

The civilised man's fear is founded, it must be admitted, on a reasonable knowledge of the ocean, so much his friend and yet so often his foe. Man is not independent of his fellow-man in distant countries, nor is it desirable that he should be. No land produces all the necessaries, and the luxuries which have begun to be considered necessities, sufficient for itself. Transportation by land is often impracticable, or too costly, and the ocean thus becomes the great highway of nations. Vessel after vessel, fleet after fleet, arrive safely and speedily. But as there is danger for man lurking everywhere on land, so also is there on the sea. The world's wreck chart for one year is, as we shall see hereafter, something appalling. That for the British coasts and seas alone in one year has exceeded 4,000 vessels, great and small! During a period of thirty years there were over 66,000 wrecks on the coasts of the United Kingdom, involving the loss of 23,000 lives. Think, then, of the *world's* wreck-chart! But still, as we shall see, though the number of vessels lost annually is on the increase, the accompanying loss of life is not, thanks to science and humane effort, by any means in equal ratio.

The history of the sea virtually comprises the history of adventure, conquest, and commerce, in all times, and might almost be said to be that of the world itself. We cannot think of it without remembering the great voyagers and sea-captains, the brave naval commanders, the pirates, rovers, and buccaneers of bygone days. Great sea-fights and notable shipwrecks recur to our memory—the progress of naval supremacy, and the means by which millions of people and countless millions of wealth have been transferred from one part of the earth to another. We cannot help thinking, too, of "Poor Jack" and life before the mast, whether on the finest vessel of the Royal Navy, or in the worst form of trading ship. We recall the famous ships themselves, and their careers. We remember, too, the "toilers of the sea"—the fishermen, whalers, pearl-divers, and coral-gatherers; the noble men of the lighthouse, lifeboat, and coastguard services. The horrors of the sea—its storms, hurricanes, whirlpools, waterspouts, impetuous and treacherous currents—rise vividly before our mental vision. Then there are the inhabitants of the sea to be considered—from the tiniest germ of life to the great leviathan, or even the doubtful sea-serpent. And even the lowest depths of ocean, with their mountains, valleys, plains, and luxurious marine vegetation, are full of interest; while at the same time we irresistibly think of the submerged treasure-ships of days gone by, and the submarine cables of to-day. Such are among the subjects we propose to lay before our readers. THE SEA, as one great topic, must comprise descriptions of life on, around, and in the ocean—the perils, mysteries, phenomena, and poetry of the great deep. The subject is too vast for superfluous detail: it would require as many volumes as a grand encyclopedia to do it justice; whilst a formal and chronological history would weary the reader. At all events, the present writer purposes to occasionally gossip and digress, and to arrange facts in groups, not always following the strict sequence of events. The voyage of to-day may recall that of long ago: the discovery made long ago may be traced, by successive leaps, as it were, to its results in the present epoch. We can hardly be wrong in believing that this grand subject has an especial interest for the English reader everywhere; for the spirit of enterprise, enthusiasm, and daring which has carried our flag to the uttermost parts of the earth, and has made the proud words "Britannia rules the waves" no idle vaunt, is shared by a very large