

A MARINER OF ENGLAND

HIS WIDOW TELLS THE STORY OF HIS WONDERFUL EXPLOIT.

How He Recaptured His Ship from an Armed Frigate Crew and Sailed Her Across the Ocean Single-handed—The Stuff of Which British Sailors Are Made.

A bright, pleasant-faced woman, who has been on a visit to St. John, told Progress a remarkable story of adventure the other night. She is the wife of Mr. James Porteous, of Kingston, Kent county.

Before she became Mrs. Porteous, she was the widow of Captain William Wilson, of Liverpool, England, who died about nineteen years ago. He was the hero of one of the most gallant achievements ever performed by a British sailor on the high seas.

In the year 1861, Captain Wilson was in command of the *Emily St. Pierre*, a splendid ship of 1,000 tons, registered at the port of Liverpool, and owned by the Trenholms and others, of that town. He made a voyage to Calcutta, and from thence cleared for Charleston, S. C. He had a cargo of gunny bags, valued at \$30,000.

There were no ocean cables in those days. When Captain Wilson left Calcutta it was not known that the United States had blockaded the southern ports, and when he arrived off Charleston, in March, 1862, he was wholly unsuspecting of any danger to his ship. He was intensely surprised when he was brought to by the U. S. steamer *Edgar*, his papers demanded and his vessel seized as a blockade runner.

Lieut. Stone, with a second lieutenant, an engineer and a prize crew of fifteen men was put on board to take the ship to Philadelphia.

Capt. Wilson was a very quiet man. His owners had hesitated about giving him such an important command, simply on that account. They did not know him. Beneath that easy exterior was a will which would not be thwarted, and a courage which no peril could daunt.

Wilson had come from Dumfriesshire, Scotland. He had in him all the stuff of which the bravest sons of Scotia have been made. The time was coming when he would show it.

His crew was taken from him and put on board the *Edgar*. He was allowed to remain and assist in navigating the vessel to Philadelphia. His cook and steward were also retained for the benefit of their services. The *Emily St. Pierre* was headed to the north.

With eighteen armed men in charge, she seemed pretty secure as a prize. Capt. Wilson did not think so. He was determined that she should not reach Philadelphia.

There were two ways of preventing this. One was to sink her, and the other to recapture. Capt. Wilson determined to try the latter plan first.

This seemed an extraordinary thing for three unarmed men to attempt. It was that it succeeded is more extraordinary still.

Capt. Wilson, having formed his plan, began to put it in effect. His first work was to make a number of gags, in the seclusion of his stateroom. Then he arranged with the cook and steward to assist him in the further execution of his plan.

Lieut. Stone's watch on deck ended at 4 a. m. At that hour Capt. Wilson, who had had his watch below, came on deck and made some enquiries as to the vessel's course. At his suggestion the lieutenant went down into the cabin with him to take coffee and pick off the course on the chart. During the conversation across the table the captain looked the lieutenant square in the eye and said:

"This ship will never reach Philadelphia. At this moment the steward approached the lieutenant from behind and threw a sheet over his head. In another instant he was gagged, handcuffed and locked in his stateroom. Not a sound had been made to alarm the others.

The second lieutenant and engineer were next captured without resistance, as they lay in their berths. So far, all was well, but 15 sailors had to be secured before the victory was gained. Stratagem was necessary.

The lieutenant's watch had turned in, and the others had not been routed out. Capt. Wilson ran to the forecabin and shouted for four or five to come aft and lend a hand in getting a coil of rope up the after hatch for the lieutenant. Down the hatchway they went, and as they did the hatch was put down and they were trapped like rats in a cage.

In the meantime the three Britons had possessed themselves of the revolvers of the captured officers. The cook was stationed alongside the man at the wheel with directions to shoot him if he made a sound or motion to alarm his comrades. The rest of the watch had by this time begun to tumble out of the forecabin.

They had become alarmed in some way, and one of them made a rush at the steward with a knife. The steward raised his revolver and fired. The bullet went through the man's shoulder and disabled him. The others retreated to the forecabin, where they were locked up.

Capt. Wilson had captured the ship. He had complete possession, but it suddenly occurred to him that as his papers had been taken, he had no legal title. He concluded to get that also. Going below he demanded of Lieut. Stone the immediate return of the ship's papers. They were

handed over at once, and Capt. Wilson was ready to make his way to Liverpool.

The steward and cook were prudent in their respective vocations, but they were not able seamen. To take the big ship across the ocean alone was the task which faced the captain, and he did not quail for an instant. He had the help of the two men to handle what little sail was carried, but beyond that he did the work himself.

He stood at the wheel, practically, all the way across, without rest or sleep for 30 days. The others were unable to take their trick at steering, and when the captain quitted his post at rare intervals to attend to some other part of the ship, he lashed the wheel until his return.

Luckily, he had fair winds and reasonably good weather. Part way across, however, the rudder was damaged by a heavy sea, and it became necessary to rig a jury-rudder. Capt. Wilson was lowered over the stern by a chain, and at imminent risk of his life accomplished the task alone.

The ship made the Mersey on a Sunday morning, and a pilot came alongside. He was engaged, and after coming aboard requested that the crew be turned out to assist in making port. He was intensely surprised to find that the crew consisted of the captain alone.

Presently a tug came by. Situated as the captain was, crewless and to a great extent helpless, salvage could have been demanded had his real position been known. He decided to save that, and when hailed by the tug appeared unwilling to engage it. As the tug was bound to Liverpool in any case, it was glad to make a bargain to tow him for £5. When the captain of the tug found there was no crew to handle the towing hawser, he learned what an opportunity he had missed.

On Friday, two days before, the mail steamer had arrived, bringing news of the capture of the *Emily St. Pierre* by the steamer *Edgar*. Word had been sent to Mrs. Wilson, who was naturally much alarmed for her husband's safety. The owners had, of course, given up the ship as lost.

The ship came to off George's dock, Sunday night. The next morning Capt. Wilson opened the hatches and allowed his prisoners to come on deck. They had been well fed during the passage, and, considering their close quarters, looked remarkably well. Orders were given to the steward to furnish them with a square meal, and the captain went ashore.

He went first to his own house, where his appearance, haggard and unshaven, so alarmed his wife that she fainted. Then he went to see his owners.

They received him kindly, regretting the loss of the ship, but glad to see him alive. When he told them that the ship was at the docks, they thought his trouble had crazed him. He asked them to see for themselves, and they went.

So did all Liverpool, as fast as the news was spread. There she lay staunch and sound, the ship that one man, unarmed, had captured from eighteen with arms, and had navigated across the ocean alone.

The unfortunate eighteen were handed over to the United States consul, who sent them home as speedily as possible. Before they left the ship, Capt. Wilson told them that he had given them a free passage, and that they were just in time to visit the industrial exhibition. They did not stay to see it.

The merchants and others of Liverpool gave Capt. Wilson all honor for his wonderful feat. They presented him with an address, a gold watch and chain, a silver service and £2,000 sterling in money.

It took some time for Capt. Wilson to recover from the effects of his exposure and want of sleep. So soon as he was able, he revisited Charleston. This time he knew about the blockade, and determined to run it. He had a fast steamer, the *Margaret and Jessie*, and she was loaded to the hatches with supplies for the rebels.

With his steamer, Capt. Wilson broke the blockade ten times, entering and coming out of Charleston four times, and Wilmington, N. C., once. He was the terror of the Federal gunboats, and every effort was made to capture him, but he always escaped. On one occasion no less than 350 shots were fired at him in vain.

The citizens of Charleston appreciated his pluck, and made him many valuable gifts. Among other things, they presented him with the flag which was hoisted over Fort Sumter when Maj. Anderson evacuated and rebellion became a fact. Mrs. Porteous has still in her possession about \$100,000 in Confederate money, which her husband brought away from the blockaded city.

Capt. Wilson abandoned blockade running to quiet the constant fears of his wife. He subsequently died at sea aboard the ship *Glasgow*. He was by no means a stranger in St. John, in the old days when most of the English trade was done by sailing ships.

Easy Times for a Month or So.

The rush of the express and customs officials is over. Christmas is not a happy season to them. The bulk of the work of the year is crowded upon them in a few weeks. They are happy now in the prospect of easy times for a month or two.

Go to "The Hecton's," No. 23 Charlotte Street, for Oyster Supper.

MIDNIGHT MUSINGS.

There was a regular Sunday night crowd on Charlotte street Tuesday morning, shortly after midnight. It seemed as though half the town had gone to watch meeting, while the other half sat up and waited for them to come back.

What a very impressive service a watch night service is! All bow reverently as the moments quickly pass and the old year merges into the new. How heartily is the appropriate hymn sung by the congregation as the new year becomes a reality. One almost feels the change; or imagines he does. Not a few go home filled with new resolutions. How many will be kept? Too few, I am afraid.

If there is anything that makes a man feel like breaking his good resolutions for the year, it is to learn that the meeting was not run "on time;" that when he was silently waiting and watching the hour of midnight had already long passed. Yet I have known this to happen.

If anybody took Trinity chimes as an authority, it happened Monday night. The chimes were playing merrily while the people were going home from all the churches.

Persons going home through King square Tuesday morning, listened to the tail end of a very elaborate, not to say noisy, watchnight service. About 30 boys from the vicinity of the railway depot, it appears, congregated on the square and ushered in the New Year by marching around the walks singing with a will. "The Elegant Musketiers." That is as near as I could come to it. At any rate it is a very lively song, and was in the hands of a crowd that could sing it as loudly as one would want to hear.

Speaking of musical young men reminds me of an incident which occurred on the night when 1887 gave way to 1888. Everybody who attended service that night will remember how piercing cold it was. Well, a very eccentric musical club were desirous of doing the romantic, and shortly before midnight they were on the new foot bridge which crosses the I. C. R. yard. They intended singing, "I Stood on the Bridge at Midnight," when the hour arrived, but it was so cold that they couldn't sing a note and had to give up the idea.

Present indications point to a very decided change for the better in the moral nature of the people. I think, however, that a more accurate estimate could be taken about the 1st of May, when moving time comes and the stoves have to be taken down, or perhaps sooner, when all the clubs have had their annual "splash."

BROOKS.

HE LOST HIS APPETITE.

Johnny Mulcahey Discusses the New Year and Makes a Call.

This is the new year! It's the time when everybody says what they ain't goin' to do things; any more'n then do 'em soon's they kin. Pa's sworn off doing everything 'cept 'cep'in' to business, strict. He says what he's goin' to turn over a new leaf, so he carried up two stuttles of coal without ma askin' him to. Next day, after it was carried up, pa said what he fargot to. I guess pa's a fake. Ma says she's goin' to turn over a new leaf, too, and she's goin' to prayer-meetin' more reglar, and give more time to missions. I guess they'll latter hold more meetin's if ma wants to break her record, fur she always goes, 'cause she says them and the sewin' circle's the only place where a wimmin can hear what's goin' on around her.

New Year's day's the one which everybody goes visitin' on, and gits their suppers on the instalment plan. Pa says visitin's gettin' played out, and he wouldn't be bothered with it now-a-days, 'cause the wimmin don't give nothin' but sryup an' cake. Pa says the cake the modern wimmin makes is so heavy what the sryup's not strong enough to wash it down, and it's hard on the indygesthun. They useuter have sryup.

Our minister dropped in to try ma's cake and sryup, and eat all what's on the plate. He said hers was the best he ever tasted, and I said chestnuts, cause Bill Johnson told me he said that to his mother, too. So ma she got red as a lobster and the minister said he didn't comphrynd, but ma told the minister to proceed helpin' himself as she wanted to give sum instructions to me. She hurted too, when she got me in the hall.

Bill and me went visitin' up to Jenn's, and then we went to Bill's girls. Jenn's mother was out, so she stood them up good, 'cause you know she's my girl. Bill's a sooner on sryup. I guess he's not goin' to turn out very good. We eat a nuffin' lot of cake, 'cause Jenn helped make it, and then she treated with her old fellar's cigars. There real dinkeys, they are an' don't smell half as bad as pa's. Ma said I was losin' my appyrite at supper, and what I shouldn't go that at the New Years. But I guess she didn't know.

JOHNNY MULCAHEY.

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PEOPLE YOU HEAR TALK ABOUT.

Phineas Taylor Barnum, the unquenchable in his efforts to build a big name in New York. The old man has made lots of money out of his circus, but he can't help remembering that most of his fame grew up around the old museum, where the country cousins used to camp out.

New York has turned a cold shoulder on Miss Charlotte Crabtree at last. She is otherwise known as Lotta, and it is announced that she will soon retire from the stage and take up the management of a Boston theatre, which she owns, as a matter of business. She does not appear in New York this season, and will probably not go there again except on special occasions. All of Lotta's recent appearances in New York have been failures more or less pronounced, and it is now generally recognized by her managers that she is too old to be any longer acceptable to metropolitan audiences in juvenile roles. As her fortune is nearly a million dollars, she accepts the verdict with equanimity.

Mrs. Frances Kemble, or Fanny Kemble, as she is generally called, has just entered upon her 81st year. It is more than 60 years ago that she made her first appearance on the stage of Drury Lane as Juliet after only three weeks of preparation.

General Boulanger's one idol in life is said to be his mother. She was with him in 1859 during the ten months in which he was in danger from a wound received at Solferino, and which has never entirely healed. He spends every Sunday afternoon and evening with her and if away always sends her a telegram.

No man on either side of the ocean has had more sincere congratulations, during the holidays, than has Mr. Gladstone on attaining his 80th birthday. He is likely to have many more of them. His health is said to be excellent, and his mental and bodily vigor are unimpaired.

Two of his great secrets of health are exercise and sleep. Every one has heard of his pastime of chopping trees, but it is not generally known why he prefers that exercise to others. The reason that I have seen assigned is that it gives him a complete relief from thinking. If he were to ride or walk, or even if he were to saw wood, he would probably be thinking out something at the same time, and would thus only get a partial relief. In chopping down a big tree, as every one who has tried it knows, the job demands attention, and there is no chance to become absorbed in thought. The mind is relieved while the body is exercised. Next to boxing or punching the bag, it is one of the most complete recreations.

As for sleep, Mr. Gladstone never loses any. He can sleep when he wills to do so, no matter what is on his mind or where he is. A chair will suit his purpose as well as a bed, if the latter is not to be had. This has been and is a peculiarity of more than one famous man. Bonaparte could sleep anywhere. So can Ben. Butler. During the campaign of 1864 when Butler was stumping the country, he never allowed himself to suffer from insomnia. He would sit down in a depot waiting room, sometimes, clasp his hands over the top of his cane, lean his chin on them and sleep like an infant.

To return, a London correspondent says that Mr. Gladstone usually has three books in reading at the same time, and changes from one to the other, when his mind has reached the limit of absorption. He complains sometimes that his memory is no longer quite as good as it used to be, but, although that may be true, it is still twice as good as anybody else's, for Mr. Gladstone has an extraordinary faculty of not only remembering those things he ought to remember, but for forgetting those things it is useless for him to remember. His mind is so unencumbered with any unnecessary top-hammer, and he can always, so to speak, lay his hand upon anything the moment he wants it. This retentive memory was no doubt born with him, but it has been largely developed by the constant habit of taking pains. When he reads a book he does so pencil in hand, marking off on the margin those passages which he wishes to remember, querying those about which he is in doubt, and putting a cross opposite to those which he disputes. At the end of the volume he constructs a kind of index of his own which enables him to refer to those things he wishes to remember in the book.

George Augustus Sala, the well-known London journalist, began life as a caricaturist, but failed in his examination for the schools of the Royal Academy by drawing a foot with six toes. He has drawn crazier pen-pictures, since.

It is announced that Adirondack Murray has fixed his headquarters at Boston and will devote himself to the lecture platform. It is not likely that he will remain "fixed" there or anywhere else. He is not one of that kind.

Murray is a very remarkable man. He has made a good many mistakes, but he has always been quick to discover them. His first and greatest mistake was in trying to be a minister. He was only 22 when he left Yale college, and five years later he was called to Pa's street church, Boston. Of all the churches in New England, Park street, with its doctrines, was least fitted for the rifle-shooting, horse-trotting young pastor. Its rigid adherence to orthodox Congregational belief had brought on it the name of "Brimstone Corner." Murray's success was phenomenal while it lasted. He began to rival Beecher in his fame. For six years he asserted his remarkable individuality, and achieved extraordinary triumphs. With dogs, guns and horses he bade fair to sweep away the traditions and covenants of Brimstone Corner forever. At last it became a question of parting with all that was dear to orthodoxy or with Murray. The latter course was taken. Then he established a church of his own, in Music Hall, and started on the second mistake, of trying to run a paper. He left Boston about 1876, and since then he has lived a wandering life in England, Texas, Canada and the Adirondacks. He has never abandoned literary work, and some of the best fruits of his life are yet to come. He is only 48 now, and his wanderings have given him a vast wealth of material for future work.

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