

at sea to keep a cool head in moments of danger, but he took time to say that some "hoodoo" had sailed with the ship, and John T. Charming was brought out from his sedentary duties in the galley, to be made the butt of his captain's wrath and indignation. Then all the members of the crew were commanded to appear before him, and he said, shaking his clinched fist to add emphasis to his words:—

"One of you must volunteer to swim ashore, tonight, and, if there is a steamer in that harbor, ask her captain to come out and pull us off. Who will go? It is a good two miles?"

The crew looked amazed for a minute. But they had lost all their boats in a hurricane, two weeks before. Captain Cammell was staring into their blank and wondering faces, with a suppressed curse on his lips, when a clear voice spoke the words, "I will!"

It was the voice of John T. Charming. Before the skipper had time to recover from the shock, the disgraced mate was standing on the taffrail, divesting himself of his unnecessary clothing. In another instant he had plunged into the deep. The darkness enveloped him, and a splash was all that told he had struck water.

"Make for the shore to your right; then follow the beach! Look out for sharks!" cried the captain, as he rushed to the taffrail. Then a muffled "Aye, aye, sir!" came up from the depths. Poor John had learned, at least, how to answer in true nautical style. Vainly those on deck peered over the sides to catch a glimpse of him, but the favoring moon was temporarily hidden behind a mountain peak, and its shadows made the waters of the bay as black as the storied Styx. Those aboard could only wait and hope, and listen to the weird grating, as the bark now and then, rubbing against the rocks, but Charming swam on and on, now "side-stroke," now "over-hand," plunging, forcing every muscle to the utmost, muttering to himself that he would show that captain that he could do something, and wondering if his strength would hold out until he reached the shore. A tiny light told him that something was anchored in the harbor, and he struck out in its direction, although the distance was much greater.

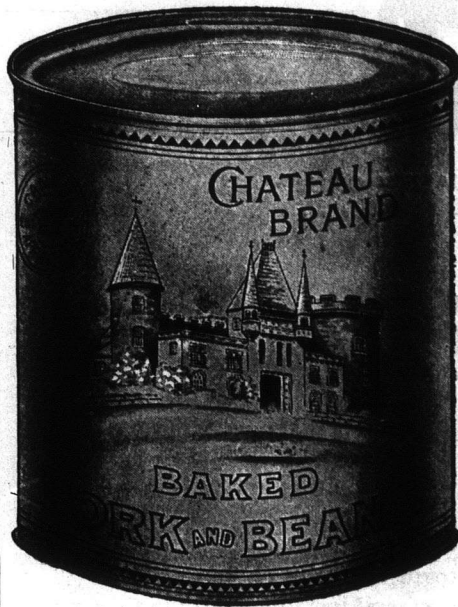
But the harder he swam, the further away it seemed. At length his strength began to fail. Once he sank from sheer exhaustion, but he managed to get on his back so that he could float until his vigor returned. Then he struck out again. The light grew larger and brighter, and he could discern the outline of a vessel. This seemed to give him new strength, and he kept on, with increasing energy, until he found himself within hailing distance. He tried to cry out, but his voice had gone. He swam close to the vessel, but the gang plank was drawn up, and there was no way of getting aboard. Finally, a man walked up the deck, and Charming called out faintly. "It was a sailor. He heard the cry, but answered in the French tongue, which the American could not understand. The craft was the little French steamer "Tahitiennne," which plies between the islands of the group; and her crew, quickly roused by the lone sailor, threw a rope to the swimmer, which he caught in a dying struggle, and wound around his body. Then they dragged him from the sea to the steamer's deck. He fell, exhausted, and a man ran for stimulants. Charming slowly revived, and muttered: "Out—there, —she's—sinking."

But none of the Frenchmen understood, and Charming struggling to his feet, and, with a wild gesticulation, pointed to the entrance of the harbor, and—fell to the deck, apparently lifeless.

"There's something the matter out there," said Captain Martineau, of the "Tahitiennne." Losing no time, he weighed anchor, and, in fifteen minutes, was by the side of the "Lingering Breeze." A hawser was made fast to the stern bits of the bark, and she was towed to safety in the harbor.

There's a grave in the little French cemetery at Taiohai, and on the tombstone that is shaded from the tropic sea by the wide green leaves of a spreading palm, is this inscription: "John T. Charming. Aged 40. An American hero."

"If I'd only had a chance to thank him!" always exclaims Captain Cammell, with a suspicious moisture in his eyes, as he finishes this story of his untutored but brave and kind-hearted first mate.



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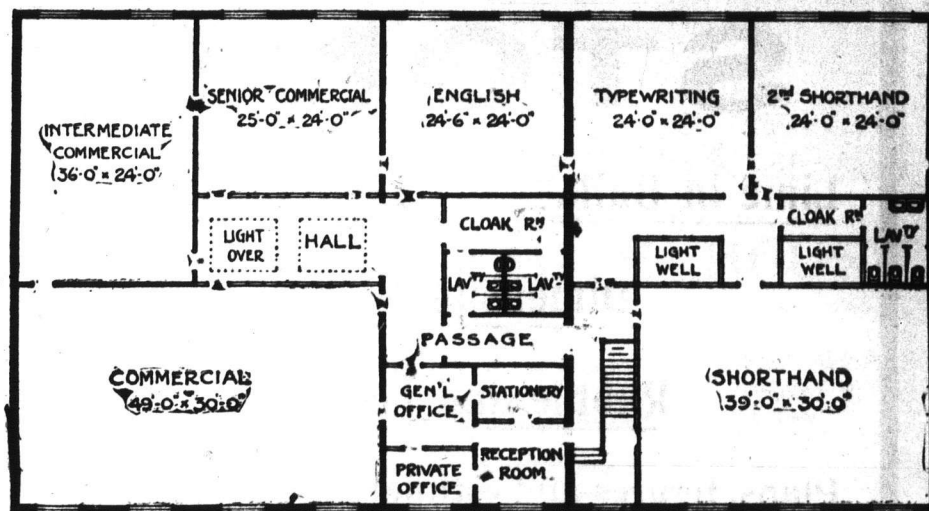
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