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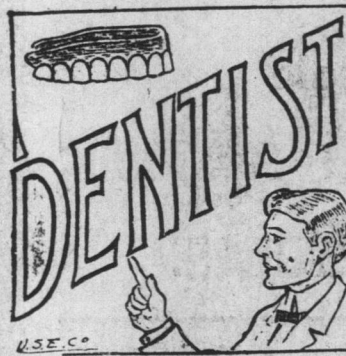
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Songs o' the Sea.

Old Jock paused for a moment from his arduous labor of back splicing a hemp strop. Eagerly he relit his obstinate clay pipe. A smile of satisfaction shone over his weather-beaten old face as the smoke came anew in clouds, writes A. B. W. Curran Reedy, in Blighty, London. Without a moment's hesitation, he resumed his work with marlin spike and neatly whipped strands. At the same time he commenced yet another of those queer rhythmic jargons of his old sailing days.

As a boy Jock roamed around the Pacific in an old American windjammer. He retains much that is characteristic of clipper days. No word of his ever speaks in praise of steamships; he is an encyclopedia of sail. Turbines do not interest him, but he can spin a yarn for both deck watches on every yard of canvas from the main sky sail to the flying jib. He swears by the old sailing ships.

Jock's particular weakness is for song. He must know thousands of chancies, for he rolls them off unheeding like verses from the Book of Solomon. His voice is cracked, and his knowledge of music is probably negligible. Certainly he betrays little evidence of any. But as he hauls on the deck tackle or does something for which some effort is essential, a wheezy chorus instinctively bursts from his wizened throat:

Oh, was you never down Lima way,

Down Lima way?

There's golden rivers, so they say,

Down Lima way.

Heave 'er taut! Heave 'er taut!

An' clap on 'er stich fer Lima port.

Good-bye, my bonnie lassie,

We're off to Cal-la-o.

Down Lima way!

He has songs for every occasion. Movement inspires him to a fresh outburst. Most of his repertoire is crudely comic, a little of sentimental and some quite dismally maudlin.

When spoken to concerning his chancies old Jock relaxes into a uncommunicative mood. He thinks we are poking fun at him. The reserve of some old seamen is sphinxlike. Occasionally a few bare details will half unconsciously escape him, but only as a concession to a stolid perseverance.

Every line of his queer jargon smacks of the salt seas. The brine buffets in the ambling gait of them. He has snatches of song more or less appropriate to every job aboard ship, from working a capstan to "bawling" a halliard taut. We sternly set our faces against ribald laughter simply to hear the wheezy old relic of bygone days "get under way" with a new inspiration.

In his unctuous way he is funnier than Coquelin or Dan Leno.

In a particularly confidential burst he recently related that in the old sailing days of his youth—"when seamen were seamen"—each crew of working hands was led by a chanterman, who sang a line or two of recitative, haphazard nonsense, to which the toiling seamen added a so-called chorus. Jock assured us that a chanterman he once knew who hailed from Florida could keep a crew singing for an hour without once repeating himself. Old Jock rates him a step higher than Nelson, side by side with Capt. Kidd and Paul Jones. We sometimes think that he once shipped under the Jolly Roger—But there's nothing about it on his papers.

Old Jock is still singing. His voice floats down from the boat deck above:

Er skipper's name was Aaron Rugg.

His face was ripe ma-hog-ny!

Aye! Aye! he loved a well-filled jug.

He'd keel a nigger an' string a thug;

But he wasn't the chap to log any.

Jock is going ahead with his quaint nonsense at a rate o' knots. The sea road is thronged with all sorts of queer folk, but Jock is the queerest to be encountered in many a mile.

By Air to the Pole.

Going to the North Pole by airship, a feat which is about to be attempted, is no new idea. In fact, it is very old; older, indeed, than even the balloon itself. True it is that, until Andre set off on his ill-fated expedition in July, 1897, no one had actually attempted the feat. But so

far back as 1870, a French Jesuit, named Francis Lana, proposed to navigate the Arctic Ocean in a species of "aerial boat." This queer contrivance was to be raised above the ice by means of four hollow balls of thin copper, from which the air had been exhausted.

In 1785, two aeronauts named Roder and Romain, built at Calais a "fireproof" balloon, into the construction of which asbestos, or some similar non-inflammable substance, entered largely. In it they proposed to sail from Archangel across the North Polar regions to Alaska. While experimenting near Boulogne, however, their "fireproof" balloon burst into flames in mid-air, and both the experimenters were killed.

Nothing daunted, other "balloonists" continued to build innumerable "arctic airships," every one of them warranted to sail to the Pole in almost next to no time at all. But none of them got beyond the experimental stage, although Mr. J. B. Laessle's "aerial cruiser," which was worked by a crew, would undoubtedly have been dispatched in 1859 in search of the Franklin expedition, had funds permitted.

Professor Wise, too, in 1873, came within an ace of starting for the Pole in a pair of twin balloons, giving together a lifting power of 15,900 lbs., a carrying power of 9,500 lbs., and 7,500 lbs. of disposable ballast.

Queer Indian Ferries.

In a country where rivers are subject to sudden and heavy floods, bridges are in many cases so insecure that ferries must always be maintained in addition. Such is the case in India, and the methods of crossing streams to-day are what they have been from the earliest times, says an exchange. An American consular officer tells how he was taken across an Indian river at the time of a freshet. The contrivance was simple, and has been used in the Orient as long as history shows any record.

A cord having been fastened to a large, elongated gourd, and a smaller gourd being also tied to it, the native gets astride, and laying his breast upon the larger gourd paddles across with his hands and feet.

Women, too, avail themselves of this singular contrivance, under the escort of a ferryman, who similarly mounted, takes his charge in tow, carries her basket, with perhaps a child in it, on his head, and conveys them safely across.

Herd of cattle swim these flooded rivers like water rats, and the herd boys, as a matter of course, takes the tail of the hindmost bullock in his hand and thus gains a very comfortable lift across.

These methods of crossing rivers, however, are hardly in accordance with our ideas of comfort. So the American thought one day as he stood, after a long ride, on the bank of a wide and rapid stream which separated him from his halting place. He did not relish the idea of buffeting the muddy current on a horse of gourd, but as there was not a boat within twenty miles it seemed as if he must either do this or bivouac on the bank with his dinner.

While he was in this dilemma a native signified that he would soon get the foreigner right. From a neighboring hut he brought a native bedstead—not a four-poster such as westerners use, but a small light frame of wood having four little legs and held together by the interlacing of a piece of cord, which thus forms a sort of netted bottom to this simple piece of furniture. The native next brought out four round earthen pots, and after protecting the bottom of each with a few inches of sand he put the legs of the cot into the pots and signified that the vessel was ready to be launched.

As the American sat doubled up on this extemporized raft in company with his saddle, he found himself raised an inch or so above the level of the water, the earthen pots forming admirable floats. A couple of lusty swimmers then took him in tow and soon landed him on the opposite bank.

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The True History of "Little Jack Horner."

A rhyme very familiar to young folks is that which tells how "Little Jack Horner sat in a corner Eating his Christmas pie; He put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum."

And said, "What a good boy am I!" Why Master Horner thought himself such a good boy is a question that may have occurred to many juveniles as requiring some answer, and when they have read the true history of his doings they will agree that the answer to that question is as great a puzzle as ever, for Jack Horner's conduct shows him to have been anything but a good boy.

The ancient town of Glastonbury, in Somersetshire, used at one time to possess a very beautiful abbey, inhabited by generations of monks, who spent their days and years in ceaseless prayer and praise.

This abbey was afterwards destroyed by the ruthless hand of Henry VIII., but when Jack Horner was a boy it was in all its glory.

The abbot was a great man, tremendously rich and the head of a great many monks.

Jack Horner was neither abbot nor monk, but only scullery lad in the great abbey kitchen. You might have seen him any day turning the spit, or running here and there at the beck and call of the abbey cooks—a red-headed, freckle-faced boy, with small, cunning-looking light grey eyes, and a big head.

Those were troublesome times for the abbot, for Henry VIII. had sent to the abbot to demand that all the wealth which belonged to the abbey, together with the title deeds, should be delivered over to him on pain of death. This put the poor abbot in a terrible plight. At first he determined to resist the unjust exaction of the great monarch, but, finding such resistance useless, he had decided to send the deeds to London, in compliance with the King's request.

But who was there to take them? If it became known that the title deeds of the rich Abbey of Glastonbury were on their way to London, there was every probability of them being stolen. It was a perilous journey in those days from Glastonbury to London. Railways had not been invented, and there were no policemen. At length one of the monks, Brother Ambrose, by name, hit upon a scheme. He proposed that a large pie should be baked in the great oven of the kitchen as a present for the King, and that the deeds should be put inside it. This plan recommended itself to the abbot.

But another difficulty arose; how was it to be conveyed to the King? Brother Ambrose's great mind was equal even to the solution of this. "There is in the kitchen," said he, "an honest country lad, by name of Jack Horner. Let us send him. He is not able to read a single letter, and is not likely to suspect the contents of the pie."

Jack was called in from the kitchen to the great hall, where abbot and monks were assembled. The abbot took a ring from his finger and hung it round the boy's neck, so that upon showing it he might gain admittance to the royal presence. The pie was placed in his charge, and he started upon his journey.

For a long time he jogged along comfortably enough, then the wolf in his inside began to make its presence known, and Jack felt those cravings for food which were never long absent from his hungry stomach. Then it seemed to him that a pie baked in the abbey kitchen expressly for the King must be good. First of all he put his nose to the pie, and then he peeped through the hole in the crust, but neither sight nor smell satisfied his craving; he inserted his finger and thumb through the hole.

The plum he pulled out was a piece of parchment covered with writing—a wonderful mystery to Jack. "Did ever anybody see the likes o' this!" he said, turning it over and staring at it with all his eyes. "It's a puzzle to I where the man's to be found as can eat this." With a shrewd wink he buttoned up the parchment inside his jacket, and continued his journey. In due course he reached London, and was admitted to the presence of the King.

There he broke the crust of the pie,

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and delivered over the remaining parchment to his Majesty, but of the one abstracted he said nothing. Years afterwards he laboured to understand it, and finding that it entitled the possessor to certain lands

near Glastonbury, he claimed and obtained them.

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