CHRISTMAS EVE ON SHIPBOARD, TALES OF THE MEN OF SEA

Officers of a Ship at Sand Point Spin Yarns on Christmas Eve---What They Heard When in the Magic Hour the Gift of Tongues Descended Upon the Ships in the Port.

(By Colin McKay.)

Into the harbor of St. John the ship came at dusk of Christmas Eve, tied up at a berth at Sand Point, and soon, having disembarked her scanty passenger list, was lying at rest, and quiet, save for the contented purring of her electric light dynamos, and the rustle of the winches slowly revolving with just enough steam on them to prevent the pipes from freezing.

After dinner, spiced with some grave banter from the old man about the austere delights of spending Christmas Eve a considerable number of miles from home, the officers withdrew to the smoking room to celebrate the arrival in port, swap yarns, and wait for the magic moment of the Christmas midnight when the gift of tongues descends upon ships and they talk to one another across the docks of their waysarings and adventures upon the deep, the ways of the men who sail them, the glamor of far ports, the wonders and mysteries of the Seven Seas. Outside a high wind howled down the harbor, and flurries of snow rustled along the decks, but inside the smoking room it was cosy enough and a steward was brewing a bowl of punch. Soon the first officer, pipe alight and a glass at his elbow, was spinning a yarn of the first Christmas eve he spent at sea as an apprentice on a sailing ship, a tale of a wild night on the Western Ocean. After he had finished the chief engineer who had come in, along with the doctor and the purser, told of frantic work in an engine room on a Christmas Eve when a steam pipe burst. And then the third mate, a burly, devil-may-care young fellow with a goodly gift of gab, put in his oar: "Talking about wild Christmas Eves, I put in one some years ago when I shipped aboard of a Nova Scotia fisherman to get a taste of the life. I got my fill of it that Christmas Eve. Most of the time I did not expect o live to see daylight again.

"We had been fishing somewhere east of Sable Island and were running in for Canso, and hoping to make port Christmas Day. The schooner I was in then was an able craft, and about this time in the evening she was bucking up against a brisk nor' easter, lugging her four lowers, and reeling off about fourteen knots. She could sail, that craft. And she was wet, mighty wet, a regular submarine—never went over a sea when she could dive through it. And the skipper, who belonged to Canso and was in a hurry to get home, was driving her—driving her till I thought he'd drown her.

"At eight bells she was threshing into it merrily, and we began to think we'd be in before midnight. But presently the sky began to grow black, black as a pocket. Inside of fifteen minutes you couldn't see anything, and then all of a sudden it burst upon us—a regular blizzard. Somehow we managed to get the jibs and mainsail off her, but the foresail blew to pieces.

"Soon we got her hove-to under a bit of the storm trysail; and by that time it was blowing a hurricane. The air was full of snow and flying spray; the wind cut like a knife, seared like flame and it was cold—cold enough to freeze the marrow in your bones. The schooner hove-to, wallowed in the turbulent sea like a trawl tub, and drifted off before it. We made things snug and went below.

"But before we were well warmed up again, the skipper put his head down the cabin companion and sung out to the crowd below:

" 'Boys, I'm goin' to hook her. At this rate, she'll be blown off to Sable Island 'fore morning, and I want to get in tomorrow somehow.'

"The old man was out of his wits, we thought. She wouldn't ride to her anchor ten minutes in that gale, we said. She'd jerk the windlass out of her in a brace of shakes. No use losing the ground tackle. But the skipper didn't want to be blown off the coast. 'Get forward, get the big fishing anchor over, and give her every inch of cable,' he ordered. 'Hurry up now.'

"We made our way forward against the blinding rush of snow and spray, and the mad buffets of the driving dollops of uprooted sea; and took our stations on the icy deck. Then, keeping a wary watch on the foam-bonnetted combers charging down upon us out of the smoking smother, we flung the mudhook over, and paid out the big hemp hawser. When the anchor caught the bottom, she took out cable mighty lively, and when we came to the end we had to check her rather sharply. As she brought up, a towering comber rose suddenly above her jib-boom, and curling over like a cascade broke over the bows, knocking us down and scurrying us helter-skelter aft along the decks like a lot of ninepins. We brought up against the after house, dazed and half-drowned, but duly thankful to find the deck under us.

"In a few moments she freed herself of the invading flood and the skipper's voice called out from somewhere in the darkness, demanding if anybody was overboard.

"Well, she hung on to her mudtackle all right, but she made wild weather of it—frightful weather. She floundered fearfully in an infuriated sea, white with seething foam and fiery with phosphorus. She leaped, she dived, she pitched, she rolled, she stood on her head, she reared on her stern. She would leap with a swift, wriggling motion to the summit of a sea; then plunge headlong into the black gulf beyond, burying her bows with a sickening crash into the bastions of the on-coming surge. And next moment she would check on her cable violently, with a shock that sent shuddering tremors through her straining hull.

"Of course, she [illegible] lots of water over her, and made ice. There was no rest for her, and none for us. We had to pound ice. And it was bitter weather—terrible work. The blizzard blew relentlessly; the sea raged like a mill race. A man couldn't stop on deck for more than fifteen minutes at a stretch. But we pounded ice for dear life—when we could. It was dangerous work, cruel work, toiling upon the reeling slippery decks, blinded by the rushing snow and spray, buffetted by heavy dollops of icy water, blown from the breaking seas. All hands were soaked to the skin, and after fifteen minutes on deck our clothes would get so stiff we could hardly move. But with our faces protected by cloth masks from the biting blast we toiled on doggedly.

"At times the ship made ice faster than we could beat it off her, grew sluggish on the sea, and often it seemed as if she would be smothered under the wash of the waves. Yes, many times that night I thought she would founder under our feet with the weight of ice upon her, but somehow fighting with frenzied energy, we managed to cheat the little ice-devils of their prey. A merry Christmas Eve, all right; a bully fight.

"Some time after midnight it cleared a bit and there not fifty yards ahead of us was a big steamer, lying head to the gale and drifting down athwart our bows. We rang the bell to attract her attention, but the sound of it was lost in the rear of the gale, the tumult of the sea.

"'Stand by to cut the cable,' shouted the skipper. 'Give us a torch up here quick.'

"A man made a torch by winding some sacking about a broom, and pouring oil over it; but when he lit it by shoving it into the stove he managed to set fire to the cabin at the same time. And when he rushed on deck with it, the wind promptly blew it out.

"The steamer, however, had seen us, and blowing her siren, forged by, out of harm's way. But if she had decided not to sink us she had put us in a fair way of being roasted alive. As the man with the torch had upset the contents of the oil can over the floor, there was a pretty blaze down in the cabin in no time. After fighting the frost, we had to turn to and fight fire. And a pretty fight it was, too. For a time it looked as if we wouldn't be able to handle it—but we managed it, somehow.

"And then we nearly froze to death. You see, it took us some time to put the gutted cabin to rights, and get a fire going in the stove again. And we couldn't get into the fo'castle forward—too much water piling over the bows.

"A while before daylight the gale broke, the sky cleared, and the sea subsided rapidly. Presently the hawser, chafed or stretched to the breaking point by the long strain upon it, parted; but it had served us faithfully long enough. The schooner was in no danger of being swamped now; and we went to work to get sail on her. As the rigging, running gear, sails blocks, everything was coated with ice, that was no easy job; but after about three hours' labor, we managed it.

"Shortly after we got her going the skipper caught sight of a glitter upon the rolling waves near the southwestern horizon. Immediately he put her about, and bore away for it. We looked at him, lost in astonishment. What possessed him to go chasing after the glitter of an ice-pan wallowing in the waves?

" 'What's up now, skipper,' asked the second hand. 'Cal'late to pick up a load of ice? Not enough aboard last night?'

" 'I've got to see what that is,' quoth the skipper uneasily. It looks to me like a wreck.'

" 'Thought you were in a great hurry to get home, sir. If you go chasing all around the clock you won't be able to eat your Christmas dinner ashore.'

" 'Can't help it. I've got to have a closer look—I'm afraid it's a wreck,' said the skipper in a tone that made further remonstrance impossible.

"And sure enough it was a wreck—a ship dismasted and iced up like a berg. She was very low in the water and the waves were washing right over her fore decks. At first we thought she was abandoned, but presently we made out a couple of figures on the after-house. They were sheathed in white ice, and looked like a couple of hoary Santa Clauses.

"We bore down, and the sun, breaking from behind a cloud, flashed its rays upon the crystal masses weighting the wreck—flooding it with a blood red glow. Presently we rounded to under her lee, and, having chopped the ice from our dories, soon had a couple of them over the side.

"That old hulk was in a pretty plight, and her crew just alive. When we swung alongside a bearded Santa Claus informed us in a weak voice that we would have to come aboard—that there were four men in the cabin unable to help themselves. A couple of us scrambled upon the wreck—at the peril of our lives. You see, she was filled with ice to the level of her rails, and there was nothing to prevent us from slipping right overboard again. The cabin was half full of water surging back and forth with every roll of the old hulk. And there were four men down there, standing in water to their waists. They were off their balance evidently—just had sense and strength enough to keep their heads above water. They seemed to take us for ghosts, and had no desire to be saved.

"No, they didn't want to leave that wreck. We had to haul the first lad by main force out of the cabin, and as he struggled like a madman, we thought we'd never be able to get him in the boat. While we struggled with him—I thought we'd all be sliding overboard—the bearded Santa Claus on the house clambered down, and assured him fiercely that it was all right—that he'd better go in the boat quietly. At that the lad calmed down, and we managed to get him into a dory alongside. Well, we picked off the lot of them without mishap—except that I fell overboard once. However, it didn't matter much, the frost was out of the air.

"And we just got them off in time, too. While we were hoisting the bearded Santa Claus aboard our schooner, the old hulk threw up her heels and went down head foremost into the depths. She was bound to Halifax, and do you know what?—the bearded Santa Claus, her captain, was our skipper's brother. Talk about fisherman's luck! If our skipper hadn't hooked her Christmas Eve, we'd never have sighted that wreck and all hands would have gone down with her. They'd had a pretty hard time of it, were frost burnt a bit, but nothing serious. In a short time they were sleeping comfortably.

"Presently the wind backed into the southwest, and with everything drawing, we stood in for Canso. We arrived that afternoon about 3 o'clock, not much worse for our adventures. We made merry that evening and then went to sleep for 24 hours on end."

Yarn followed yarn. The talk ranged round the world and back again, and quickly the evening wore away. At last eight bells struck, and of a sudden the lights grew dim in their frosted globes, died out, and it was dark.

"Humph, they're shutting of the lights. Time to turn in," said the matter-of-fact purser, and rose and departed.

But the others sat in the dark, waiting. And suddenly they were aware of voices talking in the night; strange voices, indistinct at first, but soon growing strong and clear; the voices of ships calling to one another in the magic hour that follows the midnight of Christmas Eve. Great liners, possessed with the passionate life of a score of fiery furnaces, crowded with the manifestations of power and wealth, majestic in their might, splendid in their luxury; big tramps, that had poked their bluff noses into ports in the far corners of the earth; haughty little government boats, insolently secure of a life of ease and plenty; overworked, weary, weatherworn, coasting schooners—all were lifting clamorous voices, challenging audience. Even the gaunt tugs raised chattering voices, unabashed by the distinguished company of ships in the port. But it was the high stern voice of an ancient wooden square rigger, once the pride of a famous firm of ship owners in New Brunswick, that dominated the hubbub of voices, and that by virtue of her age and experience and the fact that she was of the breed of ships which had dared the dangers and mysteries of all the seas before the coming of steel and steam, claimed priority. Gravely, proudly, the old ship began her saga, and stately, liner, bluff cargo boat, reckless coaster and truculent tug stilled their voices to listen. Thus she spoke:

"Go call the winds to witness, the winds of all the world,
The gale that rose to wreck me, the breeze that served my need,
They will tell you that wherever my white wings were unfurled
Queen of the roaring seas was I, by virtue of my speed.

"The trade winds have caressed me like maidens sweet and gay,
The fierce West Indian hurricane has howled about my path,
The North Atlantic blizzard has driven me on my way,
And Cape Horn gales have striven to whelm me in their wrath.

"The fragrant breeze and frolicsome that roams the Carribees
The lost, light winds that wander through the mid-Pacific Isles,
The typhoon, wild and terrible, that sweeps the China seas—
They have played or battled with me while I reeled the lonely miles.

"I have idled in the doldrums—Cape gales I've laughed to scorn—
I have run the Easting down like a fury fleeing fate—
I have travelled like a Flying Dutchman at the storming of the Horn,
And smashed the clipper record from the Hook to the Golden Gate.

Then spoke the Allan Liner:
"Allh onor to the sailing ships that plough the plunging sea,
And draw their life from the boistrous breath of the vagrant, veering wind
Oft-times have I envied them their wanderings far and free
And their long, long rests in the piquant ports from Carleton to the Ind.

But I was the first turbiner in the trans-Atlantic trade;
I am the latest triumph of man in his war with the sea;
Of steam and fire my spirit is—of steel and iron I am made—
And twice ten thousand horse power is the might that driveth me.

Ten thousand years, yea, more than ten thousand years have I been in the making:
I am the fruit of achievement since in yon dim and distant age,
Man, the savage, struck the hard flints together, shaking
His soul with awe as my mother fire leaped at him in a rage.

Proudly I sweep through the surges—into the teeth of the gales I drive
Against my bows the combers curl and break in a fury of spume—
But I hold to my course untroubled, bearing my human hive,
'Twixt port and port as straight and swift as a shuttle swings through the loom.

Then spoke the C. P. R. Liner:
"Queen of a fleet of famous ships am I;
On the Great Lakes and on the Greater Seas,
My numerous busy sisters proudly fly
Our honored house-flag to the harbor breeze.

Great is the company that I serve;
Spanneth a continent and two oceans wide;
Its mighty achievements are a nation's dower,
Quickening its pulsing life, an Empire's pride."

Then a little coaster broke in:

Belay, belay, my sisters, these vaunts of power and pride,
Hardly are they in keeping with the spirit of Christmas-tide;
An obscure and humble old drogher, it is not for me to boast,
I have merely carried lumber up and down a dangerous coast.
But this I know, my sisters, ye ships, so grand and gay,
'Tis only the spirit of service that counts on Christmas Day.

Then a four-masted schooner, deep laden with coal, lifted up her voice:
"Bond servant am I to a wearisome trade, but not in the servile sense,
That fits with the skypilot's preaching
Scant is my recompense—
A coat of paint and now and then some gilt for my ginger bread scrolls,
But when the tempests rave I get a chance to feel my strength and prove the souls,
Of my masters and servants, Ay I know the high
Abiding satisfaction of hard service on the sea, but I
While serving with content demand much of the men who sail me, stern
Ideals of duty, vigilance inceasing, faithfulness, and hearts that burn
With courage and the love of grim endeavor. The spirit of service such as He,
Born in this hour, taught to the fishermen of Galilee,
This have I freely given. But no slave am I, patient and dull,
Duty to me, relaxed their vigilance a minute's space
Quick would I be to bring them face to face
With death or dire disaster. This I conceive to be,
The spirit of service fitting ships to sea.
The skypilots have fabled that He,
The great earth shaking revolutionary,
Once walked upon the sea of Galilee,
And found the fishermen cowering and huddling in their little craft,
While the wild waves raked them fore and aft.
But well we know that He who called the fishermen to Him—
And bade them carry His great message o'er the earth,
Would never have walked upon the waters in the dim
Twilight of storm and found fishermen that were worth
The saving, cowering and huddling. Nay they would
Have been too busy battling with the storm in fortitude
Of soul to mark or care who walked the waves

Suddenly the lights flared up. The men of the sea sat silent as if still listening to the voices of the ships. But with the flare of the lights had the magic of the hour vanished, and they were not permitted to hear the high argument of the goodly company of ships. Presently the chief officer rose and proposed a sailor's toast to Home and Sweethearts; it was drank in silence, and then the chief officer spoke again. "A sailor's Christmas may have its drawbacks, but most of us, I suppose, remember best the Christmas we spent at sea. The hardest time I ever had was on Christmas eve, and I remember it with satisfaction. That Christmas was for me a festival. I remember it with pleasure. I think of it with pride, that experience that gave me a chance to know myself, to feel my strength, to understand the spirit of service. Here's to the spirit of Christmas."

I. Chester Brown's

Annual Christmas Sale of DRY GOODS

Your Money Will Go One-Third Further If You Do Your Shopping Here

35c. Black Purses	23c. each
75c. Black and Brown Hand Bags	49c. each
$1.25 Large Leather Hand Bag	89c. each
2.00 Ladies' Umbrellas	$1.50 each
1.35 Ladies' Umbrellas	98c. each
1.00 Ladies' Umbrellas	69c. each
1.25 Men's Self-opening Umbrellas	98c. each
2.75 Ladies' Coat Sweaters	$1.98 each
1.50 Black Underskirts	98c. each
1.50 Black Sateen Underskirts	98c. each
2.00 Moire Underskirts	$1.50 each
40c. Tweed and Plain Cloth Suiting	25c. yard
45c. Black and Colored Suiting	29c. yard
Special lot of Fifty Inch Heavy Cloth	39c. yard
75c. Wool Plaids	50c. yard
39c. Worsted Plaids	29c. yard
$1.25 Heavy Tweed for Coats 56 inch	59c. yard
1.75 Cardinal Beaver Cloth	$1.39 yard
1.35 Cardinal Blanket Cloth	$1.10 yard
10c. Heavy Roller Towelling	7½c. yard
40c. Butchers' Linen	25c. yard
50c. Round Thread Linen	37c. yard
14c. Thirty-two inch Prints, new	10c. yard
35c. Unbleached Damask	25c. yard
50c. Full Bleached Damask	39c. yard
35c. Huck Towels	25c. pair
35c. Large Bath Towels	25c. pair
25c. Child's Corded Waist, White or Drab	19c. each
Special Lot of English Shaker, 34 inch, Sale	10c. yard
35c. Ladies' Heavy White Knit Vests and Pants	25c. each
50c. Heavy Knit Underwear	38c. each
Children's Black Tights	25c., 30c. and 35c. pair
Ladies' Black Tights	Special 55c. pair
10c. Linen D'Oylies	only 5c. each
15c. D'Oylies	10c. each
25c. Battenburg D'Oylies	15c. each
35c. Ribbed Cashmere and Wool Hosiery	25c. pair
50c. Llama Hoisery	35c. pair
40c. Worsted Hose, for Bovs, large sizes	25c. pair
25c. Heavy Wool Hose, large sizes	19c. pair
35c. New Collars and Fancy Belts, in boxes only	25c. each
75c. Fancy Collars in Boxes	50c. each

All New Goods But We Must Reduce Our Stock

I. Chester Brown, 32-36 King Sq.

GETTING EVEN WITH HIM.

An Episcopal clergyman, rector of a fashionable church in one of Boston's most exclusive suburbs, could not be bothered with the innumerable telephone calls that fall to one in his profession, so he had his name left out of the telephone book. A prominent merchant of the same name, living in the same suburb, was continually annoyed by requests to officiate at funerals and baptisms. He went to the rector, told his troubles in a kindly way, and asked the parson to have his name put in the directory. But without success.

The merchant then determined to complain to the telephone company. As he was writing the letter, one Saturday evening, the telephone rang and the timid voice of a young man asked if the Rev. Mr. Blank would marry him at once. A happy thought came to the merchant: "No, I'm too damn busy writing my sermon,' he replied.

NOT NEEDED.

While a traveling man was waiting for an opportunity to show his samples to a merchant in a little backwoods town in Missouri, a customer came in and bought a couple of nightshirts. Afterwards a long, lank lumberman, with his trousers stuffed in his boots, said to the merchant:

"What was them 'ere that feller bot?"

"Night-shirts. Can I sell you one or two?"

"Naup, I reckon not," said the Missourian. "I don'et set arouud much o' nights."

Too Merciful.

(Washington Times.)

Speaker Champ Clark, tells a story of the extraordinary feeling between the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Once, when speaking at St. Paul, he called attention to the reckless street driving in the rival city.

"Why," he declared, "I have even heard that ten inhabitants are killed in Minneapolis on the streets every twenty-four hours."

"Waal," came a loud voice of an interrupter, "it ain't enough!"

A CHRISTMAS TABLE FOR THE ADULTS

At this season of the year when there is such a variety of good things to choose from, the zealous housewife is often inclined to provide more for her Christmas feast than is really practical. Here is a simple menu which may be elaborated according to one's ways and means:

Raw Oysters.

Salted Nuts Stuffed Olives
Lobster in Red-Pepper Cases.
Brownie Rolls.
Roast Goose with Mashed Potatoes.
Apple Sauce Glazed Onions
Poinsettia Salad; Crackers.
Frozen Orange Pudding.
Nuts and Raisins Cake
Coffee.

The First Two Courses.

Serve the oysters in their shells on small plates, with a little crushed ice beneath, and stand these on larger plates, and in the centre of each small one place a tiny red pepper case filled with a mixture of one tablespoonful of Worcestershire sauce, one teaspoonful each of lemon juice and Tabasco sauce and a dash of salt. This should be well mixed.

For the fish course take two cups of lobster meat, and chop it very fine; then force it through a sieve. Add two tablespoonfuls of the bread crumbs, four tablespoonfuls of sweet cream, one-half cup of milk, and the beaten yoke of an egg; season with salt, a little paprika, and one tablespoonful of lemon juice, and blend these well together; then fold in the stiffly beaten whites of two eggs. Fill small red pepper shells with the mixture; stand them in a baking dish, and surround with hot water; cover the tops with buttered paper, and bake in a moderate oven for twenty minutes. Just before serving add a spoonful of hot lobster or Bechamel sauce to each, and garnish the tops and sides of the dish with parsley.

Either Turkey or Goose.

The main course may be either the national turkey or the traditional goose, just as one likes; if the latter is selected be sure that it is young, one and one-half cups of hot mashed potatoes, one cup of softened bread crumbs, one finely choped onion, one-half cup of melted butter, two well-beaten eggs, salt, pepper, and a dash of sage. After singeing and cleansing the bird carefully, wipe out the inside and fill with the mixture; lay several thin strips of fat salt pork on the breast and legs, and roast on a rack in a dripping pan in a hot oven or two and one-half hours, basting every ten minutes with the fat in the pan.

For the Christmas salad, slice off the stem end from large red apples, scoop out as much of the inside as possible without breaking through the skin, and fill these with an equal portion of sliced apples cut in tiny cubes, chopped celery, and English walnuts seasoned with salt and moistened with cream salad dressing. Cut large petal-shaped pieces from pimentoes; arrange them in a circle on lettuce leaves in the form of a flower, on individual plates, and set an apple filled with the mixture in the centre, and add smaller petals to the tops.

Better than Plum Pudding.

The Christmas dinner nearly always calls for a rich dessert of some kind, either the old time-honored mince pie or a rich steamed fruit pudding which is usually prepared two weeks in advance. Instead you can serve this simple frozen sweet, which is really more suitable for finishing a heavy meal. Make a thin syrup with two cups of sugar and one-half cup of water; then add one cup of strained orange-juice and the juice of half a lemon. Heat in a double-boiler two cups of thin cream, add the beaten yolks of four eggs, and cook until it coats the spoon; then remove from the fire and fold in the beaten whites of the eggs; cool, add the syrup and freeze, when partly frozen fold in one cup of cream. Pack in a mold and bury in ice and salt for an hour or two. Serve this unmolded and ornamented with preserved fruit and leaves cut from angelica or candied citron.

A Generous Boy.

A lovely woman who lives on St. Clair Road is the proud mother of two boys, the older only six years. Mamma is subject to headaches, and mamma has discovered the sort of proprietary pills that will relieve them. One mustn't take more than one per hour. And the other afternoon mamma had a headache, took a pill and got up to repeat the dose—and found the pill-box empty. She summoned the maid. "Frida!" she cried. "Did Reginald swallow all those pills? Answer me!" "No'm," answered Frida, with a smile. "Don't be scared none. He's a chenerous kid—he gofe half of 'em to der baby!"

They Will Swap, as Usual.

"It's the same old gag.

"What is?"

"The've started promising not to give each other anything for Christmas."

"But won't they go through with it?"

"They will not. They're afraid Each is actually scared to death the other really means it."—Detroit Free Press.