

# Adventures of a Stowaway

Editor Nugget:

The following story of a young man whom fortune had at the time deserted was related by the hero himself to a coterie of his friends the other evening. The facts as related seldom happen to a stowaway on a vessel at such a late date. I will use the words of the speaker as near as I can, and the principal himself shall be nameless—suffice it to say that he is a Dawsonite of the most pronounced type. The story goes as follows:

Arriving at New Orleans after a series of adventures that in itself would form a chapter of interesting reading, I found myself what would be called in modern parlance, strapped. Being desirous of replenishing my purse, I carefully scanned the daily papers in quest of work. The usual array of "wants" appeared but I did not seem to be fitted for any of them. In my early education my tutors had forgotten to see that my talents extended in the line of cookery, waiting, removing hirsutal growth, etc., for which there seemed to be an unceasing demand.

Passing through one of the byways where employment offices held forth, I came upon one which had a particularly large sign stating that 1,000 men were wanted in Costa Rica to work on a railroad. Forgetting at the time that I was dressed in quite a fashionable manner I entered the office and asked the man in charge what sort of men were needed. He replied, "Working men." I immediately told him that hard work was my particular line and nothing sounded so melodious to my ear as the sound of a pick striking a cobble stone. My earnestness proved rather too much for the composure of the agent, for he burst into a loud guffaw that jarred somewhat heavily upon my nerves. I readily perceived that he did not place much credence in my statement. He evidently was quite impressed by my earnestness as I protested that I had not entered his place to furnish him any amusement gratis. He retaliated by asking me to let him see the palms of my hands. This request I refused and indignantly bowed myself out of the office. I proceeded to other parts.

My experiences the following days intervening between this and the departure of the steamer for the Central America port I will pass over by stating that I can easily call to mind pleasant ones. Knowing of the date of departure of the steamer I strolled down to the dock with a small leather bag filled with a few necessary articles of clothing and watched for the agent to appear and select his men. There was a large crowd of them waiting his arrival and a more motley aggregation one could hardly imagine. After a short wait we were all rewarded by the arrival of the pooh-bah. He held in his hand a bunch of tickets and with an air of propriety gazed upon the assembled seekers of employment. They stood not upon the order of their address but overwhelmed the agent with such cries as "Put me to work, pardner," "Look at my hands, pardner," at the same time holding up a brace of digits through which a 1500 volt current of electricity would be stunned at contact.

After all the tickets had been distributed it was an easy feat to pick out one of the lucky number, and approaching a likely one I asked him if he had secured a ticket. He answered in the affirmative and produced the coveted piece of paper as evidence. In as brief a manner as possible I told him of my predicament, and asked him if he would take my grip until I should appear to claim it. He readily consented and I gave the bag into his custody. Drawing a long breath and trying to act with the air of a man who was entirely at peace with himself and simply strutting around to see the sights I approached the gang plank and sauntered on board the vessel. I felt assured that my attire bespoke me a man of money and would probably cause me to be mistaken for a cabin passenger. The methods of the passenger department of this particular vessel were seemingly lax for I was allowed to go aboard without a challenge.

My experience with vessels at that time was confined to naphtha launches and row boats, and I was in a quandary where to hide myself. I had previous to going aboard made a few inquiries as to about what time the vessel was scheduled to depart, and I knew that it was within the hour. Armed with this information I realized that no matter how uncomfortable my selection might be I could probably remain in hiding for such a short space of time. Walking aft I noticed a sort of manhole, and after

taking a careful survey and satisfying myself that I was unobserved I lifted the lid and without further hesitation lowered myself into a dark, dingy aperture. I found myself in the center of a large coil of rope and crawling over it I came to more rope and presently bumped against a partition. With a thrill I wondered if I had provided myself with matches and I searched my pockets with trembling fingers. Ah! I discovered three. Carefully I lighted one and took a view of my surroundings. It did not benefit me much. All I could see was rope, endless rope. Lighting another match I looked again and thought I had discovered an exit to my prison, but before I was able to determine its position my light failed and not wishing to light my last and only match I commenced to feel about with my hands for an opening to some place where I might repose in comfort. I searched for what might have been a half hour when my fingers wandering over the sides of my prison suddenly slipped into a space through which I could wave my arms without encountering a single obstruction. Gradually working my way to the opening I grasped a stanchion and lowered myself gradually until my feet touched what felt like a box. After assuring myself of a secure foothold I then determined to light my remaining match and see what my new quarters promised me. I beheld an array of boxes and bales and easily understood that I was in the hold of the vessel. After the extinguishment of the light I selected the most comfortable position I could find and thus awaited some evidence of the departure of the vessel. I had not long to wait for soon the throbbing of the engines and the rattling of the chains told me that we were under way.

The excitement of this intelligence caused my nerves to vibrate in unison with the pulsations of the piston and I felt in my dark and gloomy prison an overwhelming sense of gratified desire. Wishing to explore my situation and discover what might be more comfortable quarters I carefully climbed over endless boxes and other things that go to make up the cargo of a vessel until my hands touched something soft and yielding. Its contents caused an indescribable fear, a sort of revulsion and chill. Then something touched my face; it made me start and exclaim "Who is it?" In a very material form I received my answer. Slowly turning my arm with his fingers their owner must have leaned toward my ear as he answered, "It's me." "Who the devil are you?" I mustered courage to say, "Brown," he answered, "I did not press him farther on this somewhat commonplace retort, but proceeded to question him as to what he was doing and discovered that his object was identical with mine. He suggested that he was hungry and proposed that we forage around until we should find something to eat. I readily agreed and our sense of smell, made doubly keen by an enforced fast of considerable duration, directed us to a spot where the refreshing odor of newly baked ginger snaps arose to delight our senses and promised to furnish us with pleasant diversion as well as to satisfy our immediate physical wants. I ate of those snaps until I felt uncomfortable and it is a fact that from that day to this the sight of a ginger snap is almost repulsive to me. While we were still engaged in eating, a ray of light from an opening on the deck above pierced the gloom that surrounded us and we could see the form of a man crawling through the hole and coming down a ladder that led from it to the deck. He approached to where we were sitting. He carried a lantern that spread a sickly reddish light in the dark, dank gloomy hold and we immediately scrambled to a place where we could see him unobserved, just so much like rats who scatter at the approach of an intruder and after reaching supposed safety warily stick their noses out to watch his moves. The intruder on this occasion commenced to batten down all the hatches and indicated that his purpose in the hold was merely to see that everything was securely fastened, thus relieving our overwrought nerves of the dread that he was searching for us. I communicated my intentions to Brown by stating that I intended to approach the watchman and ask him a few questions. He answered, "Fool, would you queer us," and as I started to move I clutched my arm with his fingers to restrain me. I broke from his grasp and stealthily approached the watchman, who was busily engaged fastening one of the port hatches. I rather gingerly touched him on the shoulder and wheeled

like a flash he pushed the lantern toward my face and after a hasty survey from my immaculate collar to my patent leather shoes he managed to say "Well!" I doubt if that sailor had ever before in the course of his windy experience ejaculated so much genuine surprise in one breath. After he had recovered himself enough to speak he asked me what I was doing there and I hurriedly explained that I was unable to pay my fare and trusted that he would be kind enough not to tell the officers of the vessel that he had discovered a stowaway. He consented with the warning that I should not mention his having found me, assuring me that if it were known to his superiors it would cause his dismissal. I told him to rest easy, that I realized my position and was too thankful for his assistance and advice to be the cause of any trouble coming to him. He advised me to go on deck as soon as I felt the vessel pitching or rolling as we would then be on the open gulf and having passed the last light house they could not put me ashore. Then leaving me he passed to the deck above.

I did not return to my companion, as I wished to go it alone, having formed a plan of campaign that I thought might bring me a measure of success if I were not interrupted in carrying it out. Waiting patiently until the boat should indicate by her movement that she was breasting a swell from the open sea. I almost fell asleep but was suddenly brought to an upright position by the groaning of the timbers and the creaking of the boxes. I realized at last that it was safe for me to go on deck and see what was in store for me. Crawling laboriously over the cargo I came to the coal bunkers and climbing gingerly over them, being careful that I soiled my clothes as little as possible, I at last reached the boilers and taking a few steps to the port side of the vessel came upon an engineer asleep in his chair. I touched him on the shoulder, when he awakened with such a start, whether from guilty fear at being discovered asleep at his post or for some other cause I did not determine, but his chair being tilted at a comfortable angle he fell over backwards and certainly was wide awake in the bargain for perceiving that it was not his superior officer but a somewhat besmired passenger probably looking around at the machinery that confronted him, he angrily asked me what I wanted in the engine room. The ludicrous side of the situation was so apparent to me that hardly restraining my laughter I told him the whole story. His face became graver and graver as I proceeded to relate what I had done and he cut me off by ordering me to go up the ladder at once as he would be censured if caught talking to a stowaway. I then realized for the first time the precarious foothold a person in my position has on board a ship. I begged him to let me clean the grime from my hands and face and he reluctantly consented, adding that I do it in a hurry. After cleaning myself until I was again presentable I climbed the ladder and stepped out on deck. Going to the fore part of the vessel I passed the mate who accosted me pleasantly, asking me if it was too warm to sleep. I replied that I liked to watch the early morn break and enjoy the cool refreshing breeze. With this I walked along and noticing some sailors at work I asked them about what hour did the captain usually awake and was informed that six o'clock was his usual hour. It lacked twenty minutes of this time and I put it in gazing at the porpoises as they gambled around the bow of the boat. Assuring myself that the captain was astir I immediately climbed to the upper deck and knocking on the door of his stateroom was told to enter. Bidding him good morning as cheerfully as I could muster the salute, I proceeded to pour my tale of trouble into his ear and though he seemed to desire that I should be impressed with the gravity of my offence, yet he did not seem to doubt the truthfulness of my story.

I told him that I believed that I was acquainted with the manager of the railway company and thought that if I could get to him I would be well taken care of. I produced several letters of recommendation from some well known men that testified to my character and on the whole I made the desired impression on the skipper's mind. He pressed a button and shortly afterward the purser appeared, to whom the captain expressed the wish that I be furnished with first class passage to the Costa Rican port and that he would be personally responsible for the passage money. This was certainly an agreeable ending to a chapter of trouble, but the end was not yet, for two days from the time I had my interview with the captain I was requested to go to his cabin and there he

informed me that owing to the serious illness of the purser incapacitating him from active duty I would confer a favor on him if I should assume the duties of the purser and in so far as my limited experience would allow me keep the work of his office in proper shape. I readily consented and when arriving at the destination of the boat I was handed a nice little check as pay for my services and being assured that my passage had been arranged for, I left the steamer after having, as I stated at the beginning of my story, an experience that probably never before fell to the lot of a stowaway.

ANTHONY MCCAULEY.

## Gen. Joe Wheeler's Idea

During my substantially twenty years of service in congress I made several attempts to secure legislation which would modernize the laws regarding that great arm of defense, the "militia of the United States," but owing to the inflexible rules which govern the house of representatives all such efforts proved to be unavailing, and today the law regarding our militia, which was enacted the 8th day of May, 1792, and amended the 2nd day of March, 1803, with all its utter inapplicability to present conditions is nevertheless now the law of the United States.

The following is verbatim the present law with regard to arming the militia, as it is solemnly reproduced in the latest copy of the revised statutes of the United States: "Section 1625—Every able-bodied male citizen of the respective states, resident therein, who is the age of eighteen years, and under the age of forty-five, shall be enrolled in the militia.

"Section 1626—It shall be the duty of every captain or commanding officer of a company to enroll every such citizen residing within the bounds of his company, and all those who may from time to time arrive at the age of eighteen years, or who being of the age of eighteen years and under the age of forty-five years, come to reside within his bounds.

"Section 1627—Each captain or commanding officer shall, without delay, notify every such citizen of his enrollment, by a proper non-commissioned officer of his company, who may prove the notice. And any notice or warning to a citizen enrolled, to attend a company, battalion or regimental muster, which is according to the laws of the state in which it is given for that purpose, shall be deemed a legal notice of his enrollment.

"Section 1628—Every citizen shall, after notice of his enrollment, be constantly provided with a good musket or firelock of a bore sufficient for balls of the eighteenth part of a pound, a sufficient bayonet and belt, two spare flints and a knapsack, a pouch with a box therein to contain not less than twenty-four cartridges, suited to the bore of his musket or firelock, each cartridge to contain a proper quantity of powder and ball, or with a good rifle, knapsack, shot pouch and powder horn, twenty balls suited to the bore of his rifle, and a quarter of a pound of powder; and shall appear so armed and provided when called out to exercise or into service, except that when called out on company days to exercise only, he may appear without a knapsack. And all arms, ammunition and accoutrements so provided and required shall be held exempted from all suits, distress, executions or sales for debt or for the payment of taxes. Each commissioned officer shall be armed with a sword or hanger and spontoon."

It will thus be seen that every member of the militia or state organizations, and as to that matter, practically all citizens of the United States, who are not exempted by law from militia duty, are violators of the law who have not supplied themselves with a musket or firelock, bayonet and belt, two spare flints, a knapsack, cartridges or a good rifle with shot pouch, powder horn, balls, a quarter of a pound of powder and various other things too numerous to mention, and at this time very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, and absolutely worthless for battle, if unfortunately they were obtainable.

As but few of us have ever heard of a "spontoon," I will explain that it means a pike or a halberd, or a long-handled weapon.

I am glad to say that American officers of this period are showing a

most commendable spirit and this struggle for improvement is growing stronger every day.

But while in many things we lead the world we have up to this time kept a little behind in weapons of war.

That this condition will no longer exist there is abundant evidence. The "Bureau of Ordnance and the Board of Ordnance and Fortifications," both of which are composed of very able and distinguished officers, are giving most intelligent investigation to new inventions, and every possible encouragement to inventors who have anything of real merit to present.

What is true of the army is equally true of the navy. Both services seek to do full justice to inventions by civilians, and this wise and intelligent action on their part will prove of great benefit to the army and navy.—Gen. Joseph Wheeler, U.S.A.

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