

**CLASSICS TO GO**



**CAPTAIN  
SALT IN OZ**

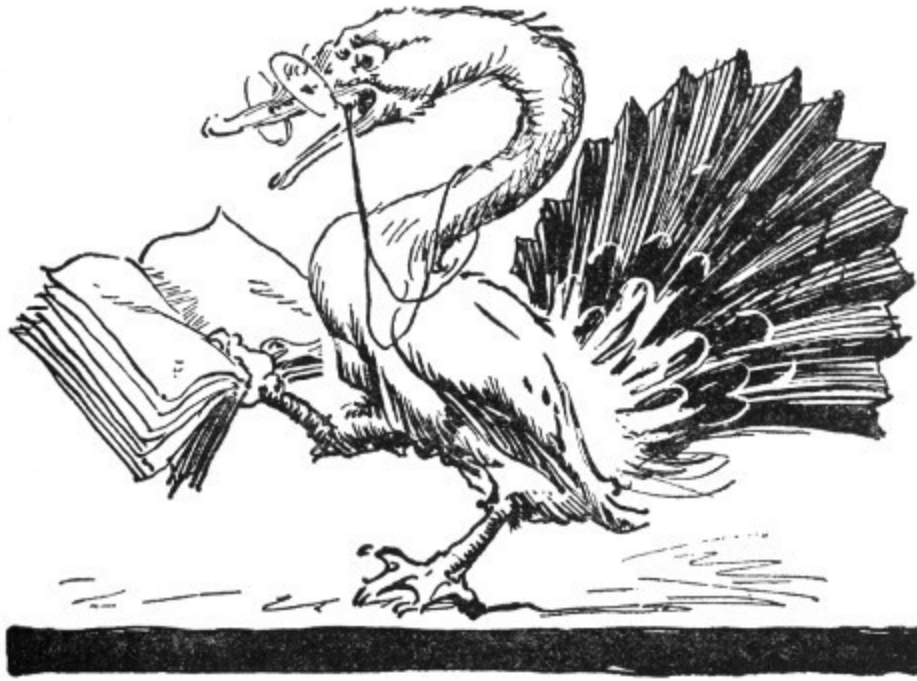
**RUTH PLUMLY THOMPSON**

# **Captain Salt in Oz**

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# CHAPTER 1

## Sail Ho!

Eight miles east of Pingaree lies the eight-sided island of King Ato the Eighth. While not so large as Pingaree, the Octagon Isle is nevertheless one of the tidiest and most pleasing of the sea realms that dot the great green rolling expanses of the Nonestic Ocean. And Ato himself is as pleasing as his island, enormously fat and jolly with a kind word for everyone.

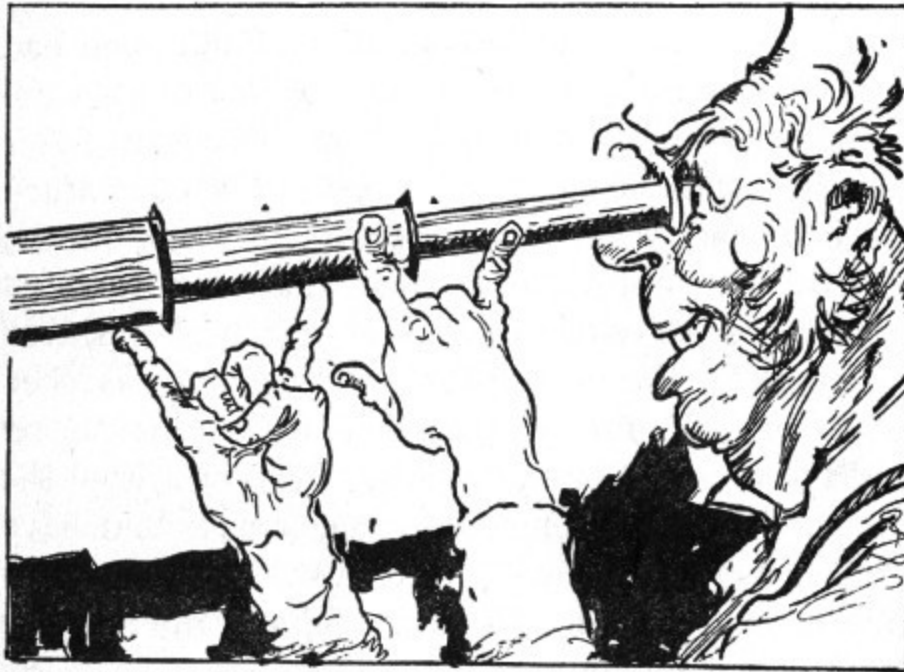
In his eight-sided castle, he has every modern convenience and comfort and some of which even an up-to-date country like our own cannot boast. For instance, take Roger, his Royal Read Bird. Roger, besides knowing eight languages, can read aloud for hours at a time without growing hoarse or weary. So Ato never has to strain his eyes poring over his eight hundred huge volumes of adventure and history, nor his arms holding a newspaper or court document, nor his jaw pronouncing the names of kings and countries in Ev and Oz and other curious places on the mainland west of his own island. And Roger is as handsome as he is handy, his head and bill rather like a duck's, his body shaped and colored like a parrot, but much larger, while his tail opens out into an enormous fan. This is extremely fortunate, for the Octagon Isle is semi-tropical in climate, and on warm sultry days, Roger not only reads to his Majesty, but fans him as well. All in all, Ato's life is decidedly luxurious and lazy.

Sixentwo, Chief Chancellor of the realm, and Four'nfour, its treasurer, attend to all the business of governing, so that Ato and Roger have little to do but enjoy themselves. The

Octagon Islanders, one hundred and eighty in number, are a sober and industrious lot, rarely giving any trouble.

Once, it is true, they sailed off and deserted the King entirely, but Ato, with Peter, a Philadelphia boy, and Samuel Salt, a pirate, who landed on the Island at just the right moment, immediately set out after them, using the pirate's stout ship the *Crescent Moon*, for the purpose.

By a strange coincidence, Samuel Salt's men had also mutinied and sailed away, so that there were two sets of deserters to seek out and discover. After a dangerous and lively voyage, the *Crescent Moon* reached the rocky shores of Menankypoo on the Mainland. Here they learned that the Octagon Islanders and Samuel Salt's men had been enslaved by Ruggedo, the former Gnome King, and marched off to conquer the Emerald City of Oz. How Peter and the Pirate, Ato and a poetical Pig outwitted the Gnome King is a long and other story. You have probably read it yourself. But ever since their hair-raising experiences with Ruggedo, and their rescue by Ato, the Octagon Islanders have been perfectly satisfied with their own ruler and country. In fact, they were so docile and devoted, so fearfully anxious to please, Ato often wished they would revolt or sass him a little just to relieve the monotony and make life more interesting.



To tell the truth, after serving as cook, mate and able-bodied seaman on the *Crescent Moon*, Ato found it quite boring to settle down to a humdrum life of a monarch ashore. Roger, too, missed the gay and carefree life he had led as a pirate and could not even pretend an interest in the books of adventure he still dutifully read to his Master. He and Ato now spent most of their time on the edge of the Island—the King in a comfortable hammock swung between two palm trees, Roger on a tall golden perch set close beside him. Whenever the Read Bird paused to yawn or turn a page, Ato would pull himself up to a sitting position, raise the telescope he always had with him and gaze long and wistfully out to sea. Many ships passed Ato's Island, but never a one in the least resembling the splendid three-masted fast sailing ship belonging to the Pirate.

"You'll give yourself a fine squint there," warned Roger one morning, as Ato for about the hundredth time raised his spy glass. "And what is the use of it, pray?" inquired Roger grumpily, ruffling the pages of the Book of Barons. "Samuel

Salt has probably forgotten all about us and gone off by himself on a voyage of discovery."

"No! No! Sammy wouldn't do that," said the King, shaking his head positively. "He promised to stop by for us on the very first voyage he made as Royal Discoverer of Oz."

"Ho, one of those seafaring promises!" muttered Roger. "A pirate's promise. Humph! His new honors have gone to his head. Quite a jump from pirating to exploring. I'll wager a wing he's gone back to buccaneering and forgotten us altogether!"



"Now, Roger, how can you say that?" Heaving up his huge bulk with great difficulty, Ato looked reproachfully at his Royal Read Bird. "Sammy never cared for pirating in the first place," wheezed the King earnestly, "and he was so soft-hearted about planking the captives and burning the ships, his band sailed off and left him. They only made him Captain because he was clever at navigating, and you know



perfectly well he spent more time looking for flora and fauna than for ships and treasure."

"Ah, then I suppose some wild Flora or Fauna has him in its clutches," observed Roger sarcastically, "and a likely thing that is, seeing the poor Captain weighs but two hundred and twenty pounds and stands six feet in his socks."

"What a tremendous fellow he was," sighed Ato, sinking dreamily back in his hammock and half closing his eyes. "I'll never forget how high and handsome he looked when Queen Ozma asked him to give up buccaneering, and serve her instead as Royal Discoverer and Explorer for Oz! And a fitting reward it was, too, for capturing Ruggedo and saving the Kingdom. Aha, my lad, THAT was a day! And we had our share of glory, too! Remember how they cheered us in the Emerald City of Oz?"

"Aye, I remember THAT day and a good many other days since," sniffed the Read Bird disagreeably. "Six months from that day Samuel Salt was to sail into our Harbor. Well, King—it's been six times six months, and nary a sail nor a sign of him have we seen."

"That long?" said Ato, blinking unhappily.

"That long and longer. Three years, eleven months, twenty-six days and twelve hours, to be exact!"

"Dear, dear and dear! Then something's happened to him," murmured Ato. "He's either been shipwrecked, captured or enchanted! I'll never believe Sammy would forget us or break his promise. Never!"

"Well, whatever you believe, the results are the same." Flapping open his book, Roger prepared to go on with his reading. "And depend upon it," he insisted stubbornly, "we'll never see Samuel Salt again, so you may as well put up your telescope and put your mind on something else for a change. Maybe it's your cooking that's keeping him away,"

finished the Read Bird, who felt cross and fractious and contrary as a goat.

"My cooking?" roared Ato, roused to honest anger at last. "I've a notion to have you plucked and roasted for that. My cooking, indeed! Show me the fellow who can beat up an omelette, a cake, a batch of biscuits, faster than I; who can brown a fowl, broil a steak or toss out a pan of fried potatoes to compare with mine. I—I, why, I'm surprised at you, Roger!"

Roger, ruffling his feathers uncomfortably, was rather surprised at himself, for the King was speaking the exact truth; a more skillful man with a skillet it would be impossible to find in any kingdom. Ever since his voyage on the *Crescent Moon*, cooking had been Ato's chief pleasure and pastime. The castle chef, though he heartily disapproved of a King in the kitchen, could do nothing to discourage him, so finally stood by in grudging envy and admiration as Ato turned out his delectable puddings, pies, roasts and sauces.



Muttering with hurt pride and indignation, his Majesty continued to frown at the Read Bird, and realizing he had gone too far, Roger started to read as fast as he could from the Book of Barons. As he read on, he could see the King growing calmer and finally, pausing to turn a page, he let his gaze rove idly over the harbor.

"Anchors and animal crackers! What was that?" Stretching up his neck, Roger took another look, then, flinging the Book of Barons high into the air, he spread his wings and started out to sea.

Soothed by the droning voice of the Read Bird, Ato had closed his eyes and the first warning he had of Roger's departure was a terrific thump as the Book of Barons landed on his stomach. Leaping out of the hammock as if he had been shot, the outraged Monarch looked furiously around for his Read Bird. This really was too much. Not satisfied with insulting him, Roger must now be bombarding him with books, cocoanuts and what not.

Shading his eyes with his hand, Ato glared up and down the beach and finally out over the rippling blue ocean. At what he saw there, the King forgot his anger as completely as Roger had forgotten his manners. For, swinging jauntily into the Octagon Harbor was the *Crescent Moon* herself! No mistaking the high-prowed, deep-waisted, powerful craft of the Pirate. But a new and gayer pennant fluttered from the mizzenmast today. Instead of the skull and bones, Samuel was flying the green and white banner of Oz, as befitted the Royal Discoverer and Explorer of the most famous Fairyland in History.



"He's here! He's come!" shouted Ato, running wildly up and down. "Samuel! SAM-U-EL!" In his delight and excitement the King forgot the Royal dock and began wading out into the bay. Peering around his wheel, Sammy saw him coming and broke into a loud cheerful greeting.

"Hi, King! Ho, King! How are you, you son of a Lubber! Wait till I ease her in and I'll be ashore quicker than quick." Roger had already reached the *Crescent Moon* and, perched on the Captain's shoulder, was chattering away at such a rate Samuel could hardly keep his mind on his steering. But he was an old hand at such matters, and before Ato had half recovered from the shock of seeing him, the shining three-masted vessel was made fast, and its Master striding exuberantly up the wet planks of the royal dock.

"Ahoy! Ahoy!" he boomed boisterously. "What a day for a voyage! Is it really my old cook and shipmate?"

"None other!" puffed Ato, seizing both of the former pirate's hands. "But what have you done to yourself, Sam-u-el? Where's your sash and scimiter? And what's that on your

head, may I ask? You don't look natural or seaman-like at all."

"Oh, don't mind these," grinned the Pirate, touching his three-cornered hat and satin coat apologetically. "These are my shore togs for impressing the natives. Can't look like pirates when we go ashore this voyage, Mates. We're explorers and fine gentlemen now, and when we set the flag of Oz on lofty mountains and rocky isles, when we bring savage tribes and strange races under the beneficent rule of Ozma of Oz, we must look like Conquerors. Eh, my lads?"



"Yes—I sup-pose—so!" puffed the King, skipping clumsily to keep up with the long strides of Captain Salt. "But I'm sorry this is going to be a dressy affair, Sammy. How'm I to cook in a cocked hat and lace collar and swab down the deck in velvet pants?"

"Ho, ho! You'll not have to," exploded the Pirate, giving the tail feathers of the Read Bird a sly tweak. "On shipboard we'll dress as we please, for the sea is MY country and free as the wind and sun."

"Well, well, I'm glad to hear you say that. Have you still got my old pirate suit and blunderbuss aboard?" inquired the King anxiously.

"Certain for sure, and a couple of new ones, and WAIT till you see your galley all fitted out with copper pots, and provisions enough below to carry us anywhere and back. Wait till you cast your eyes on 'em, Lubber!"

"Don't you call ME a Lubber!" chuckled Ato, giving Samuel a hearty poke in the ribs. "I'm as able-bodied a seaman as you, Sammy, and you know it."

"SIR Samuel, if you please!" roared the former Pirate, striking himself a great blow on the chest with his clenched fist. "Sir Samuel Salt, Explorer and Discoverer Extraordinary to the Crown of Oz."

"So—oooh! You've been knighted?" breathed Roger, peering round into the Captain's face,

"Ho pass the salt and ring the bell  
And bend the knee to Sir Sam-u-el!"

"Sir Samuel Salt! Well, I'll be peppered!" gasped Ato, sinking down on the lower step of the palace which they had reached by this time. "Sir Samuel!"



"Yes, SIR!" boasted the Pirate, rubbing his hands together, "but come on, step lively, boys; how long'll it take you to pack up and heave your dunnage aboard? Mustn't keep a Knight of Oz waiting, you know!"

"Keep *you* waiting?" Suddenly and determinedly, Ato rose to his feet and shook his finger under Sammy's nose. "Keep **YOU** waiting? Why, we've been ready and waiting for this voyage three years, eleven months, twenty-six days and twelve hours. Where've you been, you great lazy son of a sea-robber?"

"Four years?" choked the Pirate, falling back in real consternation and dismay. "Never! It's never been four years, Mates. Why, I've scarcely had time to sort out the shells and specimens we picked up on the last voyage, and to fit out the *Crescent Moon* for the next."

"Where have you been?" repeated Ato, wagging his finger sternly.

"Why, home on Elbow Island, of course. Where else should I have been?" muttered Samuel, looking distinctly worried and crestfallen.

"Then have you no clocks or calendars in your cave?" demanded the King accusingly. "And what would the *Crescent Moon* be needing? I thought she was about perfect as she was."

"Ah, but wait till you see her now!" exclaimed Samuel, cheering up immediately at mention of his ship. "The *Crescent Moon*, besides a new coat of paint, has self-hoisting sails and a mechanical steering control in case we wish to take it easy occasionally. The Red Jinn paid me a visit and presented us with these and several other magical contrivances and improvements. I'm minded to make this voyage with no crew but ourselves. It's cozier so, don't you think?"

"Yes, but am I still on bird watch and lookout duty?" demanded Roger jealously.

"Aye, aye!" Samuel Salt assured him heartily.

"I suppose the Red Jinn has supplied you with a mechanical cook in my place as well as a mechanical steering wheel," murmured Ato, tugging uneasily at the cord round his waist.

"In your place!" thundered the Pirate. "Why, shiver my timbers, Mate! Only over my prone and prostrate body shall another man enter my galley to shuffle my rations, sugar my duff or salt my prog!"

"Hooray, then let's get going!" squealed Roger, bouncing up and down on Sammy's shoulder. "I was only saying this very morning that you'd never forget your old friends and shipmates or go on a voyage without us!"

"Huh! So THAT'S what you were saying!" grunted Ato, looking fixedly at the Read Bird. "Well, well, let it go. Come



along then!"

"Yes, yes, and hurry," screamed Roger, spreading his wings to fly on ahead.

"Sixentwo! Sevenanone! Where are you?" panted the King, plunging up the steps after Roger two at a time. "Where is everybody? Pack a bag, a chest, a couple of trunks. I'm going on a voyage of discovery!"

"And don't forget the cook book!" bawled Samuel Salt, bounding exuberantly after the King.



## CHAPTER 2

### Anchors Aweigh!

With the help of eighteen serving men, eight courtiers, Sixentwo, Sevenanone, and Samuel Salt, who was not above carrying a sea chest or hamper, Ato began stowing his belongings on the *Crescent Moon*. There was little court apparel or finery in the King's boxes. Most of it consisted of bottles of flavoring extract, spiced sauces, cook books, minced meats, fruits in jars for pies, numerous frying pans, egg beaters, and rolling pins.

"Are we gypsies, pan handlers, peddlers or what?" panted Samuel Salt as he dumped the last load breathlessly on the main deck. "Goosewing my topsails, Mate, many's the fish we cleaned with a jackknife, and potato we pared with a dagger on the last voyage. Mean to say an explorer needs to use all these weapons on his pork and beans?"

Checking off a list as his stuff was placed in the galley, Ato nodded determinedly, then winking good-humoredly at the perspiring Captain, ducked into the cabin to don his old sea clothes. Samuel was not long following suit and soon, in short red pants, open shirts and carelessly tied head kerchiefs, the two went below to inspect the stores Samuel had laid in for the voyage. Roger, having nothing to bring aboard but a few books and a bottle of feather oil, was already perched in the crosstrees of the fore topgallant mast looking longingly toward the east and waiting impatiently for the ship to get under way. But the booming voice of the Pirate soon drew him to the lower deck and from there he swooped down an open hatchway to the hold.

This huge space, usually reserved by the pirates for captives and treasure, had been neatly divided into two sections. In one were the tinned, dried and salted meats, the groceries, vegetables and extra supplies of rope, tar and sail. In the other section there were numerous shelves, many iron cages, aquariums and sea chests.



"For any strange animals or wild natives we may encounter and wish to bring home with us," explained Samuel Salt as Roger looked curiously at the cages. "In those chests are the flags of Oz we shall plant here, there and everywhere as we sail onward!"

"And to think a new and mighty Empire may grow from this flag planting," mused Ato, opening one of the sea chests and thoughtfully fingering one of Ozma's green and white silken banners. "But surely you don't expect to plant all these, Samuel?"

"Why not?" demanded the Royal Discoverer of Oz with a wave of the scimiter he had resumed with his old pirate

pants. "The sea is broad and wide and no one's to tell us when we may start or sail home again. But look, Ato, my lad—these will interest you." Turning from the chests, Samuel pointed to a stack of long poles lashed to the side of the ship with leather thongs. "Stilts!" grinned the Pirate as Roger and Ato stared at them in complete mystification. "Fine for keeping the shins dry when we wade ashore and don't feel like lowering the jolly boat. All my own idea." Samuel cleared his throat with pardonable pride. "Of course, it takes a bit of practice, but we'll try 'em on the first island we come to. Eh, boys?"

"Well, thank my lucky stars for wings!" breathed Roger after a long disapproving look at Samuel's stilts. "Two steps and you'll smash yourself to a jellyfish, Ato. Stick to the boats, men. That's MY advice!"

"Too bad he has no confidence in us!" roared Samuel, giving Ato a resounding slap on the back. "Just wait, my saucy bird, and we'll show you how stiling is done. And now, gaze upon this corner I've set aside for my specimens; for rare marine growths, for seaweed, for curious mollusks and other crustacean denizens of the darkest deep."

Samuel coughed apologetically as he always did when he mentioned his collecting mania, and Roger and Ato, exchanging an amused grin, swung about to examine the long shelves with iron boxes clamped down to prevent them from shifting with the motion of the vessel, huge aquariums fitted into brass holders, and large trays bedded with dried moss and sand for Samuel's collection of shells.

"You might even bring home a mermaid in this," murmured Ato, touching the side of an enormous aquarium.

"No women!" snapped Samuel Salt, growing red in the face, for he did not like to be teased about his specimen