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# THE VIKING BLOOD

FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE



**THE VIKING BLOOD**  
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**THE VIKING BLOOD**  
*A Story of Seafaring*

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By  
**FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE**  
*Author of "Blue Water," "The Shack-locker," etc.*

**HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED TORONTO**

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**TO  
V. S. W.**

---

There's few who know the ocean road,  
Its way by reef and bar:  
It keeps its secret guarded well,  
In league with sun and star;  
But if you tramp it year by year,  
And watch it wild and still,  
Its heart will open unto you,  
And lead you where you will.  
*The Sea Road.*

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## CHAPTER ONE



**H**E was christened Donald Percival McKenzie, but his mother preferred to call him Percival. The father, however insisted on the “Donald” and demanded that it be given priority over whatever appellation the mother might desire to add to the rare old Highland surname of McKenzie.

Captain McKenzie received the news of his son’s arrival into the world just as his ship was leaving the coaling station at Cape Verde Islands, but his wife’s suggestion of “Percival” caused him to hold the ship to an anchor while he dashed off a letter protesting against the tacking of such a namby-pamby name on to a son of his. “‘Donald’ is the name I have set my heart on, Janet, and I won’t have the name of McKenzie defiled by any such English designation as ‘Percival’. I won’t have any Percy McKenzies in my family.” Then, to conciliate his wife, who, he felt, deserved some consideration, he added, “You may call him Percival also if you’ve set your mind on it, but remember, Donald comes first!” So Donald Percival McKenzie it was, and thus it is inscribed in the Register of Births for the City of Glasgow, in the County of Lanark, Scotland, in the year of our Lord, Eighteen Hundred and Seventy-six.

Though registered thus by the laws of church and state and in the mind of the father, yet the mother won her desire for a time and omitted the “Donald” when addressing, or referring to, her son. It was only during Captain McKenzie’s brief home visits between voyages that young Donald Percival discovered that he had another appellation which he was expected to answer to. This discovery became a most pleasing one when the boy advanced to those years of discretion when he might fraternize with his fellows on the aristocratic “Terrace” where he resided. Glasgow youngsters, inheriting antipathies through Scotch or Irish ancestry, scorned anything savoring of “English” and the name of “Percy” could only be applied to an “Englischer” or a boy so anglicized by his “Maw” as to be only worth giving a licking to wherever and whenever met. When one’s mother hails from Inverness and speaks the pure melodious English peculiar to that part of Scotland, it is difficult for a lad to disprove connection with southron antecedents—especially in the face of such circumstantial evidence as a name like Percy, and an accent free from rolling “r’s” and Scottish idioms.

This was what young McKenzie had to fight against. Even though he could scrape through the language test and deliver himself of a guttural “Och, awa!” and pronounce “loch” without calling it “lock,” yet the “Percy” damned him. He had attained the age of seven—a rather delicate boy, much petted and spoilt by his mother—when he rebelled. The juvenile denizens of the Terrace had jeered at him—calling him “Percy, dear!” and added injury to insult by throwing mud and profaning his white starched collar with unclean hands. “They called me a mammy’s boy,” he sobbed, “’n they said I was English, ’n they said English was no good ’cause

they ran away from the Scotch at Bannockburn an' Stirling Bridge. I'm *not* English, am I, mamma?"

"No, no, dear," soothed the mother. "How dare those vulgar little scamps abuse my little pet! Don't cry, my wee lamb! I shan't let you go out and play with them any more——"

A renewed howl came from Donald Percival. "But I wanna play with them, mamma! I don't wanna be kept in! It's all your fault for calling me 'Percy'! I don't wanna be called Percy! I wanna be called Donal' same as daddy calls me. And, mamma, please don't call me Percy any more. I like Donal' better!"

There had been several incidents of this nature, and Mrs. McKenzie was now forced to address her offspring publicly by his first name. But the other died hard and practically blasted young Donald's life in the locality in which he lived. Only when the family removed to a distant neighborhood did the youngster feel free to begin life with a clean sheet.

There is a psychology in nomenclature which reflects the characters of the parents. "Percival" aptly described that of Mrs. McKenzie. As plain Janet McKinnon she grew up in the bucolic atmosphere of a small Invernessshire farm, where she had, at an early age, to help her mother milk cows, clean byres, plant and gather potatoes. In summer, she ran around barefoot; in winter she wore heavy boots and homespun stockings and red flannel petticoats. The farm was a poor one and the McKinnon family was numerous and hungry. Janet at sixteen was sent out to "service" as a maid-of-all-work in the home of a Glasgow baillie.

The baillie had made some "siller" in the scrap-iron business and hankered after the desirable municipal eminence of Lord Provost of Glasgow. As he and his wife were rather crude personages, he realized that some training in deportment and society mannerisms was necessary, and his establishment became something of a stamping ground for professors of dancing and deportment, English governesses and impecunious connections of aristocratic families. Janet, the maid, absorbed much of the atmosphere with which she was surrounded and unconsciously aped a great deal of what she saw being dinned into the baillie and his kindred.

"Bonny Janet McKinnon"—good-hearted, healthy, quick-witted, and a pretty figure of a lass, though rather proud and vain—followed the baillie in his steps up the social ladder, and while a domestic in the future Lord Provost's house, met handsome, rollicking Alec McKenzie, chief officer of the Sutton Liner *Ansonia* in the New York trade.

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## CHAPTER TWO



**J**ANET made Alec McKenzie a good wife. She supplied the ambition and aggressiveness which her husband lacked. No one could say he lowered himself by marrying Janet McKinnon, for she was quick to realize her husband's assets in the way of family connections and genuine ability, and she carried herself as if she were the accepted niece, by marriage, of the Laird of Dunsany. Other mates' wives called on her, more out of curiosity than kindness, but she would have none of them and treated them coldly. Her demeanor impressed the visitors, as it had already impressed the landlady, and the latter bruited the story that her lodger was the daughter of a "Hielan' Chief—somewhat rejuiced in circumstances." Mrs. McKenzie did not deny the story; she rather accepted it and even hinted at it in casual conversation with gossipy callers.

Alec was a first-class chief officer, but that wasn't good enough for Janet. She longed for the day when she could be referred to as "Mrs. McKenzie—wife of Captain McKenzie of the S.S. *So-and-so*," and she worked skilfully to that end. After much manœuvring, she struck up an acquaintanceship with Mrs. Duncan, wife of the marine superintendent of the Sutton Line, and never missed an opportunity to impress upon that simple lady the fact that Alec was a nephew of Sir Alastair McKenzie, and brother to David McKenzie the ship-owner on Bothwell street.

Though McKenzie longed for promotion, yet he was cursed with a sailor's bashfulness in seeking office, and of his own volition he would make no move which would cause his skipper to eye him askance as a man to be watched. He had known over-ambitious mates who had been "worked out" of the Line by superiors who felt that their positions were imperilled by such aspiring underlings, and he abhorred the thought of being classed as an "owner lickster." But Janet had no such scruples. She was out to speed the day, and before she had been a year married, she had called on her late employer, Baillie Ross, and sought his interest in Alec's favor. Ross was climbing in municipal politics and had recently been elected a director of the Sutton Line, and he appreciated Janet's efforts to "rise in the warl'." At the first opportunity, he casually mentioned to the Managing Director of Suttons' that they had "a maist promisin' young officer in Mr. McKinzie, chief mate o' the *Ansonia*. He's a nephew o' Sir Alastair McKinzie an' a brither tae David McKinzie—the risin' ship-broker. He wad mak' a fine upstaundin' Captun fur wan o' yer boats some day, and *I wad like tae see him get on!*"

The Managing Director was wise in his day and generation and made a note of McKenzie's name, but he was too much of a Scotch business man to promote officers unless they had ability. Captain Duncan was called in one day and engaged in casual conversation by the manager. "What do you know of McKenzie, chief officer of the *Ansonia*?" Duncan had been primed by his wife. "A fine smert officer, sir," answered the marine superintendent. "Keeps a nate shup and always attends to his wark."

"Drink?"

"No, sir! I've never heard tell o' him bein' a man that used liquor."

"How does he stand in seniority?"

"There's twa or three mates ahead o' him in length o' service, but nane ahead in smertness. He's well connectit, sir. Nephew tae Sir Alastair McKenzie and he's merrid on a Hielan' Chief's dochter—a fine bonny leddy, sir!"

The Managing Director turned over a fyle of papers.

"McCallum, master of the *Trantonia*, has knocked the bows off his ship in going out of Philadelphia and it has cost us a lot of money. When the *Ansonia* comes in this time, you can find a new chief officer for her. We'll sack McCallum and give McKenzie command of the *Trantonia*."

Duncan told his wife the news that evening over the tea table and that worthy lady bustled over with the tidings to Janet. "Mrs. McKenzie," she gasped, blowing and puffing as she flopped down in Janet's parlor-bedroom. "Jeck cam' hame th' nicht an' tells me yer husband's tae be made captun o' th' *Trantonia*! Ye'll can ca' yersel' Mistress Captun McKenzie efter this!"

Janet felt like embracing her visitor, but restrained her delight and murmured. "So kind of you to come over and tell me, Mrs. Duncan. I appreciate your thoughtfulness. I must write to-night and inform his uncle, Sir Alastair, of the promotion"—the latter was a white fib for Mrs. Duncan's benefit—"he'll be pleased, I'm sure."

When Alec arrived home, he was delighted with his good fortune even though the *Trantonia* was one of the smallest and oldest steamers in the Line and had long been relegated to the cargo trade. But she was a ship, and size made no difference in the status of ship-masters. The pay—seventeen pounds per month—would enable them to take up house. Everything was glorious and Alec marvelled at his good luck in being promoted ahead of mates senior to him in service, and he was not above voicing regrets for the unfortunate officers who suffered through his advancement.

"Poor old Johnson," he said. "Been due for a command these ten years. This will break his heart. Moore is ahead of me and should have got the next vacancy, for he's a smart, able man. And old McCallum, whose shoes I jump into. I'm awfully sorry for him, for he's got a large family and nothing laid by. He'll have to go mate again in his old age or take a job as watchman around the docks. It's cruel hard, but this is the mill of the British Merchant Service these days. We jump ahead over the bodies of the poor devils who slip on the ladder, and God help those who slip!"

Janet did not share his sympathies and felt rather annoyed. "Why should you fret about them? They wouldn't worry about you. Now, let's go and look for a house, dear. There's a lovely three-room-and-kitchen to let in Ibrox, which is a nice neighbourhood and many Captains live there." She did not enlighten him as to how he got his promotion.

With Janet spurring him on, McKenzie rose from command to command. For three years he ran the gamut of the Company's old crocks until, when Donald Percival was born, he was master of a big five-thousand tonner in the River Plate trade and drawing a salary of twenty pounds per month.

McKenzie was happy then, and would have been quite content to remain as master of a Sutton freighter doing the run from Glasgow to the Plate. It was an easy fine-weather trade and he was drawing twenty a month, and occasionally making a pound or two in commissions. There was only his wife and Donald to support, and he had a comfortable home in Ibrox—three rooms and kitchen on the second flat, with hot and cold water, and a vestibule door off the stair landing—a real snug spot. At sea, he was not over-worked, having a purser to write out manifests and bills of lading, and he had plenty of time to read and smoke and take it easy. But with the coming of Donald Percival, Janet's ambition expanded. "Percival must have a nurse," she wrote to her husband, "and there are several expenses to be met in connection with our darling boy. You must get out of the cargo trade and into the passenger ships, dear. Mrs. Davidson tells me her husband is getting thirty pounds a month as captain of the *Zealandia* in the Canadian emigrant service. You must think of your connections. I shudder when I imagine you coming up from Buenos Ayres with your ship full of smelly cattle and sheep ... the passenger ships are more genteel ... the doctor's bill is quite heavy, dear, and I have retained the services of a good nurse, as I do not feel equal to housework yet and Percival requires much care and attention...."

His wife's letter contained a memorandum of the expenses attendant upon the ushering of Donald Percival into this mundane sphere, and it caused McKenzie to break out into a cold sweat. "Raising kids is a devilish expensive business," he confided to the mate, who had "raised" six. "This youngster of mine stands me something like sixty pounds!" "Sixty poonds?" gasped Mr. McLeish. "Losh, mon, but yer mistress mun be awfu' delicate! Mistress McLeish brings them tae port ivery year an' five quid covers the hale business.... Saxty poonds for yin bairn? I c'd raise a dizen for that amoint o' siller. Ye'll need tae be lucky, Captun, an' fall across some disabled shups yince in a while if ye're plannin' tae have a family. Saxty poonds? Ma conscience!"

It was through a streak of God-given luck that the sixty pounds was paid, and Donald could thank the Fates for sending an Italian emigrant ship with a broken tail-end shaft across the path of his worried Daddy. McKenzie picked her up in a gale of wind south of Madeira, and he had his boats out and a hauling line aboard her ahead of a hungry Cardiff tramp who had been standing-by for eight hours waiting for the weather to moderate. "Sixty pounds has to be earned," muttered McKenzie in his beard, "and there's no Welsh coal-scuttle going to prevent me from getting it." After a strenuous time, and parting hawser after hawser, McKenzie plucked the Italian into Madeira, and the salvage money that came to him afterwards ensured his son's future as a free-born citizen.

The incident was used by Janet as a stepping-stone to her ambitions. After the salvage money had been awarded, she chased her husband "up to the office" and made him interview the Managing Director and ask for a command in the passenger trade. The official listened courteously to McKenzie's plea (dictated by Janet) and as Suttons had benefitted considerably by the Captain's picking up the helpless Italian, the promotion was forthcoming. With a sigh of regret, McKenzie carted his belongings from the comfortable River Plate freighter to the master's quarters on the *Ansonia*—the old ship he had served in as chief officer.

The *Ansonia* was not the smart flyer of his younger days, but she still carried passengers. Second cabin and continental steerage thronged her decks outward from the Clyde to Boston, and four-footed passengers occupied the same decks homeward. Those were the days of the cheap emigrant fares—when the dissatisfied hordes of Central Europe were transported to the Land of Liberty for three pounds fifteen—and the *Ansonia* would ferry them across in eleven days. McKenzie drove her through sunshine and fog, calm or blow, and took chances. There was no money in slow passages at the cut-rates prevailing, and Alec often wished he were jogging to the south'ard in his nine-knot freighter with but little to worry him. In the *Ansonia*, the first grey streaks came in his blonde hair, and the lines deepened around his mouth and eyes.

Janet was happy for a time, but Suttons had better and faster ships than the one her husband was commanding. Their skippers were getting more money and were able to maintain "self-contained villas" and keep a servant. The return cargo of cattle which was the *Ansonia's* paying eastward freight offended Janet's sensibilities. She did not care to have Mrs. Sandys—wife of the master of the Sutton "crack" ship—asking her at a select "Conversazione" or "high tea"—"How many head of cattle did your husband lose last voyage?" or "I don't suppose you visit your husband's ship, Mrs. McKenzie. Those cattle boats are simply impossible!"

Janet, in her younger days, was not above laboring in odoriferous cattle byres, but, with her exalted station in life, the mere thought of the *Ansonia's* cluttered decks and the honest farm-yard aroma which pervaded her and could be smelt a mile to loo'ard on a breezy day, gave her a sinking feeling and dampened her social ambitions.

She felt that she had exhausted all her "string pulling" resources, so she applied herself to imbuing her husband with more aggressiveness. Though passionately fond of his wife, yet there were times when McKenzie felt that he was being *hounded* ahead. Every cent he earned was spent in what his wife called "style," and what Alec called "dog." Janet dressed expensively and did much entertaining, and young Donald Percival was petted, spoiled, and cared for in a manner far beyond the rightful limits of a master mariner's pay.

"Make yourself popular with the passengers, dear," counselled his wifely mentor, "and drive your ship. Suttons like fast passages—"

"Aye," interrupted Alec somewhat bitterly, "but they don't like accidents. You know what happened to poor Thompson of the *Syrania*? Driving his ship in a fog to make fast time he cut a schooner in half and stove his bows in. Suttons lost a pile of money over that, and Thompson got the sack and is black-listed. His ticket was taken from him and he barely escaped being tried by an American court for manslaughter. I saw the poor chap in Boston this time, and what d'ye think he was doing? Timekeeping for a stevedore firm and getting ten dollars a week! A man who had commanded an Atlantic greyhound!"

Janet listened impatiently. "Oh, that was just his ill-fortune. I heard that he was in his bunk when the accident happened—"

Her husband made a gesture of mild irritation. "Good heavens, Janet! A man must sleep sometime," he said. "Thompson had been on the bridge for sixty hours and was utterly played out. But that made no difference. It was his fault. He was driving her full speed in a fog and that's where they got him—even though Suttons were driving him with their unwritten instructions—'Be careful with your ship, Captain, but we expect you to make good passages!' Drive your ship, but look-out if anything happens to her! That's the English of that!"

By persistent urging, Janet's exhortations had effect. McKenzie hounded the old *Ansonia* back and forth along the western ocean lanes and grew more grey hairs and deeper lines on his face with the worry and anxiety of long vigils on her bridge staring into the clammy mists through which his ship was storming. With a chief engineer who loved her wonderful old compound engines and who was willing to drive them, McKenzie commenced clipping down the *Ansonia's* runs until one day she raced into Boston harbor an hour ahead of her best record twelve years before, and two days ahead of a rival company's crack ship, which had left Glasgow at the same time.

The Boston newspapers, heralding the feat and containing a cut of Captain McKenzie and the ship, were forwarded to head office by the Boston agents. The Managing Director was delighted over the defeat of the rival company's crack ship, for the American papers played it up strong, with two-column, heavy type headlines and exaggerated description. After perusal, the canny Scotch manager gave some thought to McKenzie—the Yankee reporter dilated on the sub-head, 'Scotch baronet's nephew commands Sutton record breaker,' (Alec had never opened his mouth about the relationship)—and he began to consider him seriously as master for the Sutton New York-Glasgow express steamship *Cardonia*.

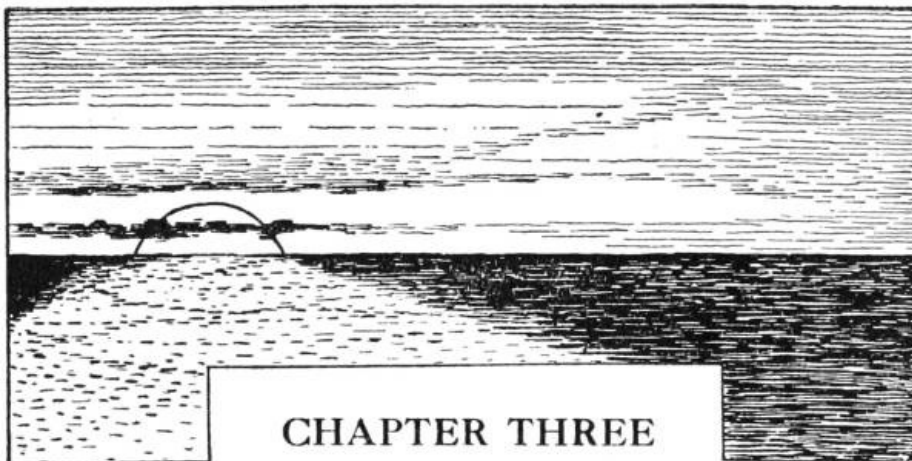
A wealthy American, returning to the States after a lease of Dunsany Castle, unconsciously gave Alec the promotion which the manager had considered and postponed. The American was rich and fussy, and when booking his passage, had demanded to do so through the manager. "I want a suite amidships, sir, 'n I want tew travel in a ship that kin travel along, as I ain't none too good a sailor. I want to sail with a skipper that'll make her travel some. 'N bye-the-bye, I saw by a Boston paper that one of yewr skippers is related to Sir Alastair McKenzie. I leased the old boy's castle for a while 'n a fine old bird he is. I'd like mighty fine tew cross the pond with this here McKenzie if he's on a fast packet, but ain't he on one of those twelve-day hookers to Boston?"

The manager had made up his mind. A man with McKenzie's connections would bring lucrative business and be popular in the New York trade. The other masters in line for promotion would have to wait. "Captain McKenzie was in the *Ansonia*—one of our intermediate ships—but we have now placed him in command of our New York Express steamship *Cardonia* and we can fix you up splendidly in her." The American booked passage, and McKenzie commanded the *Cardonia*.

With the promotion came a substantial increase in salary and Janet felt that her ambitions were realized—for a time at least. New worlds to conquer would suggest themselves bye-and-bye. The flat in the Terrace was given up, and a somewhat pretentious eight-roomed red sandstone villa in a suburban locality was rented, expensively decorated and furnished, and Mrs. McKenzie, with Donald Percival and a capable Highland "general," moved in and laid plans for attaining the rank of first magnitude in the firmament of the local social stars.

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## CHAPTER THREE



**D**ONALD Percival McKenzie was eight years old when the red sandstone villa became his habitation. He was glad to leave the Terrace where they formerly lived as his life in that locality, as far as relations with lads of his own age were concerned, had been none too happy. The migration to Kensington Villa, as the red sandstone eight-roomer was called, was accompanied by a determined ultimatum from young McKenzie that his mother drop the name "Percival" altogether and call him "Donald" in future. As the ultimatum was presented with considerable howling and crying and threats of atrocious behavior, the mother felt that she would have to make the concession.

With this bar to congenial juvenile fraternization removed, Donald felt free to begin life on a new plane. The youthful residents of the suburb he now lived in were "superior." They did not run around barefooted in summer, nor wear "tackety" or hobnailed boots in winter. Not that Donald scorned either of these pedal comforts. Bare feet were fine and cool and "tackety" boots gave a fellow a grand feeling of heftiness in clumping around the house, in kicking tin cans, and in scuffling up sparks through friction with granolithic sidewalks. Though superior in mode of living and dress compared with the less favored lads of Donald's former habitation, yet his new chums were very much akin to the latter in their scorn and hatred for anything savoring of "English," and Donald hadn't been in the neighborhood two days before he had to prove his citizenship in fistic combat with a youthful Doubting Thomas.



The other lad was bigger and older than Donald and had the name of being a fighter. He gave young McKenzie a severe drubbing and the latter had to go home with his clothes torn and his nose bleeding. The mother was furious and intended to see the other boy's parents about it, but Donald wouldn't allow her to do so. Instead, he remained home for an hour or two, changed into a garb less likely to spoil or hinder the free swing of his arms, and then slipped out to have another try at defending his name. Once again, Donald, in pugilistic parlance, "went to the mat for the count," but in rising he announced his intention of coming back at his fistic partner later—"after I take boxing lessons an' get my muscle up." Donald's determination, and possibly the threat, had considerable effect upon Jamie Sampson, who immediately made conciliatory advances. "I don't want tae hit ye any more," he said. "Ye're a wee fella'—"

"Am I Scotch?" queried Donald aggressively.

"Shair, ye're Scoatch!" Jamie admitted heartily—adding, "And I'll punch any fella's noase that says ye're no. Let me brush ye doon, Donal'!"

Through the exertion of the "fecht" Donald caught a cold and was laid up for two weeks, but he felt that it was worth it as he had gained the friendship of Jamie Sampson—"the best fighter on the Road, mamma, and you should see how he can dunt a ba' with his heid!" Donald's description of Jamie's prowess in using his skull for propelling a foot-ball caused Mrs. McKenzie some pain at the language used, and to her husband she said, "Donald must go to school soon, but we must send him to a place where he will learn to talk nicely. I think we'll send him to Miss Watson's private school. She's English and very particular."

Captain McKenzie looked thoughtfully at his son and sighed. "He's not very strong," he murmured, "but he's got spirit if he hasn't got stamina. Fancy him going for that big lad again after getting a licking! Aye, aye, Janet, he's a hot-house plant, but maybe he'll grow out of it if we're careful."

Petted and coddled by both parents; seldom rebuked or disciplined, young Donald was inclined to be "babyish" and somewhat arbitrary. He was a rather delicate child—a not unusual exception to the law of eugenics where both parents were ruggedly healthy—and his frequent sicknesses kept him much at home and in the society of his mother. He was clever beyond his years and had mastered "A, B, C's" and "pot-hooks and hangers" prior to his fifth birthday, while at seven, he could read and write in a manner superior to most thick-skulled Scotch youngsters of ten. He showed surprising evidences of artistic talent at an early age, and the blank cover pages and flyleaves of most of the books in the McKenzie library were adorned with pencil drawings of railway locomotives and ships—mostly ships. Captain McKenzie seldom arrived home from a voyage but what he had to pass critical comment upon his son's artistic conceptions of the *Cardonia* ploughing the seas in every manner of weather imaginable. There would be the *Cardonia* driving through a veritable cordillera of cresting combers—billows which caused the Captain to shudder involuntarily and declare that they were so wonderfully realistic that "he could feel the sprays running down his neck when he looked at them!" The *Cardonia* would again be presented in odious comparison with a rival company's ship, and the latter was always dwarfed in size and far astern. In Donald's eyes, the *Cardonia* was superior to anything afloat—even the crack Liverpool greyhounds of the day were mere tug-boats compared to her.

Occasionally other ship-masters would accompany Captain McKenzie home to dinner when his ship was in port, and these were red-letter days for Donald. After dinner, the seafarers would retire to the drawing-room and, with pipes or cigars alight and seated before the grate fire, the talk would inevitably drift to ships and shipping. With ears open and drinking in the conversation, Donald would be seated on a cushion in front of the blaze, revelling in the gossip, and unconsciously absorbing the spirit which, for ages, has set the feet of Britain's youth a-roving o'er the long sea paths.

Mrs. McKenzie would catch the look of rapt attention on her son's face and with the long foresight of a mother's mind she would realize that such talk was not good for a boy to hear if he were to be kept to home and home pursuits. Besides, she had a fear of the sea—a fear which was growing on her with time, and only her husband's monthly home-comings lifted an unknown dread from her heart which returned with his "good-byes." Though ambitious, proud, extravagant and somewhat callous where the welfare of others was concerned, yet she adored her husband and her son, and if put to the choice, would gladly relinquish her social aspirations for their sakes.

When the wild winter gales raged on the Atlantic and ships were posted as missing or came in with decks swept, Mrs. McKenzie had her share of dreadful fears, as have all seamen's wives at these times, but her husband had been so consistently fortunate that she almost believed him to be invulnerable to ocean's caprices. True, there were occasions when the news of the loss of a neighbor's husband at sea would cause her to frame resolutions to save for such a contingency, but ambition would dominate these good intentions and she would console or deceive herself with the thought that "Alec is young yet. He's never had an accident, and we'll save when Donald is through college."

To her perverted mentality, accidents could happen to others, but they couldn't happen to Alec. She preferred to think of the sea-captains who had safely dodged the wrath of the sea and who had retired to snug stone villas in sea-side towns where they took their ease growing geraniums and roses and acknowledging the whistle or flag salutes of brother masters in active service as they passed by. On her lonely couch, she dreamed of the future days when Alec would retire from the sea for all time; when she would have him always with her, and when young Donald Percival—man grown—would be a coming Glasgow architect, designing structures destined to be the admiration of all eyes.

In conning over her lifetime so far, Janet felt a great pride in her accomplishments. From the "but and ben" of a poor Highland farm she had travelled far, and to her credit it must be said that she had worked and studied hard to keep pace with her social progress. Her humble origin and the menial service of her pre-marital days had been skilfully covered, and her quick and active mind readily absorbed the "correct" conversation, deportment and pursuits which should necessarily accompany the social status of a "Captain's wife whose

husband was in the New York passenger service, and whose salary was four hundred pounds a year!"

Since her marriage she had dropped home ties. She felt that she owed her parents but little. They had brought her into the world, fed and clothed her for a few years and were glad when she had gone into "service" in Glasgow. She was off their hands then, and ten brothers and sisters more than filled her place at home. Neither her father nor mother could write, and the only time she saw her family again was when they arrived in Glasgow en route to Canada. They were now out on a homestead in "Moose Jaw, Chicago, Sacramento or some such outlandish place," and she had heard nothing from them since they emigrated.

Baillie Ross had attained the coveted Lord Provostship, but with the honors of the office, he had become unapproachable to Janet. David McKenzie was flying his own house-flag on several sailing-ships, but he had discouraged advances by cutting Captain and Mrs. McKenzie "dead" on the few occasions during which they came face to face. "To the devil with him!" laughed Alec on the first non-recognition. "I can get along without him. His name is a curse in the mouths of sailormen and his ships are notorious as 'work-houses' and 'starvation packets.' Better not to claim acquaintance with such a brother. He was never anything to me anyhow!"

Alec had written to his uncle upon one occasion—just a friendly letter telling of his progress at sea (he was in the *Cardonia* then), but Sir Alastair had answered curtly, stating that "David had informed him of his (Alec's) doings and he didn't care to hear any more about them!" Alec read the letter thoughtfully, and mentally pictured the story David would spin to the Baronet. With a bitter smile, he threw the letter in the fire and wiped both his brother and his uncle forever from his affections.

Thus, unencumbered or blessed with relations, the McKenzies ploughed their own furrow and lived happily in their own select sphere. Donald went to the private school and showed exceptional brilliancy at his books, even though his tuition was interrupted often by spells of ill-health. His frequent sicknesses worried the mother, until a famous Glasgow specialist had examined the lad and given his verdict. "He's as sound as a bell, madam, but he has a cauld stomach. Keep his feet warrm and dinna gie him a lot of sweet trash to eat. Dinna coddle him. Let him rin the streets—it's the life of a laud rinning and jeuking aboot—and by the time he's twalve or fourteen he'll be as tough as a louse and as hard tae kill!" Couched in homely Doric, the advice of the great Doctor Chalmers—famous throughout Great Britain for his skill and common-sense prescriptions—assuaged Janet's fears and opened up a desirable vista to Donald Percival.

Captain McKenzie's interpretation of the great physician's advice was to insist on Donald being sent to a public school. "Let him get along with real boys, Janet," he maintained. "He's ten years old now and should be able to take care of himself. If you coddle him too much, he'll be a namby-pamby baby instead of a live boy —"

"But think of the rough characters he'll meet?" objected his wife.

"He'll have to meet them sometime and the sooner the better. He isn't going to be a monk that you should want to keep him so inviolable. Now, Janet, take him away from that kindergarten he's attending and put him in the Gregg Street Public School right away." Captain McKenzie was determined, and next day Janet took her ewe-lamb to the public school in a cab and waited on the head master.

That worthy pedagogue assured Mrs. McKenzie that her hopeful would be well looked after and that his morals would not necessarily be contaminated by association with *his* scholars, and he mentally wondered how it was that all mothers imagined their own children were lambs and those of others, wolves and jackals. Twenty years of driving the rudiments of knowledge into the thick and stubborn skulls of Scotch youngsters had made him cynical, and he looked upon Donald as another mild-looking angel with probable devilish propensities.

Young McKenzie was given an examination to determine the grade or class he was fitted for, and surprised the examiner by his general intelligence. He was then taken and enrolled on the register of the Fifth Standard, and a saturnine male teacher gave him a number and a desk which he had to share with a shock-headed urchin who wore a blue woollen "ganzey" and "tackety" boots. Shock-head glanced over Don's black velvet suit and white collar with ill-concealed disdain and, having taken the measure of his desk-mate, inquired huskily, "Can ye fight?"

On Donald not deigning to answer this "rude, rough boy," Shock-head felt encouraged to try the newcomer's spirit by a lusty jab in the ribs with his elbow. Young McKenzie returned the prod with interest, which caused Shock-head to grunt and make a swing with his fist. The eagle-eyed teacher spied the movement and haled the aggressor to the floor. Producing a snakey-looking leather strap from his pocket, Mr. Corey took a great deal of the belligerency out of Shock-head by administering six stinging blows with the strap on the culprit's outstretched palm. "Now, sir, go to your seat and leave the new boy alone!"

Shock-head never made a whimper, but returned to his seat and endeavored to cool his injured palm by spitting and blowing on it. Such hardihood appealed to Donald and he whispered in the parlance he was supposed to eschew, "You're a gey tough yin!" The other, still blowing, nodded and whispered with unmoved lips, "Ah've taken twinty swipes an' he couldny make me greet!"

At this juncture the bell for "minutes" or recess was tolled and Donald filed out in company with Shock-head, who evidently bore no malice.

"Whit's yer name, new fella'?"

"Donald McKenzie! What's yours?"

"Joak McGlashan! Whaur d'ye leeve?"

"Maxwell Park! Where do you live?"

"Thurty-seevin M'Clure street an' up three stairs. Whit does yer faither wurrk at?"

"He's a sea captain—in the Sutton Line!" declared Donald proudly. The other paused and looked at him in surprise. "Is he? Whit boat is he on?" There was curiosity in his tone.

"The *Cardonia*!"

McGlashan made an exclamation of pleased astonishment. "My! but that's funny," he said. "Ma faither's bos'n on the *Cardonia* an' he's great pals wi' your auld man. They get on fine thegither. Jist think o' that noo! Is she no th' fine shup th' *Cardonia*? Did ye ever see th' bate o' her?" And the two boys were chums instantly.

Mrs. McKenzie came down at four and took Donald home in a cab. "And how did you get on, dear?" she asked—nervously glancing at the noisy mob of school children who were lingering around to watch "the toff gaun hame in a cab!"

"Fine, mamma, fine! I've got a chum already—Joak McGlashan—and his papa's bos'n on the *Cardonia*! He says his pa's great pals with my *old man*!"—(Mrs. McKenzie gasped)—"and mamma, Joak is a gey tough yin!"—(Another gasp)—"he can stand twenty swipes on the hand from the teacher's strap without bubblin'! Aye, an' he's going to put a horse-hair on his hand next time he gets punished and he'll split Mister Corey's strap to bits. I'm going to bring Joak out to tea some time soon"—(the mother shuddered)—"and he's going to learn me to stand on my hands and skin the cat and sklim a lamp-post!" At the mention of this contingency and the terms used in naming certain athletic accomplishments, Mrs. McKenzie reached for her smelling salts and felt that the carefully built fabric of years was crumbling.

To her husband that night, Janet said dolefully, "I'm afraid Donald is going to lose all his gentility and good manners at that common school. He has chummed up already with a Jock McGlashan who says that his father is a great 'pal' of yours—a boatswain or something on your ship—"

McKenzie laughed. "Oh, yes!—McGlashan! Well! He's a good honest sort of a fellow and he's sailed with me a good many years. It won't hurt Donald to be democratic. When I was a young chap I ate and slept and shared clothes and tobacco with fellows who are quartermasters with me now, and good chaps they are too. Don't bring our boy up to believe he's better than anybody else. If you do, he'll be like a young bear—all his troubles before him."

"But Donald wishes to bring this McGlashan boy up here to play with him!" protested Janet. "Just think of the manners of M'Clure street being introduced here!"

The other smiled and patted his wife's hand. "Don't worry, dear. If Donald wants young McGlashan to play with him here, let him do so. Better to have McGlashan here than have Donald go down to M'Clure street. He won't learn any more deviltry from my bos'n's kid than he would from young Sampson or the other imps who live in this neighborhood." Then, in a kindly tone, he added significantly, "You know, Janet, I was never one for making distinctions in breed or birth. One finds true gentlemen and real ladies dressed in the meanest clothes and serving in the humblest capacities. Let Donald have plenty of rope and don't coddle him too much."

Young McKenzie's introduction to public school life was rather a severe trial to a delicately nurtured boy, who had so far been, as jeering school-mates declared, "tied tae his mither's apron strings!" His undoubted cleverness in the school-room commanded no admiration from his kind. On the other hand, he was reviled and held up to contempt as one who was false to school-boy traditions by actually studying his lessons—"tae keep in wi' th' teacher!" The majority of Scotch boys preferred to have their lessons driven into their hard heads by dint of much corporal punishment rather than lose valuable play hours by "dinnin' ower their buiks."

The fact that he lived in a villa in a select suburb, took piano, singing and dancing lessons, and wore nice clothes and a white linen collar—clean every morning—militated against him for a time. To his blue-jerseyed companions, white collars were the trade-marks of a "bloomin' toff" and fair game for desecrating with ink and muddy paws. Mrs. McKenzie used to tremble with indignation at the sight of her son's collar on his return from school, but after a month the soiled linen ceased to offend her eyes, as Donald simply removed his collar before entering school and put it on again prior to his entering his home.

He would have fared worse had it not been for Joak McGlashan. Joak was a "tough yin" and had considerable renown as a fistic gladiator. The arena for these encounters was a piece of waste land near the school and screened from the eyes of prowling "polismen" by a high bill-posting boarding. "Efter fower o'clock" was the invariable hour of combat, and many the time Donald arrived home late for tea through acting as second for the invincible Joak. These after-school fights were often sanguinary affairs and the Scotch stubbornness and pugnacity were well exemplified in the savagery of the contestants. Scratching, kicking, and hitting a downed man were strictly taboo, but everything else went, and to see the appreciative looks on the faces, and hear the excited yells of the spectators during one of these "after four" meetings, one would be convinced that the Scottish youth was not far removed from his barbaric ancestor.

No boy in the school could avoid doing a round or two behind the bill-boards within a month of his entry into the Gregg street institution. If he hadn't trampled the hallowed mud of the spot as a combatant it was either because he was too big and strong to be challenged, or because he was a coward. If the latter, his life would be made a misery to him and he would either have to leave the school or go into the arena with the weakest of his tormentors and either beat him or be beaten. A boy who had fought, whether licked or not, had proved himself and would be unmolested.

In due time Donald's hour of trial came. A dock-lumper's hulking son had usurped Donald's hook in the cloak

room and had thrown his coat on the floor. Donald saw the action and resented it by throwing the other's coat off. No blows were exchanged at that time, as the argus-eyed janitor was around, but Luggy Wilson—the big fellow—doubled up his fist and tapped his nose significantly, saying, "Efter fower! Ah'll do ye! Ye'll fight me, McKenzie—dirrty toff!"

Luggy was big and strong but lacked "sand." Donald was endowed with plenty of "grit," and in the fight that followed behind the bill-boards after school, he came off the victor. A lucky punch on Luggy's proboscis drew blood, and when the big fellow sighted his own gore he ran away home. Intoxicated with the exhilaration of victory, Donald insisted on Joak accompanying him to Maxwell Park as a reward for seconding him, and Joak, feeling just pride in his protégé, was glad to go and be in a position to give Captain McKenzie an eye-witness's account of the fracas.

It was almost six o'clock when Donald, accompanied by Joak, burst into the McKenzie drawing-room. Both Captain and Mrs. McKenzie were at home and the Presbyterian minister and his wife—particular folk—were with them awaiting dinner. At the sight of her son—covered with mud, with swollen lips and a rapidly blackening eye, and accompanied by a shock-headed youngster in blue woollen jersey and hob-nailed boots—Mrs. McKenzie nearly fainted.

"Ah've had a fight, mamma!" ejaculated Donald, relapsing into the language of the street. "Ah licked a big fella ca'd Luggy Wulson. He was a big lump with nae guts and I bliddied his beak and gave him a keeker! Didn't I, Joak?"

"Ye did!" grunted Joak laconically, taking in the luxurious surroundings of his "pal's hoose."

Mrs. McKenzie rang for the maid and gasped, "Mary! Take these boys out in the kitchen and clean them!"

The minister and his wife sat very prim and quiet. Mrs. McKenzie felt that her darling had fallen from his pedestal, while Captain McKenzie strode to the bay window and looked out with smiling eyes—secretly delighted—and proud to know that he had a son that was "all boy."

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## CHAPTER FOUR



**T**WO years at the Gregg Street Public School saw Donald in that exalted grade of learning known as the "Ex-sixth"—a sort of educational Valhalla which conferred a brevet rank upon one and caused the scholars of lesser degree to look up to its members with awe. The pupils of the Ex-sixth were supposed to have out-grown "the strap," and their curriculum led them into the envied precincts of the school laboratory, where, at certain times, they could do all sorts of wonderful things with Bunsen burners, and test tubes, and hydrometers and such like. In this class a fellow could make gun-powder on the sly and color his knife or a white-metal watch and chain to look like gold by dipping it in copper sulphate.

Though Donald could boast of no prowess at the strenuous athletic games of football, running, jumping, etc., yet he developed remarkable ability as a swimmer. Swimming lessons were compulsory in the Gregg Street School and a fine swimming bath was attached to the institution, and the scholars had to take at least two lessons a week under the tutelage of a master of the natatory art. Young McKenzie took to the water like a duck, and his proficiency made him a favorite with the master and a contestant in inter-school matches, and during his year in the Ex-sixth he won the Glasgow Amateur Swimming Shield for schoolboys under 14 years of age.

His educational progress at the school had been marked by commendation and praise. He was an example to all, and on the "Prize Day" he invariably trotted home loaded with gift-books marked inside the cover, "Presented to Donald P. McKenzie for Excellence in Drawing," or maybe it was for history, composition,

geography, or some such subject in which he excelled. The constant repetition of McKenzie's name on "Prize Day" caused less-favored youngsters to feel bored and to express their desire to give the clever one "a punch on th' noase" for being so mentally efficient. This desideratum was expressed *sotto voce* and to intimates, as McKenzie's fame as a fighter had been established since his encounter with Luggy Wilson, and who McKenzie couldn't fight, his chum, Joak McGlashan could, so he was treated with considerable respect for a "toff that wuz clever at learnin'."

Joak's intellectual powers kept him to the Fifth Standard, and it was doubtful if he would go beyond that grade. He would never have retained his place in it were it not for Donald, who primed him and did his home work for him during the time the two were class-mates. Bos'n McGlashan used to regard with some wonder a prize book which his son had won for "General Excellence in Drawing" while with Donald in the Fifth Standard, and wonder still more when during Joak's second year in the Fifth his drawing percentage was the lowest of any in the class. Joak explained this inexplicable loss of artistic ability by stating that he had sprained his thumb and couldn't hold a pencil like during the prize-winning year, but to Donald he regretted the deception as one which gave him a lot of unnecessary work in trying to live up to it. The "sprained thumb" excuse came as a grateful relief.

Though separated by the gulf of learning, Donald and Joak fraternized as of yore, but Mrs. McKenzie absolutely refused to allow the McGlashan boy to come to the villa in Maxwell Park. Donald's frequent lapses from the ethics of polite society in occasional interlardings of his conversation with "Glesca" vernacular, and in lengthy absences on Saturdays and holidays from the precincts of the villa, were laid to the baneful influence of Joak. Joak was blamed for Donald's home-comings with dirt-bespattered clothing and grimy face. Joak was the leading spirit in those all-day pilgrimages "doon to the Docks," and Joak was to be indicted for sending Donald home one day soaked to the skin after he had fallen off a raft which they had constructed to sail on the stagnant waters of a railway cut.

Saturday was a day of days with the boys. It was the day in which they toured the Port of Glasgow and conned its multifarious shipping; when they trudged from dock to dock, and basin to basin and appraised the model and rig of every craft that lay therein. "There's a bonny boat fur ye noo, Donal'," Joak would say as he eyed a liner with white-painted upper works and yarded masts. "She's a big yin—an Injia boat, Ah'm thinkin'!" Donald would scan her with a sailorly eye. "She's not an India boat, Joak. She's in the North Atlantic trade. There's no coolies aboard her. There's always coolies on an India boat. Now, just look at that big sailing-ship beyond the bend. There's a boat for ye! Let's go down and maybe we can get aboard her." Thus the pilgrims would go—dodging shunting engines and rumbling coal-trucks, cargo hoisting cranes and Dock Police—and the middle of the day would find them trudging up the odoriferous and noisy confines of M'Clure street, where at number thirty-seven, up three flights of stone stairs, Donald would find a welcome and a bite to eat from the big-hearted Mistress McGlashan. Of course, Mrs. McKenzie knew nothing of these social calls on her son's part. If she did, Donald's Saturday pilgrimaging would have been ruthlessly cut short.

It was a memorable day when in their prowls around the docks, Donald and Jock saw a wonderfully fine ship come up the river and moor at the Sutton Line quay. She was a new purchase of Sutton's—a former London East India liner, and Suttons had bought her to put her in the New York trade as an off-set to a brand new ship which their rivals had just launched. Both boys admitted that the "new yin" was finer than the *Cardonia*, and both inwardly voiced the hope that their respective daddies would have the privilege of sailing on the latest addition to the Sutton fleet.

At school a week later, Donald sought his chum with portentous news. "My father's going as Captain of the new ship, and she's to be called the *Sarmania*. Isn't that fine, Joak?"

Next morning young McGlashan had news. "Ma faither's gaun as bos'n o' th' new yin, Donal'. He told me this mornn, an' he's gey prood. She's th' finest shup oot th' Clyde, he says!"

When Captain McKenzie discussed the new ship with his wife, Donald showed a surprising knowledge of the vessel's rig, design and tonnage.

"By George, young man," exclaimed the father, "how do you happen to know so much about the ship?"

Mrs. McKenzie laughed. "What is there he doesn't know?" she said. "Why he spends all his Saturdays and holidays wandering around the docks with that McGlashan imp and I can't prevent him. I'm always in fear that he'll be killed or drowned there some day."

Captain McKenzie looked at his son. "What is the idea?" he enquired. "Why this craze for dock-wandering and ship-worshipping?"

"Why?" reiterated Donald slowly. "Why? Because I intend to go to sea myself some day!"

Captain McKenzie looked his son over critically and stroked his beard. Donald was twelve years old then—a tall, slim, comely lad. He had his mother's dark hair and large dark brown eyes. The eyes were clear and sparkling and expressive of the boy's emotions and served to lend distinction to a face which might otherwise be characterized as "plain." His forehead was high; the nose was straight and the mouth large and firm, but there was a pallor to the skin which did not betoken rugged health, although he was wiry enough. His hands were small, with long artistic fingers, and as he looked at them, Captain McKenzie could not imagine those frail hands digging for finger-hold into the rough canvas of a wet topsail. Nor could he vision this carefully nurtured lad scrambling aloft on a dark, dirty night to the dizzy height of a swaying royal-yard, or tugging and hauling at wet ropes on a sluicing deck. A boy who had been trained in painting, music, singing, dancing and the culture of the drawing-room to herd with rough-spoken men who looked upon such accomplishments as effeminate and worthy only of curseful scorn; a boy that had never slept anywhere but in a warm, downy bed; who had never wanted for anything; who had never known cold and hunger; who had been petted and waited upon by a doting mother—Pah! The sea would kill him ere he had been a dog-watch in a ship's

company!

The father spoke quietly. "Donny, my lad," he said, drawing his son to his knee, "you must give up that notion. The sea would kill you, laddie. You're not strong enough for that life, and it's a dog's life at the best of times. Why, boy, I'd rather be a farmer with a snug place ashore than skipper of the *Sarmania* to-day."

"But Nelson was a delicate boy, daddy," protested Donald, "and he came along all right."

"Yes, Donny, but Nelson was a man in a million. He was a solitary exception. I've seen poor little shavers go to sea and have to be taken ashore on a mattress absolutely crocked up for the remainder of their days. You'd be wasted at sea, laddie. You have ability and talents far beyond what I have, and if you develop them you should be wealthy and famous by the time you're my age. No, no, boy! You must get that sea-fever out of your head. It's no good, believe me!"

"Joak McGlashan's going to sea, Dad, and we both planned to go together when we were fifteen or sixteen."

The father smiled. "How are you going to work that? McGlashan's folks could never afford to apprentice him. He'd have to go in the fo'c'sle as a boy."

"Well, Dad, we planned we might go in a steamer together as deck-boys and serve our time. The sailing-ships might be too hard for me at first, but a steamer would be easier—"

The Captain burst into a guffaw. "You think so, eh? Let me tell you that you'll do more real back-breaking and menial work aboard of a steamer than you'll do on a sailing-ship. On a steamer! Huh! Shoveling ashes and cleaning out holes that a man couldn't get into! A dirty deckboy at the beck and call of every ordinary seaman—and on a steamer! God forbid! They don't make sailors on steamers, and even if you served your time in steam and got a master's certificate, there isn't a ship-owner would give you a ship, nor would you obtain the respect of officers and crew if you did get one. There's no back-door for reaching the bridge in sea-faring. You have to serve your time in sail, and go thro' the mill, otherwise you'd never get to be more than a common deck-hand no matter how clever you were. There is a time-keeper down in the wharf office with an Extra Master's certificate, and he can't get even a second mate's berth. Why? Because he served his time in steam. He knows all about navigation, but he couldn't put a square-rigger about, and that has damned him in the eyes of owners and sailormen. He might have the theory, but he hasn't the practice, and that cooked his goose. Now, sonny, we'll just drop all this notion of going to sea and you'll study hard and be an architect and stay home and keep your mother company. One of us at sea is enough!"

Donald left the room abruptly and Mrs. McKenzie sat beside her husband. "I'm so glad you have talked to Donald, Alec," she said. "He's just crazy about going to sea, and I've heard nothing but ships, ships, and ships for months. He gloats over that sailing ship picture there and reads nothing but sea-stories, and I think that he and that McGlashan boy spend all their spare time around the docks. I hope you can drive the fancy out of his head."

"All British boys have the fever at some time in their youth," said the Captain with a laugh. "He'll get over it. He can't go to sea unless he runs away, and I'm sure he won't do that!"

Upstairs in the privacy of his bedroom, Donald was prone on a sofa crying bitterly. His dreams and ideals had been ruthlessly smashed. He felt bitterly the lack of health and strength to do what other boys could do. How could he face Joak and tell him that he couldn't accompany him in his sea-faring? It was hard to give up the idea after dreaming and weaving fancies around it so long. For an hour he lay alone in his misery, until the father and mother found him and petted and caressed him back to smiles again. "Don't fret, Donny-boy," said the father, who understood. He drew the boy to him and brought the wan, tear-stained face to his shoulder. "I tell you what I'll do, sonny," he said.

Donald looked up expectantly. "What, daddy?"

"Next May, if all goes well, I'll take you and mamma on a voyage to New York and back. How's that?"

"Hurray!" All disappointment was forgotten in the promise, and the boy alternately hugged his father and skipped around the room in joyful antics. "Won't that be great! Hurray! Jingo! I must tell Joak. And in the *Sarmania* too! I can hardly wait until the winter's over. Just think of it, mamma! To New York! Three thousand miles across the Atlantic!" His delight knew no bounds and seafaring ideals were, for the nonce, postponed.

On a brumal November day, the *Sarmania* was to sail on her first trip under the Sutton house-flag. Captain McKenzie had bidden his family an affectionate farewell early in the morning and had driven away in a cab with his white canvas sea bag and portmanteau on the "dicky." Mother and son had watched the four-wheeler rattle down the road and had waved to the Captain peering for a last glance of home through the window. Partings are holy moments, fraught with memories and fears, and both watched the conveyance disappear from sight without speaking. "Mamma," said Donald, when they entered the house again, "what do you say if we take a cab this afternoon and drive down to Renfrew and see the ship pass down the river. I'd like to see daddy's ship going down to the sea." The idea appealed to Mrs. McKenzie and she assented eagerly. "And mamma," continued Donald, "I'd like to ask a favor and I hope you'll grant it."

"What is it, dear?"

"Let me go and get poor Joak McGlashan and take him with us. His papa is on the *Sarmania* too, and I'm sure it would be a great treat for him to see the ship."

Mrs. McKenzie's lips pursed and she was about to refuse gently, but something had softened her heart towards the undesirable Joak, and she gave permission. Donald grabbed his hat and coat and was off to thirty-seven M'Clure street.

Later in the day a cab plodded down to the grassy banks of the Clyde at Renfrew and the occupants got out. Joak had had a hair-cut and wore a collar—an adornment which chafed his neck and made him feel like a “bloomin’ toff.” In Mrs. McKenzie’s eyes, the youth, thus adorned, looked quite passable, and were it not for his “atrocious conversation,” she would have been impelled to invite Joak to tea on occasions. Joak’s dialect, however, barred him from the polite society of Maxwell Park, and Mrs. McKenzie felt that the restrictions could not be relaxed.

The party sat on a seat by a river-side path until Donald, who had been scanning the roily windings of the Clyde citywards, discerned three tall masts coming slowly around a bend. “Here she comes!” he cried.

Slowly and majestically the liner swung into view, with a paddle-wheeled tug straining at a stern hawser, and the boys scanned her over with appreciative delight. The *Sarmania* was, indeed, a queen among ships—a long, straight-stemmed, black-hulled dream of a vessel, flush-decked from stem to stern, with white painted rails, stanchions and life-boats in orderly array, and varnished teak deck-houses, whose brass-rimmed ports glittered in the cold November daylight. A lofty, black, red-banded funnel arose from a phalanx of ventilators amidships, and three tall pole masts, with square yards crossed on the fore, added to the appearance of a handsome ship.

The pilot-jack flew from a stem-head staff just in front of the uniformed Chief Officer standing up in the eyes of her; the graceful Stars and Stripes waved from the fore-truck, while the Sutton house flag and a red mail pennant decorated the other masts. Astern, from the jack-staff lazily waved “the old red duster”—the “blood and guts of Old England”—the red ensign of Britain’s Merchant Marine, and “The Flag” never floated from a nobler looking ship.

Mrs. McKenzie saw not the ship. Her eyes were riveted on the high bridge which stood, spider-like, on stout iron stanchions forward of the long funnel, and upon which strode her husband, uniformed, alert, and monarch absolute of the little world he ruled. Captain McKenzie paused in his thwartship paces and whipped up a pair of binoculars to his eyes. The boys were swinging their caps and shouting; Mrs. McKenzie was waving a handkerchief. The Captain spied them, and taking off his uniform cap waved heartily. He turned for a moment and gave an order. A burst of steam whirled up from the liner’s funnel and the syren blared forth a farewell roar. “He’s blawin’ th’ whistle tae ye!” yelled Joak. “Ah see ma faither at the front o’ the shup. Haw, faither! Haw, faither!” And Joak yelled himself hoarse at the stocky figure which detached itself from a knot of seamen and waved a cap at the rail.

Slowly the fine ship glided past, decks thronged with passengers, and a column of black smoke ascended from the funnel as the firemen stoked for “a full head of steam.” The stern tug came abreast of the watchers, and the ship swung around a bend and slowly vanished.

Mrs. McKenzie called the boys, and with something of an ache in her heart, she drove home—remaining silent while the others chattered and described the fine points of the wonderful ship their fathers sailed in.

The *Sarmania* arrived in New York after a rapid passage, and Donald and Joak had discussed stealing down to the river-side when the ship was due back and watching her come in, but the December weather had set in with gales of wind and rain and the time of the ship’s arrival was problematical, so they gave up the idea and decided to meet the ship at the quay should the time of day be appropriate.

On a cold, wet winter’s morning, Donald trudged to school, intending at lunch hour to go down to the wharf office and ask if there was any word of the *Sarmania*, which was then due. Joak was not present that morning, but that was nothing unusual, as Joak was becoming tired of the Fifth Standard and played truant often. The morning dragged slowly. It was a dark, dismal Glasgow day—a day of sullen clouds and slashing rain—when the street lamps remained alight to do the work of the skulking sun, but Donald hummed softly at his work and looked forward to an evening with his father and a recital of the wonderful *Sarmania*’s maiden passage in the New York trade. He would be in that day, sure enough! He was a day late, but they always gave a day extra on winter passages, and Alec McKenzie seldom exceeded it.

Noon came and Donald was seated in a corner of the play-ground shed eating a lunch and kicking his legs to keep warm, when Joak—a grimy, wet and haggard Joak—came running up. Donald noticed that the tears were streaming from his eyes. “Who hit ye?” he gasped as he stood up and caught his staggering chum.

Joak ignored the question. “Oh Donal’, it’s awfu’, it’s awfu’! Ah dinna ken what to say!” And the tears and sobs burst forth anew.

Donald was alarmed. “What is the matter, Joak? Tell me, quick!”

Joak looked up from the bench upon which he had thrown himself prone and in a voice punctuated by sobs and moans, told the news.

“We’re orphans, Donal’. Th’ *Sarmania*’s jist cam’ in an’ your faither an’ my faither is no aboard her. They were lost oot on the Atlantic!”

The lunch dropped from Donald’s hand. For a moment he stood paralyzed, staring at his weeping chum. The dreadful sense of his loss benumbed his brain and he almost felt like laughing insanely. Then reason and realization came rushing back, and he fled from the school and ran, with fear urging him, to his mother and home.

## CHAPTER FIVE



**D**ONALD rushed into the house to find visitors in the front parlor with his mother. He peered through the curtain and saw her seated on a lounge, deathly pale, and twisting a sodden handkerchief in her fingers. By her red-rimmed, swollen eyes, Donald knew she had been crying. The visitors were Captain McGillivray, the Sutton Line Marine Superintendent, and a burly man in uniform whom Donald recognized as Mr. McLeish, Chief Officer of the *Sarmania*. Both men rose to their feet as Donald slipped in and ran to his mother's side. Clapsed in her arms and crying silently, he listened to Mr. McLeish's story—told with all technical embellishments through nervousness and an effort to keep from tears. Poor, honest, simple-hearted McLeish! It was a hard task they gave him!

"Ye see, Mistress McKenzie," he proceeded huskily, "we left Sandy Hook on the morn o' the sixth o' December an' ran intae a succession o' heavy easterly gales. We made twenty west four days ago, when it sterted in tae blow worse'n ever frae the east'ard and an awful sea made up. Th' Captain didny dare steam her in th' face o' sich a wind an' sea, so he keppit her heid to it and turning over jist enough to give her steerage-way. Yer husband, madam, was a wonderful sailor and he handled that *Sarmania* beautifully, and mind ye, she's a shup that needs carefu' handlin'—bein' a long, deep shup wi' no much beam. As I was sayin', we kep' her bows-on to it waitin' for a let-up, and at fower in th' mornin' I had jist cam' doon aff the bridge tae go tae ma room. The Captun, yer husband, was up on the bridge wi' th' second mate, Mister Murphy, and a quarter-master in th' wheel-hoose, when she shipped a nasty sea what carried away a ventilator on the fore-deck. The bos'n and three men were pluggin' th' place when the shup fell down in a reg'lar hole, they tell me. Ah was jist in ma room, at th' time, and I could feel th' shup slidin' doon jist as if th' sea had droppit from under her bottom. Ah rin tae the door o' the alley-way and looks oot tae see a tremendous comber pilin' up ahead. It was a terrifyin' sea, that yin, madam, and I never saw anither like it in a' ma sea-farin'! Then it must ha' hit th' shup, for she staggered somethin' awfu' and I couldny hear nought for a meenut or twa but the crashin' and the roarin' of it. Ah laid on ma back in the alley-way in water and I thocht th' *Sarmania* was done for an' goin' to the bottom. Then I pickit masel' up an' went oot on deck and I found th' whole bridge and wheel-house gone, the funnel, hauf o' the ventilators and a' th' boats. She was stripped to bare decks and stanchions, madam, but worst of all, madam, yer husband was gone! Aye, him an' the second mate, and the quartermaster at the wheel, and th' bos'n and fower men. Eight gone, madam, and fower sae badly mashed up that I doot if they'll leeve!" McLeish paused and blew his nose violently. "That's a' there is tae tell, madam," he murmured. "Ah'm awfu' sorry—awfu'—sorry!" He repeated the words in a daze like a man tired out.

Captain McGillivray arose to his feet. "Mrs. McKenzie," he said quietly, "we'll no keep ye from yer sorrow. Ye've had a terrible blow, but that's what comes tae sailors' wives at times. The Loard giveth and the Loard taketh away. Blessed is the name of the Loard. May He give ye comfort and strength in yer sair affliction!"

"Amen tae that!" murmured McLeish, and the two men took their leave.

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Janet was left with nothing. Alec had never taken out insurance of any kind, and both husband and wife had lived up to every cent of income. There were many bills to be paid—caterer's bills; dressmaker's bills—useless debts, most of them, and the furniture of Kensington Villa had to be sold to pay them. Aye, Janet was suffering and paying the price of folly, and the double load of sorrow and recrimination was all that she could bear.

The huge tidal wave that swept McKenzie and his men to their graves in the chilly depths of the Atlantic did more than that. It swept the McKenzies from comparative affluence into stark poverty. It also cleared from Janet's eyes the scales of false pride, and she was not too proud to go down and mourn with poor McGlashan's widow ere she left Glasgow and her fair-weather friends.

The bos'n's wife would get along. An older son was out earning a little, and Joak would have to do his bit also. Aye, she would manage. She had a few pounds laid by and wouldn't starve. Poor Joak was "greeting" when Donald bade him "Good-bye." "I'll meet you again some day, Joak," he said, "and I'll write you, never fear!"

The management of Sutton's had sent a cautiously-worded letter of regret, and took the liberty of "enclosing



our check for fifty pounds, which no doubt would be useful." They presumed, with the good salary that Captain McKenzie had enjoyed, that Mrs. McKenzie would have prepared for possible contingencies, and that she would be comfortable.

The fifty pounds represented Janet's sole capital after all debts had been paid, and with this in her purse and a few boxes and trunks of personal clothing, she and Donald vanished from the ken of the aristocratic denizens of Maxwell Park. The tired-looking, dull-eyed woman in deep mourning who left the suburb that cold January morning, had but little resemblance to the haughty and conceited *Jeanette* McKenzie of a month before. Janet had commenced to learn a new lesson—a lesson which is oft intoned in cold Scotch kirks, "Beware of sinful pride! The pride of thine heart has deceived thee and though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord!" Aye, better the sight of eyes that see humbly than the blindness of vanity and desire!

Mother and son landed in a sea-port town not fifty miles from Glasgow and Janet rented a small furnished house in a modest street. The neighbors wondered who the "stylish lookin'" newcomers were, yet they evinced no great surprise when a printed placard was hung up in the front window with the legend, "Furnished Lodgings." Buchan Road gossip sized the matter up in a few words. "Weedah-wumman left sudden-like an' naethin' pit by!" Such incidents were common in that locality.

And thus they lived for a space. The mother relapsed to the honest toil of her former days and just "managed" and no more to make ends meet, and Donald earned a few shillings per week as boy in the office of a local ship-yard. Both worked hard and were happy, and life went along uneventfully for two years.

Then came Mrs. McKenzie's decision. Donald was not getting ahead in the shipyard office. The boy was restless and found it hard to apply himself to ledgers and journals. He had no liking for a clerical life, and he was reaching the age where he did not know what he wanted to do. Mrs. McKenzie had her secret ambition to see her son an architect, but in her present circumstances she couldn't afford it. There was one source of possible assistance she had never appealed to. She would try it right away.

On a drizzling spring day, the mother, still comely and dressed in black, accompanied by Donald—a bit taller, perhaps, but unchanged in features, and clad in carefully brushed clothes and with a clean white collar on and shining black boots—stopped in front of an office building in Bothwell Street, Glasgow. A brass plate bore the legend they sought—"D. McKenzie & Co., Ship Owners & Ship Brokers."

Entering a rather gloomy office they waited at a counter until a lanky clerk of undeterminable age unlimbered himself from a high stool and brusquely asked, "What can we do for ye?"

"I want to see Mr. McKenzie, if he is in."

"He's in," grunted the clerk. "Have ye a kerd? And what's yer business with him?"

"Purely private and personal," replied Janet, producing a visiting card—relic of better days.

The clerk scanned the name and became obsequious. "Wait a minute, ma'am," he said, and he took the card into a private room. He seemed to be gone a long time—long enough for Donald to scan his uncle's office and its contents. There were several pictures of ships on the wall, a few maps, and insurance calendars. Numerous old-fashioned desks and cupboards littered the place, while an old-maidish female clerk sat at a window writing in a large book, and a bent-backed, grey-haired man was copying letters in a press. Everything in the establishment, material and human, seemed to be old and dried-up and mean looking. The windows were grimy, and even the driving spring rain failed to make them clearer. Donald figured that the grime was on the inside.

The boy's attention was centered on a picture of a large iron barque on the wall in front of him. It was a big ship—heavily sparred—and it was riding along with all sail set over a sea like corrugated iron. Painted on the frame was the legend, "Barque *Dunsany*, D. McKenzie & Co., Glasgow, Owners." Donald was studying the painting, when the lanky clerk issued from the sound-proof inner chamber. Addressing Mrs. McKenzie, he said, almost insolently, "Mr. McKenzie cannot see you!"

Janet colored. "Why?" she asked calmly.

"He gave no reasons, ma'am," said the clerk. "Simply said he didny want to see you on any matter or any excuse."

The mother went white. Her mission had failed and she was too proud to plead. "Come, Donald," she said. "We'll go!"

They had hardly reached the stairs before the clerk caught up to them. "Mr. McKenzie has changed his mind," he exclaimed. "He will see you if ye'll come back with me."

A minute later they were ushered into the private office and stood facing the man—Alec's brother—who in bitterness and unreasonable pride had kept himself aloof from them for eighteen years.

He was seated before a large table littered with papers and books—a hard-visaged, stiff-mouthed man, pallid-faced and stern-looking. His thin hair straggled over his forehead, unkempt, and he sat back in his chair with his head hunched into his collar, his clean-shaven chin sunk into his chest, and regarded the McKenzies through steel-rimmed spectacles with searching, unfriendly eyes.

There were two chairs in the office and he indicated one with his hand. "Sit doon, madam!" he said in a harsh voice. "The boy can stand!" And he glanced sternly at his brother's son.

Donald stood up with his hat in his hand and stared at his uncle with feelings of resentment and dislike bubbling within him. It was difficult for him to believe that this hard-faced ship-broker and his laughing,

rollicking, blue-eyed daddy were of the same blood and born of the same mother.

McKenzie spoke and his voice burred with Scottish accent and grated like a saw on iron. "What d'ye want me to do for ye, madam? Ye've come to me wanting something, or I've missed my guess!"

Donald could notice a look as of pain cross his mother's face as she nervously twisted her black-gloved fingers. She looked old that morning. "I've come to see if you can do anything to help Donald—my boy here," she said, a trifle nervously.

"In what way?" rasped the ship-broker.

"Well, sir," continued Mrs. McKenzie, "he has a natural talent for drawing, and it was Alec's wish that Donald become an architect, and it was our intention to put him through College, but, as you know, my husband went"—here she faltered—"and—and—I—I was unable to give him the schooling necessary. I—I thought, that, maybe for Alec's sake, you would help Donald in some way and put him through school for an architectural training."

David McKenzie listened unemotionally. "Humph!" he grunted, then with his searching eyes on Janet, he enquired in the manner of a prosecutor:

"Did you save no money from my brother's salary? I understand he was gettin' big money from Sutton's—four hundred pounds a year as master—for a considerable time before he was drowned."

Mrs. McKenzie winced. "I saved nothing," she murmured.

"So!" The prosecutor's voice grated on. "Ye were penniless when Alec went? Aye! Ye spent what he earned like watter. Ye lived in a villa and in a style fitted for people with an income twice what Alec was gettin'. I ken all about it, for I made enquiries. And noo ye're keepin' a lodgin'-hoose and comin' tae me tae help pit yer son through tae become an architect." He paused and leaned further back in his chair. "Why should I be asked to do this?"

"Why?" Mrs. McKenzie repeated the word dazedly. "Why? Well, I thought as you were Alec's brother you'd be glad to do something for his son!"

"So!" Donald stood inwardly furious at the manner in which this dead-souled man was tongue-lashing his mother. "So! The lesson ye have learned—or ought to have learned—hasny driven the high-falutin' notions oot yer head! Ye think because the lad can draw a bit that he should be an architect. It's a wonder tae me ye didny want him tae be an artist and ask me tae send him tae Paris!" McKenzie's eyebrows elevated sarcastically and he continued. "Madam! Your coming to me for such a thing is jist as big a piece o' presumption as if the mother of yin of those pavement-artists came tae me on the same mission! Neither you nor yer son have any more claim upon my charity than they would have! If he could write poetry, ye'd want me to help him be a poet, I s'pose? Now, look here, madam!" He tapped the table with a pencil. "You're in no position to have such notions! It was your high-and-mighty ideas that placed ye in the way ye are to-day! If your boy is clever at drawing, pit him tae work with a hoose painter or a sign painter. Let him get tae work. He's auld enough!" Then almost fiercely to Donald. "How old are ye, boy?"

"Fifteen last October, sir!" answered the boy calmly.

"Old enough tae go to sea!" growled David McKenzie. "Would ye go to sea, boy, after what happened to yer father?"

"I would," answered Donald wonderingly, "if I knew that mother was provided for."

Mrs. McKenzie interposed. "I wouldn't allow him to go to sea!"

The other took no notice, but reached for a pad of paper. "Give me yer address," he grated. "I'll see what I can do for ye, but, I'll say this, that I'll not be makin' an architect oot of that boy there. You may go!"

He neither rose from his seat or made any offer to shake hands. Mrs. McKenzie hesitated for a moment at the door of the room, but David was absorbed in some letters and did not look up. "Thank you! Good day!" she said dully, and Donald echoed, "Good day, sir!" He took no notice, but when they left, he jumped up and locked his office door and sat for a long time staring out of the grimy window—oblivious to respectful taps on the closed panels. From a scrutiny of the grey sky, he turned and stared fixedly at a small photograph on his desk—a picture of a young boy—and the stern look faded from his face. It was his own son. For a minute he gazed on the picture with eyes in which a strange light of almost idolatrous affection glowed, then he turned and picked up Mrs. McKenzie's card and the bitter, sneering expression returned as he murmured, "*Aye! I'll look after her brat!*"

The McKenzies were out on the street again when Donald clasped his mother's hand. "The old beast!" he said. "How I hate him!" The mother made no answer. She had only been with David for five or ten minutes, but in that time he had wounded her to the soul and she felt that all that he said was true.

They went home and tried to forget the memory of that hateful interview, but a week later came a letter from David McKenzie.

"Dear Madam:"—it ran—"I have considered your case carefully. I will give your boy the benefit of a free apprenticeship on a new vessel which will be ready for sea in a month or two. For yourself, I am enclosing a letter to the manager of the Ross Bay Hydropathic, Ross Bay, Ayrshire, and if you will present this to him on May 1st, he will give you a position there as assistant matron. Yours truly, David McKenzie." There was a postscript which ran:—"I will advise you when your boy should report here at my office. I will provide him with the outfit necessary. D. McK."

Janet read the curt offer and for a moment she stared into space. "Donald to go to sea! The sea that had torn her husband—his father—ruthlessly from her! And poor Joak's father too! The sea that yearly made widows of so many Glasgow wives..." She remembered her dead husband's words, "The sea would kill you, laddie ... and it's a dog's life at the best of times!" She threw the letter down on the table. No! she wouldn't accept David's offer. It was the cruelest blow he had yet dealt her. She would manage somehow, but she'd keep Donald by her.

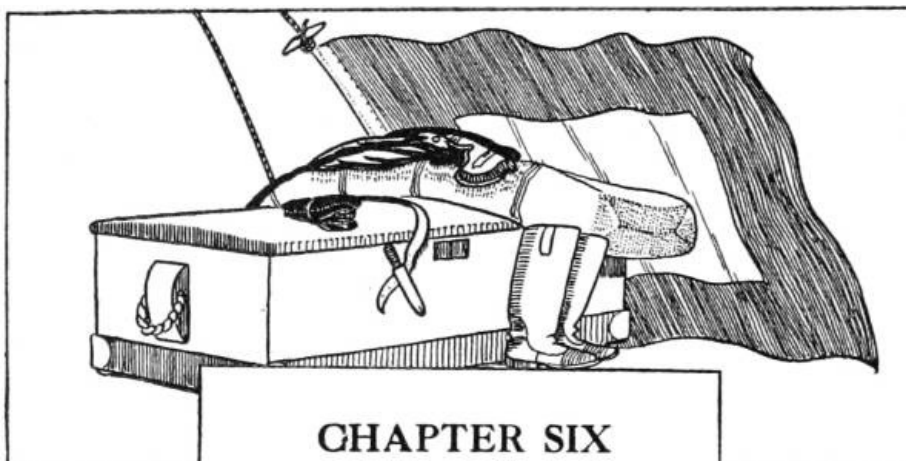
"What does he say, mamma?" Donald picked up the letter and read it. The mother stared at him as he read and she noticed the look in his eyes with an unknown fear gripping her heart. Ere he had laid the missive down she knew what was in his mind.

"Mother, dear," he said, slipping his arm around her neck, "I want to go!"

For a moment she remained silent and her mind ran back to a day two years ago. McLeish, mate of the *Sarmania* was talking. "It was a terrifyin' sea, that yin, madam ... and when I pickit masel' up ... I found the whole bridge and wheelhouse gone ... and worst of all, madam, yer husband was gone! Aye, him an' th' second mate, an' th' quarter-master, the bos'n an' fower men ... an' fower sae badly mashed up that I doot if they'll leeve! And that's all there is tae tell, madam!" She shuddered at the horrible memory of it. The frightful wall of grey-green sea rising up, curling and roaring. The terrible crash as it engulfed the ship, and the bare wet decks, twisted iron work and debris which remained. The others—the human victims—were carried away in the maw of the monster—whipped from life into death with a suddenness which was staggering. "No! no! no!" she cried, clasping her son to her in a frenzy of fear. "You shan't go! He shan't send you!" But in spite of her objections, she knew that the irresistible lure of the sea would take her son from her and that the ties of love and home were powerless against the magic of its adventure and romance.

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## CHAPTER SIX



**I**N a month's time, Donald received a curt note from his uncle to come to Glasgow and to be at the office at "nine sharp." He entered the gloomy chambers at ten minutes to the appointed hour and stood waiting outside the counter. At nine, David McKenzie entered the office and Donald greeted him with a respectful "Good morning, sir!" The uncle turned and glared at him through his glasses. "Oh, ye're here, are ye?" he rasped. "Jist wait in the office here until I want ye!" Then he entered his own private room and left his nephew cooling his heels until nigh twelve o'clock. By that time Donald had scrutinized every article in the dingy office and had surmised the characters of the old maidish clerk at the window, the grey-headed bookkeeper, and the lanky youth, perched like the gods on Olympus, on the long stool. People occasionally came in with papers—bills of lading and so on—and once or twice, shawled women entered and asked if there was any word of the *Dunlevin*. The *Dunlevin* was evidently one of his uncle's ships, thought Donald, and he wondered what would be the name of the ship he would go to sea in.

At noon, a stocky man dressed in rough woollen serge entered. He appeared about fifty-five years of age and wore a square-topped bowler hat and heavy black boots, and had a face as red and as round as a harvest moon. He turned and glanced at Donald as he laid an umbrella on the counter, and the lad saw that he was clean-shaven save for a fringe of whisker under the chin. He had a bulbous red nose and small blue eyes—hard, mean-looking eyes, Donald thought—and his red face was pitted with the marks of small-pox. In a quiet tone—Donald expected a husky roar—he asked the lanky clerk "if Mister McKenzie could see him noo?"

"He's expectin' you, Captun," said the clerk, and he vanished into the private room.

A few moments later, the Captain entered the sacred precincts, and after a while David McKenzie appeared at the door and cried, "Come in here, boy!"

Donald entered the private office and found the red-faced man seated in a chair with his umbrella between his knees and a pair of ham-like fists clasping the handle of it.

"This is the lad I was speaking about, Captain," said the ship-owner in his grating voice. Turning to Donald, he said, "Boy, this is Captain Muirhead, master of oor new ship, the *Kelvinhaugh*. As you will be going to sea in that ship wi' Captain Muirhead, it's no too early for ye to get acquainted." Donald stepped forward and shook hands with the Captain, who smiled and murmured something about, "Gled tae have ye come with me, mister. Hope we'll get along." Donald thought he would like Captain Muirhead, but he mistrusted those piggish blue eyes of his.

"Now," said his uncle, seating himself at the table, "we'll fix up this indenture business an' th' Captain will take ye along to an outfitter's shop and get ye a kit. Ye'll get doon aboard the ship next Monday mornin' at five o'clock—no six o'clock or sevin o'clock—but five sharp, and if ye pay attention to your work and do your duty, ye'll have a chance tae become master of a ship yersel' some day. Now, ye can sign yer name to these indentures."

The business of signing the apprentice seaman's indentures was soon completed and Donald voluntarily bound himself apprentice unto David McKenzie & Co., and signed his name to "faithfully serve his said master and obey his and their lawful commands ... and said apprentice will not, during the service of four years, embezzle or waste the goods of his master; nor absent himself without leave; nor frequent taverns or alehouses; nor play unlawful games, etc., etc. Whereof the said master hereby covenants with the said apprentice to teach the said apprentice the business of a seaman and provide the said apprentice with sufficient meat, drink, lodging, washing, medicine and medical or surgical assistance." Donald saw these paragraphs and noted them vaguely as he inscribed his name to the document prescribed for the purpose by the British Board of Trade. Then in company with Captain Muirhead, he went to an outfitters on Jamaica street and procured a sea kit.

It was a poor lot of truck that his Uncle David was purchasing for him, and the Captain evidently had instructions to keep the cost down to a certain figure. A mattress—a common jute bag stuffed with straw—and a blanket of thin shoddy came first. Then Donald was measured for a cheap blue serge uniform. A peaked uniform cap, with the "Dun Line" house-flag on the badge; a suit of two-piece oilskins, a pair of leather sea-boots, a sou'wester, two suits of dungarees, two woollen jerseys, some underwear and socks, towels, soap, matches, knife, fork, spoon, an enamel mug and a deep plate practically completed the outfit which was hove into a cheap pine chest with rope handles. The Jew salesman threw in a belt and a sheath-knife "as a present," and the Captain said to Donald, "Ye've got a rig there fit to go 'round the Horn, mister, and a sight better'n I had when I first went to sea!"

The cheap junk which constituted an outfit and which was packed in Donald's chest, appeared quite all right to him and he was delighted with every article. He longed for the day when he could don the brass-buttoned blue suit and wear the badged cap of an apprentice seaman. He pictured himself swaggering ashore in foreign ports, with the cap set back on his head—in the manner approved of by 'prentices—and with the chin strap over the crown. "Ye'll get yer suit in two days, sir!" said the tailor. "Will you call, or will I send your kit?" As Donald wasn't sure if he would be in the city, he said that he would call.

Before taking a train for home, he asked some questions of the uncommunicative Captain Muirhead, and found out that the *Kelvinhaugh* was a brand-new four-mast barque of about 2,500 tons, and that she was loading railroad iron for Vancouver—a long round-the-Horn voyage. They would probably get a homeward cargo of grain from the West Coast, and then again they might charter to load lumber at Vancouver for Australia or South Africa—the Captain couldn't say. Vancouver! Australia! South Africa! thought Donald. What names to conjure with! How he would roll them off his tongue—easily and nonchalantly, as a sailor would. "Aye, I'm sailing to-morrow. 'Round the Horn to Vancouver, and then across the Pacific to Australia maybe. Be back in a year or eighteen months. So long!" As the train sped home, he sat in a corner of the third-class compartment and thought of the wonder and romance of it all. Running down the "Trades"; crossing the "Line" and doubling the stormy, storied Horn! That was the life for a red-blooded boy! And some of those future days he pictured himself pacing a liner's bridge—monarch of all he surveyed—and saying, as he had heard his father say: "My ship did this!" or "My ship carried them!" Oh, it was fine castle building, and he actually blessed his uncle for the chance he had given him and forgave his bitter words and brutal mannerisms.

Mrs. McKenzie did not share his enthusiasm. His jubilation at getting away to sea; his description of the ship, the voyage, his uniform and prospects for the future were like salt on an open wound, and she would listen mechanically to his chatter, but her mind was far away and her heart was full of bitterness. She would be alone—frightfully alone—and she would be afraid. Donald, her baby boy, out at sea in that ship with rough men and living a rough life! She had heard her husband talk of his sailing-ship days and she remembered his worst experiences.

Could Donald stand such a life? She was afraid, and she felt that her boy was going on a journey the outcome of which she was unable to forecast.

Sailing day came on winged feet and mother and son journeyed to Glasgow on the Sunday morning. They strolled through the Kelvingrove Park on the bright Sabbath afternoon, just as they used to stroll when Captain McKenzie was home and they were all together, and the recollection of those happy days made the mother feel that life was dealing harshly with her. But, whatever her feelings were, she hid them for Donald's sake and under a smiling mask concealed the anguish which was gnawing at her heart. What a brave little chap he looked in his badged cap and brass-buttoned uniform! There was a flush on his cheek and a glow in his eyes that she had never seen before. Aye! the magic of the great waters was calling to one bewitched and whose sole acquaintance with the sea was in the sight of the ships, the talk of sailormen, and through the Viking strain in the British blood!

They had tea together and went to church in the evening. Strangely enough the preacher chose as his text, "The Sea is His!" and his discourse went direct to the mother's heart. In all that great church there was only one to whom his slowly intoned words had a significant meaning. "The Sea is His! He made it!" the preacher said—his utterance rich with homely Doric. "Never the man born of woman throughout the ages of earth could arrest its tides or command its resistless waves. Ships traverse its wastes, but make their voyagings only through His sufferance—a momentary loosing of His hurricanes and they could be blotted out as utterly as though they never existed. It is irresistible in its fearful power, and in a mere minute of time the most marvellously wonderful, and the mightiest creations of our human handiwork can be swept into utter oblivion, with never a trace of where stone stood upon stone, or iron riveted to iron. It can be neither pathed or bridged, harnessed or commanded, and all the skill and ingenuity of man has failed, and will ever fail, to share with God the proud boast that the sea is subject to any bidding but His. Only He who walked on Galilee could order, 'Peace! be still!' and have His mandate obeyed. The sea is His, my brethren, and those who traverse verse its unmarked paths would do well to sail with God in their hearts, for it is only God who can save and protect them in their journeyings o'er its vast and restless expanse!"

The congregation knew the truth of the preacher's words. They were ship-builders, many of them, and they wrought in the yards that made the old Clyde-side city famous. They knew what the sea called for in the structures which they framed and plated and rigged; they knew what the sea could do to iron and steel stanchion, frame, beam and plate. Many a twisted wreck had come to their hands to be straightened, untwisted, flattened out and replaced. "Goad, aye! we ken its handiwork!" they muttered. In their cold Scotch perception, this was the manner in which they comprehended the power of Him who calmed Galilee.

Mother and son sat up talking late into the night. It was the mother's hours and she used them as a mother would with a son who was leaving her for a space of months, and maybe, years. She told of old remedies for this ail and that ill. She gave him motherly cautions regarding wet feet, damp bedding and draughts. She gave him a little ditty-bag well furnished with needles, cottons, threads, darning wool, buttons and such like, and her last and greatest gift was a small Bible. They were holy hours, and they sat and talked until her regard for his sleep caused her to send him reluctantly to bed. She came to him then and tucked him in and kissed him as she always did, and when she went away, her tears wetted his cheek. He tried, as boys do, to carry it off "big," but when she left him he cried, too, as many a brave man has cried in similar partings since the world was young.

He awoke at four next morning to find his mother beside his bed. She had never closed her eyes, but now she was smiling. She wasn't going to send him to sea with tears and heart-burnings to pain his recollections of parting. He dressed hurriedly, gulped the tea and toast she had procured for him, and sat awaiting the cab which was to take him down to his ship. His sea-chest was packed and ready, and the mother had gone through it and replaced to the best of her ability some of the shoddy gear which she knew would never stand sea-faring.

They heard the rattle of the wheels and hoofs on the stony street. The mother clasped her son in a close embrace. "Don't you worry about me, dear," she said. "I shall go to the Hydropathic and I will be quite comfortable there. Be a good boy and take care of yourself. God bless you and keep you, dear, and may your dear father watch over you!"

The cab-man came up into the room and the wet streamed off his clothes. "Dirrty mornin', ma'am," he said huskily. "Ah'll jist hond this box doon." And he shouldered the sea-chest and led the way.

The boy entered the cab and drove away, and Mrs. McKenzie stood in the rain at the door and watched it vanish just as she had watched, many times, the departures of her husband. "He's gone! he's gone!" she murmured dully, and only turned to enter the house when the woman who kept it led her away with a "Cheer up, mum! He'll be back, never fear! Come and hae a cup o' tea. It's guid med'cine fur a sair heart!"

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## CHAPTER SEVEN



## CHAPTER SEVEN

**T**HE *Kelvinhaugh* was lying in the Queen's Dock and the cab rattled down the silent streets which glistened wet in the glow of the gas-lamps. It was a typical Glasgow morning—dark, cheerless and with a cold drizzle descending from the brooding skies. They passed men—hands in pockets and shoulders hunched—hurrying through the rain to their “wurrk.” Dock policemen loafed under the eaves of the sheds, standing like statues with their oilskin capes reflecting the vagrant flickering of near-by gas jets. It was a ghastly morning to be going to sea, and Donald's spirits were at a very low ebb. There was very little romance in this sort of thing.

The clatter of hoofs stopped and the cabman hailed a passer-by. “Hey, you! Whaur's th' *Kelvinhaugh* lyin'?”

“Twa berths doon!” came the answer. The hoofs and wheels clattered again and ceased a minute later. The Jehu came down from his “dickey.” “Yer shup's lyin' here, mister,” he said. “Ah'll kerry yer box an' gear tae th' gang-way.”

Donald followed him through a cargo shed, dark and dismal in its emptiness. Some sparrows were quarrelling up in the rafters and two pigeons picked vagrant ears of corn from the bare stone floors. Over at an open quayside door, a knot of people were standing, and through the opening one got a glance of the gleaming wet mast of a ship and vertical parallels of new manilla cordage. To this door the cabman shouldered Donald's sea-chest and bed gear and tumbled it down at the shore end of a narrow gang-way. “Ah'll hae tae leave ye here, mister,” he said huskily. “Ah canny trust ma hoarse tae staund verra long.... Aye! that'll be two shullin' for you, sir! Thankye, mister, and a pleasant voyage tae ye!”

The people around the gang-way turned and stared at the boy. There were several shawled women among them, evidently seeing their men off, and some of the men appeared to be very drunk. As Donald pushed through them to get to the gang-way, a man laughed and said, “Make way fur th' binnacle-boy!” Some of the women laughed also in a manner which testified to the brand of “tea” they had been imbibing that morning.

The gang-way was laid on the ship's rail and opposite the half-deck, in the door of which a young fellow was standing looking at the dock. Donald addressed him. “Will you give me a hand to get my chest and bedding aboard?” The other growled an “Alright!” and came ashore. He was a youth of about twenty—a big fellow with pleasant features—but he had a glum look in his eyes, and there was a downward droop to his mouth. He followed Donald and roughly elbowed a passage through the group at the gang-way end. One of the shawled women blocked his way with a challenging look on her coarse face, but the youth shouldered her aside ruthlessly, saying, “Out of my way, you—!” Donald was shocked at such treatment of a woman, but he was shocked still more by the oath-besprinkled retort which came from the aggrieved one's lips.

Both lugged the chest up the gang-way, while the lady of the shawl spoke her mind. “Ye lousy pair o' brass-bound poop ornaments!” she shrieked. “Ah'd like tae gie ye a scud on yer bloody jaws, ye blankety blank—!” One of the drunks beside her whipped his wet cap off his cropped skull and gave the virago a resounding slap across the mouth with it. “Haud yer tongue, ye gabby—!” he growled, but he got no further. With a wild shriek, she turned on him. Off went the shawl, and a fiend of a woman, with tousled hair flying and practically naked above the waist, dug her nails into cropped-head's ugly face and scraped him from hair to chin. The two of them set-to in earnest—swearing, clawing, punching and kicking like a pair of wild-cats—and the others looked on without attempting to interfere.

Heavy footsteps came padding up the shed. “Chuck it! Here's the polis!” cried someone, and a stalwart Highland policeman grasped the combatants and swung them apart. “Lemme get at him!” howled the woman—a shocking sight in her *deshabille*, but the policeman had her by the arm and held her off in a mighty grip. “Is that your shup?” he asked the man. “Aye, Ah'm sailin' in her!” growled the fellow, wiping the mud and blood off his ugly face. The officer of the law released the woman and marched the man up the gang-plank. At the rail of the ship he roared, “Hey! tak' this fella aboard an' lock him up!” And he swung him down on the barque's main-deck with no gentle hand. Someone took the man and stowed him away.

Donald had seen his chest stowed inside the half-deck and had watched the rumpus on the dock. “Isn't that awful?” he said, utterly shocked. The glum-looking youth grunted. “That's nothing! You'll see worse'n that some day!” Then the glum look faded somewhat and he regarded Donald curiously. “You're a new chap?” he enquired. “First voyage, eh?”

Donald nodded. “What's your name?” enquired the other.

"Donald McKenzie."

"Mine's Jack Thompson." Both boys shook hands. Donald felt that he would like Thompson. They sat down at a small mess-table and talked. Thompson had been at sea three and a half years. He had six months of his time to serve and hoped to go up for his second mate's ticket by the time the *Kelvinhaugh* made a home port—"if she ever makes a home port," he added gloomily.

"Why?" asked Donald. He had glanced around the ship and she seemed to be a splendid vessel. Everything was brand-new and shining. "She seems a fine ship!"

"Fine hell!" growled the other disgustedly. "She's nothing but a big steel tank and a cheap one at that! A great big lumbering, clumsy, four-posted box, built by the mile and cut off by the yard, that'll give us merry blazes when we get outside. I can see what's before us. She'll be dirty, wet, and a bloody work-house from 'way-back. That's what she'll be. If I had of seen her before yesterday, I'd have skipped—'pon my soul I would!"

Donald was not unacquainted with the idiosyncrasies of sailors, so he put Thompson's pessimism down to a sailing-day grouch. They talked a while and Donald learned that there would be two other apprentices who would join the ship at Greenock—a port at the mouth of the Clyde. These lads, together with Thompson and Captain Muirhead, had been together on the barque *Dunottar*, but this ship had been run into and sunk in the Irish Channel a few months back. The "Dun Line" people had bought the *Kelvinhaugh* on the stocks to take the lost vessel's place in a charter for carrying railroad iron out to the Pacific Coast for one of the Canadian railways. There had been four apprentices on the *Dunottar*, but one of them was drowned when the ship went down. "A first voyager, too," said Thompson, "but the ruddy young fool went back to save some of his gear and got caught!"

"What kind of a man is Captain Muirhead?" enquired Donald.

"From what I've seen of him," replied the other bluntly, "I don't like him much. He was only on the *Dunottar* the voyage she went to the bottom, and as she slid for Davy's Locker four days after leaving port we didn't get time to get acquainted. He's a mean josser and a bad-tempered one too. But what can you expect in one of these ships? McKenzie only pays his skippers twelve pounds a month. Good men wouldn't go to sea in them for that." Staring curiously at Donald, he asked, "Your name is McKenzie. Are you any relation to the owner of these hookers?"

"Yes," replied the other. "He's my uncle."

Thompson whistled and said aggressively, "Well, you can tell your uncle next time you write to him that he's a lousy, miserable swine and that his ships are the worst-fed, worst-rigged, rottenest, under-manned hookers afloat! Wouldn't I jolly well like to have him aboard one rounding Cape Stiff! He'd get a belly-full of it—the blasted two-ends-and-the-bight of a skin-tight Glasgow miser!"

Donald was not surprised at this freely-expressed opinion of his uncle, but he quickly disabused Thompson's mind of any intention of writing him. "My uncle isn't in love with me, and probably doesn't care two pins about me!" he said shortly.

Thompson laughed. "Oh, well," he said, "we're in for it now, and we've got to stick it out. Now, sonny, I'm going to give you some tips. First of all, I'm top-dog in this half-deck. I'm the senior apprentice and what I say goes—in here. Remember that!" Donald nodded. "Now," continued the other, "you seem a nice little chap, so I'll take you in hand. You take this upper bunk here and chuck your bed-sack and blanket into it. These upper bunks are the best when the water is sloshing in here a foot-and-half deep. Don't you give that bunk up on any pretence. The others will have to take the lowers, whether they like it or not. Serve 'em right for being 'last-minute-men' and not joining the ship here." Donald hove his bedgear into the bunk. Thompson glanced at the stuff and felt the blanket. "Where did you get that junk? Your uncle fitted you out, ye say? God help ye! It has his trademark—a Parish Rig, a donkey's breakfast and a bull-wool and oakum blanket! I can see he don't love ye! Now, son, get those brass-bound rags off and get into your working clothes. You'll have to turn-to in a minute or so. We're waiting for the tugs and the Old Man."

While Donald was changing his clothes the door opened and a tall man about thirty years of age and clad in an oilskin coat and with a badged cap on his head peered inside. He had a clean-cut face, an aquiline nose, piercing grey eyes, a flowing reddish mustache, and he was smoking a cigarette.

"Get ready, naow!" he said in a nasal drawl which bespoke his nationality as American. "I'll want ye in a minute or so."

Thompson looked up from the chest he was unpacking. "Yes, sir, we'll be ready, sir. And, Mr. Nickerson, sir, it's a dirty morning. Would you care for a nip, sir!"

The other swung his sea-booted feet over the washboard, entered, and closed the door. "Produce th' med'cine young feller," he drawled. "The Old Man will be singin' out in a minute. Who the devil is this nipper?" He indicated Donald with a jerk of his head.

"The new apprentice, sir," answered Thompson. "Just joined. First voyager, sir."

The tall man fixed Donald with his gimlet eyes. "What's yer name, nation, an' future prospects? Donald McKenzie, eh? Scotch, I cal'late, an' goin' to be a sailor I reckon. Waal, let me tell ye, ye're a bloody fool an' ye'll know it before ye've bin a dog-watch at sea. I'm the mate of this bally-hoo of blazes, and my name's Judson Nickerson and I hail from Nova Scotia. When you address me you say 'Mister' and 'sir,' and when I address you, you jump, see?" He thrust forth a mighty fist and crushed Donald's hand in a vice-like clasp. "You be a good boy, obey orders an' look spry, and we'll get along fine. Skulk, sulk or hang back, and I'll

make you wish you'd never been born!"

Thompson brought forth a bottle of whisky from his chest and handed it to the mate, who tilted it to his lips and swallowed a noggin which caused Donald to stare in amaze. Mr. Nickerson noticed the boy's wide-opened eyes, and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, laughed. "Never seen a man drink, sonny?" he asked. "Cal'late afore ye've made a voyage or two—ef ye live it out—ye'll drink a bottle at a sitting." He swung outside again with a parting word to get ready.

Thompson took a swig at the bottle and put it back in the chest, saying, "I'm not going to give you a slug, nipper. You'll learn quick enough without me starting you off! Curse it! The only way to go to sea is half-drunk anyway."

There were numerous shouts out on deck and sea-booted feet clattered outside the half-deck door. The crew were being mustered. Mr. Nickerson could be heard singing out, "Look slippy, naow, you damned Paddy Wester! Get that gear away out o' that!" and "Bos'n! Bos'n! Where in hell is that ruddy bos'n? Aft there an' git that hawser on th' poop an' ready to pass daown to the tug!" Then came a kick at the half-deck door. "Turn out, naow, an' single them lines aft here!" "Aye, aye, sir!" cried Thompson, and he went out on deck followed by Donald.

The grey dawn was dimming the light of the gas-jets and the morning looked clammy and cold. A number of men were working around the barque's decks, and there was a crowd of people on the dock looking on. Up the poop ladder scrambled the two boys—Thompson leading—and they proceeded to the port bitts—there to wrestle with a snakey wire mooring hawser and drag it aboard through a quarter-chock. There was a light in the cabin and it shone up through the skylight. McKenzie thought it must be nice and warm and homey down below as he tugged on the cold, wet wire, grimy with coal-dust, and hard on his tender hands.

A big hulking fellow scrambled up the ladder and stood beside them. Donald glanced at him. He had straw-colored hair and a broad, ugly, clean-shaven face. "Vind dot blasted wire on der drum!" he growled at the sweating boys. "Vy der blazes don't you use your brains! Fetch der end oop here und vind her!" Thompson dragged the end of the wire to an iron drum and wound while Donald "lighted" the hawser along. "Who's that chap?" asked Donald, when the man had turned away.

"The ruddy Dutchman we have for a second greaser," replied Thompson with an oath. "Mister Otto Hinkel—a square-head from Hamburg—and a stinkin' 'yaw-for-yes' swine if there ever was one!"

Under the orders of the Nova Scotia mate, the two were kept busy at various tasks, and within an hour of the time he had come aboard, Donald began to be disillusioned. There was very little romance in what he had seen, heard or done so far. Toiling and sweating in the cold, wet and muck on the barque's decks, with drunken, fighting men falling foul of them, and cursed at by officers—themselves ill tempered and harassed—who seemed to be absolutely heartless and apparently ready to enforce orders with a blow or a kick, Donald began to recall his father's words, "It's a dog's life at the best of times!" The scenes on the wharf disgusted him, and during a "knock off" to gulp a mug of coffee in the half-deck, he witnessed another dock-side altercation between two "ladies" who both appeared to have a claim of some sort on a stolid Swede, who, drunk and hardly able to stand, stood looking stupidly on.

"Ay tell ju," screamed one of them, "he's my hosbond dot man is! His wages cooms to me!"

"Ye're a liar!" shouted the other, who was Scotch. "He merrit me two years ago! Ah hae ma merridge-lines tae prove it, which is a thing you havny got ye dirrty Dutch——" And she applied an epithet which implied that the lady in question had never received the benefit of clergy in lawful ratification. "Ah, ken ye, ya yalla-haired trollop! Ye hae a boat-load o' husbands! There's yin in ivery shup that gaes doon the Clyde——" And casting aside their shawls in the approved Broomielaw fashion, both went for one another in a scratching and hair-pulling contest of most disgusting savagery.

The big Highland dock-policeman sauntered up, and with a blasé expression on his ruddy face tried to separate the combatants. They, however, resented interference and attacked him. His helmet rolled off, to be slyly kicked into the dock by one of the onlookers who detested policemen, and the two women gave him a tough tussle. Grabbing the Swedish damsel, he shoved the Scottish maid on her back in the mud, and blew his whistle. Another policeman ran up. "Pit yer cuffs on that Moll lyin' doon an' bring the barra'," said the helmetless one. "We'll tak them baith to the offis!" The prostrate woman was evidently too drunk to rise, but kicked and struggled fiercely as the policeman snapped the handcuffs on her wrists. Then she lay in the mud with the rain pouring on her naked shoulders, weeping and cursing, while her opponent struggled in the officer's iron grip. In a few minutes the other policeman appeared with a long, coffin-like hand-cart on two wheels. The lady in the mud was hoisted into it, kicking and screaming, and effectually confined by means of two straps. With one officer pushing the hand-cart, and the other dragging the Scandinavian woman, the procession started up the shed, followed by the "boos" and groans of the spectators.

The man who was the cause of all the row suddenly seemed to wake up. Reaching around the back of his belt, he pulled out a sheath-knife, and shouting, "Ay kill dot feller!" staggered, brandishing the knife, after the policemen. Mr. Nickerson had been calmly watching the fracas from the poop, but when he saw the man moving off, he sprang from the poop rail to the dock, and in two or three long strides, reached the belligerent Swede. In less time than it takes to relate, he had knocked the fellow to the ground, and had twisted the knife out of his hand and sent it spinning along the stone floor of the shed. Then with a mighty heave, he jerked the man to his feet, rushed him up the gang-way, and then hove him from the height of the to'gallant rail to the deck. Leaping after the now thoroughly cowed sailor, the mate booted him into the fore-castle, and then, pensively pulling at his mustache, walked nonchalantly aft along the main-deck to the poop, utterly oblivious to the cries of "Bucko!" "Yankee bruiser!" "Come up here an' try yer fancy tricks an' we'll pit a heid on ye!" which came from the coterie on the quayside.



Donald was nauseated by the sights he had witnessed and the manner in which Mr. Nickerson had handled the Swedish sailor frightened him with its brutality. He could hear the heavy thud of the mate's boots as they were driven into the ribs and back of the man, and it sickened his sensitive soul.

"Ye're looking white about the gills, kid!" remarked Thompson sarcastically. "What's worrying ye?"

"Mister Nickerson—and that sailor!" mumbled Donald.

"Huh!" said the other coolly. "He handled him fine! That's the proper Yankee fashion, though I guess our Old Man wouldn't like to see the mate hustle them like that around the dock. Liable to get into trouble. This is a British ship and the authorities won't stand for manhandling if it can be proved."

It was broad daylight now and the two tugs were alongside. The Blue Peter was flying at the fore, and the Red Ensign from the jigger gaff. Captain Muirhead and the pilot appeared on the poop—the former in his square-topped bowler hat. Coming to the break of the poop, the skipper sung out to the mate, "All hands aboard, mister?"

"Two men short, sir!" answered the mate. "Shipping master says he'll try and locate them and send them daown to Greenock!"

The master grunted, "We'll no get them, that's sure. Weel, we hae tae get oot o' this. Staund-by fur lettin' go fore'n aft. Send a hond tae th' wheel!"

Mr. Nickerson motioned to Thompson. "Go'n take the wheel, you! I cal'late there ain't a sober man in th' fo'c'sle. An' you, nipper," he said to Donald, "jest stand-by under the break until I want ye. Ye're not much account yet awhile!"

The tow-boat whistled for the swing-bridge at the dock entrance to open, and slowly dragged the deep-laden barque away from the quay. As the single mooring lines were cast off, the onlookers gave a few "Hurrahs!" and the women and men yelled to the members of the crew. "Ta, ta, Joak! Bring me hame a parrot—yin that can talk!" "So long, Gus! Look outd for dot mate! He's a nigger-driver!" Mr. Nickerson was up on the fo'c'sle-head rousing his Jacks around, and he came in for a number of complimentary epithets. The cook lounged in the door of his galley and as they passed through the swing-bridge piers, he waved his apron at the crowd of workmen waiting to cross and shouted the time-honored outwardbounder's fare-ye-well, "Urray for the pier 'ead an' th' bloody stiy-at-'omes!"

"Ye may well say it, Slushy!" bawled a man on the pier. "For I'm thinkin' ye'll be payin' yer debts wi' th' foretopsail-sheet an' maybe the polis is lookin' for ye!" The shot evidently went home for cookie vanished.

Out through the dock walls went the barque, just as the shipyard whistles were blowing for eight o'clock, and with the stern tug straightening her out in the river channel, the ship responded to the pull of the hawser ahead and glided down to the sea.

Donald tramped up and down under the break of the poop keeping himself warm, and in one of his turns he espied a female figure, waving a handkerchief, standing near the Kelvinhaugh Ferry slip. He waved in return. It was his mother, and he leaned over the high rail and watched her until the rainy mist veiled them from each other. Then he turned inboard with a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes. He was feeling miserable, and oh, so lonely! Leaning his head against the rail he began to cry.

"Vot de hell is de matter mit you, boy?" cried a strident voice from above. Donald turned to see the German second mate looking down at him from the poop rail.

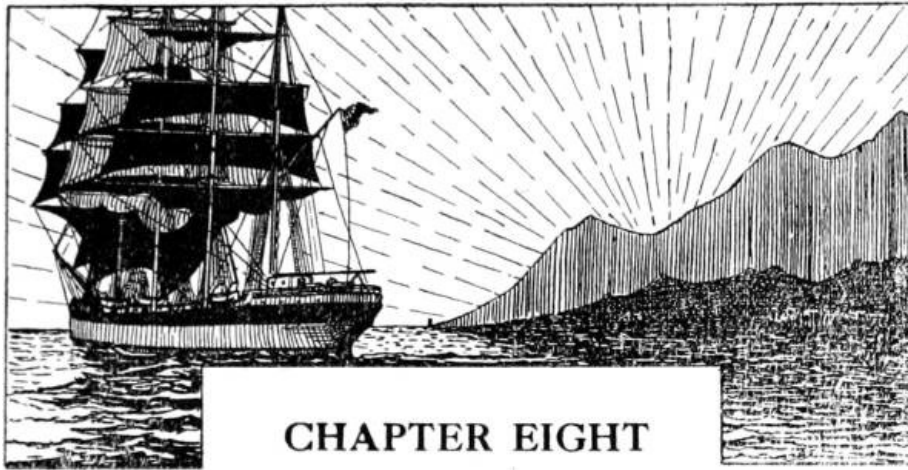
"Nothing, sir!"

"Den if nodings is de matter," growled the other, "you yust belay dot weepings or I gif you somedings to weep for! You go forrard dere und haul down dot Blue Peter und bring it aft here und be damned smartd aboutd it!"

Three hours a member of a ship's company and Donald was pretty well sick of it all. Nothing of the glory, adventure and romance of the sea and ships had yet unfolded itself to his eyes. No! all he had seen was sordid wharf-side bickerings, evil women and sodden men; dirty menial work and cruel words; autocratic authority, brutality and a scoffing callousness for fine feelings. He thought of these things as he coaxed the outward-bound bunting down and clear of the mazy web of rigging aloft, but with the sight of the sky and the soaring spars and the river gulls, came new heart and determination, and he murmured to himself, "Others have gone through it and came out all right. My daddy came through it all right, and so shall I!"

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## CHAPTER EIGHT



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**T**HE tug pulled the *Kelvinhaugh* to the Tail of the Bank and the barque dropped her anchor there. During the journey down the river the second mate kept Donald busy on odd jobs, and several times he was in close proximity to Captain Muirhead, but the latter never even greeted him by word or look. When the tug departed, the Captain eyed the sky, cloudy and overcast, and went below to his cabin. Hinkel also went below, after ordering Donald to sweep up the poop, and he was sweeping when Mr. Nickerson came aft.

"Waal, boy, what d'ye think of it all?" he enquired blithely. "Goin' to like it?"

"I'll like it after a while, sir," answered Donald with a smile. "When I get more used to the ship and the work."

The mate laughed and a saturnine smile came over his sharp features. "Which means you don't think a hell of a lot of it so far, eh? Waal, son, ye're dead right. It's a dog's life, and the man who goes to sea for a livin' nowadays 'ud go to hell for pleasure!" And after delivering the ancient deep sea proverb, he too turned and went below.

After sweeping up the poop, Donald went down to the half-deck and found Thompson having his dinner. "Come along, nipper!" he cried cheerfully. "What'll you have? Roast stuffed duckling with baked potatoes, string beans and brussels sprouts, jam roly-poly and coffee! How would that suit you?"

"That would suit me fine!" exclaimed Donald eagerly looking for evidences of such a menu.

"You bally well bet it would suit you!" laughed Thompson, "but there ain't no sich luck, as the Yankees say! Here's your chow! Dig in and curse your uncle!" As he spoke he pushed a large tin pan containing mushy potatoes and a fat, disgusting lump of pork, towards Donald. He also indicated a hook-pot and a small wooden half-pail. "There's the tea and coffee in the pot—it's coffee in the morning and tea at other times, but it's the same stuff—and there's hard bread in the barge there. Sink me! I don't know why I left a comfortable home to go knocking around in one of these mean Scotch ships!"

Donald helped himself to the food and made a meal of the worst viands he had ever swallowed in his life. "Is it always like this?" he asked, disgustedly pushing the mess-kit away from his sight.

"Always like this?" echoed Thompson in mock indignation. "Well, I'm blowed! Godfrey, nipper, you'll appreciate chow as good as that afore this trip's ended! Yes, siree! you'll learn to thank the good Lord for a penny herring and a slice o' white bread and a real potato yet. And you'll eat your fill o' rotten grub afore you hit the beach again, my son! Such ungratefulness, *Oliver Twist!*—damned if it ain't!"

Thompson would have continued in this strain for a while, but there came a tug at the half-deck door and two youths leaped in dragging bags and chests. "Hullo, Jack!" shouted both in unison. "Here we are again!" Both were dressed in apprentice's uniform and were chunky lads around sixteen years of age. "Who's the new chum, Jack?" queried one—a chubby, curly-haired chap with a pleasant smile and nice white teeth.

Thompson waved a lazy hand. "McKenzie, meet Jenkins and Moore. Jenkins has done one stretch, but Moore has only four days of his four years in. Jenkins here is a fat-head for sleep, while Moore is a young sailor but a damned old soldier and would sooner skulk than work. Now you know them!"

Jenkins laughed, but Moore scowled. He was a swarthy complexioned lad with a large ugly mouth and beady black eyes. Donald sized his two shipmates up quickly. Jenkins would be alright, but Moore would be quarrelsome. Two minutes later, his deductions were verified when both started to protest at having to take lower bunks. "I say, Thompson, old man," said Jenkins, "the nipper will have to turn out of that bunk—"

"No he won't," answered Thompson, calmly smoking away. "I told him to put his truck there and he'll stay there!"

"Oh, I say, dam'-it-all," expostulated Jenkins. Moore started to pull Donald's stuff out of the bunk. Donald jumped to his feet. "What the deuce are you doing with my things?" he cried calmly.

"I'm goin' to take this bunk," he growled. "If you or Jenkins want a punch in the jaw, I'll give it to you!"

Donald realized in a flash that his comfort in future absolutely depended upon himself—nobody else would help him here, so he gave Moore a blow on the mouth with all the power of his right fist. The Irish lad's beady eyes snapped savagely, and with the blood streaming from his cut lips, he went for Donald and the two mixed it up in a proper rough and tumble.

Thompson jumped from the seat and hauled Moore away. "You leave McKenzie and his bunk alone, you blighter, or I'll wipe the deck with you! You take that bunk there and be blamed glad to get it!" And he hove Moore down into the worst located of the two lowers.

Donald sat down panting with an eye which was rapidly discoloring. "I say, Jenkins," he said to the other apprentice, "I'm sorry to have done you out of a good bunk, but I'm game to toss you for it—" "No, you won't," laughed Jenkins. "It serves me right for not joining the ship in Glasgow. First come, first served. You keep the bunk, nipper. Let's have a drink!" He produced a bottle of whisky, and on Donald refusing to join in, they offered a drink to Moore, who sullenly accepted.

This whisky drinking by lads of sixteen and twenty rather shocked Donald, but he had scarcely been an hour in the company of the three before he heard enough to convince him that there wasn't much in the way of vice they didn't know. The drinking, swearing, and the recounting of vicious adventures and questionable stories caused Donald to wonder why such wickedness was not visited by instant retribution from Heaven. Blasphemy and the ribald use of the most sacred things seemed to roll from the tongues of his companions like water from a fountain.

Thompson had been applying himself to the bottle rather heavily and he was fast becoming "tight." He turned around to Donald, who was sitting on his chest listening to the talk. "Look at that poor l'il devil there!" he drawled thickly. "I like that l'il feller—he's such a pale-faced skinny l'il nipper. He c'd crawl through a ring-bolt, by Godfrey! Ne'mind, son! You've jus' got t' learn to drink a four-finger nip 'thout blinkin' or coughin', an' learn to spin nine hundred dirty yarns, an' swear to music, an' keep watch snoozin' between bells, an' you'll be a real dyed-in-the-wool shellback, with every finger a fishhook, and every hair a ropeyarn, an' blood of Stockholm tar!" Thompson rambled on. "His uncle owns this hooker. Th' lousy Scotch miser! But he don't love that kid, he don't. Sends him to sea in this ruddy coffin an' fits him out with a donkey's breakfast and a dog's wool blanket an' a kit ye could shoot peas through—"

A heavy tramp of sea-booted feet halted outside. Jenkins whipped the bottle away, as the broad ugly face of Mr. Hinkel appeared in the door. "Now, den, vot are you lazy defils loafin' avay your time in here for?" he rasped in his guttural brogue. "Gome oudt of dot und bear a hand to bend der flying yib und overhaul some of der gear aloft. Dam' rigger's snarls everywhere und dam' lazy boys loafin' und yarnin' und egsppecting Gottalmighty to do der vork!" He slammed the door and Jenkins extended a spread hand with a thumb to his nose, while Thompson cursed the second mate for a "beastly yumping yiminy Yudas Dutchman!"

The boys toiled and mucked all afternoon in the rain and bitter wind, and Donald crawled to his bunk at seven that evening aching in every limb and muscle and with his hands skinned and painful. For hours he tossed around listening to the snores of his ship-mates, and the sighing of the rain-laden wind in the gear aloft. It had been an eventful day, but a day in which his clean ideal of a sea-life had been rudely shattered. He was seeing it now in its naked, unvarnished, unromantic reality, and he was realizing that if he would hold his own he must protect his rights by physical force and steel himself to endure many hardships in soul and body; case-harden his finer feelings, and rigorously restrain all impulses of sympathy and the fine charity which can be exhibited ashore. His father was the embodiment of all that was good and honorable and kind, yet, no doubt, he was as unimpressonable and as callous as Thompson or even Mr. Nickerson, while roughing it in his early days at sea. He thought of Thompson and Jenkins. Both these lads were "straight" according to youthful ethics, but how rough and tough they were in their sea-life, yet, in their homes they were possibly, and probably, as fine, true and as honorable young fellows as those environed by gentler walks of life. Sea-ways were not shore-ways, and it did not take Donald long to find out that a sea-life would make of a man exactly what he himself desired. Youth was left very much to his own resources. There was no mother to caress or to correct in a ship's half-deck, and in the ruck of it all, with its disgusting familiarity, evil talk and callousness, the lad who had the instincts of a gentleman and a clean heart implanted in him, would come through it without being contaminated in mind or speech or diseased in body.

The *Kelvinhaugh* lay for three days at the Tail of the Bank getting ready for sea. Though a brand new ship and fresh from the riggers' yard, yet there was more to do in getting her ready than in a craft that had been under sailors' hands for a dozen voyages. Standing gear had to be screwed up again, running gear rove off through the right leads and a hundred and one small gadgets installed which riggers omit and sailors have to fit. In this work, Donald did his share and spent many hours aloft working with the other lads. There was a rare thrill in this climbing and toiling with good honest cordage up in the tops and on the yards—and he felt that clambering and swinging about on the barque's dizzy eminences savored of the real adventure of sea-faring. Like all boys, he could climb, and being free from giddiness, he thoroughly enjoyed the view from aloft. Looking down on the ship, she appeared to his unsailorly eye, a most beautiful model, and the men working on deck seemed as pigmies, while he, suspended like Mahomet's tomb, between sea and sky, felt a strange exhilaration—a sensation which lent zest to the work and made him look to the future with a happier heart. Alas, he was unconsciously imbibing the doctrines of all sailing, in which one remembers the good times and forgets the hardships and the miserable days.

On the third day there was enough blue in the sky "tae mak' a Hielanman a pair o' breeks" and the wind was coming away fair for a slant south. The two short-shipped men had turned up, dazed and useless in the aftermath of a carouse, and were in the fo'c'sle "sleeping it off." At nine a tug came out, and the bos'n having got steam up in the donkey, the anchor was hove up without capstan-bar or chantey, and the *Kelvinhaugh* trailed at the end of a tow-line down the Firth of Clyde with a fresh northerly breeze whipping the short combers into white-capped corrugations.

By mid-afternoon the barque had pulled through the Cumbraes and the captain was up on the poop squinting around. He had discarded his shore toggery and slumped around in a cloth cap, a cardigan jacket, heavy woollen pants and carpet slippers. After a long scrutiny of sky and sea, and a tap at the mercurial barometer hanging in the chart-house, he spoke to the mate. "We'll get the muslin on her when she comes up wi' Arran. Wi' this northerly we're no needin' a tug and A'm thinkin' we'll be safe in rinnin' doon the Irish Channel."

The mate nodded. "Aye, sir. Looks like a fair wind, sir!" And he sniffed at the breeze like a hound scenting his quarry. The Old Man grunted and resumed his pacing along the weather side of the poop.

When the high purple-heathered hills of Arran came abeam, the master ceased his pacing. "Get yer tops'ls on her, mister!" he ordered the mate, and his quiet command seemed to galvanize ship and crew to stirring action. "Loose tops'ls!" roared Mr. Nickerson, and the hands working on "stowing-away" jobs, at which they were time-spinning, seemed to be imbued with new life. "Loose tops'ls—he says!" cried the bos'n directing his squad. "Move yerselves, blast ye! Loose th' fore, you! Main an' mizzen you! Look spry now, my sons, or ye'll have th' mate down among ye wi' some Yankee salt to put on yer tails!" The latter *sotto voce*.

Donald went up with Thompson to the lower mizzen topsail yard, and under the senior apprentice's direction, cast the confining gaskets adrift. Almost simultaneously from the three masts came the shout, "All gone, sir. Sheet home!" As the canvas rustled and flapped from the yards and bellied in the restraining gear, the mate's nasal bawlings could be heard injecting action. "Lay daown from aloft you skulkers 'n get some beef on them tops'l sheets. Look slippy naow!" The chain sheets rattled and clanked through the sheaves as the men, standing on the fife-rail and deck, hove down, "hey-ho'ing!" and barking, on the slack and brought the lower clews of the fore lower topsail nigh to the sheaves of the fore-yard-arms. A man squinted aloft after the last sweat had been given at the sheets. "What a hell ov a poor cut sail," he remarked.

"To yer main an' mizzen tops'ls naow!" came the mate's roar. "Never mind gamming. Ye're not on a spouter (whaler)!" Main and mizzen lower topsails were set to the wind, and the *Kelvinhaugh* started to drive ahead on her own and the tow-rope began to light up. "Up on yer foretopm'st-stays'l!" "Stand-by to get that tow-line aboard. For'ard with ye!" The tug blew a blast of her whistle and made a wide sheer from under the bows. The tow-rope was let go, and while twenty men hauled the wet, snakey manilla aboard over the foc'slehead, the tug steamed around and came up on the barque's weather quarter to receive a material valediction—in the shape of a bottle of whisky—and the last letters. Donald saw the package being thrown down on the tug's decks at the end of a heaving-line, and he watched with some anxiety for the safety of the hastily-written note which he had indited to his mother. It was a cheerful note—full of optimism which he did not feel when writing it, and he played up the most promising and alluring aspects of a sea-life and the men in whose company he would be for many months. Poor lad! the romantic ideal was fast fading and it was hard to write paragraphs of happy fiction with Thompson and Jenkins swapping gloomy prognostications for the future over the mess-table.

The tow-boat blew a long farewell blast from her whistle and dropped astern. Within five minutes she had swung around and was steaming up the Firth as fast as her slatting paddle-blades would take her, and with her went the *Kelvinhaugh's* last link with the land for many a long day.

"Upper tops'ls naow!" came the order, and under the curseful directions of the two mates and the bos'n, able-bodied, ordinary and apprentice seamen were hustled from job to job, and in the midst of the action, Donald scarce realized that he was assisting to carry out those wonderful manoeuvres over which he had gloated in printed page. Somehow the actual seemed different from the visionary. There was surly venom in the barking orders of—"Tops'l halliards naow an' put yer bloody backs into it you lazy hounds!" and such bitter remarks as "Struth! A poor bunch of beef in this crowd. Sailormen have all died an' nawthin' left naow but skulking kids an' broken-down sojers!" which came from the mate. In the novels the mate was usually a bluff, fatherly old codger who sung out "Heave away, my lads!" or "Haul away, my hearties!" in a hurricane roar, and with many good-humored asides interspersed between orders, but in cold realism on the *Kelvinhaugh*, Donald felt that Mr. Nickerson was only using his tongue because he was denied the use of his fist and boot, and the hulking German second mate growled and grunted and pushed in sullen self-restraint because British sea laws forbade him commencing the voyage by killing someone.

Running with square yards past the Arran hills, the deep-laden barque ploughed along with all hands sweating at the halliards and sheets and dressing the *Kelvinhaugh* in her "muslin." Her tops'l yards were heavy, and it did not take the old hands in the crew long to realize that they had signed in a "work-house" in this short-handed, heavily-sparred craft. With the tops'l halliards led to a main-deck capstan, the crew stamped around straining at the bars in sullen silence. The stolid, brutal German barked guttural curses—he was too thick-headed to notice anything unusual in this silent labor, but the keen-eared mate sensed the absence of the deep-water working chorus, and he was down on the scene in a minute giving tongue.

"Come on thar', bullies! Ain't thar' a chantey-man in the crowd? Strike a light someone! A chantey does the work of ten men, so walk her raound an' sing aout!" A West Indian negro showed his white teeth in an ingratiating smile and the mate spied him. "A black-bird to sing every time!" he cried. "Come you coon—loosen up yer pipes an' shout an' walk them tops'l yards to the mast-head!" Thus encouraged, the negro commenced in a clear tenor,

"Shanandoah, I love yore daughter!"

"Bark you hounds!" roared the mate. "Sing aout an' heave 'round!" And the chorus was timidly voiced in half-a-dozen keys.

"Away! My rolling river!"

The black soloist pushed and sang.

"Oh, Shanandoah, I loves to hear yo!"

Then the crowd, warming to their work, roared in unison.

"Ah, ha, we're bound away—

'Cross the wide Missouri!"

The ancient chantey "took hold" and the men woke up from their sullen apathy and stamped around the clinking capstan roaring the plaintive refrains to the negro's quavering solo. The mate stood watching with a smile on his keen visage. "That's what we want to hear aboard these hookers!" he said. "When I don't hear a crowd singin' out they're liverish and I'm ready to dose 'em up with a double whack of black draught!"

Whether it was through a new spirit of cheerfulness at getting under sail or through dread of the old sea medicine, the crowd commenced chanting, and in hauling out the topgallantsail sheets and mastheading the royal yards, Donald felt something of seafaring romance, amidst the hard work and his burning hands, in lustily bawling the ancient choruses of "Sally Brown I love yer daughter!" "Whisky Johnny," or "On the plains of Mexico."

By the time Pladda was abeam, it was becoming dark, and the barque, sail-clad from scupper to truck, was rolling, a creamy "bone in her teeth" from her blunt bows and slugging along with a slight roll to port and starboard. With the blue bulk of Ailsa Craig ahead over the jib-boom and her royals and fores'l set, the big wind-jammer began to smell the windy spaces of her unsailed traverses, while aft on the poop paced the Old Man—proud of his new command and anxious to see how she was shaping up. Down in the half-deck, Donald, aching in bone and muscle, and with hands blistered, skinned and paining, gulped his tea in a daze, with but one consuming desire—to get into his bunk and court blessed oblivion.

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## CHAPTER NINE



**“CLANG-CLANG** Clang-clang! Clang-clang! Clang-clang!” Four double tolls sounded on the bell aft betokened the sea-time of eight bells in the second dog-watch, or 8 p.m. shore time. Donald was half dozing in his bunk and listening aimlessly to the hardened Thompson holding forth to Jenkins. “Mark my words ... a ruddy workhouse. No takin’ yer ease on this lime-juicer ... nigger-drivin’, back-breakin’ starvation Scotch tank ... rotten dead cargo.... She’ll be a truck to steer ... and a swine to tack. All day to-day ... sweating ... calashee watch....” He growled away pessimistically while Donald nodded with eyes closed. Moore was in his bunk asleep. He, like Donald, was tired and sore, but bore it in sulky silence.

“Lay aft all handts!” bawled Mr. Hinkel on the main-deck. Jenkins gave Donald a rude shake and brought him to wakefulness with a yell. “Muster out on deck, nipper! Picking the watches, I guess!”

Donald scrambled out into the darkness. The barque was running with her yards square and the trucks swayed slightly across the stars. A light was blinking abeam, and the following wavelets plashed and hissed against the vessel’s sides. The men were coming from for’ard and collected in knots under the poop-break. “Come up on the poop, men!” cried the mate, leaning over the rail.

Up on the poop the wind blew cold and Donald shivered. The mate stood by the lighted binnacle with the ship’s articles in his hands.

“Sing aout naow while I call school!” he said, and he read:

“Jones!”

“Here, sir!” came from one of the crew.

“Stand to one side after you answer your names!” ordered the officer.

“Barclay!” The black chantey-man answered and joined Jones, and the mate mustered representatives of four continents as he drawled, “Valdez!”—“Si, senior!”

"Hansen!"—"Yaw, sir!"

"McLean!"—"Aye, mister!"

"Yedon—what th' hell is this? Yedon—"

A man answered, "Yedonowskivitch, sir!"

"Struth," growled the officer, "yer blasted name is as long as a flyin' jib'alliard! Yed is your name from now on!" The Russian grunted and joined the men who had been checked off.

Englishman, Irishman, Scotchman, Welshman, Japanese, Swede, Dane, German, Norwegian, Russian, Canadian, American, West Indian, Spaniard and South African represented the *Kelvinhaugh's* laborers, and as Donald viewed them, he wondered how it was possible for such a cosmopolitan and ill-favored gang to be gathered together. Dressed in various garbs, scarcely one looked to be a sailor, but the keen-eyed mates knew that clothes and general appearance do not mark the man who is rated "Able Bodied" and who can "hand, reef and steer." When the watch picking began, the first man Mr. Nickerson picked was the cropped head McLean, whose face still carried the marks of the clawing he had received on the Glasgow dock, yet Donald would have sworn that this fellow was a steamship fireman or a ship-yard laborer. But they were a small, weak-looking crowd after all, and when the boy scanned the little group and allowed his eyes to wander over the barque's great hull and the mighty fabric towering aloft—ponderous and unwieldy in the gloom—he realized something of Thompson's forebodings and compared the little company of ill-assorted humans, who were to work the ship to her destination, to a squad of pigmies doomed to undertake the tasks of giants.

Much to his dismay, Donald found himself listed with the "starbowlines," under the broad-faced Mr. Hinkel. Thompson was picked for the mate's watch and would rank as "acting third mate," and Chubby Jenkins was along with him. For a watch-mate, Donald had the surly Moore, and he felt that the luck was against him every way.

"Alright, men," said Mr. Nickerson when the watch picking was over. "Starboard watch keeps the deck until midnight. Relieve the wheel and look-out, and go below the port watch!"

Though dreadfully tired and aching in every bone and muscle, Donald had to remain on deck until mid-night, and Mr. Hinkel, with brutal directness, gave him a lecture on his watch-keeping duties. "You keep oop here und avake and don't you let me catch you skulkin'. You keep der binnacle lamps trimmed und vatch der time und strike der bells und you keep handy so dot I can see you on der lee side der poop!" And with a few curseful remarks about being pestered with useless, lazy boys, he turned and began pacing to windward. For four long hours, Donald trudged with leaden feet on a monotonous round—binnacle to cabin gangway (to squint at the clock) and gangway to poop bell. Feeling "played out," he heaved a sigh of relief when midnight came around and he belled the news with a feeling of anticipatory pleasure in the hours of restful sleep to come.

Utterly exhausted with a "calashee" (all hands working) watch of eighteen hours—the most of which was hard labor—Donald kicked off his boots and rolled into his bunk "all standing" and slept like a dead man until Jenkins yelled "Eight bells! Turn out!" at 3.45 a.m. Moore, who had dodged the second mate during the first watch and had stolen a snooze then, turned out, dressed and went on deck without giving his watch-mate another shake. When the starbowlines mustered aft, Donald was missing, and only reported after Thompson had roused him out of a heavy slumber.

The tyrannous Mr. Hinkel had something to say when McKenzie came up on the poop ten minutes after the bell had tolled. "Vy der hell dond't you turn oudt ven you are called?" he snarled. "By Gott, I'll make you spry!" He turned and sung out to the bos'n. "Gedt a pot of slush und let dis lazy defil grease down der yigger-top-masdt!" Donald went to the lee side of the poop, nervous and apprehensive at the nature of the punishment to be meted to him for lack of punctuality in turning out on his second watch in the ship.

The bos'n, a kindly Dane, who had sailed so long in English ships as to have sunk his nationality, brought the tin slush-pot upon the poop and called to the wondering Donald. "Here, son," he said quietly so that the second mate could not hear. "Dam' shame sendin' a raw nipper like you aloft on a job like this for bein' a minute or two late. In decent ships the new boys ain't allowed above the tops until they've bin a month at sea. Howsomever, son,"—rigging a bos'n's chair to the halliards as he talked—"don't git narvous. I'll tend th' halliard an' lower ye down as ye sing out. Put the lanyard o' this slush-pot aroun' yer neck an' grease th' mast wit' yer hands. Tie this bit o' line aroun' th' topm'st when ye get above th' eyes o' the riggin' so's ye won't swing out when she rolls. Don't be scared, son, you'll be alright."

"I'm not scared, bos'n," answered Donald, taking his seat in the chair, with the foul smelling pot of grease around his neck. Up to the block of the halliard he went—clutching the mast, as the bos'n hoisted him up, to keep from swinging, pendulum-wise, with the roll of the barque. It was dark, but clear, and the stars shone bright in the cold morning air. Far away to port a light blinked somewhere on the Galloway coast, and from his lofty perch, he could see the wake made by the ship's passage fading into the murk astern. The rolling of the vessel was more pronounced up aloft, and before he commenced "slushing-down," he took a turn of the line around the mast as the bos'n had advised, but even then, he swayed ominously and the grease smelt indescribably foul.

Dipping his sore hands into the mess, he massaged the smooth pole with the grease as the bos'n lowered him down. It was very cold up aloft and the rolling and the foul smell of the slush was making him dizzy with nausea. Within a few minutes, he was deathly sick and hung to the spar, white-faced and with the perspiration breaking out on him. Try as he might to regain control of himself, Donald had to succumb to the dreadful *mal-de-mer*, and with a feeble "Look-out, below!" he made his first contribution to Neptune.

A volley of German curses from the poop apprised him of the fact that the second mate had received evidence of his indisposition—Mr. Hinkel having, unfortunately, strode to loo'ard just when Donald was ejecting the "longshore swash out of his stomach." The realization of what had happened frightened all the sea-sickness out of him, and he resumed his task, fearful of the consequences when he reached the deck. Coming down the mast, he wondered, as he had often wondered of late, what fascination there was in a sea-life that sent lads to sea.

On deck again after the job was done, the bos'n met him with a grin. "Ye put it all over th' secon' greaser," he said. "He's for'ard cleaning himself off." Donald felt too nervous to smile. Mr. Hinkel would have something to say to him when he came aft.

While he was talking to the bos'n, Captain Muirhead slipped quietly around the chart-house and stood before them. "Whaur's the second officer?" he said in a quiet, but ominous tone.

"Th' lad here, sir, was up aloft slushin' down an' took sick an' Mister Hinkel got it, sir," answered Martin somewhat eagerly. "He's gone for'ard to get somethin' to clean hisself off with, sir!"

The Old Man muttered unintelligibly under his breath, stared over the port rail at something ahead, and then gave a quiet-spoken order to the man at the wheel. The helm was shifted, and when the second mate came aft, the skipper called him. Pointing into the gloom for'ard, he said: "Do you see that ship ahead?" Hinkel followed the direction of the Old Man's hand. "Yaw, sir!" he answered. A new phase of the silent Captain Muirhead's character was revealed to Donald in the violent outburst which came from his lips. "Then what th' hell dae ye mean by leavin' th' poop afore we're clear o' th' Firth," he thundered in a strident voice so utterly different from his usual quiet-spokeness. "What's yer look-out doin'? Asleep, I suppose? Damn yer bloody eyes, we'd ha' been intae that fella if Ah hadna jist spied her! Your place is here, mister, especially while we're in th' midst o' Channel traffic. Ye'll no dare tae leave this poop in your watch onless Ah'm here, or th' mate, or unless it's necessary fur th' safety o' th' shup! Awa' forrit an' see if yer look-out's awake!"

Hinkel made no reply but slouched down the poop ladder, and a moment after his guttural cursing could be heard as he dressed down the sleepy watchman on the fo'c'sle-head. "Hinkel will not love you for this night, son," remarked the bos'n. "He's an ugly swine, so keep out of his way."

Donald discreetly kept to loo'ard when Hinkel came aft again. The captain paced the poop for a spell and then went below. Donald heard the second mate growl something to the man at the wheel, and a moment afterwards turned to find the hulking German in the gloom alongside of him. Hinkel grasped him by the arm in a grip that made him wince. "Jou verdammt schweinehund!" he snarled through gritted teeth and shaking the boy violently. "Mein Gott! Ich like fur kick jou in der vasser—jou cursed rat! Jou look oudt! I'll sveat jou fur dis!" In his rage he was almost unintelligible and he concluded by heaving Donald violently away from him.

During the rest of the watch the boy attended most assiduously to his duties, as he knew he had made an enemy who would only need a slight excuse to wreak vengeance on him, but in a way that would be upheld by the British Merchant Shipping laws and the officials administering it.

With a fair wind and fine weather, the *Kelvinhaugh* cleared the St. George's Channel and swung away S.W. across the broad expanse of the North Atlantic for the equator and on the deepwaterman's track which would bring her in the vicinity of the land again at Cape San Roque on the Brazilian coast. It was fine weather for the ship, but it wasn't fine weather for Donald. Captain Muirhead ignored him absolutely, at least by speech, though he watched him at work often with furtive glances. The Old Man was not much of a conversationalist, but he did talk to the other apprentices, and his ignoring of young McKenzie was commented on in the half-deck. Thompson summed it up, rather brutally, but Donald knew that he meant it in a kindly spirit. "Nipper," he said, "your uncle has no love for you or the Old Man would be falling all over you. Your stingy Scotch relative looks upon you as a charity brat—it don't need but half an eye to see that, for he sent you to sea parish-rigged, with an outfit as mean as what ye'd get from a boarding-house master in Jerusalem. He shoved you off here as the cheapest thing he could do—an apprentice without a premium paid down—and he'll see that you work for your keep and clothes. The skipper knows it, and that square-headed Hinkel knows it, for he'd never dare treat any of us other fellows the way he treats you. Your best friend aft here is that hard-case Blue-nose mate.... And, say, kid, just you make that skulker Moore do his share. He's sojerin' around in here smoking and loafing while you're on deck. Why doesn't Hinkel get after *him*, I'd like to know? You just bring Moore to his bearings, kid, and jab him one on the jaw if he gets lippy!" Donald thanked the senior apprentice with tears in his eyes. Ever since he had come aboard this ship, it had required all his nerve and courage to keep from breaking down at the petty tyrannies and persecutions of the second mate. The captain must be abetting his officer, or why didn't he interfere in cases where, as Donald knew, he, as an apprentice, was not supposed to be ordered to perform. Tasks, which in most ships were done by older hands, were delegated to McKenzie, and he carried them out cheerfully, thinking that he was going through the rigorous course prescribed for those who would become "compleat and perfect seamen."

Mr. Nickerson seemed indeed to be his best friend among the after guard. Though not in the mate's watch, yet that officer did not take long to size Donald up as a lad having the right spirit in him for a sailor. He was willing and jumped to obey a command. He was intelligent and mastered the intricacies of the big barque's rigging and gear in less time than most green hands would have taken to determine bow from stern and starboard from port. In the dog-watches and on Sundays, the mate took Donald in hand and taught him how to steer, and by the time the *Kelvinhaugh* had picked up the north-east trade winds in the latitude of the Canaries, he was able to take a wheel in fine weather and steer "by the wind" or by compass.

The Nova Scotian's lessons were forceful and not readily forgotten. "I jest show a boy once," he used to say, "an' then I expect him to go ahead an' do it himself. When I have to show a thing twice I ram it home with a rope's end!" Jenkins and Moore—the latter especially—had cause to fear the mate's teachings, but Donald

stood high in his favor through his intelligent grasp of things and the will to master a problem. To the other apprentices and in the eyes of the hands for'ard, Nickerson was a "ruddy Yankee bucko," and it must be admitted, the epithet was justified, for he was a "taut" hand and made no bones about using his fist or boot to accentuate "nippiness."

By the time the barque caught the "trades," and in spite of the miserable food supplied, young McKenzie had toughened up wonderfully. The continual "horsing" to which he was being subjected by his watch officer seemed to be the very elixir necessary to building up his apparently frail constitution. His muscles and sinews hardened and developed; his eyes were clear and bright, and the sallowness of his face became replaced by a healthy tan. The soft hands became hard and horny-palmed, while his movements were quick and active under the spur of the mate's teachings and the second mate's spite. If the sea killed some boys, it was making a man of Donald, and he recalled the old Glasgow specialist's advice to his mother, "He'll be as tough as a louse an' as hard tae kill!"

While he had benefitted physically through a sea-life, his boyish ideals of the romance and adventure of seafaring had been ruthlessly shattered. His treatment on the *Kelvinhaugh* had practically killed all the thrilling fancies and dreams of his home days. He was beginning to realize his father's words, "It's a dog's life at the best of times!" and even the blue-skied "trades," with the barque bowling along through the azure ocean under clouds of brand-new canvas, white as snow, failed to awake in him the same enthusiasm as the ideal about which he had dreamed. True! they were glorious days—for a passenger or the officers, maybe—but for Donald, hard-worked and living on wretched provender and envired by men whose imaginations were dead, the "trade" latitudes were but periods in a voyage, just as summer and winter were seasonal phases in a calendar year. Had he gone to sea under better auspices, his enjoyment of the sea and its glories would have been different.

There was one lesson he did learn and which he ever afterwards retained as a permanent part of his character, and that was dependence upon himself and the submergence of sensitiveness and meek toleration of injustices from equals. The rough talk of the half-deck and the cutting jibes of his shipmates no longer wounded his sensibilities. While he retained his inbred gentleness, yet he case-hardened it with an armor of indifference not to be easily penetrated. Physically, he resented being imposed upon by others not entitled to command obedience, and gained his first step in that resolution in a "show down" with his apprentice watch-mate, Moore.

The surly youth had never forgiven McKenzie for the bunk episode when the ship was at Greenock. He also attempted, by reason of the fact that he had served four days of his time at sea in the lost *Dunottar*, to claim seniority over Donald and to delegate to the latter the job of "Peggy" for the half-deck. Donald was willing to do his share of fetching the food from the galley and in cleaning out the apprentice's quarters, but he began to resent doing all of it. Moore considered that Donald's willingness to do mess-boy work for the crowd was a tacit acknowledgment of his seniority and freedom from such menial tasks, but he over-stepped the bounds one dog-watch when he insolently ordered McKenzie to sweep up the floor of the boys' quarters, after he had littered it with shavings from a model which he was whittling. Donald had swept the half-deck out earlier in the day, and calmly told Moore that "as you've made the mess, it is up to you to clean it up!" Thompson was in his bunk reading, but hearing the words between the two, he knocked off to watch events.

"D'ye hear me, nipper!" growled Moore threateningly. "I told you to clane this litter up. Git now or I'll be after makin' ye!"

Donald stood up, determined and very cool. "Moore!" he said calmly, "I've made up my mind that I'm a better man than you, so put up your hands, for I'm going to knock the tar out of you!" And he went for the other like a shot out of a gun.

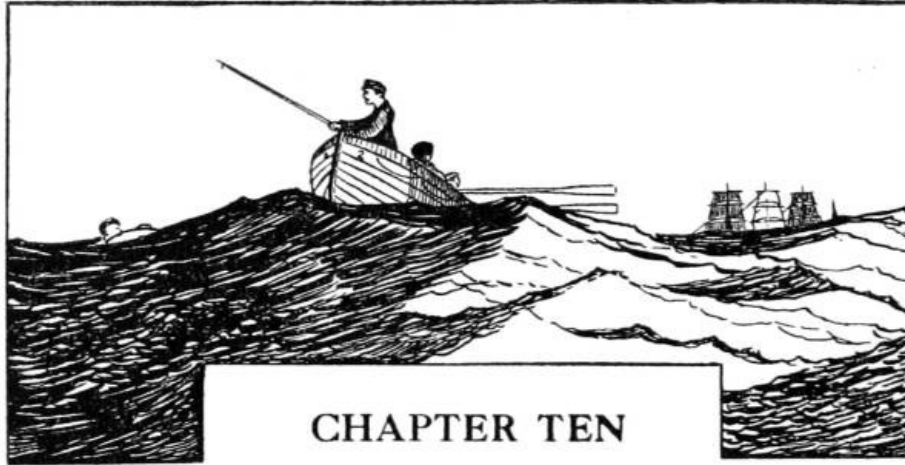
Moore was bigger and heavier than Donald, but he was one of the kind who "sojered" in a heave or a haul and only exerted his strength when he had to. When Donald was toiling under Hinkel's eye, Moore was "sun-fishing" somewhere. Hinkel was too busy horsing McKenzie to care a continental what Moore was doing, and it was thought by some of the hands that the second mate had received a substantial monetary consideration from the Irish lad to allow him a "jack-easy" time. Moore's people were wealthy brewers in Liverpool, and he went to sea with plenty of money. However, Mr. Hinkel's attentions to Donald proved Moore's undoing. As a physical developer of soft muscles, the second mate had been a success as far as Donald was concerned, and within five minutes, the younger lad had Moore backed up against the bulk-head and was "knocking the tar" out of him with fists as hard and as bony as though shod with knuckle-dusters. Thompson was sitting up in his bunk betting plugs of tobacco on the outcome of the "mill" with Jenkins and the bos'n, who were watching from the door. The sail-maker and carpenter were craning through the ports, thoroughly enjoying the "scrap" and murmuring, "Good fur the wee fella! He's a richt nippy yin wi' his dukes!"

Moore, badly mauled, hauled down his flag, and Donald broke away from him. With a new gleam in his eyes—both puffed from some of Moore's shots—he said, "From now on, Moore, you'll go half and half in any work that's to be done in here, and you'll begin now and do a week's "Peggy" for what I've been doing since we up-hook'd, or I'll turn to and plug you some more!"

Thompson laughed. "That's talking, nipper," he said, "ride him down! You gave that Irish puddler just what he was bearing up for!" And Donald felt that he had gone a step up on the ladder of the spirit that makes the man.



## CHAPTER TEN



**T**HE monotonous routine of uneventful sea-life saw the big barque across the equatorial line, and the usual spell of windless calms had to be endured when the *Kelvinhaugh* left the dying trade winds astern in nine degrees north. After a stretch of twenty-five days, "bracing up" and "squaring away" to innumerable "cat's paws" and flickering zephyrs, the vessel picked up the south-east trades a few degrees south of the line and, braced sharp up, made brave sailing for such a huge heavily laden craft. So far the weather had been fine and the barque had not yet been called upon to match her clumsy fabric with angry wind and sea.

It does not take a ship's company long to size up the condition of things aboard ship, and fo'c'sle and half-deck gossip showed that the hands had pretty well taken the measure of the after-guard. Captain Muirhead turned out to be a cheap skipper, a sulky old bear, an indifferent sailor and over-fond of the bottle. In the calm, windless doldrums, he never came up on deck but what the aroma of whisky travelled with him. On these occasions he was more talkative than usual, and exhibited a fondness for yarning with the second mate. The big German would act so openly servile during these phases of the captain's favor, that the crew had him designated as a "ruddy skipper licker." Curiously enough, when the Old Man was sober, he treated Hinkel to the rough side of his tongue pretty frequently, and would often call him to task for errors and omissions in seamanship.

With Mr. Nickerson the case seemed to be different. The master had very little to say to him at any time, but the mate acted on numerous occasions as if he had but little use for his commander. Nickerson was undoubtedly a splendid seaman, and Martin, the bos'n, openly averred that he was the smartest mate he had ever sailed with as far as his seamanship was concerned. Thompson bore testimony to the Nova Scotian's skill as a navigator, and stated that he had taught him wrinkles in working difficult problems which would have stumped many an extra master. But Mr. Nickerson's harsh treatment of the crew did not win him their affections, though it commanded their fear and respect.

As the days passed, Donald prayed fervently for the voyage to end. Hinkel was fast making his life a burden to him, while Thompson's and the bos'n's gloomy prognostications of the future in the barque did not tend to hearten his outlook on the days to come. The boy did not worry much about the third mate's prophecies of disaster, but when Martin began growling, it was time to take notice. "Mark me well," croaked he to the hands, "we'll catch hell in this hooker. Th' pitch o' th' Horn in July ain't a good season for this big hulk down there, an' she'll be a man-killer! Mark me well! Them big heavy yards an' sails an' a long ship an' a deep ship means work an' dirt. She's slower'n blazes in answerin' her helm and a lazy swine in coming about—always gittin' in irons. An' she'll be wet ... a ruddy half-tide rock! Th' grass'll grow on them there decks afore we get around. Aye! Mark me well! There'll be th' devil to pay an' no pitch hot when we git *down there!*"

The continual croaking about "down there" had but little effect upon Jenkins and Moore. Both had never rounded the Horn; could not imagine its frightfulness, and were not worrying. "Come day, go day, God send Sunday!" was their motto. The barque was so big and new that the Horn had no terrors in their imaginations. In a smaller, older ship it might be bad, but in the big new *Kelvinhaugh?*—Tcha! there was nothing to it! Donald, however, was not so optimistic. Possibly the nigger-driving he was continually subjected to somewhat obscured any rosy outlook on the future. Anyhow, he prepared for the worst and did what he could to make his poor kit fit for dirty weather and a long spell of it. Jenkins and Moore had plenty of clothes—they would pull through alright, but Donald, with his wretched rig, knew that he would get nothing more to augment it this side of the Horn. In such straits a boy could not but wish that the voyage would end.

Hinkel became more tyrannous as the barque reached to the south'ard, subjecting McKenzie to numerous petty tyrannies known in seafaring parlance as "work-up jobs." A favorite trick of the second mate's was to tug slyly on the bunt and leech-lines—breaking the twine or yarn which kept them from chafing the sails. He would then sing out for McKenzie to lay aloft and overhaul and stop the gear from the royal down, generally around the end of a watch. Poor Donald would have to skip up with a fist-full of rope-yarns and finish the task by the time his watch had been anywhere from half to an hour in their bunks. Aye, there are a hundred and one ways in which a despotic officer can break the spirit of a man or boy at sea! One incident north of the Plate showed the true calibre of the man, and gave Donald an experience he was never likely to forget. It was one of the outstanding incidents in his career and one of the most humiliating. Thompson had called him at the end of the first night watch. There was a strong breeze blowing aft and the barque was slugging along

under all plain sail. As he pulled on his clothes, Thompson remarked jocularly, "You're shapin' up not too bad as a shell-back, nipper, but there's one thing you can't do yet."

"What's that?"

"You can't chew tobacco," replied the other with a grin. "Until you can masticate a quid you can't call yourself a genuine deep-waterman." "I'll go you," said Donald. "Gimme a bite of your plug." And with a liberal chew in his cheek, he jumped out on deck and reported aft.

The second mate had some work for the watch for'ard and told Donald to take the wheel. The sea was slapping under the ship's stern and causing the wheel to buck heavily, and the boy could only manage her by putting his foot on the spokes at intervals in order to rest his sorely strained arms. For almost an hour he steered and chewed on his quid, but the wrenching of the wheel was beginning to exhaust him. He had just put his foot on the lower spokes when he was conscious of Mr. Hinkel's presence at the lee side of the wheel-box. At the same moment a heavier sea than usual smashed under the counter and the wheel jerked savagely—knocking his foot away. Grasping the spinning spokes with his two hands he tried to arrest the violent whirl, but before he could exert his strength, he was hurled completely over the wheel-box and up against the second mate. The officer slipped to his knees, but jumped up in a flash and arrested the whirling spokes. Donald lay across the grating with all the breath knocked out of him and deathly sick through swallowing the tobacco he had been valorously masticating.

Hinkel yelled viciously for a hand to take the wheel—kicking the prostrate Donald violently with his heavy boots and swearing vengeance as soon as he could leave the jerking spokes. Donald was too sick to take much heed and lay across the grating horribly ill.

"Jou verdammt schweine!" bawled the furious German as soon as he was relieved. "Ich teach you!" He grabbed the boy by the arm and dragged him across the deck, swearing in mixed English and German. Over to the hen-coops at the fore-end of the poop he hauled the unresisting apprentice, and opening up a door, jammed him headfirst in among the screeching fowls. Slamming the barred door down again, he turned the catch, and stood up. "Stay in dere dis vatch!" he snarled. "I'll teach jou to gedt fonna me vit!"

Too sick to protest or cry out, Donald lay prone inside the narrow coop while the few remaining inmates clucked and squawked and pecked at his head. At that moment he only wished to die and end his misery, and this feeling, together with the violent jar he had received at the wheel, the tobacco in his stomach and the foul odor from the floor of the coop, sent him off into a faint.

He came to a short time later to find himself being pulled out of the coop by Mr. Hinkel, and he heard Mr. Nickerson saying, "Bring him out!" in a voice as harsh as a file. The mate was in his shirt and under-drawers, and when Donald was hauled from his foul prison, the chief officer bent down and asked, "What in blazes were you doing, boy?" Donald related dully how he had been thrown over the wheel-box. The second mate broke in. "I tell jou, sir, he vos star-gazink und let der veel go! She nearly broached mit der jung fool's monkey-tricks—"

The Nova Scotian leaned forward and peered menacingly into the German's face. "Listen, Hinkel," he said slowly and in a voice as hard as steel, but as ominous as a death threat, "I've got your flag an' number, my bucko, and if I catch you man-handlin' that boy again I'll break you like a dry stick. You measly Dutchman!" That was all he said, quietly, so that the man at the wheel could not hear, but Hinkel was visibly impressed and without a word, turned militarily on his heels and walked to loo'ard. The mate watched him for a moment and bent down and raised Donald to his feet. "Go to yer bunk, boy, an' stay there for the rest of the watch." Donald staggered away feeling unspeakably grateful to his champion, and with a fixed determination to forever eschew at least one of a "dyed-in-the-wool" shell-back's accomplishments.

That the second mate hated him, Donald knew, though he was completely at a loss to account for the continual hazing by the brutal German. Possibly, he thought, it was because the fellow was a natural bully, and Donald's misfortune in getting the second mate into trouble with the skipper for being off the poop on the night in the Firth of Clyde may have accentuated Hinkel's spite.

The captain's attitude was also unaccountable to Donald's reasoning. During the whole of the time he had been on the barque, Captain Muirhead had never spoken to him, nor had he taken notice of him in any way save by furtive glances. The man had no reason to dislike Donald, yet after the familiar conversations they had had together at Glasgow, he had now closed up like a clam, though to the other boys he often passed friendly remarks, and on occasions, corrected them with the rough side of his tongue. To Donald, he neither spoke friendly or otherwise, and the boy wondered why the skipper maintained such an attitude towards him. Thompson often commented on the fact and put forth several conclusions. "He's either afraid of you because you're the owner's nephew, or else he doesn't care a continental about you because you're a charity 'prentice. It's one thing or the other, sure."

Off the Plate, Donald underwent another bitter experience which left a deep and lasting impression upon him and served to put the captain in the proper category of relationship. An English barque, homeward bound, had passed and McKenzie was on the poop handing code flags for the Old Man who spoke the barque and asked to be reported. It was blowing fresh abaft the beam, but the sea was smooth save for a long swell from the south'ard. The last hoist was flying from the spanker-gaff, when the halliard parted and the bunting came fluttering down on the poop. The other ship had got the signal, however, as her answering pennant was up, and Captain Muirhead gruffly told Mr. Hinkel to stow the flags away. During the afternoon in the second mate's watch, the Captain suddenly told Hinkel to have the halliard rove off again as he might require it at any time. "Ye don't need tae top up th' gaff, mister," the Old Man added. "Send yin o' thae boys up. That young McKenzie is spry enough tae reeve it off!"

As the ship was running, the spanker was furled, but to shin up a slippery spar standing out from the

jiggermast at an angle of about thirty-five degrees is no easy task even in a dock, and with the vessel rolling and the gaff swaying, even though braced with the vang, the job was exceedingly risky, and able seamen would have refused to do it. Donald, however, made no demur, but jumped to obey the second mate's guttural command. With the light halliard in his hand, he clambered up the jigger shrouds and swung down from the top on to the gaff and sat astride it facing towards the stern of the ship.

With the halliard in his teeth, he started to clamber up the pole with his arms and legs encircling it, but owing to the fact that it was a scraped spar and recently "slushed," the task of shinning it was exceedingly difficult. Several times he hauled himself up, only to slide back, and once or twice the swaying of the ship almost caused him to slip off altogether.

"Oudt jou go, now, und no verdammt nonsings!" bawled Hinkel sixty feet below. Captain Muirhead was pacing to windward absolutely unconcerned and scarcely bestowing a glance at the boy clutching the precarious gaff. Several of the men, working in the waist, knocked off to watch the performance and the bos'n growled, "Gaudy shame! That boy can't shin that greasy gaft. A ruddy work-up job, that what I calls it. They're hazin' that nipper."

Nervous and somewhat apprehensive as to his ability to get out to the gaff-end, Donald essayed it once more. Gripping the spar with all his strength, he made a desperate effort and halted for breath a few feet short of the vang out and above him. The swaying was worse out there and he was almost exhausted. Hanging on to the gaff was as hard as climbing out on it, so, perspiring and fearful, he made another shuffle. At the moment when he had almost reached the gaff-end, the weather vang carried away; the gaff swung to loo'ard and Donald was hurled violently off the spar. He cleared the poop rail by a few inches in his descent and plunged head-first into the sea.

Martin, the bos'n, had been waiting for just such an eventuality and he was up the poop ladder in a flash, and had thrown one of the poop life-buoys over. Without waiting for orders, the man at the wheel put the helm down and the barque was coming sluggishly up into the wind, with canvas rustling and banging. "Keep her off! Keep her off!" bawled the Old Man. "Damn an' blast ye! Who told ye tae pit her doon? Dae ye want tae tak' th' sticks oot o' her—"

The mate, in shirt and trousers, suddenly appeared aft and elbowed the captain away from the wheel. His lean face was convulsed with fury. "You white-livered hound!" he roared. "Ye'd leave that kid t' drown, would ye? Not ef I know it! Ease yer helm down!" The captain stood, astounded, red-faced and gasping, while Hinkel ran for'ard to do something or get out of the way.

Nickerson leaped to the break of the poop. "Back yer mainyard!" he bawled. "Aft here an' git the quarter-boat away! Rouse out the hands—cook an' all! Aloft you, Jenkins, and keep him in sight!" Under the spur of his curses the men skipped around, and the life-boat was out of the chocks, swung out and lowered away in record time. Six men, led by Martin, the bos'n, swarmed down into her, and soon had the oars shipped and manfully pulled away in the direction indicated by Jenkins up in the jigger-rigging.

"D'ye see him, boy?"

"Yes, sir," Jenkins answered. "He's got hold of the ring-buoy and is about half a mile away off the beam."

"How's th' boat headin'? Kin they see him?"

"They're heading right for him, sir!" replied the apprentice.

Captain Muirhead came to himself at this juncture—he had remained beside the wheel seemingly petrified by the mate's action in countermanding his orders—and he walked over to Mr. Nickerson with a face dark with rage. "Mr. Nickerson," he said, in a harsh, tense voice, "Ah'll log you for this, by Goad! It's bliddy mutiny—no less! It's—" He stopped at a loss for words in his passion. The Nova Scotian gave him a contemptuous glance. "You log an' be damned to you!" he said coolly. "You an' your 'take th' sticks out of her' in a moderate breeze!" Then with a strange look in his eyes, he peered truculently into the captain's face. "There's something blame' fishy about this!" he said significantly. "What are you up to? Are you trying to get rid of that kid?" Then threateningly he added, "Let me tell you, sir, that if anything happens to that nipper aboard this ship, I'll have *you* jugged for it. I've got friends in Vancouver who'll take you in hand, sir, an' you'll find they're rough an' ready on that part o' the West Coast!"

The captain, with suddenly subdued expression on his face, was about to say something, but evidently thought better of it. Instead he remarked quietly, "When ye get yer boat aboard, pit her on her course again. If th' laud wants a drap o' whusky, Ah'll gie ye some for him." Then apologetically, "Ah got a bad fricht, an' didny ken whit was happenin' when Ah gied th' man th' order." And as he turned away, Nickerson stared at him curiously and muttered, "Liar!"

Donald's plunge into the sea knocked the breath out of him for a moment, but when he came up, gasping and half-stunned, he saw, as in a dream, a life-buoy being thrown over the barque's taff-rail. When he regained his bearings he swam for it, and succeeded in reaching and hanging on to the circle of canvassed cork. He held on for an indefinite period, during which time he saw the *Kelvinhaugh* coming to the wind, and rising on top of a swell, he made out a quarter-boat pulling towards him. He shouted several times, and in a daze, heard voices. "Here he is! Steady all! Easy starboard! Pull port! 'Vast pulling all!" Then he was grabbed by the arms and hauled aboard the boat, where he lay on the bottom boards and vomited the salt water he had swallowed.

Feeling sick and shaky, he was carried into the half-deck, and Thompson and the steward took his clothes off and rolled him up in warm blankets and put him in his bunk. He was given a stiff drink of hot whisky and almost immediately went off to sleep, and the talk of the other apprentices at tea only woke him after he had slept like a log for almost five hours.

"How're ye feeling, nipper?" enquired Thompson kindly. "Good? That's fine. Ye're gettin' to be a reg'lar hell-diver, you are, and, my eye! didn't you cause a rare rumpus!" And he told what had happened after Donald had taken the plunge. "That measly squarehead of a Hinkel is trying to do for you!" added the senior apprentice solemnly. "You should have seen him when the mate came up on deck an' shoved the Old Man away from the wheel. The big Dutchman runs for'ard yelling in Doytch an' what th' blazes he was saying nobody knew. I think he was running away from Nickerson. If you wanted to see a reg'lar genuine 'stand-'em-up-and-knock-'em-down,' 'give-me-none-of-yer-sass' Western Ocean bucko look on a man's face, it was on the mate's when he called the Old Man 'a white-livered hound!' I guess Hinkel thought he would lay *him* out with a capstan-bar, so he skeddaddled!"

Donald had got his clothes from the galley, where they had been dried by the cook, and was sitting in the apprentice's berth talking with Jenkins, when Mr. Nickerson looked in. He gave Donald a sharp glance. "Nipper," he said, curtly, "you'll come in my watch after this. Jenkins will go in the second mate's."

The mate had just come from for'ard after questioning the bos'n. "Them spanker vangs, sir, were all right when I examined them day afore yest'day, sir," Martin had said. "The tackles are brand new and there ain't been nothin' to cause a chafe or enough strain to strand th' rope. Them strands, sir, were filed or scraped, sir, to make believe they was chafed or wore, and I thinks, sir, as how that second mate did it."

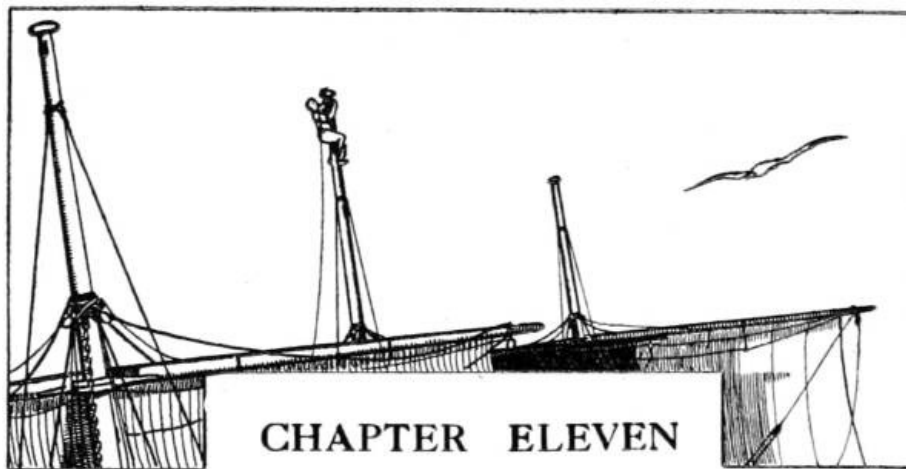
"And the signal halliards?"

"They was alright, sir. Th' Old Man, sir, jest made a slippery bend on th' flag, I guess, and it carried away an' un-rove."

Mr. Nickerson nodded. "You jest keep your tongue between your teeth, Bose, an' don't open your trap about th' matter to anybody. I'll look into this." And he walked to the half-deck and gave Donald a change of watch.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN



**D**ONALD was to go on duty with the mate's, or port watch, at midnight, but he was awakened suddenly at six bells by loud shouting on deck and the violent careening of the ship. Hinkel could be heard bawling, "Ledt go royal und to'gallundt halliards and clew up! All handts!" Then Jenkins opened the half-deck door for a second and yelled, "Roll out! Look alive!" and mingled with his shout came the booming roar of wind, the swash of heavy water and the thunder of slatting canvas.

"A ruddy pampero!" cried Thompson, leaping from his bunk and pulling on his boots. "Jump, kid, she's on her beam ends!" Donald dropped to the sloping floor of the berth, hauled his boots on the wrong feet, and sprang after Thompson into the darkness. When he got outside he cannoned into someone running aft, who cursed him and vanished in the howling blackness. The lee scuppers were a boiling froth of water waist deep, and up aloft the canvas was thundering as the royal and t'gallant yards came down by the run. The ship was over on her port side at an alarming angle, and for a minute Donald could do nothing but hang on to the mizzen gear, gasping and dazed, until he got his bearings.

The German second mate was barking commands from the break of the poop when something banged aloft. A voice shouted, "Maint'gallan's'l's gone!" Then Thompson grabbed him by the arm. "Bear a hand haulin' up yer mains'l!" he roared, and Donald scrambled for'ard along the sloping decks and hauled on the gear with a mob of "hey-ho'ing," swearing men. Then the mate appeared—(the captain was on the poop)—and he gave tongue. "What in hell are you all adoin' here?" he snarled. "Aloft an' stow th' fore an' main r'yals you boys! Git some beef on those bunt-lin's, you hounds, or I'll kick some go in you! None of yer 'You pull now, Bill, I pulled last' work here!"

From the height of the main-royal-yard, Donald could see the water to windward white with foam. The stars were shining clear and bright to the westward, but all was black in the eastern sky and the wind blew in savage gusts, which gave them a hard tussle in subduing the bellying, slatting canvas. By the time they had got the two royals confined in the gaskets, the barque had come to an even keel and was running before the blast under six topsails and foresail.

The crew had hauled up the cross'-jack, mainsail, and hauled down the fore-and-aft sails and were aloft stowing the big t'gallan's'ls as the barque swung off, staggering and rolling scuppers under in the cross sea which was running, and as soon as the boys came down from the royal yards, the mate chased them up the mast again to help furl the mizzen-upper-topsail, which had been let go. On the completion of this job, and when the crew were pretty well exhausted with pulling, hauling and lifting, Thompson voiced the opinion of all hands: "God help us when we strike some real wind and have to get the muslin off her in a hurry," he said gloomily. "Those big yards and sails will take charge of us then. We'll have to let the canvas blow away and pay for it."

"Pay for it?" queried Donald innocently. "What d'ye mean?"

The senior apprentice laughed grimly. "I was referring to the old yarn about a 'prentice boy who had a rich father. The mate ordered him up one-time to stow the mizzen-royal in a squall. The kid squints aloft and didn't like the look of the job, so he says to the mate, 'Oh, let it blow away, sir; father will pay for it!' That's what we'll have to do on this hooker, I'm thinking. I shiver when I think of handling those big courses and tops'ls of ours in a real Cape Horner. We'll catch it down there and no blushing error! If we only had *men* for'ad instead of flabby-muscle dock-rats we might get through, but it'll be all hands every time there's a job o' work."

"How about that donkey engine?" queried Donald. "Isn't that supposed to help in the heavy work?"

Thompson laughed sarcastically. "A fat lot you know, nipper!" he cried. "Your lousy Scotch ship-owner puts in a donkey and cuts down the crew, but he gives orders to the skipper that the donkey is not to be used except on extra-special occasions. The donkey is the greatest curse of sailormen these days and the owner reaps the benefit. He cuts down the crew on the work it is *supposed* to do, and saves money in port by using it for loading and discharging cargo. That's your labor-saving donkey for you!"

The two boys were in the half-deck changing their wet clothing and donning their oilskins for a "stand-by" until their watch was called at midnight, but Mr. Nickerson looked in and ordered them out. "Bear a hand an' get that maint'gallan's'l unbent from the yard an' sent down. It'll put ye in trim for Cape Stiff!"

The "pampero" was the first real dusting the barque had tackled, and the old timers shook their heads ominously and muttered dread prophecies of times to come. In the weight of the squalls blowing, and under heavy weather sail, she made a dirty job of it, and it took two men at the wheel, sweating, to try and steady her. Big seas piled up astern and, overtaking the sluggish, deep-laden barque, broke on both quarters and crashed aboard—filling the decks from fo'c'sle-head to poop deck. "A ruddy half-tide rock!" growled the men as they worked in water, waist-deep, handling the remains of the maint'gallan's'l, a brand-new heavy weather sail, which had split in several places. "Cheap gear for a cheap ship!" commented the sailmaker.

By the time the pampero had blown its edge off, Donald returned to his binnacle-trimming and time-keeping job on the poop, and the barque, braced sharp up and with lower stays'ls set, was plunging and diving on her course to the Falklands and Cape Horn. There was a cold bite to the wind that Donald had never felt before—precursor of the bitter windy latitudes they were running into—and he scrambled into the kindly lee of the chart-house. The lee port-hole was open and Donald could hear the angry voice of the captain laying down the law to the second mate. "Ye wur asleep on watch, mister," he was saying, "or ye'd ha' seen that squall makin' up. It's a wonder tae me ye didny jump th' masts oot of her.... She was in th' thick of it afore ye sung out. Ye're a damned worthless sojer—that's whit ye are—an' yer spell in jyle has made ye forget all th' seamanship ye iver knew...." Donald opened his eyes. "Spell in jail?" He wondered, and as he had no respect for either the Old Man or Hinkel, he kept his ears agog for more. "Don't gie me ony back chat!" the skipper was shouting, "or I'll dis-rate ye an' send ye forrard.... an' ye know what th' men'll dae if they ken ye wur th' man what...." The boy strained his ears to catch the remainder of the sentence when the mate's strident voice interrupted with—"Boy! boy! Where'n Tophet has that ruddy young sojer skulked to? Oh, ye're there, are ye? D'ye know it's five minutes of eight bells? Look smart, naow, an' call th' starboard watch or I'll trim yer hair for ye!"

Life under Mr. Nickerson's command was Heaven compared to his watches with the bullying German, and Donald experienced a revival of spirits at the change. Not that the Nova Scotian was an easy task-master. By no means! But Nickerson was too much of a man to bully and ill-treat a boy, though he was not so particular with the 'fore-mast hands. He was a "driver" in every sense of the word and kept Thompson and McKenzie up to the mark, but he never set them at useless "work-up" jobs. Thompson, as an apprentice almost out of his time, he did not interfere with much—Thompson was an able fellow, anyway, and would make a smart officer when he got his ticket—but Donald was the mate's particular protégé, and many a time the lad wished he did not stand so high in the officer's favor.

"Boy," said the mate one afternoon a day or two after the pampero, "I want to see ef ye've lost yer nerve after floppin' off that there gaff th' other day. Naow, son, d'ye think ye kin shin up to that main truck an' reeve off a signal halliard?" Donald stared up at the dizzy height of the main-mast to where the truck capped it—a good one hundred and eighty feet above deck—and felt some trepidation at the thought of the job. Nickerson was watching him narrowly. "Haow abaout it, boy?" he said.

"Yes, sir!" answered Donald after a moment's hesitation. "I'll go up, sir!"

"Well, then, ask th' bos'n to give ye a coil o' signal halliard stuff an' shin it up. Sharp, naow!" Everything with the mate was "Look alive!" "Jump!" or "Nip along, you!" with a few blistering oaths added to put the proper

amount of "go" into the command. Anything moving slow was the officer's *bete noir*, and the men used to remark that he "sh'd ha' bin a ruddy ingine-driver on a perishin' mail train!"

Donald moved "sharp" and started aloft. There was a light breeze and enough swell to cause the masts to sway in an arc of ten degrees. He made the royal yard without difficulty—he had been up there often before and under worse conditions—and after his climb up the Jacob's ladder, he rested with his feet on the yard and held on to the eyes of the royal rigging. From this giddy perch he had a wonderful view of the ship one hundred and fifty feet below, and the fore-shortening of her hull from this height made him feel as if this weight aloft would cause her to capsize. Below him the sails bellied out in a succession of snow-white curves—full and rounded with the wind and each silently pulling the ship along—and the spreading rigging looked like a spider's web radiating from where he stood. All around was sea and sky and the wake of the barque could be seen making a foamy path through the greeny-blue of ocean, with a few sea-birds wheeling above it. A gull sailed past him—squawking as if in jealous anger at the boy invading its ethereal realm, then the mate's stentorian voice floated up from below, "Nip up, naow! Ye've bin sight-seein' long enough!"

Glancing up at the thrusting height of the sky-sail pole to the truck thirty feet above, a slight wave of fear came over him—an aftermath of his jigger-gaff experience—and he closed his eyes for a moment until his nerve returned. There was no skys'l yard crossed on the *Kelvinhaugh* and no means of getting up to the truck save by shinning up the greasy pole with the aid of the skys'l back-stay. With the halliard in his teeth, he took a long breath and grasping the stay with one hand and encircling the mast with his left arm and his legs, he started up and reached the eyes of the skys'l rigging, perspiring and gasping. From the eyes of the rigging, the pole up-thrust, smooth and bare, for about eight feet and, gulping a deep breath, he wriggled and grasped the smooth spar with his two hands. In a few seconds he brought the round sphere of the truck on a level with his head, and hanging on to the mast with legs and his left arm, he took the halliard from between his teeth and thrust it up through the sheave in the truck with his free hand.

By this time he was almost exhausted with the effort of the climb and holding the weight of his body on the greasy spar with one arm. But though he had thrust the end of the halliard up through the sheave, he had yet to bring the end down through the pulley hole, and this called for a hand to hold the line and another to reeve it down through. The rolling of the ship was swaying the mast, and, as he hung desperately on to loo'ard, the dead-weight of his body almost wrenched the muscles out of his shoulders and arms. The swinging of the mast was nauseating him in his excited condition, and he felt his strength gradually ebbing. The breath was hissing through his clenched teeth in rapid gasps; his heart was pounding fiercely, and his imagination began to picture horrid visions of him hurtling through the air and crashing to the deck.

"I've got to do it! I've got to do it!" he panted, and making a supreme effort he thrust the line into his left hand, and reaching over the truck with the other, pushed the end down and through. Grasping this in his teeth, he slid down the pole, caught the skys'l backstay and swung down to the spreader of the cross-trees.

Exhausted, sick and shaky, he sat on the spreader for a few moments until breath and composure was restored, and then he came down on deck and belayed the halliard. Mr. Nickerson was smoking a clay pipe and leaning back in a corner of the poop rail when he mounted the ladder and reported, "Halliard's rove, sir!" The mate looked quizzically at him for a second, and taking the pipe from his mouth, remarked, "Ye were a hell of a long time doin' it!" After accomplishing what, to Donald, seemed a most hazardous and herculean feat, this was all the praise he got. It was the way of the sea!

In the night watch the mate called Donald over to him. It was a quiet evening—cold but clear, and with a moderate breeze blowing. "Son," he said, "would you go aloft again to-morrow an' reeve another signal halliard?"

"Yes, sir!" answered the boy bravely, and wondering what was coming.

"Y'ain't scared?"

"Not now, sir. I was while I was up there, but I won't be next time." Nickerson seemed pleased. "That's why I sent you up, boy," he said. "I wanted to see if your nerve was good. You'll do, son!" He puffed away at his pipe for a spell.

"What d'ye cal'late makes the Old Man an' Hinkel treat you the way they do? S'pose ye spin me something of how ye come to go to sea." He spoke kindly.

McKenzie told him in a short narration the events which were responsible for his being on the *Kelvinhaugh*. The mate plied him with questions and grunted at the answers. "So yer old man was skipper of the *Ansonia*, was he?" he ejaculated one time during the boy's story.

"Yes, sir! Did you know him?" Donald had not mentioned the *Ansonia*. Nickerson affected not to hear. "Go on with yer yarn," he growled, and when Donald had finished, he asked, "This Hinkel, naow. Hev ye ever seen him afore? No? D'ye know anything about him?"

"Well—er—I'm not sure," said the boy doubtfully, "except what I overheard the other night." And in answer to the officer's queries, he told him of the "spell in jail" and "if the men knew you were the man" fragments which had come to his ears through the open port. Mr. Nickerson was greatly interested. "Humph!" he commented. "Said he'd been in jail did he?" Then he straightened up with a jerk and slapped the rail with his hand and the smack made Donald jump. "I've got him, by thunder! I've got him dead to loo'ard this time!" he ejaculated. "I knew I wasn't far out when I told him the other night I had his flag and number!" Then quietly he said, "Son, did ye ever hear the story about the ship *Orkney Isles* and a little 'prentice boy name of Willy McFee? No? Well, alright! Ask McLean to step aft here a moment and you skin along and see what time it is instead of yarning here. Hump yourself naow!" Donald "humped"—smiling at the young officer's peculiar manner.

Holding on down the South American coast, the *Kelvinhaugh* began to prepare for the ordeal ahead. Her winter weather canvas had already been bent, and the carpenter was busy re-wedging the hatches and with his crony, the bos'n, getting the ship's gear chocked, lashed and restowed. They went about their work with ominous head-shakings, and the ordinary seamen were beginning to exhibit signs of nervousness with the ceaseless recital of the barque's faults and the Horn in winter, which the old-timers were forever croaking about. In the dog-watches, there was less yarning and skylarking around the fore-hatch, and oilskins, repatched and re-oiled, hung in the sun around the fore-rigging—unmistakable forecasts of dirty weather ahead in the coming days.

In the half-deck, the boys spent their evenings yarning and playing cards—all but McKenzie, who was busy overhauling his wretched kit. Moore had a splendid outfit of everything in the way of oil-clothes and warm clothing, so he didn't worry—neither did he offer to augment Donald's meagre rig. Thompson and Jenkins had a miscellaneous collection of clothing sadly in need of overhaul, but they were young and thoughtless. The Horn didn't scare them! No, by Jupiter, *they* were rough and tough and had hair on their chests—they would start straightening out their gear in plenty of time. When she crossed forty-five south it would be time enough to make and mend for fifty-five! So they bragged, but it was safe bragging, as they knew they'd have the captain's slop chest to fall back on. Thompson had rounded the Horn before, but he did it in summer from Australia, and with a brave west wind astern. He'd never experienced the passage in winter, and he was not impressed. McKenzie was an "old woman" for his pains, they said, but Donald preferred to heed the advice of men like Martin and McLean and to prepare, as the bos'n and chips were preparing the ship. They weren't doing that for nothing. Not by a long shot!

So he stitched and patched and oiled and did the best he could with his shoddy gear, and the best was not enough. He knew it, but he did not complain. One may growl about the ship, the weather, the mates and things extraneous, but lamentations about one's bodily ills or aches, the work one has to do, a wetting or a freezing, is bad form aboard ship and receives no sympathetic hearing. "Serve you dam' well right. What did you come to sea for?" is the invariable answer to such whines.

The barque crossed "forty-five" in a chilly blow, and for two days they had wild tussles aloft with wet, heavy canvas, and severe knockings about on flooded decks hauling on clewing-up gear or braces, downhauls and halliards. Then the "hairy chesters" began to get busy, but the time had gone when oilskins could be re-oiled and dried in the sun. The days were shortening rapidly and the sun's warmth was becoming nullified by the chill of the high latitudes. Each knot they reeled off to the south'ard saw the sea changing from a warm blue to a frigid green, and azure skies to a gloomy lead-colored pall, solid with potential gales.

Captain Muirhead was nervous—all hands could see that. He spent more time on deck and hovered between barometer and binnacle, and when the ship came up with fifty degrees south, he ordered the royal yards sent down on deck—much to the unvoiced scorn of the mate—and the *Kelvinhaugh* was now reduced in canvas to nothing above her big single topgallantsails.

Nickerson sneered mentally. "How does the looney think she's agoin' to make her westing under these clipped kites? All right to send down yards in a light ship, but this heavy drogher.... Huh! Ef it was some of th' Bluenosers or Saint John packets I've sailed in, they ratch her around under skys'ls, by Jupiter! No wonder these limejuicers never make a passage when they have these careful old women in command of them. Huh!"

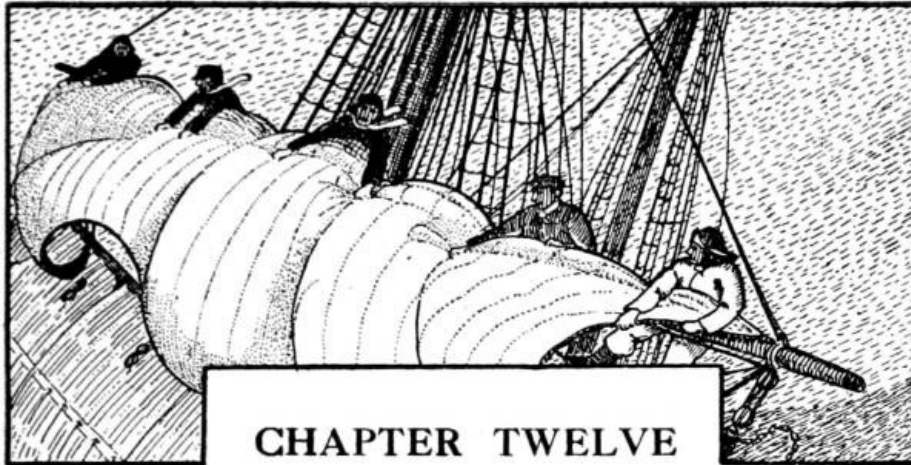
They wallowed down past the Falklands in remarkably fine weather for the latitude, and headed for Cape St. John on Staten Island—easternmost sentinel to the stormy Horn. There was no doubt now of the times ahead. Snow had fallen once or twice, and ice had formed on deck and lower rigging in early morning hours, but the gales...?

"I don't like this," growled Martin to Donald one dog-watch, as they peered at the yellow sunset over towards the Fuegian coast. There was a long rolling sea coming up from the south'ard, with the push of the Pacific Antarctic drift, and the wind had been "knocking her off" all the afternoon, until the yards were braced "on the back-stays." There was a chilly spite in the breeze, which was beginning to pipe up a mournful note in the wire standing rigging, and the south was a black wall, in which sea and sky merged as one. "There's dirt acomin' afore long ef I know the signs, but that ruddy Dutch greaser don't know enough to strip her for it. Ef I was you youngster, I'd go'n turn in right now an' catch up on sleep, for, mark me well, it'll be Cape Stiff afore mornin'!"

Donald took the bos'n's advice and, refusing to join the little game of "nap" which the half-deckers were playing for plug-tobacco stakes, he rolled into his bunk and slept, but not before he had placed his boots and oilskins in a handy place.

He was in the midst of a delightful dream some hours later, wherein he was a spectator watching a young, lean, hawk-nosed pirate, strangely like Mr. Nickerson, prodding his Uncle David, Captain Muirhead and Hinkel down a plank out-thrust from the side of the *Kelvinhaugh*. At the barque's jigger-gaff flew a black flag, upon which was the skull and cross-bones in white. Uncle David was screaming for mercy, and Nickerson was jabbing him in the back with the point of a huge cutlass. Then the scene changed and the mate was pouring bags of golden sovereigns into his lap and telling him to take them home to his mother. "Buy a castle, son," he was saying, "and one with beautiful trees and gardens with wonderful flowers—flowers with nice smells to them—geraniums, roses, honey-suckles, rhododendrons, mignonettes, and don't forget pansies, pretty velvet-petaled pansies—" There came a frightful lurch of the ship which flung him rudely against the steel wall of the berth, a roaring of a big wind on deck and the staggering crash of heavy seas cascading over the rails. Guttural yells sounded from the poop. "Led go to'gallundt halliards!" and someone bawled through the half-deck ventilator. "All out for God's sake!" In the dark, Donald grabbed his boots and oilskins and Thompson shouted, "Hell's bells! Strike a light someone! Here's Cape Horn!"

## CHAPTER TWELVE



**T**HEY jumped out on deck into a wind that nearly took their breath away, and it was as black as the inside of a tar-pot, save where the sheen of the foam to loo'ard illuminated the darkness. Spray and sleet slashed through the air, and the wind was as keen as the edge of a knife—a squall that shrieked in the tautened weather rigging, and which was playing a devil's tattoo with the clewed-up canvas aloft, and orders were being volleyed from the bridge which ran clean from the poop to the fo'c'sle head. "Haul up yer cro'jack! Haul up yer mains'!! Aloft an' stow!"

The combers were crashing over the weather rail in solid cascades, and the scupper-ports were not large enough to carry it off. As the big logy barque did not rise to the seas, the lee side of the main-deck was awash to the height of the to'gallant rail, and in this bitter, swirling brine the crew, manning the furling gear, tugged on the swollen ropes—slipping, washed along and sliding on the sloping decks—in water up to their waists, while the mate, leaning over the bridge rail, cursed and flayed them to herculean exertions with bitter jibes and frightful threats.

The four apprentices and an ordinary seaman went up to the mizzen-t'gallan's'l, the yard of which had been braced to spill the sail already clewed up, and with Thompson at the bunt, singing out, they dug their fingers into the hard, wet canvas in an effort to catch hold and pick it up. "Now, my sons!" bawled the senior apprentice. "All together! Sock it to her! Dig your claws into the creases an' hook her up! What th' hell's a bit of canvas anyway to five husky men!" But picking up the sail in other blows and picking it up in a Cape Horn snifter is a horse of another color. Twice they had it almost on the yard, and twice the squall slatted it away from them. Donald's fingers were bleeding at the nails and his hands were numb with the cold, while the ordinary seaman with him on the weather yard-arm was cursing and whining with the chill and the strenuous labor. "Pick it up, damn you, pick it up!" shouted Thompson. "Now, boys, all together!" They dug in, hauled the canvas up bit by bit, and had almost got it on the yard and ready to pass the gaskets, when Moore gasped, "Aw, t' hell with it!" and let his portion of sail go. The wind ballooned the loosened fold and whipped the canvas out of the others' straining fingers. Thompson gave a growl of rage and instantly clawed his way along the foot-rope and jack-stay to where Moore hung inside of Jenkins at the lee yard-arm. "You miserable skulking hound!" he yelled, kicking Moore savagely with his rubber-booted foot. "I've a—(kick)—dashed good —(kick)—mind to—(kick)—boot you into the—(kick)—ruddy drink! You dare let go again while a kid like McKenzie, half your weight, holds on!"

Whimpering and crying like a baby, Moore bent over the yard while Jenkins at the lee yard-arm encouraged him by further threats, and the five began their muzzling work again. "Now then, my sons, up with her!" yelled Thompson. Beating at the stiff canvas with numb and bleeding fingers, they fought like devils for hold while the sleet slashed at their faces and the cold caused their oilskins to become as rigid as though cut from tin. A hundred feet above the ship, they struggled desperately on precarious, swaying foot-ropes, leaning over the jerking yard and using both hands and trusting to finger-hold to prevent being blown or hurled off. It was strenuous work—work which called for tenacity of purpose and the exercise of every ounce of strength, and when, after taking a yard arm at a time, they finally got the sail rolled up and secured by the turns of the gaskets, they scrambled into the cross-trees, breathless and utterly exhausted. Bitter work for boys, truly! But they would be called to more desperate tasks ere the *Kelvinhaugh* made to the west'ard of the Horn!

They scrambled down on deck to be greeted by Mr. Nickerson. "Where'n Tophet hev you lazy young hounds bin to? Stowin' th' mizzen-t'gallan's'l, eh? Why, curse yez, I've a mind t' set it again an' give ye some sail drill!" Scant praise for strenuous accomplishments! As Donald came aft again—dodging the seas which were, ever and anon, tumbling over the rail—he felt miserably wet and cold under his oil-skins and jumped into the half-deck to examine himself. In spite of the marline which he had tied around his wrists and over his boots, and the "soul-and-body" lashing around his waist, his cheap oilskins allowed the water to soak through the shoddy fabric, and as wet-resisters, they were worthless. Having no others to wear, he had, perforce, to put up with the discomfort and pray for fine weather.

During the middle watch the wind stiffened and the *Kelvinhaugh* was making heavy weather of the going. The



captain was on the poop watching the ship, and as Donald passed to loo'ard of him to make it four bells, he had evidence that the Old Man had been having a nip. The mate, a long, rangy statue in an oilskin coat, sou'westered and sea-booted, lounged in his favorite corner sucking away at a dry clay pipe and watching the straining leach of the mizzen upper-tops'l. It was snowing by now and the flakes could be seen driving athwart the ship in the light of the skylights and the binnacle. The skipper turned from the rail over which he had been leaning, and called the mate to him. Donald, pacing to loo'ard, heard snatches of the conversation down the wind. "That fella Hinkel," the Old Man was saying. "No worth his saut as a second mate. He canna be trusted ... canna dae his wark. When this blow cam' on her he was snoozin' somewheres ... doesna ken a squall when he sees th' signs ... nae guid!"

The mate's nasal voice advised, "Hoof th' square-head scum forrad!" "Aye! Ah'm thinkin' so.... Ye might take him in hond, mister, an' shunt him oot. Ah'll make the entry in th' log ... incompetent an' derelict in duty ... that's th' ticket. Tell him at eight bells ... an' we'll pit Martin in his place ... auld hand and a smert man.... Thompson's too young." Donald could see the tall figure of the mate straighten up and a saturnine laugh came from his direction. "I'll shunt him, sir!" he said.

When Donald called the watch prior to eight bells, he told Thompson the news he had overheard. "Breaking the second mate, is he?" ejaculated Thompson, gleefully tugging his boots on again over wet stockings. "Jerusalem! I wouldn't miss the fun for a farm. I'm going to hang around for a bit afore turning in." They slipped out in the wake of Moore and Jenkins and just reached the poop-break in time to hear a furious altercation on the deck above. The second mate was shouting, "Send me forrad? Send me forrad? Ju candt do id! I my work know id!" "Ye're a damned bluff from A to Zee!" came Mr. Nickerson's nasal bawl. "Ye're a boy-bully—a ruddy, no-account squarehead from Heligoland or Hamburg! You're a common A.B. from this minute, Dutchy, an' ef ye don't move along off this poop an' forrad where ye belong I'll help ye with th' toe of my boot! Shift naow! Look nippy!"

There was a sound of oaths and blows in the darkness—a stamp of sea-booted feet—a guttural curse—and a bulky form came hurtling down the poop ladder. It was Hinkel, and the boys could see his face—ferocious in the light from a port-hole. He had been thrown clear down on the main-deck from the poop, and before he could pick himself up, Nickerson came flying down on the hand-rails with his sea-booted feet clear of the steps. In his dive down the ladder, he landed on the ex-second mate's prone body, and commenced booting him in a manner supposed to have passed away with the Western Ocean packet-ships.

"You sojer! You no-sailor, you! You slab-sided gaffer o' Fielding's gang! I'll work yer old iron up, my son!"—and he kicked Hinkel into the lee scuppers, where the fellow wallowed in the water attempting to rise to his feet. "I got yer number, you German sauerkraut! I had it the night you jammed McKenzie into th' hen-coop! It's an old trick o' yours, ain't it? Well, here's something—(kick-kick)—for poor little McFee—(kick-kick)—an' yer hen-coop dodge on the *Orkney Isles!*" He knocked off, panting, while Hinkel scrambled to his feet and looked sullenly at the avenging Nickerson.

The men had gathered aft, wondering spectators of the scene, and the mate swung around and addressed them. "This joker here is dis-rated an' sent forrad. He's an A.B. from naow out! He's th' squarehead what served two years in San Quentin penitentiary in 'Frisco for killing a boy named McFee on the ship *Orkney Isles!* Naow, ye know th' hound, an' ye'll know haow t' treat him!" Then to Hinkel, "Forrad, you scum, or I'll help ye! Th' stoo'ard'll shoot yer duds aout in th' morning!" And Hinkel, with all the fight kicked out of him, slunk away from the mate's vicinity and disappeared into the darkness.

In the half-deck, after they had pulled off their wet clothes, Thompson and Donald discussed this momentous incident. "And who was McFee?" enquired the latter. Thompson wrung out a soaked shirt and hung it up. "From what I have heard, he was a young first-voyager on a Glasgow ship called the *Orkney Isles*. He wasn't a bright kid—I think he was soft in the nut a bit—but he was a 'prentice on that hooker bound from London to 'Frisco 'bout three years or so ago. It appears that her second mate—(this Hinkel, I suppose, though he wasn't called Hinkel then. His name was Hemelfeldt, I think)—got adown on the kid and almost bullied the life out of him. Off the Horn, the youngster refused to do something, and this swine jammed him into the hen-coop and kept him there the whole of a bitter, freezing watch. The boy had no coat or oilskins on, and he was almost frozen to death. He took ill, but this bucko hauled him out of his bunk and made him work around in the wet and the cold at various work-up jobs, and the little beggar took pneumonia and died. When the ship got to 'Frisco, the other 'prentices and some of the men complained to the authorities, and Hinkel or Hemelfeldt was arrested, convicted and sentenced to two years in a California prison. The way he ill-used that kid was the talk of the Coast at that time. That's the yarn as I know it, and I tell you, son, I wouldn't care to be in Hinkel's shoes from now on. Between the mate and the hands for'ard, his life will be merry hell from 'naow aout'—as Nickerson says!"

Now commenced a period which Donald and all the hands never wished to experience again. The savagery of the Horn latitudes in winter-time buffeted them in all its bitter hellishness, and the heavily laden barque was smashed and banged about in a manner which beggars description. Gale succeeded gale, with all their concomitants of bitter cold, driving sleet and snow, and tremendous seas. Twice they sighted the lonely light on Cape St. John, and twice they were driven back to flounder in the big combers and rips of Burdwood Bank, hove-to under scanty canvas. During the lulls in the gales they would get sail on her and attempt to make their westing, but the trailing log would only record a few miles in the desired direction before a blast of wind and snow would call for strenuous clipping of the *Kelvinhaugh's* wings. "Clew up! Haul down! Let go! All hands! Aloft and fur!" became dreaded and commonplace commands. On certain tantalizing occasions the wind came away fair for a slant and the crew would have a breathing spell, praying and hoping that they would get around "this time," but a fresh gale would strike in from another quarter and the weary watch below would be roused from slumber by the raucous hail of "All hands wear ship!" And wearing ship was the easiest way to tack her, and an operation which the *Kelvinhaugh* made a dirty job of. As the helm was put up in the smooths, the barque would expose her long, deep broadside to the mountainous combers, and she

seldom wore 'round without shipping it green the whole length of her. In paying off, and in coming to the wind on the other tack, the big four-master swung around so slow that she courted destruction, and several times, the crew, huddled together on the comparative safety of the poop, never expected to see her emerge from boarding combers which would bury her completely from fo'c'sle-head to poop-break.

Added to the cruelty of the weather were the long, dark hours of the high latitudes in mid-winter, and what little daylight there existed was as gloomy as night with lowering, leaden skies and the black squalls slashing out of the west. It was here, in the "stand-by" latitudes, in fifty-five south, that Donald McKenzie had all the romantic ideals of sea-faring knocked out of him. It was here where he learned that he had come to sea to be disillusioned and that romance existed mainly in the printed page, the picture and the imagination of boys and poets. The man who writes and sings best of the sea is the man who has been but little acquainted with the hardship and monotonous drudgery of a sailor's life. Young McKenzie came to sea to realize the romance he dreamed of. He had run from fifty-five north to fifty-five south and retrospection failed to bring out any phase of his life on the *Kelvinhaugh* as being anything other than desperately hard work, relieved by spells of tiring monotony. He slept and ate in a steel tank with white painted walls pierced by starboard and port doors and two port-holes, and furnished with a deal table and two plank seats. Four bunks, two uppers and two lowers, completed the furnishings of this combined bedroom, dining room and parlor. True, there was a small bogey stove, but this was more of an ornament than an article of utility. There was no fuel supplied to keep it alight, and only on rare occasions (when the boys stole some coal from the donkey-boiler room, or when some chips and shakings could be secured) was a fire ever kindled in it. In this cubby-hole, jammed up with four sea-chests, suitcases, sea-boots on the floor and oilskins and clothing on the walls, the four lads, "gentlemen rope-haulers," lived during their hours of relief from duty. The unsheathed steel walls and overhead beams dripped moisture, which made rusty streaks from the rivet-heads, or dropped on the upper bunks or to the floor—there to add their quota of damp discomfort to the salt water which squirted through the jambs of the door every time she shipped a "green" one.

Chiseled into one of the overhead beams ran the legend—"Certified to accommodate four seamen." Thompson, with the aid of an indelible ink pencil had altered this to a more fitting rendition—"Certified to *suffocate* four seamen," and in the stormy latitude of fifty-five south, with doors and ports tight shut, and bedding, blankets and clothing sopping wet and exuding their own peculiar aroma, mixed with those of the paraffin-oil lamp, tobacco reek, food, boot-grease and damp oilskins, the amended version was nearer the truth.

McKenzie's companions, also, were "hard-bitten," or had become so through the environment. Clad in filthy garments, and unwashed through lack of fresh water and opportunity, they wolfed their wretched food, cursed and blasphemed and bullied one another in a manner that would have shocked their parents. There was little consideration given them by their superiors and they, in turn, had but little consideration for each other, though all, except Moore, would do what they could for a ship-mate in sharing clothing and tobacco. It was a rough comradeship, but a true one, nevertheless, and while such weaknesses as sympathy or sentiment were tabooed, yet each would stand by each in a pinch or time of peril.

For a boy brought up as Donald had been, he had shaped up remarkably well. He had been bullied and knocked about a great deal more than any of the other apprentices on the *Kelvinhaugh*, but hardship seemed to have toughened him and he stood the physical grind as well as the best—sure evidence of untainted blood and wiry stock of Highland forebears. Mentally, he had received the greatest gruelling, but, in addition to quick wit and keen intelligence, he had the rare faculty of adaptability, and without losing his finer feelings or allowing them to become demoralized, he fitted himself to his environment, but kept a leash on his talk and actions which may be summed up in Thompson's characterization of him—"a dashed clean, plucky little nipper who always plays the game!"

Clean, plucky, and "playing the game"—a delicately nurtured lad—a mother's boy—but bred from good stock and holding to his ideals with true Scotch tenacity—was Donald McKenzie. The romantic aspect of a sea life had faded away, but there still remained the thought that he, a lad of sixteen had done things, could do things, that strong, grown men ashore would hesitate and refuse to tackle. The bitter grind of seafaring tempered his boyishness and taught him self-reliance and courage; the rigor of the discipline had taught him to obey without question, and when a man can obey, he is fitting himself for command. He had gone through the first degree; had been initiated into the great fraternity of seafarers, and he knew seafaring for what it was—shorn of its false romance—a gruelling grind which called for men of courage, men who were willing to cut themselves adrift from the comforts and allurements of the land, and who became as a race apart. With romance shattered, he was willing to stick to the end, to go through the mill until he reached the goal where he could take something from the sea which had exacted so much from him. It had ruthlessly claimed his father and seared the soul of his mother, but he, an apprentice seaman, was learning its ways, its varying moods, and as a seaman, he was acquiring the sea-cunning and strategy to use it for his will. That was his new ideal. He would take something from the sea which had already exacted so much from him!

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

**S**IX weeks of desperate effort! Six weeks of plunging in Cape Horn “graybeards,” during which time the *Kelvinhaugh’s* crew plumbed the depths of physical and mental misery; physical—in the savagery of the weather, the ceaseless grind of back-breaking labor and the wretchedness of living conditions; mental—in the seemingly endless succession of gales thwarting their passage of the stormy corner at the foot of the world and the relentless tyranny of the hard-driving Nova Scotian mate. When they retired to the comparative comfort of their sopping bunks praying for a rest, it was Nickerson who roused them out and drove them from task to task with lurid oaths and fearful threats. And they knew his threats were not idle phrasings—many a skulker had felt the weight of his fist and boot. “Rest?” he would voice their mental desires. “Rest when ye’re dead. Ye’ll have rest enough then, by Godfrey!”

Day after day, with the yards on the backstays, clawing along in the teeth of the westerlies, under all the driving sail the wind would allow, the *Kelvinhaugh* traced a spider’s web of traverses in the area bounded by sixty and seventy degrees west longitude and fifty-four to fifty-eight south latitude, and failed to win past the desired meridian. Captain Muirhead proved in those days of stress to be “poor iron.” He was vacillating and easily discouraged, and, worst of all faults in a ship-master, he was endeavoring to stiffen his nerve with excessive drinking. When the whisky was in him he forgot his worries, and as the days crept along with no change in the weather, he betook himself more and more to his liquid solace, and left the sailing of the ship to the mate.

In the intervals between “bouts,” Captain Muirhead would show his weakness as a commander by seeking affirmative advice from the Nova Scotian. “Don’t ye think, mister, it would be a guid notion tae square away an’ mak’ a runnin’ passage of it to the east’ard by the Cape an’ across the Indian Ocean an’ th’ Pacific?” or “Would it no be better tae knock off an’ put in tae Port Stanley in th’ Falklands an’ lie there ‘til the edge is aff this awfu’ weather?” To these suggestions the mate gave but one answer, “Sock it to her an’ drive her around!” To this the master would shrug his shoulders and protest querulously, “Ye canna do that wi’ this ship, mister! She’s no built fur drivin’! Ef she was a double-stayed ship an’ wi’ a big crowd for’ard, ye might, but drive her, an’ she’ll shed her sticks or she’ll dive tae th’ bottom. She’s no sea-kindly. She’s a long, heavy, logey barge wi’ nae lift tae her. Pit sail tae her an’ she’ll jist scoff everything aff her decks. She’s a lubberly, meeserable bitch of a scow, an’ if it wasna that I was on a lee-shore an’ jammed in a clinch I’d never ha’ took her.... Nickerson, ma laud, never let an owner get a grup on ye! Ef ye do, ye’re done! Aye ... done!” When he had liquor in him, the Old Man was unusually talkative and hinted at things which Nickerson noted carefully.

The mate undertook to drive her one day when the skipper was below, “keeled over” by an unusually stiff bout with the bottle. Under three t’gallants’ls he was ratching her to windward in a heavy wind and a “nose-end” sea, when the barque took a dive into a towering “greybeard” which thundered over the fo’c’sle-head, buried the for’ard house and stove-in the fore-hatch. Another sea would have finished her had it been allowed to pour its tons of chilly brine down into the uncovered hold, but Nickerson had the helm up and the barque wore round and running before the wind ere such a disaster could happen. When the Old Man heard of it, he made a noisy, but weak, remonstrance, and celebrated the escape from Davy Jones’ locker by another solitary spree.

Under the grind of the ceaseless gales, the bitter cold, and the continual round of laborious work in water and wet clothing, the crew began to play out. Seldom a watch reported aft but one or two of their numbers were in their sodden bunks useless through rheumatism, cramps, sea-water boils, shivering fits, bruises or sheer exhaustion. The panderers to shore vices collapsed under the drilling of Cape Stiff and they received scant consideration. Nickerson or Martin would go for’ard and diagnose the case. If the sufferer was fit to pull on a rope—out he would have to come—sick or not. Skulkers and sufferers from “Cape Horn fever” had their ailment quickly cured by the “laying on of hands” or “repeated applications of sea-boot.” Sick men received the best treatment the medicine chest and the ship could afford—enough to bring them on deck when the necessity arose.

The former second mate, Hinkel, went through a severe drilling. Loathed and despised by the men among whom he was forced to live; bullied by the Britishers and treated with contempt by the “Dutchmen” and “Dagoes,” his watches below were but little better than his watches on deck under the eagle eye and scorching tongue of the young Nova Scotian mate. Nickerson roused him around with a vengeance, and the man had his crimes rowelled into him when the mate “rode him down” and used the spurs. Tender-hearted little McKenzie was really sorry for his late tormentor, but he had miseries of his own to keep his sympathies for.

The boy was suffering terribly through the wretched clothes he had been supplied with. He was never dry during the knocking about off the Horn, and his feet and fingers were chilblained with the cold. He had waited on the captain and asked for a re-fit from the slop-chest, but the Old Man curtly dismissed his plea by stating sourly, "Mister McKenzie told me that the rig he bought ye was tae do ye th' trip until we were bound hame. He'll no pay me for onything I may gie ye oot ma slop-kist. Awa' wi ye an' start a tarpaulin muster with yer pals in th' hauf-deck!" Thompson and Jenkins spared what they could. The sullen Moore made no offers.

One bitter day the mate found him huddled in the lee of the chart-house crying with the misery of sodden clothing and aching fingers and toes. His sea-boots had burst from their soles and he had "frapped" and covered them with strips of canvas and old socks. His oilskins were patched and coated with pitch and oil to render them waterproof, and upon his hands he had a pair of discarded woollen socks as mittens. The officer stood and scrutinized the little pinched face peering from under the thatch of a painted sou'wester, and his eagle eye spied the tears and the make-shift clothing. "Hell's delight, boy, but is that the best rig you kin muster for this weather? Hev ye bin pipin' yer eye?" He spoke harshly.

"No, sir," replied Donald, straightening up. "The wind was making my eyes water. I'm all right, sir!"

The young Nova Scotian looked at him for a moment and then his stern face lit up with a smile of almost brotherly affection—and smiles on Nickerson's face were rare in fifty-six south. Stepping up to the lad, he put his arm over his shoulder in a big brotherly way. "Dern my stars'n eyes, son, but you've got grit, guts'n sand in that skinny carcass of yours. I like your style, sonny—blister me ef I don't! Wouldn't the Old Man give you a new rig from the slop-chest?" Donald told of the skipper's charity and the mate's face resumed its stern saturnine look. He was silent for a moment. "Come below with me, sonny, and we'll try and square up that pierhead rig of yours." And Donald followed him down to the saloon and along to the steward's quarters.

"Looky here, Johnson," said Nickerson sharply to that individual, "open up that slop-chest an' give this nipper a full rig-out!"

The steward stared. "Why, sir, I—I cawn't do that," he stammered. "The slawps belong to the keepting, sir, h'an 'e gyve h'orders, sir, that McKenzie 'ere was not to be h'allowed to dror anyfink—"

The masterful mate interrupted sternly, "Naow, looky-here, you stew-pot walloper, you'll jest bloody well do as I tell you, or I'll trim yer hair. I don't care a tinker's dam what the 'keepting' has said. I'm not agoin' to allow this here youngster to freeze to death on a Scotch lime-juicer's charity. You give him the duds pronto, an' you kin charge them up to his uncle—the owner of this packet!" And he concluded by fixing the steward with a ferocious scowl and the familiar spur to action, "Look slippy naow!" And Donald went into the half-deck with a full kit of fairly good gear, which he donned with heartfelt thanks to the mate, and some little, but not much, trepidation as to what the captain would say about the forcible commandeering of his treasured "slops."

However, as events turned out, the captain was put in a position where his remarks would carry but little weight. For weeks he had been drinking heavily and the navigation of the ship had been left almost entirely to the mate. He kept to his quarters in the after cabin, sitting before the stove soaking himself in whisky and hot water. When he came on deck, it was to curse the ship and the weather, and to suggest putting the barque before it for a run around the world to the east'ard, or to put into the Falklands. After making these suggestions, he would retire to the warm stove and the "mountain dew" again.

One morning at the change of the watch, when the barque was rolling scuppers-under in an ominous Cape Horn calm, Mr. Nickerson and Martin called their respective watches aft. The mate leaned over the poop rail and addressed them. "Men," he said quietly, "the master of this hooker is continually drunk and incapable of handling the ship. Naow, we want t' git along, and I cal'late I kin git her along. Mister Martin and I have talked the matter over, and we have come to the conclusion that it is the best for all hands if I take over the command of the ship. What d'ye say, men?"

The men may not have loved Nickerson as an officer, but they admired and respected him as a sailor. They all knew that the Old Man was a "rum hound" and a weakling, and they had already chewed the matter over in fo'c'sle parliaments and wished for something to happen to get them away from "Cape Stiff." Nickerson couldn't be any worse as master than as mate. The assent was unanimous.

"I will make the necessary entries in the ship's log, and I will ask you men to come aft here an' sign yer names to it," said the Nova Scotian. "And, naow," he added, "as I am in command of the vessel, I want some action. Ye'll git those three r'yal yards crossed again right naow while this quiet spell lasts—" The men looked glum—royals prophesied more work setting and furling—"and as you men have to work hard, it is only right that ye sh'd be fed properly and have warm quarters. I'll order the stoo'ard to improve your whack, and while we're down south here I'll see that ye git coal for yer stoves. Naow, turn-to both watches!" The glum looks were replaced by grins and appreciative smiles, and under the direction of Martin, now acting as mate, the men set to work getting the royal yards off the skids and up aloft on the masts where they belonged.

The senior apprentice, Thompson, was made acting-second mate and would be in charge of the starboard watch. Martin, the former bos'n, though uncertificated, was a first class seaman, and was quite capable of taking the mate's place. McLean, of the cropped head—cropped no longer—was promoted to bos'n and donkey-man.

When Thompson came into the half-deck to remove his gear into the cabin, he had some interesting news. "The skipper was full as a tick when Nickerson and Martin broke the sad news to him. He kicked up an awful rumpus and lugged a revolver from under his bunk mattress, but our Bluenose mate rushed him and wrenched it out of his hand. Then Nickerson told him he had the choice of being carried to Vancouver in irons, or of staying in the after cabin, and the old soak took the best choice. He had three cases of whisky and a small keg of rum in his clothes cupboard, and the mate left him the whisky—telling him to enjoy himself for

the rest of the passage lapping it up. It was a hot session, believe me, and old Muirhead cursed enough to blister the paint. That Limehouse wharf-rat of a steward kind of sided with the Old Man, but Nickerson settled his hash by telling him if he tried any monkey business he'd send him for'ard and ride him down like a maintack. So the skipper is a prisoner in his quarters and the steward is skipping around licking Nickerson's boots. It's a rare tear, my sons, and believe me, chums, we're going to have some fun from 'naow aout' as our new skipper says."

McKenzie and Jenkins expressed joy at the change in affairs—especially at the allowance of coal and improved grub—but Moore remarked that "Nickerson was exceeding his rights and had been tryin' to run the ship ever since we left port!" This brought Thompson on him. "Listen, you moocher!" he said, threateningly. "You're going to sweat in future! You came to sea to learn to be a sailor, and as long as you're on this packet you'll do your whack. You've been shoving it on to McKenzie and Jenkins all along, but you won't now. You're coming into the starboard watch with me, and I'm going to look after you. I'm not one of the half-deck gang now. I'm second mate of this hooker, and you'll address me as 'Mister Thompson' and you'll clap 'sir' on to your answers, and you'll work, you bally sojer, or I'll know the reason why." And with a portentous look at the sullen apprentice, he left for the cabin.

The foggy calm lasted about eight hours, and while the big barque wallowed in the trough of the mountainous swells, the crew sent the royal yards aloft, shackled on the gear and bent the sails. A sight of the sun at noon and in the short afternoon placed the ship in 56° S. latitude, and 63° W. longitude—a poor showing for six weeks' effort. But with the change in commanders and conditions, all hands hoped for better times and a fair slant to push the barque to the west'ard of the seventieth meridian. The older hands, however, knew the vagaries of the Horn latitudes, and calms were invariably the fore-runners of fiercer gales. By the manner in which Nickerson hovered around the mercurial barometer in the cabin entrance; his hopeful tapping of the glass to hasten its prophecies, and his continuous scrutiny of the sky and horizon, they knew he was looking for something to happen, and wondering where it was coming from.

The short day came to a close and tea-time found the barque rolling her lower yard-arms into the tremendous swells. The gear aloft banged and crashed and the sails flapped thunderously, while water spurted in through scupper hole and clanging wash-port and swashed across the decks. Lying thus, helplessly becalmed, in an atmosphere chill with winter cold, and under a sky as black as ink, they waited for the wind which they knew was coming.

At the close of the second dog-watch it began to snow, and within an hour the barque was filmed with the flakes and appeared as a ghost-ship in the velvet darkness. When the first flakes began to fall, Nickerson ordered the stowing of the cro'jack, the t'gallants'ls, the mains'l, and the mizzen upper-topsail. All fore-and-aft sails were down except the fore-top-mast-stays'l, which is seldom hauled down at sea. As the men rolled the canvas up on the swinging yards their voices floated down out of the blackness aloft like unto spirits crying in the dark. The swishing canvas and the falling of the snow in the windless air, combined with the aerial shouts to conjure a picture in McKenzie's Celtic imagination as of "giants aloft sweeping the floors of Heaven with mighty brooms!"

At midnight the ship wallowed in a world of sheer blackness, in which neither sea or sky could be defined. Albatrosses, driven to rest on the water through lack of wind to bear their mighty pinions, squawked mournfully in the dark, and their cries, mingling with the tolling of the ship's bell as she rolled, filled the night with eerie warnings distinct from the screeching, clanking, flap and rattle of the sails, chains and gear aloft. "That's an auld sailor frae Fiddler's Green," remarked McLean, when the squawks of the albatross came out of the murk. "He's givin' us warnin' tae stand by fur dirt. Auld sailormen never die ... they gang tae Fiddler's Green, which is a pleasant harbor seven miles tae loo'ard o' hell, whaur ye never pay fur yer drinks. It's all free tae auld sailors—smokes an' drinks. When ye wants a cruise around, ye jist turn intae yin o' them albatrosses.... Aye! A great-place fur sailormen is Fiddler's Green!"

"Is there no Heaven or Hell for sailors, Mac?" asked Donald.

"Nane ava', laddie! Jist Fiddler's Green—that's Heaven. There's nae hell fur sailors. Tae wurrk hard, live hard, die hard an' go tae hell after all would be hard indeed! Na! na! we get oor taste o' hell in these things ... up on a tops'l yard ... doon hereabouts!" And he sighed—content with his philosophy.

One bell had struck when Nickerson's voice cut through the darkness and brought the standing-by watch to vigilance. "Lee fore brace!" The helmsman stood stolidly at the wheel staring into the binnacle and awaiting orders to swing the ship in the direction the wind and master dictated. "How's her head?"—the nasal tones again.

"South by west, sir!" came the answer, and the man had no sooner spoken when the sails gave a thunderous flap and a shrieking squall came out of the west. The ship, without way upon her, rolled her monkey-rail under to loo'ard and the sea plunged over the bulwarks and filled the lee deck. Nickerson cursed. "West again, blast it! Another nose-ender!"

The sails, braced sharp up, took the wind and lifted the vessel through the water and away she plunged—smashing her blunt bows into the seas, and with her jib-boom pointed for the South Pole. Down the wind came the sleet, which blew athwart the ship like chaff from a blower, and which adhered to the gear and froze in the increasing chill—adding to the misery of the crew in handling ropes, jammed in the blocks and fair-leads, and sails, hard as iron with frost and snow-skin. The long swell began to define itself in the darkness with ghostly foam caps which grumbled, hissed and roared, and the *Kelvinhaugh* invited them aboard in every part of her except the poop—which, rejecting the solid green, nevertheless had to accept the sprays, and these, freezing in their flight through the air, slashed the poop's occupants with shot-like hail.

Within an hour of its coming, the squall proved too much for the barque, but Nickerson had no intention of wearing ship and letting her scud before its fury. He was out to make westing, and if he could not pick up a

slant in the vicinity of the Cape, he would drive her south—aye, even to the edge of the Antarctic ice—and work to the west'ard from there. He kept her on her southerly course and ordered a further reduction of sail.

It was in getting the big foresail to the yard that Donald, in company with both watches, got a taste of Cape Horn devilishness. Strung along the ice-coated foot-ropes—ten hands on each yard-arm, with the gaskets aft of them, struggled and fought like demons with the threshing canvas, endeavoring to burst the confining bunt-lines and leach-lines. Clutching the jack-stay with one hand for self and using the other for the ship was no use. In the *Kelvinhaugh*, short-handed and with heavy gear, it had to be two hands for the ship and God help the man who was caught unawares by a back-flap of the rebellious canvas, or who lost his footing or balance on the foot-rope!

Slashed with hail-like spray, cut with slivers of ice flicked from the sail or the gear aloft, and chilled with the biting cold, they struggled in the dark, panting, swearing, clutching at canvas, rigid, bellying, iron-hard and full of wind, and spurred on by the oath-besprinkled exhortations of Martin and Thompson and McLean at the bunt and lee and weather yard-arms. "Up with her, ye hounds!" they were encouraged. "Put yer guts into it an' grab ahold! Lay back, you swine, an' I'll boot you off th' yard inter th' drink! Now, me sons—an' ye know what sons I mean—altogether! Up with her!"

Each man and boy clutched his portion of sail with numb fingers and muzzled it between his chest and the yard, and paused for breath. Then another clutch, another heave up, and another band of sail was added to the imprisoned roll. Many times, a fiercer gust would fill an opening of the canvas and battle for the mastery, and often, in spite of a roared "Hang on all!" the hard-won portions would be wrested from a weak clutch and the wind would claim the sail from all and the awful fight would have to be waged again.

In this desperate struggle they worked themselves into a sort of Berserker frenzy of strength and determination to master flogging canvas, wind, weather, and the limitations of the human constitution. The sail *had* to be furled. There was no getting away from that. The Anglo-Saxons showed the grit of their northern blood and tugged and hauled and gasped blistering blasphemies in a savage rage at the opposition of wind and canvas to their muscles and brains, while the Latins and others hung on to the jack-stay, useless, apathetic, whining and remonstrating feebly at the kicks and curses bestowed on them by their sturdier shipmates.

"You yellow dogs! Oh, you herring-gutted, paperbacked swine!" snarled Thompson at two frightened, cowering seamen alongside him. Then, with up-raised fist, he threatened in hoarse rage, "Grab-ahold, curse you! Grab-ahold, or I'll jam my fist into the monkey-mug they gave you for a face when they made ye! Never mind grabbin' that jack-stay! Grab canvas! That's what ye're up here for, you—you—" he paused for a suitable epithet, but none coming to mind, he broke off in disgust and beat at the sail as if he were beating the men he had threatened.

Forty minutes aloft and twenty men had failed to subdue the sail. Martin at the bunt stood on the truss and clutched the chain sling. "Now, men," he bawled hoarsely while the canvas jiggled a rigadon below them, "we're going to make one more try—just one more, and she's *got* to come this time. If any man sojers or lays back on the job, I'll kill him—s'help me God, I will! Now then! A-a-all together!" And they bent to the task again—cursing, whining, crying, and wishing the fores'l, the ship, and everyone aboard her in sulphurous flaming hell.

They got the rolled-up canvas on the yard at last and were passing the bunt and quarter gaskets when someone gave a guttural yell in the blackness, and two of the men instinctively felt that a man was gone from between them. "Somebody's fell off the yard!" cried a seaman sensing the gap in the ranks along the foot-rope. "Who is it? Where did he go?" yelled Thompson, who was on the fateful yard-arm.

"Hinkel, I think, sir!" The second mate swung back of the men along the foot-ropes to the truss and scrambled down the weather rigging, followed by Martin. Dodging a boarding sea, both men slid down to loo'ard behind the for'ard house and scanned the lee scuppers. "He ain't there!" shouted Martin. "Must ha' gone over the side!"

"Might have fallen on top of the house," cried Thompson climbing the ladder. A moment later his hail brought Martin up. "He's here. It's Hinkel, and he's alive, though unconscious. Get some of the hands and we'll get him aft!"

The former second mate was carried into the cabin and placed in a spare bunk. He was unconscious and bleeding from a cut on the head. His arms and legs hung limp, and at the moment, it was impossible to determine the extent of his injuries. "Tell the stoo'ard to attend to him," said Captain Nickerson. "I'll look him over later."

Crashing and floundering in the big seas under shortened sail, the *Kelvinhaugh* staggered south, driven by the fury of the gale and filling her decks with frigid brine in monotonous regularity. All hands were sodden, frozen and exhausted, but as they huddled around the bogie-stoves in fo'c'sle and half-deck, "standing-by," they murmured curseful thanks for the grateful warmth to the iron man who paced the poop and studied glass, ship, wind and sea with an eye vigilant for the weak opening in Cape Horn's armor of implacable spite.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN



**W**ITH all sail stripped off her and a tarpaulin lashed in the weather jigger rigging, the grey daylight revealed the *Kelvinhaugh* lying hove-to in a sea which words fail to describe. It was a veritable battle of the elements—wind and ocean wrestling for the mastery—and the unfortunate barque was in the “No Man’s Land” of contending forces.

The crew were huddled in their swaying bunks absolutely exhausted in body and spirits. They had put in a desperate period from midnight to dawn, and they felt that another such ordeal was beyond their powers of strength and endurance. They were ready to give up and let the ship go where sea and wind listed, and even Nickerson, driver that he was, could get no more effort out of them. Hour after hour throughout the night they reefed and hauled sail off the barque, and eventually hove-to under fore and main lower topsails. When the main-topsail split in a frightful gust, they stowed the remaining canvas as best they could, and set a staysail of storm fabric. When this small patch burst, they unrolled a tarpaulin hatch-cover in the jigger rigging and seized it there to keep her head up to the mountainous sea.

“Ef she was only a real ship....” growled Nickerson disgustedly, but she wasn’t. She was the *Kelvinhaugh*—a cheap product of slack times in Clyde shipyards; a stock article for sale at a cheap price, ugly, ill-designed, ill-equipped, over-loaded and under-manned. Her crew knew it that day, and hove-to, their master allowed them to turn in all-standing, and recuperate for the next call to battle. No look-out was kept—there was but little use for a lookout with the ship not under command—and only McLean, tending the lashed wheel, and Nickerson, tenanted the spray and rain-drenched poop. These two men—thorough seamen both—communed together, exchanging weather-lore and experiences and planning to beat the fierce west wind of the “Roaring Fifties” with a ship that was not designed or fabricated or laden to do what ships are called upon to do in the wind-hounded seas of the high latitudes.

The Nova Scotian, oil-skinned and sea-booted, his lean face reddened by the wind and his keen grey eyes peering forth from swollen lids, came out from the shelter of the cabin companionway and squinted to the south’ard. “I think, McLean, it’s haulin’ southerly a mite!” he remarked in a voice harsh with much shouting.

McLean rolled up his sou’wester thatch with a mittened hand and glanced around—sniffing the air like a hound. “Yes, sir, I b’lieve it is. It’s clearin’ a bit to the west’ard, sir. There’s a wee bit break yonder.”

Sagging off to loo’ard, the big barque rolled and plunged ponderously in the swing of the big Horn seas which, ever and anon, swashed over the rails and filled the decks until the clanging wash-ports drained the boarding brine away. Her four heavy masts, denuded of canvas, described wild arcs across the grey skies, while the wind shrieked and thrummed in halliards and wire stays, and clanking chains and chafing parrals added their notes to the general pandemonium. The running gear blew out in great curves to loo’ard and the ends of the halliards, washed off the belaying pins, floated across the swashing decks in an inextricable tangle of snakey coils, or trailed overboard through the ports. In the lee of the houses or the tarpaulin in the jigger rigging, the two men swayed their bodies to the violent lurches, both watching for the hoped-for signs. McLean read them by sea-lore and sailorly instinct alone—the skipper combining these qualities with more scientific forecasts in squints at barometer and compass.

After an hour, Nickerson rubbed his hands together and swung his arms. He laughed—a hoarse, crow-like chuckle—and remarked to the bos’n, huddled in his oilskins and standing alternately on one foot to ease numb toes, “She’s shifting, my bully. We’ll get our slant this time, I cal’late. Sing out to the stoo’ard to give us a mug-up of coffee and bite here, and then we’ll rouse out the hands and get the muslin on her.”

Thompson appeared while they were quaffing the hot brew. “Captain,” he said, “Hinkel wants to see you. He thinks he’s dying.” The skipper smiled saturninely. “I’ll look him up in a spell. He won’t cash in his chips yet awhile. I cal’late I hev time to finish my coffee an’ cake afore he pegs aout, eh?”

A few minutes later he went into the berth where Hinkel was lying. Earlier in the morning he had examined him, and finding only a broken collar bone and a number of bruises, he had set the bone as well as he could and left him to the care of the Cockney steward. “Well, what’s ailin’ ye?” he asked harshly.

“Do ju t’ink I’m goink fur to die, kaptan?” He asked the question apprehensively.

Nickerson looked at the German shrewdly. "Naow, I ain't sure but what you might slip your cable. I can't tell what ails ye altogether. Ye might be injured internally. A man don't fall sixty feet or so an' land on a hard deck-house an' git away with a cut finger. No, siree! One o' yer ribs might ha' busted an' pierced a lung an' ye'd bleed to death internally. Hev ye any pain thereabouts?"

"Yaw, kaptan, I have dot pain in dot place und I t'ink ju right maybe." His owlish German face screwed up in an expression of pain as the rolling of the ship racked his injured body. He showed fear in his eyes—fear of death—and he spoke hoarsely and rapidly. "Kaptan! I ju musdt dell somedings! Ju lisen please!"

When the skipper left Hinkel's room, he had a curious expression upon his hard young visage. "Miserable sculpin!" he muttered. "It would be a damned good thing if he did die!" On deck again, McLean enquired respectfully, "Wull the Dutchman pull through, sir?"

"Aye, he won't die," came the reply. "Not much the matter with him but sheer funk, I cal'late. We'll have to board him until we strike port, and he'll be no more use to us than the Dutchman's anchor what was left on the dock." Then with a squint at the compass and a glance to windward, he continued, "Rouse the hands aout, McLean, an' git th' tops'ls on her! This hellion of a wind is comin' away fair for a slant an' we've got to make the best of it!" And he stamped his feet on the slushy deck and chuckled.

And they made the best of it! With a southing wind blowing stiff from the icy Antarctic wastes, they "put it to her!" as the sailors say, and sail after sail was cast loose, sheeted home, and yards mastheaded to the chorus of rousing chanteys. The crew, unkempt and unwashed, weary, wet and bruised, but rejuvenated with the thought of getting under way again to the west'ard, worked and chanteyed with a will—tugging and heaving on sloshing, rolling decks and blessing "old bully-be-damned" aft for raising a breeze which would speed them from these accursed latitudes. Let him pile the rags on! They would stand the racket, by Jupiter! No sail-carrying, no cracking-on, could affright them now after what they had gone through. They had plumbed the depths of uttermost misery. Six sanguinary weeks and three gory days banging around the back door of Tophet in a perishing, misbegotten, barnacle-bottomed barge of a ruddy work-house misnamed a barque; reefing and fisting sail in hail-squalls and sleety gales, bursting their hearts out on heavy gear and being drenched in chilly water and washed violently along and across the decks, and enduring all this for a measly pittance—they had had enough of it. Drive her or drift her! but get her away from Cape Stiff, the grey skies, the snow, frost, ice, gales, albatrosses and mollyhawks, and they would be thankful for small mercies.

Captain Nickerson paced the swaying poop smoking his pipe. Two men were at the wheel—skilled hands for lee and weather spokes. Thompson was for'ard and Martin flitted along the bridge from poop to fo'c'sle-head. The foresail and upper and lower tops'ls had been set and the barque was beginning to storm ahead under the urge of the wind in their woven fabric. "Give her th' main t'gallan's'l, mister," commanded the Old Man, and when the sail was sheeted home and the yard hoisted, he studied the straining canvas and spoke again. "Set the fore an' mizzen t'gallan's'ls, mister. She'll lug them. What she won't carry, she can drag!"

Under this canvas the *Kelvinhaugh* stormed along, headed nor'west by west magnetic, and with the bitter gale over the port quarter hounding her through the huge grey-green seas which, in this latitude, sweep around the world.

The men, after setting the topgallantsails, dived into the fo'c'sle for a warm-up and a lay-back. The barque was driving the sprays as high as her lower mast-heads and the gear began to freeze up in the chill of the wind from off the Antarctic ice. But they didn't care. She was making westing, and the Olympian Bluenose aft was driving his wind-harried steed up into fairer and warmer latitudes. The *Kelvinhaugh*, built by the mile and cut off by the yard as she was, wriggled her long body through the sea, and her blunt bows shouldered the east-bound combers and she staggered to their tremendous impact. The great Cape Horn "greybeards" roared past, seeming to say: "We'll give you a chance now you poor devil!" when the barque would give a swaggering lift to her bows like a woman tossing her head, and she would seem to retort insolently: "The deuce you will!" as she elbowed a small half-surge out of the way. Then up would come a big brother comber, racing and roaring in the wake of the little fellow, and the ship, conceited in the irresistible weight of four thousand tons of hull, spars and cargo, would try the same tactics. Crash! Burr-r-room! a halt, a stagger, a thunderous roar as of a cataract, and a slow lifting as tons of chilly brine swirled through the clanging scupper-ports, and the big fellow would speed on his easterly run to Australia, hissing a warning—"Go easy, you silly trollop, or we'll smash you, stave you, rip and rend you, and plunge you down to roost on the splintered pinnacles three hundred fathoms below!"

Nickerson slapped the weather poop rail with his hand. "Go it, you scow! Travel naow an' let's see what ye kin do. You've a hundred an' seventy-five miles to make to Diego Ramirez, so slog along, you big ugly plug, slog along!" And to Donald, "standing-by" on the lee-side of the poop, he grinned, "Heave the log, son!"

The hands for'ard had an eye on the poop. "What's he doin'?" queried someone—"he," of course, meant Nickerson.

"They're heavin' th' log," came the reply from an observer.

"Humph," grunted a fo'c'sle oracle. "Bet he'll be singin' out for th' ruddy main-r'yal in a minute!"

McKenzie, Jenkins and an ordinary seaman had finished their speed recording task and were reeling in the line. "What's she makin'?" asked the Old Man.

"Ten and a half, sir!"

Nickerson nodded. "Ornery old barge," he grunted, "an' this is her best point o' sailing." Then to Thompson, "Mister! Give her th' main-r'yal!"

The fo'c'sle observer qualified as a long-distance lip-reader. "He's told young Thompson to give her th' main-



r'yal. Spit on yer hands, lads, an' limber yer j'int's for a pull at sheets 'n halliards—"Thompson had run along the bridge and his voice interrupted the prophet's observations, "Main-royal, men! Lively now!"

Moore was sent aloft to cast the gaskets adrift, and on deck the crew sheeted home and mast-headed the yard to "*A Yankee ship came down the river,*" and they chorused and hauled the sheets to the t'gallantyard-arms and yanked the yard up ere Moore was off it. Soloed the chanteyman:—

*"Were you ever in Congo River?"*

The crowd chorussed:—

*"Blow, boys, blow!"*

The chanteyman piped again:—

*"Where fever makes the white man shiver!"*

And the men roared:—

*"Blow, my bully boys, blow!"*

In the cold and the wet, in day-light and dark, on sloshing decks they hove and hauled—bawling out the old-time sea choruses as if in defiance to the shriek of the wind and the roaring water. They yelped and barked on "*Ranzo*"; stamped to "*Blow the man down!*" and "*In Amsterdam there lived a maid,*" and wailed plaintively to "*Lowlands,*" "*Shenandoah*" and "*Fare-well you ladies of Spain.*" The chantey is rare melody—inane and unimpressive ashore, but wonderfully inspiring when sung to the organ roll of a big wind, and the human voices rose above the material accompaniment of clanking chains, humming shrouds, clanging wash-ports, the boom of the gale aloft, and the swish and thunder of the sea.

All day and night they drove her storming, decks filled to the rail and wire shroud and steel framing twanging and screeching to the strain of the driving. In the half-deck the boys laid in their bunks—the water a foot deep on the floor—and watched the chilly brine spurring in through the jambs of the doors and felt the jarring of the steel house as the seas smashed against it. The place dripped water; their blankets and bed-sacks were sopping, and they were wet, cold and hungry, but the aspect of things had changed. The brave southerly—friend of the outward-bounder in fifty-six south—was blowing stiff and strong and driving them away from the regions accursed.

In the grey twilight of the succeeding day, when the patent log had recorded their distance, they cast the deep-sea lead over the bows and Nickerson fingered the line aft on the poop and noted the marks with contentment. "Sixty-five fathoms! She's makin' her westing all right!" Then to McKenzie, he said, "Son! Nip aloft an' see if you kin make out anything like steep rocks or the land ahead. Take these glasses with you."

From the elevation of the t'gallant rigging he scrutinized the bleak expanse of sea—greying in the half-light—and picked up a dog's tooth of black rocks against the sky-line far to the northward. "Land ho!" he shouted, pointing with his arm. On deck again, he described them to the captain. "Humph!" grunted he with satisfaction on his stern visage, "Diego Ramirez, I cal'late, or it might be Ildefonso. We're gittin' along.... Mister Thompson! At eight bells you'll git th' fore an' mizzen r'yals on her. This southerly'll ease off as we run north."

In the middle watch that night, Nickerson called Donald to him.

"How're ye feelin' naow, son? Warm enough these days?"

"Yes, sir! Thanks to you," replied the boy.

The skipper puffed at his pipe and settled himself comfortably on the rail in his favorite angle. "Son," he said, after a pause, "what d'ye plan to do when we reach Vancouver? Stick with the ship, eh?"

Donald nodded. "I'll have to, sir. I can't do anything else."

"Ye don't have to, son," said the other quietly, "and ef you'll take my advice, you won't. This hooker ain't fit to sail in. She'll go to the bottom some of these days. Now, your uncle .... he's a swine from 'way back and you'd be safer away from him and his ships. He don't care a cuss for you—in fact, I know he hates you like poison. You'd better plan on skipping aout, sonny, when we get tied up to a Vancouver wharf. Whatever you do, don't sail in this or any of your uncle's ships."

McKenzie was impressed with the Nova Scotian's manner. Desert the ship? He had given the matter some thought before, but had dismissed the idea in his determination to serve his time and climb the ladder to command. "How about my future at sea, sir?" he enquired perplexed. "If I run away from the ship, how am I going to get on in my profession?"

"Do you want to go ahead in this rotten business?" exclaimed the captain earnestly. "What is there for a clever young nipper like you in the lime-juice merchant service these days? Why, boy, you'd make more money and have a better time of it on a Grand Bank fishing schooner. Aye! in the Canadian coasting trade, the skipper of a three-master'll make more money than the brass-bound commander of many a big liner in the passenger trade! I'm telling you, son, and I don't want you to spill it to your pals, that I'm not agoin' to stay in this bally-hoo of blazes when she gits safely tied up. I've got friends in Vancouver and Victoria, and I'm goin' into something on the Coast or else back home in Nova Scotia. I've had enough of this slavin' and drivin' and sailin' ships with useless, spineless dock wallopers and sun-fish for crews.... Aye! I'm tired of it.... Howsomever, son, I've taken a shine to you, and ef you'll follow me, I'll take care of you, and I'll guarantee in a few years you'll be able to bring your mammy aout to Canada an' live happily ever after as the story-books

say."

Donald nodded. "It sounds good, sir. I'll think over it, and I thank you for your kindness."

Nickerson knocked his pipe out on the rail and stretched himself. "Alright, son, think it over, and say—nip along for'ard an' see ef them light-tower windows ain't covered with snow or ice. Those mole-eyed lookouts 'ud never think of giving 'em a look-over even though they'll hail 'the lights are burnin' bright!'"

As the skipper surmised, the glasses of the side-light towers were filmed with frozen spray and the lights were barely visible. Donald cleared them and had hardly done so before he made out the ghostly loom of a large ship ahead. No side-lights were visible, but he needed no second look to convince him it was a ship close-hauled and not a trick of the imagination. The look-out, coming up from a stolen visit to the fo'c'sle, saw it too and yelled.

Donald, knowing that a running ship must keep clear of a vessel close-hauled, shouted, "Hard down! Hard down! Ship dead ahead!" Nickerson must have heard him and acted, as the *Kelvinhaugh* swung up to the wind and the watch tumbled up to the braces and trimmed the yards as she came up. The other vessel careered past—a big, deep-laden three-masted ship with painted ports—and as she went by to loo'ard, a voice sung out, "What ship?"

"*Kelvinhaugh*—Clyde for Vancouver! What—ship—is—that?"

"*Craig Royston*—Frisco to Falmouth!" And she was swallowed up in the night.

"Weather braces!" came the command from the poop, and the *Kelvinhaugh* swung on her course again—her crew having heard the first strange voice in four long and weary months.

When McKenzie came aft again, the skipper met him. "Smart boy!" he complimented. "I just h'ard ye in time. Another minute and that feller would ha' bin slap-bang into us or us into him. Go down in the cabin an' rouse that skulkin' stoo'ard aout an' tell him to make a mug-up for the two of us!"

With such small rewards were deeds of vigilance, nerve and hardihood commended—a cup of tea and a piece of soggy cake or a cabin biscuit! At sea, however, on a deep-water ship, one is thankful for small mercies, and to men and boys who lived as the *Kelvinhaugh's* did, a little bit of warming fire, a mite of extra food, and a cup of indifferent tea stood out in the monotonous drudgery of sea-life as pleasant sensations and bright reminiscences in the midst of drab memories.

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN



**C**APTAIN Nickerson drove the *Kelvinhaugh* in genuine "Down-east" fashion, and the big barque made the best speed it was possible to attain in such a model, and with such a weak crew. The cheap gear gave trouble, sheets parted, shackle-pins broke, braces carried away, and the sail-maker—who had looked for a fairly easy time in a new ship with new gear—was kept busy mending split sails, while the men had their fill of bending and unbending canvas. "Nah yer gets an h'idear o' wot h'its like h'on them ruddy Bluenose packets!" growled a seaman. "Ye spends orl yer watches h'on deck wiv the hand-billy and the strop and ascrapin', apaintin' and apolishin' h'of 'em, and orl yer watches below sendin' dahn, amendin' and abendin' th' bloomin' canvas they busts h'in their sail draggin'. Ho, them's th' perishin' packets for 'ard work, me sons! Them Bluenose mytes, like h'our fella there, lies h'awake nights thinkin' up work for the 'ands, they does, bli'me!"

"A reg'lar plug!" Nickerson would growl, when, with a stiff breeze and under all the sail she'd stand, the log would only record a speed of nine or ten knots. These were records for the *Kelvinhaugh*! Her usual gait was

around five and six sea miles per hour with breezes in which a clean-lined British or American clipper would be running her two hundred and forty miles from noon to noon.

The Nova Scotian was no believer in ambling along. He slept during the day and kept the deck at night, driving the big barque along by every trick of wind-coaxing he knew. In the "variables" off the Chilean coast he box-hauled her in the flukey airs, and when the squalls came down, it would be—"Stand by yer r'yal halliards!"—but no command to "clew up and let go" would be given unless the skipper judged the weight of the wind to be too much for sail and mast to stand. Nickerson would sooner split a sail than take it in—so the hands averred—but headway is more often made at the expense of canvas than by mothering it, as the Yankee clipper ship records show.

From the strenuous, desperate labors of the high latitudes, the crew progressed to the monotonous grind of scraping, chipping rust, and painting. Decks were sanded and scrubbed clean to new wood and then oiled; rigging was set up and "rattled down," or rather "up," as the fashion now is, and Donald, with the other two boys, had his fill of tarring and slushing. Nickerson's liberal use of the ship's paint would have caused David McKenzie to sweat blood could he have seen it, but by the time the barque had crossed the Pacific equator, she was scraped, scrubbed, painted and varnished until she looked like a yacht inboard. The running gear was overhauled from spanker-sheet to flying-jib down-haul; the standing rigging was tarred down and set up bar taut, and the brass-work—what there was of it—shone until it glittered like new-minted gold in the sun. All of this spelt "work," and Martin and Thompson would feel that they had done all they could do in "sprucing her up," but the artistic eye and labor finding imagination of the skipper would suggest some other job "to keep the hands from gittin' hog-fat an' lazy"—even to the extent of polishing "Charley Noble"—the galley funnel.

Through the sweltering heat of the "Line" and its heavy down-pours and thunderstorms, the *Kelvinhaugh* was coaxed into the north-east trades again, and when the Tropic of Cancer had been crossed, the crew felt that they were almost in port and they fervently longed for the day when they could set foot on shore once more. Would they ship in the *Kelvinhaugh* again? Not by a perishin' condemned sight! They had had enough of her—these lean, taut-muscled sea-wolves. Their voyage in the ship had been a nightmare, and their desire to "hit the beach" was accentuated by the daily lessening quantity and bad quality of the beef, pork, flour and biscuit which was being served out. The voyage had been over-long and food was running low. Fresh water had been secured in the tropical down-pours, but the tanks were foul through want of liming. Even the lime-juice—a feature of British sailing-ships on long voyages—was scarce and only served to those men who showed symptoms of scurvy.

McKenzie—the pale-faced, sensitive little mother's boy of six months back—had developed into a lithe, hard-muscled youth—"tough as a church rat," as the skipper remarked—and he had thrived wonderfully in the cruel grind of "lime-juice" seafaring. As a sailor, he was far ahead of the other two boys—thanks to Hinkel's hounding and Nickerson's drilling. Moore was useless, and would never amount to anything at sea. He was the stuff "they don't make sailors of," as Martin sarcastically remarked, while Jenkins, though a willing lad and of considerably more sea experience than McKenzie, was slow to learn and was of the kind that acquired knowledge in time through sub-consciousness of repeated lessons and dint of much driving them in. Compared with his previous voyage on another ship, his experiences in the *Kelvinhaugh* had sickened him, and he talked of "cutting his stick" and serving the balance of his time before the mast in another ship.

In the less strenuous hours of the tropic latitudes, Donald had time to think, and he made up his mind not to remain by the *Kelvinhaugh*. His life on her had knocked his ideas of the future "galley west," and while he intended to remain at sea-faring, he did not plan to serve out his time under the McKenzie house-flag. Nickerson's ominous advice had impressed him. He felt that the skipper knew more than he cared to tell him, and if the Nova Scotian would keep his word, he would follow his fortunes and take a chance on his future. In common with the inmates of fo'c'sle, half-deck and cabin, Donald looked forward to the end of the voyage. "The more the days, the more the dollars!" sailors say, but none of the *Kelvinhaugh's* crowd were anxious for a long voyage pay-day.

As they crawled up the North Pacific, gossip fore-and-aft wondered what would become of Captain Muirhead. He had "lapped up" all his supply of spirits and was now sullen, sober and sick looking. For a while each day he appeared on deck, and the men wondered at Nickerson's charity in allowing the deposed master such freedom, but the Bluenose evidently had Muirhead "jammed in a clinch," for he made no move to secure his usurped position either by word or deed. The dis-rated Hinkel was for'ard again with his arm in a sling, and useful only to the cook. The fo'c'sle would have none of him. He was a veritable ocean leper, and ate in the galley and slept in a berth intended for a painter.

Six months and ten days out from Greenock, the *Kelvinhaugh* stood in and raised the land. When the hail came from a man who had been making up gaskets on the foret'gallant-yard, all hands tumbled up for a look. There was a light wind from the nor'west and they ambled towards the high coast line, which stretched as far as the eye could discern. When darkness fell it gave them a definite position in the flashing light on Estevan Point, Vancouver Island. Thrice welcome beam! Harbinger of the seaman's yearning for stable earth, trees, grass and flowers, cosy homes, bustling streets and the concomitants of the land!

During the night, as they drifted down the coast towards the Straits of San Juan de Fuca, the crew roused a big towing hawser up onto the fo'c'sle-head; knocked the plugs out of the hawse-pipes, rove the chains through them and shackled on the anchors under the auspices of "chips" the carpenter. Overhauling the ground-tackle! Happiest of deep-sea tasks—fore-shadowing of a voyage's end.

Dawn found them standing in between the land, with a flood tide aiding the light wind in squared yards. With the breeze fair for a run up the Straits, Nickerson intended to save a stiff tow-bill, and they held along past the Vancouver Island shore in a drizzle of rain—typical fall weather on the West Coast. Shipping was more numerous now and tramp steamers with lumber deck-loads, and three-masted schooners forged out of the

haze outward-bound from British Columbian and Puget Sound ports. Early morning brought them the sight of a beautiful clipper-bowed, two-funneled Canadian Pacific liner, which flashed past them, bellowing raucously in the mist. A lithe, white-painted ghost of a ship she appeared as she slipped along at fifteen knots. "She's bound for Yokohama, Shanghai and Hong Kong—Japan and China," remarked Thompson to Donald. "Japan and China?" echoed McKenzie dully. "Ah, yes.... Japan and China!" Romance to him was dead, and the mention of these far-off destinations in the mystical Orient failed to awaken a spirit of world-wandering. Different, indeed, from the time, six months back, when he dreamed glorious imaginings of the coming voyage "out west," and when the words, "Aye, I'm sailing to-morrow. 'Round the Horn to Vancouver..." conjured a wonderful vista of romantic sights and experiences.

Aye! aye! he had been around the Horn and Vancouver was a mere jog ahead, but the youthful glamor of his shore dreams was gone. To realize his dreams he had experienced hard work, hard fare and hard knocks, and the price was too heavy for the realization of the ideal. A sailor's life...? He found himself unconsciously echoing his father's words, "It's a dog's life at the best of times!"

Still, he ruminated, maybe he hadn't been given a square deal? Maybe he had struck it tough? He thought over the yarns of his shipmates for opposition reasonings, but a mental summary of their reminiscences failed to bring up any expression from them of infatuation for a seafaring life. "Seafarin'? Aye, mate, it's all segarry in yer bloomin' yacht when you is the bloomin' owner; when you lies in yer blinkin' bunk 'til nine an' presses th' button for the stoo'ard to bring yer blushin' cawfee; when you lolls around in a deck-chair or an 'ammick under an awnin' aft an' has another flunkey amixin' ye up gin an' bitters, an' arfs-an'-arfs, an' whiskies an' sodies, an' when ye're sick o' rollin' about, ye jest ups an' tells th' skipper to run yer boat inter th' nearest pleasant 'arbor. That's real seafarin'! Any other way is plain hell!" So Cock-eyed Bill expressed his ideas one night, and the growl of assent which came from the audience seemed to confirm the sentiments. To them it was all "a hard drag"—a monotonous round of drudgery in an unstable ship-world in climates torrid, temperate and frigid, and punctuated by spells of desperate effort and nerve-breaking thrills. When sailors talked of good times, they were memories of shore jaunts and sprees. The fun and pleasant memories of those sea-toilers invariably savored of "the big night we had at Red Riley's place in 'Frisco," or "Larrikin Mike's dance hall in Sydney"—never at sea! And yet, in spite of it all, men would go back to the sea and the ships again—tire of "the beach" and sign and ship for another spell of knocking about. What was it? he asked himself. What was the indefinable something which irresistibly drew men back to sea-faring after drinking deep of its cup of loneliness, monotony, hardship and misery? He could not answer—not yet. He was but an initiate in the lodge of the sea. He had other degrees to master and he had not yet been ashore and alone with his sea memories. When the voyage was over and he was free from the ship and his shipmates; when he was safe on the beach and fraternizing with landsmen who knew nothing of the degree he had worked, nothing of the sea and sailormen—then would old ocean's magical lure get aworking. His time would come—some day—if he were of the genuine Viking blood.

The wind died in the forenoon watch and in an "Irishman's hurricane" of up-and-down drizzle, the *Kelvinhaugh* drifted, tide-borne, on a glassy sea. Far to the west a square-rigger was lying becalmed; the C.P.R. liner's smoke hung low along the horizon, and the serrated peaks of the Olympics loomed high to starboard. The waters of the Straits were dotted, here and there, by fishing boats, and slabs of bark and huge tree-roots drifted past with the tide or current. Nickerson relaxed his work-bill for once, and the crew, except the wheelsman and look-out, took shelter from the rain and discussed the future.

Poor sea-children—they had all been burnt by the fire of their experiences, and all were for "slingin' their hook" from the *Kelvinhaugh*. They had it all planned out. Some of the Scandinavians had friends in the fisheries and they would look them up and land a job handling salmon nets or halibut trawls. No more wind-jammering deep-water for them "by yiminy!" A green hand announced his intention of making for the Klondyke gold fields—that being the incentive which sent him fore-the-mast on the *Kelvinhaugh*. Some of the others planned getting work ashore, or, failing that, they would make for Puget Sound ports or San Francisco "where the boarding-house masters treat a feller right an' a man could take a pick o' ships to sail in ef he didn't get drunk!" That was the ticket! 'Ware mean Scotch barques with ornamental donkey-boilers and four heavily-sparred masts and eight able seamen's bunks forever empty in the fo'c'sles. They knew the Scotch shipowner, by cripes! It was them that invented hard work and small pay. Didn't they start the donkey-boiler dodge? Didn't they invent these four-masted hookers with their fore, main and mizzen sails all the same size, so that the tops'l of the one could be used on the tops'l of the other, thus saving a spare suit of sails for every mast—a Scotch money-saving dodge! And they brag of the handy four-mast barque which could carry a whacking big cargo and only needed, with the donkey, a small crew to work the ship! More Scotch shrewdness! Aye, they sat in their offices in Bothwell street, and Hope street and Neptune Chambers and thought these schemes out! The *Kelvinhaugh* was a sample, and when Cock-eyed Bill admitted with pride that "doin' twelve months hard in Barlinnie Jail was a blushin' holiday compared with this v'y'ge," they perished and blistered their sanguinary eyes and cursed Scotch economy in ships, food, and creature comforts. Young McKenzie, listening, felt a pang of shame for the economical characteristics of his countrymen.

The muggy night found the barque still with the wind "up and down the mast." For'ard, the crew were packing their bags and having a sing-song—the first for months. Aft, McKenzie, Jenkins and Moore (sullen no longer) yarned of their experiences and discussed the future. Donald was non-committal—"he probably would stick by the ship"; Jenkins was going to "fly the coop between two suns—clothes or no clothes" and put his time in on some other ship as a seaman 'fore-the-mast, and take his chance on securing a clean discharge. Moore had enough of the *Kelvinhaugh* and a sea-faring life to last him the rest of his days. He would cable "Pa" from Vancouver to send him the price of a ticket home. After a month or so's rest, he would enter the brewery's office, where he could make up invoices instead of gaskets. No more "Up you go, you skulker, and overhaul and stop the royal buntlines!" and perching and hopping around the lofty branches of the trees which grew from a windjammer's decks. "It's all right for a bally bird," he said, and the other two loathed him for lack of sand. A "stuck sailor," forsooth, and the beer factory would suit him handsomely!

A light southerly sprung up with the cessation of the rain in the middle watch, and "Lee fore-brace!" roused the hands out to haul the yards aft and trim sail to the wind. Early morning found them around Beechy Head, Race Island, and off Royal Roads at the entrance to Victoria Harbor, and they backed the main-yard while a pilot boarded them. He was a brother Bluenose and scrambled up the Jacob's Ladder with a "Got here at last, cap'en!" as if he had long been expecting the ship. His boat's crew hove up a bundle of newspapers, which Captain Nickerson took and failed to read, as they were filched shortly afterwards by the half-deckers—hungry for news and wondering if Canadian papers contained British football and cricket results.

The greetings done with, the pilot glanced around. "Cal'late, cap'en, ye'd better bring-to here in Royal Roads an' let go yer killick. Carmanah got yer number yesterday and your Vancouver agents are sending over a big tug to lug you in. Devil of a current runs through the channel hereabouts ... pull you through them at slack water. Better clew up yer muslin naow an' edge in an' let go off th' shore there. Th' quarantine people will look ye over here, but I guess there ain't much ailin' your crowd but hard muscles and empty bellies." And he chuckled reminiscently.

The barque glided slowly in to the anchorage as sails were being clewed up and the yards lowered. "Come-to hereabouts, cap'en," said the pilot. The helmsman put the wheel over, and when the ship lost headway, the skipper sung out, "Leggo y'r anchor!" The carpenter, in the eyes of her, swung his maul and knocked out the pin of the chain-stopper, shouting "Stand clear!" as the mud-hook plunged into the water with the chain thundering and rattling through the hawse-pipe. Then came a moment of silence—a further rattle of heavy cable-links—and a jarring tremor betokened that the ship had taken up the chain and that the anchor had bitten the bottom. "Anchor's holding, sir!" came the hail from for'ard. "Alright!" grunted Nickerson, and to Martin he said, "Naow, git her canvas stowed ... an' make it a harbor furl. She'll not need sail for a while naow!" His lean young face had a complacent grin as he puffed on a cigar. He had worked the old scow in, and the *Kelvinhaugh* had completed her first voyage under canvas—a passage of one hundred and ninety-five days.

Nickerson and the pilot went below, and the men working on the poop noticed that both they and Captain Muirhead were sitting around the saloon table chatting away in the most friendly manner. "A rum go!" they remarked. "What's in the wind?" But the young Nova Scotian was evidently playing a game of his own. "Yes," he was saying to the pilot, "Captain Muirhead has been a very sick man. Knocked out down south ... have had to take his place ever since. Second mate fell from aloft ... hurt...." The pilot was murmuring his sympathies and Muirhead was shaking his head as if in corroboration of Nickerson's testimony. In truth, he did not look a well man. The long confinement had washed the sea-tan off his pock-marked features and, no doubt, his heavy drinking had affected his system.

With the rest of the hands, Donald was aloft helping to furl the sails into that neat uncreased roll which is known as a "harbor stow." They took their time at the job. None of your lump, bulgy furls, like "a bunch of tricks," with a bunt like a balloon and clew-lugs sticking out like a whale's flukes, in a harbor stow. That sort of thing was all right for Cape Horn, where it was roll 'em up anyhow and get the gaskets 'round them, but the last furl had to be a furl where the canvas would lie, without a crease, like a white ribbon along the yard, and the gaskets would be passed like unto a neat serving. With sails stowed, they clambered to the deck and braced the yards faultlessly square; took up the slack in running gear and faked it down on the belaying pins in neatly stopped coils. When this was done, the *Kelvinhaugh* looked, in the placid water of the Roads, a proper picture of an inward-bound deep-waterman. No seaman could mistake the clean paintwork and scrubbed decks *inboard* and the taut rigging and well-furled sails aloft for an outward-bounder. The chafing gear on the stays and the rusty, sea-washed and red lead patched hull told its unmistakable story, for every sailor knows a wind-jammer goes to sea with a clean hull, but with cluttered decks and riggers' snarls and "Irish pennants" (loose ends) aloft, and a ship is in her best trim after her sailormen have toiled on her between port and port.

A launch brought the port doctor out and he glanced perfunctorily at the lean, hungry-looking mob lined up on the deck for inspection. He examined Hinkel's mended bones and muttered, "A good job—well done!" A professional compliment to Nickerson's surgery, truly! He then went into the cabin, and when he came up again, Thompson heard him say to Nickerson, "Your skipper has a bad liver ... been drinking too much, I'm afraid.... Sick man ... better be careful!" And he went over the rail.

Shortly after the man of medicine departed, a big deep-sea tug came around a point and forged towards them. She had a huge rope fender over her bows and several wooden ones trailing along her sides. A wheel-house was perched forward on her superstructure, and it was profusely ornamented with nameboards in gilt and a spread-winged eagle crowned its roof. Donald had never seen such a tug before and he was interested in the fine points of difference between it and the low-riding, paddle-wheeled craft which had hauled them to sea over six months ago. She ranged handily alongside, with her skipper half in and half out of the wheel-house. He was in shirt-sleeves and wore a hard bowler hat, and looked like a drygoods clerk, but he knew how to handle his craft. When she was fast alongside, he sung out to the pilot, "Better get yer hook *hyak* (quick)!" he drawled—masticating a quid with jaws that never ceased to work. "I wanna git this big hooker through in slack water afore them *skookum* (strong) currents start arunnin'! This one'll be a sight worse'n any raft o' big timber by th' looks o' her, I reckon!" Punctuating his conversation with Chinook idioms, he chewed and yarned with the pilot and Nickerson while the crew prepared to get under way again.

McLean had steam up in the donkey, and it hove the anchor short amid fervent comment from the barque's crowd. "Fust time that ruddy ornament has worked sence we left for out!" they remarked. "Pity they couldn't ha' used it them times we was doin' ruddy watch-tackle drill or handlin' them cussed yards!" Aye, but coals cost money and muscle-power was cheaper, and these were days of low freights.

In tow of the steamer, the *Kelvinhaugh*, with a man at her wheel, glided out of the Roads, rounded Discovery Island and pulled into Haro Strait. The pilot and Nickerson paced the poop exchanging news and views, and Nickerson evidently astonished his fellow countryman, judging from the "Waal, I swan's!" and "Th' hell ye

say's!" which came from the pilot's lips. "Aye ... lucky to get here ... a slow ship," the captain was saying.

The pilot glanced around. "New ship, too ... ye hev her spruced up. Not like aour old Bluenose packets, whittled out of the bush above tide-water, eh? A lime-juicer for discomfort ... no wheel-house to keep the man at the wheel out of the cold and the wet. Stand in the open an' freeze an' be damned to you! That's th' lime-juice way for ye!" The tug was plucking the big barque along at a faster clip than she usually made under sail and the reek of her Nanaimo coal gave the barque's crew a tantalizing memory of Glasgow's bituminous atmosphere. The tide was running in strong astern of the ship and helped to shove her along, but soon it was noticed to slacken when they hauled through the island-studded channels.

Donald, working on "stow away jobs," feasted his eyes on those islands—rugged, rocky, dense with rank undergrowth and lofty with mighty cedars, spruce and red pine. Huge fallen trunks thrust their tops into the water, and mighty gnarled roots—"snags" the pilot called them—danced in the tide swirls or lay stranded on the beaches. Bare rocks were passed, upon which seals basked or slipped into the quiet water when the ships loomed near, and ever and anon, they passed fishermen in open boats, towing trolling-lines to entice the clear-water salmon. Once a Siwash Indian family in a dug-out canoe, made from a single cedar log, swung lazily under the barque's stern, and the head of the family imperturbably continued his paddling in the wash from the "*skookum sail-ship*," while his "*klootch*" (woman) cuffed her curious brood to the dug-out's floor. "Yon's an Injian," observed McLean to Donald. "A rid Injian. There's lots o' them in these parts." And Donald's thoughts turned for a space to the stirring tales of Fenimore Cooper and the "Buffalo Bill Library." "Do they scalp and go on the war-path nowadays, Mac?" he enquired.

The bos'n laughed. "They're gey good at scalpin' th' heid aff a whusky bottle if they can get yin. Ah was a year on this coast yin time ... tradin' ... up north. We sold them whusky for pokes o' gold an' skins. They're quiet folk ... no th' scalpin' kind."

Threading around the channels and dodging dangerous up-rooted trees as long as the ship's main-yard, called for good steersmanship. "A lazy hooker!" remarked the pilot. "A slow ship in stays, I reckon?" Nickerson nodded. "Slower'n scullin' a loaf o' bread 'cross a tub o' Porto Reek molasses in January!" he answered—quoting a "Down-east" phrase indicative of the extreme in tardiness. "Aye ... boxhaul her around or wear ship most of the time ... a condemned scow!" The pilot laughed. "Minds me o' th' time I was a kid in an ol' three-mast schooner timber-droghin' from Nova Scotia to the West Indies ... flat on the bottom ... wake 'ud be forrad o' th' fore-riggin' ... took a whole watch to tack her in and the whole ocean for sea-room. Haul daown heads'ls an' fores'l, sheet in mains'l an' spanker 'n roll th' wheel daown. Then slack yer after canvas, h'ist fores'l an' jibs ... sheets to wind'ard ... an' she'd git around ... maybe!" And he chuckled over the reminiscence.

From Haro Strait, they emerged into the placid waters of the Gulf of Georgia, and in a lifting of the shore haze, the wonderful beauty of the coast ranges on Vancouver Island, and the mainland burst on the vision. All around the horizon the great peaks thrust their summits into the ether and fleecy wisps of mist caressed their tree-clad slopes. Far to the east, dominating them all, Mount Baker, Queen of the Cascades, hove her snow-crowned crest almost eleven thousand feet above the level of the sea.

McKenzie was entranced with this tow-line voyage. This was the happiest day of his seafaring, and Nature's prodigality in this wonderful country charmed and fired his imagination. He remembered his last sight of land the breadth of two continents away—a dog-toothed spur of wave-lashed granite, a splinter of stone from the tail of America's tremendous vertebrae—Diego Ramirez rocks to the west'ard of the Horn. Aye! things were different then, but even the Ramirez were good to look upon ... a welcome milepost on a hard traverse.

In mid-afternoon, with no work to do but watch the nip of the towing hawser, and undisturbed by the fear of an oath-besprinkled command, he sat on a fo'c'sle head bitt and absorbed the wonders of that hundred-mile drag. In the words of the fare-well chantey:—

*"The sails were furled—the work was done!"*

And he relaxed and dreamed and feasted his eyes and starved soul on the magnificent panorama which was unfolded with every mile the ship made up the Gulf. Aye, here was romance! The thrill of having travelled a hard, dreary road and stepping, all of a sudden, into Fairyland. Only those who have experienced it can realize the heart-hunger for the land after six months of nothing but heaving, restless sea. McKenzie forgot the sea and the ship and the voyage and unleashed his soul and imagination to appreciate the glories of the serried peaks which ringed him around, and the gem-like islets set like emeralds on the turquoise of the water.

In the dog-watch, when the sun was setting in an oriflamme of red and gold behind the western peaks, and the lazy waters of the Straits mirrored the lights and shadows in brilliant crimson, gold and blue, they towed past the Fraser River estuary, and the Sand Heads light-ship gleamed scarlet in the sun-glow. Numerous sailboats dotted the turbid flood at the mouth of the river—their occupants setting the twine to enmesh the river-seeking salmon. "Fushin' fur salmon tae be tinned—or canned, as they ca' it oot here," vouchsafed McLean. "They turn oot millions o' tins o' salmon up yon Fraser River. Them fishermen are nearly a' Japs, an' there's a when o' them on this coast ... aye, an' Chinks an' Hindoos an' sich-like Mehommedahs!"

It was dark when the tow-boat swung the barque around Point Grey and headed in for the Burrard Inlet Narrows. Between Prospect Point and the high-wooded slopes of the opposite shore, they pulled through a narrow channel, and the huge trees of Stanley Park commanded Jenkins' admiration. "By golly," he cried, "I don't know whether it's a trick of the moonlight or not, but did you ever see such monsters? They're higher'n the masts of this ship!" No indeed! Donald never had, but he promised himself a closer scrutiny of those lofty trunks at the first opportunity.

Round a picturesque cliff, capped by a brilliant light, they hauled, and the City of Vancouver burst upon their

vision with a blaze of twinkling electrics, which spun twisting threads on the mirror of the harbor waters. The Queen City of the West! It has been called thus, but to one sea-wearied lad it was Fairyland—a veritable Valhalla for ship-tired Vikings—and he hungered for the moment when he could set foot ashore and roam its streets. The fo'c'sle crowd gladdened at the sight of a town again, and McLean and other old-timers were busy answering eager questions. "Is the beer good an' cheap ashore here?" or "Is this der place where dot Two Bit Hilda has dot haus mit der lager und der gals?" "Aye, aye," McLean was saying, "ye can get a' th' whusky an' gurls ye want here if ye hae th' dollars. Let me tell ye about th' time..." Donald listened carelessly to a vicious adventure. It did not affect him. He was staring longingly at the city and the snow-clad heights around and paid no attention to the excursions in vice which the crew were planning. Nature's beauties had no place in their make-up. It was whisky and women, and most of them knew the beauty spots of the world only by the price and quality of the liquor to be procured therein. Poor devils! It was their idea of pleasure, and after what they had gone through, it was corporeal joys they appreciated rather than mental.

He was brought to things material by the warning shriek from the tow-boat's whistle, which found an echo in the lofty heights. "Stand by, forrad!" came Nickerson's voice. The men shambled to the bows. "Haul in yer hawser!"

The steamer slipped the rope and the barque rounded up and threw her great hull and spars athwart the moon-path. "Leggo yer anchor!" came the strident command from aft. A plunge—a roar—a rattle of chain—and silence. The awakened waters showed new facets to the moon-glare and spread in concentric rings away from the disturbing hull, and with a voice hailing from the departing tug, "We'll berth you at five!" the *Kelvinhaugh* lay quiet and motionless at the end of her chain, like a tired horse that had travelled a long and weary road.

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN



**T**HE *Kelvinhaugh* lay alongside a wharf and her steam donkey was working, as it never worked at sea, slinging the long bars of railway iron out of the holds by yard-arm tackles. It was a noisy discharge, as the rails clanged sonorously on impact with each, and the whole harbor rang with the sound.

All the ship's company had departed, with the exception of Captain Muirhead, the steward, and the four apprentices. Though chartered to load lumber at Hastings Mills for Australia, Muirhead had paid the crew off—a rash and unwise act, as he would find when he came to ship another—but he was probably willing to take a chance and get rid of all witnesses to his disgrace and deposition from command. Judson Nickerson had gone, too, but before he took his dunnage ashore, he called Donald and said, "I'm going ashore for a spell, but I'll give you a hail later. Don't run away or do anything foolish until I communicate with you. Let on that you intend to stand by the ship!"

Thompson was now "out of his time" and the skipper had given him permission to leave and go home to take the examination for second mate, but he had asked him to stand by the ship for a while until a mate was signed on. Moore had cabled his "Pa" for a remittance to take him home and away from sea-faring. He was seldom aboard the ship, and spent most of his time ashore "sun-fishing" around bowling alleys and billiard parlors with young loafers of a similar cut of jib to himself.

Hinkel vanished after being paid off, and he was never seen again around Vancouver. It was thought that he had shipped to the north in a coasting packet running supplies up to St. Michaels or Nome for the thousands of gold-seekers who were swarming into the Yukon with every north-bound ship. McLean and Martin had succumbed to the gold-fever and had shipped as hands on Alaska steamers, and the others had scattered to the four winds of Heaven shortly after being paid off. Donald recalled their shouting of the fare-well chantey as they warped the barque alongside the wharf:—

“The work was hard, the voyage was long,  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her!  
The seas were high, the gales were strong,  
And it’s time for us to leave her!  
She would not steer, nor stay, nor wear,  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her!  
She shipped it green, and made us swear,  
And it’s time for us to leave her!  
The sails are furled, our work is done,  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her!  
And now on shore we’ll have some fun,  
And it’s time for us to leave her!”

Roaring this nautical valediction, they belayed and coiled down, and when Martin had said, “That’ll do, men!” they tumbled their dunnage over the rail and hied along to Pete Larsen’s Place or Two Bit Peter’s Sailors’ Boarding House and Nautical Emporium—glad to get away from the “bloody starvation Scotch work-house” which they called the *Kelvinhaugh*. Aye! in a week or two, in all probability, they would be outward-bound again in something as bad, and the much-anathematized *Kelvinhaugh* would be glorified in “my last ship” reminiscences.

Donald and Jenkins worked from six to five painting and doing odd jobs, under the orders of Thompson and Captain Muirhead—the mystery of whose reinstatement had not yet been cleared up. He was not the same man, however, and he spoke quite kindly to Donald on several occasions, and even gave him a dollar with which to see the sights. A dollar did not go far on the West Coast in those hectic days, with prices enhanced by the gold-seekers’ demands, but Jenkins had received something from home, and he generously “stood on his hands” and shared with the others.

A great packet of letters from his mother made Donald happy. She was well and getting along all right in the Hydropathic and had no complaints, though she was lonesome for her darling boy. These motherly missives usually contained many warnings about sleeping in damp bed clothes, sitting in draughts, and the danger of wearing wet socks. There was also much well-meant advice about the dire results of “overloading his stomach,” and requests not to “eat too much rich food.” Donald smiled grimly when he read these paragraphs. God knows there was no danger of overloading his stomach on any “rich” food in a starvation Scotch barque! Pea soup, hard biscuit, salt beef and pork, occasional potatoes and “duff,” tea and coffee (water bewitched), constituted the bulk of the “rich food” he had lived on, and there wasn’t too much of it at any time, and latterly, he had tautened his belt on the meagre feed to delude his imagination into the belief that his stomach was full!

Thompson—a four-years’ voyager—received similar reminders from home. “The dear old mater thinks I should wear goloshes and an umbrella on deck when it is raining,” he said with a laugh. “What mothers don’t know won’t hurt them.”

With Captain Muirhead’s dollar, Donald wrote several letters home and got his photograph taken standing alongside one of the giant cedars in Stanley Park. The photo cost him “four bits,” or fifty cents, but he thought it would be the best thing he could send, and cheerfully spent the money.

The *Kelvinhaugh*’s cargo had been nearly all cleared out of her, when a boy delivered a note to “Mr. Donald McKenzie.” It was from Nickerson, and it requested him, briefly, to meet him ashore at a certain corner at seven o’clock, and not to say anything to the others about it. Donald cleaned up, and slipped away from Jenkins and Thompson by saying he was “going up street to post a letter.”

Captain Nickerson, looking prosperous and smoking a cigar, met him at the appointed time and they went to a Chinese cafe and ordered something to eat. “Now, Donald,” said the other—it was the first time he had ever addressed him thus—“what do you plan to do? Are you going to stick by the ship?”

McKenzie had spent many hours thinking over matters, and he was unable to make up his mind. Since the ship had been in port, the miseries of the passage had been forgotten, and he had already gotten into that frame of mind—common to all sailors—wherein he thought that his future sea-faring would be easier. He knew the ropes now, and, of course, it had been his first voyage, and it had been an unusually rough one. If he was to get on in his chosen profession, he would have to go through his apprenticeship. He voiced these thoughts to Nickerson, who nodded understandingly.

“Naow, sonny,” he said, when Donald had finished. “I know haow ye feel, but I’m agoin’ to tell you something. Do you know that your uncle shipped you on that hooker to get rid of you? Do you know that Muirhead and Hinkel tried to do you in? Did you know that the two of them framed up that jigger-gaff accident off the Plate, and that Hinkel cut the tackle rope of the gaff vang to make sure you’d go overboard? Do you know that Muirhead tried to leave you to drown, and that I just came on deck in the nick of time and made him bring the ship to the wind while we got a boat over? No? Waal, son, ye may look flabbergasted, but it’s gospel truth! They tried every dodge they could think of outside of plain murder, and it was me that spiked their guns!”

Donald stared at him in open-eyed astonishment, but the other’s stern features betrayed no emotion, and he puffed his cigar and continued.

“I took you out of Hinkel’s watch after the jigger-gaff incident to save your life when I got wind of the game. The skipper got cold feet then and gave up all ideas of doing away with you. Off the Horn, the ship got him frightened—blamed frightened—and he knew that Hinkel was no good as a second mate, so he agreed to break him and send him for’ard. Hinkel had fallen down on his job and the skipper was scared of me, and it was me that put that Dutchman out of the afterguard. Then when Hinkel got hurt and thought he was going



to die, I got a long confession out of him and it don't show your uncle up in a good light." He paused, took a drink of coffee, and puffed on his cigar.

"Aye, son, your uncle is a downy bird—a proper queer-feller! He had old Muirhead under his thumb for some ship-scuttling job which he did for some one, and the old cuss was in dead fear it would be found out, and he would do any dirty work your uncle asked him to do. Then this Hinkel was another rotter, and another of your uncle's assassins. You ain't likely to know it, but your skunk of a relative was managing owner of the *Orkney Isles*, and I have good reason to believe he got palm-oiled to get that half-baked apprentice McFee out of the way. I think McFee's step-father engineered that job and Hinkel confessed to me, when he thought he was agoin' to die, that he got paid for doing it through your measly uncle. Aye, aye,—the more I learn about some ship-owners the more I feel sure that hell 'ull be overcrowded!"

"What—what would be his reason for trying to get rid of me?" Donald enquired in a daze at Nickerson's astounding revelations.

"Hard to imagine," replied the other. "You ain't got any money and there ain't nobody to benefit by your death, is they?"

Donald pondered for a minute. "No! I can't think of anything. There's only mother and I. When the dad was drowned, he left nothing."

Nickerson grunted and gazed on the smoke from his cigar. "He's got some deep object, son," he said after a pause, "and I'll take time to find it aout." He did not speak for several moments, then he threw away his cigar and turned to Donald.

"Now, son," he said kindly, "I've taken a shine to you and I know you've had a rough deal, an' that you're a poor little devil of an orphan with nobody to look after you. I knew your daddy, though I never told you. We were shipmates one time and he did me a good turn ... never mind what. I've been a wild one in my day and should be further ahead than what I am. But I'm going to settle daown. I'm agoin' back home and I'll take you along if you care to come. You'd better get clear of your uncle and your uncle's ships, and we'll frame up a dodge on him if you're game. Will you skip naow after what I have told ye?"

"Yes, I will!" replied Donald emphatically. "I don't want to stay. I'll run away to-night and go anywhere and do anything to get away from that ship."

"Don't hurry," said the Nova Scotian. "Wait until I'm ready and I'll tell you what to do. I have been around with some friends of mine who own sealing schooners. One of them wants me to take a contract to deliver a schooner in Halifax—taking her 'round the Horn from Victoria. This sealing game is getting played out here naow, and there's a lot of trouble on between the Canadian and American Governments about saving the Behring Sea seals and putting a stop to the fishery altogether. Ef I agree to take this vessel around, I'll take you along with me and I'll see that you are paid seaman's wages. You won't have a hard time, and you'll find one of these sealers make a fine able craft for rough voyaging. They'll make better shape of a Horn passage than that ugly barge we jest came around in, and the trip'll do ye good. When we git 'round to Halifax then we'll discuss the future. Ye kin either go home or come into the Bank fishing game with me. We'll see. Naow, Donald, here's a couple o' dollars. Skip off an' see the sights. Don't say anything to the other lads and stand-by for a hail from me later." "What about the captain?" asked Donald anxiously, "will he do something to me now?"

"He won't harm you," replied the other smiling. "He's pickled that liver of his until it's like a sponge. He may never take the *Kelvinhaugh* to sea again." He rose, paid the bill, and left Donald on the street, much astonished, perplexed, and speculating on the tale he had listened to.

And Judson Nickerson? he thought. Could he trust him? The young Nova Scotian was a peculiar fellow. A hard master—a driver—and quick with his feet and hands—a regular sailor banger! Donald thought of the way in which Nickerson kept him skipping around on the *Kelvinhaugh*; his bitter, oath-besprinkled commands, and his callous remarks in lieu of praise for strenuous accomplishments. And yet Nickerson had been his best friend. He had saved his life when he fell from the jigger-gaff; saved him from Hinkel's studied hazing, and had secured him warm clothes when he was perishing with cold off the Horn. He had done him many kindnesses, but he had awed Donald with his shipboard severity. He called to mind the time he had sent him aloft to reeve a signal halliard through the main-truck ... but that was to test him. It could not be called bullying. Nickerson was a hard officer, but he had never hit any of the boys, though he horsed them around. Yes! he felt he could trust Nickerson. He was a capable, aggressive sort of fellow, but under his stern manner he had a kind heart, and his piercing grey eyes looked honest, and he was undoubtedly gentle at times. And he had known his father! Was he doing these favors for Donald as a return for something his father had done for him?

And his Uncle David! Why should he want to get rid of him? What had he done, or in what manner did he stand in the way of his uncle's unknown objective? He racked his brain to solve this problem, but reached no satisfactory conclusion. He believed Nickerson's story, and a review of his voyage on the *Kelvinhaugh* recalled many incidents in which his life hung by a thread. If it had not been for Nickerson he would never have seen the land again ... no doubt of that. He had been sent to sea to be made away with, and he shivered at the thought of his many narrow escapes from death.

The *Kelvinhaugh* had discharged her cargo of rails and hauled over to Hastings Mills to load lumber for Australia. Moore had received his remittance and had gone, and nobody mourned him. He came aboard and packed his dunnage with Thompson, Jenkins and McKenzie looking on. "Why don't you give that gear to some of us?" Thompson had remarked, but Moore replied, "I want to take it home with me."

"Aye," sneered the other, "you'll go home in your brass-bound rags and cut a dash blowing about your

passage around Cape Stiff. Believe me, you cub, you've nothing to blow about! You want to tell your girl what a ruddy sojer you were, and tell her that I was going to boot you off a yard one time for having no guts. Aye! you ain't worth carrying—even as ballast—and the sooner you get to your pa's beer factory the better for you. You can help him stick the labels on the bottles—that's your trick, young fellow-my-lad!" And with the other three lads jeering at him over the rail, he slinked off in a hack to catch the C.P.R. transcontinental train for Montreal.

Thompson was looking for a passage to England in a Blue Funnel liner, and planned to ship in one 'fore-the-mast. Jenkins did not know what to do. He didn't want to sail again in the barque, but he thought he would hang on to her for board and lodging and skip out just before she sailed. Donald was non-committal and said nothing about his future intentions.

They had some pleasant times in Vancouver, and in company with four other apprentices from an English ship, also loading at the Mills, they toured the beauty spots of the vicinity. Sundays, they spent at English Bay—bathing and picnicing, or drove to New Westminster and Steveston on the Fraser River and looked over the numerous salmon canneries established there. One time they made up an excursion to Capilano Canyon; other events were boat sails up to Port Moody or up the North Arm of Burrard Inlet. The towering mountains had a strange fascination for Donald, and he loved to watch their lofty crests reflect the colors of the westering sun or enhalo themselves with wispy vapors when the clouds hung low. He set out one day to scale the "Sleeping Lions" which guard Vancouver's bay, but a few yards plunging among the muskeg, rocks, and huge fallen trunks of trees, made him give up the attempt.

One of the foremen at the Mill kept an "open house" for 'prentice-boys, and Donald often went up with other lads and played the old piano. It seemed strange to him to be fingering the keys again, and it took some time to get his stiffened fingers limbered up. As a piano player, McKenzie was very much in demand, and "sing-songs" at the genial Mr. Harrigan's bungalow became almost nightly events. Another artistic accomplishment was renewed when he made sketches of Vancouver scenery and mailed them to his mother. He did not feel like sketching while at sea, but during the placid hours of port life, the mood returned, and with pencil and crayons, he limned the sights around while Thompson and Jenkins admiringly looked on. "If I could draw like that, nipper," remarked the former, "I'd be cussed if I'd ever go to sea. I'd sooner squat on Jamaica Bridge and make chalk pictures of herrings, and mountains, and fruit, on the paving-stones for pennies. Hanged if I wouldn't!"

A month passed very pleasantly, when he got a message from Captain Nickerson, and in company with the Nova Scotian he dropped into the Chinese cafe.

"Naow, son," said Nickerson, when they were seated with coffee before them, "I'm all fixed up. I'm agoin' to take a ninety-five ton sealing schooner called the *Helen Starbuck*, around to Halifax soon's I git a crew of four or five able hands. Naow, tell me, Donny-boy, d'ye s'pose young Thompson 'ud like to go along with me? And young Jenkins? I'd gladly give them a lift out o' that big barge ef they'd care to ship. D'ye think they would?" Donald felt pretty sure that both would go if they got the chance.

"Good!" replied the other. "We'll sound 'em later to-night. I s'pose you can get 'em some time this evening? Right! Naow, I've thought up a dodge for your uncle's benefit. You go on that lumber wharf to-morrow night and pretend you're goin' fishin'. Lay your brass-bound coat on the wharf, an' git a big rock, or anything that'll sink, and you jest give a yell for help an' heave it in. Chuck yer cap in afterwards, an' sling your hook from th' wharf as hard as you can pelt. I'll wait for you at the head of the dock in a quiet spot an' we'll slip away. As for your clothes, Thompson kin bring them away with him ef he comes with us."

Donald opened his eyes in wonder. "What is the object of pretending I'm drowned off the wharf?"

The other smiled knowingly. "Two objects! First—it will prevent old Muirhead from notifying the police that you have deserted. Second—he'll inform your uncle of your death, and then you'll see what the game is. Write and tell your mother what you are doing and she can keep an eye on things over there. Naow, skip along an' find Thompson an' Jenkins!"

Two days later, Nickerson and the three apprentices sailed on the night boat for Victoria. All were dressed in cheap store clothes and looked like laborers or fishermen, and in Thompson's sea-chest and dunnage bag reposed the best parts of Jenkins' and McKenzie's kit. Thompson had left the ship openly and with a clear discharge from the captain, on the plea that he was going to join a steamer in Victoria. Jenkins had skipped out "between two days," and his name and description was on the police blotter of Vancouver as a runaway apprentice, who, when apprehended, was to be kept in confinement until such time as the barque was ready for sea. McKenzie, alas! had fallen off the wharf while fishing and was drowned, and Captain Muirhead tersely reported the matter to D. McKenzie, Esq., Bothwell St., Glasgow, without any elaborate explanations. *Mr. McKenzie, no doubt, would consider that the job was satisfactorily accomplished.*

Next morning early, they stepped off the steamer at Victoria and hired a boatman to put them aboard of a trim, black, copper-bottomed, two topmast schooner lying in company with a small fleet in the Inner Harbor. Nickerson said that they were all ready to sail, and the quartette tumbled aboard the little vessel.

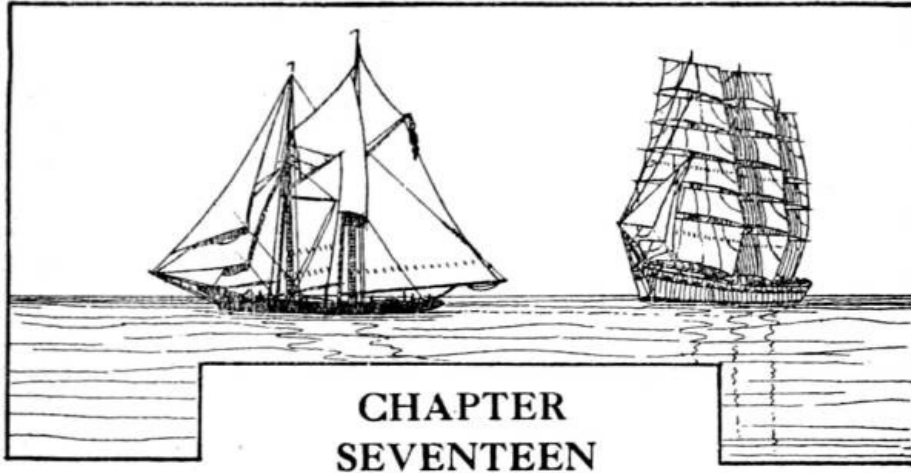
"Naow, boys," said the Nova Scotian, "Thompson'll live aft with me and act as mate. Donald an' Jenkins here'll live fo'ard in the fo'c'sle. It's nice an' comfortable compared with the *Kelvinhaugh*. There's two other hands an' the cook aboard an' daown havin' breakfast, I cal'late, so we ain't noways short-handed. We'll hev a bite to eat, an' then we'll git under way!"

Donald and Jenkins clambered down the fo'c'sle ladder and found three men eating at the triangular table fixed between the fore-mast and the pawl-post. They looked up when the boys jumped down, and one of them rose to his feet with a shout.

"Donal'!"

It was McKenzie's school-boy chum—"Joak" McGlashan!

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



"**H**AE some o' these beans, Donal'!" urged Joak, piling his old chum's plate, "they're good an' fillin' an' I cooked them masel' Boston fashion. Jist tae think we sh'd meet like this! (Here's some broon bread.) It's simply astonishin'! (There's new-made dough-nuts.) Ah, canny get over it! (There's apple pie an' coffee—help yersel'.) Wonders'll never cease!"

Donald hadn't gotten over his surprise, and with a mouth full of the food which his chum was pressing upon him, he stared at McGlashan—a big strapping lad of eighteen, with a cook's white apron around his waist. "How did you get out here, Joak?" he asked eventually.

"I came oot as a cook's helper in a C.P.R. boat—a new ship what was built on the Clyde," explained Joak. "Then I went cookin' on tugs towin' logs, and I made a trip to the coast o' Japan an' th' Behring Sea on yin o' they sealers. I'm anxious to get hame noo, so I took this job. An' you, Donal', hoo did you come tae hit th' West Coast?"

Captain Nickerson and Thompson dropped down for breakfast. "Sailors meet old *tillicums* in all sorts of odd places," remarked the former, when he heard of McKenzie and McGlashan. "It's not surprising. I met my brother Asa aboard a barque in Antwerp one time. I was 'fore-the-mast and he was second mate, and I was kinder slow gettin' along to man the windlass and he hustled me. When I looked around, it was brother Asa. 'Where'n hell did you spring from, Jud?' he says. I told him I had just shipped so's to git home. 'Waal,' says he, 'I'm headin' for home also, but don't you forget I'm second mate o' this hooker. So slide along an' put some beef on them windlass brakes or I'll make you wish you'd never seen me!'" He chuckled over the recollection.

While eating breakfast, Donald had a chance to size up the *Helen Starbuck's* company. In addition to McGlashan, who had shipped as cook, there were two able Scandinavians—Axel Hansen and Einar Olsen—quiet young fellows about thirty years of age with the heavy build of their breed—good muscle and beef for a tussle with wind and canvas. With six hands and the Captain, the *Helen Starbuck* was well manned.

Jenkins had some fear of Nickerson, and the latter perceived it. "Don't look as ef I was goin' to eat you, boy," he said with a laugh. "I'm no bucko! I cal'late you're thinkin' o' th' *Kelvinhaugh*, eh? Waal, son, I had to be a taut hand there. She was short-handed and a lime-juicer. The hands were a scrap lot, and ef I didn't run them an' keep them up to the mark, they'd have run me. I had to drive the crew to drive the ship. Slack-up with those scum, and they'd lay-back an' take it easy. A little touch of down-east fashion is great med'cine for putting ginger into a hard-bitten crowd an' keepin' 'em spry. But we don't need that here. It sh'd be a reg'lar yachtin' trip ef we all pull together." And he smiled in a manner which reassured the anxious "Chubby."

Breakfast over, they tumbled up on deck and hoisted the big mainsail. It was quite a heavy pull, but they all tallied on to a halliard at a time and got peak and throat up by stages. "Naow, boys," said the skipper. "You square-rig men'll have to get on to fore'n aft sail. The mains'l is h'isted by peak an' throat halliards as far as they'll go, then ye'll take up the slack an' sweat up by these two jig-tackles which are made fast to the other end of the halliards. The throat-jig and the peak-jig are on opposite sides the deck and are made fast by the rigging. There's jigs on the fores'l and on the forestays'l and sometimes on the jib. This schooner carries mains'l, fores'l, forestays'l or jumbo, as we sometimes call it, and jib. These are known as the four lowers. Then for light sails, we carry a main and fore-gaff-tops'l, and a stays'l which sets between the masts. On the

fore, we kin set a balloon jib, an' for running in a long steady breeze like the Trades, we have a square-sail setting on a yard which we kin h'ist up the forem'st. Naow, ye have it all. Ship yer windlass brakes an' heave short the anchor!"

With a pleasant westerly breeze they got outside of Victoria harbor under four lowers and into the Straits of San Juan de Fuca. Here they set the watches for the voyage—Captain Nickerson, Axel Hansen and Donald in the starboard; Jack Thompson, Einar Olsen and Chubby Jenkins in the port. McGlashan, as cook, stood no watch, but was expected to give a hand whenever called upon.

The *Helen Starbuck* was a Nova Scotia built, clipper-bowed schooner of 95 tons and about 100 feet overall by 23 feet beam. She was originally built for the Grand Bank fisheries, and was of the model known as "tooth-pick"—so-called from her clipper bow and long pole bowsprit. With a hardwood hull, plentifully strengthened by hanging knees between deck-beams and ribs, and fine lines with a deep skeg aft, she was of a type of craft which could sail fast and stand the hardest kind of weather. For sealing, her bottom to the water-line was sheathed with copper—preventive of marine growths and toredos borings in tropical waters. The fore-castle was located under the main-deck and ran right up into the bows. The galley was situated in the afterpart of the fore-castle, and the rest of the apartment was lined, port and starboard, with two tiers of bunks which ran right up into the peak. A table was fixed between the fore-mast and the windlass pawl-post, and lockers ran around the lower-bunks and were used as seats. The after part of the fo'c'sle was fitted with numerous cupboards and shelves for the storage of supplies, and in handy proximity to the cooking range there was a built-in table and a sink.

Under the fo'c'sle floor an iron water-tank capable of carrying 1,200 gallons was fitted, and fresh water could be procured at the sink by means of a hand-pump. Entrance to this sea-parlor was obtained through a companion way and a ladder leading down from the deck. Light came from a small skylight above the galley and by deck-lights.

Amidships, and in what would be the fish hold of a fishing schooner, there was a room fitted with bunks and known as the steerage. In sealing, the hunters would berth in this place. Directly aft, the cabin was located between the main-mast and the wheel. It was a small apartment containing four double bunks—two on each side—with lockers all around. A table took up the forward bulk-head, and a small heating stove stood in the centre of the apartment. Upon the bulk-head for'ard hung a clock and a barometer, and a small shelf contained books of Sailing Directions, Coast Pilots and other nautical literature. As the cabin floor was only four feet below the main-deck, full head-room was given by means of a cabin trunk or house which rose about two and a half feet above the deck. A companion on the after-part of the house gave entrance into the cabin.

The wheel was of iron and operated a patent screw-gear which turned the rudder post. The compass was in a wooden binnacle placed on the starboard side of the cabin roof, where it could be readily seen by the steersman who usually steered on the starboard side of the wheel. The schooner steered like a yacht, and a spoke or two of the wheel swung her either way almost instantly.

The mainsail was a big stretch of canvas and carried a main-boom sixty-five feet long. The main-mast was eighty feet from deck to mast-head, and the topmast thrust itself another forty feet higher. The fore-mast with topmast was some ten feet shorter, and the foresail was a long narrow sail with a 25-foot boom. Amidships, the schooner carried two carver-built boats, lashed bottom-up to deck ring-bolts, the other boats usually carried by a sealer having been disposed of.

This then briefly describes the little craft which these seven adventurers planned to sail down and up the combined length of two oceans—from the North Pacific to the North Atlantic—a run of from thirteen to fourteen thousand miles. "I'm out to do it in less than a hundred days," said Captain Nickerson grimly, "an' barring accidents, we'll do it!"

They worked down the Straits of San Juan de Fuca in the teeth of a light westerly, and Donald was charmed at the manner in which the schooner sailed and tacked. "Not like the *Kelvinhaugh*, sir," he remarked to the skipper. "And how easy she steers! A touch of the spokes swings her." "You're right there, son," said the other. "Let me tell you that you're aboard one of the finest kind o' craft whittled out o' wood. You're not in a steel barge this time. This packet will lay up to less'n four points of the wind an' sail; the *Kelvinhaugh* would never steer closer'n seven. And when we strike some weather and wind you'll find a difference too. No sloshing decks on this hooker onless she trips up."

When Cape Flattery blinked a fare-well to them that night, Captain Nickerson set the course for a Great Circle swing to Cape Horn. "I'm goin' to shoot her right daown and I reckon we won't haul up anywhere this side of Cape Stiff," he remarked to Donald and Thompson that evening. "Are you going to try the Straits of Magellan, sir?" asked Donald. The skipper shook his head. "I have thought it over, but as I've never been through them, and seein' as it's a reg'lar hell-hole of narrow channels an' currents an' chock-full o' willy-waws an' squalls, I cal'late we're safer in open water. We'll run *Helen* around the Horn an' we'll stop in at Monte Video for fresh meat, water and a run ashore. Naow, boys, we'll hang out the patch an' let her go!" And with the balloon-jib and stays'l hoisted and sheets aft, the *Helen Starbuck* swung away on the old deep-waterman's track for the Line and Cape Horn.

They took their departure from Cape Flattery, and Donald streamed the patent taff-rail log. The schooner was snoring ahead to a brisk westerly, and rising and falling gently over a long rolling sea with but a slight heel to port. Axel Hansen had the wheel and Donald stood by the windlass for'ard keeping a look-out and giving an occasional glance at the side-lights in the fore-rigging. The night was spangled with stars and the bow-wave sang a low grumbling note which was conducive to sleep, but McKenzie had been too well trained aboard the *Kelvinhaugh* to nod on watch, so he leaned over a windlass bitt and held communion with his thoughts.

He was genuinely happy now, and something of real appreciation and love for the sea was beginning to awaken in his heart. In the *Kelvinhaugh* he never got a chance to become enamoured of sea-faring. His first

hour aboard that ship in the Glasgow dock was the beginning of the disillusionment which finished at Royal Roads. The bullying, rough treatment, hard work and poor food on the barque had stifled the romantic spirit which had sent him aroving, but on this schooner, with good fare, warm comfortable quarters and chummy ship-mates, everything was different. Captain Nickerson—whom he had regarded with feelings akin to terror on the barque—seemed to have changed utterly. No longer did the Nova Scotian rip out strident commands punctuated with bitter oaths, nor did he maintain the Olympian aloofness of other days. The chummy, even-tempered, good-humored Canadian in command of the *Helen Starbuck* seemed to have no connection with the truculent, swearing, heavy-handed “bucko” mate of the lumbering *Kelvinhaugh*.

It was a grateful change all 'round. The bitterness and misery of other days was but a reflection of the nature of the *Kelvinhaugh's* owner. David McKenzie's harsh and vindictive soul was re-incarnated in his ship. She, like him, was ugly in form and character; her crew were the sweepings of the port—ill-fed, over-worked and driven like dogs to do the work which was required of them; her master was a “wrong 'un”—a tool of the owner and half-incompetent. Hinkel—another incompetent and another “wrong 'un”—helped to complete the sordid combination into which young McKenzie was thrust ... to be “polished off.” What was his uncle's object?

Donald did not know a great deal about his Uncle David. His father had seldom mentioned his name, and his mother knew nothing of her husband's brother save what little that Alec had told her, and her impressions from two interviews—both unpleasant. He did know that David McKenzie was a rich man and had interests in many ships. He knew also that he had married late in life and that he had one child. (Donald wondered if his manner to his wife and child was as coarse and as cruel as his treatment of Alec's wife and boy.)

Thinking of his relative led him to his father's uncle, Sir Alastair McKenzie. Was he involved in this peculiar business? Was there any way in which Donald might interfere with a succession to the McKenzie title and estate? He pondered over this conjecture, but was forced to dismiss it as improbable. Sir Alastair had a son, and the McKenzie heritage was nothing to covet. The estate was mortgaged to the hilt and Sir Alastair was nothing more than a plain Scotch farmer. If Sir Alastair and his son died, the title would go to David McKenzie. Therefore, Donald reasoned, this motive must be eliminated. It was a mystifying business, and the ship-owner's desire to get rid of his nephew must be put down to sheer hatred or to a motive unknown.

“I'm away clear of the beast now, so why should I worry my head about him?” said the boy to himself. “I'll make this trip with Nickerson and follow his fortunes in Nova Scotia, and as soon as I get money enough I'll send for mother and bring her to Canada.” He squinted around at the side-lights, and seeing nothing in the shape of a vessel ahead, went aft to relieve Hansen at the wheel.

With no untoward incident to mar their passage, the *Helen Starbuck* romped down the parallels and swung into “the heel of the North East Trade.” Boomed out, and with square fores'l set, the schooner made brave sailing in the grip of the steady Trade wind and the patent log recorded twelve knot speeds hour after hour. These were glorious days under azure skies flecked only by the fleecy Trade clouds and brilliant with warm sunshine, and steering the able schooner in such weather was a period of rare delight to a lover of the sea and sail. Under the drive of the unvarying breeze, the deep blue of the sea rolled to the horizons in regular corrugations—their crests a broil of foam which flashed in the sun. Running before the wind, the *Helen Starbuck* stormed over the watery undulations with a roaring welter of foam under her sharp fore-foot, and the wake of her passage seethed like champagne and streamed astern—a path of foam-lacings defined for miles in which the log-rotator spun up the knots and the gulls dived for illusive food.

Lazy days, truly! When the crew, bare-footed and clad only in shirt and trousers, steered or worked in the sun. When the Skipper, similarly attired, smoked and paced the quarter, hour after hour, or lounged on the cabin house reading old papers and magazines—breaking off only to take morning and afternoon sights for longitude, with Thompson or Donald jotting down the chronometer time, and the noon observation for latitude. On clear nights, he invariably amused himself taking star sights and working them up. Navigation was a hobby with Nickerson, and during the run down the Trades, he initiated Donald into its mysteries until he was able to work out the ship's position accurately. Many a night the skipper would stop in his deck pacing and say to McKenzie, “Skip below, son, an' bring up my sextant. We'll take a star.” And when the workings of the celestial triangulation were explained, he would hand the sextant over to Donald and ask him to take a sight and work it out alone. These diversions, with a trick at the wheel, a spell on look-out, and some scraping, painting and “sailorizing” during the day, helped to make the watches pass pleasantly.

There was no loafing on the *Helen Starbuck*. Loafing breeds discontent, and Nickerson found enough work to keep the hands busy apart from steering and sail-trimming. The vessel was painted from stem to stern, inside and out, and when nothing more in the painting line appeared to be done, the Skipper had all the bits, skylights, companions, fife-rails and ladders—previously painted—scraped, sand-and-canvased, and varnished. Every scrap of brass-work on the schooner was polished bright; anchors and cable chipped and painted, and then a complete overhaul of the rigging was started.

Though Donald had picked up a good deal of sailorizing aboard the *Kelvinhaugh*, yet it was on the *Helen Starbuck* where he really completed his knowledge of knotting and splicing, worming, parcelling and serving. On the barque, iron turn-screws took the place of the lanyards and dead-eyes which the schooner used to set up her rigging; iron rods were seized to the shrouds in place of rope rattlins, and wire rope and iron blocks were used wherever possible. On the *Helen Starbuck*, with the exception of the stays and shrouds, it was honest hemp and manilla—grand stuff for a sailor's hands, and under the tutelage of the Norwegian seamen, Donald learnt all the fine points of “marline-spike seamanship,” in setting up rigging, stropping blocks, hitching and seizing rattlins, turning in dead-eyes, making chafing-mats and sennet, and the hundred and one accomplishments of fingers, fid, marline-spike, and serving mallet. Sailorizing was fine work for a “Trade” day when one could sit in the sun “passing the ball” in a serving job, or sit, perched aloft, seizing new rattlins, or overhauling some of the gear in the cross-trees. Engaged in such pleasant tasks, Donald would feel a returning wave of the romantic sea-fever which had caused him to choose a sailor's life. Under the better

auspices of his present existence, he began to love his chosen profession, but it was only on this small schooner that he really understood and appreciated the lure of the sea and sail. Sea-faring on the *Kelvinhaugh* had been a nightmare.

Young McKenzie's eight months from home had worked a wonderful change in him, both mentally and physically. The hard grind on the *Kelvinhaugh* had toughened his muscles and steadied his nerves, while the discipline had mentally improved him by making him a "do-er" rather than a "dreamer." With the contented mind, better food and better quarters on the schooner, he had put on flesh and filled out. There was a healthy tan in his cheeks, and his dark brown eyes sparkled with vitality and keen intelligence. The Skipper noticed the change and remarked: "By Godfrey, son, you're starting to beef up! Your mammy'll never know you now for the skinny, pasty-faced kid that left her apron strings in auld 'Glesca' a while ago. Well, boy, ye're getting stout and strong—see'n don't lose it by drinkin' an' muckin' about in shore dives, for many a good sailor has bin dumped to the fish rotten with drink and the diseases of vice." He paused and gave Donald a keen glance. "Are you religious, son?"

The boy returned his gaze. "I'm not a crank on it, sir, but I read my Bible on Sundays and say my prayers at night," he replied.

The Captain nodded. "Good," he said. "Carry on with that an' you won't go wrong. It's when a lad gets adrift from his mother's teachings and kinder loose about religion that he trips up. Of course, there are times when a man can't be too much of a devil-dodger or a Holy Joe—such as when you have to drive a deep-laden ship with a poor, spineless bunch o' hands an' feet. They won't do anything by preachin' to 'em or askin' 'em politely. No, siree! You have to bang 'em some an' haze 'em and curse 'em to get the work done. That's what I had to do on the *Kelvinhaugh*, but don't imagine that I'm a heathen or anything like that. I was well brought up, and read my Bible and went to church and all that, and I still believe in God and the Ten Commandments, though I don't put much stock on the rest of the frills. Religion for a sailor should be simple and free from the gadgets of ritual and all that sort of truck. And this hell-fire bunk! Who believes that? Aye, as sailors say—"To work hard, live hard, die hard an' go to hell after all would be hard indeed!"

Nickerson often talked in this strain—especially in the quiet night watches, and as this calmer side of the young Nova Scotian's character revealed itself, Donald began to regard the man with affection mixed with admiration for his capable two-fisted manhood and iron nerve. Judson Nickerson was the type of Nova Scotian who built ships and sailed them: whose seamanship was renowned among sailormen the world over, and whose ships were to be found all over the seven seas in the palmy days of wooden hulls—the days of "wooden ships and iron men."

He regaled Donald with tales of the Grand Bank fishermen: their seamanship: their wonderful schooners, and the freedom and camaraderie of their life. "And these fellows make money, too," he explained. "Skipper of a Bank schooner can make a sight more money in a year than most of your brass-bound liner masters. And they live well—best o' grub and the best o' cooks. None of yer hard biscuit, bull-meat an' salt junk aboard those hookers. All of them have comfortable homes ashore with a bit of land which they farm a little ... snug an' comfortable. I know the game on the Banks, son, for I first went seafaring on a fisherman and put in three years at the life off and on, and believe me, when we reach home this time I'm agoin' back to it. No more of this knockin' about the world for me, shovin' lime-juice windjammers south an' north-about. I've had my spell at it, and now I'm goin' home to God's country. And, son, ef you're wise, you'll keep under my lee and get in on my game!"

Fishing for cod on the Grand Banks of the North Atlantic did not appeal much to Donald. To him, it seemed a poor life, and he had the notion that fishermen were wretched creatures who lived in a state of semi-poverty and who toiled, year in and year out, barely making a living. Fishing seemed a messy business—an uncouth trade among uncouth men. With his ideals and education, how was he going to fit into that life? Captain Nickerson's anecdotes of the Nova Scotia fishermen failed to awaken in him a fair idea of their type, their work, and their industry. He listened to the yarns, however, and endeavoured to appreciate them in proper perspective, but when one is absolutely ignorant of fishing and unacquainted with colonial life, a lack of understanding can be forgiven. Donald often wondered why Nickerson—splendid seaman and skilled navigator and holding a Liverpool certificate of competency as master foreign—should be anxious to return to the existence and labor of a deep-sea fisherman. A man of Nickerson's ability would, in time, rise to command a liner. He was well educated, though in his conversation he slipped into vernacular and ungrammatical phrases, and he had studied and delved deep into the profound sciences of nautical astronomy, oceanography and the errors and attractions of the compass. The man had read a great deal of thoughtful literature, and surprised Donald on numerous occasions with his intimate acquaintance of such subjects as political economics, histories of ancient civilizations, shipbuilding, sea trade and sea power in vogue in many countries. Truly, he was a strange character, and Judson Nickerson, mate of the *Kelvinhaugh* and Captain Nickerson of the *Helen Starbuck* seemed to be a typical Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of the sea.

He talked a great deal with young McKenzie—possibly because the youngster was better read and more thoughtful than the others of the *Starbuck's* company, and one night, when Donald was on the look-out, he sat on the cable-box and told how he had met the boy's father.

"Ye know, son, I didn't know you were Alec McKenzie's boy until that night after you rove the main truck flag halliard when you told me your story. I told you a while back that I knew your dad, and that he did me a good turn. He was skipper of the *Ansonia* at the time, and I came out to New York in her as quartermaster. I got ashore in the Big Burg and went out on a drunk, and returned to the ship just before sailing day with only what I stood up in—having sold my shore-clothes and overcoat for rum. When I got aboard there was a letter awaiting me from my father saying that mother was very ill and for me to come home at once. I hadn't a cent, but when I went to the skipper—your father—and told him the circumstances, he gave me a hell of a raking over and loaned me fifty dollars to get home.... I'm ashamed to admit, Donald, that I never paid it back. I was pretty wild in those days.... I always intended to pay him the money, but I never had it. Fifty dollars was a

mate's monthly wages in those days an' not easily picked up. However, I'll square it up with you when we get to Halifax, for it's always bin on my mind. It was darn decent of him to do what he did for a blame' quartermaster, but Alec McKenzie was famous for his open-handedness. So that's how I came to be under obligations to your daddy." He chatted for a little while and went aft—leaving Donald with yet another incident of the strange manner in which sailormen from the ends of the earth get acquainted with each other.

The North-east Trades flickered out in fitful breezes and thunderstorms, and they ran out of the pleasant "flying-fish weather" into the calms and the cats-paws of the "Doldrums." In the light airs the *Helen Starbuck* seemed to ghost along as though she had an engine in her, and Captain Nickerson saw to it that all sail was trimmed to take advantage of every puff. They sighted several square-riggers lying becalmed and Thompson chuckled when he saw them swinging their yards to the flickering zephyrs. "Look at that pound an' pint limey off to starb'd," he would say. "Aren't you thankful you're not aboard that blighter now? There's a puff! It'll be 'Lee-fore-brace, you hounds!' There they go wind-milling. Jupiter! who would want to go to sea in one of them after being in a fore-and-after like this?"

One morning they drifted close to a big full-rigged ship with painted ports, bound south. She was the *Phalerope* of Liverpool from San Francisco with grain to Falmouth for orders, and her master hailed the schooner.

"What ship? Where bound?"

"*Helen Starbuck*—Victoria to Halifax, Nova Scotia!" bawled Captain Nickerson.

"Come aboard an' have a yarn, captain!" came the invitation.

Nickerson grinned. "Sorry—can't stop!" he hailed. "I'll report you in Monte Video. So long!"

They glided past the towering ship, and Thompson yelled to the men peering over the for'ard rail. "What's the matter—anchor down?"

"G'wan you sliver!" returned a voice. "'Ow did you git aht 'ere? Wos you blowed off?"

"Run along you an' get your weather braces off the pins!" shouted the *Starbuck's*. "You're due for another slew around if your mate's awake!"

They had no sooner shouted this jeering advice before a bellow from the ship's poop echoed along her decks. "Round in your weather braces!" At which the schooner's crew laughed noisily. The *Helen Starbuck* glided ahead with Donald jocularly coiling up the main-sheet and heaving it over the taff-rail—suggestive of a tow.

From the blistering heat of the Line they slid into the "Variables" and picked up the dying breath of the Southeast Trade winds. For two days they trimmed sheets to the ever-increasing puffs—each watch betting with the other as to who would have the log spinning for at least an hour of steady going—and it was "Lucky" McKenzie who picked the wind up and won the tobacco. It came after a heavy rain-storm in the middle-watch, and he was standing naked at the wheel enjoying a wash and a cooling-off at the same time. When the rain died away the sails flapped to a cool southerly breeze. The skipper was below, but when he heard Donald singing out to Hansen to "sheet in jib and fores'l" he came up on deck and assisted in bringing the main boom aboard. Light at first, the breeze stiffened until the schooner was snoring along with a flash of hissing foam streaming aft, and Donald was shivering at the wheel. "That's right, son," said the captain, jocularly. "You jest coax her along as you are. Anytime we want to raise wind you'll shed your duds." And for an hour he kept Donald steering in his nakedness.

With the steady Trade shoving them along on the starboard tack they crossed the latitude of 25° south, and one morning at dawn Donald came on deck to find the skipper gazing through his binoculars at a black spot abreast of the rising sun-glow. "What is that, sir? A ship?"

The captain handed the glasses over. "That's Easter Island, son! Have a squint, for it's the last land you'll see between here an' Cape Horn!"

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



**J**OAK McGlashan's troubles started when the *Starbuck* crossed 45° south. The pleasant zephyrs of the Trades were a memory of the past; the gentle undulations of the fine weather latitudes which hove the schooner gently along their swelling bosoms gave place to long rollers, which had the vessel sliding down their declivities and almost standing on her bowsprit, and then climbing up a watery hill with her long toothpick looking for the Southern Cross.

Joak had to work around his stove during this ocean fandango; he had to cook and prepare meals with his galley floor sliding and sloping under him at angles which called for gimballed joints and adhesive feet. When they swung into the "Roaring Forties" the skipper had given Joak a warning of what was to come. "Mouse your pots an' kettles, cook, the *Starbuck's* bound to the east'ard!" he said with a grin. "See all yer cut glass an' silver well stowed, chocked up, tommed off, an' shored, for she'll do some queer prancing from now on!"

"Aye, captain," returned Joak ruefully. "She's beginnin' tae jump about, but let me tell ye, ef ye want guid bread ye'll hae tae rin her steadier fur I canna get ma dough tae rise wi' th' shup jugglin' about like a jumpin'-jack!" And with this dire remark he grabbed at a sliding pot and chocked it off on top of the stove with a rolling rod.

The fiddles were shipped on the fo'c'sle table, and a minimum of dishes were placed upon it at a time. The men ate with their mugs of tea or coffee in their hands, and with a protective arm around their plates, for *Helen* was beginning to dance. On deck, everything was double-lashed for heavy weather; the foretopmast had been sent down, and the balloon jib and foretopsail rolled up and stowed away in the sail locker. Under winter rig of four lowers the schooner was swinging into the long rollers of the "Forties" and getting ready for her "easting."

The cold weather came upon them quickly, and Donald donned his winter clothes and saw to boots, mittens, socks, and oil-skins. Though it was supposed to be summer time down south, yet it was bitterly cold and the only tangible evidence of the season was the long daylight—the duration of darkness being but four hours, as the sun was south of the Line. The blue color of the middle-latitude seas had changed to a chill grey-green, and as they made their southing the wind hauled more westerly and blew hard with a vigor and intensity which reminded Donald of other days in this part of the world. At times they glimpsed on the far horizon great islands of dazzling white—outriders of the Antarctic ice, lofty, immense in area, and dangerous in calms and thick weather.

With the single-reefed mainsail boomed over the quarter, whole fores'l, jumbo and jib, the *Helen Starbuck* commenced to show her heels in the windy latitudes south of fifty. Twelve knots, thirteen knots, fourteen knots were common hourly readings in the gusts, and Nickerson would grunt with satisfaction when he picked off noon to noon runs of three hundred sea miles. Rare travelling, surely! And he would pace the weather alley glancing at sail and sheet to scent a job for the watch in jiggling-up slack canvas or yanking a boom inboard. Occasional snow flurries came down the wind and it was bitter on deck o' nights, but there was always a warm bunk in a warm cabin or fo'c'sle to turn into; good eatable grub at meal times, and a "mug up" of hot coffee or a bite of soft bread or pie for a man to warm his blood with during, or after, a chilly watch.

Then came the day, when, steering east by south, they started to "run their easting down." They were south of Cape Piller and had got into the swing of the tremendous sea which sweeps around the world in that latitude. The western wind blew hard and strong and Nickerson had the mainsail stowed, the big main boom in the crotch well secured by the crotch-tackles, chain guys and topping-lift, the jib furled and triced up on the fore-stay to keep it from freezing on to the bowsprit, and the jumbo was in the stops.

Under the whole foresail and the squaresail, they were running her before it—a job for nervy men—and the great rollers of the Southern Ocean were piling up in vast battalions, crowned with acres of seething, roaring foam, and almost half a mile from crest to crest. In these mighty undulations, the *Helen Starbuck* was storming along with the wind whistling in her rigging and a bawling welter of white water sheering away from her sharp bows.

Joak, imprisoned in the fo'c'sle, was endeavouring to cook under conditions which rendered culinary work a herculean task. It was one hand for himself and one for the ship, and he hung between sink and stove doing his best and feeling half sick with the heat of his battened-down fo'c'sle, and the violent swoops and leaps of the ship. Aft in the cabin the watch below slept in the spare bunks so as to be handy for a sudden call. Two



men steered, lashed to the wheel-box, and Nickerson stood, muffled to the eyes, in oil-skins and sea-boots, on top of the cabin house with an arm thrust through a stop of the furled mainsail. He was constantly on deck watching ship and sea, looking out for ice, and, ever and anon, grunting advice to the wheelmen. Steering a running ship in such a sea called for vigilance and skill. Once let her broach-to amid those Cape Horn greybeards, and she would be gone—rolled over and smashed into kindling in the twinkling of an eye.

Up, up, up, the slopes of these frightful hills of brine she would climb—poise for a moment amidst the roaring white water of the crests with her keel showing clear to the foremast—and then, with a wild swoop, her bows would drive down the fore-front of the comber into the trough with the creaming surge-tops growling, roaring and curling above and behind her. Many times they piled up astern—walls of grey-green water full thirty feet above their heads—and when almost under their toppling crests, the brave little vessel would leap forward and the giant comber would plunge over and break on each quarter in a thundering broil of foam which drowned all other sounds.

The two Norwegians and Donald were the only hands who would steer the schooner running in this sea. Thompson and Jenkins refused to tackle the wheel, and Nickerson would not insist. Good steersmen are born, not made, and only men who had an instinctive knowledge of a vessel's ways, who could forecast what she would do a few seconds after, were able to twirl the spokes to correct that little swing which might lead to broaching and disaster. Most seamen can steer a good trick by compass or by the wind in a moderate breeze, but it takes a master-helmsman to steer running before a gale and a giant sea. The Norwegians inherited their steersmanship through centuries of Viking ancestry; McKenzie, through quick wit, sensitiveness and steady nerve.

The wonderful seaworthiness of the schooner was fully apparent during that storming to the east'ard. She was as buoyant as a cork and no heavy water struck her decks. Sprays would slop in over the waist or over the bows when she over-ran a sea, but the quarters were dry and never a dollop came over the taff-rail. "Ef ye were in the *Kelvinhaugh* naow," remarked the skipper, "I'd hate to think o' what she'd be doing. I cal'late she'd be pooped in this a dozen times in a watch and her main deck 'ud be full to the rail with them greybeards overtaking her."

They wolfed their food in the fo'c'sle, mug and food in hand, and they had to watch their chance to jump below without bringing an unwelcome sea down the half-opened hatch. Joak did his best to cook something, but after many disasters, he confined his efforts to tea and coffee, biscuits and soup, and the others did not grumble but praised him for his efforts.

"This ain't nawthin'," remarked the skipper with a grin. "I've seen it ten times worse'n this daown here. I recollect once bein' two weeks in the hollow o' one sea an' when we came up on the crest of it we c'd look daown the chimneys in China, by Godfrey!"

It was dangerous going, and the skipper fully appreciated it. He was anxious, and when the black squalls of rain and sleet came driving down upon them, he watched the straining sails and spars with eyes of concern. It was now that the sailorizing of the Trade latitudes would be put to the test. A drawn splice, a slip-shod mousing, a stranded rope or a broken shackle ... and disaster might follow swiftly. He spent his time between his cabin-roof look-out and the vicinity of the foremast scanning the over-taxed gear. When the squalls came driving down, he was doubly concerned.

West of the Ramirez in the grey dawn, the gale stiffened into a wind which her sail could not stand. A violent gust carried the squaresail away and it flew down the wind like a snowflake. The schooner was trembling under the weight of the whole foresail and the mast threatened to go by the board. Nickerson called all hands, cook as well, and said: "We've got to reef that fores'l and reef it running as we can't come to the wind in this sea. Donald will take the wheel, and the rest of us will tackle the sail." And to Donald he said in words pregnant with meaning, "Son, you want to steer as you never steered before. Watch her like a hawk and give her jest th' least little shake so's we kin git that fores'l daown a bit ... and don't let her lose way or come up!"

Donald took the spokes and the others went for'ard along the swaying, sloshing decks. A terrible sea was running and the air was white with driving sleet, while the wind screamed in the shrouds and plastered the naked main-mast with wet snow.

The six men for'ard cast off the halliards and four had hold of the gaff-downhaul. "Shake her a mite, son!" roared Nickerson in the teeth of the wind. Donald glanced astern at the sea, then eased the wheel down gently—watching the sail anxiously and murmuring a heartfelt prayer. The schooner tore along, yawing and plunging, but she started to come up with the turn of her rudder and Donald met her with unerring instinct. The vessel swung around in the trough, the sail commenced to flutter, and the men hauled the gaff down with lurid deep-water oaths and yells of encouragement. "Swing her off! Swing her off!" bawled Nickerson, fearfully eyeing a big greybeard which was racing down on them, but McKenzie had acted ere he sung out.

With the fore-gaff held fast by the down-haul, and the reef cringle on the leach sweated down to the boom by a tackle, the sail bellied out like a balloon in the squalls, and as the schooner raced off before the wind again the six men and boys started to get the tack of the sail down to the goose-neck of the fore-boom. They tugged and hauled with numb fingers, but the sail was iron-hard and full and refused to "light up." "It 'ud take a whole fishing gang o' twenty men to reef that fores'l naow!" panted the skipper. "We'll hev to shoot her up again to git that tack-earring passed." He clawed his way aft to the wheel.

"Ye'll hev to shake her again, son," he shouted. "Be damned careful, naow, an' don't let her lose way or git tripped up."

Watching his chance, Donald eased the helm down and yelled, "Now!" The sail flapped and jerked at the restraining sheet and down-haul while Nickerson and the gang hove down the tack-crinkle with tugs and oaths. The schooner was sidling along in a momentary lull in the squalls with way upon her, when Donald saw

the shadow of a big sea before him. He flashed a look astern; saw it piling up with a crest of foam, roaring and seething, and he screamed, "Look out, ahead!" and clawed the helm up as it thundered over the taff-rail and engulfed him in tons of chilly brine.

The water tore at his lashing and he hung to the wheel with his arms thrust through the spokes. While under water he instinctively shouldered the wheel up a bit to prevent a gybe; there was a roaring as of Niagara in his ears; red lights danced before his eyes; his lungs filled to bursting, while his strained muscles pained fearfully. Then his eyes glimpsed the daylight, and he straightened up off the wheel-box with a dull pain in his left side, while the gallant little vessel lifted ahead and rolled the water off her decks over both rails.

"All right, nipper?" came a voice from for'ard.

"Aye, all right!" he gasped faintly, steadying the schooner in a violent yaw. Dazed and panting for breath, he stood hanging on to the spokes and steering by instinct. They had got the fores'l tack tied down and were tying the reef-points. In a few minutes the sail was reefed, the down-haul cast off, and the gaff hoisted up again. Then they trooped aft, clawing their way along the slushy decks.

"Yer face is all over blood!" cried the skipper staring at Donald. "Did that sea hurt ye?"

The boy wiped the blood away from a wound in his forehead where his head had struck the handholds of the wheel-spokes. "That's nothing, sir," he replied. "I, couldn't help letting that sea come aboard ... it caught us as she was coming to in the trough."

"Of course you couldn't help it," said the other. "You did blame' fine! You must ha' swung her off an' steadied her while that comber had you under. From for'ard, there was nawthin' to be seen aft here but th' main-boom stickin' aout! Waal, she's all right naow. Under that rag of a fores'l she'll run like a hound. Ain't there th' hell of a sea runnin' though? A square-rigger 'ud be sloshin' through this under a fore-lower-tops'l—" He stopped and pointed at the smother down to starboard. "Look!" he shouted. "There's a poor devil of an outward-bounder! See him? Hove to!"

The *Starbuck's* crew stared in the direction indicated and glimpsed in the lift of the sleet squalls a big grey-painted barque lying under a mizzen stays'l and a goose-winged lower maintops'l with the lee clew hauled out. "Poor devils ... beatin' to the west'ard off th' pitch o' th' Horn ... sooner be on this hooker, captain!" shouted Thompson, and his remarks seemed strange when one made comparisons between the big wall-sided barque with her spacious decks and human complement of twenty-five or thirty men, and the little 95-ton *Helen Starbuck* and her seven hands all told. But Thompson was learning that size did not mean seaworthiness or even comfort, and an able little schooner of Bank fisherman model was to be preferred to a huge steel box like the *Kelvinhaugh* for ocean ranging.

The pain in McKenzie's side was beginning to make him wince when a kick of the wheel jarred his body, and the skipper noticed it. He came close to the lad and shouted in order to be heard above the noise of wind and sea, "Hurt anywhere?"

The boy nodded and grinned stoically. "Think I've bust a 'slat,' sir!"—using West Coast slang. "Got hove down on wheel ... left side ... when sea hit her that time." Nickerson shoved back the hatch. "Olsen! Relieve the wheel!" And when he came up he motioned to Donald to go down into the cabin.

When McKenzie was divested of his upper clothing, examination revealed an ugly bruise just below the heart. With Thompson and Chubby holding the boy from sliding off the locker, the skipper examined the spot, tenderly feeling the bruise with his fingers. "You sure have, son!" he murmured. "Two slats are sprung, me son! Waal, can't be helped, but ye'll do no deck work or steering for a spell, boy. You've done yer trick, anyway, so we'll doctor ye up without kickin'!" And he first proceeded to doctor Donald by giving him a stiff dose of salts!

"Ugh!" protested McKenzie after he had swallowed the nauseous dose. "Is this a sailor's cure-all? If a man breaks a leg or a rib, why should he be dosed with this muck?"

Nickerson laughed. "It may seem unnecessary, but it ain't, for the salts will put your system into a condition which will help the bones to knit. There's good medical logic in that, son!" Dosed, rubbed with liniment and bandaged, Donald was shored by pillows and rolled up blankets into a cabin bunk and ordered to remain there for the rest of the day.

"Durned plucky kid!" remarked the skipper to Thompson.

"Always was," answered the other. "Game to the core! Good stuff in him! Always plays cricket!" An odd British Public School expression, the latter. Fulsome praise, truly, from two such men—English and Canadian master-seamen!

Flying along on the wings of the wind the *Helen Starbuck* made brave running of it under the reefed foresail, and when Nickerson managed to get a noon sight in spite of successive squalls and sliding decks, he figured out the ship's position and remarked gleefully to Donald, "She's run ahead of the log, son! We'll haul her up this afternoon. Cape Stiff'll be in sight off the port bow in a while. She's run sixty miles in four hours—good travelling! Thought I sighted the Ramirez rocks at eight this morning ... to th' norrad. Old Man Horn should be loomin' up from th' riggin' naow ef it's anyways clear inshore." Cape Horn in sight! The storied Stormy Horn—locale of a thousand epics of the sea since Schouten and Drake braved its tempestuous corner. "'Round Cape Horn!" A sailor's boast—conferring a brevet rank on the man who had gone through the mill off Cape Stiff! Donald's imagination thrilled at the thought of viewing the wind-and-wave-beaten milestone at the foot of the world. "I'd like to see it, sir," he pleaded. "Call me when it is sighted, please!"

Nickerson laughed. "Waal, son, ye're more eager than I am. I wouldn't care a cuss ef I never saw it. Ef it was

old Cape Sable or Nigger Cape or Sambro or Eastville Heads, naow! Why, I'd jump to the spreaders for a squint, but Cape Stiff? Ugh!" And he spat disgustedly. He buttoned up his oilcoat and clambered on deck, and a minute or two later Donald could hear his voice. "Aye ... to th' norrad ... high peak with smaller ones. See it? Aye ... alright." The companion hatch was shoved back and Donald was out of his bunk and pulling on his boots when the captain came down. "Hell's main hatch is in sight," he cried with a laugh. "Where they brew the gales and sailor's misery.... Lemme help ye with yer coat. It ain't rainin' naow an' th' sun's aout. I'll bowse ye up on th' cabin roof."

About eight miles distant, the Ultima Thule of the South American continent reared its hoary head—a pinnacle of weather-worn granite, which, with the lower hills of Horn Island and the land behind, made the whole appear like a crouching lion facing the west. It stood clearly defined for a space—blue against the rain and mist behind and dull red where its northern slopes caught the sun—a monument of strenuous endeavour; a monolithic memorial to seamen's a courage and suffering, and the bones of ships and men in the waters below. Around its splintered base the mighty combers of a world-around wind-hounding smashed themselves in acres of foam, roaring and hissing in sullen fury at the implacability of the rock which forever bars their passage. Tremendous! Inspiring! Irresistible! The storied, stormy Horn!

A moment later it was blotted out by a snarling snow squall just as though the God of those seas had rung down the curtain on a sight not given to every sailor's eyes. Donald was assisted to his bunk again. He had seen the Horn and his romance-hunger was satisfied.

When Horn Island had swung to the port quarter, Captain Nickerson called the hands. "We'll gybe that fores'l over naow and make our northing. Hook the boom-tackle into that fore-boom and ease her over, and look out in case she ships a sea!" The relieving tackle was hooked on to ease the fore-sheet when the boom came over, and Hansen was instructed to put the helm up. The vessel swung to the nor'rad, the fores'l gave a mighty flap, and with a "whish!" and a "crash!" and the screech of the tackle-rope whirring through the blocks, the sail swooped over and brought up on the patent gybing gear with a jarring shock. "Let 'er go nothe-east by east!" cried the skipper. "We'll run her through the LeMaire Straits an' dodge this sea. I cal'late the rips o' the Pacific drift and the Patagonia current ain't agoin' to bother us much in there ... we'll try it. Can't be worse'n the Bay o' Fundy 'round Brier Island."

They negotiated the Strait without difficulty—sighting the high cliffs of Staten Island and Terra del Fuego in their passage through the treacherous channel, and after leaving the sterile, snow-capped highlands of Cape San Diego astern, they swung off shore again, and ran over by the West Falklands and up the South American coast.

Back into warmer climes, they busied themselves overhauling the schooner's rigging after the strain of the easting run, and on the morning of a fine summer's day they struck soundings in the muddy estuary of the River Plate. Under all sail with the wind blowing down the river, they snored through the muddy water and picked up the English Bank light-ship. Four hours later, they stood in and dropped head-sails and anchor in the outer roadstead of Monte Video.

Reporting at the Customs House that they only came in for water, wood and supplies, they procured these necessities and spent a couple of days seeing the sights of the beautiful Uruguayan city. Donald sent off a long letter to his mother telling her of the voyage so far and his future prospects. Before sunrise one morning, the *Helen Starbuck* slipped away on the last leg of her long, long trail.

The voyage up the South Atlantic, over the Line, and into the North Atlantic was practically a repetition of their Pacific passage, and with much the same daily round of duties. It was not all plain sailing. They experienced several blows, and some they had to ride out hove-to under foresail and jumbo. The worst of these was near home, between La Have and Western Bank, and here, for the first time, Donald saw numerous Bank fishing schooners lying-to like themselves.

"Son, these are fishermen!" cried Nickerson, pointing to six or eight vessels riding out the blow around them. "They're hanging on to the ground until it moderates. Ef they had a full trip below, they'd be hoofin' it for Boston or Gloucester under all she'd stand. It takes a breeze o' wind to stop those fellers—they're sail-draggers from 'way-back. You'll see some joker giving her 'main-sheet' for home in a while."

In a blurry easterly squall of sleet that night, Donald saw one of them "giving her main-sheet" for home. She stormed out of the smother—a long, lean schooner under reefed mainsail, whole foresail and jumbo, and she flew ahead of the *Starbuck* on the wings of the wind—riding over the seas like a duck, with the main-boom over the quarter and well topped up to keep it clear of the wave-crests when she rolled to loo'ard. There was something inspiring in the manner in which she raced out of the gloom—a ghostly vessel literally bounding over the seas. A pile of dories were nested on her deck amidships, and as she swung past, someone hailed, "Hi-yi! haow's fishin'?"

Nickerson chuckled delightedly. "Naow, there's a hound!" he remarked. "Swinging off for Boston or Gloucester with a hundred thousand o' cod and haddock below. Dory-handliner, by the looks o' her. Her gang will be below playing cards or mugging-up or snoozing, and only two on deck seeing her home! These fellers are sailors, my son! Winter and summer, they're sloggin' in and aout, and nawthin' bothers them. I'd sooner be skipper of that hooker than commander of the *Teutonic*! I'd have more fun and I'd make more money."

When the *Starbuck* got under way again under reefed canvas, fishing schooners passed her bound west under their whole four lowers. Sometimes two vessels would come driving up out of the snow squalls—racing for port with sheets flat aft and the lee rail under in a broil of white water, and a mob of oilskinned men lounging around the quarters of the respective ships watching the going and betting on the outcome. Beautiful schooners they were, and Donald could not believe that such yacht-like craft were employed in the humble pursuits of fishing.

"There's hundreds of these craft on this coast," remarked Captain Nickerson, "and they're all fine-lined, able vessels. They're built to sail fast and they're rigged an' sparred to stand the drag. They draw a lot of water aft and they carry a pile of iron and stone ballast. That's why they can sail an' make a passage while we're lying-to. Even in this able packet, we wouldn't dare to try to sail by the wind like those jokers in that snifter."

Donald was profoundly impressed and he began to regard casting his lot with the North American Bank fishermen as something to be desired—a phase of seafaring with remunerative and romantic attractions, and when he saw more of them, crossing the southern edge of Western Bank, the spell of this adventurous, daring, sailorly life began to get a hold on his imagination, and he made up his mind to give it a trial. Incidents, related by Nickerson, of the camaraderie among the crews, their superb seamanship, and the good living aboard their vessels also influenced his decision to experience these things himself.

On a bright winter's morning when the sea, ruffled by a moderate westerly breeze, rolled blue under a clear, cloudless sky, to the horizon, the skipper pointed over the port bow. "Old Nova Scotia's showin' up naow!" he said with a grin. "Ye'll see the rocks and spruce in a while, and if it holds like this, we'll drop the killick in Halifax to-day. We're running in to the shores of God's Country—Nova Scotia!" He uttered the last sentence with unusual feeling in his voice.... Judson Nickerson—hard-case blue-waterman, world ranger, and a perfect seaman—was glad to be nearing home after many years.

The faint haze on the horizon ahead defined itself, as they drew near, into wooded hills—green with spruce and coniferous trees—and patched, here and there with snow which gleamed dazzling white in the sunshine. A depression in the land, over which smoke could be discerned, marked the City of Halifax, and, ahead of them an Atlantic liner was standing in for the port.

Captain Nickerson was pacing up and down the quarter, smoking and talking to the runaway apprentices, and Thompson lounging aft. "You two chaps"—meaning Thompson and Jenkins—"will have no trouble in getting a ship for England here. You can either go as a passenger or ship as quarter-master or 'fore-the-mast. It's only a ten-day jump across the pond and a mere hoot-in-hell to the fifteen thousand mile we've traversed in this hooker. There's Chebucto Head to port an' Devil's Island to starb'd ... we're gettin' inside the harbor naow ... due north by compass takes her right up." And he chatted and joked with the boys in buoyant spirits at getting home—a vastly different Nickerson from the bawling, truculent wind-jammer officer of other days.

Slipping along in smooth water, they found themselves once more encompassed by green earth and human habitation, and it was good to look upon by eyes wearied by countless leagues of restless sea. Herring Cove, with its fishermen's cottages nestling among the winter greenery, slipped past to port, and the village looked snug and homey and "landish" to these world sailors. Thrumcap, Maugher's Beach, and McNab Island glided by, and they lowered the stays'l for the last time as they ran through the passage of George Island at the neck of the harbor. The fair city of Halifax burst upon their vision then—row upon row of houses rising from the wharves and warehouses of Water Street to the Citadel Hill, which overlooked the eastern outpost to the Dominion which the *Helen Starbuck* had run the length of two oceans to span from west to east. Victoria to Halifax! A long traverse truly for a small schooner around the Horn, and when they let the headsails run and dropped the anchor behind George Island, Captain Nickerson smacked his fist on the wheel-box and laughed. "Victoria to Halifax raound Cape Stiff in a hundred an' twenty days! Not too bad for a little hooker—not too bad! With a little more ballast and a couple more hands to fist sail in a breeze, we'd ha' done it in a hundred! But, it was a fair sail ... a fair sail!"

Donald and Thompson pulled the skipper ashore, and loafed for an hour on Water Street. The paving stones felt hard to their feet after months of a vessel's decks, and they kept their body muscles instinctively keyed up to meet the lurch and sway which did not come. "Looks something like an Old Country town," said Thompson, after they had strolled around a bit. "Let's get a newspaper an' see what's happened since we left. Chubby will want to know if there's been anything doing in soccer."

Captain Nickerson joined them after a while. "We're to leave the schooner where she is," he said. "The new owners will tow her in to their own wharf to-morrow. We'll strike our flag and pay off in the morning."

By the next day afternoon, they had their dunnage out of the *Helen Starbuck* and Donald cast a regretful glance at the wonderful little vessel in which they worked such a long, watery traverse. As he gazed at her lying quiet and still behind the Island, he thought of those wild and windy days "running the easting"; of Cape Horn and the Le-Maire Straits, the wild seas and the scorching calms "down to the south'ard!" Aye! these were romantic days—days he would never forget, and as he clambered up on the wharf, he waved an adieu to the anchored schooner. "Good-bye and good luck!" he murmured. "You're a brave and gallant little ship—*Helen Starbuck!*"

The little band of adventurers parted company shortly afterwards—Olsen and Hansen to a boarding house where they would meet others of their kind, and Chubby and Thompson to try their luck at getting over to Liverpool by working their way, or as steerage passengers.

"So-long, nipper!" said Thompson to Donald. "Good luck to you in future. We'll maybe meet again some day!" Chubby wrung Donald's hand but said nothing. His heart was too full for words. "So long, Chubby!" said McKenzie. "Try and make Uncle give you your premium back, but don't say that I'm alive. So long!"

Joak McGlashan remained with Captain Nickerson and Donald. He would stay a while and try his hand "cookin' at the fushin'" before going home, and he, like Donald, would sail in the wake of the redoubtable Judson Nickerson, and see where that worthy would lead them.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN



“**N**AOW, boys,” Nickerson was saying, “we’ll take the little packet steamer to-night an’ go home to my people’s place daown the shore at Eastville Harbor. It’s a little fishing an’ boat-building taown, but it’s a pleasant place an’ pleasant folks live there. I called the old mother up on the telephone a while back an’ told her I was blowing home with a couple o’ ship-mates and they’ll sure give us a welcome!”

“How about getting some decent clothes,” ventured Donald, looking ruefully at his rough sea-duds.

“Clothes be hanged!” ejaculated the skipper. “Get a hair-cut and a bath—that’s more to the point. We’re not sticklers for clothes daown aour way. Buy clothes when you’ve money to blow—not when you’ve a measly twenty dollars in your jeans between you and destitution.”

Donald had been paid at the rate of twenty-five dollars a month for the trip around, and Nickerson had also squared up his indebtedness to Donald’s father. Of the hundred and fifty dollars which he had received, Donald remitted one hundred and twenty-five to his mother—telling her to keep it for passage-money when he had prepared a home in Canada for her to join him. Joak, as cook, drew one hundred and sixty dollars out of the venture, while Nickerson had a roll of bills in his pocket as thick around as a cable hawser.

Giving their sea-bags to an expressman to deliver at the boat, the trio loafed around Halifax until evening, when they boarded a little wooden steamer with a high superstructure aft and a fore-deck piled with barrels and boxes of assorted merchandise. A middle-aged man in shirt sleeves, with a rotund form and round, red, good-humored face leaned out of the wheel-house window smoking and watching the deck-hands chocking and lashing the cargo. To this worthy, Captain Nickerson shouted facetiously.

“Waal, naow, Cap’en Eben, haow’s tricks? I see you’re still splashin’ araound in ten fathom and in smell of the land!” The other took his pipe from his mouth and stared curiously at Nickerson. “Ye’ve got me guessin’, matey,” he drawled. “I ain’t seen you afore, hev I? An’ yet that face o’ your’n seems mighty familiar—”

Nickerson laughed. “Eben Westhaver!” he said, “d’ye recollect th’ time we shipped on that coal drogher an’ took sixty days to run from Sydney to Saint John an’ you lost your only pair of pants by gettin’ them—” The listeners had no opportunity of learning how Captain Westhaver lost his only pair of pants, as he jumped out of the wheel-house with hand outstretched, shouting, “Young Juddy Nickerson, by the Great Hook Block! An’ where’n Tophet hev you sprung from? H’ard ye was lime-juicin’ ... ain’t seen ye raound for nigh four or five year. Well, well, an’ haow be ye, Juddy-boy?” And the two men started a “gamm” in which Nickerson narrated and Eben listened and interjected strange “Down-east” ejaculations—“I reckon you did!” “Th’ devil ye say!” “Waal, I swan!” and “D’ye tell me so!”

The boys were lolling over the steamer’s rail gazing on the wharf, when Nickerson called them over and introduced them to Captain Westhaver. “Come into the wheel-house, my sons,” he invited. “Set ye daown, fill up yer pipes, and make yourselves to home. I reckon ye ain’t had much layin’ back of late ... a long v’y’age ye made in that little hooker ... a long v’y’age!” Then, addressing Nickerson, he continued. “Not much change in Eastville Harbor sence you left, Juddy. Fishin’s good. Sev’ral noo vessels in the salt Bank fleet, and they’re buildin’ a few every year. Your father is kept full o’ work at his yard. The old man’s pretty hearty, Jud—don’t age any, an’ your mother’s spry—purty spry for a woman what had all the sickness she’s had. Guess they’ll be glad to see you home an’ to know you’re home for good. Goin’ to take a shot at the fishin’, are ye? Ain’t forgot haow to rig trawls, bait up, an’ haul gear in the bow of a dory, hev ye, Jud? When a man’s bin a brass-bound mate in lime-juicers, he’s li’ble to git kinder soft—”

Nickerson snorted indignantly. “By the Lord Harry, Eben Westhaver,” he said grimly, “I’d give a lot to see you a ‘brass-bound mate in a lime-juicer’ as you call it! You’d sweat some, by Godfrey! Ef you was mate of the four-posted scow that Donald here and I were in and shovin’ her araound from Glasgow to Vancouver—seven weeks’ beatin’ about off Cape Stiff—you wouldn’t be so glib with yer talk about gittin’ soft. It ‘ud trim some of the bilge off that ol’ belly o’ yours, I’d swear! You prate of hard times coastin’? Wait ‘til you’ve been southabout in a starvation Scotch wind-jammer big enough to carry this coaster on her davits and with hardly

enough men in two watches to swing her yards raound. I was mate and skipper of a twenty-five hundred ton four-mast barque, Eben, an' Scotch, an' tight Scotch at that. Ef you know ships, you'll know what that means—gear, stores and crowd—cheap and scanty. Six ruddy months and two blushin' weeks on the passage ... a reg'lar blinder too! Second mate—a no-nothing Squarehead! Old Man—a cowardly old rum-hound! Kicked the greaser forrad and locked the skipper in his room when off the Horn, and took the ship to port myself ... would never ha' got there else. An' you, you fat old coaster, lyin' back and takin' it easy, to talk about me gittin' soft. I like yer blushin' gall!" And he grunted in mock resentment at the imputation.

The other laughed and lit up his pipe. "Well, Juddy, you were always the boy to tackle hard traverses!" he remarked calmly. "Why didn't you stay to home? There was no call for you to go barging araound. Your folks are snug ... ye've bin a dam' fool!"

A far-away expression came into the other's keen grey eyes and the stern lines of his sea-tanned face softened. Pulling at his mustache, he sighed. "You're right, Eben," he said at last, "I *have* been a dam' fool! I don't see what should ever take our Nova Scotians away from our own country. But I've seen a lot and I've l'arned a lot. I've got an English Board of Trade certificate as master and I've handled big ships. I haven't chucked my money araound either. But after all I've seen and experienced, I've found nawthin' to beat Nova Scotia, and I believe I'll make more money and be better off all raound if I stick by home and take a vessel to the fishin'. And money ain't everything. To be home is worth more than any money. These are my honest convictions and I'm agoin' to try them aout. Yes, sir, me and my two young buckos here."

They left Halifax about midnight and steamed out of the harbor and to the west'ard. Chebucto flashed them a "Good morning!" when the little packet rounded the Head to negotiate the ledge-strewn channels behind Sambro Island, and picking up the lights, she poked into coves and inlets and delivered her parcels on silent wharves. Sometimes a sleepy wharfinger would awake at the steamer's whistle and emerge from a nearby shed. "Two bar'ls fish for daown th' shore, Cap!" he would growl drowsily, and after the two "bar'ls" were hustled aboard, he would pocket his receipt and depart for bed again with a "Fine mornin', Cap. Hope ye strike no fog this time!"

Donald and Joak were awakened early by Captain Nickerson. "Gittin' in naow, boys," he said. "We're jest coming up by Eastville Cape and it's a fine morning." The boys rolled out of the berths in which they had been sleeping "all standing," and after a wash, they went on deck. It was indeed a fine morning—a glorious March morning of clear blue sky and brilliant spring sunshine, and the cool off-shore breeze seemed to carry the odors of balsam and spruce from the wooded shores which they were approaching. Eastville Cape, a high, rocky promontory, crowned by a white painted light-house and a warm-looking forest of evergreen spruce, flanked the entrance to a spacious cove or bay surrounded by gentle slopes of tilled fields and green spruce bush. The entrance was somewhat devious by reason of numerous underwater ledges on the western side, but the channel was evidently wide enough to be negotiated by a schooner, even with the wind ahead, as one could be seen tacking up the passage abreast of the packet steamer. The Cape faced a twin brother west of the ledges, and the two headlands stood like grey stone sentinels watching the Atlantic and guarding the bay behind.

On either side of the passage, green slopes, flecked with the remains of the winter's snow in the sun-shaded hollows, rose abruptly from the sand and shingle beaches, and nestling among the spruce clumps, white wooden cottages with cedar shingle roofs, peered cosily from out of the wind-break of greenery. A strip of tilled ground invariably flanked the gentler slopes of those cottage estates, and on the beach, dories and boats betokened that the owners farmed both land and sea. "Those are all fishermen's houses," explained Captain Nickerson. "They farm a little, cut spruce logs, and fish alongshore for lobsters, cod, haddock, mackerel and so on in season. Some o' them go vessel fishing on the Banks in summer. It's a pretty place."

It was indeed a pretty place. Donald thought it was magnificent. The clean stone beaches, with here and there a strip of white sand, the rocks, bold and rugged and with verdure growing in the fissures, the grassy slopes at odd intervals and the clumps of evergreen, the all surrounding hills clothed with thick forests of coniferous trees, and the clear pellucid waters of the Bay, made a picture which an artist would itch to portray on canvas.

Threading the passage, the steamer headed across the widening inlet for a wharf environed by a number of neatly-painted wooden houses—the homes and marts of Eastville Harbor's citizens. The gaunt trunks of maples and elms rose from among the habitations—not yet clothed in their leafy garments—and a tall church spire stood out behind the town—stark white against the brown and green of the hillside. Numerous anchored schooners of beautiful model, but with booms bare of furled canvas, betokened fishermen laid up until the spring fishery called them into service, and when the packet steamer glided between them, she roared a greeting to the town, and the hills echoed to the blast of her whistle.

Captain Nickerson pointed to a spot on the shore below the wharf where the white ribs of a vessel showed up against the dull red of a shed. "There's my father's yard," he said. "That's a schooner he's building. That white-painted house up on the hill an' half hidden by a spruce bush is our family shack an' where I first saw the light o' day." They were coming into the wharf now, and a number of men and women stood upon it awaiting the arrival of freight or friends, or actuated by curiosity to see "who was on th' boat." A half-a-dozen wagons and one or two slenderly-built buggies were hitched to the back-rails of the wharf—their horses placidly unconcerned at the bustle when mooring lines were made fast and the gang-plank shoved ashore.

When Captain Nickerson stepped on the dock, a tall, clean-shaven man about sixty-five years of age, with wisps of white hair showing from under his soft black hat, detached himself from the knot of spectators. He had a ruddy complexion and keen grey eyes, and his spare figure, slightly stooped at the shoulders, was dressed in blue jean overalls, to which flecks of shavings and sawdust adhered. He wore a white shirt—a Sunday relic—and his low, turn-down collar and black string bow tie gave him an air of distinction which his workman's garb failed to disguise. He greeted Captain Nickerson in a deep, booming bass. "Judson! Here you

are!” The other swung around. “Hullo, father. How are ye?” They shook hands heartily but with no ostentatious show of affection, and the older man laughed. “Not much change in you, Judson,” he said, “a mite stouter I cal’late—not much—an’ you’re looking well. Mother got your telephone message—”

“And how is mother! I hope she’s well?”

“She’s bin pretty good, Judson, pretty good,” answered the father. “She’s bin up early this morning gittin’ a rousin’ breakfast ready for you. Er—where’s your friends?”

The captain turned around. “By Jupiter, I nearly forgot them,” he cried. “I was so pleased to see you, father, an’ to git home.” He beckoned Donald and Joak to him. “Come up, boys. Father, this is Donald McKenzie an’ John McGlashan—two Scotch lads that came around from Vancouver in a schooner with me. Donald was a ‘prentice in the barque I left Glasgow in an’ we’ve got quite chummy. I asked them to come home with me until they got a chance to look around.”

Nickerson, Senior, extended a welcome hand, and boomed forth that he was glad to meet them and glad to have them stay a while. Donald liked the genial face of the old ship-builder and wondered if he, like his son, had dormant characteristics of truculent aggressiveness. Maybe, he had, when he was younger, thought Donald, but age had calmed his spirit. That booming voice, and the tattoo marks on the old gentleman’s hands, betokened a sailor, and when he glanced at his face, so much like Judson’s, with its aquiline nose, strong jaw and set mouth, he could readily imagine him singing out biting commands from the quarter-deck of a ship years ago. Age, however, had softened the stern lines of his countenance; the grey eyes beamed kindness and there was a merry twitch about the corners of the mouth, while the silvery hair gave the old gentleman a patriarchal appearance. They were a dominant race—these Nova Scotians—strong-minded, aggressive descendants of those puritanical British pioneers who left the Mother Country for a savage colony because it would not give them the freedom of life and religion which they craved.

As they walked up from the wharf to the tree-lined Main Street, Captain Nickerson was the recipient of many greetings. “How’re ye, Jud? Home again an’ agoin’ to stay, eh? Glad to see ye!” was the general tenor of these hearty, loud-voiced welcomes, and Donald was impressed with their evident sincerity. People who spoke loud betokened characters of bluff straight-forwardness—straight, simple living folks who believed in themselves; confident, clear-headed and hearty, and Donald was enamoured of this colonial quality. He liked these people already.

Walking along a plank side-walk—interrupted at intervals by the giant trunks of ancient elms—and flanked by neat wooden houses painted in whites, greys and yellows with trimmings of contrasting shades, they swung off at a big red building with the sign “ENOS NICKERSON & SON, VESSEL BUILDERS & SPAR MAKERS,” and approached a large square house painted the universal white with green trimmings. It was set up on a bank or small hill over-looking the yard and harbor, and a number of fine elms and spruce encircled the place and gave it a comfortable appearance. A wide verandah was constructed in the front of the house, and upon it Donald could see two female figures—one of whom was gesticulating wildly, while the other was shading her eyes with her hands against the eastern sun.

“There’s mother an’ Ruth on th’ gallery,” remarked the old gentleman. “Ruth has done nawthin’ but talk about ye comin’ sence you ‘phoned yestiddy, Judson, an’ I cal’late she’s made a big mess o’ that choc’late fudge which you useter be so fond of.” Donald smiled to himself at the thought of the hard-case Bluenose mate having a penchant for chocolate “fudge.” It seemed rather ludicrous.

When the quartette toiled up the steep beach-gravel path to the steps of the house, Captain Nickerson jumped lightly on to the verandah and clasped his mother in his strong arms. She was a silver-haired, rosy cheeked little woman of about the same age as her husband, but she showed none of his phlegmatic greeting when she hugged and kissed her roving, sea-bronzed son. While the mother claimed his arm and cheek on one side, Ruth, a dark-haired, pretty girl of sixteen or seventeen, hung around his neck on the other and Judson was literally “boarded” with welcoming salutations “port and starboard.” “Oh, Juddy, my boy, I’m glad you’re home,” cried the mother with joy in her eyes. “How fine and well you look—”

“And I’m glad too, Juddy!” exclaimed Ruth retaining her clasp around her brother’s neck and punctuating her welcome with kisses. “I’ve been up since four this morning getting your room in order and fixing up your clothes, and I’ve made you a big plate-full of fudge, Juddy—”

Donald stood at a respectful distance watching the reunion with odd thoughts. Judson seemed to show up in still another light. The hard-fisted, swaggering and domineering mate of the *Kelvinhaugh* ... hugged and kissed by a dear little mother and a sweet little sister and caressing them affectionately in return! One would have thought that a man like Nickerson would scorn these things. And Ruth Nickerson! Donald was much interested in her. He was going to be made acquainted with her. He had not spoken to a girl for almost a year, and he had not fraternized with the sex since disaster overtook the McKenzie family and his social circle was swept away with it. He had yearned, many times, to have a girl to whom he could write and tell of the things he was seeing and experiencing. He hungered for a girl’s company. He idealized them in a clean, manly way, and the rough immoral talk of his shipmates on the subject of girls always jarred on his sensitive nature. Before he even met her, Donald was hoping that Ruth Nickerson would prove “chummy.” Her face, figure and manner had already charmed him wherein he showed himself a genuine sailor by falling half in love with the first girl he met.

“Come up, boys. I want you to meet my mother and sister.” Captain Nickerson swung around with an arm encircling his mother’s and sister’s waists. “Mother—this is Donald McKenzie and John McGlashan.” Donald clasped her hand and bowed; Joak made a respectful salute by touching his forelock. “And this is my sister Ruth—John McGlashan and Donald McKenzie!” In this case, Joak shook the girl’s hand murmuring, “Pleased tae meet, ye, Miss!” while McKenzie, overcome by shyness and almost reverential awe, bowed and stammered an acknowledgement of the introduction. Ruth gave both lads a casual glance from her sparkling

blue eyes and led her prodigal brother into the house. "Nice wee lassie—" whispered Joak, but Donald scowled. He wished he had some respectable clothes and a collar on.

"Step right in, my sons," boomed old Mr. Nickerson. "Make yerselves to home an' don't stand on ceremony—" And his wife looked back and chimed in. "That's right, Enos. Show the boys their room. We'll have breakfast right away."

Up in the large airy bed-room with its huge wooden bed and old fashioned furniture and numerous picked-rag carpets, Donald washed and surveyed his rough clothing. "I wish the Skipper had given me a chance to get some new gear," he remarked regretfully. "I feel like a tramp in these rags."

Joak laughed and gave his friend a malicious glance. "Och, I wadna worry aboot yer claes. Miss Nickerson'll fa' in love wi' ye without yer bein' a dude. That's what's makin' ye sae parteecular ... th' wee lassie!" Noting the scowl on his chum's face, he changed the subject. "It's a bonny place this, an' this hoose wad cost a big rent in Glesca. Wha' wad have thought Cap'en Nickerson had a hame like this? I thought he was gaun tae take up tae yin o' them fishermen's shacks in the woods yonder!" And he stared around the spacious bed-chamber with appreciative eyes.

They went down to the dining-room—a lofty apartment and furnished with heavy walnut and maple furniture of antique make. The woodwork and doors were painted a dull white, and Donald's artistic eye was entranced with the simple Colonial design of architraves and panelling of doors and china cabinets. A large square table was already laid with the breakfast, and Donald found himself seated opposite Ruth Nickerson and with the old shipbuilder and his wife at the ends of the board.

It was a merry feasting—a meal which McKenzie enjoyed silently in being once more in the environment of a home with white linen, silver and china and womenfolks. It was like picking up the thread of a life one has missed for many months. Nickerson must be feeling that way also, thought Donald, for in his Skipper he now saw a man he had never known before. The saturnine Judson; he of the Olympian air, scathing vocabulary and truculent disposition of *Kelvinhaugh* days had vanished, and there now appeared a laughing, teasing, joking young sailor with nice table manners and language, which, while idiomatic, was faultlessly correct. The stern lines had completely disappeared from his bronzed face, and he looked as young as his age.

During the breakfast, Donald was silent but observant, and the most of his observations were of the pretty young girl opposite him. There was a feeling in his breast he had never felt before when he glanced at her; a feeling that caused him to admire her fresh young beauty in face and form and to hunger for possession. The age-old instinct of adolescent youth was awakening within this clean-hearted, red-blooded sea boy, and he was forming new impressions and a new appreciation of the opposite sex. Seventeen is the impressionable age.

McKenzie's shy glances brought no response from Ruth's sparkling blue eyes. Her attention was wholly taken up with her brother and Joak, whose peculiar speech and mannerisms gave her much secret delight. Captain Nickerson readily sensed this and he skilfully drew the unconscious McGlashan out for the amusement of his roguish sister. "D'ye mind the day, Joak, when you told me to get the mains'l off her because you couldn't get your bread dough to rise?"

"Aye, captain, I do that!" replied Joak, stuffing his mouth full of crisp bacon. "Yon was an awfu' windy day an' she was jumpin' about like a lone spud in a wash b'iler! *You* ken, Miss"—addressing Ruth—"it's no easy gettin' a batch o' dough tae rise if th' whole place is jumpin' an' jigglin' an' jooglin' about!" Miss Nickerson nodded sympathetically.

"And your pea soup, Joak," continued the skipper. "The peas would be as hard as bullets when you started to boil them, but you'd stick a lump of washing soda in the pot and soften them up!"

Joak shook his head vigorously. "Naw, captain," he retorted vehemently. "I never did that! Sody is awful' hard on the guts—er, excuse me! I mean, stummick, and it 'ud soon tak' th' linin' aff yer insides. Naw, I saffened them up wi' a guid soakin' in warm water. That's a!"

Ruth's face was crimson, but she did not laugh. Joak was taking everything very seriously.

"I've heard Judson talk of a number of strange sea dishes with queer names," she observed. "Cracker-hash, dandy-funk, three-decker-pie, and what was that goose story you used to tell, Judson? That was a new way of cooking." Donald could have sworn that she winked a roguish eye at her brother.

"Oh, ah, yes ... the goose story," said Judson taking up the cue. "I don't think Joak knows how to do that—though he might.... It happened aboard a ship I was on one time. The skipper had invited some friends off to have dinner aboard and had told the cook to get a goose ready for cooking. A while later the old man got a message saying his friends could not come, so he called the cook and said. "These people are not coming for dinner to-day so we'll postpone the goose!" The cook goes out scratching his head and when he gets forrad he says to the crowd. 'I knows how to b'ile 'em. I knows how to bake 'em, and I knows how to fry 'em, but I'll be hanged if I know how to postpone 'em!'" He finished the yarn without a smile. For a moment Joak stared at him in serious perplexity, and then blurted, "I wouldna know how tae postpone it masel'!"

Everybody laughed, while Donald felt like kicking his schoolboy chum for his simple density. Ruth, after enjoying the joke, eased Joak's discomfiture by explaining the meaning of "postpone." "Oh, aye, that's it, is it?" cried McGlashan laughing boisterously. "That's a good yin—a gey good yin! I don't remember ever gettin' that worrd at school. Did we get that yin, Donald?"

Thus appealed to, McKenzie answered with some annoyance, "Of course you did! You must have forgotten."

"Then you two were at school in Scotland together?" Ruth gave Donald the first direct glance of the meal.



"Aye, Miss," cut in Joak. "We were chums an' went tae school thegither since we were wee fella's. Donal' an' me's had some rare tares when we were kids."

The tolerantly humorous look in Ruth's eyes annoyed Donald. He felt that she classed him on a par with Joak and it vexed his conceit. There was a hint of patronage in the direct manner in which she addressed and looked at the both of them—a manner which left Joak unaffected, but which made McKenzie squirm. He felt instinctively that Judson's sister regarded the two of them as odd creatures her brother had brought home from sea—brought home much as he might bring home a parrot, a cardinal bird, or a monkey, and because he was anxious to create a good impression on Ruth, he resented it.

Later in the day his resentment was intensified when he overheard Ruth talking to her brother Asa's wife on the gallery. "Yes, Juddy came home this morning," she was saying, "and you know what Juddy is for bringing home strange characters. This time he arrives with two queer Scotch boys. One talks the strangest gibberish and positively can't see a joke, while the other doesn't talk at all but gives you the queerest looks. I'm not sure but what both of them are a little off——" Donald blushed furiously and moved away, seething inwardly. His pride was hurt. To Miss Nickerson, he would, in future, be ordinarily civil and courteous, but nothing more.

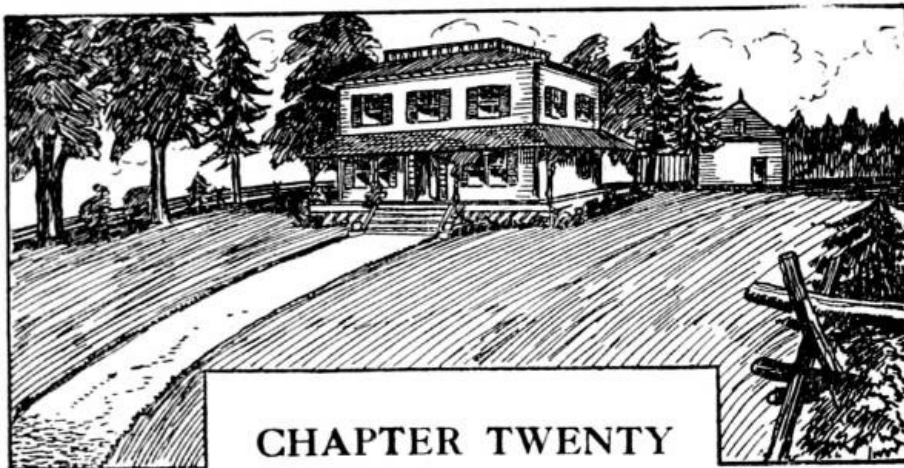
The skipper did not believe in loafing around home. That same afternoon he took the boys down to the harbor to look at a schooner in which he proposed buying an interest. "Father already owns a half share in her and he's willing to fit her out for salt Bank fishing if I'll take her and get a gang together. I can place you in her as cook, Joak, and I'll take you along, Donald, and make a fisherman out of you. There she lies! The *West Wind* is her name and she's about the same build and tonnage as the *Helen Starbuck*."

They tumbled into a dory and pulled out to a schooner lying to an anchor among the fleet. Into cabin, hold and forecastle they went, and after a careful examination, Captain Nickerson expressed himself as satisfied. "This is a fine little vessel, boys," he remarked. "Give her a bit of an overhaul and she'll be a better vessel than the *Helen Starbuck*. I'll take her over, and we'll get to work right away, boys, and fix her up for the spring voyage. What d'ye say? Are ye both game to try your hand at the fishin' with me?"

Donald and Joak answered together, "We are, sir!"

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## CHAPTER TWENTY



**W**ITHIN a day or two of his arrival in Eastville Harbor, Donald saw the beginnings of great activity among the anchored fleet of fishing schooners in the Bay. Almost simultaneous with the commencement of the *West Wind's* overhauling, every vessel in the fleet was tenanted by sail-benders and riggers, painters and caulkers, and the water front rapidly took on a lively appearance with the hauling of schooners to the wharves to receive supplies, fresh water, salt and gear. Fishermen were streaming in from outlying villages and back-country farms—emerging like the bears and squirrels from a winter's hibernation—to sign up with the skippers for the spring fishing voyage. Eastville became a hive of industry and the street corners and stores were fishermen's parliaments where the costs of salt, trawl lines, hooks, oil-clothes and sea-boots were discussed and the price per quintal of the season's fish was forecasted.

Donald did not see a great deal of the Nickerson family except at meal times, kitchen snacks and lunches, mostly at which Mrs. Nickerson and Ruth merely waited on the men. They rose early in the morning and got aboard the vessel by 6.30 a.m., and with an hour for dinner at noon, they worked until darkness called a halt. Joak was busy overhauling his galley gear and painting fo'c'sle and cabin, while Donald and Captain Nickerson worked on the rigging and sails.

When the heavy work of bending sails was finished the skipper said, "Naow, Donny, boy, I'll leave you to

reeve off halliards and sheets and hitch and seize noo rattlins, 'cause I've got to skin araound among the boys and git an eight dory gang—that means sixteen men—two to a dory. I'm agoin' to hev a job gittin' them 'cause they'll prefer to ship with old skippers who know the game, but I'll scrape up a crowd somehow."

And Donald was left alone for almost a week, during which time Captain Nickerson drove around the country trying to pick up men. He would return after dark from these excursions tired with driving and talking. "Th' fellers araound here have become most cussedly conservative sence I left home," he gloomily remarked one night. "They're all glad to see me, but when it comes to shippin' with me, they're either signed up with someone else or they're afraid they'll lose a chance o' making money by sailing with a green skipper. I haven't got a one yet and I've tried hard for a'most a week. There's men to be had, but haow to git them beats me."

Donald had met quite a number of the Eastville fishermen and had yarned with them enough to form a general opinion of their characteristics. They treated him very cordially and had freely discussed Captain Nickerson's chances of picking up a crew. "He's a good sailorman an' navigator," they admitted, "and he's fished some, but we doubt ef he knows the grounds an' where to pick up th' fish. He ain't never bin skipper afishin' an' fellers ain't agoin to take chances with a green skipper when there's so many high-liners alookin' for crews." Donald readily saw the point and he gave some thought to the matter, and from his observations of fishermen character he made a novel suggestion to Judson.

"It seems to me, captain," he said, "that you've got to spring something unusual on these chaps—something that will appeal to their sporting instincts, and from what I know of them and you I think it can be worked. You may be an Eastville man, but you're different from these chaps in a good many ways." And he explained his idea.

The skipper listened intently with a broadening smile on his face, and when Donald had finished he thrust forth his hand. "Good! Lay it there, boy. I'll do it, by Godfrey! Let's write it out and we'll git it printed and mailed at once!" And he rose to his feet, stamping and chuckling.

Two or three days later every fisherman in Eastville and vicinity received the following printed notice in his mail box:

Dear Sir,—

The undersigned has taken over the command of the schooner "West Wind," and will fit out for salt fishing this spring.

Several fishermen have expressed their doubts as to my ability to catch fish and make a good stock. I wish to state that I will lay five hundred dollars with any man, even money, that I will, this season, be the high-line eight dory vessel of the Eastville Harbor fleet.

I am now picking up an eight dory gang, and want only young, hardy men and good fishermen. No married, tired, or nervous men need apply.

Yours for fish,

JUDSON K. NICKERSON.

The effect was wonderful! All the young, reckless spirits in the district camped on Nickerson's doorstep and he had his pick of the best in making up his eight dory gang—sixteen young bloods, strong, single, and tough, and endowed with a dash of the sporting spirit which would ensure their being of the breed to "stand the gaff" in winning their skipper's bet.

Nickerson was delighted. "That sure was a great stunt, Donny, boy," he cried. "I've got a gang of young toughs—a bunch that'll work 'til they drop an' who'll swing dories over when the gulls can't fly to wind'ard! They're the kind for makin' a big trip 'cause they'll work like the devil to beat the old timers, and they'll fish when the married men an' the' narvous men'll be for stayin' aboard. I'd ha' never thought o' that stunt if it wasn't for you, by Jupiter!"

"Do you suppose anyone will take up your bet?" enquired Donald somewhat anxiously. The other thought for a moment before answering.

"Yes!" he replied. "Some skipper will call me—some high-liner. Lemme see—who is there runnin' eight dories? Wilson?—No, he's too tight! Wallace?—A big family an' no money to blow! It'll be either Smith or Ira Burton. Burton will call me sure! He don't like me sence I gave him a trimming for insulting little Vera Knickle. ... Yes, it'll likely be Burton. He'll itch to take my money an' show me up as a windy bluff. Mark me, Donald, we'll have Burton to fight against, and he'll take some trimming, too!"

Jud Nickerson's wager was the talk of the fleet and the news spread up and down the shore. Young fishermen came in from other ports to ask for a "sight" with Nickerson, and he regretfully turned them away. He had his gang now—a cracking good crowd—Jud Nickerson's "hellions" they were called, and down on the wharves and in the outfitters and barber shops, the old skippers smiled sourly and "cal'lated that Jud Nickerson was agoin' to fish lime juice fashion," and they reckoned some day he would spring a surprise in the way of a vessel with "injury-rubber" dories that would stretch with a big load of fish, and leather sails for running a vessel to port in a breeze.

The *West Wind* was duly hauled alongside the wharf and her gang were aboard getting salt into the hold bins and rigging up their trawling gear. This was a job which Captain Nickerson advised Donald to "get hep to," and he sat with the fishermen on the *West Wind's* sunny decks practising the knotting of "gangens,"<sup>[1]</sup> the "sticking" of same into the "ground line" of the "trawl" or long-line, and the bending on to the gangens of the

seven or eight hundred hooks which go to make up a seven-“shot” tub of trawl gear. The Eastville harbor fleet of twenty-five or thirty schooners were nearly all “salt Bankers”—that is, they engaged in a deep sea fishery on the off-shore “Banks” or shoal water areas of the Western North Atlantic, and their catch of cod, hake, pollock, haddock and cusk were split and put down in salt aboard the vessels. Cod, however, was the commonest fish caught, and when the salted catch was landed, it was prepared for export to West Indies and South America by being dried on racks or “flakes” exposed to open air and sun. Flakes, hundreds of feet long, were built on the sunny slopes of the hillsides around the harbor, and during the summer months these would be covered with hundreds of thousands of split salted codfish caught on the Banks from Le Have to Grand. When thoroughly dried these fish were graded, packed in casks and drums, and shipped to the West Indies and South America, where, as “bacalhao” it is much esteemed by the Latins and colored populations.

[1] Pronounced “gan” as in “began” and “gen” as in “gent.”

Donald knew a good deal about sailing a schooner, but he knew absolutely nothing about fishing in any form. His notion of “trawling” was steam trawling wherein a huge bag net was towed over the bottom by a steamer specially built and equipped for the purpose. In Scotland this method of deep-sea fishing was universal. Trawling, so-called, in Canada, was a different operation altogether, and consisted in catching fish by means of lines about 2,100 feet long, into which, at 28 or 40 inch intervals, a “snood” or “gangen” about 36 inches long was stuck and hitched through the strands of the main or “ground” line. To this snood or gangen was hitched a black japanned hook and from seven to eight hundred hooks depended to a “string” or “tub” of trawl gear. The whole of this long line was coiled down in tubs usually made from cutting down a flour barrel, and six to eight tubs of trawl went to each dory.

The dory is a flat-bottomed, high-sided boat peculiar to the North Atlantic coasts of the American continent. It is thus constructed for wonderful seaworthiness when properly handled, and by having removable thwarts and other fixtures, it can be “nested” within other dories on the schooner’s decks. From six to twelve such boats can be carried “nested” one within the other on the port and starboard sides of a vessel’s waist. From these dories, when launched on the fishing grounds, two fishermen set the long trawls with every hook baited and the line anchored along the bottom.

Young McKenzie found himself in an enchantingly novel world of seafaring and learning something new every day. He had recovered from his surprise at the beautiful class of vessel employed in the Canadian deep-sea fisheries, and the comfort of their forecastles and cabins, but what delighted him still more was the class of men who went to sea in these fishing craft. They were fishermen and farmers and lumbermen and seamen all rolled into one, and as they sat in the sun rigging up interminable fathoms of tarred cotton lines into fishing gear, their conversation would range from the planting of potatoes to the care of a “galled” ox; from the cutting of spruce “piling” and the clearing of an alder swamp to the forty fathom talk of searoads and sailormen. Most of them had been to the West Indies in schooners, brigs and barquentines. They talked glibly of Demerara, Trinidad and its “Pitch Lake”; the Sugar Loaf at Rio; the Prado and Malecon of Havana, and the salt pans of Turk’s Islands. They chewed tobacco, joked and yarned in a strangely fascinating drawl, and Donald’s seafaring blood would be thrilled by their unaffected relations of wild battles with sea and wind, and times when the sudden hurricane blows of spring and fall “blew th’ gaul-derned fores’l, jumbo’n jib clean aout of her ’n left us stripped to bare poles ’n th’ gaul-derned ledges to loo’ard!”

They all addressed each other by baptismal names and Donald was struck by the number of Biblical appellations, and also the odd Freemans, Wallaces, Bruces, Wolfes, Lincolns and other Christian names which sounded strange to his ears and betokened the liberty-loving spirit of ancestors. They were a fine type—lean, strong-muscled, sun-tanned, good humored and coolly daring, and Donald looked forward to life among them with anticipatory pleasure. In these craft and with these men for shipmates, he felt the fascination of the searoads coming over him stronger than ever, and the hateful memory of the days on the *Kelvinhaugh* were passing into oblivion.

They were almost ready for sea, and Captain Nickerson and Donald were standing on the wharf superintending the loading of some supplies, when the skipper gave a grunt. “Here’s Burton acomin’!” They turned around to see a tall, raw-boned, sandy-haired man about forty stepping towards them. He had a clean-shaven face, a hard mouth, and cold grey eyes. “Hello, Jud,” he said in a high-pitched drawl. “See ye’re back with us again. Lime-juicin’ too much for ye these days?”

Nickerson grunted. “Cal’late lime-juicin’ didn’t hurt me any,” he said coldly. “But a man likes to be home an’ among his folks once in a while.”

The other picked up a pine splinter from the wharf, and producing a knife, began to whittle it. After a pause, he spoke again. “See ye’re agoin’ in fer fishin’. Ye’ve a smart vessel there.”

“Yep! She’s able!” answered Judson shortly.

Another pause. “Reckon ye can catch a trip o’ fish?” Still whittling, he asked the question without taking his eyes from the pine sliver.

“Reckon I kin!” replied Nickerson, and fixing the other with his steely glance, added, “I plan to be high-line eight-doryman this season.”

Whittling away, Captain Burton nodded slowly. “Umph!” he piped after a thoughtful pause. “Cal’late, Jud, I hev five hundred toad-skins loose what says you ain’t agoin’ to be ahead o’ th’ *Annie L. Brown’s* gang spring trip to fall.”

Judson laughed sarcastically. “The *Annie Brown*? Why ef I couldn’t trim that crowd of old women I wouldn’t ’temp to go afishin’. I am out to trim an abler gang than the *Annie’s*.” There was a grin on the faces of the loafing *West Winders* who sensed what was in the air and who hung around within earshot. Burton noted the

grins and reddened. "I said, Jud, that the *Annie L. Brown* hez five hundred dollars to put up agin yore hooker. Do you take it, or do you not?"

"Of course I'll take it, Captain Burton," answered the other with a careless laugh. "If you have the money with you I'll take it naow 'stead of later."

Burton threw the stick away and snapped his knife. "I'll leave th' money with Bill Smith, th' harbor-master, an' you kin leave yores there too. I'm sailin' day after t'morrow." Without another word, he turned and stalked up the wharf. Nickerson turned to his grinning gang. "That's the joker we're up against," he said, "and, take it from me, he'll be a tough one to beat. He has a good gang and an able vessel and he's a good fish-killer. We'll have to hustle some to get that money, bullies."

A fisherman laughed. "You find th' fish, Cap," he said, "an' you'll find that 'hustle' is aour middle name. Ira Burton's 'toadskins' look mighty good t' me!"

Joak had removed his dunnage down aboard the schooner and lived on her with some of the men. Donald wanted to do the same, but the Skipper told him to remain at the Nickerson home until he, himself, went aboard. Though he appreciated and enjoyed Judson's kindness, yet he felt the lack of presentable clothes—especially when Ruth was about, for, by her actions and manner towards him, he felt instinctively that she looked upon him as a common Scotch sailor-boy of a social status far beneath her. She was neither unkind nor discourteous, but she treated him exactly as one would treat a hired man. This jarred McKenzie's pride considerably, and when Ruth was around he refrained from conversation and confined himself to mere affirmative or negative answers when she addressed him.

The evening before sailing came, and Donald trudged up from the vessel clad in overalls and rubber boots, and grimy with loading stove coal. When he stepped up on the verandah of the Nickerson home, he spied Ruth seated before an artist's easel and intent on painting a view of the harbor. Anything savoring of art appealed to Donald and he could not resist walking up and looking at the young lady's effort. He felt instinctively that he would be snubbed. At the sound of his footsteps she turned around and gave him a careless glance such as one would give the milk-man or a pet cat.

"Good evening, Miss," ventured Donald politely. "I see you are an artist." "I do a little painting," she replied curtly, continuing her work. For a space he watched her brushing in the colors, and his artistic eye detected many mistakes which were spoiling an otherwise creditable canvas. The girl evidently lacked training though she possessed ability. When she paused to squeeze some color on to a palette, Donald noticed that her fingers were long and well shaped—tokens of artistic temperament. "Well, what do you think of it?" she said without looking up and with a touch of patronizing tolerance in her words.

"I think it is very good in parts," replied Donald quietly, "but—" "Yes, but—?" She was looking at him with arched eye-brows, and there was a trace of resentment in her voice seeming to infer "What do you know about art?"

McKenzie smiled. "I was going to say, if you'll permit me, that your perspective is a little bit out," he answered calmly. "Your schooner is too large for the shed in the fore-ground, and the detail on the further side of the harbor is too harsh. It should be toned down a bit—" He paused, noting the angry flush which was rising to her face. "Go on!" she snapped—almost rudely. "What else is wrong with it?" Her tone was irritable, and Donald, thinking of her conversation with her sister-in-law the day he and Joak arrived, proceeded without mercy, "Your sky is too much of a greeny-blue—you need more cobalt in it. Your water should reflect the sky more, and your clouds are somewhat heavy. A little dash of white and Naples yellow mixed in the centres would lift them out more. And, pardon me, for a sunny day, you should have worked more of a yellow tinge into all your colors—" He said no more, for with an indignant toss of her head and a sparkle of temper in her blue eyes that made her look very fascinating, she jumped up from the stool and throwing down her brush, stalked into the house, saying tartly, "If you're so smart—finish it yourself and let us see if you are as good an artist as you are a critic!" Donald stared after her—somewhat pleased that he had stirred this self-possessed young beauty, and yet somewhat regretful at having offended her. Any unpleasant rifts in his relationships with any person always annoyed McKenzie. He would rather endure than inflict. He turned and scanned the painting, and the artist in him came to the fore. Throwing off his overall jacket, he sat down, picked up the palette and brushes, and started to work. Under his trained eyes and hands the crudities were painted out or toned down, and when Captain Jud came up from the wharf he had transformed the picture into something, which, while yet amateurish, betokened the handiwork of a true artist. "Aye, aye, painting something, are ye?" was the Skipper's greeting.

"No," answered the other. "I took the liberty of retouching your sister's picture. It is her painting, and it is very good." He rose and followed Judson into the house.

He had been gone but a minute before Ruth slipped silently around a corner of the verandah. "He says 'it's very good' does he?" she murmured. "Let's see what our Scotch sailor-artist-critic has done." But when she looked at the canvas, her pique gave way to genuine admiration. "Oh!" she ejaculated softly. "He *is* an artist after all!" Then perplexedly. "I wonder where he learned?" Still wondering, she lifted the canvas from the easel and took it up to her room.

They had supper in the big dining-room that evening—it was a special meal for the departing sailors—and Donald wore a white duck shirt with a turn-down collar—a dollar purchase which catered in a measure to his desire for clean white linen. With his face and hands well scrubbed, and his hair brushed, he looked eminently respectable and felt more at ease. Clothes and personal appearance are two extremely important factors in the self-respect of youth—especially so when the admiration of a girl is to be gained. McKenzie's dollar shirt added enough to his personal appearance to command Ruth's attention, and during the supper she shot shy glances at him and wondered why she hadn't noticed what fine eyes and teeth and hands this tanned young seaman possessed. His artistic criticism set her to thinking. She pondered over his manner of

conversation and his actions when she and her mother were around. He spoke with a Scottish accent, but then, unlike McGlashan, his language was faultlessly correct. His table manners, she noticed now, were according to all the canons of etiquette. He did not tuck his serviette into his shirt-neck; he wielded his spoon in the prescribed way when taking soup, and he held and used his knife and fork properly and not in the "scrammy-handed" manner she expected from a common sea-boy. The Nickersons were superior people, and noted these things and lived correctly themselves. They were seamen and ship-builders, fish merchants and timber merchants, but others of the family had taken up the higher professional arts and doctors, clergymen and lawyers were numbered among them. The Skipper's maternal uncle was a lawyer and a member of the Dominion House of Commons—not that this political honor may be cited as a criterion of breed—but it was evidence of the fact that the family were "particular and knowing folk."

They were to sail for the fishing banks on the morrow, and Judson suggested they have a little family party. Brother Asa and his wife were invited over, and they were bringing with them a cousin who was visiting them; a young woman a year or two older than Ruth. "Now, Sis," said Jud to his sister, "you can get busy an' make up a whack of that choc-late fudge for me to take to sea with me. I c'd eat a bar'l of it right now!"

Asa Nickerson, older than Judson, but almost identical in looks, speech and manner, came in with his wife and her cousin Helena Stuart. Helena was petite with soft brown eyes and pretty fair hair—a rather striking girl and with a face and form which matched her hair and eyes, she would attract admiring attention anywhere. When she greeted Ruth and the two were together, Donald thought he had never seen finer-looking girls. Judson was evidently struck with Miss Stuart, and it wasn't long before he managed to escort her off to the kitchen to superintend his sister's fudge making. Donald, in the odd habit he had of conjuring up contrasting memories, smiled to himself when the Skipper, in his most polite and persuasive manner, offered Miss Stuart his arm in mock courtesy and led her laughingly away to a candy-boiling. He thought of a rain-lashed, heaving deck and the drumming of a big wind aloft and an oil-skinned, sea-booted Judson leaning over the bridge rail of the *Kelvinhaugh* and rasping out, "Put yer ruddy guts into it, you lousy hounds, or I'll bash the ugly mug of th' swine that hangs back!" with a liberal sprinkling of biting oaths for better measure. Truly, seafarers live lives of contrasts not alone in the element they live part of their lives, but in the nature of their work and the herding of men with men far from refining influences.

Donald was left with the older people, and he sat quietly listening to their small talk. Asa spoke to him once or twice, but eventually got embroiled in a discussion with his parents as to the correct manner in which to feed a nine-months-old child—which discussion, while of interest to married people, bored McKenzie dreadfully, and several times he felt like making a bold move by leaving and repairing to the kitchen, where, from the shrieks and laughter, the girls and the Skipper were having a jolly time over the manufacture of the chocolate confection.

He was about to slip out, when Mrs. Asa went to the piano and commenced running her fingers over the keys. "Play us a tune, Gertrude," boomed the old ship-builder. "My ol' favorite, y'know—'Sweet Dreamland Faces'—an' ye might sing it too, Gerty-girl."

The daughter-in-law picked out the music but demurred at the singing. "You know, father, I can't play and sing at the same time. If I had someone to play, I'd sing. Helena would play for me, but I hate to disturb her. She's having a good time in the kitchen by the sounds." Donald, tired of sitting and doing nothing and itching to get his fingers on piano keys once more, rose to his feet. "Possibly I can help you," he said quietly. "I haven't played the piano since we left the West Coast, but I'll try."

Young Mrs. Nickerson looked somewhat surprised, but smiled and vacated the stool. Donald sat down and fingered the keys. His fingers were stiff with the hard usage of sea-faring, but he swung readily into the easy score, and soon Mrs. Asa was singing the sweet old song in a pleasing voice to his accompaniment. When it was finished amid the plaudits of the listeners, the singer complimented the young fellow on his playing. "You play well," she said. "Do you sing? I'm sure you do! Won't you play and sing for us?"

Rather than hazard a resumption of the baby-food conversation, Donald murmured with a self-conscious blush that he would try, and without any preliminaries he touched the keys and in a clear baritone rendered "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon." As he sang the famous old Scottish song, memories of his mother and home in far-away Scotland surged to mind. He forgot the company and sang with closed eyes. He was lonely and more than a little home-sick, and the yearning suggested by the words and its plaintive air rang in his voice, and his quiet touch on the piano mingled with his singing and combined to make it a song from the heart and soul of a wanderer far from his native land.

"Ye mind me o' departed joys—  
Departed.... Never to return!"

When he finished there was an awed silence, and he swung on the stool to see Judson and the two girls standing in the doorway. Helena Stuart, her eyes glowing, walked over to the piano. "That was lovely, Mr. McKenzie," she murmured admiringly. "Won't you sing something else?"

Donald was embarrassed. "I—I'd like to hear *you* play or sing something, Miss," he stammered. "Will you, please?"

"By Jingo, Donny-boy," cried the Skipper, "I've been with you nigh a year naow and I never knew you could play or sing like that! I've h'ard you chanteying, but, if I could play and sing like you can I'd be hanged if I'd go to sea."

Miss Stuart had been rummaging through a music cabinet. "Here we are, Mr. McKenzie," she cried. "Here's a pretty thing—'In Old Madrid!' Do you know it? Fine! If you'll sing it with me, I'll play." She commenced the prelude and they sang the quaint old song. It was a favorite of Donald's and savored of the romance which forever appealed to his nature. Songs of feeling awakened responsive chords within him and his voice

contained the subtle intonations of correct interpretation of the words.

“Her lover fell long years ago for Spain—”

He could conjure a picture of gallant *conquistadores*—*caballeros* and *hidalgos* of chivalrous Castile ... the lover—an armored knight lying stark on a stricken field with a Moorish arrow or javelin in his heart ... and her dainty glove would be fixed in his helm. He visioned her anguish when the dreadful news was brought to her—

“A convent veil ... those dark eyes hid,  
And all the vows that love had sigh'd ... were vain!”

In such a song he could feed his soul on the sentiment which he hungered for. Miss Stuart's soprano blended well with his expressive baritone and delighted the listeners who felt they were being truly regaled with singing of a high order. Ruth, too, was delighted, but deep down in her heart was a twinge of bitterness, of jealousy, of recrimination. This young stranger had lived under her father's roof for almost a month and it was only on the eve of his departure for the fishery that she discovered his worth and talents. She had ignored him for a common sailor lad—a ship laborer—and here he was displaying culture superior to her own. Later, she catechised her brother. “Who is this McKenzie boy? He's no common fellow like that cook of yours—that impossible McGlashan. Where is his family? Where does he come from?”

Judson laughed. “What did you think he was, Sis? Some hoodlum I picked off the dock? Why, honey, his father was a well-known sea-captain in the New York trade ... drowned at sea. The boy is very clever and very well educated. His uncle owns a fleet of ships and Donald was an apprentice or cadet on the barque I was mate of. They knocked him about so much on her that I got him to skin aout in Vancouver and come with me. He's a thorough gentleman in every way and one of the pluckiest and neriest youngsters I ever was shipmates with. He's gone through something, that lad!”

When her brother had finished, Ruth looked at him accusingly. “Judson Nickerson,” she said. “I'm vexed with you! You tell me all this when he is going away, and here for almost a month I've kept him at a distance thinking he was only a sailor you had hired. We might have had a lot of pleasant evenings here if you hadn't been so thoughtless. You come home to eat and sleep, and when we are around you kept Mr. McKenzie from getting better acquainted with your eternal ship-and-fish-talk monopolizing his evenings. I—I could *beat* you, Judson—yes! thrash you well!” And she stamped her foot angrily, while the Skipper stammered excuses and finally laughed at her chagrin. “It took Helena to find aout my friend's qualities,” he teased. “*You* judged him by his clothes. He wanted to dress himself up, but I told him to save his money as he didn't have much. This'll teach you, Sis, that all my guests are not rough-necks and shellbacks!”

In the parlor, Helena and Donald were entertaining the company by singing and playing, and in the congenial atmosphere the young fellow cast off his reserve. He felt that he was once more picking up the threads of the things he delighted in, but had lost for a space. With generous praise from his audience, admiring glances and expressions from pretty Miss Stuart, and a desire to revenge himself upon Ruth for her neglect and tolerant behavior towards him, he expanded and did his best.

When Ruth came from the kitchen with her brother and noticed the friendly intimacy of the two young people at the piano, she suggested a dance as a diversion. “Gerty will play a waltz for us and we can go into the dining-room. Juddy—push the table back, and—” in a whisper—“take Helena for your partner. I'll find out if your friend has other accomplishments.”

When Mrs. Asa trilled out the “Blue Danube,” Ruth approached Donald. “Will you waltz with me?” she asked with a winning smile. The youth looked up at her with surprise in his eyes, colored slightly, and glanced at his heavy boots. “I—I'm afraid I can't do much with these on,” he answered hesitatingly, “and I expect I'm sadly out of practice—”

“Let's try anyway,” she suggested, and Donald slipped his arm around her waist and stepped off in time to the music. He held her very gingerly at first, but in the swing of the dance he tightened his embrace of her lithe figure. Though nervous and afraid of stepping on her dainty feet with his heavy brogans, and somewhat abashed in holding a pretty girl to him in such close proximity, he, nevertheless, piloted her through the rhythmic whirl in a creditable manner which bespoke a graceful dancer. Panting, and with eyes glowing and cheeks blooming, she called a halt. “Oh, I'm out of breath,” she gasped. “Let's sit down. Juddy and Helena will dance all night.”

He escorted her to a corner of the dining-room and sat beside her. All his resentment against her previous treatment of him had vanished and he felt strangely buoyant and happy. For a moment neither spoke. “I'm so sorry I was rude to you about my painting this afternoon,” ventured Ruth at last with a shy glance towards his face. “You were quite right in your criticisms and you altered it wonderfully. I had no idea you were so clever. You must have studied painting...”

Donald nodded. “I always loved drawing and painting,” he replied. “My art lessons were the only ones I really enjoyed.”

“And music and dancing and singing?”

“I took lessons in all because Mother made me do so,” he answered smiling. “I did not like them at the time, though I appreciate such education now.”

She looked at him to see if he was passing a compliment, but in his expression there was no evidence of such. “Your Mother must miss you very much,” she observed. “Whatever sent a clever boy like you to sea? Art, music and drawing-room accomplishments have a mighty little place on a fishing boat. It's a miserable life, though Juddy thinks it is the only occupation.”

"Men must work," replied the youth.

"Granted! But seafaring! Fishing! Why not some occupation where you can make use of your artistic gifts—?"

"There are better artists than I am walking the streets of Glasgow and London who will draw excellent crayon pictures for a sixpence." He smiled and added. "I loved the sea!"

She sensed the past tense and repeated wonderingly. "Loved?"

Helena walked into the room in time to hear Ruth's query. "What's this? What's this? Who talks of love?" Donald blushed furiously. Helena laughed. "All right, Mr. McKenzie, don't feel so embarrassed. I'll respect your confidence. I suppose Ruth was flirting as usual. I've just come to call you in for a cup of coffee and some cakes."

They returned to the room again and had refreshments. Then Mr. and Mrs. Asa Nickerson and Helena took their departure—the latter very cordially shaking Donald's hand and wishing him a pleasant voyage and trusting to meet and enjoy some singing again. "And don't let Ruthie trifle with your affections," she added with a roguish glance at her friend. "She's an awful flirt." Miss Nickerson smiled demurely. "Go 'way home," she cried, "or I'll have a reputation I don't really deserve."

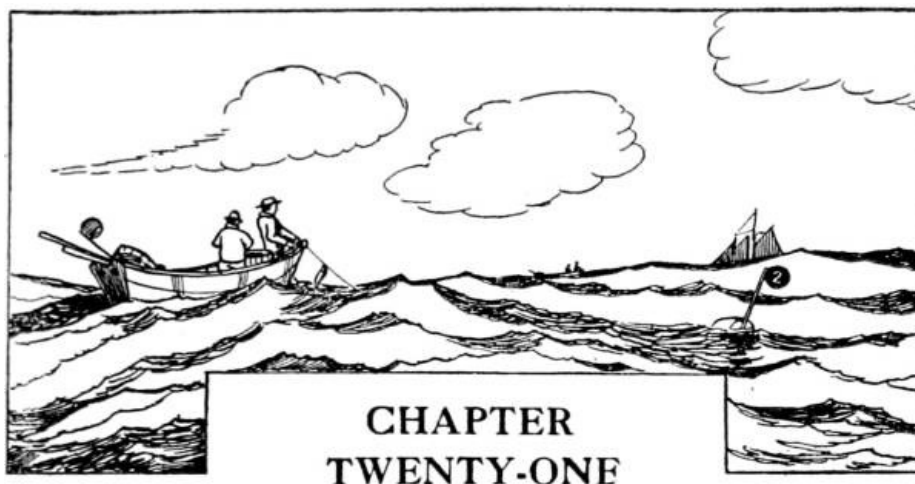
When they departed the Skipper clapped Donald on the back. "We'd better turn in naow, Don," he said. "We'll roll aout at four an' get aboard and aout down the shore for aour bait. We've got to get busy if we're agoin' to get Ira Burton's money away from him."

Donald turned shyly to Ruth. "I suppose I'd better wish you 'Good-bye' now—"

The girl shook her head. "No! I'll be up and give you and Juddy your breakfast. Good-night!"

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE



**T**HEY got the *West Wind* down to the end of the wharf on a cold March morning. It was dark and the sky was overcast, and as he hauled on the schooner's mooring lines, Donald wondered how it was that ships invariably seemed to sail at unearthly morning hours—hours when the soporific influence is strongest and vitality is at its lowest ebb. He called to mind the morning he came down to the *Kelvinhaugh*, and the spirit of romance and adventure which filled him then, until the actual experiences of sea-faring in the barque dissipated his rosy visions and made him wonder what there was in the life that sends lads to sea. He recalled the stirring voyage in the *Helen Starbuck*—an adventure which brought back some of the glamor and fascination of the windy sea-roads to his soul, and now he was outwardbound on a new traverse with the deep-sea fishermen of Nova Scotia. Would he like the life? He wondered. If he didn't, he would have to make a cast back into the merchant service, or give up all thoughts of a nautical vocation and stay ashore. He didn't like the thought of the latter alternative—sure testimony that Old Ocean had him in its thrall.

"All right, boys, she's daown far enough!" Skipper Nickerson was singing out. "Aft here, my sons, an' git yer mains'l on her." Eighteen men tallied on to the throat and peak halliards, and with the skipper directing them with a "Hold yer peak! Up on yer throat!" and vice-versa, they soon had the big sail up. "Throat an' peak jigs, naow, boys!" and the gang swayed up the sail until it set like a board, with the wrinkles running from peak to tack.

"Fores'l, naow, an' when you're ready, give her th' jumbo!" To Donald, "Jump on the wharf, Don, an' cast off th' bow line, then stand-by yer starn line."

They soon got the foresail up, jiggled and the halliards belayed, and Donald cast off the bow line as the jumbo,

or fore-stays'l was run up. "Make yer jumbo tail-rope fast to wind'ard!" cried Captain Nickerson, "and when she pays off, give her the jib an' hang on to yer weathersheet!"

Standing by the stern mooring, Donald gazed up at the Nickerson home and fancied he could see a female figure looking out of one of the upper windows. He saw her wave a handkerchief, and he returned the farewell gesture. It was Ruth Nickerson—he could see that even in the half light—and he wondered if she was waving to him or her brother. He waved again, and the salute was returned. "Alright, Don!" came the skipper's voice. "Leggo yer starn mooring an' jump aboard!" He slipped the loop off the spile and leaped aboard as the *West Wind* payed off with her heads'ls a-weather. The skipper spun the wheel and paced athwart the quarter staring at the anchored vessels ahead—some of whom were getting under way.

"Your sister is at the window, captain," said Donald, still looking up at the house. The other turned and waved a hand. "Good little kid is Ruthie," he remarked to McKenzie. "A good little girl—full of fun, an' clever as they make 'em. She always was a favorite of mine. I've got a box of chocolate mush in my bunk which she gave me this morning—" Donald would have liked to continue the conversation in this strain, but the skipper broke off. "Skip for'ard, Don, an' leggo that tail-rope an' weather jib sheet!"

The schooner glided down the harbor with a light air filling her sails. The men had gone below to the fore-castle and cabin awaiting breakfast, and were filling in the time by working on their lines and hooks. Donald, shipped as spare hand, was supposed to work under the captain's orders and to look after the vessel's gear. Fishermen do no work on the schooner's hull or gear when at sea. All overhauling must be done in port. The fishing crew ship only to fish, handle sail, steer and keep watch. The spare hand is supposed to make all repairs to the vessel's rigging while at sea, and to look after the stops, reefing and furling gear. When the men are out in the dories fishing, or when they are dressing fish, he must assist the skipper in sailing the schooner, in getting dories hoisted in or out, and wherever he can be of use.

Donald busied himself coiling up halliards and picking up gaskets, and as he worked, he whistled a song to himself and thought of Ruth Nickerson. He had seen her that morning. She had come down in slippers and a pink silk kimono, and he thought that she looked ravishingly pretty in such a garb. While he and the skipper were drinking a cup of coffee which she had prepared, he wondered how she could look so dainty and fresh at four o'clock in the morning. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks had a healthy bloom in them like the Okanagan apples he had seen out in British Columbia, and she teased both of them about the bet with Ira Burton. "If you lose," she said, with a laugh, "Juddy and you will have to go to Halifax and go on the stage. You play the piano and sing, and Juddy will take the money. I'm sure he can look so fierce sometimes that people will be glad to give you something." And they all had laughed heartily at the thought.

How he envied brother Juddy when she threw her arms around his neck and hugged and kissed him! A young fellow of seventeen is at the susceptible age, and Donald was not blind to the charms of the fair sex, even though he had had but little opportunity to tread the primrose path of dalliance with fascinating young ladies. How he blessed his mother for keeping him to his piano, singing and dancing lessons! He had looked upon these accomplishments with scorn in his Glasgow days, and had carefully hidden them from Joak and his other school-boy chums. "A lassie's wurrk," they would have jeered. "Ye sh'd take knittin' an' croschay lessons as weel!" Aye! he appreciated such culture now!

She said "Good-bye!" with a simple clasp of the hand, and the memory of the soft, warm pressure of her small fingers in his roughened fist thrilled him yet. "I hope to see you when you come back," she added, and he had stumbled away in the dark of the morning with a pang of regret at leaving. He did not know why he should have felt that way, but the fact remained that he did, and he was glad when he saw her again waving from the window.

When the Lower Eastville Head came abeam, the cook sang out, "Breakfast!" and Donald went down into the fo'c'sle. Nine fishermen were already seated, and when he came below they shouted, "Make room for Scotty McKenzie—an' ol' Cape Horner but a noo trawler! Sit ye daown son, an' eat hearty an' give th' ship a good name!" They were a merry crowd, and Donald compared them with the all-nation scrubs of the *Kelvinhaugh* and the wretched provender which they had to eat aboard the barque. It was vastly different here! There was a blue checkered tablecloth spread over the triangular table, and upon it were heaped enamelware pots of first-class porridge, sausages, fried eggs, new white bread, doughnuts, biscuits and cheese. Each man ate off white graniteware plates and drank steaming coffee out of china-clay mugs—no tin pannikins and cups on a Bank fisherman! As they "scoffed" the good victuals, they joked boisterously over the wager with Ira Burton, and "cal'lated when they got agoin' they'd trim him daown to his boot-straps, by Judas!" There were no sullen faces or growling oaths from this crowd. Every man wore a contented smile, and they talked and joked and chaffed, but managed to get away with the food in spite of the conversational interruptions.

"This minds me o' the time I wuz cookin' on a Behring Sea sealer," remarked Joak to Donald. "They were a' like these chaps—a verra jolly bunch." McGlashan, as cook on a fisherman, held an exalted position. Everybody tried to "stand in" with him, and on a Banker, the cook and the skipper are the two officers whose word is law and whose commands must be obeyed.

They ran into South-east Harbor that afternoon and dropped anchor off the Cold Storage Company's wharf. Nickerson went ashore to procure a quantity of frozen herring for use as bait, but found that he could only purchase a few barrels, as several salt Bankers had already spoken for the available supply. Captain Ira Burton had left for the fishing grounds that morning with a full baiting, and this fact caused Nickerson to hustle aboard what he could get. "Hang the patch on her!" he shouted. "Burton's off and he's got plenty bait. We'll have to start with what we have and run in for more later."

Under four lowers, they sped out of the harbor to a freshening sou'-west breeze, and the skipper set the watches. "Number One dory will take first wheel and look-out," he said, "and the other seven will follow. It'll be one hour and a half to a watch, but Donald and I will look after her this afternoon while you fellers bait yer



gear. Draw for baiting places now!"

Hardwood planks were fixed around the cabin house and the gurry-kid—a huge box for'ard of the house and used for stowing fish-offal while in port or odd gear at sea—and a man went around with a piece of chalk and marked and numbered off certain spaces on the planks. Upon these planks or "bait boards," the fishermen cut their bait, and certain spots were more desirable than others—hence the drawing for places. When this was accomplished, the skipper sung out for the stays'l to be hoisted, and told Donald to stream the taff-rail log. "Four miles off Salvage Island and four o'clock," remarked the captain. "A hundred an' thirty miles to make to the sou'-west edge of the Western Bank. Take the wheel, Donald, and let her go east by south half south. I'll help the boys bait up!"

Seated on the wheel-box, he steered the able little schooner and listened to the conversation of the fishermen. The breeze was blowing fresh and there was a short sea running and the vessel was laying down to it with the water squirting in through the lee scuppers, and she was pulling over the rollers as gracefully as a steeple-chaser at a low hurdle. The well-made sails were full with the wind, and it thrummed in the rigging and under the booms, while the foam from the sharp bows hissed and bubbled to loo'ard and raced aft to mingle with the wake astern. A myriad of gulls, attracted by the herring offal which was being whisked overboard every now and again, wheeled and squawked around them, and their graceful winging, with the buoyancy and gentle pitching and rolling of the flying schooner, combined to make a picture symbolical of the poetry of sea motion. Wing and sail were closely allied in this exhilarating off-shore flight, and McKenzie was thrilled with it to a degree which he had never felt before.

Chop, chop, chop! went the men's knives on the baitboards as they deftly severed the frozen herring into portions for garnishing the hundreds of hooks which went to a tub of trawl. With yellow oilskins on their stalwart bodies, they stood around the quarters, singing and bantering one another—a picturesque crowd of clear-eyed, hard-muscled men. True sons of the sea! thought Donald, and he steered and listened to a ballad which one of the men was trolling:—

"The galley was as high as the handle of a broom,  
For'ad of the cabin, underneath the main-boom,  
It warn't very big, an' I hadn't much room,  
For cookin' on th' pine-wood dro-o-gher!  
I had no room to move abaout,  
When I was in, my starn stuck aout,  
Th' stove would smoke an' make me shout—  
Who! While cookin' on th' pine-wood dro-o-gher!"

The crowd chopped bait and howled the last line with gusto—drawling the "dro-o-gher!" with all a chantey-man's vim, until it wound up with the final verse of the cook's troubles on the "pine-wood drogher."

"I kissed the stove a long farewell,  
An' wished the maker a mile in h—l,  
An' th' builder of the galley there as well,  
An' I flew from th' pine-wood dro-o-gher!"

A howl of guffaws greeted the last verse, and with a "Tune her up again, Tommy-boy!" the ballad singer broke into another Blue-nose "Come-all-ye" describing the voyage of an Annapolis barquentine to Demerara. The singer worked her every foot of the way to her destination and back, and even dilated upon the flirtations of the crew in the South-American port.

"We wish aour fr'en's could see us naow,  
You bet they would be shy,  
For we have sweethearts by th' score,  
Though we court 'em on the sly;  
Daown comes a yaller gal—dressed up like a queen,  
Enquiring for th' stoo'ard of Corbett's barquentine."

There was a rare, seaman-like swing to a verse which ran:—

"Under a goose-winged tawp-s'l, an' a double-reef'd main-sail,  
With her head towards th' nor'ad, boys, she rides a furious gale;  
If brother Tom could see us naow, an' hear those wild winds blow  
He'd thank th' Lord that he was out of Corbett's gundalow!"

With the droning of the wind, the seething of the sea, and the squawking of the gulls as accompaniments, this deep-sea concert went on, and every man worked like a busy tailor baiting his gear and chiming in the choruses. Someone struck up an inspiring song about the record run of the fishing schooner *Mary L. MacKay*, and it reflected the spirit of those hardy Banksmen.

"We lashed th' hawser to th' rack, an' chocked th' cable box,  
An' over-hauled th' shackles on th' fore an' main-sheet blocks;  
We double griped th' dories as th' gang began to pray,  
For a breeze to whip the bitts from aout th' *Mary L. MacKay*.  
We slammed her to Matinicus, an' th' skipper hauled th' log:  
'Sixteen knots an hour, by gum! Ain't she th' gal to slog!  
An' th' wheelsman he jest shouted as he swung her on her way,  
'You watch me tear the mains'l off th' *Mary L. MacKay*!  
To the wheel was lashed th' steersman as he soaked her thro' th' gloom,

And a big sea hove his dory-mate clean over th' main-boom,  
It ripped the oil-pants off his legs an' we could hear him say:  
'There's a power o' water flyin' o'er th' *Mary L. MacKay!*'"

Captain Nickerson leaned over the taff-rail and glanced at the log dials. "Ten knots, Donny-boy," he murmured happily. "She can travel this one! Sock it to her, son!" And he jumped back to assist in the baiting up. When supper was announced, the work was finished and the watches were set. McKenzie lazied the evening away stretched out on a cabin locker listening to the yarns of his ship-mates. Some of their quiet relations were the very heart of adventure and hazard. "You'll mind th' time, skipper, when the *Annie Crosby* was hove down and came up with a dory hangin' to her fore spreader!" or "Was you around in that bad blow when Harry Winslow soaked his vessel over th' Cape ledges an' smashed th' skeg off her bangin' over the rocks! He was a haound, that Winslow!" Aye, they know thrills who fish the Banks—the thrills of "Breakers ahead!" and the desperate clawing off a lee-shore; the scares of the smoking mists, sinister with the raucous bellowings of driving liners; the exhilarating drives for port in a brave wind, and the lying-to in piling seas, blinding snows and savage gales! Donald lolled with sparkling eyes and open ears drinking it all in until the last yarner had knocked out his pipe and rolled into his bunk.

Joak turned them out for breakfast next morning at four. It was black dark, and they ate in the light of oil lamps while the schooner tore along on her east by south course. "She's run a hundred an' twenty miles naow," remarked a fisherman just relieved from his "trick." "This one's a grand little hooker to sail! Steers like a witch!" He sat down at the table. "I'm as hungry as a bear. Slap some o' them beans on this plate, Westley-boy, an' give th' bread an' butter a fair wind this way."

At five, the Skipper shot the schooner up in the wind. "Take a cast of the lead, Don!" he cried, and when the youth gave him the sounding, "Thirty-five fathoms, sir!" he examined the tallow on the bottom of the lead. "Fine sand. Right! Call the gang, Donald! We'll hoist the dories over here an' spin the gear aout! There's a fellow to wind'ard there dressing down fish." As he went for'ard, Donald looked to the sou'west and saw the twinkle of torch-lights low down on the far horizon—unmistakable sign of a Banksman at work.

The men came from below, oil-skinned and booted, and with mittens and woollen caps on, for the air was biting and cold. They began getting the tubs of trawl, anchors and buoys ready, and scurried around picking up the impedimenta necessary for going overside in the dories. "Lower away top dories!" bawled Judson from the wheel. Though this was his first order as a fishing skipper yet he seemed to have adapted himself to the life as if he had known no other. The experiences of his younger days came readily to mind and hand and he carried on as though he had never seen the "lime-juice" merchant service.

The four fishermen who went in the two dories (nested on top of the port and starboard sets) placed their thwarts and pen-boards in position, kicked the dory-plug into its hole in the bottom of the boat, and saw to it that two pairs of oars, sail, water-jar, bait-knife, bailer, bow-roller and gurdy-winch were in place. Then they hooked the dory hoisting tackles into the bow and stern beackets of the twenty-foot boats, and with two men heaving on the fall of each tackle, they swung the dory to the rail. Throwing in anchors, buoys and buoy lines, they shoved the little craft out and lowered her into the water while Donald held her alongside by the painter. Joak did the same for the dory on the port side.

One of the fishermen jumped into the boat, while his dory-mate handed him down the tubs of baited trawls. "Set two tubs, boys," advised the skipper, "and if fish are strikin' we'll spin th' whole string. Pull to the east'ard when you're setting your gear!" The two fishermen jumped into the dory and Donald allowed the boat to drift astern and belayed the painter to the taffrail pin.

Within a very short time, all eight dories were overboard with their crews in them, and the schooner towed them along in a string of four in line ahead from each quarter. Heading the vessel away from the schooner to windward, the skipper waved his hand. "Leggo port dory!" The last dory on the port string cast off. One man shipped the oars and pulled to the eastward, while the other hove the trawl-buoy over and payed out the anchor line. When the line had run out sufficiently for a thirty-five fathom depth of water, he bent the end of the baited line to the crown of the light trawl anchor and hove it overboard. Placing the tub of trawl-line before him in the stern-sheets of the dory, the fisherman commenced throwing the baited gear out by means of a heaving stick which he held in his right hand, while his dory-mate rowed the boat. It did not take long before the two thousand odd feet of trawl was whisked out and the end line of the second tub was bent to the tub-end of the first and shot overside in a similar manner. When the whole line was in the water, another anchor was bent to the baited gear and thrown over, and the fishermen hung to the anchor-rode until it was time to haul the trawl. With a buoyed anchor at the first end and another at the last end, the four thousand feet of line with its sixteen hundred baited hooks, was securely stretched along the sea floor, and in readiness to entrap the hungry cod and haddock which roamed over the bottom looking for food.

All eight dories were cast off from the schooner and all set their trawls at a distance of about half a mile from each other, and when the last dory was slipped, the skipper put the schooner about, and with the jumbo belayed to windward, the mainsheet eased off, and the wheel made fast a spoke from hard-down, the *West Wind* lurched along in that semi-hove-to condition known in fishermen's parlance as "jogging." Joak went to his galley to get dinner ready; Captain Nickerson shipped the fish-pen boards on the schooner's decks between rail and cabin house, and Donald whetted dressing knives.

As they worked, Captain Nickerson kept up a running fire of explanations about the fishery, and Donald listened with increasing interest. "This manner of running dories aout is called making 'flying-sets,'" said Judson, "and the schooners fishing fresh for market usually work this way. If we strike good fishin' hereabouts, we'll let go the anchor an' ride to that big cable hawser, an' th' men will pull away from th' vessel an' set their gear all 'round her. Ef we do that, we'll stow all th' sail an' hoist a trysail, or ridin' sail on th' main to steady her an' keep her headin' up to her cable. We're only setting' two tubs this time to try th' ground aout, but ef fishin's good, we'll run four or six tubs an' buoy them an' leave them in th' water. Th'

boys'll under-run th' trawls then—takin' th' fish off th' hooks an' re-baiting them without liftin' th' whole tub o' gear out o' th' water. You'll notice that each trawl buoy has a short stick with a black-ball or flag on it inserted into it. That marks th' gear an' enables us to pick it up easily. They'll start ahaulin' th' lines in half an hour, an' we'll see ef there's any fish hereabouts."

They jogged past a dory which was hauling in their gear. A fisherman stood in the bow and pulled the line up from the bottom over a lignumvitæ roller fixed in the bow-gunnel. His dory-mate stood immediately behind him with the empty trawl tub, and as his mate hauled, he coiled the gear down in the tub again. "There's a scale!" cried Judson. The fisherman in the dory had a big cod on his line and he lifted it up with his right hand and swung it deftly behind him with a sharp jerk which tore the hook out of the mouth of the fish and sent it wriggling into the penned-off fish pound in the dory bottom. Donald could see a number of fish being hauled up, and the skipper was scanning the other dories through his glasses. "They're all gittin' something," he remarked. "I hope there's fish here, for we've got to hustle. Ira Burton'll have a full deck by naow I reckon, an' he's got plenty bait to keep him agoin'!"

They started picking up the dories shortly afterwards, and as they came alongside, Donald and Joak caught their painters and allowed them to drift abreast the quarters. Pitching and rolling in the swell, the fishermen forked the cod, haddock and pollock up into the deck pens—counting the catch as they threw the fish aboard. "A hundred an' twenty-one!" sung out a fisherman. A couple of forks or "pews" spun over the rail, followed by the two dory-mates. "Tie yer dory astern," said Captain Nickerson. "Go'n have a bite an' spin aout four tubs. We'll let go the anchor here."

When the eight dories delivered their catch, there were five thousand pounds of cod, pollock and large haddock in the pens. Donald had never seen so many fish in his life before. "Is that a good catch, skipper?" he asked. The other pursed his lips. "Only fair," he replied. "I've seen th' whole quarter full o' fish on two tubs, but it ain't a good sign to strike fish right away. We'll get a deck later."

They anchored the schooner on the Bank and after furling sail, the gang bent and hoisted the trysail or riding sail, had a "mug up" of tea and cold victuals, and pulled away in their dories to set and haul their lines again. They were "on fish," and when they left their buoyed trawls at nightfall, there was fifteen thousand pounds in the deck pens. After supper, the work of "dressing down," splitting and salting the catch began.

Several kerosene torches with huge wicks were set alight on the cabin house; dressing tables were rigged, and the men, armed with sharp knives, commenced gutting and beheading and splitting open the fish. They were adepts at the work, and Donald watched them with wonder. "Slop!" a large cod would be slapped on to the table; a fisherman would seize it in his gloved hand and give it a slash with a knife across the throat and up the belly; his neighbour would scoop the viscera and gills out with one motion and snap the head off with another, and, when passed around the board, the beheaded and disemboweled fish would be whisked into a huge tub of salt water, split from nape to tail and scraped free from blood and adhering viscera. After a sousing in the tub, it would be hove out to drain in a pen alongside the fish room hatch, and finally it would be shot below, where the "salters" in the hold would pile it neatly in a pen, skin down, and cover it liberally with coarse salt.

The men worked like Trojans in the glare of the torches—gossiping and singing—and the low hum of their talk would be punctuated by a shout for a fresh knife, a drink of water, or a pipe or a chew of tobacco. The skipper seemed to be everywhere. One minute he would be pitching fish down into the hold; another time he would be slapping fish on to the dressing tables. He jumped around whetting knives, lighting torches, and occasionally gutted fish. "You ain't forgot haow to split 'em, Cap!" remarked a man, complimenting his dexterity with the knife. Nickerson laughed. "When a feller has spent three years of his boyhood days doin' this, he ain't likely to forget—even though he has been deep-waterin' since. I was two seasons with old Abner Westhaver in the *Carrie Watson*, and he kep' a boy ahumpin'—believe me! I've split ten thousand pounds hand-runnin' many a time with that ol' Turk, an' he wouldn't let ye straighten yer back 'til the work was done."

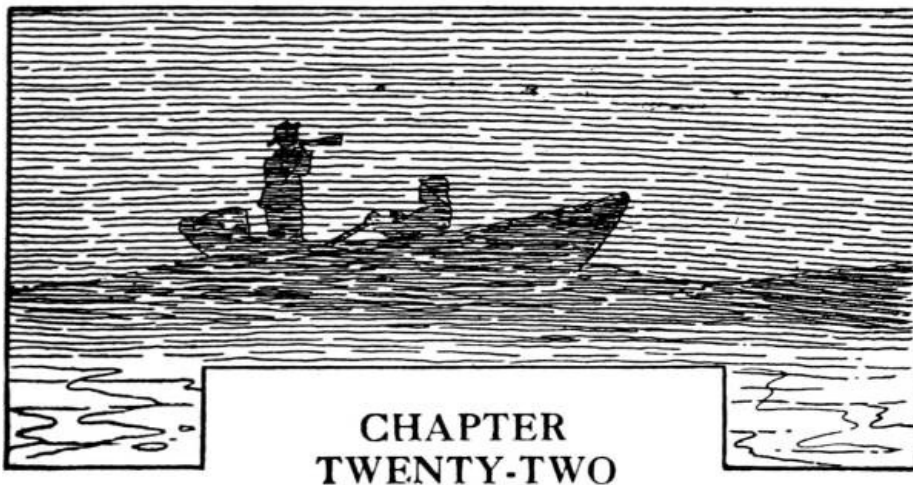
In the spells between assisting the men, Donald sat on the wheel-box and surveyed the scene. The schooner, with all canvas furled, except the try-sail on the main, rolled gently to the swell—her shining spars and new running gear outlined in the glare from the flaming torches. These flickering flares limned the rugged faces of the fishermen at work and illuminated the objects within their effulgent radius in the manner of Rembrandt. Decks gleamed wet like a city street on a rainy night; the slimy bodies of the fish and the oilskins of the men stood out vivid against the darkness where the light caught them. All around was the night—opaque, impalpable, and only definable when a heavier swell lifted its crest above the low quarter and caught the torch glow. Sea birds squawked in the blackness—quarrelling over the choice scraps of viscera dumped overside—and occasionally flying into the circle of light, so near that Donald could discern their unwinking, bead-like eyes as they poised for a moment above the rail. There were myriads of gulls around while they were dressing fish; when the work was done, they vanished. "Them beggars knows," observed a fisherman to McKenzie. "They'll keep away until they sees you begin to rig th' dressing keelers, then they're round in hundreds. Winter time's th' time for gulls ... don't see 'em so much in summer. Stinkin' Carey Chickens then ... hundreds of 'em. Fly agin yer face when dressin' daown fish by torches an' 'most choke ye with th' carrion smell of 'em. Deep-water sailors think Carey Chickens are sacred. We fishermen take no 'count of 'em ... snip their heads off with th' dress-knife when they flops in front of ye."

When the last fish was below and in the salt, Donald cleaned up the decks and the men proceeded to bait up their gear and prepare bait for taking out with them on the morrow. Then, with draw-buckets of clean salt water, they washed their oilskins free of fish slime, wrung out their gloves and mittens, and went below to fo'c'sle and cabin for a mug-up, a smoke, and a long, satisfying "kink" in a warm, comfortable bunk. "Breakfast at two, boys," Captain Nickerson said. "We'll get the gear 'bout three an' set an' haul all day to-morrow. We've got to hustle day an' night to trim Ira Burton." And to McKenzie, he said, "Go'n turn into your pew, Don. I'll keep watch 'til midnight, then I'll give you a hail. We'll catch up on sleep when the boys are out

in the dories to-morrow."

Donald rolled into his berth in the cabin after a "mug-up" of molasses cake and coffee from the "shack locker" or quick lunch cupboard in the forecabin. He felt tired but happy, and soon closed his eyes, lulled to slumber by the steady ticking of the cabin clock, the regular snores of his shipmates, and the gentle rolling of the vessel. As he slept he dreamed that he was skipper of a fishing schooner as big as the *Kelvinhaugh*, running a hundred dories, and that he had brought her in full of fish and had won Ira Burton's money. Ruth Nickerson met him on the dock as he landed and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. With a satisfied "Um-hum!" he rolled his back to the light of the lamp and "sounded for forty fathoms," while Nickerson paced the weather quarter, smoking and planning how he, a green fishing skipper, would "get to wind'ard" of an old fish-killer like Ira Burton.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO



**A**FTER three days' hard fishing, they cleaned up the fish on their first "berth," and when it "thinned out" they hoisted sail and anchor and shifted to the northward. Every day was not a good fishing day. Sometimes they got a mere handful of cod or haddock, and there were other days when the April fogs were so dense that Captain Nickerson had to keep the dories aboard, in spite of his desire to get "a trip of fish" quickly. These were the days when Donald experienced the grey terror of the Banks—the soaking, impenetrable fog which would steal up apparently from nowhere and settle over the sea in a heavy pall of finely atomized mist which defied sight and played strange tricks with sound. The fishermen hated fog, and well they might. McKenzie got an idea of their antipathy one day when a huge New York liner almost "got" them as she whirled past them in the vapor. So close was she, that they had to let the main-boom run to the end of the sheet or the steamer would have struck it as it lay in the crotch. All hands were frightened, and standing on the rolling schooner's deck, they shook their fists at the receding liner and howled picturesque oaths. "Half-speed on the telegraph, half speed in the log, but the engines turning up their maximum revolutions," growled the skipper, and Donald thought of how his father had to drive his ship through these foggy wastes and possibly just escape destroying a schooner as this steamer had narrowly missed sending the *West Wind* to the bottom. During thick weather, while at anchor on the Banks, in daytime, they kept the bell tolling and fired a shot-gun when steamers were heard blowing in the vicinity. At night, they kept torches alight. When under way, they relied on sharp ears and eyes and a mechanical fog-horn, which emitted a sound a trifle more audible than the buzz of a bee.

Fog, however, did not always keep the fishermen aboard. If it was thin, or if there were signs that it would dissipate shortly, the dories went over the rail, and the fishermen pulled into the mist with only a kerosene torch, a tin trumpet or a conch-shell, rudely cut at the end of the spiral to make a bugle-like blast when blown, to protect them. Donald had only been a week at sea on a fisherman when he learned of what calibre these Banksmen were. He saw them pull off in their frail dories in mists; in sharp March and April snow-squalls, and in moderately heavy breezes, when the seas were cresting and the spring rains were pelting down. They went over the rail in the dark of early morning, with brooding sky and a hint of storm in the air, and with torches aflame on their dory gunnels, they set and hauled their gear, until the wind and sea decreed that it was dangerous to defy it longer. Were it not for their skipper's signal to come aboard, they would have fished until the most timid of their gang buoyed the gear and pulled for the schooner, but there were no timid men in the *West Wind's* crowd.

They fished hard on the *West Wind*, harder than they would have ordinarily, but there was a bet to be won, and it was safe to assume that Ira Burton on the *Annie Brown*, was working "double-tides" and "wetting his salt" as fast as he could. Captain Nickerson kept his men at it, and he did not spare himself. He worked harder than any of them, and called up all his sea-lore and fish-lore to bring the finny spoils aboard. At odd

intervals, he produced blue-books and pamphlets on ichthyological subjects from his bunk shelf and studied the migrations of fish and the distribution of plankton and the various other marine minutiae upon which the cod, haddock and other demersal species are supposed to feed. Two or three times a day, he lashed a thermometer to the lead-line and recorded bottom temperatures. Temperatures and salinity of the surface waters were taken by him regularly and recorded in his private log. Donald attempted to assist him in this work, and the two of them pored over the scientific literature and incidentally cursed the writers for recording their researches in language beyond their common school educational understanding.

The men looked upon this scientific work with scorn. "A blame' thermometer ain't agoin' to tell him whar' th' fish are," they said. "Let him fix a camerar to that there lead an' photygraft th' bottom to tell us whar' th' fish an' th' rough spots are. That's th' ticket. Ira Burton don't fish thataway. No, siree! That guy hez th' mind of a cod, an' they say he jest picks one up aout o' th' pen an' he goes below with it an' talks to it, an' he'll come up a while after an' say: 'We'll fish araound here some more. They're thick on th' bottom in this here spot!' That's Burton's way." And some joker would raise a laugh by picking up a big codfish in his arms and asking it the whereabouts of the main body of its family.

They were doing very well, however, and when an ugly easterly sprung up, they took advantage of the break in the weather to run into port and secure more bait. On the run-in, the men caught up on sleep, and the skipper and Donald sailed the vessel the fifty or sixty miles to port under a reefed mains'l and through a spiteful wind and sea. They only remained long enough to secure bait and some supplies, and shot out again on the last of the easterly blow.

Working the grounds around Sable Island, they swung off for Eastville Harbor with over a thousand quintals of fish in salt below, and arrived in the home port on May 10th, after nearly two months' absence. Ira Burton had been in and was gone again, and nobody knew how much he had landed. The fish had been weighed by his own men, and the tally was kept a secret. It was a good "jag" gossipers averred, and various estimates were given—none of which could be credited.

"We'll git aour fish aout, salt an' supplies aboard, an' we'll skin aout too," said the skipper. "An' we'll see what's what at the end of the season."

It was early morning when they arrived in Eastville Harbor, and the skipper and Donald surprised the Nickerson family by stamping into the house before a soul was stirring. The first one downstairs was Ruth, who greeted them both warmly, and asked excited questions about the *West Wind's* catch. "Will you beat Captain Burton, Juddy?" she cried. "He's landed his spring trip and people say it was a record one—" She broke off and turned to Donald. "And how do you like the fishing, Mr. McKenzie?" she enquired interestedly. "I suppose you're glad to get back. Are you going to stick at it?"

McKenzie answered enthusiastically, "I surely do like the fishing life and I intend to stick at it. I've enjoyed myself immensely. Of course, I'm glad to get back for a spell—"

"It ain't agoin' to be a long spell though," interrupted Judson, who was worrying about Ira Burton. It was not the chance of losing five hundred dollars that caused him anxiety, but rather the blow to his prestige—the horror of losing and being called a "windy bluff." Masterful men of the Nickerson type cannot stand ridicule. "We'll skip aout again to-morrow morning, I cal'late."

The girl's face fell at his announcement. "Why do you want to run away like this, Juddy, dear," she asked plaintively. "Surely one day won't make much difference between now and September?"

Her brother laughed. "Won't it?" He patted her on the shoulder. "It might put us in the hole. A pile o' fish can be salted down in one day, Ruthie. No, no, Sis, we can't stay longer—much as we'd like to." Donald, feasting his eyes on Ruth's pretty face and lithe figure, mentally echoed her desire and anathematized Ira Burton and his wager. He regretted for a moment his fertile imagination in suggesting such a scheme to Judson.

When the skipper left to go upstairs to see his parents, Donald sat and chatted with Ruth, who was engaged in laying the table for breakfast. "You'll be interested to know that Miss Stuart is staying with us just now," said the girl. "I left her in bed fast asleep—"

"No you didn't, Ruth," came a laughing voice from the stair. "Here I am wide-awake." And Helena came down into the room and greeted McKenzie cordially. "This is indeed a pleasant surprise. Did Captain Nickerson win his bet?" Donald explained to her that the wager would not be decided until the end of the season in September.

It was very pleasant sitting in the sun-flooded dining room and chatting with two pretty girls—very pleasant indeed. After weeks in the intimate society of hairy-chested men, whose conversation was red-blooded and direct, it was distinctly refreshing to be talking "nice" and listening to soft musical voices. Donald's artistic eye appreciated the soft hair, clear skins and sweetly moulded figures of the two young women, and when he gazed at Ruth there was a light in his eyes which told of the loveflame kindling in his heart. It was spring, and through the windows and the open door, the sunshine was streaming in and the birds were singing and chirping in all the joyousness of the season's warmth. The trees were breaking into leaf and the grass was bright green and goodly to look upon by eyes weary with the monotony of eternal leagues of sea. The sky stretched faultlessly blue overhead and the waters of the harbor gleamed gold in the sun, while the air was as clear as a bell and redolent of warm earth and the scent of balsam and spruce. When old mother earth breaks from the thralldom of winter, the heart grows light and fancies turn to love.

Ruth had finished laying the table. "Now, Helena," she said, "you can go in the kitchen and fry up some eggs and bacon and make some coffee. When Juddy comes downstairs he'll help you. I want to show Mr. McKenzie the dear little bird's nest we found yesterday." And turning to Donald, she continued, "There are four beautiful little eggs in it. Come on, Mr. Fisherman!" And nothing loath, Donald followed her out into the

sunshine, feeling favored and happy. This was a girl for his heart! A girl who appreciated Nature in all her loveliness, and when she pointed out the hidden nest in a hushed voice there was a tenderness in her tones which betrayed affections, deep, true, and worth winning.

At the breakfast table, he spent a happy hour. Ruth waited upon him assiduously, and in thinking about her, he gave vague answers to old Mr. and Mrs. Nickerson's questionings regarding his fishing experiences. What Ruth was doing for him, Helena was doing for Judson, and when he glanced at the smiling, laughing, joking skipper, McKenzie blessed the day that saw him a member of the *Kelvinhaugh's* ship's company under such a man. In those days he little dreamed of such present hours.

When Donald had finished his fourth cup of coffee, Ruth jumped to her feet with an exclamation. "Oh! I almost forgot. Here's a letter that came for you while you were away. I must apologize for not giving it to you before. We'll excuse you while you go and read it."

It was from his mother, and it was a long epistle full of loving expressions and scarcely veiled fears. She was appalled at his experiences aboard the *Kelvinhaugh*, and extremely nervous about his voyage in the *Helen Starbuck*, and when his letters came from Halifax and Eastville announcing his safe arrival, a great load had been lifted from her heart. "You know, dear laddie, you are all I have now, and if anything happened to you I would not care to live," it read. "And, oh, my bonny, but I'm lonesome for you and longing for the day when we'll be together again.... I'm so pleased you have found such a friend in Captain Nickerson. I'm sure he is a splendid gentleman, and I hope your step in going into the Canadian fisheries will be successful and promising. I am longing for the time when I shall come out to Nova Scotia and make a home for you there. Your remittance of \$150 came to hand safely, but I am sorry to confess, dear, that I had to break into it. Your uncle wrote me the enclosed letter, telling me of your death by drowning—which, of course, I knew was not true, as you explained the circumstances in your letter from British Columbia—but shortly afterwards I was dismissed from the Hydropathic for some unknown reason, and I feel sure David McKenzie was at the bottom of it. I found some little difficulty in getting another place, and it was during this period that I had to use the money you sent me. Now, do not worry about me. I have since secured a position as night matron in the Davidson Home for the Aged and Infirm—a lovely place just outside of Glasgow—and I am very comfortable here." The letter concluded with those affectionate paragraphs which only mothers can write.

He turned his attention to the enclosed letter from his uncle. It was typical of the man—abrupt in phraseology and entirely lacking in courtesy or sympathy.

"Dear Madam," it ran, "the master of the *Kelvinhaugh* advises me that your son, Donald McKenzie, was drowned while fishing in Vancouver harbor on the evening of Sept. 30th, 189—. His body was not recovered. Yours truly, DAVID MCKENZIE & Co., per D. McK."

Donald smiled bitterly. "Short, sweet and utterly damnable!" he muttered, and he crushed it savagely in his strong fingers. He opened his mother's letter again and perused it thoughtfully, trying to read between the lines. There was a lot left unsaid in that letter, and he knew his mother was hard put to it when she was forced to use the passage-money. David McKenzie was apparently as vindictive as ever, he ruminated grimly. The beast! Curtly announcing Donald's death to his mother and then having her discharged. How had she fared after leaving the Hydro? His imagination pictured fearful things and he stared out of the window unseeing and unconsciously gritted his teeth. Put him before David McKenzie again and let the swine treat his mother as he did before and he would tear the heart out of the hound with his bare hands! The perspiration broke out on his forehead in excess of silent rage as the old fury of Highland blood boiled within him thirsting for revenge....

A hand was placed on his shoulder and a girl's voice roused him. "I hope you had good news from home, Mr. McKenzie?" It was Ruth, and she was looking at him with an expression of concern in her deep blue eyes.

"We-e-ell, yes," he answered cheerfully—the old passion dying instantly at the sound of her voice. "It is not bad news. Mother is well and happy."

She smiled. "I was afraid by the look on your face when you read your letter that something unpleasant was troubling you." Donald laughed and crumpled the letter into his pocket.

"Are you going to be here this evening?" asked Helena, coming over. "If you are, we might have some music and a little dance. What do you say, Ruth?"

"Surely, surely," answered the other, "and I'm going to ask Mr. McKenzie to look over some of my recent daubs in the painting line. And, now, coming down from the sublime to the ridiculous, Helena, come and help me clear the table."

Lolling on the window-seat, McKenzie's thoughts flew back to his mother in the Glasgow Home. He was anxious to see her again and to have her with him. She must be lonely—very lonely. He was deeply immersed in thought when Ruth, on her way to the kitchen with a pile of dishes, stumbled over a rag mat and sent the crockery crashing to the floor. Donald was on his feet in a second. "I'm so sorry," he said apologetically. "I should have given you a hand to clear the things away. I'm forgetting my manners. Allow me to pick the pieces up!" He dropped to the floor while the girl regarded him with shining eyes. Such chivalry in domestic mishaps was unusual.

He collected the broken dishes and carried them into the kitchen, and when Ruth rolled her sleeves up to wash the breakfast things, he smiled and held out his hand. "Give me the dish-rag, Miss Nickerson, and I will wash up. You can dry the things." When she demurred, he added, "Oh, I'm an old hand at this work. I used to do it for mother many a time." And he took the dish-cloth gently away from her, while she mentally remarked on his courtesy with something of regret. "This delightful boy—a fisherman! Wasting his fragrance on the desert air ... it's too bad." Fishing, as an occupation did not stand very high in Ruth's estimation. She was of a

romantic turn of mind and longed to be a modern Una, but the thought of choosing her knight from among sea-roving fish-killers did not appeal to her imagination. She rather fancied this stalwart, dark-eyed, confident, cultured youth, but his profession...? It was the fly in the ointment!

The others had vanished for the time being, and together in the kitchen, Ruth and Donald washed and dried, chatting, teasing and laughing until Judson stuck his head around the door. "Oh, there you are," he cried. "Washin' dishes? Well, well! I cal'late, Ruthie, you'll have to let your galley-help come along with me. We have a lot to do an' darn small time to do it in. Come on, Don!" Donald regretfully relinquished the dish-cloth and wiped his hands, while Ruth voiced her indignation. "That's you, Judson Nickerson!" she scolded jocularly. "Always spoiling a pleasant little party by dragging my visitor off. You may boss him, but, thank goodness, you can't boss me!"

Her brother looked humorously at her—pulling pensively at his mustache. "No, by Jupiter, Ruthie-girl," he said, edging towards the door as he spoke, "I could boss a whole shipload of roughnecks, but I wouldn't attempt to boss a little spitfire like you."

As he passed through the door after Judson, McKenzie whispered, "This is the first time I have really enjoyed dish-washing. I'll help you to-night, if I may." And with the sparkling glance from her laughing eyes envisioned in his memory, he strode down to the wharf with a heart as light and care-free as though trouble never existed.

Down at the wharf they tallied the fish out, and kept the score secret. Then supplies were hustled aboard, and Donald and the skipper worked until afternoon sending up the *West Wind's* fore-topmast and bending the balloon jib. They dined on the vessel, and when tea-time came, she was ready for the long summer trip with salt, fresh victuals, and water aboard. "We'll get under way at six in the morning," said the skipper finally, and he and Don went up to the house.

Donald had been worrying considerably about his mother, and he confided his troubles to the skipper. "I want to bring her out here, captain," he said, "but I don't know if I can afford to keep her on my wages. I am getting thirty dollars a month as spare hand on the *West Wind*, and I own that is good money for a chap my age, but could I keep mother on that out here?"

The other thought for a moment. "I'm afraid not, Don," he said. "You'd need to earn at least forty-five dollars monthly to keep a home an' your mother anyways comfortable. However, son, you jest plug along this summer an' get on to the fishin' so's you kin go in a dory—then you'll earn more money. This fall, I'm goin' to go master of a big schooner running fish an' lumber to th' West Indies, an' I hope to take you along as second mate. You'll get fifty a month then, an' next spring you'll go in the dory as a fisherman, and ef we strike it right there's no reason why you shouldn't make six to eight hundred dollars for the season's work. Fishin' summers an' makin' West Indie voyages in the winter ought to keep you pretty comfortable for a while. But I hope in a year or two to see you skipper of your own vessel. With your brains an' ability, there's no reason why you shouldn't."

Donald smiled. "That's what I hope, Skipper," he said, "but I want to write mother to-night and give her something definite. I am thinking of shipping over to Glasgow and bringing her out when we get back. Can I do it?" "No reason why you can't," replied the other. "It'll only take you a month to make the trip. S'pose you leave in October, you can be back in time to sail with me in December. You should have a couple of hundred dollars to draw come September. You'll be in good trim then. That'll more than pay her passage out an' yours too." The lad laughed happily. "That's right, Captain!" he exclaimed, "I'm just longing to bring her out here. I love this country, and the people, and I've never regretted going fishing. The past two months have been a revelation to me, and I've enjoyed every bit of it. The work is hard when it comes, but there are lots of slack spells to make up for the hard drags; the living is first class, and there is an element of hazard and gamble in this fishing game which seems to have got me in a spell—"

Judson slapped him affectionately on the shoulder. "You've said it there, Don! That's it! The gamble of it all; the hard work for hard dollars, and the harder you work—the more you make. We have good times, good quarters and good grub, and, better'n all, you sail in able craft an' with able men. That's why I chucked up the other game. I was fed up mucking about in lime-juicers an' tryin' to get work done with the no-sailors an' sojers that go in them nowadays. I rushed them, cursed them, and even banged them at times, but I didn't do that for the fun of it. I did it—played the bucko—because I had to, that's why! Your lazy lime-juice shell-backs give Yankee and Bluenose ships a hard name. Why? Because in aour ships a man had to be what he signed for. If he was an A.B., he had to do A.B.'s work. If he couldn't, God help him! We wouldn't put up with sojerin' or slack lip in aour ships, an' that's why we had the smartest wooden wind-jammers in the world. Where did you find your best British seamen? In American and Canadian ships—where they were appreciated and well-fed. No Yankee or Bluenose officer ever man-handled a good seaman. It was the bums, the hoodlums, an' the Paddy Westers who tried to run the ship, that we booted an' belaying-pinned, for that was the only language they understood and respected. I was long enough in British ships to have been soured on them. I've seen sails blown away an' gear destroyed simply because the crew shirked their duty and the officers—good enough men—couldn't make them do it for fear of bein' hailed afore a British Consul on the charge of misdemeanors against the Merchant Shipping Act." He paused and spat disgustedly. Continuing, he said, "Naow, take yourself! You maybe thought I was a mite severe with you on th' *Kelvinhaugh*? I never ill-used you, though I made you hustle. Why? Because I saw you had the makings of a sailor in you an' I wanted to instill smartness in you. You'll never forget my lessons, Don, and I'll guarantee when you get a command of your own, you'll want your crew to skip araound lively an' work, and ef they don't, you'll know haow to handle 'em!"

They were on the verandah of the Nickerson home by now, and were greeted by Helena and Ruth. "Don't you believe all Juddy tells you, Mr. McKenzie," said Ruth, smiling. "He'd make one believe he was a terrible man at sea. I don't believe he would hurt a fly!" Donald laughed heartily. His memory flashed back to *Kelvinhaugh*

days and he recalled some incidents in "brother Juddy's" career which rather belied his sister's opinion. The skipper himself grinned foolishly, and glanced from Donald to Helena Stuart. "How did he treat you on that Scotch ship, Mr. McKenzie?" enquired Ruth. "Was he kind to you?"

"He was my best friend," said Donald seriously, "and did a great deal more for me than I can ever repay. Your brother, in my humble opinion, is the most capable and the best-hearted man that I ever knew and—" "Belay! belay!" cried the skipper, reddening somewhat as he saw Helena's dark eyes staring at him. "These compliments are liable to unship a fellow's modesty." And he caught his sister by the arm and led her into the house, while Helena and Donald remained seated on the veranda steps.

"Tell me," said the girl after an exchange of small talk. "What sort of a man is Captain Nickerson at sea? You seem to have a great admiration for him."

"I have," replied Donald enthusiastically. "He is the ablest man I have ever known outside of my own father. He is fearless, but not reckless. He has wonderful endurance and a cultivated mind, and he has a heart as big as his body. He is a man's man all through!"

Helena made a mental addition, "but evidently not a woman's man." Aloud, she asked quietly, "Has he—er—do you know if he is anything of a ladies' man?" There was a curious note in her voice which caused Donald to glance at her with a quizzical expression.

The youth replied slowly, "Well, now, I don't believe he is."

"How comes it that he has escaped marriage?" she enquired. "They marry young down here, and he seems to be a fine sort of a man. He must be around thirty-five now."

"He's thirty-three, I believe," answered Donald. "From what he has mentioned at odd times, I gather that he was engaged to a girl once and she jilted him. That's all I know."

Murmuring "Too bad, poor man!" Helena changed the subject and they talked for a space on other topics, until Mrs. Nickerson called them in for supper.

After the meal, the young people went into the parlor, and Donald and Helena played and sang. This did not suit Ruth, who got rather tired of seeing Mr. McKenzie monopolized by her friend, and as Mrs. Asa was unable to come over and play for them that evening, she suggested a walk in lieu of dancing.

"Let us stroll out by the Eastville Cape," she said. "It's a glorious night and there's a full moon."

"That's a good idea," exclaimed Donald eagerly. "I've almost forgotten how to walk after two months on shipboard." The skipper, clean-shaven, and looking bronzed and handsome in his shore clothes, murmured approval and stood awkwardly to one side as the girls passed out. Donald and Helena went on to the gallery, and Ruth turned to her brother. "Go on, now, you big calf," she said quickly. "Go and take Helena. Don't be hanging back like a country bumpkin."

Judson grinned sheepishly. "How do I know she wants to go with me? Maybe she prefers Donald."

His sister made an impatient gesture. "Don't you like Helena?" she snapped.

The skipper, reddening under his tan, stood irresolute. "Sure I do," he replied, "but I don't want to force my company on her!"

"Faint heart never won fair lady," quoted Ruth sharply. "Go and ask her to walk with you, and when you talk with her, try and say something interesting!" And she pushed him out on the gallery towards the others. Feeling considerably more nervous than he ever felt during a strenuous watch at sea, Judson took the easier course and addressed Donald. "Will you walk with Ruth, Don? She's tired of me an' I'm afraid of her! She's got an awful tongue!" Donald was only too pleased to make the exchange, and they sauntered down the road towards the headland.

It was a most entrancing night—a night of dark azure sky brilliant with moonlight and myriad stars—and the waters of the bay glittered like silver in the glow from the moon. The warm southerly wind was perfumed with the scent of budding and flowering herbage and the balmy, resinous odors of spruce and balsam. The frogs in the field ponds were crooning their nightly lullabys, and their continuous croaks served as an orchestral accompaniment to the sweet warbling of the robins and other songsters of the twilight hours. Somewhere in a spruce thicket a whip-poor-will was calling, and over on the rocks of the passage, the gulls sounded weird cries, as if in plaintive greeting to a coasting schooner standing out to sea with the ebb tide. She sailed across the moon-path on the water, and for a moment her hull and sails stood up in silhouette against the silvery background, then she slipped out of the glare and faded into the darkness, with but the red glow of her port light to mark her presence.

"Isn't this lovely?" exclaimed Ruth softly, as they sat down in a hollow of the Cape and looked over the harbor and passage. "This is a favorite spot of mine, and I love to come here in summer and look at the sea."

Donald sat on the grass beside her with his arms around his knees. The spring air was inoculating him with its exhilaration, and a strange sensation of pleasant enjoyment of life was taking possession of him. He breathed deep of the warm-scented breeze, and stared at his partner's pretty features illuminated by the moon-glare. Her face was turned away from him, and her profile, crowned with a luxuriance of dark tresses, looked almost Madonna-like in the silvery glow, and Donald was thinking how delightful it would be to slip his arms around those rounded shoulders and, holding her closely to him, kiss her upon that rosy mouth. "In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love!" Donald recalled the famous phrase and sighed. Ruth turned. "What are you thinking of, Mr. McKenzie?" she asked, smiling. For a moment he could not answer, but the "Mr. McKenzie" jarred him. It did not fit in with the night, and he replied boldly, "I was



thinking how much nicer it would be—for me, at least—if you would not be so formal. I would like you to call me Don, instead of ‘Mister McKenzie,’ and I would also like to call you Ruth. Ruth is such a pretty name, and should not be masked under the conventional ‘Miss.’” He paused and looked at her with wide dark eyes faintly smiling.

The girl bent her head and picked at the grass. “If you would like me to call you ‘Don,’ I certainly will—Don,” she said with a flash of her eyes.

He gave a little laugh. “And I hope you will permit me to call you ‘Ruth’—Ruth!” With this primary barrier to intimate acquaintanceship broken down, they sat and talked as only young men and women of “sweet seventeen” know how, and they voiced the thoughts which came to mind inspired by the beauty of the night, but Donald dare not give expression to all the ambitions and desires inspired in him by the charming young woman at his side. She was very lovable, he thought, and he knew that his boyish heart was already captivated by her fresh young beauty and the glory of her clear and deep blue eyes. He always adored blue eyes, and Ruth’s reminded him of the sea and sky in the track of the Trades—the fine weather, azure when the sun would be shining, and the flying-fish leaping from the murmuring wave-crests of the tropical sea—the deep, unfathomed blue.

“I wonder where Juddy and Helena went to?” suddenly exclaimed Ruth. Donald laughed and his teeth gleamed white in the moonlight. “Nice teeth!” mentally remarked Ruth.

“I think I can hear him talking on top of the Cape,” he answered. “Listen!” In the quiet of the evening, Judson’s voice floated down to them. He was giving Helena a lesson on the stars, and they could imagine him pointing them out.

“There’s Ursa Majoris! There’s Polaris! Arcturus! Sirius! Andromeda! Cassiopeia!” and so on. Ruth chuckled. “Juddy evidently has scared up something interesting for Helena. She adores that sort of thing. I was afraid he would find nothing to talk about but royal sails and gallant topsails and that sea stuff.”

“You misjudge your brother, Ruth,” said Donald. “He is a well-read man and can converse on many subjects not connected with the sea and ships.”

“He ought to be. He was at school long enough. He had a good education, though, by the way he talks sometimes, you’d think he never saw the inside of a school-room. But I’m very fond of Juddy. I like him the best of all, and I would like to see him married and settled. Don’t you think Helena and he would make a good match?” She watched him curiously when she asked the question.

“I most certainly do,” replied Donald heartily. He thought he detected a faint expression of relief on her face at his answer, and the thought pleased him mightily.

“We’d better skip along, folks! There’s a fog rolling in.” It was Judson calling from the hill path. Regretfully, Donald rose and assisted Ruth to her feet, and taking her arm, helped her up the slope. When upon the path again, he evidently labored under the delusion that his partner was short-sighted or unable to walk without assistance, as he failed to withdraw the aiding arm. To his secret delight, the girl made no protest or attempt to withdraw. Upon such trivial actions do we record another knot ahead on the log slate of love!

Back on the verandah of the house, they separated into two groups, and the intimate hour passed all too quick for Donald. The skipper struck a match and looked at his watch. He would have liked to have sat the whole night out with Helena, but he had the old-fashioned notion that half-past ten was a pretty late hour ashore. “I suppose you girls’ll be making for bed naow?” he observed regretfully.

“I guess we must,” said Helena, smiling to herself. Helena was city bred. “What time do you sail, Judson?”

“We’ll go out on the first of the ebb-tide at six, I expect.”

“I’ll be up at five to give you a cup of coffee,” said Ruth. Her brother protested. “No use of your getting up to do that, Sis. Don and I will go right down aboard th’ vessel. McGlashan will have breakfast all ready—”

“And I suppose you prefer your old cook’s coffee to mine!” interrupted Ruth tartly. McKenzie unconsciously voiced her protest. He wanted to see all he could of her.

Judson slipped his arm around his sister’s shoulders. “There, there, naow, Petsy!” he soothed. “She shall get up an’ make her brother an’ Don a cup of coffee. It shall never be said we refused yours for any old cook’s brew of water bewitched. We’ll see you in the morning.” He turned and extended his hand to Helena.

“I guess I’d better bid you good-bye—”

“In the morning,” she answered. “I’ll be up with Ruth. Good-night!”

Donald retired that night feeling indescribably happy. He felt that he was on the high road to winning Ruth Nickerson’s heart and hand. He was in love with her, he admitted. He wanted her for his own, and he felt that she was favorably disposed towards him. This being his first love, he had no precedents to disillusion him or conjure up obstacles. It would take time, he knew. He had to make a home for his mother first and a position for himself. He would work hard and study for master, and when he skippered his own vessel, he would be all right. Then he would build a house in the hollow near the Cape—the place they had visited that evening—and he would ask Ruth to marry him. As he planned, so he dreamed, and everything was plain sailing and fine weather.

“Skin up you an’ loose y’r mizzen r’yal!” came a snarling voice in his ear. Old habit made Donald leap up, rubbing his eyes and wondering if he had committed the crime of sleeping on watch. Judson, lighting the lamp, laughed. “By gum, Don, that fetched you! I’ll bet you thought you were aboard th’ *Kelvinhaugh* and that I was singin’ aout?”

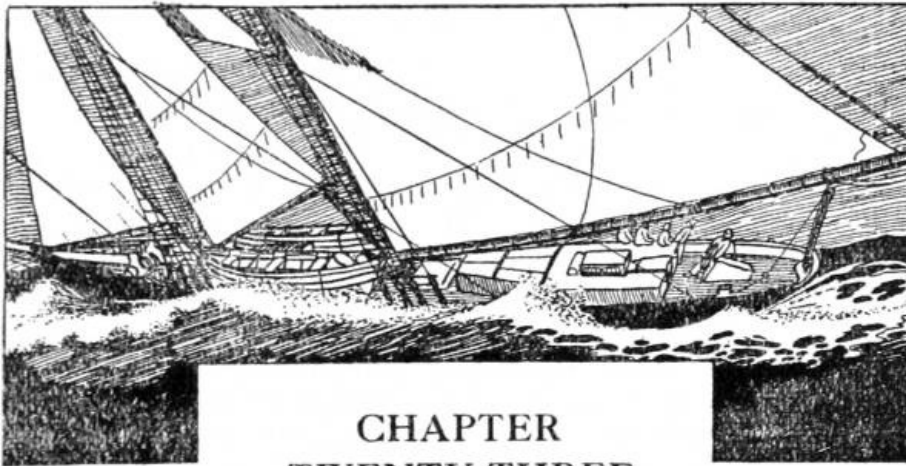
They went downstairs smiling, and found Ruth scurrying around laying cups on the table. She was in a kimono, and looked, in Donald's eyes, a picture of feminine loveliness. "Some day," he mused, "she would be making a snack specially for him when he was going out on an early morning tide." Alas! his shore hours were too short. He would not see her again until the fall.

Helena came down, and they all drank the coffee as in a mystic farewell rite—a valedictory communion. It is wine and the wafer for the soldier going into battle, but it is coffee and biscuits for the sailor going to sea!

Seamen hate farewells. Make a brave welcome if you must, but let us slip away to sea unobtrusively—between sunset and dawn—with the last ringing laugh in our ears, but do not let us go regretfully, with the memory of a long hand-clasp and hint of tears in an upturned face. These are the usual seamen's desires—merely to depart with a nonchalant "So long!", but Donald had no notion of such a curt parting. He wanted to spin the bitter-sweetness of it out, as lovers are fain to do. He gave Ruth's hand a warm squeeze and held it for a moment. She was looking at him with wide-open blue eyes, with a hint of fear in them. "Good-bye, Ruth," he said quietly, "I hope to see you when we come back. Good-bye!" She murmured something, and abruptly he swung away.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE



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**T**HE *West Wind* slipped out of the harbor and Don stared up at the Nickerson house to see if Ruth would wave. A female figure stood on the verandah and Donald made a farewell gesture with his cap. It might have been Ruth—he was not sure—but the girl waved in return, Donald was certain, and the skipper, taking a squint through his binoculars, said it was his sister.

"Wonder where Helena is?" said McKenzie.

"Oh, guess she's in the house somewhere," replied the skipper somewhat dolefully, looking back at the receding house on the hill. He turned to the wheel. "She's a mighty fine girl, Miss Stuart," he remarked, looking aloft at the main-gaff. The other smiled. "She sure is, Captain. A fine girl!"

Clear of the Eastville Cape, they hoisted the light sails and headed up the coast to the eastward, bound for the Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for a baiting of fresh herring. With this secured, they would fish in the Gulf and on the Newfoundland Banks during the summer, until their "salt was wetted." "We've got to hustle to beat Ira Burton," remarked the skipper. "He's at the Islands now, I'll be bound, and yet ... he may not. I h'ard there was a mull of ice in Canso Straits and I'm wondering what is the best course to take."

Next morning they were up with Cranberry Island—the north-eastern extremity of Nova Scotia, and the skipper piloted the schooner into Canso Harbor. "Um!" he grunted as he scanned the anchorage. "No schooners here. Must ha' gone up the Straits." They came to an anchor, dropping the headsails only, and the skipper and Don pulled ashore in a dory. "We'll go up to the Post Office first, Don, an' see the weather bulletins, and then we'll do some scouting around for news of what's doing in the Straits." At the Post Office, Captain Nickerson asked to see the weather reports for two weeks past, and when they were handed to him, he read them carefully. Then he went to a telephone and called up Port Hawkesbury—a small town in the Straits about twenty-five miles from Canso. When he came from the telephone he had a concerned look on his face and was pulling nervously at his moustache. "Ira Burton was there a day or two ago," he said, "but they tell me he slipped away in the night. Naow, I see by the bulletins that the wind for the last two weeks a'most has been from a quarter that'll drive all the Gulf ice into the mouth of Canso Straits, and it'll need a stiff southerly or easterly to clear it. I'm thinkin' Burton has figured that all aout, and he'll be gone north-about, same as I'm plannin', and he'll get to the Madaleens through Cabot Straits. When the drift ice is crowdin'

down here it'll be clear up above."

They got aboard, they got their anchor, hoisted the headsails and shot out of Canso and up the coast and around Cape Breton Island. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence, between Cape North and the islands of St. Paul, they came up with two fishing schooners steering west. It had just broken daylight and the wind was light, and when the day grew brighter they saw that one vessel was a Lunenburg schooner of a new model, but the sight of the other craft caused Nickerson to jump below for his binoculars.

"It's Burton!" he cried, after a short scrutiny. "I'd know his old hooker's small fores'l and long bowsprit anywheres." He paced the quarter, whistling softly to himself—a curious whistle, as though he were calling a dog—and ever and anon he would murmur, "Come wind! Come wind! Come wind!" The gang stared at the schooners to leeward and one of their number pulled a bait-knife from a cleat. "I'll raise something," he said with a laugh. "I'll stick this in th' forem'st. That'll raise a breeze, by Jupiter! Never knew it to fail yet!"

The wind was light and variable under the lee of the Cape Breton mountains, towering a thousand feet high to port, but when they glided past Cape St. Lawrence, it came away in fresh gusts from the south'ard. The sky was overcast and there was a rainy haze around the horizon.

"It's agoin' to blow right enough," said Nickerson, taking over the wheel from Donald. "We'll get aour breeze afore long ... all we want of it!" And he sniffed the air and looked to leeward. The other schooners had caught the draught flowing over St. Lawrence's high head-land and were bowling off for the Magdalen Islands and rapidly leaving the *West Wind* astern.

"Jig up everything, boys!" bawled the skipper. "An' get yer sheets aft. We'll have a little shoot of fifty miles with those jokers ahead, and I be damned if we're agoin' to be the last. Th' Lunenburger might trim us, but I'll be cussed if Burton does. They're mayn't be much herring at the Islands, but we want to get what there is an' get it quick!" The breeze caught the *West Wind* as the gang sweated up and sheeted-in, and she tore after the other vessels under four lowers, main-topsail, main-staysail and balloon jib. Nickerson himself took the wheel and held her to a N.W. by W. course for Amherst Harbor on Amherst Island of the Magdalen group.

The barometer had dropped to 29.6, and with the southerly came a cold, rainy mist. Within a half-hour of its commencement, the wind stiffened into a squally blow and a short, violent chop arose, which had the schooner plunging and rolling and driving sprays over her bows. But through it all, she was running along like a hound, with the white-water racing aft and the wake abroiling.

"It kicks up nasty here," remarked the skipper from the wheel. "There's a surface current of the water from the melting ice up the River St. Lawrence streaming down the Gulf this time of year, and it sets hard to the east'ard. With this southerly blowing across it and the tide arunning up the Gulf and only twenty fathom under our bottom, it makes a dirty jobble of sea hereabouts."

When the ice moves out of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the spring, the migrating herring "strike in" around the shores of the Magdalen Islands in countless swarms. They have done so for many years, and the inhabitants of those bleak and isolated islets trap them in nets as they seek the shores to deposit their spawn, and while some are pickled and barrelled for use as food, a considerable quantity is sold to the fishing schooners for use as bait. In May and June, a large fleet of Canadian, American, Newfoundland and French fishing craft repair to the Magdalens to secure fresh bait, and the rule is "first come, first served." Nickerson knew this, and the skippers of the other schooners knew it, too, and all three drove their vessels as hard as they would go. A further incentive to speed lay in the fact that there would be a fleet of a hundred sail storming out from Canso Straits with the southerly driving the ice barrier away. With so many vessels hunting for bait, the demand would be greater than the supply.

Within an hour the breeze had freshened into half a gale, and the three schooners were laying down to it with their lee scuppers awash and their decks, gear and canvas drenched with spray and rain. On the *West Wind*, which was slightly astern of the other two, the gang were all on deck and lounging aft with sou'westers and oilskins and sea-boots on, and the skipper, seated astride of the wheel-box, gripped the spokes in his strong hands and glanced, ever and anon, at sails, compass and the schooners ahead and to leeward.

There is nothing a Bank fisherman loves more than a race. Not one of your summer jaunts of a few miles on a measured course in a ladies' wind, but a genuine thrash to windward in a scupper breeze with all the "muslin" hung. A race of fifty, or a hundred miles, or even more, which gives the contestants a chance to show what they can do, is fishermen's sport, and Donald got an opportunity, in this fifty-mile "shoot" to the Magdalens, to see the Banksmen on their mettle.

With faces wet and reddened with the wind and slashing rain and spray, oilskins glistening and dripping water, the men lolled on the cabin house, laughing and joking, singing and smoking, and when she rolled down in the puffs, they howled with hilarious delight and prayed for a breeze "to tear a patch off'n her!"

"Neptune! Boreas! Amphitrite! and all the little windy sea-gods, give us a breeze!" shouted Nickerson, laughing at McKenzie. He had hardly spoken, when, with the suddenness which is a characteristic of Gulf "blows," the southerly began snapping up in savage squalls. The schooners to leeward were blotted out in the rainstorms, and the *West Wind*, with never a sheet started, dragged her lee rail under and the lower dead-eyes of the rigging tore through the broil of water to loo'ard and the scuppers frothed half-way up the deck. It was brave sailing, as over the short, savage seas the schooner plunged and reared, and clouds of spray enveloped her as she stormed along at fourteen knots.

Bang! With a report like a shot from a gun, the main-gafftopsail split, and within a moment slatted into a sunburst of ribboned rags. "Clew up what's left!" bawled the skipper calmly, and to Donald he shouted. "A job o' sail mending for you, son! I hope ye can handle palm an' needle?"

The other grinned. "You bust 'em and I'll sit up nights mending 'em," he shouted excitedly. "This is what I call

sailing! Give it to her, Skipper, and trim our friend Burton there."

Nickerson nodded. "Leave it to me!" he replied grimly. "I'll trim him or jump the masts out of this one, by Jupiter!" And by the look in his eyes, he meant it.

The rags of the topsail were scarce clewed up when another blast struck the *West Wind* and she rolled down until her whole lee deck vanished out of sight in the seething water. The gang jumped like scared cats for the weather rail and the port nest of dories, and from these places they actually looked down into the foaming water which churned and sloshed over the cable and the nest of dories on the starboard side. With the vessel heeling over at a dangerous angle, the men glanced nervously at the skipper, but that individual was hanging on to the wheel-spokes, chewing nonchalantly, and standing with his feet braced against the side of the wheel-box. "That guy's a perishin' terror!" shouted someone excitedly. "I wonder ef he knows what a vessel'll stand? He'll spill us all into th' drink afore we're through, by Judas!"

Cr-a-ack! Bang! Bang! Flap! Flap! A thundering row aloft—the big staysail was adrift, slatting and banging and threatening to whip the top-mast out of her. "Stays'l sheet's carried away! Belayin' pin broke!" cried a fisherman, and the skipper barked, "I reckon so! Get that sheet, boys, an' make her fast again!"

A mob of oilskinned men slid down into the water to leeward and scrambled up the slack lee main rigging. Aloft, the sail was thrashing about and the sheet was whirling around like a whip and slashing at the rigging as the canvas flogged in the wind. When the rope flicked inboard, a dozen hands would make a grab for it.

"Shoot her up, Skipper—" shouted a fisherman.

"An' be damned!" bawled Nickerson, with something of his old *Kelvinhaugh* truculence. "None o' you fellows got guts enough to grab a loose bit o' string? Don't be scared of it—'twon't bite ye!" Thus adjured, and after receiving some savage blows from the snapping rope, they managed to grab it, and while sixteen men stood up to their thighs in water laying their weight on the straining sheet which held the sail, Donald jammed an iron belaying pin into the rail and took a turn of the rope around it. With wild shouts and lurid phrases, the fishermen hauled in the slack and belayed, then returned, panting to their weather-side perches.

A man jumped out of the fo'c'sle companion in the sprays and clawed his way aft. He was laughing. "Golly, fellers, ye sh'd be below in th' fo'c'sle naow!" he shouted above the roar of wind and sea. "Cook's wild! She's chucked all his pots off'n th' stove an' half his plates are smashed. Th' fo'c'sle floor is slushin' with pea-soup, rice pudding an' beans an' everything's swilling with th' water acomin' daown th' scuttle and th' ventilator. Scotty's in one hell of a rage and he's alyin' in his bunk cursin' an' swearin' that he won't cook or clean up a gol-derned thing until this here sail-draggin' is over!"

The skipper grinned and gave a hasty glance to windward. "By Gorry, boys, there's a black squall acomin'," he bawled quickly. "Jump an' haul daown yer balloon an' stays'l or th' sticks'll go. Look sharp!" The men raced to obey the command; halliards were cast off; downhauls manned, and as the canvas was dragged from aloft, bellying and flapping thunderously, the squall struck the vessel as the skipper eased the helm down.

The *West Wind* seemed to stagger to its onslaught and rolled over until the sea rose to the lee-side of the cabin house and frothed over the coamings of the main-hatch. Donald, at the stays'l downhaul, thought she was going to capsize, and one of the men yelled in fright, "God save us! She's goin' over—she's goin' over! Cut yer dory gripes! Cut yer dory gripes!" Two men reached for bait-knives and began to hack at the stout ropes that lashed the weather nest of dories, when the skipper roared menacingly, "Leave them gaul-derned gripes alone, you crazy lunk-heads! She's all right, I'm tellin' ye! 'Tis only a puff!"

"Only a puff?" growled a fisherman. "Only a puff? Another like that one and there'll be a drowndin' scrape araound here—" He stopped and yelled, "For th' roarin' ol' Judas! Look at him! He's swingin' her off! He's swingin' her off!" Nickerson was spoking the helm up, and Donald hung on to the main-rigging in time to save himself from flying over the lee rail when she careened to the weight of the wind. "This is th' perishin' worst I ever saw in sail-draggin'!" remarked someone huskily. "Does that bucko at th' wheel there think he's sailin' th' *Flyin' Cloud* 'round Cape Horn? Ef he don't strip her or lift th' spars out the ol' hooker yet, I'm a Dutchman!"

The least concerned in the crowd was Nickerson. Cool and calm, with a truculent look on his stern face, he strained at the spokes with just the suspicion of a grin on his lips. With his bronzed face streaming water and his mustache dripping, he glanced into compass and up at the straining sails and gear with exultant eyes. "Good iron! Good timber!" he murmured, and broke into the words of an old chantey—

"Blow, winds, blow!  
To Cal-i-for-ni-o!  
There's plenty of gold, so I've been told,  
On the banks of Sacramento!"

The man seemed to be carried away with the thrill of it—this wild, roaring, hurling through the water, and Donald gazed on vessel and steersman with shining, worshipping eyes. Here was a man—a marine Ajax defying the wind and sea!

It was an inspiring sight, truly! The whole lee side of the schooner was under from cat-head to the end of the cabin house, and she was storming along, leaping and plunging, with the sea to leeward in a welter of white water, seething and roaring, in the drive of her passage. The wind was whistling in the rigging and drumming in low thunder from under the bending booms, and with sheets and weather shrouds bar-taut and the sails as full and as hard as though cut in marble, the *West Wind* tore along with her gang hanging on to the weather gear and her skipper holding her cleaving bow down to her course.

"Look at Burton!" yelled someone. In the lift of the rain, they saw the *Annie L. Brown* astern and running off.

Her foretopmast had carried away and her balloon jib, the topmast, and a raffle of wire stays and halliards were being salved by her crew. "He's out of it now," remarked a fisherman, "but he did well. Where's th' Lunenburg feller?"

For a minute she could not be discerned, but when the rain dissipated, she showed up on the beam, forging along under her four lowers. She was a big vessel—a West India voyager, strongly rigged and well ballasted. The first fury of the squall was easing off now and the *West Wind* was showing her rail again.

"Away ye go on yer stays'!" bawled Nickerson. "That feller'll trim us ef we don't watch aout!" And when the big fisherman's stays'l went up between the masts, the whole gang tallied on to the sheet and swayed it down with excited yells, and the schooner rolled her rail under again.

In his seafaring, Donald had never experienced such a contest. He had seen some sail-carrying on the *Kelvinhaugh* and *Helen Starbuck*, but nothing to equal this. Judson was pressing the vessel to the limit, but he could do it, as he had nineteen husky men he could depend on to haul the sail off her when the time came. In the *Kelvinhaugh*, with her gang of no-sailors and weaklings, it couldn't be done; in the *Starbuck*, with a small crowd, it would be suicidal. "If it were only for these races alone, I'd love this fishing game," said Donald to the skipper. "This is simply great!" And he chuckled and snapped his fingers with the exhilaration of this windy driving of wood, iron and canvas.

With the stays'l on her, the *West Wind* drew ahead and the Lunenburger was evidently content to allow her the advantage, as he did not send his stays'l up. It was found out afterwards that he had none to send up—it having split to rags in one of the squalls. The skipper laughed. "We've trimmed 'em both," he remarked happily. To Donald, he said, "Read the log!"

"Forty-six miles, skipper!"

"Good!" he said. "Forty-six miles in three hours and a half is fair going. We must ha' logged sixteen knots in some o' them bursts of wind. It's easing off naow—her rail's showin'." And he grinned contentedly, while a fisherman remarked, "We kin trim Burton sailin' anyway, an' I cal'late we kin trim him afishin' too—"

"Land ahead!" came the shout from for'ard. The skipper peered into the rainy mist and put the wheel over a spoke. A huge block of reddish stone showed up on the port bow a mile ahead. "Entry Island!" he observed. "I steer as good as Captain Clincher when he laid a course for the Eddystone Light and knocked it daown! Ye can keep a look-out for Pearl Rock buoy on the starb'd hand and get fifteen fathom of chain over th' windlass."

When they passed the island, the sea became smoother and the wind eased off. A misty rain was falling, which obscured the land, but a steamer could be seen anchored ahead. "Ice-breaker or Fishery Cruiser, I cal'late," said Judson. "He'll be anchored in plenty water, so we'll jest jog to the west'ard of him without letting go the hook. Haul yer stays'l daown an' git a dory over!"

They ran slowly past the Fishery Cruiser, and a rising of the mist revealed the bare hills of Amherst Harbor and the little wooden houses of the village. A flag was flying from a staff on a hill above the harbor, and the skipper commented, "There's the bait flag aflyin'! There must be bait around somewheres." Leaving the schooner in charge of Donald, Captain Nickerson jumped into a dory and was pulled ashore. Within half an hour he was aboard. "There's a little herring at Alright Island," he announced. "Ef we're spry, we'll get it. Slack off yer sheets!" He took the wheel again. "We're darned lucky," he said. "There's been a lot of bad weather here an' they haven't had much herring so far. Burton'll have a job to get any for a while."

They stood over for Cape Alright a few miles away, and met the Lunenburg schooner running into Amherst. Nickerson hailed him. "Come over to Alright, Cap'en! There's some herring there—enough for two of us!" The other skipper waved his hand and his schooner followed in the *West Wind's* wake.

Off the island, the dories were hoisted out and pulled in to the traps anchored off the beach. Here they were loaded with living herring bailed from the seine, and the men rowed back to the *West Wind*, sitting in herring up to the thwart strips. With eight dory-loads aboard and stowed on ice in the hold, the skipper chuckled gleefully, "Me'n th' Lunenburg feller hev scoffed all the bait hereabouts. Ira Burton'll hev to do some pokin' araound these Islands when he hits here, and he'll hev fifty or a hundred other craft to compete against. Now, boys, we'll get under way an' start for the grounds. We'll shoot for th' Straits and the Western Bank again."

As they ran out of the bay, the mist lifted and the *Annie L. Brown* came bowling up. Her fore-topmast showed but a splintered stump just above the fore-mast cap. "Haul in by him, skip!" earnestly requested the gang, and Judson swung the *West Wind* towards the oncoming schooner. As she approached, the *West Winders* seized herrings, and holding them aloft, jeered and yelled, "Thar ain't no more, bullies! We scoffed 'em all!" Sallies and jibes flew thick and fast between the rival crews, but the two skippers steered and remained silent.

"Why'n blazes, Harry, don't ye ship in a craft what kin sail?" roared a *West Winder* to a friend on the *Brown*.

"There goes the Old Trawler's Home!" shouted another in derision. "Come a trip with us, me sons, an' you'll bait small an' catch large, as well as learn haow to sail a vessel. Why ain't you got yer ridin' sail on her? Ye're gittin' reckless!" And so they jibed and shouted until the other vessel passed out of hearing.

Running to the south'ard for the Canso Straits, the wind veered and the mist blew away and revealed a wonderful sight. Standing in to the Islands under all sail, came a mighty Armada of fishermen—fifty or sixty beautiful, clean-lined schooners, yacht-like with their white canvas and painted and varnished spars—and all were racing for bait. With booms sheeted in and decks sloped at angles which had the froth boiling in the scuppers, they stormed along with the white-water shearing away from their sharp bows and their crews shouting and bawling rude jests at each other. The *West Wind* ran down among them, and as they flew past,

she was greeted with cheers as the "first hooker to bait at the Madaleens!"

"Any herrin' left for us?" they enquired in stentorian tones. And this question was asked by all the vessels which passed them within hail.

"By George," exclaimed McKenzie, "but this is a sight! This is worth coming a long way to see. It's wonderful!"

"Aye," remarked Judson, "it's a great snarl of canvas, an' many a wealthy yachtsman would give a thousand dollars to be in that fleet racing for the Islands. This happens every spring in aour fisheries, an' when they're all anchored in Pleasant Bay of a night, their ridin' lights make 'em look like th' streets of a town."

Within an hour, they passed the stragglers, and soon they came up with evidences of the blockade in the pieces of floating field ice which littered the sea ahead. As far as the eye could discern, the white pans of ice flecked the green of the water, but it was small and mushy and not particularly dangerous. A good look out was kept and the vessel was steered to avoid the large pieces, and by nightfall, she passed through them into clear water.

The May days slipped into the summer days of June and the *West Wind* wandered from Bank to Bank, with her crew working hard from daylight to dark. On Sundays they rested, though a good many fishermen work Sundays, yet Nickerson remarked, "We're workin' double-tides on this hooker, and a Sunday lay-off gives a feller a chance to rest up. We can work all the harder for it."

"Do all the fleet work like we do?" enquired Donald.

"No, indeed they don't," replied the skipper. "We're only driving like this because we're out to win that bet. The other Bankers take it easier, an' they loaf around a lot. You take it this spring. The fleet lay around Port Hawkesbury for a week doin' nawthin', then they'd lay around the Madaleens for another week, maybe. Then they'd run off to the Banks an' fish their bait, an' then some of them'll start cruisin' around Noof'nland ports for the capelin bait. In the blows, they'll run in to port an' lay until it's over, but *I* don't believe in that. I'd sooner ride it aout hove-to an' keep the drift of her an' hang on to the grounds. By using my knowledge of navigation, I can always make my berth again, but some of these other skippers have to run in to the land to get a new departure from which they'll steer to the Banks again ... which wastes time. Then again, all these fellers won't h'ist dories over in thick or hazy weather like we do, and if I hadn't a good husky, willing gang, we wouldn't do it either."

"What counts in successful fishing—luck or work?"

"Luck—some," replied Judson, "but mostly work. You take all the Gloucester an' Lunenburg high-liners—they're all hustlers. They work hard, skippers and men, and it pays them when the share checks are given aout. Some of those smart high-line skippers will make as much as two thousand dollars out of the summer's fishin', and if they fish winters as well, they'll often make five thousand in the year. Haow many liner skippers are gettin' a thousand pounds a year? I doubt if there's a one! I claim this work ain't as hard as when I was in th' merchant service. What was I gettin' as mate of that *Kelvinhaugh*? Nine ruddy pounds a month! Forty-five measly dollars! D'ye wonder at me gittin' aout? What do *you* think?"

Donald looked over the summer sea at the dories, which here and there dotted its blue expanse. In every boat two men were pulling the lines up from the ocean floor and toiling like beavers. Not heart-breaking, hopeless toil, but work at which a man can sing, at which he is wresting silver dollars for his effort. Some of them were singing, and their voices carolled across the lazy water. When the heart is glad there is no hardship in toil! From the sea, he gazed on the schooner sluggishly rolling in the swell, with a cheeping of boom jaws and a pattering of reef-points on the great stretches of canvas which reared aloft. It was very quiet and peaceful. For'ard, McGlashan, in white apron, was shifting his galley funnel for a better draught, and he, too, was crooning a lay to—

"Bonnie wee Leezie—tha floo'er o' Dundee!"

A delicious whiff of fresh-baked bread floated aft, suggestive of the good fare upon which they lived, and the summer breeze blew soft and warm. In the pens were a number of fine cod-fish awaiting the splitter's knife, and on the cabin roof was a pillow where he and Judson had been dozing in the sunshine after the dories left the vessel. The memory of his days in the fishing fleet passed through his mind and they were pleasant memories. He thought of what he had seen of the sea in the past; thought of the rollicking, good-natured fellows he was now shipmates with, of Eastville and its people, and taking a deep breath, he replied, "This is the life, Skipper, and the more I see of it, the more I am convinced that you are a wise man!"

They fished steadily throughout the long summer days and worked to the north and east. On St. Pierre Bank they "jigged" a great baiting of squid—an octopus-like creature which may be caught near the surface on calm nights by dangling a small, umbrella-like hook overside. The squid enveloped the jig with its tentacles and would be whisked aboard squirting sepia in protest. With this bait—beloved by cod—they fished on St. Pierre and over on Grand Bank, and the rough grained salt in the bins got lower and lower, and the kenched cod in the fish-room grew daily higher, and the *West Wind* settled deeper in the water with the weight of it.

Times there were when they fished in plenteous company, and many a dawn would show sails all around the horizon. Oft-times they swung a dory over and "visited"—sitting in a stranger's cabin with all hands crowded in listening while the skippers talked "fish." In these visits, Nickerson would pick up all the news and gossip of the great fleet which did business on the huge watery areas from Le Have to the Virgin Rocks, and he would give information and prospects as freely as the other man. On one occasion they boarded a large French topsail schooner out from St. Servan, and Donald essayed a conversation in halting French. The outcome of this visit did not result in much fishery news, but the skipper received a bottle of cognac in return for a few plugs of tobacco, and McKenzie came away wondering how the deuce the Frenchmen got around in

the clumsy, straw-stuffed *sabots* and ponderous cow-hide, wood-soled sea-boots they wore.

In mid-August, they ran down to Western Bank again on the strength of a rumor that cod were extremely plentiful there, but they had only made one set when one of the crew developed a sickness which looked suspiciously like typhoid fever.

"We'll run to Eastville, Donald," said Judson. "We'd better land Wesley at his home and we'll fill up the tanks with water that we're sure of." At this announcement, McKenzie felt a strange thrill. "Eastville ... Ruth!" The names were synonymous, and it was quite possible that the skipper had the same incentive, but with a different objective. Under all sail, they crowded her home in a rare sailing breeze, and "with the Eastville girl ahauling on the tow-line," they stormed in past the Capes on a lovely August morning and tied up to the dock. Wesley, muffled in blankets, was landed and rushed to his home, and the doctor pronounced it as a touch of typhoid, not a bad case, but enough to keep him in bed and ashore for a spell.

"I'll have to pick up another man for his dory," said Judson, but Donald broke in, "How about me, Skipper? Don't you think I'm able enough to go in the dory with Jack Thomas?" The skipper laughed. "If Jack will agree, I will! It'll leave me without a spare hand, though, but as the summer's near over, I don't mind." Jack Thomas was agreeable, and McKenzie would go in the dory as a full-fledged fisherman when the *West Wind* made her next set.

After landing the sick man and giving orders for the tanks to be disinfected and re-filled, Judson and Donald went up to the house. Donald, feeling strangely elated, walked with springing steps, wondering if Ruth would be as glad to see him as he to see her. There was no sign of her on the veranda when they approached, and it was Mrs. Nickerson who met them, surprised and pleased. McKenzie nervously awaited Ruth's appearance.

"Where are the girls?" enquired the skipper, after kissing his mother.

"They've both gone to Halifax for a visit," replied the old lady. "Just went this morning, too. Isn't that too bad!" Donald said nothing, but felt it was a calamity. Another month now before he would see her again, and a month is an age when one is in love. He felt very blue, but when Judson was called away to the telephone, he perked up and chatted with Mrs. Nickerson as amiably as if he had never been disappointed in his life.

When the skipper came back, he announced, "Tom Haskins wants to buy aour fish. Wants to git some dried an' shipped afore the fleet comes in, and he offers a good price. We'll unload right away and git aout to-night so's we'll git a day's fishin' to-morrow. We'll come up for supper, mother."

With Captain Bill Smith, the harbor-master, checking the weights as they discharged the fish, they emptied the *West Wind's* hold clean to the floors. "You got a good jag, Judson," said the Captain. "You must ha' fished hard to git all them in that time."

"D'ye s'pose we'll be high-line, Cap'en?" asked Jud with a twinkle in his eye.

The old harbor-master bit off a chew of tobacco. "Ye might," he answered non-committally. "Ye never kin tell."

"Burton, naow—d'ye s'pose he landed as much as we did on his spring trip?" queried Nickerson quizzically.

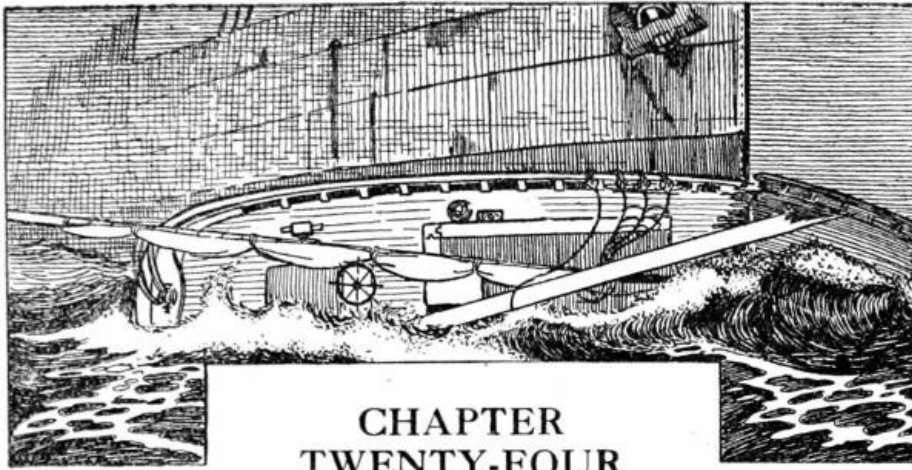
"He might have," replied the old man, with an unemotional visage. "Ye never kin tell ... 'til th' tally's published." Judson chuckled and clapped the other on the back.

"Closer'n a clam, you are, Cap'en, but you're quite right. I'm agoin' to beat him sure! I'm off to-night for another jag."

That evening they slipped out of Eastville for the Banks again.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR



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**A**FTER making a few sets on Western Bank, they ran up on to Grand again and anchored on the southwestern edge of the ground. Donald went in the dory with Jack Thomas, and the two of them got along very well together, but Donald found the dory work considerably different from the deck labor of a fishing vessel. Rowing the heavy boat to windward or against the tide for a mile or two was genuine hard work, and hauling a trawl against the same wind and tide for the best part of a day was a job well-calculated to try the muscles of the arms and back. However, with time, he soon "caught on," and after a couple of weeks over the side, he could do his share of hauling trawl in the dory-bow and at baiting up the gear.

When he got into the swing of it, Donald really enjoyed the work. There was something indescribably alluring in being out on old ocean's breast in a frail boat a hundred miles from the nearest land and pulling up the finny spoil from the sea floor, anywhere from two hundred to five hundred feet below. And one never knew what was on the hooks until they were hauled up fathom by fathom, but standing in the dory bow on smooth days, one could see a long way into the pellucid green, and the wriggling fish would show a flash of white belly thirty or forty feet from the surface. To the man of scientific leanings, much could be learned from this very intimacy with the ocean. Whales often broke water within a biscuit toss of the dories, and sharks—snapping at the fish on the trawl—were common sights. Porpoises and black-fish played around them in schools on numerous occasions, and Donald once witnessed a most terrific fight between a whale, a sword-fish and a thrasher. Prodded or slashed by the sword-fish from below and flayed by the tail of the thrasher from above, the huge cetacean forged to the surface and hove its great bulk out of the sea in a desperate effort to shake off its tormentors, and the splash of its impact with the sea again reverberated across the water for miles.

Besides cod, haddock, cusk, pollock and hake, which they usually got on the hooks, a numerous variety of other fish were caught, and Donald examined them with studious interest. Star-fish of many kinds, sea anemones, sea vegetables—lemons, cucumbers, potatoes and cabbage, came from the depths, besides crabs, scallops and cockles, and odd fish species, such as sculpins, anglers or monk-fish, dogfish, wolf-fish, cat-fish, lump-fish, halibut, flounders, skate and others. These "curiosities" he brought aboard and examined and dissected, and the postmortems often revealed strange facts. In the stomach of an angler would be found a large spiny sculpin; in that of a wolf, or cat-fish, the crushed shells of scallops and crabs ground up by the powerful jaws and canine teeth of these fish, and Donald would wonder how it is possible for such tough fare to be digested.

Sometimes they had the sea all to themselves; at others, the horizon would be dotted with fishing craft, and occasionally they would be in company with a St. Malo barque, or St. Servan brig, fishing on the ground. Oftentimes, steamers would pass, but, strangely enough, more could be *heard* in fogs, than *seen* in clear weather. On a memorable occasion, they saw a huge iceberg stranded on the Eastern Shoals of Grand Bank, and they sent the dories in to pick up pieces of the broken ice drifting to leeward of the monster for the purposes of keeping their squid bait fresh.

Thus the August days passed and time slipped along into September. Days of lazy calms, when the sea stretched oily and undulated with a slow heave like the breast of a giant in slumber, and the vessel rolled so lightly as to be almost imperceptible; days of brave west winds, when the sea was whipped into blue corrugations crested with foam which glistened in the sun and tossed the dories up and down on comber and trough; days of storm, with rain and savage squalls, which forced the schooner to drift under a foresail and jumbo until the blow passed and they could commence fishing again after the enforced, but welcome rest; and most dreaded of all, days of smoking fogs which covered the sea in a thick, viewless pall and kept the fishermen nervous and wide-awake for the shrieking sirens of the liners racing across the Banks. And they had reason for fear!

On September 12th, the *West Wind* was lying to a hawser anchor in twenty-six fathoms on the eastern edge of Banquereau, or Quero Bank. It was foggy when the men went over the side in the morning, and towards noon the fog shut down so thick that Captain Nickerson decided to keep the gang aboard after they discharged their first haul of fish. The first dory to get alongside was Thomas and McKenzie, and they pitched their catch out and hoisted their dory on the rail and left the tackles hooked into the bow and stern becketts. Thomas went down into the forecabin to get a mug of tea from McGlashan, while Donald went aft to talk with the skipper. While they sat chatting on the cabin house, they were startled out of their wits by the jarring roar of a steamer's whistle close aboard.



Thomas, in the forecabin, was up on deck in a trice, closely followed by Joak, and Nickerson bawled, "Ring th' bell! Ring th' bell! He's a comin' slap bang for us!" Donald jumped down into the cabin for the skipper's shot-gun and a few shells, and was just coming up the companion steps when he heard Nickerson shout, "God Almighty! He's into us!" There was a terrific crash, followed instantly by the rending, grinding and splintering of wood, and as the schooner rolled down, McKenzie leaped out of the cabin companionway in time to avoid the sweep of the mainmast and maintopmast as it thundered down across the quarter. For a second he was dazed, and only conscious of a huge bulk immediately back of him, then the deck tilted up beneath his feet and he was hurled violently into the water.

His first instinct was to swim away from the monster smashing and rending him, and with his head down he trudged hard for almost half a minute. Then, pausing for breath, he swung around, and trod water. The first thing that met his eyes was the rust-streaked hull of a large steamer gliding past in the mist but a scanty fifty feet away. He could see her funnel and boat deck looming in the fog, but his vision was mostly centred on the red stripe of her water-line, a white-painted load-line mark, the condenser water pouring from a sluice in that blank wall of riveted steel plating, and the broil of foam from the churning screw. The latter sight caused him to swing around again and swim for a frantic half-minute. He did not want to get caught in that vortex and cut to pieces, and when he had exhausted himself in his spurt, he turned under the ship's stern and read the name, *Livadia—Piraeus*.

Panting for breath, he attempted to shout, but was unable to render more than a husky croak, "Help! Help!" A piece of the schooner's deck surged up out of the water close beside him, and as he grasped it, he saw the *Livadia's* fantail become misty in the fog, and finally vanish altogether. "Swine!" gasped Donald. "He's leaving us.... Greek swine!" And for a minute he clung to the wreckage regaining his wind and scattered senses.

"Help! Help!" A faint cry came out of the mist to his right. It sounded like the skipper's voice. "Hold on! I'm coming!" shouted Donald, and taking a deep breath, he slipped into the sea again and struck out in the direction of the cry. Dodging pieces of splintered timber, he came upon Nickerson hanging to the cover of the wheel-box. It was scarce enough to float him and his head was very low in the water, while every now and again he would go under altogether. Blood flowed from a gash in his scalp, and by the look on his face he was nearly all in.

"Here I am, Skipper!" cried Donald, swimming up to him and thrusting an arm under his elbow to lift his head out.

Judson's eyes turned and looked into his. "I—I—can't—swim!" he gasped. Donald nodded. "Don't get nervous, Jud!" he cried, reassuringly. "I'll fix you up in a minute if you'll do as I tell you. Grab that box with both hands and kick your feet out like a frog."

"Can't.... Too—heavy—boots!" gasped the other.

"Wait! I'll slip them off!" And Donald, free of his own, ducked under and hauled the skipper's heavy leather boots off his legs. Blowing and puffing, he came up. "Now you're all right," he said. "Do as I tell you and I'll get you over to a larger piece of wreckage."

The skipper nodded and commenced striking out with his feet. Donald, treading water beside him, scanned the sea for wreckage. At last he spied what looked like the main-mast about a hundred feet away. "I see the mast over there," he said. "You keep paddling, Jud, and I'll swim over and bring back a line and tow you!" In a few minutes he was back with the gaff-topsail sheet, and hitching this through a ring in the wheel-box cover, he cautioned Judson to hang on. Swimming over to the mast with the line in his teeth, he gained the spar and managed to haul the skipper up to it.

Sitting astride the long pole, Donald caught Nickerson by the shoulders and dragged him over it. Judson was heavy, and he seemed to have no strength in his arms, and McKenzie was pretty well played out by the time he got the skipper on the spar and with his legs astride of it. "Take a breather for a spell, Skipper," he said. "Just lie quiet. I'll see that you don't roll off." For ten minutes Nickerson lay prone—sick with the salt water he had swallowed—but after a while, the color returned to his face and he looked up.

"I'm all right naow, Don," he said. "Who was that sweep that hit us? Don't appear to have stopped ... or launched a boat."

McKenzie replied with bitterness in his voice, "A dirty Greek. I got her name—*Livadia* of Piraeus."

Nickerson nodded. "That's near Athens," he observed. "A clumsy, lubberly Greek. He cut his stick for fear of the consequences, but he won't get away with it. We'll make him sweat, by Godfrey! *Livadia* of Piraeus! Humph!"

Pieces of the *West Wind* floated past them in the smooth sea, and the skipper began identifying them. "There's a bit of the cabin house. There's a bait-knife still stuck in the cleat, see? There's the chain cable box, and there's a slew o' pen boards. Some of the boys' blankets over yonder—Godfrey! my head's buzzin' and achin'. Th' main-mast or the gaff gave me a devil of a wipe when it came down an' knocked me overboard!"

Nickerson evidently received a hard blow, and as time passed he began to jabber meaningless phrases. "I want a drink in the worst way, Don," he cried. "Get me a drink, like a good chap!" It was very quiet on the water and the fog blanket lay very thick. Donald was shouting for help at intervals, but the mist seemed to stifle his voice. The prospects were beginning to look black, and he yelled and shouted until his voice began to crack. Real fear began to clutch at his heart. If other vessels or dories were in the vicinity, they might pass close by and never see or hear them.

They had been on the spar for almost an hour, and Donald was really anxious. Nothing could be heard save

the lapping of the water around the broken mast and Nickerson's mutterings. He was lying face down, apparently oblivious of his surroundings, and McKenzie had passed a line around his body to prevent him sliding off. He collected his energies for another spell of yelling and had bawled the first "Help! Help!" when an answer came, "Keep ashoutin' 'til we pick you up!"

In a voice as hoarse as a crow's, he continued crying out, until a dory loomed out of the mist and rounded alongside the spar. She was a fisherman's dory, and there were two men at the oars.

"Get the skipper in first," croaked Don. "He's had a crack on the head. Who are you? Where's your vessel?"

"We're off the *Frank and Mary*—of Gloucester," replied one of the men. "We picked up th' rest o' your gang in th' dories, an' some of us are scoutin' around lookin' for youse."

"Did you get our cook and my dory-mate—a man called Thomas?" asked Donald anxiously, as he clambered into the boat.

The fisherman shook their heads. "Naw," they answered. "We only picked up fellers in dories. We never got any fellers but youse out the water." McKenzie's heart flopped like a lump of lead in his breast. "Poor Joak," he murmured almost tearfully. "Poor Joak ... my old chum. And Jack Thomas ... one of the best!" He looked over the mist-wreathed water with his fingers twining together nervously. Then he recalled the vision of a steel stem—grinding, smashing and rending—the Beast of the Banks—and he ground his teeth in an excess of rage and bitterness at the suddenness and the ruthlessness of their hurling into Eternity. He gripped the dory gunnel convulsively in fingers of steel. "They'll pay for this! They'll pay for this!" he cried aloud.

"You got th' steamer's name?" queried a fisherman, pulling away.

McKenzie started. "Aye ... we got her name!"

A big schooner under sail loomed out of the mist and a voice shouted, "Here they are, an' they've got a couple o' them!" Within a minute they rounded up alongside and the skipper was handed over the rail and taken down into the cabin. He was in a dazed state from exhaustion and the effects of the blow on the head. Donald, little the worse for his experience, went down into the forecabin, where he was surrounded by the *West Wind's* gang and questioned as to how it all happened. After he had related the affair as he knew it, they shook their heads dolefully. "Poor cook! Poor Thomas!" they murmured. John McGlashan and James Thomas could be listed with the yearly toll of the Banks.

"Drowned on Banquereau when the fishing schr. *West Wind* of Eastville, N.S., Nickerson, Master, was run down while at anchor and sunk by the Greek steamer *Livadia* of Piraeus."

That would be their epitaph! After drinking a cup of hot coffee and a bowl of warm soup, Donald turned into a bunk, and thinking over the loss of his chum and his dory-mate, cried—not like a baby—but like a man.

He lay quiet for an hour, then he got up. His clothes were being dried at the cook's stove, so he wore a pair of pants and a sweater lent him by one of the *Frank and Mary's* crew. "How're ye feelin'?" asked the men lounging around on the lockers and bunks.

"Not so dusty," answered McKenzie.

"Yer skipper says ye saved his life," observed the cook from the stove. "He was jest alettin' go when you came up an' hauled him to that spar. It's a great thing to be able to swim."

"How is he?" enquired the youth eagerly.

"He'll be alright," replied the other. "I fixed up his head an' gave him a slug of old Jamaikey to wash the salt water outa his stomach. He's asleep now, but he'll be fit when he wakes."

One of the *West Wind's* crowd spoke. "We've cruised all around the wreckage, Donald, but thar' ain't no sign of the cook or Thomas. Cal'late they must ha' gone under when th' steamer crashed into yez. Lucky thing for us we was out in the dories, or there'd ha' bin a bigger drowndin' scrape."

McKenzie sat quiet for a moment, until he heard the dull mutter of a bow wave outside and felt the slight rolling of the vessel. "Under way?" he enquired.

"Baound fur Halifax," answered the cook. "Aour skipper's agoin' to land yez there." He busied himself around the stove for a while and then remarked, "Lucky thing for youse fellers that you landed most of yer season's fish. You ain't agoin' to lose too much—"

"Won't we?" ejaculated a *West Winder*. "We'll lose a bet we had with the *Annie L. Brown's* gang. I had a hundred dollars on that. Th' skipper had five hundred, an' most of the boys put up a dollar or two. We'd ha' trimmed that outfit hands daown. Ira Burton ain't in it with Jud Nickerson fur ketchin' fish." And he growled anathema on the Grecian ship.

Captain Nickerson was himself again by supper time, but was dreadfully upset on hearing of the loss of McGlashan and Thomas. "I would have gone, too, if it hadn't been for you, Donny-boy," he said. "Can't swim, y'know, and there's not many fishermen that can. Water's too cold around our coasts for bathing. You pulled me through, son—"

"Just as you did on a good many other occasions," interrupted Donald, "so that makes us quits."

The skipper smiled faintly. "We also lose our bet, I'm afraid, though I don't think Ira Burton can collect from us. However, it don't matter. I'll get another vessel again—the *West Wind* was insured—and I'll have no trouble next season in getting a gang—that's certain."

They were landed in Halifax forty hours after the accident, and Captain Nickerson immediately reported the facts of the collision to the marine authorities. As luck would have it, the Grecian steamer was then in the harbor. She had made no report of the mishap—a damning feature—and, as she was about to sail for Baltimore, she was libelled and held, and her master and watch officers were hailed before the authorities to explain. At first they absolutely denied sinking any schooner, or even scraping one, and they had even altered the ship's log-book to show that they were not in the vicinity when the collision happened, but under expert cross-examination their story broke down, even though they refused to admit the facts. Inspection of the steamer's bows revealed dents and scrapes freshly painted over, and eventually, a sailor with a grudge, failed to corroborate the officers' evidence and bluntly stated that they had run down an anchored schooner on the Banks and deliberately steamed away from the scene. The master and owners of the *Livadia* were required to furnish bonds for fifty thousand dollars before the steamer was allowed to proceed. The official inquiry was set for the week following, at which all parties were required to attend the Court in Halifax.

Captain Nickerson, Donald and the *West Wind's* crew boarded the packet steamer that evening for Eastville Harbor, and just a minute prior to sailing, two men came running down the wharf. Shouting "Wait a minute!" they ran up the gang-plank and staggered into the midst of the *West Wind's* crowd, who greeted their unceremonious boarding with incredulous oaths and shouts of surprise. *It was Joak McGlashan and Jack Thomas!*

"Where in the name of all that's sacred did you fellers spring from?" gasped the skipper, while Donald grabbed Joak to see if he were really alive. "Jist came in, Skipper," answered McGlashan breathlessly. "Jist got put aff a schooner a wee while ago an' we've had tae rin like blazes tae catch this wee boat here. They tel't us on the wharf that yez was a' picket up."

"By Jingo, Joak," said McKenzie, "I've been weeping over you as being drowned on Quero. How the deuce did you escape?"

"Gimme a chanst tae get ma wind!" McGlashan sat down on a pile of freight and wiped the perspiration from his brow. "It was like this, ye see," he said, when he had recovered his breath. "We came up on deck when yon steamer whustled, an' we ran fur the dory which Donald and Jack had jist left hanging on the rail. The steamer hit her abaft the main-mast, about the gurry-kid, and it didna hit the dory. Me'n Jack jist tumbled intae it, and when the mast went, the dory went intae the water. We lost the oars and were driftit awa' frae the schooner, but efter two hours floatin' about we were picket up by a Yankee schooner and landed in Halifax a while syne. That's all there is tae tell, except that we were sure the skipper and Donald were lost, as we knew you were baith aft when the steamer hit." He gave a deep sigh and continued. "Anyway, we're all here, thank God, but the schooner's gone, and ma good clothes are gone, and ma alarm clock, too, and I had a fine codfish chowder on the stove fur yer dinners that day that also went—" He spoke so solemnly that the listeners laughed immoderately. "By gorry, cook, you're a haound!" they chuckled. What was at first thought to be a tragedy, was now looked upon as an experience, an incident for yarning and joking about, and they spent much time in chaffing McGlashan about the loss of his "alarm clock," his clothes and the chowder.

Arriving back in Eastville Harbor, Donald and the skipper were disappointed to find that Ruth was in Halifax staying with the Stuarts. Had they known, they would have looked the girls up before coming home. However, they would be in Halifax at the inquiry the following week, and Donald looked forward to seeing Ruth then with feelings of anticipatory pleasure. He had not seen or heard from her for four months, and when a youth is in love with a pretty and very desirable girl, four months is a terribly lengthy period.

At the Nickerson home, Jud's parents were kindness personified. Old Mrs. Nickerson took Donald in hand and purchased him an outfit of both sea and shore clothes. They were not expensive clothes, but they were of good wearing stuff. For the first time in over a year, he possessed a shore suit, and, even though it was ready-made store clothes and of a fit and pattern a good deal poorer than he had worn at other times and in other circumstances, he was glad to have them and to know that he could call on Ruth in Halifax without qualms as to his personal dressing. He fancied nice clothes, and would like to be able to purchase a complete rig-out of good quality and finished tailoring, but when a lad is earning thirty-five dollars a month and saving to make a home for his mother, he cannot spend money in dress. Donald accepted Mrs. Nickerson's gifts with deep appreciation, but with a sneaking suspicion that Judson had engineered the whole thing as a reward for services rendered.

The *West Wind's* two trips of fish were sold, and the skipper announced that they had landed altogether three thousand five hundred quintals. Had they completed the season, the *West Wind* would have made a record catch, but, as it was, the crew were eminently satisfied with share checks in the neighbourhood of \$600 per man, with a possible addition for gear, clothes and fish lost when the collision case was tried and judgment secured against the Greek steamer's owners. Donald received a check for \$140. "And there's more acomin' to you," said Judson when he paid him. "You'll draw a fisherman's share for this last trip, but we've got to get the money from those Greeks first. They'll pay us enough to help build a new vessel, for the fish we lost, and all our outfit and gear. They'll *have* to pay, for they haven't a leg to stand on. The money is as good as ours naow!" And he chuckled grimly.

When the inquiry was over, Donald intended to ship in a vessel for Glasgow and bring his mother out to Nova Scotia. He had already written her to that effect, and before he went to Halifax, he and Mrs. Nickerson arranged to rent a neat little cottage on the hill street just back of the town, and not far from the Nickerson home. It was secured furnished, and as it was at present untenanted, Donald worked around the place for a few days painting the floors, doors and wood-work, after scrubbing it out thoroughly from top to bottom. It was not a large cottage, but it was a warm one, and built of squared spruce logs shingled on the outside and match-boarded inside. There was a kitchen addition, and the main part of the house had a dining-room, parlor, and two small bedrooms upstairs. It was a vastly different place from the red sandstone villa in Maxwell Park, with its tiled bathrooms, hot and cold water, electricity and gas, but it was clean and cosy, and the rent was extremely moderate. The furniture was plain and meant to be utilized. Most of it was made by

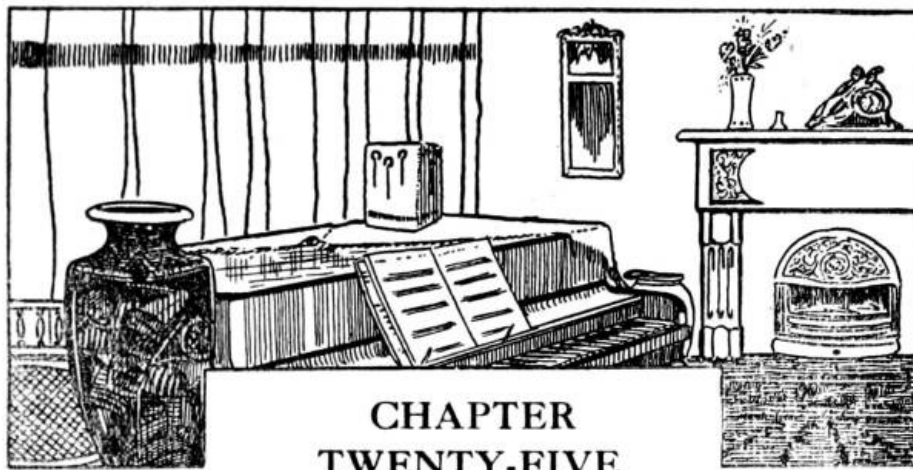
ship-carpenters, and there was no veneer or elaborate carvings. The beds were of wood, and in lieu of springs, there were mattresses of plucked feathers so soft and downy that one almost vanished in their cosy embrace. Picked rag mats covered the floors, and the place was heated in winter by a small box stove which burned wood, and which stood in the dining-room, and disseminated heat into the parlor through a square opening in the wall.

An acre of good garden ground went with the place, and there was a small building suitable for a stable and wood-shed immediately back of the dwelling. A well, equipped with a pump, stood near the kitchen door in handy proximity to save laborious water carrying, and the former tenants had planted vines which clustered over the little front porch, and there were rose bushes, lilacs, and hollyhocks around the front and sides of the house.

On the eve of his departure for Halifax and Scotland, Donald viewed his future home and tried to imagine what it would be like when his mother arrived and was installed within. He could picture her reading by the stove of a winter's night, or working in the garden in summer. She would have chickens, of course, and maybe a pig or two. His mother knew all about these things. Then he thought of Ruth.... Of course, she wouldn't live in a cabin like that, but by the time he was in a position to marry her, he hoped to have a home of his own—a big wooden house like what other Eastville skippers owned—a house with four or five bedrooms, hot air furnaces and plastered walls and modern plumbing. They all had pianos, a horse and buggy, and good furniture imported from Halifax. He would get that ... in time. He'd go with Judson in the dory again next summer, then he would go to navigation school in Halifax and get his second mate's ticket for off-shore. He was able to pass the examination now, but he hadn't the necessary sea-time in to qualify. Another year or two fishing and he would go skipper—fishing in the summer and running fish and lumber to the West Indies in winter. He would be skipper, if all went well, by the time he was twenty, and when he attained his majority, he would ask Ruth to marry him. With these pleasant thoughts, he squared up a rumpled rag mat on the floor of his future home, straightened a deal table and studied the effect of a cheap vase—he knew it was cheap and gaudy and he wanted to stow it away—on the sideboard—and after a final look around, he gave a satisfied sigh and locked the front door. At the front fence, he looked back at the cottage—nestling cosily amid a few dwarf spruce—and whistling cheerfully he swung down the road ruminating over a suitable name for his coming domicile. "Shelter Harbor! That's a good one," he murmured. "I think mother would like that. M-m! Shelter Harbor—that's the name, for it'll be a shelter harbor for the both of us!"

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE



**T**HE *West Wind's* crew arrived in Halifax on a Monday morning at the end of September to attend the inquiry, and the evidence was given by both sides. The Greeks had no case. It was proved that they were navigating at full speed in a dense fog; that a proper look-out was not kept; and that sound signals were not given at the intervals required by the International Rules of the Road for navigation "in fog, mist, snow or heavy rainstorms." The Court severely condemned the absolute disregard for Articles 15 and 16 of the Rules, and the Commissioner was most scathing in his remarks regarding the conduct of the Greeks in running away from the vicinity after sinking the schooner. To the Greek master and watch-officers he said, "Your conduct on this occasion was such as to merit for you the scorn and contempt of all seafarers, and your action can only be characterized as one of the most despicable cowardice. If this Court had power to deal with your certificates, we would have no hesitation in cancelling for all time that of the master, and the second and fourth mates, in order that such callous brutes may never hold a position of responsibility at sea again; as it is, a copy of this judgment will be handed to the Grecian Consul!" The *West Wind* secured a judgment against the *Livadia*, and the Greeks left the Court Room amidst the hisses of the spectators. An Admiralty Court action for damages was immediately entered by the owners and crew of the fishing schooner, and the skipper

remarked to Donald, "We'll win our case. You can go over to Glasgow naow an' bring your mother aout. I'll have a berth in my West Indiaman for you when you get back."

That evening after supper at their hotel, the skipper and Donald went to the Stuart home to call on Helena and Ruth. Judson had telephoned earlier in the day that they would be around, and McKenzie was wildly excited at the thought of seeing Ruth once more. With his new suit on, he felt more presentable, though he was not altogether pleased with the cut of the garment, nor the pattern. The collar did not "sit" nicely and the coat sleeves reached the knuckles of his hands. The pants seemed horribly wide, and they had a loose feeling around the waist. Mrs. Nickerson had spoken of their roominess as just the thing for a growing lad, but then the dear old lady did not know that the "growing lad" was in love, and therefore more than usually fastidious and critical of personal appearance. The pattern—a pepper and salt effect—gave Donald the creeps to look at it, but there was one thing in the outfit's favor, and that was the strength and durability of the cloth. As Donald soliloquised, "This suit was built—not tailored. They sewed it with sail-twine and lined and stiffened it with double-ought storm canvas. It would make a grand sail when everything else blew away!" After numerous surveys in the mirror, straightenings of tie and collar, and buttonings and unbuttonings of the coat and vest, the skipper remarked with a grin, "Oh, you'll do, Donny-boy! With that rig on, you look as handsome as a silver dollar on a Swede's pants, or a monkey's eye in a frying-pan. Anybody that walks aout with you naow sh'd be as proud as a dog with two tails. Knock off yer glass-gogging and we'll git along!" And blushing self-consciously, Donald followed him—inwardly condemning the fit and texture of his gift suit.

The Stuarts lived in a fine house not far from the Public Gardens, and when the skipper rang the bell, Donald gave his drooping sleeves a hitch up and patted the recalcitrant collar into place. A maid answered the door and ushered them into a parlor. Judson was perfectly at ease. Donald, who ought to have felt at home in such surroundings, sat on a spider-legged gilt chair feeling awkward and out of place.

A rustle of skirts, a ripple of laughter, and Helena and Ruth entered the room. McKenzie's heart leaped and he rose to his feet, and while Ruth was greeting her brother with hugs and kisses, Helena, looking particularly charming and attractive, walked over to him. "I'm so glad to see you again, Donald," she said sweetly. "And you're not looking any the worse for your shipwreck out on the Banks." She shook hands and turned to the skipper, "And how is Captain Judson?" And the two of them drew away to a corner sofa, leaving Ruth standing before McKenzie.

She had her dark hair coiled up and wore a dress of some pink silky material, which showed her slim girlish figure to advantage. There was a soft rose blush in her cheeks and her blue eyes sparkled as she advanced to Donald, but he, with the critical discernment of the love-lorn, thought there was a hint of coldness in her gaze. It might have been reserve. "And how are you, *Mister* McKenzie?" she enquired calmly. Donald mentally winced at the *Mister*, and instinctively felt the reserve, the chill—just a suspicion of it—in her voice and manner. He clasped her hand warmly and inclined his head with a courteous gesture. "I'm very well—Ruth," he answered quietly, "and you?" He raised his large dark eyes to her face and continued, "I needn't ask for my sight tells me you're the picture of health." Mentally he added, "And lovelier than ever!"

She sat down in a chair near-by and Donald admired the ease and grace with which she walked. He was keen to notice all the little traits and points in her carriage and manner and in the sedate environment of the Stuart home, it was evident that Ruth had adopted her "city manners" in dress and actions. They murmured a few commonplaces about the weather, while McKenzie noticed that she had small neat feet and wore white silk stockings and fine kid dancing slippers. He liked to see a girl attired in nice frocks and "things" feminine, fluffy, soft, silky and lacey, but Scotch-like, he mentally figured the cost and wondered when he would earn enough to provide a wife with the articles he would like to see her clothed in.

"You had quite a mishap out on the Banks, I hear," she observed, leaning back and gazing at him with steady eyes. McKenzie imagined she was looking critically at his suit and he hitched the sleeves up off his knuckles before he replied. "Yes! It was quite a smash-up. It might have been worse if we'd all been aboard the schooner. McGlashan regrets losing an alarm clock and a fine chowder which he was cooking at the time—" He smiled as Ruth laughed and revealed her white, even teeth. The ice seemed to be broken by his remark, and soon the pair were chatting away and rivalling the skipper and Helena, who were conversing most earnestly.

They talked about Eastville, and Donald told of his renting a house for his mother, and how he hoped to be leaving Halifax that week to bring her out to Canada. Ruth nodded interestedly and asked many questions, but not once during her conversation did she address him as "Donald," and the youth puzzled his brains to account for this sudden formality. Was she trying to keep their intimacy upon the plane of "merely friends and nothing more"? Donald worried.

"Do you intend to remain at the fishing?" she asked. Something in the tone of her voice lent moment to the question.

"Yes!" replied the other. "I'm in it now, and I intend to make it my work. I like the life. It's full of interest and every day brings something new. Your fishermen are splendid chaps and dandy shipmates, and these fishing schooners are wonderful vessels—comfortable and seaworthy. I hope I shall be skipper of one by the time I'm twenty-one."

"It's a hard life and a dangerous life though," said the girl, with a far-away look in her blue eyes. "It must be awful to be a fisherman's wife. In those terrible winter gales ... a lot of fishermen are drowned. Just think what might have happened on Juddy's boat if that collision had occurred at night and you were all in bed. A good many of you would have been drowned. We've had accidents of that sort before in Eastville ships and I know—" She shuddered half-fearfully.

"You can get drowned on other craft besides fishermen," observed Donald. "I'll bet there are as many people killed in Halifax in a year as there are drownings from vessels on the Banks. There's a good many fishermen

out there at times—Lunenburg has twenty-five hundred men in her fleet alone—and look at the crowds from Gloucester, Boston, Newfoundland, France and other places.” He regarded her intently and gave his creeping cuffs another upward hitch.

“That may be so, Mr. McKenzie,” said Ruth decidedly, “but if the fishermen do not worry, their women do. I’d go crazy if I had a husband out at sea in those fogs and cyclones. It’s bad enough to have Juddy in that risky, messy business, but a husband—?” She closed her eyes for a moment, while Donald stared at her with a strange tremor in his breast. It was as though he had received a blow and the impressions left by her words were painful. If he were to be at all favored by Ruth’s heart and hand, it was evident that he would have to change his profession, unless she changed her views.

They chatted on other subjects for a while and McKenzie noticed that his companion was glancing every now and again at the ormolu clock on the mantel, and when she answered his questions she seemed abstracted and her remarks were terse and spoken in a manner which betokened that she was forcing the conversation. A ring came at the door-bell, and as the maid pattered down the hall to answer it, Ruth sat up in her chair and straightened out her frock. “She’s expecting someone,” mentally surmised McKenzie, and his spirits dropped a shade when he heard a male voice speaking to the maid. Helena looked over at Ruth with a knowing smile. “That’s Walter, I guess!” she whispered, and Miss Nickerson colored a trifle and looked expectantly at the door of the room.

The male voice spoke in the hall. “Miss Nickahson’s in the pawloh, eh?” and they all rose as a young man about twenty entered the room. He was an athletic-looking fellow, dressed in the height of fashion, and he wore a striped tie and clothes of a cut much affected by college students. His sandy hair was long and parted in the middle; he had blue eyes, teeth with much gold filling in them, and a face which was clear-skinned, regular and good-looking. Smiling, he advanced to Miss Nickerson and extended a white, well-manicured hand. “Good evening, Ruth,” he said breezily, “and how do I find you to-night?” The girl took his hand and murmured something while the color deepened in her cheeks. The visitor then wheeled and greeted Helena, who introduced Judson and Donald. “I’m happy to meet you, Captain! How do, McKenzie!” he drawled in the stilted English of certain Haligonians who endeavor to ape the style and accent of the Naval Dock-yard and Garrison fops. The skipper gave him a sharp, keen, appraising glance and Donald could note a hostile light in Judson’s eyes.

Mr. Walter Moodey strode lightly across the room and, drawing a chair with him, sat down alongside Miss Nickerson. After pulling up his immaculately creased pants and revealing a fancy colored sock above sharp-toed shoes, he leaned towards the girl in a cool, self-possessed manner. “Have you rested up since the dawnce the otha’ night?” And the two were soon engaged in bubbling reminiscences, while Donald sat quiet and with a complacent look on his face which did not accord with the feeling in his breast. At last, Ruth, conscious of her neglect, turned to him with an effort to include him in the conversation. “Mr. McKenzie is going over to Scotland this week to bring his mother out to Canada,” she said. “Now, isn’t he a good boy?”

Mr. Moodey endeavored to look interested. His keen eyes rambled over Donald’s clothes, and conscious of the scrutiny, McKenzie squirmed in his chair and hitched his sleeves up. “Ah, really!” He pronounced it “rully.” “Going ovah in the *Sardonia*, Mistah? She sails for Glasgow this week.” Donald gave him a clear-eyed gaze. “I don’t know what ship I’m going on,” he answered.

“You haven’t booked your passage yet? Bettah hurry—all the ships are full—”

“Are you going as a passenger?” queried Ruth absently.

McKenzie reddened slightly. “No! I’m shipping before the mast if I can get a chance,” he answered calmly.

Moodey’s eyebrows went up. “Oh!” He pronounced it “Ow!” “I see! You’re a sailoh then I take it?”

“I’m a fisherman,” said Donald bluntly. Judson on the sofa with Helena was listening intently while carrying on a tête-à-tête with his fair companion.

“Oh, really!” The eyebrows went up still further and McKenzie thought Mr. Moodey was about to hold his nose. His manicured fingers did lift towards his face, but he changed his mind and pulled a silk handkerchief out of his sleeve and carefully smoothed his hair back from his forehead. “You ketch cods and kippahs and all that sort of thing, do you? Out on the Banks, eh? It must be an awfully jolly life pulling nets all day long—makes one think of the Apostles, eh, what?—but it’s such a messy, smelly one, I should imagine, eh?”

“We don’t pull nets,” said Donald a mite aggressively. “We use hooks and lines.”

“Quite so! Quite so!” returned Moodey unabashed. “I forgot ... cods. Good money in cods, McKenzie?” There was a tone in his voice that Donald did not like, nor Judson either. The latter had been listening to the conversation and he wheeled around from Helena and observed in a steely significant voice, “You sh’d know that, Moodey. Your old gran’pop made all his little whack on the fishflakes. Many a cod the ol’ man split, salted an’ turned on the flakes himself, and a terror to bargain was the same Salt Hake Moodey. Useter cut th’ whiskers off the hakes an’ try an’ pass ‘em off as cod-fish—” Both Moodey and Ruth were fidgetting, and Helena, sensing something, rose and beckoned to Donald. “Come on, Don! Let’s have some music.”

They spent some time at the piano playing and singing together. Mr. Moodey exhibited some surprise at McKenzie’s talents at first, but latterly slid back in his chair with an air of boredom. They were singing old songs and Walter did not care much for them, though Ruth was listening with appreciation, and several times when he started to speak, she held up her hand for silence.

“I say, old chap,” he said to Donald at the conclusion of a piece, “cawn’t you give us something with a little life to it? That old fire-side and heart-throb stuff is awfully depressing, don’t y’ know? Give us some musical comedy or light opera stuff—but, I don’t suppose you know anything in that line?” The slight, and possibly

unintentional, sarcastic note in his voice when he spoke the last words annoyed Donald. He would show this Halifax fop that a fisherman wasn't necessarily a creature without culture or education, and when it came down to playing and singing snatches from musical comedies or operas—Huh! he had possibly seen and heard more of them in Glasgow than Moodey ever knew existed.

"What'll you have? What do you know?" queried Donald calmly, without turning from the piano. "*Florodora? San Toy? The Geisha? Mikado? The Cingalee? Pinafore?*"

Walter's expressive eyebrows went up. "Oh, you do know something in that line? How odd. Let's see—! Give us that snappy thing from *Pinafore*! It's called 'Tell me, pretty maiden, are there any more at home like you?'" A snort of disgust was barely stifled by Judson, and without a smile on his face, Donald remarked, "That's from *Florodora*!" And he played the song from memory while Helena sang. For a while he remained at the piano running off several well-known pieces, and occasionally he carolled the words. He was playing and singing for a purpose. He wanted to show Mr. Moodey—whom he looked upon as a rival for the affections of Ruth Nickerson—that he was quite at home in the culture that was supposed to be Mr. Moodey's, and he also wanted to impress Ruth that Mr. Moodey had nothing on him when it came to social accomplishments. Were it not for the wretched clothes he was wearing and which had taken a lot of his self-assurance away from him, he could have crossed swords with the other youth in anything.

Ruth was warming up to him again, and several times she asked him to sing and play pieces which she selected from Helena's music cabinet, and Donald played them with a great deal of pleasure. Mr. Moodey's star was going down a little and he knew it, and Donald knew it. Both youths were carrying on a subtle duel of wits which the girls were not aware of, though Judson, keen judge of human nature that he was, reclined on the sofa lazily and mentally seconded and applauded his young protégé.

When Donald had played a number of pieces—purposely working in snatches from "Il Trovatore," the sextette from "Lucia" and other well-known airs popular among people who appreciate real music—Ruth called to him. "Come over and have a rest, Donald," she said sweetly. "You've been doing the lion's share of the entertaining and we've enjoyed it immensely. I cannot understand how you can play so well from memory and with such little practice, and it is too bad that your talents should be lost to your friends by your going off to sea for the best part of your life." She gave him an admiring glance from her blue eyes and McKenzie felt very happy. His little bit of "swank" was evidently worth the effort, for she had called him by his first name again, and his youthful heart fluttered. Moodey was quick to note the familiar appellation too, and he felt that he must do something to pull his stock up to par.

"Er—Ruth," he said. "You're coming down to the game to-morrow afternoon, aren't you? We're playing Acadiaville for the championship and it'll be a tough game to-morrow afternoon, aren't you? We're playing ball, McKenzie?"

"I used to play a bit while at school in Scotland."

"Rugby?"

"No! Soccer—Association."

"Oh," Walter gave a half-sneer. "That's a kid's game. We play Rugby."

Miss Nickerson interposed. "You know, Donald, Mr. Moodey here is a great athlete. He is captain of the college team and immensely popular here in Halifax. He is what they call a 'grid-iron hero'."

"A grid-iron?" The term puzzled Donald. "That's what they use in cooking. Nothing to do with eating, has it?"

Ruth laughed and Moodey looked dark. "A grid-iron," he explained, frostily, "is a slang term for a football ground. It is marked out in squares like a grid-iron." And as Ruth was still laughing, he gave Donald a look which gave him a hint of the "hero's" feelings towards him.

Mr. Moodey was now launched into a subject in which he could shine, and he commanded Ruth's attention for several minutes telling her of past games, the prospects for the morrow, and a good deal of his talk centered around his own personal prowess. "I'm in great shape now," he observed. "I've trained down until I'm as hard as nails." He raised his right arm and flexed his biceps. "Feel that, Ruth! Hard, isn't it?" Ruth felt. "Oh, it certainly is hard!" she exclaimed. "You must be strong, Walter. Just feel his muscle, Donald!" There was a merry twinkle in her eye when she made the request. Donald, feeling rather nauseated at Moodey's brag, gave the muscle a squeeze with his fingers which caused Walter to wince a trifle. A sailor's grip, with fingers toughened by canvas clawing and rope hauling, is not to be despised, and McKenzie purposely gave the "grid-iron hero" a hard nip and Moodey felt that he would like to get McKenzie where he could hit him for it.

Totally unconscious of the veiled hostility between the two, Ruth chattered away, addressing her talk to both. When Donald spoke to Moodey he was icily polite; when Moodey passed remarks to Donald, they were thinly sarcastic and he, on occasions, introduced a nasty trick of imitating McKenzie's slightly Scotch accent. Had the circumstances been otherwise, Donald would not have taken any notice, but when these conversational shots occurred, the young sailor felt like giving the college man something more painful than the retort courteous. With the two youths playing a dual role, the evening passed until Helena, who had been holding an earnest colloquy with the skipper, cried out, "Did you know that, Ruthie? Judson tells me that Donald saved his life when the steamer ran them down. They were in the water for an hour." Ruth's fine eyes flashed to Donald's face and there was an expression of surprise and fear in their blue depths. He flushed and squirmed on his chair and shot the creeping sleeves up again as Moodey drawled, with another eye-brow raising, "Oh, really!"

"He sure did," vouchsafed Judson. "If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be here now. You can thank him, Ruth, that

your dear brother is not feeding the fish on Quero Bank this night, for I was nearly a goner."

The girl glanced from McKenzie to her brother with a strange look on her face. "I—I didn't know there was anything like this in your accident," she said quiveringly. "I—I thought you were all picked up in your dories a few minutes after the collision. That's what you said, Juddy. You said it was nothing—"

"Juddy evidently didn't tell you the whole story," interrupted Helena. "He has just been telling me how Donald swam about in the sea and found him just as he was going under, and held him up and eventually got him over to a spar and upon it. They were both thrown into the sea by the steamer's bow and had a dreadfully narrow escape."

Ruth remained speechless for a moment, as if trying to comprehend it all, then she gave McKenzie a most expressive glance—a look of unspoken thankfulness—and she leaned forward and murmured softly to him, "I don't know what to say, Donald, but—we'll talk about it again." And the youth blushed still redder, felt hot, and to cover his confusion, patted the recalcitrant coat collar into place.

Mr. Moodey, after a period of silence, cleared his throat. "You're a swimmah, McKenzie?" he enquired.

Donald nodded. "I can swim a little."

"Jolly useful thing to know," continued the other, "specially if one's a fisherman. They're always getting spilled out of their boats. I do some swimming myself. It is one of the sports I pride myself on. Just won this trinket the otha day for swimming out at the Nor'west Arm." He took a watch-fob out of his pocket and handed it to Donald. It was a gold medallion—a first prize for a half-mile contest—and Donald knew enough about swimming to give Moodey credit for being an athlete of distinction. "That's very nice," he remarked, handing the fob back. "I've done a little racing when I was at school. Y'know, in Glasgow schools swimming is compulsory, and I rather liked it." Modestly, he made no mention of having won the Glasgow Amateur Swimming Shield for schoolboys under 14 years of age.

After Helena's revelation, Moodey became quite cordial. He realized that McKenzie was a superior sort of a fellow in spite of his vocation and his frightful taste in clothes, and he dropped his patronizing and sarcastic attitude towards him. Besides, he found in McKenzie a foe-man worthy of his steel and he was quick to assume that any baiting of the Scotch lad would lose him Ruth's friendship. It was evident that this McKenzie chap had a strong stand-in with the Nickersons and Helena Stuart, and an exhibition of antipathy would probably end in Mr. Moodey being the loser. With the change in both Ruth's and Moodey's attitude towards him, Donald found himself spending the most enjoyable period of the evening.

After having some cake and coffee, the men rose to depart. Moodey took his leave first—saying that he was in training and would have to get to bed early for the game on the morrow—and he shook hands quite cordially with Donald. "Try and get around to the game to-morrow afternoon, old chap," he said, "and if you're going to be in Halifax for a few days, why we might go over to the Arm and have a swim togethaw." And after saying to the girls that he would look for them in the grand stand—front row—next afternoon, he said "Good-night!" and departed.

When McKenzie was leaving, Ruth took him to one side. "It was lovely of you to come," she said sweetly, giving him a squeeze of the hand and a glance from her blue eyes which set his heart in a whirl. "And you've been so nice and obliging in playing and singing for us. And, moreover, we Nickersons are very much in your debt for what you did ... out on the Banks." Donald made a deprecatory gesture. "It was nothing. I am a good swimmer," he murmured happily.

"If you are going to be in town to-morrow, Donald," said Helena, "you must come up and have tea with us. Judson is coming, too." And when Ruth echoed the invitation, Donald accepted with delight.

At their hotel that night, Judson seemed in great spirits. He and Helena had had a wonderful evening together, and he was feeling very happy. He whistled and hummed a song to himself as he undressed for bed, and Donald knew things were going well with him. McKenzie was in a similarly joyous mood. He felt that he had left Ruth on an extremely good footing and Moodey ceased to worry him, and when Judson remarked from the depths of his blankets, "I'd like to have that Moodey pup in my watch aboard a wind-jammer for a spell, I'd give that haw-hawing specimen of the cod-fish aristocracy a hot time, by Jupiter! I'd harden his muscles up, by Jingo! Hear him talk as though he didn't know what a codfish was ... and his old gran'pop made a fortune out of the codfish he jewed aout of the poor devils of fishermen up the shore and on the Gaspé coast. Huh! Him and his 'kippahs' and his 'pulling nets all day long'—"

McKenzie laughed. "Oh, he's all right. He's a decent sort of a chap. It's just his manner and the way he has been brought up."

Next morning he went down to the Shipping Master's office to see about getting signed on in a steamer for Glasgow. The captain of a ship was in the place at the time, and when McKenzie asked the official if he was looking for any men to a British port, the ship-master turned and spoke. "You looking for a ship?" Donald nodded. "Yes, sir! I'd like to ship for the run to Glasgow, or, failing that, to any British port."

The other looked him over critically. "I'm looking for a hand—an able seaman—and I'm Glasgow bound. Ever been to sea before?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Show me your discharges."

"Haven't got any," said Donald, slightly flustered.

"What ships were you serving in?"



"I made a voyage from the Old Country to the Pacific Coast in a barque, and from Victoria, B.C., to Halifax in a schooner. I've been fishing on a Banker for the past four months."

The captain looked at him narrowly. "You're Scotch, eh? What barque were you in, and what did you do aboard her?"

"Never mind the name of the ship, sir, but I was serving my time—"

The other grunted. "Huh! Runaway apprentice, I guess, eh?"

Donald laughed, and after a pause he said, "The skipper of the schooner I came around the Horn in is in Halifax now. He'll vouch for me."

The Shipping Master looked over the desk. "Was that the *Helen Starbuck*?"

"Yes, sir!"

The official smiled and observed to the captain, "I reckon, Cap'en, that a lad that has made a voyage from the Coast to Halifax in a ninety-five-ton schooner is a sailor."

The master nodded. "Can you steer?"

"Of course, but sail only."

"We-e-ell," the captain gave him a searching glance, "I guess you'll do. You look bright. I'll sign you as an A.B. How's that?" McKenzie replied in acceptance.

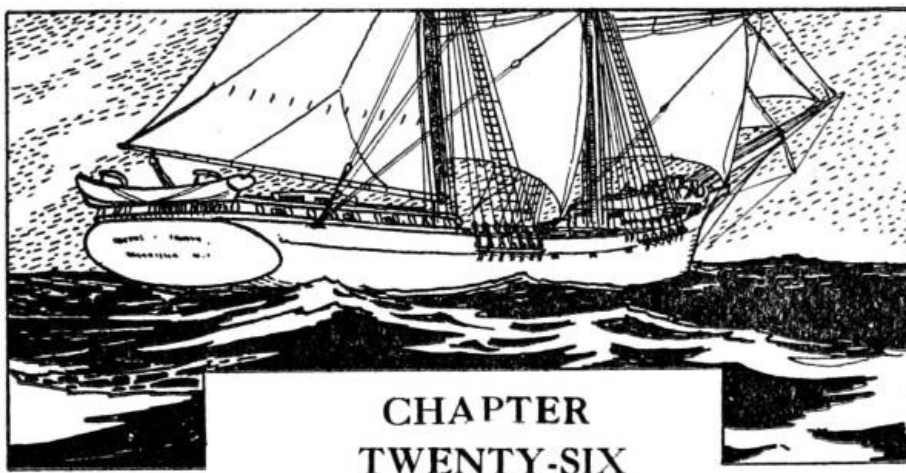
"Alright, Mister, sign him up!" Then to Donald he said, "Get your clothes and get down aboard the ship right away. We're ready to sail. Hurry now."

Donald had only time to run to his hotel, collect his sea kit and pay the bill. Judson was out, but he scribbled a note to him and left it on the dressing table. "Confound it!" he muttered, as he walked down to the dock. "I didn't expect to get hustled out like this. And I was looking forward so much to that tea to-night. Now it's all off and I haven't even got a chance to telephone her. Hang the luck!"

That evening he was eating his tea in the starboard fo'c'sle of a big freighter, in company with an all-nation gang of deck-hands, and the place was swinging to the roll of the off-shore swell, while the shores of Nova Scotia were fading away in the dim distance astern as the propeller drove the steamer for Glasgow and his mother.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX



**D**ONALD was talking. "And, Mother, I've got the house and everything all ready for you. All you've got to do is step into it. It's a pretty little place up on a hill overlooking the harbor. Of course, it isn't anything like our old home in Maxwell Park, but it'll do until I can save some money to build another—"

Mrs. McKenzie, looking just a shade older, but there were little lines around the eyes and mouth which told a story not of Time's making, gazed lovingly at her sea-bronzed son. How he had grown! And how strong and handsome he was! The sight of him revived memories ... he reminded her of him who went out to Eternity in the maw of a big Atlantic comber not so many years ago. She realized that the pale-faced, sensitive little chap of two years ago had vanished, and in his place was a strapping, ruddy-visaged youth who was almost a man. His dark eyes flashed with the fire of life and the enjoyment of it, and there was a timbre in his voice which expressed confidence, fearlessness, and the ability to command if necessary. The sea had worked wonders in

him. It had given her a new son, and her heart filled with pride at the capable, possessive manner in which he sketched out her future with him. She drew his face down to hers and kissed him on the cheek. "Anywhere with you, my bonny, will be home. Be it cot or palace, it will be yours, Don, and it's proud I'll be to keep it neat and sweet for my laddie."

Donald laughed happily. "Mother, do you remember when the *Kelvinhaugh* towed out? I saw you standing at the ferry slip by Shearer's Yard that morning. My, but I was feeling miserable then! I was ready to run away if I could."

The mother rose and opened a drawer. They were seated in her room at the Home for the Aged, and Donald had just arrived from Glasgow but an hour before. "Here's a clipping from a paper I saved for you," she said. "It's about the *Kelvinhaugh*, and many's the prayer I've made in thankfulness." Donald took the piece of newspaper, read it, and whistled. It ran—a terse, unsentimental record of disaster:—

#### LOSS OF A GLASGOW BARQUE.

SYDNEY, N.S.W., Jan. 15:—The ship *Castor* arrived here to-day from Chemainus, B.C., and reports passing a large quantity of wreckage in lat. 31 degrees North, long. 152 degrees West, which seems to prove the loss at sea of the Glasgow four mast barque, *Kelvinhaugh*. The wreckage consisted of lumber, yards and upper masts, and a damaged life-boat bore the name *KELVINHAUGH—GLASGOW*. The master of the *Castor* is of the opinion that the barque foundered by capsizing in a squall. The ill-fated vessel carried a crew of twenty-five men, most of whom were signed on in Vancouver, B.C., from which port she loaded lumber for Sydney, N.S.W. She was a new vessel of 2,500 tons, commanded by William Muirhead of 972 Glenburn Road, Glasgow, and owned by D. McKenzie & Co., Glasgow.

He laid the clipping down and looked into space. "So she went ... just as Nickerson said she would. We're lucky ... darned lucky!" The mother nodded as he spoke his thoughts aloud. "You don't know how thankful I was that you had left that ship when I read that," she said. "Just think ... if you had remained in her. It would have been dreadful!"

Donald slipped his arm around her shoulders and laughed. "I'm not born to be drowned, Mother," he said. "Now tell me, what do you know about that lovely uncle of mine? Is he dead, knighted, in jail, or what?"

Mrs. McKenzie gave a contemptuous grimace as she replied, "The wicked ever prosper, Donald. He seems to be getting along wonderfully. I see his name in the papers quite often, and he is reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in Glasgow. He has a whole fleet of tramp steamers now—the Dun Line—"

"It's well named," interrupted Donald grimly. "He should spell it D-O-N-E—for it has been by *doing* poor sailors and insurance companies and others that he has made progress. I wonder what his object was in trying to 'do' me? The fellow apparently meant to have me put out of the way."

"I haven't the faintest idea, sonny-boy. I thought possibly it might be something in connection with the Dunsany title and estate, but I can't, for the life of me, see how you would have anything to do with it. Sir Alastair died last year and his son, Roderick, inherited the title and the property. I don't know much about him, except what I've heard in various ways. He's a professional man of some kind, unmarried and in poor health, and he spends most of his time in England. Your Uncle David would claim the title should anything happen to Roderick, and when David passed on, it would go to his son—young Alastair. About the only decent trait in that man is the affection he seems to have for that boy—so I've been told—and I only hope, some day, that he is punished through his son for what he has done to you—" The fierce spirit of the Highlander flamed in her eyes.

"Hush! hush! Mater dear, don't talk like that," Donald said, patting her hands. "What do we need to care for him now? Let him slip away as a bad memory. There'll come a time when he'll have to pay the price, but we needn't be the ones to present the bill. Now, Mater, we'll go up to Glasgow to-morrow and book passage for Halifax. I have reserved two second cabin berths in the *Ontarian*, sailing Saturday." He paused and gave her a keen scrutiny. "Bye-the-bye, Mother," he asked gravely, "what made you use the passage-money I sent you? I mean, what caused you to use it after leaving the Hydro?"

She tried to evade the question, but he insisted, and after much coaxing she told the story. Dismissed suddenly and without a reference from the Ross Bay Hydropathic, she had tried for place after place, until she was forced to accept a position as waitress in a workman's coffee room. "Good God!" ejaculated Donald. "In a workman's coffee room? A waitress...?" Frightful thoughts went through his mind and his mother seemed to divine them. "No, dearie, it wasn't so bad as you think. The poor are good to the poor. I was never insulted or abused ... nor heard bad language, except when a man was drunk." She paused, then continued her tale. "It was very hard work, early and late, and I took sick. I was ill for six or eight weeks and had to draw on the money you sent me. I was down to the last shilling when a kind lady, who had been a patient at the Ross Hydro, met me and got me the position of night matron in this home."

Donald listened quietly, but his knuckles showed white on the tan of his clenched hands, and there was an ominous glint in his eyes. "I'd like to tear the heart out of him!" he growled fiercely, but the mother soothed him. "Let's forget it all, sonny-dear, and talk of Canada. I have ten pounds saved up. Will I need to buy heavy clothes for the cold winters there? They tell me it's all frozen up for half the year in Canada."

The vindictive glint in the youth's eyes faded away and he laughed heartily. "Why, Mater, where did you get that yarn? I'll bet you won't feel the cold as much there in winter as you do here. It was warm enough when I left, goodness knows! What's good for winter here is good enough for Nova Scotia. Now, we'll book second cabin passages out, and for once I'll go as a passenger and find out what it feels like to loaf around at sea."

After a stay of just three days in Glasgow, during which time McKenzie called on Mrs. McGlashan and gave her news of her son, the two sailed for Halifax. After an uneventful voyage, they arrived in the old Canadian city by the sea on a fine October day, and Donald telephoned the Nickersons at Eastville Harbor. Judson answered the call. "I'll meet you at the boat, Donald," he said over the long distance wire, "and I'll have a load of wood up to your shack, the stove lit, the kittle on and grub in the locker. I'm tickled to death you're back, and I've got a fine little brig for you to second mate in a couple of weeks. And, bye-the-bye, Donny-boy"—he chuckled into the instrument—"Ira Burton's landed his fish an' we've skinned him hands daown. He jest came short of aour trip by ten quintals. It's the talk of the taown, boy, and he's riproarin' sore about it. He lost a lot of time at the Madaleens and he struck a bad breeze on the Banks and lost an anchor and hawser, some of his dories and a pile o' gear. It's a rare joke, but I ain't agoin' to take his money. He struck hard luck all through. An' say, Donald, you'll find Ruth daown home here, but she's got that codfish aristocrat with her. I've a notion to shanghai him to the West Indies—Oh, gorry! they're here. I must knock off. So long, Donny-me-lad! See you in the morning!"

So Moodey was down at Eastville! Donald was not very pleased at the news, but then, a girl might have men friends without anything serious being the intention. He was jealous, he said to himself, and Ruth was not tied to him. He had neither a proprietary interest nor a monopoly of her company, and he could not expect her to avoid the society of all men-folk but Donald McKenzie. Thus cogitating, he laughed the matter away, and called up Helena Stuart. "My! Donald, but I'm glad you're back," she said after the first greetings. "And your mother is with you? Bring her up to the house this afternoon and stay until your boat leaves for Eastville. Mother will be delighted. Do come now! Don't forget! Au revoir!"

Before going to the Stuarts, Mrs. McKenzie looked her son over critically. He was wearing the much-detested suit, but his mother had overhauled it and shortened the hated sleeves. It did not look good on him, however, and the mother knew he disliked it. "Don," she suggested, "I think you could afford to buy another suit. I want to see you looking nice. Don't you think you could get one ready made to put on before going up to your friend's house?"

Donald, with true Scotch canniness, counted his money. "I think I can, Mater. I've got twenty-five dollars I can spend—some for you and some for me. Let's go shopping!"

When he stepped into the Stuart parlor that afternoon, he was attired in a neat grey tweed which really fitted his slim, well set-up figure. Fifteen dollars could accomplish wonders! When Helena saw him, she stepped back in surprise. "I really didn't know you," she cried, with a smile of admiration on her pretty face. "You don't look a bit like—like—what will I say?"

"Like a fisherman," volunteered Donald, laughing at her evident confusion. "That's what you wanted to say, but you didn't like to say it for fear of offending." She came close to him and whispered softly, "If Ruth were to see you now, she'd fall in love with you right off!" And McKenzie blushed furiously.

When his mother was busily engaged in conversation with Mrs. Stuart, Donald got Helena away to a corner. He wanted to find out something, and he thought Helena might tell him. "Helena," he said quietly, "I look upon you as one of my best friends, and I want you to tell me if Ruth really cares for Mr. Moodey?"

The girl looked up at him quickly with a smile in her dark eyes, but when she saw the earnest look on his face, she became serious. "I—I really don't know, Donald," she answered. "He has been going around with her a great deal and she appears to be fond of him. He belongs to a good family here in Halifax and his people are well off. He is studying law at the College and is very popular with a certain set here—quite an athlete and a social star—and he simply dances attendance on Ruth when she is here."

Donald nodded gloomily. "Does Ruth think anything of me, Helena?"

"She thinks a great deal of you," replied his companion, "and often talks about you. She thinks you are very clever and very brave, but I don't think she likes your profession. You see, Ruth is a girl who has always had everything she wanted. Her parents and her brothers have spoiled her. I think she is afraid you'd never earn enough to give her what she has been used to, and she detests the idea of marrying a seafaring man. She has often remarked that she would never be a sailor's wife."

McKenzie smiled rather bitterly. "You know, Helena, I'm very much struck with Ruth. It's awfully foolish of me to be talking like this to you, I know, but ... I want to get my bearings. If Moodey is the favored man ... why, I'll withdraw. But, you know, Helena, I'm Scotch, and I wouldn't withdraw unless I had absolutely no chance with her. You say she thinks something of me? If she does, I'll stick around and give Moodey a run for it, even though I am but a fisherman. Within a few years I hope to be the best fisherman out of Nova Scotia. I have no money, but money isn't everything."

Helena slipped her hand into his and gave it a warm squeeze. "That's the way I like to hear you talk," she said encouragingly. "You just stick to it. You and Ruth are very young yet—I'm taking advantage of my two or three years' seniority to speak thus—and I think you have plenty of time ahead of you. Ruth is a very dear sweet girl and I really think she is too good for Walter Moodey—not that he isn't a nice sort of boy, but I think he's too conceited. You must work hard to get ahead in your vocation, and keep paying attentions to Ruth, even though Walter is around."

"You'll keep this all a secret?" asked Donald shyly. "It's awfully silly of me to talk to you like this." Helena laughed. How seriously this eighteen-year-old boy talked! She admired his unsophisticated charm, and wondered how this young fellow who had travelled and seen so much could be so serious in his love and withal so boyish in his confidences and child-like in his fears. Eighteen is early to talk of love, yet at seventeen and eighteen love is blossoming into flower and the newly-opened buds are often more beautiful than the mature bloom. Besides, this lad had outgrown youth. He was a man. When most lads of his age were still callow youths, with youthful thoughts and actions, he was doing a man's work, living with men and

thinking with men and earning a man's pay. His life for the past two years had been fraught with experiences which men of maturer years in shore occupations would consider as adventures sufficiently notable to be classed as outstanding events in a lifetime. The sea may keep the heart young, but it ages mind and body, and the sailor of eighteen is the equal in confidence, initiative and ability of land-living males twice older in years. The midshipman of sixteen is often in command of men in hazardous expeditions, and many a sailor youth in his teens has sailed and navigated ships to all parts of the globe. Thus Helena reasoned, and she regarded Donald's confidences as being the heart secrets of a clear-minded, upright man, and not as the love-sick fears and fancies of a susceptible boy.

When mother and son left the Stuart home for the Eastville packet steamer, Helena whispered to Don in parting, "We are charmed with your mother. She is a most delightful lady and you must take good care of her, and ... keep up your attentions to our mutual friend. 'Faint heart' ... you know. Au revoir!"

Eastville greeted the McKenzies next morning in most auspicious weather, with a blue sky, smooth sea, and clear autumn sunshine, and as they passed inside the Capes, Donald pointed out the various landmarks. "And there's the spot, Mater, where we'll build our house later on ... in that hollow among the spruce trees just back of the head-land. You get a magnificent view of the sea and harbor from there, and the hollow faces the south and is sheltered from the cold winds. The sun shines there all day long ... it's a lovely spot." And he rambled on, until at last they were on the wharf and shaking hands with Judson Nickerson.

"Come along up to the house, Mrs. McKenzie," he said cordially. "We'll have breakfast there. Your trunks will be sent up to your own place—don't worry about them. I'm glad to see you both safely landed here." And he chattered away in an effort to make both feel that they were at home and among friends.

Breakfast at the Nickerson home that morning was an event, and Janet McKenzie was most cordially received. The old ship-builder's voice boomed in welcome, and his keen eyes beamed hospitably through his steel-rimmed glasses, and Mrs. Nickerson and Ruth charmed the mother with their courtesy and kindness. They had been up to the cottage the day before and had fixed it all ready for occupancy, and Jud had piled the wood-shed with kindling and stove-wood. And the breakfast itself was a thing to be remembered. Corn meal porridge and hot corn cake, fried fresh mackerel and bacon strips and hash brown potatoes, new-baked biscuits, honey, stewed blueberries and delicious coffee—a typical Down-east matutinal meal! Mrs. McKenzie was delighted with everything, and with a heart aglow with happiness, confided to her son, "I'm sure I'll love this place. Your friends are so kind. What lovely people they are. I'm very, very happy, Donald-laddie, now that I have a home and you!"

And when he took his mother up to the cottage on the hill—Shelter Harbor—that was a joyous occasion. "This is our little place, Mater," he said proudly as they walked, arm in arm, up the front path. "It's small, but it's cosy." He opened the door and ushered her in, and when she surveyed the clean and homey interior, he waited, almost breathlessly for her comments. From room to room they went, and when every part of the place had been examined, Mrs. McKenzie sat down in a chair and with eyes glowing, said with excess of happiness in her voice, "My! ... it's just lovely, Donny-dear! Just perfect!" And Donald felt, with her pronouncement, that life was indeed sweet and everything was worth while. "Of course, Mater, it isn't anything like our old villa in Glasgow, but it's not too bad," he went on. "Here's the stove for heating the place—you'll have to get used to these Canadian heaters—and the pump is just at the kitchen door. It'll be a little hard for you here while I'm at sea, as you'll have to get your wood out of the shed and your water from the pump—"

The mother laughed. "And you think that is a hardship? Why, my dear child, I was brought up on a farm and I had to do a great deal harder work than that. I cleaned stables, planted and pulled potatoes in the fields, milked cows, and gathered hay and oats and stacked them. I was born a poor country girl and know what work is. Don't you worry about me in this cosy little place. It's paradise compared with what I've had to do." By these admissions, Janet McKenzie showed that she had profited by misfortune and the old arrogance and "high-falutin'" ideas of palmier days had passed away. She, too, had gone through the mill and come out ground!

The Nickersons had invited them to stay with them for a day or two, but Janet courteously declined. She was eager to get into her own home, and within a half-hour of her entry, she had the kitchen stove alight, the kettle on, and a dinner under way, and Donald busied himself stacking up fire-wood in the wood-box behind the stove. "We must have some chickens," observed the mother as she peeled potatoes, "and next spring I'll plant a vegetable garden so that we can have our own potatoes, onions, cabbages and such. Maybe, later on, we can buy a cow, and I'll make butter and I'll be able to give you real cream, and butter made with my own hands."

Donald made a negative gesture. "That's very nice, Mater, but a cow means hard work for you. I don't want you to slave—"

His mother gave a sniff of pretended indignation. "What have I got to do in this little place when you are away? Do you think I can't do the work. I'm not going to act the lady and sit with my hands in my lap all the time, Donny-dear! We'll get the chickens, the garden and the cow, and I'll show you I know all about milking and butter-making. I used to be a dairy-maid, and a good dairy-maid, too. My butter won a prize at a fair one year." And she smiled happily, when Donald said, "Alright, Mater, you'll have your chickens, your garden and your cow, and I'll be able to give you butter if your butter is all that you say it'll be."

Judson came up in the afternoon. He was in working clothes and sat down in the kitchen. "I don't want to rush you, Don, but I guess you want to git to work and earn some money. I'm going skipper of that little brig down to the wharf there loading dried fish and lumber for Havana, and I want to git her sails bent and her gear overhauled. I'm holding the second mate's berth open for you. D'ye s'pose you can start right in naow and bear a hand? You might as well be doing something and earn a dollar. What d'ye say?"

"I'll be with you in ten minutes, Skipper," answered Don eagerly. "I'm anxious to get to work. A brig you say? I'll have to remember my square-rig sailorizing for her. Bye-the-bye, did you know the *Kelvinhaugh* is gone? Here's the newspaper report."

Judson read it and there was no surprise on his face. "I knew it," he said. "She was too heavily sparred and unwieldy for such a small crew, and I cal'late she got caught in a squall with her kites up and rolled over. I guess old Muirhead was full, too.... Oh, well, I'm not sorry I skipped aout of her. She was a barge if there ever was one, and I'm sorry for the poor devils that shipped in her." And with that, he dismissed the matter.

The brig was a Nova Scotia product of about three hundred and fifty tons, and called the *Queen's County*. She was a smart little craft and by the lines of her, promised to be a fast sailer. Her hull was painted white, also the houses and the insides of the bulwarks. The trunk cabin aft contained comfortable rooms for three officers and a cook-steward, and for'ard, a house was built partly into a short topgallant forecastle, and this contained accommodations for eight hands. The second mate was supposed to act as boatswain also, and this was to be Donald's job.

She had two masts, both square-rigged, and carried double-topsail yards, single topgallants and royals. The masts and yards were of wood and scraped and greased. The blocks, mast-heads, yard-arms and trucks were painted white, and her cleanliness, bright wood, and white paint proclaimed her a typical "Bluenose" packet—a lazy sailor's nightmare.

"I see where there's a lot of sand-and-canvas work aboard this little craft," remarked Donald. "I hope we get a crew worth while."

"Oh, they'll all be home fellers," said the skipper. "You and I and the mate and McGlashan will live aft, but the grub'll be the same for all hands. There'll be ten of us to handle her, and that's a good crowd for this hooker in any weather."

The *Queen's County* was partly owned by an old Eastville captain who only went to sea in the summer, and she plied almost exclusively in the West Indian trade between Eastville and the Island ports. Dried fish and lumber out, and molasses to Halifax, home, constituted her cargoes. It was an ideal trade for winter, and Donald looked forward to voyaging in the little brig with a great deal of pleasure.

While he was aloft on the main-royal yard tying the rovings which lash the head of the sail to the jack-stay, he saw Ruth and Walter Moodey on the wharf below talking to the skipper. His heart gave a queer little jump at the sight, and something of a depressed feeling seized him when he saw Moodey helping her up the gang-plank, but he went on with his work. He was on wages and had no right to knock-off for social receptions unless his commander gave him permission. From his perch, a hundred and forty feet aloft, he saw Judson pilot the two about the brig's decks, and from the corner of his eye he could see Ruth looking up at him, but he made no sign that he had seen her. Finally, they went into the cabin.

From bending the sail, he commenced to overhaul the furling gear and was reeving the bunt-lines through the leads when Judson's voice came rolling up from below, "R'yal yard there! Lay down from aloft!" He was standing on the poop with his sister and Moodey, and they were chatting and joking. McKenzie took the short cut to the deck by sliding down the royal backstay and when he stepped on the poop, he whipped off his cap and bowed to Ruth and extended a tarry hand to Walter with a "Hullo, Moodey, how are you?"

The other shook hands cordially and there was no resentment in his expression at the dropping of the "Mister." If it had been anybody else whose station in life was similar to McKenzie's, Moodey would have had something to say on the omission. Ruth took Donald by the arm and walked him over to the rail. "You wouldn't look at me when I came down," she pouted prettily. "I've been getting a crick in my neck looking up at you and trying to catch your eye, but you went on playing with your strings and cords and refused to look at me."

Donald laughed. "Well, you know, Ruth, I'm on the ship's books now and I can't do as I like. I thought you might not care to have a dirty-looking sailor hailing you from the mast. I humbly apologize for my neglect."

"My friends are all gentlemen no matter what their garb or their work," answered the girl, "and you are a friend of mine." Mentally, the youth wished he could be more than a friend, and with that wish in his heart he could not frame a suitable answer. Instead he asked, "What do you think of our little ship?"

They chatted for a while until Moodey, who was talking with the skipper, cried out, "Will we go along now, Ruth?" There was a proprietary tone in his voice which Donald was quick to note, and it pleased him when Miss Nickerson replied, "I'll be with you in a minute!" And to McKenzie she said, "Will you come over tonight? Bring your mother with you. You know, I'm going to Halifax on Monday to study music and painting, and I'll be staying with the Stuarts until the spring. You'll come—won't you?"

Donald promised readily and when she went off with her escort he watched her slim figure walking gracefully up the wharf with a feeling of mixed admiration and regret in his breast. Moodey's presence disturbed him and the thought of her being in Halifax all winter—which meant being in the too-near proximity of Walter—did not make him feel happy. It was very easy for a girl to forget the absent one. He turned to make his way aloft again, when the skipper remarked, "Y'know, Don, I can't cotton to that blighter somehow. He's chock-full of bazoo about himself, and he's forever hitching at his tie or scrapin' his nails or patting his hair. He's got a notion that he's hell'n-all 'raound here and that he's patronizing us Nickersons by paying attentions to my sister. I said so to her last night, but she gave me an earfull and told me to mind my own business so I have to be nice, for Ruth's sake, to that pink-faced, powdered, manicured, scented pup!"

"You're too hard on him," grinned McKenzie. "That's only his manner. I'll bet he's alright at heart, or Ruth wouldn't tolerate him. I was a bit of a namby-pamby kid myself one time, until I went to sea and got it all knocked out of me—and you did some of the knocking out yourself, Judson."

The other growled, "Oh, shucks, Don, you were different. I hustled you around to make a sailor out of you, but you had the stuff in you even though you were a mammy's boy. But that feller? I'll bet he's got a yellor streak in him a yard wide. I can tell! I'm a judge of men, and some day you'll see.... Naow, Don, we'll go through the bos'n's locker and see what we need for the voyage."

For the next two days, Donald saw Ruth each evening. Of course Moodey was there, but it seemed as if the girl favored McKenzie more than the Halifax youth. Dressed in clothes which enabled him to feel at home in her company, the young fisherman felt that only Moodey's presence prevented him from cultivating the intimacy he yearned for. The Monday morning came all too quick for Donald, though Moodey felt no regret. McKenzie was bound "to the south'ard" and would not see her again for possibly two or three months. Moodey, in Halifax, could visit her whenever she permitted. McKenzie squirmed when he thought about it, and pictured his rival wooing Ruth with a free rein and no opposition. He would have to do something to keep his memory green, mused Donald, and when she was about to drive away in the team to catch the Halifax train at the station ten miles away, he managed to secure a few minutes' talk with her *à la solitaire* and screwed his courage up to ask if he might write to her in Halifax.

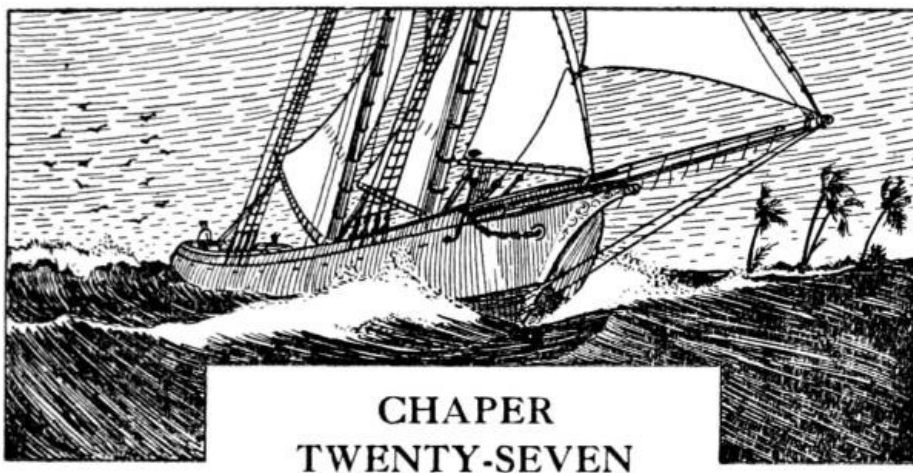
With a sweet smile, she said, "Most certainly, Don. I shall be delighted if you will. Write and let me know all about Havana and the places you visit. We're pals, aren't we? Write me a nice chummy letter, and if you come to Halifax during the winter telephone me first thing, so's we can have an evening together." And with her merry blue eyes and pretty face photographed on his mind and her farewell greetings ringing in his ears, he turned from thoughts of love and wooing to more mundane and sterner things.

On a cold November morning, the *Queen's County*, with a hold packed with drums and casks of dried cod-fish and a deck-load of spruce lumber filling the space between fo'c'sle head and poop-break, towed out of Eastville Harbor and to sea. A couple of miles offshore, the tug cast them off and the brig swung south for warmer climes, with her crew crowding the canvas on her. It was a very happy Donald that paced her weather alley that night, smoking and musing. As *Mister* McKenzie, second mate of a beautiful little clipper brig, he was standing his watch in charge of the ship, and he kept an eye on the weather-leach of the straining t'gallan's'ls, and thought of his mother, his home on the hill, and Ruth.

"Eighteen years of age and keeping a home of my own, and with the dear old Mater comfortably settled in it, and me, second mate of this fine little packet! Donald Percival McKenzie—you're a very lucky boy! And, maybe, if you watch yourself, and play your cards right, you'll win the dearest and loveliest.... Um-um!" He smiled happily to himself and sensing a flap aloft of the t'gallan's'l leach, he turned to shout to the wheelsman, "No higher, Jack! You're shaking her!"

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN



**D**ONALD McKenzie celebrated two noteworthy events in Havana, Cuba. One was his twenty-first birthday, and the other was the successful completion of his first voyage as master of a vessel. She wasn't a very big vessel—being but a fishing schooner of 99 tons—but still she was a vessel and required as much skill in sailing and navigating as a craft ten times her size. Judson Nickerson, in the brig *Queen's County*, had arrived in Matanzas a couple of days before McKenzie attained his majority, and he journeyed the forty miles or so to Havana to help his friend celebrate the occasion.

McKenzie, a man grown, tall, lithe and sinewy, sea-tanned and good looking, and dressed in white ducks and a Panama hat, met his former skipper in the rotunda of the Hotel Sevilla. "Waal, by Jupiter!" cried Nickerson, wringing his hand. "You got daown here anyways, an' you ain't pushed any of th' Bahamas off th' charts in gittin' here, have you? And you're twenty-one, eh? Lord Harry, Donny-boy, you make me feel old—"

"Yes, you look old, you ancient crock!" laughed the other, staring at his friend critically. Judson had lost some of his ranginess, his angularities had filled out, and his sharp face had smoothed and rounded, until he looked younger than ever he did in *Kelvinhaugh* days. "Why you're only a mere fifteen-year jump ahead of me, and since you've been living a quiet, settled life for the past four years, the lines of dissipation have faded—"

"The lines of starvation, you mean," cried the other. "Since I left your hard-feeding Scotch ships an' got home into Bluenosers again, I've gained weight, and so have you, let me tell you. Where do we celebrate?"

"Right here, old timer," answered Donald. "I've got a meal ordered that will make your mouth water, and with everything to drink from *pina frias* to planter's punch." And they entered the cool, high-ceilinged dining room and sat down at a table by the *patio*.

"I suppose you'll try to go afishin' in that ol' hooker of yours this spring," queried Judson. "You should do all right. You know the ropes naow an' ye've done two seasons in the dory with me. Will Heneker give you the *Alameda* for a fishin' trip this spring, d'ye think?"

McKenzie pursed his lips. "I'm not sure, Jud. You see I offered to take her down here with a load of salt fish when Tom Himmelman took sick, as you know, and I didn't get a chance to broach the subject. I was glad of the opportunity to skipper a vessel, and I didn't ask for too much. But when I get home I'll ask Heneker to give me a chance as skipper afishing, and if I take good care of the old *Alameda* he might give me charge of her or another of his hookers. Fishing is the only game to make money in. There isn't much in this freighting work, but it's a good way to pass the winter and earn a dollar or two. Do you know, you old fox, I think you had a hand in getting me this command?"

Captain Nickerson gave an enigmatical smile. "Skipper of a double-trawl dory is better than being mate of the finest wind-jammer afloat. You're boss anyway—no matter the size. You 'member the old yarn 'bout the big P. and O. liner going out of London River? Her mate, brass-bound to the eyes, was standing in the bows when an old barge sculled across the river in front of the liner an' th' mate had to signal to the bridge to slow the engines to prevent a collision. Then he opens up on the bargee. 'You blankety-blank scowbanker!' he bawls. 'What in Tophet d'ye mean by scullin' yer old punt 'cros'th' bows of a liner carryin' Her Majesty's mails an' a thousan' passengers?' The bargee shoots a squirt of tobacco juice over th' liner's stem as he sculls past, and he looks up at th' brass-bound mate with all of a London bargee's contempt for a deep waterman. 'Oo th' 'ell are you aboard that 'ooker?' he shouts. 'I'm the chief officer of this packet!' answers the mate. Mister Bargee spits again and retorts, 'Well, Mister Chief H'officer,' he says, 'I'm captin' of this 'ere barge, so you'd better go'n talk to yer equals, you brass-bound bridge monkey!'"

The guffaws of the two sailors at this hoary old joke caused the tourists at adjacent tables to look questioningly in their direction.

Working through the dinner from soup to fruit, the two skippers passed a jovial couple of hours, and when the punch came along, Judson filled his glass. "Here's to you, old son," he said. "Twenty-one years of age an' master of a vessel. Not too bad, boy! Not too bad! Here's hoping that the next time I drink your health it will be at your wedding. Salut!" McKenzie acknowledged the toast with a smile. "And you, Jud? Here's hoping I'll have a similar pleasure, and I hope it will be soon. Bye-the-way, have you heard from Helena this time?"

The other reddened a little under his tan. "Yes, I got a note from her at Matanzas," he said slowly, and then he added, "You know, we seafarin' men are at a disadvantage. These pretty and popular girls have a swarm of shore-hawks dancin' araound them all th' time, while we poor devils only get an evening with them two or three times a year. Helena has a bunch of admirers in Halifax—there was two fellers visitin' her the last time I went to call on her—an' darned if I could get a word in edgewise. They gushed about hockey matches, dances, teas and theayters, an' I had to sit an' listen to their bunk an' amuse myself tryin' to figure aout th' price of fish, until I sat the blighters aout an' got a few minutes alone with her 'bout midnight. Durned if I know whether she likes me or not."

Donald sighed sympathetically. His experiences were of a similar nature. He, too, had dallied precious hours waiting rare minutes of tête-à-tête with Ruth, but four years of persistent wooing seemed to have been rather futile, and he was in a state of maddening uncertainty as to his standing with the girl of his desire. He never talked to Judson about his fondness for Ruth, and the latter never mentioned the subject to him. Oftentimes he wished he could make a confidant of the brother, but as the other had never broached the subject, Donald hesitated to open it with him. From Jud, however, he got scraps of news, but they were not calculated to make him happy. "Th' nut was daown home, I h'ard," or "Ruth spent th' holiday with th' Moodeys," was the general drift of his informative remarks and they made McKenzie writhe inwardly.

Ruth wrote him often, but they were merely friendly letters, commencing "Dear Donald," and ending with "yours sincerely." Donald took his cue from these, and no matter how much he hungered to subscribe himself as "yours affectionately," or "yours lovingly," he had to wait for time and opportunity to earn the right, and time and opportunity in a sailor's wooing, is long acoming. Evidently Judson was in the same box, but Judson was in a better situation than McKenzie. Nickerson had money saved and could afford to keep a wife and a comfortable home; Donald had his mother to support and had nothing but a couple of hundred dollars to windward of him. Give him two years as skipper of a fishing vessel and he might, with luck, scratch up enough to keep a home with a wife and his mother, but when he thought of Ruth as the wife, the prospects looked black. Moodey paid her a great deal of attention; Moodey's people had money, and he, himself, had secured his LL.B., and was now a junior member of his father's law firm. Walter was away with a flying start on the road to success; McKenzie was but a common vessel fisherman, and skipper for a West Indian voyage, of a small schooner carrying dried fish.

They finished dinner and strolled down through the palms of the Prado to the Miramar on the Malecon or marine promenade. It was a glorious evening, and the cool sea breeze was coming in from the Gulf of Mexico with the setting of the sun, while a regimental band was playing for the entertainment of the Cubans and

Americans who lounged around on the seats, or strolled leisurely along the sea-wall.

"Let's sit down here and watch the sun set," suggested Donald, leading the way to a seat. "My artistic eye is taken by the view from here. Isn't it glorious? I must invest in a pad of paper and a box of water-colors and do some sketching. I've got a chance now."

The sea stretched like a huge mirror of ruddy gold before them, and the sun was going down behind the placid Gulf a huge red ball already eclipsed by the horizon. The windows of the residences on the Malecon gleamed as though a furnace flamed within their walls, and the rocks of old Morro's headland stood out like rough cast copper in the glow. The light-house tower, the ponderous masonry of Morro Fort and of Cabanas behind, stood placidly reflected in the fading light—calm and hoary as with the dignity of age, and when one gazed upon their rugged walls and heard the rag-time strains of the American band, a strange sense of incongruity took possession of the soul. Here, embodied in those massy bastions, was history—monumental testimony to the glory of old Spain, of the Conquistadores, of buccaneers and sea-rovers, of Columbus, Drake, Morgan and the hosts of reckless seafaring adventurers who had made these waters their cruising ground. From here, De Soto—the Bayard of Spanish chivalry—journeyed to Florida to seek a new El Dorado greater than Mexico or Peru, and left his noble wife, Isabella d'Avila, to hold La Fuerza as Regent of Cuba until his return. For five years she waited for her husband's coming and kept the prowling sea wolves away from the treasures collected yearly in her stronghold for shipment to Spain. Then came the news of her husband's death and burial in the turgid waters of the great river which he discovered—the Mississippi—and she surrendered her post to join him three days after the ill news was brought to her.

And in the brave days of old what sights old Morro saw! Slave-ships gliding in from the Guinea Coast, with the sea breeze behind and their ghastly freights below; privateers, adventurers, pirates and simple merchantmen! Plate ships from Panama with the treasures of the Incas in their holds, and galleons and carracks from Vera Cruz, with a lading of the silver of Mexico, slipped in and out of this storied harbor—*Llave del Nuevo Mundo*—as the Spaniards called it—"The Key to the New World!"

As he mused on these things, McKenzie thought of the prosaic age he lived in and the change wrought by the years. The dark and narrow streets with their grilled windows through which dusky *senoritas* in days long gone, watched the passers-by or flirted with *caballero* and *hidalgo* of Spain, were aglare with electric lights, and the streetcars gonged their noisy way down the stone-paved *calles*; the *avenidas* were thronged, not with promenaders in *sombreros*, black coats, and lace *mantillas*, but with smartly dressed men and women who spoke Spanish with an American accent, or English with a Spanish accent; with peddlers selling cheap cigars and cigarettes, and newsboys yelling "*El Diario!*" ... "*El Mundo!*" ... "*Havana Post!*" and "*New York American!*" and soliciting bilingually with easy transition from Spanish to English, and above the hum of conversation and street noises, blared the American band, playing, not the dreamy airs of far-off Castille, which Old Havana knew in thrumming guitars, but the latest Broadway "rag-time" or march of Sousa. And he, McKenzie, how had he come to storied Havana? Not in galleon, carrack, privateersman or slaver brig, but in a little Nova Scotia soft-wood schooner, with a load of dry salted cod-fish!

He sighed and came to a mental conclusion. Romance was in the past. It did not belong to the present; it was always in the past, and memory was like unto a skilful painter who touched up the drab canvases of reality with the colors of glamor long after the picture was made!

The sun had vanished behind the quiet sea and the stars had swarmed into the velvety azure of the firmament upon the heels of the master orb, whose after-glow still flamed above the western horizon. A fishing vessel crept in from the Keys on the breath of the soft north-east trade wind and her crew were chanting an old Biscayan chorus, while a big steamer ablaze with lights forged out with passengers and cargo on schedule time, to connect with the trains at Key West, ninety miles away. Donald drank in the beauties of the night, and remarked to his companion, "This Cuba is a beautiful country, Jud, and I could sit for hours just dreaming and looking on this sort of thing. Look at those palms with their feathery fronds; that sunset! Oh, to be a master painter or a poet that I might dilate upon the things I see!"

"Yes, it's very fine," grudgingly admitted Judson, "but I don't know as it can beat daown home for scenery. These tropical countries have lots of color in them—the flowers are gaudy and the palms and herbage are very green, but look how coarse they are. Then again, these places are all hell-holes for heat. You sweat all the time, and you're pestered with flies and bugs of every variety. No, siree, I prefer Nova Scotia. I've bin all over th' world, and I think Eastville has them all skinned for looks an' climate. When a mosquito bites you Down-east you don't die of yellow jack like you used to in these ports. This here Havana, until the Yankees cleaned it and drained it, used to be a sailor's grave-yard." He paused and lit up a cigar. "Tell me, now that you're twenty-one an' skipper of a hooker, tell me, what you think of a seafaring life now? You came aboard that *Kelvinhaugh* full up to the back teeth with the romance and adventure of it, but have you found it? Do you really like the life?" And he looked quizzically at McKenzie through the cigar smoke.

The other stared for a while at the ruddy glow of the sunset to the westward, and answered slowly, "Have I found romance and adventure in a sea life? I'll answer that in a peculiar way. On the *Kelvinhaugh* my ideals were shattered and I hated it all, and I was glad to run away from her in Vancouver. On the voyage to Halifax in the *Starbuck* I was indifferent. It was intensely monotonous and the adventurous spells were only occasional, like the time we ran the easting down the Horn. But, now, when I look back on these voyages, it gives me a thrill and I see the adventure and romance of them, but it is only by recollection, and not in the actual experience, that I appreciate these things. But in the fisheries, I have found the true and ever-present fascination of seafaring. We're taking something out of the ocean in that game; we're dodging the wind and weather with only one objective—that of getting fish. We don't know what we're going to get. It's a gamble, pure and simple, but there is a glamor and hazard in wresting the spoils of the deep from the deep, which does not exist in the other branches of seafaring, where one is paid a wage to sail a vessel from one port to another and keep her in good condition while on the journey. In fishing, we are in closer intimacy with the ocean and all its moods. We brave it in small, but able vessels with men whom we work with as partners, and



we work *in* it, rather than *on* it. We know it as the merchant seaman cannot know it, for we know the floor of the ocean, while the other seamen only see the surface. To them, the sea is a waste of salt water. To us it is an element which we regard as an opaque mass which hides that which we seek and we are forever penetrating its secrets. We know the currents below; we know the depth of water on our Banks; we know what the bottom is like—rocks, gravel, mud or sand, and we try to figure out the migrations of the fish which travel over these bottoms in the gloom of the light-defying fathoms. We lay our lines over the sea floor always hopefully and we're always looking forward to a catch. When the fish are striking it is dollars in our pockets and we're robbing old ocean's horde; when they're not striking, we look forward optimistically to another day's looting. Monotony, the drawback in seafaring, has thus no place in fishing. We are keener observers of the weather and thus become closer students of natural phenomena; we work hard, but we live well and sleep in comfortable quarters; we sail in craft of yacht-like build, and we enjoy the sport of sailing as no yachtsman can; and best of all, we are free and independent men banded together for a common purpose and obeying our leader without force or coercion. Seafaring under those conditions appeals to me. I am content. I desire no other vocation for gaining a livelihood, for it gives me money for my material needs, and enough of adventure, romance and the element of chance to satisfy my mind and soul. So there you have it."

Nickerson smiled. "You've expressed it pretty well," he remarked, "and I cal'late you've recorded my ideas on the subject also. We fishermen are the true Sea Kings. Your merchantman is only a ship laborer—nothing more and nothing less. I learnt that, and I went back to the fishing. The merchant seaman looks upon us with contempt; the landsman, with pity for our hard lot, and we laugh at the both of them. They are fools! They don't know—they can't know, for we are a fraternity—a lodge intricate and hard for the stranger to enter, for our initiation is difficult and not easily acquired. We are the finest sailors afloat, and we harvest Neptune's pastures when his watch-dog, Boreas, sleeps. When we want a change, we come droghing fish and deals to the Indies or the Brazils and live in perpetual summer."

Donald laughed. "Judson, you are developing a wonderful faculty for moralizing. I like your phrase 'we harvest Neptune's pastures when his watch-dog Boreas sleeps!' That's a motto for a fisherman. It should be painted on the wheel-box like the 'Don't give up the ship's' and 'England expects,' which they carve in the poop-breaks of British and American men-o-war."

McKenzie accompanied his old ship-mate to the station, where he took train for Matanzas again. "So long, Donny-boy," cried Judson as they pulled out. "I'll see you in Eastville unless our courses cross. I'm loading molasses an' I'll be getting away in a day or so. I'll tell your mother I saw you here an' helped you to celebrate your twenty-first birthday—"

"You'll tell my mother will you?" shouted the other with a grin. "Not if the *Alameda* has a rag of canvas on her. I'll be home a fortnight before your old square-rig hooker sights Cape Sable."

Early next morning the *Alameda* slipped out of Havana and ran south-east down the Cuban coast to the Turks or Caicos Islands—there to load a cargo of salt for fishery use. At Salt Cay, they came to an anchor and filled up the schooner's hold with a cargo of the evaporated sea-water salt, which is the principal manufacture of the inhabitants of these easterly atolls of the Bahama group. When a full lading of the saline crystals was secured, the crew of six hands hoisted sails and anchor and with the steady trades filling their canvas they bowled off for Eastville and home.

"I'd like to make a fast run up," said McKenzie to McGlashan. "It has been done in seven days, but I don't think this old hooker can stand the driving and travel like those new model Lunenburg vessels. However, we'll try her."

With the Bahama current behind them and the steady north-east trade blowing strong, the *Alameda* showed her heels and ploughed through the deep blue of the tropical sea at a ten-knot clip. McKenzie paced the quarter, luxuriating in the bright sunshine and watching the flying-fish, which every now and again skittered up from the sapphire water as the on-rushing schooner drove upon them. Blue skies and bluer seas; water that boiled and hissed like champagne in the furrows of the vessel's passage, and foam that gleamed snow-white against the deep colors of the Main; flashes of low sandy islets with graceful tufted palms leaning to loo'ard as the constant trade wind rudely swayed them.... Truly, these were enchanting seas! Little wonder, he mused, that the old sea-dogs of northern climes sought these waters and plied their nefarious occupations until Port Royal gallews and cruising frigates made the "trade" no longer safe or profitable. Aye, aye, no wonder the old buccaneer would lament the pleasant times in pleasant weather in—

"The pleasant Isle of Aves,  
Beside the Spanish Main."

For five days they ran thus and McKenzie lazied the hours away—reading and basking in genial sunshine and taking three sextant squints daily to fix the schooner's position. Then they crossed the Gulf Stream and the chill breath of February struck them just as suddenly as the sea changed from blue to green at the fringes of the great current. Off came the light clothing of summer weather, and on went the heavy underwear, sweaters, sea-boots, mittens and caps of frigid seafaring, and a fire was kindled in the cabin stove to unlimber stiffened fingers and toes.

On February 20th, they made to the eastward of Brown's Bank, and the fair wind which had hurried them along, flickered away and left them rolling, with slatting sails and banging booms, in a heavy swell from the S.E. The sky was solid with stratas of leaden cloud, which ran in layers from nadir to zenith, and the air was chill and cold. McKenzie studied the barometer anxiously—tapping the glass every reading to flog the forecasts of the instrument, which was steadily going down. Archie Surette—an old fisherman—read the signs. "We're agoin' to git some dirt, Skipper," he remarked. "Awful pink sunrise this mornin' and there ain't no gulls araound. This swell comin' up from th' south-east ... a south-easter, sure."

McKenzie laughed. "That's a fair wind for home, Archie," he said. "Better get her snugged down though. Call the boys and we'll get the jib in the tricing jacket and the mains'l reefed before it hits us."

At noon, the glass had dropped to 29-5 and still going down. A misty rain began to fall, and within half an hour of its coming, the wind came in a squall from the southeast which drove the *Alameda* down to her rail with the violence of its initial onslaught. When it eased off and the schooner was tearing along towards the Nova Scotia coast, McKenzie ran below to squint at the barometer. "Dropped another tenth," he muttered anxiously. He laid a chart out on the locker and with the dividers commenced measuring the distance from the vessel's present position to the nearest harbor. For a minute he sat thinking, and then he rolled up the sea map and threw it into his bunk. "Can't make it," he muttered. "This blow will be on us full force within an hour, and we'd be safer offshore than running in on the land in a gale of wind and snow."

Buttoning up his oilskins, he pulled on his mittens and went on deck. Though it was shortly after noon, the sky was dark and the rain was coming down in sheets, and the wind was blowing in gusts which careened the vessel to her rails as they struck the canvas.

Taking the wheel, he spoke to the helmsman. "Go for'ard Jim, an' call the boys. Tell the cook to oil up and come on deck. We'll get the mains'l off her." And the man scrambled forward to do his bidding with feelings of relief. When the big mainsail is down, fishermen feel that they are in trim for anything.

Taking in the mainsail with a full gang of fishermen, and taking it in, in squally winter weather, with only six men to subdue the thrashing canvas, are two different propositions. When the men mustered aft, McKenzie gave his orders. "Joak will lower away on the peak, and Jim will lower away the throat when I sing out. You, Archie, will ship the crotch and hook in the tackles when Wesley lowers away on the topping lift. Ainslie will stand by the gaff down-haul, and I'll look after the wheel. We'll get the mainsheet in first. Are you ready?"

It was blowing harder every minute, and the schooner, by the wind, was plunging and rearing in an ugly cross sea kicked up by the shifting of the squalls to the eastward. The rain was turning into sleet, which cut the skin and numbed the hands with its bitterness and velocity, and which adhered to the gear and froze in the lowering temperature. Donald watched his chance, and in the wake of a violent blast, he rolled the wheel down easily and roared, "Helm's a lee! Mainsheet!" For five minutes, the *Alameda's* quarter was a scene of frenzied action. As the vessel came up, the mainsheet was yanked in by all hands, and then the men ran to the stations. As the schooner rounded into the wind, sails slatting and sheet blocks banging and jangling, McKenzie slipped the wheel in the becket, and held the crotch plank while Surrette hooked the crotch tackle into the ring bolts and hove it taut. The big sixty-foot boom was now amidships, and when it steadied above the crotch, McKenzie roared, "Lower away y'r lift!" And when Wesley Sanders slacked off on the tackle fall, the boom dropped on to the crotch notch; port and starboard crotch tackles already hooked in were hauled taut and belayed, and the order came, "Settle away yer halliards!"

The schooner, plunging and rearing, bows-on to the seas, was threatening to fall off with the wind in foresail and jumbo. "Let yer halliards go by the run!" shouted the skipper, springing to assist the two men tugging at the gaff-downhaul. "And bear a hand here you other fellows!" Joak and Jim at the pin-rail let the halliards go and scrambled aft to lend their strength and beef at the downhaul—wrenching and jerking with the vicious slats of the bellying mainsail, which, half way down the mast, was prevented from coming down further by the wind which filled the canvas.

As all hands struggled with the hauling down rope, a big sea rose above the quarter, roaring with a white-capped crest and curling ready to break. McKenzie saw it. "Belay yer downhaul," he yelled, "and hang on!" The words were hardly out of his mouth before it broke aboard. The schooner rolled down to its impact, and the men hanging on to the downhaul were enveloped in solid green and washed over the main-boom and into the belly of the mainsail, which, with the force and weight of the water in it, was driven over the low rail and into the sea. Struggling for foot-hold on the slippery canvas and totally submerged in water as the schooner rolled to leeward, McKenzie and the four men with him would have been drowned had not Surrette, who had hung on to the crotch-tackles when the sea struck, jumped up on the cabin house and thrown a rope down to the yelling, oilskinned humans struggling and clawing to get out of the deadly water-filled sail.

As soon as he recovered his breath, McKenzie, with no time to thank Providence for his escape, or to contemplate the horrors of those suffocating minutes over-side, sprung to the wheel and swung the vessel off before the wind. "Get the fore-boom tackle hooked in," he gasped. "I'll jibe her and get that mains'l inboard!" As he rolled the wheel over, the *Alameda* slowly payed off. "Watch yerselves when she comes-to!" he cried in warning, and he stared anxiously at the little knot of men standing amidships by the fore-sheet. The wind was blowing with gale force by now and the sea was running in roaring combers, and the air was white with spray and sleet. For a minute the schooner raced over the waves with the wind aft, and on the declivity of a huge crest, Donald rolled the helm up and the foresail came sweeping over like the flick of a whip—fetching up on the jibing-tackle with such force as to snap the strong iron shackle of the block and to bend the stout boom like a bow. The fore-sheet held, however, and as the schooner came to the wind on the other tack, the men leaped into the main-rigging just as another sea boarded her amidships, and wrenching the staysail-box from off the booby-hatch, carried it over the rail.

McKenzie gave a grim smile. "Heneker won't be pleased with this day's work," he murmured. "And this is only the beginning." By this time, the mainsail had collapsed and the men were down from the rigging and tugging on the wet canvas. "Ef that there downhaul had parted while you fellers were in the belly o' that mains'l overside, I cal'late ye'd ha' bin in Heaven 'r Hell by this time!" observed Surrette. And the others grinned and thought no more about it.

Hove-to under foresail and jumbo and with the wheel lashed, McKenzie and his five men tugged and hauled the heavy wet mainsail aboard. Then commenced the big job of furling it—a herculean task, at which every man had to exert all the strength that was in him to roll the sodden, frozen canvas up and on to the boom. As

he pulled and jerked and hefted the weighty roll of canvas on his back in order that the stops could be passed, Donald thought of similar tasks “down under” off the pitch of the Horn in the *Kelvinhaugh*. No need to go to fifty-five south for strenuous seafaring, he thought. It could be experienced in all its terrors right off the Nova Scotia coast in wintertime, and this was a sample of it.

It took them an hour to get the mainsail stowed, and when it was done, Joak staggered away to his galley—cursing the folly that made a cook a sailor. “A cook aye gets the worst of it,” he growled to himself. “They never want ye on deck but when it’s blawin’ a ruddy gale, and then ye get it butt-end first. I wisht I was back in a guid steamer’s galley whaur ye have nane o’ this murderin’ deck wurrk!” Joak was a true sea-cook, however, and in spite of the awful rolling and tumbling of the vessel, he had his oilskins off, his apron on, and good meal under way—gale or no gale. And the chilled and hungry humans of the *Alameda* wolfed his hot concoctions and blessed him wholeheartedly.

Throughout the short winter afternoon, they rode the gale under foresail and jumbo, with the wheel lashed and two men on deck to keep a watch. The wind was steadily increasing, and blowing in such terrific squalls from the N.N.E. that the schooner would be pressed lee-rail under during their violence. At tea-time, they stowed the jumbo to make the vessel lie easier, and McKenzie noted by the still falling barometer that the worst was yet to come.

With the darkness came conditions bad enough to frighten capable seamen. A terrible sea—stupendous in the height of the waves and the whitewater which crowned them—raced roaring through the livid night and tossed the schooner about like a cork. The wind, at times, blew in such terrific squalls as to heel the vessel down until half her deck was submerged and the watch had to hang, limpetlike, to the gear to avoid being blown overboard. Nothing born of woman could look to windward in those blasts, and the air was so full of spray as to fill the mouth with salt saliva in the breathing of it. The side-lights could not be kept alight, and a kerosene torch, which they had lit and placed inside a dory to shine against the foresail, was repeatedly doused by the sprays which drenched the schooner. “You’ll just have to keep torches handy inside the cabin gang-way to show a light in case another vessel’s bearing down,” said Donald, after an attempt to keep a riding-light lit on the peak halliards failed. Lightless, they plunged and rolled and prayed that the *Alameda* would cross no liner’s path that night.

At midnight the glass was down to 28.6 and pumping in rapid jerks, and McKenzie called Surrette’s attention to it. “Did you ever see that before, Archie?” he asked, hanging on to a weather bunk partition to save himself from sliding to leeward. The fisherman stared at the barometer, bit off a chew, and grinned. “Look’s if th’ gaul-derned thing was agoin’ to jibe, Skipper!” he remarked, and Donald laughed at the simile. The quivering of the needle suggested the premonitory symptoms of a sail about to swing over. He sat down on the cabin floor—it was impossible to stand or sit comfortably—and filled a pipe of tobacco. He had just taken a couple of puffs when the cabin slide was shoved back and Wesley shouted, “Gittin’ worse, Skipper, and snow’s thicker’n ever. Thought I h’ard a steamer blowin’—”

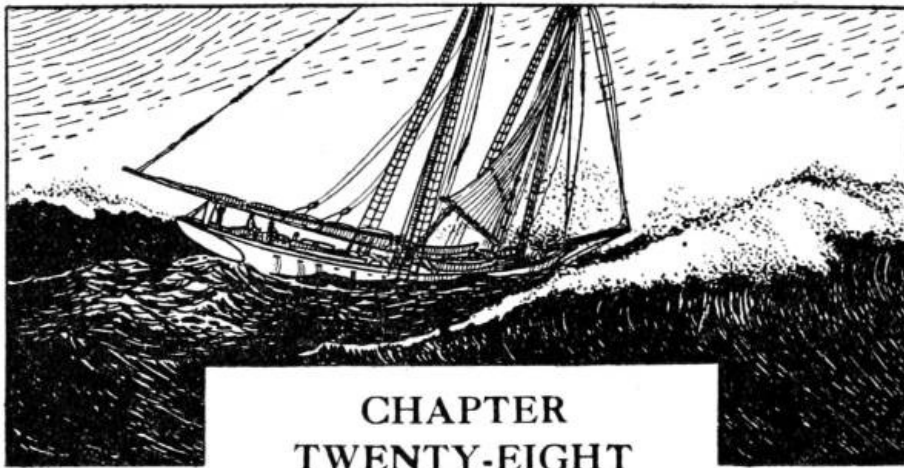
McKenzie was on his feet and up the steps in a trice. Clutching the spokes of the lashed wheel he listened with straining ears, and amidst the howl of the wind and the thunder of the sea he heard a regular note which betokened the blast of a steamer’s whistle. “Call the crowd, Wesley, and tell Jim to light the torches in the gangway—” He had barely shouted the words when the faint mast-head light of a large steamer blinked in the blackness to windward. A flicker of red and green showed below and McKenzie knew that the vessel was heading right square for them. Casting off the wheel lashing, he almost screamed, “Stand by yer fore-sheet! We’ll have to swing off!”

With fearful recollections of the *Livadia* accident in his mind, he watched the nearing lights and spoked the wheel over. Someone was easing off the sheet of the foresail and the vessel was swinging off. Then she gathered way and slipped out from under the roaring bows of the monster driving through the night. It was a big ship—a liner of ten or fifteen thousand tons—and she towered above them as she forged past, bellowing stentorously and rolling ponderously. The black smoke from her belching funnels whirled pungent and bituminous to McKenzie’s nostrils as she vanished into the blackness—a memory of rows of blazing port-holes and swinging fabric.

The *Alameda* tore through the dark with a huge wave chasing her astern, and waiting but a faltering hand at the wheel to overwhelm and destroy the gallant little craft. McKenzie was a master helmsman, however, and when the steamer passed, he shouted to Surrette beside him, “We’ll come-to again. Go for’ad and tell the boys to sheet in the fores’l when I put the wheel down!” Watching his chance in a smooth between two seas, he gave a shout and eased the spokes over while the crew amidships tugged the boom inboard and belayed. The steamer was but an incident—a common hazard nevertheless on the Banks—and they were hove-to once more.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT



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**I**T was two in the morning, and McKenzie, keeping a watch by standing inside the cabin gang-way with his head and shoulders above the slide, noticed that the foresail was too much for the vessel in the hurricane squalls then blowing. To Wesley Sanders, standing on the cabin house hanging on to the main-boom, he bawled, "Go'n call the boys. We'll have to reef that fores'1!"

Sanders clawed his way forward in the darkness and Donald waited for the men to muster aft. As they peered at the huge seas rushing to loo'ard and felt the terrific force of the wind, they realized that it was time to clip the *Alameda's* wings, for if they didn't reef the sail, either mast or sail would go and they would be in a nasty mess. Never, in his years at sea, had he ever seen such a gale, nor had old Archie or any of the others. It was an awe-inspiring sight—something to put fear in the heart of the boldest, and McKenzie admitted to himself that he was nervous, but not afraid. He was constrained to marvel at the Providence which kept them comparatively safe up to the present in this tremendous broil of wind-thrashed water—this war of elemental Titans in the midst of whom the schooner was tossed like a chip. As he waited for the men to report aft, he thought of some verses about the Gloucester fishermen in the big gale of 1879.

"Oh, the black, black night on Georges,  
When eight-score men were lost!  
Were you there, ye men of Gloucester?  
Aye, ye were there, and tossed  
Like chips upon the water  
Were your little craft that night,  
Driving, swearing, calling,  
But ne'er a call of fright."....

He thought it must have been a night just like this one, but the vessels in those days were not the able, well-ballasted craft of his time. It had been blowing like the devil for some hours now and a hell's own sea was running, but so secure did the crowd feel that those off duty could sleep peacefully in their rocking bunks with implicit trust in the seaworthiness of the vessel and the skill of him who commanded her.

Moving figures in the gloom for'ard showed that the four men from the forecabin were coming aft with Sanders, and Donald scrambled out of the cabin gang-way and hauled the slide shut. As he leaped out on top of the cabin house, a violent blast of wind struck the schooner and he grasped the gaff-bridles to save himself from being hurled overboard as the vessel rolled down. The squall kept her pressed lee-rail under for fully a minute, during which time McKenzie and the others could do nothing but hang on to the main-boom and the gear around the mast until its fury was expended.

Slowly, very slowly, the vessel came up as the sail eased off, and the water poured over the lee rail. Then Saunders gave a frightened shout, "Watch aout!" McKenzie peered quickly under his arm to windward in time to see a huge wall of water piling up with a roaring crest, livid in the blackness of the night. It was a "boarder"—he saw that—and he swung himself on the lashed gaff and scrambled up the peak halliards as fast as he could go. He was climbing when the sea struck, and the shock of its onslaught hove the *Alameda* down until her masts were level with the water. McKenzie was almost hurled from the halliards he was climbing, and when the schooner rolled down he found his feet trailing in the sea and his body at right angles to the masts—outlined in the gloom by the frozen sleet adhering to them.

Clutching desperately at the halliards, he waited for the vessel to come up and wondering how the others fared, and if the hull was damaged. She lifted a little, but would come up no further. This time she was hove-down on her beam ends. "Cargo's shifted!" muttered McKenzie, and he scrambled down to the gaff again with half his body dragging through seething sea. Crawling over the boom with fingers numb and frozen and the chill sleet melting and running down his neck, he made the weather side of the house and clawed his way along to the main-mast, where men were standing hanging on to the gear and working at something. In the darkness it was impossible to discern anything distinctly, save by the film of frozen sleet which outlined objects. Also, nothing could be heard above the thunder of wind and sea. As McKenzie slid down the slanting decks to the mast to see if all hands were safe and the condition of the foresail, Surette bawled in his ear, "Main-boom's out of the saddle, Skipper, an' Wesley's jammed in it—!"

With a grim foreboding in his heart, Donald felt and stared around the after-side of the mast until he made out the oilskinned figure of Sanders lying head down to leeward. He was writhing and twisting and crying

out, and his right leg was jammed against the mast by the jaws of the unshipped main-boom. At every roll of the beam-ended schooner in the sea-way, the man's head and shoulders were submerged and he was screaming, "For th' love o' Christ set me free! Get my leg clear! Oh, God! It's killin' me!" His cries could be heard above the noises of the gale.

"Let's have a pump-handle!" bawled McKenzie quickly—horror-struck at the man's plight. "Get a fluke-bar—anything.... God's sake don't let him suffer like that! Get down and hold his head clear of the water, you Archie!"

With four of them tugging and straining on a pump-brake, they failed to lever the boom-jaws clear. When the vessel rolled, the great sixty-five foot spar swayed and ground against the captive limb and Wesley screamed with the frightful agony of it. "Oh, God!" he shrieked, and his shouts would be stifled by the seas which washed over them from time to time. "Cut my leg away! Cut it away! Holy Mother! I can't stand it! I can't stand it!"

Surette was hanging to loo'ard with one arm around the fife-rail and the other supporting Sanders to keep his head clear of the water. He was trying to soothe the agonized man. "Hold a minute, Wesley-boy, we'll git ye adrift in a minute! Keep cool, my son, ye'll soon be alright!" But, eventually, Nature did what Surette couldn't do, and Sanders mercifully fainted.

Every grind of the boom-jaws against the man's leg wrung Donald's sensitive heart. He saw that all efforts to budge the heavy boom by levering it away were of no avail. "Get me an ax!" he yelled, panting and perspiring and with the blood running cold within him at the terror of it all. When the axe was handed to him, Joak whimpered, "Ye're no goin' tae cut his leg aff, are ye, Donal'?"

"Leg? Hell!" snapped the skipper. "Stand clear! I'm going to chop through the boom!" And he swung the keen blade into the wood until he had severed the jaws and Wesley was released.

"God's truth, that was awful!" he panted. "Get him down in the cabin and place him in a lee bunk. His leg must be crushed to a pulp." Staggering along the deck with the groaning man and deluged with spray and solid water, they reached the gangway and managed to get Sanders into the cabin. They placed him tenderly in a bunk in the darkness and scrambled on deck again for still more strenuous work.

The *Alameda* was lying on her beam-ends in the trough of the sea and the waves were making a complete breach over her. "Slack away the fore-sheet!" shouted McKenzie calmly. "And if that don't lift her, we'll try and haul the sail off her!" A half an hour's desperate work on the part of the five men failed to bring the schooner up, and Donald realized there was only one other thing to do. "Get me your axe again, Joak," he shouted, and when it was brought to him he slid down into the water to leeward and hacked the lanyards of the main-shrouds. Crawling up to windward, he bawled to Surette, "Cast off your main-sheet and crotch-tackles! I'm going to cut away the main-mast!" And when this was done, he waited a moment when the vessel rolled to leeward and swung his axe into the taut weather lanyards. With a twang of the spring-stay as it parted, the big spar went by the board and into the sea.

Relieved of the main-mast and with the foresail down, the schooner slowly came up from her beam-end position, but wallowed in the trough with her decks listed to port. The foremast, with nothing to stay it aft, was reeling precariously in the step and threatened to topple over the side until McKenzie and Surette clawed their way aloft and stayed it with two lengths of three-inch halliard which they carried to the gypsy-winch and hove taut.

When this work was done, they double reefed the foresail and set it, and Donald sent Ainslie Williams to the wheel. "We'll jibe her over on the other tack and get to work on that salt which has shifted up inside her port top-sides. It'll shift back some when we put her over.... Lash yourself to the box, then let her run off for a spell and watch for a lull and a smooth before you put the helm up on her!" And he and the three others stood by a jibing tackle which they rigged to ease the fore-boom over.

Under sail again, the schooner ran before the wind and sea, and then Ainslie shouted and put the wheel over. Bang! The foreboom whipped from port to starboard with a jarring shock which caused the stout halliard backstays to stretch and McKenzie to glance anxiously at the mast.

"She's alright," he ejaculated grimly, and he was about to make a leap for the fore-rigging as the schooner came up, when another big sea piled over the stern and, catching him in its terrific onrush, drove him with sickening force into the fore pin-rail. For almost half a minute he was under water, and when he emerged dazed, sputtering and gasping, it was to find Surette washing about in the water, which seemed to fill her decks from stem to stern.

Hauling the old fisherman to his feet, McKenzie found him unconscious from a blow on the head, but, sensing from the slatting of the foresail, that the wheel was deserted, he propped the man against a splintered dory and ran aft to find nobody at the spokes. Before he could swing the wheel down, the foresail jibed, and the sail split from head to foot and was soon a rectangle of slatting rags.

Joak and Jim from out of the darkness appeared aft. "Where's Ainslie?" bawled Donald. "God Almighty, but this is one hell of a night! Go for'ad, you fellows, and get Surette into the cabin. He's lying stunned against a dory!" And he slipped the wheel into the becket lashed hard down, and searched the lee quarter for the missing Ainslie with a chill dread gripping his heart. When the other two brought Surette aft, Donald met them. "Ainslie's gone!" he said huskily. "God be good to him!"

With the schooner lying broad in the sea, they went below, and McKenzie lit the lamps and went over to examine Wesley, who was lying where they had left him. Cutting the clothing away from the injured limb, Donald found the leg fearfully bruised and swollen. Fixing it up as best he could, he made the injured man comfortable by shoring him with pillows and blankets, and he turned to Surette. The old man had been hove

against the bulwarks and had received a nasty cut on the head, but when a spoonful of rum had been forced between his teeth, he became conscious. After bathing and dressing the wound, Donald left him in a bunk, and scanned the barometer.

"Rising!" he grunted wearily, and to the other two he said, "We'll get a bite of something and cut our way into the hold and trim that salt. Then when it eases off, we'll get some sail on her and get her in." The others nodded gloomily, and they all went forward to the forecabin and ate like starving men.

When Joak brought Donald a cup of coffee, he found him with his head on the table, crying silently. "What's th' matter, Donald?" he asked, patting his old chum on the shoulder. "Are ye thinkin' about Ainslie?"

The other nodded and looked up with the tears streaming from his tired eyes. "I wonder—if I shouldn't have taken—the wheel—myself—that time?" he said brokenly.

Jim answered, "No, no, Skipper! It wasn't any fault of yours. I h'ard ye tell him to lash hisself an' he couldn't ha' done it. It was his fate. Poor lad! I hope he died quick an' easy. That's th' best a feller kin wish. God rest his soul, for he was a good lad!"

McKenzie was only a boy after all and he felt Ainslie's loss keenly. It was awful to go like that—to be swept into eternity in the twinkling of an eye—and it un-nerved him. He had put in a frightful night and he was feeling the strain, and it wasn't over yet. The other two—older men and unhampered with responsibility—cheered him up, and when he went on deck again, he felt better and ready to tackle the problems before him.

Breaking into the hold, they trimmed the cargo of salt, and came on deck again when the grey dawn was breaking. The wind had eased off to a moderate gale, but the sea was still running high and the schooner, on an even keel once more, looked a sorry sight in the growing light. Ice filmed rigging and the bulwarks, and everything moveable was gone from the deck—dories, stays'l box and cable box, and the chain was scattered around. The starboard anchor was hove off the rail and inboard, and a splintered stump showed where the main-mast had been, while a gap in the port bulwarks marked the place where it crashed overboard. The foremast stood denuded of sail, with gaff and boom swinging idly and festoons of canvas flapping from them. The halliards were trailing overside, and gleaming ice covered everything.

"She's rim-racked for sure, Skipper," grinned Jim, "but she's still tight. Ain't no more'n ordinary water when I tried th' pumps ... good hull to stand th' bangin' she's had this time."

Donald surveyed the schooner and he said hoarsely, "We'll work her in. We'll hoist the riding sail on the foremast, and with that and the jumbo, we'll get her along. Let's get busy."

With the easing off of the gale, McKenzie got the schooner underway again, and after figuring out his position by dead reckoning, he shaped a course for Eastville, and found, even without after-canvas that she would lay it. Eastville Harbor was their nearest port, and he was anxious to get Sanders ashore and into a doctor's hands.

But progress under such scanty canvas was slow, and when a fishing vessel hove in sight during the afternoon, McKenzie hoisted the ensign, union down, and, when the other craft hove-to, he hailed her. "Send a dory over. I have an injured man I want to send to hospital!" They came and took Sanders away, and within a few minutes the other vessel swung off hot-foot for Eastville.

"I'll work her in alright," Donald told her Skipper. "Tell them we're coming, and that we lost a man—Ainslie Williams—overboard in that blow."

Two days later, in fine smooth weather, they arrived off Eastville Capes, and a tug plucked them through the headlands and into the harbor. McKenzie steered—as he had steered for two nights and two days—and he looked utterly played out. His face was unshaven and red and swollen by continuous exposure to cold and wind; his shoulders drooped through sheer bodily fatigue, and his brown eyes peered, blood-shot, through half-closed lids, heavy for lack of sleep. The skipper of the tug-boat, making fast alongside to shove the schooner into the wharf, stared at the smashed decks and at the weary McKenzie, and he remarked to a deck-hand, "That lad has sure had one hell of a time an' he's done well—mighty well—for a kid."

There was a crowd of people on the wharf when they came alongside, and, thinking of Ainslie Williams, Donald avoided their eyes. They looked down on the schooner's decks in silence, and the half-masted flag told its own story of death ... outside. He got up on the wharf, still in his sea-boots and oil-clothes, and staggered on the stringpiece as though a deck were still heaving beneath his feet. People spoke to him—kindly voices—but he was tired, too tired to talk. When a man has been three days and three nights on his feet under severe mental and physical strain, he craves but one thing—to throw himself down and sleep, sleep, sleep.

Caleb Heneker, the *Alameda's* owner, laid a kindly hand on his shoulder. "You did well, son, to bring her through that breeze. It was a terror—a real bad one, and an awful lot of vessels and lives lost. Run along, Cap'en, and git a rest. Your mother's at the head of the wharf, and I cal'late she'll be mighty glad to see ye." He seemed to rouse at the mention of "mother," and with a vague recollection of hearing Heneker say that "Sanders was alright, but they had to take his leg off," he found himself with her arms around his neck and her voice in his ears, sobbing, "Oh, Donald, I'm so glad you're back home and safe!"

Arm in arm with her, he walked up to his house, and the people strolling down to the wharf to view the schooner, stepped courteously to one side to let them pass. "Young Skipper looks broken up," they said, sympathetically. "Must have had an awful time." And they stared after the stooping, oilskinned figure staggering up the road with the mother leading him by the arm, and shook their heads understandingly. It was not the first time they had seen such sights, and oftentimes it would be a silent figure on a plank, and covered with a blanket, which would be carried up from the wharf—a staved and broken human—aftermath of gales.

At home he flopped down into a bedroom chair and the mother took his boots and oilskins off—soothing him with cheerful “There now’s” as she removed his clothing. Leading him to bed, she helped him in, arranged the pillow under his head and covered him with the blanket and quilt just as she used to do when he was a bit of a little lad. Then with a soft kiss, she pulled down the window blind and left him to a slumber which lasted for a full twelve hours.

Youth does not take long to recuperate both mentally and physically, and McKenzie was no exception. When he awoke, he sloughed off the despondency and depression of spirits induced by fatigue and anxiety, and went down to the vessel. They were unloading the salt out of her, and carpenters were already at work on her decks repairing the damages. Archie Surrette, tending a salt tub, hailed him cheerfully, “How’re ye feelin’, Skipper? Catch up on sleep?” His head was bandaged, but he looked none the worse.

“They’re givin’ ye a great name, Cap, for gettin’ this hooker in,” he continued. “‘Twas an awful breeze, they say. A power o’ vessels lost an’ bust up. Th’ whole o’ Novy Scotia’s beaches are piled wi’ lobster-traps, stove dories and fishin’ boats, an’ nary a fish house has a roof on it ‘twixt here and Cape Sable. It blowed vessels away from the wharves—bust their moorin’ lines, an’ even blowed sails out o’ the stops and tore ‘em to rags. It wuz th’ big breeze all right.”

McKenzie nodded. “What—what do they think of—of poor Williams—going?” he ventured hesitatingly.

The old man bit off a chew. “It was too bad, Skip, that he went, but it wuz his own fault. He niver lashed hisself to the wheel-box after you warned him. He sh’d ha’ known better—he’s bin at sea a long while and he knowed what was liable to happen. Ef he’d have taken a turn with a bit o’ line around his waist, he’d have bin here to-day ‘stead of over the side. Don’t you worry, Skip,” and he patted him on the shoulder, “it ain’t your fault, and nobody’s sayin’ it is. Good thing he was a single man. Now, poor Sanders ... that’s bad. They had to take his leg off to save his life. He’ll pull ‘raound, but he’s got six of a family to keep, an’ I cal’late he won’t want to go to sea any more after what he went through. And I don’t blame him!”

Feeling himself again, Donald went into Heneker’s office to discuss the chance of getting command of the *Alameda* for the spring fishery.

“I’d like to give her to ye, son,” said the old man, “but Tommy Himmelman’ll be goin’ back in her.” He noticed the disappointment in McKenzie’s eyes, and he added encouragingly, “I’m plannin’ to build another vessel this summer which Himmelman’ll take next year, an’ by that time, I can promise you first chance on the *Alameda*. Y’know, son, you’re young yet. Put in another season in the dory and learn all ye can. It’ll be good training.” He turned and picked up a letter from his desk. “Here’s a letter from the insurance company what has the policy on the *Alameda*. They’re sending you a gold watch for bringin’ her in, and well they might, for it’s saved them a good four thousand dollars anyway.”

When he left the office, Donald muttered grimly, “A gold watch? Very nice, but a gold watch will not help poor Williams or Sanders. I’d give a thousand gold watches to see them as they were!”

For a couple of days he remained at home helping his mother and cutting wood for her summer firing, then Mr. Nickerson sent for him to get Judson’s schooner ready for the spring fishery. He spent a week working on her when Judson himself arrived from Halifax.

“By gorry, Don,” remarked the skipper after the greetings were over, “but that was one devil of a session you had after you left me. A dirty easterly! We get one every winter, but that one was a terror. Awful sea, they tell me, running everyways and piling aboard. That’s what does the damage, and no vessel can avoid them. So Caleb Heneker can’t give you the *Alameda* this season? Oh, well, you’re young yet, and another summer in the dory won’t hurt you.”

“I suppose you saw Helena in Halifax,” observed Donald. “And Ruth? How are they?”

The other made a gesture. “By Jingo, I nearly forgot my message. I’ve to tell you they’re both tickled to death to hear of your escape, but Ruth wants to know why you did not write her since you came in. She thinks you are most unfriendly.”

McKenzie smiled. “I’ll write to-night,” he said simply; glad that she resented his neglect. He had not felt like writing after his disastrous trip, and the piece of convent-made lace which he had purchased for her in Calle O’Reilly, Havana, had been ruined by salt water and was no longer presentable.

When mid-March came around, the Spring fleet were swinging off for the Banks again and Nickerson’s schooner, the *Windrush* was about ready for sea, with an eight-dory gang. Donald was going dory-mates with old Archie Surrette.

“Let’s take a shoot up to Halifax for a day,” suggested Judson, and when McKenzie gave him a quizzical stare, he reddened under his tan. “If I don’t,” he added in excuse, “Helena will be getting hitched to one of those Willy-boys that’s forever flappin’ araound her. Get into your glad rags and come along.” And the two men ran for their respective homes, changed, and caught the packet steamer a half-minute before she pulled out.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

**R**UTH Nickerson greeted Donald with unusual warmth. She was now a woman beautiful of face and figure, and McKenzie had never seen her look so entrancing and desirable, while the sincerity of her welcome caused his heart to thump wildly. When she took his hand, she stepped close to him and looked up into his face with wide open eyes—eyes as clear and as blue as a Trade wind sky, and there was a hint of deep regard in them which made him feel ridiculously happy. For a space he retained her soft fingers in his and she made no attempt to withdraw them.

"I am so glad to see you, Donald," she said softly, and there was a depth of feeling in her voice that he had never heard before. "And I, you," he murmured, and he gave her hand another press before releasing it.

She stood back a space and scanned him from head to foot. He was dressed neatly and becomingly in a grey tweed and with tan boots. His collar and tie were in accordance with the latest fashion, and a Halifax barber had spent an hour trimming his hair, shaving his cheeks, and manicuring his sun-tanned strong fingers. This last was a piece of the fussiness of early training, and when he departed, his barber remarked to a workmate, "Them rich guys are great on havin' their lunch hooks fussed up. By th' mitts on him, I reckon he's bin spendin' th' winter sportin' 'round in Bermuja playin' goluff an' paddlin' canoes."

Nothing of the desperate ordeal of three weeks before appeared in his face or figure. His features glowed with a healthy tan and the white skin of his forehead—hat-shaded from sun and sea wind—served to contrast with his dark wavy hair. There was a snappy glint of vigorous strength in his large dark eyes which matched the erectness of his slim figure, and his present appearance caused Ruth to hark back in memory of the day, four years previous, when she had first met him—a rough looking, tousled-headed sea boy, garbed in clothes which were a caricature.

After the survey, which Donald endured somewhat abashed, she remarked laughingly, "My! Donald McKenzie, if I were to meet you on the street I wouldn't know you—you're grown so——" She was going to say "handsome," but hesitated and caught him by the arm. "Come into the parlor and tell me all about your dreadful adventures. It must have been awful." And she led him to a sofa and motioned him to a seat beside her.

As he was reluctant to tell the story, she plied him with questions to which he returned jocular answers. It is bad form for a sailor to relate personal adventures in any other way. "Yes," he observed humorously, "we cut away the mast because it made the vessel lop-sided and very uncomfortable. When we cut it down and got it clear of the ship, things were much nicer. The gale? Oh, it was quite a breeze—quite a breeze! I should imagine you people ashore had an awful time in the streets with the shingles flying and the signs and telephone poles falling down. None of those dangers at sea—thank goodness!" And he heaved a sigh of mock relief.

She asked about Williams and Sanders, but when she saw the fun die out of his smiling eyes and a look as of pain light in their depths, she cried hastily, "No, no, don't let's talk about *that!* Let's change the subject. Are you going as captain of a vessel this summer?"

"No," he answered, almost pathetically. "It's me for the dory and trawl-hauling again. I guess Old Heneker thought I used vessels too roughly to risk giving me another command. But he's promised to give me a chance of a vessel next spring, so that's encouraging."

"You intend remaining at sea then?" she ventured somewhat apprehensively.

"Sure thing!" answered McKenzie. "There's nothing else I can do and there's nothing else I care to do. Seafaring is my hobby and my profession, and I do not wish anything better."

"Wouldn't you care to have a shore occupation? Something connected with ships?"

"Some day, yes!" he replied, "but not yet. Some day when it does not pay me to go to sea or when I've made enough to keep away from it. But I have a home and a mother to keep and it is only by fishing and navigating vessels that I can make the money. I couldn't make enough at any other occupation. I wouldn't care to be an office clerk and I don't want to be a shore laborer. What could I do ashore worth while? Nothing!"

Her face fell a little at this, but Donald failed to notice it. He was gratifying his artistic sense of proportion and his appreciation of beauty in regarding the lovely roundness of her bare forearms and the perfect sweep



of shoulders and neck. What a glorious head of hair she had!—he mused as he gazed thoughtfully on its wavy, coiled tresses with a sheen on them where they caught the light like the sun on a raven's wing. She was very, very pretty this Nova Scotia lassie, he thought, but with his silent admiration came a recurrent pang of fear that someone other than he would call her "wife." He talked away, and while he talked he sub-consciously tried to imagine possessing this charming girl for his own; to slip his arms around those perfectly moulded shoulders, and, looking into those wide blue eyes, slowly press her body and her lips to his. It was an enchanting thought—a fancy to set his blood afire; to realize his heart's desire, to have this wonderful, virile, glorious creature in his arms and to hear her whisper, "I love you!"

They switched from the relation of storm happenings to a description of Cuba. He seemed inspired by her company, and as he dilated on the beauties of the sapphire seas, the palms, the dazzling sunlight, and the ancient glories of Old Havana, she saw in him an artist, a romanticist, and a nature-lover, drawing on a clear and retentive memory for the painting of a word picture which his masterly telling limned before her imaginative eyes. She lay back on the sofa cushions and gazed at his features dreamily, and as he talked she felt a strange thrill in her heart and he appeared then to her as her Knight Splendid. She pictured him in shining armor—a Conquistadore in morion and cuirass—a *caballero* of Royal Spain—a cavalier as intrepid, as brave, and as chivalrous as those of whom he was talking in his relation of Cuba's history, and she could picture him in fancy leaving her for the conquest of a new world with her glove in his helmet and clear purpose and courage burning in his dark eyes.

"Those are glorious latitudes," he was saying. "Warm, yet cool with the steady Trade wind forever blowing and ruffling the sea into little waves which sparkle in the dazzling sunlight. As the ship rushes along the schools of flying fish leap out almost from the curl of the bow wave, and with their wings glistening like mother-of-pearl in the sun they slip into the blue water again to be followed by another school. And those palms! I think the palm is a most beautiful tree! There is something graceful about them which delights the eye as they bend and sway to the wind with their fronds rustling and sighing in accompaniment to the murmur of the surf on the white sand beaches. It's a rare tree, the palm, and the only trees which compare with them for beauty, in my mind, are our own Canadian spruce and pine."

Ruth admitted to herself that she was in love with Donald then. But when he ceased talking and she lost the spell of his eyes and voice, cold reason would intervene and endeavour to stifle the feeling within her. "Love him! Love him! Love him!" Desire and the woman's heart urged, but Reason came with a repressive "No! No!" and as she wavered between the two, Reason would conquer and Justice and Honor would murmur, "Play the game fairly. Tell him it cannot be!"

Cultured, handsome, brave, generous and all as he was, yet he was but a common fisherman, with but a bare and hazardous livelihood assured him. Love him, she might, but she knew she would not marry him as a fisherman, and he would not change his occupation. She admired the fishermen; she had listened, with her imagination thrilled, to tales of their adventurous existence, but ever since she was a little child she had shuddered at the thought of ever having a near one and a dear one following that hazardous vocation. She feared for her brother, Judson, and she would fear ten times more for the man she loved. The recent gale in which Donald had lost a man and seen another maimed for life; in which he himself had escaped death but narrowly, served to stiffen her determination. She could not marry him. She admitted she was a coward, but she could not bear the strain and anxiety of the days when her man was at sea. When she married, her husband would have to be near and to home.

At last Judson and Helena came in and interrupted their delightful *tête-à-tête*. They had been to a theatre and they burst into the parlor full of the recollections of a pleasurable show, and with their entry the conversation became general. Then they had some playing and singing, and when McKenzie prepared to depart he felt that the time was fast approaching when he would have to declare himself. Ruth's attitude towards him gave him hope and he knew instinctively that he stood well in her estimation. This evening she had been particularly charming to him—not the charm of a hostess to a dear friend—but rather the charm of a woman in whose heart love was budding; that indefinable something, the touch of fingers, the fleeting glances and soft-spoken phrases which only lovers can understand, and McKenzie was quick to sense it.

In the darkened hallway she pressed close to him and her hair brushed his face, leaving a faint and indescribably sweet perfume in his nostrils. In the reflected light her rounded shoulders and head were faintly illuminated, and she became, to his imagination, a Venus of the shadows; a woman waiting to be caressed and loved unseen by prying eyes and desirous of keeping her affections secret. While he stood whispering to her the intoxication of her presence and the circumstances were causing his blood to pound through his veins. She, too, was fighting a tumult in her heart. "Love him!" urged Desire and the woman in her, but Reason's icy hand repressed the inclination. She would have to decide soon—aye, even now. If she gave way...?

Walter Moodey's face rose before her eyes. She'd have no reason to fear sea terrors with him. He was handsome, manly, generous ... and yet she had a deep feeling for this poor, brave, clean-hearted Scotch fisher-boy. But the sea ... the lonely nights. The hazardous livelihood ... the sweating toil of it. It was hard, terribly hard, but it could not be otherwise. A tremendous wave of sympathy swept over her and she found herself murmuring, "Don! Kiss me ... and go!"

She barely whispered the words, but the telepathy of love communicated their import to his quickened sensibilities and he crushed her to his breast. For a moment—a space of seconds charged with happiness supreme—he could feel the throbbing of her heart and her warm, soft body against his as their lips met in the age-old seal of love. Then, drunk with the sense of possession, with the intoxicating sensation of having held this glorious creature in his arms for a delicious and memorable portion of time, of having kissed her on that desirable mouth, he reeled away, feeling that he had reached the uttermost heights of visioned and desired joy.

When McKenzie left, Ruth immediately felt ashamed of her weakness and cringed mentally at the thought of her impulsive action. It was sympathy and a feeling which she could not control that spurred her to display her excess of emotion, and she knew that Donald had misinterpreted her true feelings towards him. She admired and respected him, but she did not love him enough to marry him. He had neither money nor prospects sufficient to give her what she expected and had been used to, and she was too much of a coward to become the wife of a fisherman. With Walter Moodey as her husband she would move in a sphere corresponding to her desires, tastes and ambition. With Donald McKenzie she would live as a house-drudge, solitary for long periods, uncertain as to the future for many years, and unable to enjoy and fraternize with the things and people she admired.

In her bedroom she lay in the dark and analyzed the spirit which urged her to the action which she was now repenting. It was purely sympathy—sympathy for a manly, clean-hearted young fellow who loved her and whom she would be putting on the rack within a short period when she accepted Walter Moodey. Moodey was in her class. He was handsome, clever, generous, courteous and a gentleman, and she *thought* she loved him. When he was with her she was sure of it, and it was only when she was alone and thinking of McKenzie that the little doubt came.

McKenzie's voyage in the *Alameda* was the cause of his undoing. Ruth had heard the story from Judson and the horror of it had stiffened her determination to break off the dangerous intimacy with Donald. She laid awake the best part of the night a prey to conflicting emotions, and scheme after scheme ran through her mind like sheep racing through a pen gate. She would have to let McKenzie know the real state of affairs between them. To let him go away with the impression which he undoubtedly had, would be a torture to her conscience and self-respect. She would write him to Eastville the first thing in the morning and explain—but ... if the letter should not reach him before he sailed? Or again, if it did, how would he act? This caused her much speculative pain, and for a space, her reason refused to suggest an easier way. Harassed by her fears she ultimately decided to evade and postpone the day of reckoning with McKenzie. Walter had already proposed to her, but she had not given her answer. She would accept him and have him hasten the marriage ere Donald returned from the fishery in the fall, and by doing so she would be spared the necessity of making painful explanations and of living in the same locality with him.

Stamped into this ruthless line of action, she tried to soothe her conscience that it was for the best. Next day she accepted Walter Moodey. The engagement was to be kept secret, and they were to marry in August.

Meantime, McKenzie was living in the seventh heaven of delight. His feet trod air and his head was in the clouds. In his mind, Ruth's action gave her to him. They had sealed their pledge without words and she would become his wife on the asking. In his exhilaration of spirit he was not above feeling sorry for Moodey. "Poor chap," he murmured. "I hope he don't take it too hard, and may he get a girl as good as Ruth." Happy, with love in his heart and a song on his lips McKenzie went to the Banks.

The *Windrush* "wet her gear" on the Western grounds most of the time, but the spring trip was a rough and windy one and fishing was below the average. Donald was anxious to make money—it was now an obsession with him—and Archie Surrette, his dory-mate, would curse his excess of zeal when he rolled, bone-tired, into his bunk o' nights. "By Judas Priest!" he'd growl, "McKenzie's killin' me! I'm rushed from mornin' to night. He don't want to stop even to eat, an' to-day, after we'd hauled an' baited six tubs o' gear agin' that tide an' wind an' my back near busted an' dark acomin' and me wishin' I wuz aboard and in me bunk, he says, 'By gorry, Archie, if I had another bucket o' bait I'd haul an' spin 'em out again!' I ups an' says, says I, 'Donald McKenzie! ef you have a mind to do that, ye kin put me aboard th' vessel and ye kin take th' dory yerself and spin 'em out agin, for I be damned ef I will!'"

And when the bait was finished and the schooner was heading for Eastville to land her spring catch, it was McKenzie who went to her wheel and swung her off as the skipper gave the course. "West Nor'West and drive her, you!"

"West Nor'West, and I'll drive her! I'll tear the mains'l off this peddler before she slacks her gait!" McKenzie grinned cheerfully. He was directing her course for home and Ruth, and in a moderate gale, with a tuck in the big mainsail, the *Windrush* was storming through the night with a bone in her teeth. Watch after watch came aft to relieve him, but he waved them away with a laugh. "Leave her to me, boys," he shouted. "I'm a steersman and I'll walk her along. If I leave her to some of you Jonahs, the wind'll drop or come away a nose-ender!"

The for'ard gang christened him "Stormalong McKenzie" that night. In the weight of the breeze blowing the schooner commenced that peculiar leaping and plunging which indicates a "driven" vessel, and whole seas were coming over the bows and washing as far aft as the gurry-kid. In the forecabin the men lay in their bunks and listened to the continuous "barrooming" outside—the drumming of the bow-wave, the crashes of the water falling on deck and the swash and trickle across the planks overhead. Now and again she would swipe a big one and the jar of its impact against the bowsprit and the windlass above would douse the lamp screwed to the pawl-post; the anchor stock would thump against the bows, and the vessel would creak and groan in every straining timber.

Crash! A heavy thud and a rolling noise on deck as if huge boulders were being thrown along the planks. "He's capsized th' chain-box this time," growled a nautical Sherlock Holmes from the depths of his bunk. Crash! Thud! Swish! Another comber aboard, and Sherlock remarked, "That one fetched agin th' dories, I'll bet. McKenzie'll start somethin' overboard afore long!" But the snores from the bunks proved that most of the gang were not worrying.

A nervous look-out man scrambled aft in the dark and shouted to Donald, "Th' starb'd nest o' dories is workin' aft, Mac!" And the other, with a laugh, replied, "Don't let that scare you, John! Get a gripe around their sterns and let me know when the windlass comes aft. Time enough then to shout!" And thus he drove her

storming—a slugging twelve to fourteen knots throughout the night—and next morning, before the dawn, the light on Eastville Cape blinked them a homeward-bounder's welcome.

Aye! 'Tis not always Boreas that drives a vessel into port; oft-times Cupid is more of a driver than the breezy god!

Donald surprised his mother just as she was bringing in a pail of milk from the little barn, and he also whirled her off her feet with the gladness of his welcome. Then he sat down to a breakfast such as seamen dream about—not that they didn't fare well on the *Windrush*, but much seafaring provender comes out of cans and salt brine, and fresh milk, eggs and vegetables can be appreciated after weeks of preserved food.

"Ruth Nickerson is home," observed the mother, well aware of the importance of her announcement even though Donald had skilfully concealed from her all ideas of serious intentions. Mother's instincts are keen, however, especially where love and another woman is concerned, and she smiled to herself at Don's look of false surprise and his careless "Is that so? And how is she?" Just as if he wasn't dying to know if she were home!

"I think Mr. Moodey and Helena Stuart are down here also," she went on. Another time, this announcement of Moodey's presence in Eastville would have given him a sinking feeling, but now he could afford to be generous. He didn't mind poor Moodey. Jolly good of him to stick around and keep Ruth company. Fine chap, Moodey! The mother continued, "I heard something about them having a picnic down to Salvage Island today. The young people of the church have chartered the packet steamer for the trip. They're to start about eleven."

"A picnic?" ejaculated Donald. "Oho! I'd like to get in on that. Wonder if Jud'll be going?" He had scarcely finished speaking before Captain Nickerson appeared in the kitchen door. After greeting Mrs. McKenzie he said to Donald, "The church folk are having a picnic cruise to Salvage Island—clam bake and all that sort of thing—and I reckon I'll go. Will you come along? The boys'll get the fish out and the stores aboard, and we'll pull out day after to-morrow. You'll be with us? Right! Meet me at our house. The packet'll pull out at eleven."

He had departed but a few minutes when Caleb Heneker walked up. He was evidently in a fix about something by the manner in which he hustled up to the house. "Is yer son araound, Mrs. McKenzie?" he enquired. "Want to see him particular. H'ard he got in this mornin'." And when Donald appeared the old man got to business right away.

"I've got the schooner *Amy Anderson* loaded with dry fish for San Juan, Porty Reek, and th' skipper I had for her has gone raound to Annapolis to take a three-master. Naow, I'm stuck. I can't git a man I kin trust to take my vessel daown, and I've come to see ef you'd go in her. I've got to git her away right naow—she's three weeks late already—and I got a cable this mornin' sayin' ef th' cargo don't leave within' twenty-four hours they'll refuse th' shipment. Kin you go?"

Donald was rather taken back. "How about my fishing?" he enquired. "I couldn't leave Captain Nickerson short a man, and, also, I doubt if it would pay me to leave the *Windrush* to go West India freighting."

Heneker waved his handkerchief to cool himself. "That's all right," he answered quickly, "I saw Judson Nickerson just naow and he says he's agreeable for you to go. It's easier to git fishermen than skippers and in this case I'm willin' to pay you as much as what you'd make afishin'. That's square, ain't it?"

McKenzie nodded. He was in a quandary and couldn't make up his mind right away. They might make a big stock fishing and he knew that Caleb couldn't pay on the basis of a high-line trip for a West Indian run. Then after he came back he might have to kick around idle. He wanted to think the matter over, but Caleb insisted on an answer one way or the other. Mrs. McKenzie had been saying nothing, and to her the wily Heneker turned, "Best for him to take my offer, ma'am," he observed. "She's a fine big hundred an' twenty-five-ton schooner—a noo vessel—and it's better to be a captain than a fisherman. Besides, I'm agoin' to give him a vessel to skipper afishin' next season." The old pride was working in Janet's mind and she thought of the "captain" part of it. Donald was, in her opinion, more suited for master than fisherman, and besides, hadn't Mr. Heneker offered to make his money as much as if he were fishing?

"I think, Don, Mr. Heneker is right," she said, "Captain Nickerson is willing for you to go and he can easily get another man to fill your place."

Donald rose to his feet. "I'll go, Mr. Heneker," he said quickly. "I'll get my gear aboard this morning—you'll loan me a sextant—and I'll get out with the early tide after midnight—"

"Can't ye go out this afternoon?" queried the vessel owner.

"No!" said the other decisively, thinking of Ruth and the picnic. "I must have a few hours ashore. I've been two months at sea and just got in. I'll take her out at two in the morning if she's ready."

Caleb rose to go. "Right, son," he said. "And don't be scared to drive her. That fish must be got down there quick. I want to hold the business and avoid payin' another insurance on it. You'll either load molasses or salt home. The agents'll give you instructions."

After he left Donald shed his sea clothes, bathed, shaved and dressed, and glanced over a number of picture post cards from Joak McGlashan who had gone home to Glasgow for a visit. McGlashan was having a six months' holiday after six years absence from home, and by the addresses from whence the cards came he was having a time and a half. "I'll be back in time to go to the West Indies with you in the fall," he wrote. "Hope you have good fishing and high line stocks this summer. Am enjoying myself, but I like the Canadian weather better than this. It's aye raining here."

About half-past ten he took leave of his mother and went to the Nickerson home. As he stepped up to the door

his heart was pounding like a sledge-hammer against his ribs, and he felt pleasurably excited at the thought of seeing Ruth again after two months' absence. The memory of that farewell in Halifax was still vivid, and he hoped, ere he sailed for Porto Rico, that he would be fortunate enough to have such another delightful valedictory moment with the girl of his heart.

She came to the door at his knock, and Donald noticed, with something of a shock, the half-fearful look in her eyes when she greeted him. She was pale and her hand was feverishly hot when she received his cordial clasp. "You're a little pale," he remarked in anxious concern. "Are you feeling all right, Ruth?" She led the way nervously into the parlor. "Oh, I'm all right," she replied. "It's the warm weather, I guess, and rushing around to get ready for the picnic. And how have you been?"

They sat and talked for a while, but to Ruth the conversation was an ordeal. She answered and remarked mechanically while her sub-conscious mind was thinking of the cruel duplicity which she was practising on the young fellow beside her. His eyes told her, too eloquently, of the manner in which he regarded her. She could see that and she looked forward to the day's excursion with dread. It was too late now to withdraw from going, and she felt that the fateful hour was coming and it might as well be elsewhere as in her own home. By nature, open-hearted and free from deceit, it was terribly hard for her to dissemble her feelings, and for the past two months her thoughts had been whirling around like a chip in an eddy. In the quiet of the night Donald's handsome tanned face, with its large dark eyes, would keep constantly coming before her in spite of all her efforts to eradicate all thoughts of him from mind and heart.

She was secretly engaged to Walter, and when he was with her she felt composed and happy, though, strangely enough, in all her intimate moments with him she had never been thrilled as she had been with McKenzie the night he bade her good-bye in Halifax. Walter had kissed her at the moment of their engagement, but there was something lacking on her part. She could not respond to his warm embrace and caress, and she thought it was because of her mind being troubled with the deception she was forced to play on McKenzie. When she gazed at the handsome, confident young sailor seated beside her, a strange yearning filled her—a desire for something she did not know—but when her feelings were becoming distraught, cold reason calmed them by bringing up her self-imposed axiom that she would not, and could not, marry a fisherman, nor exist as a fisherman's wife.

Moodey came in, and after a puzzled glance at Donald and Ruth—a lightning glance with just a hint of jealousy in it—he thrust forth his hand and greeted McKenzie cordially. "I'm glad to see you again, Mac," he said warmly. "You're looking fine and dandy, by Jove, and as hard as nails. Going to the picnic with us? Good! We'll have a jolly good time." Donald returned the greeting with equal cordiality—the more so as he felt some regret for Moodey. A fine chap, Moodey, he thought. The affectation and swank of college days had been toned down, but he was still a little "uppish" with others not in his exact social scale.

With Helena Stuart and Judson making a party all to themselves, the other three walked down to the steamer. Ruth walked between them, outwardly care-free and as charming as ever, but torn in heart and mind with a dread of the day's possible events.

Promptly at eleven the steamer, with a party of seventy-five young men and women aboard, cast off and proceeded down the harbor. It was a fine warm day and the sea was smooth, but in the pilot-house Captain Eben Westhaver was worrying. To Judson he confided his fears. "It's a nice day naow, cap'en, but look at th' glass and that brassy-lookin' sky to th' south'ard. Not that we need worry 'bout a summer squall in this able packet, but it ain't pleasant picnicking in wind an' rain, an' we don't want t' have a crowd o' sea-sick wimmen aboard."

The other laughed scornfully. "Wall, naow, ef that ain't a coaster talking my name ain't Nickerson! Judas Priest! There never was a shore-ranger yet but what didn't go to sea with one eye on the barometer and another off to wind'ard. Ye seem to hop 'tween harbor and harbor dodgin' every little breeze and scared to death of a bit of cloud. What if the barometer *is* low? I've seen it fall often-times and nawthing happen. Tcha! Go ahead and don't be such an old woman!"

They landed on the Island about one and had a most glorious dinner. Then some of the young men remained to prepare for the clam-bake supper, and others, boys and girls, broke off into groups and roamed around in the woods or along the sandy beaches. Judson and Helena vanished, leaving Ruth, Walter and Donald together.

"I'm going to have a swim," said Moodey. "I brought my suit along. How about it, Mac?"

Donald made a negative gesture. "Have no swimming gear," he said.

"I can get you a suit from some of the others. Come on in."

Ruth, dreading to be left alone with Donald, added her plea to Moodey's. "Yes, Donald, why don't you go? Let me see you and Walter have a race."

McKenzie laughed. "I can't swim very much and besides I'm not stuck on bathing in these waters. Too cold for me."

Moodey gave a half sneer as he remarked, "I should have thought you sailors could stand anything in that line. I haven't pounded ice off a ship's rigging or doubled Cape Horn, but I've gone in swimming at the North West Arm in Halifax in winter. Well, since you're not coming, take care of Ruth. I'm off."

When he went, McKenzie felt that his opportunity had come. With his heart pounding rapidly, he said, "Ruth, let's walk up under the trees. We can sit down and watch Walter swimming from there."

Dreading the coming minutes she was about to dissent, but something beyond her control compelled her to

follow him. Seated under the trees, she sat dumbly waiting, and with her eyes looking far off to sea. Gazing into her face, Donald took her hand and she made no resistance.

"Ruth," he said very quietly, and in the tone of his voice there was a nervous tremor. "You made me very happy that night I left you in Halifax." He paused as if expecting a sympathetic response, but none came. Ruth felt her heart pounding as if it would choke her. He continued slowly and in the same nervous low tone. "You know, girlie"—she winced at the term—"I loved you ever since we first met four years ago, and—and since that night in Halifax I've been thinking of you night and day." He wanted to say a great deal more but words failed. He drew a deep breath, and gazing intently at her slowly paling face, he said simply, "Ruth, darling, I love you. Will you marry me?"

The moment had come! Ruth made an effort to regain her composure. Not daring to look at his face, she slowly withdrew her hand from his and replied in a faint whisper, which seemed, to her strained imagination, to echo inside of her, "I—I can't!"

Donald gave a slight start. Her shoulder was against his and she felt it. It seemed to have temporarily bereft him of speech. After a pause, which to Ruth seemed an eternity, he asked quietly, "Why, Ruth?"

She lost her composure for a moment and felt like crying, but regaining her self-control, answered in the same barely audible voice, "I'm already engaged."

"Engaged? To whom?" The quiet question held a note of intense surprise. Astounded, uncomprehending, McKenzie stared at her averted face in a daze.

She almost choked as she replied, "To Walter!"

It seemed an age before he spoke again, but when he did the tremor was more noticeable, though there was no anger in the tone, but instead, a note of astonishment. "Why, Ruth, how can that be? Don't you love me?"

Still looking away from him; not daring to look at his face, she shook her head and murmured, "No, Donald!"

"I don't believe it!" His words came quick and there was no tremor in his voice. Catching her hand again, he gripped it in his strong fingers, and repeated. "I don't believe it!" Then with appeal in his tones, he added, "Look into my eyes, Ruth, and tell me that! I don't—I can't—believe it ... after that night!"

Her resolution was wavering, but cold reason was saying insistently, "If you give way now you'll surrender to him. You'll be a fisherman's wife. You'll live in a cottage and keep a home for a man who'll be with you but seldom. You'll lie awake nights worrying about him. You'll not be able to enjoy the things you desire and admire. You may love ... but love flies out of the window when poverty comes in at the door. Your culture, your education will be thrown away, and some day, maybe, you'll be standing in your cottage door with a child in your arms and there'll be a vessel coming in with a half-masted flag ... and some man will be saying to you, 'Aye, your husband was lost at sea!'" She shuddered at the thought and steeled her heart. She would not look into his eyes. If she did so, she would waver, she knew. She cared for him more than she thought, and her heart was breaking.

"No, Donald, I—I like you very, very much, but I can't ... will not ... marry you!"

Still grasping her hand, he asked huskily, "Do you mean that, Ruth?" She answered with a nod, but wishing to hear it from her own lips he repeated. "Do you mean that, Ruth?"

"Yes!"

He released her hand quickly and rose to his feet. Straightening himself up to his full height he squared his shoulders, and with moisture glistening on his forehead, turned and gazed at her. It was his Gethsemane, this spot, and the pain in his heart showed in his eyes. The girl sat on the grass with averted face, nervously tearing a spring flower to shreds. "Ruth," he said at last in a voice charged with emotion, "With the exception of my mother, you've shaken my faith in women forever. Good-bye!" The farewell came from his lips like the snap of a whip, and when she raised her tear-filled eyes, it was to see him striding through the woods with his head high and his shoulders square.

When he vanished in the greenery, she gave a queer little sob and commenced to cry. For a minute she gave way to her pent-up emotions, and only when she saw Walter coming out of the sea did she arise and run back to a little stream in the woods. Bathing her eyes in the cool water, she coaxed the evidences of tears from her face and tried to console herself that the ordeal was over. But in her heart of hearts she knew that it was just beginning.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY



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**T**HE packet steamer was slugging hot-foot for Eastville as the sun went down behind an ominous bank of clouds. Thunder was rumbling to the south'ard and Captain Westhaver was glancing every now and again out of the pilot-house window. "Only a thunder storm, I reckon," he muttered. "But I don't like that cussed glass an' that blurry sky to th' south'ard. Looks jest like a West Injy hurricane sky. But, we'll git in afore it strikes." The sea was smooth save for a slight swell rolling up from the south'ard, and there was but little wind. The chatter and laughter of the picnickers sounded unusually loud on the quiet air. Someone was playing a fiddle, and there was a dance going on aft.

Down on the after freight deck away from the crowd, Donald McKenzie sat on the bitts, sucking away at a dry pipe, and communing with his thoughts. Outwardly calm, yet boiling inwardly, he reviewed his years of acquaintanceship with Ruth Nickerson. Ever and anon, the memory of the night in Halifax would rise to mind, and he would vision again her upturned face with the dim light upon it, and feel the soft warmth of her body as he held her in his arms when she had said, "Kiss me, Don, and go!" Pah! He brushed his hands across his lips. It was a Judas kiss, for but a scant two months afterwards she had become engaged to another.

There was a patter of rain on the sea, a growl of thunder, and the sky had suddenly become overcast with sullen clouds. The pattering rain turned into a teeming downpour, but McKenzie took no notice of it. Nature was only in keeping with his mood, and even when the rain slashed in upon his body he made no note of the squall which caused it. The sea was rising after the first ten minutes of the puff, and the rolling of the steamer caused a cessation of the music, the dancing, and the chatter on the deck above. "Goin' t' have a storm, I reckon," remarked someone behind him. He turned. It was a fireman up for a breath of fresh air. "Yes," returned McKenzie. "A summer squall."

It was darkening fast. The sun had set and the heavy clouds curtained the after-glow. Ever and anon, a vivid flash of lightning would shatter the darkness and render the night blacker than before, and the wind was rising. To port, Donald could see the land against the faint light in the west, and he knew they were drawing in to the heads of Eastville.

He suddenly realized that he was soaking wet and he shivered with the chill of it. His collar was limp and the rain was running down his neck and inside his clothing. The clammy discomfort cooled his burning body and brought him back to a realization of things around him. It was blowing a savage squall, and the packet steamer was rolling and smashing the waves into spray. Up on deck he could hear the frightened cries of sea-sick women.

The sailor instinct came to the fore, and, for the time being, he forgot the, to him, tragic event of the afternoon. Glancing ahead, he could see the white water on the Lower Eastville Ledges, hounded by the gusts and squalls, boiling and quarrelling with the rocks. The Outer Ledge sparbuoy slipped by, and he felt the steamer canting as the wheel was put hard over to make the turn into the channel. Then, all of a sudden, something snapped above his head, and he was struck a heavy blow, as of a whip, across the back. He turned and saw a piece of steel wire rope hanging from fair-leads in the deck beams above. "What the—?" he ejaculated rubbing his smarting shoulders, and then a realization of what had happened came to him in a flash. "Jupiter! Wheel gear has parted!"

Two men—the mate and a deck hand—came running to where he stood. "Where's th' spare tiller? God's truth! we'll be on th' ledges—" The words were whipped from the officer's mouth as a piling sea came aboard and hurled him, the deck hand and McKenzie to leeward. As they lay in the scuppers, they felt the steamer ground—once, twice, three times—and finally with a terrific crash. "She's ashore!" yelled the mate jumping to his feet and scrambling up the ladder. A huge comber, with a livid, curling crest which seethed and growled, piled up ready to fall, and McKenzie and the deck hand leaped behind the casing as it struck the helpless steamer. Through the spray, Donald saw white-painted planks and pieces of the vessel tossing in the wake of the breaker, and with the water up to his chest he struggled along the narrow alleyway to a ladder leading to the deck above.

A mob of frightened, crying and screaming women and girls were crowding in the lee of the upper deck cabins, and when a sea hit the steamer and caused her to grind and twist, they shrieked in fear. Looking at the starboard life-boat, McKenzie saw that it was already stove, so he turned to the port boat which Captain Westhaver, Judson and other men were trying to swing out.

"You here, Don?" cried Nickerson when McKenzie elbowed his way to him. The skipper's face was strained

with anxiety, and he seemed relieved to see him. "Git these lubbers out o' th' way, Don," he roared, "so's we kin git this boat out. Th' gaul-derned thing ain't wu'th a hoot in hell anyways, but we might git th' wimmin in and away from th' ship. She'll be in flinders in a damn short time!"

Pushing back the men and youths who were pressing around the boat, most of whom were farmers and tradesmen, McKenzie shouted, "Don't crowd now, boys. We'll get the boat out a sight quicker if you'll give us a chance." He spoke kindly and confidently and they stood clear while the davits were out-swung.

"D'ye reckon ye kin git away from th' side?" cried Captain Westhaver to Judson. "Devil of a back-wash down thar' an' she'll be stove sure as blazes—"

Crash! A double wave piled over the steamer's superstructure and poured tons of chilly brine into the boat, and while the women screamed, and the men hung on to anything available, the flimsy bolts in the davit heads parted with the weight of the water-filled life-boat and it up ended and fell into the sea.

"God save us!" cried Nickerson, aghast at this catastrophe. "That's yer coaster gear for ye! By the old red-headed, creeping Judas, Cap'en Westhaver, ye sh'd be tarred an' feathered for that piece o' botch work! Hell's bells! We're jammed in a clinch for fair, naow."

Donald stood beside him. "What's best to do now, Jud?" he asked calmly. "Durned ef I know," answered the other. "Cal'late we'd better see th' women with life-belts on an' git to work on a raft."

A terrible sea was piling over the ledges by now, and revealed in the flashes of lightning, it looked awe-inspiring and frightful. The steamer had struck broadside on to one of the reefs, and had been lifted almost over it. If she went much further there was the dire possibility of her sliding into the deep water on the inside of it and foundering. A sandy beach could be seen—a hundred yards away—a trifle astern of the vessel, while ahead of her rose a small rocky cliff upon which some stunted spruce trees grew.

While Donald and some others were working on a raft, Captain Nickerson was tying life-belts on to Ruth and Helena. Both girls were dreadfully frightened, but managed to keep calm. Moodey stood, white-faced and silent, with an arm around Ruth to keep her from sliding overboard when the vessel pounded. Helena was hanging to her friend's arm, and secured around the waist by a line which Judson had rove through a ring bolt, and the other girls—about forty of them—were similarly protected. All stood huddled under the lee of the upper deck-cabin.

Torn with anxiety and fearful of Helena's and his sister's safety, yet Judson appeared outwardly calm, and he soothed the girls with cheerful words. When a sea would crash over the steamer his booming laugh would be heard. "Don't let that scare you? That's nawthin'. Hang on for a bit and there'll be a slew of dories alongside. The boys'll be coming aout from Eastville." In his heart he knew he lied. No dories could live in that broil of tide, wind and ledge-torn water, and at Eastville there was neither a life-boat or a Lyle gun breeches-buoy apparatus.

The captain of the steamer dragged himself along to where Nickerson stood. "Ef someone c'd only swim ashore with a line," he shouted above the tumult, "we might git a hawser fast to a tree on th' point yander and rig up a breeches buoy. But it's takin' a big chanst whoever tries. Liable to git mushed up in the surf."

Judson nodded. It was a chance—their only chance. The steamer would go to pieces inside an hour ... when the tide rose. The storm might abate in that time, but the sea would be there long after the wind had subsided, and hanging on to the vessel would be fatal. The only solution was to get the crowd clear of the ship before she went to pieces. He turned it over in his sailorly mind. *He* couldn't swim, but he might be able to get ashore on a couple of planks. "By gorry!" he muttered, "it might be done!" And aloud he bawled to Westhaver. "Git a couple of stout planks 'n lash 'em together, 'n get me something for a paddle. I'll ride th' blame thing in to the beach same as the Kanakas in the South Seas ride the surf on a board. Sing aout when you're ready!"

Helena overheard the bawled conversation and clutched him by the arm. "What are you going to do, Jud?" she cried fearfully. Then with a glance at the surf seething and roaring on the beach to leeward and swirling in toppling combers around them, she added hysterically. "No, no, no! Judson, you can't do it! You can't do it!"

He looked into her frightened face and laughed. There was no fear in his keen dare-devil eyes when he replied tenderly. "Don't worry, Helena. I'll get there ... somehow. Jest you hang on here ... an' pray to God!" The last words were spoken reverently.

She suddenly threw her arms around his neck and her wet hair fluttered around his face. "Judson," she pleaded. "You can't do it. You know it can't be done. Stay with us and we'll die together!" Then she turned towards Ruth who was hidden from her by Walter's body. "Ruthie!" she cried. "Judson can't swim and he's going to try and reach the shore on a plank with a line. He can't do it! He can't do it! Don't let him go!"

Westhaver scrambled for'ard again. "I got a couple o' fine two-inch plank all lashed up for ye, Jud. Well-seized an' spiked they are so's they'll hang together," he was meticulously exact in his description of the preparations for the desperate venture, "and I've got some stout line and a good paddle fur ye. We're ready fur ye, Jud, old man, an' by cripes, ef you make it..."

A sea burst over the house and caused the fabric to tremble ominously. When the tide rose, the waves would hurl themselves on the light superstructure and it wouldn't last long. Judson knew that and he cried, "I'll be right with ye, Eben!"

Helena screamed and clutched him tight around the neck. "No, no, no! It's certain death!" she wailed. "You can't swim and you'd never get through ... that!" She gave a frightened glance at the sea. Ruth, who had been

standing apathetic hanging on to Moodey's arm and the life-line, suddenly turned to her fiancée. He was shivering and silent and had hardly spoken a word. "You're a good swimmer, Walter," she cried. "Why don't *you* try it? Don't let Judson go. He can't swim a stroke!" And she looked up into his face imploringly.

Walter seemed to be galvanized to life. He gave an apprehensive look at the sea roaring and crashing around them and at the white water racing and bursting over the rocks ahead. In the darkness it looked horrible. There were pieces of jagged timbers whirling and tossing around in this hell's caldron and he thought of swimming among them. The roar and thunder of the water; the livid tossings in the blackness and the awfulness of demoniac power suggested in the staggering impacts of the waves against the steamer's hull and the rending and grinding of timbers un-nerved him. "God ... Ruth, I—I couldn't do it!" he burst out at last. "Nobody could swim in that. I'd—I'd be smashed to pieces in the breakers. Look at them! Look at them!" And he pointed with shaking fingers at the raging water.

"But to the beach below there," cried Ruth appealingly. "You might manage that, Walter. Think of the women aboard. You might be able to reach the shore. I'll pray for you, Walter dear. Try, Walter, my brave boy. You're a good swimmer—"

He shook his head vehemently, angrily. "No, no, no! Ruth, darling. Don't ask me! I couldn't do it. Nobody could swim that. You're trying to send me to certain death. No, no, no! We'll hang on here until the men come from Eastville in the boats. They'll be here soon now. The storm will soon be over. Just wait, dear. Just wait!" There was a whimpering note of protest in his voice, and in the semi-darkness, Ruth looked at him in amazement. She heard him mumbling again. "Why should I go? ... certain death ... just wait. Just wait." She stared up at his face; noted the fear and horror expressed in it, and her lips curled contemptuously. "And you so often boasted of your swimming!" The scorn in her voice made Moodey writhe, but he hung on the life-line and mumbled. "I know. I know, Ruth ... but I couldn't swim in that. You want to see me drowned ... just wait!" The girl savagely disengaged his arm from around her waist, and to her brother she said with a trembling in her words. "Go, dear Juddy, go! And God go with you! There are no cowards in the Nickerson family—men or women—and ... there never will be!" And she kissed him.

Nickerson swung around to Helena. "I'm agoin', Helena," he said calmly. "So long, little girl!" He bent down and kissed her on the spray-drenched lips. "Go, darling, and may God aid you!" she cried, and when he dragged himself away the two women, clinging together, watched him vanish in the darkness with pallid faces upon which spray and tears mingled.

On the after-deck, McKenzie, who had been busy on a raft, saw Judson whipping off his coat. "And what are *you* going to do, Jud?" he asked. "Try to git in with a line," answered the other grimly. "I might manage to make the beach yonder, and if I can, I'll come up araround to the point ahead there and git a hawser ashore. Breeches-buoy, y'know."

"But—but you can't swim, Jud," exclaimed McKenzie protestingly, "You'll *never* make it!"

"I'll make a dam' good try anyways," growled the other determinedly. Donald laughed and proceeded to divest himself of his coat, pants and boots. There was a resolute look on his boyish features, but he still laughed as he stripped. "And what th' devil are you laughing at? And what are you cal'latin' you're agoin' to do?" cried Nickerson, staring at the young man in amazement.

"Me?" McKenzie stopped laughing, stared to leeward, and carefully scanned the sea—the racing, broiling run of it and the violent confusion of water which separated the wreck from the shore. "Why, Juddy, old timer, I'm laughing at the idea of you trying to scramble ashore on two planks. You'd be choked or drove under ere you'd made five fathom off the ship. Remember the *West Wind* and the *Livadia*? I've had some practice—you haven't. I'm going to let you tend the line, old timer, and *I'll* swim ashore!" He spoke the last sentence without laughing and in a voice that brooked no denial.

Nickerson demurred. "You've got a mother and you're all she's got—" The other nodded and said in the same grim tone, "If anything *should* happen, Jud, I rely on you to look after her. Now, get your line coiled and see that there is enough of it and no chafes or broken strands."

Captain Westhaver broke in, "It's a kile o' trawl ground-line, bran' noo stuff, an' stout an' strong. I got three hundred fathom here—" "But, hell!" growled Judson obstinately, "I'm agoin', Don—not you!" Donald pulled off his boots and tightened the waist-band of his under-drawers. "No, no, Jud!" he said. "What's the use of you going? It would only be wasted effort. You can't swim. I can. It's up to me. You're needed aboard to rig up that breeches-buoy and get the people off. If I shouldn't make it, you can try, but not before. Gimme that line!" "Th' lad's right," concurred the steamer captain, and he handed the end of the thin, light, trawl-line to McKenzie, who proceeded to knot it around his shoulders. "Now, Jud," he said finally. "I'm going to make for the beach yonder, and if I manage it, I'll carry my line up to the point ahead. When I give a signal, you bend a stout halliard and a block to it and I'll pull it ashore and rig my end of the gear to one of those trees. You know how the business is worked. Now, Jud, old man, so long! If anything *should* happen ... look after my mother!" And while Nickerson stood half-dazed with the suddenness of this usurpation of *his* voluntary forlorn hope, McKenzie was scrambling along to the stern of the pounding steamer. For a full minute he stood amidst the chill sprays awaiting a chance, and his slim body would be outlined against the livid whiteness of the foaming water. Several times when flying water from the waves slashed across the deck, the anxious watchers thought he had gone. They waited with their hearts in their mouths, and Nickerson nervously fingered the line. A smooth after a big sea; a momentary cessation of the tumult; a muffled shout from the slim figure at the rail—then into the back of a racing comber he dived!

Nickerson tending the line felt it weaving through his hands, and he leaned over the broken rail and stared into the spray and rain with chill fear clawing at his heart. He was trembling with anxiety for his friend—the lad he had trained in the ways of the sea and the man he loved as a brother—and he peered into the tumult of surging combers, into which Donald had gone, with nervous concern. Watching the sea and the line slipping



through his fingers in spasmodic jerks, he was unaware of two female figures scrambling along the drenched deck behind him. It was Helena and Ruth who, unable to remain lashed up for'ard, had come aft to see if Judson had gone on his desperate mission. Mistaking him for someone else, they cried fearfully, "Has he gone?"

Captain Westhaver heard and answered shortly, "Yes!" And added. "Take care an' hang on, girls!" Then Judson shouted out, "He's still going! He's still going! I believe he'll make it!"

"Oh!" The two women cried out together at the sound of the voice, and Helena asked quickly, "Who's that? Is that Juddy?"

"Aye! That's Cap'en Nickerson at th' rail," answered Westhaver.

"Then who's gone? Who's out there?" It was Ruth's question.

"Young Cap'en McKenzie! He's aswimmin' in to th' beach!"

Ruth gave a queer little cry. "Donald?" For a moment she stood as if dazed. She had been thinking of him all along and wondering where he was. And he was out in *that!* And he had not come to her! Everything seemed to swim before her, and she would have fallen had not Captain Westhaver grabbed her as she swayed. "Oh! oh!" she whimpered. "He's gone and I didn't know it! Oh! oh! he's gone.... Oh, God help him!" And with Helena and Westhaver holding her up, she stared into the blackness alternately sobbing and calling on the Almighty to guard and keep the man who was struggling through the breakers in an effort to save them all.

And McKenzie was having a desperate struggle—the greatest fight of his life! With his head down, and swimming a powerful overhand stroke, he got clear of the ship and into a broiling welter of leaping combers which toppled over on his body, forcing him under with the weight of the falling water and tossing him on their frothing crests like a shingle in an eddy. The tide, racing in with the sea and wind, was driving him towards the rocks, and he realized that, once in its grip, he would be done for—smashed to a pulp on the ledges which were dashing the seas to spray and effervescing foam.

It was about a hundred yards to the sand beach, but it was a hundred yards of raging water—a mill-race of shouting, roaring, fighting, whirling combers whipped to fury by wind, back-wash, tide and the inequalities of the bottom, and by the time he had three minutes in among this inferno of water he felt his strength giving out. He was choking for want of air; his mouth and nose were full of salt brine, and the buffeting of the waves and the drag of the tide were fast weakening him, and he hadn't made half the distance. Gasping for breath, he struggled on until he felt that he had reached the limit of his endurance. His muscles were lagging and refusing to respond. His heart was pounding as if it would burst inside his chest, and he found it increasingly hard to breathe. He thought of his mother and Ruth and murmured a prayer as his strokes became feebler. He was going to die—a modern Leander of Abydos—and he decided to throw up his hands and drown rather than be shattered on the rocks with the spark of life in his body. He had stopped swimming, when a kindly under-tow—an inshore eddy—caught him and bore him away from the ledges.

He thought dazedly of the women aboard the wreck and it spurred him to life again. Treading water in the momentary respite and gulping great chestfuls of air, he prepared himself for the final effort—the battle with the surf on the beach. He could discern the shore clearly now as he rose on a wave, and when he made out the sloping sand of the beach he took a last gulp of air and drove in on the back of a mighty comber. Husbanding his strength, he held back when it broke until he felt the sand under his feet. Digging his toes in, he tried to stem the back-wash, but he was too weak. His legs collapsed under him and he was caught in the following comber and rolled over and over in a broil of water and sand. Clawing desperately at the unresisting grains, he caught a projecting bolt from a buried wharf-timber, and hanging on to it with all the strength he could muster until the wave receded, he scrambled frantically on hands and knees up the beach ere the next breaker came pounding in.

For a full five minutes he lay prone with half the senses and breath knocked out of him, until the brain, recovering quicker than the muscles, began to urge, "Get up! Think of the women! Judson, Helena, Ruth!" Even *her* name came to him sub-consciously just as it had come when he was for giving up in the broil of it. He rolled painfully to his feet and staggered like a drunken man along the beach. He glanced at the loom of the steamer lying amidst the whitewater on the ledges, then suddenly felt for the line. It was still around his body, and he gave three strong jerks at it to see if it had parted. By the feel of it, he knew it was all right and mumbled thanks to God. Then, stumbling over the sand, boulders, and pieces of timber and trees, he ran for the point.

Aboard the wreck, Nickerson was almost frantic with fear. The line had not taken a fathom from him for about five minutes and he imagined the worst. Then three distinct tugs came on the cord which he held. He wheeled around with a triumphant bellow. "By the old red-headed Judas Priest! He's done it! By Godfrey! He's done it ... th' bully boy!" And he laughed like a drunken man.

Helena gave Ruth a violent shake and almost screamed, "Do you hear, Ruth? He's done it! He's ashore! Oh, God, we're saved! We're saved! Oh, Father, to thee our thanks ... for him ... and us!" Ruth nodded dumbly. She couldn't speak, but mentally she was praying and thanking the Almighty for His mercy.

Judson was bawling—calmly now. "He's getting araound to the Point. Git that block an' tayckle ready, Cap'en. You got that strop araound th' forem'st and a tail-block on? Good! And that ring-buoy and whip-line—have ye got it slung and ready to reeve off? Fine! We'll send that halliard rope ashore...." He and Westhaver walked forward with the line, shouting encouragement to the drenched, shivering, and now apathetic mob of people hanging in life-lines under the lee of the deck-house. The rising tide was sending solid water over the packet's upper decks now and pieces of the superstructure were sluicing over the lee rail. The people in the shelter of the house were often up to their knees in swirling water. McKenzie had just reached the shore in time! "Don't

git scared naow," consoled Westhaver. "We'll hev ye ashore in a jiffy. Th' rope's gone in ... cheer up ... soon be aout o' this!" And Judson was chattering away to him and the packet's crew as they rigged the breeches gear. "Knew him since he made his first voyage to sea ... a poor little whitefaced nipper of a 'prentice-boy in a lousy four-mast barque out o' Glasgow. Game as they make 'em.... I made a sailor out o' him ... th' little skinny nipper ... and naow he's a better man than me!"

"Aye!" said Eben solemnly, "and you're an able man yourself, Judson Nickerson! An able man!"

Up on the Point, Donald, shivering in his wet underwear, hauled the stout rope ashore and was lashing a block to a tree trunk when several men with lanterns appeared. They stared at him in astonishment, and in answer to their questions he pointed to seaward and replied huskily, "There she is! Steerin' gear wheel rope parted and she grounded on the ledge yonder. I'm rigging a breeches-buoy to bring the folks ashore.... Here! Fix this. My hands are numb! Look sharp or the old hooker will be falling to pieces in the pounding she's getting out there now!" The men—Eastville folks who had come out to the Point to see what had delayed the steamer—set to work and rigged the gear under McKenzie's direction. Within ten minutes they were hauling the first passengers ashore.

Donald stood huddled under a boulder and watched a number of the women land. He saw Ruth and Helena among them. He did not wish to see either of them—the events of the afternoon were too fresh in his mind. He was still bitter. Then he remembered his contract with Cal Heneker, and the memory spurred him to ask a man to loan him an overcoat and get him over to the town. Seeing that he could do no more, and that the packet's crowd would be rescued all right, he left for home in company with a farmer who had a horse and buggy with him.

His mother was standing in the door of Shelter Harbor when he arrived, and she almost went into hysterics when she saw him. "Don't be frightened, Mother," he soothed. "I'm all right and so is everybody else. The old steamer went aground in that storm, but everybody got off safe. I had to swim ashore and I left my clothes. So now, Mother dear, make me a good hot cup of tea while I change, for I must get aboard my ship and away with the tide. The storm is breaking off now and it's going to be a fine night."

Aching in every muscle, and with his shoulders, arms and legs skinned and bruised by the pounding he had got on the sand, Donald rubbed himself down with liniment and bandaged a few of the worst scrapes. Then he climbed stiffly into his sea clothes and went down-stairs.

Over a cup of scalding tea, hot biscuits and cake, he smiled at his mother and patted her cheek. "Dear old mother," he said with a tender note in his voice. "Always worrying and fretting about me."

"But just think, Donny, if you'd been drowned?" she said plaintively. He laughed happily. "I'm not born to be drowned, mammy-dear. Swimming is the only athletic accomplishment I have, and I can swim easier than I can walk. I did it easily. 'Twas only a hundred yards."

The mother shook her head as if doubting the light manner in which he was relating the experience of the evening, and she thought of the day, years ago, when M'Leish, mate of the *Sarmania*, had come to her with evil news. She shuddered involuntarily and her hand gripped that of her son's in a tense clasp. "Oh, Donny-laddie, if I were to lose you...?" She bit her lips and her eyes filled with tears at the bare thought.

He set down his cup and rose to his feet. Slipping his arms around her neck, he kissed her, saying tenderly. "Mother mine, you're not going to lose me. I'm yours always, and you're always mine!"

She smiled gravely and looked into his eyes. "Maybe ... someday, Donny, my son, you'll be saying that to another woman."

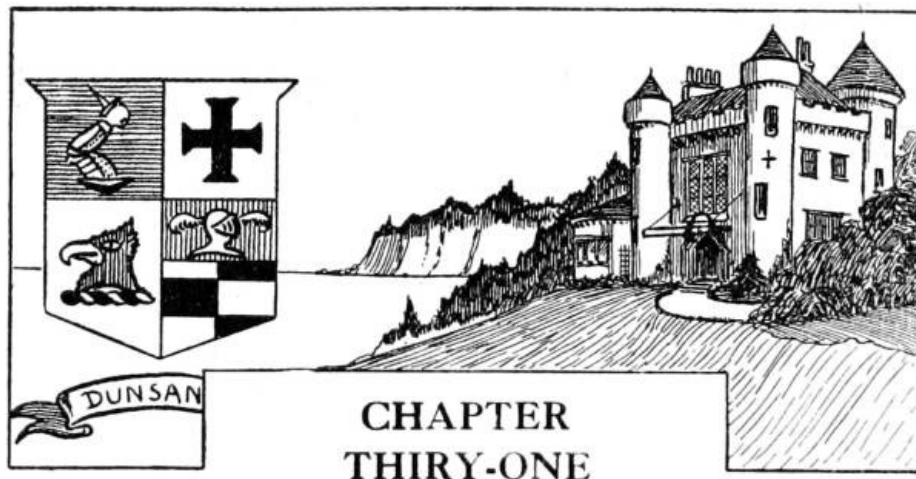
He winced imperceptibly, and into his tired eyes there flashed a sudden tense look—a shadow of painful memory reflected in the windows of the soul—then it vanished, and he smoothed her hair lovingly. "There is no other woman but you, Mother dear!"

And an hour later, and while the crew and passengers of the ill-fated packet steamer were being warmed and re-clothed in the farm houses near the scene of the wreck, Captain Donald McKenzie was stiffly and painfully pacing the quarter of the *Amy Anderson* standing out to sea.

The wind had dropped to a light breeze when they passed out of the channel. A heavy swell—aftermath of the gale—was running, and the wreck of the steamer could be distinctly discerned in the moonlight with the waves making a complete breach over it. The whole superstructure was gone, and nothing but the hull remained, and as he stared at it, McKenzie thought of the mental wreck he had experienced but a few hours previous. "Mrs. Walter Moodey," he murmured, and he smiled bitterly.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE



**M**CKENZIE drove the *Amy Anderson* for Porto Rico in a manner that gave his small crew some trepidation whenever there was more than ordinary wind blowing. He felt that he had to give vent to his feelings—to blow off steam as it were—and as he was too good-natured a man to take it out of his crew, he took it out of the vessel, and kept sail on her at times when prudence suggested otherwise.

On these occasions, he twirled the wheel himself and seemed to take a savage pleasure in hounding the schooner along, and several times he had her with half the deck under lee water and threatening to jump the masts over the side. Try as he might, he could not erase Ruth Nickerson from his mind, and with harassing persistence, the memory of the night in Halifax and the afternoon at Salvage Island kept rising before him—odious and inexplicable comparisons which tormented his thoughts and wrung his heart. He couldn't fathom the complex feminine nature which was capable of shifting around so quick. In his opinion, Ruth had led him on; he had bared his soul to her, and she had spurned him, cut him adrift, and given her heart and hand to another two months after he concluded she was his, and his alone.

When he thought of this, and of the visions, dreams and ambitions in which Ruth played so prominent a part, he endured mental agony which demanded relief. As he had neither taste nor inclination for drink or brutality, he found a counter distraction in driving the vessel. And under such pressure, the *Amy Anderson* arrived off San Juan nine days after leaving Eastville, with her foretopmast gone and all her light sails split through sail-dragging in one or two hard breezes.

In the Porto Rican city, he sought solace in riding into the country—leaving the schooner early in the morning and returning late at night. During these solitary excursions he debated his future course of action, and finally concluded to carry on as though nothing had interfered with his peace of mind. Ruth Nickerson would live in Halifax after she was married and he would see but little of her in Eastville. He loved that town; liked its people, and the Bank fisheries gave him a vocation and a livelihood which he enjoyed and which catered to his fascination for the sea and the myriad life which dwelt within it. In future, he would live and act as though Ruth Nickerson never existed. This was his resolution, but he found it terribly hard to forget.

An hour before sailing for Halifax with a cargo of barrelled molasses, the agent brought him three letters which came in the morning's mail-boat from New York. One was from his mother, the other from Judson Nickerson, but the hand-writing on the third—a small pink envelope—made his heart leap. His first impulse was to tear it open, but pride arrested him. "She's not worth it," he growled. "Mother comes first." And he thrust Ruth's letter into his pocket, adding under his breath, "Explanations, most likely ... or an announcement."

Mrs. McKenzie's letter was a long one and it bubbled over with news. "You are a regular hero here," she wrote, "and I have a bone to pick with you for not telling me about your swimming ashore through the surf and saving all those people. I am both proud and vexed with you, but I think my pride will overcome any vexation I may have at your failure to tell me more about the wreck and what you did. Everybody is talking about you, and, oh, sonny, but I'm proud. To-day, a cablegram came addressed to you from your friend Mr. McGlashan in Glasgow. I opened it and it runs: *Remain in Eastville. Will arrive Halifax July fifteenth. Very important. McGlashan.* I suppose you know what it is about. I saw Ruth Nickerson this morning. She was quite ill after the wreck and doesn't look very well yet."

He folded the letter up and placed it in his pocket for a second perusal later, but one item in it seemed to run in his mind. "Ruth ... ill?" he murmured, and slowly and deliberately, he reached into his pocket and took out her letter. For a space he gazed at the familiar handwriting on the envelope, then he broke it open and took out a sheet of pale pink paper folded in half, and with a firm-set mouth and cold eyes, he straightened it out. For a moment, the writing danced before his eyes, with the excited blood pounding from heart to brain, then his self-possession returned and he read the two or three lines which it contained.

DONALD:—

If you can forgive me, and trust me to renew your faith in women—ask me again.

RUTH.

The grim look faded from his face and gave place to one of perplexed astonishment. Scarcely believing he had read the note aright, he perused it a second time—reading the words out aloud. "If you can forgive me ... and

trust me ... ask me again!" And he stared at the little pink sheet—now trembling in his hand with the agitation of conflicting feelings—and murmured, "Ask me again!"

With a joyful cry he jumped to his feet—his dark eyes sparkling with a gladness which scarcely knew expression—and he stepped under the sky-light and re-read the letter for the third time. "Whoop-ee!" he cried in excess of new-found delight. "Will I forgive her? Why, she never did anything wrong! It must have been a mistake—all a mistake—for she's the dearest, sweetest, darlingest girl in the world!"

A tousled, sun-burned face peered down the cabin companionway, and a hoarse voice enquired, "Did I hear ye sing aout, Skipper?" Donald wheeled and laughed confusedly. "No, Anson, I didn't sing out, but if you're all ready to slip, get the stops off the sails and we'll slide right away for home. Everybody aboard? Cook get his water tanks filled? Good boy! Then we'll get under way!" And when Anson vanished, he kissed the little pink note, folded it carefully, and slipped it into the breast pocket of his shirt. Within thirty minutes the *Amy Anderson*, with the Canadian ensign flying from the main-gaff, and the four lowers on her, was slipping out of San Juan harbor to the urge of the steady north-east trade.

Running out to the nor'ad, the green hills of the Island soon changed into the blue of distance as they left it astern. McKenzie paced the weather quarter with his brain in a whirl of exhilaration and the tinkling bell of the patent log recording the knots sounded gloriously in his ears as evidence of the ever-shortening distance between him and the girl he loved. He trod the deck with a strange springiness, and when he scanned the bubbling broil of the wake astern, he could not restrain a joyous chuckle and an encouraging word to the man at the wheel, "Sock it to her, Billy old son! She's travelling home and the girls have got hold of the tow-rope! Give her a good full and let 'er slide!"

He paced the deck for an hour, then he had to go below and read those magical words once more to make sure that his eyes were not deceiving him.

No, by Jupiter! There it was—plain as a hand-spike in her own dear hand-writing. "Ask me again." Would he ask her again? Why, the *Amy Anderson* couldn't travel fast enough to give him the opportunity! In his excitement, he paced the narrow cabin, staggering and swaying with the rolling of the vessel, and murmuring to himself, "Ask me again!"

He suddenly remembered Judson's letter and opened it quickly. Stretching out on the locker, he composed himself to read it. Good old Juddy! What did he have to say, the old bucko! "Dear Don," it ran. "Congratulate me! I'm the happiest man in the world, old timer. Helena has said the word and we're going to sail dory-mates just as soon as the Devil-dodger makes a long splice of it. I'm waiting for her to name the day, then, old son, you can polish up your gaff-topsail hat and overhaul your square-mainsail coat and stand beside your old skipper and see everything all clear for my getting under way on a new voyage. If it wasn't for Eben Westhaver's old packet bumping the ledges, I reckon I'd still be guessing, but I've no hard feelings against that sorry old coaster now. And, bye the bye, Don, you pulled out in a hell of a hurry that night. You seemed to think it was of more importance to get Cal Heneker's old scow to Porto Reek than it was to see all us shipwrecked folks ashore. However, the town will have a band playing for you when you get home. The Ladies' Aid of the Church and the Young People's Society are both squabbling among themselves as to how they'll honor you, while Tom Daley, the Mayor, is prating to the Council about recognizing Eastville's esteemed citizen, Captain Donald McKenzie, with something worthy of your plucky work that night. They've petitioned the Royal Humane, the Government and Lloyd's to honor you, and I tell you, son, they had scare-heads in the Halifax papers about 'the thrilling rescue.' But enough of that. You are going to get no more soft-soap from me on that subject. My sister Ruth was quite sick after the affair, but she's chased that nut Moodey back to where he belongs. On the steamer that night she asked him to swim ashore with a line—he's bragged a whale of a lot about his swimming abilities to her—but he got a sudden attack of Cape Horn fever and balked at the job. I always said that joker had a yellow streak in him somewhere, and that was where he showed it. If he wasn't such an able swimmer and such a mouth about it, I wouldn't have felt so mad about the blighter. But, believe me, Don, I gave him an earful when we got ashore that night. It took me a while to square myself with the girls for the language which they said I used towards him. Now, *you* know, Donny-my-lad, that I'd only express my feelings in good old sailor fashion, but shore-folks don't understand our particular lingo, though I'll bet Moodey did. Now, old shippy, I'm going out again in the morning, but I'll look for you in September, and you can bet my bullies will hump some this time. We'll spin 'em out when the gulls can't fly to wind'ard, and I plan to wet a pile of salt and bait small and catch 'em large from now out." When he finished reading, McKenzie chuckled happily.

On a windy July morning, the *Amy Anderson* stormed up Halifax harbor and came to an anchor in the stream. McKenzie went ashore and got Caleb Heneker on the telephone and was over-joyed when that worthy told him to deliver his cargo to a certain Agent and pay off. The schooner would load dry fish in Halifax later in the month and sail for Demerara, and if he cared to do so, he could take her down when ready. Next day, late in the afternoon, Donald drove into Eastville, and slipping along the hill road, he got home before any of the town's-people were aware of his arrival.

"And Donny, my son," said his mother, after the welcoming and exchange of news, "they're planning a public reception to you for that rescue. It was a wonderfully brave thing you did that night, laddie—" And she chatted joyfully in the same strain, but Donald wasn't listening. He was thinking of just how soon he could call upon Ruth Nickerson.

"Have I any decent clothes, Mother?" he asked suddenly—interrupting her in the middle of an announcement of what the Ladies' Aid were proposing to do.

"Only an old suit, dear," she replied. "Your best suit you left on the wreck—"

He rose and patted her on the shoulder. "Then, Mother dear, if you will be sweet enough to give it a bit of a press while I'm cleaning up, I'll wear it."

After supper, he kissed his mother. "I'm going down the road, Mater dear—"

Mrs. McKenzie gave a knowing smile. "Oh, yes, laddie, and you might give my regards to Ruth and tell her I hope she's feeling better." Donald blushed under his tan. "Who said I was going to see Ruth?" he asked confusedly. The mother turned him around and gently pushed him through the door. "Run along, Donny," she said with a laugh. "You can't hide anything from your mother. Give her my love!"

Ruth was not at home when he called, but Mrs. Nickerson thought she had taken a walk in the direction of the Cape. For several precious minutes the old lady detained him to talk about the wreck (Donald was inwardly damning the wreck) but at last he managed to break away by saying he would stroll along and meet Ruth and come home with her. As soon as he was out of sight from the houses, he broke into a run.

He spied her at last, in the half-light of declining day, sitting on the grass alone and watching the sea. It was in his favorite spot in the little hollow behind the head-land, and he trotted up behind her—his foot-falls making no sound on the green sod. A short space away from where she sat with her face turned away from him, he stopped and cried softly, "Ruth!"

She was on her feet in an instant and facing him—her cheeks flaming rose and a wonderful light in her deep blue eyes. "Donald!" Sweet and low the name sounded from her lips and his heart thrilled. He advanced towards her and took her hand. "Will we sit down again?"

She nodded shyly and dropped to the grass and he still retained his clasp of her hand. He scanned her face. How beautiful it seemed in the rosy glow from the westering sun. "I got your letter," he said simply. She made no reply, but sat nervously plucking at a wild flower, and her eyes were lowered to the ground.

There came into Donald's soul at this moment the thrill of splendid hours—vistas of momentous events in his young life; reefing down jobs on the topsail yards of the *Kelvinhaugh* in the wild squalls of the Horn; the storming excitement of "running the easting" in the *Helen Starbuck*; delirious drives for port on fishermen in pelting winds and heavy seas, and all the exhilarating sensations which come to sailors every now and again. He could remember his feelings at those times—the quickening pulse, the rapid heart-beats, the alertness of eye, mind and muscle and the expectancy of ultimate conquest. He was feeling that way now. "And I've come to ask you again," he said at last and with something of a tremor in his voice. Taking a full breath, he asked boldly, "Ruth! will you be my wife?"

She looked up slowly—very slowly it seemed—and her eyes looked clear and glowing into his. Then softly, very softly, she answered, "Yes!" And Donald's arm was around her and he was pressing her to him and his kisses were upon her lips.

"And you'll be content to marry me—a fisherman?" enquired he when the first ecstasy of love had passed. "You know what I am and what I have. Will you make the sacrifice?"

She smiled happily. "It's no sacrifice, dear," she replied. "I'm proud and glad to be yours, no matter what you are. It's not the occupation that counts ... it's the man!"

The rosy glow in the west faded and the azure of the summer night claimed the sky from nadir to zenith, while the glorious host of stellar worlds aloft spangled the heavens in myriad twinklings of diamond lights. The earth exhaled the scent of wild flowers and the warm wind wafted the odors of spruce and pine to where they sat. A night bird warbled a happy song to its mate, and its paeon of love found a responsive chord in the hearts of the two who listened.

"Isn't this just lovely, Don?" ventured Ruth. "The night, the stars, the flowers, the world, everything...!" Donald pressed her to him and looked into her upturned face, his dark eyes radiant with the joy that was his. "Not half so lovely as you, dear!"

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Donald got to bed very late that night and next morning he confided his secret to his mother. "And I hope you won't be jealous, Mater dear," he added, "for you are still my lovely sweet mother, and Ruth will not usurp any of the love I bear for you. She'll share it with you, and we should all be very happy."

She flashed him a look of infinite tenderness. It didn't seem so very long ago when he was a pale, shrinking, sensitive lad whom she comforted and petted and caressed. Here he was a lithe, strong, sun-tanned, capable man starting out on the high-road of love's adventure. "You'll both be my children, laddie. You've brought me another one, and I'll love her for her own sake as well as yours. She's a dear lassie, and I'm glad—oh, so glad!" Then a shade of worry crossed her face and Donald noted it.

"What are you thinking about, Mater?" he asked.

She hesitated before replying, "Are you sure—do you think Ruth will be content to live here, and—and get along on your earnings? It's quite a drop from what she's been used to." Anxious concern was reflected in her eyes.

He squared his shoulders. "Don't you worry about that, Mater dear," he said confidently. "I'll be skipper of a fishing vessel next Spring and I'll make enough to keep us comfortable. I know my work. I'm ambitious. I'll invest in vessels and build up a competence just as the others around here have done. Ruth knows our circumstances and position, and she'll tuck in. She's cultured and well-educated, but she can cook and sew and do housework as well as the best. That's the sort of a girl I'm taking for a wife—a girl in a thousand!" And he spoke the last words proudly. The mother watched him swing out into the garden—strong, optimistic and full of the confidence of youth. Aye, she mused, he had done well. Master of a vessel at twenty-two and earning more than many a commander on a liner, and successful in love and ambitious.... He would be alright

... if the sea and the Almighty willed it so.

Two or three days later, and while Donald was chopping wood at the back of the house, he heard a familiar voice in the kitchen talking to his mother. It had a strong Scotch burr there was no mistaking, and Don hove down the axe and strode hastily into the house to find Joak McGlashan seated in the parlor. There was a stranger with him—a dapper looking gentleman, middle-aged, clean-shaven, and wearing good clothes of an unmistakable English cut. When McKenzie walked in, Joak sprung to his feet, his face beaming. "Hulloh, there, Donal!" he shouted. "My! but I'm gled tae see ye! Ye got ma cable, eh?"

The important happenings of recent days had driven all thought of the cable out of Donald's mind, and he stammered a wondering affirmative. He had regarded the matter as being of no particular importance. Joak wanted to secure a berth as cook with him, possibly, and he would certainly get it if McKenzie had the ordaining of it. The other turned and indicated the stranger who was standing gravely waiting. "This is Mistur Montgomery o' Glesca'," he observed, "and he come oot here tae Novy Scotia tae see you and yer mither here about verra important business." And having made the introduction, Joak sat down and nervously lit a clay pipe.

Mr. Montgomery extended a hand to mother and son, and he lifted a despatch case on to the table and opened it. "I'm a solicitor," he said briefly. And while the two McKenzies stared at him wonderingly, he pulled a sheaf of documents out on the table and adjusted a pair of *pince nez* on his nose. Clearing his throat, he began, "Er—I have a disagreeable task to perform, Captain"—he addressed Donald—"in telling you that your respected uncle has passed away. Died very suddenly—very tragic affair!" He looked over his glasses at mother and son, and sighed. Mrs. McKenzie clasped and unclasped her fingers nervously and her eyebrows went up in consternation at the announcement, but Donald's tanned face was unmoved. "Too bad," he remarked calmly. He took a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and lit one.

The legal gentleman nodded. "Yes ... too bad." Then he enquired with a corrugation of his forehead and in a mildly suggestive tone, "You—er—haven't kept in touch with your relatives in Scotland, have you?"

"No, sir," answered Donald coolly, and he blew a smoke ring, "nor they with us."

The other gave a respectful cough and drew his chair closer to the table. "Possibly, I'd better go into the matter and explain the object of my visit to British North America." McKenzie smiled at the appellation. With the tips of his fingers together, Mr. Montgomery leaned with his elbows on the table and said, "Your husband, Mrs. McKenzie, was a nephew of the late Sir Alastair McKenzie, Baronet, of Dunsany Castle, Scotland. You, of course, were aware of that." Janet nodded. "Now," he continued, "Sir Alastair had but one son—his wife died many years ago—and when Sir Alastair passed away, the title and estate naturally went to the son Roderick. This young man, I regret to say, was in very poor health—in fact, he was a consumptive—and he never married. He knew, that having no direct issue, the title and estate would have to pass to another branch of the family; namely, his father's nephew or his issue—"

"That would be David McKenzie," interrupted Janet interestedly.

The lawyer shook his head. "No, Madam! It would be your late husband—Alexander McKenzie!"

A blank look came over the mother's face and for a moment she couldn't speak. At last she stuttered, "How—how could—could—that be, sir? David was the elder!"

"No, Madam! On the contrary, Alexander was the elder by an extremely narrow margin. You knew, of course, that David and Alexander were twins?"

Mrs. McKenzie gasped. "No, I didn't! This is the first time I ever knew of it! Poor Alec never once told me that he and David were twin brothers, and I always thought David was years older than my husband—"

The other shook his head. "No, that is not so. David may have *looked* older. Possibly his sedentary and rigorous manner of living made him appear that way, but your husband was older than David by a few minutes, and the birth, date and time is thus recorded in the Edinburgh Registrar's records." And while Donald and his mother were puzzling over what they had heard and wondering what was coming, Mr. Montgomery continued.

"Your unfortunate husband having been drowned at sea, the heir to the baronetcy was, of course, your son the Captain there. Under Sir Roderick's instructions, an investigation was made for the next of kin some years ago, and we found that your son Donald had gone to sea in a Glasgow sailing ship and was supposed to have been drowned in Vancouver. That being the case, David McKenzie would succeed on Sir Roderick's demise, and then would come David's son Alastair the second," Donald was blowing smoke-rings and smiling strangely. It was as if he had guessed something.

"Now we come to the particularly tragic aspect of this affair." The legal gentleman paused for a fresh start. "Some ten weeks ago, Mrs. David McKenzie, the boy Alastair, Sir Roderick and a chauffeur were motoring down from Dunsany to Glasgow when the steering apparatus of the motor car broke or jammed and it plunged over the high bank into Loch Velaig. I regret to say that both Mrs. McKenzie and the boy were drowned. Sir Roderick was saved by the chauffeur, but died within a few days from the exposure in the chilly water. The chauffeur went direct to Glasgow to Mr. David's office and told him the sad news. The shock was too much for him, evidently, for he was found dead in his chair a half an hour afterwards."

Mrs. McKenzie was listening with horror-struck features and Donald was visibly affected at the recital of the ghastly retribution which had come to his uncle. Retribution it was ... and Donald shuddered at the horror of it. Mr. Montgomery continued with legal deliberation and calmness. "We could find no heirs, of course, and the matter was advertised in the papers. The whole story was given, and it stated that you, Captain, had been drowned in Vancouver harbor. A few days after publication in the Glasgow press, Mr. McGlashan comes to us

stating that Donald McKenzie was alive and in Canada, and he told us of your running away from the ship and making believe you were drowned. He produced evidence so convincing that we got in touch with two men who had been shipmates with you, Thompson and Jenkins, and, as a result, I am here in the colonies to settle this business." The quizzical expression came on Donald's face again and he calmly lit another cigarette.

Turning to Mrs. McKenzie, the solicitor enquired, "You have your marriage certificate and your son's birth certificate, I presume? Yes? Very good!" The mother produced them and when Mr. Montgomery had finished examining them, he rose to his feet and walked towards Donald. "There are, of course, some legal details to be gone into, but the case is pretty clear." He held out his hand and in his most cordial professional manner exclaimed, "Allow me to congratulate you, *Sir Donald!*"

The mother gasped audibly, but her son was calmer and in control of his feelings. With a queer smile on his face, he asked: "The Dunsany estate? It is mortgaged, is it not?"

"To the hilt, sir," answered the other. "There is no revenue from it—"

Blowing a series of smoke rings, McKenzie laughed a little and said very calmly, "I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Montgomery. But I don't know as I can thank you for coming out to Canada and handing me a title. As a sailor, I don't know what to do with it. The estate, I understand, brings no income. What's the use of a title to me? I'm a skipper of a fishing vessel and I'm certainly not going to accept a title and have my crew calling me 'Sir' or have people observing that 'Sir Donald struck a big jag of hake on Western this time,' or have my gang joking about being skippered by a baronet. It would be the biggest joke on the Banks. All the trawlers would be swinging off to have a look at me to see if I wore a coronet!" He became serious again. "No, sir, I think I'll let it drop. Pass it on to someone with the money to keep up the style which should go with the thing. At the present time, to me, it would be as useful as the Dutchman's anchor—" He stopped at his mother's reproachful "Oh, Donald!" Poor woman! Her pride was being sorely tried by her son's perversity. "Sir Donald!" It had a rare impressive sound and she was just beginning to feel that life was sweet, joyous and tremendously portentous. Her son a baronet! And so he should be.

Montgomery smiled and raised his hand. "You should permit me to finish," he said. "Your uncle, David McKenzie, has no heirs, and you are the next of kin. He was a wealthy man—one of Glasgow's merchant princes—and the value of his estate, including cash, bonds, stocks and shares, his ships, and so on, which will come to you, is in the neighborhood, I should judge, of eight hundred thousand pounds!"

Joak's clay pipe broke between his teeth, and as it clattered to the floor, he ejaculated, "Ma guid gracious! Eight hunner thoosan' pounds!" Mrs. McKenzie looked dazed, and Donald sat quietly plucking at the fringes of the tablecloth.

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The solicitor departed for the hotel after examining certain papers which Mrs. McKenzie produced for his inspection, and before he left he said, "It will be necessary for you both to come to Scotland in order that we might settle up the estate. I will leave you a draft to cover the necessary expenses, and it would be well for you to leave as soon as possible." He bowed gravely, "I am at your service, Sir Donald, and I trust we may have the pleasure of handling your business in future. I bid you a very good evening!" And he and McGlashan went out together, but not before Donald had warned Joak. "See here, you old Turk, not a word to anyone about this affair ... yet. And furthermore, I don't want any of that damned *sir-ing* from you. Cut it out in future!" And he gave his old chum a slap on the back and had him chuckling in unfeigned delight.

For an hour, mother and son discussed the matter—Janet excited and exuberant; Donald, calm and thoughtful. "You know, Mater," he said at last, "I've been putting two and two together and I've figured out Uncle Davey's little plans. He knew that Roderick McKenzie was a lunger and not likely to live long, and he knew that I stood in the way of his succession to the Dunsany baronetcy. Knowing those things, he worked those schemes to get rid of me aboard the *Kelvinhaugh*. The idea just struck him when we went to his office that time. And, do you know, I don't believe he was thinking of himself. It was all for his son and his family pride that he toiled and scrimped and did shady tricks so that when the time came he could restore the family fortunes and uphold the dignity of the house. But, you see, after all, he lost out in the end. Aye, the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small!" He sighed and rose to his feet. "Mater dear, if you'll rustle the grub on the table the baronet and his mamma will have supper. I want to go over and see Ruth. I have a very interesting evening ahead of me."

He dressed himself with particular care that night—particular in the *selection* of his clothes. With a blue flannel shirt, a cheap tie, faded coat and pants, and a pair of heavy boots on his feet, he surveyed himself in the glass and chuckled boisterously, "Now, Sir Donald," he said to himself, "you look the part as right as rain. A poor trawl-hauler dolled up to see his girl. If Ruth'll love me in this rig, she'll love me in anything. I'll test her affections to-night for sure!"

A few minutes later, he clumped upon the veranda of the Nickerson home. Old Mr. Nickerson was reading a paper and looked up over his glasses. "Waal, young feller," he boomed cordially, "an' haow does it feel to be a hero? The old taown certainly gave ye a good reception t'other night, eh? And I cal'late that young girl of aours is as proud as a dog with two tails to hev a man all Eastville is makin' a fuss of. Cal Heneker tells me he's agoin' to give ye his best vessel to take afishin' next Spring.... Aye! aye! ye're a lucky young feller all 'raound. Ruth? She's inside washin' up the supper things." And he resumed his reading again—thinking for a moment of the days when he, too, was young.

McKenzie led Ruth off to his favorite spot behind the headland, and they sat down on the grass. "Whatever's on your mind, Donald?" asked the girl. "You've been looking so mysterious and acting as though you were suppressing something that I'm sure you've got a surprise hidden. Be kind, now, and let your poor curious

little Ruthie in on the secret.”

He looked smiling into her eyes. “Yes, Ruthie, dear, I have something—something to ask you. Will you marry me right away?”

She recoiled. “Right away? Good gracious, Don, how can I?”

“How can’t you, sweetheart?” He asked the question with a laugh.

“Why—why, I—I have to get a hundred and one things ready, Don,” she answered. “You can’t expect a girl to marry you the day after the engagement. I’ve a host of things to get ready. I haven’t got a full Hope Chest. There’s linen to make up and embroider; dresses to be made, and—and—” She paused in confusion at the mental vista of nuptial concomitants.

“And?”

“And—and lots of things you have no business to know anything about,” she added hastily, while an embarrassed flush crept into her cheeks.

Donald pretended not to notice, and made a careless gesture. “Oh, you could get all those things afterwards, dear. You know, the *Amy Anderson* sails for Demerara next week. Don’t you think a trip down there would make an ideal honeymoon? I may not get a chance to take you on the trip *I’m thinking of* unless you marry me right away.” It was a carefully worded series of sentences. There was no accommodation for a woman on the *Amy Anderson*.

Ruth thought for a moment, then, with sparkling eyes, she cried, “That would be lovely, Donald, I’m willing, but—but—let’s go home and talk it over with mother first.”

For answer he caught her around the shoulders and turned her towards him. Looking down into her eyes, he said earnestly, “Ruthie, darling, are you *sure* you love me? Will you be content to marry me—a fisherman—and be a fisherman’s wife? Would you, if your mother consented, marry me in a few days, and sail with me adown the seas on a sailor’s honeymoon? Would you?” With heart thumping wildly, he waited for her answer, and when it came—a soft-spoken “Yes!”—he saw her face alight with the pure flame of love and her blue eyes smiling with adoration of him. Then he kissed her fervidly and laughed with the joy of realization and triumph.

“So we shall, sweetheart,” he cried joyously. “We shall get married and you’ll sail with me—not to Demerara—but to auld, grey Scotland. And you’ll sail as a sailor’s bride, for I am of the sailor breed, but not as a fisherman’s wife, for you’ll be Lady Ruth McKenzie! Aye, sweetheart, Lady Ruth McKenzie, wife of Sir Donald McKenzie of Dunsany, and heir to eight hundred thousand pounds!”

The sun glow flared in the golden west and the whispering spruce and pines stirred in the evening breeze as the night-bird gave tune to his nocturnal serenade. On the bold head-land, facing the eternal sea, two deliriously happy souls gazed out upon the waters, and the man murmured, “I’ve seen it in murmuring calms and crooning under the stars, and I’ve seen it when the hail and sleet and the big graybacks went roaring down the wind. It has been cruel and kind; it has scourged me and inspired me; it took my father ruthlessly from me, but it made of me a man! It has taken much, but it has given much. It brought me to you, and I love it, as I love you, for it has given me the greatest blessing in all the wide, wide world ... you!”

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## EPILOGUE

(EXTRACT FROM AN ARTICLE IN THE “COMMUNITY MAGAZINE.”)

A striking example of the benefits which can be conferred upon a small town through the munificence of one of its citizens can be seen in the little fishing port of Eastville, Nova Scotia. Eastville is probably one of the most contented towns on the continent of America, and it owes its many advantages as a community to a young sailor-fisherman—Sir Donald Percival McKenzie, Bart.

Many years ago, Donald McKenzie came to Eastville as a poor sailor lad in company with Captain Nickerson, who had befriended him at sea. He afterwards sailed in Bank fishing schooners with Nickerson and learned the business of a fisherman. In those days he had no knowledge of the good fortune which was in store for him, but plied his hazardous vocation until he commanded a vessel of his own at twenty-one. Through a strange turn of fate, the Eastville fishing skipper fell heir to an ancient Scottish baronetcy and a fortune estimated at four million dollars.

Instead of returning to live on the ancestral estate in the Highlands of Scotland, Sir Donald built a modern replica of Dunsany Castle on Eastville Cape, and devoted his money and talents to the benefit of his adopted town. As an experienced fisherman, he naturally turned his attention to the fishing industry, and organized a company in which practically all the citizens of Eastville are share-holders. This thriving concern, known as the Eastville Community Fisheries, Ltd., own and operate a fine fleet of some fifty fishing schooners and West India freighters, and the shore establishments consist of a cold storage, fish cannery, sail lofts, blacksmith



shop, shipyard, marine railway, and large buildings and drying yards for the preparation of dried salted fish.

Through his influence, Eastville was connected up with the main line of railway with two trains daily, and he has endowed the town with a cottage hospital, a public library, and a splendid building for meetings and entertainments, known as the Alexander McKenzie Memorial Hall—erected to the memory of Sir Donald's father, a sea-captain drowned at sea. Many other instances could be cited of this young man's regard for his adopted town, not the least of which is his thoughtfulness in caring for former ship-mates. A sea cook, John McGlashan—a boyhood chum—is in charge of a completely-stocked grocery store and commissariat for outfitting the fleet; a fisherman, Sanders, who lost a leg on a vessel Sir Donald commanded, is in charge of the vessel gear stores, and the General Superintendent of the fleets and plants and assistant manager, is the Captain Nickerson who befriended him. The whole town is employed, directly or indirectly, in the McKenzie enterprises, and there is ample evidence that all are thriving and paying propositions.

It was the writer's privilege to visit Dunsany Castle and meet Sir Donald and his charming wife. Built exactly to the dimensions and in the style of the original Scottish castle, insofar as outside appearance is concerned, the residence boasts a modern interior in heating, lighting and other conveniences. The rooms are hung with numerous tapestries and paintings—ancestral heirlooms removed from Scotland, while many of the latter are the productions of Sir Donald and his wife, both of whom are artists of no mean ability. From the upper windows of the residence a magnificent view of the Atlantic is obtained, and Sir Donald explained that as he could not remain actively at sea, he had to have a place where he could at least look upon it. The Laird of Dunsany, however, holds a master mariner's certificate, and spends much time on the water in marine biological work, and in winter months, he sails and navigates his own yacht on southern cruises.

... In conversing with the townspeople, one is struck by the affection and admiration which they all have for Sir Donald, Lady McKenzie and Sir Donald's mother. All three have apparently bound themselves up in the social life of the community and endeared themselves to all who know them, and it is a distinct pleasure to meet fishermen who boast of having either sailed under his command or as dory-mates or ship-mates in fishing vessels. In this hectic age when most capitalists are looked upon with dislike by the working people, it was a treat to be able to visit a community where the head of it was held in such genuine esteem.

For to see the successful operation of the community system to an industry, at once romantic and hazardous, and for a living example of a capitalist who knows the sea as only sailors know it, and whose life is a record of adventure and daring deeds, I would have you journey to the pleasant town of Eastville, Nova Scotia.

## THE END



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**Transcriber's Note:**

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