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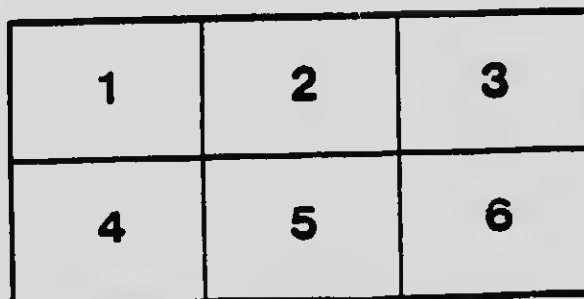
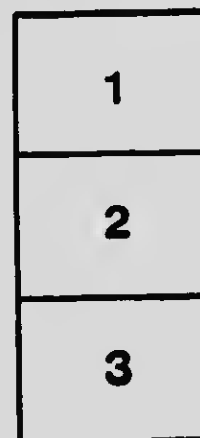
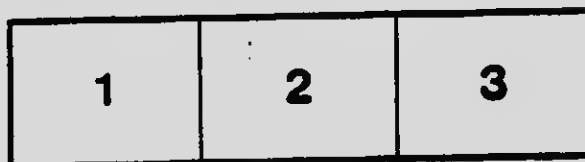
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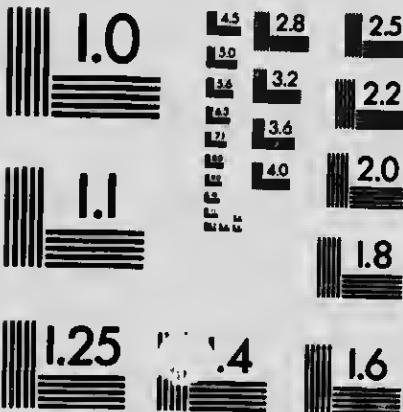
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OF A SAILOR

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“IF YE AIN’T OUT IN TWO MINUTES, I’LL BE AFTER YE, AND
BELT THE HEADS OFF YE.”

THE SALVAGE OF A SAILOR

BY
FRANK T. BULLEN, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF
"A COMPLEAT SEA-COOK," "THE CRUISE OF THE CACHALOT," ETC.

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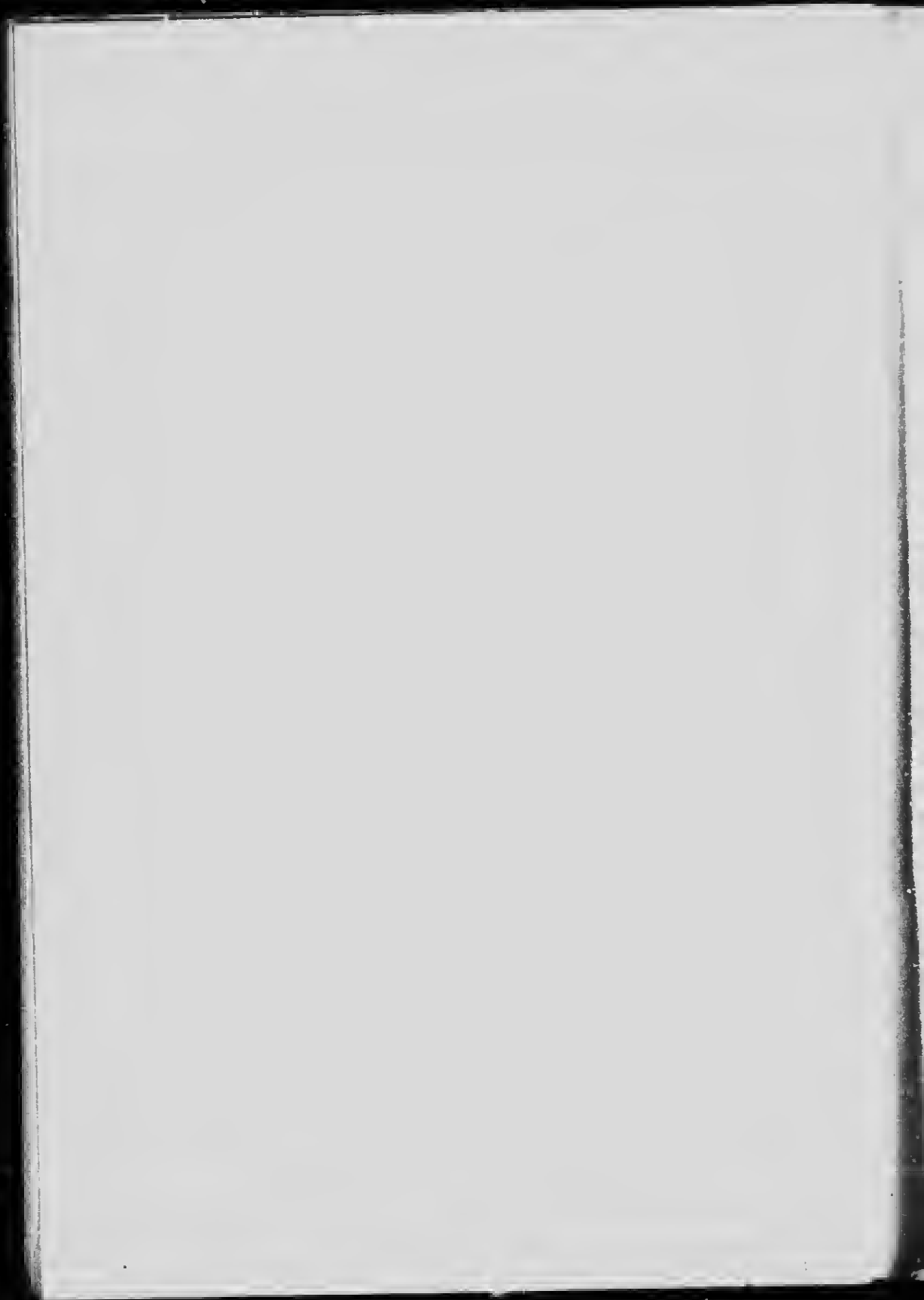
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THE SALVAGE OF A SAILOR

CHAPTER I

SEA WARFARE

“ ALL hands on deck ! a-a-all ha-a-a-nds ! For God’s sake hurry up, or she’ll run under stern foremost ! Hurry up, you starboard watch ! ”

Indeed, there was a need for hurry. She, a four-masted sailing ship, the *Megalon*, laden down to her Plimsoll with salt from Liverpool for Calcutta, had been caught aback in one of the worst places in the world, off the “pitch” of the Cape of Good Hope, and the watch on deck, Heaven help them, had about as much value in this emergency as a man trying to push a wagon up a hill. So it was no wonder that the mate tore his lungs in a yell of “ All hands ! ” and beat frantically upon the fore-castle door with a belaying pin as a man might knock within a room in a burning house.

Where he stood was the realm of chaos and Old Night. Utter blackness, surging waters, and an elemental roar pervading space; the voice of wind and sea when there is nought to hinder

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their high revels. This infinitesimal speck of a ship with all its little humanities about it was of exactly the same account as the bubbles on the spume that lashed the waiting, shouting man.

Perhaps some sense of this insignificance did attack him, softening the rigid muscles and slackening the set of his square jaw. But only for a moment. The man in him sprang up against the degrading idea of base surrender, and again he roared out his summons. This time it was answered by the door bumping back and seven wild-eyed, half-dressed men appearing, who plunged into the foaming flood on deck and rushed aft, not seeing the mate or not heeding him. But when they got to the break of the poop where the rest of the watch on deck were standing by awaiting orders, matters were taken out of their hands; indeed, they had been so from the first, the poor handful of men not being able to cope with the first necessities of the situation, as treble their number could have done. The mighty entanglement of steel and rope and canvas aloft began to give way to the abnormal strain upon it, and, although the horrible uproar of its going was completely dumbed by the all-subduing riot of wind and wave, was being dispersed like autumn leaves over the invisible sea.

This failure of the masts and sails to withstand the shock of the wind saved the ship,

because she had already begun to "root into 'he sea like an old sow" (the term is not mine, but her mate's), and had lifted three mighty masses of water on to her poop which threatened to bury her. Ships are built to bow the sea, not to sail stern first, and until they are designed like the Braekstad Draker, or on the model of a whaleboat, they cannot make stern way without danger. Wherefore, in spite of the appalling prospect ahead of them with such a crew, the skipper and officers of the *Megalon* realised that there was hope of her weathering it, a matter about which they had been very doubtful before.

To the uninitiated, however, matters would have presented a hopeless aspect. There was more wind, if possible a deeper darkness, and a more deafening roar. And still, by reason of certain fragments which reached the wallowing decks, it was evident that the destruction aloft was not yet complete. Then suddenly there came a shift of wind. It smote the *Megalon* on her starboard side, and heeled her over until her deck was at such a slope that all hands must needs hold on and crawl by any projecting means to windward, since to stay to leeward was to drown.

The danger was only shifted, for now she lay across the sea, which became more broken and

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aggressive, towering in peaks and breaking anywhere. Still, it became lighter, the awful blackness broke, revealing jagged masses of cloud being hurled furiously across a moonlit sky, and underneath the appalling confusion of the sea. The mass of the *Megalon* was just a toy, but the work of her builders was tested to the utmost, not a rivet or stringer but bore an uncalculated strain; nevertheless, all honour to the good workmen, it stood the test.

Just here the man appears about whom this story is written. You, dear reader, may call him the hero if you like; I don't, for in him I discern nothing of heroic—just plain man, and the manly part so hidden as to want more finding than usual. They were an undistinguished crowd, not one of them worth a pen-scrape, just the kind that would man a sailing ship to-day, because no other craft would carry them. Poor wretches; untrained, half starved, with no hopes, no ambitions, no stamina, the scrapings and wastrels of a great sea-port, whose only idea was to get away somewhere; to some fo'c'sle where they could loaf and smoke and growl protected by our kindly laws, and make the officers' and apprentices' lives hateful by reason of their unwillingness and inability to do what they signed for.

Dick Mort was just one of them; no better,

no worse; a seafarer of such a low type that to call him a sailor was a sort of blasphemy, and his only worthy characteristic a certain animal-like ability to endure cold and hunger and thirst without these privations having much effect upon him. He stood huddled with, and undistinguishable from, his shipmates, all of whom were prepared to endure, but certainly to shirk doing whatever could by any means be avoided, when like a suddenly erected hill there arose upon the port side an enormous mass of black water which curved inboard silently, fatefully, until it broke in a terrible overwhelming flood. There was silence, such pitiful ejaculations as might have been heard under other conditions being dumbed by elemental uproar, until after a few year-long seconds the *Megalon*, still staunch, heaved her sorely battered hull clear of the sea. Then it was discovered that the human portion of her equipment still existed, clinging bat-like, lizard-like to various portions of her, some of them slightly damaged, but all—no! “Where’s Dick?” queried a voice.

“Oh, he’s all right!” sneered the mate; “in his bunk most likely, if he ain’t stowed away somewhere dodgin’ Pompey as usual. Still, better make sure after a sea like that. Dick! Dick Mort!!”

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And the summoning cry went up from half a dozen throats, but was almost immediately followed by a warning yell from the mate.

“Hold on everybody, here’s another coming!” at which the seekers flung themselves at the nearest holding-on points while another mighty sea poured its dark masses on to the long-enduring ship’s decks as if determined to make an end of her. This was a far heavier sea than the last, and the ship took longer to recover from it, but she did rise eventually, showing very bare and forlorn as the sullen sea reluctantly left her decks. As the last of it gurgled in the scuppers the eager eye of the mate caught sight of a helpless bundle rolling there, and with a shout for aid, he rushed forward and snatched at it. Two of the apprentices and the third mate ran to his assistance, and between them they raised the limp, dank body and bore it into the saloon, where the steward briskly prepared a spare cabin while they laid their burden upon a settee, and by the light of a swinging lamp discovered it to be Dick Mort.

There was a swift ejaculation from the mate, but it was no time for leisurely wonder, and leaving one of the lads to help the steward, Mr. Bingham rushed on deck again to find that there were men missing, and the back of the gale

was evidently broken. The captain's voice from the poop roused him from a momentary reverie, and he shouted, "Aye, aye, sir," in orthodox reply, as he made the best of his way to his chief, who awaited him by the mizen rigging looking worn and old after his terrible vigil.

"Worst of it's over, I think, Bingham," said the skipper wearily, "but it's made a pretty mess of us—and here, too!"

"That's not the worst, sir," growled the mate; "Mort's all broke up in the saloon, I shouldn't wonder if he was dead by now, and there's three others missin'!"

"Merciful Father!" gasped the skipper. "Have you searched everywhere? They might be skulking."

"No, not this time, sir. They've done all the skrimshankin' they'll ever do, I'm afraid. I should have heard before now if there was any hope, sir. But perhaps it would be as well to have a peep at Mort. He may not be so bad as I think, an' anyhow, it's just as well to make sure. An' I can look after her now all right—only wants the wreck clearing away for the present."

The skipper assented with a word or two, and after a glance at the compass and a comprehensive look around at the clearing

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sky, dived below to find that his steward, good fellow, had a scalding cup of coffee awaiting him as if he had timed his descent to a minute.

“Thanks, steward; what about Mort?”

“Well, he ain’t dead, sir, an’ that’s about all I can say. I made him as comfortable as I could without handlin’ him too much, for it seemed to me as if all his bones was broken. But he didn’t seem to take no notice o’ what I did.”

The captain took three strides into the cabin where Mort lay, and choking down a certain feeling of nausea began to feel the wretched body. “Steward!” he cried presently, “bring a bit of paper and a pencil. Have you got it? All right, then. Enter: five ribs broken, two right, three left; right leg broken in two places; both arms broken, and many bad bruises. That’s all.”

“Now I want all the thin boards you’ve got, and all the bandages out of the medicine chest, besides one of my sheets. I think that will do for the present.”

And then began a scene of surgery to stagger any surgeon: the handling of such a number of comprehensive injuries in a dimly lighted cabin and under the most awkward conditions imaginable, while as for the septic surroundings, the

less said about them the better. It can only be noted that the body to be handled had not been washed for two months. The clothes upon it—ah! well, we need not go into these matters, but proceed to state that at the end of two hours the skipper emerged, his task completed after a fashion and himself exhausted.

In fact, so done up did he appear that the steward anxiously suggested a little brandy out of the medical comforts supplied to the ship, but the skipper waved him aside, saying faintly, "I shall be all right presently. But you'd better make a little beef tea and put a spoonful of brandy in it and try and get Mort to take a little. I can't understand his being alive and not taking any notice after what I've done for him. Yet alive he certainly is and his heart is beating strongly."

CHAPTER II

DRIVEN LABOUR

RETURNING to the deck, though every fibre of him was like a hot wire, and the animal protested fiercely against its treatment by the spirit, Captain Houghton dragged himself wearily to windward and gazed with dim eyes, first into the brightening East and then at the forlorn wreck upon which he stood. And at that moment a sense of nausea almost overcame him, for like the flash of a searchlight there came to him a vision of himself joining his first ship, a quarter of a century ago, a ruddy-faced, high-hearted boy, brimming over with youthful courage and confidence in his ability to conquer the worst difficulties of his profession.

And now, old in body but not in years, wise in sea lore, but how infinitely wiser in sorrow as the result of his experience, not in the way of the sea or in the way of a ship in the midst thereof, but in the miry, devious ways of men connected with seafaring, and especially those who ruled it from the land! But, as with his mate a few hours before, the natural elasticity

of a healthy man's mind reasserted its sovereignty over the weary body, and he stiffened up, his eye brightened, and he resumed his overlordship of himself and his crew.

"Good old Meggy!" he muttered; "you've stood what very few would have done this night, and lame duck though you are aloft, I'll bet you're as tight as a bottle below, thanks to the British workman. One dishonest rivet and Messrs. Fox, Weasel and Co. would have drawn their insurance with solemn faces, and put the money in steam, perhaps. But I think not this journey. Well, Bingham," as the mate came slowly up the lee gangway, "what do you think of it?"

"Might be worse, sir," replied that worthy cheerily, "which isn't saying that it mightn't be a lump better. If we'd only got a few sailors . . . but these dock rats—why, it's cruelty animals to send them aloft, and as it is there's three less of 'em—Ginger, Nosey and the queer feller."

"Oh, that won't do, Bingham," hastily interrupted the skipper. "Don't you know the tallies the fellows shipped under? I can't log them like that!"

"You can easily find out from the articles, sir; they all took a pierhead jump at the Wapping Dock and you signed 'em on aboard

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—you'll find their tallies in the articles. As for their dunnage, they hadn't got any; if they had there wouldn't be much trace of it left now. You know what the things they call sailors are nowadays, don't you, sir?"

As if his last words had not been heard the captain musingly questioned the mate.

"What's the worst of it, Bingham?"

"Fore topmast gone at the hounds, main topmast halfway up, mizen to'-gallant mast gone at the cap, jigger mast all right, bowsprit solid. Fore yard, main and main topsail yards, cro'jack, and mizen topsail yards, all available."

"Oh, come," replied the skipper, "that ain't half bad! Now, it's in my mind we'd better make for Port Louis. We'll get there easier than anywhere else, for this southerly weather's going to last, if I'm any judge, and we'll be runnin' into fine weather all the time. It's true the hurricane season's on, but we must risk that, and anyhow, hurricanes ain't plentiful. So as soon as you're ready, we'll square away, so as not to miss the best of this fair wind."

"All right, sir, it'll be an hour or two yet before my watch have got the deck clear, say eight bells, because we shall need to bend a new upper main topsail and fore sail—they blew away last night."

"Oh, never mind them, let's get her off the wind with what we've got, she'll do better. And so will my patient—you forgot about him."

"Oh, Dick," yawned the mate carelessly; "what about him? I should have thought he'd been dead by this time from what I saw of him when we brought him in."

"Dead, eh!" chuckled the skipper; "don't say the word to me. I'm going to bring that chap ashore in Calcutta as sound as ever he was in his life, now you mark me, an' I'll hold him up as a proof that, with all their education, long-shore medicos ain't in it with us when it comes to a really big job. At present, he's more like a mummy than anything else, but he's alive—at least he was—that reminds me." And he took two strides to the companion, down which he shouted, "Stoord, how's the patient?"

"Doing wonderfully well, sir," came back in about a minute from the steward. "He's taken two lots of that beef-tea and brandy you ordered him and I'm just getting him some more ready. He doesn't seem to come right to, not to get really conscious as you may say, but he takes that stuff down quite greedy like, and doesn't make any noise at all. I should say he's doing all right, sir."

"Thank you, Stoord. Give him the stuff little

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and often, but only a teaspoonful of brandy in each lot; it won't do to have him look for it regular," replied the skipper; then turning to the mate he said jovially—

"What do you think o' that, Bingham, for an amateur saw-bones? Think the whole college of surgeons could have treated him more successfully, eh?"

"I think while there's a heap o' credit due to you, sir, an' you'll never get any, nor thanks neither, a good deal is due to the patient. That sort's more like a Chink than anything else. What'd kill a sensitive able man they take no notice of; they can't, they haven't got brains enough. I've no doubt he'll get all right again, though I'm sure he wouldn't if he was worth a hill of beans."

The skipper looked at him musingly for a moment, then replied wearily, "Oh, well, we've got t' deal with 'em, poor devils, an' I don't suppose they can help it. Let me know as soon as you're ready to square away. I'll just go down and get a sluice and a change, and then I'll relieve you."

So the two brave men parted, the skipper to refresh his wearied body, the mate to resume his thankless task of driving the not merely unwilling, but incapable crew to do the barest necessary work for the saving of the ship.

Little of it was or could be constructional, it was perforce limited for the time to clearing away wreckage, hacking and hewing and dragging. But the men were without heart, half starved, hopeless, not a single aspiration among them save to get warmed and fed. Oh, it is all very well to gird at them, but a terrible responsibility lies upon those whose callous selfishness has brought them to this pass, and worse still, has flung the onus of keeping them at work upon men and boys who deserve a better fate.

So they pulled and dragged perfunctorily at the writhen conglomeration of steel wire and tortured ironwork, caring nothing when their efforts were futile, looking surprised when they succeeded, but all miserable beyond description, and appearing, as was indeed the case, as if but for the youthful enthusiasm and energy of the apprentices they would have lain down and allowed the sea to work its will of them.

Still, as even the feeblest efforts if persisted in must have some effect, so by eight bells, 8 a.m., the mass of wreckage was clear and it was possible to make such sail as remained to the *Megalon*. The condition of things being reported to the skipper, he shouted as soon as eight bells struck—

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“Square away, men, weather main and lee cro’jack braces, put your helm up, my lad—oh! well, your main yards, well, cro’jack! Some of you weather fore braces, the rest haul taut to looard. Keep her N.E. by N., my lad,” to the man at the wheel. “That’ll do the watch, Mr. Bingham.”

The second mate was a fine upstanding sailor-man of thirty-two, middle aged, by sea chronology, and trained in Yankee ships, where efficiency was considered first, and the condition of the crew, except in the matter of feeding, not at all. “Put ’em through for all they’re worth,” was his motto, learned in that stern school, and although the sufferers by it hated him beyond the power of words to express, they watched him with a sort of dazed admiration for his bull voice, his indifference to fatigue, and his apparent ability to do anything and everything that came along.

This man was a Londoner, caught young and reared in Nova Scotian and Yankee vessels, but for a very well-known reason he hailed from Boston, and called himself James J. Fisk. None of these trifles mattered though; what did matter was the amazing way in which he got work done by creatures hardly worthy of the name of men, the uncanny ability he brought to bear upon every detail of his duty, and the incessant torrent

of sulphurous abuse which flowed from his lips. You would have thought him a foaming torrent of irritability, yet in the midst of a perfect storm of violent language he would turn aside to crack a joke or give a gentle hint to the boys whom he loved, and for whom he spared no thought or labour that would help to fit them for their posts in the battle of the sea later.

Such men as he are not loved, can hardly be in the nature of things, but there is no denying the fact that but for them the wheels of sea affairs would turn far less swiftly and easily, and would stop far more frequently than is now the case. Mankind may not love a man, but it admires him, and will obey him where it will affectionately disobey one who has less force and more gentle consideration.

It can hardly be denied that Mr. Fisk had a certain good-natured contempt, not only for the port watch, but for his colleague, the chief mate, whose British methods of easy tolerance for the shiftless and incapable were to him just an exhibition of weakness. And now when he heard that one of the poorest wastrels on board was being tenderly nursed and doctored in the cabin his disgust was great. His hapless watch knew it; like a pampero he raged behind them in everything they did. His

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bull-like roar pervaded the ship, and it is certain that, but for the skipper, most of his watch would have felt the weight of his fist or his foot that morning.

But the work was done. He himself did twice as much as anybody else, so that by the time the skipper and the mate, sextant in hand, were watching for the sun's meridian altitude, not only was the *Megalon* making her six knots an hour freely, but the wreckage was trimmed down to something more like a ship-shape appearance, and the past appalling experience was, as usual, fading into dream-land.

The weather fined rapidly, as the skipper had easily foretold, and consequently work proceeded as well as could be expected from such a crowd. More quickly than usual, because in that mysterious way that such things do get about it was known to everybody that they were bound to the Mauritius, and, as all sailors know, the prospect of breaking a long passage by a visit to some port is one that appeals universally. The order to get the anchor and cables ready for port is one that I have never heard grumbled at, and I think the only one, and proves the disagreeable contention that the happiest time in a sailor's life is when he is going into harbour.

So all were in better spirits than usual, all,

that is, but the skipper, who dreaded the communications from the owners which he was sure to receive. But even he was cheered by a faint hope that the underwriters would recognise his ability in bringing the ship safely into port against such overwhelming odds; they might even give him a chronometer or a purse of gold, who knew? With this he endeavoured to counteract the feeling of despondency which would attack him despite all his efforts, and meanwhile the *Megalon*, crippled aloft as she was, crept steadily northward at an easy five or six knots an hour.

We have neglected our *soi-disant* hero very badly, but he doesn't care. He is as comfortable as ever he was in his life. The mere accident of a few broken bones hardly bothered him who had seldom in his life been without some ghastly sore or wound, giving far more pain than a fracture, because impossible to keep quiet while moving about and not considered bad enough to lie up for. Now he was compelled to lie quiet in order not to disturb the broken bones so roughly, yet efficiently, repaired by Captain Houghton. He had regained his consciousness and with it a sense of the comforts he was enjoying, which he expressed as best he could, rather fulsomely to the captain, and fully to the steward.

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His dull mind was unable to take in the reason why he was so valuable to the skipper; in fact, he did not think of anything at all, but just lay and enjoyed the ministrations of the steward and captain, heightened by the knowledge that in the work incessantly going on overhead, work which he knew of by the weird cries reaching even to his quiet bunk, he could not be called upon to take his share.

"It's well to be you, Dick," said the steward one day, when though very tired with legitimate work he had to attend upon the patient. "You lie here and have the best of everything, you gets waited on hand and foot, even the skipper looks after you as if you were his firstborn, and then you turns to and goes to sleep like a baby, and nothing troubles you."

Dick shed a tear or two—they came easy—and mumbled, "I couldn't help getting knocked all to pieces while I was doin' my dooty, could I? I ain't getting a bit better treatment than I ought, an' you know that. If I was ashore, I'd be in orspittle and have the best doctors in the land a-lookin' after me 'stead o' this 'ere. Not that I mind, 'cause I don't; I'm willing to put up with anythink that a pore 'ard-workin' feller 'as ter put up wif. Wot's the odds s'long's you're 'appy?" And he lay back luxuriously,

taking deep draws of the pipe that the skipper had given him on the first intimation that he would be pleased with one.

And while he smoked came the rattle and roar of the cable. The anchor had been let go in Port Louis, Mauritius, and already the vultures were flocking to their prey.

CHAPTER III

STERN SCHOOLING

IT is a cardinal belief among seafarers generally that there is nothing wrong in "doing," with all which that implies of downright rascality, two classes of people—underwriters and Governments. The latter are seldom available for predatory purposes, but the former: let certain quarters of the world favourably situated to be the resort of ships in distress bear witness to the wholesale plundering carried on, because "the underwriters will have to foot the bill." Of these transactions so very plentiful in bygone days, Port Louis, Mauritius, was one of the most favoured centres, the more so because it was the happy hunting ground of a motley gathering of mixed races, none of whom had any scruples where money was to be made.

Because of this, it was a place of tribulation for a captain who had some elementary principles of truth and honour; he soon found himself between the upper and nether millstones of his employers chafing at delay, and

the crowd of sharks ashore who would let nothing progress until he fell in with their notions of charging, and signed without demur such documents as were necessary. Nor were these the least of his trials. His crew would get filthy liquors, would fall sick, would not work, and as usual he found himself compelled to overwork the willing officers and boys in order to keep the ship in anything like decent trim.

All these things befell Captain Houghton and more, yet such was his pride in his patient that when the port doctor, a man about whose qualifications for his post the less said the better, tentatively hinted that he would take Dick off the captain's hands—"for good," he added, significantly—the captain replied somewhat indignantly that he was not going to allow all his care and skill to be wasted; he would not let Dick be moved until he was thoroughly well, by which time he told himself, "I shall have lost all interest in him."

So, throughout that weariful and strenuous time, in spite of the almost appalling difficulties with his crew, who seemed only to possess brains for the purpose of getting illicit drink and incidentally doing no work and making trouble for the afterguard, in spite of the disgusting and continual conflict with the gang of thieves ashore, and the despondency he felt in the incessant

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struggle to preserve his honesty, a struggle which sharply-worded cables from his owners did not make easier, Captain Houghton found his pleasantest recreation in dealing with the broken wastrel and lavishing upon him all the care and attention that a loving heart could suggest.

At last—and no words can express the heartfelt relief of her officers at the knowledge—the *Megalon* was ready for sea. By the drastic exercise of power, all shore boats had been kept away from the side except where the most rigid supervision could be maintained during the daytime; none under any pretence were allowed alongside at night, this order involving fresh hardship upon the overworked officers and apprentices. Such high-handed proceedings, however much needed in the interests of decency and order, could not fail to arouse the strongest sense of antagonism in the minds of the crew, of whom there were still eleven capable of work in the fore-castle.

Therefore, when the heart-stirring order was issued by the fine voice of Mr. Bingham, of "Man the windlass," it was followed immediately by a discordant chorus of yells and oaths of defiance, the purport of all being that the crew wanted liberty and a month's pay before going to sea; failing the receipt of



"WE WANTS OUR LIBERTY AN' A MONTH'S WAGES WHAT WE'VE EARNED."



these necessaries they would do no more work, and above all they would do nothing to get the ship to sea.

As usual the defiance was instantly followed by the order to "Lay aft all hands," and that again by a curious diffidence on the part of the crew to meet the man they were defying. Presently, however, there was a sort of swaggering movement towards the door, and being very much like sheep, all hands followed. They marched aft and were confronted by the captain and his two officers, the apprentices, cook and steward, carpenter and boatswain, being in the background, the last two being uncountable because they were peaceful Scandinavians.

As soon as the motley crowd were assembled the captain stepped forward and said—

"Now then, men, what do you mean by refusing duty in this fashion?"

There was no answer for a few seconds, until a big, truculent Liverpool Irishman, one of the type that are a standing scandal to civilisation, bone-idle, savage, and unmoral, spat filthily upon the clean deck before him and said, "We wants our liberty an' a month's wages, what we've earned. We're no nigger slaves," and the motley crowd behind him muttered approval.

"I see!" crisply rejoined Captain Houghton.

“Now, in the first place, none of you have earned a month’s wages since you have been in the ship, and secondly, usless trash as you are, the law compels me to carry you even if you’re only ballast. We have done most of the work without you and can continue to do so, but I will take care that you do not laugh overmuch at the result. Mr. Bingham, a pound of bread and a quart of water a day with no access to the deck except for the most necessary purposes for these ease-loving gentlemen until they’re tired of their freedom from work. Now, go forrard.” The last words sharply, almost fiercely, uttered.

“We demands to see the counsel,” doggedly said the spokesman.

“Oh, you do,” laughed the skipper; “well, there isn’t one in Port Louis, and if there were you shouldn’t delay the ship now. You’ve been too busy poisoning yourselves with Mauritius rum illegally obtained from the bumboatmen, and now you are too late to interview the shipping master. Get forrard, you worthless raseals!—there isn’t half a man among the whole gang. Mr. Bingham, see my orders carried out as regards these vermin, and carry on with the boys and yourselves, working the donkey engine for all it’s worth.”

Some one has righteously said that you may

as well kill a man as break his spirit, but like all epigrams it needs qualification. An evil spirit needs not even breaking, but destruction. And the spirits possessing these men were purely evil, desiring only gratification of the baser lusts, and without one solitary aspiration towards decency of conduct. But it was cheering to see how whole-heartedly the after-guard and apprentices sprang to the great task before them. Even before the slouching group of wastrels and loafers had got below, the work of unmooring was well under way.

For the next couple of hours all the workers were furiously busy, the captain shouting his orders from the wheel, and everybody feeling as happy as could be because they knew that they were equal to the great task before them. But the happiest man on board was the patient, Dick, whose appetite was most carefully fostered, whose bones were all well knit, and who, taking it all round, was beginning to experience for the first time in his hitherto wretched life that it was good to be alive. Hitherto his only real enjoyment had been in the process of getting drunk, and that was discounted by the always succeeding misery. Now, however, day succeeded day bringing careful, even tender ministrations, good dainty food such as he had only dimly understood existed before, and a

gentleness of demeanour on the part of his attendants, the captain and the steward, which puzzled him. Having no previous standards to gauge it by he looked upon it as something too deep for him.

Of what was going on above he had no idea, nor any care. He asked no questions and information was not volunteered by either of his attendants. He was dear to them because they had taken so much trouble with him, but they knew well that he was quite happy without knowing anything of their troubles; such knowledge would only have bored him. While as for his being grateful, it did not occur to them that he could be; they knew too well that the class he came from are apt to regard all such attentions as theirs as the outcome of an infirmity or weakness of mind on the part of the doers, and as such to be received with a sort of haughty contemptuousness.

So it may be taken for granted that Dick was happy and also that all the working portion of the crew were exuberantly so, because everything was going on so well. Their bad luck seemed to have blown itself out. The trade wind blew pleasantly and steadily, and the ship made good progress northward under all plain sail. The only unhappy ones were the idle foremast hands, who on the third day

out were foolish enough to make a piratical attack upon three of the lads who were standing watching the moon rise. So keen was the watch kept though, that before any harm was done the whole force of apprentices and officers were on the spot, and it was a very sore and sorry set of loafers that sat cursing in their lair that night.

The next day they hoisted the white flag, but the captain was indisposed to parley with them. He told the messenger that the ship could get on very well without them, and that he would prefer their remaining out of the way until Calcutta was reached, when he hoped that they would grace an Indian gaol with their presence for a couple of months. By the end of the first week all of them had surrendered and apologised unconditionally, but their services were only accepted on the understanding that they were to be employed all day in cleansing work, and that nothing in the nature of a seaman's duty should be entrusted to them. So henceforth they scrubbed and they scraped and they holystoned all day long, and at night they slept, while the good ship forged steadily northward, until on the twenty-eighth day after leaving Port Louis she laid to for a pilot off the Sandheads.

CHAPTER IV

PAYING SCORES

THEY struck the river at a time of great activity. Freights had gone up like a rocket, and the tugboatmen were intensely high-minded in their prices—nothing less than 2,000 rupees for a tow up to Calcutta would satisfy them. Twenty-five sailing ships lay at the Sandheads, but Captain Houghton was full of pride, and economy in towage was no part of his scheme just then. So he took the *Court Hey*, the first tug that approached, with 2,000 chalked on a board in the hands of a *Lascar* on her paddle box, feeling immensely big as he did so, and knowing that all the other skippers were regarding the *Megalon* with hungry, jealous eyes. In a shady corner of the spacious poop sat Dick, luxuriously occupying a long chair. Yes, it was Dick, but so changed, so serenely elate, so satisfied at the expression of positively devilish hate which glittered in the eyes of his shipmates forward, that he could hardly be recognised as the same Dick whole and unbroken before the storm.

He was deeply interested in the idea of the skipper getting all his shipmates put in gaol. He never said a word about it, of course, because nobody mentioned it to him, but looked upon it as an interesting experiment. And when the captain took those wastrels up to the shipping office and laid the case before that dread functionary it would be hard to say which was the most surprised at the decision, the captain, Dick, or the hands. For the shipping master considered that they had been punished sufficiently (presumably by ever going to sea at all), and sentenced them to lose a week's pay each (or 15s.) and to be discharged from the ship. They gleefully hooted and cursed the captain out of the shipping office and then turned their attention to Dick, who was standing looking on.

They took him away with them to celebrate the occasion, and did so by leaving him a worse wreck than he was after the bursting on board of that sea. When he regained consciousness he was in hospital in a pitiable condition, all the loving care and attention lavished upon him by Captain Houghton and the steward of the *Megalon* entirely wasted so far as he was concerned. To him as he lay moaning there came a gentle-faced nurse, who after making him as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances, called the

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house surgeon to see his patient according to order.

Trim, brisk, and keen-eyed, the young man strode into the ward swiftly, yet noiselessly, and pausing by the side of Dick's bed, looked scornfully down at him, saying—

“H'm, strange example of tenacity of life among the lower animals. Your pals seem to have done their drunken best to smash you up among them, in spite of your abuse of the man who has done so much for you. They didn't approve of your lying there so long in comfort and luxury while they were being subjected to the worst misfortune of their kind, being made to work. It may interest you to know that they are all in gaol. They made the natural mistake of supposing that because they could play the devil on board ship, with only contemptuous penalty to follow, they could do the same ashore. But they have discovered that we value our policemen and tradesmen very much higher than we do our merchant officers.”

Dick looked uncomprehendingly at the speaker, his cracked lips working, and at last succeeded in asking—

“Please, sir, what's the matter with me? Have I been run over?”

“Oh, yes,” cheerfully chuckled the doctor, “also jumped on and kicked and battered up

generally. Some of your broken bones which had knit quite nicely have come undone again, and you've some trifling fractures of fingers, etc., in addition. Also, you have bruises enough to decorate a whole ship's company. Yes, I should say you are booked for a good three months here as an interesting study for me, and when I turn you out cured as I propose to do, I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that my labour is all in vain as far as you are concerned, because you'll never be any good to yourself or anybody else."

Diek just blinked at him. How could he know what depths of scorn were in the doctor's mind? Those bitter words were unmeaning to him. And presently the doctor understood that big fact. As soon as he did, he left the ethical side in its right place and busied himself solely with the physical derelict before him as a subject for his skill.

That night at his elub he foregathered with a quaint man who came from nobody knew where, but was obviously possessed of ample means, although living in utter unconventional simplicity. His name was John Williams, and he appeared to be a seafarer, since his conversation was largely tinctured by the *argot* of the sea. To him the doctor told the story of Dick Mort as he had received it from the captain of the

Megalon, with many a reflection of his own upon the class of seafarer existing to-day, largely the product of steam navigation and lawlessness encouraged by shore authority on board ship.

Mr. Williams listened quietly, smoking like a furnace the while, and occasionally between whiles interposing a shrewd question. When at last Dr. Norie had talked himself out, Mr. Williams murmured to himself—

“I suppose I can see this specimen of modern seafaring if I call at the hospital?”

“At any time you like, Williams,” eagerly replied the young doctor. “Shouldn’t have thought you would have taken any interest in the wastrel, though.”

“My dear fellow, we’ve been very friendly and all that, but how can you have any idea as to what I should take an interest in? Tell me. I’d like to know.”

Dr. Norie flushed a little as he answered, “Well, you see—I—thought, that is to say, I fancied that you were just——”

“Loafing, eh? Got enough to live on without working, and so drifting comfortably down towards the jumping-off place. No, don’t apologise or hedge. You are quite right to think so, but the fact is I have some strange fads, and just now I fancy I see my way to a fresh one. At any rate, let me see this specimen; he seems

about like virgin soil in most respects. I'll be along to-morrow about eleven, if that will do."

"Right ho!" responded the doctor cheerily; "whenever you like to interview his lordship I'll be around. We're not very busy just now. Well, I'll be getting along. *Salaam do!*" And away went the good fellow to his home, his work, and his hobby.

Now at that time there was established in the city of Calcutta a small unofficial mission from the State of Maine. Nobody asked them to undertake the work they were doing, nobody seemed to care whether they did anything or not, yet day by day, amid the manifold miseries attendant upon such labours as theirs were, dependent upon the most slender support, they laboured for the souls of men as they saw best. They had but little encouragement, for the natives who surrounded them could not, with all their astuteness, get anything material out of them, for the best of all reasons, they had nothing to give. And the white men of all European nations who drifted in and out of the great port never stayed long enough for the missionaries to know whether any real impressions had been made upon them or not.

But none of these things moved those good fellows; their part was to keep pegging away

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in what they believed to be the right direction and leave results to the Most High. Naturally they sought for recipients of their ministrations wherever they were to be found, and one of the most likely places was the hospital. Hence it follows that Dick, lifting pain-dimmed eyes, saw a benevolent, bearded face opposite his own, a face with eyes that twinkled behind circular spectacles as if with mirth, but yet had a latent sadness in them. As soon as the possessor of those eyes saw Dick was sensible, he said—

“Well, Mr. Sailor, I’m pleased to make your acquaintance. My name is George Ward, and my business is to do you some service if I can. Now, what can I do? Can I read to you, talk to you, or just sit quietly by your side and sympathise with you? The hardest task you can set me is to go away, but I will even do that if it will give you any pleasure.”

Dick managed to get out a qucer “I don’t want ye to go away,” though why he said so he hadn’t any idea. Still, that was sufficient for the missionary’s purpose. He sat down by the cot-side and began to talk—a stream of cheery anecdote sparkling with humour and obviously just intended to amuse. Suddenly, seeing the sister passing, he rose and, bowing politely, said—

"My time is nearly up, I suppose, sister, and anyhow I do not wish to tire your patient, but may I bring him something when I come to-morrow?"

"You will please ask the house surgeon about that, sir. Meanwhile, I regret to say that you have reached the limit allowed for your visit."

Instantly the missionary turned to Dick, saying, "Well, good-bye, friend; I'll hope to see you better to-morrow. And when I come you'll find I've been thinking of you."

And with a pat on the cheek the good fellow glided away, leaving Dick staring dumbly at him and wondering mistily why he came. He hadn't long to wonder, though, for another visitor arrived within five minutes, John Williams, looking particularly shabby and undistinguishable as he slouched across the ward and took his seat by Dick's cot-side. But any one versed in physiognomy would have been arrested by the visitor's face—keen, shrewd, and full of quiet power in expression. He looked at Dick as if he were reading his mind. Dick looked back, blinking, and without any expression save vacant wonder as to why he was thus favoured with a visit from two strange men on the same morning, neither of whom seemed, as he would have put it, "to have it in for him."

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Nevertheless, he wriggled uncasily under the scrutiny of those deep grave eyes until the owner said at last—

“You seem to be pretty comfortable in spite of your damages?”

“Yes, thank ye, sir,” hoarsely whispered Dick.

“And I suppose you don’t very much care what happens to you to-morrow as long as you are comfortable to-day, do you?”

Dick had no answer ready. Never at all acute, his mind was at present almost benumbed. And yet there were stirring within him some inexpressible thoughts and feelings, one of which was so new that it gave him great uneasiness and forced some moisture into his pale grey eyes, making them blink more feebly than ever up at the inscrutable face above him. So he did not reply, and presently Mr. Williams said quietly—

“Well, we shall see. At present I think you are a most promising subject for my investment, regular virgin soil to work upon. So long, and I wish you a speedy recovery.”

“So long, sir,” croaked Dick, as he watched the departing figure, then entirely exhausted by his effort to make out what it all meant, closed his eyes and went into a sound sleep.

His visitor sought out the young house

surgeon, and without giving him time to ask any questions, remarked casually—

“Your man is a most promising subject, absolutely fresh ground. I don’t believe he has a single idea in his head except a desire for personal comfort. In every other respect he is just an animal without the instinct of an animal. But if you can only turn him over to me in good shape, I’ll invest in him cheerfully. He’ll give me what I need badly, an interest in life. And I promise you that whatever the result of the experiment may be I’ll let you know, and be just as grateful to you whether it succeeds or fails. Good-bye for the present.”

CHAPTER V

THE SALVAGE BEGINNING

SIX weeks later, Dick Mort, robust and hearty, sat in Mr. Williams' room at the Great Eastern Hotel staring at that gentleman, as if in a desperate effort to understand what he was saying. Bit by bit, about as easily as one opens an oyster with a piece of tin, Mr. Williams had extracted from his subject all that he had to tell of his past history. It was very little and very sordid, being in this respect, alas, on all fours with an enormous number of his class. Child of an overworked, ill-used and sweated mother, and a hulking, loafing, lazy, conscienceless father, who beat her and the children, for whom he should have been responsible, whenever the fit took him, and cared for nothing except beer, tobacco, food and no work; he went through the usual formula—board school, errand boy, loafer, thief, the sea; and since then a nuisance to the unfortunate men who were supposed to get work out of him which he had engaged to perform but for which he was wholly incompetent.

It would be tedious to relate the conversations between Mr. Williams and Dick, mostly carried on by the former, at this and several other interviews, but the gist of them may be summed up in this: that there was more in being a man than being a waster; that if Dick believed, in common with most of his tribe, that he had never had a chance, he was going to have one now; all he had to do was to remember that, to buck up, to talk little, do more, and play the game. To realise that it was profitable to keep your word about doing your work, and to be sure that some one was watching carefully, ready to help and reward every effort at acting man-fashion.

At the close of the present interview Dick surprised his mentor by asking a question, one, too, which showed that he had been thinking, a rare feat. He asked diffidently—

“Are you religious, sir?”

Mr. Williams flushed a dull red as he replied—

“Well—no—not particularly. Why?”

“Only because that there gentleman as has been coming to see me at the hospital every day, an’ bringing me all sorts of nice things, has been saying things to me like that every day. An’ I know he’s religious, ’cause I’ve a-seen ’im a-prayin’ over me when I was pretendin’ to be

asleep; an' besides, I don't know what else he'd come reglar to see me for."

Mr. Williams' heart gave a sudden bound. Here was a step in advance indeed. If such a dull, brute-like mind could recognise the Divine Brotherhood, even under the feeble convention of "religious," what might he not expect? He knew of the frequent visits of George Ward to the man whom he now looked upon as his *protégé*, and although he recognised to the full the self-sacrificing nature of that good fellow's ministrations, he had almost felt as if his preserves were being poached. He need have no fear. All that the kindly American Christian had done was to prepare the soil of that dark mind for some growth of understanding. For a realisation, however dim, that alongside of the shameful evil of all kinds with which alone he had hitherto been acquainted there was to be found such goodness as would almost penetrate the cruel heart of a Redskin.

Ward had done more than this; he had even, without pressing, succeeded in getting Dick to come to the cheery quarters in Radha Bazar where the little group of Yankees lived and kept open house for any white man who would accept their hospitality, which included good

food and drink without intoxicants, and did not include the necessity as a sort of *quid pro quo* of listening to a mass of rant, of which not even the utterer had any idea as to its meaning. These Yankees never preached, they just talked, and kept their audience in good humour; but in an amazing way managed to convey a great many pearls of wisdom in those witty words which often set their rough audiences in a roar.

The place had a fascination for Dick, he could not tell why, nor did he understand in the least what, if any, religion was being lived before him. But he did know that there he was warm, comfortable, and always welcome. And dimly there began to dawn within him a desire to reciprocate in some way, he did not know how. Be sure that this newly-born sense did not escape those keen Yankees. They saw, and when, one day, Mr. Williams called at their home and asked for Mr. Ward, he learned something that gave him an added interest in the task he had set before himself. He was assured that Dick had, at any rate, lost the taste for the husks in the swine trough, and had grown so accustomed to decent living that he was now never to be found in the usual horrible haunts of the silly sailor in Calcutta.

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True, he had no money, but then that is never a bar to the wastrel seafarer, who seeks for trouble as some men seek for riches.

“And of one thing you may feel certain, Mr. Williams,” said George Ward, at the close of a long conversation, “this man is not the ordinary type of Rice Christian. He’s never professed anything at all, while as to promising amendment, I don’t think he has any idea that it is expected of him. But he’s certainly got a dim idea that life is not properly made up of loafing, shirking, lying and drink, and that there are some better things to be looked for and found if only a man will behave decently.”

“I owe you a lot of thanks, Mr. Ward, and I hope to have a chance to pay some of them practically one day. Meanwhile, it will interest you to know that I am going to experiment with this man in the hope to find a soul within him somewhere. To this end I’ve got him a berth with a pal of mine who commands the finest clipper at present lying in Calcutta, and who’ll give him every opportunity to show any manhood there may be latent in him. She’s the *Mooltan*; ah! I see you know her. Well, Captain Grey tells me he’s got a fairly good crew, mostly young fellows, at least half of whom know their business and are keen on it, hoping to rise. He’s managed to get a

spirit of fair play going in his ship and a hatred of the blaspheming skulker who, while hating work himself, doesn't in the least mind his work being done for him by his shipmates. So Dick Mort will get the best chance, I'm hoping, even if you haven't the satisfaction of enrolling him as a convert."

"Now you can't draw me, Mr. Williams," replied Ward, with a sunny smile. "And I'm sure you'll do me the justice to admit that I have not tried to make a hypocrite of this man by asking him to profess something for the sake of what he was going to get out of it. At present he's a poor invertebrate creature, and if you succeed in making a man of him by any method, I'm sure you'll be doing God and your fellows good service. Good-bye; I wish you all success."

In due time, then, behold Dick Mort, the picture of health and strength, neatly clad and sensible looking, sitting in the roomy fore-castle of the *Mooltan*, submitting unconsciously to the close examination of his shipmates. They soon assessed his value, not very high, but already in that mysterious way common to all primitive communities the news had gone round that he was somehow different from the usual A.B., that he was, so to speak, "the white-headed boy," and this was sufficient to arouse a spirit

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of antagonism against him, however unjust. Still, nothing overt occurred, and in due time the *Mooltan* sailed for Demerara, with 600 coolies in the 'tween decks and Mr. Williams as a passenger. This latter resolution of Mr. Williams was not made until just before sailing, and was entirely unknown to Dick, who had been instructed to write to his benefactor and furnished for the purpose with addressed envelopes and a writing case containing all needful accessories.

Thus it came about that during the tow down the Hooghly there came a dramatic moment when in obedience to a wide wave of the pilot's hand the tug gave a sudden sheer to port, carrying away the cleat through which the hawser ran on the bow. The hawser made a scythe-like sweep and carried overboard a senior apprentice who was standing on the fore-castle watching a tug. He was spun into the yellow foam of the river like a top, to the horror of all who witnessed the incident save one. Dick was just going aloft at the main and turning saw the whole affair.

Now, nobody will ever know, least of all Dick Mort, what secret spring of action was suddenly released and shot that man off the rail into the dirty eddy where Albert Neville's despairing face appeared. Nor can anybody

tell how the unutterable confusion of the next few moments resolved itself into an anchored ship, a quieted stand-by tug, the two humans picked up; one with both legs broken below the knees, and a general repairing of damage before starting again.

But one thing emerged potently—Dick Mort was a great fellow. Nobody more surprised than he. Had he been able to express himself he might have said that dimly at the back of his skull was a dynamic idea that now was the moment, this the way to show his gratitude; and so, forgetting whether he could swim or not, he hurled himself or was hurled to the rescue of a fellow-man perishing in deep waters. The praises which were accorded him were bewildering because he could not see why he should receive them, any more than nine-tenths of our heroes can who do but obey an overmastering impulse against which their natural love of life or cowardice is powerless.

The forecastle of the *Mooltan* was a happy place that night. She was anchored at Saugor awaiting daylight to pursue her voyage, and all hands were free for a much-needed rest, as well as a delightful chinwag, assisted by a ration of grog, served out at the instance of Mr. Williams, who had no scruples of any sort except against cruelty and injustice. Song and jest went

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merrily round, but during the intervals it was easy to see that Dick's personality and the deed he had done lay uppermost in the minds of all. And although he seemed dull and irresponsible, bewildered, indeed, by the obvious admiration and respect paid to him, there was no doubt but that the new atmosphere was entirely good for him, was bracing up his long enervated moral being with the idea that this sort of thing, while costing no more effort than he had been compelled to put forth hitherto, was vastly more pleasant. Strangest of all, he refused his share of the grog.

"No, thank ye," he muttered; "anybody can have my whack. I'm scared of it. It never done me no good, an' now I don't want it. It's no trouble to me to do without it, 'cause I never really cared for it."

He didn't know that he was voicing a great truth, which is that half the drunkards of civilisation are so because of lack of other occupation and not from love of drink at all. Were their minds full of something else and drink not easy to get they would be sober enough, better off certainly as far as sobriety goes. But his shipmates could not understand him, and felt no desire to jolly him because of his expressed want of care for liquor; rather they felt a curious kind of respect for him,

which reacted upon him and made him feel better somehow.

Because of all these matters it came about that the *Mooltan* weighed from the Sandheads under the pleasantest conditions, fair wind and weather, contented crew, clean bill of health among the 600 shrinking descendants of an ancient civilisation taking the fateful step of caste rupture by crossing the Kala Pani, or Black Water, to an unknown land, but dumbly venturing because of rumours of some of their caste fellows returning bloated with wealth and exuding stories of pleasant conditions over there.

Indeed everything pointed to such a passage as the novelist hates, a passage that fortunately for seafarers is usual, but furnishes little material for interest on the part of shore readers, who, in truth, can hardly believe in uneventful voyages. And the early promise was fulfilled until the ship was well across the Equator, which was accomplished in the rather long time of twenty days owing to the wind being light. And then they were becalmed. Five words of utterly uneventful import generally, but here full of tragedy, reeking with horrors. For it seemed, as one leaden day succeeded another, that there would be no more wind, that the noble ship containing 640 human

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beings, was condemned to lie upon that glassy plain, with her sails hanging in useless, listless folds until the end of all things for everybody there, an effacement of which the inner awfulness would never be known to anybody on shore.

For the first week matters were well enough. Fun, skylarking, gymnastics of all kinds, much to the amazement of the coolies, were indulged in by all the white men, although there was at the back of each mind some indefinable fear, never even hinted at because of one's ship-mates. And then, with the suddenness of the lightning, came the news one morning that six of the coolies had been found dead of a disease which the doctor admitted he could not understand. Poor wretches, they seemed benumbed, not exactly with fear, but with fatalism, and utterly unwilling to do anything they were ordered, perhaps unable to realise the necessity for exertion in order to save their lives. Unhappily, the desire of life was not very strong, it has always been weakest where the pleasures of living have fallen to almost nothing.

The next week was one never to be forgotten by any who survived it. Kipling makes Mulvany speak of the cholera attacking a regiment in the train as the judgment of God

striking down out of a naked sky; but what would he say of this appalling, unknown plague appearing on board ship becalmed in mid ocean among hundreds of the most helpless of mankind? One bright spot there was in the whole horrible business—the white men, whatever they felt, did not show any fear; indeed, amid these most terrible surroundings, they went about their dreadful duties with cheerfulness and alacrity.

Especially Dick. Indeed, Mr. Williams, who kept a close and careful watch upon him, was so pleased and interested at what he declared to his friend the skipper was the growth of the real man in him that he was probably as happy and contented as he had ever been in his life. Yet the condition of things showed no improvement: the death roll became steadily greater, until at the middle of the third week of calm, 250 coolies had died, and the skipper began to confess to himself that he would probably have none left to carry to Demerara, if, if—ah, there was the unspoken question which was at the back of every man's mind, however high his standard of education. The same hopeless outlook upon sea and sky, the same utter absence of any promise of wind, the sickly, fetid odour arising from the stagnant sea, all scummed as it now was with something very

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like the green duck-weed on a pond; these persisting day after day, apart altogether from the ravages of disease, were quite sufficient to breed doubt of the stability of hitherto known conditions even among the best educated of the *Mooltan's* crew.

"My dear man," replied Williams one morning to the skipper, who had been indulging in some highly pessimistic remarks about the ship ever getting anywhere, "you don't seem to see how highly favoured you are. You've got to encounter an abnormal state of affairs, it's true, but you haven't even had a man sick of your own crew yet; God forbid that you should, but still, under the conditions, isn't it marvellous?"

"I grant that," growled the skipper, "but isn't it a marvellous thing, too, that in all the experience of anybody on board, nothing of this kind has ever been met with before?"

"Not at all," blurted out Williams contemptuously. "Why, the sea is full of surprises and conditions the knowledge of which are only vouchsafed to a very few. Come, keep your spirits up, old chap, and set a good example to the best crew I've ever sailed with, and I've known the sea off and on for thirty years. More than that, I'll promise you that I'll make everything straight with you what-

ever it costs, since after all money does most things in this world. I've got a million or so to spend, and I don't want more than five pounds a week, so I'll be glad to do a little good with it if I can only see how."

"Oh, well, of course, when you talk like that you do take a load off my mind," answered the skipper grudgingly. "I confess I was thinking more about the charter-party, by which I'm only paid passage on the coolies I land, than anything else. And I admit I haven't done anything like justice to the good crowd I've got, the best I think I've ever sailed with. And as for that wastrel of yours, Mort, if I'm not mistaken, he's speedily getting to be regarded as the best man forward. At any rate, there's a stolid perseverance in well-doing about him that pleases me immensely. I wish I could always get a crew like him. He isn't what you'd call a smart sailorman, but he's anxious to do his best and he's always willing."

"You don't know how glad I am to hear that, captain," said Williams delightedly, and then with a sudden change in his voice, "but what's this?" as the ship began to heave uncomfortably and the midday sky to darken.

CHAPTER VI

SALVAGE PROBLEMS

THE startled question asked by Williams was now being echoed by every white man on board. It was at a time of the day when all hands are awake and about. And consequently the amazing spectacle that now presented itself was witnessed by all hands. From the sullen stagnant sea, now leaden in hue because of the obscuring of the sun, there arose a steam of deathly vapour, a stench of sulphur and putrid things mingled—ah, heavens, how different from the strong, pure odour of ozone generally diffused by the ocean under normal conditions.

Darker, and more dismal, and more mephitic grew the atmosphere, until little Billie Ballantyne, the wit of the fore-castle, said: "Weel, lads, the devil's pinched the sun frae us the noo. He might ha' left us that an' hiked awa' the remains o' they coolies."

Men in those straits laugh very readily, and the feeble jest found favour, being bandied about with new additions until the sudden appearance of a veritable hill of water, a

massive knoll apparently level with the cross-trees, sent all hands flying to get a hold somewhere. Gallantly did the good vessel rise to meet it; fortunately it came low or all would have ended then and there, but it was of enormous dimensions and not alone. Three times she rose and fell, and on each occasion a vast flood mounted her forecastle and roared aft until it passed over her stern in foam, leaving much wreckage in its track.

The sea smoothened and they still remained on its surface, very nearly water-logged, it is true, and with the deck a complete ruin as far as fittings were concerned. All the running gear trailed over the side or lay in tangled masses involved with some still standing piece of wreckage, twisted steel or splintered wood. And wonder of wonders, all hands were still present, alive and uninjured. Recovering himself first, the mate roared at the pitch of his splendid voice—

“Now then, boys, hurry and get the gear clear. Some of you below and see about those coolies, some of you man the pumps.”

There was a rush to obey him, though none could help feeling that at any moment some awful disaster might overwhelm them; but those who rushed below met a spectacle that was truly appalling even to them. The whole

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great area of the 'tween decks which was allotted to the coolies was a miry foaming flood in which were tumbled about dark lumps, unrecognisable, but undoubtedly the bodies of the hapless men and women who had survived the devastating sickness.

For a few moments the brave fellows were daunted, because though they could see only a very little way, they knew that what they saw around them was the same all over the 'tween decks. And it was all so quiet, too, except for the monotonous swash of the water as the ship rolled heavily. It well might be, for there did not appear to be any sign of life when the sailors began their terrible task by seizing the limp bodies as they washed past and bearing them to the main hatch. Gradually the fetid flood settled down through the few small scupper-holes cut for that purpose in the 'tween decks, and some lamps brought down by two apprentices aided in the discovery of such a mass of horror as could only be paralleled in the hold of a slave ship.

Detailed description is impossible and impracticable. We are all content to take horrors for granted, and the man who would describe a battlefield after an engagement would find no publisher. Imagination does the gruesome work, however, and so, when we understand

that of the whole number of coolies brought on board the *Mooltan* only fifty were found alive in the top bunks we have said all we dare. But the experience was one that sufficed those sailors for the rest of their lives; they had never been down to the primeval conditions before.

In a few hours of strenuous work the inferno of the 'tween decks was cleansed, and the survivors resumed life with a cheerfulness that rather puzzled the white men, who could not understand the utter selfishness and aloofness of their kind inseparable from the life of the coolie. However, the luck seemed to have washed itself out, a steady trade began to blow, and the stately *Mooltan*, as if the wreckage on deck mattered nothing at all to her, was soon bowling merrily along towards the Cape under all plain sail.

During the whole of the recent trying time Mr. Williams had devoted all his energies to (1) keeping out of the workers' way, and (2) watching his *protégé*, who had forgotten all about his patron, and indeed all about everything except the one idea that had taken deep root in his brain, that is, that his one object in life henceforth was to do his best wherever he might be and whatever he might be doing. Which was entirely to Williams'

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delight, for it exactly fulfilled his desire, and therefore he not only did not interfere, but he gave no sign to anybody on board that he was at all interested.

Day by day the gallant ship sped westward toward her destination. She had been originally destined to call at the Cape, but Captain Grey decided that there was now no necessity, his passengers being so reduced, and consequently Cape Town was given a wide berth, Table Mountain being only visible for a few moments through a smother of haze. Nor were there any complaints. The *Mooltan* had a fine crew, who regarded their position as a privilege and their ship as their special care. I have known such ships and love their memory as much as I hate the conditions obtaining in sailing ships to-day.

There is never anything stirring to write about the northern passage from the Cape to the West Indies because it is perennial summer. The pampered saloon passenger in the Union Castle Line may suggest that it is "very slow," but in my days we loved it because, although we always worked hard all day setting up and rattling down and getting the ship in order generally for next voyage, the wind was so steady, the weather so consistently fair that any man who had not a wheel or look-out in his

watch or, as we used to say, was a "farmer," could be sure of a sound sleep all night except for the few minutes at muster, and muster was not always called.

The faithful south-east trades did not fail the *Mooltan*, and the usual routine, consecrated by generations of use, was observed with enthusiasm by her crew. Few people ashore can have any idea how gladly and wholeheartedly the seamen of half a century ago used to fling themselves into the toil of rigging work at sea. They welcomed with wonderful zest the opportunity to show themselves adepts in the higher branches of sailorising, and those who were proficient were looked upon almost with awe by the neophytes. The beastly question of how little they should do, or how much they should get for it, never entered their heads; they were swallowed up in the clean joy of creation, as Kipling says, and all growling usual in stormy latitudes was forgotten.

Happy, thrice happy were then the masters and officers who, with boatswains abreast of their work, had crews who were seamen. For no men can be happier than they who, loving their work and having nothing on their minds but its execution, can be sure of its being done supremely well, knowing it thoroughly well themselves and so able to appreciate excellence

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of workmanship in their men. The technique of the seaman's profession may not be touched upon here, so I must be content to say that a good seaman in my day was a skilled mechanic of the very highest class, and if at sea all his life was ever learning his profession, because the wily old sea had ever some new scheme to surprise him.

Therefore when the *Mooltan* anchored off Demerara Lightship everybody on board had the happiness which comes from a perfect contentment with themselves. Except, perhaps, the feeble remnant of coolies, and they made no sign; they probably neither knew nor cared for anything except that they were alive and well fed. Mr. Williams was especially happy because of the success of his experiment. He had anticipated failure, but almost unknown to himself had hoped against it, and here in a surprised way he had watched the dead soul of a man being revived. Dick had no notion that he was being watched, it is certain. He may have wondered, but I do not think he did, why his environment was so pleasant, but the main factor in his alteration was something within, something which impelled him rightwards, but for which he, less than any other person in the world, could not account, even if he had thought of so doing.

The stay of the *Mooltan* in Demerara was short, for a cargo of sugar was ready for her, and it was well, because the failure of the consignment of indentured labour was received with immense anger by the authorities. They would doubtless have dealt very hardly and unjustly by the captain but for the presence of Mr. Williams, who was able first to impress them with his enormous wealth, and second to affirm that in no detail was the captain wanting for the benefit of his human freight.

The crew received the usual liberty and took the usual advantage of it, all except Dick, who, to the surprise of everybody, quietly announced that he didn't want to see Georgetown, had seen it before and didn't like it, would rather stay on board and catch cut-fish. And when the liberty men returned on board, sick, sore, and sorry, as well as full of war against everybody, Dick came in for a fair share of abuse and learned for the first time in his life that his blind struggling upward to a decent life was resented by his class, even the ultra good ones around him now. A little drink to loosen their tongues and their hatred of a decent man came out. He was, so they said, a paid spy, a pampered "white mouse"; but I cannot go into the abuse, I can only note his utter bewilderment because of his perfect inno-

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cence and his definite recognition of the language used to him as being his native expression to shout a while ago.

No harm was done. The vapourings of drunken men, even though they revealed the truth, were relegated to their fitting place, and the *Mooltan* started homeward, deeply laden, with all her crew full of energy and apparently desirous of doing something to obliterate the memory of their recent outburst.

Nothing happened until they reached the "roaring forties." Within the tropics all hands gave all their minds to getting the ship ready for going into dock, painting, varnishing, tarring down, etc., domestic details very tame in description and not lending themselves to literature because devoid of hair-raising incidents. But as soon as they were out of the fine weather region, the sky began to gather blackness, and before many hours had passed it was evident that they were in for a heavy North Atlantic gale such as a well-found, well-manned ship can meet easily, but a poorly-found, badly-handled vessel may as easily find fatal.

So, knowing their strength, all hands were perfectly easy in their minds, and this feeling was admirably expressed by Willy Farrant, one of the younger apprentices, on his second voyage,

as the *Mooltan* lunged massively through the sea under two lower topsails and a reefed foresail, rushing past many less fortunate vessels wallowing hove-to.

“I reckon this here gale is just a God-send. The work’s all done, the paint an’ varnish and tar is all used up, but if we had a lot of fine weather, ‘Shinny’ (the second mate) would sure have us messing about and dabbing at it. Now he can’t, an’ I’d like to see it blow like this for a week or even a bit harder. I’m fed up with spring cleaning.”

And this was a great gale which strewed the Atlantic with wreckage and blackened underwriters’ faces for many a day. So great is the satisfying effect upon the mind of a good ship and a good crew. But Mr. Williams was now beginning to get anxious about Dick. That worthy was irreproachable in his behaviour and had been proof against temptation in Demerara, but once in London town it was difficult to forecast what the effect upon him would be. More, the system upon which Williams was working forbade any coddling or sheltering. He felt that any good behaviour on those terms would be worthless because of its liability to utter failure when expected to stand alone, and he would have none of it for that reason. But he was anxious, and in accordance

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with his character became more silent and pre-occupied than usual.

He was greatly relieved therefore at an unexpected happening which showed him more plainly than anything else could do how deep-seated was the alteration in Dick's character. The gale had lasted for four days, and the *Mooltan* was well past the Western Islands, having seen several fine vessels hove to and several steamships in much difficulty, but as far as she herself was concerned having never been in any difficulty at all. Therefore there was considerable enthusiasm among all hands when, about 500 miles W.S.W. of Scilly, a large steamship was sighted with signals of utmost distress flying. It was soon discovered that her engines had broken down beyond power of repair, her rudder was gone so that she could not be handled, and that the gale had played havoc with such sails as she could have set. Nothing but the splendid workmanship of her hull had saved her until now, but she was reduced to a helpless hulk full of helpless people to the number of over 800, crew and passengers, sinking, and of all her goodly array of boats only two little ones remained, the launch of which would only have meant their immediate destruction.

With immense caution the *Mooltan* was

rounded to on the weather side of the disabled steamer, showing at once by her extraordinary antics how fierce was the gale and sea that she had been using so blithely. But none of her crew had any time to think of her tremendous lurches, especially as their confidence in her was in that stage that any failure on her part would have been received with the profoundest astonishment as being quite outside probability; they were entirely occupied in getting out their two lifeboats, not in the least, dear reader, like the lifeboats you know down at your favourite seaside resort, vessels in which a man might cruise the stormiest ocean in the globe and be scathless, but just ordinary large boats with a row of air-tight zinc cylinders beneath the gunwale on either side to lend them buoyancy, the same being enclosed in wooden covers to serve as additional seats.

This great work was efficiently performed because everybody's heart was in it; those who directed understood their work, and those who obeyed did so with all their might. Of these, Dick was a prominent example, the most prominent perhaps. While he did not possess the slightest initiative, he was untiring, indefatigable in his efforts to do what was asked of him, and moreover, what he did was done with intelligence

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and care, so that he was a delight to those who were responsible.

Now, if I were able I would like to describe that great day's work, the passage of the boats between the two vessels through those gigantic seas where a false movement meant the capsizing of a boat with fifty people in her, the amazing seamanship required in the handling of that huge sailing ship in such weather so as to keep her near the foundering steamship, and the utter bovine helplessness of the rescued ones making the rescuers' work trebly hard. But it is quite impossible to tell such a story adequately, we can only trust to the reader bringing his imagination to bear upon the scene so that he may hear the hungry roar of the storm, the crashing of the boats and the complaining of the ill-used fabrics. And even then he will not be able to realise the feelings of the sufferers.

I believe that the rescuers were so lifted up by their own great purpose that one feeling alone possessed them, a sense of victorious overcoming the immense odds in obedience to the dictates of the higher nature. Thank God that this is so often the case. When neither wounds nor weariness nor fear nor callousness on the part of the rescued matter one jot, and only the sublime joy of doing good for its own

sake is felt, compensating fully for all minor matters.

By nightfall the last of the rescued ones were in safety on board the *Mooltan*, and such meagre preparations as could be made for them had been put in hand. Then suddenly everything else ceased as a cry warned them that the *Eastern City* was sinking. The whole great crowd thronged the bulwarks of the *Mooltan* and watched with awe the ocean's quiet taking of its toll. Just a gentle rising and falling, a little deeper inclination than usual and the great vessel slid downwards and was hidden for ever from mortal view amidst the myriad other mysteries of the ocean bed.

CHAPTER VII

THE BIRTH OF A SOUL

SUCH a tremendous event as the rescue of 300 souls from imminent death would anywhere else have demanded almost imperatively a breathing space afterward in view of its significance, its effect upon all concerned. But here, as usual at sea, every nerve must need be strained in order that the good work so nobly done might not be all frustrated by an even greater calamity. For the gale still blew heavily, showed indeed no signs of abatement, and in getting the ship before the wind again several great seas were shipped which filled the crowded decks and added to the miseries of the saved who, even within every corner of the ship's accommodation, could not find sufficient shelter.

But at last she was well away, and Captain Grey, confident in the largely augmented force of his crew and the power of his ship, dared to pile on her canvas and drive her as she had never been driven before. For fourteen hours she tore through the massive seas like a maddened thing, and then, to the relief of all but the

most daring, the gale began to abate. And as it did so, more and more sail was piled on her until on the evening of the second day from the rescue, the fore-castle was crowded with eager watchers for the Lizard Lights, the news having gone around the ship that the captain intended to run into Falmouth and land his involuntary passengers.

Finer and finer grew the weather, the wind moderating rapidly, until at midnight the twin lights, like a loving, welcoming pair of eyes, shone steadfastly before them, and the hearts of all those saved ones swelled with gratitude for that they had been spared to see them shining once more. Only an hour afterward a pilot was picked up, and when the beautiful day dawned they sailed into the splendid harbour of Falmouth, as proud a crew as ever manned a ship, although every one of them knew full well that the deed they had done was one that is never rewarded with money—the saving of life has no value commercially compared with the saving of property.

Nor was there any opportunity given to the rescued ones to express their gratitude. They were, as they put it, bundled ashore as soon as ever it was possible, and the *Mooltan* having discharged her errand of mercy was again got under way for her final port of discharge,

London, and there she arrived in splendid shape two days after, mooring in the South West India Dock.

Now in "dese times I scribe of" a most disgraceful state of affairs existed, such as can hardly be imagined now, at all the docks. When a ship came in she was at once boarded by "runners," the vilest of the population, whose occupation it was to get hold of the sailors as customers or rather victims for boarding houses, tailors, and brothel-keepers. These apaches stuck at nothing, personal violence least of all, to gain their ends, and I have seen some ugly fights on board of a home-ward-bounder over a sailor who halted between the choice of one out of two rival boarding masters. Consequently the last hour after the *Mooltan's* arrival was a particularly boisterous one, and most of the crew were literally dragged ashore, hardly comprehending what they were doing because they had had a nip or two out of the bottles with which each runner was provided.

Now, it was no part of Williams' scheme that Dick should be subjected to such a trial as this, for really it would have been most unfair, the poor fellow having no alternative, so to speak. Consequently before the worst of the hubbub following the *Mooltan's* arrival had commenced the mate, acting on Williams' instructions, called

Dick aft and told him if he liked he could stay "by her" as a night watchman and have the cook's berth. Dick consented at once with an appearance of relief which showed that he was dismayed by the prospect of being handed over to the tender mercies of the rabid gang forward, and at once proceeded to get his belongings aft out of their clutches.

Entirely satisfied, Mr. Williams bade him good-bye, having previously commended him to the care of the chief mate and Captain Grey, laying particular stress upon the fact that he did not want Dick coddled or in any way made a favourite except on his own merits, but where he sought help to protect himself from such a disaster as was imminent to-day, their giving it to him would be substantially acknowledged. With this the eccentric man disappeared, leaving two bewildered men behind him with a strange sense of responsibility for the well-being of a man whom they looked upon as a first-class worker, but with certainly no special points about him marking him out for exceptional treatment.

And in truth at the present time Dick was not an interesting subject at all. He had become that bugbear of all romantic writers, that foe to sensationalism, a quiet, hard-working, respectful and respectable man. A man, in a

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word, whose only object was to do his duty and earn his salary, who had turned against drink and vice and outrageous behaviour, and by so doing had earned the contempt of all those, fortunately very few, ardent spirits who profess to live a free, artistic and joyous life.

Therefore we must not even here dwell upon the calm and even tenor of Dick's life as night watchman of the *Mooltan* in dock, because there were no incidents in it that would read well in a newspaper. The man had no imagination and no ambition, apparently, except to do his duty as well as he could and keep out of any trouble. Any attempt at conversation with him would have been found tedious to mortification; he simply couldn't talk and didn't know why he had lost his taste for loafing, liquid and lust. Or why he was so keen upon doing his best, whether it was working or watching or keeping himself clean, for I must not omit to notice that one very prominent feature in the new Dick was that he was almost finically smart in his appearance and quite careful about his clothes.

But the greatest event of his life, at least so he thinks, was when, the outward Calcutta cargo being half in, a gentle lad of fifteen, Willie White, the only son of a widowed mother, joined the ship as an apprentice. He was a

shy lad whose passage through his school days had been marked by a great desire to hold himself aloof from the rougher sports and looser conversations of his school-fellows, taking the keenest delight in reading and in the society of his mother and sister. For such a lad the outlook upon a rough world was anything but bright, especially when by the rascality of a trustee his mother's small income was reduced by half.

Then came the amazing thing—this gentle lad told his mother he would go to sea, thus relieving her of the burden of keeping him and preparing himself to keep her. His decision fell like a blight upon the poor woman, but she saw its reasonableness, though neither of them had the faintest idea what "going for a sailor" involved. However, there was little discussion, for Willie developed a tenacity of purpose that almost surprised himself and certainly astonished his mother. The upshot of it all was that he joined the *Mooltan* when she had half her outward cargo in, and the mate and captain had far too many other things to think about than to trouble their heads in the least about a quiet lonely lad, who in spite of his firm resolution could not help feeling very small and insignificant and uncomfortable on board the big ship.



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Thus these two incongruous people were brought together by sheer force of circumstances, and their hearts immediately grappled. For Dick Mort had silently progressed along a mysterious path leading him to one clear idea of his place on earth, a stolid determination to do his best in whatever situation he might be placed, and that without any guiding light of principle or gratitude or religion. He had never been talkative, now he was almost dumb, but he had a wistful, seal-like expression in his eyes which made you feel that the inner man of him was longing for companionship while unable to make any effort to find such a necessity.

Now here it was. Willie was flung upon him, as it were, out of the void, and at once he knew that this was what he had been blindly aching for, a human being to protect and to be a companion. One who would not be above him either, but whom he could teach and help, although he was not clearly conscious of these things.

On the first night of Willie's arrival the strange pair were seated in the galley before a good fire and under the dim light of a paraffin lamp. Willie had very humbly asked permission to come and sit there, and Dick, feeling queerly as if he should have been the suppliant, had replied

rather creakingly, as if his talking machinery were rusty, that he'd be glad if Willie would consider himself free of the galley all the time she was in port.

Then they sat side by side silently until Willie said—

“My mother would be very glad if she knew I was comfortable. She was so afraid I would have to rough it and that it would be very hard on me at first.”

With an effort, and after a pause, Dick replied—

“Yes, I suppose she would think so. And she'd be right, too. If you'd come a few days later when the other apprentices was here they'd have made you sit up. They don't mean anything, though, it's only their fun.”

There was silence for nearly five minutes while Willie, rather fearfully, tried to think what the other apprentices' ideas of fun might be, gauged by his school experience, when Dick broke out again with—

“But you come and ask me anything you want to know just whenever you think of it and I'll try and put you up to it. Y' see, I ain't got anybody to talk to that I care about talking to, d'ye see, and I should like to tell you as much as I can.”

There was such absolute sincerity in the

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voice, such pleading in the eyes of the man, that Willie thawed right out at once and opened out the treasures of his virgin heart. He prattled away at highest speed, two-thirds of what he said passing clean over Dick's head, who had never heard or dreamed of anything like it before, and when they separated for the night, Willie felt happier than he had done since leaving home, while Dick was all in a glow. A new spirit was moving within him, and without realising it, he would gladly have offered his life to protect that bright, gentle-faced boy from any danger that threatened him.

Thenceforward until the time when the older apprentices began to return was the happiest period of Dick's life. For hitherto he had really known no happiness, only a certain animal satisfaction at the absence of pain and the presence of certain pleasant sensations. Now he was beginning to realise higher joys of thinking and of caring for another without any idea of return, the greatest pleasure that earth has to bestow. Evening after evening Willie and he sat in the galley talking until nearly midnight. For he had found his long disused tongue, and though Willie was inexhaustible in the matter of questions Dick was actually voluble in answering. Also there were

yarns and laughter, except when Willie doubted whether Dick was telling him the truth, when Dick would solemnly turn upon him a reproachful look and say—

“I wouldn’t tell *you* lies, anyhow, an’ I don’t think I could tell lies at all, I don’t believe I could. I know I don’t want to, don’t seem to see the use of ’em somehow.”

Which speech puzzled Willie extremely, for he had long ago learned the use of a lie and had availed himself of the knowledge. Yet he could not doubt that this strange sailorman was uttering his exact thoughts—but what did it mean? By a great flash of illumination he became aware of the strange fact that he now knew a man to whom lying was of no use; he told the exact truth as he knew it because he had no idea that . . . was either pleasant or profitable or prudent to do anything else.

The end of this comfortable acquaintanceship arrived with the first of the lads. During the day three of them arrived, and although they were a bit subdued at parting with the delights of home they had sufficient devilishness left to make Willie more grateful than he had yet been that he had enjoyed those quiet hours with Dick, and had almost unwittingly learned so much from him. For both boys and men only haze the greenhorn. Once they

realise that a fellow knows the common business their desire to make him miserable gets a setback, and there is an uneasy feeling at the back of their minds that possibly he may know more than they do, which may be awkward for them later on.

Signing-on day arrived, and with it Mr. Williams, who had kept an eye upon the ship all along, but had not shown himself to Dick, who he knew was doing very well. But now the philanthropist rather anxiously interviewed Captain Grey and Mr. Smart, the new mate, inquiring whether they did not think it possible that Dick might become the boatswain. The captain and mate looked at each other doubtfully. Both remembered boatswains who were great sailor figures, men to whom every detail of a ship's needs were as familiar as eating, men who could command as easily as they could speak, and whose ability to do themselves what they ordered others to do was of so high a quality as to leave no loophole for criticism.

Now Dick's seamanship was decent, his energy was great, his ideas of discipline perfect, but his power of command was an entirely unknown quantity. Still, times were altered, and boatswains of the highest type were rarer than hens' teeth now, and—yes, that was it,

Mr. Williams would make it worth their while—oh, yes, it could be managed. So Williams went into a state-room while Dick was sent for. As soon as he appeared Captain Grey was struck with the change in his appearance. He looked smarter, more manly in every way, carried himself indeed as if aware that he counted for somebody.

“Morning, Dick!” said the captain. “Mr. Smart and I think you’ll suit us for bo’sun. What d’ye say?”

“I’d like to try it anyway, sir. An’ if you’ll take it that I’m doing my best always, sir, I think I can make out. There’s lots o’ things for me to learn, of course, but I suppose that’s so everywhere.”

“All right then, bo’sun,” replied the skipper, “Green’s Home at eleven o’clock. You’d better get your dunnage into the bo’sun’s berth at once. You can have the boys to help you if you want them.” And turned away as a sign to Dick that the interview was over. Dick immediately marched out of the saloon and Mr. Williams, emerging from his hiding place, fairly bubbled over with delight.

“Never saw such a change in a man in my life. Never made a better investment. By heaven, it’s like watching the birth of a soul! But I’m bewildered. I can’t imagine how or

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why he has made such tremendous strides towards manhood. Ah, well, I'll have to be content with the results. There's a couple of bits of paper for ye," passing cheques to the captain and mate, "and if you can credit me, I never paid any money away that gave me more pleasure than this. If only I can renew that pleasure when you return with the same knowledge of its sound basis, I do think I'll be the happiest man alive."

CHAPTER VIII

WASTERS AGAIN

WHEN the leather-lunged official at the shipping office known to seamen all the world over as Green's Home, shouted that December morning, "All the croo of th' *Mooltan* for Calcutter," he was answered by as unseamanlike a mob as ever that fine building has sheltered. There really did not seem to be a sailor among them, and the captain's heart sank as he surveyed them and thought of the prospect before him. But their discharges were all right, he must have a crew, and appearances were invariably deceitful. Well, they were shipped, go. their advance notes and were told to be on board at 8 a.m. on Saturday, the next morning.

"What d'ye think of 'em, bo'sun?" queried the skipper of Dick, when they had trooped clumsily out into Jeremiah Street.

"Not much, cap'n," calmly replied Dick, "an' it'd be better if it was summer time; but we've got eight good boys, an' you'll tow down past Beachy—oh, it'll be all right, sir!"

Captain Grey didn't look very sanguine, but he said no more, neither must we until we begin the voyage with that duck-gaited, duff-headed crowd on the cluttered-up decks of the *Mooltan* as she slouched seaward behind the *Robert Bruce*. To say that they were useless was to put it mildly. None of the books about seafaring have ever deigned to notice, probably because of the author's unacquaintance with the subject, this particular aspect of the case of a ship leaving port. Her crew in addition to their incompetency as seamen are mulishly drunk. Could they be put away somewhere until sober, the officers and apprentices, and, perchance, the one or two sober chaps could manage; but no, they are not drunk enough for that, and so they exasperate beyond endurance and go maundering about the decks, getting in the way of the sadly over-tired workers. And it doesn't matter whether they are truculent or amiable, the result is the same, a shameful endurance of the willing and anxious men upon whom the bulk of the work falls, and that, too, without the slightest corresponding advantage.

But through all the misery on board the *Mooltan* (for it is misery to have work that must be done with too few hands to do it) the faithful tug tows steadily on. She has no

incompetents on board, there is no room for them. And on the quarter-deck of the big sailing ship the stolid pilot walks with the anxious skipper, the one thinking that a few hours will end his connection with the trouble that he sees looming but cannot hinder, and the other seeing that trouble coming nearer and fretting because the deficiency of the crew makes him unfit to meet it. Not lack of seamanship but lack of power breaks a man's heart at times like these.

Throughout all that ugly twenty-four hours all hands except the fourteen A.B.'s worked like heroes with hardly a minute's rest, very little food and no sleep. The boys toiled, too, until they had to be sent below, but aching in every sinew the officers and petty officers held on until the cold stormy dawn saw that great grey ship under two lower topsails, reefed foresail and fore topmast staysail fore-reaching toward the French coast, her long passage to Calcutta begun.

In that grim time the education of Dick Mort proceeded apace, although the mate felt grievously discontented with his quietness. Admitted that he did three ordinary men's work, he seemed to be extraordinarily lenient towards those wretched men who wallowed in filth and unfitness in the fore-castle. This was

entirely distasteful to the energetic young officer, who said severely—

“Boss, you’ll never get those wasters going if you don’t go for ’em. And I will back you up for all we’re worth, and so will the skipper, I’m sure. What’s the matter with ye? You ain’t afraid of ’em, are ye?”

“No, sir,” replied Dick quietly. “I ain’t afraid of anything that I know of—don’t see any call to be; but I don’t think it’s any use wasting time trying to make men work that can’t. But if it’s your orders, sir, I’ll do my best. As to goin’ for ’em, though, that’s beyond my duty and I won’t do it for anybody. I know it’s a weakness on my part and I’m sure some fellows are better for a clump aside the head, but I can’t do it, nor never shall be able, so if you please, sir, we’ll take that as settled. Anything else, now, I’ll do my best at.”

Discontentedly the mate joined the second and eased his mind by a growl all round. Then Captain Grey came along and joined in, and for a few minutes they eased their minds generally upon the topic which meant so much to them. Then the captain grumbled—

“That fellow’s one of the very best ever, but I do wish he was a bit of a bucko. However, he isn’t, and from what you tell me, he’ll never

be. And, anyhow, I'd much rather have him as he is than have a bucko that doesn't know his job. Well, she's snug now, you must all get what rest you can. You, Mr. Seeger (to the second mate), have a caulk, you've been working over hard. I'll call you when I can't keep my eyes open any longer. Now get!"

And so the *Mooltan* fore-reached in mid-Channel with one man on the look-out and a clever boy at the wheel, a vessel worth all of £100,000 with her seamen lying in a swinish heap in the fore-castle unfit for any earthly thing.

At dawn, after such a night as you, dear reader, would say was full of misery, but the useful members of the *Mooltan's* thought was a great improvement upon what had gone before, the ugly leaden sky looked down upon as cheerless a scene as one could be penalised by being one of the partakers. Then a bright thought occurred to the mate, who sought the bo'sun and said nonchalantly—

"Boss, I've been looking in that fo'c'sle and it's past all. Enough to choke a black; the hog-sty's a drawing-room to it. Now get the force pump to work, the sail-maker and three of the lads'll work it, and we'll rinse out that filthy hole, see!"

Dick assented heartily, and immediately gave

the requisite orders. In ten minutes he stood within the foul-smelling fore-castle guiding the nozzle of the hose with its strong stream of bright sea water impartially over the gloomy interior, while the mate stood at the door grimly chuckling as he saw the frowsy heaps on the filthy deck moving and groping their way towards the entrance, gasping inarticulately.

"Pump up, boys, pump up!" he shouted. "Do 'em no end of good." But when presently the whole of that wretched crew, dripping and swaying, were outside and visible even his stern soul relented, and he roared "'Vast pumping!" Surely, whatever their offences against manhood, their punishment was fully adequate, and he would be less than human who could not spare them some pity.

Then there broke in the stern voice of the skipper who, appraised of the success of his chief officer's device, had come forward just in time to take in the full significance of the picture.

"Now then," he said, "you poor, miserable wretches, get some hot coffee and grub into yourselves and come out to the work that's waiting for you. Better men have been doing it while you have been swining it in there, but you've had long enough, so I warn ye. Cook! Serve them breakfast, and then" (turning to

the second mate), "Mr. Seeger, see that they do something. It'll be purgatory for them, but they'll be all the better for it afterwards—that is, if anything can improve them."

And it was so, but alas, they had not been at work five minutes before Dick and the officers found that they were wastrels of the worst type, knowing nothing of their work and unfitted by their low physique to do it if they had known. Some dim memories of his own past made Dick feel very sympathetic and patient toward them, much to the disgust of the energetic mate, who could not in the least understand how a man who never spared himself in the slightest degree and whose work was made trebly hard by the crew's uselessness, could feel any sympathy for them or have any patience with them. But then he did not know Dick's past.

We have not forgotten Willie any more than Dick had. The boy had been desperately seasick and unfit to lift his head. But it took all Dick's influence and energy to shield him from rough treatment on the part of the other lads, who only seem to be harder upon a newcomer for the remembrance of their own sufferings. Still, through all the untellable misery of that week's fore-reaching down Channel, when every mile to windward was, as the skipper said

bitterly, "like a mouthful torn out of the devil's jaws," Dick managed to save him from the diabolical suffering which would have been entailed upon him had he been compelled to come on deck and wallow in wet, struggle blindly in the throes of nausea to do something he knew not what, and fall about through sheer weakness and want of nourishment. Two or three times his limp body was dragged out into this inferno; as many times Dick found him, lifted him in his strong arms and carried him back to his unsavoury bunk, where, at least, he could lie quietly. And the result of all this unobtrusive care was a love in the lad's heart for his friend that became an absorbing passion, having rich results later.

Because of its very tediousness and unrelieved misery we must pass over in silence that desperate time in Channel which formed so frequent a preliminary to the voyages of sailing ships thirty or forty years ago. To the great relief of her officers she won through it without accident or being run down, though the latter casualty was several times imminent, her wretched dragging to and fro across the fairway of the Channel inviting it. At last the wind shifted to the north-east and gave her a slant, at which gleam of hope even the wastrels were stirred into something like energy.

"If I only get a fair wind," snarled Captain Grey in confidence to his mate one evening, "I'll put her through it. What she can't carry she'll have to drag. It's hard upon all of us, but it's the only thing to do when we're sent to sea like this with a crew that would be weak if they were all prime seamen, but with such as these, why, it's constructive murder."

The mate growled complete assent, looking to windward at the same time, where the sky was assuming a hard, brassy appearance; the wisps of feathery cloud flung fantastically over that hopeless looking void boded anything but peace to a sailor. The skipper did not trouble, for his barometer read high, and unfortunately he was one of the old school, though a young man, who take the lettering on the glass for gospel. That night it piped up from the northward and by noon the next day the *Mooltan* was doing fourteen knots, with all three royals set and every stay sail set also that she could carry. Great masses of spray rose against her side on the impact of the seas and soared as high as the upper topsail yards, but even so, she was vastly more comfortable than she had been in Channel, and, besides, it was much warmer.

To Willie, however, this fierce rush and the spectacle of that pyramid of canvas overhead

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bowing towards the leaden-looking waves at each roll was appalling, and he snuggled up to his chum the bo'sun for comfort, asking artlessly—

“Is it what you call a heavy gale, Dick?”

“Bless yer heart, no, Willie. This is what we call a fine breeze. Of course, you want to know yer ship, and y' ought to know yer crew. Well, that can't be helped. Of course, if it wasn't a fair wind it'd be different. We'd be making heavy weather of it then.”

At that moment the ship gave a wipe to windward, and caught a wave in mid-rush on the bluff of the bow; it rose like a liquid hill and burst upon her, and in a moment she was obliterated, a foaming mass of ocean covered her. Oh, beautiful faith! Although Willie found himself holden within a grasp which nearly cracked his ribs, with the furious foam almost submerging him where he hung, by the topsail sheets on the fife rail of the mainmast, he never doubted the truth of the assurance he had just received from Dick. Assuredly he saw nothing in Dick's face to make him doubt, for it may be taken as an axiom that this redeemed wastrel had passed the stage where man fears for either his body or his soul, and was now living perfectly in the present with even less prevision than a fish.



"WILLIE FOUND HIMSELF HOLDEN WITHIN A GRASP WHICH NEARLY
CRACKED HIS RIBS."

[p. 102.]



Notwithstanding, it was a gale, if not a heavy one, and it was increasing. So much so that the chief concern in the ship now was the steering. None of the crew were fit to be there, would not have been had they been sailors, owing to their enfeebled condition, and so the great business was given up to the senior apprentices, splendid young fellows of fine physique, and each of them reinforced by a wastrel to leeward to give aid when a heavy sea seemed to jam the rudder as in a gigantic vice. No doubt she was well steered, but she was being sorely tried, and every thinking man knew exactly what would happen if, during one of her gripings to windward, anything connected with the steering gear should carry away. Still, nothing but a high delight was visible upon the skipper and officers' faces, for the *Mooltan* was making the record of her existence, fifteen and a half knots, and every rope and spar was being tested to its limit. The poor wretches forward were all clustered about the fore-castle door. They had only an indefinable sense of fear, for most of them had never been in a sailing ship before. But all of them had a curious feeling of finality about her lee lurches when she went down, down, down, until the water foamed over her lee cat-head and they held their breath

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in the expectation that she would never rise again.

They did not know that had a single shred started then it must have meant wholesale destruction. But the skipper and his mates did, and knowing it they hung on, dependent upon the mercy of that growling, merciless north-easter. Truth to tell, they were all prepared to take the risks, and there wasn't a drop of unclean blood in any of them. At one time it was certain that only a trifle extra pressure must have meant all three masts gone or the *Mooltan* bottom up, but still they never blenched. They were all of the right breed.

And so courage and daring were again justified of their children. For fifteen hours the gale persisted, hardly varying in direction a point, and then it began to take off, grudgingly, but hauling its fine weather round by the south. I can swear that all hands were grateful without reservation, and when it was all over and the sorely-tried ship with salt-bleached rigging was wallowing along southward in the perfection of fine weather, Willie boarded his friend again with—

“It really was a gale, now wasn't it, Dick, in spite of us not taking in any sail?”

“Yes, my dear, it was,” replied Dick solemnly, “but you needn't think about it.

Because it seems to me that we'll have more like that before we gets to Calcutta. Our skipper's a fine man, and he isn't going to let a bad crew hinder him. But it won't be easy for some of us. However, that's nothing. Come along and let's show you some more of the work you'll have to do presently. A sailor's first duty is to forget all the past except what it's taught him, and his next is to be ready for whatever is going to happen to him next watch."

"Yes, I see that, Dick," chirruped Willie brightly, "an' so I'm ready for whatever you've got to show me."

CHAPTER IX

RUNNING THE EASTING DOWN

THE conclusion of that stern lesson left the ship well within reach of the north-east trades and practically fine weather. And thenceforward for a matter of three weeks there is nothing for me to chronicle—as I have often had to remark, nine-tenths of the voyages that are made have scarcely any more stirring incidents to record than may be witnessed on a trip from Walham Green to Liverpool Street by omnibus. It is this that makes a sea life bearable, this that differentiates modern scifaring from the old, for whereas the old wind-jammer lay around and perforce waited for trouble, the modern steamer plugs along and gets to her destination generally. Of course, she gets caught occasionally and the sea balances its accounts carefully, but compared with the suffering and loss of life of forty years ago, life at sea to-day is practically as insurable as a sheltered life ashore.

But though the *Mooltan* herself made no

history as she glided along in leisurely fashion towards the southern verge of fine weather, her bo'sun was by way of growing rapidly to the full stature of a man. It was doubtful whether he would ever make what he used to know as a prime seaman, because he had passed his early plastic manhood in shirking and so had never acquired that skill in manipulating rope and canvas and wire which marked the complete seaman. These things a man may learn anywhen, it is true, but he can never get the same finish to his work; never in the eyes of a seaman, that is, be anything but a bungler unable to do a job that shall be a joy to the eye as well as warranted to stand in the hour of stress.

This he may have known—he never showed whether he did or not—but certainly where he was it did not matter, since there were none better than he. What did matter was that he was never too tired to lead his crew, never lost his temper, and never said two words when one was sufficient. These were great assets. Besides, the wretched crowd that he had to deal with, though in their weasel-cunning they soon learned that he would always rather do a job himself than wait while they bungled it, developed a wholesome dread of the energetic Mr. Smart, and the second name one or

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the other of whom were always on the watch to see that the soft-hearted bo'sun, whom they had grown to love, was not imposed upon.

By the lads he was adored, and during fine weather it was delightful to see how in the second dog-watch they would gather round him on the main hatch and hang upon his words, learning many things from him and incidentally teaching him how much he really did know. And on all these occasions Willie, who was developing finely, always sat closest to him, exercising unconsciously quite an air of proprietorship, a shadowy claim which was admitted with amused tolerance by the rest.

Unfortunately no progress was made by the foremast hands. Happily it is rarely that one finds a whole crowd of fourteen tarred exactly with the same brush, but these were. They would learn nothing but tricks of shirking, they would, had they dared, have been truculently troublesome, and they spent all their waking leisure in nagging one another in filthiest language, interspersed with ghastliest threats, but meaning nothing because of the utter cowardice of the utterers. No one knew what Dick thought of them, for he never said, but the skipper and his three mates often thanked

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God audibly that they were bound to Calcutta and that the stress of the westerlies need only be borne for so long as would get her round the Cape, then they could bear up into fine weather.

Dreaded events come rapidly, and soon the noble *Mooltan* had squared away to the eastward in 88° S. before the first westerly breeze. Aloft, she was as fit for the coming struggle as she could be made, almost entirely by the efforts of the bo'sun and the boys, and as all hands had enjoyed quite a spell of fine weather and fairly decent food, it looked as if, given a fortnight of moderate westerly gales, all would be well for the outward passage, anyhow.

So the good breeze blew up, the sheets and tacks settled down into their grip of yard and mast, earring and clew took on their straining nips, and the decks were cleared up as usual for the great business of running the easting down. Now, the southern ocean is capricious in most of its ways, as we expect from all extra-tropical waters, but its reputation for evil-doing is fairly well earned. The only thing that it respects is a well-found, well-handled ship which has a decent turn of speed. Of course, I now speak of a ship dependent upon the wind for her motive force, for so independent have steamships become that only

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recently I was told by the captain of a 7,000-ton steamship, just home from New Zealand, that she had broached to in a heavy gale while he was asleep in his chart-room and resumed her course without his being aware that anything out of the ordinary had happened. The same thing occurring to the finest sailing ship while running under similar conditions would have been an appalling calamity, most probably meaning the disappearance of ship and crew for ever.

There is also a fairly well-founded belief that the farther south you go the worse weather you get, wherefore the weaker ships usually run their easting down in a fairly low latitude, although the advantage of a deep dip south on the long stretch from mid-Atlantic to New Zealand, say, is to be reckoned in hundreds of miles. But on the much shorter run to St. Paul's, where the Calcutta bound ships haul to the northward, a high southern latitude is not of so much advantage, and so it was in no sense cowardice that impelled Captain Grey to decide that 42° S. was high enough for him.

Unfortunately in this instance the southern ocean exhibited savage capriciousness, for its behaviour in that mild parallel was atrocious—far worse, indeed, as was ascertained subse-

quently, than was shown ten degrees farther south. The wild west wind leaped from its lair before they passed the meridian of Gough Island, and although it found them ready for its immense attack, it nevertheless behaved in an altogether savage manner from the outset. Lashed and beaten by the sleet-laden blast, the *Mooltan* fled eastward like a maddened thoroughbred with a ruthless rider who continually plies whip and spur unsatisfied with the utmost efforts of his steed.

Yet the simile halts, for who could suggest that the little group of stern-browed officers gathered on the *Mooltan's* poop were in any way reckless or unfit for their high charge? Truly they knew, none better, the immense risks they ran in endeavouring to do their duty to their owners, for any sudden call they might make upon the crew who were shivering with apprehension forward would be utterly futile, since the poor creatures had neither the strength nor pluck nor skill to obey usefully. Oh, yes, they knew, and so did the petty officers and boys, and every one of them agreed in the high resolve to make the *Mooltan* do her best with the great power that had been vouchsafed to her.

So onward into the darkness she flew, her spars and rope and canvas tested to their

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extreme limits, and in the squalls there were heartfilling moments when every sense was alert for the crack—of doom, as it would probably be. Watch after watch dragged by, her decks one welter of foam continually, while the strain upon the officers would have been unbearable but for the splendid fashion common to all seafarers of laying down all the anxiety of responsibility with the watch. And yet one man could not do that—the skipper—whose load at such times none can lift from him. It is a fine breed of man that can and does bear this load unknown to men ashore, a load whereof the penalty of unfitness is usually a great destruction of life, not only his own—that is taken for granted—but of those who must depend upon him.

Again Willie found himself creeping close to his friend Dick for consolation and consultation, but now with knowledge that forbade any false comfort. They forgathered in a corner of the bo'sun's room, sodden with wet, yet protected by weather boards from the washing in of the incessant floods on deck, and Willie, looking Dick squarely in the face, said—

“Well, Dick, is this a gale?”

“Ah, boy,” replied Dick. “You know too much now to be put off like when we got out

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of Channel, and I got to say that it's the heaviest gale I've ever run before. In fact, it's come to this now—that we can't do nothing but run. This here sea is so frightful that if the captain was to try and heave her to now she'd smash up in ten minutes. But you see he couldn't do nothing else. Them poor fellows forrard are no help. They don't know, and they can't learn, how to make or shorten sail. They're too few for one thing, and if they was twice as many they don't know, they don't care, and"—here his voice sank to an awed whisper—"they don't want to know."

There was a painful pause, during which the devilish howl of the gale and the incessant smash, smash of the sea over the decks were the only sounds to be heard—other sounds, the complaint of the whole tortured fabric subjected to unfair strains, were to be felt, if you can understand n , but they did not strike upon the ear. Then Dick said, as if the idea or memory had suddenly occurred to him—

"And to think that once I was in the same pot with them poor fellows! Why ain't I now? What's happened to me?" He stared into vacancy as if he had never before realised how great was the stride he had made, and

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Willie, looking at him in round-eyed wonder, said—

“Dick, you never *could* have been like them. Why, they’re no good. Why, I’m better than any one of them, you’ve said so yourself. And you? Why, we all think you’re the finest fellow in the ship. You——”

“Stop! Willie, stop! I don’t want to hear such things. I don’t know anything about them, nor I don’t want. I only know that something’s come to me, came in Calcutta about a year ago, and made me feel as if all my life from then I must dig out and try to make up for the life I wasted up till then. But I ain’t got no call to be proud of it, and I can’t be if I wanted to.”

“Say, Dick,” queried Willie, snuggling closer to him, “ain’t you afraid, just a little bit, you know, of the ship breaking up and all of us being drowned in this awful sea? I am, though I don’t want to be, and I do want to know whether you are or not; down deep, I mean.”

Dick took the speaker’s chin in his hand and looked into his eyes for some seconds before he answered slowly and solemnly—

“Willie, my dear laddie, if I could comfort ye by saying I was afraid, I think I should. But I know I couldn’t. No, I ain’t afraid.

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Some people are proud of not being afraid, I know, but I got nothing to be proud of. I ain't a bit afraid because I got nothing to live for, and I can't suffer like some poor people that's been better educated. I've had lots of smashing up when folks told me I ought to have died, and I don't know why I didn't, and now I feel that it don't matter. Perhaps it is because I've got nobody to care whether I live or die. I sometimes think that if I'd got anybody like a mother or a sister or a—anybody ashore that cared, I might be a bit afraid, but then, you see, I haven't. There's nobody except Mr. Williams as cares what becomes of Dick Mort, and him only because he's a kind gentleman as takes an interest in me. But if I was to peg out he'd say, 'Poor fellow, that's the last of him,' an' he'd turn to something else."

Willie listened, only half comprehending this curious lack of interest in life because of having no one to care for, yet he understood as much about it as Dick, who was only just beginning to feel that Divine hunger of the soul that seeks in the pleasure of others its highest joys. He remained silent, however, only clinging a little closer to the sturdy form of his friend and shivering a little when an extra large sea mounted the rail, climbing up, up,

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until it stood solid above the shear poles, then lolloped inboard and filled her fore and aft with the hissing flood.

Another day came—it would hardly be fair to say it broke or it dawned, since it was just a lightening of the heavy gloom of night into a dull greyness—enabling the seafarers to note the ragged masses of leaden cloud breaking on the mast-heads, and occasionally to catch a glimpse of the much-enduring upper sails whose every thread bore witness to the tremendous strain they were enduring. A short lull gave Mr. Smart an opportunity of questioning Dick upon a few points connected with the condition of things aloft, and the advisability of doing some small preventive work, matters which only Dick or one of the elder apprentices could be trusted with, since none of the crew forward knew enough or had energy enough to do such things.

While they thus conferred, standing upon the break of the poop, a furious sleet squall overtook them. Involuntarily they raised their eyes, and as they did so they saw the main top-gallant mast bow forward at a horrible angle and its burden of sail disappear in the smother like a puff of smoke. They could neither turn nor speak, such was the fury of the squall, but remained glaring forward full

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of wonder what would go next, for they knew that this must be the beginning of the end unless the gale took off. But the squall lasted long, how long they could not tell, except that to them and the devoted helmsman it seemed a lifetime. Then almost imperceptibly it eased, and they were able to look around and speak, although the original force of the gale had not abated in the least.

The mate, with a hurried "do what you can, bo'sun," fought his way aft to the companion and shouted below, "She's begun to shed her canvas, sir! Main top-gallant mast's gone." Up rushed Captain Grey to see for himself, and coming on deck with a bound caught sight of another vessel within half a mile, going the same way but in a parlous plight. For she had lost all three of her top-gallant masts, her topsails and foresail were in streaming ribbons, the sea was leaping over her stern like a horde of starving tigers, and from her peak fluttered the remains of an ensign, Union down, the most pathetic signal of distress imaginable.

No words are adequate to describe the dreadful pathos of that scene. For it was as certain as anything on earth or sea could be that within the next hour she and her crew would be at peace far beneath those boiling seas, and those who now looked on helplessly at their

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fellows holding out appealing hands for the assistance they knew was not possible, were fully aware that what they saw was likely to be a perfect foreshadowing of their own lot presently. And as they thus reasoned she disappeared, another squall coming up and blotting her out of sight for ever.

During those few close-packed seconds the condition of the *Mooltan* was forgotten by her own people, but the coming of the blotting-out squall recalled them to a deep sense of their own danger, for, bereft of the driving power of the lost sails the over-burdened ship began to steer wildly. Also the following seas began to overtake her, and one or two already flung quite a mass of water over the taffrail. The captain, sidling to the mate, roared in his ear—

“I think the fore top-gallant mast must be gone, too. She would never have slacked up this much otherwise.” The mate nodded comprehensively, but before he could get forward to see he met Dick returning as if he had been diving and learned that it was even as they had feared, and that now their only hope was in the winds taking off or shifting. Continuance in its present quarter at its present strength must mean that before another day could dawn the end of all things must come

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for them; it was impossible that she could live through the night. And the most buoyant life-boat that was ever patented could never brave that awful sea successfully for twelve hours; in fact, boats are not carried to face such emergencies as these.

In the fore-castle there was only a dull sort of satisfaction that they were able to sit and smoke, no work being possible owing to the incessant flood on deck. It permeated the den in which they lived, making it clean indeed, but more like some tide-swept cave than a place where seamen must spend their necessary rest hours. This, however, mattered to them nothing, the only thing that concerned them was that they should be left alone and fed. As for danger to the ship, that was none of their business; to do them justice, only the impact of death itself would have made them voluntarily exert themselves in any degree.

Now, however, they were suddenly 'started by a roar of "Now then, on deck all of ye, and try and save the ship!" It proceeded from Dick, who stood at the fore-castle door knee deep in foam, his inscrutable face and eyes turned upon that group of utterly animalised men.

"Come, get a move on ye, and try and heave ship to. Hurry up now, or you won't get a

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chance to loaf by this time to-morrow. I don't think ye will anyhow, but that ain't certain. Anyhow, come on now."

"Yes," said the mate, jerking the bo'sun violently aside, "if ye ain't out in two minutes I'll be after ye and belt the heads off ye. Why, ye're worse than any coolies I ever sailed with. And I suppose you swagger as British sailors when you're ashore."

Just then there was a tremendous crash, an enormous mass of water burst upon the speaker, hurling him and the bo'sun in upon the gaping group of men who sat about irresolute, and for the space of a minute it seemed as if all of them would be drowned in that triangular space. For the forecastle was full up to the beams with water, then the ship heeled slowly over, over, over; until by superhuman efforts the half-drowned men were able to crawl out to windward and balance themselves at the door where they could see the destruction that had been wrought.

The great disaster of the sea was upon them. Their ship had broached to and now lay upon her beam ends, that is upon her side, with her lee lower yard-arms in the water and every shred of sail blown away, the sport and prey of the unsatisfied sea. No, for at that supreme moment, when, humanly speaking, nothing

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could save them, the weather broke, and before the final blows could be delivered, every seaman on board knew that once more the ocean, apparently in a fit of caprice, had spared its lawful prey, a magnificent well-found ship, that by reason of the worthlessness of her crew had been so handled as to make her liable at any moment to destruction. But it is not often that the sea is thus lenient.

CHAPTER X

THE END OF A PASSAGE

ALTHOUGH, as I have said, the *Mooltan* was spared once more, her present condition would have appeared to any one unacquainted with seamanship as hopeless as possible. For she had no stitch of canvas available, she had a tremendous list—that is, she lay over on one side at an alarming angle—and three important masts were gone, as well as a lot of minor gear. Altogether she was a very fair example of a wreck, and so I imagine her owner would have thought her could he have seen her then. But her captain and officers, who knew her prospects an hour before, were almost jubilant, for they well understood how much hope there was now, with the rapidly falling wind and sea. And the mate ground his teeth as he said bitterly—

“I’ll get some work out of them scallywags now. They haven’t earned their keep since they’ve been here, but if I can manage it I’ll

make em do so from here to Calcutta, if I have to work double tides meself. Bo'sun!"

"Yes, sir," replied Dick, struggling towards him.

"Get those fellows forward to work clearing away the wreck, and drive 'em—d'ye hear?—drive 'em. Spare these good lads of ours, we want their work presently, so every bit you can get out of those lazy dock-wallopers, get it. It's rough on you, I know, boss, but I know, too, that you don't mind that. Only I don't want you to do so much pully-haully yourself. Why, I've watched those fellows again and again, when you've been showin' 'em, the minute you take hold they let go. They don't want showin' any, they want a job where the work's put out and the grub and pay's good. Spare yourself, boss, an' let's get something out of them, it's full due."

Dick smiled sadly, for clearer and clearer every day he saw himself as he was, and he made all sorts of excuses for those who had not had his opportunity for learning better. But he could do nothing to aid them. He knew full well that Mr. Smart spoke the truth: they wanted no showing, and would just as soon shunt their work on to each other as on to the officers or apprentices. Like the sportsman whose doings are so feelingly described in certain popular

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prints, they would rather rob the public, but they had not the least objection to robbing one another, if they could.

However, for the next month they had, what they described in their limited vocabulary in such terms as are not to be printed except in a translation: a very bad time. The weather became fair and remained so, while the ship, abandoning the usual route, hauled up some hundreds of miles east of St. Paul's and made her way somewhat slowly towards her port. All the boys were in the seventh heaven of delight. For they had the chance of their lives putting into practice the many feats of sailorising they had learned, knotting and splicing and seizing and serving, while the men, the *sailors*, who should have done the scientific work, were doing the menial labouring part of it.

They emitted an occasional growl, occasionally they tried to spoil a job, but the officers watched them closely and did not allow the slightest intimidation of the good lads who were proving so splendid. If only all the officers and captains could or would have done likewise! In the result, by the time the *Mooltan* was half-way up the Bay of Bengal she was in good trim again aloft. Her bulwarks were still full of gaps where the mighty seas had

almost rent her in twain, but owing to her great stock of stores she was practically refitted, and her junior officers and apprentices had learned many lessons which they never forgot. In fact, many of them looked back upon that passage as the very best of their lives, forgetting with the easy facility of the sailor all the horrors of the few days that made the latter experience possible.

In fact, when the *Mooltan* anchored at the Sandheads to wait for steam, 125 days from London, all the people on board who thought about things were in a state of almost complete satisfaction with themselves, and even the scratch crew forward were beginning to swagger a little; here and there were to be found men who looked down upon the rest, and who felt that they were better than their shipmates. Dick had noted this improvement at once and was proportionately delighted, doing all in his power to encourage it by differentiating between the fellows he put at various jobs and by getting some of the best of them allowed an occasional trick at the wheel.

So she was what might be called a fairly happy ship as she lay, looking weather-beaten but full of that sailor-like appearance that seamen know and love, aye, and can detect a couple of miles off. Her officers smoked the

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pipe of complete satisfaction on the poop, her captain sweated in his cabin as he wrote his letter to his owners, describing what had happened, and made up his estimate of damage. The boys clustered around the door of their half deck, discussed the passage just over with all the nonchalance of men who knew, and commented upon the lack of manliness among the crew with a wealth of lurid detail that would have considerably surprised their staid and gentle parents at home, could they have heard.

Indeed, all was peace, replete with the sense of labour well spent such as can only come to people like these. And it was crowned by the simultaneous appearance, from two opposite directions, of the tugboat *Warren Hastings*, and that autocrat of the Hooghly, the Bengal pilot. Full of delight, the officers shouted their orders, the crew moved to the task of getting under weigh with what celerity they were able, and in an hour the *Mooltan* was speeding up the mighty Indian river which, for treachery, hidden dangers and immensity of traffic combined, knows no compeer in the world.

Little thought the *Mooltan's* company of these things. The tug-boat kept the tow rope taut as a steel bar, and the white-clad pilot

listened keenly to the nautical cry of his two leadsmen as he conned the vessel, noting with satisfaction the ability of the helmsman, young Douglas, the senior apprentice. Indeed, the potentate so far unbent as to ask the captain whether the man at the wheel was one of his A.B.'s, receiving with an air of entertained dignity the captain's flood of explanation and objurgation of the trash, as he called them, with which he was manned as far as his foremast hands went.

"Ah, well," he replied, in a tired, disinterested voice when the captain paused for breath, "you'll be able to get your pick of prime seamen in port now when you've chased this gang out of her. But you'll have to be careful. The present shipping master has a great notion of upholding the rights of the sailorman against the brutal shipmaster, and you'll have to prove your case up to the hilt in order to get rid of them if they don't feel like going. There's not much danger of that, though; they always feel like going, that sort, if they can get a few dibs to spend on chain lightning."

Then, as a man who had exhausted the subject, the pilot bent all his attention upon his task, for the heavily-laden *Mooltan* was approaching the bend of the river almost as dreaded as the infamous "James and Mary's,"

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whose quicksands seem alive with diabolical malignity and ever ready to swallow a whole fleet of great ships if presented to them one after the other in quick succession. He watched with all his mind bent upon his great task the powerful tug, as it strained at the long hawser; he surveyed mentally the uneven bed of the great river, of which every pilot worthy of the name must carry a chart in his head, and ever through his thoughts rang the musical cry of the leadsman as he sang in Hindustani the slightly varying depths over which they were swiftly passing.

Suddenly he fell forward on his face with a crash that almost stunned him, and every man on board who was erect at the time and not holding on went down also. He sprang to his feet again, shouting—

“All hands prepare to lower boats. Carpenter, chop that hawser! Ah!” His last remark was forced from him, for the great ship, as if in the jaws of some invisible monster, was turning over with a stealthy rapidity that precluded all idea of any handling of boats. Over, over, she went, the waters all aboil around her, and as the turbulent, sand-laden flood began to surge and suck in over the lee rail all hands, seizing everything they could lay hold of, dropped off into the river, where the

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"OVER, OVER SHE WENT, THE WATERS ALL ABOU. AROUND HER."



boats of the tug were already lying by, waiting to pick them up.

But it was nearly dark, 7 p.m., many of them were dazed with sleep, being all unused to the suddenness with which the Navy calls upon its men at all sorts of unseemly times; and so it came to pass that when the last sign of the *Mooltan* had disappeared from human ken beneath the river only seventeen out of the twenty-nine composing the ship's company of the *Mooltan* answered their names. Of these five of the A.B.'s were missing, as were also the cook and steward, the sailmaker, the carpenter, and three of the dear lads who had really made it possible for the *Mooltan* to get as far as she had.

And this was their reward. Ah, well! It was a sadly quiet and dispirited little crowd that assembled on the *Warren Hastings'* little deck as she plunged full speed towards Calcutta. They had no heart to discuss the appalling disaster which had burst upon them out of the unknown, nor, though they all shrank instinctively from the hapless pilot, who looked very different indeed from what he did when in all his pride of position he had boarded the ship at the Sandheads, did they evince any active enmity towards him. The survivors of the foremast hands made no

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sign at all, but just covered together and smoked as they had done on board their old ship in bad weather; nothing seemed to matter to them.

But a touch of the same imperviousness to the fiercest blows of fate made Dick a veritable tower of strength to the five lads who—with Willie, as usual, nearest—crowded round that worthy man. He did not seem in the least worried or upset by the tremendous occurrence, but talked with the lads, trying to answer their many questions as if he had been an unconcerned spectator of the last event. Occasionally the lads stole a furtive glance at him to try to detect whether it was a pose or not. There was absolutely no sign of his being anything but just his real self—and Willie, who for his age was wonderfully acute and thoughtful, was proportionately elated or depressed by any change of fortune—because Dick had sized this world up and satisfied himself that it had nothing to give him that he could or would value in the least.

Of course, the lad could not know Dick's past history; indeed, except for the question he had put to the bo'sun one night about being afraid, all his opinion of him had been based upon his behaviour under all the changing circumstances they had seen together; but I do not know a

better basis for one's opinion of a fellow-man than that, do you? Now, however, he was to learn a little more.

Whatever could have loosened Dick's tongue, usually so still, except the fact that he was condemned to idleness for a considerable time and was surrounded by fellows whom he was drawn to by the way in which they had behaved during some trying times, is unknown. He did not love them or even like them, as far as he knew, for these higher senses were not definite with him—he just felt drawn towards some people and repelled from others. He, however, was now about to teach himself something in a most unexpected way.

"The last time I was in Calcutta," he began, inconsequentially, and after a long pause, "I was all broke up and laid in hospital for a long time."

"Why, what happened to you, boss?" eagerly queried two or three of the lads; "did you have an accident?"

"Ay, lads, I had an accident all right. I had such an accident as ought to have been my last if I'd got my rights. I'd been badly damaged in a gale of wind off the Cape comin' out, an' the skipper an' steward nursed me night and day for nearly three months, until I was as fit and well as ever I was in my life.

And then, when we got to Calcutta, all hands took their discharges; they was a crowd very much like the lot we've just been shipmates with, an' I was one of 'em, an' I joined 'em. What did I know or care about the kindness I'd been getting or the real good time I'd a had lyin' there in lugsury?

"The skipper never reminded me—he wasn't that sort; he just paid me my full money an' let me go, an' I went on a tear with the crowd. But they didn't forget me because I'd been better off than they had, so they set about me, an' hammered me to shakings almost an' went through me an' left me all broke up, as I said."

"I should say it served you jolly well right, boss," jerked out one of the lads, getting very red in the face. "Why, even a poor wolf 'd be grateful for what you'd had done for you."

"William is quite right," calmly rejoined Dick, in the quiet that ensued. "It not only served me right, but I never ought to have had a chance agen. No one knows that now better than I do. But there's people in the world that never lose faith in and hope for even the worst of us, an' there was some o' them in Calcutta. An' I've only just woke up to the fact that if he's alive I shall see one of the men that believed in me—in me! mind you, an' there ain't a more worthless wastrel in the

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crowd of ours than I was. An' when I see him,
I—I——”

It was here that the wonderful thing happened, the illuminating point for Dick and many others. He, who had never before shown that he was susceptible of human emotion, who had seemed equally impervious to love, joy, hate, heat, cold, hunger, or fatigue, now broke down choked, and big leaden drops forced themselves out of his eyes and rolled down his face. Awe-stricken, the boys gazed at him; two, Willie and another, turned away as if the sight was too sacred to look upon, and indeed, although they did not know it, that was so, for it was the birth-time of a soul.

Presently, in a strange, unnatural sort of voice, Dick said, “I’m sorry, lads. I think I must be a bit queer. Got a knock, perhaps, and didn’t know it in the hurry-scurry. But I’m all right agen now, only I think I’ll try and find a corner somewhere and lie down an’ have a caulk.”

And suiting the action to the word he strolled away to a place beside the steam-chest, where he stretched himself on the bare deck and apparently courted sleep. Really his brain, which had never troubled him before, was abnormally busy trying to find out why? why?

why? But persistent through all the welter of confusion in that poor just-awakened soul there shone one beam of certainty. If only George Ward were still alive and he could meet him, how great, how splendid would that meeting be for him, Dick! As he lay and chewed the cud of these new ideas the desire to see his benefactor amounted to positive pain, such as he had never felt before. It surged through his whole being, goaded him, until he had to clench his hands and teeth and force himself to be still, to exercise a restraint over himself which had never been necessary under the most acute bodily pain before. And at last the conflict was so overpowering that he fell asleep and slept as if he were dead, awaking only when the rushing about of everybody roused him to a knowledge that the tug-boat was at her pier, and he with his shipmates were expected to get ashore.

There was quite a sensation in the city when the news became known, and Dick with the officers were objects of much solicitude at the Sailors' Home. But, warned by the captain, they said nothing for fear of doing harm. They only accepted gratefully such help in the way of change of clothing and a little pocket-money as came to them from the consignees. And then came the event that Dick had longed for and—

dreaded. The door of the room in which he sat opened, and in walked George Ward, his eyes glistening, his hands widespread.

It is of little use trying to describe Dick's feelings then. He could not describe them himself. All he could say was that he felt so weak that he couldn't stand, and if he could have used Eastern allegory he would probably have added that his liver turned to water, which is about the most expressive simile I know. However, Mr. Ward advanced upon him, seized him, looked him up and down, and said fervently, "Thank God." Then he sat down by Dick's side and began in his quaint down-east English, clipped, but pure, to talk about all sorts of extraneous matters. But Dick soon stopped him. He moistened his dry lips two or three times, cleared his throat and at last said—

"Mr. Ward, I've come back to thank you for saving a man, but I never really thought about it until last night. I've been a man ever since I left here, I know that, though I ain't got no pride in it; but I never fully realised that it was all your work until last night, when it came upon me in a moment and made me feel as I never felt before. Then I felt as if there wasn't anything on earth I wanted so much as to see you agen, an' now

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I see you, I feel I don't want anything else in the world. If there's anything I can do for you I'll do it at any cost of my flesh and blood. I haven't got any money as far as I know; what I had has gone down in the ship."

"My dear man," said Ward brokenly, "say no more. I'll show you a way to thank me presently, and it won't be a cheap way either. Just now I'm too full of gladness to say or do anything but just thank God that I've been permitted to see the result of my prayers. I've often thought myself a poor shote, hadn't anything to show the Master; but I'm full of hope now, thanks to my having met you. For if I've been the means of reclaiming you and setting you on your feet with your face to the sky, it's as much honour as any man dare hope for in this world. And besides, what about that good man, Mr. Williams? Hasn't he been boosting you with all sorts of real help?"

"I—I—d—don't know," stammered Dick bewilderedly. "I never thought of that before. An' yet—why, of course, it must be so. Surely I sh'd never have got the show I have if it hadn't been for him. An' I've never thanked him neither. Well, I got a lot to learn still, there's no two ways about that."

"Don't you allow anything of that kind to worry you, Mister Man, not for one second

of time. If I know anything about friend Williams, and I guess that he's unfolded himself to me some, I'm certain that what you've done in the way of growing in manhood is the best possible thanks you could possibly have given him. Lip thanks, though necessary, and sweet-sounding and all right in their place, are cheap, there's no getting away from that. But when friend Williams sees your face and hears your story he'll be as elated as I am this day, for he'll taste the sweetest pleasure known to mankind."

"Ah," sighed Dick. "It'll be a long time before he'll have that pleasure. I left him in England, and I've no idea where he is now. I wish I had."

"You could wish many things harder to gratify than that, then," replied Ward, "for he is here in Calcutta, has been here a month."

CHAPTER XI

THE COPING STONE

By a natural coincidence, the meeting of Mr. Williams with his *protégé*, of whom, as will be well understood, he had never lost sight, occurred just as Mr. Ward had arrived at the Sailors' Home to renew a conversation he had enjoyed with Dick the previous evening. I have omitted it for many reasons, but chiefly because I do not wish by publishing reasonable facts to injure those who put their money into a book of mine. And Ward's conversation with Dick was of that kind which the world, even that part of it which calls itself Christian, does not want to know about, unless it be wrapped in phraseology bearing no resemblance to the real facts of life.

But I can say this much without offending the nice taste of the reader, that the wise, kindly, and sensible man, Ward, fully believed at the close of his conversation with Dick that the latter had been thus amazingly altered because of the influence of the Gospel upon him, even though he was quite unconscious of the fact. Not only so, but a single word upon

the topic had never crossed his lips, a single idea on the subject had never illuminated his mind; in common with his shipmates in the *Mooltan*, as far as any one can judge, any form or practice of religion of any kind was as distant from their imaginings as if they had belonged to the lower animals. By this I do not mean that they were what is called heathen, for no doubt all of them had, at some time or other, been taught something about God the Father, and His Son; I only mean that never by any chance did one of them convey to another an idea that God or Christ meant anything at all to him.

“Horrible! Impossible! Unbelievable!” I hear some good folks cry. Very well. I cannot prove the matter to you, I can only assert it with all the emphasis I have and leave the matter there with the conviction that I speak the plain truth about six British ships out of ten now afloat, and that this was certainly the case in nine ships out of ten in which I sailed during my fifteen years at sea.

But as this is merely a digression I gladly leave it. At last into the dim recesses of Dick's mind, empty, swept, and garnished as they were, there came a luminous idea that he might give great satisfaction to the man who, of all others on earth, he felt had the most

claim upon him. And he clung to that idea, fostered it, loved it; for it satisfied a need that had been growing upon him ever since he had begun to climb the steps of manhood, a need that his steadfast helpfulness to the apprentice, Willie White, had only increased, not appeased, since he could not help feeling that there he received much more than he could ever hope to give.

Then he suddenly remembered Mr. Williams, and the recollection came with something like a jolt. Of course, he did not know at all what he owed to that good fellow and his hobby. In any case his knowledge would have been vague; but he found himself wondering why it was that he did not feel more grateful for the help he did not know of, the interest that his benefactor had taken in such a worthless wastrel as he knew himself to have been. But just as we either believe a thing or we don't when it is not susceptible of proof, and no amount of persuasion or argument can alter our innermost attitude of soul towards it, so Dick felt towards Mr. Williams, and soon he wisely gave up the effort to try to understand the puzzle.

That afternoon Mr. Williams and the missionary, Ward, arrived at the Sailors' Home together and met Dick, who was eagerly waiting to receive them. Ward was so full of his

enthusiasm over his convert that before the trio had been together five minutes he had bubbled over to Mr. Williams about it, and he was not a little daunted and chilled to find that gentleman receiving his raptures very coldly indeed, if not with a positive dislike.

This attitude so impressed him that he could not restrain his feelings, and presently blurted out—

“You don’t seem exactly pleased about something, friend Williams, and if I didn’t know you so well, I’d be tempted to think that it was jealousy at my interfering with your *protégé*. That I don’t, because I can’t, believe. Your mind is too big for that. And since the result of your experiment is so perfectly satisfactory, I’m more than a little puzzled to know what it is that clouds your brow and keeps you silent, except from short sarcastic remarks quite unlike you. Unless—unless——”

“Why don’t you go on, Ward?” interjected Williams. “You are free to speak your mind, aren’t you? Why don’t you say all you think? When you have done so I’ll tell you something that may surprise you—perhaps not, though.”

“I’m ashamed, friend Williams, of doubting your tolerance, but it did just occur to me—the doubt was raised in my mind—that perhaps

I was making too much, in your estimation, of the part that religion has played in the raising of our brother."

"Well, you were quite right, strange as it may appear to you. I have the gravest doubts about your methods, and I had hoped to raise Dick Mort by methods of sheer common sense without the supernatural being obtruded at all. I give you credit for not only being absolutely sincere and faithful, and I don't believe you would be dishonest even in thought, but I earnestly wish you hadn't come into this business at all. I'm certain I could have done very well without you. And now I find you here again interfering in my work, and—oh, you needn't shake your head—claiming all the credit of it for your particular 'ism,' whatever that may be. Don't think me either an atheist or an infidel, because, according to the real meaning of those words, I am neither; but I tell you frankly that I hate the arrogance of those who believe that their little creeds sway the forces that rule the universe.

"There, I haven't said so much at a time for years, but then I haven't been so much upset and annoyed for I don't know when, and what makes it all the harder to bear is the fact that I have a very genuine regard for you. Only I feel sure that you'll spoil Dick here,"

and he laid his hand affectionately upon Dick's shoulder.

Ward stood as if rooted to the spot, his eyes glistening with unshed tears and his face, despite the power of self-control which he shared with the best of his countrymen, working convulsively. At last he said—

“Friend Williams, I can't tell you how wrong I believe you to be, and if I could, you would not believe. But I can leave you with Dick, as I am sure you would wish me to. I will not promise to cut his acquaintance—I owe my Master better service than that—but I will promise never to take part in such a scene of trial as this again. Dick, dear man, you know where I am to be found at any time. For the present, good-day both of you.”

And he hurried away, evidently fearful that his control would give way before witnesses, leaving Dick staring after him like a man who has been stunned. When his footsteps had died away Mr. Williams, motioning Dick to a chair, took one himself and said as calmly as if the just-ended scene had not occurred—

“Well, Dick, I can see that you haven't gone backward since I left you in London, but I'd like to know how you feel about things. What's your outlook on life now?”

Poor Dick could no more have answered

such a question (Williams didn't expect him to either) than one of us could calculate the area of a conic section offhand without tables; but one thing he did know, and that was that he was indebted to the quiet, rather sardonic man before him for many material things. He was also aware that he had not nearly as much regard for him as he had for the man who had just gone out. He did not know why, nor could he find any way to explain, so he did not try. But he said, with a very red face and a tremendous effort—

"I know I've been a great expense to you, Mr. Williams, this last year, an' I'm much obliged for your interest in a poor broken-up wastrel like me, but if you'll kindly take from me what I've earned since you sent me afloat again (I've really earned it, sir, every piece of it) I'll be just as grateful as I am now. If it hadn't been for you, sir, I should very likely be loafin' in some ship's fore-castle now, sir, as worthless as ever I was."

Up rose Mr. Williams, and it was astonishing how much dignity there was in his insignificant figure.

"Dick," he said sternly, "never mention payment to me again, though I can't help admiring you for it all the same. I'm a man with heaps of money that's worrying me, and

if only I could spend every pound of it making men like you, I'd be glad to live on a crust and a drink of water a day. Your friend who has just gone out believes in saving men's souls, I believe in saving their bodies to do the work of the world, but you can't do either with money alone, you must have the help of the man you're trying to save. You've bucked up. I've heard all about you, and I tell you I'd have given one hundred, yes, one thousand times as much as you've cost me to have been sure of the same result. Never mind, we'll let that drop.

"Now the first thing that I want to know is, what are you going to do now, that is, as soon as the inquiry into the loss of the *Mooltan* is over?"

"Get another ship," promptly replied Dick. "I got no use for the shore. I feel as if I was a loafer, an' I know I been that too long already. That's all that I know of, sir."

"Quite enough, too," responded Mr. Williams. "Now listen to me. There is in Calcutta at the present time one of the finest sailing ships in the world, and her bo'sun has just died of jungle fever. I know the captain well, and he has promised you the berth if you can sail with him before April 15th. It's now the 5th. I think if the inquiry doesn't come

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off before then I can get your evidence taken on commission so as not to detain you. I'm anxious that you shouldn't lose this ship, because Captain Carnegie has promised me that he will teach you navigation on the passage home, and I want that you should pass for second mate when you get to London. What d'ye say?"

"I say, thank you, sir, over and over again, but as Mr. Ward told me this morning I could, I'll thank you in a better way by being a credit to you."

"Ah, he said that, did he? Well, that was good of him, much better than I expected. I thought he might have asked you to pray for me."

"He did that too, sir, but he's always told me that praying without working was like trying to work a confidence trick on God Almighty. Why, he told me once I might as well be a Chinaman offering paper money to a joss as believe that."

"Ah, come, come, he isn't so bad after all! Well, I'm glad to know that. However, you'll be tired to death of me by this time, so I'll get hence. The name of the ship I've bespoke for you is the *Allahabad*, Captain A. Carnegie. She lies off Prinseps Ghat, and I'd advise you to have a look at her first chance

you get. See you to-morrow, all being well. So-long."

And he was gone, leaving Dick in a state little short of bewilderment. However, it was dinner time, and there was a pleasant after-dinner meeting with the lads, who were all being entertained in the officers' quarters of the home, so that the time passed quickly enough until Dick felt free to go and visit his friend Ward at the corner of the Radha Bazaar. When he did do so, he found him holding forth in the old way to a full audience from apparently all the vessels in port. It was a special occasion of some sort, so Dick took a back seat and feasted his ears upon the rich, rolling tones of the man whom he now knew that he loved—and he had never known what love meant before. And then he bowed his head upon his hands in a perfect agony of desire to be thankful to somebody or something for the enormous change which had been wrought in him.

And so he remained, the voice of the speaker still booming in his ears, but his whole being filled with immense gratitude. The words he heard mattered nothing—which is why oftentimes the poorest preacher is the most successful proselytiser, because it is character, not words, that tells. Then as he sat still, after the

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audience had melted away, Ward came up to him, giving a little glad cry as he recognised him and haling him off to his tiny den at the back of the hall. Into those sacred precincts we will not penetrate, because what passed there may not be lightly discussed. Sufficient to say that when Dick emerged an hour later there was a new firmness in his step, a new light in his eye; he had received the coping stone of his manliness and went to his pallet at the Sailor's Home fully happy, because for the first time understanding what it was to be a man.

CHAPTER XII

BO'SUN BAITING

UNPLEASANT and harassing as were the circumstances connected with the loss of the *Mooltan* for the captain and officers of that vessel, the holiday was a season of unmitigated joy for the remainder of the apprentices. It was the best time of the year for Calcutta, and besides, they were made very much of by the best European residents, who gave them the time of their lives. With the thoughtlessness of boys they did not dwell upon the awful sorrow of the parents who had been bereaved of their sons, it was not to be expected of them. And Willie was especially delighted, because he had found a letter awaiting him from his dearly-loved mother to the effect that by the death of a distant relative she was now a wealthy woman, and enclosed a draft for £100 with an urgent request that her dear boy should come home by the quickest route—little knowing how free he would be to do so.

Willie was a good lad, but this wonderful

piece of good fortune nearly turned his brain, and for a little while he behaved like a wild thing. Then, as soon as he cooled down he sent a cablegram to his mother informing her of the circumstances and promising to come home as quickly as possible; next he made for his best friend, Dick, whom he met in the street walking towards Prinseps Ghat to view his future ship. The boy hurled himself at his friend, and for the next few minutes his tongue flew, to the utmost bewilderment of Dick, whose brain moved slowly. Indeed, it was not until they were opposite the moorings of the *Allahabad* that Dick understood the main facts about Willie's altered position, and realised that the boy wanted to give him £20.

The first did not impress him much, but the second caused a deep red flush over his face as he slowly turned to Willie, saying hesitatingly—

“I—I—cou-couldn't take it, Willie. I don't want much money, anyhow, but I don't want any that I haven't earned. I've only just learned that, but I know it by heart. An' I don't know what you want to give it to me for. If I was hard up and wanted a lift over a bad place, perhaps then, but you know I'm all right, so why?”

“Be—be—cause, oh! because you've been so

good to me, Dick," blurted out the boy, the big tears standing in his eyes. "I don't believe I could have lived through the first part of the voyage if it hadn't been for you, an' look how you've been to me since! Why, I'd give you half my fortune if I had one."

"Somehow, Willie, I don't know how, you've given me something that all the money in the world couldn't buy. An' I feel, I ain't rightly sure, but I feel that if I was to take any money from you, unless, as I said, I was hard up an' couldn't earn none, I should be spoiling myself. Put your money away, Willie, you can do much better with it than I can. An' now look at this ship. Ain't she a beauty? D'you know, she's the first four-master I ever remember seeing. Why, she must be over 2,000 ton" (in an awed whisper). And indeed a 2,000-ton sailing ship was a portent in those days.

Willie gazed aloft at the towering masts and the enormous web of gear, which to the lay mind presented an entanglement past unravelling, and then said with a gasp—

"My, Dick, she is big! Why, she makes the *Mooltan* seem quite paltry. And you're going bo'sun of her! Well, I only wish I was going with you, but I got to go home, mother

wants me, bad. I'm sailing next Friday in the *Verona*, an' I hope you'll be able to come and see me off. Fancy me a first-class passenger in a P. & O.! I know you'll come if you can."

Dick promised, and parted with the dear lad, who returned more in love with his old bo'sun than ever. But that good fellow went straight on board the *Allahabad* and was immediately subjected to the most rigid scrutiny by all hands from the mate downwards (the captain was ashore), for the bo'sun in those days was in many ways the most important man in the ship, not excluding the captain. He could not make a movement but it was watched with the most intense interest and eagerly commented upon. His critics were not really hostile, but intensely critical; and it may be definitely stated that while any favourable point would be justly if grudgingly noted, every unfavourable movement would be not only noted, but underscored in deepest black for future use.

But Dick had one immense safeguard against any mental worry on that head. He had no self-consciousness. While many of us assert, often blatantly, "I don't care what people think about me as long as I can do my work," we are actually conscious that our statement

is utterly untrue and that an enormous weight is added to our load because we cannot help caring what the other people are thinking, even those whose opinion isn't worth the proverbial hill of beans. In Dick's case such a statement would have been absolutely accurate. He did not care, because the idea never occurred to him that the same callousness which in his wastrel days made him impervious to the most caustic, vitriolic comments upon his uselessness, his sloth, etc., now operated in an entirely beneficial direction.

So he went about the ship with the mate, speaking very respectfully when it was necessary to reply at all, but generally listening until the mate, tiring in his attempt to understand this future foreman of his, made an excuse to end the visit, and Dick, with a respectful "Good-day," left the ship.

Now it was not often that Mr. Curzon, the mate, deigned to enter into general conversation with his junior officers. He belonged to the old school who believed in keeping a religious distance between junior officers and himself, even as his captains were wont to keep him at a distance. But to-day he relaxed and said to Mr. Parsons, the second officer—

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“That new bo’sun of ours is a complete puzzle. I can’t make him out. He seems to know his work all right, as far as I can judge, but he either don’t or can’t talk. I tried all sorts of dodges on him, but they didn’t work, and I can’t quite make up my mind whether he’s any good or not.”

“Doesn’t matter very much, does it, sir?” growled Mr. Parsons, who was a middle-aged and very much soured second mate. “If he’s one of the skipper’s pets he’ll do, no matter what his qualifications are. Put it on to the ‘greaser’” (second mate). So the mate stalked away to his cabin with a great accession of dignity, while Mr. Parsons smiled bitterly. In the forecastle, however, at dinner-time there was an enormous discussion, for this ship, owing to the owners’ enlightened policy of supplying the ship with good food and paying the best rate of wages out of the port she sailed from, not only carried a picked crew but kept them. Even then they were rather mixed as regards nationality, but every one was a seaman. If there had been a man there who could not do what was considered to be a seaman’s work in the repairs of the ship, he would immediately have become a Gibeonite to all hands; for your skilled hand has no pity

upon the shyster and malingerer—the creature who shirks his duty in the hope that some one else will shoulder the double load.

Among this knowing crowd, then, Dick's prospects were discussed with the utmost freedom, and the upshot, as far as one could make it out, was that while success on the new bo'sun's part would be received with strict neutrality, if he failed to make good his right to be the best seaman on board, a *sine qua non* for a bo'sun, he would have much trouble, and no one would pity him. As far as impartiality of judgment was concerned that was the outlook for Dick, but, of course, had he known it, he would not have cared in the least; it was not his business.

Matters rolled on their easy way. The *Verona* sailed amidst the benedictions of Willie's friends; and, after a fervent leave-taking on Willie's part between him and Dick, in which Willie pledged himself to keep in touch with his friend wherever he might be, the inquiry was held, and resulted, as every one had foreseen, in complete exoneration of all parties concerned, no other verdict being possible. And then Dick, tremendously bored by his idleness, and the inability he felt to take any interest in anything save what George Ward said and the work from

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which he had been cut off, joined his new ship and entered upon his duties.

An interview with Captain Carnegie, in the presence of Mr. Williams, had little result, for the good captain, like so many others, could not imagine how so stolid and apparently stupid a man could become useful. Like most of us, he was compelled to judge a man whom he did not know by what he said, and Dick said scarcely a word. However, Mr. Williams had squared everything, and it was understood that every evening while the ship was at sea, wind and weather permitting, Dick was to attend in the saloon and be instructed in the science of navigation, to the end that he might sit for his examination before the Board of Trade for a certificate as second mate when the ship arrived in London.

By some strange freak of mercantile business she was bound in ballast to Adelaide, S.A., whence it was understood that she would be dispatched with wool, wheat, and copper for London. This, of course, affected the crew not at all, save as a subject for discussion in the fore-castle during the dog-watches, leading nowhere because no one knew anything about the reasons for the step. Aft there was also but little said about the matter, because the business of the afterguard was to get the ship safely and swiftly

from place to place, and that was quite enough to occupy their minds; not but the owners of the *Allahabad* had paid liberal attention to the crew side also. She had three good officers, two with master's certificates, and six stalwart apprentices, the most junior of whom was a second voyager.

Wherefore, when Dick joined the big ship a week before she sailed, he came to a very different state of affairs from that obtaining in any ship he had ever been in, save the *Mooltan* on her leaving Calcutta for her previous memorable voyage. But he had not been at work more than a hour before every man on board knew that he was a first-rate seaman, who knew his job so well that he could take hold of anything that he ordered a man to do and show him how it should best be done. But they also noted that while he led them he was not able, or, at any rate, did not attempt, to drive them, and that all his orders were given quietly and kindly, his voice never being unnecessarily raised. Another thing quickly noted was that the new bo'sun did not use bad language, neither did he smile.

So the officers thought that the work would suffer from lack of driving power. The carpenter and sailmaker, who shared a cabin with him, voted him an utter kill-joy, who was almost as

silent as a dumb man below, and the men began to slack off behind his back, thinking that for all his fine seamanship he was a fool. Only the boys, as usual, thoroughly approved of him, felt, as they said, that "he was a jolly fine chap," and were generally enthusiastic about him.

Now, in all this there was not much difference from the conditions obtaining upon his first appointment in the *Mooltan*, one might think, and yet the difference was really very great. In the first place, despite Dick's real indifference as to what his shipmates thought of him, it was impossible for him to help realising the solidity of his standpoint as a man fully competent, fully reliable, and entirely fit for his post. Secondly, the crew with which he had now to deal were without any exception skilled seamen who took a pride in their work and who thoroughly recognised their bo'sun's ability, while at the same time prepared to take every advantage of any softness or, in other words, fear of them that he might exhibit. Thirdly—but this was hardly known clearly to himself as yet—he had grown in another direction. Those long talks with George Ward and the few sarcastic remarks dropped from time to time from Mr. Williams had slowly but certainly rooted in Dick's mind an

idea that there had been a great danger of his falling into the opposite extreme to the worthless loafer, and becoming a worthless Christian, a man, that is, who, while having before him the highest ideals of goodness and usefulness, became of no use, and certainly no good, because of losing his grip upon the fact that in the Kingdom of God, as well as in the kingdom of this world, law is essential to usefulness, but law without means to enforce it is only a theme for laughter, and becomes with all speed lawlessness.

Now, as Dick had certainly become a Christian in the best sense of the word, he was in very great danger of falling into the pit yawning for Christians on board ship, where the average son of Belial is always ready to use the fact of his superior officer being a Christian as an argument why discipline should not be enforced. But Dick had been forewarned, and just as his quiet, temperate life and great industry had developed his muscular power and made him a fine specimen of manhood, so his really awakened spirit was developing in him a high sense of responsibility towards all men, especially in that he must see that the name and profession of Christian did not suffer through him.

But all this was a sealed book to everybody on board, and in the meantime the *Allahabad* was

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proving herself a noble sailer, making splendid use of the fine N.E. monsoon, and slipping away to the southward at a great rate. Captain Carnegie faithfully fulfilled his portion of the contract made with Mr. Williams, and devoted an hour or so every evening to teaching Dick the simple mathematics necessary for him to know in order to pass for second mate. At first it was a very uphill task, for Dick's arithmetic even had to be begun. But when once he had mastered the first four rules, his immense perseverance and intense desire to learn made every step forward easier.

Strangely enough, because both of them should have known that it would be so, there was no thought in either of their minds of the effect that these evening lessons were having upon the minds of the rest of the crew, both officers and men, not boys, although they, if any one, might have grumbled. Jealousy, fierce and unscrupulous, raged fore and aft. From the mate to the ordinary seaman, all hated the skipper and bo'sun; the first, because he was to all appearance favouring the bo'sun, the second because he, while shunning all society on board save the apprentices, was closeted with the skipper for an hour or so every evening.

There was really no ground for either, because

the reason was just plain jealousy, which we know has no reasons, only feelings, and is never more hateful than when shown at sea among men. Yet the two innocent causes of all this ferment and turmoil fore and aft went on their way utterly unconscious of the storm they were preparing for themselves while doing their plain duty, until one day, when about half-way between the Equator and Cape Leeuwin, the storm burst, with greater fury perhaps for having had no legitimate or even forced outlet previously.

The port watch, the mate's, were setting up the main rigging, working as well as usual when sailoring, as we call manipulation of rope, canvas, and wire, etc., was afoot, because their professional pride was up. The bo'sun was working among them as usual, and while in the act of racking a lanyard was called by the mate. He handed the job over to a man at his side to finish, and proceeded to wipe the tar and grease off his hands before going aft, when to his astonishment he saw the man to whom he had handed the job deliberately undoing his work. He stopped and inquired quietly—

“What are you doing?”

“Going t' put this rackin' on properly,” was the studiously insolent reply. Now this incident,

seemingly so trivial, conveys a notion of sea difficulties—it was an unpardonable insult, for it distinctly conveyed the notion that the chief seaman on board did not know his work. It was too much for Dick even, who walked up to the man saying—

“Put that racking on as I was doing, and don’t talk so much. You’re too free with your ideas.” (Please bear in mind that I translate throughout.)

For all answer the man let the racking go, and the lanyard rendered up again what had been gained. He then faced the bo’sun with a flood of sea abuse, all the more virulent for being long pent up, but, be it noted, without any real cause of offence whatever. The rest of the watch dropped what they were doing and clustered round with grins of utmost satisfaction on their faces.

“Bo’sun,” roared the mate from the poop. “Didn’t you hear me call you? Why don’t you come along here?”

Dick was in the dilemma prepared for him. If he hurried aft he was running away, if he stayed he disobeyed his superior officer. He did not hesitate. With an utter blankness of expression, he deliberately walked aft, where the mate, who had lashed himself into a temper over

the imaginary slight, began to bawl at him. He went up quietly to the noisy man and endeavoured to edge in a word, but the mate only grew louder and louder, while the watch crept aft to enjoy the scene. Suddenly a great voice behind the mate shouted, "Silence!"

CHAPTER XIII

MUTINY

It was the captain who, coming on deck at the loudness of the mate's voice, had suddenly become acutely conscious that there was great trouble brewing, though entirely unaware of any cause for the same. But as he spoke he noticed the watch clustering aft, and striding to the break of the poop, he cried—

“What do you men want here? Have you nothing to do? Go forrard, you are not wanted just now!”

It was the match to the powder magazine, always ready laid on board of English ships, where there are no legal means of enforcing discipline at the best of times, but in cases like the present only anarchy, unless the captain is a man.

“We ain't goin' forrard, an' we want to stop just 'ere. We aint' used to seein' the cap'n of a fine ship take the bo'sun fer a chum, an' 'ave 'im shut up with 'im every evenin' for a couple of howers, an' before we goes forrard we're a goin' t' see that its altered. That's what were 'ere for.”

There was an approving murmur among the rest of the crew, all of whom had turned out and joined in the throng. But it was lost upon the skipper, who, in a cold, calm voice, turned to the mate and inquired—

“Mr. Curzon, is this your doing?”

The mate, thus directly appealed to, stuttered and stammered, and finally blurted out that, while he had nothing to do with the present outbreak, he felt personally aggrieved at the interest the captain had taken in the bo'sun, who, as far as he could see, had nothing special to recommend him.

“That is quite sufficient,” rejoined the skipper. “Steward, tell the second and third mates I want them, and tell them, too, that I am in a hurry.”

There was a dramatic silence. The great ship surged steadily southward with every sail drawing, the helmsman apparently absorbed in his task of keeping her straight. And there, gathered upon and before the poop were the crew of the ship, the six apprentices aloof as usual, but taking the utmost interest in the scene. The second and third mates came up the lee ladder two steps at a time, bearing evident signs of having been fast asleep a few minutes before, and looked quite uncomfortable, especially Mr.

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Parsons, who had outgrown experiments, though not jealousy.

"Now then," said the captain sharply, "for the first time in my life I've to ask my officers whether they are prepared to take part with the crew in the act of mutiny such as I see brewing among the men?"

Both the second and third officers denied all knowledge of any grievance, and professed full allegiance to their chief. But the mate said rather haughtily that he was no apprentice, and he preferred to know where he stood before he gave in his adhesion to a scheme which, as far as he could see, left him inferior to the bo'sun in the ship's company. Without one word further upon the subject Captain Carnegie ordered him to his cabin, then turning sharply to the second and third mates, he said—

"Now then, gentlemen, it's your say. Are you prepared to side with the crew in this mutiny, as the chief officer has evidently done, or do you intend to do your duty?"

The plain issue being thus placed before them, the two officers accepted the situation at once, and explained to the captain that they had never entertained the least idea of disobeying his orders or of questioning his actions.

"That's all right, then," replied the captain,

and turning to the sullen, lowering crew he raised his voice, and said sternly—

“I give you five minutes to decide whether you will return to your work under the bo’sun as you have hitherto done, or whether you will remain prisoners in the forecastle on bread and water until we anchor at Adelaide, or sight a man-o’-war. But whatever you do I shall indict every one of you before the Courts in Australia for mutiny upon the high seas. Now choose.”

The last words were injudicious, but the man was in a white fury at the injustice of the thing. At any rate the immediate result was that two or three of the crew stepped forward, and with a flood of horrible imprecations announced their intention of doing just what they chose from thenceforward and anyhow; no hand-turn for the ship would they do until the mate was reinstated and the bo’sun disgraced.

The clashing voices had hardly ceased when the captain’s clear call rang out, “Steward!” Up ran that worthy fellow, who had been with the captain ever since he took command ten years before. A whispered order and he departed on the run, presently returning, while the crew were still raging, with a leathern case, which the captain coolly laid upon the thwart-ship rail in full sight of all hands, and opening it, handed out

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two heavy Navy revolvers to each of his officers, and the bo'sun taking a pair himself. A great quiet came over the seamen at once as he once more leaned forward, and in level, monotonous tones announced his orders.

“Get forrard at once to your house, out of which you none of you stir without my permission. If you have not gone before I count ten I fire.” And he brought both his weapons to bear upon them. Oh, how they cursed and foamed and devised devilish tortures for him and the bo'sun, but they went, and hurriedly, too. Only one, a big Liverpool Irishman, stayed for an instant at the corner of the main hatch to hurl a parting curse and defiance at the skipper. He stayed a second or so too long, for a bullet came, ping! through the fleshy part of his arm, and changed his yell of defiance into a howl of pain. He bolted into the forecastle like a rabbit, both doors were slid to, and as far as the deck was concerned there was peace.

A mustering of the available force by the captain now took place. As crew there were six lads, any one of whom was capable and willing to do a man's work. Carpenter, sailmaker, and bo'sun, and, in case of necessity, cook, steward, and third mate, the captain taking his watch. Twelve men, all anxious to do their best, all fit

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"A BULLET CAME, PING! THROUGH THE FLESHY PART OF HIS ARM."



and sure of extra pay for conduct calculated to save the ship. Why, it was dead easy, the captain chuckled gleefully. But his face darkened as he went below, having made temporary disposition of his forces and given precise instructions to his officers as to their behaviour in a case of a rush of the men.

"Steward," he shouted, "tell the chief officer to come here to me"; and he seated himself at the head of the saloon table.

In two minutes the mate appeared, trying very hard to look at his ease, but failing most signally. He came up to within six feet of the captain and stopped, saying—

"You sent for me, sir?"

"I did," replied the captain. "I want to know what you have got to say for yourself. In face of the whole crew, in a state of mutiny, you have defied me and virtually cast in your lot with them; and if I did what I believe to be strict justice, I should send you forrard to join them and enjoy their enlivening society. Oh, shame on you!" he burst out, as if compelled thus to speak, "to degrade a noble service like this through sheer foolish jealousy, only fit for incompetent asses who are afraid that they will be supplanted. I do not favour the bo'sun at all. He is committed to my charge by a good friend who

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pays me to teach him navigation, and for that purpose I give him an hour or two of my time every evening when his work is over for the day. But if you or any man says that I favour him in any way beside that you lie shamelessly, and you well know it.

“Now I give you one more chance, because I would not lightly ruin a man, as I can ruin you for this if I choose. Apologise for your behaviour, resume your duties, and I will make no difference in my treatment of you from what it was before. But mind, I will have no persecution of the bo’sun. I do not ask you to apologise to him or anything of the kind, but a man who can do his work and is always willing deserves consideration and the best treatment possible. This the bo’sun will always get from me, and I expect no less from you. What do you say?”

“I say, sir,” answered the mate, “that I have been a fool, and that you are treating me much better than I deserve. I accept your conditions gratefully, and I’ll do my best to act so that you shall have no further fault to find with me. I don’t think I could talk like this if I didn’t feel how utterly I have been in the wrong.”

“That’s all right, then,” said the skipper, with a beaming smile as he rose and held out his

hand to the mate. The mate took it and wrung it hard, while the skipper went on—

“An’ now we’ve got to get the ship along for a day or two. I don’t think those fellows forrard will hold out longer than that, but they may, for they are good men in their way. What a pity they are such fools. Anyhow, in case of accidents, here’s a pair of revolvers for you—mind, they’re loaded, and I shall expect you to protect the bo’sun as if he was your own father. He’s giving me no end of trouble, but it’s not his fault, and I’d die before I’d fail in my duty towards him. And so would any other man that had the pluck of a louse,” he added, as an after-thought.

Thenceforward for a week the *Allahabad* glided steadily southward, while her misguided crew sweltered in the forecandle on their spare diet of biscuit and water. The bo’sun respectfully refused to carry the revolvers, alleging that they could only be for protection of himself, and he didn’t want to be protected. But he had his evening lessons just the same, and, strangely enough, he progressed in them much faster than he had yet done. And then the mutiny ended in dramatic fashion.

As the bo’sun was descending the forecandle ladder after a visit to see how the head sails were doing, he was suddenly surrounded by a dozen

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dark figures who man-handled him into the fore-castle before he could utter a cry for help if he had chosen to do so. He was seated upon a chest and surrounded by the lowering visages of the half-starved men, each of whom was holding his sheath knife ostentatiously before him. Then the Liverpool Irishman, whose wound was nearly healed, hissed out—

“Ye worthless scum! ’Tis fer you that this comfortable ship has been turned into a hell afloat. An’ ye’er not worth it, no ye’er not. An’ whatever happens t’ us ye shall die. Ye’ve forfeited a dozen lives if ye had um, it’s a pity ye’ve only got one. But we’ll have some sport wi’ ye before we send yez out into the darrk. Tell us, ye rotten beast, what yez mane by ut!”

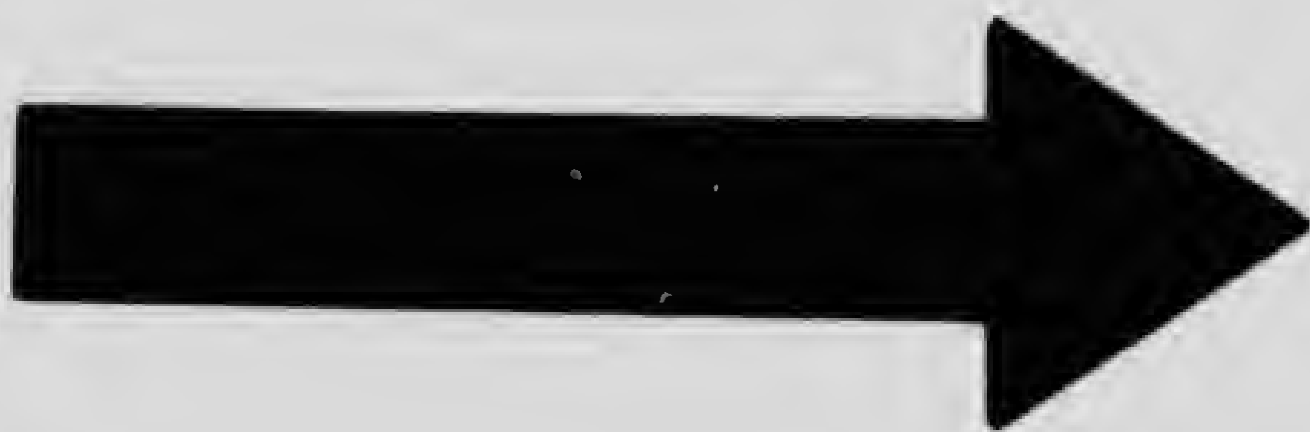
A yell of laughter went up at the end of these remarks, not nice laughter, but the laughter of men who were cruel and who desired more cruelty. But Dick behaved as if he did not notice any difference in their behaviour from what it had always been. He looked round upon their faces incuriously, slowly, as if taking a mental photograph of each one, then he spoke slowly, and with a smile dancing in his eyes.

“I’ve been to sea now for a good many years, but I never saw such a funny gang as this. I don’t understand it. What is it ye want? To

kill me? Well, why don't you do it; I'm sure I'm agreeable. I don't mind when or how I die, and you wouldn't wonder if you knew what I've been through. Do you think to frighten me? Don't try, because you can't, and it wouldn't be any good to you if you could. I tell you I don't understand what you are after, and I never shall, nor why you're so desperately mad with me!"

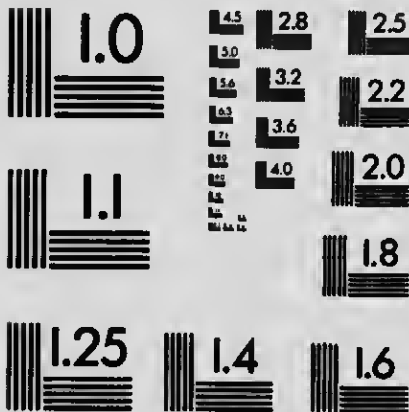
"D'ye mane to say, then, ye filthy scum, that y' haven't been a dhirty spy upon everybody in the ship since ye came aboard. Wid yer navigashin' lessons in private wid the skipper an' ye'er——" But decency forbids us to follow the Liverpool gentleman's remarks, and thank Heaven it is not necessary. While all of the crowd were in the throes of uncertainty what to make of this queer fellow who didn't seem to know the use of fear, and who were half inclined to rush in and end the controversy in the bad old way of slaying blindly, the door was smashed open, a figure leaped lightly in, and a voice roared, "Hands up!"

The order was peremptory, it was backed by a brace of heavy revolvers pointed straight at the group, and it was instantly obeyed. What a funny sight! All that cruel crowd suddenly converted into a crying mob of sycophants earnestly hoping that the captain—for it was he—would



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not shoot. "Come out, bo'sun," he cried, "come out; you're too good a man to sit amongst such a gang as that. Oh, ye wasters! I wonder ye ain't ashamed t' live. Ye'er very brave when ye've got a man unarmed into the clutches of a gang, but ye show up in ye'er true colours when a man holds you up as I'm doing now. Come out, bo'sun!"

"All right, sir," replied Dick; "but if you don't mind I'd like to say a word to these chaps first if you'll let 'em drop their hands. I ain't afraid of 'em."

"All right," cheerily answered the captain, "it's your funeral, my boy. Only if I was you, I wouldn't trust 'em too far. However, go ahead."

"Boys," said Dick, turning to the silent crowd, "what's wrong with ye? Whatever on earth can you have against me? I've been trying to learn navigation from the skipper since he's been good enough to teach me, but surely that's not enough to make ye want to kill me? Do you think I'm not man enough to be bo'sun? I never learned fighting, but I'll take any of you on now with the fists if you like—all I want to do is to show you it's a silly fool's game you're playing."

He stopped; the captain looked on with a

sardonic smile until the big Liverpool man said quietly—

“I weaken. I’ll turn to.” He was followed by the rest of them like a flock of sheep, and the mutiny was over.

But that night after the usual lesson Captain Carnegie said solemnly, “Now, bo’sun, I want to give you a word of warning. You mustn’t be so easy. You’re all that I could wish for a bo’sun, and I don’t want a bucko, but you must not let men think that they can do as they like with you. If they hadn’t thought you were easy, this trouble would never have happened. You must stiffen your back, if necessary lay a man out if he cheeks you; but, anyway, let them see that you’ll stand no nonsense or else there’ll be nothing but trouble. If you can’t alter you must go at Adelaide. I don’t want to be always in hot water.”

The bo’sun sat tight until the captain had finished, then he said in a quiet, subdued tone—

“Very well, sir, but I’d made up my mind before you spoke. I’m sorry you used the threat—no,” as the skipper raised a deprecating hand, “I know you didn’t mean it for a threat, but it was one all the same—because that makes a man feel that he must do the opposite just to show

he's a man. You'll have no cause to complain of me from this out. Good-night, sir."

And he was gone. Now for some days, with the shadow of recent occurrences over them, all hands went softly and the skipper chuckled to think how beautifully his notion of running the ship worked. Then suddenly the second mate, of all people in the world, fired up and spoke most scurrilously to the bo'sun, who paused for a moment to let the thing soak in, then striding over to Mr. Parsons, said, quite quietly—

"If you don't get aft at once out of this and leave me to my work I'll heave you overboard."

The effect was amazing. The second mate had nothing in reserve. He felt himself a poor old thing all at once, but was cheered for a moment by one of his watch striding forward, and crying fiercely—

"Don't you take it from him, sir, we'll stan' by yer." He had hardly got the words out when he felt himself seized by the scruff of the neck and the band of his pants and hurled forward with such force that his impact broke one of the panels of the house. And the bo'sun stood with his two hands half clenched, and a fire burning in his eyes from some long ago forgotten Viking ancestor, glaring around for some one to give him another opportunity. There was none. He had asserted

his position and the sufferer got no sympathy from his watch, who sedulously pursued their task while the second mate, driven to extremities, went aft to complain to the skipper.

Poor fellow, he little knew what he was letting himself in for. The captain heard him to the end, then called the bo'sun. Upon Dick's arrival the captain queried—

“Is this right that Mr. Parsons tells me, that you said you'd heave him overboard if he didn't go away and leave you to your work?”

“It is, sir,” replied the bo'sun very respectfully.

“And would you have hove him overboard?”

“I would, sir, just as easy as I am answering you now. I'm beginning to understand, sir.”

“Very well, you may go, bo'sun, and, Mr. Parsons, you had better understand from henceforward that your duties do not include abuse of the bo'sun, more especially before the crew. If he fails in his duty report him to me and I will try and deal with him. That will do.”

And the captain departed to his state-room to have the heartiest laugh he had enjoyed for a long time. Poor Mr. Parsons, who was really a good fellow, but had his foolish moments, like the best of us, went sadly, while the bo'sun returned to his work, unconsciously changed into another

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and a better man, unaggressive but entirely prepared to maintain his position. His very carriage proclaimed the fact to the curious watch, who went about their duty with a fierce emulative energy that emphasised their satisfaction with the new order of things. It was a strange development, for which every man on board was happier and better, this sudden awakening of the man who could do his duties of ruling, and the lesson it conveyed was never lost by any one of those fortunate ones who were privileged to be there.

CHAPTER XIV

AN ORDINARY PASSAGE

ALTHOUGH the rest of the *Aliahabad's* passage to Adelaide was a strenuous and stormy one, as far as the elements were concerned, a description of it would read very tamely to those who have grown accustomed to the abnormal and extraordinary. The everyday work of the sailor, like that of every skilled tradesman, is interesting enough to write many volumes about, but, alas, it will not be read save by the elect few. And although I and many more like-minded would read with keen and critical interest the record of a passage of a four-masted barque from Christmas Island to Adelaide, it would be ridiculous to expect the same attention from a people bred to revel in the piffle that sells as sensational romance to-day.

So we must leave the passage of the *Allahabad* to the Semaphore, at Port Adelaide, to be taken as read, only adding that it was perfectly ideal. A good ship, perfectly kept and found, and a crew now absolutely up to the work, and satisfied with their leaders. What to them were dirty weather, gales, or calms? Nothing; their ship

was their home, they were a band of brothers, and in their fore-castle causeries they claimed the big ship as the best that ever sailed out of anywhere. And all because once, and once only, they had been made to realise that the hand of a leader was over them. Unhappily, Port Adelaide was at that time suffering from a great lack of sailormen. Wages were £6 per month—double what they were at home—and in many cases bonuses were being paid, in other words, premiums were being given to deserters.

Poor Jack is ever prone to forget present good for prospective benefits, and therefore, although many of the seamen had already been eight months in the ship and had £10 coming to them, they thought only of the big wages ahead and the bigger wages up-country just then offering for labour. So they deserted, and in four days the *Allahabad* had an empty fore-castle, her crew had all taken advantage of the lenient laws of the colony and vanished. Not altogether to the captain's annoyance, as they left so much money behind them, and he was not a whit behind making out fresh charges against them—but there, I need not go into those details.

In due time the beautiful craft was loaded with a most valuable cargo of copper, wheat, and wool, and—there was no crew. But for the law of South Australia, Captain Carnegie would have

sailed without a man before the mast and trusted to luck, as so many of our sailing ship captains have had to do, to get her home. But he was not permitted to do this. All they would allow him to do was to ship men, no matter whether they were sailors or not so long as they made up the complement. That hint to him was sufficient. He swept up fourteen poor wretches, whom the colonies had rejected as unfit, and signed them on as able-seamen, well knowing what he was doing, and to his honour, be it said, letting all his trusty officers and apprentices know, too. So on July 10, midwinter, the *Allahabad* sailed from the Semaphore for London with a crew of really fourteen effective hands—the other fourteen did not count, since none of them could go aloft and all of them would probably be sea-sick for the first week. And she, that great four-masted ship, was about to plunge into the severities of the mighty southern ocean in midwinter.

Undoubtedly the early navigators were brave in facing what were comparatively unknown terrors of the deep in their cockleshell vessels and with their trivial knowledge of navigation, but we should not refuse a due meed of praise to the modern man, like Captain Carnegie, who takes a vessel to sea for a most strenuous passage with a crew that, if all were efficient and perfect

in seamanship, would be all too few, but in most cases were, as in the present case, less than half able to do even a common day's work ashore.

Nevertheless, it was a gleeful crew that set her crowd of sails upon the *Allahabad* to a fresh northerly breeze off the Semaphore, and toiled away at them until, as she passed through Investigator Straits, she was carrying every stitch she possessed, to the intense delight of the captain who, like most sailors, greatly loved a good start. He said little to anybody upon the subject, but he made a mental resolution that what she couldn't carry she should drag, and in this, although the knowledge affected him but little, he knew he would be supported by all his reliable ones.

Fortune favours the brave, it is said, and sometimes that will appear true, for the northerly breeze with which the big *Allahabad* started from Adelaide only steadied and strengthened until, on the fourth day out, as she drew near the Snares, she was staggering under a load that seemed to the poor fellows forward far too much for her to bear. But they, though ignorant of their duties, were willing, nor were any of them in the least backward through fear. Wherefore, those who had to deal with them, especially Dick, felt very complacent towards them, and tried in

every legitimate way to make their hard lot as easy for them as might be.

So, in spite of the fact that the ship was being driven so that every rope yarn in her sang like a telegraph wire in a gale, there was no discontent and although she was going at her very best speed, she was not making bad weather of it, but the wind keeping on her beam held her steadily down, and the occasional spray that smote her and was hurled as high as the top-gallant yards never ever touched her decks. Presently they all got used to the strain, looked upon it as normal, and grew to think lightly of other similar scenes in which they had taken part. And when, one day, they saw a ship as big as themselves under three topsails, reefed foresail and storm staysail, lying wallowing like a half-tide rock, while the seas made sport of her and kept her awash, they were filled with an immense compassion mingled with contempt for the mariners who were so poorly led, or so awkwardly situated.

Indeed, there appeared to succeed the *Allahabad* one of those extraordinary periods common to the knowledge of all sailors of these days. One passage nothing goes well. Calms, gales, doldrums, squalls, anything but a steady fair wind. The hardest work, the keenest scrutiny fails to get her along. Seamanship

seems useless. The next passage, steady, fair winds, and fine weather from port to port are the rule, and you admit that a crew of old ladies might have sailed her as well as you have around the globe, so gentle and favourable have all the elements been.

But the passage home of the *Allahabad* was even more wonderful, in that she had for sixty-two out of the eighty days which it took her to get from Adelaide to London *via* Cape Horn, just as much wind as she could do with from the most favourable direction, and during the other eighteen days, though the winds were light and variable, they never ceased altogether, nor did they ever set averse. In short, it was an ideal passage. The hapless makeshifts shipped in Adelaide were in a fair way to become prime seamen by reason of their willingness to learn, and the capacity of their teacher. He also developed great capacity for absorbing all that the skipper had to teach, and presently found himself being looked up to as an oracle by the lads upon subjects which, six months ago, he would have regarded as utterly beyond him.

And so, without further incident worth recording, the *Allahabad*, one lovely October afternoon, drew gently up to her berth in the East India dock, as smart and trim a ship as had ever entered there. The hungry wolves of an

earlier day were now happily barred from interfering with the crew on board the ship, so that peace reigned, until at last, all being cleared up, the mate said. "That'll do, men, and if any of you want a little money I can give it you if you come aft presently."

There was a hearty "Thank you!" from them all, for they were not the ordinary ne'er-do-wells, but poor chaps who had folks waiting for them. And so the sharks who had waited hungrily about the grim gate for their prey found nothing, and their language concerning the *Allahabad* and her crew was utterly unfit for publication. Very much like that of the Syndicalists, who regard the possession of anything as a crime to be instantly punished by taking it from any one if he is too weak to defend it.

Before Dick left the ship he had a long and pleasant interview with Captain Carnegie, who told him among other things that, should he pass his examination as second mate, the berth on board the *Allahabad* would be open to him, as it was his—the captain's—intention to dispense with all three of his present officers at once.

"I do not want officers who palter with their authority, and need a catastrophe to bring them to their senses. I know you, and am sure of your loyalty. And at present we cannot afford to risk anything on those lines. So go ahead and

pass—you'll have no difficulty—you've got no nerves to get flurried as the poor apprentices do, and as for seamanship, the poor old examiners have forgotten most of it. You'll stay at the Home, of course, poor chap. I wonder if you'll ever have any other interests than those of your work."

So they passed; but no sympathy need be wasted upon Dick, who was quite accustomed to keep his own company and be perfectly satisfied with it. But it so happened that on this occasion he had not to be left to his own devices, for he had hardly settled down into his snug room at the Wells Street Home before a messenger rapped at his door to say that some people were wanting him in the superintendent's room, speaking, too, with a certain awe as if the people were a cut above the ordinary.

Dick obeyed the summons in leisurely fashion, his brain slowly revolving the possibilities of callers, but getting no further than Mr. Williams, and he was not people. But when he entered the superintendent's room, a bright-faced, slender youth sprang at him and, gripping him by both hands, cried aloud—

"Dick, you dear man, I'm overjoyed to show you the darling mater and my sister. They know you, you good man, but they'll never know you as I do."

And here the bewildered Dick was taken on both sides by soft hands, while shining eyes looked up into his, and soft voices bade God bless him for his loving kindness to Willie, darling son and brother. In vain did he protest that Willie had been as much help to him as he could ever have been to Willie; these truths do not matter at such a time. But it was a happy, merry little party that sat down presently in the superintendent's private room to tea and discussion of the passage home.

The upshot of the conference was, though, that Dick could not be allowed to stay there. A room was awaiting him in the beautiful house at South Kensington where the Whites lived, and he, seeing how desperately hurt those dear people would be at his firm refusal, gave way sensibly, and presently was bowling smoothly westward in the Whites' carriage, which had been waiting. And as they went, Willie took occasion to whisper in his old chum's ear—

“Do you know, bo'sun, you look quite the grand gentleman? I don't know what it is, but I felt almost afraid to speak to you; there's such a new expression in your eyes, as if you were somebody, you know! And I'm sure you are, whether you know it or not. By the way, do you know what Martna said to me just now? Of course, you don't. Well, she said you

looked like her ideal of a great sailor—there now!”

It was “there now.” It accomplished poor Dick’s undoing, for he was not again able to look Miss Martha in the eye during his stay at that sumptuous house. Fortunately, as he thought, he had to attend his school each day, for he was really most anxious to pass as second mate, and as the time drew near for his examination he began to feel, as never before, somewhat nervous. To those who know how trivial is the ordeal, as far as mathematics are concerned, this will provoke a smile, but it is otherwise with men who, like Dick, have no recollection when they begin the navigational course of ever having learnt simple addition.

Therefore, Dick suffered a good deal, for his usual care-free air deserted him, and he began to worry, despite the efforts of Willie to cheer him up. The ladies kept away from him altogether, for they saw that he was only driven distracted by their presence. And, of course, there was no need for any nonsense of the kind. Men who take their profession seriously, as Dick took his, need have no fear of the result. Only the silly lads, who during their apprenticeship throw all idea of what they learned in the *Conway* or the *Worcester* to the winds, need have any fear that they will be plucked. Dick passed without the

slightest trouble, while at the seamanship exam. the genial old captain detained him longer than usual. "Not," he said, "from any doubt of his ability, but because it was so delightful to talk to a man who knew the grand old business of seafaring so well."

Now behold Mr. Mort, second officer, B.T. 00765, and a humbler man you could hardly find. Not that anything could surprise him; even when, upon returning to the Boltons one evening, he found Mr. Williams in apparently most friendly conference with the ladies White. He came upon the scene quite easily, but the sight of him almost capsized the equanimity of Mr. Williams, whose mind flew back to the time when he first saw Dick in the hospital in Calcutta. And he wished, with a longing that was almost pain, that the young house surgeon could be with him now. For Dick had quite unconsciously developed into a fine man. He had the sailor's rounded shoulders—few escape that in the merchant service—but he had the clear eye, the keen face, the alert poise that belong to a *man*. And, although that doesn't matter a bit, he was handsome as well as massive. High forehead, clustering brown hair, and faultless white teeth—oh yes! he was a fine man.

Perhaps, best of all, he was sublimely unconscious of anything of the kind. But I don't

know. "Lord, gi'e us a guid conceit o' wersels" is a good prayer, for without it we don't get on much. Heaven help the man who does not know his own worth—he won't get very far. Unfortunately, there are so many worthless ones who imagine themselves to be all the money, that it is difficult to know which of them is the real thing—that is, for the outsider—and the wisest of us are apt to get left when we try to discriminate.

We are forgetting Mr. Williams. He had enquired at the Home for Dick, and had received his present address, a quite easy one for him, as the Whites were old friends. It would be silly to devote any space to telling how glad he was, or they were, to know all these things about Dick; but, of course, Dick was quite in the dark, although his newly awakened comprehension set him wondering why the staid Mr. Williams should be so kiddish that night on learning that he had passed his second mate's exam. He would have been still more surprised had he known that the very next day Mr. Williams made a small bargain in the city, the effect of which was to transfer to Dick forty sixty-fourths of the *Allahabad*. That transaction, however, was to remain a secret for the present, even from the captain who had promised to take Dick as second mate with him next voyage if he passed.

The *Allahabad* was chartered for Callao with

coal, and thence in ballast to San Francisco to load wheat for home. And as the kind of coal she was to load is not shipped in London she was to sail round to Cardiff or Penarth to get it. Therefore, our friends arranged a parting evening, for which Dick, aflame with the idea of getting to sea once more, cared little; indeed, when the time came to bid them individually farewell he would have passed Martha over entirely had it not been for Willie, who was sorry for his sister's distress, and having no scruples brought Dick to say good-bye to her. Poor girl, she recovered fast enough then—how women can stifle their heart's longings—and she bade him farewell without letting him know that he, the wastrel, had won a lady's heart.

CHAPTER XV

A SPLENDID START

ON November 5—raw, cold, and depressing weather—the *Allahabad* sailed from London for Penarth with nearly all hands new to her. True, Captain Carnegie and Dick and the lads—one of whom had now become a most efficient third mate—were old hands, but the fourteen men forrard, the carpenter, sailmaker, boatswain, the chief officer, were all new. The new crew were a strange mixture of good and bad, efficient and useless, but one great blessing was at once received, they all arrived sober enough to do something. So that, what with the great aid of the donkey engine, and this most unusual usefulness of the crew, the big ship was got out of dock and started down the river in tow of the *Anglia* as smartly as any captain's heart could wish.

Then the captain, leaving the pilot, with whom he had been carrying on a long conversation, came to where Mr. Panter, the chief officer, and Dick were standing discussing the course of work to be followed. Smiling pleasantly, he said—
“Well, gentleman, we make a good start, and

from what I can see we have got a fair average crew. But when you pick your watches I want to say a word or two to them. When do you propose doing so?"

Mr. Panter, who was a huge, black-bearded man with a fierce, determined face, replied quietly—

"Mr. Mort and I were just saying that as she is fairly clear now, and nothing is pressing for an hour, we could pick for watches now."

"That will suit me very well," rejoined the skipper. "Go ahead and call the men aft, Mr. Panter."

"All hands lay aft!" commanded the mate, and everybody on board was astounded at the majestic volume of sound. Here was a man that needed no megaphone, and the pilot, who like every one else was arrested by the wonder of that great voice, said quietly—

"I'd give a hundred pounds for a voice like that, Mr. Mat. and think it cheap."

Its effect upon the crew was electric. They came on the instant, they really swarmed over one another in their haste to get aft, so vastly are men impressed by the magic of a great human voice. And the skipper smiled benignantly upon them, for his heart rejoiced to think that he had now a good prospect of a peaceful voyage. Forth stepped the mate with a paper in his hand, from

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which he read the names of each member of the crew who, as he heard it, called "Here!" Then, when they were all ticked off as present, they were divided into watches by the simple method of selection by eye, the mate having first pick. Nothing else is possible, but this method is ruthless in showing the ability of a man to read character from outward appearance, for as chosen then they must remain for the passage out, at any rate, and it has happened that one officer has had all the seamen and the other all the wasters in his watch.

For better or worse, however, the division was soon made, and the port and starboard watches thus constituted now faced each other as the skipper strode forward.

"Men," he said quietly, "you know as well as I do that some of you are well up to your duties, and others hardly know one end of the ship from the other. Now, I want it to be plainly understood that the man who has shipped here for a sailor on false pretences is going to do the dirty work, however big and ugly he may be. I won't have good men doing the work of wasters as well as their own, and I certainly won't have wasters loafing, because they make themselves a nuisance. So let the men who do know their work do it in the full knowledge that the officers and

myself appreciate their labours at full value. And then I think she ought to be a happy ship."

He turned away, and the mate said quietly—"That will do, men. Go forrard and have a smoke."

There then ensued a conference of the powers, the officers and the bo'sun, who was a man of a hundred thousand, whose wage was far from being his value. Splendid Tom, the very thought of you thrills me now! A Blackwall rigger, nearly six feet high, with brown face, coal black hair, and eyes which sparkled like diamonds. Except when in shore-going rig, when he always looked exquisitely uncomfortable, Tom always wore a bucko cap, a faded blue but perfectly clean dungaree jumper with short sleeves, and a pair of white moleskin pants. In short, the first-class rigger's get-up when working along the dock. He had a set of teeth that a nigger might envy, a laugh that was full of music, and he could do more with rope and wire with his fingers than any other sailorman I have ever known could do with marline-spike, wire-fid, or rigging screws. Just one trait more—his good temper was amazing, but it had its limits and when they were transgressed the delirious was apt to get badly hurt.

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I have heard people say that he was just a splendid animal because he had no religion, and when ashore did occasionally get drunk. But I only know that as a workman I never knew his equal, I never knew him tell a lie or do a mean action, and consequently I cannot help offering him this little tribute of admiration, without prejudice.

Mr. Tregenna, the third mate, was a fine lad, a great admirer of Dick, and somewhat inclined to resent the appearance of two such paragons of skill and strength as the new mate and bo'sun appeared to be. It is possible that he was a little nervous himself as to the figure he would cut when compared with them, and, therefore, clung to Dick as being an old friend, one whom "you always knew where you were with." Really he had nothing to be afraid of, for he was well up to his work, was a fine athlete, and keen as a stiletto. But all these fine qualities may, and often do, go with a deep-seated distrust of one's own powers, that only practice and experience can remove.

So that, taking it all round, Dick's first voyage as second mate began under the fairest auspices. Even if the quality of the crew was very uneven, there were other circumstances, as we have seen, that reduced that inconvenience to a minimum,

and the quality of the officers apparently left nothing to be desired. This was manifested fully upon the tug-boat's departure off Beachy Head. The weather was coarse and threatening, the Channel was unusually thronged with shipping, but the pilot, a man after Captain Carnegie's own heart, said to the latter—

"If you can trust your crowd, captain, I should feel inclined to give her all she can stagger under. We've got a leading wind now, or very nearly, but I shall be very much surprised if it doesn't back into the westward before many hours and blow pretty hard. Then we shall have heavy hammering and not much to show for it."

The captain gladly agreed, and pretty it was to see how, for the next half hour, sail upon sail appeared, the shaking out of each piece of canvas being followed by a noticeable improvement in the speed, until at last, with every thread set and drawing, the *Allahabad* put on her best gait, and at a speed of twelve knots passed everything except two liners, and they had only a couple of knots advantage of her.

A most curious phenomenon then appeared among the crew. Curious, that is, to a landsman, but one that used to be common enough at sea. An immense pride in their ship took sudden possession of all the foremast hands, even those

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who understood least about their work. Instead of rushing below to their bunks as soon as released from their toil, they clustered on deck and watched the splendid vessel passing with consummate grace and ease her many competitors, and they were particularly delighted when she swept past some swag-bellied cargo steamer lumbering along down Channel at the rate of about nine knots, like some high-born, swift-footed goddess passing a clod-booted hind.

"Why, she's a bloomin' yacht, that's what she is, boys," said one, a savage-looking north-countryman and a prime seaman. "I never been sh' mates with a four-poster afore, but if this is th' way they get along I think the extry sticks all a r'ht—an' no mistake!"

There was a murmur of approval all round, for it was a sentiment all endorsed, a sentiment, moreover, that was universally felt fore and aft. A great complacency descended upon all hands, a quiet satisfaction that they were the controlling force of so noble a fabric as the one that was thus justifying all their efforts. And, as if to crown the feast they were enjoying, the pall of cloud parted, and a bright gleam of sunshine appeared, making the grim Channel beautiful, and sending a thrill of perfect satisfaction through every heart, as such an unexpected beautifying does.

As the pilot had foretold, the wind had backed, but only a little, and contrary to the usual experience, piped up a bit fresher. So she laid her course with the yards checked in a bit and, despite her vast cloud of canvas, the skipper looked longingly aloft and remembered the old days of stunsails, those huge auxiliary wings which were responsible for so much heart-breaking toil. But she had none, nor did she need them. The log hove at four bells, 6.0 p.m., showed her to be going a scant thirteen, and that, as the pilot said, was the best that he had ever done in sail outward bound since he had entered upon his present profession.

Contrary to all the rules of fictional art, no hindrances to the triumphant progress of the *Allahabad* occurred. The pilot's prediction about the backing of the wind was only justified half-way, for, although it went round as far as E.N.E., it hung there and refused to continue its bad circuit. And so the big ship achieved a record run from London to Penarth, arriving in the roads two-and-a-half days from leaving the dockhead in London, with all hands as proud as if the ship belonged to each of them individually, but without the slightest notice being taken of such a feat of sailing by any newspaper whatever. In the United States, or Australia, or New

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Zealand, such a passage would have filled the reporters with joy and would have furnished the most delightful reading for many thousands who could appreciate its significance. But here, in the greatest maritime empire the world has ever known, we find our leading newspaper columns filled with rot about the size of golf balls or the length of golf clubs. Heaven help us!

Arrived in Penarth docks there was little for the crew to do while awaiting the ship's turn at the tips. It is always an anxious time for captains, for as a general rule crews are difficult. The few days in Channel seem like a voyage, they are anxious for a change, especially for money which is not due—they have had it all in advance—but that is "dead horse" and they want more. There are no inducements for crews to desert in Penarth, but they do; some men seem to consider it incumbent upon them to be dishonest, and having received an advance of wages, to evade earning the same by not going in the ship. The amount of wages does not matter, the principle is the same.

But in the case of the *Allahabad's* crew none of these troubles assailed the captain. He very wisely saw that his men were well fed—it is a beastly, devilish form of meanness that economises on hard-working men's food, to say

nothing of its utter folly—and they did the rest. Every ship's company in the docks visited the *Allahabad*, and were regaled in the forecastle with stories of her prowess until the port rang with her fame, and every hand forward went about metaphorically with a chip on his shoulder, ready to fight anybody who should even hint that she was not the finest ship that ever floated or that ever would float.

Several days elapsed before the ship could take her turn at the tips, but they did not hang heavy for the reasons I have given, and so many visitors came down to see the wonderful ship that nobody paid any particular attention to a little group that appeared at her gangway, one dull morning. Two ladies and two gentlemen, the elder of the two latter hailing an apprentice—who was polishing the brasswork on the poop—with the inquiry whether Captain Carnegie was on board, or if not, could Mr. Mort be seen.

"Oh, yes," replied the sprightly youth; "he is, and he can. Won't you come on board? The gangway is quite safe, the Mayor of Cardiff came up it yesterday."

"After that we surely need not hesitate," responded the inquirer, and the little party mounted the ladder and came on board. They were met by Dick, whose countenance bore a

look of the blankest amazement as he gasped out: "Mr. Williams, and Willie, and Mrs. White, and Miss White—well!"

"That's all right, Dick," nonchalantly responded Mr. Williams, then turning to Willie he remarked in a stage aside, "Puts on a great deal of dog, doesn't he, Willie? I suppose that breathless style is the latest. But hasn't he picked it up quickly? Really, Dick—I beg your pardon, Mr. Mort, you are making great strides. Oh, how are you, Captain Carnegie? We came down yesterday fully prepared to wait a few days for you, but as we heard that you were in we came across to give you a look up this morning. Did you have a pretty good run round?"

By this time the captain had recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to extend a warm greeting to his friends and introduce them to Mr. Panter and Mr. Tregenna with great courtesy, while, with a scarcely perceptible motion of his head, he invited Dick to follow into the saloon. When the little bustle of their entrance had subsided and they were all seated, the captain said with a quiet air of triumph—

"My friends, you'll hardly be surprised to hear that we are famous among our own folk. We have made a record run round, and we've got a No. 1 crew, who are not only satisfied with

their ship, but are proud of her! And that, let me tell you, is a thing doesn't often happen in these days. I may say that it has never happened to me before, which is why I am so elated. But seriously, I have never felt so happy. A sailor's life nowadays—that is, a sailor in a position of responsibility—is so full of miserable disappointments and handicappings that such an experience as this goes far to turn one's brain."

"Thank you, Captain Carnegie," stammered Willie, just a little nervously, for he had hardly overcome his awe of the captain; "we'll take the risk of *your* brain turning. We've come to ask if you can find us accommodation for the passage to San Francisco. My mother and sister are ordered a sea voyage for the benefit of their health; I'm beginning to feel a bit out of it ashore, and Mr. Williams—well, he knows best, but I think it's most kind of him—he's offered to come along and keep us company."

The captain and Dick received this astonishing communication as if it were an order for their execution. They sat bolt upright and stared at the speaker stupidly. But gradually the beautiful possibilities of the whole scheme soaked into them, and they began to smile.

Then Captain Carnegie said, as if he had just thought of it, "Oh, certainly! Why, that will

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be splendid. We shall have the time of our lives. Accommodation! Well, I should say so. My dear friends, this is the greatest scheme. Mort, don't sit looking like a stuck pig, but tell the ladies how glad we all are."

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CHAPTER XVI

A HAPPY SHIP

So it was all settled, and the *Allahabad* sailed from Penarth laden down to her marks with a cargo of best Welsh coal for Callao *en route* to San Francisco. But the fact of her having a cargo at all was forgotten in the greater knowledge that she was now really a great ocean yacht, with four passengers, for whose benefit all manner of luxuries had been shipped, and who had also decreed that the ordinary food scale of the ship—excellent, too, by comparison with ordinary vessels—should be completely overlaid by additions made to it out of the passengers' bounty.

But, indeed, this food question is largely a matter of personal attention. Good food is cheap. Butter, jam, potatoes, turnips, tinned meats, come almost as cheap as the garbage in casks sent here from America, which stinks and reeks of ptomaines. It is a crime to offer a man the filth out of a cask of pork fattened on Confederate graveyards, but it used to be committed constantly. Things are better now.

So that the improvement in the food scale of

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the *Allahabad*, though adding immensely to the comfort and efficiency of the crew, was not a costly affair at all. It seems appalling to remember that for the whole voyage it did not nearly reach the price of some little dinners at the Savoy of which we have recently heard. Ah, well!

Therefore, they sailed away, most happily and contentedly and auspiciously, for the wind, when she slipped her tug off the Mumbles, was due north and blowing fresh. And the enthusiastic crew, already looking forward to fresh records, flew to each halliard and sheet rejoicingly, as if each of them had a personal interest in the result that would presently be brought about by their united labours. So the big sails were all set and all drew, and the beautiful fabric, all alive with the suasion of the gallant wind, glided grandly westward as if she were consciously proud of her strength and ability, and was determined to do what in her lay to excel all her sisters, entirely oblivious of the commercial side of the undertaking, or the mass of three or four thousand tons of coal which lay piled in her mighty bowels.

Oh, she was a happy ship! She passed a homeward bounder quite closely, the crew of which made the usual scoffing signal to the outward bounders by shying overboard their worn-out donkeys' breakfasts (beds), and waving rusty

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"THE ENTHUSIASTIC CREW FLEW TO EACH HALLIARD AND SHEET."



hookpots, plates and pannikins. These things give the usual outward bounder a great deal of pain; simple as they are, they hurt badly, because they make him think with compunction of his own home-coming a week or two ago, and the use he has made of his monied leisure. But the present crew only laughed heartily and assured one another that they would far rather be outward bound in this ship than homeward bound in any other. And they meant it, too, for who should know a good ship if a sailor doesn't?

And the *Allahabad* was most exceptional. There are magnificent ships that any man could be proud to ship in, where the feeding is so vile that life is a horror; there are fine ships where the feeding is good but the skipper and officers are a set of rotters, who only get anywhere by virtue of the Divine Providence which looks after fools; there are good ships, with good officers and good food and worthless crews; there are good officers, good crews, good food and beastly ships, evil constructions that have committed every crime since they were launched, yet have survived where an infinitely better ship would have perished (by the special intervention of their designer, the Devil, so their victims say), but in the present instance all the virtues were present and none of the drawbacks.

To crown all other excellencies, and almost

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awakening superstitious fears in some of the older men lest this wonderful beginning should be but the prelude to an awfully disastrous ending, came this perfectly gloriously June day in November, this wonderful fair wind which made the noble ship show herself to the very best advantage in the eyes of those who manned the many other craft which she passed. And when, just before sunset, she passed the then Atlantic greyhound, the *Alaska*, inward bound, her decks crowded with passengers and gallant Captain Murray on the bridge, their cup brimmed over as that great concourse cheered them lustily for providing a sea spectacle of the highest and rarest beauty, such as most of them had never seen before and would probably never see again—a noble sailing ship of the largest size at her very best under all sail.

There was a very pleasant little gathering of the four passengers, Captain Carnegie, and the mate, on the poop that evening. Dick was not there for reasons of state, though two of the parties present felt rather sore at his absence. Still, there was a great sense of satisfaction prevalent when the captain called attention to the entirely satisfactory state of affairs, and in order to bring Mr. Panter into the conversation asked him if he did not think such a departure constituted a record in itself.

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A HAPPY SHIP

"It's eighteen years since I first took to the swan's bath for a living, sir, and I've never known such a time. I've been accustomed to handling men a bit. For the last five years I have been mate of Yankce ships and blue-noses, and I find it a bit of a strain to hold in on account of the ladies, but I'll confess that this is the most willing and useful crowd I've ever struck. And as I'm really a man of peace, whom necessity has driven to warlike courses, I'm mighty glad of it, I can assure you, captain."

"Oh!" interjected Mr. Williams dryly, "you've been trained in the coercion school then, Mr. Panter. You believe that if a bird can sing and won't sing, he must be made to sing—is that it, or do I misunderstand?"

The mate looked at the captain for a moment to see if he would say anything, but that worthy man evidently wanted to know Panter's views in this secondhand fashion, for he looked dumb. So the mate replied—

"There are some men so willing that they can't help being good workers; there are others who have been driven to learn and who know, but are bone idle; there are others who don't know how, but are willing; but the largest class of all are those who don't know, don't care, and won't work. They ought to stop ashore. As they are the majority they'll get all they want by-me-by,

and when they get it they'll starve. But if I have to handle such men at sea—and that has been my misfortune since I have been an officer in most cases—they're going to get hurt. I don't want to hurt them, I don't want to hurt anybody, but the ship's got to be looked after, and it's my job, and I've a weakness for doing what I'm paid for and—well, I'm going to do it, that's all. Excuse me, captain, I feel strongly about this, and I let my feelings run away with me. I ask pardon, everybody."

Up jumped Mr. Williams and held out his hand, saying in strangely excited fashion—

"My dear man, you have no reason to apologise. You are a man, and Captain Carnegie is another, and Dick Mort is another, and although I'm glad we've got a good crowd that don't want your muscle and sinew for coercive purposes, I recognise the right spirit in what you say. I'm glad to know you, sir."

The big man flushed under his tan, and the captain, pitying his embarrassment, began a long story to the ladies about Willie's behaviour on the voyage of the *Mooltan*, which he, the captain, had pieced together from the fragmentary accounts given him by Dick at various times. This drove the young man off to seek his old friend, who was busy in his cabin with certain navigational work, which he had grown to love

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A HAPPY SHIP

and felt compelled to practise until he should reach perfection. But on the entrance of Willie, Dick's face brightened up, and he immediately put his work away, welcoming his young friend with outstretched arms.

"See here, now," said Willie, eagerly, "if I happen to call you bo'sun by mistake sometimes you won't mind, will you? Somehow I can't think of you as anything else, although I'm more glad than I can express that you are now an officer and have got a nice cabin to yourself. And as for the mater and Martha they are just delighted, for you know how they cottoned to you because of me. While as for Mr. Williams, he don't say much, as you know, but my word, he is pleased! If you ain't happy, Mr. Mort (got it that time!), well, you ought to be; that's what I feel, because I know how you deserve."

Dick didn't answer, but sat with his chin on his hand looking at the lamp, until Willie inquired anxiously whether anything was the matter.

"No, my dear lad," replied Dick very softly; "don't think such a thing possible. But when you or anybody else says things like that, about my good luck, you know it makes me feel a bit ashamed to think of what I should have been if it hadn't been for the goodness of the men I've fallen in with. I've got nothing to brag about.

They've made a new man of me; at least, that is, they were the tools."

He paused, looked at Willie with shining eyes, then wiping his brow, went on--

"All right, Willie, that's done with. 'There's some things we feel too much to talk about, and this is one of 'em. Now, when we're on deck, of course, you'll have to call me Mr. Mort for discipline's sake, but when we're below, like we are now, or together, I wish you'd call me Dick. For, though I'm not old enough to be your father, I feel towards you just as if you were my little brother. Hark! there goes eight of 'em."

Snatching his coat and cap from their hooks Dick made for the door, followed by Willie, and in a minute was mounting the poop ladder where the little gathering we spoke of just now were still enjoying the unaccustomed delights of the glorious evening. And as he came forward, before the mate had time to disentangle himself from the discussion, Mr. Williams hailed him with--

"Dick, come here and help me; we're in a bit of an argument, and I'm getting overpowered. Lend me your help!"

"Very sorry, sir," gravely answered Dick, "but it's my watch on deck, and I can't argue, I can only obey the orders of my superior officers and pass them on to my watch."

"Thank you, Mr. Mort," laughed the skipper; "he understands his place if you don't, Mr. Williams. The idea of trying to get a second mate to side with you against his skipper and chief officer! I'm surprised at you!"

This tremendous facer, delivered in a mock heroic tone, was received with tumultuous laughter by the passengers, but, nevertheless, it lightened a certain gloomy look that was contracting Mr. Panter's mouth, for his idea of second mates was that they should be kept in their place like everybody else on board ship. And he saw, with considerable satisfaction, that Dick also realised this fundamental fact, in its fulness, and was not in the least likely to overstep the boundaries of nautical etiquette.

But we have had sufficient of this gentle society for the time. It's a pity, too, because while the leaky, badly handled, storm-beaten ship, and the half-starved, mutinous crew furnishes us with our exciting sea literature, it is very pleasant to be able to record some of the delightful episodes of the old sailing ship days when ships like the *Sobraon* and *Parramatta*, to mention two of the best known, made voyage after voyage with many scores of passengers, pleasantly and safely, to the great joy and sweet memories of those who sailed in them. They did not figure in any sensational paragraphs, they gave no materials to

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book-writers, but they are remembered with more than ordinary affection, they and their beautiful sisters, by many elderly pillars of the State in Australasia.

Still, for all that, we must hurry on to say that the *Allahabad*, without any hindrance from contrary winds and with a speed exceeding that of the ordinary cargo steamer by at least two knots, crossed the Equator fourteen days out from Penarth, and, pausing one day to pay tribute to the genii of the tropics in the shape of enduring a downpour of rain so solid that it filled the main deck, the scuppers being plugged, to a depth of three feet, wherein all the crew disported themselves like schoolboys, was taken by the south-east trade winds in gentlest fashion on her course again, those trades as usual lying well to the eastward.

By noon the next day she was making a good seven knots with the yards just checked in, and the faces of all hands bore a look of sublime satisfaction, for that they had been again so favoured as to pass through the neutral area between the two trades, which is often so severe a trial to both men and officers. Where the wind will fly into twenty points of the compass in the space of a watch, where rain falls so copiously and so constantly that the ropes swell and require almost as much strength to get them through the blocks as

is required for the work they are the means of doing, and the constant soaking with fresh water, even though it be not cold, is responsible for the rheumatism of sailors—not salt water wetting, which only makes uncomfortable but does not really hurt anybody.

And here they were gliding southward at a great rate, for that part of the world, with the comforting assurance that in all human probability they would have a steady continuance of the present beautiful breeze until they were well clear of the tropics, when they would, of course, be prepared to meet and utilise the great westerly winds of the southern ocean. It was even so. The trades held, and the whole crew, with whom there had not been the slightest suggestion of trouble, enthusiastically aided the forethought of the chief officer and bo'sun in getting every portion of the ship's gear aloft overhauled, and prepared to meet any emergencies. It is not possible to exaggerate a description of such a ship under such conditions. The ideal state is reached, for a time at least, when no one thinks of the money he is earning or broods over the inequalities of life, but each takes a delight in his particular job, and is only anxious that he may do it well enough to satisfy himself.

The happiest crowd of men I ever sailed with in all my life, for a short three weeks, that is, was

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the crew of the *Brinkburn*, London to Jamaica. During a steady spell of the trades the ship was practically re-rigged, the skipper working among the men up to his elbows in tar. They worked all day and slept all night, except for a hand at the wheel, and the officer on watch and in the dog watch talked shop to the exclusion of the usual undesirable topics. And when the great task was finished they were all intensely proud of the result, which was entirely good.

So the crew of the *Allahabad* forgot that they ever had any grievances; in the ardour of their profession they almost adored the bo'sun, whom they acclaimed as the finest sailorman that ever cracked a pantile (not that there were any pantiles—ordinary ship biscuit—in use on the ship; she had bread better than I have even seen supplied for the cuddy in many ships). Next to him they worshipped the taciturn mate. Indeed, he was regarded by them as a superman, an opinion which an amusing incident went far to confirm. One morning, at daybreak, when the wash-deck tub was just being filled, Mr. Panter stepped out of his cabin entirely unclad, save for an immense mane of jet black hair which covered his back and breast in curling waves with an average length of four inches. Arms and legs were also covered in black curly hair matching his great beard and moustache, while his head,

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save for a thick fringe at the sides and on the neck, was entirely bald.

He stepped into the tub, and after a good souse, got out and shook himself like a retriever, scattering the drops over the admiring watch who had been irresistibly drawn to the spot. And as he withdrew to his cabin, leaving the bo'sun as usual to carry on the work, the comments upon this phenomenon were almost awestricken in their tones. The general view seemed to be that he must be a man of gigantic strength both of mind and body, and that one exhibition of himself would have fixed his position with reference to the crew as their absolute master had it been necessary.

In a ship like this the second mate finds himself in a backwater. He may not interfere in the work except under the orders of the bo'sun, which impairs his position, in fact, cannot be with a man who is thoroughly competent. Because if he does he must fall foul of the mate who gives the bo'sun his orders. So he is confined to keeping his watch and having a fairly lazy time, which annoys some skippers, although they know its unavailability. In Dick's case, however, owing to his placid, contented nature and his peculiar position, there was no danger of the time hanging heavily on his hands. For there were three people who were always ready to talk to

him, one of whom, Martha, seemed to hang upon his words and make him feel in some indefinite way that she regarded what he said as a matter of the highest importance. This made him grow mentally, but quite unconsciously. He had not realised in any measure his importance in the scheme of things. But he did feel that it was pleasant to talk with a very pretty, sensible young lady, whose mother and brother and friend sat around and held their peace meanwhile, or put in an encouraging word occasionally as if all in a friendly conspiracy to give him a good conceit of himself.

At first he used to cease his conversation and edge off apologetically when Captain Carnegie joined the party, but that worthy man was far too straight and just for that, so at the first opportunity he took Dick on one side and said—

“Look here, Dick, if you were like the majority of young officers I’d have you making sinnet before I’d let you yarn with passengers during a dog watch on deck. But I know you; I know, too, that you can’t take any active part in the ship’s work, and I know that there’s no jealousy, so it’s all right, my boy. Don’t clear out when you see me coming. If I see any reason why you should keep away from the passengers, I’ll let you know. At present I don’t.”

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A HAPPY SHIP

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And so the glorious passage went on, until one day in 85° S. the brave south-west wind rushed out upon them like a hungry tiger from its lair, and compelled them to shorten her down to a few main pieces of canvas and forereach her, since she would not lay her course. The work was splendidly done, reflecting credit upon all hands, but it warned them of the beginning of the fiercest struggle the sailing ship knows—getting round Cape Horn from east to west.

CHAPTER XVII

FIRE AND WAVE

TWENTY-EIGHT days only had elapsed from the departure from the Cardiff Roads, but they had been long, happy days, days which would be long remembered by all hands. Also they had been a preparation for a great fight now before the men who had proved themselves so capable and willing. There were now no more pleasant times on deck, nor watches of willing labour slung aloft in precarious positions, performing prodigious feats of seamanship. Now came the testing of the work then done.

The first blast sounded the note of defiance, but, although it was promptly answered by a shortening down of all her white wings save four, no sooner had its fierceness become usual than bit by bit other sails were set, and presently the grand ship was asserting herself in old-time fashion, and plunging southward defiantly, covering herself with flying spray. Every kind of work that had occupied the eager fingers of the men during fine weather was now put away,

and it was made known that the one duty of the men now was the handling of the ship, in order that she might round the Horn. Of course, it was understood that this included the readiness of all hands to obey a sudden call with the utmost promptitude, and also that the watch on deck kept aft within hail—they were not to skulk in the forecabin, and curse when called out to do their work. It also included hot cocoa every night at midnight, the changing of the watch, a boon the value of which only those who have longed for it in vain can understand.

Now it was Dick's turn. At least that was Willie's idea. He had been very dissatisfied with Dick's position during the lovely days that had passed, and it is to be feared that in this connection he did neither Mr. Panter nor the bo'sun justice. But after all, he was only a lad, and his experience was small; it is a pity that there are so many like him to-day, who pose as authorities on the polity of the merchant service. Dick thought nothing at all about the matter. He flung himself heart and soul into the great work of getting his ship round the Horn. And really it seemed at first that the fight was not going to be such a heavy one after all. In ten days they were off the pitch of the Horn, but it was blowing a fierce westerly gale, so fierce that fore-reaching to it was really like being hurled

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bodily before wind and sea over the edge of the world.

And so it continued for four days, during which time, so tremendous had been the pressure on her, that the brave ship had drifted nearly 200 miles to the eastward and southward, helplessly, for no canvas or gear could stand against the fury of that onslaught. Then the wind hauled round, and instantly all plain sail was made upon the ship, which sprang forward as if rejoicingly. They passed three lame ducks that day, ships which the captain was at pains to explain to his passengers were handicapped by the poverty of their crews. There they were lying helpless under small canvas because they hadn't got men enough to set sail before it would be time to take it off again.

Indeed, that time was not long in coming. They had not recovered two-thirds of their leeway when, bang! came the westerly again, and although they hung on until the very last minute, the uselessness of doing so was soon evident, and the canvas had to come in. Fortunately, owing to the goodness of the crew, it could be taken in and not allowed to blow away from sheer inability, but it was a bitter pill to have to take it in at all. Talk about patience! There is no greater test of it than in battering at the Horn, even with the finest of ships and

crews, for nowhere is man made to feel more fully his impotence—that is, in a sailing ship. In a full-powered steamship, which can avoid it all by threading the intricacies of the Straits of Magellan, the Horn counts for nought.

All their good fortune seemed to have deserted them. Day succeeded day without any appreciable progress being recorded; night after night was filled with terror for all hands on watch, because of the innumerable ice-islands that kept gliding up from the cruel south. At last, one day, the great ship, emerging from a fog, found herself embayed in an immensity of icebergs. They stretched around as far as eye could reach for the "innness; their flat tops extending for many miles seemed to support the leaden sky, as they shut out the might of the sea and the wrath of the wind. That was a strange and subduing scene. People spoke in whispers, though there was no need, for there was an ominous silence save for the wild undertone of the gale outside that massy white barrier.

Grey and white above, and blue-black beneath, those were all the colours now to be seen, and their sombreness affected all hands, poor prisoners as they felt themselves to be. But it was left for the girl to bring home to every one there a deeper sense of uttermost danger than any of them had ever known before. She was abnor-

mally sensitive, and about an hour after the disquieting discovery of the encircling icebergs had been made she said suddenly—

“What a strange smell! It’s like when they are laying the tar pavement at home. Don’t you smell it?”

None of them could, but the faces of the officers took a deeper shade, because if she was right, something had happened that over-topped their recent troubles. At a whispered word from the captain, Dick and Mr. Tregenna, who were both on deck, disappeared to investigate, while the captain said, with an attempt at jauntiness—

“Oh, somebody burning his old boots in the galley, I suppose. It’s nothing, Miss White, or I should smell it, I know. I’ve got a wonderful nose.”

“And is that nothing also?” replied she, pointing to the mizen lower masthead, where a thin blue stream of smoke was spreading out from beneath the raised cap into the wintry air. He saw it at once, and turned on her a glance that was full of sorrow, for he recognised the horror of that sign—the cargo of coals was on fire! But she was happily ignorant of the significance of his glance; her remark had been perfectly innocent and playful, for she had no idea of the awfulness of the situation which immediately confronted them. Almost instantly she found

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herself alone. All hands were called, the extraordinary environment was forgotten, and with a desperate haste which showed the imminence of the danger, the hoses were coupled up, the donkey engine started, and the force pumps manned.

Mr. Williams was left with the two ladies, who were almost clamorous in their desire to know why all these tremendous activities were going on. Now, he was a man who, while he held a very exalted idea of womankind, did not in the least believe in their being kept in ignorance of the more painful facts of life, and so he told them in the plainest possible language all he knew.

“The coal has generated fire spontaneously, as Welsh coal often does, when, as lately with us, it is not possible to keep it well ventilated. Dampness and want of air-circulation has combined to produce a gas which is not only inflammable, but has a knack of lighting itself. This is what has happened to us. The cargo is on fire below, and it depends entirely how much of a hold it has got whether our splendid crew are able to get it within their control. If they can control it, they are safe enough—I don't regard this ring of icebergs as more than an accident, the effects of which may be dissipated at any moment; but if they cannot—then I believe that

we must be prepared to face death in one of the ugliest forms very soon, because none of our boats could hope to live long in this part of the ocean. There, I have told you the worst, and I feel glad I did, because I see by your faces that you are brave."

Mrs. White moistened her dry lips once or twice, and then, with a wan smile, remarked very quietly—

"My daughter and I are no braver than anybody else, Mr. Williams, but we try not to be selfish, and if we can't help you men in this awful task, we won't hinder you. We'll hope for the best, though it seems impossible to believe in the worst after what we have seen and known of this wonderful ship and her crew."

"That's great," said Mr. Williams gently; "now come down below and have a little refreshment; it's too cold and too depressing for you to be standing about up here. I promise that you shall know all that goes on." And he conducted them to their state room, leaving them there to do that to which he was sure they felt compelled, beg for help and mercy in their sore strait from the only Source where it could be found.

On deck the work was proceeding with immense vigour. A huge quantity of water was being pumped into the ship at various points

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through holes made for the purpose, and dense volumes of smoke poured from the top of the mizen-mast in proof that the conflict between fire and water was raging below. Another hopeful sign was that, as yet, the fire was confined to a comparatively small area. But all those with experience of these dangerous cargoes knew how rapidly fire spreads through the black mass under such conditions, because it is all ripe for bursting forth. And besides, it may very well be that the whole centre of the mass is glowing, although only a trickle of smoke at the beginning attests the presence of fire. It is perfect slow combustion with no draught, and that, as we know, produces little or no smoke.

Fortunately this was only known to the captain, the mate and the carpenter, all thoroughly brave men not liable to panic, and they said nothing, for they knew, too, that nothing paralyses effort so rapidly or effectively as the knowledge that it will most probably be in vain. They knew that there was a chance, though a slender one, and they dreaded the further attenuation of that chance by a knowledge of the terribly dangerous conditions being plainly presented to the crew.

Everybody behaved nobly. There was here no question of seamanship and skill, it was just hard, grinding work, and there were no shirkers.

Dick especially, wasting no word and stripped to shirt and trousers, toiled like a Titan, stimulating his watch as no words could have done, so that while the cold sea poured in like a flood, the almost boiling water kept the big leather hoses leading from the main pumps fully inflated as it rushed forwards from the hold. For as yet there was no necessity apparent for flooding the ship, especially as at any moment she might need all her buoyancy in order to combat the combined fury of wind and sea, at present quiescent because of her encircling barrier of ice-mountains.

No one there was under any delusion as to the tremendous character of the task before them. Hour after hour pumping in and pumping out without apparently the slightest result being attained is horribly trying to the patience and also to the faith. And men who have not staying power are exceedingly apt to give in, uttering some such cowardly phrase as "What's the good?" "Only tiring ourselves out for nothing"; "We're all doomed." Phrases that act like rotteness in stored fruit, only much more rapidly. Against this all the bolder and braver souls have to fight as well as guarding every possible point against the invader.

It was no wonder that in these strenuous circumstances, the extraordinary position of the ship, surrounded by an apparently impervious barrier

of ice-mountains, should have been ignored, if not forgotten. Indeed, it is probable that it was accepted as an element of hope that the ship should be, even in so uncanny a way, protected from the combined onslaught of gale and sea, even though the problem of release seemed an insoluble one. However, one problem at a time is enough for many people—too much for most—and so everybody tacitly agreed to ignore the ship's position, and concentrate their energies upon her condition below.

Wherefore, it was only two men, the captain and the helmsman, who at midnight—a miserable grey twilight at that time of the year—saw, as if some ghostly dock hands had been turning on some hidden power, two of the hugest masses of ice, each several hundreds of feet in length, glide solemnly away from each other and leave a wide space through which the *Allahabad* drifted broadside on. It was all more like the process of a dream than anything more tangible, yet the actual result was immediately known to all hands, because of the different motion of the ship.

She was no sooner free, than Captain Carnegie, going to the break of the poop, called out—

“Mr. Panter, she's all clear of the ice. Let half the men rest while the other half do their best. We must save ourselves as much as we

can. But, first of all, we must make some sa for the weather seems inclined to be fine, and v must make the most of our chances. Oh, on thing I forgot! Boys, it isn't a part of m principles, but if ever it was justified, it is now Grog, oh!" He had previously instructed th steward.

So they all swarmed aft and had each a glas of grog, and voted the skipper a white man, and the ship one of the best, and swore that they would pump till they dropped, and a lot more of it that may have been rum, but I believe was the best of themselves bubbling up because they had been thought of and called upon man-fashion. Then they dispersed to their several duties, and rest—but there was little rest for the officers. Poor young Tregenna, the fine lad, could hardly stagger, and him the mate ordered to go and lie down for an hour; but the mate and Dick and the bo'sun, though hollow-eyed and worn, seemed to regard any suggestion that they needed rest as an imputation upon their powers of endurance that was unbearable.

So have I seen the officers of a whaler, from sheer pride, refuse to give in labouring for fifty consecutive hours with briefest intervals for food—and there was no real necessity laid upon them, only the subtle quality that counts for so much in men, and is so difficult to define.

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The morning broke bright and sunny, a portent of hope with great influence upon the toil-worn men who witnessed it. Only a few far-distant white flecks upon the horizon marked the position of that threatening range of ice-islands which but yesterday had hemmed them in: the wind was fair, all sail was set, and the volume of smoke was much reduced in size. Why, all was surely well again! Only those who knew most about the matter were sternly affected by the supreme necessity for the continuance of fair wind and fine weather—a condition of things almost unheard of in their present position. However, with all the power at their command they utilised the present grace, and the gallant men who had laboured on without rest for so long were now allowed a brief spell for recovery of their forces.

During all the time Mr. Williams, though physically unable to assist the labours of the men in any way, had done excellent service in keeping the women posted as to the condition of things, laying special stress, as he would, of course, upon the quiet, unobtrusive heroism of his *protégé*, Dick. He little knew how delightful his words sounded to one of his hearers, how she drank in eagerly all that he could say upon that topic. Strangely enough, he had not connected Dick with the idea of ladies' love. Himself a man who

had never been affected by the master-passion, he was not at all likely to give it its lawful place, or to know that, regarded rightfully, it might possibly set a noble seal upon the upbuilding of a man's life work.

So he talked on, serenely unconscious of the joy he was giving, until Willie, who had been putting all his young strength into the common fund, joined the party, bringing the precious news that for the present, at any rate, the captain thought that pumping both in and out might safely be stopped and the crew thoroughly rested.

"And if they want it half as badly as I do they'll be glad enough of it. I'm sore in every bone, and I've been doing nothing compared to some of them. I wish you could have seen that chap, Dick, my hero, as I shall always call him, carrying on through the night. Never a word to say, but working—well, there, nobody could believe that a man of flesh and blood could work like it."

"What, was he so far ahead of everybody else?" slyly inquired Mr. Williams, with a quizzical smile.

Willie reddened and stammered, and then admitted, like the truthful lad he was, that, of course, there were others in the front rank—the mate, the bo'sun and so on; but as far as he was concerned, he had eyes only for one man, though

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he didn't mean to be unjust. And now he must really go and turn in, for he was dead beat.

That night, as Dick was leaning on the weather rail in the first watch, thinking deeply of the possibilities of that mass of danger beneath his feet, meditating upon the marvellously merciful slant they were getting after all their hammering, but immensely, though unconsciously, affected by the beauty and quiet of the hour, ten p.m., he suddenly felt that there was some one near him, and turned sharply to see Martha gazing upon him with eyes that reflected sparklingly the rays of the rising moon. It was not even twilight, indeed the sun had not set, but was obscured by a heavy mass of clouds in the west, so that every detail of the young lady's features and dress were visible. His cap flew off immediately and he stepped to her side, calmly pleased to see her there, but without one quickened heartbeat.

And she, poor girl, was, though as good and pure as ever girl was in this world, almost driven to distraction by the fact that, although she had been nearly two months in the close proximity of shipboard with the man she loved with her whole heart, she had never been able to detect the slightest consciousness on his part that he knew of her love, or knowing, cared, which last supposition was appalling. Of course, she per-

sueded herself that his reticence was due to his modesty, to his sense of duty, to anything rather than the real cause, which was, as we know, that the sex idea had as yet for him no meaning. His awakening spirit had only so far been able to grasp the idea of unselfishness, of spending yourself for the benefit of others, of returning for every benefit you received heaped-up, running-over measure, and underlying it all, since his last visit to Calcutta, the sense of an indwelling Power that would enable him, and was enabling him, to forget himself and his own interests in toiling for the well-being of his fellows.

But now, as so often happens, the sense of a great peril overhanging them all gave her a courage to defy convention and to approach the man she loved more nearly and definitely than had yet been possible. She did not know what she should say or do, except that she was determined to let this strong, shy man know that he was loved by her, and find out for herself whether her love was returned. So without any preliminary fencing she looked him squarely in the face, and said—

“We are still in very great danger, are we not, Dick?” blushing furiously as she pronounced the familiar, beloved name aloud for the first time. His eyes opened a little wider and his face lighted with pleasure as he replied—

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LOVED ME."



"We are always in danger, as far as I can see, Miss White——"

She suddenly stopped him.

"You must never call me Miss White again. My poor, plain name is Martha, but if you will call me by it I shall love it as much as I have disliked it before. For, oh! Dick, I have waited and hoped so long for you to say a word to me showing me that you saw how I loved you, and now I can wait no longer, for I feel that we are balanced on the very edge of death, and I don't want to die without knowing that you loved me."

His face was transformed as if he travailed in birth of a new soul, and she looked at him in awe as he held out both hands to her. But before he could speak a word there leaped out of the main hatch a tall tongue of flame, and her voice faltered "Fire!"

CHAPTER XVIII

BOATING OFF CAPE HORN

LOVE, that sacred thing which is the highest attribute of the Godhead, and lifts man as high as his Creator's arms, is often vilely profaned in descriptions of its lower form, as connecting the sexes. This is especially the case in the reporting what the newspapers call "Love Tragedies," sordid and bestial as these always are. There is the highest tragedy in pure, God-like love, even the death of the Cross, but they are always the tragedies of self-sacrifice, producing the highest, deepest joy. And when there is any recognition of love by the loved one the lover feels a thousandfold repaid.

It is difficult to judge, then, of the exaltation of Dick's mind, thus suddenly raised to such a pitch of joy by the offer of a reward of which he had never permitted himself to dream. It made the awful certainty of a fight to the death with fire seem trivial in comparison, until there crept into his heart, with sickening meaning, the sense that while he could die cheerfully and gladly, and

would do so, Martha, young, joyful and beautiful, might—indeed, ought to—cling to life with all that it could contain for her.

These thoughts flashed through his mind as he rushed swiftly below to the captain's berth, and awakened him with the dread news. In a few minutes, all hands were at work again, more desperately than before, for now every one of them knew how scanty was the hope that they could get her in anywhere, much less to her destination. The decks began to warp and smoke beneath their feet; even in that frigid atmosphere they felt the heat of the vast furnace, which they now began to realise must be glowing below their feet.

As soon as the whole dreary business of pumping in and out had been started, the captain, calling Mr. Panter, went below to his cabin, and got out his working chart. From it the two navigators soon made the course and distance to the nearest *useful* land, that is, land where they might have reasonable hopes of reaching the shore without any disaster—for such places are rare on the outer shores of Tierra del Fuego, without counting the many risks from the bestial aborigines, and the inhospitable character of the land.

They were right off the pitch of the Horn, in lat. 58° S. long. 68° W., and making good pro-

gress with the north-easterly wind then blowing—both wind and weather unusually favourable for getting to the westward at any time of the year. Having fixed her position, Captain Carnegie looked straight in his big mate's face, and said quietly—

“Now, my boy, we're up against it, and I'm glad to have men like you and Dick Mort with me, without saying a word against the rest of the crew, who I believe are all as good as they can be. But she's doomed. There's no use in blinking that fact, old man, so we must prepare the boats. Tell off four of the lads with the cook and steward, and get our three lifeboats thoroughly well rigged and provisioned. And see to the gear. It's all right, of course, but we never contemplate a business like this until it comes on us, and so we generally make a mucker of it, don't we? Now, my dear fellow, I think that's all we can do. Thank God for the weather!”

When, however, they reached the deck again, that cause for thankfulness was taken away. With the suddenness which characterises all changes from good to bad in that region, the fair wind had dropped to an uneasy calm, the generally clear sky had thickened over with an ugly grey scum, and there was a hollow moaning like a draught through a vault, presaging the coming gale. The sense of disaster from the weather is

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always more powerful than any other with a sailor, so that, although all hands were working as hard as they could at their several tasks, they felt in all their bones the coming of that last, most terrible trial of their manhood—the combination of the southern gale with fire.

Maybe they strove more fiercely to do that which they had allotted to them, but, let it be eternally recorded to their credit, that not a man or a boy of them gave any sign of the fear that naturally belonged to their flesh. They were of several races, but all alike maintained their manhood. Yet many of them found space to marvel at Dick, who seemed now to have the strength and endurance of a giant. He toiled more fiercely than any two of them, except the bo'sun, who, greatly his superior in physique, found a fierce joy in showing of what he was capable. But it was evident to all of them that their labours must be in vain, for no matter how much cold water they pumped into her now, the heat increased steadily, and all, at the back of their minds, felt that the summons to leave her was near—might be given at any moment.

And then out from the westward came the gale, not in a sudden squall—that might have been a false alarm—but in a steady, ruthless pressure of wind, increasing every minute, with light flickers of snow, which hissed like myriads of tiny snakes

as they spattered against the hull of the doomed vessel. Captain Carnegie came forward, his face drawn and white. He cried aloud, "Men, we've done all we can to save her, now we must try and save ourselves. All the boats are as ready as they can be, let us take to them quietly at the word. First of all, heave her to on the port tack."

There was no cheer. They just left the pumps and went to the stations, and in ten minutes she was on the port tack, with all her sails lowered never to be hoisted again.

"Now then," cried the skipper; "first boat away, starboard lifeboat; officer, Mr. Mort. He takes—oh, I beg your pardon," for two women and a lad were eagerly plucking at his coat-sleeves; "he takes the two ladies and their friends, handing them over to me later if necessary. Let it be done ship-shape and Bristol fashion."

And so it was. As if carried out in a man-o'-war, only more slowly, of course, the starboard lifeboat and her precious freight was lowered without any accident, save to an incautious seaman who put out his hand to boom the boat off the side, and drew it back with a yell, with all the skin off it—for the iron was nearly red hot. The last thing they heard from the ship was the voice of the skipper, crying, "North, quarter east, ninety miles, will fetch the land; when you

get there you must use your own judgment and your chart; I can't help you any further." So they unhooked and drifted away.

That should surprise no one who knows anything of the sea, but to the two ladies and Willie, the passengers who had taken refuge with Dick, it seemed that the separation might be merely temporary. They had grown to regard the officers as supernatural beings, who always knew by some mysterious means where the ship was at any time, and so they must be entirely trustworthy now. So they were, within their limits, but only those who are of the craft know how severely those limits are defined. Still, Dick was better off in one respect than many similarly situated officers—he had a fairly accurate position, a compass, and a chart of the nearest coast.

But everything else was swallowed up in awe and sorrow at the tremendous spectacle which now unfolded itself before their hungry eyes. They forgot the lowering weather, the cold, their precarious position, everything in contemplation of the most terrible sight known to modern man. Suddenly from a dozen places at once along the doomed ship's decks, there shot up long tongues of flame like the arms of demons who had just been released to work their horrible will. With astonishing rapidity they grew in size, and became more numerous until the whole vessel

from stem to stern was a pyramid of yellow flame topped by a canopy of blackest smoke, which seemed to defy the rising wind to drive it away. No sign of the other boats could be seen although the distance between them could not have been great. It must be supposed that the remaining members of the crew, underrating the rapidity with which the fire would spread at the last, had cut the time of their departure so fine that, assuming they had gotten away safely, they had rowed almost blindly in any direction, so long as it was away from that vast furnace. However they were nowhere to be seen, and as nothing could be gained by remaining near the burning ship, except the remote chance of being picked up by some vessel which, seeing that great light in the sky, was able and willing to work down to it on the off-chance of picking up survivors, Dick set their course for the eastern side of Tierra del Fuego, that being the best for them, having regard to the direction of both wind and sea.

So far all was as well as it could be, but strangely enough, the effect of this sudden accession of responsibility upon Dick was quite the reverse of what might reasonably have been expected. To say that his newborn feeling of love for Martha died a sudden death, being indeed, only born of a sudden and unnatural situation, would be hardly true. Yet it had certainly been

displaced, if not replaced, by a stronger realisation of a higher love in which every one of the thirteen members of the boat's crew, besides himself, shared equally. For him, the fact of two of those people under his charge being females, had only this significance now, that they were of the sex that is not accustomed to be placed in positions of active peril, and need all the help and consideration of men in consequence when they are. Otherwise, every one had an equal claim upon them.

The first to discover this was Martha herself. While Dick had suddenly been elevated in her estimation to the dimensions of a hero on whom they were all glad to hang in mental dependence, she felt, with a pang that was like a death blow, that what she had fondly hoped for, had even braved conventionality to obtain, could not possibly be. Because, great as she knew was her love for Dick, she would have scorned to accept his pity—~~to~~ have had him for a husband without his being also a lover. And that she felt sure now would never be.

He certainly did not look like one as he stood erect in the stern of the boat occasionally giving orders, never wasting a word, apparently anticipating every emergency that could arise, commanding, without attempting apparently to do so, the respect and instant obedience of every one

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in the boat—immense was the change in him even from a twelvemonth ago. But it is certain that he was unconscious of the fact. In the same manner as he had reached his present manly stature, he was now proceeding, just doing his duty as he saw it with all the force he possessed. And well it was for all of them there, that they had to command them a man with a single eye to the benefit of all, and no thought of self to disturb that objective.

Except for the part of the world they were in, it might be said that they were exceptionally favoured in their conditions for a boat voyage. Their craft was the ordinary ship's lifeboat, with hollow zinc cylinders under a seat that ran all round the sides, increasing her buoyancy greatly. She was in excellent condition, and certified to accommodate thirty-five passengers. She was also well equipped with mast and sails and six oars. Plenty of provisions and water, and clothing too, were on board; indeed, nothing had been forgotten that any ship could be expected to furnish to boats leaving her because of her coming to grief on the high seas.

Yet the ultimate factor that decides above all the skill and prescience of man, the weather, was to be reckoned with, and though they made that day a matter of fifty miles towards her doubtful destination, there began at midnight the long-

expected gale, which in a couple of hours brought most forcibly home to every one of them the utter insignificance of man in the face of Nature.

Fortunately there are very few of us who ever have realised, or ever will realise, what it means to be on the wide ocean in an open boat during a gale of wind. A great many more there are, who have seen a small boat bringing a pilot to a ship in what we fondly suppose to be dreadful weather, but which the people concerned know as "a bit of a breeze." But to those whose lot it has been to sample that tremendous experience of the boat on the high seas after shipwreck, there has ever afterwards been present a shuddering sense of inadequacy of expression, of ever finding words wherein to clothe our sensations of that appalling time.

Seen from the deck of a noble ship, a heavy gale is tremendous enough. The solid force of the wind that almost precludes breathing, the orderly, apparently irresistible procession of gigantic waves, reaching from horizon to horizon, their summits curling into hissing feathery foam which is whipped off by the lashing wind, until the air is half salt water, the long streaky hollows which seem like graves ready to receive the prey of the ever-ravening monsters whose snowy crests tower above them; all these are grand, yes, sublime, if you will, to behold from the promen-

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ade deck of a fine ship; but from the gunwale of a laden, undecked boat with a foot of free-board even for the best and bravest of us, it is a time of continuous heart stress, an incessant wonder what we shall do when——.

If that is so, and I need not challenge contradiction, what must the effect be upon passengers? For their comfort I would like to say—not nearly so severe. For they cannot discriminate. Just as a passenger will describe a perfectly lovely breeze with an annoying cross swell, as “a great storm,” because of the effect of the ship’s motion upon him, so in a boat with death separated from them by less than the thickness of leaf gold, they are benumbed, unable to realise what the sailor can see only too clearly, and apparently lowered in intelligence for the time. And no wonder.

Therefore, when that bitter westerly gale began to blow, and the terrible battalions of the southern sea surged up from the unbounded shoulders of the globe, the three passengers sank into a torpor of resigned despair. Three, because Willie had reverted from his proud status of sailor and become again passenger—it is fatally easy. At any rate, he cowered beside his mother and sister under the shelter of the tarpaulin boat-cover which the carelessness or hurry of a sailor had left in the boat when she was lowered, heedless of the awful seas coming rushing at them, or

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BOATING OFF CAPE HORN 257

indeed of anything save that they were cramped and cold and utterly miserable. They had not even the consolation of admiring the heroic figure at the rudder humouring the boat in meeting the seas, and certainly they couldn't appreciate his incessant watchfulness, the strain upon hand and eye and brain necessary to keep her in the most favourable position with regard to wind and wave.

Fiercer and fiercer roared the wind, higher and higher rose the sea, as the weary hours dragged by. The dark hollows around Dick's eyes grew larger, and the fire in those steadfast orbs grew brighter as the time wore on, until suddenly at a critical moment he stumbled, fell, the tiller swung smartly backward and struck him on the forearm as he rose, and immediately the boat was full of water. But her crew were of the best, and although a low wail of despair went up from the three cowering figures, there was no sign of weakness or hesitancy on the part of the crew. One lithe figure sprang aft instantly and snatched the tiller, saying quite quietly—

"Leave her to me, sir. I'm a fisherman and can handle her better than you, 'cause it's my business. 'Sides, you're done up. Soon as she's baled out you get a sleep. Us can't do without 'ee, that's sartain, 'an it baint no manner o' use you knockin' yourself up. Do'ee go and get a rest."

That was a distinct gain, and Dick felt it as he gladly laid himself out in the stern sheer and slept, oblivious to the howling of the gale. But when he awoke again he felt in every bone that the end must be near. For now the weather was awful and every wave that rolled up seemed as if it must be the last. Nothing could be seen for more than twenty yards around, had there been anything to see, and the only thought that could persist was the one that dealt with their utterly unnoticed disappearance, like a raindrop in that vast area of tormented sea, with no one to know of their fate. But instead of this inducing the lethargy that so often accompanies despair it awoke every dormant energy—they were all good fellows, be it remembered. They served out the provisions in due form, and all except the passengers ate and drank steadily, baling between whiles. And finding that their tiny craft was still gallantly breasting the waves, still keeping her living freight alive, they followed an old, great example—they thanked God and took courage.

Matters grew steadily worse, so much so that the passengers sat no longer like images but faced the fate that even they could understand was imminent now, with the stoicism that was partly acquired from their fellows in misfortune, though of that they were unconscious. Three times the

boat had been caught by the merest fringe of an over-curling sea a fraction of a second before she had lifted herself clear, and had been almost filled, and as often they had been snatched from the very grip of death by the tremendous labour of the crew in baling. This could not happen often, for human nature must sooner or later be wearied out, grow helpless and be caught. But the bitterness of death was past with conscious hope.

And then they suddenly became aware of two matters of astounding significance, occurrences so strange that the seasoned seamen were even more puzzled by them than the passengers. The first was a sudden smoothing of the sea, a leveling of those enormous masses of water which had been rushing at them so furiously, a disappearance of the hissing white crests which, whipped off by the gale, had lashed them incessantly. At the same time they all, even the least sensitive of them, became aware of a stench so appalling that most of them fell a-vomiting—all, in fact, except three, of whom Dick was one. He stood erect in the now gently moving boat and looking around in the grey half-light, saw close to windward of them a huge black mass from which spread this uncanny smoothness of the waters which had apparently just occurred in time to respite them.

Like an inspiration came the knowledge of

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what had befallen them, though he could no more recall having heard of such a thing than he could have experienced it, and that he had never done so he was quite certain. It was a very large dead whale from whose body was exuding sufficient oil to smooth those terrible waves, and produce the sleek surface in which they were now riding quite easily. It also exhaled that truly infernal odour, a stench so vile that I doubt whether anything in creation can compare with it. A mass of decaying flesh, some hundred tons or so in weight, inflated with foul gases generated within the great cavity of the abdomen, until the centre of it floated eight or ten feet above the level of the surrounding sea, while operated by the curious law which governs these limp masses, it slowly worked its way to windward broadside on against the bitter, blasting gale.

Dick seized the situation, and in a voice as steady as his former chief's, shouted—

“Man the oars, men, and let's get hold of that whale if we can—there's our safety.”

At the same time he had no idea how a hold could be secured on that slippery mass, for although the boat had a tiny grappling for use as an anchor, it was not easy to see how it could be fastened. However, the boat was worked up close alongside of the whale, which loomed above them large, like a pontoon, and one of the men,

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in a moment of inspiration, saw the opportunity
 and hurled the grappling on to the whale's head,
 where the mouth lolled open, the animal being,
 as always is the case when a whale is dead, upon
 its side. The grappling fell within and a couple
 of its five points held so that the boat was now
 anchored to the whale, only needing that in-
 cessant care should be given to the rope attached
 to the grappling as the boat rose and fell by the
 whale's side.

So they rode in the centre of a comparatively
 calm sea, but it seemed very doubtful whether
 the frightful foetor from the dead animal would
 not destroy most of their lives as surely as
 drowning would have done.

CHAPTER XIX

SEA MIRACLES

ALTHOUGH Dick felt relieved, for the sake of his trust, at this temporary respite, he was much puzzled to know how to act now. One thing he felt, and one alone, would save the situation—a break in the weather; when, whatever the outlook, he must venture out from the vicinity of that protecting mass of putridity. For it was evident that unless they could get away most of the sufferers must die. Three of them, the two ladies and a sailor, were bleeding violently from the nostrils, and others were lying helpless from nausea, which nothing could relieve save the absence of its cause. And now more than ever, to venture out into the sea beyond that charmed circle meant death suddenly for all. One man solved the problem, as far as he was concerned, by rising in his place and plunging into the sea. There was a sudden lashing of the oily surface as if by the struggles of unseen monsters, and William Curtis never reappeared, though the five men still retaining their senses, because, perhaps, they were a little more obtuse than their

fellows, looked eagerly where he sank for any further sign of him.

Then they realised how hopeless it was to expect any creature foreign to that ravening shoal of scavengers, busy with their work of removing that mass of corruption from the sea, to exist among them, and the knowledge added a new horror to their lot. Fortunately it was hidden from the other sufferers; indeed, it is doubtful whether anything had power to affect them now. Piteous moans broke out from them now and then, as fresh blasts from the gigantic corpse to windward assailed them; and the one free man occupied himself by passing from one to the other of them with a pannikin of water wetting their cracked lips.

Then, suddenly, as if conscious that the time had come, the grappling broke through the hold it had, and the boat, caught by the advancing shoulder of a great smooth swell, was swept a hundred yards to leeward. Again, after a moment's pause, she was flung a cable's length farther, and immediately the fierce biting purity of the wind relieved the lungs of the sufferers, and they sat up and looked around. Another respite, for the back of the gale had broken, and although the weather was still bad enough to scare even a sailorman unused to boating if called upon to face it in a boat, all of them felt

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the relief, took heart of grace, and actually began to believe that they might cheat Davy Jones after all.

The gale moderated rapidly, and those poor beings, recently so near death in one of its most disgusting forms, were able to relieve the craving of their stomachs with a little food—coarse and poor enough, but delightful beyond measure to them, because meaning new life. And then Martha, who had not spoken for many hours, indeed, had hardly thought, lifted her wan face to Dick, who was handing her a pannikin of water, and said in a faint voice—

“I never thought it might be possible to pray for death, but really, I did just now. I shall never want to die more sincerely than I did then. Do you think there could be any thing more awful to bear than that smell? If it had only made one faint it wouldn't be so bad, but to keep sensible and have to breathe it, oh, heaven!”

“Never think of it again, Martha,” he replied calmly; “only that, bad as it was, if it hadn't been for that whale I don't believe that we should any of us have been alive now.”

“I don't care,” answered she, rebelliously; “I don't want to live, it isn't worth the suffering, life isn't, that's how I feel. Only there's mother, and Willie. Poor mother! I'm afraid she can't live, anyhow.”

"Be comforted, Martha," piped up her mother; "I'm a great deal tougher than you think for. Only I wish you wouldn't talk nonsense about dying. I've been learning what life's worth these last few hours, and I tell you I want to live to thank God, and tell people how sweet life is. Eh, Willie?"

"I dunno, mater," answered Willie languidly; "I feel about done. My inside feels as if it has given up, and that poor chap, Curtis, going like that"—and the good lad laid his head on his mother's lap and wept like a child. Now, Mrs. White knew nothing of this sad occurrence, had, in fact, been quite unconscious when it occurred, but she wisely said nothing—she just let him have his cry out, and it did him a lot of good. Indeed, they were improving all round, with the exception of Dick, who, in spite of his brave front and obvious determination to keep going, was by no means the man he had been. His face had grown very thin, his eyes were deeply sunken, and his hands had an unusual tremor in them—quite noticeable when he held one out for any purpose. His men, whose behaviour had been beyond praise all through, tried their best to relieve him of the worst of the work, and since the assumption of the steering by the west-countryman, they had succeeded to a large extent. But they could not shoulder his burden

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of responsibility, prevent him from feeling that all their well-being devolved at last upon him. This it was that kept him from sleeping, prevented him even from eating his share of the restricted rations, had made him live upon his own vitality.

And now another horror was upon him—the water, which had been husbanded with most jealous care, was now reduced to one gallon. By their reckoning, they were about forty miles south by east of the nearest point of Tierra del Fuego, and with the present wind might hope to be there in a day, but in that region, and in that horrible coast, no one could tell when they might be able to land—if ever. Anxiety for others consumed him. Though he realised how much worse his position might have been with a crew of such as he himself had been so short a time ago, he could not help the gnawing fear—for others—which preyed upon his heart. He prayed incessantly; but like other young believers in the Omnipotent, could only see certain ways in which help could come, and as those ways seemed closed, he was fast becoming hopeless. Also, as if to aggravate matters, there would come into his mind an occasional gripe of dread at the possible fate of the rest of their shipmates. Not one word had been uttered by anybody on the subject, but doubtless it was in all their

thoughts, and overshadowed their hopes of deliverance.

He was serving out the water that day with the utmost care, and watching with a full heart how every man and woman fought down their bodily needs as men fight for their lives. And in the middle of his task the wind veered and came away from the eastward—quite smartly too, enabling them to spread all sail for the nearest land. It was a marvellous change, and he could not help announcing his belief that, if the breeze would *only* hold for eight hours, that is, until four o'clock the next morning, they would be near enough to land, though he added—

“Heaven alone knows where we shall find a place to land or what sort of a place it will be when we get ashore. I only say this so that you shan't hope too much, because it's got the reputation of being one of the worst places on earth.”

What did that matter to them? The very idea of land to shipwrecked people, until they see it, is comforting beyond belief, and to these sorely-tried folk, whose suffering I have concealed as much as possible, it seemed like a reliable promise of Heaven. At any rate, it had a great effect upon them for good. They all perked up and looked brighter, in harmony with the weather, which was better than they had seen

for weeks. The strong easterly breeze had swept the sky clear of its usual mask of dark grey cloud, and the sun was beaming upon them with actual warmth. Also some beautiful birds appeared, hovering above them in increasing numbers, as if to welcome them to the strange land all eyes were strained to see.

During the three hours of twilight most of them slept. Not so Dick. He was assailed by strange pains for which he knew no cause. He was also unaccountably languid and loth to sit up, hot even to burning at one moment, and full of cold shiverings the next. He brought all his will-power to bear upon the situation as well as all his newly-born faith, but all through it was evident that he felt the well-being of the whole party was dependent upon his keeping command. Quite natural, of course, but how necessary it was for him to learn that no one is indispensable!

As soon as the bright dawn broke, the snow-topped mountains of Tierra del Fuego were visible, apparently above their heads, for they were only a matter of five miles from the shore, running dead upon it. But what a coast! They hauled up and skirted it at a good speed, only to find it for mile after mile utterly unapproachable. Serried masses of jagged reefs guarded the hungry-looking land, where even within that terrifying fringe of enormous breakers there did

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not seem pasture for a squirrel. Oh! the weary, weary miles! They seemed longer by far than all that terrific sea journey—a voyage that might, without any exaggeration, be called miraculous, but which being past, was accounted little of by comparison with the present distress. Hour by hour they plugged on, looking fearfully to windward at times in case of a change in the weather, but mostly keeping their eyes fixed upon the inhospitable shore, hoping against hope to find some spot where they could pass within those guarding reefs.

At last when all seemed hopeless, when the last drop of water had been drunk—for they had been a little less stinted of it that day—and the breeze was beginning to falter, the keenest eyed of all the crew, Bill Smith, yelled out—

“Lighthouse on the port bow, sir!”

The effect was like nothing else on earth. Life from the dead we don't know or it could be compared with that. It occurred to nobody to doubt it. Bill was reliable, and his eyes were like a Buriat's. Oh, it was right enough! Better still, as they drew nearer they saw the squat funnel and two masts of a steamer apparently close up under the huge rock upon which the lighthouse was built, and the helmsman altered his course so as to steer straight for her, because now the barrier reef dwindled away.

Every heart there but Dick's sent up a fervent thanksgiving to God. Whether they had ever professed to know Him or not the impulse of their nature was to thank some Power that had brought about such a salvation as this. But in the midst of their joy they suddenly realised that the man upon whose courage, capability and unselfishness they had all hung so long now lay huddled heap in the stern sheets, unconscious of everything. They accelerated their efforts to get alongside the steamer, which had the plain blue-and-white Argentine flag flying at her stern, and having done so, were insistent that the eager crew of the steamer should first of all hoist their unconscious shipmate on board.

It was done, and the medical officer carried by the lighthouse tender, for such the vessel was, exerted himself as efficiently as he knew how for Dick's benefit. But it took him no long time to discover that the malady was one that did not need his skill. Want of food, of drink, of sleep, of relief from an intolerable burden, had brought about the collapse. Please God a supply of all these needs *might* effect a cure. *Quien sabe?* If the strain had been on too long the will to live might be gone, in which case—— here the doctor shrugged his shoulders and turned out the palms of his hands.

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But, at any rate, Dick was comfortable, and Martha declared herself fit to nurse him, since nursing was the only medicine the man needed, an offer which was supplemented by Mrs. White. And so the best room in the handsome little steamer was given up to him, and the two grateful women took it in turns to nurse the man who had very nearly given his life for them. All the rest of the rescued company were as fit as ever they had been in the course of the next day, but their new hosts were full of wonder, almost amounting to incredulity, that they should have surmounted such dangers, and won through with the loss of only one man.

Happily the *Campanero* was on her return passage to Buenos Ayres, so that they would soon learn whether anything had been heard of their shipmates, a matter which gave them the very keenest apprehension, exercising their minds even more than did the state of the gallant fellow who now lay unconscious, and apparently without improvement. Day after day passed by, and still he lay quietly resting but taking the very smallest nourishment, puzzling the doctor beyond belief, for no trace of disease could be found in him, no reason why he should not want to live. Indeed, the medico very soon saw enough to convince him that in one respect, at any rate, he was extremely fortunate and ought to be full of the desire to live.

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But then the doctor did not know Dick, and was not to be blamed, although he was much chagrined by the knowledge that when the vessel arrived at the great Argentine capital his patient was still unconscious, and though given to innocent babbling, no weaker.

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CHAPTER XX

A MYSTERIOUS AILMENT

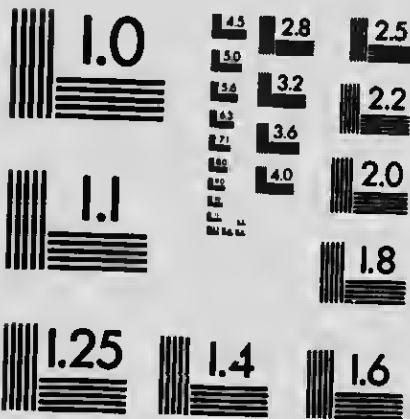
EVERYTHING that wealth can command may be bought at Buenos Ayres, and much, too, that money cannot buy in the way of loving, generous service. And when it became known to those high in authority there what straits this little band, with two English ladies in it, had fought their way through until an Argentine ship had been happy enough to receive them, there was a perfect whirl of social excitement, which for a time stilled even the fierce voices of warring politicians. The three passengers and even the sailors were made free of every comfort and luxury that was going; in fact, the sailors were speedily better off than ever they had been in their lives.

Just as the interest began to flag, Dick, who in his unconsciousness had been elevated to a most heroic height, again became sensible and began to mend, but so slowly, so imperfectly, that it seemed very doubtful whether he would ever be a hale man again. And the curious thing



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was that it didn't seem to trouble him one bit. His patience and gratitude were great, but it was impossible to avoid feeling that he would have been just as contented had he been in some unkempt hospital ward, indifferently attended by people who were careless whether he lived or died, so utterly listless and satisfied did he seem.

While he lay like this, taking little notice of the many good people who called to see him, and apparently more pleased when the sailors came than he was at the sweet faces of Martha and his mother, who never relaxed their attentions for an hour, a rumour reached him which speedily became a certainty. The other two boats' crews had arrived, and at Buenos Ayres, too! It revived him like some powerful tonic, and he asked eagerly if all were saved. Yes, all, though unable to speak of the experiences they had passed through, were safe and sound, and again the whole city was aflame with this wonderful happening, many of the Anglo-Argentinians claiming it as another proof of the stamina of the English race. But they, of course, were seriously prejudiced.

That, however, was nothing; what counted was the fact of three boats having survived the sudden loss of their ship in that terrible region, although the story of the captain and mate's boats con-

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tained no such exciting incidents as did the passage which Dick had captained. It appeared that on that terrible night when the *Allahabad* became a pyramid of flame the captain and mate did hold on longer than Providence dictated, not with any hope of saving the ship, but of saving as much as they could of their own valuables, for there was practically no insurance of those things in those days. And so it came about that when at last they did leave her, they could see nothing of the second mate's boat, and knowing Dick's quality, did not waste time or precious opportunity in seeking her. They made for the western side of the nearest land in the hope of meeting some copper-ore trader or getting into the Straits; failing that, they felt there would be an advantage in being to windward.

Their experiences were painful and perilous, but no one of them had succumbed, owing to the care and forethought which had provisioned the boats, and the skill and discipline of all of them. But they frankly admitted that the last gale would have probably finished them, with all their splendid boatmanship, but for the sudden appearance of the *Beddgelert*, Swansea barquentine, homeward bound from Mollendo, which sighted them one morning at dawn. She was under an enormous press of canvas, as usual with those wonderful little vessels, and no one but a sailor

can tell what it meant to take it nearly all in, that she might be hove to and pick up those perishing people.

But it was well and seamanly done, how well and how skilfully you must take for granted since to explain would be impossible without inflicting upon unoffending people a mass of technical detail which they could not possibly understand. No, the temptation is great, but the old sailor yarning about the things that matter at sea does become a bore, because unintelligible—the worst sin that a literary man can commit, unless he happen to be a—never mind you know the great names I mean.

So they were all rescued and the boats with their stuff they had saved with so much care were drifting away—you do not hesitate to cut adrift even the most valuable belongings when life is at stake—the *Beddgelert* was kept away again, the sail piled on her and all hands felt that a great deed had been nobly done. Thenceforth until the arrival of the smart little packet at Montevideo—she had to land them at the nearest practicable port, since such a drain upon her resources and strain upon her accommodation was not to be endured an hour longer than necessary—there was nothing to record but their entire admiration of the way in which the beautiful little vessel was handled. Although, as Captain

Evans said with excusable bitterness, nothing could save his passage now.

It is, therefore, all the more pleasant to record that, before leaving the vessel at Monte Video, Mr. Williams requested the captain to call all hands aft to receive his thanks and a sum of £500 to be equally distributed among them by the captain when they were paid off at Swansea. He was also handed a bill for a similar amount for himself and his two officers, who thereupon felt that such a windfall would be welcome every voyage—and the passage might go hang.

And now it was that, for the first time since he had possessed it, Mr. Williams really felt the beneficent power conveyed by the unhampered control of money. For far less than some conscienceless brutes will squander over a single horse-race or a few days at the tables at Monte Carlo, he was able to make every man whose worth he had good reason to know, quite happy. A few words in a cablegram and the coffers of the local banks were open to him, and as nobly as unostentatiously did he rise to the occasion. First of all, since the British Consul, as usual, acted as languidly and as carelessly as if the interests he was paid to look after were a "doosid bore," he saw to it that each member of the crew was well supplied with clothes and accommodation, and pocket money. Captain and

officers each received in the gentlest and most delicate manner a sum of money covering about six times their losses and their wages for the voyage.

It is a platitude to say that money could not buy such service as we often get, and it is nothing less than shameful that so many wealthy men and women die, and reward a lifetime of faithful service with a sum less than they would, during their lifetime, have spent on a week-end, while leaving hundreds of thousands of pounds to people already rich. I am happy to say that Mr. Williams was free from this vicious taint; he knew all the arguments, had heard all the objections—and acted on the impulse of his own heart. Would to God that some of our millionaires would do so likewise, there would be less class hatred than there is now.

Now, though all the late crew was provided for, Mr. Williams did not lose sight of them; he exerted himself in all legitimate ways to see that they should find good ships to start their life work again. And in dismissing them from our story it is pleasant to record that many of them date their first step up the ladder of promotion from that never-to-be-forgotten time, and the knowledge that there were men possessing grateful and generous hearts as well as means to gratify such pleasant instincts.

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And now we must return to the little company with whose movements we are alone concerned. Four people, whose thoughts were centred upon one—and that one a man who apparently had lost all interest in life—had no idea that it was worth while to endeavour to maintain his hold upon it, though mild and gentle and grateful for the smallest service. Of course, he made little or no progress, and at last his attendant doctor lost patience—as well he might—to see his best efforts thus frustrated. Recognising Mr. Williams as the chief of the party, the one who was paying all the bills, too, Dr. Blanco sought him one day, and begged for an interview for a little serious talk. It was at once granted, and the good doctor, plunging at once into his subject, said—

“Mr. Williams, I am profoundly dissatisfied with my patient, and professional pride prompts me to resign the care of him. He has, as far as I and the skilful gentleman consulted can see, nothing whatever the matter with him but a general paralysis of his will-power. In other words, with every inducement to get well, with the best of nursing—ah, sir! what a heaven-sent, untiring nurse is that young lady!—he does not improve; nor will he, if I know anything of my profession, unless some incentive to live arouses him. And I feel that I cannot longer accept fees under false pretences.”

"Thank you, doctor," replied Williams; "it is very good of you, and I am most grateful. I have long had an idea of the truth of what you tell me, and have formed my own conclusion as to what I should do. Now I will act."

The physician then took his leave, and Williams, after sitting for a time in deep thought, suddenly rose and sought Mrs. White, whom he found as anxious as he was for a change upon the subject nearest their hearts.

"My dear friend," said he, "I want to know what you think is the matter with poor Dick. I have my own idea, but you are a lady, and have been nursing him, and I would like to hear your opinion on the subject."

She gave a nervous little laugh, and then answered, "I am afraid you'll think me crazy, but I can only answer you truthfully, that I believe he is afraid of my daughter's love! She fell in love with him, you must know, and at a supreme moment, when we all expected death, she told him she loved him, and he kissed her. How he came to rise to that height I don't know, but he has never kissed her since, nor uttered one word of love. True, the strain on him has been tremendous, and I don't wonder that it has nearly killed him, but he's got better of that, and I feel sure that his fear of himself on top of his other weakness is worrying him to death."

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But, of course, beyond that, I do not think he could ever be fit for a man's duties again. The mainspring of his life seems broken."

Williams reached over, and grasped her hand warmly, saying as he did so, "You are quite right, I believe, and, as the Americans say, that lets me out. I'm forty-five years of age, and until recently I've never even thought of being anything but a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth. It has its charms, of course, but they pall, and I need a change. So I'm going to ask your daughter, Martha, if she'll marry me, and find out for myself whether it is true that hearts are caught in the rebound. I've done all I can for poor Dick, and he'll be able to live in comfort all the rest of his life, but I can't allow so sweet and good a woman as your daughter to slip through my fingers without, at least, trying to secure her for a wife. And I feel sure that Willie, much as he loves Dick, will applaud my decision. So here goes. Wish me luck!"

CHAPTER XXI

A SURPRISE

“MY dear Martha, will you marry me?”

It was rather abrupt, to be sure, and the young lady's brown eyes opened wide as she looked at the kindly smiling face of Mr. Williams, full of honesty and quiet fun, as he put this momentous question to her. Of course, for a few seconds she could not speak, and when she did, what she said was hardly intelligible. So Mr. Williams, feeling sorry to have thus embarrassed her, said soothingly—

“Now, my dear, please forgive me for being so sudden, but I am a man of decision. As long as I felt there was a chance that you and Dick would marry, I stood back, for though I have been very fond of you for a long time, I didn't feel that I would kill anybody that came between us, or want to go about looking daggers and poison. I'm not that sort. But now I know that poor Dick, who I'm fonder of than you can imagine, is done for as far as an active life is concerned, and that he can't even get up any more unless he's sure that he won't drag you

down to his sick bed, I felt that I must ask you, and I have—and what do you say? ”

The gentle tears began to flow. Softly the words came, “I have always liked you very much, but I loved poor Dick. Indeed, I stepped over the limits and told him so. But he never loved me—I feel sure that he could never love any woman. And I—and I can’t help feeling hurt, and if you will take what I have to give—oh! Mr. Williams, what can I say? I feel so unhappy about poor Dick. The doctor seems to think he’ll never get any better.”

“He’ll get better now, my dear, when he knows that you and I are going to be married,” laughed Mr. Williams gaily.

She looked at him strangely and her face took on a new expression which, if not dislike, was very near it. And who could blame her? The saintliest woman that ever lived could hardly learn that she had offered her heart to a man who was not only incapable of appreciating the treasure, but was actually remaining ill for fear he should be compelled in honour to accept the gift. In that moment the last lingering spark of love she had retained for Dick was stamped out, and she turned to her old friend and newly accepted husband with a bright smile and an expression of perfect satisfaction.

So it was settled, and the happy man betook

himself to Dick's sofa, where he lay, as usual, the picture of patient endurance, with the air of a man to whom nothing matters. His friend advanced upon him, and seizing both his withered-looking hands, cried—

“Come! up you get. I've good news for you. Martha has promised to marry me whenever I like, and I like as soon as it can be arranged. And I want you to be best man at the wedding. You've been lying around here long enough. And now pull yourself together, and show that you are still alive and mean to remain so. Aren't you glad? And if not, why not?”

The bewildered man looked at his friend with dazed eyes, as if he feared that something had happened to take him off his balance temporarily. But, seeing no change, save a brightening and brisking up of the whole man, there came a new light into his own faded eyes, a new vigour into his frame, and he stood upon his feet, moistening his dry lips. At last he said huskily—

“Oh, Mr. Williams, you have made me feel very glad. I'm a poor creature after all, and somehow lately I've been all gone inside, as if I couldn't go on living—and—and——”

He could get out no more, and Williams respected his difficulty, while at the same time feeling how strange it all was. However, the strange part of it was that from that moment

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Dick appeared to revive, to take a new hold of life, in a grave, subdued way, of course, but still he was able to get about, took his food with something like appetite and entered into all the arrangements for the wedding with a subdued enthusiasm that amused his friends very much. As Willie said one day—

“Any one would think he was rigging a ship, he goes about it all in such a business-like fashion.”

It was not long before all of them were on the old familiar unembarrassed footing, such as obtained on board the ship. Yet that hardly does justice to the case. Even then there had been restraint, something held back; now there was nothing except that none of them ever cared to show Dick the pitying look their eyes held for him. As we look upon a man who enters a room from which he will never emerge alive, so they thought of Dick—as of a man whose life-work was done. Yet in the universal joy it was but seldom that such a look appeared, for it seemed that to each of them had come such a peaceful solution of their problems as they hardly dared to hope for. Even Willie, who was inclined to rebel against what seemed to him to be a cruel stroke of fate against the man he loved best on earth, lost his resentment against the successful man, and again accorded him that whole-hearted liking

he had always held for him before the loss of the ship.

If Williams had a prominent fault, it was one that commands a great deal of sympathy and respect from those who are not actually inconvenienced by it—he was so masterful that he hardly recognised a hindrance to his wishes, and being a man of strong common-sense, he was perfectly conscious that his enormous wealth gave him the power denied to most men—to all, indeed, who must consider ways and means. So when on the next day he suddenly entered the private sitting-room where Mrs. White and Martha, Willie and Dick were comfortably chatting, his manner prepared his friends for a sudden move of importance.

“This is Tuesday; if the wedding takes place on Friday, we can sail next Tuesday in the *Illimani* from Monte Video for home, can we?”

Eight pairs of eyes looked upon him as they might have done upon a messenger from Mars, marvelling, uncomprehending. But Mrs. White regained her speech first, saying gravely—

“John, you are surely not serious? How can we prepare for a wedding and a voyage in a week?”

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soon see that need not worry you. Fortunately, in this land one need not wait till dinner-time for anything to be done, and I have this morning arranged for the wedding dress, the wedding, reception, banquet, and passage home. And all that is now necessary is for you two ladies to get into the carriage at the door and drive off to Calle Florida, where at Madame Escondido's establishment you will find all is ready for you. And the rest is my funeral, so to speak."

There was nothing really to say. Obedience, prompt and delighted, was their obvious course, and in fifteen minutes the ladies had departed, and the three men were on their way in another direction for a pleasant drive, as if their only object was to waste time. But once well away, Williams told his two friends that underlying all this seemingly childish hurry was the stern fact that in a few days the whole city would be ablaze with the ghastly fires of revolution, unsafe for any law-abiding person, and he proposed removing all he held dear therefrom in time. Willie rather anxiously inquired whether he was sure that peace would last so long, but he replied airily that nothing was sure save death and the tax-gatherer, after the Spanish proverb.

Thenceforward events moved rapidly but
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smoothly, as they usually do when a wealthy organiser, with unlimited funds, is pulling the strings. In fact, four people were carried past the possibility of surprise, so evenly and beautifully did one development succeed another, until the evening when they stepped from the river boat on to the deck of the fine Pacific Mail steamer *Illimani*, and found that all the best cabins in the big ship had been reserved for them, and apparently the whole staff of the ship was waiting to receive what was felt must be a Royal party.

When they retired below, the sweetly contented bride said to her pleasantly gratified husband—

“John, dear, I am ever so happy, yet I can't help feeling that you are spending a terrific amount of money. Can you afford it? and if you could, is it wise?”

His eyes sparkled as he looked up at her and answered, “My dear wife, if I had chosen to buy the ship to take us home and another liner to attend upon us, the cost would not have affected me more than buying a suit of clothes does a rich man. I am not only enormously rich but I have never spent more than a quarter per cent. of my income—I didn't care to. Now I am spending a little because it makes you happy and at the same time gives me a fresh interest

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life. And if I can I'm going to make this the jolliest trip any man on board of this ship has ever spent."

If he was not as good as his word it was not for the want of trying. Few passengers had been booked at the calling ports, but those who had were made to feel the joyous spirit in the air. And when in due course Liverpool was reached, the cheers which resounded from the ship's company over the muddy waters of the Mersey, as the happy little band went over the side, were full of heartfelt praise for the noble generosity of a truly wise man.

A special train was waiting for them and they were whirled away south, through the lovely autumn weather amid fields of golden corn, cottages ablaze with flowers, and orchards where the boughs were pendant with ripening fruit. They just sat and gazed, full of content, but none feeling it so deeply as Dick, because he had never seen it before.

Yet, strange to say, it seemed to satisfy a long and deeply-felt need of his nature. Never in all his life had he been really happy until then. Occasionally remarks addressed to him he did not hear, and but that an occasional slight change in his position showed that he was fully conscious, his friends would have been alarmed. It was not unnatural. Returning from

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America once myself I travelled from Liverpool to Euston with two Portuguese, who had spent many years in the Sandwich Islands, and I can never forget their entranced delight at what they saw. Their oft-repeated remark, "It is one big garden," will never leave my memory, and when we parted they assured me again and again that never in all their journeyings had they enjoyed such exquisite pleasure before.

The special train drew up at Tiverton Junction and there a beautiful roomy omnibus carriage with a pair of splendid horses awaited them. They were all by this time so accustomed to miraculous happenings that they evinced no surprise at this, but they all felt very happy as the big vehicle rumbled through the scented lanes in the warm darkness. But even their experience was not proof against the marvel of the sudden appearance of a brilliantly-lighted porch lined with willing servants and a stately couple, he in evening dress and silk knee-breeches, and she in black silk, who welcomed them into a vast hall, where a huge fire of logs was blazing and reflecting itself in a thousand wonderful things on the walls, and even in the polished beams of the vaulted roof.

Turning to his beautiful wife, Williams said in a strange voice, "Welcome home, dear wife!

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Welcome to our home, dear friends! Mrs. Benson Trevithick, this is my wife, and these are my dearest friends," and he sank upon the nearest seat and put his hands to his eyes.

That blessed weakness was only momentary, for almost immediately he sprang to his feet and began issuing orders which sounded like requests, with a single eye to everybody's comfort, and in a few minutes every guest was being conducted to rooms prepared for them, while he and his wife took possession of their own. Into that retreat we cannot follow them, except to hear John Williams say to his wife, "Martha, dear one, God has been abundantly good to us. So in recognition of that great fact you and I will try and be good to His people. We will give banquets to those who need them, seek out the suffering and speechless poor and do them good, and make sure that not one farthing of all we give shall go to the fostering of wickedness, laziness or debauchery. So God help us, Amen."

Dick, being conducted to his bedroom, a beautiful apartment containing all that a man could need, whether well or ill, for a day at least, looked around it and came to the conclusion that it was time he was in bed; and when the footman came to tell him dinner was ready he was fast asleep. The man descended and told the butler,

who made the matter known to Mr. Williams. They were all waiting in the drawing-room for Dick, all having forgotten that he knew nothing of social observances. Then Williams flushed, and blamed himself, saying—"Poor chap! What an ass I am! However, he was wisest." Then to the butler, "Let him alone, he is very tired."

Recognising, as they did, that it was the best plan to allow Dick to rest even upon such an auspicious home-coming as theirs, the happy little party gave themselves up to a quiet enjoyment of the pure pleasures that surrounded them. Truly they were able to appreciate them to the full, having such a fund of experience in the immediate past to draw upon, but every fresh reminiscence only drew them back to the sleeping man upstairs. And there were none of them that for one moment wished it otherwise. If, however, there was one among them who was more deeply, fervently happy in thus recalling the brave doings of their friend, it was John Williams.

This, though strange perhaps to some minds, is strictly in accordance with all precedent in such matters. In every day life it is the commonest experience to find folks whose only reason for loving and honouring and heaping benefits upon a certain man, or woman, or child, is that they

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were once able to render the recipient a great service without hope or thought of return. And that act has begotten an overmastering desire to continue so doing, a desire that breeds a pure love such as inflamed the heart of John Williams for Dick.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

AT breakfast next morning great was the amazement when Dick presented himself. A new Dick, from whom all the old deadness and lethargy had fallen like some poisoned garment; whose eye was bright and bearing purposeful as if a miracle had been wrought upon him during the night. So great and noticeable was the change that even Williams was dumb for a time, and it was not until a series of funny mistakes, such as putting salt in tea and sugar on eggs, had been made that heaven-sent laughter came to the rescue and cleared the atmosphere of mystery.

"What's happened to you, Dick?" blurted out his friend. "I have never seen such a change in a man. You seem to have taken a new lease of life during the night. I knew our Devon air was mighty good, but I didn't give it all that credit."

"No," replied Dick, "it isn't the air. It is that when I awoke at daylight this morning I knew in some strange way what I have to do, and I felt that I had the strength to do it. First of

all, I can't stop here wasting the opportunity God has given me. I must go to sea again and do what good I can—there's room enough for it, heaven knows."

"Well," mused Williams, "if you're quite fit I don't know but you're right. I've been figuring on you being rather like a clock with its hair-spring damaged, able to go but unfit to be of any use. And I thought of you coiling up your ropes here for the rest of your life in peace, anyway."

There was a whole volume in the way that Dick straightened himself and with sparkling eyes cried--

"Never, dear friend, never! If ever I felt so or thought so I am very sorry. I could not have been responsible, anyhow. Now, however, nothing can be further from my thoughts or wishes than such a backing down, and I'm off to sea again at the earliest."

"Good man!" cried his friend, and he was echoed by Willie, who immediately put in a claim to go too. But, holding up his hand for silence, Williams went on--

"First of all you must go and pass for mate. That'll be easy for you. By that time I'll have a good ship for you. Because, although I know very well you're quite capable of paddling your own dugout, there's no harm in having a

ship where you know you'll have a free hand as far as your crew is concerned. Besides, you'd like Willie here for third mate, and you'd hardly be able to manage that without Don Dinero behind you. Oh, money isn't a bad thing when you use it right ! ”

To this Dick could have no possible objection indeed, anything that furthered his heart's desire, that of doing some good to his fellow seamen, was welcome to him. Mrs. White was the only unhappy one of the party, for the thought of parting with her beloved son was almost more than she could bear, and she was perilously near hating Dick because of his innocent influence over Willie. All remonstrances and arguments were in vain, for they beat hopelessly against the Gibraltar of maternal selfishness, which is often ready to sacrifice a dear son's future if only he can be kept at home and mothered—that is, kept utterly unfit to do anything in the world.

However, Willie, backed by Mr. Williams, was adamant, and the beginning of the new week saw Dick and he in London in comfortable lodgings, and full of enthusiasm over the coming voyage, wherever it might be for. As might have been expected, Dick passed the examination for chief mate with flying colours—it has only terrors for the waster who expects to cram

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nautical knowledge in a fortnight—and, in reply to Dick's letter acquainting Williams with the fact, came a letter announcing his appointment to the *Hadrian*, four-masted ship, Captain Custance, loading in the East Indian Docks for Panama.

Willie and Dick only skimmed the letter before they made all haste on board, and found her to be, as far as they could see, the finest ship of their experience. The captain was on board and, being told by the steward of his visitors, greeted them very warmly. He was loud in his praises of the generosity with which his new owner had treated him—never before in all his life had he been given such pay or had so lavish a list of stores, both for officers and crew.

“And besides,” he went on, “there is a bonus for each officer at the end of the voyage, if completed successfully. You may be sure, Mr. Mort, that I am only too glad to welcome you, even though I understand you are a considerable shareholder, having heard so glowing an account of you from the agents. I am not in the least jealous—all I crave for is efficiency, and the better a man is the more I love and admire him, even if he shows me by his life what a poor thing I am as compared with him. Now let's have a look round the ship.”

Closer acquaintance with her only confirmed

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Dick in his first impression, that the *Hadrian* was as fine a ship as ever floated, and, when he heard what was to be the number of the crew and saw their accommodation, his heart swelled with gratitude. But then sadness claimed him again as he thought of the poor wasters, such as he once was, whom he must ruthlessly reject on every account. Such a ship and such an owner must have the very best that could be procured in men as she already had in material. And so it came about that when the *Hadrian* sailed she was already well on her way to a successful voyage, because man had done his best to help and not hinder that desirable end.

It can hardly be wondered at, therefore, that the noble *Hadrian* returned from her 50,000-mile trip in the shortest time on record, having made what Captain Custance truly called, in his valedictory address to the crew, a perfect yachting voyage—a voyage whereof every member of the ship's company spoke to the last day of his life as the happiest he had ever made. Good seamanship, good pay, good grub, good ship and good weather—why, such a combination made the voyage seem like an episode from an ocean paradise!

As already arranged, Dick went up for his

Hadrian was the master's ticket on his arrival home, but during the latter part of the voyage he had been thinking deeply over his present happiness, and had come to the conclusion that he had no right to so much, while those who, like him in his early days at sea, were the wretched dregs of the profession had literally no one to care for them, and knew not how to care for themselves. Through a series of miracles he had been raised from that sad abyss, and also been made to feel that he always might count upon knowing that he had the weight of an enormous mass of money behind him.

Therefore, not being able to hide from himself the painful look of expectancy upon the face of his beloved skipper, he took the earliest opportunity after he had told Captain Custance of his success in passing, to put the latter's apprehensions at rest.

"Captain," he said, "I know you feel doubtful whether I'm not going to oust you from command now, and I don't wonder. But be comforted, no such thing is going to happen. Indeed, it need not in any case, for another ship could easily be obtained for me; only I am not going to sea any more!"

A little time was allowed by Dick to let this announcement soak in, and truly it staggered his

friend the skipper, who could say nothing in reply, but only stared as if stupidly. So Dick resumed—

“No; much as I love the sea, and happy as I have been with you, I feel a duty laid upon me that I can't, no, nor I won't, neglect. I've got to do something for the wasters that make their own and their officers' lives a burden at sea. And I am going down into Devon to-morrow to tell my friend Williams of my determination—and I know he'll do whatever I want. Meanwhile, I leave Willie with you. You know how good he is, and I'm sure you'll help him all you know to get his ticket when his time's in. He'll get to the top of the ladder quickly enough, though parting with his old friend has been a terrible wrench to both of us. Well, good-bye.”

“Good-bye, good man,” faltered the captain. “You'll never know how great a load you've lifted off my heart. May you get your heart's desire.”

The next day Dick and Mr. Williams were closeted together for four hours settling the details of Dick's scheme for the well-being of his fellows. Williams was repeatedly amazed at Dick's grasp of the details of his subject, and very soon determined to give him a free hand and

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an open account to draw upon as he liked, satisfied that he would make good all that either of them had ever dreamed—that is, as far as the machinery was concerned.

Within a year, all was in working order, a home for wastrels of the sea where those most welcome were those most in need of a welcome anywhere. Where the old-fashioned virtues of manliness, diligence, unselfishness and devotion to discipline were taught, and no man was led to believe that by a whining profession he could get favours withheld from those who were deserving but honest.

Now Dick was in his element. It was the hardest task he had ever undertaken, but he was pre-eminently fitted for it by his experience. No case was too degraded, no man too worthless to be tackled by Dick, whose only boast was his prime qualification for understanding the needs of the lowest, seeing that he had been one of them himself. And his own story, which he was never tired of telling, instead of attempting to preach, always "fetched 'em," as they put it naïvely.

A certain measure of success has crowned, is crowning, his efforts. Not enough to make him unduly elated, if that were possible. Many disappointments, many a set-back, but on the

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whole, such a life of dynamic love as makes Dick Mort one of the happiest men on earth, and causes John Williams to rub his hands and rejoice that ever he undertook the Salvage of a Sailor.

THE END

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