

TOO LATE.

The barque *Eagle* lay in the London Docks, taking in the last of her cargo and getting ready for sea. It was mid-day, and a pleasant lull had followed the din and turmoil of the morning. The huge steam cranes on the quay-side were at a standstill, their suppressed vitality showing itself in little puffs of steam that escaped with a hissing noise from the safety-valves. The ring of the calking hammer was hushed for a while. Stevedores, riggers, painters, and carpenters had gone ashore to dinner, and the half-dozen hands left aboard were gathered for the same purpose in a snug little cabin on the maindeck just forward of the charthouse. Ben, the sailmaker, in his canvas jacket, was a prominent member of the group. He was a man in the prime of life, with a pleasant look on his sunburnt face. His heart and soul were in his calling, for his experience dated from boyhood, and he had a way of telling things that was racy of salt water.

The conversation had turned from the business in hand to the latest bit of shipping news, the loss of a well-known London trader, that had that morning been posted at Lloyd's as missing. Many were the reminiscences brought up by first one and then another touching the skipper and crew of the ill-fated vessel.

"D'ye think there's any chance that some of 'em may ha' bin picked up?" asked one.

"No, I don't," answered Ben, "and that's the truth. I'm afraid it's the old story of death in an open boat, if any of them got away from her at all. And that reminds me of something that happened about two years ago, which may be none of your have ever heard, but which is as true as we're a-sittin' here in this cabin."

"I shipped (said Ben) from the port of Hull aboard the *Queen of Kent* for a round voyage to Hong-kong. She was one of the 'Bell' Line, and a smarter craft I never wish to sail aboard of. She was well found too, gear, stores, and everything. Well, we made a fast passage out, with fair weather; but because we wanted to be first home, from the time we dropped the pilot until we crossed the line it was altogether different. For days, at a time we lived in our oilskins, you might say; the hatches were battened down, and the fo'c'sle was awash. South'ard of the Cape we ran into the worst gale I think I was ever in in my life; and I'm sure o' this, that not many a craft would ha' lived through it. For three days we were hove-to under close-reefed tops'ls, with the wind howling and roaring through the riggin' till it seemed as if every stick must go, and the seas tumblin' over the fo'c'sle and quarterdeck as if they meant tearin' the craft plank from plank. However, she came through it with no worse loss than a set of tops'ls and courses. After that we had a brief spell of better weather; the sea dropped, and the skies cleared, and we were able to make a bit more sail. Well, just about that time, we were washin' decks one mornin' at daybreak, when the second mate, who had the mornin' watch, sings out to one of the lads: 'Go below and fetch the glasses out of my cabin.' Away he goes, and presently comes up with a pair o' these here opera-glass things.

We didn't take much notice o' this, for we thought perhaps he'd sighted a sail in the distance. But after a long look ahead, he calls out again: 'Bo'sun, just take a look through these and tell me if you can see anything ahead yonder. Wait till she dips again! Now! about two points off the weather-bow, low down on the water.—What do you make of it?'

'I see somethin' away there, sure enough,' answers the bo'sun after a pause, 'and looks as if it were about midway between the bow of the ship and the horizon; but I can't rightly make it out, sir, with these. I'll go aloft and take a look around.'

In less than five minutes his voice came from the fore topmast crossrees: 'Below there!'

'Ay! ay!' responded the mate. 'That's a ship's boat ahead there, sir, from what I can make of it; but it ain't no bigger than a man's hand from here,' reports the bo'sun.

'So I thought,' was the mate's reply. 'All right; that'll do.' Then glancing at the canvas aloft, he muttered an oath. 'Confound the wind; it's dyin' away altogether now.'

And so it was; and by the time the sun had been above the horizon for an hour, there wasn't breeze enough to lift the leech of the royals, and the lower sails beat against the masts and riggin' at every roll off the vessel; for though the surface was like a lookin'-glass, there was a bit o' swell on that might ha' bin a reminder of some of the heavy weather we'd bin havin', or it

might mean a bit of a breeze again before nightfall. Anyway, there we lay with the tacks and sheets haagin' in festoons over the side, and a stretch of blue water lyin' between us and yonder speck, that had got to be covered somehow.

As you may guess, we were all agog at this news, and not a few of the watch below turned out have a peep over the weather bulwarks. Some said they could see her, or made out that they could; but for my part, when I came to look, I couldn't for the life o' me make out her whereabouts. But there was no doubt about it, she was there, and maybe half-a-dozen poor wretches aboard of her, wonderin' whether the big ship saw them, or was going to leave them to their fate.

In the meantime the mate had gone below and roused out the skipper, who came on deck lookin' sleepy and not over good-tempered. He had a look through the glasses, and, my word, you never saw such a change in a man all at once. He was wide awake in a moment, takes a turn or two up and down the deck, glances sharply aloft at the idle canvas, and then has a careful look all round the horizon, as if looking for the wind; but never so much as a breath came to his aid. A few words with the mate, and his voice rings out over the deck: 'Clear away the starboard lifeboat.' A dozen hands spring forward to execute the order; and in less time than it takes me to tell you, lads, the lashings were cut and the boat swung over the side.

'Lower away easy there,' comes the next order.—'Now, Mr. East, take half-a-dozen men with you, and make the best of your way to yonder boat, and let us know whether there's any one living or dead aboard of her; but don't be longer than you can help, for I believe the breeze'll freshen again soon, and we don't want to lose a day.—Bo'sun, pipe the hands to shorten sail, and clew up your fore and main sail.'

You may be sure I did not want to be asked to form one of that lot's crew. There was a bit of a scramble; but I was the first to drop into her. The number was soon made up; and in a few moments we were pulling in the direction of the derelict.

From her royal masthead to her waterline, our ship looked a picture as we pulled away from her; and the voices of those left aboard, as they bent to the ropes, drifted cheerily over the sea. It was a stiffish pull, I can tell you, for the sun had got a bit o' power by that time, and made things warm all round, and the distance seemed twice as long, for every man was on the tiptoe of excitement, and anxious to get alongside, and kept lookin' over his shoulder to see what way we were makin'. The mate he says nothin' but a few words of encouragement every now and again; but at last he stands up, grasping the tiller ropes in his hand, and with his eyes fixed on the boat we were makin' for. Every line of his face was workin' with excitement; but a moment afterwards, he turned the colour o' the canvas, and said in a husky voice that weren't a bit like his own: 'We're too late, lads! Easy all! Stand by for'ard there with the boat-hook.' And the next moment we were alongside the stranger, to find—a few rags of canvas hanging from a mast, an empty water-breaker awash in the bottom, some pieces of sodden leather, a pencil-case and a human figure huddled in the stern sheets—dead.

Well, mates, we took the boat in tow and made back for our own craft. The breeze had sprung up at last, and she was coming down to us like a yacht, hand over hand, with every line of her canvas filled, and it was a pretty sight to see her hove-to. There was a row of anxious faces lining the bulwarks as we pulled alongside; but they disappeared one by one when they saw we had done no good. That night we stood round the gangway bareheaded while the skipper said the last words over the poor fellow.

Then we made sail once more; and never from that day to this has it ever been discovered to what ship or to what port that boat belonged."

The Leipzig police have shut up the Marien baths, the most fashionable swimming school in that city. The cause of this action was the neglect of the attendants in allowing a boy who could not swim to enter the big bath without a rope. The bathing master was called away just after the boy entered, and the boy was drowned unnoticed. Several hours later the boy's mother called at the baths for him, and he could not be found. The swimming bath was drained and his body was found at the bottom. There have been six similar deaths in the swimming bath since the Marien house was opened. The owner is under arrest and will be tried for manslaughter.

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Foreign Naval Notes.

The Royal Adelaide, which was built at Davenport nearly sixty years ago, and which has never yet been outside the break-water which protects Plymouth Sound, is about to make her first voyage. She is under orders to precede to Sheerness, where she is to be converted into a training ship.

"No blame is attached to anybody concerned," is the decision in the case of the bursting of the 6-inch gun on the cruiser Cordelia. As this proves that the bursting of the gun was in no way due to carelessness on the part of the gun's crew, it is evident that the weapon itself must have been defective, and consequently the cause of the weakness ought easily to be traced.

In point of speed, as well as in general efficiency, the 3,150 ton cruiser 25th de Mayo, built for the Argentine Republic, is one of the most remarkable vessels which modern skill and science have produced. In speed she surpasses every ship, outside of some of the torpedo boats, in existence. With natural draft she can maintain a speed of 21 1-4 knots per hour, and with forced draft it is possible that two knots more speed could be got out of her. Her armament consists of two 8-inch breech-loading rifles, eight 4.7-inch and twenty small quick-firing guns, and three torpedo tubes.

If one has any desire to note the advance made in every direction in the construction and armament of war vessels, the Royal Naval Exhibition affords the opportunity. The full-size model of the Victoria, the vessel historically associated with Nelson's victories, is a strong contrast with the Victoria. The former was a three-decker of 3,500 tons 186 feet in length, and carrying an armament of 102 guns, the largest of which were 42 pounders. But she had a complement of 900 men, against 587 for the Victoria. The latter has a length of 540 feet and a displacement of 10,500 tons. She carries an armament of 44 guns, the largest of which are the 110-ton guns. The largest charge of powder used on the Victoria was 10 pounds, while the largest charge used on the Victoria is 1,000 pounds. The Victoria is also a steel vessel, and it has a total of 88 engines.

The naval manoeuvres of the British fleet have been productive of an unusual number of accidents to machinery. On the way from Plymouth to Berhaven the Swiftsure delayed the squadron for nearly an hour by a mishap to her engines. The Speedwell burst one of her steam pipes, but, fortunately, without causing any injury to any of her men. The Tartar broke the eccentric rod of her starboard low-pressure cylinder, and had to drop out for repairs. The condensing apparatus of both the Latona and Pallas gave out, and they had to put into Tynemouth for a supply of fresh water. The Spider had to return to port, after being pronounced in all respects ready for sea, in order to make good several defects of her engines. The firebars of one of the furnaces of the Sharpshooter were completely burned through, and these had to be replaced. The Spanker, of the second class, came to utter grief. Not only did she smash one of her piston rings, but one of her boilers was in such a bad condition that the vessel was practically disabled.

The members of the press rose in their might against the order that they should not be permitted on board certain ships for the manoeuvres, "because their movements will be of no interest to the general public." They were excluded from the other ships on the ground that there was no room for accommodation—which was not the fact.

This order was issued by Lord George Hamilton, a surprising fact, since the First Lord of the Admiralty has been looked upon by more anxious and willing to do his duty by the Navy than almost any other member. It is the general impression that the real reason why the Admiralty fought shy this year of wholesome publicity was because it dreaded the discovery that the so-called "20-knot torpedo catchers" are only capable of a sea-speed of 16 knots, and frequently break down at that. The only one of the Sharpshooter class that has been trustworthy from the first is Rattlesnake. Is it due to the fact that the builders were fined \$5,000 because they added sufficient weight to her machinery to make her trustworthy?

Generally Interesting.

The highest altitude ever reached by a balloon was seven miles.

In one business establishment in London no fewer than 400 Cornishmen are employed.

California's crop of peaches this year will probably amount to three and a half million half-bushel baskets.

One of the peculiar customs of the East Indian coolies called Lascars is the putting of a ring on the great toe when they marry.

It is estimated that in the year 2000 no less than 1,700,000,000 will be speaking the English language, while only 500,000,000 will be speaking other European tongues.

The first Mohammedan marriage in England was celebrated a few weeks ago, when a Moslem lawyer was wedded according to the rites of his religion to the daughter of a magistrate.

The total number of Buddhists in the world is estimated to be 75,000,000.

In twenty years there has been no counterfeiting of American postage stamps.

Pittsburg claims to have more millionaires in proportion to her population than any other city in the world.

The 124½ miles between Newcastle and Edinburgh, which is done without a stop is at present the longest run in Britain.

In France a little more than a hundred years ago it was impossible for anybody to work unless he joined the union of his particular trade and submitted to its rules.

The social magnificence of a State ball at St. Petersburg is such that on one occasion the guests numbered 3,000, yet there was no crowding and every arrangement was perfect.

Kaiser Wilhelm is a heavy eater, with a preference for homely dishes. According to Mr. Frederic, he smokes a great number of light Dutch cigars, which cost about three-halfpence each.

A noted smoker of his day was the late Lord Clarendon, who regularly smoked when attending to his official business, his despatches being generally permeated with a strong aroma of cigars.

A nervous passenger badgered the guard on a train for the North at every station as to whether she had reached her destination. In due course the town desired was arrived at, and she as usual, called—"Guard! Guard! I, say, guard, is this Aberdeen?" "Yes'm, this is Aberdeen." "And do I really leave the train here?" "Why, yes'm, you ought to, unless you wish to take it with you." And then she bounced out and slammed the door.