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STORIES OF THE SEA

By EDWARD JENKINS, M.P.

Author of "Little Hodge," "Lord Bantam," "Ginx's Baby," &c.

CHAPTER XIV.

Delayed by a fog, it was early on Monday morning, the eleventh day out, when the Kamaschatkan, steaming through the great opening of Casco bay, approached the harbour of Portland. On board all was excitement and preparation. Passengers, officers, seamen, stewards and baggage, were mixing themselves up in a conglomerate that promised to be insoluble. Above the stirring scene, on the bridge, the pilot who had been picked up thirty miles away, coolly chatted with the captain as they watched the points of the lapping headlands, opening up one after the other. Joyous seemed the morning sun, and enlivening the brisk keen wind that came off the snow-spread country, on which rested so many curious eyes. The Canadian and American passengers were anxiously calculating their chances of reaching home in time for the celebration of Christmas—a day and an idea which carries all round the great world an unbroken circle of festivity; and their brightened fancy looked forward to affectionate greetings and pleasures doubled by glad reunion. But to the majority it was a chill and wondering look-out. What Christmas cheer was there for them in that vast icesprent land, among a strange people and in circumstances so new and so painful? Little Miss Beckwith, gazing earnestly at the approaching shore as she stood alone by the wheelhouse, drew her thin cloak closer round her spare figure, and shuddered not so much at the cold as with sorrowful apprehension. Some one, however, had been looking at the thin blue face, and came up abruptly with a kindly gentleness in his voice. It was Sandy McGowkie. His countenance was a picture of efflorescent comfort and good health.

"Eh! Miss Beckwith," he cried. "This will be a cold look-out for ye! But it's not so cold when you get to it, as it looks from here, and feels, too. Ye seem to be half frozen. I'll warrant ye've never thought of getting yourself any warm winter clothing, now!"

"O yes, I am quite warm enough, thank you, Mr. McGowkie," cried the little woman, a faint dash of blood flushing the skin for a moment, but never changing the blue of the brave lips which she pressed closely together to stop the tremor, lest it should belie her words.

"Ay, but not enough," persisted Sandy. "Ye're for Montreal, now, are ye not?"

"Yes," she said.

"Ah! well now, Mistress McGowkie was just saying that you'd be unco' lonely and sad to-morrow, for a stranger in a strange land, and we'll be lonely to. Ye'll just please go on with us, and eat a Christmas dinner at St. Lawrence Hall, for I'm thinking we shall not get all the way home to Toronto in time. Come away, now, and get a big shawl to keep ye warm. It's a new one, and they'll pass it more readily at the customs if it's on your back, and we shall be greatly obliged to ye."

Following Mr. McGowkie to the cabin he occupied jointly with his wife, the governess was soon wrapped up cosily in a huge, soft, lambswool shawl, and the touch of a generous sympathy sent a glow through her shivering heart.

"Eh!" cried McGowkie, "but where is my wifie, now? Ay! ay! she'll be away with that young lord, looking after they doitering divorsees, as she calls them. Hout! What a matter these quarrelling mates make o' life! Ye'll just come with me then and indicate your luggage, and I'll see that it goes with ours; and, mind ye, if ye please, ye'll be our guest so long as we are together, and you'll not mention a syllable about the expenses, or I'll cast ye off, bag and baggage."

Mrs. McGowkie was indeed engaged in the purser's cabin. To avoid a scene on the boat or on the pier, which would have been inevitable had the expectant bridegroom recognised the lady, it had been decided at a council held in the captain's cabin, that Mrs. Belldoran and Mr. Corcoran must be smuggled ashore in disguise, and get away from Portland as soon as possible. How this was to be accomplished without attracting the attention of the general company, and in the teeth of the fact that the lady's name and that of her maid were on the purser's list, and would at once be seen by the inquiring official, as soon as he came on board, was a problem which had puzzled Lord Pendlebury's ingenuity, and greatly perplexed the simple soul of Mistress McGowkie. She had the gravest doubts about lending her assistance to a scheme of deception which was, in her eyes, worse even than play-acting; because it was so real. Indeed, she urged Mr. Corcoran to brave the difficulty, and just "meet the poor man and tell him the truth.' But the ex-Master knew himself too well to agree to this.

"It will never do, my dear lady," he said. "Do you think, a man gives up a woman with a thousand a year and good connections, without a struggle? He would wish to see her and then he would threaten her, and, then, maybe, he would run clean off with her; and in this blessed democratic country, for all I know, law and public opinion would go with him. And then, where would I be?"

The ex-Master put this question with such melancholy earnestness, that the peer, who was listening to the conversation, laughed aloud, and even Mrs. McGowkie could not repress her smiles.

So the little Scotchwoman, considering that it was a right thing to help, "to bind up broken hearts," yielded to her good nature, and was aiding and abetting in an elaborate plan which had been devised to enable the separated couple to execute a runaway match.

Lord Pendlebury's neighbour at the dinner table was a Boston clergyman, and he had informed the peer that a marriage could be legally performed in the United States between two persons of full age before any minister, and without a license. It was therefore arranged that the pair should accompany him to Boston by the first train, which would leave upon the arrival of the steamer, and that the ceremony should be performed by him on Christmas morning.

"A good day for a good deed,' said Mr. Corcoran.

The unhappy Mr. Freemantle, who had turned out of the St. Louis House as soon as the vessel had been signalled was now walking up and down on the slippery pier in a state of preternatural excitement, as the Kamschatkan, moving majestically through the smooth deep water of the magnificent harbor, drew up alongside. His eye eagerly scanned the faces which thronged the port bulwarks in a long line from stem to stern. But he looked in vain. The wished-for face of the financee was wanting. Again and again he searched the crowd on the stern deck, always to be disappointed. Slowly the huge ship moved. Lines were thrown into boats and towed ashore; cables were attached to the big posts on the pier; the donkey engine worked away with its short, quick, rub-a-dub strokes, and gradually, deliberately, with exasperating slowness, the floating mass came nearer and nearer to the pier. But no Mrs. Belldoran was to be seen at the bulwarks with a waving handkerchief and a smiling welcome. Lord Pendlebury, coolly chatting for the moment with Araminta, but really in a state of the deepest anxiety, watched the crowd of persons collected on the pier, to see if he could discover the auditor-general, whose person had been described to him by Mrs. Belldoran. At this moment the purser appeared at the bulwarks and threw a book to a clerk of the shipping firm, who was waiting on the pier. The purser was not in the secret. A gentleman standing near the clerk said to him quickly—

"Is that the purser?"

"Yes, sir."

"Purser!" he shouted. "Is there a Mrs. Belldoran on board?"

"Yes," answered the officer. "Purser's cabin."

Lord Pendlebury started. There, no doubt, was Mr. Freemantle, and he would be aboard in five minutes. Without a word of apology to Miss Peakman the peer darted off, and pushed his way through the crowd that occupied the fore-deck. There he found a man dressed in the uniform of one of the ship's stewards, with a low cap on, prominently peaked. To his arm was clinging a person dressed in a somewhat seedy costume, but whose large and showy figure very ill supported the character she had assumed of a lady's maid. A thick blue veil covered her face.

"He is there!" cried Lord Pendlebury, in a whisper. He pointed out to the supposed steward the unconscious Coelebs, who, wrapped in a warm coat of Astrachan fur, seemed to be anxious to leap upon the vessel. Corcoran felt the hand on his arm clutch it convulsively and tremble.

The peer joined Nick Donovan, Mr. Corcoran's servant, who was waiting at the steerage gangway, ready to be the first to rush ashore and secure a hack to convey the fugitives to the Boston depot.

"There is the gentleman, Nick, in the big black fur coat."

"Stand back there!" cried a voice. The vessel had touched the pier. A number of men seized upon a broad gangway. The ropes were already aboard, and half-a-dozen sailors dragged it up to the space that had been opened in the bulwarks. The steerage gangway was up first. Regardless of cries and curses, the man in the fur coat rushed breathless up the wooden bridge, brushing past the peer and the servant.

"Where is the purser's cabin?" he shouted.

"Oh!" screamed Mrs. Belldoran. Corcoran placed his hand over her mouth.

"Silence, my dear—for the love of heaven and me!" he whispered. But the inquirer had been too excited to notice the exclamation of the steerage passenger. He pushed forward. At the same time Lord Pendlebury and Nick Donovan were running along the pier and through the yard of the Grand Trunk Railway, to the outer area where sleighs were in waiting. Nick held in his hands two travelling-bags and a bundle of rugs. A sleigh and pair were easily obtained. The peer hastened back, to find the fugitives, in their excitement, losing themselves in the mazes of the great goods-station. They reached the sleigh, and rapidly ensconced themselves in the buffalo robes.

"You have no time to lose," said Lord Pendlebury, "A merry Christmas to you, Corcoran, and to you, Mrs. Corcoran,—I may say I hope?

"God bless you, my dear Pendlebury!" cried the ex-Master. "May ye never elope yourself in less happy circumstances. I suppose the parson will turn up in good time for the train? Tell our—our friend we are grieved that necessity obliges us to play him such a scurvy trick; and you might perhaps add that he has lost nothing by it!—Eh, Pearl?—A merry Christmas to you, my dear fellow!"

Mrs. Belldoran's grasp was no less warm and cordial. She could scarcely speak. Tears were in her eyes.

"My dear boy," she said, "you have played the part of an old and experienced friend. In restoring our peace, may you add to your own. A thousand thousand blessings on you!"

As the young peer turned away, touched by the feeling she had shown, he overheard Corcoran addressing his servant.

"Nick!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Go aboard now, and look after the things of myself and my lady, and get them through the customs in good order. And see here now, closer. Don't ye be making up to my lady's maid, and running away with her. It's a disreputable way of doing things. If you manage this all right, I'll settle something handsome on you for life. Good-bye now. You will follow by the next train to Boston, and look us up at the Commonwealth Hotel"

Lord Pendlebury hastened back to the ship, where by this time the injured Mr. Freemantle was creating a lively scene. When he rushed off to the purser's cabin, the eager bridegroom found its door closed and locked. He knocked gently on the panel. No answer. More loudly. No reply. Still louder.

"Who's there?" cried a voice from the inside of the cabin.

"'Tis she!" said Freemantle. "I am here, my love!" he cried, through the key-hole..

"Oh, dear!" replied the voice. "Please wait. I shall not be out for some time yet."

"Are you not ready yet?" cried the impatient official. "Why, my dear madam, the vessel is alongside the pier, and everybody going ashore. How long will you be?"

"Half-an-hour."

With a gesture of vexation, the candidate for matrimonial honors set off to pace the deck. The people were now crowding ashore, and the confusion was immense. In the midst of it Sir Benjamin Peakman emerged from the companion hatch on the starboard side. He instantly recognized the auditor-general.

"You here, Freemantle!"

"Yes," replied the other, simpering, and pointing to the door of the purser's cabin. "I have come to meet Mrs. Belldoran. You must have seen her. You may perhaps have heard. We are to be married. My sister has accompanied me down to meet her."

"To be married!" cried the knight, gasping with surprise. "Her former name was Corcoran!"

"Yes—a vile rascal—there was a divorce—entire separation. I hope to make her happy."

"Well, Freemantle," said the knight looking curiously into the excited face of his friend, and with his own features burnished all over with a peculiar smile, "my impression is that you had better arrange quietly to go home with me, and say nothing about it."

"What do you mean?"

"Her former husband, Corcoran, is on board."

"The——"

"No—excuse me—Corcoran. And from what I have heard and seen, I believe they have made it up."

Freemantle's face coloured with rage.

"Am I to understand, Sir Benjamin, on your honour as a gentleman, that what you tell me is true and bona fide?"

"Yes. To the best of my belief!"

Freemantle rushed to the door of the purser's cabin.

"Let me in!" he cried, as he thundered on the heavy teak panel. There was a faint scream from within. He continued to hammer on the door, in spite of the knight's entreaties.

"I will know all about it," he cried, foaming with rage.

The door suddenly opened, and Mrs. McGowkie stood before him. There was no one else within.

"What do you want, sir?" she said, with all the gravity she could assume.

The knight smiled.

"Why!" gasped the unhappy man, "I thought this was the room of Mrs. Belldoran. I — I beg your pardon. I have made a mistake."

It was at this moment that Lord Pendlebury returned upon the scene. Mrs. McGowkie looked very sad and uncomfortable.

"May I ask," said the peer to Sir Benjamin, "whether this is Mr. Freemantle?"

The knight introduced them. The official, however, was in too great a rage to care even for such an introduction.

"Forgive me" he said. "I must see this rascal at once, wherever he is. I have been grossly deluded."

"Do you mean Mr. Corcoran?" said Lord Pendlebury. "Pray come with me. He has occupied the captain's cabin."

The three gentlemen entered the cabin, where Lord Pendlebury, spinning out the yarn as long as he could described to Mr. Freematle what had taken place. The expectant bridegroom's wrath was natural, and naturally extreme. He set down and covered his face with his hands.

"A thousand a year!" he murmured in his anguish. "I could have retired comfortably on that and my pension!"

Lord Pendlebury glanced at the knight, who was smiling benignly. The astute millionaire loved to see human nature uncovering itself, and he was just the man to offer consolation to such a character in such an emergency.

"Come, come! Mr. Freemantle," he said, half maliciously, half kindly. "You have not lost so much after all. If that is your real point of view, we can arrange for you a more advantageous parti than that, in Quebec, I dare say. You shall spend your Christmas—and intended honeymoon—with us at Oak Park, and Lady Peakman will be delighted, I am sure, if she can send you back to Ottawa with something better than you came for."

The young peer, whose face had worn a curiously mingled expression of regret and amusement, had listened attentively to Mr. Freemantle's objurgations. But when the latter incautiously avowed his mercenary motives, Lord Pendlebury, without further parley excused himself to the knight, and after giving Mr. Freemantle, in as handsome terms as he could conceive, Mr. Corcoran's message, he left the cabin and ran to find Mrs. McGowkie. She was on the point of going ashore, with the governess and the phlegmatic Sandy. Lord Pendlebury shook her hand warmly.

"It is all right, my dear madam,' he cried. "You need not distress yourself in the least about the part you have played. I have seen the man. He is not hurt. It was not an affair of the heart, but of the pocket. He will soon recover of that. I have left a millionaire consoling him. Hurra! We can eat our Christmas dinner with a clear conscience.'

And so, my reader, I trust you may, and "good digestion wait on appetite."

The End.

GREEDY SHARKS.

The Modern Way of Dealing With These Sea Monsters.

"Johnny Shark," as he is called, is all too voracious for his own comfort and safety. A writer in Badminton says that the sailor looks upon these tigers of the sea as his natural enemy, and plays upon their weakness for his own good. He never loses an opportunity for their extermination, and it is well known that a piece of white rag over a hook is often sufficient attraction wherewith to capture them.

The more modern method of destruction is neither by hook nor harpoon, but according to exact science. Into an empty soda-water bottle is put a small charge of guncotton, with detonator attached; from this is led an electric wire, which, in turn, is connected with the battery after passing through the cork, which is hermetically sealed with India-rubber solution. Having duly encased this deadly bottle in a piece of salt pork, it is paid out astern at the end of a line along which runs the wire.

The shark, swimming leisurely by, sees the tempting morsel, and with a single stroke of his tail secures at once his dinner and his death; for at the instant when his jaws close upon the bait, our modern fisherman touches the key of the battery, completing the circuit, and blowing the head and shoulders of the shark into a thousand atoms.

Sharks are even greedy of each other. A huge specimen one day leaped more than half its length out of the water, and seized in his capacious maw, the lower portion of its already captured companion, which was depending from the spanker boom-end, where he had been left triced up until a bullet through the brain should have rendered him less dangerous to take on board.

Again, in the outer harbor of Aden, a sailor was on the point of hauling out of the water an average-sized rock-cod, when it was swallowed whole by a small but ravenous shark, which then, of course, became attached to the line. As the fisherman was debating in his mind whether or not his light tackle was equal to the added strain, the matter was settled for him by a very much larger shark which engulfed shark number one, and made off with fish, line and all.

GETTING RID OF FRICTION.

A novel invention has been exhibited before a large number of persons by J. M. Aives, a Russian civil engineer, in St. Petersburg. With this invention he proposes to revolutionize wheel locomotion. By attaching it to the wheels of any vehicle, friction is reduced to its lowest possible limit. To the amazement of the spectators an ordinary horse easily drew a wagon loaded with two and a half tons of goods. The mechanism of this device was kept a secret, the wheels being covered with a wooden framework. This precaution on the part of the inventor, it was explained, was because he had just applied for a patent and did not wish his invention made public until it had been protected by the patent.

ABOUT SOFT BACON.

SOME HINTS THAT MAY BE OF VALUE TO FARMERS.

Notes From Prof. Day on Some Experiments at the Ontario Agricultural College.

As Canadian packers have recently had a great deal of trouble with what is known as "soft bacon," perhaps a few notes on the subject may prove of interest to the many farmers who read your valuable paper, writes Prof. Day in the Globe. One of our leading packing houses makes the statement that during the months of May, June and a part of July of the present year the number of soft sides ranged from 20 to 40 per cent. of the whole. This means that Canada placed upon the English market this year a large quantity of inferior bacon; and though this bacon was not misrepresented, but was sold strictly upon its merits, at the same time it was Canadian bacon, and tended to bring discredit upon Canadian bacon as a whole. It requires no argument to convince any intelligent man that the condition of affairs just described means an ultimate loss to the farmer, because when our packers meet with losses of this kind their only remedy is to pay lower prices. It is therefore a matter of great importance, not only to the packer, but more especially to the farmer, that less soft bacon should be placed upon the market; and the problem of how to produce firm bacon should be carefully studied by every man who has a pig to sell.

Soft bacon does not mean fat bacon. It means a soft condition of the fat, which develops while the bacon is in the salt, and reduces the value of a side according to its degree. An absolutely soft side is comparatively worthless, and between this condition and firmness there are all shades and degrees of tenderness. Sometimes softness is noticeable before the bacon is put into the salt, but apparently firm sides frequently come out of the salt decidedly tender or soft.

Various speculations have been indulged in regarding the cause of softness. Corn, clover and lack of exercise are perhaps the chief things which have been blamed, but there is considerable diversity of opinion regarding the matter. For some months past experiments have been in progress at the Ontario Agricultural College to ascertain, if possible, some of the causes of softness, and to study methods of producing firm bacon. In these experiments the hogs are shipped directly to the factory, slaughtered and the different groups packed separately in salt. When the bacon comes out of the salt it is carefully examined by experts, so that there can be no mistake as to its firmness or softness. Our investigations are by no means complete, but some interesting results have been obtained. Full details of the experiments will be found in the college report of 1898, but the following are some of the principal points brought out by the work up to date:—

1. Though corn has been commonly blamed for producing soft bacon, it apparently has no evil effects when used for finishing hogs that have had plenty of exercise until they reach 100 pounds live weight.

2. Neither does corn appear to cause softness when used for finishing hogs that have had no exercise, but have been fed skim milk, with a mixed grain ration until they reach 100 pounds live weight.

3. What has been said of corn may also apply to rape, when a two-thirds meal ration is fed with it.

4. Hogs confined in pens and fed wheat middlings during their early growth, and peas, barley and shorts, during the finishing period, without either skim milk or whey, have a marked tendency to softness of fat.

5. Hogs given plenty of exercise and fed as just described produce firmer bacon than those confined in pens and fed the same ration.

6. The evil effects arising from lack of exercise can be overcome by the judicious feeding of whey or skim milk with the meal ration. From two to three pounds of whey or skim milk to a pound of meal will be satisfactory.

7. Whey and skim milk appear to have a greater influence than exercise in producing firm bacon.

8. Unthrifty hogs are more likely to produce soft bacon than growthy, well-fed hogs.

The influence of whey and skim milk in these experiments was especially marked, not only in making rapid and economical gains, but also in producing a fine quality of bacon, in spite of lack of exercise. While corn produced firm bacon when used for finishing well-grown hogs, it must not be assumed that it will not cause softness when used under other conditions. Its influence on younger animals has yet to be tested. In Danish experiments corn was found to be decidedly injurious to firmness when fed to very young animals.

It is to be hoped that feeders of hogs will carefully study this question of producing firm bacon, for it is a matter of vital importance if we are to retain our profitable English trade.

WOULD BE PREPARED NEXT TIME

A little girl went out to tea the other day, and after tea different games were indulged in until it was time to go home. As the guests were leaving, the hostess offered the little girl a bun.

No, thank you, ma'am, said the mite; I could not eat any more.

The hostess told her to put it in her pocket. She replied.

I can't, it's full already; but next time I come I will bring a basket.

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