



Dick Sands Or, The Boy Captain (Original Hetzel Illustrations): A Captain at Fifteen (Voyages Extraordinaire Book 17)

Jules Verne

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In 1878 appeared Dick Sands, the epic of the slave trade. This picture of the wilds of Africa, its adventures and its dangers, the savage hunting both of beasts and men, has always been a favorite among Verne's readers.

It contains no marvels, no inventions, but merely, amid stirring scenes and actions seeks to convey two truthful impressions. One is the traveler's teaching the geographical information, the picture of Africa as explorers, botanists, and zoologists have found it. The other is the moral lesson of the awful curse of slavery, its brutalizing, horrible influence upon all who come in touch with it, and the absolutely devastating effect it has had upon Africa itself.

Dick Sand is a fifteen-year-old boy serving on the schooner "Pilgrim" as a sailor. The crew are whale hunters that voyage every year down to New Zealand. After an unsuccessful season of hunting, as they plan to return the wife of the owner of the hunting firm, Mrs Weldon, her five-year-old son Jack Weldon and her cousin, Bénédicte, an entomologist ask for a return passage to San Francisco. Several days into the journey they save five shipwrecked passengers from another ship and a dog who was with them at the time (Tom, Actéon, Austin, Bat, Nan, Hercule and Dingo (the dog)). Towards the end of their passage, they notice a whale and the crew, hoping for some profit after a bad season, decide to hunt it. Captain Hull reluctantly leaves Dick responsible for the ship. But the hunt goes awry and all the crew members are killed. Now Dick is left in charge of the ship with no experienced sailors to help him. He tries to teach the five survivors of the shipwreck and tries to reach the coast of South America, but Negoro, the ship's cook manages to trick them, breaking one of their compasses and their speed measuring device and eventually, after making sure the rest were lost, leads them to equatorial Africa.

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