

Tied up at Mackinac Island

by Louis Arundel

“All aboard!”

It was Nick who shouted this aloud on the following morning. They had arisen at dawn, and prepared a hasty breakfast. Josh had looked out for this on the preceding evening, for he had cooked a pot of grits, which being sliced while cold was fried in butter after being dipped in egg. Only several fryingpans were needed for the job, on account of the extreme fondness Nick had for that particular dish. But long ago his comrades had learned to view such an assertion on the part of the fat boy with suspicion; because it was discovered that the present treat was *always* the one Buster adored most.

The waves still seemed larger than might prove comfortable, but there was a fair chance of their going down later on in the day. Besides, George was gaining more confidence in his narrow boat, as he came to know it better; and he possessed something of a reckless spirit in addition.

“Ain’t this just glorious!” exclaimed Nick, when they had gotten fully started, and passing beyond the protecting point, felt the full force of the waves.

Not a voice was raised in dissent; even Josh, while looking a little anxious, refused to put up a complaint as the *Wireless* ducked and bowed and slid along through the troubled waters like a “drunken duck,” as Nick termed it aside to Herb.

But just as they had anticipated, things improved as the day advanced. The breeze grew lighter; and while it came over many miles of water, the sea was not threatening. Besides, there is such a thing as growing accustomed to such things. What in the beginning might excite apprehension, after a while would be accepted as the natural thing, and even looked upon with indifference.

They kept this up until after the noon hour, and splendid progress was made, so Jack declared. As he had been elected the commodore of the fleet, and kept tab of the charts, they always depended on what he said as being positive.

Finding a good opportunity to get ashore about this time the boys accepted it by a unanimous vote. So many hours aboard small boats gives one a cramp, and under such conditions a chance to stretch is always acceptable.

Their stay was not long, for all of them were anxious to reach the beautiful island known as Mackinac by evening. So once more the fleet put out, and in a clump bucked into the northwest breeze and the sea.

They were now heading due northwest, and about three in the afternoon George declared he could see land dead ahead which he believed must be Bois Blanc Island.

“I reckon now you’re just about right,” said Jack, after he had consulted his map, and then in turn peeped through his marine glasses. “For the way we head, there couldn’t be any other land straight on. If that’s so, fellows, we’ll raise the hilly island just beyond pretty soon.”

Before four they could get a sight of what seemed a little green gem set in the glittering sea of water.

“That’s Mackinac, all right,” observed George. “I can see white dots among the green, that stand for the houses. We’re going to get there today, fellows. Told you so, Buster. Me for a juicy steak tonight then.”

“Oh! don’t mention it, please,” gasped Nick. “You make my mouth fairly water. And if our boss cook would only suggest fried onions along with it, my cup of joy would be running over.”

“Sure,” called out Josh, “if you promise to peel the tear-getters. We need such a heap to satisfy that enormous appetite of yours, not to mention some others I know, that I refuse to undertake the job.”

“Oh! all right; count on me!” cried Nick, looking around as though anxious to begin work at once, a proceeding that George vetoed on the spot.

“I need my eyes to see how to steer, thank you, Buster,” he declared. “You just hold in your horses. Plenty of time. Besides, most of the onions are aboard the *Comfort* along with Josh.”

An hour later they were approaching the magic isle that has won a fame all its own as a picture of beauty seldom equalled, and never excelled—green with its grass and foliage, and with many snow white cottages and hotels showing through this dark background.

“Did you ever see anything like it?” asked Jack, as the three boats sped onward.

“Never,” replied several of the others.

“I’m glad we’ll soon be there!” declared Nick; but everybody knew without asking, that he was thinking about that beefsteak and onions, rather than the joy of reaching such a pretty shore.

“Look at the old blockhouse up on the hill!” remarked Herb.

“Yes, I’ve been reading up on this place, and history tells about some lively times around here during the War of 1812. Seems the British thought Mackinac a good place to have possession of. They sent out an expedition, and came ashore in the night, surprising the little American garrison.”

“That was tough,” grunted Josh. “Like to hear things the other way. Thought Americans never got taken by surprise.”

“Oh! well,” laughed Jack; “you want to read history again, my boy. But I notice a good many steamers around. I reckon most of those bound through to Chicago stop here, as well as the Lake Superior ones. There’s a boat coming in full of people. The *Islander* she’s called. That must be the boat going over to the Snow Islands every day. There’s another back of her, perhaps coming down from the Soo. Seems quite a lively place, fellows.”

“You bet it is. We must take a run around the island tomorrow, before going on. Never do to pass this by, as we may not be here again in a hurry,” Herb remarked.

Approaching the shore they began to look out a suitable place where the small boats might be

tied up for the time they expected to remain. This was not easy to find, since they had to take care and not get in the way of any large craft that might be going out.

After all it was Nick who discovered the opening. Josh declared that the fat boy's vision was sharpened by the clamorous demands of his appetite; but Nick, as usual, paid little attention to such slurs.

"Who's going ashore to find a butcher shop?" he demanded, as they began to draw close in to the shore, and get ready to tie up.

"I appoint you a committee of one to secure the steak," said Jack, solemnly; "and remember, don't let it be a bit over one inch thick, and weigh more than five pounds."

"Good gracious! that wouldn't be even a pound apiece!" expostulated Nick.

"All right! we expect to have some other things along with it, remember," Jack continued. "You know the penalty of disobedience to orders, Buster?"

"Deprived of food allowance for twenty-four hours!" broke in Josh.

Nick only groaned; and presently finding a chance to creep ashore he hurried off on his delightful errand. For when there was anything connected with meals to be done, Nick was as spry as anybody in camp.

It was some little time before he showed up again.

"Wow! look at what's coming, would you?" shouted Josh, suddenly.

Of course it was Nick, laden with various packages, and grinning amiably.

"It's all right, Jack," he announced as he came ambling along. "It doesn't weigh a fraction over five pounds. Oh! I was mighty particular about that, I tell you. Had him cut off pieces of the tail till it got down to an even thing."

"Here, somebody help him, or he'll take a header into the brink, and lose half of what he's hugging so tight!" called Herb, and Jimmie started to obey.

"But what's in all these other packages?" asked Jack, pretending to frown.

"Why, onions, just onions and then more onions!" came the bland reply; at which the others burst out into a roar, causing Nick to look at them in pity. "You fellows can laugh all you please," he said in lofty scorn; "it don't feaze me one little bit. I was afraid we might fall short, and so I bought a half peck at the butcher's. Then, while I was coming along, I saw some white ones, and couldn't resist the temptation to get a couple of quarts. They go fine raw when you feel just nippy, you see, along with a piece of pilot bread."

"But there's still another package; how about that, Buster?" asked George.

"Why," answered the other, slowly; "after I started off with the white ones would you believe it

I discovered a lot of those fine big Spanish onions in a confectioner's store. I just couldn't resist the temptation to get half a dollar's worth. Mightn't have the chance again, you know, fellows. It's my treat this time."

"Thank goodness! we've really got enough of something to satisfy Pudding for once!" cried Josh, as he received the various packages.

"Look at the steak, Josh," said the provider, proudly. "Guess I ought to know a good thing in that line. It's streaked with fat, and is bound to just melt away in your mouth."

Josh admitted that it did look tempting; and later on the entire party agreed that Nick had profited by his hobby.

When starting upon this extended trip the motor boat boys had agreed that on no account would they sleep under the roof of a house, unless in case of sickness. So even at Mackinac they must keep to their boats.

Several of them went ashore to see what the place looked like under the electric lights, returning an hour or so later, ready for bed. Those left behind had attended to all necessary arrangements, so that little time was lost.

As customary, the watches were made up of two, on different boats, and so selected that Nick would be paired with Jack himself; because the commodore was suspicious of Buster's ability to remain awake with any one else as his sentry mate.

It happened that while these two were taking the first turn, and Jack every once in a while would poke Buster with a setting pole he kept handy, something not down on the bills came to pass. The first thing that Jack knew about it was when Nick gave vent to a shrill screech, and scrambled to his knees, holding on to some struggling object that seemed to scratch and snarl and act in a way that was altogether mysterious. And of course the whole six boys were immediately awake, sitting up to ask all sorts of questions.

Source:

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