

A VALIANT WIFE

(By James Connolly in Donahoe's.) It was Tom Moore with his 'Lalla Rookh' that first filled my boyish fancy, my head and heart, with infinite longings to see something of the charms of 'that delightful province of the Sun.' So I still lacked two years of being out of my teens when I shipped as able seaman in the clipper ship 'Chieftain,' bound for Calcutta. She was commanded by Captain Stephen Maguire, who for all his deep water dignity and quarterdeck aristocratic airs had a look of instinctive kindness on his manly, bronzed face. There were unmistakable indications of masterful physical strength in the swing and poise of his athletic six feet stature. We knew, too, that the judicious use of this strength had been chiefly instrumental in winning his way, at thirty-five, to the command of such a ship as the Chieftain.

But it was not the beauty of our fine new ship and the robust competence of our captain that gave such hopeful promise of a pleasant voyage. This came for the most part from the appearance of a woman who was driven up to the gangway in a carriage, and helped on board the Chieftain by the mate and captain, half an hour before we put to sea on that Bleak March morning. The lady was Mrs. Maguire, the captain's wife.

A March nor-wester has a rare skill in deepening the rose tints on a woman's cheek, more especially if she be running off shore before it, looking back wistfully at the facing landscape astern as she leans on the arm of her sailor husband. A record of that passage, however interesting to the nautical-minded, would lack sufficient entertainment for the great majority whose fancy or feeling seldom goes down to the sea in ships. So it must suffice to say of our passage that it was as pleasant as such passages possibly can be, all the way. There were times, of course, 'running the eastern down,' far south, among the great ice islands, before the heavy westerly gales and mountainous seas, when it seemed that even the Chieftain must be overwhelmed. Yet even then a chance glimpse of Mrs. Maguire's face through a window gave one fresh courage. The cheerful influence which radiates from one centre was never more gratefully felt than during that three months' passage from Sandy Hook. And when the Chieftain hove her main topsail to the mast off the mouth of the Hoogly River, to take one of those high and mighty Calcutta pilots on board, every man of the twenty-two of us in her fore-castle wished the passage had been a month or two longer.

On board the big side-wheel tug which towed the Chieftain up the Mahomedan's 'sacred stream' there was more profanity in one day, amongst her officers in driving her crew of thirty native lascars around deck, than there had been on board our ship for the whole passage. But the instability of human growth, upward, was never more palpably seen or felt than in our case. It ended in fact on the day we got the ship moored to the buoys in the muddy river abreast of the 'city of palaces' and Mrs. Maguire went on shore with her husband to stop at the Great Eastern Hotel. From that hour the light seemed to have gone out of the ship, and we lapsed back into the old, rude, seafaring ways.

The scorching heat and miasmatic atmosphere of the riverside fens intensified the gloom and unrest. By the time our outward cargo was discharged seven men were laid up in the fore-castle on Dr. Burke's hands. He came on board every morning, good soul, to treat his patients, his pleasant discourse and rollicking ways mitigating more pains than his prescriptions.

We had not seen Captain Maguire come on board, as was his custom of a morning, for several days after the loading of our homeward cargo was begun. This, of course, naturally bred conjectures that something had befallen him. We dare not ask any of our officers, and the doctor was simply deaf to our appeals for information as to what had happened. When the ship was nearly loaded we were told that a severe attack of the cholera had left Captain Maguire a mere physical wreck. There was talk of the Consul General appointing a new captain, our mate not having sufficient navigation to take the ship home. But Mrs. Maguire protested against having her husband sent home by steamer, and applied for appointment to sail the ship home herself. The other American captains in port took up her case, assuring the Consul General that though a woman she was a thorough navigator, and sufficiently skilled in seamanship to take the ship home quite as well as any one of themselves. He at first laughed at the idea of putting a woman in charge of such a ship. But when he came to talk with her on the matter he soon saw that the captains were right. She furthermore assured him that this was the only means of getting her husband home alive. This last appeal settled his consent, and he bade her go ahead and have her own way.

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The American captains attended to all the business of getting the ship ready for sea, but Mrs. Maguire had to appear in the custom house herself to sign her clearance papers. Her invalid husband was carried on board in a sedan chair, on the afternoon of the day prior to our sailing. Burke and his Baboo accompanied the party, bringing on board a fresh supply of medicines for the voyage. We could hardly realize that the pale, spent invalid in the chair was our strapping, robust captain of a couple of months ago. Yet with his wife, somewhat thinner, and with face saddened and paled by her cares, came back the light which had gone out of the ship with her.

The new pilot with his crew of lascars was on board next morning by three o'clock, and at sunrise had the ship unmoored and waited out to a buoy in mid-stream, hanging by a single hawser ready for a start. With the sea pilot and tug came the fine American captains. The start was made at once, ere the seven beach-comers came to take the places of the four deserters and three who died from our fore-castle, had time to put away their scanty outfits for the voyage. They were still dazed from their last orgy, and Mr. Harding, our second mate, made slow headway in shaking a little life into them. Mr. Inches, our mate, charged him to be cautious and not to let Captain Maguire see any of his drastic handling of the men.

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the answer, "that's the devil of havin' a woman capt'n."

Abreast of Garden Beach his friends carried the invalid on deck, to a slightly place on top of the after-house, under the double awnings. There his wife sat by him most of the forenoon, leaving the care of her ship to their friends. The freshets were still strong, and there was therefore some danger in making the shorter turns round the several quicksands, with a twenty-five foot draft ship. But Sand Heads was reached in safety an hour before sunset. All sail had been made on the ship before the time for letting go the hawser had come.

Then cordial good-byes were said by the captains and a safe and quick passage home wished to Mrs. Maguire as her friends got on board the big pilot's barge alongside, and put out to the waiting tug. The barge returned to the captain's gangway and took the pilot off. Mrs. Maguire now stood alone on her ship. A light land breeze, together with the off shore current flowing ever seaward from the mouth of the great river, bore us down the bay at a speed of five knots. For a brief moment her woman's heart must have failed the captain. How could she rule all these rough men, and sail her ship safely round the world, through gale, calm, current and climate of every zone? And at the same time nurse and doctor as best she could her poor sick husband? With a desperate effort she summoned up her resolute will, and looked confidently aloft to see that the yards were trimmed shipshape. She started on a brisk walk fore and aft the weather side of the poop, as she had so often seen her husband do on such occasions, and the exercise presently redoubled her confidence in herself. She remembered other women who had done far more dangerous and difficult things than sailing a ship to New York.

"Have both anchors taken in on the rail, or leave 'em in the shoes, s—er—Captain?" questioned the mate, touching his hat as he looked up at her from the main deck. "Best take the lee one on the rail and let the weather hang in the shoe yet a while, sir!" "Ay, ay, s—er—Captain!" The half dozen outward bound ships were now well under steege way, and the highest far enough off for her to go below a few seconds for a word with her husband. She could trust their faithful Japanese steward Keto who had sailed four years with them to give the patient medicine on time. By midnight we were down past the lightship. As the weather was settled and barometer steady, Mrs. Maguire felt safe in leaving Harding in charge of the deck, with orders to call her on the first sign of any change and to watch the sidights, log, and heave the lead every hour.

Her mind was too preoccupied, with anticipations of things that might happen, for rest or sleep that night. She stole softly up and down the after companionway every few minutes for a look around at the weather, and ahead at the monsoon woosack clouds piling up higher and higher as the sultry moonlit night waned. A frequent trip into the chart room, to study over courses and distances, and another look into the sailing directions of the bay—as helps to a final

decision upon the best tack to put the ship on when the monsoon struck in with a rush—varied the weary monotony. Her husband, when she quietly drew the mosquito bar of his cot aside to see how he was resting, volunteered advice upon this problem. But with finger to her lips she signalled him to silence lest the effort might impede his recovery in the least.

The toast and cup of strong coffee which the steward brought her from the galley at daylight refreshed and stimulated her. Seven bells in the morning watch (half-past seven) had scarcely struck when the pile of woosack clouds which had stood still all night started on a lively movement up the bay. Mrs. Maguire presently heard the sudden sound of the coming wind and rain. The ship was diving head on into the long swell. It was high time to shorten sail and otherwise prepare for the oncoming burst of the storm. "Clew up your royals fore and aft and down all light fore and aft sails, Mr. Inches."

The men sprang to obey ere the mate had repeated her orders. But in her eagerness to make every mile of offing possible with the land breeze she had hung on to her "flying kites" a little too long. The men had not got above the tops on their run aloft to furl the royals when the monsoon struck the ship, like the blow of a heavy wet blanket. "Hard starboard ye'r wheel, helmsman!" she ordered firmly. "Call all hands, trim sail, Mr. Inches. Brace her sharp up on the starboard tack, sir." The watch below had been already called to breakfast and jumped out on the run, and amid the deafening shock of flapping sails, soon had the reeling ship braced up and trimmed down to the strong breeze. By the middle of the forenoon it came so heavy that we could show nothing above an upper topsail to it.

We kept one another awake all that forenoon watch below, discussing the "old woman's" equipment for captain. By eight bells we had rated her "one-one-three-three," the highest class given any ship or master, by any fore-castle tribunal. And those who know something of what goes to make up the most competent master or mate know also that there is no more unerring tribunal than the ship's fore-castle, on points of seamanship.

The pitching and diving bows under into the high head sea seemed to revive the invalid.

"Let her go on the starboard tack, Molly, over under the lee of the Andaman Islands," he advised her. "Have smoother water and less head current."

"Yes, dear, but pray don't bother your poor sick head about such things."

"Have to watch your barometer and the weather, Molly, as a cat watches a mouse, or we reach over on that east coast of the bay. Comin' on toward change of the monsoon now, an' it's the worst place outdoors for cyclones."

"Please don't worry about such things, Steve. Mr. Inches is of himself a whole weather bureau, in these waters. Lift the Captain back in his cot, please, steward."

Over nearer the Siam coast we did not pick up the favorable slants of wind which a case study of Findlay's sailing directions, and her husband's teaching, had led Mrs. Maguire to hope for. But the sea grew smoother, and on the third day out the ship was able to show her three royals to the steady breeze. During the eleven days anxious beating down the bay there was little change in Captain Maguire's health. Nearly every day, just after dinner, when the weather was fine, Inches and Harding carried him in his cot up the forward companionway to the lee side of the cock pit. There his wife read to him, or conversed with him as his moods changed, with an occasional eye cast aloft at the weather leech of the mizen-royal to see that the helmsman was minding his steering. Mrs. Maguire had by this time got her sea legs so well on from walking the decks in her watches out that she had become habituated to the spread rolling step. When she had her ship well swelled of the southeast trades, with a twelve-knot breeze piping over the quarter, she strode the decks in the sharp lurches as steadily as the best man of them. She was now master of the situation in fact as well as in spirit, even though her physical strength was not quite what she could wish. Yet with the ship averaging a little short of three hundred miles a day there were some bright moments of anticipation in her life. The swinging cot which she had the carpenter rig up kept her husband from feeling the greater part of the pitching and lurching, even while she drove the ship so hard as to keep the main deck so flooded that the watches on deck were driven aft on the poop with their work.

"Best not drive her too hard, Molly," warned the invalid one day when she was giving him his medicine. "She'd go 'bout s'fast with the royals in, I guess, 'n' give the Mauritius a wide berth. Worst hurricanes it ever blow grate thereabouts. You r'emember, sweetheart, 'twas of there we had all three sticks blown out of the Electric by the board, and Captain Farnell and eight men swept overboard. 'Twas rigging jury masts and getting the ship home under 'em, under such difficulties, that made me master so young, Molly."

"Of course I remember the happiest days of my life, Steve, dear." For the first time since he was taken ill she laughed out at the vivid remembrance of a variety of delightful happenings shortly following his promotion.

Running down the trades the captain of course left Harding in charge of the deck, as she had always seen her husband do. But even there she slept in her clothes, with one eye open, "ready for a jump." Yet by the time she sighted the east end of Madagascar and passed over into the Mozambique channel she was pretty well rested for the hardest tussle of

her voyage, soon to come. On her husband's advice Mrs. Maguire reached over toward the African coast, so as to strike the southwest La Ghulas current off Natal. She sighted the mountains a little to the westward, and in the variable winds worked down handsomely into the current, in sight of land, toward the stormy cape. New heavy-weather sails were bent, and extra lashings held all things movable about decks. The carpenter fitted heavy storm doors and screwed them on to the cabin, fore-castle and galley doors, and put skylight and window shutters in shape.

The ship herself lifted her bows with a stately, heroic defiance to the first of the long southwest swell that came rolling up past Port Elizabeth. But when some days later, she, under two lower topsails in a sou'west gale, lunged heaving into the lopping walled sea, on the outer edge of La Ghulas bank, she looked to be getting the worst of the fight.

In her husband's sou'wester, long oilskin coat, and rubber boots, Mrs. Maguire stood or walked the poop, with the tremendous hail and rain squalls pelting her in the face. The brief calms following those two gales, which the Chieftain weathered bravely, were worse than the gales. With no wind to steady her, she rolled and slatted in the trough of that terrible short sea so as to almost tear Mrs. Maguire out of her husband's boots. During the worst of it she could simply sit on the deck clinging to ringbolt or bithead with both hands, looking aloft at the tossing, quivering spars.

The men in their moments of leisure, on deck or below, had an inexhaustible theme of interest in their "handsome captain." At the tail end of the last gale, when the starboard watch, after being up nearly all their watch below, wearing ship and making sail, were sent below, Ned Seely knocked down and jumped on Bill Dockery for calling her "a bloody, man-killin' hamphitrite."

The Chieftain lay wallowing in the toppling sea, within sight of Cape La Ghulas light, when a southeaster sprang up. It first showed itself in ripples on the blue sides of the over-topping seas, and then struck upward into the slatting sails, freshening as the leaden dabs of cloud overspread the metallic blue overhead. With her three royals aboard the Chieftain was bowling off her eight knots on her course, ere one of the fleet of half a score of foreigners in sight had started to turn out their reefs. In the last hour of the middle watch, with the light broad on her starboard beam, she swung aloft to the northwest around the stormy cape.

The wind held steady all next day and night, and then settled into the regular southeast trades of the South Atlantic. Mrs. Maguire looked, and felt, like one from whose shoulders some intolerable burden had been lately removed. She left the business of fitting and cleaning the ship up for her seamlike appearance all to her officers. So steady blew the trades that during the three thousand miles run up to the equator neither brace, tack, or sheet was started. So Mrs. Maguire had the most part of that fortnight to devote to the better care of her husband.

The tranquil aspect of these seas and skies, never yet known to have been ruffled by storm or lashed to fatal rage by hurricane or cyclone, were peculiarly pleasing and restful to both. But to Mrs. Maguire's grief, her husband, for all his quiet pleasantries of talk, seemed to grow weaker.

"I don't wonder a mite at your love of these quiet, lazy latitudes, Molly," he bantered, "but a man must have the spur and stimulus of the snow storm and freezing nor'west gale to brace him up."

"When he's well, Steve dear. Come, sit up now," putting an arm under his neck to help him, "it's time to take your medicine."

"Let me lift him for you, Captain Maguire," said Harding, who had the watch on deck, coming to her aid. To avoid the calms and baffling airs of the more usual crossing, Captain Maguire ran her ship several degrees further west. She sighted Cape St. Roque, swung short around it in the nor'west current, and ran out of the southeast into the northeast trades without taking in her topmast studding sail. Sighting the island of Barbadoes she coasted up the east side of the Windward Islands, with all the wind piping in over her starboard quarter that she could swing her royals to.

Things ran as lively and smoothly, too, with her officers and men in their strenuous duties of tarring-down, scraping, oiling, varnishing, painting and polishing the ship. There was no spot about the ship in which Mrs. Maguire might look without seeing herself. A couple more coats of oil on the spars and polished decks were the finishing touches, as we fanned up the "horse latitudes." Then new sails were bent for the final home-coming struggle. The cool snap of a norther blowing up off Bermuda gave the invalid captain a bit more strength. Inches and Harding were as happy and proud of their ship in her spotless beauty as any bridegroom of his bride. But the heavy northwest gale and thick snow-storm, lasting forty-eight hours, which struck the Chieftain a little north of Cape Hatteras, put a damper on all their ardor. To the worst of this Captain Maguire, again in her husband's oilskins and rubber boots, swung her two lower topsails and foretopmast staysail reaching offshore into the western edge of the Gulf Stream, where she hove her ship to in the strength of the current and let her drift to windward. The sea here was, of course, simply tremendous, but the Chieftain could stand it, and Captain Maguire was in a hurry home. It was a bitter cold nor'west gale into which the wind flew, after the last blinding snow squall, followed by a steely glare on the horizon. This

was about sunset, and the wind presently hauled northerly again. By her dead reckoning Sandy Hook was now bearing about west. To "ware ship" in such a sea was a trial from which many a seasoned captain would have shrunk. But Captain Maguire knew from a certain sort of human sympathy that her ship was good for it. So mounting the top of the after-house, whence she could see out over the thick, low bank of vapor shrouding the surface of the sea, she sang out, "All hands ware ship there, sir."

"Ay, ay, sir—er—Capt'n!" answered Inches, who had the watch on deck, running down to call Harding, after repeating the captain's orders to his watch. But he stood agast a brief moment at her next order to "loose the inner jib" in such a gale. Yet he soon saw that she had adopted about the only sure and safe way of getting the ship's head off in safe season in such a sea. She could see the tops of the combers out over the bank, and when the last of three of the biggest had broken, grasping the monkey rail tighter with both hands she ordered, "Up helm, lively, men! Hoist away your jib, sir, and stand by to square in the after yards."

Her orders were promptly obeyed. The jib was hauled down and furled, and save the chipping of one great sea that gutted the fore-castle galley and carpenter's shop, the ship came to handsomely on the starboard tack. During the night sail was crowded on as the gale moderated. Before noon of next day she was well in shore of the gulf. With a good morning sight, and meridian altitude of the sun, Captain Maguire was enabled to get her true position on the chart. Well in on sounding, the sea had gone down so that with her three royals set the ship logged nine knots in the first day watch.

Throughout the clear night the number of green and red sidights and bright masthead lights of steamers, in sight from the Chieftain's decks, increased. In the colder wind, towards morning, freezing the flying spray on the head-gear, the watch on deck already sniffed a flavor of land. Inches had the morning watch on deck and just after five bells, was himself first to sight the pilot boat's flashlight on the weather beam. But he did not call Captain Maguire just then. There would be pilots and pilots on such a morning, when she came out at seven bells. A little later he could see the same pilot boat shake out her reefs, and crack on all sail in chase of them. By eight bells she was within hailing distance on the ship's weather quarter. There were half a dozen buoys turned on Captain Maguire when she came up the after-companion and began her morning walk.

"Yes, we want a pilot," she answered to their hail. After the customary exchange of greetings with the pilot, and learning from him that her reckoning was "about right," such a change came over her as she went slowly down the after-companion that you could scarcely recognize her as the same Captain Maguire who had brought that ship home.

The news of Mrs. Maguire's taking the ship had reached home by mail more than a month ahead of her. So there were scores of fine carriages strung along the pier, their occupants eagerly waiting for the Chieftain to get close enough to afford them a sight of this female prodigy, her captain, escorted by the collector of the port and several of his officials, who came on board the ship, and extended to Mrs. Maguire their congratulations and appreciative recognition of her heroic achievement. Scarcely had she modestly replied, and heartily welcomed them on board the Chieftain, when others, and still others, came crowding, expressing like feelings and sentiments toward this heroine of the sea. Invitations to be their guests she regretted to have



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to decline. For the present she would have to go with her husband to the marine hospital. Then as soon as she could leave him for a day or two, she must go to Philadelphia to see their three children, whom they had left in care of the Sisters at the Dominican School. But later when his health was better, she would thankfully accept their courtesies.

When the customs officers, helping the invalid captain, close buttoned in his long English topcoat, up the forward companion, showed their heads, the reporters fell upon them.

Comfortably seated in the collector's roomy carriage, the Maguires, driven by the liveried coachman, were given the lead up. Inches and Harding had mustered all hands on the Chieftain's topgallant fore-castle, and, as the procession of carriages moved ahead, they gave three cheers for Mrs. Captain Maguire.

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Do You Often Laugh?

Don't forget to laugh. Laugh when you are happy; laugh when you are amused; laugh at yourself for being bored. There is always something to laugh at, and even when one is reduced to laughing at oneself that is very much better than to be "glum." This is what laughter does for a woman: It keeps her heart young; it makes her like people for the sake of the pleasure they give her, and they in turn like her; it makes her steps buoyant; it keeps her eyes bright; it keeps her face from wrinkling; it is a beautifier second to no other one; it does for the muscles of the face what exercise does for those of the body—keeps them supple and prevents them from falling into those stiff and settled lines which mean old age.

There is no situation in life, except of course the inevitable tragic moments, that may not be lightened by laughter. It is hard to burlesque one's griefs and annoyances, but it can be done, and it is worth doing. To travesty one's emotions and to make a mockery of one's annoyances may not seem to be the highest form of philosophy, but it is not so low a one as to fret over trials and grow pessimistic over personal woes.

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