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The True Story of the Great Sea Mystery of the Marie Celeste.

The Manifest Absurdity of the Recent Pretended Explanation Pointed Out by Captain Roden. How the Brig Celeste Rolled in the Sea & Tore Open the Casks of Alcohol in Her Cargo.

(By Capt. E. K. Roden, Nautical Expert of the I.C.S.)

... published in the Strand... pretending to explain the... abandonment of the brig... Celeste near the Azores in 1872... ridiculous and preposterous... has ever come to my notice... to the solution given, out... survivors' of the crew of the... Celeste, in notes found after his... and just now come to light... the enterprise of an Oxford... Captain Briggs, of the Marie... became "daff" as a result of... weather encountered after leav... York.

... particular reason the shipper... "turn queer" because of bad... is not stated. Bad weather... condition generally met with at... is always dealt with as a ma... course, and no seaman, least of... commander, ever pays but pass... to it. With a staunch... strong rig, and plenty of sea... such as that occupied by Marie... one week out from New York,

... it is not clear why bad weather should... affect the captain in such a way as it... did.

... However, the captain went quee... and persisted in remaining queer for... the rest of the trip. His idea to build... in the forward part of the brig just aft... of the catheads, a bridge or gangway... running athwartship for his five-year... old daughter, must be attributed to his... mental condition. No sane man would... ever put a bridge in such an exposed... position where jibsheets with heavy... blocks are flapping back and forth on... the slightest luffing to the wind of the... brig. Whatever the degree of stiffness... such a bridge to be built, or, if he did... his two mates would surely have pre... vented the crew from carrying out the... order as being a hindrance to the ma... noeuvring of the brig.

... The skipper's subsequent suggestion... to his mate to swim alongside the brig... with their clothes on, and the follow...

ing out of this scheme by a number of... the men, plainly indicates, if the story... is to be believed, that the entire ship's... company was daff, or in a state bor... dering on madness. The upsetting of... the bridge and the dumping into the... sea afterward of the remaining crew... and the captain's wife and child while... they were watching the swimming... rice of the skipper and his crazy com... panions is a piece of imagination evi... dently too bulky to be swallowed even... by a most phlegmatic Kansas farm... hand who never saw a vessel in his... life.

To complete appropriately the stage... setting, sharks had to be introduced, and the author of the story has seen... to it that there were plenty of these... man-eating monsters to devour ten... times the crew carried by the Marie... Celeste. Of course, the sharks did... their work well and had the victim... of the brig cleared up within a short... time, except for the survivor, Abel... Fosdyk. This worthy individual, un... affected by the daffness of Captain... Briggs and the rest of the crew, smartly dodged the sharks and seated... himself comfortably in the upset... bridge, calmly awaiting developments.

Here the story suddenly ends, with the... cheerful information that Fosdyk was... picked up by a "boat," and later on... safely landed, but no details are given.

Of all fanciful accounts written to... explain the abandonment of the Marie... Celeste, this story is by far the most... clumsy and ridiculous ever penned. How this man Fosdyk could be picked... up by a passing vessel without the... captain of this ship reporting the fact... is beyond the comprehension of the... average man. Even if Fosdyk him... self had reason to hide his identity, the crew and officers of the rescuing... vessel certainly were not bound to keep secret the story that a man and... raft had been picked up in the vicinity... where Marie Celeste was discovered... crewless.

The true account of the Marie Celeste's... abandonment is clear and simple, and requires no imagination to... explain. I have gone to some little... trouble in ascertaining the records in... the case, and here is the whole story... told in a few lines:

It will be recalled that Marie Celeste... was bound for Genoa from New York... with a cargo of alcohol in casks. According to the principal owner... the brig, Captain J. H. Winchester, who... recently died in Rahway, N.J., she was... chartered to Meisner, Ackerman & Co., of New York, to carry... alcohol to Italy. Captain B. S. Briggs, of... Marion, Mass., was her master, and he... took along his wife and young baby, Albert G. Richardson, of... Stockton, Me., was her mate, and Albert... Gillling, of New York, her second mate, while her crew were composed of... Edward William Head, of New York; Volker Lorenger, Arlon... Harbens, B. Lorenzer and Gottlieb... Goodshood, all of Germany. No such... name as Abel Fosdyk appeared on her... shipping articles.

One of the stevedores who loaded the... Marie Celeste in Brooklyn was a Swede... by the name of Lindberg, who at the... present time resides in Gothenburg, Sweden. A few years ago this... man, in speaking to me about the brig... said that for want of ample time the... casks were not properly stowed, and... that in case of heavy rolling they... might work loose. This fact was... known to Captain Briggs, but he did... not attach much importance to it, being... anxious to get started on the... voyage, and depended on the usual...

good weather prevailing during that... time of the year to make a quick passage.

By the records of other vessels... traversing the North Atlantic at the... same time as the Marie Celeste, she... ran into heavy weather, and her cargo... being poorly stowed, began to shift, and... naturally some of the casks were... smashed. Coming into fine weather... with high temperature, the fumes from... the spilled alcohol naturally began... to expand in the hold. As the pressure... increased with the expanding... vapor, it blew off the fore hatch... sending up from below gases resembling... smoky, that naturally led the crew... to believe the brig was on fire.

Captain Briggs, realizing the... explosive nature of the brig's cargo, took... no chance of being blown up with... the crew, and no doubt at once... ordered all hands to take to the... boats, carrying only the chronometer, ship's... papers and such other necessities... as could be reached in the short... time available. His intention was... evidently to stand at a safe distance... from the brig waiting for a chance... to be picked up by a passing vessel, or... to return to the brig after a reasonable... time had elapsed and the danger... to explosion was over. As there was... no time to belay the sails before... leaving, a breeze most likely sprung... up and made the brig drift, or run... before the wind, faster than the men... in the boat could row to follow her, and... consequently, the boat and brig were... separated.

This, in all probability, happened... during the night following the abandonment... of the brig. The rest of the story... is brief. The Marie Celeste was... overhauled nine days later by the... British barque Dei Gratia, but the... boat with Captain Briggs, his wife, child... and crew, did not come within... sight of any passing vessel. They...

like many others, who by stress of... circumstances, are forced to take an... open boat in less frequented regions... of the sea, perished, let us hope, by... the swamping of the boat.

The fact that the Marie Celeste had... been abandoned for fear of being... blown up is shown by all circum... stances surrounding the case. When... boarded by Captain Boyce, of the... Dei Gratia, the fore hatch was found... open, and one boat gone, but the... cargo was undisturbed and in good... condition. The spilled alcohol by that... time had had a chance to evaporate... and escape through the hatch opening... and everything looked normal. The... evidence elsewhere about the deck... and cabin showing the great haste... in which the crew had left is but a... confirmation of the fear entertained... by Captain Briggs that his ship was... in immediate danger of being blown... up, and on this account was abandon... ing his ship.

No amount of imagination or specu... lative writing can upset the soundness... of this reasoning. The writer is... perfectly willing to state his reputa... tion as a seaman and navigator as to... its correctness. No professional seaman... will contradict this explanation after... having looked into all circumstances... surrounding the case, and there should... be no mysterious or supernatural... element at all about finding the brig... without a crew, but otherwise in good... condition.

Every available evidence points to... the fact that the Marie Celeste was... abandoned for fear of an explosion... of her cargo of alcohol, which did not... take place, and her crew, drifting... about, failed to get within sight of a... succoring ship.

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