

Coastwise in B. C. Waters

By Bonnycastle Dale

Photographs by the Author and Fleming, Victoria



We were coastwise bound on the "Grumet," a big round-the-world freighter, a seventeen thousand tonner, a triumph of modern ship-building from that old Mother-of-Nations—Britain. Where there was room there stood some time-saving machine for loading and unloading, she was as full of hatches as a bee-hive of cells and she was loaded with what the Jacky called "Miss-a-lane-uss." Pickles from London suburbs, firebricks from Manchester, preserved fruits from southern ports, dried fruits from eastern shores, weird confections and rice from Japan, dried "duck," strange nuts, huge oranges—as big as cocoanuts—distorted fish, edible birds' nests from China and what not from way ports.

We made Seattle at eight bells—whatever that is—Fritz said it was surely a call for dinner—every bell is a dinner bell to the ever-hungry lad—and we went down from the bridge, just in time to see as neat a little scrap as we ever gazed on. Our crew was composed of Lascars, Philipinos, and—as the Mate said "plain devils." They had decided among themselves to go ashore and have a whale of a time, as they had not had any shore leave since the mudhook came aboard at Yokohama. The Mate had decided otherwise. No sooner were the lines fast at Seattle than the polyglot crew got ready to take that ungranted short leave.

"I've got my little 'eoca-bola,' sir, my little Yellow-Man Persuader," said the First Mate as he passed down the companion way.

"And I've got a little six-jolter here," laughed the Second Mate.

"And I'm a regular walking arsenal," said the Captain as he showed me a couple of big old-time Colts shoved into either pea jacket pocket. As I took a look at the great tanned ham-like hands of him I pitied those dark-eyed little mutineers below.

"What's this?" cried the Mate, "It's

shore you want—down below with you—you almond-eyed son-of-a-gun." A kick punctuated every word.

"Crew below—every man jack of you," cried the Captain.

"Look out you mummies," yelled the Second Mate as he leaped into the fray. It was now a regular seething mass below us—we stood on the edge of the upper hatchway—little yellow fists, big red fists struck and waved madly.

"Murder—Look out, Captain," howled Fritz beside me—as a lithe Lascar drew a long curved knife and threw his hand back to make a stab at the Captain's back. I could just see a leaping black figure pass my eyes and a sailor flew through the air from above us and struck with both feet on the shoulders of the yellow-skinned renegade—Lascar and knife and sailor went down in one swift rush—then, and only then—the

Captain drew those two big blue Colts and sent a rattling volley over the mutineers' heads. Instantly reversing and clutching them by the barrels he sailed in and the Orientals went down like ripe stalks before the reaper. Thirty minutes later the yellow skins were wheeling rice and boxes and bales as if nothing had happened.

"Blast their withered skins, a thousand dollars fine a head for every one that lands, nice fine to put on the owner's books, eh!" puffed the Captain.

"I was going to leap on that squinting devil's shoulders if the Jackie hadn't," said Fritz—and I admitted I was just feeling like it myself a wee bit.

A sharp watch and all were safely aboard when the lines were cast off after dark—but we lost two before we were clear of the harbor—two sullen splashes told of the escape—some swift strange calls on the whistle and we saw a couple of police boats—little gasoline powered craft—come sweeping out, their bright head-lights searching the scene—and both of the Chinese that tried the water route were handed over to us a few days later at the port of Victoria.

We left the "Grumet" at this place and transferred aboard the palatial "Prince George"—what a transformation—from the dark freighter's machinery-crowded ways to the magnificent along-decks promenade of this most modern passenger ship. The tide was running swiftly around Wreck Island, but beyond tipping us over a bit it did not bother us—there was a good bit of a sea too but she rode it like a duck.

"Sell, oh! sell the 'Terra Nova' (our own little steam puffer) and buy this good steady boat, sir," laughed Fritz. Truly we had suffered on the wee unstable craft, but she had never quite drowned us, which was something to say if you could see her cut up didoes. "I'll bet a landlubber a pound of fog that he cannot tell whether we are going out or coming in the 'tide-rips'—I can't myself—when we run that little 'Turn Over,'" continued the lad.

All that day we passed the fir crowded islands of the Gulf of Georgia, past the



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