

Literature.

JOHN BROWN,
OR
A Voice from the Sea.

BY HARRIETTE MURRAY.

WRITTEN FOR THE QUEENS COUNTY GAZETTE.

In the year 184— a lad about eleven years of age left his home in London, and worked his way to Liverpool. Friendless, homeless and hungry, he wandered about the docks, sometimes receiving a few pence for some service rendered. With this money he would buy a bun or a piece of bread, and in this way he kept himself from starvation. At night he crept into some sheltered corner, and gathering his ragged clothes around him, slept the sweet sleep of childhood.

The boy's forlorn appearance attracted the attention of Captain Love, as kind hearted a man as ever commanded a vessel.

"Well, my lad," he said one day, when he came across John Brown, (as we will call him), "do you like to look at ships? I have noticed you around here for some days."

John looked up into the pleasant face of the old captain, pulled off his cap, and replied:

"Yes, sir; I like to look at the ships."

"Where is your home?"

"I have none, sir."

"Are your father and mother living?"

"My father died two years ago; my mother is married again, sir."

"What made you leave your mother?"

The tears rushed to the boy's eyes; he drew his sleeve across his face and brushed them quickly away.

"Because, sir, they thought I was old enough to make my own living, and there were other little ones to feed."

"Did you tell your mother you were going?"

"I did, sir, and she gave me this," he pulled a small Bible from his pocket, "and made me promise to read some in it every night before I went to sleep."

"And have you kept your promise?"

"No, sir. I have had no light to read by; but, I always kiss it, because my mother gave it to me."

The captain's blue eyes became moist, and he said, huskily:

"She gave you a good compass to steer by, my lad."

His thoughts flew back to a similar promise given to his mother, who now sleeps beneath the green sod in a lonely graveyard in the Highlands of Scotland.

He walked away a few steps, then came back.

"Well, my lad, I will take you on board my ship, as cabin boy, if you will promise me to steer your life by that book in your hand."

John's grim face brightened.

"Indeed, I will promise anything you may ask, sir, if you will let me go with you."

"Well, come along, lad."

When they reached the ship, the captain ordered the cook to give the lad something to eat.

"In the name of our Neptun," exclaimed the cook, looking at the boy, "what is the Captain going to do with such a dirty landlubber as yourself?"

John's eyes twinkled in his dirty face.

"I didn't ask him," he answered.

"Well, go and wash, you young spalpeen, or you will never find the way to your mouth, through so much dirt."

"Where will I wash? Will I go to the big wash tub?" asked John, with a comical look upon his face.

"Where is the big wash tub, you spalpeen?" and the cook eyed him with astonishment.

"The one the ship sails in," replied the boy, without a smile.

It struck the ludicrous side of Pat's nature. He could appreciate a joke, and had the warm heart of his nation under a rough exterior. A broad smile spread over his pock-marked face, and looking at John, he said:

"You deserve your dinner for that."

From that time John Brown had a good friend in Pat Mahony.

After a vigorous application of soap and water, John presented quite a different appearance.

The captain thought so when John, cap in hand presented himself upon the quarter deck for his orders.

"My orders are," said the captain, looking into John's clean, shiny face, "that you go to your berth and get some sleep."

A look of disappointment came into John's face.

"Never mind, my lad," said the captain, kindly. "You shall have all the work you can do when we get to sea."

The fact was that the captain wished to keep the boy out of sight, until the clothes he had ordered for him came on board.

John turned away with a sigh, feeling as if a bucket of cold water had been dashed over his ambition; or, like some little baby sent to bed to be kept out of the way.

Sitting down beside his berth, he took out the Bible and soliloquized.

"I wonder what the captain meant when he said this was a good compass to steer by, he thought to himself."

He opened the Book and the first words his eyes rested upon were these:

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not, 'for their feet run to do evil.'"

He closed the Book, put it back into his pocket, undressed and crept into the berth, repeating:

"If sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

"I wonder who it was that said that. How did he know that Sam Perkins coaxed me to steal apples for him. I am glad I didn't do it, for that would have been a sin. I do not know what use they make of a compass. I will find out and then I will know what the captain meant."

Thus his thoughts ran on until drowsiness overpowered him, and he fell into a profound slumber.

How long he slept he did not know. The bustle and tramping of feet on deck awoke him. Starting up he rubbed his eyes and tried to collect his drowsy senses.

Springing out of the berth he looked around for his clothes. They were nowhere to be seen. His first thought was that someone had stolen them. He sat down, feeling very much as if he would like to cry. Presently the rough face of the cook appeared.

"Are ye awake, ye spalpeen; or, are ye going to slape till the day of judgment?"

"Oh! Pat, someone has stolen my clothes."

"Be gorra! he was a decent thafe, thin, for he left ye better ones, and ye better get into the new tugs as quick as ye can, if ye want to say good bye to ould England, for the ship is on its way across the big wash tub."

"Where are my clothes, Pat? Please tell me."

"And shure it was meself that threw them overboard for the mermaids to dress their babies in."

"Oh! Pat, did you take my Bible out of the pocket of my coat?"

"I did; and you will find it under the new tugs. What do ye think the mermaids and sharks would do with the blessed Book, without a priest to teach them?"

Pat disappeared, and John dressed as quickly as he could. Kissing the Bible, he put it into a clean pocket. In another he stowed all his worldly goods, consisting of a one-blade jack knife, a rusty screw, a piece of slate pencil, some twine, a marble, and a small mouth organ.

These articles comprised John Brown's stock in trade, when he started to cross the Atlantic to seek his fortune in the new world.

When John presented himself upon the quarter deck, dressed in a sailor suit of navy blue, and holding the new cap in his hand, the captain smiled, and said, kindly:

"Aye, my lad, now you are sailing under the right colors. Go and look around the ship, until I get out through these vessels."

Everything was new and novel to our young sailor. The tall masts, with their sails outlined against the sky, and the sailors up in the rigging, shaking out or shortening sail, fascinated him. He longed to climb up and stand beside them.

Before many weeks had passed he could climb the rigging, splice a rope, or tie a bailing, as fast as any sailor on the vessel.

The crew were a nice crowd of men. Captain Love would not employ men of bad habits. He treated his men well, and in return expected every man to obey his orders cheerfully.

He gave them no grog, but supplied them with plenty of hot coffee with their hard tack. If his men didn't like his treatment, they could seek employment elsewhere. Very few of his men, after making one voyage, were willing to leave him.

He treated John with all the tenderness of a father—always ready to answer the questions that John was constantly plying him with. The boy's thirst for knowledge, especially navigation, pleased the captain.

When the captain was examining the charts, he had a habit of speaking his thoughts aloud. John would stand beside him while he went over the latitudes and longitudes, capes, rocks, etc.

Occasionally he would stop with his finger upon some place, and, looking into the boy's eager face, would ask:

"Aye, my lad, can you get the soundings?"

"It is deep, but I think I can, sir," the boy would reply.

Then the captain would turn to the chart again, and after a while ask the same questions over again.

In this way, John soon got quite a knowledge of navigation. His duties were light and he devoted all his leisure moments to study.

In those days vessels were not built for speed as they are now. It was four weeks before Captain Love, with his good ship Flora, reached her destination, St. John, where the owners of the ship resided.

Mr. W—, one of the owners, became very much interested in our young hero, and would like to have adopted him, for he had no son of his own.

One day Mr. W— said to the captain:

"Let me have that boy," pointing with his cane to John, who was going up the rigging with the agility of a cat.

"Na, na," replied the captain, "I would

not like to lose the lad."

"I can do better for the boy than you can," argued Mr. W—.

"I doubt it, Mr. W—," said the captain. "He is a real, born sailor, and you would only spoil his life, if you tried to make anything else out of him. But when I set the lad taught, you can give him a ship to sail, Mr. W—," and a broad smile overspread the captain's kindly face.

CHAPTER II.

St. John, at that time, was a busy, stirring little city. It had not begun to spread out into the suburbs, as it is now. Shipbuilding was carried on quite extensively, and some very fine vessels were launched from the yards.

Captain Love discharged the ballast, took in a load of timber, and was again ready for sea.

John had received many flattering offers to remain in the busy little city. He refused them all, and again sailed away with Captain Love.

In fact the captain could not part with him. The boy's friendly condition had first touched his sympathy; then his cheerful, sunny disposition, together with his strict honesty and truthfulness, had won his heart. Or it might be that he saw something in the lad's face that reminded him of his own dear son—now lying somewhere in the trackless ocean. But be that as it may, his interest in John increased. He made Jack, as he sometimes called him, study navigation with him as tutor.

Upon one occasion, after they had spent some time in talking and the captain had been explaining the uses of the charts and compass, John suddenly asked:

"Will you please explain to me, sir, how my Bible is like these charts?"

The old captain leaned back in his chair, rested one elbow upon the table, and his head upon his hand. A look of tenderness came into his eyes, and he said slowly:

"I don't know, lad, that I can explain it to you, so that you can get the soundings, for I have not studied that line of navigation as much as I should. This," laying his hand upon the charts, "you see, shows the islands, reefs, rocks, shoals and head lands. They are all marked so plain, we cannot make a mistake, if we study them well."

The compass points due north, and by it we can steer our vessel across a trackless sea. That, my lad, is one line of navigation. This," taking up the Bible, "is another line. Every child, when it is born, is launched out upon the sea of life, and without a chart or compass to guide them, they would soon be shipwrecked upon some dangerous place along the coast. God, our own great Captain, has a bill of sale of every vessel that crosses the sea of life, and feels a deep interest in their welfare. So He gave the human race this Book for their chart and compass with His sailing orders wrote out plain. Some of them He wrote with His own finger. He tells us what freight to take on board, and to see that the goods are stamped with blood red, for that is His color. Can you get the soundings of what I am saying, lad?"

"Aye, aye, sir. Are there many dangerous places?"

"Aye, lad; the coast is full of them. Men go on without studying the chart until they are stranded upon some shoal or dashed to pieces upon some rock, and their souls go to perdition."

"Have the rocks a name, sir?"

"Aye, the names are all wrote out plain in this Bible-chart."

"What is the name of the most dangerous one, sir?"

"It is called 'Intemperance'. There are more wrecks upon that rock every year than any other upon this voyage of life. It sparkles and gleams and looks beautiful. People shout and sing in their glees until they are caught in the breakers and dashed on the rocks—every wave being out every timber of manhood, until demons clutch them, and they sink into hell."

The boy shivered.

"Steer away from that rock, lad," resumed the captain. "I came very near being shipwrecked upon it myself, once. I did not study the Bible chart in my young days, and like many foolish people, thought I could steer my own vessel. So I sailed madly on, without taking any reckoning, until I heard the roar of the breakers, the shrieks and cries of the wrecked creatures, as they were being dashed to pieces."

"And what did you do, sir?"

"Aye, lad; I brought my ship about, and made a tack off shore, and since then I have studied the Bible chart often, and keep my vessel in the middle of the channel where the tide runs straight into the port of Heaven."

"And what becomes of the vessels after they reach port, sir? Do they ever come back?"

"Na, na, my lad. Not one ever returns to tell, but the Bible chart has it all down plain. The great Captain examines the papers and invoices to see if they are the goods He ordered, and to see if the captain has obeyed His sailing instructions."

"And if they have not obeyed them, what will He do to them?"

The captain looked into the boy's eager, questioning face a moment, then said, sadly:

"The great Captain, with a wave of His hand, will say, 'Depart from Me; you would not obey My sailing orders.' Then they are launched out upon a sea of

fire, where there are no soundings, no harbors, no shores."

"And what does the great Captain do with the vessels that have the right kind of goods on board, sir?"

The captain's face brightened.

"It is wrote down in this chart book. I will read it: 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast obeyed My orders. Enter into thy rest.' Then the vessel is changed, and becomes pure white with riggings of wrought gold, and launched out upon a sea, the waters of which are clear as crystal, where there are no dead seeking to be taken. Where the bright and morning Star is always in view; no vapor to obscure the sight; no storms, no hurricane sweep across that sea."

"I am sixty years old, my lad, and will soon reach the great Captain's Harbor. I think my services are good, for they are stamped with His blood red seal. You are just beginning the voyage across life's dangerous sea. Study well the Bible chart, my lad, and steer your vessel by the directions wrote down, therein. Keep out from land for the coast is strewn with wreckage."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the boy, with his eyes full of tears. "I will do the best I can, sir."

The ship reached Liverpool and discharging the lumber took in freight for the West Indies; reached that port in safety and discharging took in a cargo for St. John. Thus they continued to sail from port to port until five years had passed.

John had grown tall and broad shouldered, and as leathery as a young sapling. The captain had always treated him as a son, and under his tuition, he had made rapid progress in the study of navigation, until he knew quite as much as his teacher, and the old captain felt proud of his tall, handsome pupil.

John often looked back to those five years. They ever remained a green spot in his memory. Under the captain's untiring energy, he learned to sail a ship across trackless oceans. He learned to navigate his own life over a more dangerous sea.

One day, upon their return voyage to St. John, when they had been looking over the charts for some time, the captain looked up into John's face with a smile, and said:

"Jock, you know quite as much as your master. I am going to retire and give the command of the ship to you."

"I would not care to sail in the ship, sir, if you were not master, for you have been both father and friend to me, sir, always."

A broad smile overspread the captain's face.

"Aye, aye, lad, and when we get into port, you shall have the place of first mate. How would you like that?"

"A thousand thanks, sir," replied John, his face all aglow with pleasure. "It has been my highest ambition to fill the place of mate under you, sir."

"Aye, aye, lad," and the captain looked pleased.

Upon arriving in St. John, the captain's first care was to have John duly installed first mate of the ship Flora.

They took in a load of lumber and again set sail for England. The captain took his wife and daughter, a girl of thirteen, and the idol of her father's heart. She was small for her age, and had an abundance of long, brown curls, that rejoiced in their freedom, large, blue eyes that were ever changing in expression. A well shaped mouth, with an even set of white teeth. She possessed her father's determined will, as well as his kind heart.

Following as a young kitten, ever upon the watch for some new object to tease, finding the opportunities on shipboard limited, she tried to work off her jubilant feelings upon her doting old father, who submitted to her pranks with the patience of a martyr.

She would like to have victimized the handsome, young mate, but he paid no attention, whatever, to her advances, going on with his work, and taking no notice of her, until her piqued feelings could stand it no longer.

She jumped into her father's lap one day, knocked off his hat, rumpled his hair with her fingers and at length burst out in an indignant tone:

"Who is your lordly mate, papa? He puts on as many airs as if he owned the ship and everyone on board."

The captain threw back his head, and laughed merrily.

"He is my adopted son, and, therefore, he is your brother."

(To be Continued.)

Hobson will be appalled when he hears that Miss Marguerite Lindley has said: "I hope to see the day when kissing is entirely unknown. I wish it could be made illegal. It is not a clean thing to do. It should be discontinued by every thinking woman."

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