

The Slimy Sea Grass 421

attach itself. Kipling alludes to it in his fine poem of the Derelict :--

'South where the corals breed,
The footless floating weed
Folds me and fouls me, strake on strake upcrawling.'

Its spores must be universally diffused all over the millions of square miles of ocean. For only let a congenial surface be exposed to the action of the sea, such as a wooden plank or a bare piece of iron (it does not love the poisonous paint which is put on the bottom of steel ships or yellow metal sheathing), and in an incredibly short space of time the weed will cover it with a bright green slimy veil which, being scraped off and dried, looks like the very finest grass. So rapidly does it grow that in wet ships, as we call them, that is, vessels over whose decks the sea is almost continually washing in heavy weather, it is absolutely necessary to give the decks a good hard scrubbing every two or three days to clear off this weed growth, which is so extremely slippery as to make it dangerous to walk about the decks.

It is a very curious sight to see a ship, a sailing ship that is, that has been out a long while rolling lazily in a calm with the long dank tresses of the weed on her sides lying closely to her as she lifts, and floating out all around her as if alarmed when she plunges. But it looks exceedingly mournful upon a derelict, which naturally gathers more upon it than a vessel which is being handled, since it is obvious that the quieter its host the more rapid its rate of growth. It will there be found growing thickly all over her, even in the cabins if the sea has easy access, and as she wallows helplessly it spreads like a gloomy halo worn by the genius of despair. Only upon closer