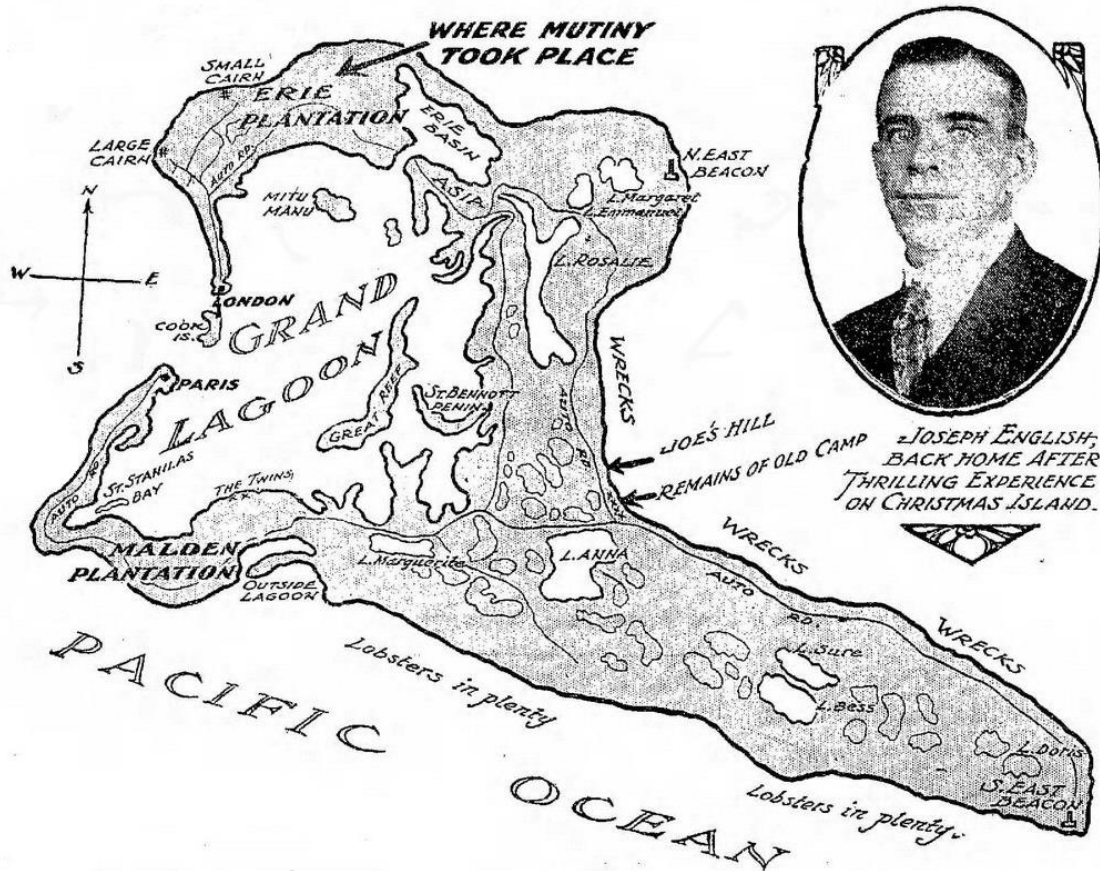


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ROBINSON CRUSOE BACK IN MALDEN

Joseph English Comes Home After Five Years of Adventure, Which Included a Single-Handed Fight With Mutineers, 14 Months Marooning On a Lonely Pacific Island, and Rescue at Last by a British Warship



JOSEPH ENGLISH; BACK HOME AFTER THRILLING EXPERIENCE ON CHRISTMAS ISLAND.

By JAMES H. POWERS

The Globe begins today one of the strangest stories ever brought back to Boston – the story of Joseph English of 257 Emerald st, Malden. It reads like Robinson Crusoe; but it is thrice as thrilling, because it is a Boston boy's true story.

Marooned for 14 months on a bit of land poking up out of the South Sea 3600 good seamiles from San Francisco.

Fighting, single-handed a battle with desperate mutineers and half believing he would never see civilization again.

Finally rescued by a British admiral (whose name is known the world over) from his outlandish spot which some ironical person named „Christmas Island.“ ...

Home town looked good

Back home in the arms of his family, after five years of wandering – with even his lust for adventure satisfied for the moment – this young man held his mother, father, brother and sisters spellbound by his matter-of-fact story.

He wandered around Malden, to see the old parochial schoolhouse he had attended as a youngster; the back corner lots where he had played at Indian with the kids of the neighborhood; and the Malden High School where he had, but a few years back, delved into the mysteries of algebra. And the old home town looked good to him.

He is the son of Mr and Mrs John W. English of 267 Emerald st, and the second oldest son in the family, too, being only 34 years of age for all his crammed years of adventure. His older brother is Jack, his twin brother is Charley, and he has four sisters, Marguerite, and Rosalie, and Anna and Mary – all of those names he has written down upon the charts of the Pacific. For he had named the little lakes and basins of Christmas Island after them.

And, so, after he had wandered about the home haunts of Malden, I tracked him down and dragged this story out of him. He showed me all his strange records and maps, evidence that spoke volumes of hairraising details which he wanted to skip over. But here is the narrative from his own lips:

JOSEPH ENGLISH STORY

It was in the late Spring of 1916 that I met “Santa Claus” Rougier in Frisco. I had been knocking about, working now for this trading firm and now for that, and the sum of it all was dissatisfaction. A desire to get away from the land for a while had been growing upon me.

Perhaps it was the spring fever, but whatever it was, the feeling had grown stronger and stronger, a feeling that something would turn up. If I had known what that “something” was to be, it is possible that I would not have been so eager when “Pere” Rougier came along and I became acquainted personally with the affairs of the Central Pacific Coco Company.

But that’s neither here nor there now. It is all over. Fr Rougier and his company struck my fancy, and I joined the C.P.C.C after an interview which lasted only a few minutes.

Fr. Rougier was known the Pacific over. A most unusual man, he looks pretty much the part of his nickname, “Santa Claus,” which he received after he purchased Christmas Island from the British.

A heavily built man, distinctly French in face and manner, a voluble man, and reputed to be one of the richest traders in the South Seas. He was shrewd, and had a multitude of business connections, and his office was a hive of industry under his energetic supervision.

Out in the Middle of the Pacific

Most striking of all was his beard. I have never seen any one in the world with a beard like Rougier's, a vast, billowy mass of black hair, streaked with gray. It resembled a mass of seaweed flowing down to his waist, and the white in it was like drifting sea foam.

He lived out on an island in the middle of the Pacific, on Papeete, which lies several hundred miles below the equator; a beautiful place of palms, and(*) shrubs, orchids, the marvelous blue sea and dim lagoons that become magically beautiful under the moonlight of the tropics.

But, like all South Sea traders, his home in Papeete was merely a stopping place, where, sometimes, he would remain a month or so.

And so I went into the office of the company, as an accountant, under the spell of Fr Rougier's insistence, and a gratifying offer of money. Before I had been there many weeks I had learned the business.

The company dealt chiefly in copra, which is the most valuable export form of the cocoanut product from the islands. It consists of the dried and broken kernel of the cocoanut, and it is used to secure oil.

As the copra is sold at about \$150 a ton, and 100 trees will produce a ton of copra a season, of course the Central Pacific Coco Company was a rich concern

Ordered to Christmas Island

A few weeks after I had begun work for the company, I learned that a ship was fitting out for a trip to the great island plantation out above the equator – Christmas Island. I was busy with the affairs of my position, when one day, Rougier and Crane, the 'Frisco manager, called me in.

"I'm going to send you out to Christmas Island" said the owner. "I think that we can improve the plantation there, and I want some one who knows what he is about. You'll do. You are to sail on the 'Isabel May.'"

"But I don't" – I began.

"That'll be all right," interrupted the Frenchman. "Morgan is there, the manager, and he'll help you all you need. You are to go as the firm's accountant and look over the possibilities."

I was to visit an island in the South Seas, an island which was scarcely an island, an atoll, the largest atoll in all that part of the Pacific, and thousands of miles away from mainlands.

Little did I dream that my visit was to become almost permanent, or that I would have to fight for my life out there in the middle of the Pacific, or that, strangest of all – but we'll come to that later.

Just now I am concerned with Crane and old man Rougier, who was looking at me shrewdly, above the mountain of his whiskers, with a sly smile. I was to learn what that smile meant

3600 Miles on First Leg

I purchased a sea chest, and cigarettes and marine glasses and a hundred and one things that I felt, vaguely, I might find useful. I had a plentiful supply of ammunition put aboard for myself, both bird shot and revolver cartridges. I had heard that there were birds aplenty out on Christmas Island.

We were headed into the southwest and the first leg of our cruise was to take us to Papeete, where Rougier was to settle some business and leave me. It is a long sea voyage, that course to Papeete – 3000 good sea miles.

The Pacific was never bluer. It was still early Summer and the skies seldom shadowed even by a cloud. And it was hot. The rails became so hot that you could scarcely touch them. The deck was like a red-hot stove lid.

Like a Huge Lobster Claw

We were all of us heartily sick of cruising by the time that we raised the low hills of Papeete. We took aboard more stores and sent some ashore, and, after dropping "Santa Claus" Rougier, we turned toward Tahiti, where I added 40 Chinamen to the crew of laborers we were taking to the island, to help work the plantations.

Our decks were piled high with lumber for buildings. There was scarcely room to move about on the "Isabel May," as, at last, she "took the bone in her teeth" to northwestward, on the final leg, 1250 miles.

Christmas Island is listed on a few maps, and has escaped the attention even of the experts of the Encyclopedias.

The island is in the shape of an enormous lobster claw, with the jaws opened to the Northwest.

We came directly toward the narrow entrance to the claw, where the points closed in toward one another, and toward a small island fair in the mid channel. The reach from headland to headland was about seven miles.

Close to the point on the northern side stood the home of what the captain told me was the manager, and a very poverty-stricken, weather-beaten bit of dilapidation it looked, even at that distance. There was a house in a clump of trees on the point to southward, too, Rougier's I learned. There, when he minded, the old trader paused in his wanderings.

"Desolate Old Dump"

Within the narrows I could see the placid surface of a vast lagoon, blue under the reflected sky of Summer, with the gleam of white sands and coral wavering toward the surface like a strange illumination beneath the sea. And behind it all rose the slow acclivity toward the near edge of the forest, with a line of lofty cocoanut palms marching toward the sea like a regiment of gigantic green plumed soldiers.

The only landing was close to the northern point of the entrance. We dropped anchor with a hoarse rattle of hawsers, and the lines were flung ashore, where two agile natives grasped them and made fast to the leaning pile heads.

“Pretty desolate old dump,” said Morgan, the manager, as we were walking up the shore toward the house, after the captain had introduced me. “I can’t see the use of lugging all that lumber out here, though,” and he pointed toward the decks of the “Isabel May.”

Worst Job of All

“It’s to build new plantation houses,” I told him. He turned and stared at me, with a curious quick appraisal. I fancied that I detected hostility in his gaze, but it was gone in a moment and he laughed again.

“Old Rougier’s scheming again I can recognize his brand by this time, though.” And he laughed bitterly, and accepted a cigarette.

“It’s the devil’s own job to get blacks over here, and the devil’s own job to keep ‘em when you get them, and the worst job of all is to make ‘em work when you have got them,” remarked Morgan, in answer to my query as to how many natives from the other South Sea Islands were on the plantation.

The manager’s house was a weather-beaten tumble of ruins on closer view. A thatch of palm leaves had replaced the wooden roof it had originally boasted.

“The Japs stole the roof and the doors,” explained the manager.

“Stole?” I queried.

“Yes. You know the island has scarcely been worked since the ‘old man’ bought the plantation rights from England. He tried once or twice, and then everything petered out. Then the Japs came poaching birds. As everybody had left by this time, they took what they wanted. That seemed to be about everything loose, including the doors and windows of both houses. The other one is over the strait.” Said he, casually, pointing to Rougier’s deserted house.

“London” and “Paris”

“Well, they left on a British man o’ war, back in 1911. I don’t know what the tale was. Maybe “Santa Claus” got sore and kicked to the British consul. Anyway, they cleared out and the place was left to the birds for a few years. Then we started cultivation again.

“We call this point ‘London.’ Fr Rougier wouldn’t stand for any reflection on his own land, you know. So we put up his house over there and called it ‘Paris.’

The next day the Isabel May began to discharge cargo and in short order the entire consignment of supplies and building material was ashore, stowed in one of the staggering shacks beside the manager’s house.

Shortly after the ship dropped down the coast out of sight, and we were alone.

The extra hands I had brought were put to work renovating the buildings and fixing up things generally at the main plantations.

We worked usually from early morning until about 10:30, when we used to knock off for the day because of the heat. When the buildings were finished, we turned our attention to the nurseries and the groves.

Enemies From the Start

It was late August and close to the rainy season and there was a big effort to get the new plants set out before it came.

Shortly afterward there came word from Fanning Island directing me to assume charge of the entire island. This, then, was what Rougier's sly twinkle meant.

Tight there began the estrangement with Morgan, the deposed manager. The appointment let loose all his enmity and bitterness. This was strange, too, for it meant that he was to be relieved and would undoubtedly return to civilization once more.

He had always been talking about the day of his return. Now that it was coming he was moved with resentment against myself. We grew politely civil. Sometimes we went for hours, even days, without speaking more than a word or two.

Nineteen hundred and seventeen came, and with the arrival of Summer once more came Rougier's ship, and carried me back to 'Frisco, to turn in my reports and to secure further supplies. Morgan was left in charge of the isle during my absence, to quit on my return.

That Autumn of 1917 proved unforgettable. How was I to know, as I stood on the deck of the little schooner, and swung out once more from the Golden Gate, that I was going to what might easily prove my death, or that before I saw again the lines of the coast of California I should have faced marooning and starvation, and the strangest rescue outside of fiction?

(More of his adventures will be told in next Sunday's Globe)

(*)

lies several hundred miles below the equator; a beautiful place of palms, and flowering shrubs, orchids, the marvelous blue sea and dim lagoons that be-