

*ADVEN
-TURE*

CHANCE FRAGMENTS /

A READER
COLLECTED BY
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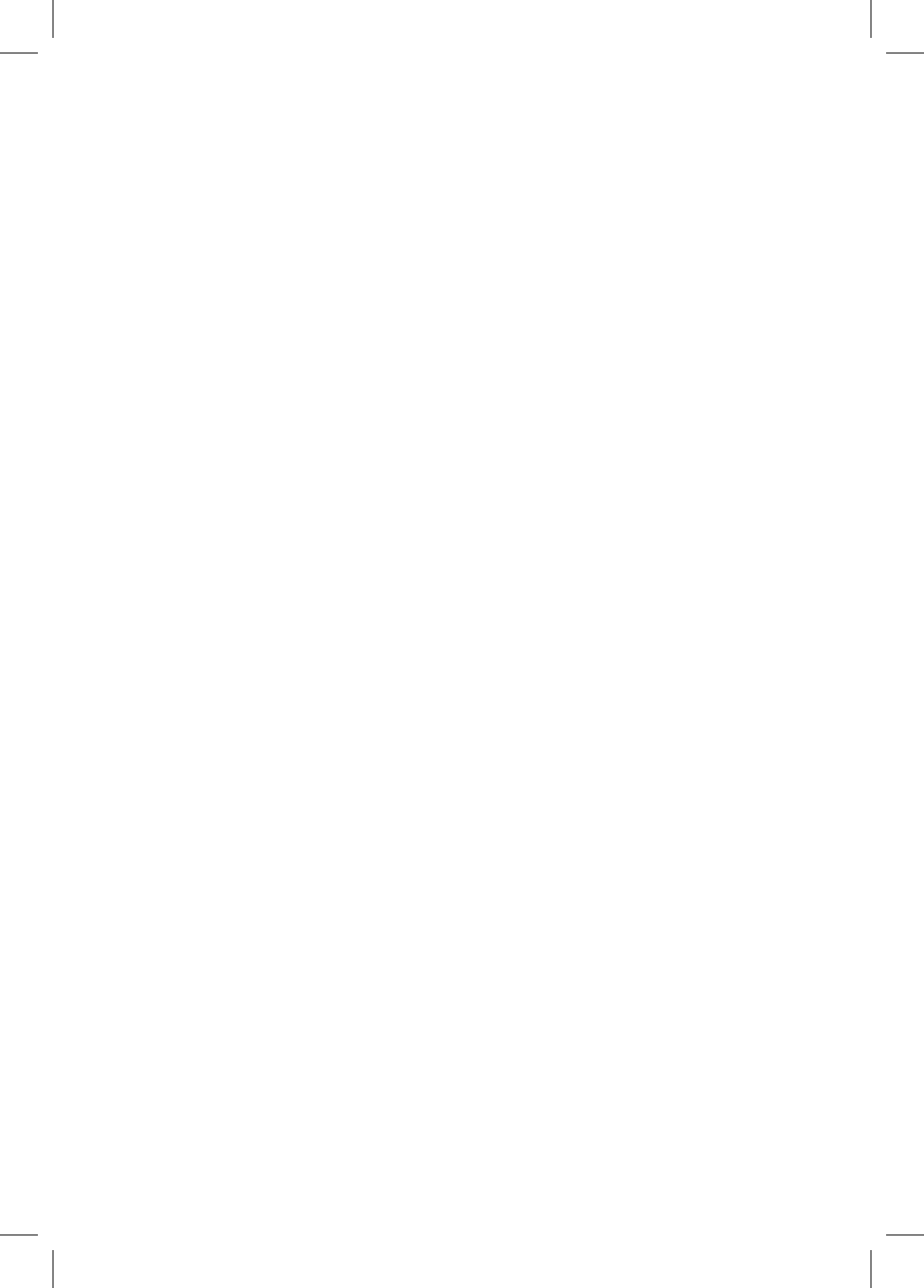
adventure (n.)

early 13c., aventure “that which happens by chance, fortune, luck,” from O.Fr. aventure (11c.) “chance, accident, occurrence, event, happening,” from L. aventura (res) “(a thing) about to happen,” from adventurus, future participle of advenire “to come to, reach, arrive at,” from ad- “to” (see ad-) + venire “to come” (see venue). Meaning developed through “risk/danger” (a trial of one’s chances) and “perilous undertaking” (early 14c.) and thence to “a novel or exciting incident” (1560s). The -d- was restored 15c.-16c. Venture is a 15c. variant. ***As a verb, c.1300, “to risk the loss of;” early 14c. “to take a chance.”*** (†)



“A mill pond, a raft and a willow are enough to begin with; and I shall never forget a certain day-break on the edge of the Atlantic when, after only a week of the open sea, my hungry eyes alighted on three bare, lovely, lone and everlasting objects which man calls islands, and which as if out of a dream had silently revealed themselves from beneath the veils of dawn against the blue of sky and water.”

Walter de la Mare (‡)



“John Cage said (I don’t know if they were his own remarks or Zen) his goal was not to get somewhere, he just wanted to enjoy the trip. That’s the quality I want in all my work, that a specific goal or accomplishment would be allied to the fact. I noticed a long time ago, when I went to a strange country, that I had the best time and the greatest experiences when I thought I was lost, because when you are lost you look so much harder.”

Robert Rauschenberg(*)

Dylan Gauthier, Kendra Sullivan

FOREWORD/NOTES:

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PREFACE: CONVERSATIONS WITH A HARE

He proceeded to explain the meaning of the works to the dead animal

“because I do not really like explaining them to people,” and since

“even in death a hare has more sensitivity and instinctive understanding than some men ...”

1.

Sculptures exist in three stages
the indefinite/movement/the definite. As matter
assumes defined form it passes through the
intermediary

movement. Movement creates new forms,
delimits existing forms, performs the double
function of

including and excluding all imaginable futures.

Movement

is the moral underpinning of all art practice, the transmutation of thoughts into concentrated values. Consider, for a moment, the adventure narrative:

The walkers exhaust themselves by actively prohibiting all that might-have-been-but-hasn't-happened from entering the plot. The doors flop open underfoot. The walls are 10 foot waves.

2.

The boat was a gift from an careless friend. The fair winds abate when the sails are raised. The high winds rise more highly when the sails are furled. Our

capital
is tied up in land while at sea, but in far-
reaching cargo
while at home. We're at odds, cash poor

and half-done-for after the ship wreck,
but the near shore is besotted by rumors
of cannibals, so we row
90 days east and in the end
are forced to eat one another. Numbering only 3
the odds are not favorable,
but we are sailors not readers-of-signs
and the captain survives.

- *Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and
Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex,*
William Chase, c. 1820.

3.

- In the early 19th century Nantucket and
New Bedford were the center of the American

whaling industry.

- Offshore, whalers excavated meat and oil from the whale, while cutting the pattern for an economy of energy consumption that continues to repeat in the contemporary market.

4.

In dreams, the harpoon is a promise of coming money. Money swimming lightwards from the deep inside of living caves, sequitous reservoirs of oil, meat, corset, light. In port, the neat and cavernous interiors of human habitation flecked with bits of whale are lit with the dispersal of its body. The tidy parlor, a plush couch, a low stool, a portrait swimming in a pastoral wall paper that delineates

the grave of furnished air
into which the animal unfolds
its final form. Its afterlife is -
pure energy. Tangentially,
the whale provides Melville with
a light to write by late at night and

a narrative. Inspired by the sperm whale
that stove and sunk The Whale-Ship Essex, in
Moby Dick
the whale could be what Hitchcock called

“The McGuffin,” the nothing
that motivates men
to act out the mystery of psychology
on the common of the water.

5.

- Melville's home - Arrowhead - in Pittsfield,
MA overlooks a whale-shaped mountain.

The whale-shape is flanked
by quarries trembling
in the aftermath of the electric sun-up blasts
by which minerals are extracted
from the ragged earth in a practice
sometimes referred to as
mountain-top removal mining.

6.

Inside the gallery -
a soft suit, inside
the suit - a small man,
smaller than the suit. Inside
all this calamity, the soft middle
of swimming ram-
ramification.

In the smallest middle
is a stuffed bunny
listening quietly to an old song

Who'll rock the cradle
when I'm gone?

The speed inside
the sleeping animal
is unbelievable. Money runs
through its dream
like water through
a flooded warren.

A dream of money means
coming home quickly through the living
cave, it seems
meaningful but anticipates
an incomplete homecoming
wherein either the home
or the one-coming-home
has been replaced
with rushing water.

He holds the bunny up,

an icon of enduring softness
thumpthump “Letting it touch
the pictures with its paws.”

7.

James Accord died last January.
His sculptures derived from nuclear waste
asserted
that through work we can be saved. A faith
based practice. His death

a suicide, a devastating admission

that the scree of consequences
authored by those in high office
render us powerless. He says:

“We’re talking about containing radioactive
materials with half-lives that exceed our written
history.”

- Half-life, the time it takes materials undergoing decay to be reduced by half. It's converse is doubling-time, ex. how long it takes a population to double in size.

Robert Smithson: “in *The Human Use of Human Beings* [Norbert Wiener] also postulates that one piece of information tends to cancel out the other.”

Accord was
a skilled welder,
a serious student of alchemy; &
a nuclear scientist.

His work insisted that transmutation is either
the moment of origin
of the free individual,

or a myth.

Meanwhile whole mountains turn to holes,
and whole ranges home to nuclear waste.

8.

By employing “love” or “revolution”
as “The McGuffin,” Hitchcock allows the viewer
to experience -however vicariously-
a personal connection with real freedom. For
the happy few

the sense of empowerment and possibility that
flank ‘love’ and ‘revolution’
is coupled with the imperative to sweep old
structures quickly and completely
from the field of experience in order to sustain
liberation.

“Such meditative conversations with the self are
central to his work.”

-In Alexandria, a crowd of protesters rush the police. The police disrobe and join the protestors, throwing stones at their former ranks.

-The self-administration of state remains a vague and unrealized aim, but in the West the demonstrators continue to represent the spiritual renewal of the collective human soul.

-In the Guardian, Zizek writes that MuBarak is the proverbial cat on a mouse hunt, who's singularity of vision carries him past the edge of a cliff he can't see.

The sculpture is the cat's crash.

9.

- Representing Egypt at this year's Venice Biennale is the artist Ahmed Baciony -

shot and killed by a sniper while filming the protests in Tahrir Square. Inside the pavilion, split projections show footage of the Square alongside “Running in Place for 30 Days,” an endurance piece that documents the limits of bio-power as the body in perpetual motion falters without fuel. One screen scans the crowd in Tahrir Square while off camera, a protestor laments the inflated cost of rice. The price he says has doubled since 2007, when the average Egyptian family was already spending over 50% of their entire earnings on food.

-Doubling time, ex. how long it takes a basic need to be out of reach.

10.

Beuys’s ‘the division of the cross’
into horizontal and vertical lines.

- "A drawn line is the basis of
construction." (Richard Serra)

Beuys' 'the multiplication of the cross'
becomes a grid,
a system of lines
implemented on a map as guides -

As the First Mate, Owen Chase diarized
the daily shift in latitude and longitude
that constitutes a 'crossing' in the ship log
of The Whale-Ship Essex in search of

pure energy.

11.

Two crosses
a stop
watch,
a dead hare,

a scattering of thin
wooden sticks. The gift
of the boat to the man
with a family, or
the gift of the job on the boat (that will sink) to
the man
with a family. His wife
succumbs to grief during a dream
of money. The hare

relays messages between
two poles of a divided self.

A clock
of rigging scatters in the wind.
A watch
of distant windows is

embedded in the mountain.
A home
divided by twin attentions thumpthump

Love of money rushes
the rabbit-waters homeward

the hallways invisible to
the human eye that towers
over the human heart which is

ANXIETY at sea.

The sculpture way-inside articulated
indefinite/thumpthumpthump/definite. The
expansion
of the sculpture way-outside, tentative,
approaching
“actual politics,” the quiet

of the dividing hare the instant
before the nuclear earthquake.

The inner and the outer life are not
oppositional, not

even opposites. “I wanted to insulate myself and so I covered myself in honey, in gold leaf, in grey felt.” We contradict

to reconcile. If it happens out there it happens in here.

He held it up, “Touch the pictures with your paws, honey,” He told her, he held her up to the drawings and to the paintings and to the light. Honey, I covered myself in your name. I wanted to produce Passion Plays with no actors, to immerse myself in the material of political context. Metaphors

were cast as protagonists and complex migrations of non-active objects or symbols were transformed into

different

non-active objects and symbols - themselves
part of an elaborate pre-revolutionary structure
of state & meaning that had to be de-coded,

repurposed, and so, unless

unless this becoming-in-the-mind-as-if

as-if, “Honey -
come sit with me in this corner.”

A dream.

“The stool is low.
The light is low.
A hood is being sewn
to my suit by my assistant
and the bunny dips
its paws in golden paint.”

But that century,
with its particular
searches and obsessions, is
a dead canary
in a living cave.

His fingers sticky
in the honey pot discern
rabbit skin glue.

Yes, yes, the odds
are not favorable, but who am I?
Neither sailor
nor reader-of-signs, he speaks
to animals.

Kendra Sullivan (►)

Dylan Gauthier, Kendra Sullivan

“At last I could row no further. My hands were blistered, my back was burned, my body ached. With a sigh, making barely a splash, I slipped overboard.” **

CHAPTER I--FOREWORD***

It began in the swimming pool at Glen Ellen. Between swims it was our wont to come out and lie in the sand and let our skins breathe the warm air and soak in the sunshine. Roscoe was a yachtsman. I had followed the sea a bit. It was inevitable that we should talk about boats. We talked about small boats, and the seaworthiness of small boats. We instanced Captain Slocum and his three years' voyage around the world in the *Spray*.

We asserted that we were not afraid to go around the world in a small boat, say forty feet long. We asserted furthermore that we would like to do it. We asserted finally that there was nothing in this world we'd like better than a chance to do it.

“Let us do it,” we said . . . in fun.

Then I asked Charmian privily if she'd really care to do it, and she said that it was too good to be true. The next time we breathed our

skins in the sand by the swimming pool I said to Roscoe, “Let us do it.”

I was in earnest, and so was he, for he said:

“When shall we start?”

I had a house to build on the ranch, also an orchard, a vineyard, and several hedges to plant, and a number of other things to do. We thought we would start in four or five years. Then the lure of the

adventure began to grip us. Why not start at once? We'd never be younger, any of us. Let the orchard, vineyard, and hedges begrowing up while we were away. When we came back, they would be ready for us, and we could live in the barn while we built the house.

So the trip was decided upon, and the building of the Snark began. We named her the Snark because we could not think of any other name--this information is given for the benefit of those who oth-

erwise might think there is something occult in the name.

Our friends cannot understand why we make this voyage. They shudder, and moan, and raise their hands. No amount of explanation can make them comprehend that we are moving along the line of least resistance; that it is easier for us to go down to the sea in a small ship than to remain on dry land, just as it is easier for them to remain on dry land than to go down to the sea in the small ship.

This state of mind comes of an undue prominence of the ego. They cannot get away from themselves. They cannot come out of themselves long enough to see that their line of least resistance is not necessarily everybody else's line of least resistance. They make of their own bundle of desires, likes, and dislikes a yardstick wherewith to measure the desires, likes, and dislikes of all creatures. This is unfair. I tell them so. But they cannot get away from their own miserable egos long enough to hear me.

They think I am crazy. In return, I am sympathetic. It is a state of mind familiar to me. We are all prone to think there is something wrong with the mental processes of the man who disagrees with us.

The ultimate word is I LIKE. It lies beneath philosophy, and is twined about the heart of life. When philosophy has maundered ponderously for a month, telling the individual what he must do, the individual says, in an instant, "I LIKE," and does something else,

and philosophy goes glimmering. It is I LIKE that makes the drunkard drink and the martyr wear a hair shirt; that makes one man a reveller and another man an anchorite; that makes one man pursue fame, another gold, another love, and another God. Philosophy is very often a man's way of explaining his own I LIKE. But to return to the Snark, and why I, for one, want to journey in her around the world. The things I like constitute my set of values. The thing I like most of all is per-

sonal achievement -- not achievement for the world's applause, but achievement for my own delight. It is the old "I did it! I did it! With my own hands I did it!" But personal achievement, with me, must be concrete. I'd rather win a water-fight in the swimming pool, or remain astride a horse that is trying to get out from under me, than write the great American novel. Each man to his liking. Some other fellow would prefer writing the great American novel to winning the water-fight or mastering the

horse.

Possibly the proudest achievement of my life, my moment of highest living, occurred when I was seventeen. I was in a three-masted-schooner off the coast of Japan. We were in a typhoon. All hands had been on deck most of the night. I was called from my bunk at seven in the morning to take the wheel. Not a stitch of canvas was set. We were running before it under bare poles, yet the schooner fairly tore along. The seas were all

of an eighth of a mile apart, and the wind snatched the whitecaps from their summits, filling. The air so thick with driving spray that it was impossible to see more than two waves at a time. The schooner was almost unmanageable, rolling her rail under to starboard and to port, veering and yawing anywhere between south-east and south-west, and threatening, when the huge seas lifted under her quarter, to broach to. Had she broached to, she would ultimately have been reported lost with all

hands and no tidings.

I took the wheel. The sailing-master watched me for a space. He was afraid of my youth, feared that I lacked the strength and the nerve. But when he saw me successfully wrestle the schooner through several bouts, he went below to breakfast. Fore and aft, all hands were below at breakfast. Had she broached to, not one of them would ever have reached the deck. For forty minutes I stood there alone at the wheel, in my grasp the

wildly careering schooner and the lives of twenty-two men. Once we were pooped. I saw it coming, and, half-drowned, with tons of water crushing me, I checked the schooner's rush to broach to. At the end of the hour, sweating and played out, I was relieved. But I had done it! With my own hands I had done my trick at the wheel and guided a hundred tons of wood and iron through a few million tons of wind and waves.

My delight was in that I had done

it -- not in the fact that twenty-two men knew I had done it. Within the year over half of them were dead and gone, yet my pride in the thing performed was not diminished by half. I am willing to confess, however, that I do like a small audience. But it must be a very small audience, composed of those who love me and whom I love. When I then accomplish personal achievement, I have a feeling that I am justifying their love for me. But this is quite apart from the delight of the achievement itself.

This delight is peculiarly my own and does not depend upon witnesses. When I have done some such thing, I am exalted. I glow all over. I am aware of a pride in myself that is mine, and mine alone. It is organic. Every fibre of me is thrilling with it. It is very natural. It is a mere matter of satisfaction at adjustment to environment. It is success.

Life that lives is life successful, and success is the breath of its nostrils. The achievement of a difficult feat

is successful adjustment to a sternly exacting environment. The more difficult the feat, the greater the satisfaction at its accomplishment. Thus it is with the man who leaps forward from the springboard, out over the swimming pool, and with a backward half-revolution of the body, enters the water head first. Once he leaves the springboard his environment becomes immediately savage, and savage the penalty it will exact should he fail and strike the water flat. Of course, the man does not have to run the risk

of the penalty. He could remain on the bank in a sweet and placid environment of summer air, sunshine, and stability. Only he is not made that way. In that swift mid-air moment he lives as he could never live on the bank.

As for myself, I'd rather be that man than the fellows who sit on the bank and watch him. That is why I am building the Snark. I am so made. I like, that is all. The trip around the world means big moments of living. Bear with me a

moment and look at it. Here am I, a little animal called a man--a bit of vitalized matter, one hundred and sixty-five pounds of meat and blood, nerve, sinew, bones, and brain,--all of it soft and tender, susceptible to hurt, fallible, and frail. I strike a light back-handed blow on the nose of an obstreperous horse, and a bone in my hand is broken. I put my head under the water for five minutes, and I am drowned. I fall twenty feet through the air, and I am smashed. I am a creature of temperature. A few degrees one

way, and my fingers and ears and toes blacken and drop off. A few degrees the other way, and my skin blisters and shrivels away from the raw, quivering flesh. A few additional degrees either way, and the life and the light in me go out. A drop of poison injected into my body from a snake, and I cease to move--for ever I cease to move. A splinter of lead from a rifle enters my head, and I am wrapped around in the eternal blackness.

Fallible and frail, a bit of pulsating,

jelly-like life--it is all I am. About me are the great natural forces--colossal menaces, Titans of destruction, unsentimental monsters that have less concern for me than I have for the grain of sand I crush under my foot. They have no concern at all for me. They do not know me. They are unconscious, unmerciful, and unmoral. They are the cyclones and tornadoes, lightning flashes and cloudbursts, tide-rips and tidal waves, undertows and waterspouts, great whirls and sucks and ed-

dies, earthquakes and volcanoes, surfs that thunder on rock-ribbed coasts and seas that leap aboard the largest crafts that float, crushing humans to pulp or licking them off into the sea and to death--and these insensate monsters do not know that tiny sensitive creature, all nerves and weaknesses, whom men call Jack London, and who himself thinks he is all right and quite a superior being. In the maze and chaos of the conflict of these vast and draughty Titans, it is for me to thread my precarious

way. The bit of life that is I will exult over them. The bit of life that is I, in so far as it succeeds in baffling them or in biting them to its service, will imagine that it is godlike. It is good to ride the tempest and feel godlike. I dare to assert that for a finite speck of pulsating jelly to feel godlike is a far more glorious feeling than for a god to feel godlike.

Here is the sea, the wind, and the wave. Here are the seas, the winds, and the waves of all the world.

Here is ferocious environment. And here is difficult adjustment, the achievement of which is delight to the small quivering vanity that is I. I like. I am so made. It is my own particular form of vanity, that is all.

There is also another side to the voyage of the Snark. Being alive, I want to see, and all the world is a bigger thing to see than one small town or valley. We have done little outlining of the voyage.

Only one thing is definite, and that is that our first port of call will be Honolulu. Beyond a few general ideas, we have no thought of our next port after Hawaii. We shall make up our minds as we get nearer, in a general way we know that we shall wander through the South Seas, take in Samoa, New Zealand, Tasmania, Australia, New Guinea, Borneo, and Sumatra, and go on up through the Philippines to Japan. Then will come Korea, China, India, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean. After that

the voyage becomes too vague to describe, though we know a number of things we shall surely do, and we expect to spend from one to several months in every country in Europe.

The Snark is to be sailed. There will be a gasoline engine on board, but it will be used only in case of emergency, such as in bad water among reefs and shoals, where a sudden calm in a swift current leaves a sailing-boat helpless. The rig of the Snark is to be what is called the

“ketch.” The ketch rig is a compromise between the yawl and the schooner. Of late years the yawl rig has proved the best for cruising. The ketch retains the cruising virtues of the yawl, and in addition manages to embrace a few of the sailing virtues of the schooner. The foregoing must be taken with a pinch of salt. It is all theory in my head. I’ve never sailed a ketch, nor even seen one. The theory commends itself to me. Wait till I get out on the ocean, then I’ll be able to tell more about the cruising

and sailing qualities of the ketch.

As originally planned, the Snark was to be forty feet long on the water-line. But we discovered there was no space for a bath-room, and for that reason we have increased her length to forty-five feet. Her greatest beam is fifteen feet. She has no house and no hold. There is six feet of headroom, and the deck is unbroken save for two companionways and a hatch for'ard. The fact that there is no house to break the strength of the deck will make

us feel safer in case great seas thunder their tons of water down on board. A large and roomy cockpit, sunk beneath the deck, with high rail and self-bailing, will make our rough-weather days and nights more comfortable.

There will be no crew. Or, rather, Charmian, Roscoe, and I are the crew. We are going to do the thing with our own hands. With our own hands we're going to circumnavigate the globe. Sail her or sink her, with our own hands we'll do

it. Of course there will be a cook and a cabin-boy. Why should we stew over a stove, wash dishes, and set the table? We could stay on land if we wanted to do those things. Besides, we've got to stand watch and work the ship. And also, I've got to work at my trade of writing in order to feed us and to get new sails and tackle and keep the Snark in efficient working order. And then there's the ranch; I've got to keep the vineyard, orchard, and hedges growing. When we increased the length of the Snark in

order to get space for a bath-room, we found that all the space was not required by the bath-room. Because of this, we increased the size of the engine. Seventy horse-power our engine is, and since we expect it to drive us along at a nine-knot clip, we do not know the name of a river with a current swift enough to defy us.

We expect to do a lot of inland work. The smallness of the Snark makes this possible. When we enter the land, out go the masts and

on goes the engine. There are the canals of China, and the Yang-tse River. We shall spend months on them if we can get permission from the government. That will be the one obstacle to our inland voyaging--governmental permission. But if we can get that permission, there is scarcely a limit to the inland voyaging we can do.

When we come to the Nile, why we can go up the Nile. We can go up the Danube to Vienna, up the Thames to London, and we can

go up the Seine to Paris and moor opposite the Latin Quarter with a bow-line out to Notre Dame and a stern-line fast to the Morgue. We can leave the Mediterranean and go up the Rhone to Lyons, there enter the Saone, cross from the Saone to the Maine through the Canal de Bourgogne, and from the Marne enter the Seine and go out the Seine at Havre. When we cross the Atlantic to the United States, we can go up the Hudson, pass through the Erie Canal, cross the Great Lakes, leave Lake Michigan

at Chicago, gain the Mississippi by way of the Illinois River and the connecting canal, and go down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. And then there are the great rivers of South America. We'll know something about geography when we get back to California.

People that build houses are often sore perplexed; but if they enjoy the strain of it, I'll advise them to build a boat like the Snark. Just consider, for a moment, the strain of detail. Take the engine. What

is the best kind of engine--the two cycle? three cycle? four cycle? My lips are mutilated with all kinds of strange jargon, my mind is mutilated with still stranger ideas and is foot-sore and weary from travelling in new and rocky realms of thought. --Ignition methods; shall it be make-and-break or jump-spark? Shall dry cells or storage batteries be used? A storage battery commends itself, but it requires a dynamo. How powerful a dynamo? And when we have installed a dynamo and a storage

battery, it is simply ridiculous not to light the boat with electricity. Then comes the discussion of how many lights and how many candle-power. It is a splendid idea. But electric lights will demand a more powerful storage battery, which, in turn, demands a more powerful dynamo.

And now that we've gone in for it, why not have a searchlight? It would be tremendously useful. But the searchlight needs so much electricity that when it runs it

will put all the other lights out of commission. Again we travel the weary road in the quest after more power for storage battery and dynamo. And then, when it is finally solved, some one asks, "What if the engine breaks down?" And we collapse. There are the sidelights, the binnacle light, and the anchor light. Our very lives depend upon them. So we have to fit the boat throughout with oil lamps as well.

But we are not done with that engine yet. The engine is powerful.

We are two small men and a small woman. It will break our hearts and our backs to hoist anchor by hand. Let the engine do it. And then comes the problem of how to convey power for'ard from the engine to the winch. And by the time all this is settled, we redistribute the allotments of space to the engine-room, galley, bathroom, state-rooms, and cabin, and begin all over again. And when we have shifted the engine, I send off a telegram of gibberish to its makers at New York, something

like this: Toggle-joint abandoned change thrust-bearing accordingly distance from forward side of flywheel to face of stern post sixteen feet six inches.

Just potter around in quest of the best steering gear, or try to decide whether you will set up your rigging with old-fashioned lanyards or with turnbuckles, if you want strain of detail. Shall the binnacle be located in front of the wheel in the centre of the beam, or shall it be located to one side in front

of the wheel?-- there's room right there for a library of sea-dog controversy. Then there's the problem of gasolene, fifteen hundred gallons of it--what are the safest ways to tank it and pipe it? and which is the best fire-extinguisher for a gasolene fire? Then there is the pretty problem of the life-boat and the stowage of the same. And when that is finished, come the cook and cabin-boy to confront one with nightmare possibilities. It is a small boat, and we'll be packed close together. The servant-girl

problem of landsmen pales to insignificance. We did select one cabin-boy, and by that much were our troubles eased. And then the cabin-boy fell in love and resigned.

And in the meanwhile how is a fellow to find time to study navigation--when he is divided between these problems and the earning of the money wherewith to settle the problems? Neither Roscoe nor I know anything about navigation, and the summer is gone, and we are about to start, and the prob-

lems are thicker than ever, and the treasury is stuffed with emptiness. Well, anyway, it takes years to learn seamanship, and both of us are seamen. If we don't find the time, we'll lay in the books and instruments and teach ourselves navigation on the ocean between San Francisco and Hawaii.

There is one unfortunate and perplexing phase of the voyage of the Snark. Roscoe, who is to be my co-navigator, is a follower of one, Cyrus R. Teed. Now Cyrus R. Teed

has a different cosmology from the one generally accepted, and Roscoe shares his views. Wherefore Roscoe believes that the surface of the earth is concave and that we live on the inside of a hollow sphere. Thus, though we shall sail on the one boat, the Snark, Roscoe will journey around the world on the inside, while I shall journey around on the outside. But of this, more anon. We threaten to be of the one mind before the voyage is completed. I am confident that I shall convert him into making

the journey on the outside, while he is equally confident that before we arrive back in San Francisco I shall be on the inside of the earth. How he is going to get me through the crust I don't know, but Roscoe is ay a masterful man.

P.S.--That engine! While we've got it, and the dynamo, and the storage battery, why not have an ice-machine? Ice in the tropics! It is more necessary than bread. Here goes for the ice-machine! Now I am plunged into chemistry, and

my lips hurt, and my mind hurts,
and how am I ever to find the time
to study navigation?

...CHAPTER III--ADVENTURE

No, adventure is not dead, and in spite of the steam engine and of Thomas Cook & Son. When the announcement of the contemplated voyage of the Snark was made, young men of “roving disposition” proved to be legion, and young women as well--to say nothing of the elderly men and women who

volunteered for the voyage. Why, among my personal friends there were at least half a dozen who regretted their recent or imminent marriages; and there was one marriage I know of that almost failed to come off because of the Snark.

Every mail to me was burdened with the letters of applicants who were suffocating in the “man-stifled towns,” and it soon dawned upon me that a twentieth century Ulysses required a corps of stenographers to clear his correspon-

dence before setting sail. No, adventure is certainly not dead--not while one receives letters that begin: "There is no doubt that when you read this soul-plea from a female stranger in New York City," etc.; and wherein one learns, a little farther on, that this female stranger weighs only ninety pounds, wants to be cabin-boy, and "yearns to see the countries of the world."

The possession of a "passionate fondness for geography," was the way one applicant expressed the

wander-lust that was in him; while another wrote, “I am cursed with an eternal yearning to be always on the move, consequently this letter to you.” But best of all was the fellow who said he wanted to come because his feet itched.

There were a few who wrote anonymously, suggesting names of friends and giving said friends’ qualifications; but to me there was a hint of something sinister in such proceedings, and I went no further in the matter. With two or

three exceptions, all the hundreds that volunteered for my crew were very much in earnest. Many of them sent their photographs. Ninety per cent. offered to work in any capacity, and ninety-nine per cent. offered to work without salary.

“Contemplating your voyage on the Snark,” said one, “and notwithstanding its attendant dangers, to accompany you (in any capacity whatever) would be the climax of my ambitions.” Which

reminds me of the young fellow who was “seventeen years old and ambitious,” and who, at the end of his letter, earnestly requested “but please do not let this git into the papers or magazines.” Quite different was the one who said, “I would be willing to work like hell and not demand pay.” Almost all of them wanted me to telegraph, at their expense, my acceptance of their services; and quite a number offered to put up a bond to guarantee their appearance on sailing date.

Some were rather vague in their own minds concerning the work to be done on the Snark; as, for instance, the one who wrote: "I am taking the liberty of writing you this note to find out if there would be any possibility of my going with you as one of the crew of your boat to make sketches and illustrations." Several, unaware of the needful work on a small craft like the Snark, offered to serve, as one of them phrased it, "as assistant in filing materials collected

for books and novels.” That’s what one gets for being prolific. “Let me give my qualifications for the job,” wrote one. “I am an orphan living with my uncle, who is a hot revolutionary socialist and who says a man without the red blood of adventure is an animated dishrag.” Said another: “I can swim some, though I don’t know any of the new strokes. But what is more important than strokes, the water is a friend of mine.” “If I was put alone in a sail-boat, I could get her anywhere I wanted to go,” was the

qualification of a third--and a better qualification than the one that follows, "I have also watched the fish-boats unload." But possibly the prize should go to this one, who very subtly conveys his deep knowledge of the world and life by saying: "My age, in years, is twenty-two."

Then there were the simple straight-out, homely, and unadorned letters of young boys, lacking in the felicities of expression, it is true, but desiring greatly to make the

voyage. These were the hardest of all to decline, and each time I declined one it seemed as if I had struck Youth a slap in the face. They were so earnest, these boys, they wanted so much to go. “I am sixteen but large for my age,” said one; and another, “Seventeen but large and healthy.” “I am as strong at least as the average boy of my size,” said an evident weakling. “Not afraid of any kind of work,” was what many said, while one in particular, to lure me no doubt by inexpensiveness, wrote: “I can pay

my way to the Pacific coast, so that part would probably be acceptable to you.” “Going around the world is THE ONE THING I want to do,” said one, and it seemed to be the one thing that a few hundred wanted to do. “I have no one who cares whether I go or not,” was the pathetic note sounded by another. One had sent his photograph, and speaking of it, said, “I’m a homely-looking sort of a chap, but looks don’t always count.” And I am confident that the lad who wrote the following would have turned out

all right: “My age is 19 years, but I am rather small and consequently won’t take up much room, but I’m tough as the devil.” And there was one thirteen-year-old applicant that Charmian and I fell in love with, and it nearly broke our hearts to refuse him.

But it must not be imagined that most of my volunteers were boys; on the contrary, boys constituted a very small proportion. There were men and women from every walk in life. Physicians, surgeons, and

dentists offered in large numbers to come along, and, like all the professional men, offered to come without pay, to serve in any capacity, and to pay, even, for the privilege of so serving.

There was no end of composers and reporters who wanted to come, to say nothing of experienced valets, chefs, and stewards. Civil engineers were keen on the voyage; “lady” companions galore cropped up for Charmian; while I was deluged with the applications

of would-be private secretaries. Many high school and university students yearned for the voyage, and every trade in the working class developed a few applicants, the machinists, electricians, and engineers being especially strong on the trip. I was surprised at the number, who, in musty law offices, heard the call of adventure; and I was more than surprised by the number of elderly and retired sea captains who were still thralls to the sea. Several young fellows, with millions coming to them lat-

er on, were wild for the adventure, as were also several county superintendents of schools.

Fathers and sons wanted to come, and many men with their wives, to say nothing of the young woman stenographer who wrote: "Write immediately if you need me. I shall bring my typewriter on the first train." But the best of all is the following--observe the delicate way in which he worked in his wife: "I thought I would drop you a line of inquiry as to the pos-

sibility of making the trip with you, am 24 years of age, married and broke, and a trip of that kind would be just what we are looking for.”

Come to think of it, for the average man it must be fairly difficult to write an honest letter of self-recommendation. One of my correspondents was so stumped that he began his letter with the words, “This is a hard task”; and, after vainly trying to describe his good points, he wound up with, “It is a

hard job writing about one's self." Nevertheless, there was one who gave himself a most glowing and lengthy character, and in conclusion stated that he had greatly enjoyed writing it.

"But suppose this: your cabin-boy could run your engine, could repair it when out of order. Suppose he could take his turn at the wheel, could do any carpenter or machinist work. Suppose he is strong, healthy, and willing to work. Would you not rather have

him than a kid that gets seasick and can't do anything but wash dishes?"

It was letters of this sort that I hated to decline. The writer of it, self-taught in English, had been only two years in the United States, and, as he said, "I am not wishing to go with you to earn my living, but I wish to learn and see." At the time of writing to me he was a designer for one of the big motor manufacturing companies; he had been to sea quite a bit, and had been used

all his life to the handling of small boats.

“I have a good position, but it matters not so with me as I prefer travelling,” wrote another. “As to salary, look at me, and if I am worth a dollar or two, all right, and if I am not, nothing said. As to my honesty and character, I shall be pleased to show you my employers. Never drink, no tobacco, but to be honest, I myself, after a little more experience, want to do a little writing.”

“I can assure you that I am eminently respectable, but find other respectable people tiresome.” The man who wrote the foregoing certainly had me guessing, and I am still wondering whether or not he’d have found me tiresome, or what the deuce he did mean.

“I have seen better days than what I am passing through to-day,” wrote an old salt, “but I have seen them a great deal worse also.”

But the willingness to sacrifice on

the part of the man who wrote the following was so touching that I could not accept: “I have a father, a mother, brothers and sisters, dear friends and a lucrative position, and yet I will sacrifice all to become one of your crew.”

Another volunteer I could never have accepted was the finicky young fellow who, to show me how necessary it was that I should give him a chance, pointed out that “to go in the ordinary boat, be it schooner or steamer, would be

impracticable, for I would have to mix among and live with the ordinary type of seamen, which as a rule is not a clean sort of life.”

Then there was the young fellow of twenty-six, who had “run through the gamut of human emotions,” and had “done everything from cooking to attending Stanford University,” and who, at the present writing, was “A vaquero on a fifty-five-thousand-acre range.” Quite in contrast was the modesty of the one who said, “I am

not aware of possessing any particular qualities that would be likely to recommend me to your consideration. But should you be impressed, you might consider it worth a few minutes' time to answer. Otherwise, there's always work at the trade. Not expecting, but hoping, I remain, etc.”

But I have held my head in both my hands ever since, trying to figure out the intellectual kinship between myself and the one who wrote: “Long before I knew of you,

I had mixed political economy and history and deducted therefrom many of your conclusions in concrete.”

Here, in its way, is one of the best, as it is the briefest, that I received: “If any of the present company signed on for cruise happens to get cold feet and you need one more who understands boating, engines, etc., would like to hear from you, etc.” Here is another brief one: “Point blank, would like to have the job of cabin-boy on

your trip around the world, or any other job on board. Am nineteen years old, weigh one hundred and forty pounds, and am an American.” And here is a good one from a man a “little over five feet long”: “When I read about your manly plan of sailing around the world in a small boat with Mrs. London, I was so much rejoiced that I felt I was planning it myself, and I thought to write you about filling either position of cook or cabin-boy myself, but for some reason I did not do it, and I came to Denver

from Oakland to join my friend's business last month, but everything is worse and unfavourable. But fortunately you have postponed your departure on account of the great earthquake, so I finally decided to propose you to let me fill either of the positions. I am not very strong, being a man of a little over five feet long, although I am of sound health and capability.”

“I think I can add to your outfit an additional method of utilizing the

power of the wind,” wrote a well-wisher, “which, while not interfering with ordinary sails in light breezes, will enable you to use the whole force of the wind in its mightiest blows, so that even when its force is so great that you may have to take in every inch of canvas used in the ordinary way, you may carry the fullest spread with my method. With my attachment your craft could not be UPSET.”

The foregoing letter was written in San Francisco under the date of

April 16, 1906. And two days later, on April 18, came the Great Earthquake. And that's why I've got it in for that earthquake, for it made a refugee out of the man who wrote the letter, and prevented us from ever getting together.

Many of my brother socialists objected to my making the cruise, of which the following is typical: "The Socialist Cause and the millions of oppressed victims of Capitalism has a right and claim upon your life and services. If, however,

you persist, then, when you swallow the last mouthful of salt chuck you can hold before sinking, remember that we at least protested.”

One wanderer over the world who “could, if opportunity afforded, recount many unusual scenes and events,” spent several pages ardently trying to get to the point of his letter, and at last achieved the following: “Still I am neglecting the point I set out to write you about. So will say at once that it has been stated in print that you and one

or two others are going to take a cruize around the world a little fifty- or sixty-foot boat. I therefore cannot get myself to think that a man of your attainments and experience would attempt such a proceeding, which is nothing less than courting death in that way. And even if you were to escape for some time, your whole Person, and those with you would be bruised from the ceaseless motion of a craft of the above size, even if she were padded, a thing not usual at sea.” Thank you, kind friend,

thank you for that qualification, “a thing not usual at sea.” Nor is this friend ignorant of the sea. As he says of himself, “I am not a land-lubber, and I have sailed every sea and ocean.” And he winds up his letter with: “Although not wishing to offend, it would be madness to take any woman outside the bay even, in such a craft.” And yet, at the moment of writing this, Charmian is in her state-room at the typewriter, Martin is cooking dinner, Tochigi is setting the table, Roscoe and Bert are caulking the

deck, and the Snark is steering herself some five knots an hour in a rattling good sea--and the Snark is not padded, either.

“Seeing a piece in the paper about your intended trip, would like to know if you would like a good crew, as there is six of us boys all good sailor men, with good discharges from the Navy and Merchant Service, all true Americans, all between the ages of 20 and 22, and at present are employed as riggers at the Union Iron Works, and

would like very much to sail with you.”--It was letters like this that made me regret the boat was not larger.

And here writes the one woman in all the world--outside of Charmian--for the cruise: “If you have not succeeded in getting a cook I would like very much to take the trip in that capacity. I am a woman of fifty, healthy and capable, and can do the work for the small company that compose the crew of the Snark. I am a very good cook

and a very good sailor and something of a traveller, and the length of the voyage, if of ten years' duration, would suit me better than one. References, etc.”

Some day, when I have made a lot of money, I'm going to build a big ship, with room in it for a thousand volunteers. They will have to do all the work of navigating that boat around the world, or they'll stay at home. I believe that they'll work the boat around the world, for I know that Adventure is not

dead. I know Adventure is not dead because I have had a long and intimate correspondence with Adventure.

* * *

DESERT ISLANDS: being the VOYAGE of a HULK, called by courtesy a Lecture, that was launched under the Auspices of the Royal Society of Literature of London many years ago, namely, in 1920, was afterwards frequently in Dock again for Repair and then refitted for FARTHER ADVENTURINGS and so at length became laden with an unconscionable Cargo of Odds and Ends and Flotsam and Jetsam, much of it borrtow'd from other Vessels infinitely more Seaworthy than itself,

and the most concern'd with what are known as ISLANDS, some of them Real, some of them Allegorical, and the rest purely Fabulous; together with a rambling Discourse concerning a certain Very Famous Man of Letters, viz. DANIEL DEFOE, and his Elective Affinity, ROBINSON CRUSOE: which, being concocted in a most Unmethodical Fashion, is now presented to a World, already groaning under an intolerable Burden of Printed Matter...

Walter de la Mare (‡)

POSTSCRIPT:

“May I ask, sir,” said I, after a while: “Why in all these years have you not built a boat and made your escape from this island?” “And where should I escape to?” he replied, smiling to himself as though no answer were possible.’**

Dylan Gauthier, Kendra Sullivan

Footnotes:

† source: etymonline.com

‡ Walter de la Mare, *Desert Islands* (1930)

► Kendra Sullivan, excerpt *Conversations with a Hare* (2011)

* Robert Rauschenberg, Interview with Alan Sayag (1981)

** J.M. Coetze, *Foe* (1986)

*** Jack London, *The Cruise of the Snark* (1911)



