

# The Boston Sunday Globe

THE BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE— MARCH 7, 1920 —SEVENTY-SIX PAGES

## MALDEN MAN IN CRUSOE'S ROLE WITH TWO WORTHLESS FRIDAYS

With Relief Promised in 45 Days, Joseph English Waited Month After Month—Clothing Gone, Provisions Spoiled, Natives Ready For Murder

By JAMES H. POWERS.

In previous instalments the Globe has told how a Malden boy was put in charge of the cocoanut plantations on Christmas Island, out in the middle of the Pacific, how the cannibal workmen mutinied, how he finally hunted them down and by sheer audacity imprisoned the ringleaders, how the supply schooner was wrecked, and how the owner at last came on a relief steamer, took away all the natives but two, and left the young manager alone with but two men, promising to return in 45 days.

### THE STORY OF JOSEPH ENGLISH

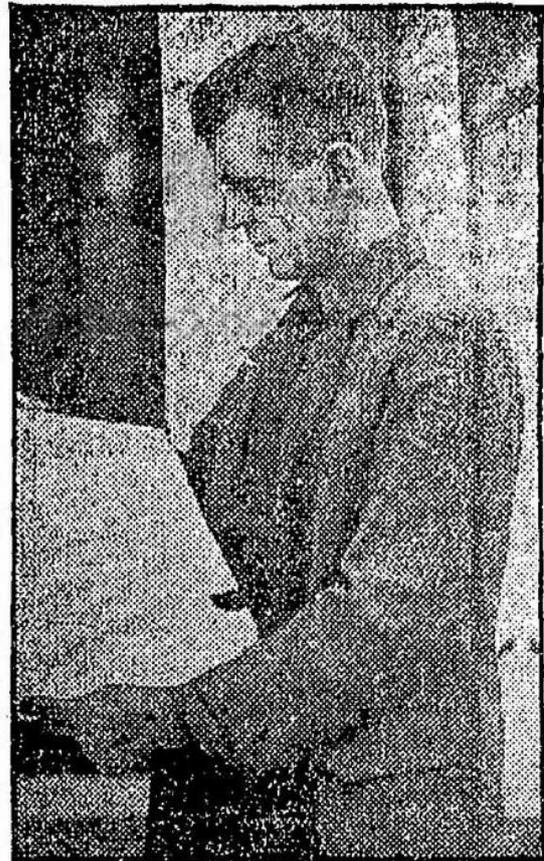
As September came on and the first showers of the rainy season fell, drenching the thirsty groves and the foliage of the tropics, which were seared under the terrific heat of the Summer, I resolved that, rain or shine, there should be no loafing.

Work was our only salvation in the monotony of existence which was to endure for close upon two months, if "Santa Claus" Rougier kept his promise and sent us a ship. So I laid out tasks, day after day.

This was no mean undertaking, either.

The two men, Tiaran and Lucien, who had been left to keep me company, showed early that they were true to the type of South Sea Islanders. I had to keep driving them, urging them and almost fighting with them to keep occupied.

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JOSEPH ENGLISH.

### **Problems Beyond Solving .**

For three men, single-handed, to see to it that all these plantations were in hand, to undertake the multitude of tasks that daily arose on Christmas Island, at London House and Paris House, was almost so gigantic a project as to be absurd.

There were piles of copra sacks to sort and stack; gasoline drums had become leaky and dirty and the entire supply must be transferred to other drums; sheet iron roofing on some of the outbuildings had grown rusty and worn through, and it became necessary to paint our supply of sheet iron and lay new roofs.

The automobile demanded attention. The motor boat machinery was clogged with sand and dirt. There were constant repairs needed at the wharfs and the storehouses and the two main stations.

The tracks at the plantations' nurseries, on which we used to move the handcars, were becoming buried beneath the shifting sand and the undergrowth. The weeds were sprouting in our groves. Our problems were legion.

And as the days went past and October came Tiaran and Lucien finally gave over working and helping me altogether.

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### **Why Work?**

They protested that they could not carry on the labor alone. It was impossible. Rougier never meant that we should try it, The arrival of the ship with 300 hands would catch up with the work in a few days.

They did not understand that, unless a man works, he has nothing left to do but to think.

Or, maybe they couldn't think.

At any rate, when the time for the arrival of the relief drew near, they lazed on the beach in the shade of the coconut trees, and scanned the horizon for a diversion, while I shifted lumber stacks on the sand, so as to get the salvage further out of reach of the sea, and thereby raised blisters for my pains.

My determination to quit the island forever, as soon as a ship should appear, crystallized during those days, with the growing weariness and monotony, and with no one to talk to. I gave up attempts at conversation with my companions, save at meal times, for my disgust at their idling was more than could stand.

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### **Watching for the Smoke**

On the 16th of the month I too gave up work for a day and went out myself to look for the ship with my marine glasses. It was sultry and the heat rose from the sands and the waters of the shore in quivering undulationg.

There was a dead calm. The surf had fallen away into little more than a ripple over the coral, and I could look deeply into the water, down among the coral and weeds.

All day long I wandered up and down the beach, from London House Point to the Cairns above the anchorage, looking to seaward, and expecting that surely, at some blessed moment, the tell-tale patch of smoke would lift over the rim of the Pacific.

As night came, and, fully discouraged, I went back to the house, it was with an oppression and a keen sense of hurt, as if someone had deliberately inflicted on me a very great injury. The 45 days were up, and Rougier had not kept his promise.

**That evening, too, a discovery was made that seemed then of little import, but later turned out to be vital.**

On going to the tin in which the supply of flour was kept, I discovered that the whole upper part of the case was full of worms, and it became necessary to throw away nearly a quarter of our little supply.

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### **Ruined by Sea Water**

This in itself was not a very serious thing perhaps, for we still had aplenty of stores to keep us for many weeks. But before we were done with our waiting, it became very serious indeed, and in the long spells of sickness and hunger that were to come, I know that, had I been able to gather up that discarded flour, worms and all, I would have been thankful.

The loss of the flour did not disturb me half so much, nor did it seem half so Important as the next discovery I was to make, That was, upon opening one of the cases of milk, to find that it was one which had been salvaged by us from the Ysabel May's cargo, and that the sea water had ruined it entirely.

We opened, one after another, the other cases. Every one of the cases of milk and the cases of canned fish was spoiled with the rust.

By now the rains had set in almost daily, and we were often soaked to the skin, but the sun would suddenly break forth again, and the heat dried us off quickly with little discomfort. Tiaran and Lucien minded it all not half so much as I.

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### **Washed Ashore by the Sea**

As neither of them was much good In the way of work, I took to going off by myself, and thus I traveled from one of the plantations to the other, leaving them to their own devices, sometimes working, sometimes loafing. It was of no use to watch over them, for they would do only what they chose,

By the time that November had come, however, the rains had grown into a serious item in my daily life, and the weather had become decidedly cooler. I spent hours looking for diversion, and nothing new or strange in the vicinity of London House escaped my attention and curiosity.

I remember how delighted I was one morning when I stood on the sand and looked down upon a strange starfish washed ashore below me, on huge denizen of the sea, with 17 points and all covered with spines like a sea urchin. I had never seen anything like it before.

On another day it was a cocoanut with a double embryo that I found sprouted on the sands by Motu Manu peninsula.

## **Ship a Month Overdue**

One day I took the two men and we went on a tour of inspection, and saw a wild duck winging its way across the land. And we speculated for an hour on where he had come from and whether he was living in the marsh of Erie Basin, or down in the Outer Lagoon, to southward.

**Finally another month had passed and the ship was a month overdue, and we all began to grow slightly indifferent to her arriving, for we had been disappointed day upon day, and the strain had nearly worn us out.**

In this mood Tiaran became stubborn, and to add to the unpleasantness of the situation, one morning he refused to get out of bed, even after he had been called four times. I doused him with a bucket of sea water, and it was cold and fetched him out with a yell.

The work of roofing the house was completed, practically by myself. Now we were beginning to feel cold in the gray weather and the persistent sea winds and the rains; and my shirt was in ribbons from rough labor and trips through the rapidly growing underbrush about the island.

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## **All the Cloth Gone**

I decided that we would make some new clothes, With this idea in mind, I went to the storehouse to get the three bolts of cloth that I knew were there, left from our previous supplies before the steamer had come to take away the workmen. I had felt under no necessity of asking "Santa Claus" Rougier for more cloth because of the knowledge of this surplus. I opened the door and went in.

The bolts of cloth were gone. I hunted all over the place, with growing amazement and wonder. Where had they gone to? I searched under the empty cases, and in every conceivable place. Then, running out of the shack I called to the two men, asking them if they knew where the cloth was gone.

Tiaran told me that Mademoiselle Pugeault had taken the bolts away with her when she left in the boat with the two nieces of Rourier, on her way to the "Saint Francois" the night she sailed. He declared that she had carried the bundles down to the boat herself, and that he had watched her, thinking nothing of the matter, for she was entitled to take what she chose, being the housekeeper of the owner of the island.

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## **The Problem of Clothes**

I went away from him and Lucien and sat down on the wharf to ponder the situation. I had one pair of trousers, already worn out and cut off at the knees because the tough thorns of the undergrowth had cut them to ribbons.

I had one shirt on my back and that was in tatters already. I had no shoes. Not a stitch of clothing of any sort other than what I had already on my back.

Lucien and Tiaran had their "G strings" or clouts, and that comprised their entire wardrobe. December was beginning, and although of course the weather would not become really very low of temperature down here close to the Equator, nevertheless the weeks of rain and cold wind and storm ahead, with no rescue in prospect, made the outlook anything but promising.

Heartily I cursed Pugeault and her selfishness and the ship owner and the whole miserable crew of them. from the 'Frisco office all the way down to the captain, who had run my ship on the reef and had brought all this to pass.

There was nothing to do however, but make the best of it. The two natives tried to make coverings of sail cloth to cut off the wind and rain: but the stuff was coarse and heavy, and they gave it over after stabbing their fingers with needles and breaking two or three.

My wet clothing and the chill of the wind gave me neuralgia, and there were two or three days early in December when I was at a very low ebb; but the desperate nature of our condition there on the island set my mind to working as to some means of escape.

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### **Another Hope Gone**

I could not wait for a ship. It might never come. I felt that it would never come. And, as I was convalescing from my attack of sickness and my weakness again, the sight of the black boat on the edge of the Lagoon gave me an idea.

**I would go to Fanning Island in the black boat. It was 135 or 140 miles, to be sure, but that did not matter. I would be picked up, perhaps. I grew excited at the prospect and even joyful, and I went out to talk it over with Tiaran and Lucien.**

But before I had reached them a sudden qualm overtook me, I could not take provisions away from the two men. The food was now running quite low. Neither could I stock the boat with cocoanuts. And the black boat was but half the size of the ship's boat in which Capt Jones had nearly met with his death on a similar trip. The black boat would capsize in the most ordinary deep sea windstorm.

So I returned to my room, discouraged, probably the more so because the hope that had been born had met with death so abruptly.

In mid-December the weather cleared again and the sun came out like a torch. My shirt was gone entirely now, and I discarded my trousers in order to save them that. I might have something left in case a ship did really come after all.

I was as naked as a savage, and my arms and neck and upper body were already burnt to a dusky brown. Thus reduced as low as the simplest barbarian, I wandered about Christmas Island, turning my hand now to a task here and now to one there and losing count of the endless days, except at night, when reality would return sharply with my entries into the diary of the company at London house.

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### **In Battle With the Wilderness**

My rambles about the plantations nearly broke my heart, but they resulted in one thing that spelled salvation for weeks — a more reasonable plan of work, I saw my nurseries, into which I had put so much care and effort, and which I had toiled over for more than a year with my workmen, fill up with weeds and vines and creepers. The shacks fell in from lack of care and the heavy winds and rain.

The cocoanut grove which I had set an few months before, my mind filled with the dreams of new plantations, were almost lost to sight beneath the luxurious and rapidly growing undergrowth of the wilds.

The sight of all this drove me nearly distracted, but eventually it roused my instinct to battle. I persuaded Lucien and Tiaran, who by this time had grown somewhat sick of doing nothing, to lend me a hand.

**Thus began our battle with the wilderness, which was to wax into a very deadly struggle, with victory going, gradually, to the enemy.**

We weeded out the Lagoon road. spending days at it, but while we were doing this, London Plantation grew into a small jungle.

We returned to London station, but, by the time we had cleaned this up again, the Motu Manu Plantations and houses were hedged almost out of sight.

We caved up Erie Plantation early in the struggle and soon we gave over the fight at Asia Plantation, and finally the end came, and we were obliged to abandon our efforts at Motu Manu.

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### **Skeletons of Boats**

Then I came, one night, to my last cigarette. I stood in the doorway, at London House, and looked at that cigarette for long minutes and wished that it could be planted and grown. I laughed at myself for my foolishness, and put the cigarette away, to smoke at some later day when I should be less able to withstand the temptation.

**That cigarette became the leading character in a drama. Each day I would take it out and look at it and put it away again, regretfully. Finally it became so dried and soft with much handling that I could not let it go any longer, and I lighted it, smoking it slowly, luxuriously, until the shortness of the stub burnt my lips.**

I went on a tour of exploration all over the Island, to fill in my time, after I had wearied of the eternal fight with the weeds. I walked eastward, and down the far outside coast, past remnants of innumerable wrecks.

I found an old windlass and donkey engine, half buried in the sand and crusted with rust, and the skeletons of boats, rotten old hulks, gaunt and barnacled, close on the shore reefs, and lumber strewn for miles.

There Was one place where I came upon a great sheet of corroded copper sheathing and some odd lengths of cable, and an old anchor, where some ship had made a fight for her life only to lose in the end.

At another place I found huts thrown together out of rocks and weatherbeaten lumber from the shore.

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### **Four Lonely Graves**

And near the half way mark down the coast, behind some coral and strewn sand, cut off from the sea by a scraggly clump of bushes, I came upon four graves in a row, very old graves they were. Some other mariners had met their fate out here on this ill omened island.

I became very much depressed, thinking of our own condition, and wondering which of us would die the first, and whether any man in the future would come upon our graves as I had come upon these four mute moments to heartbreak.

I discovered again the wreck of the Aeon, which went ashore in 1911, on the great reef southward of the base of Joe's Hill, the tallest hill on the island. Here again I discovered the quarters of the survivors, the wells that they had dug, und even the cook house. Here there was plenty of good

lumber, quite new, piled up by the sea, in tangles of weed and sand almost a dozen feet high along the beach.

December went swiftly, and I decided to visit Paris house to see how conditions were there. We fought our way out over the lagoon, finally managing to make a landing in safety after nearly five hours.

We found the place as I had expected. It was well run to weeds. The heavy surf, which seemed to be more destructive at Paris Point than over at London station, had wrought havoc with the landing.

The house itself was in good condition inside, but when I visited the boathouse I found that the high tides had carried off to sea the only boat kept there. The walks all about the place were overgrown with Kurima weed, and, after hunting about for some time, I discovered the cocoanuts planted by Alice and Berthe.

Five of them had sprouted and were growing nicely, and true to my promise, I weeded them out and fenced them off from the depredations of the hermit crabs.

The half-dozen hens that were kept at Paris house and had never been known to lay an egg had become wild, and took to the wilderness on our approach.

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### **Three Days Delirious**

That night a storm burst and the heaviest surf I had ever seen at Christmas Island deluged the whole Southern Point. Cooke's Island was not visible in the flying spume at times and when I had returned to London House the entire lower arm of the island was obscured from sight by the storm.

**In the early part of January the stove broke down and we were reduced to fires outside under shelter of old bits of sheet iron, to cook our Food.**

I missed the stove greatly, for now there was no warmth inside of London Station except when the weather cleared. The biting sea wind became deadly cold and every night and nearly every day the torrential rains fell. There were 2380 points of rain on the London side that month, according to my records.

Despite all this, and the misery occasioned by the lack of clothing, I kept at work, fighting the encroachments of the wilderness beyond the station. All of my efforts now were confined in keeping back the brush line at London and Paris. I gave over the remainder of the island, with the exception of the Lagoon road, as an impossible task.

One night, early in the month, I fell ill again, I was awakened after midnight by severe pains in the stomach and lower abdomen. Vomiting and cramps followed, and I fell into a desperate fever, for which the two men could not help me.

During the three days that followed I lay almost delirious-with the pain, and with my head splitting, I wished for death, and expected that I would die. My hope was all gone.

Yet, on the fourth day I felt immeasurably better and rose and hauled the sailboat out of the waters of the lagoon, tying a rope on the automobile to help me, for I was too weak to do it alone and the two men refused to stir.

## **Library of Two Volumes**

The rain poured down. Convinced that if I did not work I might fall again into the dreadful sickness. I toiled calking and painting the black boat under a thatch of palm leaves.

It seemed that the rain would never cease. Days upon days it rained. The lightning ripped and tore across the sky above us. When I finally went on a tour of the plantations again on the 10th of January, I discovered that the road had been flooded nearly three feet deep in places and that parts of Asia plantation were entirely under water from the deluge.

There were hundreds, thousands of sprouting nuts under the trees in the groves, and I tried to plant some of them, but gave over when I had set out 50 for the task was useless.

I went over to Paris again where I stayed a week alone, clearing away the weeds and oiling the floors of the owner's house to keep out the rot. Then I discovered the first trace of the rats. They had attacked the bindings of the French books in "Santa Claus" Rougier's library and the mattresses.

That library was a ghastly mockery for it was of no use to me. I would have given a good deal to have had something to read, but my entire library on Christmas Island consisted of a book on cocconut cultivation which I had read for the 20th time and knew almost by heart, and an old magazine, with the covers gone and the first pages missing. I kept a pencil check on the margin of this. I read it 11 times.

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## **Civil War Brewing**

Now something new happened, lending considerable diversion to my hours. A feud broke out between Tiaran and Lucien, and for days upon end I watched their hatred develop toward one another.

They were reduced to a plane of elemental savagery, and the bitter growth of their animosity, day after day, week after week, was a curious study in emotions and primal rages.

I do not know to this day what the cause was. But by February they were sullen and snarled at one another like animals, when occasion arose. Soon they avoided one another's company entirely and never spoke.

Tiaran was plainly dropping into a state of mind that must have been similar to that of his cannibal forbears; and as the grim drama developed, I found myself wondering which one would kill the other.

**This thrilling story of a modern Crusoe from New England will be continued in next Sunday's Globe.**