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AN ENGINE ROOM STORY.

On a cold frosty Christmas, a few years ago, I was a passenger on board the fine steamer "Queen," from London to——. The voyage is not a very long one; but we were several days at sea, and during that time I struck up pretty much of an acquaintance with the second engineer of the ship. I have always had a taste, rather imaginative than scientific, for watching the working of powerful machinery. The evenings were too cold to allow of my remaining long on deck; and I was often glad to exchange for a time the saloon stove for the bright glow of the boiler furnaces, and the company of the passengers for a chat in the engine-room with my friend the engineer.

Ten o'clock in the evening, when it was his watch, generally found me seated by his side on the platform that ran around the tops of the cylinders, whence he could in a moment hear any word passed from the deck, had immediate access to the handles of the engines, could see the fire-doors and stock-hole, with the glass gauges in front of the boilers; and, even while chatting with me, could be constantly alive to the smallest escape of steam, or the least jarring or chirping sound, which told to his practiced eyes or ears that something about the machinery required lubrication or adjustment.

There was nothing very remarkable about my acquaintance, Angove; he was simply an honest, straightforward, intelligent, self-educated mechanic; one, in short, of a class very numerous among our steam-boat engineers.

He was about forty years of age, and had spent nearly half that time at sea, in many services and in all parts of the world. He had been in action on board a Brazilian steam sloop; had nearly died from the intense heat in the engine-room of a Peninsula and Oriental boat in the Red Sea; had been wrecked in a West India mail steamer, and afterwards discharged from the service for a smuggling transaction, with which he vowed that he had really nothing to do; had served on board a river boat on the Mississippi, and another on the Hooghly; and had seen many a strange event in these and other services, from the plain matter-of-fact point of view natural to his temperament and education. On Christmas eve we were slipping along fast under steam and canvas,