

THE TRYST HOUR.

Come to me, for I wait,
Not by the garden-gate
As oft of old I waited,
Under the hush of leaves,
On drowsy Summer eves,
When by some worldly chance thou wert belated.

Ah, then it was so dear
To list thy steps draw near,
And feel thine arms enfold me,
And with a whispered word,
Sweeter the oftener heard,
To have the old, old tender story told me.

Nay, not as then I wait!
Far, far more long and late
The tryst I now am keeping,
The sounds of wind and rain
Are at my window-pane:
And I am heavy-hearted with my weeping.

Unto the only place
Where now I see thy face,
The angel Sleep must guide me,
I wait her darkening wing
Above me hovering,
Before thy long-lost form can stand beside me.

Come to me, it is late!
O Sleep, O Love, I wait!
And while so cold above thee
I know the turf is prest,
I'll dream that on thy breast
I lay my head, and hear thy sweet, "I love thee!"

C. D. B.

CRUISE OF THE "NINE CAPTAINS."

A TRUE STORY OF OLD NANTUCKET.

BY JANE G. AUSTIN.

Nine men stood around the stove in Jeremiah Barnard's back store, a place where the men of Sherburne were very apt to congregate of a morning to talk over the news of the previous day and lay plans for the coming one. Nine fine stalwart men, hardy, bronzed and resolute, all in the prime of life—all Sherburne men—and each a skipper of some craft more or less important, ranging downwards from the big whalers swinging idly at their anchors in the harbor—for this was during the war of 1812, and the British had laid an embargo upon the port of Sherburne, and privateersmen were hovering all along the coast ready to pounce upon anything venturing to sail under the flag of the United States.

Now, whaling being the industry of Sherburne, and the money it produced almost the only means of procuring food, clothing and other necessities from New York and other places with which the coasters carried on an active little trade, this embargo proved a very serious matter to Sherburnites, and one not likely to be patiently borne by such men as now stood around Jeremiah Barnard's box-stove, and shook each other's iron hands with mysterious emphasis.

"Well, then, here's nine of us agreed," said Obed Coffin, the usual spokesman on all occasions: "Here's Folger, and Macy, and Hussey, and Coleman, and Ray, Tom Coffin and me, Gardner and Mitchell—that counts nine, don't it? And there's my schooner, the *Betsy*, and if you're agreed we'll now christen her the *Nine Captains*, load her with candles, oil and salt codfish, put her through to New York under the noses of the blockaders and bring her home again with corn enough to plant all Nantucket and make a johnny-cake or two beside."

"You'd rather plant beans than corn, hadn't you, cap'n?" asked Coleman, with a sly wink at Gardner, who hastily turned the subject by suggesting:

"Seeing we're all captains, it would be advisable to ship one fellow before the mast, for cook if nothing else. Who'll we find?"

"Why, there's Jared Dunham," suggested Tom Coffin, younger brother of the first speaker. "He's a poor stick for hand and reef, but he can make a chowder with any man."

"And I should say Cap'n Russell to take command, though we don't look for very strict discipline, I suppose," suggested Folger, while Macy added:

"Well, no; I reckon we've all played 'old man' too long to go back to be ship's boy; but one has got to take the lead, and I'd as lief it would be Dan Russell as any man I know."

"All right, mates, I'll do my best," said Russell, quietly, and once more the strong grip of an unspoken pledge was exchanged between man and man, and pretty soon the nine captains departed to their several homes.

Three days later Captain Russell stood in his own kitchen, dressed in his sea-clothes, packing a large canvas bag which he called a kit, and talking with his wife. A fine boy of perhaps fourteen stood by, with a very anxious look upon his face. Mrs. Russell looked from father to son, a cloud of anxiety darkening her comely brow.

"It's just as you say, mother," said the captain, examining the soles of a pair of boots. "If you need him at home, home it is, and if you don't I'll take him along."

"It isn't that I need him, Daniel, but the danger—"

"Danger! Fol-de-rol, woman!" interrupted the captain, good-humoredly. "The boy's no baby, nor no fool neither, and if it hadn't been for this embargo he'd have been off whaling before now. He don't care for danger, do you, Ned?"

"I guess not—not much," replied the boy, with a voice of superb disdain. "Come, mother, say yes, say yes, say yes, mamma, do!"

"Well, yes then, since you're bound to go, Ned," said the mother bravely, but so tremulously that her husband hurriedly changed the subject by saying: "And now, tell me wife, what'll you have from York. Say anything you've a mind to, old woman, and you shall have it, for I'm going to make my fortune this trip, and my fortune's your fortune."

"Well, cap'n, there are two or three little conveniences I'd like round the house," replied the wife, dropping her apron, and looking up rather eagerly. "Several of the neighbors have got them, and—"

"You ain't going to let them get ahead of you, blow high, nor blow low," interrupted the captain, putting the last article into his kit and tying it up with a bit of tarred rope-yarn. "Well, that's all right, my dear, and what are the little conveniences in plain English?"

"Well, I thought I'd like to have a warming-pan like neighbor Tabby Mitchell's for one thing. It's real handy in case of sickness, and—"

"There's the coach, father," interrupted Ned, as a faint and mournful sound swept by on the March wind.

"You're right, boy. Get your own kit ready! Now then, wife, warming-pan it is: and what else?"

"A coffee-mill I was thinking of. Aunt Dinah Folger says it saves a sight of trouble, and—"

"Coffee-mill it is. Anything more?"

"Well, husband, I'd like a first-rate Holy Bible, a big, square one, with a place to put down all the children's ages, and—"

"Come on, Captain Russell! Coach's blown twice a'ready," called Captain Coleman's voice from the gate, and Captain Russell, giving his wife a hearty hug and kiss, shouted, "Ay, ay!" into her very ear, and then, more softly:

"Holy Bible it is, Lizzie, and coffee-mill it is, and warming-pan; and, Ned, I'll fetch 'em all if God spares my life, and do you keep yourself and the youngsters safe and well against I come home."

"I'll try, Daniel," and then Ned came for his good-by, and fifteen minutes later the wife and mother ran up to the walk on top of the house and waved her white apron in farewell to the *Nine Captains*, standing out of the harbor with a fresh southerly breeze on his weather beam. Space and time forbid us to follow the little craft on her adventurous voyage; suffice it to say that the favoring breeze continued, that she escaped the vigilance of British cruisers and privateersmen, and on the third day ran the blockade of New York harbor and triumphantly made fast to one of the rude wharves, now replaced by elegant piers in the lower parts of the city.

The candles and oil came at just the right time, and were disposed of at war prices to the great content of the owners, and even the salt fish went off at a profit well covering the cost of the entire journey.

The nine captains were men who never flinched from danger or toil so long as endurance was necessary, but they were also men who believed in recreation as well as toil, and having disposed of their cargo and bought the return freight of grain, provisions and various necessities for the island, they devoted a week or so to amusement and social enjoyment of the city so lately their own capital, for it was only nineteen years since Sherburne had been made over to the government of Massachusetts by that of New York State.

But at last both pleasure and business being well completed the jolly crew reassembled on board, hove their anchor, set all sail, changed shore clothes for sun-westers and pea-jackets, and with a parting cheer to the comrades on the wharf the nine captains dropped down the stream and faced the blockaders.

"If we get clear with this cargo, boys, and sell at home as well as we have in York, it'll be the best voyage ever a man-jack of us made yet, according to its length that is," chuckled Capt. Berzillar Hussey, as he came aft to take his trick at the helm.

"Best not to bar'l your ile 'fore you get your whale cut in," growled in Captain Coleman, whom he relieved.

"That's so," asserted Captain Russell, standing by. "All I lay out for sure is to get my woman's warming-pan and coffee-mill and Holy Bible safe ashore, and the rest goes for luck."

"Going to have a change of weather 'fore night," remarked Captain Ray, squinting his eyes up at the sun, and Captain Gardner, a very silent man, nodded significantly.

The prophecy was not long in proving itself correct, and by eight bells all hands were piped, not to dinner, as they would have liked, but to haul down the jib and reef both fore and main-sail, and in another hour the *Nine Captains* was scudding through Long Island Sound before a fifteen-knot breeze, blocks and halyards rattling and swinging, canvas crackling, two men at the helm, an old-fashioned tiller by-the-way, whose length swept the quarterdeck from rail to rail, and everything portable shifting with every lurch of the crank little craft.

"Wish we had a hundred tun of ile in our hold," said Captain Coleman, uneasily. "That corn ain't ballast enough for such a gale as this."

"What I wish is that 'twas in barrels," replied Captain Folger. "If it should shift in a body over to leeward, it would be good-by to the *Nine Captains*."

"That's so, Folger, but it ain't going to shift," blithely spoke Tom Coffin. "And I tell you, boys, this is just the ground for bluefish, and unless I'm a bigger fool than I think myself, I see a school yonder. Mighty early for 'em, but I—yes, there she blows!"

"I believe you're right, Tom, who'd think of fishing in a gale like this," growled Macy, and Tom, with his jolly laugh, replied:

"Gale! Don't call this a gale, do you? Boy Ned and I are going to fish, I tell you, while the rest of you man the ship. Aren't we, Ned?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ned, delighted, and in a few moments a half-dozen lines were overboard, for Tom Coffin's practiced eye had not deceived him, and the *Nine Captains* had run across the earliest school of bluefish seeking their Summer resorts near the shore. The example was contagious, and presently every man on board, not otherwise engaged, was holding a bluefish line, or hauling in the beautiful victims, until the sport was suddenly arrested by two shouts from the two lookouts:

"British cruiser ahead on the weather bow!"

"Corn shifting in the hold!"

"Hang the luck!" cried Tom Coffin, hauling in his last bluefish, a splendid fellow, and flinging him into the tub in the lee scuppers, just about filled to the brim.

"Hang the corn, I say," retorted his brother. "We can neither fight nor run with our craft on her beam ends, if we don't capsize altogether."

"Look here, boys," exclaimed Folger, beckoning his comrades close together, "we're going to be taken sure; for, as Coffin says, we can neither fight nor run in this fashion, but that brigantine won't spare more than two or three men to take this schooner up to Halifax, and one of us will be carried along to condemn the craft in their courts; one of us, I say, mates, and I don't see a man here that isn't a match for any three of those press-gang fellows yonder."

"That's so, brother Folger," exclaimed one, and all gave assent by voice or look, while Russell quietly said:

"Send me, if you can, boys. I'll do my best, and maybe the *Nine Captains* won't make so long a cruise as Halifax."

"Yes, yes, Russell's the man; send him," exclaimed one and all, and Russell, putting his hand on Ned's shoulder, added:

"You'll look out for my boy, mates, and Ned, you see that mother gets her Holy Bible, and the rest of the stuff."

"I'll do my best, father," said the boy, stoutly, albeit his young eyes were bright with tears.

The gale had now moderated so far that the *Wasp*, one of the British cruisers blockading Long Island Sound, was able to round to cross the bow of the *Nine Captains*, fire a gun, and summon her to surrender, which, as already agreed upon, she did without resistance, and in a few moments a boat with the lieutenant commanding the *Wasp*, came aboard, examined the schooner's papers, asked a few questions, and ordered a parade of the crew.

"Ten men and a boy for this little schooner, and such fine-looking men, too!" exclaimed he. "Well, my brave fellows, your vessel is seized as a lawful prize, and if I had my way I'd draft every man of you aboard my ship as a British seaman; as it is, you'll be sent ashore at the nearest point of your own beggarly coast. Of course one of you has got to go to the provinces with the prize to condemn her, but he'll find a passage back easily. Which man will you recommend, captain?"

He turned to Captain Folger as he spoke. He having been put forward to receive the enemy by tacit consent, and he, gravely looking over the bronzed faces before him, replied:

"Well, sir, I don't know. Most of us have families and business, you see, and it would be hard for us to make a trip to Halifax just now, but there's our man Dan, if he'd do. He's a simple sort of a fellow, mighty little help aboardship, but he can cook tolerably, and do odd jobs as he's told. If he'd do, now—"

"Oh, yes, he'd do well enough. Where is he?" replied the lieutenant, hastily, for, truth to tell, the shifting corn had careened the *Nine Captains* to a very dangerous angle, and he was in haste to regain his own boat.

"You, Dan! Where are you, man?" cried Folger, as carelessly as he could, and Russell, slouching forward with his hands in his pockets, his shoulders rounded over, and as shiftless an air as possible all over him, replied:

"Here I am, cap'n. I don't want to go to Halifax."

"Oh, yes, you do, Dan. You've got nobody to cry if you never come back, and your place ain't hard to fill," replied Folger, a suspicious twinkle in his merry eyes. "He'll do as well as a better man, captain."

But the lieutenant was no fool, and his stern eyes had already noted the splendid proportions, well strung muscles and iron jaws of the proposed hostage, which not all Russell's assumed simplicity could make his face that of a fool or a coward.

"H'm! I don't fancy the looks of your man Dan, Captain Folger," said the lieutenant, grimly. "You say he'll do as well as a better man, but I don't see a better man here, and if I sent your man Dan aboard my prize I have a queer sort of a suspicion she'd never see Halifax. No, sir, Dan won't do; but there's a fellow that will," and, nodding towards Dunham, the cook, the officer added:

"That's the man who's going to Halifax, and as for the rest of you, bundle into that boat as

quick as you've a mind to, and I'll leave four of my own men aboard, and send a gang to shift that corn, if it's to be done."

"I believe it's law for us to take our personal property, captain," suggested Folger, swallowing his disappointment as well as he could, and looking around on his comrades.

"Yes, your clothes and money; rouse out your kits, sharp," replied the lieutenant, gruffly, as he glanced over the side.

"I've got two or three little matters aboard for my wife, cap'n," began Russell, amiably. "A warming-pan and a coffee-mill, and a Holy—"

"Get your coffee-mill and your Holy, and go to glory with 'em, you villain," shouted the officer, half-laughing in spite of himself, and casting a longing eye over Russell's active figure. "I'd like to rate you as A. B. aboard ship, that's all."

"Thank'y cap'n, but I'd about as lief sail my own ship," retorted Dan, diving down the companion way.

"His own ship? What does he mean?" demanded the lieutenant, uneasily.

"Oh, it's only some of his nonsense," replied Folger, carelessly. "There's that tub of bluefish, cap'n; they are personal property, I reckon. No part of the schooner's cargo, anyway. Want to trade for 'em, or let your men trade?"

"Trade? Why they are on s already, man," replied the officer, eyeing the lively fare greedily. "Just caught, eh?"

"Yes, sir; just caught, and as you won't trade, I'll fling 'em overboard again," said Folger, going towards them. "For we Yankees know the law certain in maritime matters, and these fish don't go with the craft, or there'll be a fuss."

"What'll you take for them?" demanded the lieutenant, dryly, for he knew that the Yankee captain spoke the truth.

"Five sovereigns, captain, not a penny less. Ship's stores you'll rate 'em, you know. It isn't your expense."

"Schooner's keeling over more, sir," reported the boatswain, touching his cap.

"And so she is. You'll get your five sovereigns as soon as we reach the *Wasp*, Captain Folger. All hands aboard the boat!"

Captain Folger solemnly winked at Captain Coffin, Captain Macy poked Captain Mitchell in the ribs, Captain Gardner thrust his tongue in his cheek to Captain Tom, and Captains Coleman, Hussey and Ray grinned delightedly at each other. Twenty-five dollars for that tub of bluefish gave them more satisfaction than the loss of their schooner and cargo depressed them.

Late that evening the *Wasp* landed her dangerous prisoners on the shore of Block Island, the British lieutenant drawing his first full breath as his boat returned safely to the brigantine's side.

"If those nine fellows had staid aboard the *Wasp* overnight, I believe they'd have taken her bare-handed," said he to the master's mate, standing beside him who gruffly responded:

"Shouldn't wonder, sir, specially that Dan."

The *Nine Captains*, with her cargo, shifted back into position, sailed for Halifax the next morning, but never reached there, nor was her fate ever known; but it is probable that the cargo again shifted and the schooner capsized.

The hardships and adventures of her late crew and owners upon Block Island, and their escape therefrom, after six weeks' waiting for a chance craft, would make another story as long as this, and cannot here be told. Landing on the western point of Martha's Vineyard, just below the pointed cliffs of Gay Head, now crowned by one of the finest lighthouses on the coast, but then desolate of all except a few Indian wigwams, they made their way on foot to the other extremity, where, at what is now called Oak Bluffs and Cottage City, they found a fisherman just in with his smack, and prevailed upon him to take them over to Nantucket.

"I expect nothing but they're all lost, neighbor Russell," said Mrs. Folger, with her apron at her eyes, as she sat in Mrs. Russell's kitchen, talking of the nine captains and their namesake, the schooner. "Food for fishes before this, you may depend, and you and I widows, neighbor."

"Hark! who's that whistling up the street?" cried Mrs. Russell, springing to her feet. If that "Yankee Doodle" isn't my Ned's voice, I'm a fool!"

But she was no fool, then or ever, and in another minute Ned and his father were in the room, and the captain, dropping the kit from his shoulder to the floor at her feet, said, with a grim smile:

"There, mother, there's the cruise; all that's left of it; the coffee-mill and the warming-pan are inside there, and Ned's got the Holy Bible; he backed it all the way down the Vineyard, and maybe that's the reason he's come through safe."

"Maybe," said the mother, laughing and crying all in one. "Thank God anyway; and so you have brought home safe what's inside these four walls now, the cruise might well have been a worse one."

"Well, that's so, wife," replied the captain, thoughtfully.

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