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Author: Baron Walter Runciman Runciman

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FLOUNDERING OF THE "SILVERSPRAY."

THE SHELLBACK'S PROGRESS

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

By

WALTER RUNCIMAN, *Sen.*



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DEDICATION

TO WALTER TOWNEND, ESQ.

"MY DEAR TOWNEND,—Perhaps no two men have ever been bound together with ties of closer or more loyal friendship than you and myself. Many years have elapsed since our unbroken comradeship was formed in the old historic building in Cornhill. You have many claims to friendship and to confidence, and perhaps you can hardly realize what pleasure it gives me to remember that during our intercourse of so many years, your sincerity, directness and single-mindedness could always be depended upon. Your joyful relish of a tale of human interest, whether as a listener or a narrator, is always contagious. Your indignation and scorn for unmanly and dishonourable conduct, and your quick appreciation of whatever is generous and true; this, and my high regard for your own personal worth, have given me the wish to inscribe this volume of sea stories to you.

"Ever yours sincerely,

"WALTER RUNCIMAN."

August, 1904

PREFACE

These stories are drawn from the reality of things, and perhaps I may as well say that they have been written during short intervals snatched from a busy and absorbing commercial life. I have tried to portray the men as they were—brave, dauntless, rugged, uncouth, illiterate, simple-minded, kind-hearted, and, at times, unmercifully savage. And yet there shone through all these conflictingly peculiar eccentricities a humorous kind of religion which belonged exclusively to themselves, but which gave their characteristics a touch of sublimity. We have travelled far since those days of aboriginal stupidity and sordid blood-sucking. The contrast between the comforts and conditions of life at sea then and now cannot be imagined. We may only talk of it; we can never truly estimate the change. I do not draw attention to the comparison because I think the sailor has got any more than he is entitled to. I refer to it in order that he may recognize a desire on the part of modern shipowners and the Legislature to give him every possible advantage consistent with the peculiarities of the trade in which he is engaged. One of the most recent advantages suggested in their report by the Mercantile Committee, who sat for, I think, about twelve months taking evidence from shipowners, shipmasters, sailors, and others, is that an amended food scale should be adopted, and that the seaman should have the right of appeal against a bad "discharge" that may be given him. In my opinion the great body of shipowners will endorse that portion of their recommendations. It is to be desired that the seamen will recognize in this a willingness on the part of their employers to deal justly with them, for undoubtedly it was the evidence given by shipowners that influenced the Committee.

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I

THE WILD NORTH SEA

There was a large fleet of sailing brigs, barques and schooners waiting for a favourable wind and spring tides, so that they might be put to sea without running the risk of thumping their keels off on the Bar. The vessels had been loaded for several weeks. Many of them were bound to the Baltic. These were spoken of as the "Spring Fleet." The older and smaller craft were engaged in the coasting trade, and the larger were bound to ports in the southern hemisphere. Each of them carried three or four apprentices; but the southern-going portion did not deem the collier lads "classy" enough to permit of them forming close comradeship. A condescending speaking-acquaintance was the limit of their connection. There was nothing to justify this snobbery, for in point of comparison the average collier lad in seamanship and physical capacity was the equal, and in intelligence by no means inferior to the young gentlemen who regarded the class of vessel they served aboard of as a stamp of their own superiority. They were indeed a species of that terrible creature who apes nobility because he lives in a mansion. Occasionally the collier lads resented the lofty airs of the southern-going gentry, until open hostility ensued and much blood was spilt. But pugilistic encounters were conducted on strictly professional lines, and no ill-will was supposed to exist on the part of the combatants after they were over. That was the rule laid down, and a breach of it brought disgrace on the violator and his coadjutors, who were thereupon ostracised from the party to which they belonged. The necessity for enforcing the penalty rarely occurred, not only because of its severity, but because it involved loss of honour.

A disagreement as to valour and prowess and seamanship had arisen between some sailor lads who belonged to the two different sections. They decided that their differences could only be settled by being fought out on neutral ground. This was solemnly chosen, a ring formed, seconds appointed, and the contest began. In half-an-hour victory was decided in favour of the collier boy, though with all the fulness of sailor generosity his opponent received an ungrudging share of the ovation that was given to the champion. Both, however, showed evidences of rough usage: the only visible difference being that one had two eyes badly damaged while the victor had but one. After it was over they shook hands, swore allegiance to each other, walked back to their respective vessels, had raw beef applied to the eyes that were discoloured, tumbled into their hammocks and fell fast asleep. Meanwhile a general meeting of apprentice lads from all the vessels in port was mustered, so that the

result of the dispute should be publicly proclaimed; and in order that the occasion should be suitably celebrated, it was suggested and approved by loud acclamation that whereas there was every chance of the morrow being a sailing day, when the little port would be emptied of all its shipping, it might be that the parting would represent years, and perchance many of them would never meet on earth again. The latter clause was announced with marked solemnity. The orator proceeded to state that there had been enmities, jealousies, perhaps unworthy statements made about the inferiority of the collier boy, but the question had been settled by a brilliant exhibition of physical science; both sides were well represented, and both had shown that they were worthy champions of the noble art.

"Let me ask you then to call upon them both to join with us in becoming friends, and in having on the last night in port a ripping jollification. I propose," said the peacemaker, "that we have some chanties, and that we start these aboard the vessel I belong to by hoisting the topsail yards up."

The two heroes were roused, and cheerfully joined in what resolved itself into a carnival of reckless mischief. The brains of the whole company were excited, and they revelled in every form of scampishness. The leaders gave orders as to the vessels that were to be visited and have their yards crossed and their rig in other ways disfigured. This being done, the spokesman informed them that they had spent a very jolly night, and after hoisting the *Silverspray's* topsails to the mast head and furling the sails again, they were to disperse quietly and go each to his own ship. The sails were loosened, a chanty man was selected from among the southern-going seamen, and amid a chorus of sweet song the yards were leisurely mast-headed. The music of many voices had attracted a few people to the quay. A shout was raised that the captain of the vessel was coming. The halyards dropped from each one's hand, and a general scramble resembling a panic ensued. Down came the main topsail yard with a run, and broke in halves as soon as the sudden jerk came on the lifts. In almost as little time as it takes to write it, there was none of the revellers to be seen.

After the novelty has worn off, there is never any particular desire to put to sea on the part of youngsters; but on this occasion the anxiety to get out of the harbour was very marked. Many of the vessels got away before the damage done to the *Silverspray's* yard and sail became generally known. The captain did not know that anything of the sort had happened until he came down to take the vessel to sea, and being a commonsense sort of man, instead of joining in the chorus of screaming, as his owner was doing, he adjured him to cease wasting time in declaiming against those who had done the mischief.

"We must set to work," said he, "and have the damage repaired; that is more important than theorising as to who did it."

By the time the repairs were set in full swing, nearly the whole of the culprits had passed over the bar aboard their respective ships into the booming waves of the German Ocean. Many of them were destined never to reach their destination, and many never more to see the paradise that had given them so many ineffable days and nights. Sad hearts were grieving over the sudden parting from those who were loved because they were lovable. They seemed to be musing thoughts of poetry.

The *Silverspray's* repairs were completed in two days, and she and another vessel, that had been detained owing to her pump gear not being ready, were towed out of the harbour in the face of a strong easterly wind and a lowering glass. The portly, ruddy appearance and pronounced lurch or roll of Captain Thomas Arlington left no doubt as to his calling. He spoke with an assumed accent which resembled the amalgamation of several dialects. He was usually called Tom by his intimate friends, but mere acquaintances were not permitted to address him in any such familiar fashion. In his younger days he gained notoriety for having made several voyages to the West Indies, the Brazils and Constantinople, and he was therefore looked upon as a far-sailed and much-learned person. Owners vied with each other in sounding his praises and competing for his services. They looked upon him as a captain of the first rank, both in seamanship and education. There was no question about the former: the latter consisted in his being able to read and write a legible hand, which was a rare accomplishment in those days. He had saved a little money, and was allowed as a special favour to invest to the extent of eight sixty-fourth shares in the vessel he commanded. He never lost an opportunity of making his less fortunate compatriots feel that he was immeasurably their superior. Many of them who commanded the same class of vessel were so impressed with his influence over the owners that they looked upon his friendship as being of some value. Being part owner, his privileges were wide; in fact he was admitted within the owner circle, and contributed to the wisdom thereof in many eccentric ways.

The two little brigs were bound to the Baltic, and the first day out a heavy press of canvas was carried in order to get a good offing, lest the wind and sea should make and catch them tight on a lee shore. After they had been out twenty-four hours they both tacked off Flamborough Head, bearing west twenty miles, and stood to the N.E. The *Silverspray* passed close under the stern of the *Francis Blake*. The captains saluted each other as was the custom. The *Blake's* captain shouted that his vessel was making a lot of water. The other responded: "We are making some too, and we shall have more wind and sea before there is less." This was about ten on a February morning. Their sailing qualities were pretty much on a par, so that they were kept in company all through the day. The wind had shifted from

E.S.E. to S.E., and they headed E.N.E. with about two and a half points leeway, making the true course, after the toss of the sea had been allowed, about N.E. So long as daylight remained no canvas was taken in, though both of them were sometimes plunging their jibbooms under, and their bows almost level with the foremast. Every bit of rigging and running gear was strained to its maximum limit. There was no question of racing or foolhardiness, but a pressing necessity to flog them off a lee shore.

And this reminds me that only six years before, I innocently committed a serious breach of nautical faith for which I was roundly reprimanded by a kindly sailor. It was my first voyage at sea. I had not seen thirteen summers by many months. I heard two sailors who were standing by the lee side of the windlass end conversing about the seriousness of the vessel's position. One said to the other that if the wind did not norther a little more she would be ashore in Filey Bay before four o'clock in the morning. My views on seafaring had undergone a change. I was overcome with delight, and, forgetting the lesson many times given me never to speak until I was spoken to, with unrestrained impetuosity I interjected that I hoped she would be ashore before four o'clock, so that I might get back to my home again. I can never forget the indignation of the two men. They frowned contemptuously on me, called me names that I had never heard before, and swore with a refinement that impressed me with the suspicion that I had said something that was not to be readily forgiven. With childlike simplicity I asked if it was wrong to wish that the vessel should go ashore.

"Wrong? you young devil!" said they. "Would you have us all drowned?"

Needless to say, my desire happily did not come to pass, and I became the object for many a long day of good-humoured chaff which I would have done anything to obviate. The sailors did not seem to recognize any humorous side to their own part in it, and yet they used to roar with laughter at my amazing conclusions, and as my anger increased so did their amusement. A lee shore is always dreaded by seamen, and many a sound ship has been made leaky, and many a spar and sail has been carried away in the effort to keep off. It was precisely this fear that possessed the two captains in question and caused them almost to bury their ships in order to get well out to sea in case the wind should back into the east again.

When darkness came on they lost sight of each other. All night long the *Blake* was plunged into a tremendous sea. The crew were nearly worn out with incessant pumping, and when the dawn whirled into the sky nothing could be seen of her companion. It was thought she must have shortened sail and fallen astern. The hoarse moaning of the wind, and the waves running like conical hillocks, were a sure indication that there was greater turmoil behind them. The square foresail had been hauled up, and the crew were in the act of stowing it when the hurricane burst upon her, and she was held in the grasp of the wind. The sea was flattened, and the wild drift flew before the screaming tempest. The captain called out to the men on the foreyard to "hold on for God's sake," as the vessel lurched over so far that the man on the lee yardarm said that he felt his foot touch the water. With almost superhuman effort the seamen, already worn out with pumping and with lacerated limbs, managed to secure the sail and make their way on deck to renew the fight to keep the vessel afloat. I do not believe the owner belonged to the scoundrel class who sent their ships away with the hope that no more would be heard of them, but I cannot help thinking that he had close affinity to that no less terrible though pious section who wearied heaven with prayer for the safe-keeping of their ships and crews, while they themselves neglected fundamental precautions for their safety. It was the fashion to look upon drowning not only as an incident of the profession, but a natural finish to a sailor's career; and it is no exaggeration to say that many people thought the poor fellow preferred this form of extinction to any other. The owner who squared his conscience by throwing the responsibility of the seaman's safety on to Almighty God did not unduly concern himself as to efficiency or seaworthiness; nor did he assume deep mourning if calamity came in consequence thereof. A few appropriate words of compliment addressed mainly to himself for his care in having the ship, when she sailed, in a state of unimpeachable order, and his constant intercession for divine protection were quite sufficient to exonerate him from in any way contributing either to loss of life or to loss of property. What cant, what insufferable *hypocrisy!* What hideous slaughter was committed in those good old times in God's name and in the name of British humanity! The late Dr Parker, preaching in the City Temple some time ago on the Armenian atrocities, exclaimed amid uproarious applause at the end of a fine peroration, "God damn the Sultan!" And William Watson wrote a fine poem in which he charged England with indifference and spoke of the Sultan as "Abdul the damned." It is considered the prerogative of Englishmen to say strong things about the heads of other Governments if their subject races are, in their opinion, treated cruelly; but we are death on anyone who would interfere or accuse us of injustice or inhumanity. The only difference between the Government of Turkey and the Government of Great Britain was that the one massacres by cutting throats, and the other used to massacre by allowing rotten, ill-equipped, ill-designed vessels to sail under the spotless flag of England and carry to their doom shiploads of the finest seamen in the world. We "God damn the Sultan"; yes; but I have known the time when poor sailors might with equal justice have "God damned" the Government of St Stephen's who would not listen to their woes. Poor fellows! Had Dr Parker and other public men dared to "God damn" their own countrymen for carrying on a system of trading with veritable coffins, the reform which has made our

mercantile marine the finest in the world would not have been so long delayed.

The little vessel of which I am writing hadn't a rope (as the sailors said) strong enough to hang a cat with, and it was in consequence of this most culpable neglect that the throat halyards of the fore trysail gaff broke soon after sailing. The gaff came down with a run, and it, together with the sail, was put into a long boat which stood on the chocks over the main hatches. Paradoxical as it may appear, this accident caused by rotten running gear was the means of saving the ship and all her crew. This was only a minor mishap compared with the breaking of one of the legs of the pump brake stand, which occurred just at the time both pumps were required to keep down the increasing flow of water. The storm continued to rage with unabated fury. No sky could be seen for the flying sleet, and the sea was torn and tossed into a wilderness of broken water. The only canvas set was the close-reefed main topsail. Both pumps had been going for several hours, and at one o'clock on the morning of February 12, the well was pumped dry and the mate's watch ordered below to get a nap until four. They took their drenched clothing off, wrung the water out, hung it on a line round the bogey fire to dry, and turned into their hammocks as naked as they were born. At three the hand-spike knocked heavily on the deck and a loud voice called down the scuttle hatch, "Larboard watch, ahoy! All hands to the pumps, the ship is sinking!"

Every man in a couple of minutes had put his steaming clothes on and set to work; and the fight with death went on until noon, when it was found that the water was gaining. The men despaired of keeping her afloat over night, and as there came in sight several vessels, it was decided to put the Ensign Union down in the main rigging. The captain ordered a young hand to clear away the long boat and make her ready for launching out by the lee gangway. This necessitated the foretrysail and all its gear being thrown on to the weather side of the deck. As soon as everything was ready the young seaman went to the pumps again. He had not been long there before he observed that some of the ropes that had been thrown on the deck did not wash from side to side as the others did. His gaze became transfixed until it excited the anger of the mate who asked what he was gaping at. This aroused him from a kind of stupor, and without saying a word to the officer, he let go the bellrope and went to the object which attracted him. He took hold of a rope and found it would not yield. He then felt the deck with his bare feet and found it was holed, but in order to ascertain the extent of the hole, he determined to feel with his hands, and as the water was continuously lashing over him on that part of the deck it was no easy task to accomplish this. In a few minutes he had ascertained that about two feet of deck, the shape of a wedge, had been staved close to the hatch combings; in fact it had never been fastened with nail or bolt. He shouted at the top of his voice, "I have found the leak!"



FINDING THE LEAK

And the little band of men re-echoed with wild delight: "The big leak is found, hurrah! Down with the ensign." And the young seaman, who by accident had discovered this wicked piece of workmanship, became the object of many flattering compliments. Up to that time there had been observed a solemn, dogged, defiant struggle to defeat death who gazed into their eyes. An occasional unfriendly wish uttered by one or other of the sailors as to the punishment the owner should have received was received with applause from all except the captain and mate. These little outbursts of vengeance were a sort of tonic to their depressed spirits. A fervent "thank God" came from each man's lips as soon as the leak of the deck was stopped, the captain adding a supplementary remark that "God was good even to wicked sinners."

"In an hour from now," said he, "we might have been swallowed up in the waves. It was almost impossible that our boat could have lived until we got under the lee of the schooner" (which had been sighted and which hove to with the object of effecting a rescue). "Ah," said this penitent old man, "it is good to live as we would wish to die. God knows those who believe and trust in Him, and so He has saved us from a watery grave."

"Then keep off the whiskey and stick on deck," said one of the boldest of the crew, who was a naturalized Englishman. This remark brought the captain very near to backsliding. Fire was seen in his eyes, and he retorted with warmth: "If it wasn't the fear of God in my heart, you darned neck end, I would kick you. But," added he, "I will not be provoked into committing what may be considered a sin. We have much work to do before this passage comes to an end, if ever it does."

"Then do your part," said Jack, "and take no more drink."

Here was sound advice, and it was rigidly adhered to, for the temptation was removed by the cook slipping the remainder of the whiskey over the side. Up to that time the men had much to complain of, as their master had been very little on deck until he was made to realize that his ship was in imminent peril. They knew pretty well what he was after, and were glad of the opportunity of making him see that his well-known skill was required on the quarterdeck. Kept from the drink he was one of the smartest men that ever took charge of a vessel. He had been at the helm for nine hours before the leak was found, and as there was six feet of water in the hold, and a "private leak" which kept one pump going every hour, he stuck to it for another seven hours, when the crew called out "she sucks!" i.e., the well is dry. This was gladsome news. It is gladsome even under favourable circumstances, but here were men who had stood almost continuously up to the waist in water; and sometimes a knot of a sea would smash right over them. Their sleeves were doubled up and they had neither boots nor stockings on. Their hands were cut and their arms and legs were red raw with friction and salt water boils. Let him who may estimate the sufferings of these poor creatures. I cannot, for my vocabulary fails me. Torture does not describe it; nor yet the sweat of anguish. It was very shocking, and were it not that I fear to offend the susceptibilities of some folk I would use a term that might come very near to describing its awful character. Those who are inclined to think the picture exaggerated know little of what went on in the much applauded "good old times."

It had been dark for four hours. The clatter of the pumps could only faintly be heard for the alternate whistling and roaring of the storm. The combined music had a weird, saddening effect, as if doom were approaching. A wild and leprous moon sometimes shone through the troubled clouds of scudding sleet. The sea was white with angry commotion, and there were no evidences of the turmoil abating. Immediately the pumps sucked the captain ordered his men to go below and get something to eat; meanwhile he would remain at the helm and keep a look out. In half an hour they were at the pumps again. It took a good while to get all the water out of her, as she was continuously making a good deal, and that which had gone through the staved deck had not quite drained through into the well. However, they felt that they had got the upper hand, and would keep it, provided none of the coppers levelled in upon her and smashed either the decks or the hatches in.

As soon as the captain went below, and it was thought he was asleep, the mate, who was a phlegmatic sort of person, went below also, and left a man and a boy to do the pumping. At first they thought he had gone to light his pipe, but as he was so long in making his appearance again, one of them went into the cabin and found him in his berth fast asleep. He was shaken for a long time before he showed signs of life, and at last grunted out:

"All right. Don't worry. I'll be up directly."

He was reminded that he ought never to have been down, and that it was no place for the mate of a leaky, or any other ship for that matter, on such a night. The sailor then left him, and allowed an interval of half an hour to pass, and as the worthy officer did not make his appearance, he went below again, and found him slumbering as peacefully as before. He threatened to do no more pumping if the mate did not get up and lend a hand at once. Moreover, it was intimated to him that the skipper would have to be called if he lay there skulking while other people were being worked to death. This brought the mate out of his berth, but he got no further than the after-lockers, where he sat down with the object of lighting his pipe. Being comfortably seated, his head gradually sank on to the table, and, with the pipe in one hand and the matches in the other, he again became oblivious to the savage tumult that raged above him. Again the sailor went to see why he did not come up, and found him in the aforesaid position. This time he was not roused; a plot had been arranged, and forthwith a large bucket of water was taken below and thrown at him. He only shook himself, and murmured:

"She's the dirtiest beast that ever I was aboard of."

The second douse was flung quickly; he became confused, rushed into the captain's berth, believing he was making his way on deck. He was asked what was the matter, and replied excitedly:

"The skylight's stove in."

"Get it covered over," said the somnolent commander, "and let me know what the weather's like at daylight."

The chief officer made his way to the man at the helm, and remarked:

"That was a nasty sea that stove the skylight in, Jacob."

"There's been no nasty seas over here," said Jacob; "why, you must have been asleep."

"I tell you the cabin's flooded," said the mate.

"Very well," said the other, "if you disbelieve me, look for yourself. As to sleeping, my God, don't *you* talk, for you're hardly awake yet."

The mate made a survey, found no damage, and remarked in soliloquy:

"That's funny. Where can the water have come from?"

"Not funny at all," said Jacob, with some irritation; "get away and lend them poor lads a hand. She might have foundered for all you cared."

This was grave language to use to a superior officer, but the justice of it was evidenced by the submissive composure in which it was received. It was evidently soaking into the mate's thick skull that the water had not come from the skylight, and this idea was borne out by his not mentioning the matter to the lads when he went to their assistance. In spite of their weary and almost exhausted condition, they had to have their joke, so said to the officer:

"You're very wet, Tom; where have you been?"

"Been be darned!" said Thomas; "I've been nowhere. You shut up and attend to your work."

"That's all very fine, but 'nowhere' was what the monkey said when he was accused of stealing nuts," retorted the humourist.

The dialogue was cut short by the helmsman shouting out: "Two lights on the port bow."

One turned out to be a distress signal, and the other a red light. The dawn was breaking into the sky, and in less than half an hour daylight had forced its way through the dull grey mist, and brought the vessels in sight of each other. They were close to: one was a fishing smack, and the other a brig, labouring heavily in the trough of the sea, and flying a flag on the main rigging, just as the *Blake* had been doing the previous day. All hands were on deck, including the captain, and every eye was fixed on the sinking vessel. One of the sailors went on to the foreyard to ascertain more distinctly what was going on. As soon as he got aloft he bellowed something which could not be made out owing to the uproar, and finding that he could not make his voice heard, he made his way to the deck, and amid much excitement conveyed the belief that the brig was the *Silverspray*.

Sailors of that time were very quick and accurate in discerning the identity of a vessel by the cut of her sails, the length of her masts and yards, and the way they were stayed; even if she were hull down they could tell by this alone. Several of the disabled vessel's sails were in ribbons. They had evidently been blown out of the gaskets. She was drifting under the close-reefed main topsail, and the fore one was in shreds. The fore and main topgallant braces were broken, and the yards were swinging about to the toss of the ship. The remains of a boat hung to the stern davits. The long boat was flattened on the hatches, and the crew hustled together on the quarterdeck gesticulating to the other vessel (a smack) to make haste. At last all seemed to be ready, and the smack was headed before the maddened seas, and flew on the crest of a wave, which seemed to carry her on to destruction. Now she was almost lost sight of in the trough, then she was seen to dance on the summit of a roller, until the supreme moment came to bring her under the lee of the ill-fated brig. There was then witnessed a most sensational piece of bravery and superb seamanship. She was rounded to with the fore staysail sheet to windward; the small boat was launched out of the lee gangway; lines with life-buoys attached were drifted towards the boat, and in less than half an hour the crew was taken off and put aboard the Yarmouth fisherman. Succour came none too soon, as in less than an hour the brig's mainmast went by the board. She cocked her stern up and went down head first. The smack reached close across the stern of the *Blake*, and the shipwrecked crew exchanged salutes with her. Her speaking-trumpet was used in trying to communicate that she was making a lot of water and to report having spoken her. This was also signalled by the commercial code in case they should not have heard. Good-bye was said by dipping the ensign, and as the rescuer vanished into the dark, an unspeakable sadness crept over the *Blake's* crew.

They knew their peril was great, and the physical agony they were suffering was well-nigh unbearable. They predicted that neither would diminish. But for the inherent manliness and heroism that have always been a striking characteristic of the British sailor, these men would have been quite justified in asking the skipper of the smack to take them aboard. They

were worn out with incessant labour, and the dividing line between sinking and being kept afloat was very narrow. A little more straining, or an ugly sea breaking on to a weak spot would quickly seal their fate. They knew all this, but scorned the thought of bringing on themselves the charge of cowardice. It soon became apparent that the little craft of only 280 tons dead-weight would have to be put before the wind if she was to be saved. The crew had to stand up in water to their waists nearly all the time they were pumping, and sometimes they were knocked down by the seas that came aboard. They could stand it no longer, so a conference was held. The captain said: "Well, my lads, there are two courses open to us: sink or run for it. She has two bold ends and will scud for ever. The only thing is we will be running out of the track of ships into the northern regions where the cold will be intense, and there will be but little daylight. Besides, our provisions may run short. Now I have put the position to you both ways: I am willing to do what you decide."

"Then we decide to run," said the men, "and trust to Providence for the rest."

The helm was put hard up, the main and foreyards laid square, and she commenced to scud dead before the wind towards the mystery of the north. For the first four hours it was doubtful whether the jolly boat, which was in davits across the stern, would last long. Each diabolic lump of water that came galloping along threatened not only the boat but the vessel with sudden destruction. It was very thrilling to witness the tiny brig flying before the ecstasy of the hurricane and fluttering away like a seabird from the mountains that towered far above and were only permitted to kiss her stern with their spray. The crew were forbidden to look behind while at the helm lest their nerves should be affected and cause erratic steering. There was really more danger in this than in any lack of seakindliness on the part of the vessel. Each time she ran away from a treacherous-looking breaker, the captain would pat the topgallant bulwarks and speak words of touching tenderness as though he was communing with a little child. The further they ran north, the bigger the seas became. One of them came prancing along, tossed up the stern so that part of the jibboom was put under and her attitude became uncommonly like running head first under the sea. Another quickly followed, and the poor captain's faith was momentarily shaken. He called out "My God, this is awful!" and certainly this was the only phrase that could describe the horror of the situation. But there was nothing for it but to keep scudding. Had any attempt been made to heave to, she would have been smashed to atoms and no more would have been heard of her. It was only by great care in steering and having the proper amount of sail set that she was kept above water. An error in judgement or the neglect of a single point in the handling would have sealed her fate. By the 20th of the month she had got so far north there was little or no daylight; the biting cold was frightful, and there was no prospect of betterness. The long winter nights were spent in pumping, steering and keeping a look out (though it was assumed she was long since out of the track of vessels and no land was near), and the only lights to be seen were the flash of the curling spray dancing on the top of tempestuous billows.

It was during the forenoon of February 21, just after a snow cloud had rushed past, the crew were both surprised and cheered to observe a barque a little on the starboard bow, heading north under two close-reefed topsails. She was low in the water, and making heavy weather of it. The crew were seen in the mizen rigging, frantically waving. A tattered flag was flying beside them, but its nationality could not be discerned. It was impossible to render the assistance that was so eagerly sought for, but even if it had been possible it was too late, for a sea was seen to break right over her stern, and in a few minutes there was another added to the long list of North Atlantic tragedies. Amongst the wreckage passed was a boat full of water, and oars floating on each side of her. Whether this belonged to the latest victim of the remorseless waves or not, no one could tell, though some of the crew thought it might. This melancholy incident was not likely to improve the spirits of the little band of indomitable workers, but they knew if they had to be saved from the same fate they must not give way to sentimental weakness.

The following day the force of the hurricane broke, and on the 24th she had reached 65 degrees north. There were indications of a change of wind. The sky had cleared so that the stars could be seen, and there was a brightness in the N.N.W. that omened the wind coming from that direction. At midnight the change came. Orders were given to let the reefs out of the topsails, but it took a considerable time to do this as the reef points and errings were covered with hard, flinty ice, and it was not until marline spikes were used that any progress was made. The men's hands, already covered with wounds, had their fingers badly cut with the icy ropes and sails in carrying out this order, but it was not until they had been running south for a couple of days that they began to feel the full extent of their sores. Regular watches were now kept, and each time they tumbled out of their hammocks to relieve each other the pain of opening their hands was terrible. Two of the apprentices had both their feet badly frostbitten.

At last the Norwegian land was made, and one fine morning in the month of March she slipped into the beautiful harbour of Stavanger to have the broken pump-stand and shattered rigging and sails put right. The two boys were landed, and the doctors said their feet were in such a state of putrefaction they must be taken off at once. None of the other members of the crew were bitten by frost, but it took many days to heal their raw wounds. The salt of the sea had not only pickled them, but had penetrated into their very bones.

Meanwhile the crew of the *Silverspray* had been landed at the Tyne by the Yarmouth smack, and they reported that when last they saw the *Blake* she was hove to, and signalled making a lot of water; and as day after day passed and no news came, grave fears were entertained for her safety; heavy premiums were paid; and the relatives blamed the *Silverspray's* men for leaving the crew in a leaky ship—an unjustifiable charge, for the sailors of that period were not given to abandoning vessels prematurely. But so long a time had elapsed since she was spoken of that all hope of her safety was given up. At last there appeared in one of the local papers a paragraph stating that it was feared the well-known brig had succumbed, with all aboard, to the terrible storms that raged over the northern latitudes during the early part of February. This put an end to all doubt: newspaper statements were generally believed. But a few days after this announcement a letter, part of which had been written while sailing along the Norwegian coast, in order that it might be posted on arrival, was received in a country village as the first intelligence of her safety. It is quite sailor-like in its composition, and characteristically free from whining. The writer merely deals with facts, and very briefly with them. I have just been shown this greatly valued document, and give it as it is:

"DEAR PARENTS,—We expect to arrive to-morrow morning. We have had a devil of a voyage, and saw the *Silverspray* founder, and asked the skipper of the smack to report us. One pump going all the time nearly. Then the decks were stove in and she nearly foundered before it was discovered. I hope the *Spray's* crew were safely landed and reported us, as you would be anxious. We had to run north before the hurricane until there was no daylight. She wouldn't lie to. My word, what a sea! It was fearful to look at, and the captain said we hadn't to, while steering. One day we saw a barque founder with all hands. They were in the rigging waving, but we could render no assistance. We got into 65 degrees north, then the wind changed. It was very cold. Excuse bad writing, I am doing it on the galley seat. We are very bad with saltwater boils and cut hands. The two Swedes have their feet frostbitten: they are a sight. Hoping this will find you all well as it leaves me at present, except for the sores. We have had a fearful time. I thought you would like to know soon, so I am writing this before getting into port. Will add something more then. No more at present.

"Your loving son,

"J. ROBINSON.

"PS.—The doctor says the Swedes will have to have the soles of their feet cut off. Perhaps their feet altogether. I won't go back in her again. If I have to be drowned, I want it to be fair. The other men are leaving as well. We've been on short allowance for a couple of days, the water was spoiled as well. We are going to have a good feed now. Suppose we have to buy it ourselves."

II

CAPTAIN PLUNKER

The *Cauducas* was a brig of 120 tons dead-weight. She was very old, very rotten, and very leaky, and was constantly employed carrying coals from a north-east coast port to France or London. The crew consisted of the master, mate, cook, and able seaman, and three apprentices, one of whom was cabin-boy. No one cared to inquire as to when and where she was built. Wherever paint and tar could be used to cover up defects it was liberally applied, but that did not prevent the water rushing into her holds, causing the crew to have to carry her with the pumps from port to port, as it were, in their arms. The winter voyages taxed their skill and endurance so that scores of times they were nearly forced to abandon her or allow the sea to cover the vessel and themselves. The old sailors used to say when they saw her making the port that she always "looked far off at a distance," a saying peculiar to that part of the country. And yet she out-lived many of the most handsome, well-built, modern ships of that time.

Captain Bourne, or "Plunker," as he was nicknamed, was a man of much dignity and superior presence, but like many of his contemporaries, he was very illiterate; indeed, I do not believe he could either read or write, and yet he was able to collect his freights and generally to conduct the finances entrusted to him with amazing accuracy. His age was between forty-five and fifty; he stood over six feet, and was finely proportioned. He had a moderately-sized head, broad forehead, strong clean-shaven chin, side board whiskers, and a profile which suggested the higher type of man. Under pronounced, overhanging eyebrows, there glowed a pair of medium-sized dark eyes, which at times were penetrating,

and occasionally wore a sad, sympathetic look. His hands and feet betokened that he had sprung from a physical working race, though there was nothing of the animal about him, and in spite of a gruff, uncultured mannerism, he either had it naturally or had acquired almost a grammatical way of addressing people when he wished to assert what he obviously regarded as the dignity of his high calling. This effort to check a natural tendency to the common dialect was very comical, and yet no one ever thought of it as snobbish; the whole thing seemed to belong to him, and he couldn't be different if he wanted to. That was the impression people got of him. In an ordinary way when he was in port he wore a blue pilot morning suit and silk hat. The waistcoat was cut so as to show a good space of coloured shirt front, though on Sundays when in port and days of sailing and arrival, white shirts were worn; usually a stand-up collar with silk stock or some kind of soft neckerchief encircled his neck. He was weather-beaten, ruddy, and altogether rather pleasant to look at. He could navigate his vessel along the coast almost blindfold. Charts were rarely used by such nautical aborigines, as he and scores of his compeers disdained the very idea of being thought incapable of carrying all the knowledge in their heads that was necessary for the purposes of practical navigation. They had a perfect knowledge of the compass and the lead. The courses, cross-bearings, lights, buoys and beacons were all riveted in their memory, and it was a rare occurrence when their memories failed them.

Plunker had all the finer attributes of his class. His character was unimpeachable; he was abstemious, and unless his fiery temper was aroused by the sight of some supposed lack of seamanship on the part of his men or boys, or the idea of imposition on himself or his owner, he might have been considered religious, but never amiable. Parsimony was his besetting sin, and he carried this to the extent of feeding his crew in a way that brought him into frequent conflict with them. Indeed, the relations on one occasion were so strained that the apprentices were encouraged to conspire with some boys from other vessels to commit an act that would humiliate him in the eyes of the seafaring community and the public generally.

The old captain's pride in his ship and his position as her commander was a slavish passion. He could not endure any liberties to be taken with him, even by his employer or his equals on these two points. The boys of his own and other ships knew this so well that they planned an indignity that should lacerate his vanity. They knew he was very partial to what are known by sailors as "two-eyed steaks," and that never by any chance was he known to allow even his mate, much less any of the crew, to partake of them except on special occasions, when he distributed them himself. They were looked upon by him as a luxury, and were actually kept under lock and key. These peculiarities of his had often been freely spoken of, and now a conference of able-bodied seamen in embryo decided that there should be no further tolerance of parsimony and piety. It must be either one thing or the other. The elder members of this august coterie gave instructions that the sacred locker should be broken open and the contents thereof brought into their presence on the quarterdeck. Each of the party was sworn to secrecy in such a way that the dread of being haunted by unspeakable troubles during the balance of their lives would have prevented any breach of confidence, even had there been no higher sense of honour. The bloaters were extracted at night and handed over to the recognized authority. It was decided to decorate the vessel from topgallant trucks to mainrail by attaching the herring to the signal halyards about three feet apart. Captain Bourne's beloved brig was forthwith then trimmed in her frill of red herrings, and the equivalent to a vote of thanks was unconventionally moved and carried for the fearless assistance and patriotic advice rendered by comrades who upheld the true national faith of being roundly fed with good joints of beef and plum or suet pudding. After a few appropriate remarks in anticipation of the trouble and sensation of the morrow, the young gentlemen dispersed, each going aboard his own ship, while those belonging to the *Cauducas* tumbled into their hammocks and were soon fast asleep. They rose at the usual hour the following morning, and while they were having breakfast angry and excited voices were heard alongside; and as they eagerly listened to the picturesque flow of profane language intermixed with a few eloquent remarks to God to forgive such irreverence, their minds were permeated with fear lest suspicion would fall on them during the paroxysm of alternate rage and godliness. Plunker was a powerful man, and when his anger was roused they knew by experience it was not safe to interject a word either of denial or assent; so they determined, when he called them to him, to pursue a policy of negativeness, and trust to Providence to deliver them from a position that was showing signs of serious consequences. While the irate commander was in the white heat of a tremendous peroration, and in the act of detaching the festoons of herring which he placed so much value on, his owner, who had come down to see his property, as was the custom in those early days, came laughing towards his much troubled captain and greeted him with the advice not to take the matter too seriously. It was obviously a practical joke intended for a purpose, and he apprehended the intention was to convey the idea that a liberal allowance of food should be served out to his crew, and that the luxury he placed so much value on should no longer be the object of his special care, but that he should take to heart the lesson just revealed to him, and allow his people to partake generously of that also. As the vessel was lying alongside a shipbuilding and repairing yard, a large crowd of workmen had congregated to see so unusual a display. Discourteous and jeering remarks were loudly spoken with the studied intention of reaching the ears of the master and owner, and the news of a revolutionary act having been committed within the precincts of an unyielding discipline spread like an electric flash through the little town, and the unknown perpetrators were eulogistically

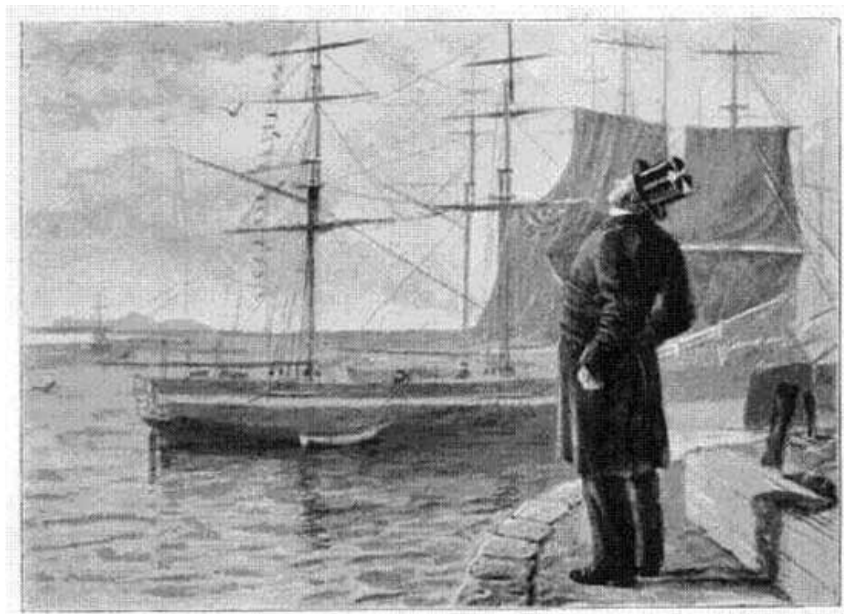
stamped as heroes.

No one knew better than this old-time shipmaster the amount of capital that would be squeezed out of the incident by the gossips, and no one recognized better than he the amount of odium that would stick to himself. The poor fellow had been stabbed in a tender spot, and those who knew him intimately foreshadowed a long period of bitter suffering for him. Indeed, there were those who openly stated that he would not long survive the insult to his professional authority. He intimated to his employer that it was his intention to forthwith hold a court-martial in his cabin, and requested him to take part in the investigation. The owner was a person gifted with a sense of humour. He laconically expressed his willingness to remain aboard, but refused to have anything to do with the official inquiry.

The mate's Christian name was Matthew, but he was commonly addressed as Matt. The dignity of Mr was never by any chance applied to chief officers of this class of vessel, though quarter-deck manners were always strictly sustained so far as the captain was concerned. He was the only person who claimed the right of being addressed as "Sir," and he would brook no violation of its use. Matt, as he was called, was made the medium of communicating the master's wishes that the apprentices should meet him in his cabin immediately. The rugged officer was smitten with the comical aspect of his mission, though he carried it out in a strictly punctilious manner. These rough, uncouth men never wilfully offended the susceptibilities of their commanders, unless they became unbearably despotic, then they retaliated with unsparing vengeance. The three apprentices promptly obeyed the command given to them, and were ushered into the presence of their infuriated captain. They were each handsome, broad-shouldered athletes, with keen, sparkling, fearless eyes that indicated fearlessness. He made a short, jerky, almost inarticulate speech on the wickedness and indecency of committing an act of gross disrespect to the vessel, the owner and himself, all of whom should have been shielded from ridicule.

"I have had you brought to me," he said, "in order that I might learn from your own lips whether you are the perpetrators of this base robbery and vile insult to myself. I ask each of you, are you guilty of committing or assisting to commit this villainous insult on myself?"

The owner, who was standing in the steerage brimming over with the ludicrous character of the previous night's frivolity, was heard to chuckle and say: "What damned nonsense to ask such a silly question!"



CAPTAIN PLUNKER ASTONISHED.

Each of the lads stoutly denied having any knowledge of what had happened, whereupon Plunker called them "a set of damned lying mutineers, who ought to be swung to the yardarm." This phrase was commonly used at that time whenever it was thought necessary to emphasise displeasure. Sanguinary penalties were roundly threatened to them and to their scoundrelly accomplices. Leading questions were put in a more or less forceful way, but the boys determined to preserve a secretive and even aggressive aspect, which sent their burly commander into an ecstasy of violence. At last, despairing of getting any satisfaction, he told them to get out of his sight. And tradition says that he was never known to smile again; but the *Cauducas* became from that day one of the best found vessels, and her crew the best fed that sailed out of port. There was no more concealment or locking up, or doling out of Yarmouth bloaters, or any other thing. A great change had been wrought in the hitherto inexorable old man of the sea. His conduct became marked by a generosity that wiped out recollections of past meanness. His natural make-up prevented him from giving

prominence to his better side, or of making himself endeared to those faithful men who spent a long life in his service, sharing his precarious fortunes in working and navigating a vessel that his contemporaries predicted would carry him and his crew to a tragic doom. Yet this man of icy exterior, blunt, uncouth and oftentimes vulgar manners, had beating within him as big a heart as ever was planted in a human breast. His men knew that there was a power about him that fascinated them. They could not call it affection, but it was something akin to it: a strong magnetism, indeed, that inspired their confidence and caused them to follow him into dangers that resembled the very jaws of death. It was never a thought of his to show any tender feelings. His susceptibilities would have been much offended could he have been presented with the idea that he had a soft place anywhere in his heart. This reluctance to be supposed effeminate was a characteristic of the age which caused many acts of injustice to be committed in order that the reputation for stern, slashing, devil-may-careness should be established, and many a fine fellow did violence to his whole nature by the desire to be considered a desperado.

This, however, never appeared to be an ambition of Captain Bourne. All he seems to have aimed at was to inspire his crew with an affection for his much beloved vessel, and not on any occasion or under any circumstances to be thought soft, or weak, or womanish. This of course could only be assumed, because he never conveyed his thoughts to anybody.

Long after the herring incident this little vessel was being loaded, waiting for favourable wind and water so that she might start on her voyage to Boulogne. She had been detained several weeks, when a fine N.E. wind and high tide enabled her to pass out of port. It was called in those days a sea tide, and several masters availed themselves of it to put to sea. Before this little fleet of collier brigs got as far south as Flamborough Head, it was blowing a fresh gale, and big lumps of sea were slashed over them. The pumps of the *Cauducas* were continually kept going, and there was much concern as to the crew being able to keep the water under. Her decks were opening and shutting, and her timbers were making suggestive noises. She scudded across Boston deeps under two close-reefed topsails and reefed foresail until abreast of Cromer high land, when the gale subsided, and before the Cockle light-ship was reached the wind had shifted into the south-south-east. With the help of the flood tide she was beaten through the Gat into Yarmouth roads, where the anchor was dropped, a good scope of chain run out, sails furled and ship pumped dry. Then the fore-castle hands cast lots who should keep the first anchor watch. The hand who picked the shortest piece of matchwood had to accept the position of having to take the first two hours; then all the rest turned in.

The mate was always called at the turn of the tide to swing the vessel, so that the cable did not foul the anchor. This was done by a skilful manipulation of the yards and fore topmast staysail. Some mates had quite a genius for this piece of real seamanship. Others never got within the fringe of doing it successfully, and the result was that many a mishap occurred in consequence of cables fouling the anchor stock, or flukes, thereby pulling it out of the ground and causing it to drag. It was also the occasion of many bitter quarrels between master and mate. The former may have been a duffer at the manœuvre himself, but that did not bother him now that the position had changed. Even a consciousness of the mate's knowledge of his fallibility did not qualify his hostile remarks; indeed, the recollection of it never failed to increase his anger. As a matter of fact, the knack of doing it was a gift that no amount of training could create if it was not inborn. I have known apprentices, after they have been at sea a year or two, become really adepts at swinging ship at a single anchor, and many of the seamen prided themselves in being able to do it well. A more difficult task was that of preventing turns getting in the cable when riding with both anchors down, and in skilled hands it could very often be obviated. The thoughtful master or officer made a practice of coming on deck at irregular hours during the night while anchored in a roadstead, so that the men might become impressed with the idea of never relaxing their vigilance. Notwithstanding this care it was not an infrequent thing for the watch to be caught napping. On one occasion a collier brig had been windbound for several days in the Yarmouth roads. The mate was accustomed to pay nocturnal visits on deck, and had suspected that a great deal of napping was done before the galley fire, and he had his suspicion confirmed when coming up one night unexpectedly, and, stealthily making his way to the galley, he found both doors closed; no one was to be seen anywhere; he looked down into the fore-castle and saw one hammock vacant, so he made his way to the galley again and listened, and heard someone snoring. He asked who was there several times and got no answer. He then tried the door, but the inmate had anticipated an invasion and had wedged it so that no one could open it from without. The mate was seized with a superstition, or exasperation, or both, so he drew a belaying pin from the rail, brought it strongly in contact with the door, and loudly asked who was there. A husky voice from within answered in broad Northumbrian accent: "Thor's neebody hear!" "Then by Gox," said the excited mate, "Ye'ar the beggar I've been luckin' for these last few nights!" The slumberer was the person who ought to have been pacing the deck. Needless to say, he became the object of much vituperation, and was never again trusted to look after the lives of his shipmates or the property of his employer. Similar incidents to this occurred on every collier vessel.

The *Cauducas* was several days windbound. The crew had repaired rigging, running gear, and sails that were damaged during the storm, and they now welcomed a change of wind which came, so that the voyage might be continued. The anchor was weighed, and every

stitch of canvas was spread and bellied out with a strong flowing wind. By the time the Kentish Knock Lightship was reached the wind had increased so that the topgallant sails had to be furled and two reefs taken in the topsails. The North Foreland was passed and a course shaped for Boulogne. The wind had increased to a gale, and the sea in the Channel was as cross and as angry as it well could be. Every preparation was made for entering port; mooring ropes and cable chains were got on deck so that the anchors might be used if necessary. She was run well over towards the French Coast before she could be hove to to take a pilot aboard. This having been done, orders were given to square away for the harbour. The sea was breaking a good distance off, and the prospects for entering looked very ugly. The captain was at the tiller and was unusually agitated. The pilot's excitement remained subdued until the sinister commotion of seas was within easy distance. He then became voluble in his orders. The little vessel rushed into the merciless liquid breakers at great speed. One of them broke over the bluff of the bow, carrying the bulwarks away, and at the same time the cable chain was lurched over the side. The master rushed from side to side with the tiller, irrespective of the pilot's equally chaotic orders. The crew became alarmed for their safety, while the captain and pilot vied with each other for first place in exhortation to keep cool, but neither the one nor the other was cool. The pilot called out in very broken English "Port" and "Starboard" in quick succession. The master answered "Port" and "Starboard" each time the order was given, adding each time as an addendum, "Look at that blooming cable chain hanging over the side!" so that the confusion of orders and irrelevant responses to them became a menacing danger to safe navigation. The pilot swore in French at the captain, requesting him to steer the vessel and not to mind the — chain being over the side, and the captain delivered himself in even more forceful language at the pilot for arrogance in dictating orders as to how he should conduct himself; and in order to minimise the guilt of hard swearing and to appease his conscience for having offended the God of the British people, as soon as it was uttered the pilot begged forgiveness, and then poured forth his anger in a flow of strong French adjectives. The crew, being well trained and accustomed to perils of this nature, did their part of the necessary work irrespective of orders. They saw, however, that trouble would come to them if the master could not be persuaded to forget that the cable chain was overboard, so they induced Matt to go and offer to give him a spell, and to everybody's surprise he was willing to give the steering into the hands of his mate, who knew as well as either himself or the pilot the way into the harbour.

The seas broke heavily over her until she entered the mouth of the harbour. A crowd of their fellow-townsmen from other vessels had come on to the pier with the object of rendering any assistance they could, and by their goodness and skill she was moored without the necessity of letting go the anchors or even breaking a ropeyarn. Plunker was very grateful to these fine fellows for the valuable service they had rendered. They knew that he was never effusive about any favours conferred upon him, so were content to receive a plain "Thank you." The local sailormen of that time used to caricature him running in confused frenzy from side to side of the quarterdeck with the tiller, and imitate the pilot and himself haranguing each other to keep cool, and immediately afterwards breaking out into violent attacks on each other's capacity for giving and receiving orders.

This strange being, at a time when he was passing through the peril of facing death, never lost the power of making his men feel that he was above their level. Even his undignified altercations with the pilot, and his mixed erratic exclamations on the subject that obviously troubled him, in no way diminished the awe in which he was regarded.

The vessel was moored alongside the quay, and great care was used in having the fenders properly placed, so that her aged planking would be preserved from chafing. Had she been the king's yacht, no greater attention could have been given to prevent this.



"THERE WERE MANY CALLERS."

The following morning there were many callers alongside, and many congratulations offered to the captain and his crew on a safe deliverance. There were shipbrokers, shipmasters, seamen and all grades of dockworkers; each of them showed a common desire to be unusually kind. The English vessels in port had their flags half-mast. Someone on the *Cauducas* asked the reason for this, and the reply came in subdued tones that the *R*— had come in on the last flood, and her master reported having had very heavy weather crossing the Kent. Everything had been swept from the deck, and Captain Bourne's eldest son, who was serving as able-seaman, had been knocked off the lee foretopsail yardarm while assisting to close reef the topsail. He held on to the reef-earring as long as he could, but the flapping of the sail soon caused him to call out to his shipmates, "I can hold on no longer," and before any aid could be given he had slipped his hold and fallen into the sea, and the surges covered him over.

The news of his son's tragic end was communicated to Captain Bourne by his faithful mate, who pathetically, and with unconscious humour, exhorted his master not to give way to grief. "It is a bad job," said he, "but it would have been much worse had it been ourselves, and we were very near done for." His bereaved master was a man of very few words. He asked some particulars without apparent emotion, and then proceeded to his cabin, where he was found shortly afterwards praying in a simple, touching way to Almighty God that the body of his son might be picked up so that it might be taken to his home. He petitioned fervently that his younger boy might be spared to him. It seemed as though his communion with the Deity had given him a glimpse into futurity, or a presentiment of further bereavement. He was recalled to material things by being reminded by the cabin-boy that the mid-day meal was ready. He took his place at the table and proceeded to make inquiries as to whether the discharging of the cargo would commence that day. The mate informed him that he did not think there was any intention of doing so, whereupon he replied, "I must go ashore and stir them up." The masters and mates of the other vessels in port would have come in a body to condole with him for the loss of his son, but they knew that he loathed outward signs of soft emotion, and in any case would never allow sentiment, no matter how justifiable, to come between him and his business obligations.

He was well known in business circles for his devotion to the interests of his employers. That was his first and last thought, and when he went forth to do their business he wasted neither time nor words. He possessed a natural gift of diplomacy, and wrote no letters. He had the knack of conveying what he wanted to be at, and his quaint way of doing it, though it might amuse, always inspired the person who was addressed with the belief in his soundness, so that few men succeeded as he did in getting what he wanted. On the occasion of which I am writing, the merchants received him with obvious sympathy, and he was promised a quick dispatch. That night he got the boy to write a few lines to his wife at his dictation. They were very brief, very melancholy, very reverential. Here is the letter:

"DEAR WIFE,—We arrived here yesterday after a very rough passage. I hope you're well as it leaves me at present. The *R*— arrived this morning's tide, and reports that Jack was knocked off the foretopsail yardarm, and they never see'd him again. He shouted 'Guidbye, I cannot hold on any longer.' I asked God to have his body picked up and sent home, and while I was doing it, a queer thought came over me that little Bobby was being washed overboard from the *Savannah*. I hope it's not true, and that God won't take him from us as well. No more at present, from

He seems to have had a rugged anxiety that the mother of his drowned son should be given a prompt opportunity of sharing his sorrow. It was not usual for these shellbacks to write letters while on a coasting voyage. Indeed, they were very cautious about doing it at any time in case even members of their own families should think them tender-hearted. Moreover, those who could not write or read were very sensitive about allowing others to do it for them.^[1]

In due course the cargo of the little brig was discharged and the ballast was brought alongside. The side ports were knocked out, and the crew commenced to throw the ballast into the hold, as it frequently happened that only one side was available. A couple of hands were placed in the hold to shovel it over to the opposite side in order to keep the vessel upright. While this was being done the captain proceeded to collect and pay his accounts. Cheques or bills of exchange were dispensed with as a rule, and the freight was paid over the counter in sovereigns, and scooped into a leather bag. This was taken aboard and concealed in the master's room. It was a rare thing for the freight to be wrongly settled, or go astray after it was settled. Men like Captain Bourne had a mysterious way common to themselves of counting and calculating, and any breakdown in their system (for each had his own) would have made a deep wound in their pride. The day after the ballast was all in and trimmed, orders were given to unmoor, and the little craft sailed out of the harbour with a fine southerly wind and all sail set. The breeze carried her as far north as Flamborough Head, when it gradually veered into the west and kept steady, but blew so hard that the topsails had to be double-reefed.

It was the morning watch from four to eight. The cabin-boy was called at seven o'clock to prepare breakfast and polish the brass stove and ashpan. The captain heard the little fellow doing his morning work, and called out to him, "Boy!"

"Yes sir," said the boy.

"How is the wind?"

"I will go and ask," said he.

He came down and conveyed the pleasing intelligence that it was still west and they were close in by Whitby Lights.

"Come into my berth and get yourself a glass of gin, my canny lad," said the indulgent skipper, "and see that I am not disturbed for breakfast. Don't call me until she is abreast of Sunderland."

"All right, sir," said the boy, and availed himself of his master's kindness by taking a second mate's nip out of the gin jar which was kept under his bed. The little fellow wondered what had caused such a convulsion of endearment, as Captain Bourne's demeanour had hitherto been the very antithesis of external tenderness. About an hour had elapsed when he was asked again "How the wind was."



HAVING A NIP.

"W.N.W.," said the youth, "and inclined to break off" (i.e., norther).

"What are you making such a noise about?" growled the now uneasy captain; "shut my door so that I may be quiet; and get the cabin properly scrubbed out ready for going into port."

The wind had freshened, the vessel began to jump into a nasty head swell, and in order to ease the strain on the rigging the necessary sail was shortened. Captain Bourne was aroused by the sombre music of the wind rustling through the rigging and making occasional discordant noises. His mind became centred on the possibility of the voyage being prolonged, and in order that his suspicions should be confirmed or otherwise, he called with a deep, agitated voice for the boy to come to him; and when he presented himself the captain asked in a tone which indicated coming trouble: "How is the wind now?"

The youthful seaman replied, with a voice and manner indicative of knowledge and assurance: "The wind, sir, is strong N.N.W., and increasing," and as this was the direction in which they were bound, the captain's mental processes became confused. A strange guttural sound came from his throat as though there was a struggle going on between the flesh and the devil. The conflict did not last long, as the sanctity which he had observed for some days went under. He jumped from his bunk, seized his boot which lay hard by, flung it at the poor, fatigued laddie, bellowing out at the same time: "On deck, you darned young spawn of ——. I've been kept awake by your clatter ever since you got up." And the boy flew before the hurricane of wrath lest he should come to grief.

The men asked him the cause of being turned out of the cabin.

"The cause," he said, "is, the old man asked me how the wind was, and as soon as I told him it was N.N.W. he flung his boot at me and ordered me on deck for making too much noise. I hadn't been more than a minute in the cabin after lending a hand to shorten sail. Besides, the old beast almost hugged me when I told him the wind was west and that we were off Whitby. Why, he was so pleased he asked me to have a nip of that gin he keeps under his bed!"

"Did he swear at you?" said one of the seamen.

"Swear?" said the boy, "it wasn't swearing, it was sulphurous."

"Ah," said the sailor, "it's a bad job he's broken out again. There'll be no more peace until something serious happens. But perhaps a fair wind might put him right for a bit. I thought the loss of Jack had knocked all the sulks out of him, and that he had fairly become religious."

"What are you gadding about, man?" said Matt, the mate; "how do you expect anybody to keep religious with the wind N.N.W. and bound north, with the prospect of being driven back to Burlington Bay or perhaps Yarmouth Roads? And besides," continued this theological authority, "sailors are allowed to swear when anything goes wrong, and the old man is only taking advantage of his rights. You make no mistake; he cannot read or write—"

no more can I for that matter—but he knows a thing or two when it comes to law or religion." Thus spake the loyal, well-informed Matthew.

After a few days' hard buffeting against a biting head-wind, the vessel arrived at the port to which she was bound, and after she was moored and everything made trim, running gear coiled round the belaying pins, every bight being regular and equal, sails stowed in a cloth, and yards laid perfectly square, the sailors then proceeded to arrange themselves in spotless white fustian trousers and blue jerseys adorned in front with their names or initials worked in red or white worsted. The latter article of apparel was usually knit by their wives if they were married, or their intended wives if they were not, and in either case there was great competition in producing the very best work both of art and serviceableness. They then packed their clothes in canvas bags and carried them home on their shoulders. There was considerable emulation not only in the neatness of the packing and the cleanness of the bags, but the arrangements for fastening the mouth of the bag took weeks to fashion into a very pretty piece of sailorising. These things may seem small and frivolous, unworthy indeed of being referred to as even a characteristic of the sailor of that locality and of that period. I do not know anything that came under the lash of such severe criticism as the sailor's own fashion of dress, and it must not be imagined that it was confined to the sailors themselves, though they were merciless enough with each other, but the owners and the public generally took the keenest interest in these little touches of vanity and handiwork. Many a worthy fellow got a good berth because he and his belongings had the stamp of ingenuity and tidiness about them, and certainly many of them knew that this was a sure means of winning the affections of young girls whom they wished to make their wives.

These young maidens who resided in this interesting little seaport town knew almost by instinct whether a vessel was kept smart or not; neither those who were married nor those who were single liked either their husbands or sweethearts to be associated with an ill-kept vessel. If they read anything at all it was what the newspapers said about shipping, or as a matter of religious devotion they might perchance read an occasional chapter in the Bible, so that their mental energy found a ready outlet in the gossip of things appertaining to their daily life and immediate surroundings, which for the most part were nautical, although I must not overlook the fact that many of the more intelligent of them were connected with religious institutions. These were mostly Dissenters, Wesleyan Methodists, Primitives and Presbyterians. The Church of England had not at that time become the evangelical force that it may be considered to-day. I am not sure to which of these sects Captain Bourne belonged, but amongst every class there was a widespread sympathy extended to him on his arrival at the home port. The news of his son having come to so untimely an end moved the little community so that condolences came to him from many unexpected quarters. Dignified owners shared with the common sailor and apprentices their ungrudging sympathy, and he received it with transparent gratitude. All his gruff mannerisms were forgotten in the sorrow of the moment. The poor lad who had passed so suddenly into the valley of death was looked upon as a promising captain in embryo, and there was much speculation as to the deeds he would have accomplished and the high position he would have attained had the sea not claimed him so soon. All this and a good deal besides was spoken to the sorrowing parents by way of ameliorating their suffering, and also because the occasion was opportune for speaking that which they really believed would have come to pass. Little did the people or the object of their compassion think that at the very time they were saying those encouraging words destiny was fulfilling another tragedy, and the sea had again become the tomb of a bonny, bright, promising youth who had not reached his seventeenth year. The *Cauducas* had been in port for a couple of weeks and was on the point of sailing, when news came that Captain Bourne's second son had been washed overboard and drowned from the vessel he was serving aboard of. The presentiment that this would happen had been overshadowed by the interest taken in the loss of the eldest boy. When the news was broken to him, a sullen, stupefied gaze came into his eyes. He murmured a few incoherent words, and then with a superhuman effort he raised his voice, and with emphasis that was terrible as well as pathetic he called out: "Oh, God, what have I done to You that You should allow this thing to be done to me? I have had two bonny lads taken from me within a month of each other. Oh, God, help me to bear the trial like a man!"

This fine old sailor, believed he was holding communion with a personal power of British nationality that could sway the universe at His will. He believed, though he could not see Him, that God was a person that kept Himself out of sight for a purpose, and that it was the duty of every Englishman to keep on good terms with Him. The mystery of divinity never entered his head. It was a simple, steadfast faith, peculiar if you like, but unyielding in devotional loyalty to His supremacy. It was a wonderful phenomenon, which even cynical logicians might have found embarrassing to their iconoclastic notions could they have witnessed it. Here was an uncultured though magnificent-looking person passing through a sorrowful tribulation, exciting the pity and calling for the admiration of hundreds of his fellow creatures, because he was able to hold his head up and appeal to the only power he knew that was capable of giving him consolation and courage. "Oh, God, help me to bear the trial like a man!" That was the melancholy burden of his petition, and the assurance that it would be answered never forsook him.

His vessel was soon ready for sea, and sailed on the first of a series of voyages that were contracted for her to run. On the completion of these he was asked by his owner to take

command of a barque of about 600 tons deadweight. To an ordinary man and to the average shipmaster of that time, the opportunity of being shifted from an old rattle-trap brig to the enviable position of commander of a "South Spainer" would have been accepted with excessive pride and gratitude; but Bourne was not an ordinary man. He had spent a long life as master of a vessel on which he had placed his affections, so that the more urgent the owner became for him to take advantage of the offer of much higher wages and greater dignity, the more tenaciously he clung to the belief that some serious judgement would befall him if he were ungrateful and disloyal enough to forsake the brig that had carried him for more than a quarter of a century across many a wrathful sea. "No," said he, "I must end my days in the canny ship. Her and me have had a lot to do with each other, and I would never forgive myself if I were to agree to this request, and some useless fellow were to put her ashore on a bank or on the rocks, and she became a total wreck. Besides, if anything were to happen I could not rest in my grave."

"Well," said the owner, "I appreciate your high motives, and also the strong regard you have shown for a vessel that has made me so much money; and I must not forget to say that but for your skill and care in conducting the business, and also in the navigation, the results would have been very different. It is because of these and other sterling qualities that you possess that I ask you to consider favourably the offer I have made. You know how badly the *Grasshopper* has done, and I feel that you are the only man that can pull her out of the bad mess she is in. Sleep over it."

Bourne slept over it, and informed the owner the next day that the ship was far too big for him, but as the change was urged he must leave the final decision to the owner, always bearing in mind that he wished to remain where he was. The owner availed himself of the old mariner's flexible state of mind by promptly taking him at his word. And he forthwith became the object of notoriety. There had been not a few aspirants to this enviable position, and much speculation as to whether Bourne would ultimately be persuaded to take it or not. Of course it was vigorously hoped he would not, and when the announcement in the affirmative was made there were sundry disappointments. The predictions were of a gloomy character. Forebodings that the new commander would never be able to handle so large a ship became the prevalent idea, for he had never been in a vessel carrying more than about 250 tons. It was an open secret that Captain Bourne had misgivings of a similar kind himself. He feared, indeed, that she might run away with him. He apprehended that his capacity to handle a vessel of a different rig from that to which he had been accustomed all his life might prove defective. Many of his contemporaries, as well as he himself, held very contracted and primitive ideas as to size. They talked of vessels of 400 tons burden as being large, and those of six to seven or eight hundred were described as leviathans.

Captain Bourne showed signs of depression from the time his belongings were taken from the object of his devotion. He felt he was parting from a life-long friend. A Board of Trade certificated chief mate was engaged to act as "nurse." The crew were signed on, stores shipped, and after the cargo was all aboard, the *Grasshopper* crossed the bar amid much cheering from the people who lined the quays and piers. Moreover, the occasion was of more than usual interest, for Captain Bourne had never been off the coast during his whole life. After the tug and pilot left, a course was shaped towards the hidden mysteries that lay across the sea. The passage was made quickly, but not without mishap, for the vessel had struck on a reef of rocks, and it was thought her false keel and copper had received considerable damage. From the time the vessel left the port of loading the captain had been little seen. It was well known that a morbid brooding had taken complete possession of him. He rarely came to his meals, and when he did he never spoke except to murmur some words of endearment about the old ship he had been persuaded to leave. The stranding of his new command was interpreted as a judgement sent to him for the wrong he had committed in giving way to pride by forsaking the craft that had carried him so many years in safety. On his arrival in port several friends paid him a visit, and were struck with his changed appearance. The mates and steward said they had observed that there was a difference in him, but the passage had been so wild and eventful they had never had time to think of it. After the first two or three days his business visits ashore became very irregular, and before the cargo was discharged they had ceased altogether. He was seldom seen either below in his cabin or on deck. He could not be induced to take his meals regularly, and took to shutting himself up in his stateroom. A dangerous form of melancholia held him in fetters, so that when friendly visitors called to see him his reclusive mood forbade any intercourse with even men who knew him intimately.

There was much speculation as to the cause of this morbid determination to abstain from food and from having communication with anyone. Naturally, drinking was freely attributed to him, but this was stoutly denied by every one of the crew. His mate and steward were of opinion that he was fretting badly about having to leave the old brig; and this had led him to think more than he would have otherwise done of the loss of his boys and the stranding of his vessel. Each day saw a change for the worse, until the mate became alarmed by evidences of total collapse. He determined to see the master of a steamer who was in port and knew Bourne well enough to do what would have been resented as a great liberty in another man. This captain insisted that he would not stand the humbug of asking to be allowed to see Bourne, so he boldly went aboard, knocked at the stateroom door, and demanded admittance. On this being refused, he proceeded to force the entrance, and

presented himself before the amazed inmate with quite a string of strong adjectives for the bad behaviour in not reciprocating his neighbourliness.

"What are you lying there fretting your soul out for?" said the burly commander; "get up and come ashore with me and pull yourself together. You owe a duty to your owner, your wife, and yourself. You're not going to mend matters by moping and refusing to take natural exercise and food!"

"Ah," said Captain Bourne, "I will never set my foot ashore again. I am very near the end, and I will be glad when it comes. Tell the owner as soon as I am gone that I have never been myself since I acted so bad in leaving my bonny little ship that did so much for me." And putting his hand to his breast, he added: "I have felt queer and sore here ever since. I hope God will forgive me, but I was sure my sin would find me out; and here I am, a poor shrivelled-up man, anxious to get away from earth and to be with my drowned boys. The parson told me I would meet them in a better world to this, and so I want to get to it as quick as I can, for all the pleasure was taken out of my life when I consented to come here. I haven't been very bad, and always was as good as I could to God. Sometimes I've sworn when anything went wrong, but I never meant any harm in it. Besides, they say that sailors' swearing is not like other people's."

His friend urged him in a rollicking manner to take a more cheerful view of his position.

"There are many," said he, "who would give worlds to have command of so fine a vessel."

"Let them have it, then," said Bourne; "but I was content to end my days in the old ship. That was glory enough for me, and they (meaning his owner and his friends) would not let me do it."

Captain W—— shook him warmly by the hand, and promised to call again.

Bourne murmured: "I may never see you again. I feel the end is very near. My general health is good, but what ails me is a sore heart. Tell them, W——, if I should die before seeing you again, that I trusted in God and His Son, that the parsons say preached the gospel of sorrow. My cup is full of that. So that I would be satisfied to meet death willingly could I catch but one glimpse before it comes of the ship that has been my home all my life, brought up my bairns, and kept a comfortable abode ashore for me."

His friend parted from him with a sad heart, believing that no earthly power could save him, for he saw that he was encompassed by the shadow of doom, and that the triumph of death would soon overtake him.

The following morning the *Grasshopper* ensign flew half-mast. Poor Bourne had passed the portal beyond which he was to find peace. His last message to his mate and steward were: "I shall soon be dead. Say 'so long' for me to my wife and the owner. Tell them my heart broke, for I could not bear the loss of my boys and the parting from the canny little brig. Tell them I bear no ill-will to anybody, and that I expect to meet them beyond the river in a better land."

These words were the last spoken by the grief-stricken old mariner, who in the plenitude of his manhood would have scorned the idea of openly giving way to emotion. His officers sat by him until he quietly slipped his moorings.

1 ([Return](#))

It may be as well to explain here that the straddle-leg patent, as it was called, often caused sailors to be both killed and drowned. They used to give advice in a flippant way to each other that if they were forced to let go their hands to be sure to hold on by the skin of their teeth or their feet. This little joke was rarely successful in saving them from being smashed to pieces or drowned. The invention by Collin and Pinkney for reefing and furling, and subsequently the double topsail yards introduced by the Americans, did a great deal towards preventing loss of life, and certainly saved many a spar from going over the side. It was found that there were fewer accidents both in life and property by the use of the latter. Occasionally the patents, which have been long out of use, went wrong, and the sail could neither be got up nor down, but this never happens when proper care is used with the double topsail yarders. With these a vessel may be put under close-reefed topsails in a few seconds.

Captain Alexander Macgregor, as his name betokens, was a Scotchman, who had left his native land with credentials which gave him the reputation of being not only learned but one of the most expert mariners that ever walked a quarterdeck. For many years he had traded to all parts of the world in command of various sized vessels owned in Scotland, and had earned the confidence of his employers by the deeds he had accomplished in making them large profits. His old owner was perturbed when it became known that his services had been sought for elsewhere, and secured, owing to monetary inducements such as no worthy Scot could refuse, for Scottish shipmasters at that time were shockingly paid. His advent to English employment was not regarded favourably by the men who claimed that vessels belonging to that particular port should be commanded by men of the port, native born or reared into seamen by the matchless skill of the generation of local sailors that preceded them. He was looked upon as an interloper who had come to take bread from their mouths. But what concerned them as much as anything was their dread of a lower standard, which might lose for them the premier position which they ostentatiously declared was theirs, of breeding and rearing skilful, hardy men. The gentleman whom they held responsible for the unwarrantable innovation carried on a nourishing trade in the dual capacity of miller and shipowner. He came across Macgregor when on a visit to one of his vessels which was discharging at a Scottish port, and became fascinated by his bright, cheery intelligence. A bargain was struck and he forthwith took command of Mr Hobkirk's finest craft. The prejudice formed by this unpatriotic act had far-reaching consequences, which were never really effaced. The community regarded it as another proof of English generosity and Scottish unscrupulous pushfulness of character which worms its way into the affairs of men and captures all the blessings of earth and heaven at the expense of their neighbours.

"We suppose," said these proud men of the sea, "he has been brought here to teach us something. We will let him see what he has come to. His life shall be made not worth living, and the miserable traitor who has put him over our heads shall be made to feel that we don't want any Scottish instruction. His great seamanship must be tested, and as to learning, what do we care for learning? This is not our business. We want sailors, not learning."

This piece of shrewd eloquence was noisily applauded by the affected persons, who felt convinced that their birthright had been stolen from them. Meanwhile the object of their aversion showed qualities of genius that caused Mr Hobkirk to marvel at his own inherent instinct which had enabled him to fix on so distinguished a prodigy. Some of his shipowning friends were struck with what they called his cleverness, and asked him to convey to them his secret for finding a person so unlike the ordinary shipmaster. He bowed his head low in token of submission, and almost in a whisper conveyed to them the belief that he was the instrument of divine Providence. The seamen and skippers of the port did not hold the same view as the owner, so they set themselves to make it very difficult for Macgregor to get a crew, and had he not been an astute man of affairs, great loss and inconvenience would have ensued. The local union was very strong, very active and intensely popular. All its official machinery was thrown into the policy of obstruction, and all its efforts were abortive, for the *Hebe* was towed out of port with a full crew in spite of a continual shower of stones and other missiles.

Amongst this notorious crew was one named Ralph Davidson, a half-witted young fellow who had served two apprenticeships without being able to qualify for the dignity of A.B., that is, he could not pass the necessary examination for admittance into the union. This poor creature was permitted to sail as "half-marrow" or ordinary seaman because of his local origin and good natured simplicity. Otherwise the very mention of half-marrow was loathed, and no amount of persuasion could induce these men and lads to tolerate a stranger in that capacity. I commend the ideal to present-day sailors and shipowners. The British Merchant Service would be all the better by going back to this old-time method of keeping up the standard of proficiency. Ralph had all the characteristic weaknesses of the sailor. He was a much-sought-after institution at all the public house dances while at home, and was not averse to either accepting a glass of whiskey or giving one when he had the wherewithal to do it, but that was rarely. He spent much of his meagre earnings and time in this way, and suffered for it when he was obliged to go to sea without suitable clothing. Young people of both sexes were very fond of getting him to do a step-dance or sing a song. The latter sounded like paying chain cable out of a hawse pipe, and kept the room in screams of laughter. The *Hebe* had reached the Bay of Biscay on her way to Lisbon. A strong south wind was blowing, accompanied with heavy rain, and the spray flew all over her. Ralph stood at the wheel shivering, clad in a suit of dungarees. His face indicated all that he was suffering, and his mutterings attracted the attention of the captain, who overheard him swearing, "My God, as soon as I get into port I'll have a suit of oilskins!" In due time they got into port, and Ralph was the first aft to ask for money to purchase the water-proof articles. The captain made the advance and reminded him that he relied on it being spent for the purpose for which it was intended. He was assured that Ralph's suffering for want of proper clothing had left an unpleasant recollection on his mind and he did not intend to suffer in the same way in future. On landing, he was prevailed upon to go to a grog shop and dance house before making his purchase. The captain, suspecting that there was not much strength behind his resolve, dropped into the place of amusement and witnessed his half-marrow in full swing on the floor. He tapped him on the shoulder as he waltzed round, and said:

"Didn't you say when the rain and spray were lashing over you in the Bay of Biscay that you

would buy a suit of oilskins as soon as you got into port?"

"Ah, yes, captain, I said that. But there is no rain and spray lashing at me now. It's different weather here," replied the irrepressible sailor as he continued to play his part in the harmony of the evening.

The captain had brought some friends to witness and enjoy the discomfiture of his "oddity," but the bright retort turned the tables against him, and established the opinion with them that Ralph instead of being half-witted was at any rate on that occasion very ready-witted. They said they would not have lost the sight of seeing the joke for anything. Macgregor wisely entered into the fun, and admitted that Ralph had scored in a way that he had not anticipated.

Meanwhile the new captain was discussed at home with striking regularity. Opinions varied as to how long he would last and what would be the cause of his downfall. Quotations from the Scriptures were used in profusion, the favourite of which was: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Their faces wore an aspect of great concern, and they ominously shook their heads in token of sinister developments that were to bring much tribulation to their friend who had broken the law of brotherhood. A letter was received by Mr Hobkirk from the captain giving a graphic description of his passage and the general prospects for dispatch at the port of discharge. Dealing incidentally with his future plans, he remarked in passing: "I cannot close without briefly saying how much I owe you for the honour you have done me by entrusting so valuable a property and such important interests to my keeping. May I assure you that it is my intention to see that you are well rewarded for the confidence you have placed in your humble servant." The owner went into ecstasy over this letter and showed it to many of his friends as evidence against their adverse opinion and as an indication of unusual capacity. Some of them drily remarked: "The letter may be all right, but we believe in results, and advise you to wait until you see your accounts." These nasty insinuations, however, did not in any way shake the confidence of the owner. Each communication dazzled his imagination and gave him further opportunity for extolling the rare gifts of his valuable skipper who was dashing his vessel along in a way that amazed the inhabitants of the sleepy town to which she belonged. The first voyage was made in quick time, and the profits were satisfactory. His treatment of the crew was not all kindness, but they were rather proud to be able to say that they had sailed with a dare-devil who had lost a suit of sails crossing the Bay by sheer carrying on; besides he was generous in the distribution of food and grog, and this was a trait that palliated all other defects. On his arrival home the interview between him and his employer was of the most cordial character, and he was sent on another voyage with a free hand to act in chartering and other things, as his judgement led him to think was in the best interests of the vessel. On this occasion he went to Landscrona with coals, and from there to a Russian place called Windau in ballast. On arrival off this port he left the mate in charge with instructions to dodge about while he went ashore to see if he could get a good charter. In less than two hours he was aboard again with the pilot, and the ship proceeded into the harbour to load at a high rate of freight for London. The news of the unexpected arrival and unique fixture created quite a flutter in shipping circles. Hobkirk's former critics became suddenly enamoured of this remarkable captain, and his fame spread far and wide. He was held up as an example of greatness to his less successful contemporaries, and they in turn secretly desired a tragic end for him. Hobkirk being a pillar of the church, deemed it necessary when he took his walks abroad to hang his head in saintly humility. If he came across any of his friends he warned them to guard against covetousness, and should prosperity such as his come to them they were adjured to subdue any inclination to pride.

"We have need to subdue vanity, haughtiness, self-glorification, and other worldly ways. I often read and ponder over these awful words," said this sanctified commercial prince: "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters, but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind."

At the time his owner was exhorting his fellow-townsmen to a closer communion with God, Captain Macgregor had given way to habits that were not commensurate with the doctrine of that righteousness which exalteth a people, and as often happens (especially aboard ship) when a bad example is shown by the master, the crew and officers drift into irregularities, and all discipline is destroyed. This was exactly what occurred aboard the *Hebe*. The master was known to be on the spree, so the mate, Munroe, thought he would have a day off, and took as a drinking chum, Ralph, the half-marrow; and, in order that they might not be disturbed, they travelled to a snapshop in the country, some miles away from the town. Instead of one day, two were spent in drinking, swearing, dancing, and, as sailors generally call it when on the spree, casting the lead—presumably to know their whereabouts. A sailor belonging to the *Hebe* got to know where they were, and persuaded a man belonging to another vessel to go with him and bring them back. They had a tough job, but at midnight of the second day they succeeded in getting them to retrace their way to the ship, the plan being to get aboard when nobody was about. Munroe was a typical sailor, full of devilment, especially when he had had a few glasses of grog. The two "plants" trudged their way conversing with great animation of what they had seen and done and what they intended to do. Ralph was ready to acquiesce in all his officer said as to future exploits. Their shipmate

reminded them (especially Ralph) that it would not be well for them if the old man got to know they had been on the loose, whereupon Ralph retorted, "I don't care a damn for the old beggar." This outburst was supplemented by more sanguinary promises on the part of Mr Munroe. At this point they were passing a farm just on the outskirts of the town, and observed some poultry. The chief officer said he would not go aboard emptyhanded, and had never done so in his life, and wouldn't do so now.

"What do you say, Ralph?"

"I say the same as you say, James," said the complacent half-marrow; "let us have a fowl for breakfast."

One cock and two hens were captured by the mate, who was full of congratulations to himself. At last one of the escorts reminded him that he would have to conceal the birds or he might be stopped and run in by the sentry.

"By gox, that's true," said Munroe; "where shall I put them?"

"In your breeches," said Ralph, sharply.

"That's first class," said he, and with Ralph's assistance they were stowed in the part of his wearing apparel where there was an abundance of room generously supplied by the tailor. They had not gone many yards when the mate showed evidences of discomfort. He was obviously suffering pain. The two escorts were by this time in kinks with laughter. Ralph asked his mate what was the matter with him.

"Matter?" said the mate, "why, the blooming things are biting me to pieces."

"Let the beasts bite," said Ralph coolly; "you cannot have them there without them doing something, you darned fool! How do you expect to get past the sentry if you go on like that? Buck up and bear it."

At this point the cock gave an unnatural guttural cry. Ralph exhorted his companion to keep the thing quiet. He replied he couldn't, and that he would stand it no longer.

"Well," said Ralph, "if you won't stand it you won't have fowl for breakfast."

"Oh, darn the breakfast! I must let them go. Help me to unbutton, for if I move they'll go mad again."

The birds were taken from their concealment. Ralph secured two, twisted their necks, stuffed one into his own nether garment, and informed the mate that he should have adopted this plan of quietening them at first.

"Here," said he, passing him the other dead hen, "two makes it far over bulky; you stow it away in yours."

"No fear," said Mr Munroe, "I'll never touch or eat a bit of fowl again as long as I live. My sufferings are too great."

"Why that's rotten nonsense," said the resourceful half-marrow; "the thing's dead."

"I don't care," responded the penitent thief, "I'll never handle them again, dead or alive. Oh, Christo, I *am* smarting!"

"Hold your blether about smarting and suffering, you fool, or you'll get me nabbed," replied Ralph, who had now concealed both roosters.

The two escorts were by this time well nigh paralytic with laughter. As they drew near to where the slumbering sentry stood, the chief officer caused great anxiety by the style of walk he was forced to assume. Ralph implored him not to go along as though he expected swine to pass between his legs, and not to put on such an agonized look. He coaxed him by the promise that he himself would attend to his wounds as soon as they got safely aboard. The good-hearted soul took infinite trouble in his rough way to fulfil the pledge he had given. They were not intercepted by the military gentleman who guarded the destiny of the port, and as soon as their feet were planted on deck Ralph exclaimed, "Now we're safe." Jack has an inherent belief in the sacredness of British territory, either floating or otherwise. He is a stout upholder of British supremacy, and conformity to the laws of other nations does not appeal to him. His creed is undisguised, and has been handed down as an heirloom from the great naval hero who smashed the combined fleets of Spain and France at Trafalgar. Here it is: "Fear God, and hate a Frenchman as the devil hates holy water." The average sailor continues to believe this to be an edict which alone can assure patriotism and divine compassion. All these things were well mixed in Ralph's brain. He never doubted the truth of them, and the one idea which brought forth the utterance, "Now we're safe," was the conviction of British supremacy and protection.

It took Mr Munroe a few days to get into working order. The news of the adventure and the sequel to it soon spread amongst the English vessels in port. There was much visiting and

jocular sympathy expressed for the prime mover, and the sailor's sense of humour was greatly touched by all he heard. The mate himself was a humourist, and after he had got over the painful period he often told the story against himself, and never failed to do so with a vividness that made it highly attractive.

The loading of the vessel was in no way delayed by this little freak, as there was no cargo down. Captain Macgregor, however, had not been seen for several days, and the vessel was nearly ready for sea. The proper agencies were instructed to have him brought aboard, drunk or sober, so he landed aboard drunk, and gave everybody an unhappy time until he was got into his bunk and sent to sleep. The next day he rose early, got all his papers and accounts made right, paid them, signed bills of lading, cleared, and put to sea with a fair wind. There were no traces of intemperance in either his behaviour or in the manner of giving orders. He talked with marked intelligence to his officer, and partook of the evening meal with him; and as he had reason to leave the table before Munroe had finished, he politely asked to be excused for doing so. This mark of consideration overshadowed his other faults and stamped him as a gentleman in the opinion of the mate. A somewhat disturbing incident followed, for the guttural voice of someone nowhere to be seen rebuked James Munroe for absenting himself from the vessel for two days and indulging in intoxicating drink to excess and for purloining a poor farmer's fowls, which even the painful results to himself could not excuse. Then followed a modest tribute to Captain Macgregor's superior morality. "It is not well that Macgregor should ever taste alcohol," said the voice; "the slightest drop takes effect and causes him to appear intoxicated when he is not." Then there came from the stairs the almost incoherent announcement that a stormy passage was to be experienced. Then the voice fluttered away, and left only the sound of creaking timbers and the weird moan of the wind. Munroe was riveted with dumb terror, and when speech came to him he remarked: "That's darned funny," and proceeded on deck to attend to his duties. In a short time he was joined by the captain, who was promptly informed of what had been heard.

"Ah," said the skipper, in dead earnest, "that must have been a warning to you and to me to regulate our lives aright."

"I don't know about the warning, but these visitations you talk about are not very canny," responded the mate.

"How dare you complain of being reminded of absenting yourself from your duties and stealing poultry and concealing them in a manner that is disgraceful?" sternly replied the captain.

"All right," said Munroe in a voice obviously agitated, "say no more about it."

Macgregor navigated for three days after leaving, with great vigour and commendable care, though it was known that he was tipping. He seemed to have an aversion to Ralph when he had imbibed too freely. This could not be accounted for, as until recently Ralph was very popular with the captain. After passing Elsinore he commenced to drink harder, but always kept his watch until the Scaw was rounded. Then irregularities became visible. Strong westerly winds were encountered after passing the Jutland coast. The men knew by experience whenever a light was kept burning in the stateroom at night, when the wind blew hard and a press of canvas was being carried, that the intention was, not to take a stitch in until something carried away. The sailors dreaded these occasions, as the little craft was smothered at times and never a bit of rest could be had until the wind eased down. Ten days after leaving Windau the *Hebe* entered the Commercial Docks, London. She had been flogged heavily all the way home. A record passage was considered to have been made under the circumstances, and several vessels that had left before and at the same time were sheltering in Elsinore roads, while others had put into Norwegian ports. Mr Hobkirk was much gratified by his captain's performances, and would not listen to the petty gossip that had been sent by some busybodies about him drinking and being absent from the vessel while at the loading port. He deemed it necessary, however, to mention the matter to the captain, who on his arrival at the Tyne was asked to spend an evening with the owner and discuss things generally. The use of offices was dispensed with in these days. All accounts and correspondence were kept and carried on from the owner's private house. When the interview took place, Captain Macgregor was at his best. Hobkirk was like a willow in his hands. He nervously introduced the subject of intemperance. It was eloquently and contemptuously denied; and just as the owner was in the act of repeating what had been told him, a stern voice came down the chimney rebuking him for lack of confidence in a man who had given such proof of integrity. Hobkirk felt uneasy, but the matter of accounts which were not quite satisfactory had to be dealt with. As soon as they were mentioned Macgregor fumed into white heat and rose to go, and got nearly to the door when a sharp angry voice came down the chimney demanding that the captain should be brought back again and peace made with him. Hobkirk was by this time in such a state of terror he begged the gallant commander to take his seat, and apologised for having unintentionally offended him. Again the voice came: "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined." This was the climax. Hobkirk was beside himself with fear, and tremblingly requested that all should be forgotten.

"I assure you, Macgregor, I have the fullest confidence in you. By the way, did you hear

anything just now?"

"Yes," said the captain, "and although I'm not a nervous man it has made a very deep impression upon me. Good night, sir."

The captain never had the honour of being invited to his owner's home again. There were those who said that Hobkirk believed him to have communion with his Satanic majesty, or to possess supernatural power. Hobkirk was undoubtedly convinced that the mill was haunted by a spirit favourably disposed towards the man who had claimed to be his ideal shipmaster. He became afraid to doubt his honesty or his sobriety lest his nights might be disturbed and his days filled with trouble.

"Ah," said he to a friend in whom he had confided, "Solomon the son of David was right when he said these words: 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding, for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.'"

"Very shrewd, very fine," said his friend, "but you might have added one or two other things that the great Hebrew King's son said. What do you think of these few words of wisdom and rebuke: 'But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh?' It is no use, Hobkirk; I told you all along that Macgregor would have to be watched, but you were carried away with his money-making, his glamour and letter-writing, and now he's your master. I'll tell you another thing old Solomon said: 'Open rebuke is better than secret love, and faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.' My advice is: have another master ready for the *Hebe* as soon as she gets back."

Hobkirk confessed to his friend that the quotations from his favourite author and his own frank statements had made a deep impression on him, though he was bound to admit that his confidence was only partially shaken in the man to whom he had pinned his faith.

"Very well, we will see," responded the friend as he passed out of the door.

Mr Hobkirk's meditations kept him awake right through the night, and at an early hour in the morning he boarded the *Hebe*, and found the captain and his men energetically preparing to take her to sea. The cargo was all in. A gentle westerly breeze was blowing. The topsails were set; the moorings were let go; and the little vessel proceeded out of the harbour bound to Copenhagen.

The owner went over the bar with her, and on getting outside had a private conversation with the master, the nature of which was never disclosed, but so far as Macgregor was concerned it was animated. Mr Hobkirk, before leaving with the pilot, gave the crew his benediction, and slipped into the cobbles which waited to convey them ashore. The pilot, observing that the flag was being dipped, broke the silence by remarking:

"She's off once more, sir, and they're dipping the blood and guts of old England to say goodbye to us."

The owner was indignant, and smartly retorted:

"I wish you to understand, pilot, that I will not have the British flag insulted in my presence. When you speak of that flag, sir, you must speak of it with reverence, and remember that it has never been lowered to an enemy."

The pilot, who had been a sailor and captain, was amazed at the owner's ignorance in not knowing that seamen were accustomed to speak of the flag in this way. Had he been a foreigner who dared to address him in a similar tone of ill-nature, he would have thrown him overboard. As it was, he merely remarked in an ironic accent that Mr Hobkirk "had a lot to learn yet." By the time the cobbles got ashore, the fine clipper brig was nearly hull down.

Macgregor had prevailed upon the same crew to go with him again, and the owner's back was scarcely turned before he commenced to drink and ill-use the poor half-witted Ralph who was in his watch. There does not appear to have been any reason for this except that of alcoholic viciousness. The dark horror of secret drinking quickly developed into hideous proportions; it gripped him like a vice; his bleary eyes and wild fits of delirium foreshadowed inevitable collapse. He raved about things that were supposed to be whispered in his ears by unholy voices; he saw wild beasts of the most ferocious character, which were not there, and imagined them grinding their teeth in anxiety to devour him; he alternately yelled and whispered that rats, weasels and wild cats were crawling over his body and gnawing at his vitals. In the paroxysm of frenzy he lay down on the cabin floor and tried to bury his head from the sight of the demons that he imagined pursued him. He cried out in pitiful accents to be shielded from them, and in the effort lost complete capacity for coherent speech. The crew were thrown into a condition of chilly fear. A consultation was held, and it was decided to have him carefully watched and occasional doses of brandy administered. For three days a fine westerly breeze had raced over the dappled sea. It had varied in strength, and nearly three hundred miles had been covered when the wind died away to a calm which continued nearly twenty-four hours. Then an air sprang up from the east and gradually gained in

strength to a whole sail breeze. The captain had shown alarming signs of sudden recovery during the early hours of the fourth day. The *delirium tremens* had apparently left him, and he became subdued and attractively rational. Munroe, who did not possess much intelligence, knowledge or ambition, expressed his satisfaction that the drunken beggar was about to resume control, as he was sick of being both skipper and mate. As a matter of fact, responsibility did not sit lightly on this frivolous officer, and it may be that he knew the measure of his capacity. Ralph heard all the mate had to say, and quietly remarked:

"They haven't left him yet. He's only at the cunning, dangerous stage."

"What do you mean, Ralph?" said Munroe (for in spite of his reputed semi-idiotcy Ralph was supposed to possess intuitive foresight).

"I mean what I say. Now's the time to watch him, or he may have any one of us by the throat before we know where we are. I'll be the first he'll go for," said Ralph, in broad vernacular; "he used to like me, but now that he's taken on to drink I feel that he wants to kill me."

At midnight on the fourth day from sailing Ralph had just relieved the wheel, and Macgregor had come on deck, and commenced to walk the quarterdeck in his usual dignified style. The vessel was being sailed by the wind, and his eyes became fixed aloft, watching, as was his custom, whether she was properly steered. At last he broke silence by shouting out:

"Hard up! Don't you see the rocks right ahead?" Then he sprang at Ralph like a tiger, and had nearly torn his clothes off him before other members of the crew came to his aid. The captain's strength was superhuman. It took four men to get him into his berth and lash him securely down, and in a few minutes he died in a screaming fit of madness.

It was promptly arranged that the body should, if possible, be landed in England, and as there was blowing a whole sail breeze from the east, her tail was put to it and then a heated discussion arose as to the proper course to steer for Tynemouth Castle. The mate said W. by N. Ralph insisted W. by S. from their position would land her right under the castle foot. As both stubbornly maintained they were right, it was agreed to come to a compromise by steering W. by N. one watch and W. by S. the next, and so on until the land was made. After this knotty question was settled an incident almost incredible in its awful gruesomeness took place. Ralph became smitten by a revengeful mania. He went below, took his deceased commander's clothes off, put his body on the table and commenced to lash at it with a piece of rope, exclaiming at every stroke, "You thrashed me, you tiger, when you were living, and I'll thrash you now that you're dead." The mate happened to go into the cabin while this performance was going on, and was stricken with chill horror.

"My God, Ralph, what are you doing?" the mate shouted.

"Don't you see what I'm doing, you d——n fool?" said Ralph, "I'll teach the villain to lash me for doing nothing!"

"But," said Munroe, "his body will be marked, and we will be had up for murder!"

"There is no fear of that. A corpse never gets marked by beating it."

This assurance relieved Mr Munroe so much that he covered his strange companion with profuse compliments on his knowledge of the inanimate human body, and nicknamed him 'Ralph-ower-mony.' After this extraordinary being had finished his gruesome revenge on the dead body of his master, it was placed in a hastily-constructed deal casement, and put on top of the longboat, and then covered over with the Union Jack and an awning, so that it might be kept cool.

There is no class of Englishmen who regard the national flag with such reverence as the sailor; to him it is a divinity, used as an emblem of glory, or sorrow, as the case may be. He disdains making the noisy, vulgar use of it that is sometimes practised at meetings by unctuous, ill-read politicians, whose abnormal egotism, impudence and ignorance cause them to boast of a devotion for the flag equalled by no one else. The sailor, on the other hand, speaks of it as a thing too sacred to act circus games with. If his shipmate dies at sea, he is sewn up in canvas and covered over with the Union Jack; a heavy weight is placed at his feet, and, with heads bowed low, they silently commit his remains to the deep. If a sailor dies in port, the flag is used to cover the coffin as a solemn token of having died while serving under its beneficent protection. Think of the beautiful sentiment that governs the sailor's ideal of using it, and then, if you can, think of the blatant political person and the use he puts it to! How it reminds you of Petticoat Lane, and makes you pray that England may be delivered from such disgusting impertinence!

Mr Munroe had assumed command, and discussed with his crew the idea of a burial at sea. This was strenuously opposed by Ralph, who insisted that the body should be carried to England in case the question of foul play should arise. This course was adopted, and great precaution was taken to prevent premature decomposition. A smart breeze from the N.E. carried the little brig rapidly towards the land, and on the morning of the third day she sailed into the roadstead for which she had been steered. The dual courses had worked out an accurate landfall. Before the anchor was let go, the pilot cobble came alongside.

"Where's the captain?" asked the pilot.

"The beggar's dead, sir," answered Ralph, ignoring the respect he owed to his superior officer, Mr Munroe, who requested him to keep his tongue quiet and allow him to speak. The anchor was dropped, sails furled and flag put half-mast, and the pilot was requested to go ashore and acquaint the owner with what had happened. At eleven o'clock every forenoon a few well-known owners met in the parlour of an inn, there to discuss matters of personal and public interest. The banking accounts and characters of their neighbours who did not belong to the coterie were pulled remorselessly to pieces. If they happened to have progressive ideas and were successful, their speedy bankruptcy was predicted. Each member of the party had "churchwardens" kept in a bracket with his name on, and only one glass of whiskey and one pipe of tobacco was indulged in until the evening sitting, when they did not stick at trifles. But the keynote of these forenoon and evening sittings was *money*. Mr Hobkirk and his friends had just got quietly seated and the conversation turned on the vessel that had been observed to anchor in the roads, when the pilot in wild excitement burst in upon their privacy, exclaiming:

"The *Hebe* has put back with the captain's dead body aboard!"

"How did he come by his death?" asked several of the party; "he was a stout, strong-looking man?"

"They say he died of drink," said the pilot.

"Ah," responded the comforting friends, "we told you, Hobkirk, what you might expect. You remember the voice coming down the chimney? That was his voice. We have been informed he could talk two ways. We never believed in him, and told you so."

"I admit it, gentlemen, I admit it. I have been deceived, but please do not refer to the chimney affair again; that unnerves me."

Instructions were given to the pilot to land the body of Captain Macgregor, and without any show of mourning the remains of this once brilliant man were put to rest in a drunkard's grave, close by the sea, far away from his own home. The story of how he came by his death and what subsequently occurred was told in all its ghastly detail to the pilots, who in turn spread it abroad, without diminishing the account given to them. Another captain was quickly engaged, and the *Hebe* sailed on her voyage. The late owners of Captain Macgregor were informed of his death, and about two weeks afterwards a comely-looking lady with a little boy of four years old called at Mr Hobkirk's house and asked for an interview. She was received with unfeigned displeasure. The owner commenced a vigorous tirade against the man who he considered had wronged him by killing himself with drink. The lady suddenly cut this flow of vindictive denunciation short by stamping her foot on the floor and shouting out: "Stop! I will listen to this no longer. I am the widow of the late captain. I have come from Scotland, not to hear your coarse abuse of him, but to learn where you have laid his body. Tell me this, and then I desire to hear no more from you. His effects and any money due from you to him you may send to this address."

Hobkirk interjected:

"He has no money due."

"Very well, then," responded Mrs Macgregor, "there will be none to send; but I must have his effects."

Hobkirk by this time had read the address. It startled him. He became apologetic and asked if the baronet whose address she had given was in any way related to her.

"Yes," said she, "he is my father, and my late husband's uncle."

"Ah," said Hobkirk, "I knew my judgement was right in believing him to belong to a family of distinction. He was a man of great ability, and had a fascinating address. What a sad thing that he should have given way to drink."

"I must request you not to speak of Captain Macgregor in this way to me. Whatever faults he may have had are covered up in his tomb. If he has wronged you, be frank and tell me, so that I may atone for it in some way. You have my address. I came here principally to visit his grave and arrange for a tombstone to be put up. Please be good enough to allow someone to take me to it."

"If I may, I should like to take you to it myself."

But the little lady declined. The fine dignity of her bearing, and the charm of her bow when she said "good-day" to him, covered the parochial potentate with shame for having received and treated her as a commonplace captain's wife. Mr Hobkirk conveyed to his friends at their evening sitting at the inn all that had passed between himself and his distinguished visitor. He was smartly censured for being shortsighted in not discerning that she belonged to the gentry, and he was charged with the possibility of getting the leading citizens of the

town into bad repute.

"Why," said they, "she may write to the papers about it, and then there will be a fine ado."

The tragedy of her husband's death and her visit created a sensation of no small importance in the district. Local gossip made much of it, and for a time the great Mr Hobkirk lost caste. The poor, bereaved lady was the centre of sympathy. They thought of her standing by the grave-side, holding her little son by the hand, and, wrapped by the veil of sorrow, offering up a humble prayer to Almighty God, and then quietly passing from the scene of sadness and death to make her way home.

IV

PIRACY IN THE ARCHIPELAGO

Who can fully estimate all the world owes to Providence and nature in propagating the fervid Scottish race? They are found in every continent, climbing from the three-legged stool in an office, or from any other subordinate position. They toil upward with caution and perseverance. They always aim at the top of the tree, and multitudes of them succeed. But one of the Scot's extraordinary characteristics is his deference to superiors. At an early age the average Scot is characterized by this passion to get on by thrift, love of "siller," a puritanic mode of thought, and an imperishable love of his country which, however, does not prevent him from leaving it in order to enter into mercantile or other pursuits in the farthest parts of the earth—or the nearest, it really does not matter—so long as he gets a decent start.

Archie Macvie's father, who was an elder of a Presbyterian Kirk, managed one of the flax factories in an important town north of the Forth. Archie was the youngest of the lads, and by far and away the cleverest, but he had made up his mind to engage himself as an apprentice aboard an English brig that was discharging flax for the owners of the factory. This determination came as a great shock to the Macvies, who had pictured their boy in the position one day of a popular minister of their own denomination. Every strictly proper device was used to change the mind of their laddie, but all to no purpose. His imagination, and perhaps his desire to minimise the grief of his parents, led him to urge that in a few years he would come to them, not only a captain, but an owner. The old people were secretly pleased to hear these aspirations from the lips of their much-beloved boy, but they felt it their duty to treat the case with becoming solemnity. "Ah, Archie," said his father, "I must warn you never to allow the things of this world to take possession of your thoughts in a way that will keep religion from you. I would remind you of the words of Solomon: 'Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.'" However, he went to sea.

After four years and a half of hard training he had gained the reputation of being one of the smartest young fellows that sailed out of his port. He had become quite a favourite, not only with his shipmates, but with the captain and owner. There was neither surprise nor jealousy when the master recommended that his indentures should be endorsed, and that he should be given the mate's situation, which had become vacant. At this time he was in his twentieth year, and before he had reached twenty-one his owner gave him command of the vessel which about six years before he had joined as an apprentice. His rapid advancement and singular success as a shipmaster made his contemporaries speak of him as likely to reach the very highest place in the profession before he had attained his thirtieth year. Their estimate of the highest position was really very modest, as the largest vessel belonging to the port did not exceed 700 tons deadweight, and of these there were only about half-a-dozen. The general public rarely saw them except when they came off a long voyage and had repairs to do. Those occasions were looked upon as not merely incidental, but historic. The whole country-side turned out to witness the advent of what they conceived to be a leviathan; the vessel herself was dressed from truck to rail on every mast with bunting, and there was a corresponding display of it on shore. Events such as births, deaths, marriages, and other more or less interesting doings were accurately remembered by a visitation of this kind. The local almanac chronicled the occasion as minutely as it did the death of Nelson or the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne. So that if any lapse of memory occurred a reference to this touchstone of local history put matters right. Archie Macvie had longed for the time to come when someone would offer him command of a large vessel. His reputation as a clever, pushing, steady-going shipmaster had reached beyond the circle of local critics, which entitled him to expect speedy promotion. His owner, as well as other people, predicted great things of him, and it was whispered that he had immediate prospects that were dazzling in their lucrative possibilities. A landed proprietor, who owned the whole of a handsome barque, had heard of his fame, and wrote requesting Macvie to come and see

him. The interview sealed the captain's future destiny. Mr Rockfeller received him with becoming dignity; but after a few minutes' conversation with the young captain his icy manner melted. He became aware that the man whom he had asked to be seated in the sumptuously-furnished drawing-room was his equal, if not his superior, in knowledge and intelligence.

"Your youthful appearance surprises me," said the lord of the manor.

"Yes," responded the shrewd Scotsman; "I have been told that before, and have often had reason to be grateful to a kind Providence in not necessarily prohibiting me from occupying a position of trust because of my juvenile appearance."

"Very good, very good," said Rockfeller. "And now, captain, I wish at once to offer you command of the first vessel that brought gold from Australia. Your wage will be £12 per month; and in order to give you a good start I offer you an eighth of the *Boadicea* at a low price. If you have the money to pay for it, well and good; if not I will be content to allow you to work it off."

"Your kindness overpowers me," replied Macvie; "I am sorry I have not sufficient money saved to pay for the share you so generously give me the opportunity of taking, and as I make it a rule never to purchase a thing I cannot pay for in cash, I am reluctantly compelled to refuse it."

"Very well," said the owner, "give me what you can spare, and I will forego the balance, and hand you a bill of sale for eight sixty-fourths. I do this not only because of the favourable impression you have made, but to make you feel that your interest is not merely that of a commander, but that of part owner with myself."

"I thank you; but may I suggest that this generosity be postponed until you have tested whether I will suit you or not?" said the lucky captain.

"No, I will risk that," replied Mr Rockfeller. "And now there is nothing left for me to say except to request that you join the vessel at once; and you have a free hand to do what you consider best with her."

Captain Macvie hurried home and conveyed to his young wife the good fortune that had come to them. He also informed his aged parents, whom he had not seen since his first home-leaving, of all that had taken place, and expressed his regret that he could not visit them before sailing on a voyage to the Piraeus, but hoped to do so on his return. This letter became a family heirloom. The joy of the old people was reflected on the whole family, and also on their friends, and the congratulations were numerous and sincere. In less than a week from the time of being engaged, the *Boadicea* was towed over the bar, and she sailed away followed by a north-east wind. The hurrahs of the visitors after embarking on the tug reverberated the joyous tidings of goodwill, and soon the ship and her jolly crew passed from view into the southern haze.

The Eastern question was causing great anxiety in diplomatic circles; trouble was fast brewing into open hostility, and before the *Boadicea* arrived at the port of discharge, the great Russian war of 1854 had broken out with all its hellish mismanagement and criminal indifference to the needs of the finest soldiers in the whole world. They were badly generalled, shockingly clothed and meagrely fed on provisions that the ordinary civilian would scarcely give to swine. Complaints of the grossest mismanagement were sent home and were unheeded; while the predatory, heartless scoundrels who had contracts were allowed to amass wealth by shamelessly robbing poor Tommy of his food and clothes. Mon Dieu! What forbearance the thinking, sympathetic portion of the British people must have had to endure it, knowing that their fellow-subjects and kinsfolk were being done to death by some contractors and by the callousness and incompetency of dunderheaded politicians and drawing-room warriors! It is a sickening subject that cannot be approached without feelings of anger.

The *Boadicea* made a quick passage, and was boarded on her arrival by swarms of Levantine gentlemen, each clamouring for first place to get her in hand to charter. The declaration of war had created a wild demand for transport tonnage. Sensational freights were offered for the veriest rattletraps, and as the young commander of the *Boadicea* estimated his craft to be one of the finest of her class afloat, he made a counter-bid which startled the Grecian modesty of his interesting visitors. The negotiations were animated, and before the day closed the vessel was chartered at a rate that would pay back her original cost in less than twelve months. Over and above this it was agreed that the captain should receive legitimate gratuities that amounted to more than double his wage per month. The director of transports ordered the vessel to be taken to Malta to load stores immediately she had finished discharging, and gave instructions that overtime should be worked in order to get the cargo of much needed supplies to the seat of war. It was a stirring time for the captain and his crew. In four days the holds were emptied and she sailed from the Piraeus on the fifth with 180 tons of sand ballast aboard. In five days from leaving Athens she arrived in the beautiful harbour of Valetta, and four days after left again with a full cargo of foods, stores and other supplies for Constantinople for orders. Every stitch of canvas was set after getting

clear of the harbour; studding sails lower and aloft were spread to the kiss of the singing wind, and the officers were made to understand that there was to be hard cracking on; nothing was to be taken in until the maximum amount of endurance of spars, ropes and rigging had been reached. The breeze freshened and the sea curled its white tops into angry combers. Captain Macvie walked the starboard quarterdeck with an air of dignity and luxury of dress that would have called forth the supreme contempt of his associates of earlier days. They would have stigmatized him as a fine-weather dandy, and not a true British sailor. The captain had never been past Gibraltar until he got command of his present vessel. As a matter of fact, he had rarely been off the coast, and never at any time as far south as Cape Finisterre. He had acquired large ideas of the magnificence that should be observed by a captain aboard a vessel of the *Boadicea's* size and class. He had heard also that the men liked to see monarchical display, and that is why he adopted it so naturally. The third day after leaving Malta the fore-castle hands were congregated on the topgallant fore-castle during the dog-watch from six to eight. The discussion was of an animated character. The second officer, who was an old hand in these waters, stood amongst them, and the speaker frequently referred to him in order that his statements might be confirmed. When the second officer came aft, the captain remarked that the boys seemed to have had a heated discussion.

"Mr Robb, may I take the liberty of asking if it is anything that may not be conveyed to me?"

"Not at all," said Mr Robb; "they were yarning about pirates that infest the Grecian Archipelago. They sneak out of the bays and from under the islands with the suddenness of a rocket. They have very swift schooners, many of them built in America for the slave trade, and they are full of well-armed, bloodthirsty villains who stick at nothing." It was according to the strictly observed ethics of South Spainer discipline that the commander never was supposed to so far lower the supremacy of high office as to speak directly to a common sailor, but only through his officers. Mr Robb took it for granted that this law had been rigidly observed, and therefore said to the captain.

"You know that fair-haired man who was talking so excitedly?"

Macvie, not wishing to appear familiar with his men, and perhaps in order to impress the officer with an air of majesty, replied:

"No, sir, I do not know him, but I think I *recognize* the sailor to whom you desire to call my attention. I saw him gesticulating, and I think I heard him swear frightfully."

"That may be, sir," said the second officer, "but he means no harm by it. He is indeed one of the best and bravest sailors attached to the British Mercantile Marine; and were it not a breach of etiquette, I would ask you to allow him to give you a brief account of all the curious experiences and hardships he has gone through in a short life."

"My curiosity impels me to consent, but my judgement forbids such familiarity. Had I been in charge of the *Vanquisher* I might have yielded; as it is, I must conform to the duty that devolves upon a person in my position by asking you to be the medium of communication of this sailor's strange adventures," said the captain.

"Very good," replied Robb, "then here is the story: I do not think he would like me to tell you, but he was a pirate himself for over twelve months. It came about like this. He and I were shipmates five years ago. The barque we were in was discharging at Athens. We asked for liberty to go ashore one Saturday night; he got a few glasses of grog too much, and became pally with some Greek sailors who spoke broken English. They asked him to go with them to some place of amusement, and in spite of my pleading with him not to do so, he went; the result being they decoyed him aboard their own vessel, which proved to be a pirate schooner. When he came to himself after his drunken sleep, the vessel was far out at sea. He was soon made to understand what he would be expected to do, and the terrible conditions under which he would be permitted to live. He was asked to take the oath of fidelity to their cause, which carried with it awful obligations and consequences if not rigidly adhered to; and after the hazy alcoholic stupor had been shivered out of him, he grasped the situation, and not only agreed to their code, but became, externally, the most enterprising of the gang. They were indebted to him for much useful information, though for some time his *bonâ-fides* were suspected because of his pushful partiality for conflict with any nationality rather than his own. He persuaded his friends that six out of ten British vessels kept firearms and powder magazines aboard, and that foreigners, such as Swedes, Norwegians, Danes and Germans gave in much sooner than his own countrymen. They cordially agreed with this, hence rarely gave chase after a Britisher except when he suggested it, and it was policy for him to do this sometimes in order to keep on perfectly good terms with them. He has told me that over and over again they boarded Norwegian vessels laden with flax, tallow or grain, and the crew asked them to take what they wanted and no resistance would be made. This, he says, was the best plan, because it saved blood from being spilt on either side. They used to fill the craft's holds from the cargo of the captured vessel; take any money or valuables, such as chronometers, that might be aboard; all firearms, gunpowder and implements of warfare had to be given up; and a squad of armed pirates covered their comrades who were operating for the benefit of the whole.

The grief of having to leave my old shipmate behind was only equalled by the mystery of what had become of him. He was very popular with all of us in the fore-castle. His quick humour and gifted capacity to entertain and amuse endeared him to everybody. A born musician, he could play on almost any instrument, sing comic songs, and step-dance as well as any professional. His great weakness was love of gay company and grog. He belonged to very well-to-do, highly respectable people; and their sorrow at his supposed death was very bitter. His mother declared that the light had gone out of her life, and begged me never to cease trying to find out when on my voyages whether he was alive or not. The old lady said she feared the worst, but never ceased to pray and hope that some day he would be brought back to them. A little over a year had elapsed since the fateful night of his disappearance. I was on my second voyage in the same vessel, but had been promoted to boatswain. We had rounded Matapan with a snoring breeze on the port beam. We had just opened the Gulf of Nauplia out when the look-out man shouted, 'A vessel on the port bow!' She was carrying full sail, and steering towards us. We soon discerned that she was on an unfriendly errand, and that the intention was to try and board us. No one could be seen about the decks except the helmsman and a man apparently on the look out. If we altered our course she did the same; and whichever way we went, her sailing qualities outmatched ours. The excitement had grown to fever heat, as a great conflict was now imminent. Our men had been supplied with muskets, and told to conceal themselves and use them when the critical time came, and to make sure that every shot was effectual. Two small cannon, which were fixtures on the taffrail, were loaded ready to do service. At last she came within hailing distance of our weather beam. A man shouted through a speaking-trumpet in mongrel English to 'Heave to!' We did not heed this insolent command, but kept going. In a few minutes more a peremptory command came through the speaking-trumpet to 'Heave to, or we would be fired upon.'

"'Now's the time,' hissed our captain; 'we will do some damage to ourselves, but, by God, we'll teach them to order an English ship to be hove to! We must run right into his midships. I will give the order at the proper moment. The thing must be done with the suddenness of fork lightning. It is not the shooting so much as the sinking, and the panic that must be created by the suddenness of our action. 'Hard down the helm!' cried the captain. 'Let go your weather braces, and stand by to use your muskets and bayonets too if any of them attempt to board us.' In less than a minute the pirate schooner's doom was sealed. Our vessel struck her with such force amidships that she sank almost immediately. Instead of tacking their vessel, and getting out of our way, which they might have done, they were encouraged to fight; and the man who didn't was the man who has attracted your attention to-night. So far as we could tell, only himself and three of the Greeks were saved. They jumped aboard unarmed, and Jack, or 'Curly' as he was called, shouted out to me and the captain who he was. We were dumbfounded. He hastily told us how he had managed to bring about the disastrous results to the pirates, and asked the captain to put the Greeks, or whatever they were, into a boat and set them adrift. This was promptly agreed to, but before the painter was let go one of the sailors asked permission to shoot the beggars before they left, to prevent them killing somebody else. But our captain only laughed and ordered them from alongside. After cordially shaking hands with the captain and all the crew, Jack requested to be allowed to assist in clearing away the wreckage caused by the collision, and fixing the spare jib-boom, for that was the only spar carried away. Jack told us the pirates thought they had a soft thing on, as we seemed so undecided what to do, and that we could not have adopted a better move than we did. 'There is nothing frightens them like panic, and I played up to it as near as I could; but, by thunder! I played a high game. I stood to be shot by either you or my Christian friends,' said Jack; 'and upon my soul I feel that I have played them a dirty trick.' 'Not a bit of it,' said I. 'You have done your country, and especially us, a great service by helping to rid the world of a few murderous thieves and cunning assassins.'

"'Oh, damn it!' interjected Jack, 'I cannot allow you to call us such villanous names as that. My late friends considered their trade quite as honourable as yours. They knew that they were breaking the law by carrying on a game of what is called pillage or brigandage at sea; but then they thought the law was all wrong, and that it was unlawful to enforce such restrictions, or put any penalty on freedom of action. And, by Jove! their arguments were almost convincing; especially when we had to fight for what we wanted, and got wounded.'

"'I see that you have got scars on your cheek and hands. Were they received by encounter with some ship's crew?'

"'Yes,' said Jack, 'but not my own countrymen. It was a deadly fight.' And then he became pensive. I could see his mind was working, but he refused to be drawn into further conversation; and from that day to this I have not been able to get anything more out of him on that score. Though when he is in the mood, he relates the comical side of the sea-rovers' life in a most fascinating way, and frankly admits the better side to have a charm about it that only those who have lived the life can know. 'But,' he would add, 'I would rather stand here and ask that I might be shot if I thought there was any possibility of ever becoming one of them again. On the criminal side it resembles hell's tatterdemalions let loose. To call them thieves and murderers is to flatter them. Their vicious scoundrelism transcends either murder or thieving.'"

The hero of this sensational story was a well-built young fellow of twenty-three or twenty-four years old; he stood about five feet nine, and had the appearance of being possessed of

great physical power; his cleanshaven face disclosed a beautiful mouth and two fine rows of teeth; his chin and nose indicated robust strength of character, and his large blue eyes, sparkling under well-formed eyebrows and a massive forehead, both spoke and laughed in a fascinating way while his tongue was speechless. In short, he was a good-looking, typical sailor, whose natural gifts made him popular and much sought after to amuse his comrades by doing a step-dance, telling a funny yarn, singing a comic song, or he would entertain them by reading from a book.

"I have told this tale at your own request, captain," said the second officer. "My main object has been not only to interest you, but to inform you of the dangers that may be expected in navigating these piratical waters. And I have been asked by Curly to warn you against hugging the land. He advises keeping well in mid-channel, as you are more likely to carry a true wind; and if any of the rovers should make their appearance and attempt pursuit, he says the thing that would terrify them most would be to shape at running them down; but if that course is adopted it must not be done in a halfhearted way. There should be no first-you-will and then-you-won't policy. Nothing but a daring, unfaltering attitude directed fair for the amidstips can be effectual. They fear the loss of their vessel more than the disablement of a few men; and the leader of the band fears as much as anything the creation of panic amongst his followers. Damage to the running down vessel must be counted upon, but it must be arranged so that the other gets hit so badly that, instead of fighting they have to swim for their lives or plead for mercy. Curly informs me this is their prowling time, and they may be expected to pop out from any of the islands as we pass along."

Captain Macvie was much impressed, and thanked his second officer for relating to him a story so full of keen interest and useful information.

"You may rely on the facts being correct," said Mr Robb, "but should you have any doubts as to the authenticity of some of the things I have been talking to you about, reserve your final judgement, because it is pretty certain that you won't be long in this trade until you find out I have not exaggerated one single incident, and that there are gentlemen cruising in these waters who claim a law unto themselves, and who make a speciality of brigandage and murder. I understand from Curly that many of them are educated and well-bred, and that it is the love of adventure that causes that section of them to take to the life. They are adepts at playing the double role of society person and murderous buccaneer. In both capacities they are fascinating, and really irresistible at a ball or a dinner-party; so much so, indeed, that it is not an uncommon thing for young ladies of gentle birth to become their wives, and in exceptional cases share their adventures."

"Oh," said Captain Macvie, "you must not suppose that I doubt the truth of what you have related to me. I think it quite possible, and we must be prepared to cope with any sudden emergency of a similar character. I must now bid you good-night. You will find instructions in the night order book. I do not wish to be disturbed unless something unusual occurs."

Right through the night the *Boadicea* romped along at the rate of ten knots an hour, and when the captain came on deck at eight o'clock the following morning she was flying through the Cerigo passage under double-reefed topsails and courses.

"There is no fear of any pirates troubling us if this continues," remarked the captain.

"Not any," responded the chief mate, "and I think we shall have more of it before we have less. You won't be able to carry this press of canvas after passing Andros. We will have the wind more on the port quarter, and she will bury herself after opening the Ægean Sea."

"Very well," said Macvie in an angry tone, "let her bury herself; and in order that her qualities may be tested before we reach this wonderful sea of yours, let the reefs out of the topsails and masthead them. I desire you to know, Mr Scrivener, that I shall be the judge when to shorten sail and when to set it. Do you imagine, sir, because I only commanded a collier before coming here that I do not know my business? Please remember that I am master of this craft, not you."

This was a crushing rebuke for the mate, and he resolved that if the masts were going over the side he would never make another suggestion while his chief was on deck. The additional canvas did not improve matters, as her flat bows sent the sea churning angrily ahead, and the spray flew all over her in smothering clouds. Mr Scrivener was secretly glad that she was "making such a mess of herself," as he called it, but he did not deem it prudent to say so to his captain. But, as he afterwards said, it was not necessary to do this, for he saw the skipper was thinking hard enough himself, though he was too proud to own it, and would have seen the masts go by the board rather than show weakness in shortening sail after what had passed. This freak, however, kept him on deck all day and all night, for there was no abatement of either wind or sea, until she was swept into the Dardanelles. The sail had to be shortened so that she might be hove to, and the boat sent ashore at Chanak to receive pratique and a permit to allow her to pass through into the sea of Marmora. Many an expensive salvage case and many a life has been lost through this barbarous system. It is the worst part of the channel for erratic currents, and notwithstanding the disasters to life and property, it has only been possible to establish a steam launch there during the last twelve months. As soon as the boat returned with the clearance she was hoisted up, and the vessel

headed on her course through the straits. The west wind blew through the narrow passage with screaming gusts, and the volley of water was churned into flying foam as she rushed along under a heavy press of sail; for the young commander was bent on letting his officers and men see that he knew how to crack on without losing his head, and the average sailor rejoices in being able to say that he has sailed with a man who was "a slogger." On the other hand, I have more than once seen a whole crew come aft and ask the captain to reduce the sail when the vessel was burying herself and the spars and sails were in danger of being carried away; and I have more than once seen deputations of this sort sent about their business, followed by a wrathful flow of well-selected oaths that are only used by persons who have a very resourceful vocabulary. It is not an uncommon thing for men to grumble and refuse to go aloft and furl a royal or topgallant sail when it has been carried too long; and I have seen the captain spring up the rigging and appeal to their manliness to follow him. This challenge rarely fails to bring forth volunteers, and those who lag behind have been the cause of bringing torrents of wickedness into the world.

Captain Macvie was not a man who swore. He was more inclined to adhere to his rigid Presbyterian training by quoting a psalm or a proverb to emphasise displeasure or convey a rebuke. His officers did not comprehend how he could be so unemotional and yet throw so much energy and dash into the navigation of his vessel. Externally he was cool, reticent, authoritative. He gave orders peremptorily, without hesitation; and both officers and sailors like to feel that they have a strong personality commanding them. The first and second mate had formed an impression, owing to their captain never having been in these regions before, that he would frequently have to appeal to them for information and advice, and they were almost chagrined when they found that he never once showed any indication of asking for information. But what caused them to marvel was the masterful way in which he handled his vessel, and navigated her not only through amongst the islands, but through a narrow waterway that he had never seen before. The first officer ventured to make a suggestion, when drawing towards Chanak, as to the method of heaving the vessel to, so that the boat might be picked up easily. The captain retorted with almost oriental dignity.

"Sir," said he, "when I was asked to take command of this vessel I did not consent until I was perfectly assured of its being within the limit of my capacity to do so, and it has not yet occurred to me that I am incapable of carrying out what I undertook to do unaided by anyone. Please do not think me angry with you. I only wish to say that you may rely on my making use of your wide knowledge and experience when I find my capacity defective. But not having realized that yet, I prefer to depend on my own tactics in all that appertains to the navigation and handling of the ship I have the honour to command."

The mate received this piece of information in subdued silence. It took him all aback. He had not taken the trouble to ascertain whether there was force and ability behind his chief's placid, silent exterior, and the lesson he received was salutary and lasting. He watched with a critical eye the management and navigation as the *Boadicea* was pressed through the stream past Gallipoli into the sea of Marmora, and admitted to the second mate that but for the excessive carrying on there was no flaw to be found.

"Indeed," said he, "I am beginning to see that we have got our master here in everything. I'm sure he is a gentleman, and I wouldn't be surprised to find that he's a sailor as well."

The following night the wind had fallen away to a gentle breeze. The vessel was sailed close past San Stephano, and soon came within range of that weird sepulchral cry of the Turk for the return of their prophet Mahomet. I know what it is like, for I have often stood on deck and listened to the melancholy wailing call of scores of voices appealing to their God, and filling the air with thrilling pathos, until I have been stricken with a sense of sadness myself, which caused me to envy the devotion of the people whom we, who call ourselves Christians, deride. Macvie was greatly touched by the sombre wail that was wafted over the glassy waters, and for a brief moment it took his thoughts to the old home of prayer and saintly song, and made him wonder whether the God to whom these people were calling could also be his. But he had no time to ponder over eternal things. His vessel was slipping towards the anchorage at Scutari. A suitable berth was picked, the anchor dropped, sails furled, and then the captain's gig was made ready by her crew, who were ordered to wash and dress themselves in white ducks and blue jerseys, the latter having the name of the vessel in front. All being ready, the master stepped into the boat and was rowed in regal style to a landing in the Golden Horn. He was met there by an agent, who informed him that he knew the stores were much needed in the Crimea, but no official instructions having been given, he would have to remain at anchor until they came.

"But don't you think," said the captain, "it would be as well for me to proceed off Sevastopol or Kertch, and see if they really are in need of the supplies I have on board?"

"My dear fellow," replied the agent, "you must never think of doing such a thing. It would be deemed a breach of the rules of the service, and you might be court-martialled and lose a splendid charter for doing so. Take my advice: lie where you are until red-tapeism finds out that the wares you are carrying for Government account are needed. You can make use of the time by putting your vessel in good order. It may be months before they come to your turn, and until they precisely come to it, you may rely on hearing nothing from them. Departmental methods are very exact. You must never be donkey enough to interfere with

an ancient order of things: it might throw the machinery of uniformity into chaos. Of course I know you will say, 'That is all very excellent: but what about the poor, ill-fed, ill-clad, fever-stricken soldiers? Is it right that I should be an accomplice in this dreadful crime?' For God's sake, captain, leave off thinking like that, or it will harrow your soul out of its casing; look at things from the broad, brainless point of view of your mechanical employers who do everything by routine. Go on board and order your sails to be unbent and put into the sail cabin, for as sure as I am talking to you now, they will not be needed for months."

"Will they not have heard at home of the distress in the army?" interjected Captain Macvie.

"Why, yes, captain," said the versatile agent; "but, my dear fellow, do try to get it into your head that these things have to go through many intricate stages. First, the trouble which ought to have been foreseen takes place; then weeks are occupied in transfixed amazement without doing anything; then a council is held to consider why these breakdowns should happen; and the conclusion arrived at is that they should never have happened, therefore they have not taken place, and it is resolved to await further developments before doing anything more. How is it possible for the British army to have sickness in its ranks when we have thought of sending out medicine? And how can they be without food and clothes when we have given orders to our contractors to have these supplied? It is a malicious libel to assert such things, to say nothing of the lack of commonsense in supposing that the commissariat department does not know its own business."

"Well," said the captain, "I must admit you seem to know the inner workings of these Government concerns."

"I should just think I do," said the agent; "but of course we have to speak with some regard to discretion. I am only giving you a tip or two to keep you right. You will be going off aboard, so I will say 'good-day.' Come ashore to-morrow."

The captain had many opportunities of hearing from this voluble person of the magnificent mismanagement shown by the way the transports were kicking about in different parts of the Bosphorus and in the Black Sea. Many of them would sail to Kertch or Sevastopol and come straight back without their cargoes being broached. They anchored in a snug spot where the shore was easy of access, and would remain for months in peaceful indolence. The *Boadicea* had been dismantled, and her anchor was never seen for six months. How the men were to be kept employed became a tax on the resources of the officers. Her sails, ropes and rigging had been thoroughly overhauled, repaired and made equal to new, and the hull showed indications of great taste and care. Not a speck of dirt or disorder could be seen anywhere; and notwithstanding the jolly entertainments, vocal and otherwise, they had on board each others' vessels almost every night, the life of inactivity became so dreary that they longed for the time when orders would be given to proceed to the Crimea. It was not mere change they longed for, but they craved to see the fighting on shore, and, better still, the bombardment of towns and ports by the warships from the sea. Many of the merchant sailors would have enjoyed taking part in the struggle.

Although the life at the Scutari anchorage had become a weary monotony, it was not without incidents of excitement. Constantinople at that time was overrun with the most daring brigands, who paid irregular visits to the different roadsteads between midnight and the early hours of the morning. They were armed with the most deadly weapons, and their secret movements frequently evaded every precaution of watchfulness. The sneaking caique, manned by accomplished emissaries handling muffled oars, was rowed through the anchorage in advance, and for the purpose of finding out the most vulnerable object of attack. Occasionally they selected the wrong ship, and met with a sudden determined resistance from the crew, who were eager for an opportunity of wreaking vengeance on a gang of murderous ruffians who kept the men of the whole mercantile fleet in these waters in a state of perpetual expectancy. Most ingenious methods were planned for their destruction. An anchor, for instance, would be hanging to the rail of the topgallant forecastle, or the cathead, and, as the caique came dropping down with the current, if they drifted her under the bow, the stopper and shankpainter was let go simultaneously, and the anchor landed on their heads and then through the bottom of the boat. Nothing more was ever seen of that batch! Another plan was to drop large stones or pieces of heavy iron into the frail craft; and in that case also no more was ever heard from them. These chances seldom came, however, as they were a wily lot, who nearly always made sure of their ground before embarking on a hazardous expedition. The crews of vessels were warned to keep a vigilant lookout, and sometimes the anchor watch succeeded in giving the alarm in time to frustrate a boarding.

But even this, and the open encounters that occurred, became a very monotonous business to a large number of crews. They were itching for some other sensation to be put into their lives, and they had moods of gloomy forebodings that the great war would be ended without their being able to say that they had seen anything of it; and, in fact, many of them never did, and it is fair to say some never wanted to. Poor Captain Wilkins of the *Seaflower* and his crew were among the latter. The captain was a highly religious person who had imbued his men with anti-war proclivities. He had a simple faith in the righteousness of making large profits in consequence of the war, but never failed to proclaim the originators of it as a gang of unholy rascals. His faith had become strong in the belief that the robber was destined

never to set foot on the *Seaflower's* decks. She had been lying there for several months without ever having been interfered with. Captain Wilkins was not unduly sympathetic when he heard of any neighbouring vessel being pillaged during the night. In fact, he became so impressed with his own virtue that he frequently fell into the error of speaking contemptuously of his less fortunate brethren. Captain Macvie had warned him against indulging in self-righteousness, and never to pin his faith on immunity from attack.

"It may come," said he, "when you least expect it; and in order that you may cultivate a more generous spirit towards your neighbours when misfortune befalls them, always keep in mind the proverb: 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the Lord see it and it displease Him.' These are words that ought to be burnt into our minds and hearts."

"Yes," said Wilkins, "I appreciate your goodness in quoting them. They have reminded me that I have not been sufficiently charitable in judging others, while I have been at the same time professing to have the spirit of the great Redeemer."

Captain Wilkins held a prayer-meeting in his cabin each evening before the watch was set, and his friend Macvie nearly always attended, and professed to receive great spiritual benefit therefrom. At those devotional gatherings there was a simple petition offered to the Giver of all good that He should guard them during the night from the crimeful visitations of wicked men who coveted that which did not belong to them, and who did not shrink from murder in order to get it. Captain Wilkins had a profound belief in the efficacy of prayer, and was therefore staggered when he realized about two o'clock one morning that a giant of coppery colour stood over him with a revolver, while his compatriots helped themselves to all that was of value. At the time this was going on in the cabin, there stood an armed man at the entrance to the sailors' fore-castle, and another in the galley in unpleasant proximity to the eldest apprentice, who had fallen asleep before the fire, and while he had slept the vessel had been boarded. Had he attempted to move or shout or make a noise of any kind whatsoever, his life would have been instantly taken, and his body thrown into the rushing stream. Poor fellow! I have often heard him speak of the dull terror that took possession of him when he awoke and saw that his own life and the lives of the whole ship's company depended on his submission and silence. The chronometer, every piece of brass, and every sail and rope of any importance was taken out of her, and this included the sails that were unbent. In fact, there was not a single article of that kind left aboard when the brigands went from alongside. This was one of the most daring and gigantic robberies that had taken place during the whole time the fleet had lain at anchor. Naturally it created a great sensation both afloat and ashore. Captain Wilkins was the object of much genuine sympathy. The whole of the personal losses of his officers and himself were promptly made good by subscription, and a good deal of the vessel's loss was contributed for as well. Never a finger was put on the perpetrators, though it was said the authorities were cognizant of their whereabouts. It was also whispered that they had accomplices in persons holding high official position, but this was never in any degree proved, and I should say it had no foundation in fact. The idea may have originated in consequence of the lethargic attitude of the officials whose duty it was to see that they were captured. At this time lawlessness was rampant in those parts, and it would have been beyond the capacity of even a more alert and energetic officialism to subdue its ferocious and determined attacks. In addition to the open brigandage that was carried on, several captains who for some reason were detained ashore until after dark were obliged to engage caiques to take them off to their vessels, and when in mid-stream the boat's crew, consisting as a rule of two Turks (or Greeks in Turks' clothing), would lay their oars in and demand them to give up all their money and valuables, or they would be thrown into the Bosphorus. And if they had the good fortune to have as their passenger a timid man they demanded that every article of dress should be given up so that they might be assured that nothing was concealed. Some of the more courageous and defiant, instead of complying with this peremptory request, took a revolver from a pocket, pointed it at the gentlemen at the oars, and suggested that as soon as they ceased to row they would have a lump of lead put into their heads. Whereupon they usually did as they were told. In cases of this kind the oars were taken from them as soon as the captain was put aboard and they were then set adrift. It was believed that several captains who never turned up were overpowered, robbed, and then thrown overboard.

The weather from the middle of October had been fitful and treacherous. On November 14, 1854, a terrible hurricane burst on the Crimean coast and wrecked nearly the whole of the British transports which lay at anchor in the roadsteads. Several warships and transports belonging to the French were wrecked. The British war vessels suffered severely, but none were said to have been lost. The loss of property was estimated at over a million, and the loss of life between 1,500 and 2,000. The devastation and suffering ashore was also very terrible. The news of the frightful disaster came to Constantinople on the night that the *Seaflower* was pillaged. Instructions were given to send on supplies; the captain of the *Boadicea* was among those who received orders to proceed off Sevastopol without delay. Wilkins was in great distress at having to part from the man whom he regarded as his friend and faithful adviser. Tugs were sent to tow the vessels through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. A fresh wind blew from the west, and in four days after leaving, Captain Macvie anchored his ship in Sevastopol Roads, and many weeks elapsed before a particle of cargo was taken out and landed for the benefit of the much neglected soldiers—such was the

disorganized condition of the service. Macvie and his crew saw many a skirmish and several pitched battles during their five months' stay in the vicinity of wild wreck and ruin. In April, 1855, the cargo had been all landed and instructions were given to sail at once for Constantinople. In due course they arrived there, and received orders to go on to Smyrna, to load hay and oats. Six weeks after passing down, she anchored in Scutari and lay there until peace was declared in 1856, when orders were given to take the cargo to Portsmouth. After about two years' absence the *Boadicea* arrived in England; and on squaring up her accounts it was found that she had cleared more than twice her original cost. Mr Rockfeller received his fortunate and esteemed captain with much favour, and was not many minutes in his presence before he intimated with an air of generosity that he would sell his shares at par.

"I think," said he, "that you ought to hold half the vessel."

"Very good," said Macvie, "I will pay you cash for the number of shares I require to make up my half share, but you must not ask me to pay the original cost price."

"Macvie," said Rockfeller, "I wish you to be reminded that I gave you eight shares to work off when you joined me. I fear you allow your national love of money to lure you into forgetfulness."

"No, no," said the shrewd Scotchman; "you are wrong. I do not forget you having done what you say, nor do I forget that I have paid you a good price for what you were good enough to give me, and it is as well that your attention should be drawn to the fact that, owing to my foresight in chartering with the Government, the vessel has more than twice paid for herself in less than two years. Besides, if you are not satisfied with my services I have a very tempting offer from another firm."

At this stage Mr Rockfeller showed signs of nervous twitching, and interposed by assuming an injured air:

"Really, Captain Macvie, you must be reasonable, and not talk of other firms bidding for your services. I feel you are more than a match for me, and the thought of it makes me wish I had been born and reared a Scotchman. I know I am weak, but you may have the shares at any price you name; only don't be too exacting."

"Very good," replied Macvie, "they are mine at £1,000."

Rockfeller looked aghast, and again appealed to his sense of justice. The bargain was closed at £200 more.

Mr Rockfeller became transfixed with the thought of his own generous simplicity. He soliloquised, "I think I must have been born to become the victim of a stronger will than my own. Nature, I am assured, has freaked with me. Yes, Captain Macvie, you are in many ways the antithesis of myself; and my experience of you is very similar to the description given of a horse by the melancholy though eloquent Arab. I think these words describe our relations, my young friend, though the superb old philosopher who is reported to have said them never anticipated that they would be used in any such way: 'Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men: he mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted: neither turneth he back from the sword. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting.'"

"If," said the commander, "you mean these words of holy writ to apply to me, I am gratified, but fear you have under-estimated their grandeur and their real meaning. They pulsate the air, and make the heart throb with a conviction that the world of literature would have been poorer had they not been written. And now, Mr Rockfeller, let us cease further attempts at satire, and get to business. I wish to visit my parents who are very old; but before doing so I should like to have our little transaction settled and the future employment of the vessel arranged." The request was duly complied with in both respects.

The reunion of every branch of the Macvie family to do honour to the Captain and his wife was the occasion of great rejoicing. He had promised, long years before, on the eve of entering upon the real battle of life, that he would not return until he was a Captain, and may-be an owner, and he now presented himself with pride and modesty at the old homestead, thronged with a vast number of friends who came to welcome and congratulate him on having become both. After the flow of greeting had subsided, he requested a private interview with his father and mother. He informed them that a great joy had come into his life in being able to give a bankers' order for the payment of four pounds per month to them as long as they lived. The saintly couple's mental process became confused. They entered upon a long disquisition of how much affluence might affect their humility and endanger their religious life. The noble son urged that their faith in God was too strong to allow the possession of money to betray them into indifference. The father being spokesman replied on behalf of his wife that they accepted this bountiful goodness, "And believe me, my son," he said, "our hearts are too full to say all we feel; but may the great God have you in His holy keeping, and preserve you from the snares and fascinations of worldliness."

And the aged mother interjected by adding a supplementary petition that he should be saved from succumbing to the dangers of his profession.

"Take this present from your father and me," she added, handing him a new Bible which she had kept concealed under her black silk apron until the opportune moment came, "and when you are tossed on the troubled ocean, read about Jesus and the sea, and trust in the Lord to bring you back to us."

These simple words were delivered with compressed vehemence. A big lump stuck in Archie's throat, for he felt that it was his mother's farewell benediction, and that he would never see either of them on earth again. He would have liked to have responded in a few endearing phrases, but a dumb pain seized his heart and made him inarticulate. He tenderly embraced the old people and passed from their presence with a heavy heart, impressed with a consciousness that their next meeting would be beyond the tomb. A large procession of townspeople met at the station, in order to give the Captain and his wife a hearty send-off. Even the Provost came to say good-bye to them.

On their arrival home they found a letter had come from their friend Captain Wilkins. It was dated from Malta, and told a sickening tale of many disasters before getting away from Scutari. Two attempts at robbery had failed at the cost of one of the crew losing his life, and another being seriously wounded. Wilkins wrote: "It was bad policy making any noise about the big robbery, as it only made them revengeful." This news distressed the Macvies, but they could do nothing more than extend their sympathy, and this was tactfully and ungrudgingly given.

Captain Macvie had a long clean record of success. His popularity among his contemporaries was a growing process. No signs of rivalry were seen. He was looked up to as an authority, not only on nautical matters, but social, political and religious questions were well within his grasp. On one memorable occasion, when he was at home, a church meeting was called to consider the minister's relation in regard to his people. It was thought that he was not sound on sanctification, and one or two little matters that did not exactly bear on sanctification—a love affair, in fact. The gallant captain took the side of his minister, and put such a convincing case before his audience that a large majority declared the accusation not proven. There was wild excitement at this meeting; the hostile faction were rancorous about the captain being put up, as they assumed he could not possibly know all the facts; but both sides were one in admitting that his fame as a debater and an orator was established. So general was this belief that many of his adversaries congratulated him on having delivered a most eloquent speech.

The desire to sail with this distinguished man seized me like a vice. I determined as soon as I was free (for I was at that time an apprentice) nothing would prevent me from asking him to allow me to serve as an able seaman in the vessel which now entirely belonged to him. In a few days after making the memorable speech at his church, the *Boadicea* was sailing down Channel on her way to the Black Sea. Mrs Macvie was aboard. She nearly always accompanied her husband, and was a good English woman, to whom the captain owed much for her thrifty habits and sound judgement. All the officers and most of the crew had sailed continuously with him since he took command. Curly, who had served aboard a pirate schooner, became quite an institution. He was very popular, and so were his pirate stories when he could be persuaded to tell them. He had served Macvie as A. B., boatswain, and was now steward. They had been to Taganrog and loaded a cargo of tallow for London. A gentle levanter was wafting them through the Archipelago. When they got abreast of the north end of Zea Island they observed a brigantine coming romping up to them under a cloud of sail. In light winds the *Boadicea* did not sail fast. The breakfast bell had been rung, and as the captain was passing into the companion, Curly, who was standing close to, intimated that the following vessel was a pirate ship, and that she would soon overhaul them if the wind did not strengthen. Curly was always addressed as "Johnny" by Mrs Macvie, who was very fond of him, and as "Jake" by her husband, with whom he was a great favourite. The lady observed the concerned manner of the captain, and requested him to confer with Johnny as to the method of resistance should the schooner run alongside and the pirates attempt to come aboard. "He knows all about their tricks, and what they like and what they don't; let us hear what he has to say, Archie," said Mrs Macvie. So forthwith Jake was called into their presence. This resourceful gentleman was quite elated at the prospect of having some fun, as he termed it. His recommendations were of a very painful and drastic character. He talked of putting them into practice in a cool, frosty-blooded way which caused the lady and her husband to shudder. "It is too dreadful, Johnny," remarked Mrs Macvie; "surely what you say has never been resorted to, even to defeat the objects of pirates?"

"I don't suppose it has," said the sanguinary John; "but if you wish to save your property and the lives of yourselves and your crew, you will have to stick at nothing. My advice is, do your best to show them a clean pair of heels. If you get plenty of wind in the narrows you will easily do it; but be prepared for the worst. This is my plan: have everything that will hold in, filled with boiling water, boiling oil, and boiling pitch; have the old muskets ready for firing. If they ask you to shorten sail, don't do so. They will then run alongside, and as soon as they put their hands on the rail, blind them with boiling liquid. Then shoot with the rifles, and they won't want much telling to go away."

The chase was long and exciting. Sometimes the pirate vessel was very nearly within gun range, then the breeze would strengthen and she would fall astern. This alternate gaining and losing continued all day, until the sun went down behind the mountains far away to the north of them, and seemed to carry with it the breeze on which they had to depend for their safety. The chasing vessel gathered way as soon as the wind fell light, and the people of the *Boadicea* saw that all hope of avoiding a fight must be discounted. Curly advised having it before darkness came on, but there was no need to wish for this as the stern inevitable had come. The pirates had almost within their grasp their expected prize, but were doomed to meet with a terrible penalty. They put their craft alongside, and about a score of men made a jump for the rail, when the intrepid Jake, who had full charge of the plan of defence and attack, shouted: "Now boys, pour it on them smartly!" and in an instant the pirates were an agonized rabble. Some of them jumped into the sea; others fell back on to their own vessel; two got on to the *Boadicea's* deck, but were promptly put over the side. Boiling oil and pitch as well as boiling water were thrown aboard the schooner, so that even those who did not attempt a boarding did not escape the awful consequences of their piratical invasion. As soon as Captain Macvie saw that the punishment had been so great that they would more than probably never fight again, he tried to steer clear, but found the braces and other ropes had become entangled with the foreyard, which broke, and then the vessels separated. The stillness of the night was made a horror by the piteous moans that floated over the level sea, and excited the sympathy of the men who were compelled to inflict the suffering in order to preserve their own safety. They felt an instinctive desire to launch a boat and go to the succour of their victims. Curly, who knew the desperate character of these fearful men, advised his shipmates to have neither remorse nor pity. He assured them that the lesson given to the miscreants would not prevent those who might recover or those who had received no injury from taking to their trade with the same thievish and murderous zeal as they had practised heretofore.



"NOW, BOYS, POUR IT ON THEM SMARTLY!"

"Do not talk of your conscience when you think of these devils," said he, "for, believe me, theirs are frozen, and all they want is a new crew and fresh opportunity, and they won't mince matters with us or any other ship's company. There is one thing, they won't be deceived in a hurry into the belief that they have a soft thing on because no apparent resistance is made; they will try to do some shooting first. They won't forget the effects of boiling oil and pitch. But let us cease chattering about them and get our rigging and sails repaired. We may need to have everything staunch and strong, as the sky is threatening mischief."

It took the crew four hours to repair the damage, and as they did so the wail of the suffering wretches became fainter and fainter, until it had faded away into space, or it may be that their hearts had ceased to throb. After things were settled down and the vessel was slashing through a passage which leads into the Mediterranean Sea with a fresh easterly wind, the faithful steward, who had provided a substantial meal for the captain and officers, was informed by the former that he and his crew were indebted to him for the ghastly achievements of the day. "But Jake, my boy, I almost wish we hadn't done it."

"Very well, then," said the blunt sailor with obvious indignation; "you'd better go back and apologize, but you must not expect me to join in the silly chorus. I suppose you are thinking of 'blessed are the peacemakers' again? If you are, then I want to remind you that these

fellows were my compulsory pals once on a time, and I found that this was no part of their religion."

Mrs Macvie interposed that Johnny was right, and that they undoubtedly owed their lives to his genius.

"We had no intention of killing them or pillaging their ship, and they had both of these designs on us," said the logical lady, "so that we were justified in saving ourselves by the means which I fear have proved so fatal to them."

The steward was henceforth looked upon with great devotion, so much so that Mrs Macvie induced her husband to include him as one of the legatees in his will.

For many years after this episode the *Boadicea* continued her trading. Captain Macvie made a great deal of money and then retired in favour of a younger man who was destined to have a short career as commander, for, on the second voyage from the Brazils, and almost within sight of his own home, his vessel was driven ashore by a hurricane and all hands were drowned. A few days later the weather was fine enough to allow fishermen to put to sea, and on rounding a rugged point on the coast some of them heard the piteous howling of a dog. They made towards it, and found it had taken shelter on the arm of a steep cliff. It was taken from its perilous position with great difficulty. A brass collar bearing the name of the ship and the owner suggested that it was the only survivor of the shipwreck. Poor Curly's body was discovered on the same day on a patch of yellow sand inside a cave. It was taken to a fisherman's hut, and round his neck was found a gold locket with four little portraits. Mr and Mrs Macvie were the idolised of one case, and his own wife and little girl were in the other. His body was put in the ground with reverence. Soon afterwards a cheque for five hundred pounds was received by his widow.

Mr Macvie and his wife lived to a ripe age in a very unpretentious way. Years later I came across my old commander and owner seated outside a small cottage which faced the sea in a remote part of Northumberland. The common in front of him was ablaze with shining flowers, and the sweet song of the lark swelled in the air. A sad, pensive look hallowed his comely face, which made me hesitate to interrupt the reverie; but he realized my presence and asked me to share his seat. He began to tell me that his mind was reviving some of his early experiences at sea.

"Ah!" said he, "I was thinking what a terrible end Curly and the old vessel came to. Poor Jake, he was a fine, swaggering fellow; a smart sailor, and as brave as a Turkish Bashi-Bazouk. He was very wayward at times, but always faithful as a mastiff dog to me. His apparent disregard for breaking the Sabbath grieved me, and when I rebuked him for it he frequently took me in a sort of humorous way as though it were a good joke to talk to him of religion. But he had periods of despondency and remorse which brought out visions of spiritual life. He would speak of death coming to take him from his wife and little girl in the most piteous way, and then I had to say to him, 'Do not be so irreverent to your Creator. Think of His imperishable goodness in saving you and me from the abysses that have so often confronted us. Think of those piratical throat-cutters whom He assisted us in vanquishing, and remember when God wants to take you He will take you.' I often quoted to him these words: 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber.' I do hope he remembered to say, when the hurricane woke out of the sky and was bearing them to destruction, 'Into Thine hand I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.'"

"I never realized the intensity of your attachment to him, Captain Macvie," I interjected.

"Yes, it was very great," he soliloquised, "and the memory of his long association with me and the perilous life that he led and the horror of the tragic finish has caused my mind to revert to an occasion which nearly ended in the same way. We were caught by a heavy southerly gale when off Candia. I carried sail until she nearly jumped her masts over the side and herself out of water. We were then carrying the double reefed topsails, reefed courses, inner jib, fore and main topmast staysail, but the gale had so increased I gave orders to close-reef the topsails and furl the mainsail. I thought it better to run no further risk of dismasting her, as there was always a chance so long as they were kept standing. All hands were up reefing the main topsail and I had the wheel. I saw the black shadow of the mountains in the darkness towering far above our heads, and we seemed to be amongst the broken water to leeward. Every moment I expected her to strike and send us to our doom. A simple thought of the last words of my mother about Jesus and the sea flashed into my mind. I lashed the wheel for a moment or two, went to the lee side, knelt down, and offered a fervent prayer to Almighty God. I asked Him, if it was His will to save us, to do it in His own way. I had no sooner taken hold of the wheel again than the sails were caught aback by the wind veering and coming with the force of a hurricane from the opposite direction. It rushed from the mountain tops as from a funnel. I called to the men to come down and turn the yards round smartly. I feared she would not back off quickly and that she might get stern way on and knock the stern in and founder. My voice failed to carry through the vast roar of the tempest, but the men knew as well as I did that a critical moment had come, so they made their way on deck; the yards were quickly trimmed and I ran her dead off the land. We

had not run more than eight to ten miles to the south amid a mad conflict of broken sea that twisted and lashed at the vessel, when all of a sudden the old wind came back and the struggle with the opposing legions for mastery kept for a time the vessel in imminent peril. Ultimately the southerly force prevailed, but fortunately it blew itself out in a few hours, and we sailed into fine weather. Never was a vessel so near destruction without being destroyed, and never were human lives so near passing from time into eternity. Even the most wayward of my crew attributed our safety to the pity of God, and they thanked Him with the usual condescension that sailors adopt even towards the Deity; but they never knew that I had addressed the Almighty on their behalf and on my own; and that is really how it comes that I am here to tell the tale."

V

SAILORS' OPINIONS OF NOTABLE PUBLIC MEN

The old-time sailors held strong opinions on law, i.e., sea law. The merits of military and naval notables and prominent politicians came within the limit of their strange discussions. Their naval heroes were Charlie Napier, Collingwood, Nelson and Hardy. They loved Napier best of all because he dared to be kind to his men and fight their battles for them against the authorities; they were never quite sure whether to give the weight of their respect on the side of Collingwood or Nelson; but as the latter came to grief at Trafalgar, he was generally given the benefit of any doubt as to superiority, and his devoted Hardy was regarded as a strong backer of the redoubtable national hero. They never got over the idea that poor Nelson was shot from the maintop by some of his own men and not by the French sharpshooters. It was a point that could never be cleared up to their satisfaction, hence the impression that his sailors must have had some grudge against him was very prevalent. His association with the King and Queen of the two Sicilies was said to have gone a long way towards giving him a swelled head, and in truth it was no mean distinction to be on terms of friendship with a daughter of Maria Theresa and sister to Marie Antoinette. They believed that Nelson had been influenced by the king and queen when in a soft-headed mood to commit an act that can never be obliterated. It was not only cruel and heartless, but it had close resemblance to a crime. "They talk," said they, "of the murder by Napoleon of their duke (Duke d'Enghien), but was it not as bad of Nelson to have Commodore Francisco Caracciolo tried by a court martial composed of the prisoner's enemies (Neapolitan officers) which sat only two hours aboard the *Faudroyant* and found him guilty of rebellion against his sovereign?" He was ordered by Nelson to be hanged at the fore yardarm of the *Minerva*. The sight of this poor man dangling at the yardarm must have had a revolting impression on the minds of those who witnessed it, and the aversion of the public who merely heard of it must have been equally well founded. No wonder that it was handed down to subsequent generations of seamen, and caused them to say, as I have heard them that, "Nelson should have left the dirty, bloody business to his pal the King of the Sicilies and kept his own hands clean." They always spoke of his death as retribution. "If there isn't something in it," said they, superstitiously, "why was Collingwood and Hardy not hit?"

His relationship with Lady Hamilton was vigorously defended; both voluble and comic reasons were poured forth in support of his action. "Had she not on more than one occasion saved the fleet, and had she not rendered great service to the British Government by her clever tongue and alluring beauty, to say nothing of a supreme genius for intrigue?" They believed that she had sacrificed everything to serve her country, and now that Nelson had smashed the combined fleets of Spain and France, and lost his life through it, this precious government had no further need for her services, so threw her helpless on a callous, canting world. They built a monument for him, and left his poor Emma, whom he regarded in the light of a good spirit, to starve, though he had begged that she should be provided for. That was the view the sailors took of it. They believed that Nelson's infatuation for the lady was his affair and hers, and nobody else's; but be that as it may, there were very few seamen in the merchant service who did not warmly sympathize with this poor, wretched, woman's fate. Nelson was often made responsible for that which he might have nothing to do with, and sailors have not spared him for his supposed share in instituting that monstrous system of pressing honest, respectable men into a service that reeked with the odour of disgraceful bureaucratic cruelty. I know something of the legacy of prejudice which extended to bitter, vindictive recollection of these days of brainless despots. I was reared amid an eighteenth-century environment; both my grandfathers fought at the Battle of the Nile; both were taken by force from their vessels which were owned by themselves and their relatives. One of them rose to the position of sailing-master; the other was a junior officer; but such was the condition of this kidnapping service they could not hope to rise higher. Both these men's lives were broken, as hundreds of others' were. Was it any wonder that strong feelings of wrong were handed down and indiscriminately fastened on to whosoever held any

prominent authority? That is why Nelson came in for his share of condemnation. Personally, I think he was credited with more than he deserved. I believe he thought so well of that branch of the service, and his patriotism was so strong, that he wondered why there was any necessity to institute press-gangs. I should imagine that he was often amazed that men did not join in droves. But had he gone to the right source for information he would soon have become disillusioned. These gangs of ruffians preferred seamen as their prey, but they did not discriminate very much. If they could not get a sailor they took whatever came to hand—the bigger the better. And so, while on one of their prowling expeditions, it came to pass that a gentleman called Willie Carr was seized, and at the point of the bayonet or musket made to embark aboard their boat. This person was a ship's blacksmith. His strength was abnormal, and his feats of swimming were a marvel. He was known to fame as the Hartley giant. Tradition has it that they put Willie in the bow of the boat, and after they had got a little way on their journey he asked them if they could all swim. This question excited great laughter; but the giant coolly placed his hands on each of the gunwales of the boat, set his knees in position, called out, "then sink or swim, you B—," and with one mighty wrench he severed both sides of planking from the stem. Willie swam ashore, and how many of the men were said to be drowned I do not remember, though I have given the main facts as I heard them scores of times in my boyhood days. This story is told by Mr Soulsby in his excellent little history of Blyth.

Their military champions were: the great Emperor of the French ("Bonny" as they familiarly called him). Next came "the martyr" Ney, and then Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, and the Prussian General, Blücher. The relative merits of these great men were discussed sometimes with foaming partiality. Napoleon and Ney were their favourites. Their wrath against the allied Powers was unappeasable. How often have I heard them thunder out that Bonny would have wiped Wellington and his myrmidons off the field but for the treachery of Fouché, Talleyrand, and his own generals (Fouché in particular). Wellington's prayer for "night or Blücher" was always used in mitigation of what might be called an unpatriotic opinion. I have listened to the diatribes of these rugged critics who claimed for their hero that he imbued his soldiers with a high sense of honour in contrast to our barbarous disciplinary methods of flogging. The image of the great man, and the part Wellington played in having him banished to St Helena, never faded from their memories. They believed the Iron Duke to be the instigator and encourager of a shabby trick. It was a wonderful phenomenon that made these men talk so systematically of their magical enemy, and yet they never lost an opportunity of showing their national dislike for and superiority over the French people as a whole. So strong was this instinct that it permeated British crews from the captain to the cabin-boy. Of course there were at times violent differences of opinion, but as a rule the Emperor was singularly popular, and the aversion to his former subjects, especially civilians, was never disguised. They showed frequent hostility towards coal-heavers, dockers, sailors, fishermen, and sundry other grades of workmen with whom they came in contact, but that is not to say they were always successful in their attacks, though they invariably took the initiative. In the old days the average British tar could not solve the mystery as to what foreigners, and especially Frenchmen, were made for; even at the present time they put on a lordly air when they come in contact with people whom they regard as aliens. This attitude is adopted independent of all reason, and becomes quite infectious. I must have caught it early in life. I went to a French port on my first voyage to sea, and although I was a mere child of twelve and a half years, I became smitten with the fore-castle belief that my country and countrymen had suffered irreparable mischief at the hands of the French nation. I therefore deemed it my duty to be avenged, so picked out a French youth apparently my senior by some years, reminded him of Trafalgar and Waterloo, and called him by the opprobrious name of Johnny Crapo, the meaning of which I did not understand. I was promptly made to run for my life before a sudden Napoleonic onslaught of about half-a-dozen small boys, who had congregated to see their friend demolish the avowed foe of their country.

In discussing the many phases of Napoleon, the sailor was never perplexed in coming to conclusions as to the right and wrong of his (Napoleon's) actions. Their quotations and manner of using them were at times amazingly tempestuous and erratic. Captain Maitland, of the *Bellerophon*, was generally believed to have behaved with becoming generosity towards the dethroned monarch, but the question as to whether he gave himself up voluntarily and without reservation, or, as Napoleon maintained, that he was prevailed upon to become the guest of England, and put himself under the protection of her laws, was a point that occasioned great diversity of opinion, and I think it may be said that Maitland's version in the majority of cases was thought to be correct. Admiral Sir George Cockburn came in for a good deal of harsh criticism for complaining about the Emperor rising from the table as soon as coffee had been served, and the well-known reminder of Madame Bertrand was quoted in a form that almost put the original beyond recognition, and had it been correct would have justified the admiral in putting the lady into solitary confinement for the remainder of the passage, for using language to him that was not only coarse and impolite, but unwarrantably seditious. Instead of this, Madame Bertrand merely remarked with all the charm of a cultured courtier: "Do not forget, admiral, that your guest is a man who has governed a large portion of the world, and that kings once contended for the honour of being admitted to his table." They had some misty notion that that admiral was not always considerate to his guest, and disliked his attentions to the officers and crew of the *Northumberland*, not one of which it is said could resist the magical influence of his actions

and words. It was natural that the salient incidents of a voyage with such a man should be passed on and handed down to later generations of seamen.

The story of the passage of the line was an everlasting theme retailed in order to justify the goodness of Napoleon. The boatswain represents Neptune and becomes sovereign for a time. Neither rank nor position is exempt from the customary shaving and baptism, but on this occasion Neptune graciously respected the distinction of the exiles, and reminded them that they had too often received the baptism of fire and of glory to require additional attention from him. The Emperor consented to have Neptune presented to him, and gave him through the grand marshal five hundred napoleons in order that he and his court might drink his health. Well might this generous gift bring forth wild hurrahs and loud cries of "Long live the Emperor Napoleon." The amount by common consent was handed over to the captain to be distributed when the crew were discharged, but this did not prevent Neptune and a number of his subjects intoxicating themselves, and it was only through the interposition of the Emperor and his suite with the admiral that they were saved from being cruelly flogged. "They may talk about this man as they like," said one of the crew, "but I won't believe the bad they say of him." His popularity with the sailors of the *Northumberland* was not created by merely seeing him sitting for hours day by day on the gun which was named "The Emperor's." He became their hero now as passionately as he had previously appeared to them as being the foe of all that was humane. His little attentions and kindnesses, accompanied by an irresistible smile, and the act of putting them through some form of drill, endeared him to them long before they reached his lonely rock. Then the story of Sir Hudson Lowe's treatment of him in so many petty ways, such for instance as seizing a small bust of his son, the King of Rome, which had been sent to the exiled monarch, made friends for the Emperor in thousands; and not the least of them were the brave fellows who had traversed the ocean with him, and whose souls were filled with sympathy and horror at the crime that was being committed. Their testimony was that no one could live in close contact with him without instinctively realizing that he was a much maligned person. No wonder that this impression was spread widely not only through the whole navy but also throughout the whole mercantile marine. What a blunder the whole savage, senseless business was!

But while the British sailors claimed the little corporal as their idol, they did not think that even for political reasons the Emperor had any right to divorce Josephine, though they thought he might have reasons other than those commonly understood to have been engineered by the arch-traitor Fouché, and ultimately agreed to by the Emperor. The Empress, when she was plain Josephine, had the reputation of carrying on violent flirtations with other gentlemen while her husband was in Italy, and subsequently, when he was in Egypt swiftly forging his way to fame and to his destiny. So that when Napoleon was accused of cruelty in putting her from him, there were ever some champions ready to palliate the act by putting her unfaithful conduct before their opponents. But the Emperor's divorce of the little Creole was never quite approved by his sailor admirers, more especially as they had a strong dislike to Marie Louise, the Austrian arch-duchess who took the place of the poor, wayward Josephine, and who forsook her imperial husband in the first hour of his adversity to become the mistress of an ugly Austrian count, named Neipperg, who was minus an eye. Subsequently this man entered into a morganatic marriage with the gentle Marie, and she bore to him several children who were declared to be legitimate, and this happened notwithstanding the fact that the Emperor her husband was still living in anguish under a tyranny and cruel despotism instituted by the British oligarchy. This was the kind of anecdote that filled the sailors with sympathy for the great man who in the decline of his days was at the mercy of a lot of little men. Then they had stories of how he could throw off the thought of his wretched position, and enter into a frolic with Betsy Balcombe and her sister at the Briars. He would play for hours with the two little girls, and also with the other children that became attached to him. The smattering knowledge and comic rawness of the discourses on this great personality were always intensely attractive. Faith in the accuracy of their own views was strong. Long before I was old enough to be allowed to take part in the fore-castle Napoleonic discussions I used to listen to them with eager interest, and well remember the attention given to even a wrongly-informed orator. The subject was always made fascinating by serving up the tales in their own fore-castle fashion. None of the other military notables of Napoleon's time claimed their admiration or devotion as he did; not even Wellington.

Their views on politics and politicians, and their mode of expressing them, were extremely queer. The prominent statesmen they talked of most were Fox, Pitt, Lord John Russell, Palmerston, Peel, Gladstone and Disraeli; and apart from the fault they had to find with the latter as a statesman, they believed him to be unwilling to legislate in their interests, though even they didn't appear to have the ghost of an idea as to how those interests were to be legislatively served. They knew there was something the matter, that was all. They also had a strong antipathy to Disraeli owing to his Hebrew origin. In fact, they regarded the great Jew in the light of a foreigner, whose intrusion into English politics was a humiliation to all British-born subjects. The confusion of opinions as to the character and duties devolving on members of Parliament was very embarrassing even to themselves, and the vivacity with which they delivered orations to each other on the merits or demerits of members was exquisitely droll. The rivalry between Fox and Pitt was a subject that involved them in vehement chaos, just as the rivalry between Disraeli and Gladstone did in later years. They

had some mystified idea that those political gentlemen were ever thirsting for each others' blood. They had gathered from some gossipy source that Mr Fox was a hopeless gambler, and that Pitt was exclusively responsible for the Napoleonic wars, and that Palmerston was a mischief-maker who set his impudence up to everybody, and his rashness either ended in war or coming near to do so. It was the latter that was accused in fore-castle circles of bringing on that Crimean War which caused so much suffering and loss of life both to sailors and soldiers. I have heard Sir Robert Peel spoken of in words of vituperation for having introduced "peelers," now known as "bobbies," to interfere, as they said, with poor people's rights. Many of them were full of wrath at his having repealed the Corn Laws. They had got some garbled notion, which was passed down to later generations, that it would tend to spoil their chances of getting employment and otherwise lower their wages. This doctrine had been well thumped into them by some agency or other, and it led to many a quarrel with the minority who held free trade views. They were opposed to the introduction of Board of Trade examinations for the purpose of obtaining certificates of competency, which is another evidence of their undeveloped sense. And I have actually known instances where exception was taken by common sailors to the close scrutiny of Board of Trade surveyors into the defects of a vessel they had long sailed in and had formed a strong regard for. The Reform Bill did not appeal to them in the same way as it did to other workmen. They had occasional opportunities of hearing that a great noise was going on about household suffrage and the extension of the franchise, but they had a very hazy conception of the meaning of the terms. It is no exaggeration to say that the former was often spoken of as having reference to the sufferings of somebody in the houses of the people, and the latter was talked of as having some French connection!

They adhered to the idea of the nation being governed by the upper classes, and yet they used to curse them with unrestrained fury for their indifference to the needs of the common people. Gladstone was very frequently in disfavour with them: for instance, they did not altogether approve of the abolition of purchase in the army. It was considered a gratuitous interference with a person's freewill. "Why," said they, "shouldn't a commission be purchased if a man wants to spend his money in that way? It was no business of his!" Besides, their fears were excited lest the army should become composed of low-bred wasters. Their views on these particular questions were always very paradoxical and very breezily expressed. How I used to listen and gape at the flow of what I deemed gifted intelligence when there was a heated discussion on. I did not understand it; indeed they did not understand it; but they talked with a volubility and assurance that made deep impressions on me and on them. The advent of Thomas Burt from the mine into the political arena was not welcomed with a gush of enthusiasm by seamen. They doubted the wisdom of a republican miner being allowed to enter a legislature composed of aristocracy and landed gentry! The idea seemed to have gripped their minds that this refined and gentle little man was destined to inflict severe punishment on dukes, marquises and earls, and in other ways disturb the British nation! Mr Burt was not long in Parliament before he showed marked indications of wise statesmanship. Men on both sides of the House soon learnt to respect and admire him. He made it clear that he was not a mere class representative, and during the whole time he has been in Parliament the sailors have had no truer friend than he. I think they have long been satisfied of this themselves.

These sturdy, commonplace fellows, taking them as a whole, knew no more about politics than Tom Brown's horse; but, like many other simple, ill-informed people, they had a calm belief in their unmeasured knowledge which was void of all reason, and when they were thrown into contact with shore people it was one of the funniest things in the world to witness the lordly air they assumed in the initial stages of acquaintanceship, and the humour of it was exhilarating when the period for evaporation came, and they shone forth in all their artless simplicity. I cannot pretend to portray or exactly reproduce the scene of a sailor's political or any other controversy for that matter; I can only hope to convey some idea of it; and the rest must be left to the imagination of the reader.

Some twenty years ago a group of sailing-ship masters was seated at a table under a verandah outside a Russian snap-shop. There were two of the old school amongst them, and these were being egged on to a debate by the younger men on a question that was creating a vast amount of interest at that time. The heir to the Tichborne estates had left home to travel abroad, and as nothing was heard of him for several years, his mother became anxious and began advertising very widely in the Colonial, English, and Continental press. The result of this was that a person calling himself Sir Roger Tichborne turned up. He paid a visit to Wapping, and then presented himself to Lady Tichborne, who was in bed. She flung her arms around his neck in an ecstasy of joy and claimed him as her long-lost son. The real Roger Tichborne was supposed to have been lost in a vessel called the *Bella*, which had sailed from Rio in South America for Australia. A claim was made on the Tichborne baronetcy. The claimant's counsel, Dr Keneally, who did not get on very well with the judges, commenced a paper called the *Englishman*, which gave full accounts of the trial. It was widely read by enthusiasts who believed that Dr Keneally's client was the real Sir Roger. It was this trial that the coterie of commanders had gathered together to discuss. One of them, Captain Rush, was a staunch believer in the claimant. He had just received the paper, and was brim-full of the convincing proofs that it contained. Another fine old salt, who had neither education nor manners, endeavoured to take an intelligent interest in the discussion. His name was Mark Grips. Both he and Captain Rush belonged to the old school,

and both were Northumbrians who spoke the dialect without any attempt at moderation.

"Ah," grunted Captain Rush, almost jumping off his seat with delight; "Keneally has Hawkins there!"

"Where?" said Mark.

"Why, here," replied Rush.

"Nothing but damned nonsense," said Mark.

"Nothing but nonsense? What? What? What d'ye say?" screamed Rush. "D'ye mean to tell me that Keneally doesn't know what he's talkin' about?"

"No; you divent know what yo're talkin' about."

"What? I divent know what I'm talkin' about? I tell ye' what it is, sor, Roger's the man!"

"Beggared a one," said Mark. (It wasn't exactly "beggared" a one that he said, but that is near enough.)

"D'ye mean to tell me," said Captain Rush (as he frothed with wrath), "that a man doesn't know the Ass's Bridge when he's asked about it?"

"Beggared a one," said Mark.

"Then you're a leir."

"A leir, d'ye say? Then I say beggared a one!"

"Another thing: d'ye mean to tell me, Mark, that a mother doesn't know her own son?"

"Beggared a one," replied Mark.

"D'ye say that again?" said Rush; "I tell you, when a woman puts her arms around her son's neck, d'ye think she doesn't know it's her son?"

Mark by this time is also frothing at the mouth; and, standing in a bellicose attitude, hisses:

"I says 'beggared a one.' Roger's not the man!"

Rush becomes speechless, and his eyes flash with anger, and he flings the *Englishman* at Mark, who in turn calls his friend, "Coward; that's the only argument you have. I tell you again, Roger's *not* the man!"

"Who are you?" retorted Rush; "do you think yourself the Lord High Admiral Dundas, then?"

"No," said the excited Mark; "I'm Mark Grips, one of Jimmy Young's skippers, and I tell ye Roger never was the man!"

This finished the controversy for a time, as the two combatants were prevailed upon to shake hands, and in spite of this spirited combat they were soon enjoying their long pipes and their grog together.

Just about the time the Radicals in the House of Commons, aided by the Irish Nationalists, were making a good stand-up fight for the abolition of flogging in the army and navy, Mr Charles Bradlaugh was elected as one of the members for Northampton, with Mr Henry Labouchere as his colleague. The sanctity of the nation was violently shocked at the effrontery of Northampton in electing so dangerous a Radical infidel to represent them in Parliament as the notorious "Iconoclast." A wave of screaming passed over the fair Christian land; the notorious advocate of atheistic principles was proclaimed a menacing danger to the Christian edifice. Injustice and untruth joined against him; shocking stories of blasphemy were circulated with mad recklessness against him. There was not a single word of truth in them. This was proved over and over again in courts of law, and yet the charges were encouraged and persisted in. Poor Bradlaugh; what a time he had of it until the tempest of folly subsided, and both the people and some of their representatives in Parliament came back to their senses, and not only allowed the member for Northampton to take his seat, but passed an act giving members the option of affirming instead of taking the oath, and also ordered the erasing from the journals of the House those records which were said to justify Mr Bradlaugh's exclusion. It was not to be wondered at that this rapturous concert of passion and prejudice should reach the impressionable sailors from one border of the ocean to the other, and formed part of their occasional riotous debates. Any one who has had the privilege of listening to the fiery arguments set forth by sailors on the Bradlaugh or any other topic of absorbing interest must ever cherish it as a memorable experience. There is seldom any regard for moderation in such conflicts, and the extraordinary confusion of ideas makes them fascinating. I have a vivid recollection of my attention being attracted to the clamour of about half a dozen weather-beaten nautical stagers that were seated outside a dram-shop which was known to fame as "Jack the Blaster's." It will be readily recognized

that the name was given to it by a north-countryman. I stopped, asked for a chair, and saw the whole thing through. Occasionally, while the controversy was travelling along its more turbulent stages, I was asked to intervene in some way or other, but I had to act with studied impartiality, so adopted a neutral course.

"They tell me," said burly Captain Harvey, "that he's the best speaker in England."

"Who's the best speaker in England?" asked Skipper Cowan; "do you mean that fellow that's givin' members of Parliament so much trouble just now?"

"I mean Bradlaugh," said Mr Harvey.

"Well then," said Mr Cowan, "you're decidedly in the wrong. I heard a Methodist parson beat him to fits at Blyth. Bradlaugh lost his temper, and after that the parson wiped the boards with him. They called the parson Harrison,^[21] and the atheists were all frightened of him after that."

"I never heard that before," said Harvey.

"Very well," retorted his friend, "you hear it now. I'm telling you; and another thing, instead of making him a member of Parliament I'd put the fellow in gaol and stop him going about the country destroying religion and making people infidels. Lord Randolph is a grand chap; he won't have any of his affirmin'. No, no, Sir Randolph doesn't believe in that sort of cattle, and he means what he says. Randy's all their daddies [Randy is cleverer than they]. Look what he did when Bradlaugh kept running up to the bar of the House of Commons to kiss the book. What did Randolph do, you say? Why he jumped after him every time, seized him by the coat tails, and said, 'Bradlaugh, stand back!' That's pluck, if you like. Of course he had what they call the sargent with a sword by his side ready to stick him had Randolph not been too many for him. And what do you think old Gladstone did? He's always up to some mischief. He wrote that pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities that brought about the war with Russia and Turkey. What did he do, sir? I'll tell you what he did. He said, 'Gentlemen, Bradlaugh's been elected; he must be allowed to come among us.' There's a fine Englishman for you! But never mind, *his* day will come!"

A bulbous, beery-looking skipper tapped a companion on the shoulder, and said in startled undertone, "Cowan said something about Bradlaugh running up to the bar of the House. Is there a bar there?" And Harvey overhearing, said:

"Yes, Mister, there's a bar in that house, but not the kind of bar you mean. It is a bar sir, not a drinking-bar, mind you."

"What do they call it a bar for, then?" asked the beery person; "a bar's a bar, isn't it?"

"Yes, a bar's a bar, and you've got a lot to learn yet. What do they call the speaker 'the speaker' for?"

"Because he can speak, of course," said the beery gentleman.

"Shut up, man," said Cowan; "don't show your ignorance, and let me go on with the argument. It's not that at all."

"What is it, then?" said the inconvenient heckler.

"Never mind what it is. It's not what you say it is," remarked Cowan. "By George, he was well served when they locked him up in the Clock Tower for his impudence. Why, at one time it took ten bobbies to keep him from mauling a lot of Christian gentleman that had taken the oath and kissed the Bible over and over again. They tore his clothes, and the pity is they were not torn off him altogether. Where was his cheek to talk about his conscience? And as to Gladstone, well, he's a fine Englishman to back a man up in his infidel works. He deserves as much as Bradlaugh; and as to Northampton, they should take away the vote from it."

The orator had completely exhausted and entwined a rich fund of adjectives into his harangue as he went along; and, when he ceased speaking, a warm supporter of his gave some applause, and nudging the bulbous person, he remarked:

"He's a long-headed fellow, isn't he? Eh, what a wonderful man for politics, and what a speaker! Why, Bradlaugh wouldn't have much chance with him. He should be in Parliament hissel'. By gum, he'd make them sit up. What do you say?"

His companion looked wise, and seemed smitten with awe. He could not trust himself to speak of the brilliant oration they had just listened to. Harvey followed up the debate by defending the right of freedom of action and freedom of speech all round.

"What business is it of these members of Parliament to interfere with what people think or say? I say 'no business at all.' Why, they tell me that when Bradlaugh beat them and took his seat and defied them, the Tories flocked round him and said: 'Bradlaugh, we're glad to see

you in this honourable House, and congratulate you as one of ourselves.' Now there was brazen hypocrisy for you; and what do you think he said in reply? He stood up and said: 'Gentlemen, I know you of old, but I'm not going to be sucked in by any of your snakish ways.' Wasn't that fine?"

"Where did you hear that?" said Cowan.

"I saw'd in the papers; it's all right," said Harvey.

"Yes, and what's more," said Cowan, "I saw that Bradlaugh had become very popular with everybody, and the Tories said he was a rare good sort."

"Then I don't believe it," said Harvey.

"But I tell you I saw'd in the papers."

"Well," said Cowan, "if you hadn't telled me that, I wouldn't have believed it."

"But I'm telling ye," said Harvey; "and what is more, there's Labouchere: he's a queer 'un. He has a paper they call *Truth*, and he writes all about the Queen and the aristocracy. He knows everything about them, and doesn't care a damn for anybody. He's been had up for libel many a time, but that never makes any difference. He goes on worse. They call him a Radical. He belongs to that lot that wants everything for themselves."

"But what about them Prussians wantin' to steal Denmark? What do you call that but cowardly work; and had it not been that Austria, the other bully, came to their assistance, the little Danes had the Prussians by the throat, and then, like all bullies, they fell out about the spoil and began to fight among themselves. No wonder that the Germans are hated; everybody liked the Danes. And where was your England then? Was she frightened of Von Bismarck? Yes, I says; yes! Was Palmerston frightened of him or of all the Prussians in the world? No, certainly not! He said: 'Gentlemen, let us draw the sword for the father of the Princess of Wales'; but these great Christian members of Parliament that you've been talking about so much said: 'No, we'll fight for nobody but ourselves.' Where is your Waterloo, your Corunna and Balaclava now? What about that foggy mornin' in the Baltic Sea when the fog cleared away and we were right in the centre of the Danish line-of-battleships, and the whole crew wanted to join the Danish navy, and the skipper said: 'No, men, you must stick to your own ship.' But we saluted them with the old flag, and gave them three good English cheers, and they cheered us, and the skipper said: 'Ah, they're fine fellows. What is England doin' of not to help them? There's no ill-feelin' left about Nelson puttin' the spy-glass to his blind eye and blowing Copenhagen down about their ears.'"

"Talk about makin' the Queen Empress of India? By George! Gladstone did walk into Disraeli about that, and it was said the Queen got her hump up about it."

"Well she might," said Cowan; "what business had Gladstone to interfere? He's always interfering."

"Yes," said Harvey; "and a good job for England he is."

"What d'ye say? Good job for England? What about the Fenians? What about Parnell and them Irishmen? What about the rascals who were nabbed settin' fire to infernal machinery for blowing up the House of Parliament? And then he talks of givin' them Home Rule! What about Piggott, Parnell and company?"

"Yes, and what about the forgeries, Mr Sniggins," said Harvey.

"Don't call me Sniggins!" said Captain Cowan, "I'm a respectable man."

"Don't you say this and that about Gladstone, then," said Harvey.

"We will if we like," said the bulbous friend, who showed in his phlegmatic way signs of taking sides against the great Liberal leader.

"What do you know about it?" contemptuously interposed Harvey. "My advice is to you, 'keep yourself sober and your mouth shut, and don't show your empty-headedness to people who have forgotten more than ever you knew!' *You* talk about Gladstone! Why, you would never have known there was such a man if I hadn't told you. Of all the brazen cheek, well! You take the cake to talk to me about a man that made England and stopped the gentry from pilfering the whole thing."

"Get away, man!" replied our portly friend; "you would swear you were the Duke of Argyle. I tell you he would have given the country away to the foreigners if we hadn't stepped in."

"Do *you* call yourself '*we*'!" interjected Harvey, his utterance almost incoherent with anger; "you want to go to school again and get some learnin'."

"Get some learnin', d'ye say, Mr Know-all? What has Gladstone done for the sailors, you an' me? That's a poser for you; and look at the money he gave away about the *Alabama* to the

Yankees, instead of fightin' them for it like an Englishman. That's another poser for you!" retorted the big, burly antagonist who had wakened up and entered into the discussion with elephantine zeal. "Some of you would let foreigners jump on your stomachs, but Captain Cowan and me says, 'England for ever!' Why, if it hadn't been for Palmerston and the old Jew, we would all have been Russians or blooming Germans before now."

"Bravo, John Bird, well said! That's a clinker for you, Harvey," chimed in the devoted supporter of the previous speaker. "Fine Britishers they are, givin' away the country of their birth in lumps at a time!"

Harvey was purple; his blood was at boiling pitch, and his poignant attack on Captain John Bird gave that gentleman some concern lest it should reach to something more than mere words. His peroration consisted of a luxuriant use of imprecating adjectives which stamped him as a person of original thought. He apologized to his Creator as he passed from point to point of these profane heights, and was obviously sure that this chaste mode of seeking forgiveness commended his observations to the Deity. The attack on Gladstone's and his own patriotism roused him to produce prodigies of declamatory illustrations.

"Givin' the country away," he said. "Gladstone's trying to stop them dukes and earls and such like from stealing it. What does he say that the House of Lords should be shut up for, and these gentry made to work like other folk? I'll tell you what he says that for: because he wants it fairly shared, and the men that go down to the sea in ships to have a bit of it."

"Now you needn't repeat Scripture after you've been swearin' see hard," interposed Captain Cowan.

"No, sir, I'm not using Scripture. I'm saying that Gladstone wants to turn them fellows in the House of Lords out to work for their living, instead of cribbing all the land and gettin' such as you to back them up and crawl on your bended knees and kiss their hands for them; but I'm not one of them sort. I says what Joe Cowan says: 'The land for the people if they pay for it.' Wasn't it Gladstone and Bright that said no good would ever be done until the House of Lords was pulled down, and wasn't it Joe Cowan that stood up for them when they wanted to make the Queen the Empress of India? Didn't he say: 'No, gentlemen, the Queen of England's good enough for me; I wants no Empress'? And didn't that favourite Jew of yours say to him it was a grand speech? But I'm not goin' to open my mouth to fill your empty heads. You don't know your A B C's yet; and you talk to me about givin' away England, and about Dizzy, and you haven't a good word to say about your own countrymen who want to get you a bit of the land to grow something on. I tell you, you're nothing better than nincompoops, hobbledehoys that knows no more about politics than the old hookers you're skippers of do." He emphasized these last remarks by bringing his fist heavily down on the table, knocking the glasses off, and then in a patronizing way he walked from them a short distance, turned round quickly as though a sudden impulse had seized him, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"You want to go to school again, if you've ever been there, but I don't think you have!"

A reticent man sat close by during the singular debate. An observer could see that Captain Harvey's last oration was having a convincing effect on him, and immediately Harvey had fired his last shot Captain George Halligay rose, and with unaffected solemnity remarked:

"That man knows too much to be a shipmaster. He should be in the House of Commons. The language he uses, and his knowledge of men and what they say, is very clever. It would take a funny 'un to tackle him. They tell me he's written to the papers sometimes."

"All wind and blather," said Captain John Bird, which remark was endorsed by Captain Cowan and received with some applause.

"Not so," said Halligay. "He has great gifts." And then they made their way to the landing where their boats waited to convey them to their respective ships.

These were some of the last specimens of our old-time sailor manhood. Rough, uncultured, careless of danger, their fighting instincts sometimes leading them to ferocity; but withal they were strong in many ways, and had intervals of docility which oftentimes made them lovable. I dare say many, if not all, of their generation (for they were aged men when I knew them) have passed beyond the reach of the political or social student, and we shall nevermore hear the same kind of confusion of thought that made the discussions of these aged mariners so delightful to listen to. Of course many of the captains of that time had real accomplishments far beyond the stolid men of whom I have been speaking. But even the most cultured of that generation did not reach the zenith of fame to which the modern commander has risen. The average present-day captain has little in common with his predecessors. His political creed goes beyond the mere assertion of the superiority of Britishers over foreigners. He claims association with a party, and knows a good deal about prominent statesmen and politicians. He is up to date in the causes which led to the Boer War, the Coal Tax, the Corn Duty, Irish Land Purchase, the Education Act, and Chamberlain's agitation to force a change in our fiscal policy from Free Trade to Protection. He has a peculiar form of self-confidence which may be considered phenomenal though it is

rarely offensive.

2 ([Return](#))

The same Mr Harrison is now a clergyman of the Church of England, and is pastor of St Thomas's, Newcastle.

VI

MARY ROUTLEDGE

I have often come in contact with old people living in the villages close by the sea and far away from the bustle of railroads and large towns, who lament the good times gone by when they used to look forward to the homecoming and the passing to and fro of the bonny sailor lads, who were always expected to lift the monotony from their dull, uneventful lives by strange stories and rollicking habits. The villagers for the most part lived under a kind of despotism. The Lord of the Manor and the parson dominated them, and fashioned their politics, their religion, and even their social lives. The rule was to keep within the limits of their own little community when they wanted a wife or a husband, but if at any time their affections travelled outside this sanctified boundary, the two potentates were assiduous in their warnings that if the new comer in any way transgressed the unwritten code of laws that were framed in order that the estate might be kept free from contamination they would have to leave it peremptorily. Ranters, Wesleyans, and other Nonconformists were regarded as heretics. A religious test was practised, and those who openly avowed their dissent from the established form of worship were frankly told that there was a strong aversion to having that manner of person about the place, and that any attempt at proselytising would be met by immediate expulsion. That was the state of things existent in a certain country village no further back than the middle of the last century, when, as though Providence had pre-arranged it, a man who at one time had been a sailor came to live there. He was tall and well-made, with broad shoulders, and he walked with a sort of military tread. He had a broad forehead, firmly set lips, and altogether he was good to look on. No one could come in contact with him without being impressed with his strength of character. His wife was an equally fine-looking person, with pronounced intellectual capacity. They were both evangelical Wesleyans. Their family consisted of five sons and two daughters, a fine wholesome brood, who were all quite young, the eldest being about fifteen. The children were reared and trained with great care, and without distinction of sexes: they were all taught to do housework. Family worship was held morning and night. If the father was unavoidably absent, the mother took the service, and if both were absent, the eldest of the family, either son or daughter, took it. The house was a hive of industry and religious fervour; everything about it was neat and spotlessly clean. Soon after their arrival the parson made a call on them, and of course the father and mother were asked what their faith was. This being quickly settled, the man of holy orders intimated that the parents would be expected to attend the parish church each Sunday with their family. They of course reminded him that they were Wesleyan Methodists, but that would not prevent them attending his church in the mornings. "In the afternoon and evenings I have been accustomed to conduct a service myself either in the open air or in my own or someone else's home," said the placid-looking father. The parson gazed at him with apoplectic surprise, and hinted that he hoped he would not continue his mission work there, as Nonconformity was not approved by the owner of the village, and, he might add, by himself either.

"I fear I must disregard your request," said Mr Burnside, "and do what my conscience and judgement demand of me."

The cleric took his leave, with the intimation that Squire Humbert would no doubt call and have a talk with him about spiritual and other matters. Burnside was not long in discovering that many of the villagers were quite illiterate, and but little above the standard of heathen. He resolved to throw his soul into the work of evangelizing them at all costs. The first visit Mr Humbert paid him left no doubt as to that gentleman's wishes. He spoke of the disturbing influence lay Methodist preachers were having all over the country, and said that he had decided no such sensational work should be permitted on his estate. Burnside did not deem it prudent to enter into controversy, but determined that nothing should deter him from carrying out the work that God had sent him to do. The circumstances were so discouraging that no ordinary man would have persisted in going on with it. He was scoffed at, hooted, and at times both men and women were so enraged that they threatened a personal attack; but there was something about his physical appearance and his firm though gentle manner that cowed even the most violent of those who were opposed to his religious

teaching. They felt he would stand no nonsense of that kind. He had not been long in the locality before a spirit of strong revival came over the place. Some of the worst men and women in the countryside were converted, and ardently tried to influence others for good. They were raw, crude, and uneducated, but there was a power behind them that made their influence irresistible. People came from far and near to hear this strange gospel of pity preached and to witness such an unexpected revolution. Strong men and women were smitten with its force, until any one of them who had shown ill-natured and violent dislike to even listening to the simple message of the lay preacher, eagerly threw their doors open to him in order that he might hold services in their homes. He urged them to attend the parish church in the mornings, as there was only one service on the Sundays, and none during the week. Most of his own family did this, while the others went with him to the chapels he was appointed to preach at. He knew the squire and the parson were feeling full of wrath, and that they believed him to be a mistaken instrument for evil, and that the whole parish was thrown into revolt by his wild advocacy of a sacrilegious creed, and that it must be put a stop to or he would have to leave the village.

When Burnside was having a stroll one morning with a little fellow of four years old, who was chattering to him about his services, Squire Humbert came upon them, stopped, and snappishly asked what he meant by disturbing the whole district with such ranting nonsense.

"I tell you," said he, "it must cease, or I will ask you to leave the place."

Burnside withered him with a gaze that betrayed his feelings, and began:

"Sir, you may ask me to leave the village, but you may not ask me to cease serving my God in the way I choose. Now, sir, listen. You have been accustomed to talk to your village servants in a way that is insufferable. I am not one of them, and if I were I should resent your doing so to me. I must ask you to carry out your threat, and when I get your communication I shall give you my definite answer. Meanwhile never you attempt to insult me or make an attack upon my religion again. And bear in mind that I refuse to allow you to be the controller of it. Good morning."

The dignified "Lord God the Squire" gasped with suppressed fury, but that which he wished to utter was unutterable, and he rode off in the direction of his hall. Burnside told his wife what had transpired. She commended him for the manner in which he had treated it, though both she and the family were filled with concern lest the threat of turning them out of their home should be carried out. It made an everlasting impression on all the family, but especially so on the little fellow who heard all that was said. *He* never got over the cruel, senseless stab, and I have reason to believe it lives with him still. Burnside regarded the whole thing with contempt, and continued his religious services as though nothing had happened. Mr Logan, the parson, not long after called to see him, and Burnside drew him into discussion on Theology. He was a great student of Bishop Butler's "Analogy," and was familiar with the writings of other theologians. The parson was amazed at the plain man's strong logical instincts, the keen fluency of his talk, and the fulness of his knowledge, and so enjoyed the conversation that he asked if he might hope to have a further opportunity of having another discussion. "Come any day you like except Sundays," said the unconventional old sailor, "and I may assure you it will give me great pleasure." They parted with feelings of growing respect for each other. The parson evidently made some weighty communication to Mr Humbert, as that gentleman's attitude towards Burnside soon underwent a marked change, and this was shown by his commencing to chat whenever they met. It was not long before they were on the most cordial terms. The squire found that Burnside was not only a powerful religionist but a strong personality. His reading was very wide, and his knowledge and conversational gifts made him an attractive man to come in contact with. Humbert had evidently seen it to be unwise to meddle with his religion any more, and his friendship for him soon became apparent, for instead of carrying out the threat of putting him off his estate, he offered him a better house to live in, with a large plot of ground attached to it. The offer was gratefully accepted, but this did not in any way interfere with the steady progress of the propaganda, and in a few years the character of the men and women who would have thrown him into the sea when he first came amongst them changed from hatred into affection. Gambling, drunkenness, wife-beating, profanity, all had disappeared.

As soon as his sons were old enough they left the district, and ere long some of them were heard of in the metropolis of England, and had succeeded in carving out distinguished careers for themselves. Two of them gladdened the old man's heart by choosing the sea as a profession, but no discrimination in point of affection was ever shown, though when he heard the hoarse moaning of the wind on troubled nights, he never failed to put in a supplementary prayer for his two seafarers. He had passed through the dangers himself, and had a steadfast belief that close communion with God was a strong safeguard against disaster. The homecoming of these sailor lads, who frequently brought friends with them, was a great joy to the Burnside's, and also to those of the villagers with whom they associated. Both lads were very sailorly, and it was well known that they never failed to make things hum with mirth and mischief, as soon as they had taken their bearings and found the coast clear of "squires" and "parsons." It was a pretty sight to see their two sisters rush out of the house as soon as their brothers were seen in the distance crossing the long stretch of moor and run to meet and fondly greet them. This had been one of the

fundamental points in their training, that they were to be affectionate to each other, and lengthened separation did not diminish the well instilled habit. But the joy of the young people's meeting was only second to that of seeing their reunion with their parents, and great were Mrs Burnside's bewildering exploits of cookery. The first night was generally spent in telling queer stories of their skippers, mates and shipmates, whilst the father sat smiling placidly and obviously living over again his youthful days when he also was a sailor lad relating the same kind of stories in the same old way. The girls asked all sorts of questions, and the merry babble was kept up until Mrs Burnside reminded her husband that it was long past the usual time for prayers, and that they had better postpone the narrative until the morrow. A chapter suitable for the occasion was given out, and they read verse and verse about until they reached the end of the lesson. Then they knelt round the table and listened to the tremulous tones of their father's prayer. When he had finished they all repeated after him the Lord's Prayer and then rose. At one of these reunited gatherings one of the brothers had been restless, and persisted in nudging his sisters and winking at them when his parent had reached his most impressive periods and was oblivious of everything but his communion with God. The scamp was taken aside by the younger sister, who was a strong-minded little damsel with fixed ideas, and she sharply reproved him for his irreverence; and the elder sister, who had a keen sense of humour as well as fixed opinions, was so thankful that the boys had been brought safely back to them, she commenced to make the most comical excuses for their erring brother's buoyant indiscretion. The young man's contrition was signified by his taking hold of his sisters, waltzing them round the room, and then proceeding to stand on his head and dangling his legs in the air. This threw them into fits of laughter, and though it was against the rules of the home, the joyous chatter was resumed and continued until long past the regulated time for going to bed. When I hear people ridiculing religion and its forms, I think of those simple days of village methodism with a throbbing of the heart.

There were coteries in this small out-of-the-way place as there are in large towns and cities, and perhaps the exclusiveness was even more pronounced there than in the larger centres. The fisher people were a class by themselves, with whom the squire's employés thought it beneath their dignity to be on regular visiting terms. They married and intermarried amongst themselves, while Mr Humbert's servants were a mixed class. Some had intellectual ambitions and rare musical talents, and others had not; and it was amongst the former that the Burnside's found something in common. Their home gathered up all the more cultured part of the population. But apart from that, every young and old person in the village was known to the others. The well was situated a good distance from the cottages, and the girls of the village generally had to carry the water to their homes either because there were no sons or because they were employed elsewhere; but if any of them were about, the lassie with the burden was always offered help, and rarely refused it. When the two young sailors came home they made a point of insisting on carrying water for any young girl they by chance saw at the fountain, hence they increased their popularity and were sought after for that reason as well as for the fact of their being rollicking sailors. In fact, it seemed as though the little circle were of one family. The day following the home-coming from any given voyage was spent in formally calling upon their friends, and in the evening all the young people gathered up at their home to have tea, and afterwards dancing, singing, talking, and all kinds of games. Of course the sailors were called upon to do some step-dancing, and so the happy days and evenings sped on until the time came to prepare to set off on a long voyage. Then for several days previous to their departure the house was full each afternoon of voluntary helpers, washing, making shirts, knitting stockings, and making all kinds of underclothing. Things were kept moving in such a lively way when these young seafarers were about, that a feeling of desolation depressed the whole village for many days after they had left it.

Yet amid all the simple charm of the people and the natural beauty of the place there came a period of sorrowing and grief. The motherless daughter of an official of the Lord of the Manor, a beautiful girl who was the idol of her family and loved by everybody, fell a victim to the villainy of her father's assistant to whom she was engaged to be married; he betrayed her and then left the village, and no one could trace his whereabouts. When her condition became apparent, her father alone failed to realize her true state until he received a note from his master to have her removed from his estate, and with brutal severity the squire insisted that she should never be allowed to stain the purity of his grounds by her presence again, nor could he permit any intercourse whatever between her and any of his servants either male or female, direct or indirect. The father was brokenhearted, and indeed the whole community were stricken with grief for her and for him. She was removed to a town a few miles away and then gave birth to a male child. The father in his thoughtless anger left her to the callous mercy of an inexperienced person, and through want of proper care consumption set in, and the shadow of doom swiftly encompassed her. A burning remorse was charring her to pieces. She craved the forgiveness of her parent, and longed to see the home she had been ruthlessly turned away from. This desire was intensified by a passion to feel the thrilling of the sea winds that came from the moaning ocean. What insufferable cruelty to refuse the appeal of a sweet girl who had been wronged, and who was passing from earth and would soon be put to rest in a grave within easy reach of the springy links and glossy sands where so many days of her joyous girlhood had been spent in innocent and jovial scenes! A last appeal was made to the hard old squire, who, to do him justice, believed he was an instrument in the hands of divine Providence to enforce the cultivation and

carrying out of high ideals. Human fallibility was not sanctioned on his demesne outside his own personality or household. The poor, grief-stricken girl wrote to him hoping that her wishes might become known to his wife and touch her to have compassion, and her plan succeeded, for on receipt of her letter permission was given to have her brought home. Here is the simple, pleading request:

"SIR,—I ask you for pity's sake to forgive me and allow a poor girl who is humbly and bitterly penitent, wrecked in body and soul, to be taken from here to her father's home so that she may seek forgiveness of him before she is called to appear before her God. I have only a few weeks at the most left to me, and then I shall pass from the scene of conflict and grief into that long sleep which never endeth.

"I am, yours obediently,

"MARY ROUTLEDGE."

The day following the receipt of this letter Mary was brought home, and the good Mrs Humbert engaged a nurse to look after her. Mr Logan, the parson, was sent for, and he administered what he regarded as a passport into heaven. He pronounced a stern reproof, and then impressed on her the idea of the great sin she had committed, and in the good old ecclesiastical style admonished her to say her prayers and read her Bible night and morning, and if she did that there might yet be hope for pardon. The girl did not think the prescription comforting enough, so after a few days' misery she asked for Mr Burnside. She had heard him both pray and preach in days gone by, and the impressions made then came back to her vividly. On entering the little home he chatted with her in his accustomed cheery way, never even hinting at her great sorrow, and then he asked if she would like him to pray with her before he went. She said: "Oh, yes, that is one of the reasons I sent for you; and if you could make it convenient I would like you to come often." Mr Burnside acquiesced, and before leaving his little friend he joked with her judiciously until she laughed so heartily that a casual looker-on would have thought she had neither mental nor physical trouble, but as she said to him: "You make me forget all my affliction." "That is exactly what I should like to do," said her bright companion, "and I think we are making some progress."

His visits were always a joy to both of them, and after paying several she called out to him one day when he entered her room, "I have found God. I know now the plan of salvation that you have been so anxious for me to see, and though I deeply regret to leave you and all those who have been so considerably kind to me, I am anxious that my Master should claim me soon and take me to dwell amid the silent glory of a last long dream. I am now prepared to meet Him. My last dying request is very sacred. It touches me so keenly I feel some doubt as to whether I can approach it without giving you a mistaken thought of what I really do mean. It is this: may I ask you to give an eye to my child when I am gone, and should you detect that he is not being cared for, or trained properly, will you use your influence in having this done? Perhaps one of the lads (meaning his sons) when they get on will take an interest in him for the sake of his mother to whom they were so kind and gentle in other days. Ah, what memories of sweetness I have gathered up since I was laid aside; and these lines, which I committed to memory long ago, have sometimes come to me:

But 'tis done—all words are idle;
Words from me are vainer still;
But the thoughts we cannot bridle
Force their way without the will."

She then assured Mr Burnside that she was quite resigned. He listened to her gentle musings, only interjecting a word now and then in order that the current of thought should not be stranded. But his heart was full of grief, and when he stooped to kiss her brow and say "good-night" the tears were dropping from his eyes.

"Ah," said she, "I know the sorrow you have for me, and your distress pains me, but after all I am only passing to the shadows a few years before you, and when you come I shall see you." And then she whispered softly, "I should like, if it be possible and my boy lives, that his mother's shame be kept from him. You, I'm sure, will try to prevent this."

He promised that her dying injunction, so far as he could arrange it, would be strictly observed, and then he went out into the mystic night.

They did not commune together again, for the Omnipotent had willed that she should pass through the valley before the long beams of light had been drawn from the dawn. The little colony was cast into gloom, and neither the chilly, puritanic doctrine of the Lord of the Manor, nor the mechanical piety of his adjutant, the rector, could stay the anger that permeated even the dullest of the inhabitants, who believed that a crime had been committed in the name of righteousness. The indignation of the female portion of the Burnside family was well subdued, not because of any cantish false delicacy, but in order that their own lads might not be encouraged to say or do anything rash. They left the father to communicate the news of Mary Routledge's illness to them. He had prayed for her on the

first night they were at home; this gave them the first intimation of the tragedy, but the ghastly character of it was learnt from outside, and they never either forgave or forgot the wicked perpetrators.

The hearts of the two sailors were sorely touched by the tale of suffering and treatment of the poor girl whom they were accustomed to regard in the light of a sister when they were boys at school, and though a few years of rough sea life had rubbed the finer edges off their early training, they still retained a strong affection for the girls who were their favourites, and as she was one of them, their affection and their grief for her was never concealed. The fulness of their pleasures had been marred by this great affliction, but as they would have made any sacrifice in order that their sympathy might be known to her, they steadfastly observed an attitude of conduct that well-nigh approached piety; and after she had been "put away" and their father told them of her last dying message, they resolved that if spared to reach a position, and her boy was alive, and those who had charge of him were agreeable that he should become a sailor, either one or the other would undertake his training. Meanwhile the child was left as a legacy to the grandfather, but incredible though it may appear, he was not allowed to bring it to the estate during the sanctified lifetime of Mr Humbert.

The young men had reached the limit of their period ashore; it was only fourteen days, but that was all that could be spared, as the vessels they were to sail in were nearly at the fitting-out stage. The night before they had to depart a tea-party was given by a distinguished old lady, who was known for her great kindness to needy people in the district, and to wayfarers who passed by her house. She owned a large adjoining estate, and managed it herself with consummate skill. She was very fond of the two lads, so that they were invited to the party, and, truth to say, it was really in their honour it was given. Nearly the whole of the young people round about were there, but the tragic death of their young friend prevented a full outburst of joyous revelry, though they arranged their mode of amusement to suit the occasion. The hostess was charming to everybody, but especially to the sailors. Her exhortations that they should be careful not to slip when they were climbing all over the rigging and yards, and to be sure not to get washed off the jib-boom, as she had heard of so many others being, and to keep ropes tied round them when the sea was coming aboard, so that they might not be washed overboard, were absurd and laughable, but tender. Of course the young men, in the true orthodox fashion of sailors, on being pressed by her and the young guests, male and female, told a few stories of their adventures that created both admiration and sensation; then by request they sang a few sea songs that were much appreciated. And when the regulation hour came for closing the proceedings the time had slipped away too quickly. A request was made to their hostess for an extension of time, and with a goodness that always characterized her it was granted for one hour longer, part of which was used by an appeal made by the sailor lads to be allowed to correspond with her two granddaughters, who were young ladies of prepossessing appearance. After some delicate negotiations and many assurances of honourable intentions, they were told that, provided their letters were confined to a history of their movements and their doings, and without any foolishness, they might write twice a voyage to the girls and to herself. "But," said she, "there must be no proposals of marriage until you have both reached the head of your profession." This condition was gratefully agreed to, and when the young men joined the party again there were many inquiries and many hints as to the nature of the conference with their hostess, but the secret was only divulged to the two who were directly interested, and then the jovial gathering formed themselves into a ring, sang "Auld lang syne," and added "Will they no come back again?" which was specially intended to apply to the sailors. These formalities having been completed, the young mariners proceeded to say their farewells, and kissed and cuddled with astonishing rapidity first one girl and then the others until all had shared the ebullition of their rugged endearment. The male portion of the assembly viewed this form of emphasizing good-bye with sheepish amazement. They would have been stupefied with shame if any one had seen them walking even with a girl, although the enterprising seafarers had done their best to assure them that it was the only true style of showing genuine goodwill.

Long before dawn the following morning the lads were tramping over a wild expanse of common towards a seaport, and they carried on their shoulders as fine a kit as ever went into a vessel's fore-castle. All the things that had happened during their stay, especially the incidents of the last night, were talked of amongst the villagers for many a long day after the sailors had left the district and travelled to the southern hemisphere. Yes, and many an eloquent petition was sent up from the familiar cottage homes that knew them so well for their safe-keeping and speedy return. This phase of sailor life existed in the country places, and to some extent in the smaller seaport towns bordering on the country, in the middle of the last century. It is always pleasant to think of the innocent, robust enjoyment these better class seamen planned out for themselves, aided of course by their rural friends. They were sought after and loved by everybody. What balderdash has been spoken and written about poor Jack everlastingly misconducting himself! Assuredly the Christian virtues did not take complete hold of all of them, and no one will deny that a large percentage were wayward and took a lot of steering. But compare them with other classes of men, and I do not think they would take a second place.

Norman and Kenneth Burnside worked, saved, and studied very hard, and rapidly rose in

their profession. They had no sooner got their extra master's certificates than they were offered and accepted the command of handsome square-rigged vessels employed in the Eastern trade, and both of them became famous for making quick passages. The old lady who had been their friend so long became impressed with the idea of their reaching great heights, and was quite frank in stating that she was proud to see the speedy advancement of two boys that had been reared within sight of her home. She indicated to some of her closest friends that she had no misgiving now about giving her granddaughters in marriage to the young sailors, and this interesting confession was made known to them by some unknown agent. They arrived in England within a month of each other, and were quietly married. The venerable lady settled a considerable sum on her granddaughters, and no lack of instructions were omitted as to its purpose. The sailors said it was very good of the old girl to do this for her young relatives, but they each reminded their wives that they did not marry them for money. After a brief holiday the brothers rejoined their respective ships, and sailed, one from Liverpool to Australia, and the other from London to Calcutta, and little did they expect when they parted that it would be nearly two decades before they were to meet again.

Many years after, two vessels were racing down the China seas, one of them a new barque heavily sparred and very crank, and the other a large, full-rigged ship. Both were rushed through the sea at great speed. The full-rigger, with Norman Burnside in command, drew ahead of the barque and lost sight of her in the darkness. Between ten and eleven at night the second officer was on the poop chatting with the captain; the sky was cloudless, not a speck to be seen, and the wind strong and steady; every stitch of canvas was set, when all of a sudden the captain ceased conversing with the officer, told him that a white squall was close upon them, and to call all hands to shorten sail. They had only got a portion of it in when the squall struck her, and everything had to be let fly. During the few minutes it lasted it was terrific; many of the sails were torn to shreds, the masts were heavily strained, and the vessel herself was well-nigh doomed. Nothing was seen or heard of the barque after that night, but the fears of those aboard the full-rigger were great lest trouble should have come to her. When they arrived in London an account was sent to them of the loss of their companion in the China Seas. The paragraph stated that the vessel was struck by a white squall, thrown on her beam ends and literally capsized; the captain was Norman's brother. He was on deck at the time and tried to get down into the cabin to rescue his wife, but the rush of water prevented him. She was drowned almost before his eyes, and her body went down with the vessel. Some of the crew who were aft managed with the assistance of the captain to get the gig disentangled from the wreck, but he refused to save himself and had to be dragged into the boat by force. Others of the crew clung to floating spars, and were either killed or drowned, and only one survived until succour came. The day following the casualty, those that took to the boat were picked up. A day later a passing vessel saw some wreckage ahead, and as they drew towards it they discovered a boy clinging to a spar which was being tossed about by the motion of the sea. The vessel was at once hove to and a boat went to his rescue. The only clothing he had on was a light flannel shirt and a pair of drawers. The poor little fellow had tried to lash himself to the spar with a piece of rope. When they got close to where he was his feeble voice whispered from it a few words of touching thanks; and then, as though a supernatural force had been given him, he said in a tone that seemed to have been flashed from another world: "It is too late. I am about to pass on to where my mother is. I feel my stomach is chafed through." His face, it was said, wore a spiritual air, and his eyes had an expression of quiet, resigned sadness. They cast off the rope that bound him to the spar, took him gently from it and placed his disembowelled body in the boat. His remains were sewn up in a hammock, heavy weights were put at his feet, and at the dead hour of the night the mourners, with uncovered heads bowed in hallowed manifestation of pity, listened to the harrowing words that came throbbing from the captain's lips as substituted for the written funeral service. When he had finished, orders were whispered to lower the body in silence down the side of the vessel, and then the waters covered him over. Many weeks elapsed before it was known that it was Mary Routledge's boy.

Nothing could exceed the genuine sympathy that was shown to the poor distracted Kenneth Burnside, but all attempts at consolation were received by him with a sad smile that conveyed the idea of an unhealing wound. He lived the life of a recluse and never went to sea again.

VII

FORECASTLE LIFE

The modern sailor can have no idea of the hardships and discomforts of his predecessors even up to thirty or forty years ago. Unless a person has lived with sailors in the forecastle

as one of themselves and taken part in their daily life, no accurate conception can be formed of what their peculiarities and conditions of life were. It may be that they fluently cursed about the latter, and had some idea that they were being imposed upon; but posterity must ever remember that they bore their wrongs with heroism and with a steadfast belief in the superiority over those of other nationalities of their owners, their ships and themselves. Comparisons were never indulged in: they insisted that all things British took in the nature of things first place, and this child-like faith was never broken in spite of glaring, wicked callousness to their men's sufferings on the part of some employers and captains.

Their accommodation was in the extreme fore-end of the vessel, and the space allowed was low-roofed and cramped, frequently leaky and invariably dismal. Immediately abaft the fore-castle ladder was the cable stage where hawsers, cable-chains, tar-barrels, tar-pots, tar-brushes, marline spikes, serving-mallets, cork-fenders, water-casks and other spare gear were stowed. The first impressions of smell to a person who had been reared in a pure atmosphere were deadly. I think I can feel all my first sensations even now. On each side of the space, hammocks were slung to hooks, or to eyebolts fastened into the beams, and on account of leaky decks the men were obliged to have oil-covers hung the full length of the hammock like a tent to keep the water from pouring on to them! There was great pride taken in the spotless cleanliness of these canvas sleeping cots. The rings that the lanyards and clews were attached to were neatly grafted, and the art of hanging with accuracy so that the occupant lay in perfect comfort without fear of being lurched out was often the cause of mutual criticism and heated controversy. It looks a very simple matter, but there is an art that has to be learned in slinging a hammock correctly. Alongside of them were the seamen's chests, with skilfully carved oak or mahogany cleats, grafted rope horseshoe handles, and turk's head at each side of the cleats. These were painted white to give variety and effect. The lid inside displayed a full-rigged clipper, barque, or brig, either under full sail with a peaceful blaze of blue sea, or under close-reefed topsails labouring in the wrath of a cyclone with a terrific turmoil. Underneath this work of art was the name of the person to whom the chest belonged, painted in block shaded letters, and the fate of many a crew has been traced by the washing ashore of a relic of this sort. All this was done by the sailor himself, and during the process of elaboration many a castle was built in the air and many a vow made that his conduct for evermore should be regulated by a strict adherence to righteous principles. There was great competition in this as in other things. The fore-castle sides and the deck were whitewashed with lime, and the floor in fine weather, at sea as well as in port, was kept clean. The apprentices were made to take week and week about in scrubbing the floor every morning, and sweeping it after every meal. In well regulated vessels that sailed on long voyages, as soon as they got into the N.E. trade winds the crew settled down to a daily routine during the first hour or two of their watch below in the daytime, of making, mending and washing their clothes. Some never got beyond this, or making mats, but there were men who varied their pastime by carving models of vessels, making wood sails or rigging, and fitting them out in every detail. This work was done with great skill and neatness. Those that could read and were fond of it gave a share of their time to that. There were others who worked hard at learning navigation, their chest lids serving as a desk. It occasionally happened that some of the fore-castle hands could neither read nor write, but if they were willing to learn there was always someone ready to teach them, who in the process of teaching learnt much that was useful to himself. A few months ago there died an old man whom I taught to read and write when he must have been over forty years of age. He was one of many skilled seamen of that day who were much sought after to command collier brigs during the winter months, notwithstanding they could not read, or write their own names even. This man never failed to make the quickest passages and voyages on record, and in the summer, without presuming on having been master, he would ship on a deep sea vessel as able seaman or cook. It was in the latter capacity that I first met him when I was an apprentice of fourteen. I was seated reading Sir Walter Scott's "Old Mortality," and laughing as heartily as a boy will at some of the sayings and doings of the Covenanters, when he asked what amused me. I told him, and he expressed a desire for me to read to him. I did so as well as I could, and when the time came for me to resume my duties and close the book, he said in a very sheepish way, "I wish I could read and write; I would make a fortune if I could." I immediately offered my services, and with a slight indication of sensitiveness he accepted them. It was a long, dreary process, but my pupil was so eager, especially after he got to know three letter words, I soon led him into figuring—addition and multiplication sums—and two years after starting him, he was learning from me what little navigation I was able to impart. He seemed to pick this up instinctively, which gave him a passionate desire to go to a navigation school, and in a short time he had made such rapid progress that the teacher thought he could pass the examination; and his opinion was confirmed by Ned going to Dundee and passing at the first attempt. He got a mate's berth in the summer, and went master in the winter, continuing to save money until he had accumulated sufficient to purchase a small ketch which he owned entirely himself. For some years he did well, then sold the little vessel and commenced business ashore. I had not heard of or seen him for many years, when one afternoon a friend of mine called at my office and intimated that my old friend was in the workhouse, and had desired him to call and inform me of it, feeling sure that I would not allow him to remain there. I asked my friend to have him taken out and put into respectable lodgings until I could get him some relief from a philanthropic institution, and the odd easy jobs I saw put in his way kept him comfortably. He often came to see me, and when I could spare the time I gratified the fine old fellow's wish by encouraging him to talk to me of those days that were such a joy to him. I believe he

regarded himself, when aboard one of my vessels, in the light of a special guardian of my interests, and I think he must have assumed an air of superiority over others which was occasionally resented. At any rate, one morning on reaching the office I found him ready to receive me; he was well dressed, clean-shaven and looked all over like a captain of the old school. I saw he had a grievance, and he at once plunged into the object of his visit; complaining that one of the captains had treated him as none of the others would think of doing, and when I asked what he had said to the captain to cause his displeasure, he replied with energy and warmth that he had told him he would "go and see his betters who had known him before he (the captain) was born. And what do you think the impudent fellow said? He told me I might go to h—ll if I liked, and so I'm here to see whether *he's* to boss me, or if I'm to take orders from you. He actually had the impudence to give me an order for my money on the office instead of paying me as the others did in cash!"

This was the only time he ever complained to me about the treatment he received from anyone. I was much amused, and humoured the old man into a good temper. He never quite forgave the insult that had been offered him, but went away satisfied that he had scored. Twelve months after this there were signs that the hard usage of his early days was breaking him up. He struggled on in the hope that his iron constitution would throw off the malady that held him in its grip, but ere long the suffering old hero passed away.

My brother once volunteered to teach another old illiterate, who shared his watch, to read and write. It was one of the most comical proceedings I ever witnessed, and when I reflect on it now I see a touch of pathos that fills me with remorse for the part I took in making fun of that fine seaman, who had been brought up in an atmosphere of heathenism, and was, in many ways, little better than a heathen himself. He stood six feet four inches, and had the frame of a giant; a large, well-formed head poised above a pair of broad shoulders; his face was strong and highly intellectual; his nose, mouth and full blue eyes indicated that he had sprung from a race of well-bred people who may have declined on their luck. Had his intellectual faculties been given a chance when young, he might have been great in any profession. As it was, he was merely a rough, uncouth man, but a well-trained and accomplished sailor. He had been trained in the hardest of all schools, that of the coasting trade, and he knew every swirl of the tide and every sandbank between St Abb's and Dungeness. He did not rise to be captain, though he frequently went as mate during the winter months. It was not until his ambition led him to a knowledge of the bigger world far beyond the continents of Europe that he determined to learn how to read and write. I am not sure whether he ever felt humiliated at having to seek the aid of a young man so much his junior and occupying a subordinate position to himself; if he did, I cannot recall having observed it. The owners' confidence in him must have been great. He was signed on the ship's articles as boatswain, but really he was intended to act as second mate, keeping the captain's watch and doing the ordinary duties of a second officer. The first intimation the captain had that his owner had sent such a strange personality was on the evening that the vessel was towed out to sea. The decks were in a condition of confusion, and this ardent officer was busying himself in getting them cleared up before dark. The master intimated to him that he was feeling very tired, and would like to lie down.

"You may go to bed, sir," said the officer, "and when you get there remember you have a better man on deck than yourself."

The captain stared at this extraordinary creature, and when he had recovered from his amazement at the unblushing audacity, he said:

"Sir, I wish to intimate to you that you are not aboard a collier brig, but a deep-water ship, and you are addressing a deep-water captain who has never been spoken to in such a strange way before."

"Good God, man!" said the irate second mate, "get away to your bunk, and don't stand there talking damned nonsense about what you call etiquette. I know nothing about that, but I'll take your ship along the coast for you, and I want you to know as well that I can handle a marline spike or a palm and needle with any of your South Spain dandies. You may go below, sir; I have not time to talk to you just now."

"Well, Joss," said the subdued captain, "I will admit I believe you are a better coasting navigator than myself"; and in the assurance that he was, the captain went below, and was not seen again until we got clear of the English Channel. The navigation was left in the hands of the mate and second mate. It was after reaching the north-east trade winds that the latter's elementary education began. The tutor could be seen any morning or afternoon watch below sitting on the fore-castle floor working at the construction of a miniature full-rigged ship. His pupil sat beside him with the alphabet written on a slate, and as he advanced in knowledge, three letter, four letter and five letter words were given him, and it was when he arrived at this stage that the process became feverishly attractive and amusing. The following is something like how it appeared to those who were looking on:

"AND—and; FOUR—four," said the tutor, without lifting his eyes from his work.

"THEIR, what the h—ll's that, Jack?"

"Their," said John.

"THERE, that's a b—— jawbreaker, Jack?"

"There," said the tutor, and off he would go in his own peculiar way. Almost every word was introduced by a harmless swear, the droll thing being that my brother simply took it as a matter of course, and never laughed unless some unusually inventive oath combination was interjected; if the pupil confined himself to ordinary swearing, there was no interruption; he was allowed to rattle along in his own voluble way, letting fly vigorously at the inventor of "larnin'." The result was that Joss learned to read and write before the voyage was over. It is true there were few people outside the fore-castle that could tell what it was all about, unless they studied very closely his eccentric pronunciation and the wild scrawl of his writing. He never went far enough to get even a second mate's certificate. He thought it an unnecessary waste of time, seeing that he intended to leave the sea as soon as he could attain a pilot's branch. This he succeeded in doing, and had a long and successful career; his fame as a pilot only equalled that which he bore when employed as a sailor. He lived to a good ripe age, and died in harness still adhering to the up-to-date belief that England was being imposed upon by "a set of b—— neckends (foreigners), who took the bread from the mouths of Englishmen." He is said to have saved and left a good deal of money, and this I can well believe, as even when a common sailor he lived far below his income. Joss, unlike most sailors, had not a note of music in his composition, but there were few professionals on the halls who could surpass him at step-dancing. I saw him dance the double-shuffle with a professional on one occasion in the Ratcliffe Highway. I think the place was called the "Gunboat," and he was there declared to be the champion. Joss considered it a part of a sailor-boy's training that he should learn to dance a hornpipe and other steps with facility, and he devoted a good share of his spare time to teaching recruits how to do it. Undoubtedly a good step-dance was a great acquisition on a long, dreary, ocean pilgrimage, and his performance always added to the amusement of a Saturday evening when a concert was organized. The songs were mostly comic, and were sung with an imitative touch of the professional dandy. Occasional lapses into sentimentality never failed to strike a penitent chord for some real or supposed sins that had been thoughtlessly committed. But the mood was merely of brief duration, and only required a comic interjection by someone to send the little community into prolonged gaiety. It was quite usual when they were in the mood to carry their revelry far into their watch below.

When the time came for the hand-spike to be thudded on the deck over their heads, and eight bells called them from slumber to duty, there were found some of whom it was said they would sleep with their heads in a bucket of water, and these were speedily brought to consciousness by the head of their hammocks being let fly by their less somnolent comrades. This was one of the jokes which often led to days of estrangement between the sleeper and the supposed culprit. It was always a mystery who committed the offence, as great caution was used to preserve secrecy. It was a wonder no necks were broken, notwithstanding the care taken to avoid injury in carrying out this mode of arousing the heavy sleeper. Many were undoubtedly hurt, but as there was a good deal of disgrace attached to sleeping on after being called, there was rarely open revolt or complaint made. Another method of dealing with hands who could not keep their eyes open when on watch was to reeve a rope through the scupper-hole, attach one end to the person, and the other to a coal basket, which was thrown overboard. If the vessel was travelling fast, the poor culprit was rudely awakened, and before he could extricate himself he was dragged into the lee scuppers. As that portion of the deck was usually flooded when the vessel had any speed on her, there were soon loud cries for mercy. When it was not prudent to adopt this plan, a bucket of water was thrown at the sleeper's head; this produced the idea of having to swim for it. I have often seen the culprit after an ablution of this character strike out on the deck until his hands or his head came in contact with something harder than either, and made consciousness revive.

But there were methods for dealing with the habit of sleeping on deck other than those, which were fraught with greater danger. I was serving on a vessel whose mate was in the habit of napping when on duty. It was arranged to stretch ropes across the deck about one or two feet from it, and about six feet apart. It was a dark, dirty night; the top of the sea was all alive with phosphorus, which made it difficult to make out lights. The mate slumbered peacefully, leaning against the weather topgallant bulwarks. The man on the look-out shouted: "A red light on the starboard bow!" The man at the wheel repeated it. The mate was awakened, and went straight into a panic.

"Where is the light?"

"On the lee bow," said the helmsman.

"I think it is green," he said.

"Yes," said the helmsman; "so do I."

"No, it is not green; it is bright," said the mate.

"What do you think?"

"I think the same as you, George," said the helmsman.

The mate proceeded to rush along the deck towards the bow; each rope tripped him up, and each fall caused him to see different-coloured lights. After a succession of somersaults, he arrived at the fore end of the vessel wide awake, but in a state of distraction. He called to the look-out man to point out the light he had reported, and a deep, sepulchral voice came from a tall figure robed in white, warning the officer of approaching disaster because of his neglect of duty. Suddenly a trumpet sounded, and in an instant the vision had disappeared, and in another two men stood at the bow. They each spoke to their officer, but he was speechless. At last he managed to jerk out:

"Did you see that figure?"

"No," said the men.

"Then," said he in great tribulation, "it is an apparition."

The ropes were removed, and when he made his way aft nothing interrupted his progress. What could it have been? His fear was terrific; he must have known that something like a joke had been practised upon him, but his superstition, together with the consciousness of having committed a criminal breach of duty, seized the imagination and made him desire to believe that a supernatural visitation had taken place. He was never known to sleep on deck again, and such was the shock to his nerves I am persuaded he did not do a great deal of sleeping below. Whether it was owing to this or not, the poor fellow never properly regained his equilibrium; and his judgement, never reliable before, became after this event a negative quantity. Long years afterwards he used to be chaffed about it, and stood it very badly. A few months since I chatted with one of the men who with myself took part in this plot. He still treasured it as a great diplomatic feat, and laughed immoderately at the recollection of the poor mate's troubles, and warmly complimented himself on the success of the enterprise, but added very seriously: "There is no knowing what might have happened had we all taken to napping. At the same time I am sure," said he, "this sharp lesson put *him* off doing it again, and it may have saved our lives, though, poor man, he wasn't very much use when left to himself."

Many more experiences not identical but similar to those I have been relating were crammed into a long passage, which relieved the monotony of the stereotyped character of everyday life. Day after day, when the weather was fine, the same kind of work was carried on with unbroken regularity. In the morning at five-thirty the cook made coffee for the watch on deck, and at six they commenced to wash bulwarks, decks, etc. By eight o'clock this was finished. The watch who had to relieve them were knocked out at seven-thirty, had breakfast and came on deck at eight o'clock. The duties of these watches varied: If the rigging was being rattled down, the mate's watch did the fore, while the second mate's did the main and mizen; or if it were only the fore, main, or mizen that was being "rattled," the port side was done by the chief officer's men, and the starboard by the second officer's. There was great rivalry among the seamen who were selected to do this or any other skilled work, but only in regard to the quantity done and its neatness. At times, of course, there was a common understanding that a certain number of ratlines should be put on. This greatly depended on the treatment they were receiving. If it was good, no restriction was arranged, for each tried to excel the other, and this applied to every department of work. Some of the dodges to evade work may not be written here; but if it could be done it would reveal a phase of sea life that has never been put into print. If it were not that our conventions forbid offending the finer senses it might be written, and thereby show something more of the really comic side of Jack when he is on the rampage against constitutional government. There were occasions when the pride of the British tar was not abashed at being called a dockyard loafer, but these were rare.

In making a sea passage there was great care taken that no chafing was going on to the foots of the square sails, nor to the rigging, when the yards were braced up against it. Hence thrum and sword mats were constantly being made and laced on in order to obviate the possibility of a chafe wherever there was a nip. Then the sails had to be kept in repair. Some sailors were clever with the marline spike: could do all manner of neat things about the rigging, but they were of no use with the palm and needle; while there were others who could do anything with both. Some captains through vanity and ignorance believed it to be "classy" to keep the men of the afternoon watch below on deck with the rest, and the sailor who had to take the helm at 6 p.m. was sent to have tea at five-thirty; the others were kept at it until six. Then the apprentices had to clear up the decks and sweep them down with a hair brush. The accumulation of dirt when far away from the centre of mucky industries has always been a great mystery to seamen. Interminable allusions were made to the late Mr Edward Cocker, writer, arithmetician and engraver, as being the only person who could have solved the problem. The phrase "according" or "not according to Cocker" was constantly used in connection with matters that the scientist does not appear to have included in his works, or in any way concerned himself about. The custom of keeping men up doing their afternoon watch-below was common though not universal; in fact the shrewd, sensible captain never did it unless it was a necessity, and it was a rule in all well-regulated vessels to give Saturday afternoons when at sea (and even in port when it could be arranged) to the men, in order that they might do their washing and thereby prevent them

doing it on Sundays, which day was reverently spent by those who could do so in reading and re-reading letters that had been sent to them from their friends at home.

Those who have relatives at sea can never estimate to what extent a well-written, cheery letter is appreciated, and the influence it has in keeping the recipient out of mischief and in helping him to form good habits. I cannot sufficiently urge the importance of never allowing a sailor, no matter what his rank or capacity may be, to feel that he is being neglected by those of his family whom he desires to believe have a strong affection for him. I do not urge this exclusively in the sailor's interest, but also in the interest of those whose duty it is to keep him well supplied with news of what is going on at home. I have seen most deplorable results from this thoughtless indifference. There is nothing the average sailor looks forward to so keenly during a passage as the receipt of letters from home, and the disappointment of not receiving any as soon as the vessel arrives has not infrequently been the cause of irreparable mischief. If the relatives of these men could only witness the eagerness with which the arrival of the captain or his agent is watched for each day at noon, in the hope that letters may have come for them, they would realize how necessary it is to attend regularly to this phase of domestic life, and how little the trouble is compared with the joy it gives. On the other hand, I think if those who do not carry out the behest could see the effect of their callousness, they might either be frightened or filled with remorse and pity. But they cannot see it, and the poor fellows are often too sensitive about showing what would appear to them as feminine weakness, and so the thing in some cases drifts on, each not knowing the ugly consequences that are being inflicted on the other, until the climax inevitably comes and it is found the wreck cannot be repaired. I have drawn an extreme case, but there are such cases, and it is because I know of them that I have made the picture emphatic. All manner of excuses are made, such as being a bad letter-writer, and having so much to attend to, and "he doesn't reply to my or our letters as he should." My reply to this nonsense is, never mind whether he reciprocates your extreme condescension or not. The communication with him should be kept going, and if letters are bright, chatty, and without a word of indiscreet reproach for any lack of attention on his part, depend upon it he will ultimately melt into penitence and become a self-accused rascal. Of course I have known many cases where unjustifiable cruelty has been shown by sailors in not writing and in not answering letters sent to them by their wives, mothers or sisters. They did not really mean to cause suffering. They merely drifted into a condition of recklessness which perhaps their environments predisposed them to without ever reflecting that they owed the same duty to their relatives as they invariably complained was not being done to themselves.

I am reminded of a beautiful instance of unwavering devotion to a poor, wayward fellow, who was engaged to serve in the far eastern trade for three years. At each port the vessel touched at on the way out, letters were sent home, and every mail took letters to him, so that when he arrived at the port of discharge quite a batch were received. He wrote regularly for some months, then his letters began to fall off, and at last ceased coming altogether. For two years nothing was heard of his whereabouts except that which was gathered in a mysterious reserved way at the owners' office, and during the whole of these agonizing months never a mail went without a letter for him, and never a word of reproach was uttered or written, though the heart of the little writer was throbbing with soreness. The shipping newspaper was scanned each day, and whenever she saw the vessel he had left home in reported, her hope revived almost to the point of gaiety. Could she have known that her husband had long since left the vessel whose name she watched so eagerly, and the sight of which filled her soul with strange emotion, she might have succumbed to the numbing intelligence. When the weather was fine she strolled to the white sandy beach that was only a few minutes' walk from her house, and there she would give herself up to the luxury of day-dreams. Her fancy was sometimes pleased by the thought that she could see the wake of the beautiful vessel as it ploughed through the peaceful ocean. She listened to the gurgle of the miniature waves until the sigh of the night wind came and reminded her it was time to go home. These occasions were made memorable by the use they were put to. Many a subject for a new essay that was to be sent over the seas found its text on the lonely stretch of sand. Sometimes a shrewd hint was dropped in by the way that his communications must have miscarried, and that there was a painful longing to see his handwriting once again. "I cannot imagine you wilfully or negligently ignoring me," said the writer, but she had a grave suspicion that she was being neglected, and a still graver suspicion that the cause thereof was not excessive sanctification.

After twenty-four months of roving and of silence, a letter came from him announcing that he was tired of staying away, and by the time the letter was received he would be on his way home. He acknowledged having received a number of letters, and then proceeded in a clumsy way to make it appear that he *had* written, and many sanguinary descriptions as to how some people who were supposed to be concerned in the plot of withholding his letters had to meet their death at his hands. In due course he arrived home, but nothing could induce him to be drawn into a conversation about the missing correspondence. Time had made him more charitably disposed towards the mythical burglars of his precious documents, and no more threats were indulged in. The lady did not deem it wise to raise the question again, and seeing that nothing but harm could have arisen by doing it, I commend her for the wisdom of resisting the temptation of an inquiring mind. This woman's long-suffering, tactful endurance is an example of splendid magnanimity that might be emulated with advantage by those who may come under the devilish lash of similar treatment, and

who may be prompted by the spirit of rebellion to make matters worse by indiscreet retaliation. The good woman won back the loyalty of her poor erring partner by her persistent gentleness and toleration.

The following is a portion of a letter I have come across, written many years ago, in which the writer's concern for the spiritual well-being of her sailor brother is very apparent. She knew that it was letters such as this that appealed to the susceptible seafarers. I have said it was their habit to read and re-read their letters every Sunday, especially if they were of a sentimental or religious character. Much of this letter is obliterated, as the person to whom it was addressed tumbled overboard with it in his pocket, and it has crumbled away:

"MY OWN DARLING BROTHER,—I cannot tell you all the joy I feel at being able to write to you in England again. It has seemed a long time while you have been away, and yet now, when you are nearly beside us again, it seems but as yesterday. This may arrive before you, but still it is happiness to think that your vessel's prow is turned homeward. Our love and prayers have travelled with you all the way, and I thank God that you are preserved thus far, and trust He will bring you safe to us all. I know you will be as glad as we are, and I know, too, that though it has pleased God to give you the blessing of that best love of all earthly love, yet you prize the old ties of home.

"I think to cherish those who have loved him all his life is not the least of a man's duties, but I think where the love is, people don't think about the duty of it at all; it is given and received as a mutual blessing, for which the heart often rises up in silent thanksgiving. I trust, my dear, that you are keeping to your determination to live to God's glory. Don't be discouraged because of the difficulties of the way; the Bible, which I hope you study, says, 'Mighty is He that hath promised,' and the whole Book is full of promises of help to those who are in earnest, and you know if one is not in earnest even God cannot save us. We must do our part, and we must work out our own salvation. It is just and right that it should be so. The glories of heaven, the reward of dwelling for everlasting in an atmosphere of unspeakable purity, will be no reward to those who do not value purity and holiness. Those who do will strive for the reward with all their might, and when our weak and sinful nature overcomes the powers of evil within and without, He comes with His promised almighty help if we ask Him for it. How very tender the words of scripture are when speaking of God's children! He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. God help you, my darling, to take this word to yourself.

"With devoted love from us all,

"Your loving

"SISTER."

It must not be taken for granted that the reasons I have enumerated were the only ones that influenced the sailor not to write. There were motives that may tax the credulity of the reader, but they existed, nevertheless. I have served in vessels myself where a large proportion of the crew would not trust the captain to post any letters for them owing to the habit of mean speculation that was commonly practised by some captains in those days of grossly overcharging postage and putting the proceeds into their own pockets. But that was not the only method of pilfering from the poor creatures whose wages ranged from £2 15s. to £3 10s. per month, according to the trade they were engaged in, and might have a wife and group of children depending on them. The captains were purveyors of tobacco, and sold it to the crew at profits that far exceeded the limits of decency. Many of them carried what were known as slop chests, which comprised every article of apparel the sailors were accustomed to wear and use: oilskins, sea-boots, suits of dongarees, jumpers, ducks, dark flannel drawers, stockings, mufflers, mittens, blue flannel shirts, fustian and pilot cloth trousers, soap, soda, needles and thread, worsted, knives, and any other thing that was worn or used and likely to be marketable. It will be readily understood that men who traded in this way were not particularly anxious to have a well-fit-out crew at the beginning of a voyage, nor did they repine if bad weather prevailed at the outset. The worse the weather, the barer the sailor's kit, the better the market for the captain's commodities. These slop-chest skippers were perfect terrors to the needy mariner, and many a physical punishment would be endured so that he might be saved the ruinous cost of having to buy from his covetous commander, who was not satisfied with a mere hundred per cent., but regulated his prices according to the severity of the weather and the demand that might be made for his goods. These human vultures carried on a nefarious trade on lines that would have put a Maltese Hebrew to shame. When the days were radiant with sunshine, and the sea made glassy with continuous calms, the shrewd sailors who wanted supplies would apply for them, expecting that they could be had at reduced prices under such circumstances, but the predatory vendor did not do business on these occasions; he waited until the poor devils were overcome and punished by the treacherous icy winds and the mad rush of the waves

that tumbled over them and made their sufferings so acute that they were driven to ask their captains to supply them with clothing, and the prices charged were such as to justify the sailors regarding the said captains as the worst types of usurers. A common phrase of the sailors in referring to this class of man was that he would not hesitate to rob "Jesus Christ of his shoe-strings." I have heard these nautical clothiers boast of how they had worked the oracle so that the wretched men who served under them would be obliged to come and on their knees beg that they might be forgiven for not taking the articles when offered, and that they might have them now when they had seen their error. Of course only the wasters would put themselves in any such position. A captain who traded in this way had a right to cover himself for the risk he ran, but it was a wicked imposition to charge more than a reasonable profit for clothing, tobacco, or postages. In settling up at the end of a voyage, the overcharges were frequently contested, and I have known cases where a substantial reduction was enforced. The rate of exchange at which the advances to the crew abroad were worked was invariably one that realized a profit to the captain and caused grave suspicion that a petty theft was being committed. Captains used to brag that they made as much as their wages came to by the sales from their slop-chests and tobacco. Judging from the amount of trade done and prices charged, I can quite believe this.

One of the most mischievous customs of that period was that of giving grog to sailors on Saturday nights, and whenever sail had to be shortened or any extra work done, and many a drunkard was made thereby. What suffering, what untold misery has been wrought by this damnable custom! The lives that have been sacrificed, the property damaged, and vessels lost by having grog aboard, and by captain and officers imbibing it and serving it out to the others with too generous a hand, can never be estimated. Much of the calamity that has occurred, and does yet occur, at sea could and can be traced to its direct use, and the unutterable grief and ruin it has brought into many a fine sailor's home is an odious testimony to those who put temptation in their way and perhaps encourage the use of it for their own benefit. A poor lad whom I knew many years ago acquired the taste for drink aboard the vessel he served in. She was what is called by sailors a grand grog-ship. He was assisting to discharge cargo, and in the middle of the forenoon the bottle was passed round. Being a general favourite with everybody, especially with the steward, whom he was always ready to give assistance to in many little ways, he jokingly asked him for "a good second mate's nip," a phrase which means that the rum or other spirits had to be three fingers up from the bottom of the tumbler glass. It was never doubted that the steward gave him a good deal more than the regulation quantity, for he became very lively soon after. Just at the time grog was served, empty waggons ran short, and the crew were ordered to do odd jobs. The poor lad was sent to the fore topmast head to splice a new lanyard into the main royal stay. He had done this, and was setting the stay up when the marline spike must have slipped out of the hitch in the lanyard. Suddenly the song he was singing ceased; a jerky, nervous shout attracted attention to what had happened; then the hush of anguish seized the horror-stricken spectators who watched the tragedy, and soon all was over. He tumbled backwards, and the sails all being loosened to air them and the topsail yard at the mast head, he fell over it, broke his fall on the foreyard, clutched at the reef points of the foresail, and then tumbled headfirst into the jolly-boat which lay at the bow, and was smashed to pieces. When the body was taken out of the boat it was seen that the flesh of his hands had been torn off by the clutch he made at the reef points.

The crew of this vessel was supplied with alcohol with the specific object of getting them to work hard at the discharging of the cargo. In plain language the owners or masters gave no thought to the personal effect of the custom so long as it did not interfere with their material interests, but should their policy cause the man to imbibe on his own account and commit a breach of discipline, or to be temporarily absent from work, he was punished with shameful severity, and in this the master or owner was encouraged both by written and unwritten laws. No account was taken of how far the employer was responsible in having helped his employee to form habits by which the law was broken. The poor lad who lost his life might have done so anyhow; but the impression that has been fixed on my mind is that the cause of his tragic death lay at the door of those who gave him the second mate's nip.

The unrestrained appetite of the old sailing ship seamen for doing something ridiculous was a problem that even those closely associated with them could never solve. When their minds were bent towards a freak they plunged into it regardless of consequences. The more daring the adventure the more enjoyment they got out of it. On a memorable occasion long ago, several ships' crews went ashore in a foreign port on leave, and at a late hour they were returning aboard their respective ships. Some were half seas over, and others badly sprung, but all seem to have been smitten with the idea of reckless mischief. Sentries were stationed along the banks of a river that Byron has sung of. They were not supposed to allow any one to pass without a permit, and as the seamen were not in the temper to brook coercion of this kind, they came into conflict with each other. One of the sentries struck a sailor, who attempted to pass the line, with his bayonet. This was the beginning of a carnival of lawlessness. The tars were maddened by the attempt to slay their comrade, and a wild rush was made upon several of the soldiers. They were promptly overpowered, disarmed, and their muskets used in disarming their friends who were panic stricken by the vigorous onslaught, and soon succumbed to Jack's bellicose persuasiveness. It then became an easy task to carry out the impromptu plan of campaign of putting each soldier into his sentry-box and casting both him and the box into the running stream. The call for help was unavailing;

none came, and soon no voices were heard, but the following day the funeral knell was sounded by the roar of the cannon from the gunboats, splashing shot into the river with the hope that the vibration would resurrect the bodies of the victims from their muddy tomb. Many of them were brought to the surface by this means.

Jack is said to have thought it a great joke, and it must be admitted there is a grim humour in the cool audacious method of disposing of the human obstacles which stood in his way. No argument, however eloquent, could convince them that a murderous act had been committed. Their idea was that no b——y foreigner had any right to question the good intentions of a British sailor or to intercept his perambulations either drunk or sober. Pageantry and armed force did not appeal to them, but a kind word and an expressed desire to escort them aboard their ship would have caused them to fall on the neck of even a foreign soldier in adoration. The thirst for joviality often led wayward sailors to crave for drink, and under its baneful influence they were easily wafted into a delirium of foolhardy devices that would never have entered the mind of the ordinary mortal.

A large barque was once in mid-ocean homeward bound, and was beating against strong head-winds under whole topsails, courses, lower staysails, and jib. It was the starboard watch on deck from eight p.m. until midnight. The captain had retired for the night and left the second mate in charge. His watch, with the exception of one man, was composed of as fine a brood of young athletes as ever ran aloft. They were on the most friendly terms with their officer, whose genial disposition led him to converse with them. I daresay he was attracted by their boisterous cordiality. Be that as it may, he either winked at or encouraged the successful negotiations that were devised to induce the steward to invade the grog locker, which was situated beneath the captain's bed, and bring from it the jar which contained whiskey. At first Jimmy the steward was obdurate.

"It cannot be done," said he, "without wakin' the aud man."

"What the devil's the good of you talking that nonsense, Jimmy?" said the persuasive orators; "why, you know he'd sleep with his head in a bucket of slush."

"Yes, but I'm feared he'll waken, and then there'll be an almighty row."

"Well," replied the tempters, "we always thought you a real shipmate, and as full of pluck as a pitman's badger. What's come over you, man; surely its not the same old Jimmy Dinsdale that had the courage to stand before Hennan and Tom Sayers? It's not as though you were not going to have a nip with us."

"Look here," said one of the enterprising coterie; "if you are feared to go, show me, and you bet I'll have the stuff on deck in a jiffy. If I can do it, surely *you* can."

The form of dashing flattery, the appeals to his bravery and comradeship, and the prospect of himself partaking of the convivial cup, punctured Jimmy's will, and he fell. The coveted jar was brought on deck without arousing the captain, and the seamen insisted that they could not touch or taste till James himself had partaken; they would then have pleasure in drinking his health. This order of things was carried out, the second officer joining in by assuring his men that he "endorsed their complimentary remarks about the steward"; he was an ardent sportsman, said the condescending officer, "whose popularity was unequalled."

"Hear, hear," responded the breezy tars.

Jimmy had another nip, beamed all over with merriment, and pledged himself to live for evermore up to the high reputation they had given him, which he was proud to believe he deserved. At ten p.m. the wind and sea had increased, and the vessel was plunging her jibboom and bowsprit under. The second officer intimated that all hands would have to be called to reef the topsails and haul the mainsail up and stow it, but his men were imbued with heroic dash, and would not hear of such unseamanlike weakness. They assured him that they could take the sail in without calling the watch below. Amid much noise and many larks they managed to get the foretopsail reefed. A chanty was lustily sung when hoisting the yard up, and when they undertook to reef the main topsail it was quite obvious the over plentiful supply of grog was taking serious effect. Their articulation became thick and incoherent. They were alternately effusive with joy and senseless laughter, and occasionally quarrelsome. The lee yardarm man insisted on hauling out to leeward before the weather yardarm man told him to, which was of course contrary to the order of nautical ethics. The situation became very strained between the men to windward and those to leeward, because of the profusion of tobacco-juice the former were expectorating into the eyes of those to leeward, not intentionally, but with alcoholic recklessness. The elderly stout man of the watch felt that it was no ordinary occasion, and grunted out that he was b—— well going to lash himself to the haulyards, as he felt wearied. The lee yardarm man managed to crawl in on the foot-rope, got into the maintop, and fell asleep there, while the gradual cessation of speech from the champions to windward indicated that they also slept. The second officer and the helmsman conferred as to what had best be done, and concluded not to risk startling any of them out of their drunken unconsciousness by shouting, lest they should loose their hold and be smashed to pieces or fall into the sea; but as the watch was drawing to a close it was suggested by the sailor who was at the helm that he should go up aloft, and make his

way noiselessly to the weather yardarm, for the two men who were there stood in the greatest danger. When he got to them he found both had partially secured themselves, though the least lurch of their bodies would certainly have placed them in a more perilous position. The young sailor's task was both delicate and difficult, but he managed it so well that no harm came to them. One of the men, as is the practice when reefing, was straddle legs on the yardarm, and had a turn of a rope round him. The other had his feet on the foot-rope, and his chest rested on the yard. They made a good deal of jovial noise when they were aroused, with the obvious intention of making it appear that they were very much alive. The stout man, who was in the slings of the mast, and the first to succumb, was rudely awakened by the rollicking yardarm man slapping him sharply on the back and shouting at him, "what the h— he meant by sleeping there and risking his own and other people's lives?"

The phlegmatic gentleman grumbled out: "What business is that of yours?"

"Why," retorted the younger seaman, "you old scanamaran, you ought to be put in irons for the remainder of the voyage, and have your wages stopped into the bargain."

This was rather high-class audaciousness on the part of a young rascal who had just been rescued from a worse position while committing the same offence. The task of getting them round was nothing compared to that of getting them humoured into a sufficiently sober condition so that no mishap would befall them in the process of coming down the rigging. It is a perfect marvel how Providence protects people under the influence of drink. Almost every step downward threatened a calamity, so they slipped from one rattling to another until their feet landed on the topgallant rail, and they slid under the shear pole on to the deck. The second mate was greeted with much affection; the attitude towards him was that of men who had been a long time absent and come suddenly in contact with a dear friend. He was sensible enough to reciprocate the kindness shown him. The reefed topsail was hoisted vigorously up to the accompaniment of rapturous song. This being done, the watch below was called, came on deck, and received a greeting unequalled in every sense, but especially in its spirituous effusiveness. The faithful James was in great demand, and after a prolonged search he was found coiled up under the long-boat; an outburst of fluent profanity indicated that his condition did not warrant him being entrusted with any commission of grave, secret intricacy, so he was expeditiously stowed away in the galley for the remainder of the night, and the port watch that had just come on deck were bitterly chagrined that they were not given the chance of "liquoring up," as they called it, with their shipmates. The following day they proclaimed Jimmy a pink devil for getting intoxicated, and his confederates were treated to a withering flow of invective for not keeping some of the stolen property for them. The captain was serenely ignorant of what was going on, but in the morning at breakfast his attention became centred on the worthy James, whose performances were of an unusually destructive character. The steerage and cabin exhibited heaps of broken crockery-ware, mixed with the humble repast that hungry men had been looking forward to. Jimmy, in an ordinary way, was really a devotee of religion, who adhered to all its forms most rigidly so long as drink was kept out of his way. He could quote Scripture by the fathom, and when in his cups used to do so copiously. The captain said to him:

"Any one with half an eye can see, sir, that you have been at my grog."

James became virtuously indignant.

"Captain," said he, in a thick, guttural voice which indicated whiskey, "you judge me wrongly"; whereupon, falling on his knees, he clasped his hands, and in the attitude of prayer began as follows: "O Lord, forgive the captain. Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord, therefore I shall not slide."

The mate, a burly fellow who stood hard by, muttered:

"Get up, you d—d fool. You *have* slid." Whereupon the pious James called him a liar, and continued:

"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me: try my reins and my heart."

When he had finished the sentence, the captain interposed:

"I'm quite satisfied that you are intoxicated, and must request you, Mr Jones, to see that he is put to bed before he does any more mischief. I shall keep my grog under lock and key for the future."

This strong indictment caused James to become piously agitated. The mate eloquently remarked:

"Yes, it is all damned fine quoting Scripture, but that won't give us our breakfast. What do you say, Mr Second Mate?"

"Amen," said the gallant officer, and, with a merry twinkle in his eye, he added in a whisper, "but I don't quite agree with the grog being locked up."

Jimmy was very popular with all aboard, and everyone was full of sympathy with him for having had the misfortune to fall into disgrace. In a few weeks after his fall he was paid off in Bristol, and to celebrate the occasion he and a young lad, who was much devoted to him, had a glass together. He was very fond of his wife and his home, and used to confide all manner of sacred things to his young friend. They were walking down a fashionable street together, and observing a well-dressed lady looking in a shop window, he remarked to the youth:

"That is a fine dress the lady has on. I would like to have one like it for our Nanny (meaning his wife). I wonder if it cost much."

His young companion was eager to have some sport out of the incident, so he urged him to ask her how much the dress cost. He was not quite sure of the propriety of doing such a thing, but was reassured of this by his friend in whose judgement he had profound confidence; so he went up to the lady, took hold of her dress, held it up in his hand beyond the limit of discretion, and asked her in pure Anglo-Scotch how much a yard it might cost. The lady was startled, and looked contemptuously at him.

"Sir," said she, "how dare you! whatever do you take me for?"

"I take you for a lady," said Jimmy, "and I'm asking how much a yard your dress cost, because if it's not over dear I would like to buy one for wor Nanny."

His young friend kept close to him, and was in convulsions of laughter; but seeing he was drifting into trouble he advanced towards where they stood and tried to explain to the lady that it was he who had prevailed upon his friend to satisfy his curiosity as to the price of her dress. Up to that point she seemed to be embarrassed, and did not know whether to resent such unconventional conduct or not. She asked if they were sailors; they replied in the affirmative. It then seemed to dawn upon her that it was merely a mischievous prank being played on her interrogator; but she was assured in a sailorly manner by both that they knew it was very funny, but they were in earnest all the same. She realized the true situation and laughed very heartily.

"Come along," said she, "and I will take you to the shop where I got this dress."

Jimmy assented, but suggested that she should walk ahead of them; but the lady insisted that she wished them to talk to her of their sea experiences, and before the shop was reached James had told her with touching simplicity about his fall and how penitent he was, and that he felt he ought to do something for the wrong he had done his wife, who would be very grieved when she heard of it.

"Will you tell her?" asked the lady.

"Tell her," said he; "why, I wouldn't dare do any other. I tell her everything."

"Ah," said she, "sailors are very confiding. Now we are at the shop; come with me, both of you."

The material was asked for, and the announcement of the price nearly made Jimmy run out of the establishment.

"I am very sorry," said he, "but I cannot afford to buy it."

"How many yards does it take to make a dress for me?" asked the lady at the shop-woman, without heeding his remark. She was told.

"Then," said she, "cut me a couple of yards extra, include the trimmings, make it into a parcel, and send it and the bill to me at once. Now," she continued to her two sailor companions, "come to my home with me and have tea; by that time the material which I have bought for your wife will have arrived."

"Madam," said the much-affected James, "surely you're no going to buy that garment for me?"

"Oh yes, I am," said she, laughing; "don't say more about it, but tell me some more of your adventures." And, fearing she was neglecting the youth who had got over his frolicsome fit and become very shy, she added: "I wish both of you to talk to me."

However, the youngster preferred to allow his friend to have all the say, and contented himself by chipping in only when there was a pause or when he was referred to. In due course they arrived at a mansion which stood in beautiful grounds. The sailors were in awe, and reluctantly followed their hostess. They had never seen anything like it before. They were taken into a room that to them was gorgeous. Tea was brought in, and two other ladies joined the party. They made both sailors feel quite at ease, and before very long they were talking with as great freedom as though they had been in the fore-castle. The ladies were made very mirthful, and laughed merrily at many of the quaint yarns that were told them, which were for the most part personal. Jimmy told them of his domestic bliss and the form of

petticoat government that controlled him in a charmingly simple way; and his companion had to relate all about his home and when and how he came to go to sea. He became quite confiding, and asked them to read some letters he had just received from his sister, so that they might form some idea of the home he came from. They declared they were the sweetest and best-written letters they had ever read.

"I am sure," said the hostess, "you must be fond of your sisters."

He admitted he had good reason to be proud of them, as they were not only good sisters but clever ones.

"But now," said he, "it is time for us to go, and I thank you on behalf of myself and my friend for your great kindness towards us."

Jimmy was handed his parcel, and in the course of a few original sentences he committed himself, his friends and his family to obligations of gratitude for generations to come. A five pound note was put into the hand of the younger sailor, who declined to take it, but the good woman said:

"I am sure you will not intentionally give me pain by refusing to accept a small gift from me. You have told me that it is your desire to take a present home to your sisters, and I wish you to buy something suitable for them with what I have given you."

"Yes," said the young man; "but I intended to buy it with my own money."

"I know you did," said she, smiling, "but I am informed you are going to try and pass the Board for second mate, and that it will cost you a good deal. Now I wish you to get your certificate and to use your own money to enable you to go to school and stay long enough ashore to do so without feeling pinched."

With marked self-consciousness he agreed to accept the gift, and they each thanked her again with all the natural gratitude that sat so lightly on this class of sailor. And when she and her friends said good-bye they felt that they had been the guests of big-hearted English women. As soon as they had passed outside the gate, Jimmy remarked that "there was none of the jellyfish shake of the flipper about them folk."

The two friends walked down the principal street together, and had it not been the prevailing opinion that sailors of that time did not meditate either coherently or incoherently, they might by their manner have been thought to be in deep soliloquy, whereas their silence was merely momentary. Any one hard by could have heard a spontaneous "Well, by George, we are in luck! What an experience!" And then in a sharp, jerky utterance: "Why, there's Jack Rush ahead of us. Won't he get a surprise when we tell him where we have been and how it all came about?"

When they came up to Mr Rush he was found to be more than half-seas-over, and commenced grinding out odds and ends of profanity about the shabby trick that had been played on the port watch on the occasion when the captain's grog was purloined and some people had to be sent to bed.

"Shut up about that," responded the conscience-pricked James, in a sudden gust of rage.

"All very well for you to say 'shut up,' but why the syntax didn't you save some of the stuff for our watch: that's what I want to know?" said the injured mariner, with an intoxicated air of Christian virtue. Jimmy's friend, anticipating trouble, came to the rescue by judiciously calling his attention from his grievance and asking where their shipmates were, as he wanted to stand drinks and relate to him and them the singular experience and good fortune of Jimmy and himself. Whereupon Mr Rush became effusively obliging, and guaranteed to have them in the midst of their friends in a few minutes. No further reference was made to the escapade that was remembered with such aversion, and they were soon reunited to the whole of their comrades, who received them with the joy of reclaimed brethren. They had entered upon the initial stages of a vigorous spree, and were cheerfully ready to listen to Jimmy's romantic story. They were not even envious of him, but they did resolve amid a chorus of merriment to emulate him in the art of sampling ladies' dresses, and in the exuberance of uncontrolled mischief some of them went forthwith on the expedition. Needless to say the experiment was not an unqualified success. They found that their rude pleasures were neither understood nor appreciated by the ladies of Bristol, and I have reason to know that some of the more enterprising came to sudden grief.

These freaks of sailor life are recorded, not with a view of holding him up as a drunken, ill-behaved, lawless creature, but merely as incidents that seemed necessary adjuncts of his calling, and for the purpose of showing the mischief that may be caused by supplying him with drink or putting temptation in his way. For even in these days he is deplorably susceptible to influences that are injurious to him. He is very weak, very reckless, and also very human; but I am inclined to demur at the notion that in the good old times he was pre-eminently so. There is one characteristic of the whole class that should never be overlooked, and that is their devotion to one another.

VIII

GRUB

In the extreme end of the fore-castle, above what is called the forehook, was a locker to keep the beef, duff (pudding) and sugar kids, bread barge and other small stores, such as tea, sugar, coffee, etc. If these were not carefully covered over, and there was any rain, or if sea-water came aboard, they soon were destroyed, and the apprentice whose work it was to look after them was held to blame by the men who meted out punishment to him in one way or another, but they themselves suffered the penalty of his fault, for they were reduced to short rations until the following week's allowance was distributed. It was customary for the captain to weigh or serve out the stores, and many a mean trick was adopted at the expense of the poor sailor by the use of false scales, weights, or measures. I have seen instances of this most wretched and meanest of all thieving more than once. One incompetent conniver at inexpressible wrong thought by cheating his men out of a portion of their meagre allowance he would make the insufficiency of stores put aboard by the owner spin out till the voyage ended. The water was served out just as exactly as anything else, and as soon as the day's allowance was handed over to each man, the bung was put in the cask with canvas nailed over it, and the dipper, which is a long, narrow copper or tin pot, with a lanyard attached to it, was bent on to the signal halyards and run up to the masthead, so that no one could sneak any more water than their whack during the close time. In spite of gross imposition, which, if committed amongst any other class of workmen would have provoked the spirit of murder, these jovial, light-hearted fellows were always ready if it was fine weather to spend the dog watches in providing amusement for each other, and at the close of each entertainment they never overlooked what was inherently believed the patriotic duty of combining a display of loyalty to their sovereign with a proportionate degree of disloyalty to the captain and owner who were responsible for supplying them with food that even a Russian serf might have felt justified in complaining about. So a doggerel verse was composed and sung fervently to a modified form of the National Anthem by way of intimating their grievance forcefully to the notice of their commander. Relevancy did not come within the compass of their thoughts; what they desired was to sing something that would strike home, so the anthem was chosen as the most fitting benediction of all. Here are the words:

God save our gracious Queen!
Long may she reign over us!
Pea-soup and pork amongst all hands of us,
Not enough for one of us,
God save our Queen!

After this had been repeated several times over, it usually happened that one of the songsters who claimed to be gifted with more perspicuity than his comrades would remind them that he had seen the old squirrel wriggle under the lash of the song. And so their wretched days of starvation were often made shorter by a more or less harmless attack on the poor skipper, who might only be the instrument of a parsimonious managing owner. But that was not the only method adopted of showing their dissatisfaction. The seaman who had the most flippant tongue and legal mind was chosen (or, as frequently happened, he selected himself) to introduce a deputation of the whole fore-castle. I always look back on these episodes as amongst the most comical of my sailor life. The spokesman would pick up the unpopular food, and with the air of an oriental dignitary march at the head of his shipmates right up to the captain, plant the wooden kid down on the deck at his feet, and ask if that "was the sort of grub for men to do a hard day's work on; besides, it was beef or pork, not bones or fat pork we signed for." If the captain happened to be a conceited, combative person, he would at once reply that he fed them according to what he thought they were worth. Then there were heated altercations, which sometimes ended in blood being spilt, or some of the crew being put in irons and logged for having instigated rebellion on the high seas. "I'll teach you to impeach my authority," the stupid, arbitrary tyrant would say; "you shall be fed on the smell of an oil-rag in future, and have your wages forfeited at the end of the voyage into the bargain." Alas, this wicked threat was too often carried into effect so far as the forfeiture of wages and ill-treatment were concerned. Whereas the diplomatic, sensible master would deal with a case of this kind in a way that was calculated to soften Jack into a condition that resembled penitence, and make him feel as though he were a pig for having complained in this direct way at all. I know there are cases that cannot be dealt with at sea in any other than a despotic fashion, and although there is no necessity to show weakness, there is as a rule a better chance of governing men by kindness than by adopting a harsh, unyielding attitude towards them, as though they were Mohammedan dogs.

A vessel short of provisions is seldom heard of in these days of steam and up-to-date

precautions, but a generation ago it was a common occurrence. Landspeople used to speak of it as one of the ordinary risks of a sailor's profession that the general public had no particular interest in, excepting that it added somewhat to seafaring romance. I have often wished that those whom I have heard speaking in a casual, airy fashion of this phase of sea-life could have the faculty of imagination put into them so that they might realize what really happened to those who had to experience the manifold sufferings and privations of being short of water and provisions in mid-ocean where there was little chance of seeing a sail for days, and when perchance a vessel was seen, the weather might be so boisterous that communication could not be effected, or *they* might even be short of provisions. In order to minimize the suffering of hunger and thirst, sailors sometimes buckled their stomachs in with a belt, and those who had not a belt did so with cord. Hunger is a terrible sensation anywhere, but it is doubly intensified at sea when there is no hope of it being appeased, and the whole surroundings become impregnated with a sense of coming doom. Those who have never known the pangs of prolonged hunger may have some idea of it conveyed to them by trying to imagine that some wild animal is tearing at their internals. That is an accurate description of it, and I should like to know what other thing is calculated to create madness sooner. Sailors of that generation never made a noise about their troubles once they got ashore and left them astern, and so the possibilities of recurrence were left open. One feels inclined bitterly to assail the owners, their captains and the general public, for having allowed such things to happen, but in common fairness we must put some of the responsibility on the seamen themselves for playing into the hands of a gang of unmitigated blood-suckers who, in some cases, purchased silence by paying compensation for the time the men were short of grub; but never more than the bare cost of the food for the time they were short of it was allowed. In the majority of cases payment was evaded altogether. I have been amongst this sort of thing on several occasions, and feel some difficulty in writing with calmness when I reflect on all the unnecessary hardships and sufferings that were caused by sheer wanton greed. On four different voyages I learnt how terrible it was to be short of provisions and water, and in three out of the four this was preventable. The first case was excusable owing to the long continuance of easterly gales in the chops of the English Channel. Some vessels managed to reach Scilly or Falmouth, but many failed to do so, and we were amongst the many. On several occasions we were nearly able to fetch into port, and then the wind increased and we drifted back into the ocean. This gaining and losing process went on for three or four weeks. Each fresh sail sighted was signalled or hailed to the effect that we were short of provisions and asking if they could supply us, and invariably the reply came back, "Impossible: our supplies have run out." We in turn were frequently appealed to for succour, but had to plead the same thing. The one redeeming feature of the critical position of the large fleet that was held in the grip of the wind for so long a time was the knowledge that we were all in the same predicament, and if we could not supply each others' wants we had at least the pleasure of companionship, and this kept us from losing hope until a slant of wind came to our aid and carried us into port. In this case we had been on very short rations for many days, and yet there was never a word of recrimination, and singularly little grumbling except at the perversity of the wind.

Nothing whatever could be said in defence of the other cases, for the vessels were not only sent away from a home port criminally short of supplies, but they left the port at which they loaded for home with only sufficient stores to last half the time it would take to make the passage with average success; and not having any good fortune at all, our allowance was reduced before the passage was half covered. We swept past the last port of call with the wind right aft. The captain and steward knew that the provisions were getting low, but the former decided to trust to Providence giving him a fair wind all the way, so we romped along for several days, and then adverse winds came and everybody realized the seriousness of the position. Orders were given that all hands had to be put on half fare, and not many days elapsed before every article of food was exhausted and we had to broach our cargo of lentils and sustain ourselves on lentil soup. Even that had to be sparingly used on account of the scarcity of water. On some days we drifted under two close reefed topsails into the heart of the western ocean and out of the regular track of vessels bound out and home. Whenever the weather fined down, sail was set according to the force of the wind which kept in the N.E., varying perhaps a couple of points each way. A look-out man was kept on the maintopmast crossrees from dawn until sunset each day to watch for passing vessels, and long, painful days rolled on without our sighting anything. Sometimes a sail would be seen hull down or too far off to attract attention. This naturally had a saddening effect, and we wished they had never been seen; but in spite of privations, which increased day by day, there was a gaiety kept up until the last sweeping up of the provision lockers had taken place, and we were reduced to the exclusive diet of boiled lentils, which I have heard is considered by some people to be a luxury; but whether this be so or not, I never wish to realize its taste again. May Providence protect me from ever again having to put it to my lips.

Up to a certain point our impoverished crew had borne the strain on their minds and stomachs very manfully, but the period of despair was now come. They talked indeed of which one among their comrades should draw the lot that by shortening his life would prolong theirs. Sickness had smitten some of them so that they could barely crawl on deck. Each day showed signs of a galloping atrophy. Letters were written to their relatives conveying in a matter-of-fact way all they were enduring: no flowery phrases; no attempt at effect; but merely a statement of bald fact. These communications were to be put into the

orthodox bottle and dropped into the sea in the hope that the sombre tidings would be picked up and read at home. The stage of openly cursing the owner had long since passed. Now and again they wondered if their spirits would haunt him in the event of their having to succumb, but that was only a passing mood. Their thoughts were mainly centred on charitable and domestic matters, and what would be the end of all their sufferings. It is a strange destiny which causes the agony of despair to be prolonged, and then when life seems to be flickering out, suddenly the angel of death is withdrawn and light and life burst forth with a radiance that fills the sufferers with hope. The look-out man at the mast-head shouts as loud as his strength will allow: "A sail! A sail on the starboard bow, crossing our track! The vessel is hull down." Immediately the whole crew except the man at the wheel are in the rigging scanning the horizon, and a running flow of conflicting opinions are expressed as to the exact course she is steering and whether she will discern our flag. The captain gives peremptory orders to set every stitch of canvas and ease the yards, so that his vessel might go quicker and meet the other at an angle. Something like superhuman effort was made by enfeebled men to get the canvas smartly set. The sight of the vessel impressed them as a providential apparition. In less than an hour the hull came in view. It was seen that the stranger was under a cloud of sail, including royals, and topgallant studding sails on both sides. A fresh wind blew right behind her, and the sea, though not rough, was showing white feathers on the surface of the Atlantic rollers. The signal that we were without any provisions was hoisted, but no notice was taken of it. Night was drawing near, and the clipper was slipping fast away from us. Our captain ordered his vessel to be hauled close to the wind again in case the flags might be obscured by running free. It turned out that this might have been the case, as we had no sooner manœuvred in this way than they began to take the other vessel's studding sails in and haul to the wind. Our vessel's course was shaped towards her, and when we had got fairly close to her both vessels had all small sail taken in, courses hauled up, and their main yards laid aback. Our pinnace was then hoisted out, and we proceeded to row alongside a beautiful tea clipper. We were a lantern-jawed, scarecrow lot, and our general appearance emphasized the story we had to tell of the privations we had suffered. We had scarcely strength enough to lift the oars into the rollicks, much less pull the boat through a choppy sea. The captain and crew of the British clipper were very kind, supplied all our needs, including tobacco, though we did not ask for the latter; this was obviously given to express more emphatically their sympathy and kindly feelings towards us. Very little water could be spared, as sailing vessels at that time were nearly always stinted in accommodation for water supply, but we were very grateful for the sacrifice the captain made in allowing us to have even a few breakers full. The act which touched the heart-strings most was the request made to their captain by his crew to be allowed to row the supplies to our vessel. It was granted by him and thankfully accepted by us; and over all the years which have passed since that scene took place it has constantly lived in my memory as one of the many traits that endear the sailor to his fellow men. This self-sacrificing crew had been caused much additional hard work on account of our misfortunes; some of them were losing their watch below; and all of them had the arduous task of hurriedly taking in the necessary sail and manipulating the yards so that a communication could be effected, and then, after their mission was done, the vessel was put on her course, and all the work of setting sail, etc., had to be done over again. We knew all this, and therefore appreciated all the more the little touch of sympathy which prompted them to add to their labours by undertaking the work they saw we were hardly fit to perform. Before leaving the hospitable deck of the clipper our captain made a well-chosen and appropriate little speech of thanks to our benefactor, by whom it was suitably responded to; and then a cordial shaking of hands took place, and we parted with hearts full of gratitude to those who had so beneficently helped us. When we got aboard three cheers were rung out from both vessels, and then their yards were filled and sail made, and we swept away from each other into the gloom of the gathering night.

An unthought-of protracted passage was in front of us, and long before it was completed the fresh water ran short again; but we were more in the track of vessels then, and succeeded in getting a further supply which lasted until our arrival at Falmouth, where all our ills were soon forgotten amid the charm of its scenery and the atmosphere of congenial excitement which the tavern of that day afforded. Songs were sung and step-dancing, such as none other but a sailor could do, as usual aroused and kept local interest on the stretch. The audiences were composed mainly of sailors, their sweethearts for the time being, or those directly interested in him. Indeed these were occasions when the place was kept humming with a salty brightness. Jack had the singular gift of making his own amusement, and so long as he kept from taking too much drink he was not only a source of pleasure to himself, but in his way entertained other people. Of course the sailors here, as always, told their experiences to each other when they met, and incidentally their owners came in for a share of contumely such as "God-forsaken robber," or "scrape-backed thief who was not fit to carry guts to a bear," and other more or less harmless invectives.

The men were rarely vindictive or bitter even, after the thing had passed on, and an example of this was shown in the story I have been relating where there was just cause for resentment and claim for compensation, and yet none was made, nor was compensation asked for or offered in the other two cases which I have mentioned, although they were on almost identical lines with the first. On these last occasions the crew lived on Indian corn for two weeks. The corn was put into canvas, battered as small as possible, then put through the coffee mill, and after the last process it was made into bread or puddings; but the mill did

not last long, so we were driven to eat it in a very rough state, and soon experienced the penalty of doing so. We could not have kept on eating it. The captain reported that he had been obliged to broach the cargo for food, and the receivers charged him with the estimated amount used. He and his crew thought this very mean, and I think I remember them expressing strong regret that they hadn't scuttled the — ship and thereby have inflicted great personal loss on the owner of the cargo who, they apprehended, would have rather seen them starve than that a bag or two of his cargo should be used for the purpose of saving their lives. That was the impression they had formed. Of course it was a harum-scarum impression, but it gratified them to hold it. The real culprit was the owner of the ship, who had not provided sufficient stores. He had not escaped notice, but the meaner sinner had obscured him for the moment.

An extraordinary characteristic of this age was the sailor's jealousy lest improper innovations should be introduced into the mode of taking their food. Knives and forks, cups, saucers, soup and plain plates were a violation of sound fore-castle principles, which in their eyes threatened a coming degeneracy of the profession. Their use was viewed as an attempt to become aristocratic, and those who dared adopt it were looked upon as fops and mongrel seamen. The average man believed in his tin pot, plate and pannikin, galvanized soup spoon and clasp knife; there were no second course articles recognized. The tin pot had a hook in front so that it could be hooked on to the galley grate to boil, though it was not uncommon in long voyage ships to dispense with the hook pot and have instead a large kettle for the whole of the fore-castle hands. The tidy man kept his utensils spotlessly clean. At seven bells in the morning the watch below were knocked out to have breakfast; this generally consisted of cracker hash, i.e., bread hash; or cold salt beef or pork, whichever joint they had had on the day previous hot for dinner; if she was a well-found ship butter was supplied; they always had tea or coffee for the morning meal. If the breakfast was of beef or pork, the platter or kid was put on the floor, and each seaman took the piece of meat he intended to cut in one hand, cut it off the junk with his clasp knife in the other, and if by any means he happened to touch that which he did not cut he was submitted to severe chastisement by being forcibly put over a chest lid and given a dozen hard slaps with a boot jack. The piece of meat intended to be eaten was put on a hard ship biscuit which served the purpose of a plate, and was cut as required with the clasp knife and put into the mouth with the right hand. Dinner was served at noon. On Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, it was beef and duff, according to scale; Saturdays, beef and "strike-me-blind," i.e., boiled rice; Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, pea-soup and pork. The mid-day meals were partaken of in a similar way to the breakfast, except that the tin plate was used for either duff and molasses, or pea-soup, or rice; it might not be used for the beef or pork—this greatly depended on the natural delicacy of the seamen, many of whom proclaimed that fingers were made before knives or forks, therefore it was proper that they should be used in preference. If he possessed a chest he sat on that, and his knees served him as a table; if he had no chest, then he sat on the floor or on the forehook, i.e., a beam which stretches across the bows. This class of food and the method of eating it went on uninterruptedly during the whole voyage. The duff, which was made of flour, water and fat, was boiled in a canvas bag made in the shape of a nightcap; it was very leathery, and was responsible for much dyspepsia. It was cut into equal parts according to the number of men who were to share it. On Sundays a few currants or raisins were scattered amongst the flour and water; this was considered a luxury which was often taken off at the caprice of the captain. Sailors have the character of being born grumblers, and their knowledge of maritime law is much exhibited by them at meal times. Poor creatures, what trouble they get themselves into at times through this belief of theirs in their legal acquirements! There is a story of a sailor who, insisting on breaking the law because he was positive he was not breaking it, got himself put into prison in consequence, whereupon a fore-castle friend called to see him. He immediately exclaimed on seeing and shaking hands with his friend, "I know d—n well, Jim, they cannot put me in here, and they'll have to pay for it."

"What's the use of talking such d—— rot, you fool? Why, you *are* here!"

On another occasion a large, square-rigged vessel belonging to London arrived in the West India Docks, and the captain, on being asked by his owner what sort of a crew he had, replied that they were sailors all over, always grumbling about their work or their grub, and it did not matter what they got to eat they would always find something else they wanted. The owner declared that *he* would provide a meal for them that *would* satisfy, and there wouldn't be a single request for anything else. The captain said he did not know what he was undertaking. The owner said: "Well, captain, if I do not succeed in satisfying them I will pay you one hundred pounds."

"Done," said the skipper.

The crew's accommodation was in a house on deck; it was arranged to have the skylight up and the side windows open, so that everything that was said could be heard outside. The meal was cooked and served by first-class men, and it was given on the occasion of the owner's birthday. A large party assembled aboard, and the host addressed the men appropriately, asking them to accept his hospitality. The sailors' spokesman replied that they never wished to serve a better governor than he, and the banquet commenced. The owner, his wife, and his daughter—a beautiful girl of twenty—together with the captain, went

quietly up the ladder at the fore-end of the house and listened to what was said. The owner was grateful at hearing such good things said about himself, though the eulogy was flavoured with a pungency of language that was not intended for delicate ears. At last one of the crew finished, tossed his tin plate on the floor, and said:

"That's a damned good dinner, boys."

A second, third and fourth said the same thing. The owner was worked up into an ecstasy of joy, and poked the skipper in the ribs as the others kept throwing their plates down and expressing satisfaction. The owner whispered: "It's a walk over, captain."

"Not yet," responded the skipper.

The last of the three broke the continuity of complete satisfaction by remarking that the dinner was all right, but to make it perfect their wives and sweethearts should have been asked. The captain became obviously nervous, and asked the owner and his wife and daughter to withdraw, but they refused. Then came the last but one, who said that the only thing that would make the dinner faultless to him would be that he should propose marriage to the owner's daughter and be accepted. The mother and daughter became virtuously agitated, and the captain again urged withdrawal, but they insisted on staying for the last chap's opinion, who became eloquent in his praises of all concerned. "But," said he to the last speaker, "you want to have the old man's daughter in marriage. I don't mind her so much; the only thing that would make me satisfied with the thing would be for the owner to die, so that I might marry his widow and get the coin."

The captain nearly took a fit, and the worthy host exclaimed: "Oh, mon dieu!" Thereupon the ladies became hysterical, and the commander having recovered from his embarrassment, said:

"Well, I suppose you will admit that I was right?"

"Yes," said the owner; "I never for one moment anticipated it would take both my wife and daughter to satisfy them, but you have won, and my faith in the possibility of pleasing sailors is broken. You shall have the hundred pounds."

There is a more recent story, which is said to be quite authentic. It neither belongs to the class of vessel or period with which I am dealing, but there is something in it that is characteristic of the old sea cook who was devoted to his ship and his employer. Lord Randolph Churchill was travelling on a steamer owned by a well-known Line, and had reason to complain of the cooking and the quality of the food, so he wrote in the visitors' book that both were bad. The old chief cook took it to heart; and several years after poor Lord Randolph had ceased to live, as the old man himself lay dying, his family saw there was something troubling his mind. They asked him if it was something in connection with his work.

"Yes," said he, mournfully, "it is, and I want you to send for Mr ——" who was an old and trusted servant of the Company. The official went to the cook's home, and before leaving him asked what it was that made him unhappy.

"Well," replied the old fellow, "I have never got over what was said about the food years ago, and I wanted to see you about it, so that you might hear me say before I die: 'May the Lord forgive Lord Randolph Churchill for saying the cooking and food of the —— Line was bad!' Now I have got it off my chest I can die happy." And before the official left, the old man had passed away.

Amongst the numerous traditions which cling to the sailors of these good old days of which Mr John Ruskin used to speak so reverently, was one of a London baker, who was known to have amassed fabulous wealth in manufacturing biscuits from ground bones and selling them for human food to complaisant shipowners who were of kindred spirit to himself. Hundreds of poor seamen who were obliged to eat this vile stuff called bread, provided by their God-forsaken employers as per scale of one pound per day per man, had their bodies saturated with disease. Nay, hundreds of them were killed by its use, and those who survived its poisonous effects had to thank the pure air of the sea and a good deal of self-sacrifice on their own part by preferring to starve themselves rather than eat it.

This system of villainy was openly carried on long after I first went to sea, and although the London purveyor had passed to another place he must have left behind him a set of imitators who acquired an equally charming aptitude for murder by supplying vessels with deadly food of one kind and another. The tradition went on to say that ultimately he died, and having sold himself to "Jimmy Square Foot," his spirit was transferred from Ratcliffe Highway to a volcanic island in the Mediterranean called Stromboli. There he frequently appeared in his professional garb, standing by the edge of the crater along with his satanic friend who was reputed to have secured an eternal lease of this rock in order to provide a suitable abode for some of those to whom he had been closely attached during their earthly pilgrimage. Whenever the volcano was unusually active, the sailors who were in the vicinity would say, "Ah, Jimmy is taking it out of the old Baker to-night."

The first time I visited this part of the world, the vessel I served in was creeping close past Stromboli with a light wind. Some of the fore-castle hands became reminiscent. They spoke of how they had been fed on biscuits made by the gentleman whom they had seen standing by the molten fire gesticulating to be taken from it. Strange tales were related as to the reality of this notorious person's existence. I listened with feverish greed to the yarns until my vision became confused and I fancied him not only close by me but imagined I heard his sombre cry of despair beseeching our compassion. The sailor's delight in hyperbole led one of our comrades to relate most charmingly the story of the baker's first appearance in Stromboli. An English barque some years ago lay becalmed within a mile from the Stromboli shore. The captain and officers knew the biscuit manufacturer well. The chief officer whose watch it was walked the quarter deck in deep meditation. A sailor who was at the wheel suddenly became aware of two figures close to the crater. One was stoking and the other was vehemently urging him to greater effort. He called out excitedly:

"Look! Who's that standing by the glare of the fire? My God, if we were not safe on salt water I would say we were near enough to hell!"

"What do you mean?" asked the flurried chief officer.

"I mean," said the sailor, pointing towards the shore, "the flames and the figures yonder. May heaven send a breeze so that we may get away from the sight of it."

The mate was over-awed; he steadied his nerves, took up the telescope and looked towards the crest of the hill for a few seconds. The glass dropped suddenly from his hands on to the deck, and he exclaimed:

"The Lord save us! It is the London baker with Jimmy Square Foot. Jump down and call the captain while I say a few words of prayer."

The hand who aroused the commander told him that they were too near the nether regions. The captain rushed on deck, and in a nervous tone asked what was the matter.

"The matter?" responded the officer, "*there* is what's the matter. Look at them, and if you are not satisfied that we're as near hell as ever we will be until we get into it, I am."

The captain was agitated and tremulously stuttered:

"Why it's the baker! How piteously he pleads to be rescued, but we can do nothing for him."

The day, hour and minute of the appearance were entered in the log-book, and when the vessel arrived home, the tale was told and paraphrased in a way that attracted national attention. The comparing of notes disclosed that the entry in the log-book corresponded chronologically with the date and time of the baker's death.

Contemporary with this traditional gentleman was a well known shipowner, who was notoriously mean and wicked towards the sailors who manned his ships. Prayers of a highly peculiar character were continuously made that he should be transported to the same region of warmth as the Baker. Of course all shipowners are relegated to these parts when they do anything to excite the anger of Jack. But the owner of whom I am writing had put himself beyond all forgiveness; he was an unspeakable wretch who would stoop to the most revolting methods of sensuality. The sanctity of homes was invaded by the fiend who carried on a double game of starving his men and destroying all that was dear to them. The curses that were continuously poured forth upon him from all parts of the world cannot be spoken; they may only be imagined. Ultimately he died amid a storm of rejoicing, and when the hearse came to take him to the graveyard the horses are said to have refused to carry the body. It was no sooner placed in the hearse than they went wild and smashed the conveyance; other horses were brought up, but they were equally obdurate and violent, and it became necessary to employ men to carry the coffin, but only the lowest roughs could be found for the service. The community, especially the seafaring part of it, were convinced that his wickedness had been so great that even the devil refused to have anything to do with him in a respectable country. He was forthwith passed on to Stromboli to assist the Baker in his arduous task of keeping the fires going, and for the purpose of confirming the sailors' belief in the law of retribution. This traditional person was a butcher—if it be safe or lawful to use such a phrase as "tradition" in connection with one of the mariner's solemn planks of faith. He left a large fortune behind, which has been a curse to his descendants, and it would have been a great disappointment to the contemporary seamen if it hadn't, as much of their time was used in the imprecation of ghastly forms of punishment and in imagining modes of disposing of what they vehemently avowed was ill-gotten wealth.

In my youthful days I listened to these tales and drank them in with juvenile credulity. How often have boys remained on deck during their watch below to get a glimpse of these personalities, and sometimes I imagined I could see all that others had told me they had seen. Incidents of this kind varied the monotony of a long passage, as the talk about it went on until some other thing equally sensational developed. To make any attempt at ridiculing the reality of such things was to offer a gross insult to the seamen's susceptibilities.

To say that shipowning, even in the early part or middle of the last century, was synonymous

with a system of heartless starvation would be too sweeping an assertion to make. There always have been men who strove to act generously towards the people serving in their vessels, though these, I am persuaded, were in the minority, and it is to the credit of that minority that they had to struggle against precedent, example, and it may be the habitual conviction that it was part of the sailor's business to take whatever food was put aboard for him. Running short of provisions was to them only an incident natural to the sailor's calling. This view had been handed down by successive generations of avaricious stoats, not the least prominent and contemptible of whom was Elizabeth, with her chilly heart, at one time receiving from Drake the spoils of his voyage in the *Pelican*; at another walking through the parks publicly with him, and listening with eager fascination to his stories of "amazing adventure," adventures that some of her Catholic subjects maintained to be "shocking piracy." We all remember the story of his sailing off with bullion from Tarapaca worth half a million ducats; also of the chase and capture of the *Cacafuego*, which had aboard the whole of the produce of the Lima mines for the season, consisting of silver, gold, emeralds and rubies. The hanging of Mr Doughty Philips, the spy, was talked of; the cutting off from the Church of God for cowardice of the chaplain, Mr Fletcher, and the chaining of his leg to a ringbolt in the deck until he repented of his sin. And she is so much interested in all these things that a royal banquet is held aboard the *Pelican*. Her Majesty attends and knights Drake. Mendoza demands for his master the stolen treasure. Leicester wants to share it with his friends; but Elizabeth puts her foot down and maintains it to be a legal capture which must be held. She conceives this to be a part of the game. Subsequent events cause Drake to plead with her to grant supplies, and she rebukes him for his extravagance. The Armada is close at our shores. Lord Howard reminds her that food is exhausted and that her sailors are having to catch fish to make up their mess, and yet they are praying for the quick arrival of the enemy. Their commander says English sailors will do what they can to vanquish the invaders, but they cannot fight with famine. "Awake, Madam," writes the poor distracted Lord admiral; "awake, for the love of Christ, and realize the danger that confronts the nation." He managed this time to squeeze one month's rations out of her, but when asked if any more should be provided, this lovely virgin monarch replied peremptorily, "No!" And when the great Armada came in sight there was but two days' food remaining. "Let tyrants fear," she says; "I have always so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects"!! She knows that she has the body of a weak and feeble woman, but she is assured she has the heart of a king, and rather than any dishonour should grow by her, "I myself will take up arms and be your general, judge and rewarder of all your virtues." That is all very pretty, and sounds pre-Napoleonic, but we cannot all swallow sweet, cantish little nothings in place of food and wages. Better would it have been had Elizabeth shown some practical evidence of "devotion" to her "people" by granting supplies and food to her starving sailors who fought and won in the most deadly naval encounter that the world has ever known. Their stomachs were empty but their hearts were big, though many of them went under with sickness brought on by famine, while she held tight that seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds which Drake brought home for her. It is amazing that a historian should be found to regard that speech of hers as being "free from affectation." But one historian not only says this, he adds: "She was the protector of her country, and the prudent executor of its will." She was nothing of the sort; on the contrary, she was a cold, greedy, heartless termagant, who risked the loss of her country by her parsimony, and it was only saved by the dauntless courage of the famishing seamen. I think that is one of the most gruesome and humiliating pieces of British history: for the monarch of a great empire to exhibit herself in the light of a sailor's boarding-housekeeper; squeezing his life's blood out, and herself handing down to posterity a character for meanness that would put to the blush the owner of a collier brig whose main idea of economy may be starving his crew. When I hear her spoken of as the Good Queen Bess, I think of how she ordered the Puritan lawyer, John Stubbs, and the printer of his pamphlet to be led to the scaffold and have their right hands driven off by the wrist with a butcher's knife and mallet, and how in God's name she commits many other unspeakable acts of devilishness, the most dastardly of which was her refusal to provide food for the thousands of brave men who saved her and her kingdom. What a contrast between this woman and the great Queen Victoria, whose long career is free from a single act of cruelty, and whose whole life teems with good deeds, while Elizabeth's reeks with an odour so bad that no student of history can peruse the account without wondering why she was allowed to live; for truly she was as bad a shrew as ever wore a skirt!

IX

MISCELLANEOUS

Fifty or sixty years ago the N.E. coast ports were all tidal; no harbours of refuge; no twenty-four feet on any of the bars at low water as there is now; no piers or breakwaters projecting

as they do to-day far into the German Ocean. It therefore frequently happened that during neap tides there was not sufficient water over the bars for even the shallowest drafted vessels. In that case, if the weather was fine, i.e., wind off the land, and smooth water, the vessels were taken outside, and the balance of their cargoes sent to them by a peculiar type of lighter known in that part of England by the name of keels. These craft were skilfully managed by two men called keelmen, who worked them up and down the stream with the tide and manipulated them with long oars. One of these lighters was being rushed out of the river by a heavy westerly wind and a current of abnormal velocity. The two men were doing their best to control their little vessel towards its destination, when the skipper spontaneously observed that they were going to drift out to sea unless aid came to them, or some means of stopping her progress were not adopted. He naturally bethought himself of the anchor, and shouted out to his mate:

"By gox, Jimmy, w'or gan to drift into the German Ocean! Let go the b—y anchor!"

The mate shouted back:

"What the devil's the use of lettin' go the anchor when there's ne chain fast te'ed?"

"Never mind a d—n about that," shouted the skipper at the top of his voice and with feverish excitement. "Chuck the b—y thing ower and trust to Providence for'd hangin' her. We better de that, ye' fool as drive to Norraway or some other place o' worship!"

The anchor was thrown over, but Providence did not yield to Geordie's persuasive ingenuity, thereupon his faith gave way and he switched his mind and utterance on to a singular form of petition to "Had her, Lord, had her" (hold her). History tells us that Geordie believed this latter appeal to have been answered, as it fell calm, and the sea became still.

Some sailors were rowing off to their vessel in a jolly-boat on the same occasion, and when the wind went down a dense fog came on, with the result that they missed their ship. They were all night in the fog, and in the morning as there was no indication of it clearing up they were filled with anxiety. At last one of their number said there was nothing else for it but to pray, and called upon a companion to do so, but he said that he had never prayed in his life.

"I don't know what to ask."

"Divvent ask," promptly replied his shipmate, "until you've made all kinds of promises"; whereupon all kinds of specific pledges of an extraordinary character were prompted, and the praying commenced and was continued with great facility and becoming earnestness, when all at once the sailor who had suggested prayer called out:

"Stop, stop! Don't commit yourself too far. I think I see the land," and the man who was in the act of praying opened his eyes, beheld the land himself, and called out:

"Why the devil didn't you tell me sooner, before I made all them promises?"

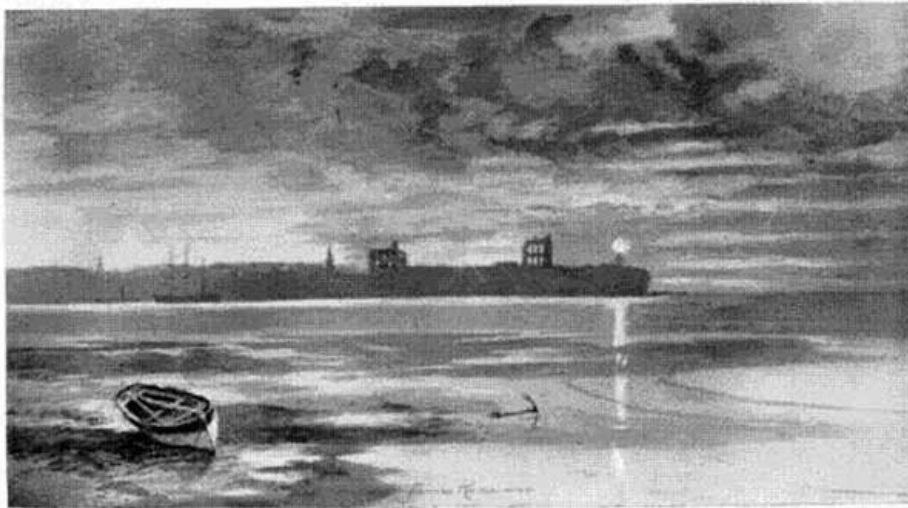
"I cautioned you as soon as I saw it myself," said his friend; "why didn't you keep your own eyes open?"

"Eyes open, d'ye say? How d'ye think a man can pray with his eyes open, you fool?"

These men belonged to an old-fashioned race, sailed in old-fashioned ships, at a time when the old-fashioned winters, as they are sometimes called, were a terror to underwriters, owners and seamen alike; for the easterly gales always left in their wake along the whole seaboard relics of devastation. Wrecks used to be strewn all over the coast, and sombre tokens of bereavement were everywhere visible. When the White Sea, Baltic and St Lawrence were closed to navigation, the class of vessels that were employed in these trades were either sent to the Bay of Biscay or the coast of Portugal with coal in order that they might bring from that country to this cork or salt, or both; and from the French ports in the Bay of Biscay cargoes of sugar were frequently obtained as return cargo; but the coal freights were generally so good at that time that vessels could be brought back in ballast and *then* leave a big profit.

Owners, however, always aimed at getting employment over the winter months in the coasting trade to France or London, and when freights were depressed beyond paying point they did not hesitate to lay them up until the White Sea and Baltic season came round again. It frequently happened that this course had to be adopted, and the ports all along the coast became blocked with idle tonnage, and the little towns overcrowded with seamen, who, as a rule, stuck to their ships and did odd jobs, without pay, until the time came for them to be again engaged in active service. It was customary for the captain and mate to specially look after the vessels when laid up so that no harm came to them, and they were expected to do so without remuneration. The honour and pride in those earlier days of having command or being mate of even a leaky old craft was very pronounced. Each brig, brigantine, or schooner, carried three or four apprentices. These lads were allowed 10s. per week, which

was called board money. The owners, it may be presumed, found it cheaper to make this arrangement rather than have cooking aboard while the vessel was laid up; but though an allowance was made for food, it was a standing instruction that at least two out of the four boys should sleep aboard the ship, and as soon as she was put into commission none but the oldest apprentice could have the privilege of sleeping ashore. This personage, by the way, was looked up to as a kind of Mogul even by his commander, but especially by the younger apprentices. He claimed the right indeed to chastise a wayward youth with the rope's end, and when very bad offences occurred, a double punishment was inflicted by keeping the little delinquent on deck in the cold at night, until his superior thought fit to pardon him. On the other hand, I have seen a mate soundly thrashed by this same person for striking a young boy during the process of a voyage. Such were the peculiar ethics of this class of seamen that, while they conceived it to be their duty to uphold the dignity of discipline when they were in supreme control of the little colony of apprentices during the time the vessel was laid up in port, they would not brook undue physical interference with their co-apprentices on the part of the chief officer when in active commission. Sometimes the stay in port would last three months. The master and mate were in attendance every day, and in order that their berths might be retained, the sailors came aboard on fine days, repaired sails, running gear, standing rigging, scraped and tarred the holds out, scraped masts, painted yards, scrubbed bottom, tarred and blackleaded it, and, in fact, when the time came to fit out for the spring voyage to the Baltic, the little vessels looked as trim and as neat as it was possible to make them, and there was little left to do except bend sails and take stores aboard.



A NORTHUMBERLAND HARBOUR.

Nor were the apprentices allowed to be idle. Each day they had to wash decks when the tide was up, and although it may seem a very small matter to refer to, it is worthy of note that the drawing of water by the youngest boy was the occasion of much interest to the onlookers, who always congregated in large numbers on the quays when anything of this sort was being done. The bucket which supplied the water was stropped with rope so that it did not injure the side of the vessel; great care was observed that no harm came to the planking, no matter how old the craft might be. The boy was expected to draw with such rapidity that the person who was throwing the water along the deck should not have to wait. It was considered quite an art to throw the water properly, and also to supply it, and it taxed both the strength and the deftness of the youngster; many a wiggling he would get in the process of training even in this small matter.

The two youngest boys took week and week about in keeping the forecastle clean. It was insisted that the floor should be spotless. This was enforced by the oldest apprentice, and he had to account to the master if it were not as he wished it to be. They of course assisted the men during the period of inactivity, but on those days when no work was being done by the sailors it was usual for the mate to give them so many *nettles* to plait: that is, five or seven rope yarns plaited into seizings for *bends* in hawsers, mooring chains, and ropes. Sometimes the mate was a person of artistic taste, and in that case they would be given bucket stropps or man ropes to *graft*, or turkheads and *grafting* to work on to some deck arrangement or yardarm, and bunt gaskets to work with marline. Indeed, the course of training was so systematic and so perfect that these young fellows long before their time had expired could do anything that a sailor might be called upon to do. To be taunted with laziness was a grievous indictment. The average lad of that period would do himself physical injury in the effort to avoid such a stigma. They prided themselves on being the pupils and under-studies of the finest sailors in the world; and so they were. When the time came round for the spring fleet to fit out, there was great commotion amongst the little community. The crews emulated each other in the effort to make their vessels look smart, and the distinction of

being first ready for sea claimed a prominent share of their ambition. They knew also that they would be subjected to the stern criticism of the female population, the limitations of which would not necessarily be confined to wives and sweethearts, or even relations.

Neither men nor women found companionship in books. If the women read anything, it was what the newspapers said about shipping movements, and it is safe to say very few concerned themselves about that. So their mental energy found an outlet in the gossip of things nautical. They knew by instinct almost when a vessel was thoroughly cared for, and although they might not be able to call things by their proper names, they never liked their husbands or sweethearts to have any hand in, or association with, an untidy vessel. Hence, to secure approval from their women critics, these sailor men and apprentice lads would strain every faculty to have sails stowed in a cloth, that is, stowed so that not a wrinkle could be seen anywhere. The youngest apprentice furled the royals and staysails, two other boys the topgallant sails, and all the crew, except the master, the larger square sails. The yards were squared by the braces. The lower yards were made to correspond with the topsail yards by means of the lifts, every rope was hauled taut, and every coil round the belaying pin was made strictly uniform. Every end of a rope had to have what is called a cross-whipping to prevent the end from becoming a tassel. A well-worn, though authentic story, which bears on this, did service many times in those days of nautical rectitude. A gentleman was brought from another district to our little port to serve as chief mate aboard a hitherto well-kept brig, and his chief characteristic was in neglecting to conform to one of the great essential nautical principles by allowing everything to get into disorder; warps and rope ends were allowed to go without whippings until it became an eyesore and a subject of strong condemnation. His wife, who did not conform to the orthodox faith, began to draw comparisons, and vigorously proclaimed that her husband's taste was a thing to be emulated. "Look," said this incensed lady, "at the fringes and tassels. Do they not look better than having things tied up like whipcords?" But her æsthetic opinions did not prevent her husband's services being dispensed with.

I have said that some of these small vessels were in the St Lawrence trade carrying timber from Quebec, and grain or timber from Montreal. They usually went out in ballast in order to make two voyages during the season, and there were very few that did not succeed in doing it, provided they kept free from accident. The spring voyage was fraught with great danger owing to large fields of ice and icebergs drifting out of the St Lawrence across the Banks of Newfoundland. Sometimes the spring fleet would be fast for days, and many of them got badly damaged in the effort to force a channel through the ice-field, while some got so badly crushed and damaged that they foundered. That was a real danger at the beginning of the season, but it did not compare with the danger of encountering the terrific westerly hurricanes that swept over the Atlantic in the fall of the year. We speak sympathetically about the six and seven thousand ton steamers that tramp across during the winter months at the present time, and yet it is less than fifty years since the whole of that trade was done by tiny brigs and barques who leaked and worked like Russian prams, but were handled with an ability that saved both them and their crews many times from destruction. Every autumn some of them became waterlogged, and not a few were never heard of after leaving the port of loading. The owner of an old brig which I knew very well was induced by the high rate of freights from Montreal to fix her to load a cargo of heavy grain from that port. Some of the owner's friends expostulated with him on the danger of sending so old and small a vessel to the St Lawrence so late in the season. "Old?" said the owner, "hasn't she had new decks? And you call her small! What about Drake's ships that he sailed to the Pacific Ocean and all over India with? Why, the largest wasn't half the size of mine! No, gentlemen, ships were built to go to sea, not to lie and rot at the quays." So to sea she went, and arrived at Montreal none too soon to assure the completion of her loading and sailing before the winter set in. She was, however, quickly loaded, and sailed on her homeward voyage. A quick run was made to Cape Breton, and thence through scores of "Codbangers" right away to the edge of the Banks of Newfoundland. Anchors, boats, hatches and everything else were made secure in anticipation of a wild passage. The studding-sail booms and other spars or planks were lashed at each side of the hatchways in order to break the weight or fire of the sea before it tumbled on to them. This was the old-fashioned plan of protection, and I hope it is still practised. I have often had recourse to it myself both in sailing vessels and steamers. There was no Plimsoll mark in those days, and this cockle-shell of a vessel was literally loaded down to the scuppers. A westerly hurricane struck her just after crossing the Banks, and she was run so long before it that to attempt to heave to meant certain destruction.

The whole length of two hawsers were put out at each side of the taffrail, and as the mountains came roaring along, towering far above the stern of the little ship and threatening her with extinction, these hawsers broke the wrath of the rollers, and made them spread into masses of prancing foam. The captain and crew said they would never have been able to scud before the hurricane but for their influence. She arrived at Queenstown a complete wreck having been literally under water or covered by it from leaving the Banks until they passed the Fastnet; bulwarks were gone fore and aft; boats were smashed, but the hatches were intact. The captain had been so long without sleep and proper rest that he had lost the power of sleep. His nerves were so badly shattered, and his physical endurance so completely exhausted, a new captain had to be sent to relieve him, and the poor fellow never really regained his normal state afterwards. I have often heard him say "it was death or glory; scud, pump, or sink," which was one of the common phrases

used by seamen in describing circumstances of this nature.

Stories more or less sensational are written from time to time of the terrors of a passage from Liverpool to New York aboard one of the White Star or Cunard liners, or even a passage on an ordinary ocean tramp, and although I would not under-estimate either the danger or the discomforts of either the crew or the passengers aboard one of these, I am bound to say they can only form a meagre conception of what it must have been like on one of the diminutive frail sailing crafts that built up the supremacy of the British mercantile marine. No one can really imagine the awfulness of the work these vessels and their crews had to do except those who sailed in them. This vessel, like many others of her class and size, did useful work in her time in building up our trade with other parts of the world. Distance and danger were no obstacles to the crews who heroically manned them. They feared nothing and dared everything. Their pride of race was inherent. They aimed at upholding the fine traditions of their nautical forbears, and contemptuously ignored the right of other nations to a place on the high seas. It was their dominion, and their prerogative therefore to monopolize them. Uneasy, ill-informed, political propagandists and commercial theorists would do well to ponder over what it has cost in courage, in vital force, in genius and in wealth to build up an edifice that represents half the world's tonnage. This structure of national strength has been erected without the aid of subsidies or bounties, and it may be not only maintained without them, but grow still greater if it is left alone to pursue its natural course under a system that brought us out of commercial bondage into a freer air over fifty years ago. That system has been the secret of much of our success, and once we embark on the retrograde course of protection then that will be the beginning of our mercantile decadence. Is the heritage not too magnificent, too sacred, to have pranks played with it?

THE END

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