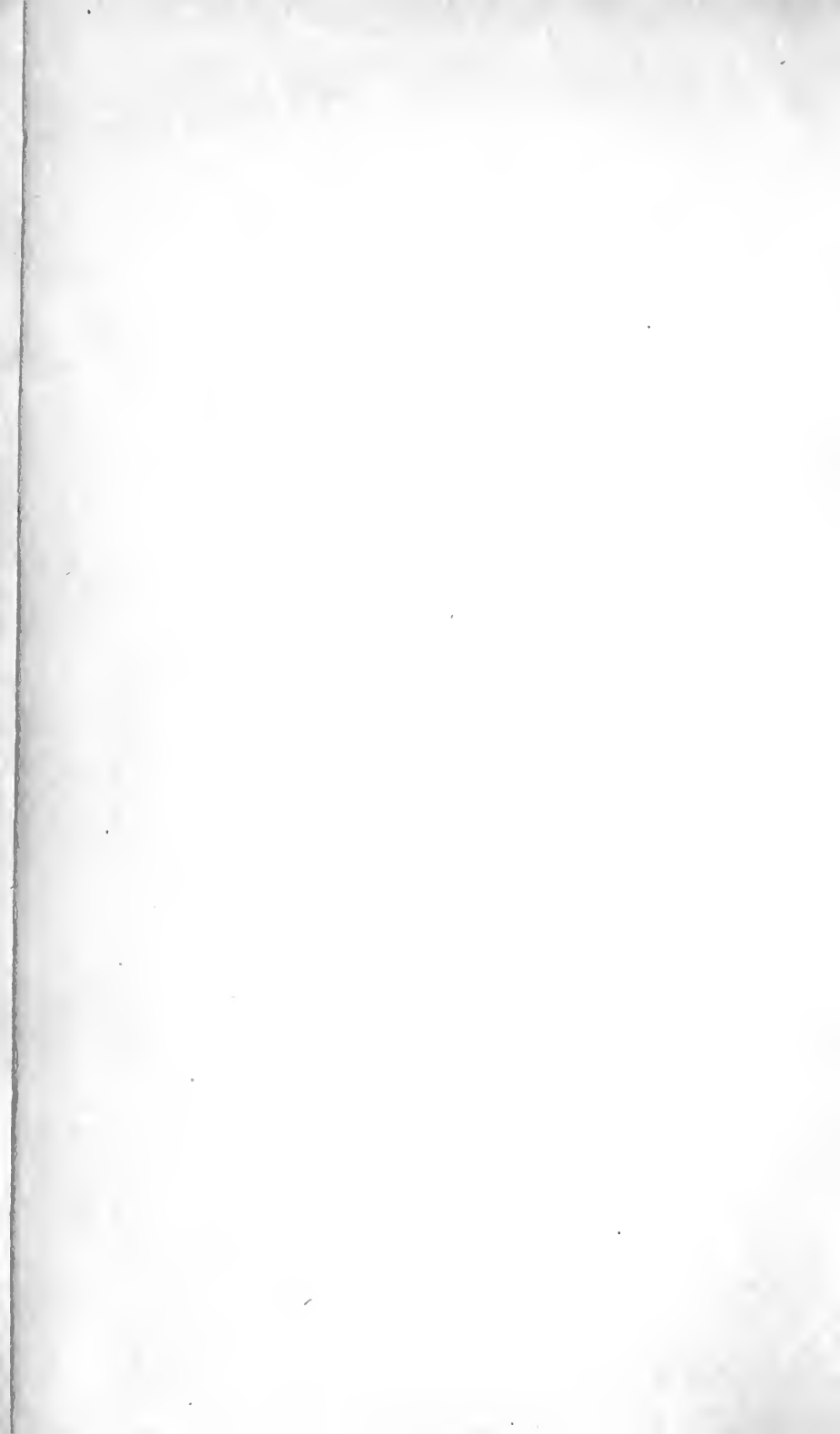


EPISTLES FROM
DEEP-SEAS

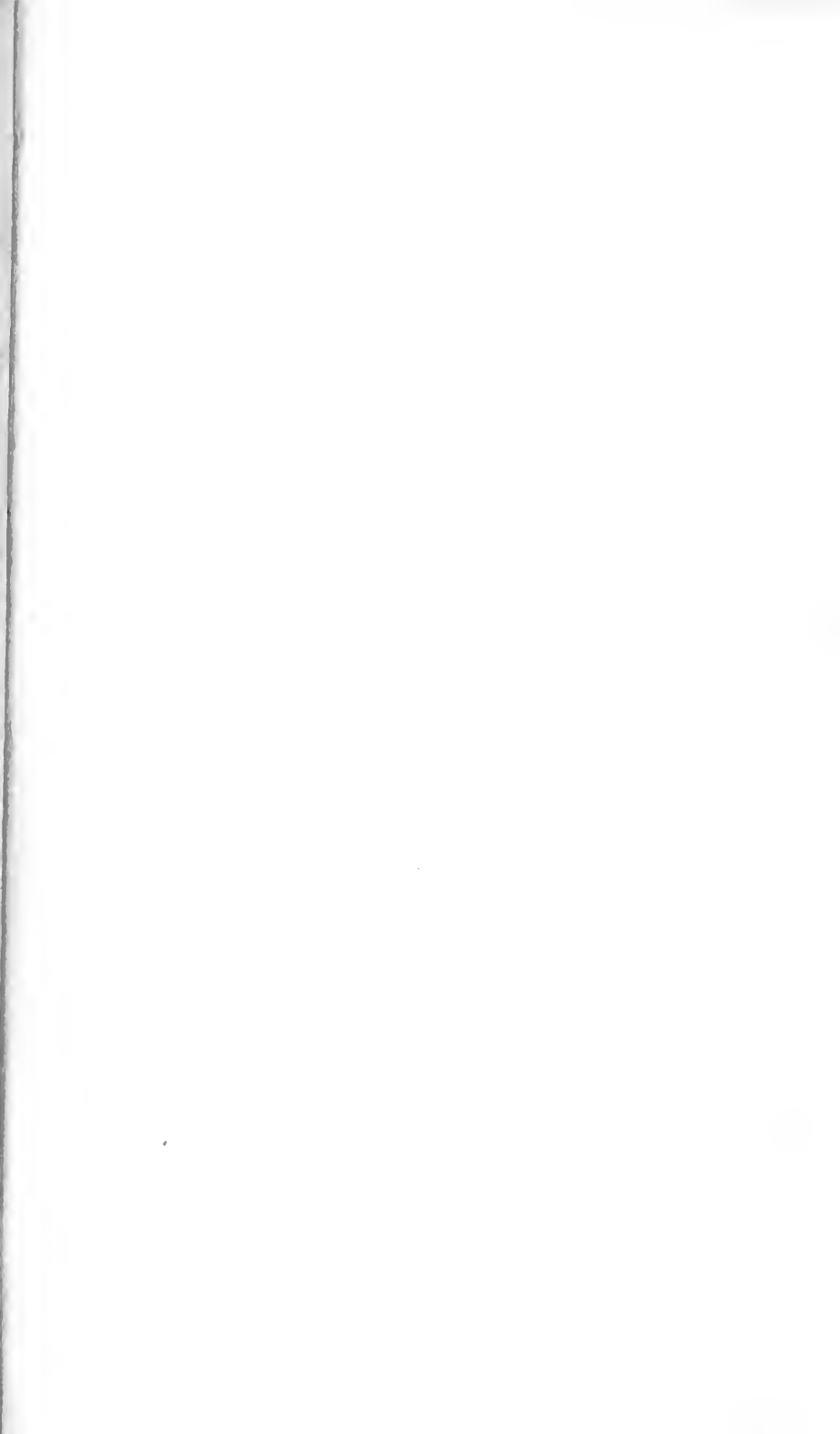
J. E. PATTERSON



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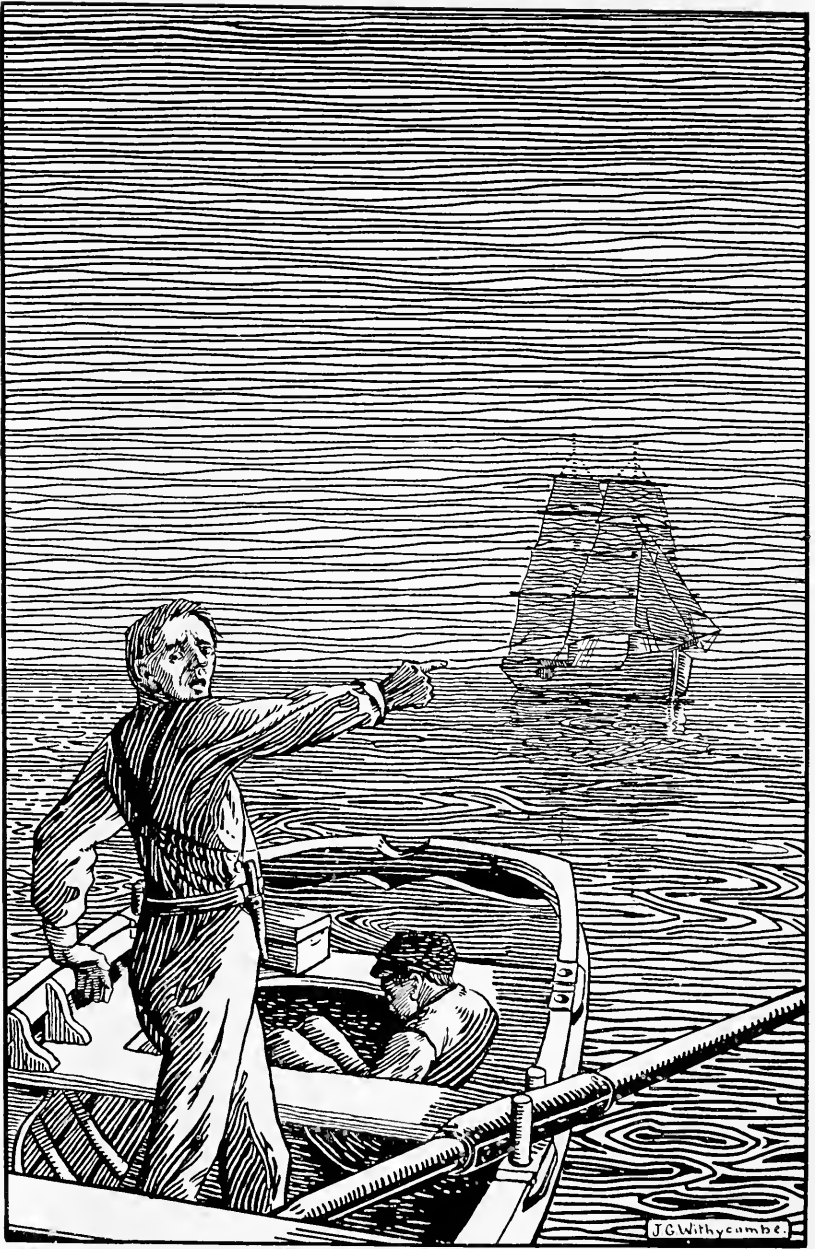


**EPISTLES FROM
DEEP SEAS**



UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THE
SUN
WAS
LOW
IN
THE
HEAVENS
AND
THE
SEA
WAS
CALM
AND
SMOOTH
AS
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AND
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GLASS
AND
THE
WIND
WAS
LIGHT
AND
SWEET



“My God! the barque again!”

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EPISTLES FROM DEEP SEAS

BEING ANOTHER KETTLE OF
SEA-PIE

BY

J. E. PATTERSON

AUTHOR OF

"MY VAGABONDAGE," "FISHERS OF THE SEA,"
"HIS FATHER'S WIFE," ETC.

WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY
J. GIDLEY WITHYCOMBE

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL,
HAMILTON, KENT & CO. LTD.

1915

NO. 1000
ALBANY, N.Y.

TO

J. JOHNSTON ABRAHAM,
M.A., M.D., F.R.C.S.

MY DEAR ABRAHAM :—

The originals of these letters were written, in a way, to a dear, dead friend, to whose treasured memory some small tribute is paid elsewhere. But the missives were not delivered. They were kept back, like Old Tom Benton's were, yet not for the same reason. I refrained from sending them, because I feared to submit them as efforts to create literature—the purpose for which they were written. Now, altered as they are, I offer them to you : First, as a token of that esteem which Pope said was—and, I hope, still is—“ worth more than a flashing diadem ” ; second, in admiration of your personal sacrifice and work with the Serbian army in the field ; and, third, because of your love of the sea, and for that charity of yours towards all things seafaring, which is as great as my lust of wandering once was, and still is from time to time.

J. E. P.

LEIGH-ON-SEA.
Autumn, 1915.

PREFACE

The origin of the book : Criticism, good and bad : Life-story of Shivers : Three more of his narratives : My attitude towards them and him : The fate of sequels : A human prerogative :
“ Deal kindly with us, ye who read.”

IN “ Sea-Pie ” it fell unexpectedly to my lot to write a book that caused critics and correspondents to ask for more. This volume is my thankful answer to them. But the larger part of the book was first written twenty-five years ago, and Shivers’s three narratives were taken down two years or so before then. The real kindness of those readers lies in the fact that they have determined me to rummage out, from half-forgotten literary efforts and from the ever-closing, ever-opening chambers of memory, these necessary ingredients for another “ Pie.” And here again I owe thanks to those generous readers ; for in sending me to a sort of muniment chest (really an old trunk and a much-dilapidated French valise that bore me rough and varied company from port to port the world about), they have reawakened many an old and pleasing sensation, have made me live again the healthy if rude and often brutal life under the Red Ensign. More, the search has brought back to recollection and examination a bundle of letters from steam “ tramps,” which are now intended to follow this volume.

It must not be thought, however, that the succeeding pages were penned originally as they are presented here. Naturally, they were not—not all of them. In what was written on the high seas there were many forced breaks, sometimes of days—many a sudden leaving-off at the cry of “Lee fore-brace !” “ Watch, there oh !” or the clang of the imperative bell that called to duty, many an abruptly-curtailed note, continuation of an idea, incident or piece of description, that was being made surreptitiously in the fo’c’s’le during a watch on deck. Gales and fights made other interruptions. But, for the sake of continuity and appearance and out of respect for the reader’s interest, most of those gaps are passed unheeded. Again, years of writing must perforce lead to a process of trimming and adding, to that which the critic calls “selection.” Thus it is that these epistles have been edited, more, perhaps, than was the case with “ My Vagabondage ” and “ Sea-Pie,” nearly all of which had been offered times out of mind to editors of magazines, etc., and not a twentieth of the whole accepted.

But, then, the first of those two books was rejected again and again by London publishers—to be received eventually with the highest possible favour all over the English-speaking world and in France. Yet in spite of that heartening chorus of praise—in which the book was written of freely, in the most responsible journals at home and abroad, as a piece of permanent literature—the second volume was refused by certain London houses, which possibly felt some regret when it was declared widely to be a

better book than "My Vagabondage." Still, did not "Fishers of the Sea" go the round of twenty-five English publishers before Mr. John Murray backed his taste and acumen by issuing the novel, to find it hailed at once as "a classic of the sea," "comparable with Hugo's 'Les Travailleurs de la Mer,'" "equal to Loti's 'Pêcheur d'Islande,'" also said to be of the same quality as "Tom Cringle's Log" and of other books of similar vitality? And, to come intimately, disarmed and kindly into the presence of my reader, am I wrong in that I find a certain pleasure in recalling these facts? Be it so or not, the pleasure is mine. For shall not the cripple, home from war, have the satisfaction of shouldering his crutch to show how fields were won? Yes, and I am not so larded over with a bourgeois convention that I fear to tell the truth that moves me; that I hesitate—except to apologize to the original—to cry:

Ye wondrous seers, I'm with you once again;
I hold to you the script, you erst beheld,
To show ye knew it not.

It is such facts as these that stir up the vinegar, move scorn to action, and bring back one's fighting instincts—as when a critickin in a certain journal threw doubt on my record of the gale in the *Egeria* (in "Sea-Pie"), started in with the pitifully ignorant statement: "Now a smack is properly a single-masted vessel";* went on to argue from this pre-

* A deep-sea sailing smack was (steam has well-nigh put an end to them) *always* a dandy-rigged craft, *i.e.* a main-mast—often termed "fore-mast"—and a mizzen-mast. Even to-day only some of the 'longshore smacks have one mast, and are termed "long-boomers"—that is, sloops.

mise that I had not written the truth, and finally sprawled the impression all over his "critique" that he was an amateur yachtsman—metaphorically, a pre-war volunteer "correcting" the narrative of a man from the trenches! It is deplorable that such things should have to be contended with in any creative art. But we know they are here; and I—living a quiet life away from clubs and coteries—have met with many an instance of them; exhibitions that, in remembrance of sufferings that were too deep to be more than recollected in pain, have filled me with contempt for the so-called "critical faculty." But only for a few minutes; then the gloom of the past and the gall of the present fled, like ghouls at the sudden burst of a beautiful dawn and the clarion-note of a game-cock, as I thought of the scores and scores of kindly, constructive, helpful, penetrating columns of print and private letters that had been written on my efforts to produce literature. And this was where the humbling, humanizing touch ever came in—ever will come in, I trust. It is not given to all of us to "turn the other cheek"; yet he who is not softened by kindness is much less than man. And, whilst feeling the stings of envious abuse and the thrusts of the carping Zoilus whose ideas of criticism consist of his being merely opposite to others in his estimation of this or that, even in the height of the battle it is possible, thanks to a merciful arrangement in these mortal affairs of ours, to apply the balsam of kindness to the wounds of malicious envy. Besides, are there not others to follow—perchance some rather timid souls who, lacking the

attack and initiative of the born-fighter, need some heartening influence to bring them to the tasks of their lives? Indeed there are. And if my case should be no more than a stepping-stone to them, it will have served so good a purpose as to justify what is written here.

So I get me back to my friends, with apologies for having wandered so far from them. Some of those respected Oliver Twists even appealed to me to "tell the full story of the adventurous life of Shivers." Would that I could do so. Alas, that I cannot! Even to me the old man never told more than what was contained in his dog-watch and night-time narratives, some of which he afterwards denied, in a way, as being parts of his own life. Had he said directly that they were not of the weft and woof of his personal experiences, I should have believed him, despite a sort of faith in the contrary, so great a hold had his personality taken on me. But his denial was couched in no such form; rather was it a gentle, deprecating suggestion that the story was out of the life of a man with whom he had sailed, such as when he recited the account of the man on the raft, as retold in "Sea-Pie." Yet, significant enough to me, in none of those happenings did he mention either the vessel's name or the voyage, as sailors *always* do when recalling some incident to a shipmate of the past.

The nearest approach he ever made to a real denial was a night or two after he told me the tale which I have named, "The Worship of the Dead Hand." *

* This is the story "of mutiny, murder, and the vengeance of fate" referred to, without name, on page 306 of "Sea-Pie," and is retold at the end of this volume.

On that occasion he said something briefly about "the foolishness of taking all for granted that an old 'shellback' pitched into a shipmate's ears." This was said in a quiet, casual way, with that faint and rarely-seen smile of his flickering, in a sense, on the wizened skin of his big, bony, brown-red face; whilst his keenly scrutinizing, steady, steely blue-grey eyes were fixed indifferently on the Khedive's palace, across Alexandria harbour, and his thoughts were, a hundred to one, somewhere on the Pacific. I noticed the smile, the tone, the manner; and, irrespective of them, I was too impressed by both him and his narrative to pay any heed to so vague and half-hearted an admonition. That those incidents had been parts of his life I did, and do, believe implicitly; and wish devoutly that I had more than three of them to repeat. As a matter of fact, the account of the mad captain and the shark's head-bone* would have been put into "Sea-Pie," but that I then thought of using it as the basis of a long story, and have now put away the temptation. The curious, psychological tale † of the dying steward and the shark waiting for his body I could not find at the time, nor would I trust myself to re-write it without the old copy before me—the copy that contained Shivers's wording almost verbatim; and the recital of the mutiny, or rather of its bloody and weird effects, was too long for insertion at the place in the book where the story is mentioned.

As to my writing the full tale of that strange man's

* Mentioned on p. 268 of that book; p. 265 here.

† "Olaf's Barrier," which will be found on p. 99.

life : How could I ?—even if I knew his comings and goings between the parts he recounted in my hearing. To do that, would be to serve up a pudding with the plums extracted. For, religious man as he sincerely was in the *Ethelburga* and in the *Water-lily*, it is not to be supposed that he gave me the secondary events of his life. And in proof of this I may recall the fact that Bible-reader, exemplary peace-lover and most faithful adherent of discipline as he was, a certain strong vein of pride ran through him generally—as was seen in his erect bearing, whether standing or walking, his firm stride from the hip, and the rather disdainful glitter of his eyes whenever he was a witness of anything mean. So I take it that the experiences he narrated were the picking of his bunch. Fiction is stranger than truth only in matters of time and place, yet it is rather inconceivable that even some forty years of varied life afloat, from about 1840 to 1880 or so, could contain more than one or two more such episodes as the seven that Shivers recited to me.

True, there were other experiences which the old man could easily have had, some as interesting, others perhaps more exciting, than his acknowledged ones were. But if the account had been of a fierce and bloody set-to with pirates, or the wholesale drowning of slaves to cheat a man-o'-war in a tremendous chase, or a great shipwreck, I could not imagine Shivers narrating the affair other than in his steady, ever onward, never in the least impassioned manner, and in his rather staccato and slightly quacking voice. Mark, even in the story of the derelict he avoided all heroics

and "literary" details, probably more than I did in the re-telling. Still more significant, it will be noticed that in the horrible affair of the dead hand he took care to start after the murders were done, and to revert to them only in so far as was necessary to give truth to the narrative. In fact, it appeared to be his habit, purpose, or what you will, to begin a story at a point that left the horrifying cause of it behind.

There is one other matter that should be explained. Although I had thought of turning the shark's-head episode into a book, so much reverence have I, at heart, for what I consider to have been faithfully recorded happenings, that I cannot adulterate them with my own imaginings. Even if I had not this feeling towards the narratives themselves, my regard for Shivers and his influence over me—still a little "creepy," twenty-six years odd after our parting in Marseilles—are sufficient to keep these dishonest hands from so much as an honest attempt to lengthen his stories. In so far as one man may love another I had real affection for my sea-father, Old Shells; but my feeling for Shivers was more one of awe and wonderment, which time, years of bitter experiences and a painfully larger knowledge of men and things, have sobered down to deep respect that nothing now will lessen.

Sequels are always said, and mostly with truth, to be inferior to their predecessors, even as a great man or woman is very seldom the father or mother of a great son or daughter. But this is no sequel. Just as the bulk of "My Vagabondage" squeezed

out the material for "Sea-Pie," so the latter answers for the previously idle material that makes this book. In putting the second volume together my aim was to make it different from the first, yet as good—or a little better. Here I have striven to the same end. Had I foreseen the success of the first, or even believed in it to that extent, how differently I should have written! And how much more satisfaction the work would have given!—as a consecutive series of volumes, one resuming the story where the other ended. This system of picking may be good for the reader; it is not so to the mind that delights in constructing, floor by floor, stage by stage, to a definite totality in size, shape and harmony from beginning to end.

Still, to aspire is the sole prerogative of humanity. The angels are as high as they can be; they have nothing further to desire. The animals are at the other end of the scale and know nothing of an advanced state. Man, in the middle, balances the matter. In the aggregate he turns from the lower and is always seeking the higher, the further-away. It is a prominent trait of his nature to strive for the greatest in most things—to emulate, to surpass, to "go one better" than either his neighbour or his own former effort in the same way. In itself this is enough to show that his final emancipation to a higher state, mental if not physical, is assured; it is one of the inherent laws of Nature and of his being. Even though it be in ages so distant that they are as yet only nebulous in the minds of the optimistic philosopher and the seer-poet, I believe he will

emerge from this partial darkness to that much higher plane. It is this belief that has always made me look up, eventually, however cast down temporarily by the irony and weight of adverse circumstances. And, to drop from the sublime to the petty, in comparison, from the oak to the acorn on the ground, it is this faith that has spurred me to aspire to make each book better than its forerunner. Whether I have succeeded or not is another matter ; the verdict on that point rests with those readers who so generously made " Sea-Pie " possible, and have called this book into existence. As the genial Autocrat of the Breakfast-table wrote :

" Deal kindly with us, ye who read !
Our largest hope is unfulfilled ;
The promise still outruns the deed,
The tower, but not the spire, we build.

" Our whitest pearl we never find ;
Our ripest fruit we never reach ;
The flowering moments of the mind
Lose half their petals in our speech."

This is the sad truth—yet not sad in that it makes us still aspire. And, such as this book is, I can but leave it to that maker and marrer of literary reputations, Mr. Public Taste ; who is, alas ! so seldom right in his first judgments, yet rarely wrong when the years have given him the truer view that comes with a retrospect.

J. E. P.

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EPISTLES FROM DEEP SEAS

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Commissioned : " All hands on deck ! " : A Hogarthian scene :
An unexpected meeting : Picking the watches : Carrying-on,
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passing thoughts : A delirious steward and an " outrage " :
Its effect on some of the men, " the doctor," mate, master,
etc. : A breeze : Our crazy steward and the cat in the maintop.

Ship *Bucephalus* : NORTH ATLANTIC. April 14, 1890.

DEAR —,

When we parted at the dockside a week ago, some of your last words were : " Don't forget your promise to write me a few real, deep-water letters, when you get away from the smell and the influence of the land." I remember our previous talk on the subject. You wanted " to know what ' life on the ocean wave ' is "—in all its true colours, its crude nakedness, variety, and charm ; its monotony, depraving littlenesses, and brutal incidents ; its superstitions, touches of nobleness and other features ; " things as they happen," you said—" as we never get them nowadays in print—along with your own thoughts of the sea's glamour, mystery, beauty, terribleness, and whatever else occurs to you."

At this moment old Tim Macdonald, our one-eyed A.B. from Cork, is sitting on the fo'c's'le-door-sill, cutting up some tobacco and humming, in a droll

2 EPISTLES FROM DEEP SEAS

mixture of the brogue and American twang, and an irony that comes of the mate having just "fetched" a Portuguese A.B. a sounding back-hander for being stupid :

" ' A life on the ocean wave '—
The man that made that was graen ;
' A home on the rolling deep '
To sae he niver had baen."

Tim has a queer, mumbling voice. Dobeys says he talks as if he had " a mealy potato in his throat " ; really like one whose tongue is too large for his mouth. And, indeed, there is more truth in his interpolated doggerel than is thought of in the landsman's dreams of life afloat. But, then, everything is pretty much what its participators make of it—or what their temperaments make of them. And is it not through the glasses of his temperament that a man sees a thing ? So it is here in this simple complexity whereof you wish me to tell you the hidden mysteries. Well, I will try to satisfy your desire.

We began in the way that is usual aboard big sailing craft. Most of the men came aboard about midnight, half of them drunk and well-nigh incapable, and thirty of the other fifty per cent. were in different stages of the same condition. Out of the four-and-twenty of us in the fo'c's'le only five had joined in a sober state and at a decent hour. From the other four I have made three chums, Oskar, Dobeys, and Cummings, of whom more by-and-bye.

This was the beginning. The second mate (a most decent young fellow, small of build, with a slight cast in one eye, a light-gingery moustache and a round, pleasant face) at the starboard fo'c's'le-door-

way : " Now, men, turn-to." He goes away, in pretence to do something, really to give us time. He comes back, and again calls in past the open door : " Come, now, look slippery ! All hands on deck ! " " I put moine on, sorr, an' a galoot throd on 'em," comes low and pleasantly-whimsical from the port-side of the fo'c's'le, and in a voice that seems to mumble naturally rather than to speak. A tugboat is dragging us away from the dock, whilst the land tugs secretly at our hearts in this parting-hour.

Oskar, Dobey, and I pass out on to the deck, and see the officer trying to hide a smile that was raised by the answer he received. Good augury, we think ; and hope we shall be in his watch. He makes another and more admonitory appeal for the issuing of the nationalities, then turns to something aft. We three stand handy, exchanging obvious remarks—we don't know each other yet—and feeling a bit awkward in the hurriedly-assumed working-clothes that have been packed away these weeks in our bags, and probably in damp cupboards. Merrie May as it is, there is a decided nip in the light breeze that comes skimming across from the English shore, in the pinky, greyish opalescence of dawn.

Inside the fo'c's'le there : What a scene for a Hogarth ! What a subject for a Rabelais ! A space some twenty-four feet long, sixteen feet wide, and six from floor to ceiling. Fore and aft the middle of it runs a bulk-head, with a table attached to each side, and an intercommunicating door at its after-end. On both sides there is semi-darkness, in which white men and black, fair, ruddy, and swarthy, big

and little, silent and noisy, clear-headed and half-stupefied, surly and good-natured, representatives of a dozen different nations, are emptying their bags in search of boots, belts, sheath-knives and dungarees. They stumble against each other in the narrow, crowded space, give gruff admonitions not to do it again or light sallies about sea-legs, try to snatch a smoke whilst dressing, fail to find what they want in the way of clothes, boots, and the like, and curse some thief in the boarding-house, meantime the article wanted is there on the floor or on the new "donkey's breakfast"—*i.e.* straw-bed. Nearly everywhere there are pieces of clothing—sea and shore—bars of strong soap, packets of matches, foot-gear, confusion, and irritation that needs only another prick to make it burst instantaneously into violence. Probably no two men in the crowd have exchanged half-a-dozen words with each other till now. Were it not that they have signed articles and are aboard-ship half of them would be at it, knife and fist, in five minutes.

The mate shouts down from the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head in a hard, rasping, throaty, middle-aged voice that is slightly American. He is impatient and annoyed, and wants to know if the second officer will have the men out before breakfast or not, or if *his* help will be needed to that end? We three look at each other and think, as we have thought already, that the grisly, compactly-built mate is a "hard case," and that we would rather not be in his watch. He is superintending the preparation of the port bower-anchor, by some "lumpers" (dockside men, who will

go ashore on the tugboat, and are here in case our crowd are too drunk to bring the ship up in the roads). Meanwhile, he watches the tug's movements and bawls aft to put the helm this way or that, as she sheers to port or starboard. A "brassbounder" on the rail by the main-rigging takes up his orders and passes them along to the poop, where the master gives them to the third mate at the wheel.

The second officer has been to the cabin. He approaches the fo'c's'le-doorway again, and begins to read out the men's names from a list. He is calling the muster, which each man must answer, and show himself. So out they come, white, swarthy-brown and black, putting caps on, buckling on belts, bare-footed, in sea-boots, slippers and "go-ashores," scarcely a man amongst them really ready for work, more than half of them blinking dazedly at the pearly light of the morning, and wishing whole-heartedly for a hair of the dog that bit them. That curious, likable, mumbling voice comes from a queer, squat, elderly figure with unusually long arms, a round face, the nearest approach to a bald head that I have ever seen on a "shellback," and one twinkling eye. He says: "God love me, Oi'm so dthry that Oi cannot raise a shpit," and a smile is seen on a face here and there. The officer, making no break, calls out:

"Benjamin Appleyard!"

A "pier-head-jump,"* who has flung his bag into

* One who, having failed to get a ship in the usual way, and being in the last extremity of debt with his boarding-master, takes his bag to the lockpit and, rigged for instant work, jumps on to any vessel that is going out short of a man. A sailor who does this is usually looked down on; because the habitual "pier-head-jump" is a waster.

our side of the fo'c's'le and is standing by Oskar and me, a tightly-knit, strong-faced man of about thirty-five, mutters :

“ Aye, what—what the——”

A bad specimen of his sort comes lumbering into the doorway, stupid with the drink of over-night, and answering weakly to the name. The man at our side leaps forward, like a spring uncoiled suddenly, seizes the last comer by his collar, drags him on deck, and gives him a left-hander that sends him reeling against some of the other men. The latter jump or stumble out of the way, leaving the assaulted one finally half-in and half-out of the scuppers, probably unsure as to whether he is still in this world or in some other one. In gunnery phraseology, the whole thing has been done with one motion. Some of us are amazed ; others appear to be ready for any eventuality.

The second mate steps forward, expostulating and plainly trying hard to be authoritative. Nature has not made him a leader of men ; and, with a glance at the faces around us, incidentally I pity him. The “ pier-head-jump ” stands where he struck the blow, leaning forward slightly, his eyes blazing, his face an epitome of passion, his fists like a crown-knots in hard hemp. He stares at the prostrate man, heedless of the officer, and spits out, with a curse here and there :

“ You—rag ! you — fag end of a cur ! you — ! You —!—! Took my wife away—best wife in Gloster ! —vour years ago, an' used her so as she jumped in the river ! You—!” He moves for another attack. The officer steps in his way. “ Brother ! ”

he hisses ; and I can hear his teeth grinding together. “ Brother ! *You* a brother ! You’re the larst voul thing as the Lord made, an’ He’ll never make a vouler. Virst time I’ve set eyes on un zince she took the jump—or—my God ! ” This is said as a sort of explanation to everybody. Then : “ Here ! ” he turns suddenly into the fo’c’s’le, and re-appears at once with his bag, adding, “ let me out o’ this ! I wouldn’t zail with that thing—no, not if the zhip was goin’ to Heaven with a vair wind every mile ! ” He turns for’ard and shouts, going that way all the time, “ Mr. Mate, put me azhore, zir, please ! I’ve done here ! Put me azhore, or there’ll be murder ! ”

Of course, everything is racket and query during some minutes. The Old Man * and the mate try to persuade the wronged husband to make the voyage. All to no purpose. He is now almost silent ; but no man could be more obdurate. Nor can they make him go with us ; for he has not yet signed the Articles. That was to have been done as soon as the ship was fairly out of your mud channel and into the roads. So we come to an anchor. The “ pier-head-jump ” and his boarding-master go back with the “ lumpers ” on the tug, and we turn to—sorry that we cannot return also, and regretting the episode in so much as it gives us the extra work of heaving up the anchor and delays our breaking away from the land.

An hour or so after breakfast the tug brings us another man, and takes our towline. The anchor is

* This is usually written “ the ‘ old man.’ ” But, as the three words are always used and constitute a known sort of title, I prefer to write it as above.

hove up, while "Rio Grande" and "There was a flash packet" go echoing over the water; it is catted, fished. And down the Channel we go, hoisting the sails to "Whisky, Johnny, whisky," "Blow the man down," "Ranzo, boys, Ranzo," and other chantey-s. During this work a black—as usual—and a man who is at present called "Bristol" prove to be the best chantey-men amongst us; but both "Chips" and "Sails"—West countrymen, the pair of them—are excellent in the chorus, and will have a song, wherever there is a line, a sheet, a brace, or a halyard to haul. And how this singing, sad as it is in places, crude to the uttermost generally, and for the most part plaintive in its airs—in the solo lines, at any-rate—how it helps to break the land-tie and get the work done in less time than would otherwise be the case!

The wind is easterly. So below Lundy the tug leaves us, with a hearty: "Good-bye, captain, and good luck to you!" The end of the day comes. All is ship-shape and Bristol-fashion alow and aloft. We four-and-twenty are summoned to the quarter-deck, clustering around the after-capstan amidships. The first and second officers stand by the for'ard-rail on the poop, the mate to port, the younger man to starboard. Thus the watches are picked, the mate having the first choice, his subordinate the second, and so on till we are evenly divided, one half on each side of the deck. I find myself, with Oskar, in the starboard-watch. We are dismissed, and go for'ard together, talking of obvious things; but our thoughts are on the morrows and the things that may be.

* * * * *

By the glint of Neptune's crown—if he wears one—but we are in it, my friend. There she goes! Another lee-bow lurch that would jerk the “sticks” out of a less well-found packet. I can't make out, for the life of me, why The Old Man doesn't heave her to. She can't be making any real headway against this weather. He is a rather queer old cuss, I am afraid—and certainly not English. A bit crooked in his build, rather short, square-set, middle-aged, bearded, got a pair of keen, light-grey eyes, and is everlastingly smoking a big Dutch or German pipe—that's him outwardly. What he is within I haven't had time and occasion yet to ascertain sufficiently. He says but little in this general turmoil of working ship in a strong breeze, and that little is always to the point, emphatic, yet neither aggressive nor irritating. On the whole, we like him and dislike the mate—and it is a rare time, this, for the testing of a crew, officers and men evenly; there is no trying-time equal to a long spell of bad weather.

To digress somewhat for a moment, this is true especially at the beginning of a voyage, when we are all largely strangers to each other. Never creatures of much convention—as you shorefolk are—what little reserve we go in at the outset of our intercourse with one another, it is now sloughed—not as a serpent casts its skin, leaving a fine, new one covering the flesh, but temperamentally naked to each other, seldom ashamed at that, and often too ready to strike in defence of our crude bareness. You understand me? I hope you do; for I have no time to explain. The *Bucephalus* is groaning and writhing from stem

to stern-post ; from keel to truck, asking in her own piteous way for some easement in her labours ; and I know not at what instant there will come the shout : “ All hands on deck ! ” It is the first dog-watch, our turn below ; so, seeing that you asked me to “ jot down things as they happened, hot and strong,” I am scribbling this as I lie aslant in my bunk, sea-boots on, but outside the bunk-board, so that they don’t touch the bed. Of my eleven watch-mates some are stretched awkwardly, as I am ; others are sitting on their chests, playing euchre or mending something. A few are reading. Every one has a pipe going ; so the place is thick with smoke. We are waiting for five o’clock and tea. From outside we can hear the mate’s hard voice now and then, also the slosh-slosh, slosh-slosh of rubber sea-boots on the streaming decks. Heavy sprays are flying over continually, and a sea comes roaring aboard occasionally, getting its first impact on our side of this deckhouse-fo’c’s’le, then breaking up to rush aft and to leeward, a seething tumult eager to destroy, and defying all confinement.

But The Old Man and this hammering into a west-south-west three-quarter gale, against which we have had the confounded ill-luck to tumble before we are really clear of the chops of the Channel—I don’t like it, this “ carrying-on,” I mean. And who on earth—or at sea, rather, would have expected to meet such a snorter here at this time of the year ? O, Mother Carey, what a perverse creature you are !—Wollop ! Some one has come a heavy cropper by the lee-door-way yonder ; so the breeze is franked momentarily

with some verbal sulphur. Of course, The Old Man doesn't want to be driven back into that narrow water-way—no true seaman would in these circumstances, and this proves him to be at least that very welcome, but not always to be found, necessity aboard ship. Yet, holy sailor buy a knife with a shackle in it—as Tim Macdonald is fond of saying—he *is* punishing this packet in order to get sea-room. Here we are threshing away heavily under the foresail, top-sails and a couple of head-sails, when she would probably do better under two-thirds of the canvas. Still, he knows his ship, most likely, and I don't. For you must understand that every sailing craft has a temperament of her own, something that has to be learnt before the best can be got out of her. There she goes again—lurch and roll, lurch and roll. My boots, how she strains! If something doesn't go aloft soon, I shall be happily mistaken.

Summers, an argumentative Cockney, has lost his balance and lumbered between a light-hearted Spaniard and a heavy-eyed Finn, who were playing euchre at the after-end of the fo'c's'le yonder. The immediate result is an interrupted game and some "chin-music" that will probably last till tea-time; for wherever Summers happens into anything by way of an accident he instantly starts a controversy that, in its essence, is an inquiry as to why the other men were there when fate pitched him on to the spot. —Crash! . . .

A sea came aboard, smothered the deck-house and burst open our weather-door, which a fair-haired, lumbering, wooden-headed German, named Mann-

heim, didn't fasten properly, when we wore ship at eight-bells. Summers, Juan and Gustave were caught squarely by the in-rush of water, and—well, the little pandemonium can be easily imagined. I add merely that the first of the three was flung from his feet into the other fo'c's'le, but the Spaniard and the Finn managed to remain on our side. In a moment the place was over a foot deep. Chests were floating about. Our freshwater keg was carried along with the Cockney through the communication-doorway into the port-fo'c's'le; whilst boots, slippers, tin-plates, pannikins, and what-not were going on the rapids through the lee-doorway to the open deck. Naturally we jumped, all the other nine of us as one man, every one except the culprit swearing as to who had made the fool's mistake. And you can bet your bottom dollar that Mannheim got it hot whilst the bailing and swabbing, gathering up, replacing and clothes-exchanging were carried on. We did not sing "A life on the ocean-wave" during those ten to fifteen minutes of strenuous work and accusations. . . .

It is the afternoon watch, next day, happily in better weather. And what a night we have had! A little while before midnight away went the mizzen-lower-topsail, the only piece of canvas on that mast. But the mate—lover of "All hands!" as he is—was man enough to spread the reefed-spanker and begin to get the rags in with his own watch. Then, just after our call-bell was struck, the great foresail burst, making a report like a twenty-pounder. It was a fine-weather sail and never ought to have been

tried so severely. However, you may be sure that it was "Jump and go!" No time was allowed us to finish dressing, nor did the most of us need anything of the sort. Knowing not of the extent of the danger or the damage, we were into boots and oilskins and out of the fo'c's'le before you could say Jack Robinson. Then the strain on that fore-yard; the lashing of whips of canvas; the urging of our likeable second and third mates in by the mast; the hoarse shouts of the unliked chief officer on the deck below us, to whose yells there was many a muttered "Go to hell!" and worse rejoinders; the driving wind; the sprays that reached even up there; the bending* of the brand-new sail, unpliant in its stiffness, that should have been bent in Cardiff; the still heavy lurching of the ship; the semi-darkness—for, happily, there was a moon at the back of the clouds—and the whole hurly-burly I will leave to your imagination. I am tired and sleepy; so here goes for some "shut-eye."

* * * * *

My dearest of friends and well-wishers, with all your knowledge of men and things, your scholarship and ability to size-up tendencies, you scarcely know what it was you asked that afternoon on the dockside. Here we are, only seven days out, and two more "incidents" have happened. It is the second dog-watch—our turn below; but as most of the men are lying about the deck, smoking and yarning for'ard, I have the fo'c's'le mainly to myself. Yes, here we are—becalmed, in a swell that makes the sails slat

* The securing of a sail to the jackstays, yardarms and sheets is termed "bending."

14 EPISTLES FROM DEEP SEAS

heavily and the spars creak in their "paralls." We are not a hundred miles from the chops of the Channel,—a bad beginning truly, in which Appleyard has been referred to several times, with varying degrees of seriousness, as a probable Jonah. However, many a bad start has had a good end; and precedent and the green hope that springs eternal will, I trust, bring us to a fairly happy "Leave her, Johnny, leave her."

Forty souls are we in all—master, three mates, bo'sun, "Chips," "Sails," steward, "the doctor" whose culinary functions you know—seven "brass-bounders"* (the third-mate is one of them, their eldest), two-and-twenty A.B.s, two ordinary-seamen, and a piece of youthful depravity whom The Old Man has taken a fancy to carry as cabin-boy. British we are, too, of varying degrees, Scandinavians, a German, a Greek, a Portuguese and a Spaniard (who are already fingering their sheath-knives at each other), two Italians, a Hollander (The Old Man), an American "gas-bag," and two "Jamaica boys," who—in conformity with West Indian notions—think themselves the all-round best men aboard, the master not excepted. In that ironic, sailor phrase—"they have come to sea to wear their old clothes out."

Shylock told Bassanio that "ships are but boards." That immortal Jew and fair specimen of usury and human hate and failure was no sailor. He saw ships only as the money-thinker does everywhere and always. Ships are like houses; crews are like families, united or divided—more, they are as communities; each

* This is the shipboard name of apprentices, whose shore-relatives and friends fondly term "Middies."

one is a body politic in itself, the master being its magistrate and parson. So it is that given a voyage of sufficient length, or a number of Continental ones with the same manning, and almost every member of a vessel's company becomes known by a nickname. Old Tim is "Mumbles"—of which place, by Swansea, nearly every man here knows. "Dobey"—the O.S. of the port-watch—is Hindustani for washerman; hardly a day goes by but that Dobey has a piece of clothes hanging out to dry. Appleyard is "Lately." He is a lanky, vinegarish fellow, never the first at a piece of general work, but ever with a mouthful of excuses for his shortcomings, able enough as a seaman, when he will; yet, I believe, a coward utterly. The Spaniard is "Sing-Song," because he is mostly humming some native song, except when he and the Portuguese are jangling. The man who was merely "Bristol" is now "Bristol Bill." I am "The Log-Keeper," or "The Clerk," and probably something else and worse, which I have not yet heard.

Thus are we settling down to our sixty to eighty days' passage, with the intercommunications of ship-matiness running fairly. Yet there are certain indications that all will not go smoothly to the end. Adversity is said to give us some strange bedfellows; perversity gives us worse. I *would* ship in this packet, for the sake of what experiences I could get from the voyage—my only one, so far, in a clipper of 2000 odd tons. Well, a voyage is much like marriage—for better or worse, and no turning back till you round for home in a natural way. And if I come

through the worse, maybe the better for me in the end.

I have said that two other incidents have occurred. The lesser one was a fight—a proper English set-to twixt Bristol Bill and the Cockney. Moonlit and deadly it was while it lasted, between the deck-house that serves us as a fo’c’s’le and the break of the t’gal’n-fo’c’s’le. The former was the victor, and up to the present there have been no after-consequences. Being British they can fight and be friends again. But enough of brutalism for now. You are no more fond of such than I am. Besides, it runs in my blood that there are more fights to come before this gallant (I am giving her credit for that best which I hope she will prove to have in her) *Bucephalus* runs for her home-paddock. (The original was a male? Yes, I know. But what sailor could speak of a ship except as “she” and “her”? I often wonder where you shorefolk’s sense of fitness comes in. It is nearly always one of you that names a vessel. Yet do you ever think of the stupid inappropriateness of saddling one with a masculine name? Not you! You are so intent on business—*business*—BUSINESS, that I am learning to detest the word. Of course, *you* are not meant.)

Again and again have I asked myself if your landsmen do not sometimes forget, when they kneel to pray—such of them as do pray—forget the subject of the moment, and begin: “Father in Heaven—two-pounds-ten. If I pull this off—a thousand—;” then come to their senses and start afresh, to go wrong again, give it up and get into bed guiltily—as well they should—there

to dream that the angels have become bank-cashiers, with the Disciples as managers, the Apostles as directors, Saint Peter with the keys of the bullion-room, and their counting-houses turned into examination-rooms for passports to Heaven.

Ah, well, have I not come recently out of an illness that marred my set purpose ; and, worse still, out of the bitter welter of trying, without influence, to get work amongst such money-thinkers ? Pray you, bear with me, since the scholar is to be pardoned for that he followeth in the steps of his master, as Sidney said. Nature the Potter was bent on no rare and graceful specimen of her art when she fashioned me.

But the incidents ? Yes. The other was a very different affair from the moonlit stand-up for'ard—an affair that may have a worse result by-and-bye ; for it touches deeply one of the primitives of “ wind-jammer ” sailormen—their superstitions. It appears that the steward (an Englishman and a privileged shipmate of The Old Man's) drank heavily whilst in Cardiff. When we left, he stopped it suddenly for two days, then got to The Old Man's stock of rum and Schiedam, and went at both like a crew on a mooring-rope at the homeward-end of a long passage. The result was D.T.'s for forty-eight hours, during which he committed a sort of outrage on Tom, the ship's big, black, sleek cat—a match for any pair of rats that ever came to sea, and already a great favourite fore and aft. Let me try to tell you how the affair affected some of our crew.

Imagine : Our cracker-hash has been “ put away ” —breakfast. Most of my watch-mates have turned

in. The port-watch is working aft. Mumbles sits on the after-starboard-corner of the fore-hatch. He is cutting up tobacco, with his "owld dudeen" (a short, black, thick-bowled clay) held up-side-down between his few remaining teeth. I am sitting at the back—after-side*—of the pigsty, unseen by him and reading a translation of the "Rámáyana." No one else is on deck for'ard. With his one, humourful eye now on Denis then on his tobacco, he apostrophises the pig :

"For whoy—for whoy did he do the thing? Fwhat was the razon?" Denis seems to put his snout between the bars of his sty. He grunts: "Sure, the shtward must be crazy—downroight crazy; 'caze if he wasn't, he'd niver be afther doen the loikes of this thing. Be the powers av snuff, an' that's a snazin' oath, 'twad bate a Philidelpy lawyer to tell the whoy he did it. Do ye not think so, Dinis?" Denis gives another grunt, and Tim adds, "Ye're a fule, Dinis; but a foine pig aal the same, an' Oi hopes Oi'll git a bit o' ye."

A short silence follows. Mumbles again addresses the pig. Gustave—a heavy-shouldered, lumbering, slow-eyed Finn, whose surname is not an easy one,†

* It is a fairly common thing to put the open front of the sty facing for'ard when going down into fine weather, and to turn it around when the vessel is "lifting her latitudes." Its place is always for'ard, because of the smell; whilst the hen-coop is as regularly aft, so that it will be more difficult for fowls to be missing on wild, dark nights—not an uncommon happening when trouble is about.

† Aboard deep-water ships foreigners are always addressed by their Christian names when their surnames are at all difficult to pronounce. Where there is no difficulty in pronunciation, the use of the first name is a proof that the man is a pleasant one; this also applies in the case

and who is in our watch—comes along, joins the old man, and their talk might have taken place out here what time Drake singed the King of Spain's beard. They are full of wry-necked omens. I am about to give up this attempt to read the beautiful Indian epic, while having my after-breakfast smoke, when Antonio appears around the fore-port-corner of the deck-house. He is the dark-faced, black-haired, squat-shaped young Greek in the mate's watch. He has eyes that always seem to be full of suspicion, a round, dark-red face and a big mouth, but he says little ; it is half-hidden by a straggling, black moustache, and his heavy jaws and chin are covered with a stubble of the same hue. He has been sent for'ard on a piece of work, hears what the other two are talking about, puts his tarpot and marlinespike on the hatch and makes up the triad of croakers, rather with brief ominous hints than with direct prophecies of disaster. Most seamen are careless about their dress at sea ; Antonio is over-careless.

This fills my cup. I close the book and saunter aft, wondering if I shall turn in and read, put the book away and go to sleep, or lie in my bunk and give Oskar some conversational instruction in English, what time he tries vainly to teach me Swedish. He is a tall, upright, typical Swede, about my age, son of a medical man, was another runaway to sea, has a fiddle and can play it well. He also has a sextant and a tiny chronometer, which he can use, and has got The Old Man's permission to do so. He and I are

of Britishers, and the use of a nickname is either on the same grounds, or it proves that the users have no respect for the object.

great chums. Instead of going into the fo'c's'le, however, I wander on, aimlessly, reach the galley doorway and sit on its high sill. It is our hurrying, Newcastle "doctor's" rather slack time. He sits on the long locker at the fore-side of his caboose, munching a fish-ball from the cabin breakfast. I ask him: "How goes it, doc'?"

"The blitherin' idiot! Waat d'ye think on it? Ye're a readin'-man an' a sea-goin'-man, waat d'ye say about it?" he replies in his drawling, sing-song way.

"About what?" I ask.

"Ye knae waat. This mad trick o' the stooard's."

"I see nothing in it," say I.

"See naethin' in it!" he echoes scornfully, in all likelihood angered by the extra work he has to do, because of the steward being laid up. After finishing the fish-ball in silence he resumes, staring at the back of his great stove all the time: "Not saatisfied wi' gettin' them blue jim-jams on Th' Auld Man's rum, he must gae an' shave the ship's caat—or th' next dour to it. For twa pins I'd gae sick mesel'. But he'll knae about it. By Jimmy Diddle, sum o' the men'll let him knae when he's oot agen—an' sarve him reet, th' rum-guzzllin' ninny! I'd stop him a month's pay, if I warr Th' Auld Man—an' gie twa poond on it ta mesel'. Whaure the blee". . . .

The ship gives an extra roll in the swell, sending a half-filled bucket of salt water against the cook's legs. He rubs his shins; and I leave him, swearing alternately at the bucket then at the steward; who, sometime during the past night, has committed the

enormity of cutting and singeing Tom's whiskers close to his jaws.

In roaming for'ard again I meet Gleeson, an apprentice from somewhere up in Lancashire and evidently a lad of parts. He tells me that the argument in the half-deck* is whether or not the cat has lost its sense of smell along with its whiskers. He asks if I can shed any light on the subject. I reply that I cannot, but "doubt if the feelers have anything to do with the animal's olfactory nerve." He repeats the words and says he will "tell that to the half-deck." He also informs me that the second mate thinks nothing of the affair. I am not surprised at this; for I know that Mr. Jefferies is a steamboat-man, putting in the required time under square sails for a first mate's certificate.

I return to the fo'c's'le, climb into my bunk, and fall asleep; meanwhile the Finn, the German, and the two Jamaica boys expend themselves in semi-whispers on the portents of the "outrage."

On resuming duty at twelve o'clock it is my trick at the wheel. A breeze has sprung up, and another foul one, to boot. The ship is going close-hauled, on the starboard-tack, flying her main-royal, but with the light staysails stowed, making good weather, although she rolls queerly in the swell that comes up under her lee.

Presently The Old Man appears in the companion-way and steps on deck. He is just from dinner, and is not a typical Hollander. His figure is quite ordinary

* Where the apprentices are housed under the poop and partitioned off from the cabin, sail-locker, store-room, etc.

in width and somewhat under the medium in height. An accident seems to have shortened his right leg—possibly a compound fracture—and thus given him a right-forward sort of lurch in his walk. He has a big mouse-coloured moustache, a kind face and a pair of bluish eyes, paler and brighter yet not quite unlike those of that strange old man Shivers, in my story of whom you were so interested. He paces fore and aft, from the for'ard-rail of the poop nearly to the wheel-grating on which I stand. There is an unusual impatience in his movements. He wears an old, cloth cap, smokes his large, bent-stemmed, wooden pipe, the bowl of which he grips with his left hand, whilst his right one is thrust deep in his reefer-pocket. He is pre-occupied, noticing nothing more than the weather and how the ship is going, both observations being habitual rather than voluntary. Every now and then I hear him mutter two or three words, and dare be bound that this is largely what he says to himself :

“ Why tder tdevil tdid he tdo it ?—tder fool ! Has he gone matd altogetder ? ”

Suddenly, as he turns for'ard, about three feet away and a little below me, he twists his neck, looks up at me and snaps out :

“ Now tden ! Where tde tdunder are you steerin' ? Keep tder topsails full !—Vill you ? ”

Not three minutes ago he complained that I was keeping her too full, although the luffs of the upper sails were then just a-shiver.

“ All right, sir,” I answer ; give the ship a little more weather helm, and remember that The Old Man is not his usual self.

"Tdat's better," says he, more in his general, fatherly way, then trudges off for'ard, leans for a few moments against the fore-shroud of the weather-mizzen-rigging, gets a slap on his face with the fringe of a spray that comes aboard in the waist, turns aft again, passes by the binnacle—close to and directly in front of the wheel—muttering as before, and I know he is saying something like this :

"Tdamn fool, tdamn fool ! Tdis no sjoke ! Less tdings cause trouble in many ships.—And a cat, too—trouble, trouble. Hope tdis breeze won't freshen.—If tder fool does it again, by tdunder, I'll——"

The fine, sleek, black object of his meditation appears at the top of the companion-ladder. The Old Man goes to him, picks him up, strokes the singed stumps of his whiskers compassionately, talks to him much as I believe he has cogitated during his fore-and-aft walk, then descends the companion-way, carrying Tom in his arms.

During the second half of the watch we take in the royal and other light sails. At eight-bells there is a further and a more considerable reduction of canvas ; then we go below, leaving the starboard-watch in charge of the deck.

Just after we have finished tea, the mate comes on to the fo'c's'le-deck-house with some of his men. We soon learn what they are there for—the better securing of boats, coils of mooring-ropes, spare light spars, etc., in readiness for a bad night. I am sitting on a big spar at the leeside of the deck, smoking, and I begin to study the mate, as he gives his orders in that ever-rasping voice of dissatisfaction, his keen light-

grey eyes on everything, nothing missed, and he now and then giving a vigorous, savagely instructive pull or heave to what is being done. He is a "wind-jammer"-man and, I believe, a Bostonian to boot. This is his first voyage with The Old Man. A most able man, apparently, but steeped in the mental ways of his sort, and whose very nature is to drive. In between it all he seems to me to be talking to himself, and the whole thing goes in this way :

"Slick gone—gone slick as a whistle. I guess this is no drink ; an' I guess it'll be no joke afore we've done.—Give another heave on that lashing there, damn you !—*You*, Antonio !—Can't you see ? Lord Almighty, if I had the eyes o' some of you I'd lend 'em to potatoes to see to grow with. . . . No, joke, no, the golldarned galoot ! By the shoes of Washington, but he can thank his stars that this tin kettle is a 'Limejuicer' an' not a 'Bluenoser' ;* I just guess he'd get mauled some if 'twas so, by-an'-bye.—Here, Sniffles——."

The cabin-boy has come to the galley for some hot water and is standing at the doorway. He is not now allowed to enter, because he literally cannot keep his "pickers and stealers"—as Hamlet calls them—off things that don't belong to him. "Sniffles"

* Nova Scotian sailing vessels ; at one time they were some of the hardest craft afloat. For this reason their reputation lives, like that of the "Packet-rats," *i.e.* the men who manned the sailing packets that plied so furiously between Liverpool and New York just prior to the advent of steam-driven vessels. British merchant-craft are the only ones that are compelled to carry lime-juice, to be served out daily with salt provisions ; hence "Limejuicer," which the American seamen uses in a scornful sense.

is the mate's pet name for him ; it tells its own origin, and is now in common use.

“ Do you *hear* ? ” A tap with a stiff rope's-end on the boy's head secures his attention. “ Hand up that piece o' line.—No, you leather-head, not *that—this* ! Can't you see ? Have you left your eyes in the locker, where you keep the things you steal ? There !—That's it—*you* ! ” The mate gets the right piece of line, a lashing that has fallen to the deck, near the galley-doorway, and concludes with : “ Boy, you have a head—so has a pin an' a bollard an' some other things ; only they can't thieve an' lie. Go ! ”

The boy goes. The work on the deck-house is finished, and the mate takes his men to other jobs ; but it is fixed in my mind that his thoughts run elsewhere every now and then.

In the fo'c's'le matters are worse. There are talks of gales and disasters in strings as long as the fall of the main-brace. Meanwhile, the wind freshens. Night comes down. Eight-bells are struck, and the order is given to shorten sail. The *Bucephalus* is making such bad weather of it that we are not sorry further to reduce her canvas.

Both watches being now at work, the fore-upper-topsail is stowed quickly under its gaskets. Then the clew-lines and bunt-lines of the main one are manned, amid more mutterings of trouble. The yard rattles down. The lines are hauled, and a leap is made at the rigging. Sing-Song is the first to get his head over the main-top. In a moment he springs at a backstay, and goes to the deck like a monkey down a lightning-

rod. As he goes he cries out something about "el demónico" being in the top. Bristol Bill is next on the futtock-shrouds. He is too modern to be much afflicted with either superstitions or belief in the supernatural. He shouts that the mad steward is there, and has the cat with him. It is the greeny glitter of Tom's eyes that Sing-song has seen.

We leave them there till the sail is stowed. Then, whilst the most of us go down and continue the work generally, some of the men get the steward and the cat to the deck—the former with a whipline around him, lest he should fall or spring from the rigging, and the latter in a covered basket. I will leave you to imagine what the talk is like when the work is done and we have come below.

EPISTLE II

Satan a sailor : How the sea became salt : A Dane and an idea :
Burning a candle to the Devil : A Tyke's interference : Nicholas,
Nick, and Nykken : " A monkey to shave and no one to hold
the lather-box " : The pull of the land : Logged : Lately and
his cough : The cat overboard ! : Lately's punishment :
Dangerous work : Nearly gone : Four callous men.

THREE more days have gone by ; and we have worn through to finer weather and a steady, slanting breeze. In fact, a change for the better took place on the morning after that daft affair in the main-top, and with the mending of the weather the steward came to his senses. During that day we heard—via the apprentices and " the doctor " and given as from the delirious talk of the steward—that the latter had committed the " outrage " on the cat, under the illusion that it had developed a mania for sitting on the edge of his bunk and tickling his cheek with the ends of those fine, long feelers that had passed away. All the same, this did not still the prophecies as to the dire things that were—and, for that matter, are yet, in spite of the general improvement in our affairs—to come out of crazy tricks with a *black cat*, which, to old-fashioned " shellbacks," is still synonymous with the Devil.

By-the-way, has it ever occurred to you how closely the Prime Mutineer is connected with the sea ? He is said to have been a sailor, proper—chiefly, I

believe, by Scandinavians. Yet the legend gives us no idea as to where and under what flag he sailed. Because of this inadequacy and other obvious circumstances in the story we can only suppose that his nautical ventures were very early in the unwritten history of man's marine activities. This brevity in supposition flings several thoughts and pictures into one's mind as to the how and where of his first voyage, its incidents, his shipmates and what came and went between him and them. With regard to the inevitably manifold results—here speculation would run wild. However, the facetious will probably remark: "Perhaps that's one reason why seamen are such devils, in a way"—a sort of hereditary tendency that comes of tainted environment, and no more to be avoided than is measles or the fatal aptitude to preach.

At any-rate it is certainly curious that a seafaring reputation should be attached to the Prince of Darkness. (By-the-bye, I suppose his style and title are due to his holding being only a principality, like some Teutonic ones. But why do we attribute darkness to a place that was, during so many centuries, rumoured to be all fire, except for those vividly-imagined gnashings, wailings, etc., and—er, well, fire? This also reminds one how lamentably human imagination has fallen off since, say, the nearer end of the Middle Ages, or up to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Why, the things and places and actions and what-not imagined by our fathers' fathers' fathers, etc., and our intellectually anæmic selves are quite down and rose-like when compared

to the lurid emphasis of those hot minds which first lit the fires of our national fancy ! Whether or not this is as it should be, that we are, or are not, here trending in the right way, may be best fought out by some Literary and Debating Society. Still, this is a digression—as the Atlantic roller roared when, owing to the steersman putting his helm up, it broke impotently under the quarter instead of smashing things up amidships. So let you and me return to the Devil afloat.)

It is curious that this variously-imagined personage has so wide a connexion with the sea. One would think that he, considering his supposed make and generalities, would stand particularly aloof from an element which is so greatly opposed to his man-made temperament. Apparently there is something wrong here ; but whether it is with his Highness (a curious sort of low highness, this) or the sea, or with those imaginations which bodied him forth and gave his airy nothings a distant habitation and a name, also endowed him with corners of identity—well, this must remain a matter of personal opinion. Yet proverbs, citing his conjunction with the world of salt waters, rise in my memory like the famed falling of leaves in Vallombrosa.

Scandinavian sailors say generally that on a certain vague occasion—believed, apparently, to have been during his first voyage ; when he was afflicted with all that a greenhorn must suffer—he turned the sea salt in order to make those on it, and castaways in particular, curse themselves into his hands. If he did so, it was a most unfair trick to play ; for sea-

going men have trials enough to drive them into bad ways, without their having to risk perdition by a forced back-lane—so to write. “A devil of a cook” is all too common a saying, and surely smacks of a ship’s galley. In connexion with it we have the Norse proverb, “Heaven sends food, but the devil sends cooks to spoil it;” which is another instance of how northern seamen think his Satanic majesty is especially solicitous in their direction. Finnish sailors (amongst whom there is probably more superstition than in any other nation’s seamen to-day) say, when opposed by a head-wind, “a dead sailor has pricked *Satana*”—a decidedly quaint reason, if nothing more.

Baltic seamen generally have a belief that there is a demon for every kind of storm known to their region, and that these do their work at the behest of Nikken or Nyck, on whose mood the violence and duration of the storm depend. (There are various spellings of the name, as you will know, being a classical man.) I remember a middle-aged Dane, who, on a certain passage from Riga to Lynn, moodily declared one evening that “Ulla Nek-troll” was preparing to give us trouble, and would do so severely before morning. At the time the sun was setting amidst those dark, sullen, reddish-yellow tints and jagged clouds known to seamen as “devil’s teasings.” The schooner was old and leaky, making a gale anything but a pleasant contemplation. Yet “Ulla Nek-troll,” or some other sea-sprite of an evil sort, made us often think, during the next three days that we should never get out of the Gulf of Bothnia until the sea gave up its dead. However, we did

crawl out of it—with the loss of a jib-boom, a fore-topmast and at the cost of much pumping—and very interesting proved some subsequent talks with the Dane. He had coined names, lineages and attributes for each storm-presiding demon of the Baltic. But what of that? We have here an apprentice—the Lancashire lad—who, so far as I can learn, has formulated a language of his own, grammar and all.

When a gale is threatening, Portuguese sailors say they will “burn a candle to Satan,” and actually do so at times; on which occasions if the gale be short, weak, or fail to come, the propitiator never fails to take unto himself the credit of having staved off an evil. One such well-recollected occurrence came about whilst crossing “the Bay,” from Barcelona to Newport. Our vessel was a steam-tramp. During our stay at the Spanish port one of the A.B.’s had been found dead on the shore of that evil suburb known as Barcelonette, and in his place The Old Man had shipped a native of Villa Real.

Soon after we lost sight of Cape Finisterre a strong nor’wester came down on us. The Villa Realite carried candles for burning during his prayers. (On occasions, when he was in a hurry to be about something else, the candle had to suffice, he the while probably enhancing his personal appearance to hasten ashore to a dance.)

In the morning-watch of the second day of the breeze, when the big seas of “the Bay” were making our position unpleasantly precarious, the bo’sun (a rough son of the Humber’s northern bank) entered the fo’c’s’le on his way to obtain a block from the fore-

peak, a store-room for odds and ends of working-gear, below our living place. For his purpose he needed a light, and thought himself lucky at finding the "Portugee" on his knees by a burning candle, we other A.B.'s and the ordinary seaman of the watch being apparently asleep. Without so much as a "by your leave" or "thank you" the bo'sun took the candle and made his way for'ard. The noise of his taking off the fore-peak-hatch caused the praying one to look up. By this he discovered the insult committed on him, his occupation, and on the particular saint whose intervention he was then seeking.

So he arose, to reclaim his candle. But the burly Yorkshireman quietly pushed the little fellow aside, as though he were a boy, and went below on his business—leaving the other staring after him in stupefaction, and hearing muttered indifferent comments on "The damned foolish waste o' wik an' taller in burnin' candles to Owd Nick, who didn't care a brass farthin' for all the candles in Poortigal. As for prayin' tu th' Vargin same time—well, when heathen do let loose the'r ideas, ther's no knowin' what will happen."

The Portuguese got his candle and went on praying, when the bo'sun had done with it and gone. But he made no trouble about the interruption—neither did the gale about his praying, so far as we could see.

There are many other national proverbs and customs coupling Satan with the sea. By a curious coincidence in two words the very name of the seaman's patron saint has grown to be connected with one of his dark majesty's cognomens. St. Nicholas is not

only the special saint of boys, girls, scholars, parish clerks, Aberdeen and Russia ; he also stands in the same light to thieves and sailors. Thus all of us, when young, have something to complain of in the matter of guiding company. Why the bygone, cannie fathers of the " granite city " elected to be watched over by one of such doubtful society is past our comprehension, particularly as they were Scotsmen. Possibly they knew best, whether they were sailors or landsmen. Russia is too large for one man to approach on any but friendly lines. From Nicholas to Nick is but the dropping of two syllables, and the changing of a letter that scarcely matters. Yet how great is the change effected !—especially when one recollects how widespread in the common mind is the old Norse idea of Nick—in whatever way spelt—being the name of a personification of evil. To this the qualifying " Old " was bound to come as a matter of course.

Out of all this grows a muddle that becomes more complicating as we think of it. Mark—the descent from Nikken, or Nych, through Nicholas to " nick," the thieves' word for stealing. Truly, it would require much talk on the part of St. Nicholas to argue respectability into his presence in the company of these " devil's clerks." In fact, his being the patron saint of seamen has, in itself, much to answer for ; seeing how quite possible it is that were it not for his connexion with us, we, as a body, should be much less coupled with " Old Nick " ; although landsmen may at times have cause for dubbing us " devils " of a non-watery kind. However, with these few state-

c

ments as ground-work for thought, I will leave the matter to you. Stay!—

Oskar tells me of a Norwegian legend as to how the sea became salt—another instance of the inherent idea that wickedness is bound to be punished: A certain king put to sea for a pleasure trip. Being fine weather, he took his three daughters with him. But a breeze came, off the land, and drove them far out. It freshened into a gale. Seas washed aboard, and the crew were lost. Then the galley drifted into a bay of an uninhabited island. When it became apparent that the four were to spend the remainder of their lives on the island, the daughters wanted their father to be husband to them. As he was a good man, he disagreed, and asked Odin to punish them. So the god set them afloat again on the galley, gave them perpetual youth, and inflicted on them the task of grinding-salt till their carnal desires died out—which their everlasting youth would prevent.

From the “gift” and the task you may draw a moral that will either adorn or spoil the tale (didn't the Greeks say something about punishment-gifts from the gods?); but that I leave to you. I should add that the salt came from an inexhaustible supply in the bottom of the galley and was turned overboard from the mills.

* * * * *

Another day: We have just had “a monkey to shave and no one to hold the lather-box.” The port-watch was relieving ours, at eight-bells this afternoon, when the Greek said something that was very un-

acceptable (I don't know exactly what it was) to Curly Jones, one of our Jamaica boys. It happened by the starboard-fore-rigging, near our side's fo'c's'le-doorway, where three or four of us stood. Curly (as we mostly call the black—our watch's chantey-man he is) being a Britisher, and proud of the fact, would not draw steel. He up fist instantly, and down went the degenerate of Heracles and all the heroes. But only to come up the next moment, knife in hand, true to his sort, and to drop there and then on the spot, quite still—not his own length from where Lately went down under the wronged husband's blow.

Sam Jones (the other West Indian, the bigger one of the two and Curly's *fidus* Achates; but there is no relationship between them) was close by, in the act of surrendering his work to a relief. So he up with his fid,* and gave Antonio so heavy a blow with the thick end of it that a little more force would have meant that most impressive of occasions, a burial at sea.

Interfere? No, not us, when the affair is not *ours*. To do so would not be to follow the way of the sea. Here every man is his own champion, and commonly wise if satisfied to remain so. This may appear to be callousness; in reality it is only shipboard philosophy. Besides, the whole matter was up and over like a tropical squall or love in Spain. I don't believe it occupied a minute. Even the mate, quick hand as I dare say he is at such turns, and coming with the young second officer along the deck near by, was only just in time to snatch the fid after the blow.

* A large sort of marlinespike, made of *lignum vitæ*.

Now—the Greek having regained consciousness—the whole party are aft, “on the carpet,” with The Old Man as magistrate, prosecuting or defending counsel, according to the moment of his changing ideas of the case; also with the two mates as witnesses plenipotentiary. And by the outcome we shall know how future affairs are likely to be treated by the rather limited omnipotence under which we sail.

It was the suddenness of this that sent me post-haste into the fo’c’s’le here to resume my epistle. And, to turn from the little volcano that is fizzling out in the cabin, here we are, with the heartaches over. Oh, yes, my friend, we have our wrenches of that sort, even as you landsfolk have. As the old song says of the men in the charge: “Be sure the foremost in the ranks has wiped away a tear”; so it is, in a way, with the worst of us rolling stones, who gather but little moss, and generally reap as little wisdom. The most “hard-cased shellback” that ever hauls on a rope, whether he be leaving woman or no woman, kin or no kin, feels the pull of the land on him whenever he puts to sea from a home port. At least, such is my opinion, based on observation. Johnson said to Boswell: “When men come to like a sea life they are not fit to live on land.” But there were some things which that typical Englishman did not know, talk he never so learnedly about them. Although this “waste of waters” has twice made me a cripple, has once had me fast in its ravenous maw, once pretty securely, and has many a time threatened to have me again, I still love it; and still I hate to leave the land on an outward passage. With Swinburne—

who, I think, loved the sea far in excess of his understanding of it—I say : “ I will go back to the great, sweet mother—mother and lover of men, the sea.” Or in my own much smaller way I cry :

Warp her out and set her free ! Earth is home no more to me.

Let me go, while leeward surges sing the day's long dirge on Western Sea.

I would know once more the heave of spacious decks above the swell,

Feel the salt spray on my face, and hear the winds their wild tales tell.

Give, O give me back again the God of Oceans and of skies !

Give me back the endless spread of space, where noble thoughts and prayers may rise.

Warp her out.—My soul is sick of trader's petty thoughts and pride ;

Lay her on the starboard-tack,—my compass, sextant, chart for guide.

Give, O give me back again the openness of Nature's face !

Give me back the wild sea's roar to stead your empty pride of place !

So I have cried whilst trying vainly to obtain work in your callous life ashore, merely that I may follow the bent of my mind, which I cannot do here. Love—if that be the word—is here ; yet the heart aches to leave those other loves behind. And you, I know, will not think these lines are a rhapsody merely ; a sudden flush of emotion, made vivid by their contrast to tarpots and brutalism ; a sort of backward

spring of the pendulum of feeling—a natural reaction. You, who say you know me in and out, will take what I write, and add no commentary that is neither here nor in my mind. Nor will you say that we sailor-men are more self-contradictory than landmen are. Our leaving the things that we love only for that which we both love and dread is but one of the proofs that, in spite of our being “simple seamen,” we still are also compact of the inconsistencies that make up the subtleties of humanity. But are we, from voyage to voyage, acting as agents entirely free of all except ourselves? No, my friend, and much I doubt if anything under heaven is so. There, past the fo’c’s’le doorway, goes Bristol Bill, humming :

“ I spent all me tin
With the girls a-drinking gin ;
So on the briny ocean I must wander.”

What, come wandering this “watery desolation” because he has flown too high a kite in those old streets back of Bristol quay?—this strong, keen man who loves the flesh-pots of the land, who has worked on the dockside, and can again when it pleases him to do so. You will not believe that, although most of the people around you would, if it were put to them. Rather quiet “hard-case” as he is, our Bristolian is here, fundamentally, because this “mother and lover of men” will not let him free of her thrall—has again called him out to her, despite himself and all the blandishments he knows in your life ashore. The sea’s ever-onward movement ; its measureless might ; its mystery over the horizon ; its wondrous beauty, that changes from day to day, always similar,

but never the same, its untold energy, and something of the fascinating terribleness that women feel when they persevere to look on that which they dread, have always drawn men from the land, home-lovers though they were, all the same. So it must always be. To me it seems to be that change is the first law of Nature ; for even self-reproduction, her greatest law apparently, is a part of the law of change. Yet there are some things that can never change. And this land-pull on the roamer's heart is one of them. I wonder if it is that, his being for the present more solid than liquid, the land has on him a kindred pull, which the mysterious power of the sea is breaking for a while ? Well, there are more secrets in the depths of Nature than we dream of even in our musings, and I am certain that this heart-pull is more psychic than temperamental. And if I am off my course, what of that ? You asked, amongst other things, for my own thoughts, gave me an erratic course to follow ; and you must bear with me, " sith the scholar is to be pardoned that he followeth in the steps of his master."

* * * * *

The " Jamaica boys " have returned from aft, and the Greek is at work, feeling rather queer, you may be sure. The results of the trial are, up to now : Curly has been logged two days' pay for " striking a shipmate " ; Antonio has suffered in the same way, but to the extent of a week's wages,* for an " intended murderous assault " ; and Sam has been commended

* All such fines go to the Board of Trade, for what particular purpose no one seems to know.

for his prompt prevention. Of course, the whole thing is on every man's tongue, except amongst those who are working near the mate. In the fo'c's'le here there are twelve talkers, each one having some particular shade of opinion all to himself and more or less insistent on his point. Still there is no excitement worth mentioning. At the same time, writing in the midst of it is not one of the easiest of tasks. So away goes my literary gear, and I am off for tea, just as Sails (another Bristolian, and one with little heed of ship-board etiquette *) pokes his head in at the doorway and chants humorously :

“Cheer up, Sam, don't let your spirits go down,
For there's many a girl that you know well
Is looking for you in the town.”

* * * * *

Lately has developed a cough—“a foine cemetery bark,” says Mumbles ; and the cat affair has come up again, with almost tragic consequences. But of the man first and his share in the other afterwards. I have been studying him. He is tall, thin, dark, fidgety, with a sparse crop of very fine hair, scanty eyebrows, a hanging lip, and is now becoming known as “Jonah the Growler.” He had a stoop about his shoulders and a rather inset chest, when we left the Bristol Channel. Now he is always railing against fate and his circumstances generally. He “hacks up the bark,” as this lovable Irishman puts it, from

* Aboard of large “wind-jammers” the sailmaker, like the bo'sun and carpenter, is expected to keep away from the men's quarters. In a sense the first and third are petty officers almost as much as the bo'sun is ; and the officers proper do not like to see them making free with the men

sleeping to sleeping again, and keeps his watch awake with it during half their time below. If any of us are looking at him when he coughs he puts one hand on his chest. At the same time, with head down so far that his glance is upwards, he glares at us "like a duck in a thunder-cloud"; saying how "very, very bad" it is, or delivering himself of the cryptic: "My God!" huskily, nearly breathless and with a curious elongation on the "o." He has, I believe, some real chest trouble. (You know that I have been a patient in eight hospitals, and so learnt to know a real cough when I hear one.) But the malingering to which he attains by the way of it has robbed him of every scrap of sympathy. Apparently he is a skulker by nature, ever ready to quarrel, but never to fight. Even before the cough became persistent, whenever there was a crowd at a task his high, round shoulders were always seen lurching slowly along in the rear. Now the harsh, throaty accompaniments to that feature get him enough undisguised scorn to put movement and retaliation into any ordinary man. This show of feeling, however, makes no change in him.

The Old Man has had him aft, listened all about him with a stethoscope (either out of the medicine-chest, or The Old Man's private property), and given him some physic, at the taking of which there is always a sort of tragic pantomime. He doesn't throw the medicine away, as a more simple malingerer would. Oh, no! He takes it with decisive regularity, and always in the presence of as many as possible of his shipmates. Of course, it is generally believed that three or four doses of salt water a day would do

Lately more good than could be obtained by all the contents of the medicine-chest.

To cap the matter, he has taken to driving the cat away, whenever it comes for'ard, and especially if it goes into their fo'c's'le. (He never liked the animal.) He swears that it has, in effect, looked on him with an evil eye, and persists in his treatment of it, in spite of all the strenuous opposition against him. I should not be surprised if his attitude towards Tom is due chiefly to our dislike of him and our preference for the cat. (It is a curious thing that although a black cat is supposed, by the illiterate, to have some mysterious connexion with the Devil—by-the-bye, was not this honour attributed to a black dog in mediæval times?—hardly any one ever appears to think that evil will come of it, unless some harm be done to the animal. Perhaps this is due to the popular notion of its being a talisman of good luck, or the diplomacy—Greek euphemism in another form—of treating your enemy well in order to be well treated by him.)

However, you will see by this that Lately has become as disquieting a shipmate as ever footed a ratline or kept a look-out. What with his humours, the jangling of Carlos and Sing-Song (the seriousness of which is stultified by the Spaniard's light-hearted gaiety), the slumbering yet easily-seen fire of Antonio's hatred of Sam and Curly Jones, and a new trouble that has sprung up between Mannheim—the German—and Summers—the Stepneyite, both of them in our watch—matters are kept pretty lively for'ard here.

As to the affair that nearly became a tragedy: The day had been marked by a variety of winds,

cat's-paws and calms, with a tendency to squalls as the evening drew on. Cummings (an intelligent young fellow from Belfast, and the runaway-son of a linen-bleacher) was playing with Tom by the star-board-fore-rigging. (They are especially fond of each other.) The play consisted of Tom climbing the running-gear and shrouds after a paper-ball which Cummings hauled up and let down by a piece of sail-twine over one of the ratlines. Then down came a squall, taking our rather inexperienced second mate by surprise. It struck the ship with a rush that sent us (it was our watch out) hurriedly to sheets, tacks, halyards, down-haulers, clewlines and buntlines. (Happily the mate caused the lighter staysails to be taken in during the first dog-watch.)

At the instant Tom was some eight or ten feet up the running-gear by the fore-shroud—the lee-side; and, as we rushed on to the scene, Cummings drew back, momentarily forgetting his black friend. Lately (to whose faults I must add a tendency to officiousness, particularly when his interferences appear to do him credit and make some one his debtor; he was off duty at the time) sprang from his crouching seat by the deck-house, grabbed the fore-topmast-staysail-halyards, and let them go with a run and a flourish that shook Tom from his hold and dropped him over the rail.

Naturally this increased the hullabaloo in a second. Cummings, seeing what had happened, knocked Lately down on the spot, and seemed as if he would jump on him. (He thought, all in that flash of time—and most of us still think—that our Jonah had purposely

jerked the cat overboard.) Between Tom's disappearance and Cumming's blow, Buckley—a tall, lithe, elder apprentice with a slight hare-lip and a queer little lisp—sprang at the lee-rail just abaft the waist, crying to those who were near him to lend a hand. In an instant he was head-first over the rail, while three or four men and apprentices held him by the legs and feet. Then up they brought him, with the poor, terrified cat in his hands—just as I was snatched from the same death, over the bow of the *Egeria* some eight and a half years ago. It was lucky for Tom that the squall was pressing the *Bucephalus* heavily to leeward, rather than driving her along, thus shortening the distance between the lee-rail and the water. Besides, if the ship had been racing along, Tom would have been astern before Buckley could have saved him.

I will leave you to guess what matters were like amongst us generally when canvas was reduced, and we were all free to foregather and talk again. For a while it appeared very much as if Lately would get some rough handling, which he would certainly have got, and plenty of it, if Tom had been lost. As it was, his right eye had put on a fine suit of mourning, concerning which he had shown no sign of physical retaliation, although he was half a head taller than Cummings and had a much longer reach. Of course, he paid back to the full verbally—he is just the one to do that. It was quite two-bells in the first watch when the curse, threat, and accusation-loaded air of the fo'c's'le calmed down, leaving us to sleep, and the majority of the port-watch to creep out on deck.

The squall became a breeze that threatened to make us heave-to. By the forenoon of the following day we were labouring along under the fore- and main-topsails, the mizzen-lower-topsail and three or four fore-and-aft sails. Up to this time Lately had been the object of restrained admonition or scornful reproach from the master—who hates trouble amongst the crew—right through all hands down to Sniffles—who just loves to see a shindy, but not to be in one.

Now the bo'sun—a wiry, gingery, angular, big-framed, short-winded and emphatic man from the Isle of Dogs—sent Lately to re-secure some lines that had got adrift from the little fife-rail under the forestay. Of course, Lately grumbled as he went, but mainly to himself and the men he passed, asking why some one nimbler and stronger (and there came the cough) than he could not be sent? He knew the danger and the utter need of keeping all his senses on the alert. All the same, he moved about the task as he did about most things else—lumberingly, mouthful of the injustice he was suffering and, I believe, half-careless of what might happen. Such was his nature, in fact, that I daresay he was in part desirous of getting a knocking-about in a sea, just to show all hands, and the bo'sun and the mate in particular, how criminal it was to send him to such dangerous work.

Then it came, apparently with no more warning than its in-board roar—a wall of greeny water, laced with a frothing white along its top, that crossed the weather-bow, nigh sudden as a clap of thunder, and some of Lately was seen here and there, now a foot,

then an arm or his head, mixed up with the unfinished lines in the hurly-burly.

In a few moments the water had cleared away, some of it on to the main-deck, most of it over the lee-bow—the starboard—on the edge of which, partially outside the lowest bar of the iron railings, Lately was fouled in a bight of the fore-topmast-staysail down-hauler, and yelling frightenedly for help. As the water swept back to its native quarters, the ship rolled up to windward. Lately struggled to get safely inboard again, all the time calling, in a voice of distinct fear, for some one to go to his assistance.

The mate on the poop, and the bo'sun somewhere aft along the deck, shouted to know what was the matter. Chips came out of his workshop, abaft the galley, and under the same roof as the fo'c's'le, and looked fore and aft.

The only men near enough to be of timely service to Lately was a group made up of Antonio, Ericksen—a Norwegian—Yank and the Portuguese. They were gathered under the lee of the deck-house, near the fore-starboard-corner of it, just where they would escape the worst of the sprays yet not be skulking too openly. They saw Lately's danger; but he was a Jonah and something else. So not one of them budged—the “gas-bag” because he was too callous and too careful of his own safety, the others because of their superstitions. The belief of the latter was that any one who saved the Devil-cursed man would eventually share his punishment.

Lately slipped, struggling, back aboard with the last part of the weather-roll—just as the mate yelled

an order for some one to go to him, and the bo'sun and another started for'ard along the weather-deck. But with that windward roll, and before the intending helpers could reach the fo'c's'le-head, or Lately regain his feet, a second, though, as usual, a smaller sea came over, more for'ard than the other one ; and he, now free of the down-hauler and missing the lee-rails by a foot or so, was flung down the starboard-ladder to the main-deck—a bundle of sorely-bruised, gasping, complaining, partially drowned and wholly frightened humanity. And, indeed, who could not pity the poor beggar, in remembrance of those few seconds on the edge of pretty certain eternity, when the seething water under the bow boiled up close to him, and it must have seemed to be impossible that he could escape ?—only such as those who stood near and made no move towards him.

As may be expected, the action of those four half-fearful, wholly-callous men has been the cause of much friction between them and their foreign supporters and our less superstitious group. On both sides there are hard nuts to crack—on the one hand sullenly defiant men mumbling crude excuses for their lack of humanity and state of mind, men who have been in many a *mêlée*, and bear physical and temperamental signs of battle and the general opposition of life ; on the other hand, quicker tongues, broader thoughts, brighter looks, greater grit and grip, and all the characteristics that mark the newer school of seamen from the old.

EPISTLE III

Our "Ancients" and "Moderns" : Some superstitions :
Our general state : Bristol Bill, Benton, and their compact :
Sails intervenes : Officers who wash their clothes : A sailorman
and three "commercial" : The "beach-comber" : A rescue :
" *El leproso!* " : Heaven's missed opportunity : One of Hell's
ante-rooms : Pandemonium : Death's calm in Hell.

You will not be surprised to learn that what I have told you of Lately and the cat has caused a sharp division amongst all hands for'ard. We are clearly of two parties, which might be termed The Ancients and The Moderns. I give them first place as a matter of good manners, and because of their numbers and antiquity. (You know that I have a sort of reverence for the old, whether it be good or bad.) In one sense we are twelve Britishers against nine foreigners, two West Indians, and the "white-washed" American. But the nine stand together. Curly and Sam Jones are with them in belief, although they say little on the subject; and would, if it came to a pitched battle, be on our side—merely because they are "Britishers." Morally, however, they are with the enemy—as one could only expect them to be; so, honestly, are such ancient-minded argonauts as Mumbles, Old Tom Benton, and Summers.

Thus, at most, we are nine to fourteen—with Yank as Jack-on-both-sides, according to his mood and the trend of the argument. I have said before

that he is a "gas-bag"; and much "chin-music" never made either a sailor or a desirable man. Besides, he is mortally afraid of "knife-work," although he tries hard to hide his weakness 'neath a deal of tall talk. As a matter of simple fact, there is not much beyond talk, idleness, food, sleep, and safety of which he has no fear. By this you will see that however sceptical he is about superstitions (and at heart he is thoroughly so), unwelcome as a friend and contemptible as an enemy, he is commonly on the side of The Ancients.

During some days it appeared as if there would be serious trouble—in such times as squalls, tacking, and wearing of ship, bracing-up at change of watches; in all the periods of quick hurrying to and fro, when men are apt to take mishaps as intended insults, and chance nothings become suddenly matters of vital importance; and again when grumbling and arguments rose sharp and rankly in the fo'c's'le, after work was done. Happily, however, it is all passing away—superficially, that is. For once stir up an ancient seaman's antipathy, on the score of his superstitions and your contempt of them, and you never know when his hate will leap into dire activity. Besides, you must remember that in this case a direct and emphatic charge of cowardice has been levelled against The Ancients—and that rankles.

As to their superstitions generally—these are many and varied. Only this morning, as I sat for'ard, in a calm, smoking, just after breakfast, the Finn came along, his big, rounded shoulders lurching a little

ahead of his body, and suggesting the motion of a Dutch galiot's bluff bows in a seaway.

"Tamn tis wedder!" muttered he, coming to a halt, and fixing the gaze of his pale-blue eyes over the oily waters and on the horizon away to port.

"What's the matter with it, man? A long passage is a long pay-day—isn't it?" I returned, looking at his heavy, roundish face, with its sparse crop of fine, short, fair hair (for he never shaves at sea); whilst I thought of what an animal he would be in a fight.

He made no immediate answer. But presently he mumbled disjointedly about his hatred of changeable weather and the work it entails. He likes to be in "the trades." Then he went to the port-side of the foremast, stuck his sheath-knife savagely into the deck by the foot of the mast, with its edge towards the port beam, said "T'ere!" and came back, around the fife-rail, to where I sprawled in the shade on deck.

"What's that for, Gustave?" I asked, knowing quite well, as I thought, why he had done this.

"Oh, you see—we get breeze soon now—fine breeze on ta * beam," he replied, with all a fanatic's assurance.

"Well," said I, smiling, "you might as well get a fair wind, while you're about it."

He gave me a look that might have meant anything from sheer stupidity to dull hate, then turned and went into the fo'c's'le—to his "donkey's-breakfast," also to the very probable thought that I was the greater fool of the two and possibly something worse. But this I knew: That he would go to

* This is the nearest I can get to his pronunciation of "the."

sleep firm in the conviction that his action would shortly bring us the breeze he wanted, despite the fact that he could not stick the point of his knife into the mast because of its being made of steel—as I once saw done by an elder compatriot of his in a small craft on the North Sea, on which occasion the invoked fair wind came pretty soon afterwards. And, all too true for Gustave's faith in his "magic," when we turned out at seven-bells to-day there was on the port-beam a light breeze that has now freshened into one under which the *Bucephalus* is making a good eight knots per hour.

Of course, such things as this mast-sticking for a breeze are rather confined to the most ancient-minded of "shellbacks"—such as Finns, Russians, Scandinavians from sparsely-populated interiors, and elderly Latins. At the same time, the superstitions of the "Deigo" and the Russ are mostly of a religious turn. The commonest forms of these mental twists relate to black cats, spilling salt (ominous portent the world over, apparently) and upsetting the "bread-barge" (biscuit-box) or a cap-hatch, *i.e.* one that fits over its coambings and touches the deck. Many a time, when one of these has been turned over, have I heard such remarks as: "There's another ship gone to the bottom!—you blunderin' galoot!" Nor does this mean merely that the capsizing of the thing is prophetic of disaster; but that in an occult, mysterious way the action causes some ship to founder. Naturally there are blunt and scoffing disbelievers in these signs and portents, such as our Sails; just as there are quiet sceptics, like Cummings, Oskar,

Dobey, others, and me. But I have rarely, indeed, come across one who was bold enough to upset a cap-hatch purposely, when it was put to him to do so to prove his lack of faith. There goes one-bell (7.45 P.M.) the summons to prepare for duty at eight o'clock. So here ends my epistle, for the time being.

* * * * *

It is another dog-watch, a first one. The breeze has slackened again, but holds on—delightfully cool. We are now “drawing-down” (*i.e.*, nearing the fringe of the north-east trade wind; some of the old hands say we are in it); so that the heat of the tropics is beginning to make itself felt.

The cat affair gets only a reference now and then. Lately's red-letter experience on the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head is left severely alone, except by himself—who is quickly left alone by nearly every one as soon as he mentions the episode. The upheaval between Summers and Mannheim has not yet gone past the threat and menace stage. One is palpably afraid; the other pre-eminently circumspect. Cummings has a pair of light-weight boxing-gloves with which there will be some “exhibitions” by-and-bye. The doctor has scalded one foot. He laid up two days, which the steward said was “only a getting his own again,” because of those days under “D.T.'s.” He is now “hopping about loike a one-legged ‘bromly-koite’* ”

* A species of vulture that is common to East Indian harbours. They carry food away in their claws and eat it whilst perched on ships' yards. A favourite game with seamen is to parboil a sweet potato—an ordinary one is generally too precious—so that it is very hot and still hard enough for rough handling. This is then thrown into the air, the vulture catches it and soars upward, drops it because of the heat,

on a hot yarrdarrm," says Mumbles, with a sort of sarcasm at which not even Appleyard, Yank, or a fiery "Deigo" could take offence. George (our watch's young O.S.) is serving as cook's mate—Dobey being too useful on deck for him to go—so come some of us by little advantages; a mouthful, no more, of this, that, or the other, from day to day. But, oh, if only a mouthful, how strenuously welcome during these first weeks of regulation, deep-water diet!—when the daily square meals of fresh, succulent food are still too well-remembered. The only other change in matters is some lively preparation for a fo'c's'le concert on the first Saturday-night after "the dead horse" is worked out—weather permitting. If all goes well, we are apparently in for a flare up. As to "the dead horse" ceremony—I have never seen it, so I am anxious for it to come along.

I have been writing in the hot fo'c's'le because of the wind blowing my paper about on deck. But as Bristol Bill and Tom Benton (two men who are very much of a stamp, although Benton is quite fifty, whilst B.B. is probably fifteen years younger) have started a wrangle concerning their lime-juice, I am driven out here, near the windlass. As we are now on salt "tack"—have been during the past seventeen or eighteen days—every man gets his "whack" of diluted lime-juice, just before noon each day, when all hands are awake. It is served out by the steward, darts down and grabs it with the other talons, goes up again and has to drop the potato as before. But he comes back, and so keeps the thing in the air till another snatches it away, or it is lost altogether, or is cool enough for him to carry off to a spar.

aft ; and we all have to go with our pannikins to receive the allowance.

Tom does not drink much ; but he smokes and chews a lot. Bristol does the opposite in both cases. So they have made a compact whereby they “ tarpaulin ” (pool) both their tobacco and lime-juice, and go at them as they please. The result is a wordy set-to every two or three days, when one thinks the other has over-stepped the mark too far, and when staggering epithets and colourful oaths are flung at one another as children throw buttercups in a summer meadow—and with about as much effect.

Although these two men are in one watch, on deck they are for the most part heedless of each other. They never seek to work together. If both of them are sent to one task—well and good, they do it well. If one has a single-handed job and finds it exceptionally hard, the other does not hurry to his help. He always seems to prefer to let a third man go. But once inside the fo’c’s’le, the bulk of that reserve drops. There is no effusiveness between them. I do not think that either Bristol or Benton could be effusive over the gift of an earthly kingdom and the absolute assurance of a heavenly one. Nor is there much of what you would call chumminess in their off-duty dealings with each other. The bond is an undemonstrative one ; yet by it, and it alone, these two men can curse each other up hill and down dale and cause no ill-feeling, whereas one of their scores of epithets from another man would bring the speaker down in a moment. “ Hard cases ” in this rolling

camp of life at sea, they are an admirable pair in their ways.

One who would complete the trio quite excellently in certain directions, yet who would act as a foil in others, is Sails. Of all the men of boisterous sweet sanity that I have met aboard-ship, he is the "top-most pinnacle," as the heroine says in an old nautical farce, when she is in love with the sailor hero, whose name is Binnacle. There he and Chips are now, along the lee-deck, their day's work done, and they sitting, smoking, and yarning on the great spare spar that is lashed to the iron stanchions. Mumbles goes by, with a big patch hanging by its top edge to the seat of his trousers, like a sail to its jack-stay. And immediately Sails whips out, in a merry chant :

"Paddy went a-walking one fine day,
Lost his breeches on the way ;
The men did laugh, and the women did stare,
To see poor Paddy with ——."

He breaks off to exclaim : " I say, Tim, old buck, you mustn't go about like that, you know ! Why, if you go down on the martingale like that, old Bussy will blush at you. I'll ask the Old Man to-morrow to give you a piece of canvas to make a ' cunarder ' * to hide that. Upon my word, you know, a depraved old man like you is not fit company for a respectable young crowd like this !—Y.M.C.A.-men as they are—we are, I mean."

He is about thirty-five ; but quiet, intelligent, easy-going Chips is nearer fifty. Mumbles returns

* A canvas jumper or smock.

from the galley, enters into conversation with them, and I cease to pay them attention.

This ship (and here is your landsman's sense of appropriateness again) has a female figure-head, even though she is named after a famous stallion ! " Bussy " is Sails's pet name for both her and her piece of carving ; and as the martingale extends from the bottom of the dolphin-striker to just below the figure-head, you will see what he meant by Bussy blushing.

Aft, near the booby-hatch, the second mate is washing some clothes in a pail—not from natural thrift or being short of clean ones ; but because the mate washes his own, as witness a deck-tub there, by the after-port-hawse-pipe, into which our chief officer soaped half-a-dozen pieces in the morning-watch and left them to soak. This evening he will wash them out, rinse them, and leave them for one of the apprentices to hang out at day-break, so that they will be dry when the mate appears at eight-o'clock. The mate—I read it—washes his clothes because it is his habit so to do ; but whether the habit is first or second nature only he could say. Certain we are that it is neither the second officer's nature nor his habit. With him—pleasant young fellow that he is—it is a case of doing as they do in Rome when you happen to be there. Nor is he the first whom I have seen come down to a natural thing and a little honest labour by being ashamed to be thought above them.

But there is another side to the washing of clothes by officers. Morally it is bad. It helps considerably

to make crude sailormen (and most of us are in that deplorable state ; we only vary in degree) look down on those to whom they should always look up. To them an officer who washes his clothes is a mean man ; and no man who is thought to be mean is ever respected by his subordinates. In their opinion it brings him down to their level, or a little lower. I have heard of masters who would not allow their officers to wash clothes, and a very proper restriction, too ; it makes for the betterment of discipline.

Well, these are only snapshots of what life is here. Yet I doubt not but that by the foot of Heracles you will judge the size of the statue with fair correctness.—Please pardon the unsailor-like reference. I am spending an hour or two a day in making a fresh acquaintance with a battered copy of “ The Æneid,” which cost me sixpence when I was recently on R.N.R. duty in Bristol. As usual I brought half-a-chest of books with me. And another into which I am dipping again is Rollin’s “ Ancient History.” (You said that I “ ought to read more of the classics, systematically, and not devour so many books of all sorts, like a hungry gourmand set free in a pastry-cook’s shop.” Well, you have been a great and kindly guide in this and things that are near allied to it ; so I am paying you the recognition of obedience.) I have the eight volumes, for which I gave a dollar and a half at a stall in Chippitooli Street, New Orleans—just after we were nearly sent to the bottom by a water-spout—and where I had the worst tram-car ride that has fallen to me the world around. My cap was jolted off three times in one journey, and

in *the* States, too ! Besides, it was a *mule*-drawn car, in the city of New Orleans ! Tell this to a talkative American, and if it does not humble him, you shall humble me thereafter.

By-the-bye, did I tell you of the joke that happened on my way down from Bristol ? I sat in a corner of the compartment, half-lost in the exploits of the pious *Æneas*, which I had been reading while waiting for the train. Three middle-aged, jovial men got in after me. They talked and laughed. I read on. The train emerged from the Severn Tunnel. A pause occurred in the strangers' conversation, and the nearer of the two on the opposite seat looked at me and my book, saying :

“ And what is our young friend reading ?—He's very much absorbed.”

The others also glanced at me ; and I answered :

“ The *Æneid*.”

“ The *Æneid* ! ” cried he, seemingly unable to say more. The man at his side exclaimed.

“ Holy ! . . . I thought it was the Testament ! ”

My copy of the epic is bound in ragged calf. The other man gazed obliquely at me in silence. Then they fell to whispering and good-natured laughs, followed by a little open chaff at my expense, which I minded little, indeed. During this and further talk I learnt that they were “ commercials,” “ men of the road,” who appeared to know as much of the mysteries of shore-life as I know of books, tar-pots, and marline-spikes. They had all been at good schools, could remember something of the classics, and were so surprised at seeing a young fellow in a P. and O. cap,

a blue reefer-jacket, and a black silk-tie (half of a Navy neckerchief) knotted in sailor-fashion, lost in "The Æneid," that I heard no more of their "shop" all the way to Cardiff. There go four-bells!

* * * * *

I see I have mentioned the water-spout voyage, when we saw the two men, whose feet dangled in the water, fetched off a capsized boat by sharks. And as you want to know all about sailormen aboard and in foreign harbours, here is the story of one in Vera Cruz, where we left some of our cargo before going to Coatzacoalcos—where the sharks seemed to eat each other, because of their unusual ferocity, numbers and lack of other food—then to New Orleans to reload. Of course, a part of the story was gathered from the police on the quay and thereabouts.

"Beachcomber" was stamped on his face, his clothes, his attitude and expression. He leaned against an upturned boat, by a little quay, away to our right. He was lost in unpleasant thought—as I could see easily. (I was one of our boat's crew, sent ashore for The Old Man, and we were idling about the beach, waiting for him.) The man's head was down; but his gaze was fixed keenly, obliquely on a peace-officer away to his left. Through a hole in the great brim of his sombrero the Mexican sun sent a shaft of light athwart his ruin-marked features, tipping the drink and weather-tanned nose with a golden glow that made delicate irony—such as a butterfly's fluttering over the death-mask of a lost soul, if that could be.

An hour previously he had been driven, buffeted,

out of the market for attempting to purloin fruit to stay his hunger. Hounded and hustled by members of *el cuérpo de alguaciles*, cursing impotently, savagely blaspheming, apparently God-forgotten ; his rags and the probable worse companions carried in them the dread and disgust of passers-by ; a crawling sore spot on the dusty, glaring street ; not allowed to shelter from the blistering sun under a shop-awning, he had at last fetched back to that locality peculiar to him and his sort—the beach, where even he could roam unmolested.

Two Britishers approached, men of business, to all appearances. They saw him and edged off. Yet it was not so when he had his promising ship-chandler's shop and agent's office in the city, after being left in the hospital by the captain of his last ship, because of breaking his arm. But, then, that was before he grew to be the devoted adherent of *faro* and that fiery Mexican spirit, to the extent of being ready to sell his soul for a glass of the one or for a dollar to stake on the other.

A lady with a little girl left the esplanade, crossed the " front " and stood on the edge of the small quay. She looked at the mud-tinged, pale-blue waters lapping the wood-work below, then at the mail-boat and other craft lying off at anchor. . . .

A shriek rent the evening air. The child had dropped into the harbour, so often shark-visited from the infested bay without. Strollers were few. At most the hurrying members of that impending crowd numbered a dozen. We three ran to the scene. On the spot already stood the " beach-comber."

Others were gathering about the frantic mother, gabbling Spanish and Mexican as to what ought to be done. As we drew near, there was a splash. The outcast had taken a header.

Within a few minutes child and man were on the quay, both alive and unhurt, despite an ominous dorsal fin half-a-cable's length off. That wildly happy mother was shaking the contents of her purse—five-dollar notes, silver dollars, and *reales*—at the man's feet.

The others hung apart. I saw that some looked on in wonder, some in disgust, two or three in pity; and I pondered as to the cause of their bearing. He gazed down at her, as she stooped towards him, pouring out the money to an accompaniment of fervent thanks and phrase-long prayers that God would bless him. She was kneeling, her emotional, southern temperament finding relief in longer benedictions, and occasionally making as if to kiss his feet. Two, who had taken temporary charge of the child, half-unconsciously murmured at the incongruity of the scene. The outcast seemed to be contemplating those neat coils of hair and the handsome figure, possibly in retrospection seeing himself kneeling to her—a secret lover, it was said, scarcely repulsed, afterwards at the mercy of her husband's revolver, but flung out of the house in disdain. . . .

She arose, stepping backwards with the action, and almost falling as her feet became entangled in the mantilla that had dropped unheeded. A partially choked exclamation left her lips, with it the word "*leproso.*" She, now free of that wild semi-insanity

of the past few minutes, had recognized him. In silence that cut what a knife could not, she walked straight away, the dripping child in her arms. Within a minute except for us he was alone, eyeing the reward of his courage. . . .

“ Leper ? ” Yes, he was leprous enough, socially, to the last degree. To her, and to all he had known at the same time, he was as dead as though he lay at the bottom of the harbour, all its weight of water on his closed eyelids, and ground-fish nibbling at his bloodless fingers. So ran his thoughts, possibly—dead, never to know life again, not in Vera Cruz.

My boatmate and our second mate turned away. The “beach-comber” muttered something in Mexican, quite probably about the folly of not pulling himself together or blowing his brains out long before this. I heard him add a curse in English, and got into conversation with him. What I learnt is partially enabling me to tell you his story.

Presently we saw a brother “comber” approaching—once a pale, sweat-and-coal-dust-smirched devil of that modern Hades, termed a stoke-hole ; this man’s inferior at that time, now his better in the matters of general stamina and work. Hastily the latter scrambled up the money—on which he had looked scornfully whilst talking to me—and he made off with it at a cold-shoulder angle to the newcomer. He needed no one to help him to spend it. He particularly wanted none of his fellow-failures with him just then. It appeared that he went direct to an out-of-the-way clothing store in the city, left his rags

in it and came forth a passable member of the community.

If ever Heaven missed an opportunity of turning a human being back to the right way, it was at that moment. But the tragedies of some lives are that their guardian angels are off duty at the most crucial junctures.

His hunger satisfied—as one can only expect—bad wine and worse spirit having once more stiffened up his neck, he was speedily standing before a faro-banker—awaiting his turn, in an atmosphere of foul smoke, surrounded by about fifty items of humanity's scum, half-breeds and representatives of all Europe and the Americas. Whilst he waited, that old familiar fever of the place took him in its bear's hug—a one-time regular denizen of the hell he was in, he quickly became again all that a hellite could be. At any-rate, that was his patent condition when a shipmate and I, along with a native guide, sauntered in early in the evening—I to satisfy curiosity, and he willingly bearing me company. I saw the "beach-comber," told my companion of the rescue, etc., in the afternoon, and we watched the man.

The bank was making a fresh start. The "beach-comber" risked a dollar and lost it. Seething passions, a very babel of half-hushed tongues, a kaleidoscopic panorama of faces such as would have delighted Hogarth, brutish instincts parading in the repulsiveness of humanity—all these, each "playing his own game," surged about him as his dollars changed hands. . . .

He stood up—moneyless. Would any one buy

his clothes?—new sombrero, fine taffeta jacket, gay sash, silken shirt?—all! He would sell his skin, if any man would undertake to relieve him of it without actual flaying. A bony, stooping, lear-eyed half-blood offered him a dollar for “the whole carcase, skin and coverings,” adding that “the flesh might fetch a ‘quarter’ in the dogs’ meat market.” The “comber” turned from him in snubbing silence, and asked the banker if he would buy.

“*Si, señor,*” was the laconic reply.

Down went the four articles. . . . Their late owner offered his boots; but the faro-man would not. He had, said he, taken the other things in charity to a loser; take a man’s boots he would not. Then came an attempted witticism on the cruelty of taking away one’s understandings—a piece of sardonic humour from the mouth of a dull Mephistopheles, bungled yet thoroughly comprehended. His victim moved aside for the next player.

The “comber,” boots in hand, was quietly hawking them about the room, mad impotence in his heart, on his face the strain of great passions hung up by the neck. He saw us, steered clear of us, and so came again on the half-breed. Some subdued haggling ensued, and finished on the accepted offer of twenty-five *reales*. The money was slowly counted down in *reales* and smaller coins, under a lamp dimmed by the smoke of powerful cigars. One watcher, with a German accent, asked the buyer if he had got the money by standing hat-in-hand at a corner—it was in such small pieces. The reply was a malignant scowl flashed upwards, the insulter’s height and limbs

making further retaliation too dangerous. (Your Mexican half-breed appears to be generally a person of much talk, but exceedingly little action.)

Whilst counting his purchase-money the "comber" received a shove from behind. This sent him stumbling against the buyer, scattering the coins at their feet. The jokers moved away, grinning, the two hagglers being left to look for the money in a clear space. When found and re-counted it proved to be two and a half *reales* short.

"You thief!" cried the "comber" in English, and down went the half-breed.

The latter was up in a moment, hurling the boots at his antagonist's head. One struck him on the jaw and brought blood.

Almost before they could close a ring was formed, through which the bank's factotums thrust and struggled to the combatants, hampered by those who wished to see the fight go on. The two men were torn apart, frantic and devilish to get at each other, fighting those who parted them. Hustlers on each side joined to set them free, more by obstructing than openly. Pretexts for blows sprang up like sputterings from a pan of hot fat. The air was oppressive with its weight of blasphemy. Knives flashed dimly in the thick lurid atmosphere. Groans followed maledictions; curses mingled with half-unconscious gasps. It was very like that scene in the *Bumboat* at Port Louis, when the Creole was killed by her lover, except that in several parts of the big room there were sounds of scrambled money, then the hurrying of feet, as the bankers cleared off with their winnings.

My shipmate said he was off and went—me at his heels, looking in vain for our guide. Revolvers began to snap out their short ping ! ping !

We hurried to get out. The Devil's hurly-burly was fully awake behind us. Above it all roared the voices of the faro-man's helps, who shouted for police intervention. Noisily, demanding lights and order, their swords naked, the officers clattered in.

A sort of peace was restored ; and we stole back to see the end of it all. Around the room ranged Satan's henchmen, their degrees of service and favouritism marked by scars and expressions. Blood needed no one to speak for it. Such wounded as could crawl to the rear of the cordon, did so ; the remainder kept their unstudied positions on the floor. Into this, from his passing carriage, burst one unexpected—one whose uniform and the deference paid to him proclaimed him to be of high *policia* rank. He flashed a questioning look at his subordinates, who had rushed in to bring about peace. He then threw a glance around the place, on the floor—his gaze was fixed there, on the dead, upturned face of the "beach-comber," who, that evening, had fetched his child out of the harbour.

"*Santa Maria !*" he murmured ; then beckoned to a sergeant, who followed him outside to receive his orders.

EPISTLE IV

Pleasant conditions : A peep at the mate : Sweet cleanliness and the illimitable *v.* dust and circumscription : " Our mother's " influence : Women, the ocean, and sea-pictures : Men and solitude : The sea's femininity : Anchors, their spirituality : The forging of a bower-anchor : A scene for an old master :
No good anchor song known.

It is three-bells in the afternoon-watch—our turn below. Oskar is " playing at shut-eye." I cannot sleep, because of the heat, active thoughts, etc.; so here I am, having the fo'c's'le-table all to myself—with no worse interrupters than the snoring of Mumbles and Gustave ; the gentle creaking of spars and running-gear ; the peculiar soughing of a pleasant breeze amongst a tall ship's spread of canvas ; the occasional flap, flap of a pair of sennet*-soled slippers along the deck without ; and, worst of all, the voice of the mate, curiously throaty and a little gruff when he tries to speak ordinarily to Parsons, Saunders, or any man who really knows his work and " keeps his place." But it is a snarling and driving voice at most times, and a queer jumble of rasping sound, with half-intelligible words, when he raves—which is pretty often in times of squalls, all hands' jobs and general " tramp and go." At the

* In deep-water sailing-craft the men often make themselves canvas slippers, the soles of which are plaited hemp or manilla yarn, the plaiting being sewed, in the form of a sole, so that the user walks on its edge.

same time, mind you, he appears to me always to treat good men well. Another trait of his, and one that speaks very well with us—he does not like a toady, no matter how little or in what way the “boosing-doan” may be, nor how good a sailor is he who seeks favour in that manner.

Happily for me at present he is away aft somewhere, superintending the change of one sail for another. So that I get no more than a reminiscence of him when he raps out.

“Spunyarn” (the bo’sun, and a name that no bo’sun likes), is not one of the most capable of sailors; and as the mate will have things done in the best and most thorough of ways, he leaves no important work to his assistant. You see—to explain our working by the way of domestic analogy—the mate is our house-keeper, the bo’sun is his parlourmaid or head-housemaid, and we are all the underlings—charwomen, if you like. The master is a sort of divinity, hedged in much as a king is; and the second mate is to him about what the bo’sun is to the chief officer. It is in these pairs that, according to the usage of the sea, they are supposed to keep watch in times of ordinary danger—*i.e.* when making a landfall, following a coastline or lying out a gale—but they seldom do so nowadays. To a mate a second mate is usually a something to be ignored as much as possible; and if his respect (never a quantity of any note) is small for his subordinate as a seaman, the more marked is his style of showing that the feeling is still alive in this “Merchant Navy” of ours that no craft has more than one “officer” proper. You must bear in mind

that the time was—only some two hundred years ago—when every trading vessel had only one mate. And here, where the surface of things changes from day to day, almost from hour to hour, yet the roots of which alter not from age to age, æon to æon—here legends, traditions and the like have well-nigh as much vitality as Nature’s self has.

But to come back to that which set me writing here, whilst my watch-mates are sleeping around me. I began by wondering if you had ever pictured yourself in these conditions—not in those of a tarpot-and-marlinespike sailor, as I am ; but, peradventure, as a passenger in such a ship at such a time. In imagination I put you outside of the crew, so that you would enjoy it all to its full. The majority of persons would ask, I have no doubt, and many of them with much evidence of incredulous surprise (oh, I, too, do know those who are counted wise by saying nothing—and disbelieving!) : Enjoy what to its full ? or, What! *enjoyment* on a lonely ship in mid-ocean ?

Yes, my friend, enjoy the cleanliness—the dear, sweet cleanliness ; the sense of freedom ; the rhythmic movement ; the spacious, white decks ; the beauty of ship and sea and sky ; the mystery and the possible discovery that ever lie beyond the horizon ; and the song of the sails, as they seem to chant :

*Oh, our bolt-ropes are tugging like horses keen,
And the white foam flies ahead ;
Whilst away there astern is a seething track,
Where before lay waters dead.*

*Then it's oh, heigh-ho, to the fearless breeze,
To the sweeping waters high,
To us bellying sails, to the drum-tight craft
And the post-boy * dotted sky!*

Cleanliness? Yes, you have nothing on land that can be so sweet and clean as a well-kept clipper ship at sea—nothing, except a hospital-ward. And there you have disease and suffering. In all else, be you never so painstaking, there is dust—dust and either actual confinement or a repressing sense of limitations. Neither can your steamer be compared with this. There it is all grime or painting afresh, hurry and racket—all that is new and little that is good. Here—well, here alone nowadays can one find any real atmosphere of the deep, salt seas. Whilst the steam-propelled vessel smacks blatantly of commercialism and modernity, the “wind-jammer” still smells of aromatic spices and the subtle East (or at least one can imagine so), and speaks of the romance and of the wild, the mystic, the unwritten sagas of far-off seas.

Here we have always elbow-room and the uplifting that bears it company. Your land is a shackling thing—a weakening, a demoralizing thing. Land and money seem to me to be inseparable. Wherever I have touched old earth the first and prime necessity has always been money—*money*; and where money is, there is crime also. (I say “old earth,” for, mark you, earth is wizened over two-thirds of its face, one

* This is the name given by men of the North Sea to those skurrying, dark, jagged, little clouds that usually go tumbling, high up, across the sky, heralding a stiff breeze or a gale.

season with another ; but the sea is never even old anywhere.) Your earth is stained with crime and disease, everywhere and from everlasting to everlasting ; it and money breed them, as foul things beget foulness. You will say that we have crime here. I answer : Yes, my friend—being men, we must be human ; yet, happily lacking the land's great fulcrum to evil—money, the lever, being action—we are clean by comparison. Oh ! that I could find a country where money is unknown ! That, to my thinking, would be the only and the true foundation of an ideal State.

But to return to the present : Here from day to day we have a boundlessness of view that makes for the mighty in simplicity. We know not what cobwebs are ; you have them ever near you. Here we understand what limitlessness means ; for, even after weeks of continual going, the eye can discern no lessening of the vista, no matter where we look. Here there is strength in every breath we take—strength, elevation of thought and spiritualness in all that we see outside ourselves. With you, in nine cases out of ten, the air is vitiated. From hour to hour, with rare exceptions, we feel a *movement that is buoyant*—a movement that requires no exertion on our part and is free of the detestable jar and “dither” of engines and propeller, a movement that is not palpable to the eye nor understood by those who are not within its mysteries. You have nothing to compare with it—nothing. On land you cannot move without noise and jolting or personal effort ; and the faster you go, the greater the racket. And

has the whole world anything more likely to keep the heart strong, the soul healthy, and the mind progressive than such a movement as this ? No—again, nothing.

As for the beauty—you can imagine that, much better than I could put it into words. And if it is never mentioned by such men as the most of my companions are, who shall say that they do not feel it ?—that it does not sink in, unknown, unguessed even, leavening their crude humanity with a subtle essence of betterment. You shorefolk are ever ready to say that we men of the sea are a simple lot. But where do we get that simplicity ? And it is not for me to say that the virtue is not ours. We started life as you did—compounded mentally and morally, as well as physically, of the same elements, differently mixed. Natural wanderers though we be, the world's ever-going wayfarers, we know what ambition is ; we have enviousness, love of gain, forgetfulness of truth, hatred of that which may be worthy of our best, malice where we should have tolerance, affection or—ay, all the defects that make you so human, even as human as were the gods of ancient Greece, these are also ours. Where, then, and how do we become simple ?—except by the mysterious influence of this mighty complexity, this simple-seeming ocean.

This complexity ? Yes, superlatively so. I have been thinking of late that the Greeks were wrong to set a god over the seas—just as they erred in making cupid masculine. For surely love is sexless. They should have put a goddess in Poseidon's place. If

the sea has an element of this sort—and I am convinced that such is the case—that element is feminine, as Oskar and I agreed in our whisperings before he fell asleep, and I sat here to pen my thoughts to you.

Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote : “ You can domesticate mountains ; but the sea is *feræ naturæ* ” ; he also looked on it as “ the wild feline element.” And while a dog is the natural companion of a man, he and it being often compared in their attributes ; if any one finds occasion to say that a given woman lacks the finer feelings of humanity, what form of expression so readily springs to the lips as “ She is catty,” or other words with the same meaning. Nor is this Anglo-Saxon merely ; it is universal. I dare be bound that for every woman who prefers to have “ a dog about the place,” ninety-nine would put it away for a cat ; this is proved by general observations. Well, dog and man, cat and woman, is what the world says. I am not here really concerned with either one set or the other. My temporary obsession is that the sea is feminine. You may hold with the genial autocrat that it is also feline. To that I am indifferent ; because you will be admitting that it is feminine. At the same time I know so well how you will hold that woman in the aggregate is far too noble, too gentle, too humane to be likened to the sea. “ Pause there, Morocco.” I confess to the truth of this contention. But, mark you, I do not compare her to the sea. I only affirm that this sea is feminine in most of its phases, its temperament, its expressed phenomena, its complexity.

Let us look at it like this, my friend. Is the old

saying true, that "Like draws like?" Or must we look to the converse for the truth? Nature and human experience seem to prove that each side is a truism with the usual exceptions. However it be, it is a fact, superficially curious, perhaps, that women are hardly ever drawn to study, and even seldom to admire, a real sea-picture. Evidences of this can be seen daily in any picture gallery where there are canvases that depict some portion of "old Ocean's wide domain." I have spent hours in galleries of art, wherever I could find them, from Petersburg* to Barcelona. For I have always loved to dwell on that which stirred me. (This is a trait, I believe, of the emotional temperament, sometimes called "the artistic perception," or temperament; and is akin to the feminine characteristic that makes so many women hang over what they fear to see.) It is this love of old pictorial things—and some common hankering after pictures generally—that sends me into galleries. Yet my search, when the first of the feast is over—when I have gorged desire with all that is most lovely, rich in colour and feeling, whether of landscape or of figure, with a preference for classic and historical tradition, if the canvas depicts the latter; then, when this is done, I am ever moved after canvases that show me Holmes's *feræ naturæ*. Perhaps it is, latently, as a critic that I search; but not so at the outset.

At any-rate, wherever I have sought, the number

* In those days I never heard a seaman say "St. Petersburg"; and a young Russian doctor in Cronstadt told me that his countrymen never used "St."

of women seen gazing at sea-pictures have been few, indeed—so few that I now regularly make this piece of observation a feature of each visit to a gallery.* By “sea picture” I do not mean the usual ’longshore piece, but paintings that reveal something of the sea’s well-nigh appalling desolation, or its wondrous charm in sunlit quietude, yet ever with more than a mere touch of that infinity of omnipotence which it always suggests to those who understand it rightly—pictures which suggest to you that they represent some fragments of mid-ocean. Put such a canvas amongst fifty landscapes, ’longshore and architectural pieces, with or without life, and not five women in an average hundred will stop to look at it—unless it shows something more than sky and water, something of mankind. And out of the small percentage whom such a canvas attracts one will be drawn by the gentleness of sunny water quietly moving ; another, yielding to that feminine trait of being unable to resist the terrible on which she dreads to gaze, will surrender herself only to the might and the majesty of a wild scene that has shipwreck and death in every savage roller ; while a third will probably be more interested in the technique of that particular piece than under any subtle spell of the ocean’s illusive power—illusive, because it is beyond the reach of both analysis and perfect description. It is a platitude to remind you that woman is not drawn by femininity. And whether it be the scene of a gale, a smart breeze or a calm, we feel, as we stand silently under its magic, that the

* Since then I have noticed the same characteristic year after year at the Royal Academy.

indescribable something of it all, its spirit and its atmosphere are feminine ; and it matters not whether the phase be that of a grand, pagan woman in a passion, or a gentle beauty smiling at her lover.

But do the same with a hundred average men—that is, let them meander past a canvas that has no touch of human life, except what is suggested by a broken spar, a rag of canvas, or a lifebuoy, and eighty per cent. of them will readily respond to some deep-rooted, inexplicable connexion between them, physically, and that atmosphere of pathetic desolation which stands out in all other true mid-ocean scenes. And what draws them in so quiet, resolute and, with them, half-unconscious a manner ? Not that indirect voicing of the masculine spirit which is indicated by the general power of the presentment, nor by any one of its virile features. For the simple reason that this exhibition of might is not really in the foreground, to them, although it appears to be so prominently on the surface, in a way. It is dwarfed, over-shadowed, kept to the back by what I call the soul of the thing—*i.e.* that atmosphere and suggestion of an inner spirit which is far more potent over the mind of the male spectator than the madness of turbulent seas, the pathos of despair or the hints of adventure beyond the fierce and ragged sky-line.

If this exposition of mere force and superficial grandeur were the really dominating elements of the scene, to the suppression of a more spiritual factor, then you might hold that it would attract women rather than men. For is not all the world agreed that woman commonly gives her homage to physical

power ; while man (I am not thinking of either men or women below a certain educational status) pays his court to gentleness and intellect ? All down the recorded centuries behind us you find numerous instances of these inherent traits, and you can safely consider that such will continue so long as there are male and female in humanity, each with its own strong and healthy instincts. Throughout the entire scale of Nature there appears to be sex in all things ; and in no division of that scale, from the stone to the human, has sex any lasting power of attraction for or over its own kind—it is incapable of drawing and holding its positive with that subtlety and permanence which every positive has for its negative. Why, then, should we be in the least surprised that the masculine land is so attractive to women, while men surrender more to the feminine influence of the sea ?—without either of them, as an aggregate body, recognizing the power that draws them. In these largest manifestations of physical Nature, land is male and water is female.

It is conceded broadly that man responds to the call of solitude in a way that woman cannot ; indeed, the evidence on this point is such that you will find it impossible to maintain the converse. And the reason is plainly that his nature is deeper than hers ; that it is more difficult to move, and that its moorings are secured much further down in the fastnesses of things unchangeable—all because of the difference in sex. Yet it is not the sea's solitude that draws man and repels woman. On the contrary, it is a strange, undefinable phase of the feminine spirit acting on his finer suscepti-

bilities as like cannot act on like. And, even outwardly, are not the ocean's moods feminine from first to last? Consider the extreme, word-defying subtlety of her charm on a still day, either alongshore or out at sea where no breath of the land can reach; when only the slightest of light winds stirs the water; when there is a soft, seductive, barely perceptible yet in a degree voluptuous swell, and bright sunlight gives a warm sheen to the surface. To see this oceanic phase in the sub-tropics is to witness a definite exposition of certain well-defined and undeniable traits of the human feminine. You may smile and ask what do *I* know of feminine nature. This is only to be expected, seeing that not one novelist in a hundred has succeeded in showing that he understood that mystery; and as yet I am not even of the tribe of romancers. I believe Becky Sharpe is the only real man-made woman; but you will know this better than I do. Even the colossus of Stratford-on-Avon—who still bestrides the world of humanity, while we pygmies hunt around his legs to find ourselves dishonourable graves—not even he did more than lift the veil of the mystery.

All the same, I shall continue in my belief. So I say, again, how like to smiling, healthy, attractive young womanhood is that phase which the amateur yachtsman terms "a good sailing day"; when a fine, steady breeze—something between the "gentle" and the "smart"—dancing waters, with no underlying swell, and genial sunshine seem to defy one to stay on the dull, unresponsive earth. Then think of the terribleness of the hurricane: Could anything be

more like a tigress in a wild fight? (And we know that amongst fighting animals the female is the more deadly.) Look at the awfulness of those combing claws, or foamy fangs—either metaphor will fit; the fierce snarl and the windy swish of the tail, as shown in the raging breeze and in all the unrestrained general savagery. Is this not the insanity of the female animal, individually or collectively, howling, bare-armed and bare-headed, for blood in a Reign of Terror, or driven to bay in a forest-decoy?

So it is throughout the whole range of the ocean's moods. First and last they are feminine; because that undefinable something behind them is directly a part of the utterly illusive quantity which lies without the pale of clear definition and is vaguely meant by "femininity." Our speaking and writing of the sea as masculine is due to the ancient Greeks putting it under the rule of Poseidon. But, free as woman was amongst the early Hellenes, they could not well bend to the idea that anything should be solely under feminine dominion—except the cold, inconstant moon; which again proves their lack of logic. For the cold woman is constant; it is only those who suffer the changing joys of too much heart-heat that are inconstant: That is your Nell Gwynnes and your Emma Hamiltons—impulsiveness, unreasoning trust that comes to a speedy and sudden end, foolish generosity, vivaciousness; a sort of April-day temperament, with now a sweep of March, followed by a flood of April's self, then all delicious May and June. And of such is the sea.

Other mythologies, especially the Norse and the

Celtic, declared or suggested that the ocean is not masculine. To the average Scandinavian to-day the sea is distinctly feminine, as it is to certain modern French poets. Look at the subject as we may, try to analyse it as we will, the sea is feminine in spirit, mood and action, change and unchangeableness. Hence it must, pictorially and in reality, ever draw men into the folds of its snares and charms ; whilst women pass it by, as they pass each other in daily life. You, my friend, with more workaday knowledge of woman than I may ever possess—you may think otherwise. But—One-bell !

* * * * *

Oh, that bell ! It is worse than Poe's iron bells were. How often it and its kin have called me from channels of thought, such as the foregone, never to be entered again, like now, because Pilot Mood has left the deck and will not return.

Twenty-four hours have gone by. I am back at my "screiving" ; and you want me to keep at sea. Truth to tell, I am just from an hour's work on the port bower-anchor. And if there is one thing more than another in shipboard gear that links a man's mind to the land and all he knows there that thing is, as it should be, a bower-anchor. Kedges and other second-rate groundlings may well be passed with indifference, left uncomplainingly to their slang name. But to treat a bower-anchor in that manner always sets my teeth on edge. If I could, I would punish the man who speaks of one by that detestable steam-boat word, "mudhook," the very sound and existence of which proclaim loudly the difference between the

men who keep to steamers and sailormen proper—about as much difference as there is 'twixt a ship's wooden-stocked bower-anchor and those new-fangled things that you see at steamboats' hawse-pipes, with two massive claws, like some ugly, iron, monster crab that disfigures the bow of any sea-going craft.

For my part, I hate to see a bower-anchor with an iron stock, like a common kedge or a boat's anchor. To me a big anchor is not a symbol merely ; it is a lovable thing—flukes and crown, shank and stock. How many a time on mid-ocean have I stood near them, thinking of what they were to me and all my kind, and being drawn by them—as a whole—back to anchorages never to be forgotten, or going forward in thought to our port of destination !

Some day I shall write of a bower-anchor. What a fine theme for a poem it would make ! Say, a big, old-time smithy by some harbour-side, darkened rafters and sloping roof overhead, the glowing fire below, a boy at the long handle of the great bellows, bars and pieces of iron large and small lying about, everything black and grimy except the fire and that mass of metal on the huge anvil—the crown of a bower-anchor, in part upheld by tackles to the beams above, and steadied by brawny men, while others swing their thundering sledges—hammers of Thor—to the time-beating taps of the master-smith's small hammer, all welding up the crown, sparks flying in showers, what time the glow lights up their strong, smirched faces and shows the perspiration running down them and amongst the hair on their bare arms and naked chests. To finish the scene, horns and

tankards of foaming ale here and there on the vice-benches. Then, last act of all, the tempering (christening, I should call it) in clear, cold water—a huge, old wine-butt sunk to within two feet of its top in the earth-floor of the smithy—whilst the hammermen stand around, tankards in hands, and sing, “The Song of the Bower-Anchor.”

What a scene for an old master’s genius!—one of the Dutch or Flemish schools, I should think. Yet it doesn’t seem to me that the thing has ever been done. I don’t remember seeing such a picture either in the Antwerp, Brussels, Amsterdam, or Rotterdam galleries, nor in any others into which I have had the good fortune—always sought where at all attainable—and the lingering delight to poke my inquisitive head.

At the same time, neither has the song been written, which is the more remarkable of the two facts. So far as my searching has gone, and that is a pretty long way, the English language has no acceptable song on an anchor; and the forging of a bower-anchor is surely a great thing spiritually. Look what an anchor is in symbolism, in the common mind, amongst Christians the world over; yet it goes all unsung, if not unhonoured. The pilot, the ship, the oak, and all such prominent things have each one their more or less great song. Yet my beloved anchor, in significance the equal of any of them, has none to do it reverence; and I, the more to my sorrow in this case especially, am all unworthy and unfitted to render the service due.

An old proverb says: Send him to sea who knows

not how to pray. I would add : Send him also who knows not how to feel. If he does not learn to feel here, he never will reach that mark of the finished man. But, then, to pray well—which, no doubt, the proverb means—as to sing well, one must feel deeply. You will say that these are serious thoughts in a young man, who is a rover for roving's sake—or, rather, was, and who now seems to be condemned for life to his Ixion-like wheel. Yes, probably I am now somewhat sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought ; but pray you remember that, altogether, I have been two years a cripple, and twice already have had my life's purpose baulked. So that I feel, as I sit here (scribbling with pencil under the lee of the windlass, because there is so much talk in the fo'c's'le) almost in the words of Shylock to Portia : I am much older than my years. But, hey presto, something will happen yet—as something does mostly where my unlucky presence thrusts itself—if it is only my being laid up again and left in another hospital.

EPISTLE V

More of Curly Jones and Antonio : Catching bonitos, dolphins, and flying-fish : Gudgeons, apprentices, flippancy and payment : Presents to the cabin : Curly "knifed" : Antonio on trial : Benefit of the doubt : "Old Tom Benton" : Holding one's own : Rum : Difficult letter-writing : The mate, another peep : Mysterious preparations.

It has happened. I mean that Antonio has "knifed" Curly Jones. He swears it was an accident ; but we don't believe him. At the same time possibility is so much in his favour that The Old Man has given him the benefit of our inability to prove that the attack was intended. And as the Greek has been so friendly with the blacks of late, he has some ground for maintaining his defence. Yet who was the Roman that said something about distrusting the Greeks when they offered gifts ?

However, Curly lies in his bunk, here behind me, with a two-inch-deep hole in the fleshy part of his thigh (near where the Kaffir stabbed me in Port Natal roadstead). And I doubt not but that both he and Sam have registered vows that Antonio shall pay a heavy bill for the blood lost by Curly. Truth to tell, this swarthy descendant of the heroes must be either considerably a fool, or a man with some courage and alertness to spare, or the affair was truly an accident. For he knows, as we all know, that, just as the chances to maim him or end him

are too plentiful, so he will need to keep all his senses keenly alive whenever it is a night-time case of "all hands shorten sail."

I will tell you how it came about. We are now drawing properly into the north-east trade wind. At present it is light, so we have bonito- and dolphin-catching every day. With us this is done by going out on the jibboom, the bobstays, the martingale and thereabouts, and allowing our fish-hooks to drag through the water a foot or two below the surface. Both these fish are gudgeons, in a way, and not particularly good eating; they are nearly flavourless and rather watery. But, then, they are fresh "tack"; and to men who would welcome even a leathery gull or a fry of jelly-fish—if they would fry—would be hailed delightedly. To me, who have fed lavishly day after day, year in, year out, on North Sea fish—from the humble dab and gurnet to the lordly sturgeon and halibut—these Atlantic surface-fish are not worth cooking.

(Gulls, by the way, make fairly good soup; but you must boil each one from four to six hours. There is no other way to cook it; after all you cannot eat the thing, unless it be a young kittiwake or something of that sort. The taste is, as you may surmise, a mixture of fowl and fish. Still, I have seen times when I would have given gladly a week's pay for a big, "square feed" of either dolphin, bonito or gull—yes, even for steaks from a shark's tail.)

However, I say the fish are gudgeons. Witness: Your bait is either a biggish, bare hook, with a silvery-looking fish cast in lead around the shank, a plated

spoon with the two inner prongs broken out and the outer ones bent in opposite directions, or an ordinary hook baited with a bit of spinning white rag. In short all you want is something to attract the prey and a hook to fetch him up.

The apprentices fish from outriggers aft, by the break of the poop—pieces of bamboo, or anything suitable they can lay hands on. But they have had very poor luck up to now. True, they have to fish at a disadvantage. So they come for'ard and stand by our deck-tubs (each watch has its own, on its own side of the deck), with much envy in most of their eyes and not a little on some of their tongues. Bowman is the worst in this. He is a stocky-made youth with a proud strut of a walk, a round "cheeky" face, a tongue that pretends to be friendly whilst being flippant or sarcastic, and with the manner of one whose father is a piece of blatant, Cardiffian success.

As I was shaving this morning, on the lee-side of the deck-house, he came along, stopped to talk, was thus the cause of the razor going into my chin, then walked off, saying: "Funny— isn't it?—but you can always cut yourself better with a blunt razor than a sharp one."

Had he said that I was a blundering shaver, I shouldn't have minded. But to cast a mean, back-handed reflection on my razor—the only one I ever had and the source of some pride—well! He came again this afternoon to beg some fish for his and his two watchmates' tea. The three of them are part of our watch; and, as the other two are good, sailor-

like youngsters, he got the fish—but not till his head had gone well into the tub, while he was getting the fish out and talking; for which reason his mouth and eyes were filled with salt water. It was unlucky for him and pleasing to me that it happened to be his turn to clean the fish. You see “the doctor” has instructions to cook pretty well as much as we want, providing that it is all ready for the pan or the pot when it is taken to him. Of course, the more fish we catch and eat, the more ship’s stores we save.

It is also an understood thing that we present some of our best fish to the cabin daily, which is done religiously, because we all recognize that The Old Man is a good sort. The steward—a heavy-browed, square-figured, big-headed, black-haired Welshman from Liverpool—began by taking the liberty to come to our tubs. But we stopped him quickly, in spite of his lordly ways and long, fierce, black moustache. Then Tom Benton, for our watch, and Saunders (“Scotty”), for the mate’s watch, took a fine show of fish aft and asked The Old Man to accept them—when the cabin had been nearly two days without any. They were accepted gladly. The result is that we present fish for breakfast, and the port-watch provides the quantity for tea—and have twice gone fishless ourselves as a consequence. One point more, then I shall have done with these deep-water gudgeons: If a dying thing can be pretty it is a dolphin; it turns all sorts of delicate shades in greens, purples, blues and the like, the colours coming and going as the poor thing dies. This fish-

catching, fine-weather phase of our passage is just the average thing in "wind-jammers."

But to return to Curly and Antonio. Flying fish are, of course, numerous in these latitudes; and to vary our fishy diet we catch all we can. They are better eating than dolphin or bonito. Dusk is the main time, ordinarily, when they come aboard in ones and twos, occasionally a dozen or more in an evening, and sometimes none. But, as you know, twilight is very short here. So we resort to the old, country-side trick of catching sparrows in the hedge at night. We hang up a bright, white light, against the fore-part of the deck-house, where it will not shine aft and bother the officer on the poop. This brings us the fish in fairly plentiful numbers. And last night, just after the beginning of the first watch, Antonio, the Portuguese and another one or two of their watch stayed on deck to get a share of the haul. As there are never enough of these small fish to go round, the rule is that each man shall have what he can lay hands on. There had been an "eight-bell pull" (all hands tightening up braces, &c.), and the most of our fellows were in the waist and aft, coiling up the falls,* and making things generally tidy; so that the port-watch men, who ought to have been below, stood to get most of the fish.

Suddenly there was a rumpus and a shout for'ard. Several of us dropped our work and ran, to find the Greek in the hands of Bristol Bill, Sing-Song and

* When a rope or line is rove through blocks, making a tackle, it becomes a "fall," especially that part of it from the belaying-pin to the end.

Scotty. His knife was on the deck, and Curly Jones sat near it, hugging his leg and crying out that he was stabbed.

In a brace of shakes all hands were there. The mate was amongst the last arrivals, because he had to cover the length of the ship. His grey eyes glittering in the lamp-light, and his grisled face all tension, he thrust through the ring and well into the light of the lantern, asking two or three questions. These were answered in an instant. Then Antonio was marched aft and put up for preliminary trial.

From this it appeared that he was dressing a couple of fish on the deck by the light just above him, when two or three more banged against the deck-house and fell near. He sprawled over for them, knife still in hand. Curly made a jump at them in the same moment. They rolled over together, grabbing and struggling, in the midst of which the black shouted that he had been knifed. Bill and the Spaniard leapt in at once and dragged Antonio off, just as Curly was getting his knife out. Antonio swore it was an accident; no one except the black could say it was not—it might have been one. All the same, the Greek was ironed and locked in the sail-room for the night.

This morning there was a much longer and more exhaustive inquiry, with the result that Antonio was set free—in the most of our minds “guilty but not proven.” As I have said, The Old Man hates to have trouble in the crew, and if he had found the Greek guilty he must have kept him a prisoner till

we reach port—one hand short all the way and further trouble when we arrive. At the same time, by finding the man not guilty he has left him to the scant mercy of the two West Indians, also to the certain prospect of a far worse happening than carrying a prisoner and possibly sending him to gaol by-and-bye.

* * * * *

By what I have already written some persons would think that our “for’ard crowd” is made up of desperadoes and “characters.” But you, who know so well what cosmopolitan seamen are, you will not think anything of the sort. You, who, like Terence, count yourself alien to nothing that is human, you will know that our crew is only an average one of to-day. Truth to tell, I have not yet told you half of their individual idiosyncrasies. Take Parsons,* for instance—an excellent all-round seamen, sturdy, ginger-haired, somewhere under forty, apparently a native of Suffolk, and a sort of pious man who can swear any other man into silence and use no blasphemy. He is a super-commissioner for oaths such as the Law Society would not accept. He holds that the man who can swear well is the one who can pray well, if he only gives his mind to it; and we Britishers believe emphatically that Parsons can pray equal to his ability to splice a rope or consume tobacco—he has already had his third pound from aft, whilst most of us are not yet through our first pounds. But, then, piety and swearing going hand-in-hand is only an old way of the sea. My reading of past times and observation

* He was the original of Knut Sloggitt in “Watchers by the Shore.”

of things as I find them afloat lead me to affirm that in the old days the man who did not fear God, swear hard, drink plenty of rum and fight well was an oddity amongst his shipmates, one who was looked at askance probably and thought to be unfit to go to sea.

Yes, Parsons is "a queer cuss." For that matter, so am I, worse than he, to every man for'ard except my chums. Yet I only spend my leisure time in reading and writing and don't chew tobacco—not because I think it a dirty habit and will not give way to it; I can't. It makes me as sick as did the first pipe of stolen tobacco at home. Of course, a man has to hold his own here; if he cannot——. I imagine that one of the hardest things to bear must be the scorn of one's fellow-workers whilst he has to labour with them. So it is that I can swear, and like an occasional tot of good rum—it is such a fine thing for warming one thoroughly, giving geniality, a bright outlook, vaulting thoughts and good fellowship. Here one must curse when cursed at, strike when struck—providing that the first swearer is not the mate. (The second mate swears at no one. He only lets out a "damn" now and then, inferentially, at things in general. In fact he is about the most parsimonious curser whom I have seen in an "after-guard.") And a good deal of ground is made, often easily, in comparison, by he who is first to do either, especially if he does it well.

Apropos rum: I have a notion that a great deal of the "jolly" in the bluejackets of bygone days was due to the quantities of rum they drank.

I say nothing about what else the red liquor gave them ; that is for you medico-scientists to say. But I do know of a story—legend or fact, I am not sure which—of a master taking his vessel into a West Indian port that was notorious for “ Yellow Jack.” When the brig (Yes, the yarn even has it that the craft was a brig ; so, if particular details go for anything, there is confirmation for you) was at anchor, he had a deck-tub stood amidships and filled with rum. To this the men were told to go as often as they liked, providing that they kept fairly at work. To shorten in the yarn, when the brig was reloaded the master took enough niggers to work her, put away the rum-tub, spent two days in keeping a good offing, till his crew were sufficiently recovered to put to sea. He then sent the blacks ashore, and proceeded on his voyage—not a man left behind, and every one fit and well.

* * * * *

Just as I wrote love letters for girls in the village, and thereby learnt the gentle art of fabrication as practised under the sign of Cupid, when I was a boy at home ; so it has fallen to my lot to write many a letter for an illiterate shipmate—particularly for one memory-holding, pimple-faced, and podgy young Tynesider, whose amorous ventures were as numerous as his own years, as unsuccessful as his attempts to make himself attractive when in harbour, and an unfailing source of keen amusement to most of us. Now, however, it appears as if I am in for something big in this way. One forenoon-watch-below, some days ago, Tom Benton put out his hand, touched

me back abruptly to my surroundings and half-whispered :

“ I say, look here, young fellar, you seems tu write a deal o’ time away. Couldn’t you just scrieve me a letter hom’ tu my old wife ? ”

At the time the lust of composition was heavy on me—the impelling love of building up, of seeing the thing grow under your hands and be lovely in its growing ; the joy of the master-builder who is his own designer and whose heart is in his work. I had thought that he was asleep, as all the others were. So that his fingers on my shoulder jerked me about, to find myself looking straight at his queer, oldish face.

He is spoken of, and often addressed, as “ Old Tom Benton.” In years I don’t think he is more than fifty. In movements—yes, he is rather slow there—no, say he is deliberate. But when there is cause to “ get a move on ” no one is smarter than Tom. He is a little under the medium in height, somewhat broad of build, wiry without appearing to be so, has a rounder and kinder-looking face than the mate’s yet one that resembles it considerably in texture, a nose that has been broken badly at the bridge and left to “ get cold ” in that condition, a pair of warm-brown eyes, and mouse-coloured hair on head and face. But it is his ways, the cast of his thought and his facial expression that have got him the “ Old.” In plain words he is nature-wise. According to the ship’s Articles he was born at Wisbech. But how long it is since he was there Heaven and he alone know. To judge by his jumble of dialects it is many and many a year ago.

However, to get rid of him I promised to be his letter-writer for the voyage. In the first dog-watch of that day he got me to work. I have penned him four and a half foolscap pages—not as I have mostly written such letters, by being told the gist of what there was to say, then putting it all down in my own manner. Tom won't have that; he must dictate every line. Then, when he has delivered himself of a passage, with some stopping and re-starting, and I have just about finished it, he begins afresh, and I must re-write it all. Nor is this enough for his fastidious taste. The next thing is: How would *I* say it for him. I tell him how; he bids me do it, then asks for it to be read, dislikes it and wants it written again. Another feature of the business is that Tom forgets what has already been put down; and when he is fast for further words—which is pretty often—I have to turn back and read the last page to him; whereat he says it is not what he meant, and wants to know if I can't "write et better 'n that." Thus has gone the larger part of three of my precious dog-watches off duty; and when I inquire if I shall conclude the missive, he replies:

"No, not yet, sonny. My old gel likes tu read long letters—ses et's as good as readin' the paper; though w'ere the hangment *she* larnt tu read I can't tell."

* * * * *

I have been studying the mate a little more. At this moment past our doorway go the Portuguese and Taliäno. (The latter's name is too difficult for ordinary daily wear on English sailors' tongues;

so he goes by the "shellback's" usual rendering of "Italian.") They are snarling viciously at each other about some task they have in hand. Meanwhile, aft along the deck, I can hear the mate's raucous voice hurrying them on, which is doubtless adding to the friction between them. He is a middle-aged man, with a gingery, greyish beard, thin, fine, and stained by tobacco-juice. His face is slightly pock-marked, whereby it gains a dappled appearance, because it would otherwise be reddy-brown. As I have already told you, I think, his twang is rather nasal, a fact that easily increases its snarling quality. He has undoubtedly sailed in "Bluenosers." Perhaps that fact and some pity for the young second mate was the reason why, when the watches were picked on the evening of the first day out, he selected most of the worst-looking men in the fo'c's'le-crowd. To my thinking this and his bearing towards the cheerful efficient in his watch speak very well for him. In fact, although most of his men hate him rankly—Yank worst of all, despite the latter's unbelieved and oft-repeated assurance that he has sailed with chief mates who were devils tenfold in comparison to ours—Oskar and I would not mind being in his watch, after all. He certainly eases matters for his good men and keeps the others hustling. Besides, he has an on-duty tone and manner and off-duty ones, which always seems to me to bespeak the officer of intelligence.

But we have something going on that is more important than the mate—temporarily so, at any-rate. For days past there has been great activity, not a little

mysterious and vague hints amongst certain of the fo'c's'leites in their watches below. Chief of these are Bristol Bill, Tom Benton, Parsons and Mike Byrne (a lively Irishman from Liverpool), with the two blacks, Mumbles and Scotty as good seconds. Sails, Chips and Spun yarn put in an appearance now and then, in virtue mainly of having supplied the materials, with The Old Man's leave—the first full of bluff and vigorous heartiness, whether in praise or blame of the particular piece of work then in hand ; the second gently amused and pleasantly commentative ; and the third quietly critical, but no more. He knows that he is not liked ; also that there are men in the fo'c's'le who could do his work much better than he can—a fact that is pretty plainly recognized by the mates. A sort of buffer-state at all times and in all craft, his is not an easy place to fill at any time ; here in his case, it is doubly so. I suppose he got his start as bo'sun by the kindness of some mate or master whose proper bo'sun had been left behind, or had “ jumped ” his ship.

However, this thing of mystery is the point of interest at present. Wooden hoops from biscuit-barrels and harness-casks have been brought for'ard, cut open and either enlarged or reduced in size and altered slightly from their previous roundness by having manilla yarns tied across them. There are about a score of these, ranging in size from the circumference of a man's head to that of a horse's body at its widest girth. Then there has been much making of tow from old manilla, and working it into two things that might crudely represent a shaggy

mane and a flowing tail. Another piece of work is a queerly-shaped, sheet-like article made with old canvas. There are also sticks and pieces of wood from the dunnage, fore-side of the coal in No. 1 hold. Finally, it has fallen to me to take down a certain song from the lips of Mumbles—altered, amended, etc., by Benton, Parsons and others of the elder hands—and to make a dozen copies of it, so that the uninitiated can learn it by the first dog-watch of our Emancipation-Day.

During all this the apprentices have been interested greatly, and have lingered about the fo'c's'le-doorways when off duty, or a surreptitious visit could be paid, all to ask questions and fire ironic sallies; whilst some of them—Bowman in particular—pretended that they knew all about the mysterious and symbolic thing to be, which they have never witnessed and are excitedly eager to see.

EPISTLE VI

A reversion to Shivers : The dying steward : That dorsal-fin :
Strange muttering : A sickening wait : Shooting in vain :
Another attempt : " He's hooked ! " : Demoniactal slashing :
Olaf's release : Oskar's dream and my interpretation : Items
of personality : Dreams at sea : Dream superstitions : A
bo'sun's belief : No dreams of good omen.

*O mystic deep, where mysteries deeper still
Hang 'twixt man's finite and God's infinite ;
What marvels move the soul of man to thrill,
Whilst hidden Nature celebrates the rite.*

You will, I know, remember the uncanny bo'sun whom we had in the *Ethelburga* and the *Water-lily*—the man whom you termed " Old Man Mystery," when I told you of him ; the man who, behind his back, was nicknamed Shivers, because of his strange and apparently involuntary ability to cause a sort of tremor in most men, particularly if they had the inquisitive temerity to try to size up the old man. I quite believe that some of our shipmates thought him to be a limited incarnation of the Devil, and that his carrying the Bible was only a " blind " ; which proved them to be illiterates, otherwise they would have known that, according to tradition, the Devil can neither read nor finger the Holy Book.

However, you will easily call him to mind, because you said how impressed you were, not so much by

his touch of the weird, as by his gift of oral storytelling, and the evident fact that he was both an educated man and had lived a strange life. I recollect your saying what excellent material he had given me, as if purposely for me to try my 'prentice hand on it; and my replying that I should think it a sort of desecration to do any more with those stories than to write them just as he related them to me—verbatim, so far as I could remember his wording. In fact, they were all written down—briefly or at length, according to circumstances—soon after I heard them, within a few hours in some cases. And as you said you would like to hear two or three of them, here is one that he told me during the long spell we had together in the Mediterranean, after my longer bout of rheumatism in the hospitals of Cronstadt, Greenwich, and Grimsby.

It was one Sunday-afternoon, my watch-out, and no trick at the wheel. The dirty old tramp was throbbing her way out of the Straits of Messina, with the ominous looking top of Etna just discernible in the clouds a little abaft our starboard beam. The blue sea was calm as a mill-pond, and everything, except the eight-knot engines, was quiet aboard. Shivers and I had drifted into talking of supernatural things in general; when, in a lull in our conversation, he began, in that unpreluded way of his, his monotone-voice lending an additional impressiveness to the recital:

“ If I were asked to give the thing a name, I should call it ‘ Olaf’s Barrier ’; for, in some strange manner, all unconscious to us at the time, the coming three

days—now so memorable—were to prove it peculiarly his barrier to the Unknown.

“Morning it was—that grey haziness then flushing of light that makes quick dawn and sudden day in the tropics. We were homeward-bound with wheat from Portland, Oregon, and were just over the ‘line,’ in the spent end of the south-west trade.

“In the light ripples, a cable’s length or so away from our weather-quarter, appeared the indication that a terror of the great waters was in our wake. It was a shark’s big, black, pointed, devilish fin, seen every now and then above the surface—a chilling fish-fiend left by the receding night to disturb the quietude of our sad monotony. An evenness that had previously been pleasant and homely was now marked by the inevitable sorrow of things, because Olaf was dying in his bunk ; and it was his dying and the horrible presence of the shark that by-and-bye gave us a life-long reminder of how close we lived to a world of things that cannot possibly be understood by any man.

“As the great red sun went up into the heavens, away our weather bow, throwing the shadow of the hull and sails astern and to leeward withal, the shark crept slowly into that shadow ; there he would hang about a little while, then slink back or dive, but he never remained long out of sight. The way he stuck to the ship’s wake made some of us shudder before the next twenty-four hours had gone by.

“Our packet was the *Glenmuir* of Glasgow, an eighteen-hundred-ton steel clipper, well-found alow and aloft, with plenty of provisions and happy in

the matter of officers. Olaf—who was dying so far as the shark would let him, as we saw it later on—was our manly, fatherly, dear old Norwegian steward. He shared the berth of the second mate, in the forepart of the cabin, and from every watch-in the officer expected to turn out, and find his berth-mate dead.

“Olaf was suffering from a complication of troubles, which being the dominant one we knew not. A doctor in Portland had told him, just before sailing, that if he left the port in the *Glenmuir* he would never reach land again. At that The Old Man had offered to pay him off, and put him into the hospital, with every penny of his money to his credit. But Olaf would have no such treatment. If die so soon he must, he would die at sea—die and be buried in that element by which he had played when a boy, whereon he had worked since first his hands had been useful on a rope or line.

“A few days after our rounding the Horn, he had taken to his bunk—not before his strength had ebbed so far as to make this action compulsory. There he had lingered on a while, growing neither worse nor better. Now he felt, and we knew, that The Old Man’s compassion, in bringing him away from Portland, had devolved upon us the sorrowful task of our ship-mate’s funeral.

“About two-bells in the forenoon-watch, Olaf became weak and delirious, and an elder apprentice was told off to sit by him and attend to his wants. He soon afterwards began to moan in a disjointed manner, to us then unintelligible, anent ‘that thing,

that awful thing in the way.' In no jot divining his meaning, we went about our work in the quiet fashion that had settled upon us all.

“ Under normal, in-board conditions, with the weather as it then was, there would probably have been an attempt to catch the shark. As it was, we had several reasons for not doing so : The fixed gloom about us repelled any effort to break it ; one and all, we had the reverse of a desire to cause a commotion during Olaf's dying hours ; our bulwarks, decks and their fittings were looking prim and smart, consequent to their late ' holy-stoning ' and painting ; and the mate was against having a mess made on them, such as would be if we hooked the monster. This was why we left it in peace till the second dog-watch, when some of the apprentices took to throwing odd missiles at it, quietly—without any further effect than making it disappear for a few minutes. The mate expressed a wish to try his hand at shooting it ; but, owing to his fondness for Olaf, he refrained.

“ Thus fell the night, to the subdued fiddling of a pathetic plantation air by Pomp, our middle-aged negro, under the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head. During those slow sad hours of darkness Olaf muttered confusedly, from time to time, of an invisible something that blocked his way—what or where we could not, did not try to imagine. Even when he shuddered and trembled in his weak wanderings, trying to lift a bony hand to point out the obstacle, we put it all down to the unpleasant fantasy of a mind dying in delirium.

“ Morning came again, the weather still the same, and still that same repellent black fin within sight of our lee-quarter. It was now that some of us shivered when we looked at the shark. It was the mate’s watch-out ; and, a little after daybreak, he fetched up a revolver leaned well-over the taffrail—to keep the sound of the shot as far off-board as possible—and fired at the foul object, which then began again to mar the quietude of our sorrow. He missed. The fin remained as before ; and a short end was put to the firing by the appearance of The Old Man—he looking sadder than any other in the crew, for he and Olaf had been shipmates during the past nine years.

“ Throughout that day our gloom increased. The frightful ghoulsh persistency of the shark was telling on us more and more. Not that a word was said on the subject. We were a homely crowd, as I said, without a single ‘ hard case ’ amongst us ; and, although we instinctively knew the repulsive reason of that terror following us, we hadn’t a tongue aboard with a heart that so lacked feeling as to give mouth to the thought.

“ As the day advanced, Olaf’s ravings became more pronounced, threatening to carry him off in their very violence. At times he shrieked that ‘ the awful thing ’ should be taken out of his way ; then he sank, shuddering, silent, cowering so far as he was able to, and nigh dying of absolute weakness and fear. This greatly increased the weight of that invisible pall of feeling under which we moved. Yet it did not occur to us to attribute his cries and horror

to that finned devil astern there ; for up to the present no one had made the slightest mention of or reference to the shark within fathoms of where Olaf lay, so careful were we to guard his dying moments from a thought of the brute awaiting him.

“ So the night passed. Another day came, and with it a blessed change—although we were not, as had been hoped, relieved of that swimming would-be grave. Forty-eight hours had Olaf spent in delirium. Now he had slept a while, perhaps as the outcome of exhaustion. On awaking he was in possession of his senses. After a quiet, weak, slow, wondering look around the berth, he feebly touched the shoulder of the watching apprentice and moaned in a whisper :

“ ‘ The shark, the shark—astern ; get the hook, get the hook.’

“ Out of the cabin, like one suddenly brought face-to-face with the undeniable apparition of his murdered victim, went the attendant apprentice. To him it was peculiarly terrifying, this bounding thought that the dying man had, by some means more than strange, received a premonition of the monster astern waiting for his body. So little versed as yet in the hard lives and often harder deaths of men who come down to the sea in ships, on to the poop sprang the youth, blurting out his information to the captain long before reaching him. Instantly The Old Man went below, ascertained that Olaf really knew of the shark’s evil presence, and stayed not to ask the how of it, but returned at once and ordered what was immediately done—the shark-

hook baited with a five-pound piece of pork, a line bowlined into its chain-end, it slipped over the side to drift astern, while we eyed it and its object with an anxiety that was closely akin to actual pain.

“And what a day was that! Surely, never a ship, never crew had another such! Not a hand’s-stir was done, except at the wheel and in the galley, and indifferently there, from the moment of producing hook and bait until the two had done their work. Nor did a thought enter any one’s head to ask Olaf how he came to know of the shark being there; although it was now plain to see, had we possessed sufficient time for deliberation, that his delirious mutterings had been caused by the presence of the shark.

“Hopefully, fearingly in the feverish greediness of smothered, passionate vengeance, we waited and watched, watched and waited. We lost all hope, felt sick at failure, then were revived to a high pitch of curbed excitement by seeing the brute approach our bait; . . . only to fall back, nerveless in the grip of disappointment, some of us muttering curses, others in worse silence, when it sniffed at the pork then retired to its waiting-place. . . . Several times the helmsman was wide of his course; but neither The Old Man nor the officer of the watch thought it worth while to tell him of the fault. The watch-in forgot that it was their turn to seek cover. Our breakfast was barely tasted. Through it all a stilling silence held us almost dumb—the silence needed for the catching of our implacable enemy, the resulting silence of that strange business in which we were

engaged, apart from the securing of so hated a prey.

“ Another feature of those long hours of wearisome waiting, of galling nearnesses to success, of fruitless endeavour, was Olaf’s continual sending forth his attendant to know if the foe’s capture had been effected. He was waiting, he said—waiting to die, and he could not do so whilst that fiend of the waters lived and waited for him. Sad, sad, indeed, both to him and to us, was the message that had to be repeatedly sent in to him. There was not amongst us a man, and scarcely a youth, who would not have risked his life, or undergone days of certain pain, to see the shark struggling at the end of our line.

“ At two-bells in the afternoon-watch, sickened at many failures with different baits and cunning contrivances, and exasperated past endurance, The Old Man brought forth a rifle. He fired several times, but failed to hit his object; the officers followed, with a like result. Two Naval Reserve A.B.’s were given opportunities of putting a bullet into the head of the prey—not that it was sure to have killed him, but there was a faint chance of its doing so, or at least of disabling him. The first of the two did no more than his betters had done; the second, in some way, seemed to wound the horrible object, for he dived. We looked for a trace of blood, or any other proof of our enemy being dead. . . . Some minutes passed. We thought that the lead had done its work properly. Just as faces were brightening and lips preparing for congratu-

lations, a young apprentice announced the shark's return.

"Yes, there the brute was, where the deepening blue merged into opaqueness a fathom and a half or so beneath our lee-counter, doggedly, steadily keeping pace with the ship. We watched him a while, hoping that he would turn over and die of the bullet which we thought to be in him. . . .

"He swam evenly on. Then the mate re-baited the sprung hook, using a pair of woollen gloves first dipped in salt water so that the shark could not smell the touch of his hands on the pork. He next secured a much longer line to the chain—we others looking on in questioning silence, half-forgetting that we were fishing for the peaceful death of our shipmate, as we had never fished in the waters of life for any good to ourselves. The mate took the newly-baited hook well-for'ard, without so much as hinting that any one should lend him a hand ; there he lowered it very quietly over the side, dropped a dozen fathoms of the line after it, then slipped along with the end of the line outside all, to the main-rigging, where he made it fast.

"'Come here, Mr. Macintyre,' said he, in a quiet gravity, while securing the line ; 'and bring a couple or three hands along.'

"The second mate went, from where he had stood on the bitts, by the break of the poop, motioning three A.B.'s to follow him.

"'Let your men take hold of the line and stand-by to gather-in smartly when I give you the signal,' the mate added, and was on the poop almost before he

had ceased speaking. Macintyre obeyed the mate's orders, then perched himself on the fife-rail in the rigging, so that he could see the line leading away aft and also the mate, who leaned over the taff-rail narrowly peering into the water where the vessel's quarter over-shadowed it.

“Slowly the *Glenmuir* forged ahead in the light breeze. Then we saw what the Mate had aimed at. By taking his new bait so far for'ard, it had sunk much below the shark. Now the pork was discerned, faintly white, rising under the drag of the line behind it, just ahead and beneath the shark. He saw it, too, evidently took it for what it was not—as the mate had intended he should. We noted him making a sweep towards the rising object. . . . He turned over. Knowing so well what that meant, we scarcely breathed; but we could not wholly repress an involuntary, wild yell, although it was instantly cut short and smothered in long-drawn breathing, as the pork disappeared in his cavernous jaws.

“‘Gather-in the slack,’ was the mate's quiet order, as his hand went up and made an equivalent mute signal in the air.

“Had the hook taken hold where we wished it to? That was the question at which we mentally halted, with bated breaths, as we all sprang for the line, then tautening out in the hands of the men originally told-off to it. In wild haste it was now gathered in; a jerk quickly followed, and we could have shouted for joy. The hook had a firm hold! What demoniacal pleasure we found in tugging at that line!

How the shark struggled for freedom ! How we ground our teeth and pulled, as he floundered and sought to free himself, now at the surface, then half-a-dozen fathoms deep ! How we jostled each other in our efforts to get a drag on the line, officers, men and apprentices mixed pell-mell ! The gloom, the melancholy, the quietude had gone. The settled depression of weeks had been snapped in a moment by an out-rush of that devilishness which marks hard-living men at such times. The worst of our natures was touched to its quickest. No 'hard case,' tyranny-driven, mutiny-ready crowd, of a 'blue-noser' could have shown more ferocity, more repellent desire to get in the prey, nor a more evident wish to out-brutalize each other in the task. To us then, Olaf was as if he had never been. Even the humane, easy-going Old Man had forgotten that there is such a virtue as gentle, noble manhood.

" Oh, the mad glamour of fiendish revenge when heads are hot and hearts are full of hate ! Twice was the shark brought alongside ; twice he tore away again, making our hands smart as the line was snatched through them ; and twice we buckled-to afresh. Although we were thirty-three and he but one, yet so disorganized was our attack and so feverish and individual in character, that he came very near breaking away a third time. But a quick turn with the line around a main-lanyard kept him close by the ship's side.

" Then the ringed upper end of the chain, attached to the hook in his mouth, was high enough to reach. Chips, an active Tynesider, leapt to the main-mast

for the end of a whip, then in use for sending fresh sails aloft. With it he returned, helped by so many eager hands that some were hindrances because of their plenitude. Over the rail leaned a young countryman of Olaf's, ready to hitch the whip to the ring on the chain. In doing so he slipped, owing to the shark's exertions to get away. He would have pitched headlong into its gaping mouth, but for two men just behind him grabbing his legs as they went up to disappear. Yet he did the work, and returned to the deck without a shudder.

“ At that moment the other part of the whip was passed into a snatch-block. Thirty-two of us manned the line, with the same motion, all nerved by the strength of brutal hate ; and up the monster came at a run—nineteen feet five inches of man-eating fish !—The Old Man letting go the line by which he was caught, as the lifting whip tautened above him. . . . In he swung, and was dropped making a thud that shook the deck for fathoms around where he struck.

“ Within two or three minutes, despite his wild flounderings and the horrible snapping of his ponderous jaws, he lay in a mass of quivering pieces. In every hand, The Old Man's alone excepted, was a gleaming, slimy knife ; even the mate and ‘ the doctor ’ had armed themselves in time with galley knives, and Chips reached in wherever he could for a jab with one of his chisels.

“ Now the attending apprentice was sent back to his post at Olaf's side ; but he was on deck again at once, with the quelling announcement that our

friend and shipmate was away on his passage to the harbour of For Ever. The youth said, in a hushed way. 'The steward's dead!' Yet those three words put us all into instant silence and stillness. While we had stabbed and ripped insanely for the life of the thing we hated and dreaded, the soul of Olaf—kept back by its presence just over the quarter there—was released. He had gone peacefully; as we saw by the calm set of his face."

* * * * *

Oskar has been dreaming; and if not thereby comes a tale, that fact holds a significant interest for me. Shortly, it puts me somewhat in the place of Joseph—not during his services under Potiphar, nor after his release from prison and his establishment as Pharaoh's Minister of the Interior. In one respect I am like unto him during the time he was companioned by the chief of the butlers and the chief of the bakers. It appears that I can interpret dreams—I say "appears." Time is needed to prove every prophet, however humble may be his share in the great look-forward.

The revelation came about in this wise. Oskar had been dreaming, and told his dream casually to Cummings, Dobey and me. When he had finished I, with no thought of interpretation, said that the dream seemed to mean so-and-so—that is, spontaneously my mind had seen a parallel in real life. To me, one thing was a sort of metaphor of the other. I am not in the least surprised at this, for the following reason: When I was a small boy, my father gave me Bunyan's "Pilgrim" to read—a little, old,

calf-bound book with quaint engravings in wood—and afterwards so catechized and instructed me in the allegory that he either aroused some inherent love of that form of comparison and mental exercise or planted a fondness for it ; so that I took to hunting for allegories in everything, and was ever afterwards enamoured of one in print. (By-the-way, is not this fondness for allegory considered to be an evidence of simple-mindedness, of the primitive ? I believe it is, and by that same token I see new light : How can one who is at once a sailor and a lover of allegories expect to make headway amongst shoremen ?)

Thus much for the why and the wherefore. Now to come back. Oskar was impressed seriously, but said nothing of what he thought. (I should tell you that he received a good education up to the age of eighteen, when he cleared off to sea. He was to have gone to Upsala for a finishing, then have entered his father's profession. He is tall, straight, well-made, about six-and-twenty, has never had a day's illness and is quiet of manner. He strikes you at once as being a man of considerable moral and mental strength, and that impression grows as your knowledge of him deepens. To look at, he is typically Swedish.)

Then he dreamt again, in the forenoon-watch—below, yesterday, told us the dream in the dog-watch ; and, as before, I paralleled it off-hand. From that moment Oskar was unusually preoccupied till we turned-in after eight-bells. In the middle-watch, he came to me on the look-out, where there was no one to overhear or interrupt, and said that the first

half of my interpretation had actually come true before we sailed on this voyage ; but he had not seen the allegory till I pointed it out. Further, there is a probability of the other half being accomplished—except for an item that is more than all the dream outside itself. This is a reunion between him and the girl he loves ; for there has been a serious quarrel, hence his wandering here, before the mast in an English ship, instead of completing his time for a master's certificate in the Swedish service. He already holds a mate's " ticket."

He may come with me to Cardiff at the end of this voyage, if our final port of destination be thereabouts. So, for the present at least, I cannot tell you more of either his dream* or my interpretation ; one half would be useless without the other, and to tell you all would be taking an unpardonable liberty with his private affairs.

However, I am not impressed by this discovery. If it be a gift, Nature gave it to me ; and as I neither wanted it, value it, nor have done anything towards developing it, I have no puffed-out notions as to the gods having favoured me above my fellows. Such a gift lies not in the track of my ambitions, any more than I am moved to become master of even so beautiful and mettlesome a high-seas steed as this

* At this distant date I do not remember the dream and interpretation with sufficient clearness to put them down here. But this much I can say : Some three years later Oskar sent me a letter, saying that the whole dream had come true, as interpreted. He was then about to be married to the girl and was at peace with his father. Since then in my own dreams I have seen such allegories as have heartened me to go on, when otherwise all was utterly black and forbidding. And there are about me those who know this fact.

Bucephalus. I own that it is an excellent fine thing to be the "little god" of such a craft—to those whose bent leans that way; mine doesn't. Thousands of men would be satisfied with the godship, if they could have it on shore; but they can't, and they don't come to sea even for the sake of being a god in a small way. I am here; yet I want neither the power nor the ship. In the beginning a wanderer from choice and the irrepressibility of youth, I now roam from necessity—albeit the love of change, action, colour, the conglomerations of humanity and all the *et cetera* of this gipsy life, compensate me largely for the fact that I cannot stay ashore and do what I wish to.

For the time being I am much more concerned with dreams than with the mastership of any vessel—much as Oskar and others would have me give up these day-dreams of authorship and turn my abilities to navigation. To me it is a curious fact that, even with the average practical person, dreams aboardship seem to have more weight on the minds of their dreamers than they have when dreamt on land. It may be that the eternal mystery of the deep, the subtle and unexplainable glamour of a more subtle element, a fascination that is never without a note of pathos, and must ever repel or enshroud all who venture to cross its vastness of solitude—it may be that this, and being severed from the strengthening assurance that comes of having the resisting earth under one's feet, imperceptibly enters the mind and tinctures these sleep-visitations with its own strange, uncanny influence. Many a time has the teller of a dream that occurred during the previous night, been

asked how it would have affected him, had it been dreamt in bed at home ; to this the reply has commonly proved that the dreamer would most likely have forgotten it ere the day had passed. At least, so have run my observations. Dreams at sea may readily though roughly be divided into two kinds—those of the passenger, which doubtless owe their seeming importance to new and peculiar surroundings ; and the seaman's dream, the influence of which is certainly that of superstition.

To a sailor a dream of a beautiful woman, or of a horse, or of muddy water, portends bad weather, and probable disaster ; while the more pronounced is the character of the dream the greater attention it receives. More than once has the skipper of a sailing vessel rushed from his berth to the deck, ordered a shortening of sail down to storm-allowance, and—despite the fair weather then prevailing—stopped on the poop, half-dressed, and seen his command fully carried out. In cases where his expectations of a sudden gale are not realized he will put the matter down to be an intervention of Providence. I remember an instance of this kind, when the breeze was more a long and heavy squall than a gale : it came with an abrupt change of wind, and I would wager that as long as that skipper lives his stock boast will be how he saved the vessel by a dream. Times beyond number have old salts become strangely silent, and remained so during several successive watches, for no other reason than that they have dreamt of something which to them heralded trouble to the ship.

Although the three sorts of dreams are generally held to be unlucky ones, there are men who have their own pet subjects both for evil and good fore-warnings that come in moments of sleep. On one occasion the old bo'sun of the *Flowery Land* (a pious and very memorable character in his way) turned out just after the fo'c's'le-relief at eight-bells in the morning-watch, came into our fo'c's'le, took the cat in his knarled hand, and shut it up in an empty chest in his berth. There he kept the animal a prisoner; and when asked why he was doing so, he replied by a mysterious shake of the head and an injunction to his questioner to "wait and see." Towards evening of the second day the barometer fell considerably; and being in northern latitudes, with a moderate breeze then blowing from the north-west, a corresponding increase of wind was expected. In this we were pleasantly disappointed; for on the following afternoon the "glass" rose above its former point, became steady, and by the end of the second dog-watch we had but a gentle breeze, while the sky was almost cloudless.

Now the bo'sun brought the cat—no longer in the sportive mood that characterized him when his captor bore him off—back to the fo'c's'le, calmly said in his quiet, dogmatic fashion that he had shut it up to save the ship from the throes of a fierce gale, and forthwith retired to his bunk. It subsequently leaked out that he had dreamt of seeing the cat romp about, as is customary with its species; of its raising the lid of an A.B.'s chest while so engaged, thereby causing a rush of wind and water out of the

chest ; and of some nameless something telling him that if the cat had not set the lid free the after trouble would never have occurred. Hence his securing the animal when he suddenly awoke from the dream, and his later assertion that the visitation was a Divine message and means of averting the impending storm, as typified by that which issued from the chest.

To ask him what connexion the cat had with the Ruler of storms, or how its imprisonment could stave off the one in question, or in what manner he squared his religious belief with such superstitious acts, was but to waste words. All that we could draw from him was a very brief answer, muddled in its way, but meaning that nothing would ever shake his faith in such things—then silence. Let it be said, as due to his memory, that he knew nothing of the falling of the barometer until two days after the story became gossip fore and aft.

Rarely is there a heavy freshening of wind, or an unexpected squall that requires a reduction of canvas, without some elderly member of the crew muttering about this or that dream while busy taking in sail. At such times, hauling on a clewline or buntline, going aloft, or struggling with a sail on the yard, to any one and everyone who happens to be near him he will tell of this dream-pictured evil siren ; or how he saw wild horses doing incredible things ; or of boiling water so muddy that it was like a thickened Thames ; or his nocturnal herald was a private one and visited him in the guise of the spirit of some former shipmate lost at sea, or of a cat which he once threw overboard while in passion, or in the

shape of a domestic upheaval in his family at home.

If an evil befalls a vessel during a gale—such as the loss of a spar, boat, or man—some wrinkled A.B. is sure to have had a premonition that the accident would take place. On occasions, two of them will have been forewarned, according to their theories of the matter. Then when once more inside the fo’c’s’le, there will be a comparing of notes, the others looking on, some in silence, and a few now and then adventuring an explanatory word. Out of this the two dreamers will either issue with a new link of friendship, or possibly wander from the discussion into a fight.

It is a curious fact that none of these dreams ever deal with any subjects but those of serious import. The truth is a trite one that, taking the Merchant-Jack as a whole, he is a very serious being; a man who is heavily impressed (unconsciously so in most cases) with the importance of life, and of things which seem to be trivial in the eyes of others. In the older, deep-water variety there is also a marked vein of melancholy and pathos, and an everlasting struggle between hope and the utter pessimism that comes of his life of isolation, discipline and the inherent sadness of the sea, with absolutely no compensating diversions such as the Bluejacket gets. I say “inherent sadness”—yes. In the sea and its atmosphere generally, as experienced in the long solitudes of a deep-water, “wind-jammer” voyage, there is a subtle sorrow that creeps into the mind like a narcotic drug through the veins, and it cannot be kept out unless you are

young, are an outstanding optimist, or a reader and worker to a definite end—like I am. To these facts only can I attribute the rarity of the “shellback’s” smiles and jokes when he is aboard, and out of them comes the evil prognostication of his dreams. Yet, that this form of superstition is dying out is readily seen in the fact of its having but little importance in the minds of the younger generation. It is also noticeable, though not remarkable, that one rarely hears of the inferior kind of seaman found on steamships giving more than a passing thought to a dream that would make his brother in the “wind-bag” prophesy all sorts of disastrous happenings.

EPISTLE VII

Building the "dead horse" : Our master and the mate : A contrast : Preparing the rite : "Heave him out" : Strenuous hauling : An interlude : It might have been a dead elephant : "Farewell, old hoss" : And what a day ! : "Slops" : Sea chests and their owners : "Exhibition-day" and an incident :
A musical interruption.

THE DAY has come and gone ! The "dead horse" is worked out ; and we are as slaves set free, yet compelled to work or starve. It—THE *day*—came early this week ; so we have to wait for Saturday-night before we can have the concert that is to celebrate our freedom. In the meantime, let me tell you about the never-to-be-forgotten heaving-out, then do not dare to say it was not Homeric, however poorly I present it to you.

The great affair began immediately dinner was over. In fact, some of us "youngsters" were at the preliminaries whilst the older hands were still munching their "salt horse." It happened to be our turn below. Bristol, Benton, Summers, Mumbles, and the two blacks were the chief workers, because they had seen it all before. We others—the whole six of us—helped and dodged, got in the way, bungled, were sworn at and swore back.

First, out came all the hoops that had been reshaped, and along with them the bamboos, pieces of wood and what-not. When four-bells was struck,

these things had, by the aid of numberless lashings and seizings, been fashioned into a crude resemblance of a horse's skeleton. The legs were of dunnage-wood, roughly-shaped by Chips and hinged loosely at the knees by a long nail through each joint, after the style of primitive dolls' wooden legs. For the sake of our general convenience it was built athwartships, in the communicating doorway between the two fo'c's'les, its stern-half being on the port-side, and its for'ard-half in our fo'c's'le—the lee-side—so that it could go out head-first.

And the head—that was a separate and special piece of art from the hands of Sails and Chips. It was made of canvas stitched over a wire-frame—mouth, nostrils, and eyes complete, painted vividly to look like life, not death. How it reminded me of the age-old, symbolic, Christmas games of my boyhood, “The Old Horse” and “The Old Tup!”

Then came the skin—canvas, of course. This was the queer-shaped, sheet-like thing that we novices had watched in the making. It was put on by the two edges being laced together from the head, underneath, to where the tail hung over and hid the finish of the lacing. And what a tail! And what a mane! What appendages for a true-born Arabian steed to envy! Instinctively Mrs. Norton's “My darling, oh, my beautiful!” arose in my mind. In the meantime members of the port-watch and the apprentices stuck their heads in at one doorway or the other so repeatedly and with such mouthfuls of questions, that we were forced to close both doors and work in the stifling atmosphere thus brought about. For although

we are in the north-east trade—a fine, steady breeze, but little above “gentle,” that causes hardly any swell—we are also drawing down towards Cancer.

Now the representative of our freedom was complete ; so, its legs not being made to stand on, we bearers lowered it gently to the deck, and let it lie there, in order that we might rest and survey and re-survey our handiwork, whilst waiting for eight-bells and all hands. In virtue of the day, but more because of The Old Man’s fatherliness, there was to be no work in the first dog-watch—that is, work was to end at four o’clock instead of six, so that all hands could share in the rite, finish it by tea-time, have tea together, a two-hours sort of holiday to boot, and feel that we were, indeed, new-made men. So we opened the doors, let in the welcome breeze to our oven-like work-room, and again suffered the passing questions of the uninitiated, the satire of such as Bowman, and an occasional, chanted : “ Now the old horse is dead, *Heave* him out ! ”

As a further proof of our Dutch captain’s stock of common feeling, in all the British ships that heave out the “ dead horse ” in this year of grace, there will probably not be more than another one, or two at the outside, where the men will be allowed to perform their ceremony before six o’clock—and even then with very little help or encouragement in the way of materials, freedom of action, and the like. And, mind you, if the mate had his way ten to one we should get much the same treatment—er, that is, if he happened to be in what is for him a pliable mood (for he is decidedly a man of moods, as all your

taciturn men are), he might give us a little licence, and possibly regret his laxity before eight-bells. Of such conflicting ingredients are some men made.

During the last half-hour of the watch some of the port-fo'c's'le-men, under the guidance of the bo'sun and whilst the mate took occasion to be out of the way, rigged up a luff-tackle* to the lee-quarter (*i.e.* the starboard) of the fore-yard, which was pretty directly on a line with the outer-door of our fo'c's'le. Instantly four-bells had been struck there were crowding, excitement, and turmoil inside the fo'c's'les and around their doorways. The port-watch came trooping on to the scene, eager to know if all was ready within, although they knew the exact state of things. The pitiable "carcase" obstructed any free passage from one fo'c's'le to the other; so all the time there was a danger of some over-strung "galoot" stumbling across its head or its rump, or going full-length on the thing itself and partially destroying its beautiful, equine symmetry. What a tragedy it looked as it lay there! As for moving it, even into our fo'c's'le, with its tail for'ard and its head to the doorway— No, that would not do; it would hamper the heaving-out. Besides, the "body" must come from *both* fo'c's'les—for it was emblematic of both alike; as, indeed, it was of the whole ship's company except the master, chief officer, and the steward. (The apprentices get no pay, as perhaps you know.)

So we crowded, half-stumbled and talked wholly,

* This is made with the use of a double block and a single one, what the landsman calls pulleys. Such a tackle is used only to lift heavy weights.

every one advising and no one obeying. Then up "he" was lifted, held in position, and the slings were adjusted. Now a proper change came o'er the spirit and the letter of our doing. Chips, Sails, and Spun-yarn thrust themselves into strong evidence as high priests of the rite, especially Sails. Yet even in his vigorousness of both voice and manner there was an equally strong, steadying influence that had its effect on the crowd, despite an occasional, sly wink from him to one or another of the older hands. In a couple of minutes we had all passed from hilariousness, facetious questions and remarks and general foolishness to a proper sense of the solemnity of the time and purpose in hand. And this was our bearing till the slings were cut, and we shouted our final "*Heave him out!*" to the disappearing "carcase." The change came really with Sails bawling in at the lee-doorway.

"Now, then, all hands on deck here, but the horsemen! Out you come, you sons of your mothers! Out with you, every damned one of you!"

And out we came, port and starboard, to gather up on the lee-deck 'twixt bulwarks and deck-house, ready to man the fall of the tackle, and leaving Chips, Bristol Bill and Parsons inside as "horsemen" and representatives of their watches and sections. In the meantime, Sails and Spun-yarn busied themselves mightily in directing the lower block of the tackle into the fo'c's'le, the hooking-on, the use of a snatch-block to a ringbolt in the deck, so that we could all tail on to the fall as it stretched aft to a belaying-pin in the fife-rail around the main-mast, with the five apprentices at the far end, just to please

them. Because of further delinquencies Sniffles was not allowed to have a pull, which meant that he got no sight of either the emblem or the ceremony. (His time is now regularly divided between work, sleep, wrongdoing, and punishment; but the last-named is all wasted.) The Old Man had thoughtfully relieved Mumbles from the wheel, and put an apprentice there—Bowman, I am glad to say—so that our lovable, old Irishman could have his share of joy in the performance.

To and fro from the fore-rail of the poop almost to the binnacle, and on the weather-side, of course, walked The Old Man and the mate, the former enjoying our allegorical tomfoolery and the second—seemingly long since dead to anything in the nature of delight—too much of an “old-timer” wholly to condemn that which his natural practicability and annoyance at everything in the shape of nonsense would have suppressed solely on account of its uselessness. Under the break of the poop stood the big, Welsh steward, his bare arms folded across his chest, his long, black moustache looking fierce as ever; whilst the second mate kept him company, casting that rather oblique eye up at him now and then, as they no doubt discussed our proceedings.

By this time the tackle was hooked on, shouts came from within to haul-away, with queries as to what the so-and-so was the matter—meaning our delay in not hauling till the order came! So we began to haul—to every appearance as if a ton weight and a big pay-day were hanging to the lower block. Curly Jones (now well enough to be about the deck again, but not

to go aloft) was chief chanteyman, at the head of our long string of thirty pairs of hands, for even the "doctor" was there; while Sails and Spun yarn hauled on the downward part of the tackle-fall, the former lending his stentorian voice to Curly's falsetto in the solo parts of the song, thus :

(Solo) "Now the old horse is dead"—
 (Chorus) "Heave him OUT!" *
 (Solo) "Now the old horse is dead and done"—
 (Chorus) "Heave the old horse OUT!"

 "We gave him a month of our daily bread"—
 " Heave him OUT!"
 "We gave him a month of our bread and beef"
 " Heave the old horse OUT!"

Now the head appeared in the fo'c's'le-doorway, hanging mournfully to one side and in such a manner that the too realistic eyes were turned on us with a look that both belied the limp neck and seemed to reproach us for what we were doing. At the same time their expression was so comical that Dobey—never a very serious young man—set up a guffaw. This brought Summers around on him with a colourful question as to why he was not putting *his* weight on the fall, like other men, and a reminder to keep his mirth for a proper occasion. I don't know why we all didn't laugh; the sight was so tickling. Instead of that, Dobey straightened his face; we all prepared to "lay back on the rope" again, and the soloists chanted :

 "He was a horse that was good an' true"—
 " Heave him OUT!"
 "He was a horse that did his bit"
 " Heave the old horse OUT!"

* At the last word of each chorus all hands pulled together.

We paused, strained, half-breathless and apparently unable to get in another inch of the fall. Curly said, grinning broadly.

“By'm golly, chaps, de ole horse *am* dead.”

Mumbles fixed his one eye on the limp head of our emblem and muttered in that peculiar, mouthful way of his: “Be jabers, but he's loike razen the dead as don't intend to roise.”

Similar remarks ran along the rope, then a voice within shouted—Parson's evidently—

“Haul away there! Damn my eyes, why don't you haul away!”

“Come on, lads! We've got to get him out!” urged Sails, and Curly chanted:

“He never kicked an' he never shied”—

“*Heave him OUT!*”

“He ate our bread, an' now he's died!”

“*Heave the old horse OUT!*”

Here there was a change. Curly stood upright and wailed out in his rather nasal, high-pitched voice and a monotone that went floating away to lee-ward, as the ship raced along easily; and none of us pulled:

“O aye, me bonnies!

De poor ole horse he's dead an' done; *

We gave him beef an' bread an' bone *—

O aye, me bonnies!

But now he's dead an' damned he goes

Over de side w'ere no one knows—

O aye, me bonnies!”

Then came the regular chantey:

“He's dead and damned, so let him go”

“*Heave him OUT!*”

“He's dead and damned, whether he will or no”

“*Heave the old horse OUT!*”

* Curly made these two words rhyme, but by sounds that defy spelling in English.

At this point the body of the "carcase" was jammed in the doorway. It had been made big for this purpose. So Sails and Spunyarn left the fall, picked up a handspike each and began to prise for all their worth—apparently—the latter in strenuous silence, as is his wont, and Sails delivering himself of great, disjointed oaths that meant nothing. Curly and Tom Benton, being next on the fall, took their place, and we all moved up, Curly saying he was glad of the change "'cause no man ken't sing weef his belly bent." Truth to tell, we were all glad at the rest; for perspiration was running down our faces and we were almost winded. Meanwhile from inside the fo'c's'le there were further shouts to haul away, and many gasping noises that spoke loudly of great exertions, as if the "carcase" had been that of a dead elephant. These were followed by oaths that were long, loud and deep. So we buckled to again with :

"The poor old horse is dead"—

"*Heave him OUT!*"

"He's dead and done, so let him go"—

"*Heave the old horse OUT!*"

"We gave him a month of our daily bread"—

"*Heave him OUT!*"

"We gave him a month of the best we had"—

"*Heave the old horse OUT!*"

And out he came with a run. Then we novices saw why it was that we had hauled and hauled at the top of our strength without injuring the frail "carcase." A steadying line of good, two-inch manilla was hitched to the hook of the block and passed through the fo'c's'les to an iron belaying-pin in the port-rail, where, still unknown to us, Chips was holding on,

giving a few inches now and then. It was against this arrangement that we had hauled and tugged so heroically. Now, however, Chips slacked away pretty freely ; and up and out went the symbol of our emancipation, while we sang :

“ The poor old horse is dead and damned ”—

“ *Heave him OUT !* ”

“ So heave him out and let him go ”—

“ *Heave the old horse OUT !* ”

“ We gave him bread and sleep and beef ”—

“ *Heave him OUT !* ”

“ But now he’s dead and done and damned ”—

“ *Heave the old horse OUT !* ”

And out he was, just clear of the rail, dangling forlornly, with those vivid eyes—black daubs in circles of red and with white spots in their middles—looking at us in a sort of comical horror and reproach. The tackle-fall was belayed, and we all stood up again, panting and spent temporarily. But we at once began to gather near the rigging, jostling and joyous, bare-armed, bare-chested, bare-headed, and some of us bare-footed, a nondescript gathering of nationalities to watch Sails mount the rail, hold on to the after swifter with one hand, whilst he reached out with the other to cut the rope yarn that held one bight of the sling to the block-hook ; meantime Curly again shrieked out his doleful “ O aye, me bonnies ! ” Then, with the last repetition of that phrase, the yarn was cut. The “ carcass ” rolled out of its sling and fell, splashing into the white foam under our lee. In a moment we were all at the rail, looking over and shouting farewells to the “ dead horse.”

It was a "soft-tack" day ; * and as the *Bucephalus* is a "marmalade ship," † with her general stores to correspond, you can be satisfied that our tea on that day was both thoroughly enjoyed and noisy. We ought to have had our celebrating concert that evening ; but the organizers—the Lancashire apprentice and the hare-lipped one who saved the cat's life, with Curly, Dobey, and Sing-Song as their chief assistants—were not ready with their programme, and refused to put up a "scratch" one. In fact, discussion on the subject became so hot, from just after tea to about five-bells, that it now looks as if we shan't have the concert—unless we do it all ourselves ; and as there are two good singers amongst the apprentices (Bowman is not one of them) and the concert-directors are very decent young fellows, we don't want to appear to be nasty over the thing.

* * * * *

It is Sunday—our forenoon-watch-out, and I am a "farmer," *i.e.* I have no wheel or look-out duty—and heavens, what a glorious day ! As Mumbles said to me half-an-hour ago : "Th' Almighty niver made a betther, specially for sailors—God bless Him !" With the breeze pretty well-abaft her port-beam the *Bucephalus* is doing a good nine knots an hour, with

* Every other day the seaman is served with half-a-pound of flour, which the cook makes into either a tiny loaf, or a dumpling that is boiled in the fresh soup of that day, which is also a "beef-day"—salt beef, of course. The other days are known as "pork days"—salt—when pea soup is served with the meat.

† A ship that served out marmalade—and usually kept back some butter in its place—was rather rare in those days. The sweetmeat was not then in the Board of Trade's scale of provisions.

her royals up and all her light staysails drawing. This means that our decks are dry, and that all is well indeed alow and aloft. (By-the-way, the concert is shelved, pending peace between the two factions. At present we are as far off it as ever we were.)

Summers, Mumbles, and Sing-Song have just returned from a visit to the "slop-chest"*—the first with a shirt and pair of "bluchers"; the second with a dungaree suit, and Juan with a pair of oilskin trousers and two bars of soap over which he is chanting softly an old ballad of sunny Spain. We are all sprawling about here on the lee-side of the deck-house—the shady side—and for'ard withal, glad of the cool breeze that strikes down from the foot of the great fore-sail. As I have said, it is Sunday—the day, when weather permits, on which the "shellback" more or less empties his chest for the purpose of airing its contents, and, incidentally, if his make be that way, of "showing-off" his sea-going and shore-parading property—always excepting that little something which nearly every man has and keeps either in the till of the chest or under its false-bottom.

Now this matter of chests is one of some interest. It rather lets you into the "shellback's" psychology. (I have had to move, under the t'gal'n-fo'e's'le-head.

* Every master of a deep-waterman has a small stock of new working-clothes, soap and matches, which he sells to his men at, generally, twice their worth. These are called "slops"; and, as a rule, about half the A.B.'s have need to go to the "slop-chest" before the ship reaches her first port of call, because of having spent their money in other ways ashore. In fact, many a man does the most of his refitting from the "slop-chest," and thereby hangs much of his character to all with whom he sails.

Old Tom Benton, just from his trick at the wheel, commenced to pester me to continue that letter of his. Bristol Bill, Summers, and Sam Jones playing at "cut-throat" euchre for tiny squares of cake-tobacco, began one of the arguments common to euchre-players. And this, added to Sing-Song's droning, was too much for me. I capitulated and withdrew.)

To return to the sea-chest, which is one of the chief marks of difference between the "shellback" and the steamboat-seaman. It is also a fairly accurate keynote of its owner. Whether he be sloven or tidy, thrifty or a spend-all, plain or coloured—I mean in the matters of personal appearance and general ways—his chest bespeaks him. The moment you see a chest that badly needs a coat of paint, or with the grummets (rope-handles) worn or made awkwardly, you know at once that the owner of it is a careless man in most things ; because the man who is not so takes a pride in his chest, knowing that it is the outward symbol of himself, the mark by which his sea-going fellows and boarding-house masters judge him.

But it is the inside more than the outer one that tells its tale. The neat and commonly prideful sailor, particularly if he has been to Chinese ports, often has a camphor-wood chest. It has a finer appearance inside than any other wood of which chests are made. It is light and durable. Above all, however, it has the reputation that no vermin of bed or body can live in it. Next to that is the teak-wood chest—an East Indian production, of course ; but, whilst being able to stand any knocking about, it is heavy.

The next again is the chest made of good, yellow pine ; with the common deal one at the bottom of the scale. This is the spend-all's chest, and if he be sloven to boot—which is not always the case—it bears his character for all men to read at a glance. It will interest you to know that, according to the unwritten yet Mede-like law of the fo'c's'le, no man may lock his chest, because that action implies doubt as to the honesty of his shipmates. But he may lock the “till”—*i.e.* a narrow locker, some eight inches deep, across one end of the chest. It is there that he keeps his special, private papers, etc., unless the chest has a false bottom, which is fairly common.

As to the inside—this is what every sailor likes to see of his shipmate's chests ; the decorations they have put, or had put, there—flags painted on the under-side of the lids, their names, slings for carrying certain things (plate, knife and fork, pannikin or mug, a pet marlinespike, etc.) photographs of mothers, sisters, sweethearts, or former shipmates, and all the little indications that go to speak the man in each separate case. And I must confess that, generally, foreigners are more choicé as to the inside of their chests than Britishers are. This is especially true of Scandinavians. Hardly ever have I seen the inside of a chest belonging to a Norwegian, Swede, Dane, Finn, and usually Germans' chests, without the Navy and merchant flags of his country painted on the lids, and often in such excellent style that only a professional painter could have done the work. I cannot say so much for the chests of Italians, Spaniards

and Portuguese. (Frenchmen are exceedingly rare in our vessels.) They are usually careless about the outsides and gaudily decorative within.

So to-day—"exhibition day"—nearly every man has something on show, either in the fo'c's'le or out here on his own clothes-line, or on some light fall of the running-gear, if he happens to be a spend-all and slovenly. Meanwhile, speaking of the day generally, there are menders and washers of clothes (the latter very sparingly, because of the lack of fresh water,* and the fact that we shall be in the doldrums by-and-bye), readers, card-players, sleepers—both of the watch-out, and members of the watch-in, who find their fo'c's'le too hot for sleep—yarn-spinners, and common "arguefiers" and "sea-lawyers," two or three of whom are always found in a score of A.B.'s, whether they be cosmopolitan or not.

Into this now and then there is a call from aft for a man to go here or yonder—a gasket † has come loose, or a rope-yarn is needed somewhere alow or aloft, or a down-hauler, buntline or clewline sways about too untidily. For to-day the ship must be kept like her crew—in a sort of holiday smartness; wherefore the apprentices have donned their "brass-bounder" caps and jackets; some of them have put on even the

* The allowance per man was, and still is, three quarts a day. This has to suffice for cooking, drinking, and washing. It is served out by the steward or second mate at a given time of the day, when one man fetches the "whack" for his watch; unless they have disagreed as to the use of it, then each man fetches and takes care of his own allowance. He is usually given about a quart and a half, the other six pints being kept back for cooking purposes.

† Gaskets are short pieces of line that hold the stowed sails on the yards.

whole suits in which they go home when in England, dazzling the eyes of their relatives and getting the style of "middy" from the unknowing.

Nor are certain of the men too old and blasé to imitate them, as a "fancy" shirt, new dungaree trousers, and even a pair or two of white drills, here and there go to prove. The chief displayers in this way are Cummings, Byrne, the two Italians, Yank and Dobey in the port-watch; and on our side Oskar, Sam and Curly Jones (you should see *their* shirts, "reg'lar blazes," as Old Tom Benton says, and jean trousers, buff-coloured), Sing-Song and your humble correspondent. But you must know that none of us are wholly and initiatively to blame—if blame there be—for this vanity. It is The Old Man's wish—and the mates don't care—that we should pay such respect to him, to the ship, to plum-duff-day, to the obliging weather, and (last and least, apparently, even in *his* general view of the scheme of things afloat)—to our sometimes considered selves. Only in last Sunday's forenoon-watch—the first Sabbath on which we could say that we were really into the north-east trade—the second trick at the wheel happened to be mine. (Ten A.M. to noon.) During the past two hours I had been busy with one thing or another up to the last minute. So, *sans* any thought of the day and fine clothes, away aft I went, as four-bells was struck. Up the lee *-poop-ladder I bounded joyously, and hurried along under the spanker-boom,

* The weather-ladder, like that side of the poop-deck, is reserved for the use of the master and officers; and, in some cases, when the former is on the poop, even the second mate is expected to use the lee-ladder.

to be pulled up sharply when I came abreast of the binnacle, on my way to the weather-side of the wheel. The Old Man stood by the after-weather corner of the skylight, his shrewd yet kindly grey-blue eyes fastened on me, as he steadied himself against the ship's leeward movement. And this is what occurred, with a curious, slight sound of "g" in his "y's."

"Pätterson, what's tder day?"

"Sunday, sir."

"And is that äll you häve to offer it?"

With his pipe-stem he pointed at my habiliments—a clean although an ordinary shirt, a pair of ditto drills that once were white, but are now iron-moulded and rather tar-spotted, a pair of old canvas-slippers, and a battered rush-hat. I looked down at myself, and my silence was eloquent of shame. In the same tone, accusative but not severe, he resumed:

"And you a young män—a Naval Reservemän; änd this Sundäy" (one could almost have sworn that he said "däg"), "änd no vork to do; ändplumtduff-däy änd fine veadder?" He turned to Mumbles, at the wheel, adding: "MacTdonaltd, keep tder vheel till Pätterson göme back."

Understanding this order, I turned about, red to the tips of my ears, walked steadily off the poop to the main-deck, then raced for'ard, and was aft again in "no time," to be met with, as I passed between the binnacle and the wheel:

"Tdat's better!"

And the hearty kindness not only took away the sting I had felt; in a way it made me rather proud of myself—which was silly, unreasonable, yet human.

During my spell at the wheel that forenoon I stood more upright on the grating than usual, felt stronger and more master than ever over the steering traits of the big ship—in spite of my being held fore and aft as the best helmsman aboard ; but this is no particular honour to any man who has been accustomed to handling fore-and-afters in all sorts of North Sea weather. Nor did I care a brass farthing for the chaff that I got when I came for'ard again at eight-bells.—But there go seven-bells ! Bristol Bill steps into the port-fo'c's'le, calling in a loud, even tone :

“Hi there, hi ! Seven-bells, you sleepers, an' plum-duff waitin' ! Show a leg ! Show a leg ! ”

George (our ordinary seaman) and Curly Jones go to the galley for the other watch's dinner—a sort of shipmatey waiting-on which we get from Dobey and one or another of their A.B.'s when the positions are reversed on a Sunday, such as at breakfast-time this morning. And, all hands being now awake, here comes Oskar with his fiddle ; so I must close down. Nor shall I get a chance to do any writing in the dog-watches to-day, because of this same fiddle (for the which, I, too, am truly thankful at other times), Juan's mandoline, Sam Jones's melodeon, and Cummings's tin whistle—I mean brass-whistle. It is an extra-special, little thing, of which he is duly proud. He and Dobey often come under the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head here for a little concerto of their own, Dobey's instrument being a comb covered with tissue paper, of which he appears to have laid in a stock for this particular purpose and in which accomplishment he

has a keen rival in Mike Byrne. Oh, by-the-way, we now wash-down and clear up in the latter half of Saturday's afternoon-watch, then stop work at eight-bells. So Cummings's boxing-gloves come in for a little use in the dog-watches, as I expect they will this evening.

EPISTLE VIII

High seas and exhilaration : Measuring another's corn : Man's affinity to the sea : England and maritime matters : The ebb-tide : And the flood : Back to my course : Analysing the affinity : Trying to hold the mist : The sea's call.

If you could only know really what it is to be here !— I mean if you could only take such a trip as this ! How it would sweep away the cobwebs of shore-life, and land you back in old England—gallant little Wales, that is—fit and ready for another decade of the worries and incessant striving to which you landsmen are civilization's heirs. Here we are—bowling along, bowling along ; nigh on a fortnight now without the need to start sheet or tack or brace, except to tauten things up now and then. Yet our decks are always dry, but for the morning and evening wash-down. You may sing “ Oh, to be in England, now that April's there,” because you don't know what it is to be at sea when the trade wind follows aft, and you in a great, clean, white-decked thing with snowy wings by the dozen and all the rhythmic movement that comes of having those wings.

It is two-bells in the first * watch, ours on deck ; and except for the man at the wheel and the one on the look-out, my watch-mates are lying, mostly

* Eight o'clock to midnight.

asleep, in all sorts of corners, so be that they are out of the moonshine, lest they get moon-struck.*

I am thinking and writing by the light of such a moon as you seem never to get in England. I have just re-read your Constantinople letter; and your remarks, on what I wrote concerning the music of the sea, remind me of that thread-bare saying as to the wisdom of not measuring another person's corn with one's own bushel. Mankind in general is somewhat prone to judge the feelings—and, for that matter, often the abilities, the merits, and the faults—of others in a given situation, by their own in similar circumstances. This habit may be more the misfortune of a man's make than his direct fault. In some cases it is doubtless so, in others it is due to the lack of a sufficiently broad outlook, or to a shortage in logic and analysis, both of which could be had voluntarily; not to oversight in failing to "put yourself in his place," but of omitting to step into his *identity* and the situation. I am writing in this strain because I do not believe that you more than half-mean this gentle girding at my "oceanic music." If you were serious, I could but hold my peace and let you go; for I am no missionary, as you know. Follow me, or follow me not, no man shall say that he did so at my persuading. I work my chart of life on the supposition that every mind is a generative, analytical force unto itself; and if a particular one be not—then have I so much that I must impart some of mine to it?

* It is a common idea with sailormen in the tropics that if they sleep in the rays of the full moon their heads will swell and they will become silly—wooden.

I think not. Life is so short and so complex that my lead-line will not sound its deeps. Its variations from the magnetic north of submerged truth are so many and so great that I am always doubting the correctness of my own compass. And as for charts—Have we not each one to make our own from day to day, by what there is in us and about us? Far be it from me, then, to lead any man to quit his own set course to adopt my steering-point. On art and thought we may argue and get at points—sometimes; but life mocks at all our arguing.

However, to return to a more direct answer to your tender ridicule. The poor-in-pocket, beauty-loving poet may, while hungry, spend his temporarily last shilling on a picture or a flower, which the cold, practical mind would at once deem foolish and superfluous. But that picture or flower may be the incentive to a lyrical gem or a beautiful thought, for which thousands of persons would bless him or his memory. (And say you to those who commit no indiscretions of the heart, whose only indiscreet doings are of calm miscalculation, that no one at large is insane enough to buy, with his last coin when he is hungry, something he cannot eat; for I have done it myself. Yes, and I have seen it done, not by one who should have been under the care of a custodian, but by one who sought to express some of those gloriously beautiful things of the mind which the otherwise best of us do only think—now and then.) Thus to judge the thought or the actions of another, without having first assumed his standpoint in all things, is manifestly narrow and unfair. We are too fond of saying

that So-and-so's particular doing is foolish, when we really mean, though perhaps not seeing the matter in this light, that it would have been foolish in us to have done the same thing.

To feel as another person does in any special circumstance it is necessary at the out-set, and absolutely necessary, to take on his or her temperament, mental attitude and complete personality. So differently are we all constituted that scarcely in any specific action of life, except in certain elemental ones where there is practically but one course open, would two men act alike. It is because of this immeasurable diversity of make that the same influence, in most cases, has various effects on the majority of us humans. Yet in spite of these facts, which, to me, are incontestable, you will not deny that in greater or lesser degree all mankind is at once acted upon by certain forces—not altogether, but each in its turn and scope. The truth of this is seen in such things as music, a racy story, the abrupt gathering of a crowd about a point of interest that is unknown outside the knot of spectators, a mystery of almost any sort, and such elemental matters as terror in a sudden calamity of great magnitude.

Amongst these exterior forces, and probably two of the greatest, are magnificent scenery and that phase of Nature in a violent rage which we term a terrible storm—when the adjective is really deserved. Yet a greater still is the ocean. No matter what may be its mood at the moment, the ocean has a mightier power over humanity, a subtler influence, than is possessed by any other of Nature's fundamental

powers that are indirectly active on mankind. Not that this fact bursts flood-like on the mind of the stranger—whether he be one of your money-grubbers from a town or a piece of simple density from the fields—when looking at the ocean for the first time, and merely as a sheet of water which his eye cannot measure. I maintain that it springs into recognition whenever a man looks at it as the *ocean*—this element that compasses the world, east and west, north and south, binding it like cross-belts which stretch with and across the lines of latitude and longitude ; looking at it and *knowing it as the ocean*—this wonderful grave of untold, undiscoverable secrets, personal tragedies and widespread calamities ; seeing in it a semblance of the Infinite, the fathomless, a vague suggestion of the unknowable, of that which defies study, penetration, analysis ; hearing in it a whispering, or being deafened with its thundering, of the Omnipotent ; feeling that of all places in the world, churches and chapels notwithstanding, it is the one on which man can nearest approach his God.

Not that all the huge portion of humanity, who are naturally drawn to the sea, who feel between it and them an affinity which they can neither express nor understand, are at once brought under the influence of seeing it in these lights. Many of us have to spend some time on or near it, thinking of it the while, ere we see even these few of those many means by which it draws us ; and the most of us are influenced by them without ever recognizing their shaping power. One of its moods, phases, may draw twenty persons, each for a separate reason ; yet with another mood it can

touch the same twenty in one way. And the fact that it plays on us differently, according to our divers makes, is no contradiction to these statements. Of course, there are thousands who would not, could not, see with me in this matter; possibly you are one of them—a proof of our varied temperamental constitutions, not of my oneness of outlook or singleness of idea. All this, by-the-way, is to say that in judging these assertions you should forget your own individuality of thought and endeavour to assume mine. The truth of the matter, as to whether or not mankind in general has a temperamental affinity to the sea, rests with the majority, not with the odd ones amongst us. But if the majority be against me, I shall not change my belief. Well might old Oceanus cry amongst the pagans:

“Lo, I am the first of the elder gods; the primal god am I; for unto me I call all men when it pleaseth me, and most men are my slaves!”

And true, for was he not before your thunder-making Jove?

However, in the face of my belief in this affinity—the articles of which I will state for you presently—I am tempted to digress into a side path that is really a parallel and a pertinent one to that which I am here endeavouring to follow. This is: Have we, as a nation, become permanently surfeited of maritime matters? Or is it a case of mere temporary indifference born of long usage?—a sort of slackening the strain for a time, ordered by that Officer of the watch who regulates the doings of humanity on the deck of life's ship; so that, instead of breaking when

a greater strain comes later on, the cable will be ready again for its work. Or once more, is it that a too blatant, cut-throat industrialism—in ninety per cent. of the people a worry to live, and in the other ten per cent. the fever of money-making—is throttling to death that love which the nation once had for all things nautical? Putting the first and the third questions together, I am inclined to think that there is such a considerable amount of truth in them as to give us pause and arouse grave reflections. (This does not affect the sea's power over the heart of mankind; it is but the presentment of certain deterrent influences that are at large—for a time only, I believe.)

Scarcely does a day, decidedly not a week, go by without your being told in some portion of the Press of such elemental facts as “the British Navy is numerically equal to any two others in the world,” and that “Britain has more ocean-going mercantile tonnage than is possessed by all the remainder of the world.” But these bare facts get us no nearer to our well-nigh lost love of the sea, than the mountain-climber is helped to his goal by sitting on the spur and saying—“Yonder is the peak.” The second attainment has come by sheer commercial enterprise, a modern feature that never makes for the good of patriotism in the breast of the Anglo-Saxon; while the first possession is due to our geographical position, a much-scattered empire, the need of protecting this enormous fleet of cargo-carriers in war-time, and to the paramount necessity of being able to do so in the face of hostile amalgamations. Yet there is no

love of the ocean in these matters, not even the justice of allowing it the credit of having materially helped us to this condition of things. In all these points there is only personal gain and that prime law of Nature—self-preservation.

* * * * *

In the nation at large there is no knowledge, not even elementary, of seafaring matters; worse still, there appears to be no desire to know such affairs, although as a nation we live completely by them. All of which tends to prove that this “mother and lover of men” holds us to her in spite of ourselves, that she has for us a mysterious affinity far beyond the scope of your dull, cold earth. That in which so large a portion of the people once took a lively interest has become the specialism of a few; in fact the industrial war of to-day is forcing so fine a departmentalism into life that all workers, mental and physical, are becoming specialists, if only to the extent of merely getting a living in a narrow and particular way. At the same time that source of information, the Press, is as comparatively ignorant of nautical mercantile affairs as are the people at large; more, the ignorance here is criminal in that it is wilfully so, where it should be tuitive.

In my vain efforts to find an anchorage ashore it has come miserably my way to find editors of daily and weekly journals not only set purblindly against learning anything of the underlying vital interests of our general well-being at sea, but also of preventing their readers from learning such matters through their means. Here is a case in point. Some time ago

circumstances brought me in contact with the assistant editor (I could say—"God save the mark") of a certain magazine. His chief was temporarily away from duty, meanwhile he had sole charge of the journal. He was about twenty-three years of age. The matter at issue was a seafaring one; and this bright example of his kind, while confessing complete ignorance of all that is mercantile maritime, advanced and endeavoured to maintain the opinion that *there are no real sailors to-day and no need of any sea-going men except steamboat labourers!* And this whilst examiners of masters and mates are demanding, so far as they may, that candidates shall have a working-knowledge of sails!

This is but one of an endless series of instances of the incompetence and irresponsibility of the dwarfs who have complacently put on the robes of those giants who went before them. It is a case of the upstart villager of no attainments forcing himself into the hall of the sterling old squire of whose manners and mode of life he is impertinently ignorant. Yet, and this is of far greater importance to us as a people, the foregone incident is tragically typical of thousands in other walks of our national life. Not that I believe us to be altogether on a downward grade that will end in placing us permanently somewhere near the bottom of the scale of nations. It is not for me, nor for any man, to preach a gospel of pessimism. Given a balancing keel, or at least a lee-board, of common-sense, and the optimistic craft will always do far better than the pessimistic one. To my thinking, we have sufficient native grit to rise from this slough

of superficiality and be ourselves again ; but it gravely behoves us to be up and unmooring for the return passage of the voyage. In the last century* we entered on a stage of such quick transition as the world had never before known, and that stage has now reached what is surely its acutest form—the inner one of shoddy. And the turn in the long lane should come soon, unless it is to be a parallel to that of the oak, which is said to be a hundred years in growing, a hundred in reaching its fullest prime and a hundred in decaying.

It is because of this state of transition that I venture to think, and to hope, that our present national indifference to nautical affairs is merely temporary†—that slackening of the strain on the cable which, I believe, I have already mentioned to you. Still, fearing no rational contradiction, it cannot be denied that we have, generally, come down from the level of the literary book of good quality to the standard of indifferent journalism. From the days of sterling broadcloth and homespun we have, indeed, descended to those of that material of refuse so well-termed shoddy. Compared to what we were, we are shoddy in thought, in literature (so far as contemporary judgment can discern) in action and attitude, in purposes, in our very aspirations and in journalism. And shoddy journalism, in such days as these are, is a sure sign of deterioration: For are not the masses of the people, they whose education and knowledge and

* May 1890.

† After twenty-five years I have to admit that the indifference still exists.

view of life are not broad enough to teach them better and freer ways, are they not both informed and led by the journals of the day? Of a truth, they are. And here it is that we see the almost omnipotent power of the diurnal Press; also of the criminal misuse of that power, which is made continually by so many of its directors. To become no more than "newsy" it has dropped its old, respectable calling of being partially instructive. And does any man live better, or be in any way better, by having his mental appetite fed on tidings of the petty and the sensational doings of his fellowmen and women? It were as wise to ask you if a stomach would remain healthy on the output of a pastrycook's oven. Well may we cry: "Cæsar dead and turned to clay will stop a hole to keep the wind away."

Looking back at this state of change, wherein I think we are still moving lamentably downwards, one may ask: Have we lost a good that was worth retaining, for something that is considerably below its level? On the face of it, we have done so decidedly—bartered much of our birthright for a mess of bad trans-Atlantic and continental pottage. Not that there was no good pottage to be had from those parts of the world. In common justice there was much; but, like those youngsters in foreign ports who far more readily learn to blaspheme in English than to speak our language as they should, we have adopted some of the worse traits—to our detriment and to the calumny of a large portion of the American people, also to those on the nearer parts of the Continent, whence we have got that deterioration of home-life

which is seriously attacking one of the vital characteristics of English life. The evil is that we have not conformed properly to the changing spirit of the times, and have not sufficiently kept intact our national character and name.

Seeing how matters are trending, I am disposed to inquire if this be a virtue in disguise, to be presently mended by the national temperament. With a sufficient, real knowledge of the internal character of the Anglo-Saxon race, as shown in past history, it could be fairly-well argued that such a redemption is only a matter of time. You may think otherwise. I wonder when will that time be? No man can tell. History appears to give no parallel by which to judge, because the concomitants and general conditions of life are so different now from what they were at any previous time. Again, on the other hand, one may maintain that it is a certain sign of weakness, temporary or permanent, to let the inferior habits of another people take hold of us to the extent of overcoming our better ones.

At the same time we must beware of those who preach the gospel of self or national satisfaction; who say that we are as good as we need or can be; whose inertia or smug complacency prevents them from striving at the higher peaks of Effort and Achievement, and who seek to counsel others to join their lagging band of draggers on the hind part of the car of progress. Self-satisfied persons are hopelessly dangerous, for they are usually wooden-headed and stubborn. If not actually worse, they are as bad as the pessimists are; to this extent they are worse,

they bind the eyes of those who, from sheer love of opposition, if from nothing else, would contradict the open pessimist by actions that would show him the evil of his thinking. Undoubtedly, many of our ways needed repairing—had to be brought up to the strenuous competition of the times; but the larger portion of the imported ways that now seem to be abroad amongst us have clearly a worsening effect, not a mending one. Therefore I say again that it behoves us sternly to tack ship and begin the return passage to our own racial port of stability and level-headed competency. If we do not, then must we betake ourselves speedily to praying to God to help us, for it will prove that we are incapable of helping ourselves in the matter.

Still we may hug to our hearts the fact that human circumstances have a by no means curious habit of working in tide-like fashion. And though the ebb has long been running in these affairs, there must eventually be a turn and a flow. It is one of the prerogatives of mankind to continue to rise and fall, ebb and flow, in all things that are within its compass; to be now knocking timidly at the Gates of Heaven, and anon be thundering in desperate blasphemy under that injunction: "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." Do this we must so long as we are men, for it is the essence of humanity. With such a nature as ours is—one end grafted in devilism and bestiality, and the other touching the very feet of angels—how could we be otherwise? Metaphorically man is the rose-tree of created life, with its roots in the fertile earth and manure, and its flowers smelling to Heaven.

And nations are but man in the aggregate, doing in the many what he does singly ; and, blessed reflection, history proves that, as a whole, he and they are steadily going upward. Thus we, if only because of our insular position, may hopefully look forward to the time when we shall once more, as a people, find in the sea a more than commonly strong phase of that affinity which it has for all mankind, and particularly for all sea-board nations.

* * * * *

It is nearly two days since I wrote the foregone pages of this epistle (mark the moonlit writing !) at the expense of two-thirds of a watch-on-deck and the first hour of a watch-below ; and I am sorry to see that I steered so widely from my course. However, such as it is, you shall have it when the time comes, to make of it what you can. It may give you to think ; though I doubt me much if I could spring any new thought on *you*.

We are still in the same weather, running beautifully to the rhythm of wind and sea and pleasantly-straining canvas. It is our afternoon-watch-below ; and, as I cannot sleep, I am inclined to resume my meandering on man's natural affinity to the sea, with the prospect of continuing it in the first watch to-night under the self-same conditions as I started it two nights ago.

Strangely enough, although so comparatively much more has been written concerning land affairs, as a subject in itself, the land has never equalled the sea in the mind of civilized man ; nor, apparently, in the minds of savages who knew the sea. Not that it

called them all as it did "Barry Cornwall" when he wrote :

"I never was on the dull, tame shore,
But I loved the great Sea more and more ;
And backwards flew to her billow breast,
Like a bird that seeketh its mother's nest."

Or Byron when he penned that greater, autobiographic stanza :

"And I have loved thee, Ocean ! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward : from a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers—they to me
Were a delight ; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror—'twas a pleasing fear ;
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted in thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane—as I do here."

Or again, that anonymous writer who confessed himself in the lines :

"Like an eagle caged I pine
On this dull, unchanging shore;
Oh, give me the flashing brine,
The spray and the tempest's roar !"

You may object that these expressions are but the opinions of enthusiasts, of full-bloods, of men who must wing their feelings on impassioned utterance for the world to scan. Further, you may say that poets are only the odd ones in a nation. To these obvious facts I answer : It is one of the duties, as well as being a privilege, of a poet to be an enthusiast ; without warmth, glow, colour, or that God-given penetration which dredges the ocean of truth and brings up pearls of submerged fact wherewith to confound us lesser mortals the while we stare at them, or minus that crystallizing beauty of expression which transmutes

the base metal of intangible things into the pure gold of thought and words—if without some one, or more, of these characteristics then it were better that he use the quieter vehicle of prose, for the calling of poet is beyond his reach. Even to be an excellent verse-maker is no proof of being one of Apollo's elected. In more ways than one, many are called but few are chosen. Again, poets, like composers of music, are the mouthpieces of countless thousands in the matter of expressing emotion; and, as all the world cannot rise to the intellectual plane of the poet, even verse-makers of ordinary capacity have their places and their deserved followings. Thus "Barry Cornwall," the anonymous writer from whom I have just quoted, and dozens of other little-known wayfarers on the slopes of Parnassus do but speak for multitudes who have no poetic voices of their own. And by this we are brought to the conclusion that there are in the long stretch of humanity, as you will admit, myriads of hearts who love the ocean with a power which they "can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal."

And what is this peculiar affinity, which the sea has for mankind, but an undefinable influence, a subtle power of call, a mysterious something that is mystic only in that it is psychical? We may try as we will to analyze it, to get at its secret, to say why the sea calls us so effectually. Yet after all our strivings, our deep searchings within and extensive watchings without, we have to quit the struggle—baffled, played with, knowing that we *are* drawn and hopelessly dumb as to the cause, except for the bald facts that we suppose it to be something akin to us, and

that we feel the intangible bond by which we are held.

Take a night of beauty on the beach, when great waters surge and retire, surge and retire smoothly, lazily at your feet: Is it the immaculate loveliness that impresses you so much? Does the rhythmic cadence of the advancing and receding water weigh upon you with suggestions of things that cannot be spoken? Or are you mute because you stand in the presence of such an infinity, oppressed with your own finiteness and unimportance in the face of the measureless things around? No. Yet in the affinity that draws you there, that holds you to the scene, there is something of the blended fitness of all three. The dull, tame, unchanging shore and its manifold features are forgotten. There is no astronomy in your thoughts while you occasionally watch the stars as they make their seemingly slow movement around Polaris. You think of no kind of navigation as you gaze across the water at the faint line of sea and sky. No, it is the subtle, evading magic of the sea's spirit that is upon you, a more than commonly wakeful sense of that binding affinity which eludes the grasp of the mind, as the water itself eludes the grasp of the hand. Truly did Bacon say: "It is no less true in this human kingdom of knowledge, than in God's Kingdom of Heaven, that no man shall enter into it 'except he become first as a little child.'" And in this we are grown men, with the world thick upon us even here, face-to-face with a mystical influence that is part of both kingdoms. Unable to put off the man and be the child, how can

we expect to enter this realm that is too mysterious for us to comprehend?—Too mystic for me; and I think you will say the same of most men.

Again, take the same scene while Nature is in a wild mood: Is it the thundered anthem of the wind-lashed rollers, or the high soprano of the gale, that stirs your blood to a quicker beat? Do you mark the break-neck pace of the clouds and try to compute their speed, whilst they hurry across the face of heaven, as if painfully anxious to hide their whipped selves beyond the leeward horizon? Do you wonder and endeavour to guess at the distance which the great waves have travelled under the thong of their enemy, the breeze, and at the damage they have done on the journey? Or are you impressed into silence solely by the awful grandeur and the terribleness of it all? It may be, with some persons it probably is, that they recognize these and other features of the moment. But far and away above them they are, I am convinced, conscious of a something that, while it partakes of them all, touches deeper, in a more subtle way, than lies in the power of those features—a something that is inexplicable to, undefinable by, mortal man; that is full of vague questionings and suggestions of we know not what—a something that plays on us all in a similar manner yet to varying degrees of extent, and at the same time differently, according to our individual moods and temperaments. Once more, in another form, it is the spirit of the sea that pervades us. We are in the velvet clasp of that affinity which the ocean exercises over us all. Well do I remember such an occasion. A friend and I were walking along a

wild foreshore, in silence. During the walk, by the intermittent light of another full moon—not so big and luminous, seemingly, as this one is—I set down these lines : *

*How spurns this sea its dead ! Here at our feet
Are flung torn weeds, and tide-worn bones that tell
Of Ocean's might and tempest-howled knell,
Of kingly hopes that once did starward beat.*

*Here rush these hounded waves—drop, then retreat,
Leaving these battered sands strewn all too well
With gear and planks of some fair ship that fell,
When charged the monstrous, green seas, wolfish, fleet !*

*Back here on my repelling beach of Now
The vengeful tide of Retrospection hurls
Dead hopes, songs' echoes and a sullied vow.
So Memory's re-smiting wave high curls
Its crest and strikes this Lethe-wishing brow ;
And all my Past's grim wreckage round me whirls.*

Later on I read the lines to my companion (who was a maker of fine philosophic verse, and, like myself, an attendant at the shrine of Nature) and asked him what his thoughts were during our buffeted walk. His reply was that he had been contemplating the glory of carrying forlorn hopes ; that Nature's violent rage had filled him with jubilation, making him desirous to be up and doing in some great action of well-nigh hopeless strenuousness. Yet in his life there was a

* These have, since then, been rewritten and included in "The Lure of the Sea."

bloodless, submerged tragedy of some magnitude. On another such occasion, when we were together, the storm caused him to philosophize on life and the grandeur of great continued efforts against misery and disappointment. From me it drew that syren's song, which you have in "The Mermaid."

On the first occasion my friend had gone out from a spirited argument with a stubborn opponent over whom he had gained a complete victory. I had gone from the reading of some of the love-tragedies in literary persons' lives, and an epilogue in the shape of unhealthy cogitations. To the second almost silent walk he had taken a mind that had just been calmed into a philosophic mood by an evening's course of quiet reasoning, while mine was full of fancies anent ancient Greek mythology. Hence what does all this help to prove?—but that in whatever frame of mind we go to the sea it plays upon our particular mood at the moment. No matter what we are at heart, or what may be our mould mentally, the sea has such an all-comprehensive affinity to human nature that it runs the whole gamut of our feelings, seeming to be one with us in all seasons and at all times. Argue it out as you may, endeavour to probe the mystery till you are lost in a very whirlpool of bafflings and unanswerable premises, you can only come at last to this conclusion: That this affinity—whereof I try so vainly to write and succeed so poorly—which I have experienced and found so much in others, is a fact that defies dispute. The sea, my friend, is cosmic; your land is particular.

As a mere instance in passing, what was it but this

affinity and their own jubilant mood that drew the two young Tennysons to go rioting in a way along the foreshore at Mablethorpe, on the day when "Poems by Two Brothers" were put before the world? There was all the country around for them to gallop their dog-cart about. In the neighbourhood, and in that of Somersby, there were roads good enough for any man to scamper over. But no, the occasion was of such a nature that they must be by the sea—the sea that was in a fair, frolicsome mood, and so buoyant to the eye and so massive. It was one of those times of hers when she seems to be the very epitome of hope, when the pale blue-green, 'longshore waters of the North Sea go dancing before a light breeze and glistening in the sun's rays. To the young brothers that day was one full of promise, full of the hope of a great pregnancy. It was a day such as the sea alone could typify, in their eyes. On her face, in her manner, about her generally there was that suggestion of everlasting youth which so well accorded with their frame of mind—that everlasting youth which the sea has, which your land never offers you except on certain days of whole-hearted tender charm in mid-spring. Yet if the sea had been in a more boisterous mood, the probability was that she would just as equally have drawn the two youthful poets to her. For the increased liveliness of wind and water would have been still more typical of and in keeping with their mood, thus, by comparison, proving even more that her power over them was greater than that of the land.

Again, as one keynote-instance of this affinity with

childhood; I recollect a little girl saying, as she romped along the beach on a lovely summer's day, "Oh, I *do* love the sea—it makes me feel so skippy!" She had a volatile, passionate temperament, and the sunlit romp of wind and water strung her at once to her lightest mood. But two days later, when a colder breeze moaned over a heavy sullen sea and under a leaden sky, she (not expressing the idea exactly in these words) thought that the sea had a wonderful sense of agreeing with her feelings. The truth was she was sad, in trouble owing to a delinquency. Yet ere the week was out, on as beautiful a starlit night as ever shone in our dull latitudes, the perfectly calm sea oppressed her with a vague sense of pain and weariness, which I could not induce her to explain. She would only reply that it made her sad, and asked to be taken away from it. On the following day I discovered that at the time she had been labouring under the fear of punishment because of a peccadillo committed during the previous afternoon.

Still, you will say, and I agree, these are but odd instances of the ocean's manifold power to touch all temperaments according to their various moods at the moment—"touch?" I ought to say "impress," and to the extent of making itself felt as a dominating force. Another point of interest is its surprising complexity. Outwardly the sea has but a few phases, superficial conditions of weather, ranging from the gale to the calm. Yet behind these misleading facial matters there is the all-touching, all-enfolding temperament that embraces both the masculine and the feminine of humanity. At the same time it must be

admitted that this temperament is far less typical of man than it is of woman. Its quick surface-changes, its greater range, its uncertainty, its volatility and other patent characteristics do but tend to prove the truth of what I say. As a phase of Nature the ocean's temperamental constitution, viewed as a something that we feel yet cannot understand, is a complete parallel to woman as the more complex half of humanity. Mark the sea in a summer tempest, at such a time as I tried so poorly to describe by that sonnet in my second letter from the Atlantic. Mark the sea at such a time, and say if it is not typical of the whole feminine temperament ! Again, the steady gale, or generally heavy weather, which may be taken as representing the male in humanity, are of much less frequent occurrence than are calms and gentle winds. Besides, although woman is more drawn by the calm, or temperately stirred sea, there are many instances of women being as much in unison with the ocean in a wild mood as the majority of men are. Thus you have another proof of the sea's femininity.

As to the ocean's impress on certain sections of humanity, you have but to consider the broader outlook of a seaboard people compared to that of those who are bred and pass their lives in valleys, whether it be in towns or in agricultural districts, away from the sea's influence. Seaboard-dwellers, to a large extent like men and women who live on exposed mountain-sides, are at heart more simple, larger in their views and freer in their ways than are the more circumscribed inhabitants of inland towns and

villages. In brief, they are more one with Nature. It could not be otherwise, could it, now ? Although certain snaps of individuality will occur in all quarters, in families, communities, and nations alike, man is more largely the outcome of his environment than of his descent.

And what is that oft-mentioned "call of the sea" but its generally unrecognized affinity to the heart of man ? Not to one class nor to one nation, but to well-nigh all of us in differing degrees of power, comes this call at some stage of life ; while with many of us it is a call that is ever present, loud or low. I have known many men of whom this is perfectly true, men who could not settle down on shore ; who, after even a short spell on land, ever felt the sea calling them away to her. For there are still sailing about the world's great waters ancient mariners—such as Coleridge had in mind—who have heard weird sounds, weirder tales, and seen sights so strange that the superficial civilization of town-dwellers cannot possibly experience, yet have come again and again in obedience to the sea's call ; men who are as far removed from the steamboat's seamen as a Celt was from a Saxon, as a marlinespike is from a butcher's steel ; men who have rounded this universe in old "wind-jammer" craft, calling in at out-of-the-way ports, seeing into the nooks and crannies where commerce penetrates in ways almost unknown in the industrial markets of either east or west, and finding curious things and peculiar interest and horrors of which even the average world-traveller knows little or nothing. Such men have I met, sailed with ; listened to their

tales around a fo'c's'le fire in a northern winter, on white "holy-stoned" decks that scarcely moved on the calm waters which lay greasy beneath this great, round, staring, tropic moon; also whilst at anchor in harbours rich in nautical history. Yet, whoever they were, the chance traveller and the weather-hardened sailor alike, I always found in them some evidence of that affinity whereof I have written so indifferently, and you, I know, will read with large charity.

I remember the story of a run-away—not my own. He was a village lad on whose elderly mother the new vicar was calling, years after the boy had been drawn from home by the ocean he had never seen till then. And she, with a lonely mother's fondness for the roving son, was telling the tale of his going, and saying how she could not understand why he had taken to such an "outlandish life, with never a home to go to at night in all them wild winds and dangers." Then the vicar pointed to a picture hanging in the room—a print of a fine ship in full sail—and suggested that there might lie the cause of her son's running away to sea. Yes, that was it; but the mother still wondered. So it is the world of white men over: Wherever the venturous spirit is, if the sea gets its opportunity it makes the call that must be obeyed.

EPISTLE IX

Model-making : Full-riggers in bottles : My temple-to-be :
“ Mark the Music ” : What a concert-room ! : An old-time song :
“ Dagoes ” and “ Dutchmen ” : A negro in ecstasy : A laughing
interlude : Oh, “ the band ! ” : *Our* item : Half-hearted ap-
plause : Another plaintive melody : A comb-duet : A fighting
interlude : Finale.

THE concert is to take place. But, first, I must tell you that, for once in my life, I have caught the fever of imitation. No—on second thoughts, erroneously said to be always best, it isn't *imitation*. Listen—I mean read. In every comfortable, deep-water packet, when the ship gets fairly into the north-east trade—or into the south-west, when homeward-bound—amongst the men it is the fashion to make marvellous-looking models of full-rigged ships in wine or whisky bottles, which, of course, are begged from the steward. The marvel is, to the uninitiated, how the models are put into the bottles. Many a time I have heard it argued that by some magic—handed down perhaps from The Old Man of the Sea—the bottom of the bottle was taken out and replaced after the model and its imitation water were put in. By-the-way, there is—or was—a rather good specimen of this “ art ” in the window of a sailors' cook-shop near the top-end of Bute Road; in your town.

Well, you don't need to be told that the bottle is not meddled with. First, the hull of the model is

made, so that it will just pass in at the neck ; it is then painted and set aside to dry. In the meantime the spars are all shaped, perhaps painted, and fitted together ; but the fitting is done in such wise that the yards will "slew"* straight along the sides of the masts, and the whole bag o' tricks lie on the deck without being higher than the top of the bulwarks. The masts are then stepped in holes in the deck, and on swivels made of pins ; and all the stays, lifts, standing-rigging and running-gear are adjusted, rove and made to work, each brace, lift or stay independently of all the others. Black thread generally goes to the making of standing-rigging and whitey-brown to that of running-gear. The important item is to be sure that every "line" works properly.

When this is all ready, about a third of the bottle—on its side—is filled with white lead and worked up with a stick into waves. Then the model is pushed gently in, bedded in the "sea" and left till the "sea" sets hard enough to hold the hull in its place. Finally comes the delicate and tedious task of hauling masts and spars into position. This is accomplished by every "line" passing through either a hole in the rail or a pin-eye-bolt in the deck, according to what the "line" is. Every one of them is rove through a hawse-pipe in the bow ; and, if the work is done successfully, the whole are then twisted up to represent an old-time cable, are "whipped," cut short, and the end is buried in the "sea," so as to give the model the appearance of being at anchor. I have written "Finally" ; but there is still the

* A seaman's word for "turn it around"

“ sea ” to paint. And sometimes a man will add a wonderful coastline to the off inside of the bottle. If anything goes wrong when getting the masts and yards into position it usually means that the whole work of weeks of dog-watches is smashed up or thrown over the side.

To the “ shellback ” proper, this is about equivalent to the Bluejacket’s making of “ pictures ” with wool or silk on canvas, or his netting shawls, anti-macassars and window curtains for his “ long-haired chums ” ashore. Meanwhile some of the apprentices and mates, Chips, Sails, and perhaps the bo’sun are making thrum-yarn mats to take home. *They* can get canvas and pieces of rope.

Now for *my* pastime—when I am neither reading, writing, nor giving Oskar a lesson in English. I have set out to carve a model of a Chinese temple on the scale of an eighth of an inch to a foot. The “ ground ” is made from a piece of teakwood ; fifteen inches square, and three inches thick in the middle. Around this there is to be a yellow-pine “ wall ” with an embattled top. In each corner, I am putting a two-inch square, hollow tower of whitewood, the sides cut through in Chinese characters (I fear there isn’t a Ching Ching on earth who could read them), and red-cedar cornices. (This and the pine are like cheese to carve. I found the cedar in the dunnage-wood ; but Chips has given me the teak and pine.) Each flank “ wall ” is “ pierced ” (I think that is the architectural word) with a gateway between two cedar towers, obelisk-shaped and three inches high—half the height of my corner towers.

Then comes—or will come—the *chef d'œuvre* of the work—the temple itself. This is to be twice the size, in every way, of the corner towers, of the same wood, cut through in the same manner—so that I can light it up with a candle—and with the same red cornices, but having whitewood bells dangling from their corners. There are four sets of steps cut in the “ground” from the gateways to the temple; and every man, and youth aboard, even to the mate, is interested in the work.*

It is in this making of models, mats, clothes-ties (the sailor-man's clothes-pegs), patching, darning, reading, card-playing, yarn-spinning, slipper-making—of canvas and sennet—and arguing about the work in hand that the “shellback's” dog-watches go out here on “the rolling deep” in these heaven-sent and sailor-blest trade winds.

* * * * *

It is Sunday again—aboard-ship generally such a blessed day of respite as you landsmen do not know. Here, however, we have an exception for which to be devoutly thankful, and few of us are not so. I am gorged with fresh soup, potatoes, Australian boiled beef (tinned, of course, also fresh, hence the nature of the soup) and—and plum-duff. I think it is universal to save the best of the feast till last. The *Bucephalus* is bowling along like a great, square-rigged yacht. She is carrying all that we can spread on her, is as upright as the Tower of Pisa, keeps her white decks dry; therefore are we as happy as she

* This model-temple was finished, brought home, and given to the Grimsby friends who are mentioned in “My Vagabondage.”

appears to be. She is a beauty, a true belle of the great waters, a real daughter of Old Oceanus ; for in addition to her being so handsome in fair weather (" this stately ship," as Falconer puts it), she knows how to behave herself in a breeze.

The port-watch is snoring under the weight of its dinner. My watch-mates are mostly in the same condition, only theirs is stolen sleep in out-of-the-way corners for'ard, ready to jump at a call. The few who are not asleep are playing euchre or reading. This is not a day for washing or mending. In fact, The Old Man has forbidden clothes to be washed on Sundays. He says, quite truly, that the man who cannot get his washing done in six days has no right to be slopping dirty soap-suds about the decks on the seventh day. Nor may any man stretch out his clothes-line to-day, except for the purpose of unobtrusively airing his " go-ashores."

Now I must tell you of our concert. The great affair is over—pridefully and for the most part peacefully. It occurred last night, in the second dog-watch—with half-an-hour's grace taken out of the first watch, at the consent of The Old Man, so that the men who had been at the wheel and look-out could have a share.

Imagine the wood-and-iron cave, which we term " under the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head "—a place considerably the shape of a whale's mouth, but closed, and the entrance from its gullet : not a whale's throat sort of entrance, either. In trying to be clear, I'm becoming obscure ; and in this I'm quoting some one, yet don't know who. Well, to make a last attempt, the

place is a whale's closed mouth when the body is cut off at the back of the jaws. Imagine it : Time, five-bells in the second dog-watch.* Along where the body is supposed to have been severed, hang a couple of staysails, to prevent the officer—the mate—on the poop from having his eyes *dazzled* by our lights. The hot, yet breeze-lightened, tropical day is passing swiftly to a dark-grey opalescence, which as quickly becomes a star-studded night.

Inside the "mouth," only seven feet from bottom to roof, from deck to deck—hang two anchor-lights and three deck-lanterns. These make the steel-plates of the bows and the lockers to port and star-board appear to be some distance away. Underneath them, on the deck, on upturned buckets, coils of rope, and what not, sit, sprawl, or lounge a score of A.B.'s, two O.S.'s, six "brass-bounders," Chips, Sails, Bo'sun and the "doctor," all bare-chested, bare-armed and capless, but washed in honour of the occasion ; although, in the lack of light that serves to make the cave seem to be greater than it is, a stranger might think that we are, every mother's son of us, half-castes of one sort or another. At the entrance, where the two sails hang a few feet apart (Denis's place of abode and the deck-house render it unnecessary to close up the whole of the entrance) stand the second mate and the steward. The line of demarcation 'twixt them and us forbids them to come inside. Sniffles is a prisoner in the pantry, as punishment for some shipboard crime committed this afternoon.

* Half-past six in the evening.

Sails is our self-constituted chairman. He calls on the first performer, and Oskar mounts the platform—a couple of gratings placed on something about a foot from the deck. This brings his tall head so near the deck above that he has to descend, in order to have room for the top-end of his bow to go up. In utter silence we listen to some old Swedish air that now fills one with desire to carry a forlorn hope, then wails like a banshee in distress, sinks to the crooning of a sea-maid in love and suggests still water and a moonlit night, to mount again and break away with a sense of fire and berserker fury, then end in a crash. We shout: “Bravo! Bravo!” The chairman adds: “Bravoisimo!” We cry: “Encore! Encore!” But he says there is no time for encores; we must go through the programme. We have started well, whether we end badly or not.

Item number two,* from Bristol Bill, and sung in a queer sort of monotone, part wail, part accusing complaint, all feeling, and not a little comical when one thinks of the hard nut he is:

“In London I was bred and born,
 In Scotland I was dwelling,
 And there I met a sweet, pretty maid,
 Whose name was Barbara Ellen.

“I sent my servant to the house—
 The house where she was dwelling;
 Said he: ‘My master loves you well,
 If your name be Barbara Ellen.’

* This was taken down from Bristol Bill. In my boyhood I had heard snatches of it in Yorkshire; and during the past ten years I have heard slightly different versions of it in “the cottage homes” of East Anglia.

- “ I courted her for six long months,
Hoping to gain her favour ;
The more I tried 'twas all in vain—
Another young man had bought her.
- “ As she was walking across the field,
She saw a herd a-grazing ;
And as they grazed, they seemed to say :
' Hard-hearted Barbara Ellen.'
- “ As she was walking down the lane,
She heard the church bells tolling ;
And as they tolled, they seemed to say :
' Hard-hearted Barbara Ellen.'
- “ Oh, go and look at the head of my bed,
You'll see a gold watch hanging ;
A gold watch with a silver chain—
It's for my Barbara Ellen.
- “ Oh, go and look at the foot of my bed,
You'll see a basin standing—
A basin that is full of blood.
Shed for my Barbara Ellen.
- “ As she was walking down the street,
She saw his corpse a-coming ;
She said : ' Young men, lay that corpse down,
That I may gaze upon him.'
- “ The more she gazed, the more she wept,
And wept as she went from him ;
Then her parents, too, they cried with shame :
' Hard-hearted Barbara Ellen !'
- “ ' O mother, mother, make my bed !—
Make it both long and narrow ;
For that young man has died for love,
And I will die for sorrow.
- “ ' O father, father, dig my grave—
Go, dig it long and narrow ;
For that young man has died to-day,
And I shall die to-morrow.'
- “ And by her side there grew a rose,
And with it a sweet briar ;
They grew, and grew to the top of a tree ;
They withered, and grew no higher.”

“Hooray, a fine song and damned well-sung, or I’m a lousy bitch!” shouts Sails in the midst of the applause, then tips a wink to Chips, as Bristol Bill hunches himself back to his seat. Dobey and George are whispering together and smiling, so are Oskar and Cummings, also two or three of the apprentices. Of the new school of sailors and with no understanding of the old, it is not in them to see more than grotesque humour in Bill, his song and his singing, despite his rather unusually good, light-baritone voice. But Bill has hard fists, and no appreciation of satire when it is levelled at him; so discretion still forms the better part of valour.

In the meantime our “Dagoes”* and “Dutchmen”† have gazed and listened in palpable amazement, particularly the Latins. Being no further acquainted with English songs and singing than what they have heard in cheap, so-called music-halls, they are visibly at a loss to understand B. B.’s vocal effort to entertain us. Yet they have no right to be so surprised; because his curious drone was not much unlike that of many an Italian degenerate-representative of the troubadours, who, with or without a monkey, folds himself over an instrument that might be the grandfather of Curly’s, and mouths a melody as ancient as “Barbara Ellen” and not unlike that ballad in its story.

At the insistence of the chairman—who makes more noise than any two of us—quietness is obtained,

* The sailor’s name for Portuguese, Spaniards, and Italians; and † the same for Germans, Hollanders, and Scandinavians. To French, Greeks, and Russians he gives their proper names.

and Curly Jones begins to sing that prevalent ditty about white wings and a girl named Maggie Darrow. For the purpose of accompanying himself on his melodeon he sits on the edge of the platform, near the stepping of the bowsprit ; and his falsetto voice, raised to its highest pitch in the more sentimental of the lines, combined with his manipulation of the treble notes on his instrument—dragging their slow length along like Wordsworth's wounded snake—must reach well-aft and away to leeward. How easy it is to see that he is enjoying himself to the full depth of his curiously-maudlin negro-nature. He is not singing for us, but for himself, with the complete feeling that those reiterated white wings are rushing him along to the arms of Maggie. To right and left of him, hang the globular lamps, beyond which are the semi-dark recesses of the ship's "eyes." In this mixture of comparatively faint lights and deep shadows the whites of Curly's eyes gleam, whilst we almost lose the outline of his black face as he turns it towards the deck above, meantime his big, red mouth lets out : "The pride of my heart, she is waiting for me!" What an ecstasy of feeling he has found! His song ends. He is greeted much as Oskar and B. B. were, except that the "Dagoes" cannot stretch the point so far as to be enthusiastic over a negro's singing, however much it may be like some of their own musical shrieks.

As he rises to go back to his place, in the lack of light that is now thick with tobacco-smoke, he stumbles over a ringbolt in the deck. The ship heaves to leeward at the same moment, and Curly

pitches awkwardly on to Sails, his melodeon hitting Appleyard in the face, then clattering to the deck, and Oskar wishes mutely that the "implement of torture" is done for. Sails swears, as a steam-tramp throws out black smoke on a homeward run. Curly gasps surprise and apologizes, with a—"By de Lord, say, Sails, you——!" as Sails rolls him away to the deck and stands up, then begins to hunt for the pipe that has been knocked out of his mouth, meantime he lets off some half-laughing, uncomplimentary blasphemy of general application, but which we all know to be meant especially for Curly.

However, the only real harm done is to the face of Appleyard, who has a shallow slit in his left cheek, where the metal-bound corner of the melodeon struck it; and, as he is no longer a Jonah, he gets some all-round sympathy, but is told not to let his complaint run through the concert.

Item four: Apprentice Buckley—he of the hare-lip—treats us to "Boys of the Old Brigade" in a good bass voice that is surprisingly deep for a wiry youth of nineteen. And now we come to the *pièce de résistance* of the first half of the entertainment. It is a concerto—of what derivation or other style and title I know not—and those who are supposed to know are now asleep. For instruments we have Curly's windy thing of strange sounds, Byrne's and Dobe's paper-covered combs—on which they are to give a duet by-and-bye—my apprentice-friend, Grimston, with two marlinespikes for a triangle, Oskar's fiddle (allowed in by him laughingly, though much against his desire), last and greatest a drum made

yester-forenoon by Chips and Sails. The body is—or was—the lower half of a biscuit barrel, with the head left in for stability, but pierced here and there with a "scientific" arrangement of augur-holes to let the sound out. The drum-head is made of new storm-canvas, and the right tension has been obtained by keeping it wet.

Now the orchestra begins. I have heard fo'c's'le-head concerts before this, a certain mad Spaniard on a guitar, Albanians on primitive bagpipes, Hindu tom-toms and wailing at funerals, Africans on similar sound-producing occasions, howling Dervishes, shipboard pandemoniums by panic-stricken Asiatics, etc., but nothing quite like this ever came my way till now. I have gone about the world seeking experiences, as other men seek sweethearts, money, position, and trouble in other forms; and I might have searched all nooks and corners and never have found this prehistoric-like (at least, so I imagine it to be) jumble of sound, which so far defies description that I—who, as you say, love to try the impossible—leave it, and admit my chagrin at defeat.

Now it is Cummings's turn—and mine incidentally. When the concert was first mooted he asked why I could not supply him with a new song. I instanced several obvious difficulties. He ignored them, made the request an attack, brought Oskar and Dobey to his help, and I surrendered. Then he and Oskar hatched out a sort of hybrid air (both of them have some technical knowledge of music), and had their squabbles over sharps and flats in the privacy of this very "cave," whilst the port-watch was

far away at work, and we others were generally asleep.

Cummings mounts the gratings, coughs twice slightly as he turns to the audience, then blows vigorously in all directions around his face and asks for a pair of bellows to clear the smoke away. Sails takes this as a peg whereon to hang some laughing, boisterous irony about "silence and cool, scented air for the prima donna in white ducks, damn your eyes!" (Cummings is rather fond of smart clothes; and he is the only one here who is not entirely in working-rig.) In the meanwhile Oskar tunes up his fiddle, puts the mute on, the better, I understand, that Cummings may sing to it, and we get:

*We have seen the sun at midnight
 In yon' far-off northern sea;
 We have seen old Nature's lyddite
 Burst on our storm-black lee,
 When the squalls were round us shrieking,
 'Mid Western Ocean foam,
 And savage seas were seeking
 To claim us for their own,
 To claim us for their own.
 For we are Nature's wanderers,
 To every ocean known;*

*With every flag for our flag, till our flag calls us home;
 With every flag for our flag, till our flag calls us home!*

*(Chorus) Haul, boys, haul! Haul, boys, haul!
 For the girls on the quay
 Are awaiting you and me;
 So it's haul, boys; HAUL, boys, HAUL!*

*Through the tropics we have weltered,
On a biscuit for each day ;
Round the Horn in gales we've weltered,
Felt typhoons off far Cathay ;
Heard the salt sea surges singing,
As up every shore they roam ;
And a hundred strange tongues ringing
In the hundred lands we've known,
In the hundred lands we've known.
For we are Nature's wanderers,
O'er every ocean blown ;*

*With every land for our land, till our land calls us home,
With every land for our land, till our land calls us home !*

Neither now nor between the stanzas has the chorus gone well, except the two lines in the middle ; so Cummings calls out : “ Now, men, once more and all together ! ‘ Haul, boys, haul ! ’ ” etc. But only he, Sails, Dobe and two or three of the apprentices show any gusto, in spite of the fact that copies of the chorus were distributed amongst our shipmates over two weeks ago. Nor is the applause more than half so long or hearty as it was for the previous entertainers. Cummings—a rather peculiarly-sensitive fellow—comes off the platform and picks his way, none too gingerly, amongst the sprawling audience, to my side. At this moment and at the least provocation he would fight any man in the crowd, not on mere personal grounds, but because they have not shown proper appreciation of *our* item in the programme, of the song over which we have spent much pains to give them a “ new thing,” and

a thing that would appeal to them as something of themselves and as coming from one of themselves.

He squats at my side, growling half-audibly at "the damned starve-guts" and swearing that he won't "give a handclap to any son of a gun that gets up there to-night." I—a little his elder in years, but more than his father in foiled aspirations and those things which make for bitterness or tolerance, and sometimes for a queer mixture of both—a feather to each wind that blows in the matter of observation, I "looky-see," as Ching Ching says, and am fain to believe that in *our* effort we have not given them something new; but have slapped them on the face with the old, the familiar with which they were already full and sickened, and that they resent our doing so. My mind is also inclined to the belief that I am rather in the position of the seer who prophesied to his own people. I know that here, as in every ship I have sailed in, there are men who look with more than suspicion on me for my everlasting reading and writing; men who would do more than *look* offensively, were it not that I can "keep my end up" at work, am that rarity in deep-water "tramps" and "wind-jammers" a First Class R.N.R.-man with a special badge on my cap (the gunnery badge that I earned in my first training, and broke the record in doing so), am strong, quick in movement, and said to be short-tempered. To some of which you will say, possibly: "Amen."

Item seven is this song by Parsons, whose vocal style is very much the same as B. B.'s, except that his

voice is a quavering treble and his idea of singing is pathetically primitive :

“ One day I was walking down by the sweet Avon,
Dark was the morning and cold was the night,
When who should I spy but one of my shipmates
All draggled and wrapped in a blanket so tight.

(Chorus) “ Then they beat the drums o'er him ;
They played the fifes * merrily over his grave ;
They played the Dead March, as they bore him along ;
He was a young sailor cut down in his pride,
He was a young sailor cut down in his pride.

“ He asked for a candle to light him to bed,
Likewise a flannel to wrap round his head ;
His poor head was aching,
His poor heart was breaking ;
He was a young sailor cut down in his pride.

(Chorus)

“ His poor, aged father, his dear, old mother,
Oft-times they had told him about his late nights,
How along with those flash girls his money he squandered,
How along with those flash girls he took his delights ;
He was a young sailor cut down in his pride.

(Chorus)

“ Now he is dead, and he lies in his coffin ;
Six jolly, fine sailor-boys walk by his side ;
And in each of their hands is a bunch of white roses,
So no one may smell him as they pass him by ;
He was a young sailor cut down in his pride.

(Chorus)

“ Now all you young sailors take warning by me,
And never go courting flash girls of the town ;
Flash girls of the town were the ruin of me,
And now I am wrapped in my blanket so brown ;
He was a young sailor cut down in his pride.”

(Chorus)

* Parsons would have it that this word was “ fights,” and that it must have meant some commemorative song of the time.

Parsons gets a mixture of loud applause and chaff, which he returns with strings of oaths. The chairman tries to swear him into silence, finds the task hopeless and calls on the next performer. This is Mike Byrne, with his paper-covered comb, and to the solo, "Wearing o' the Green," Grimston beats time on the marlinespikes. At the end of it Mike breaks spontaneously into "Father O'Flynn," and goes through the song in rollicking style, much to our general satisfaction and encouragement, in spite of Sails's vigorous efforts to assert his authority by ordering the singer to "Shut up, you howler!" "It isn't on the programme, damn you!" etc. The "doctor" is last on turn with an old-time North Country song about "Hame, hame, hame; it's hame I long ta be." And now comes the interval, during which there is a loud hurly-burly of talk in an atmosphere that almost prevents us from seeing each other.

* * * * *

I won't weary you with the details of the second half of the concert. But there is one unarranged item of which I must tell you. It occurred towards the end of the whole thing. Mannheim, apparently hurt that none of the foreigners had been asked to take part, became insistent that he should be allowed to sing "The Watch on the Rhine." In addition to the chairman's stout refusal to permit this, with some remarks on not wanting to hear a so-so song he did not understand, Summers joined in with a few words on "blasted sour-krowt singin'." Instantly this aroused the German's latent enmity towards the

Stepneyite. He spat out a piece of his hatred with such vehemence that Summers hit him squarely between the eyes.

Of course, all was racket and confusion at once ; and within a couple of minutes we were every one of us out on the open deck, in two unequal halves, port and starboard, with Summers and Mannheim between us, the deck-house and the fife-rail around the foremast. It was just after eight-bells ; and the second mate and the steward had gone aft. Naturally the set-to was hampered by the semi-darkness ; but it was heavy and determined for all that. Nor were we less strenuous in our attention to it because of the enforced quietude.

The German had the advantage of weight and long reach ; whilst Summers had the science. Every time the former came on, battering awkwardly, the latter egged, warded and got in one or more telling blows. By this time some of us had squatted on the deck or stooped low, in order to get a better view of their actions when out-lined by the ultra-blue, starry vault above. Then Mannheim went down in a heap—or, rather, he came down, in the midst of us to leeward. Summers had worked around to the weather-side, in a longish pommelling bout, and, with a lee-roll of the ship, had landed straight in, having the whole of his weight behind the blow.

We helped Mannheim to his feet. He wanted no more. Not ten minutes had gone by since the affair began. Footsteps were heard come along from aft. There was a whisper of "The mate," and into our concert-"room" we scuttled, every one of us except

the German, who was left to go into the fo'c's'le and bathe his bruised and swollen face. In a moment Sails was on the platform, roaring out "Our Jack's come home to-day," and we were sprawled around, lending the lust of our voices to swell the chorus with which he led off on the spur of the moment. When the mate took his sort of duty-bound look in at us, we were listening to the song, smoking and generally comforting ourselves as though nothing had happened to interrupt the "harmony." Of course, we younger ones were laughing to ourselves at the knowledge that he was being deceived; whilst such as Benton, B. B., Chips and Mumbles were solemn and sphinx-like, as middle-aged and old "shellbacks" usually are in silence.

When the mate took his grisled face away from the opening between the sails and turned aft again, it was probably with a muttered: "Damned nonsense! They'd be much better employed scouring paint-work—better for 'em body and soul." But if he did say something like this—which I fully believe he did—my unchangeable impression is that such opinions and ways are but habits grafted on the real stock, like a crab-apple on a good, wholesome, ribston pippin.

By the time you read this epistle you will know our Old Man well enough to guess that Mannheim's face should have caused some questions from aft. So there would have been, without doubt, were it not that we have made the German a "farmer" for to-day, lest the master should get a glimpse of his "blotched dial," as Parsons calls it, with a

few additional and more colourful words. We have also persuaded him to rub on the darkest parts of his face—which is happily not cut—a mixture of flour (begged secretly from the “doctor”) and red and yellow ochre (got from the bo’sun in the same way). If news of the affair reaches The Old Man’s ears, Spunyarn will get a “wiggling” for not stopping the fight, hence his readiness to open the paint-locker door on a Sunday. The concoction makes a fine, sun-burnt flesh-tint. It came out of our collective wisdom ; and Mannheim is very ready to use it, and to keep out of sight, because of his fear of the mate—who, he declares, always says the foreigner is to blame. Nor can I say that the German is far wrong in this. However, our concert-conduct is now safe till the usual Sunday “all-hands-pull” comes along at four-bells this evening—*i.e.* midway between the dog-watches—when the mate’s crowd have had their teas and we are about to come to ours. Then, if we are not lucky, will also come the dénouement.

EPISTLE X

A concert back-wash : " Wind-jammers ' " bands in general :
The homeward-bounder : The influence of an old letter : Pro-
saicism of to-day the romance of to-morrow : Nothing new :
Similarities : " Oh, Blue Hills far away ! " : Old Ocean the
ever youthful : Feminine *versus* masculine romance : Phœni-
cian over-sea traders.

AFTER all, there was no " carpeting " last Sunday night. Our reputation has not suffered its due deserts ; in consequence of which I daresay that The Old Man has quietly, not to say too repeatedly, reminded the mate that his policy (the master's) of trusting us to behave ourselves under licence, is better than repression. But the discovery was nearly made in the forenoon-watch on Monday. According to the arrangements by which we had made Mannheim " farmer " on Sunday it was his first trick at the wheel that forenoon. As I have said, he is heavily-built. In spite of the breeze, steering and the sun made him perspire ; the result being that by-and-bye he had wiped our disguising mixture from his face. Before this happened, however, The Old Man came from his cabin, to take his usual walk fore and aft on the weather-side of the poop, his queer, lurching movement being with the leeward heave of the ship as he went from the wheel. Mannheim says that at first The Old Man took no notice of him ; then, as he lurched aft and turned for'ard again, he looked harder

and harder at the helmsman's face on each turn and seemed to be asking himself questions. Till at last he pulled up, pointed to the bruises and asked the reason of them.

It was here that Mannheim descended to the occasion. He is a born liar, first-hand, unleavened and unabashable. So glib came the information that just after he went on deck at midnight he fell head-first into the gear around the mainmast. This is what I mean by describing him as a first-hand, natural liar: He could have given some local colour of truth to his statement by saying that he fell into the foremast gear; because he was only a foot or two from it, when we picked him up. Instead of which he must straightway move the locale to the mainmast. Personally I have not even a constructionist's respect for this sort of lying; it has no art, therefore it does not interest me. But to finish the matter: The Old Man asked Mannheim if the powder—traces of which he could no doubt still see—was put on to give him a respectable appearance at the wheel. Of course, the answer was: “Yes, Sir.” And the results were: He received commendation for his “respect to the poop” and some cooling ointment from the medicine-chest; we were amused, and the apprentices were delighted.

So passes our first concert and its black-eyed interlude; and, having started this variant of “a life on the ocean wave,” we shall have more, whether there be another such interlude or not. For you must know that such concerts are fairly common in southern-going “wind-jammers.” Your coaster—

good man at his work as he is, none better—never thinks of thus amusing himself and putting grins on the faces of his shipmates. Truth to tell he has small need to. The man of short voyages and many ports is so often in harbour that all the instrumental and vocal melody he wants he gets at the music-halls.

Deep-water “shellbacks” are nowadays pretty evenly divided: The half to whom life afloat is one long “growl we may, but go we must,” and the half that jokes through the day, then rigs up a jury-band in the dog-watch. And what bands they are all-in-all!—instruments, players, and tunes. Ours is only a sample. Truly are they of a sort to screw a laugh from the man with that malady which gentle Will declared that no philosopher could withstand. Besides, when the “crowd” happens to be composed mostly of irrepressible spirits, fair winds and fresh, foul winds and fresher, everything at sixs and sevens, or all “ship-shape and Bristol fashion,” matter not to the bandmen.

In some ships when once the band is started the performances are almost nightly. Here and there it takes the form of Christy Minstrels—with white faces, because the allowance of water will not permit of an extra wash a day, even if burnt cork was not as scarce as the water. Immediately after the men of the second dog-watch have had their tea a joyous movement is made from the deckhouse-fo’c’s’le (no deep-waterman of these days has a down-below fo’c’s’le in the bows) to the cave-like t’gal’n’-fo’c’s’le-head. Then away aft, aloft, over the sides, breaking in on the calm evening, or mingling with the outstripping wind,

come such strains as would have made Lorenzo add an emphasis to—

“The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.”

There is a kind of music in the tom-tom beating and the wailing which accompany a Hindoo funeral procession. Between melody and the wild war-song of the African brave there is a distinct cousinship. The rarely uttered and melancholy note of the seamew may claim to be a poor relative to Philomel's song; but the music of the present day East Indiaman's band is, paradoxical though it seem, related to none of them, yet is akin to all. The chances are that a real fiddle, probably owned by a coloured A.B., and bought at a pawnshop in the West India Dock Road, forms the foundation of the band. Then comes another such as Curly's misnomer of keys, reeds, bellows and wind. In most cases this comes from the half-deck—*i.e.* the cabin of the apprentices, who, being lusty and of no conceit but in their lustiness, do immoderately betake themselves to full-flavoured pleasures.

To accompany these, an empty marmalade tin is converted into a kettledrum, two large skewers from the galley serving as drumsticks. Next a would-be Christy Minstrel spends an afternoon-watch-below in fashioning two pairs of “bones” out of a couple of ribs from that day's “salt horse.” A marlinespike-triangle is always one of the instruments, and a Jew's harp is often another. Then, as the “strings” are being thrust too far into the background, another

fiddle is improvized by means of the coloured A.B.'s extra strings, a shallow cigar-box and home-made accessories. Finally, the "time-beater"—*i.e.*, big drum—is brought into existence, just as ours is in every particular, except that it may have two canvas-ends, so that one will be serviceable when the other becomes slack.

To the Babel of these "instruments" there are sung such songs as "Hearts of Oak," "Tommy, make room for your Uncle," "Yo, ho, my Lads," "The Sailor's Grave," and many a curious ditty unknown to landsmen's ears. While the uproar goes on, the more severe of the men often keep aloof, smoking their pipes and reading, or playing at euchre, and growling incidentally at "the row made by them young fools for'ard." Unless the ship is running before a strong breeze, this jumble of unsweet sounds reaches the poop enhanced by that enchantment which distance alone can lend—especially in such a case, thus conferring a double blessing on those members of the "afterguard" whose ears may be attuned to sounds of sweeter concord. Not that the "concert" is stopped even when its unmusical whoop is carried aft by a fine breeze, or penetrates there because of the sea having taken on the semblance of a duckpond. No—The Old Man (unless he chances to be one of the exceptionally cantankerous old-timers, who do not care a rope-yarn for anything or anybody but their own comfort and opinions) knows a certain weather-tack of that. He prefers the ills of blatant sound rather than to fly to the soundless ills of dissatisfied men who grumble inaudibly and move snail-like about

their work. He knows well that while the men are merry they will work hard, put up with hard fare, and continue singing; also that a few blithe spirits will brighten up a crew of growlers.

But to see this orchestra at its best one must witness it in a homeward-bounder where oil is scarce, and where The Old Man is of an easy-going temperament. For the latter is needed, because without it there can be no lights present. Then it is that the whole scene is in accord with the sound, the general effect of the picture being as nondescript and humorously-grotesque as can be found on any vessel's deck between Singapore and Gravesend. The light (is it worth the name?) is given by three or four ill-smelling and most primitively-fashioned lamps made from cut-down Australian mutton tins. The oil is "slush" skimmed by the "doctor" from his pots of boiling meat. Wick is manufactured by lightly twisting up yarns of raw cotton, and the burners are pieces of bent wire made to stand up on the bottoms of the tins. Thus does the merchant Jack prove himself a "handy man" in the matter of lamp-making. From these comes as much smoke as flame, the two filling the wood-and-iron-formed cave with a dim, lurid, fitful glow that indifferently lights up the black, white, and swarthy faces of the performers. All the place looks like a merry-making in the small cave of a band of smugglers, or—if such could be—the bottleless carousing of a little band from Hades. (So you see that *our* concert was something of a Society affair—barring the second interlude and most of the language.) Then comes one-bell—a quarter to eight o'clock—and

instead of the National Anthem or "Auld Lang Syne"
it is :

" Rolling home, rolling home,
Rolling home across the sea ;
Rolling home to dear old England,
Rolling home, sweetheart, to thee."

* * * * *

We are drawing down to that region of cats'-paws, squalls, calms, and such rains as are, I believe, unknown in any other part of the world—*i.e.* the doldrums, some six degrees of latitude, just north of the "line," a sort of marine Naboth's vineyard between the tropical ends of the trade winds. And as no private occupations will then be possible—or, at any-rate, comfortable—I have been surrendering myself for some days to the spell of my temple-to-be, except for an hour or two *per diem* with a book. For, of course, I have my usual half-chest of silent, yet eloquent friends—and much borrowing is there of the fictional part of them, especially from the half-deck, and by the second and third mates, Chips and Sails.

Truth to tell, my diminutive library is so depleted at the moment that I have just made an excursion into a bundle of old letters, in part for lack of other reading matter and partly because it was my mood so to do. And in one of yours to me at the Piræus (just before I found my way by Athens, Megra and Kalamak to Corinth) I am reminded of your request for more about "Old Man Mystery," as you are pleased to write of my queer, old friend Shivers. I am not, however, at present disposed to write of him. I don't quite like your attitude towards him. I am

more concerned just now with your accompanying contentions anent past and present phases of romance at sea. If I read you aright, you think that there is no longer any real romance afloat—that from its heyday in merchant venturers' times to those of the three-deckers, Kidd, Teach and their cut-throat fellows, it dwindled away through the days of the supercargo and John Company, till finally steam came along and put the lid on its coffin. But, believe me, even in these times, so prosaic to so many of us, though the seas have now little, indeed, for men to discover, they yet have as great a glamour, are proportionately as romantic, are far more safe, and have as much of that primeval spell over humanity in general as ever they had. This I endeavoured to prove in that Mediterranean letter about the sea's spell on men; and, after all, the lingering idea of a latent romance is a part of that spell. In the coming of steam at sea future ages will perceive a greater romance than we can find in the doings of the Elizabethans and more actual pirates who came later.

What, because of its close proximity, is the prosaicism of one age becomes the romance of succeeding ones; just as poetry is the turning of the prosaic into the beautiful. We see what we are pleased to term mediævalism not as it was, but as a something that has been coloured by the atmosphere of faded time into appearing to have been what it probably was not. The sciences of religion, mechanics, and other phases of our modernity apart, and allowing for such merely temporary matters as conditions of particular civilizations, at heart and mainly in thought civilized man

was ever the same ; and ever the same he must be until he ceases to be a man.

Intellectuality is not, and never has been, the prerogative of any one age, any more than a romantic atmosphere has proved to be the literary inheritance of any given age's successors. In such elemental matters as hate and love, depravity and nobility, misery and happiness, complaisant content with existing things, and active aspirations for the seemingly-unattainable man is no further advanced to-day than he was in ages of which we have no real data. So it is with romance, as it seems to me. And the romance of Old Ocean is just what it was ; only the phase has changed—it has put on a different dress. Yet these facts place no limit to either man's noble desires, his actual advancement or to his deterioration. To know that he is a creature bound by his environment, flesh in a mere world of earth and flesh that must perforce be personal before it can be abstract, binds him down to nothing. On the other hand it proves him to be above the animals and but little less than the angels in that he still has the wish and the power here and there to cast off the shackles of his environment, and to soar to a plane that is not much below the gods themselves ; which is no more than another phase of romanticism, its intellectual side.

Man, on the whole, will probably continue to develop along the lines of peace, sweet reasonableness, and a higher level of mental ability ; or rather these traits of a better civilization will spread throughout mankind, as they have slowly done in certain races during past centuries. But this general betterment

must always be within the bounds of earth ; and elastic though they be up to a given extent, they stop far short of allowing man to become a sort of god. So long as he is in the flesh he must remain human. To be "the noblest work of God," even to be a noble man, is nearly always within the reach of his efforts ; and an honest man is some stages in advance of a depraved god, one or two of which are to be found in almost all mythologies, past and present. And romance, the romance of enterprise and adventure for the good of man, or for any purposes except personal aggrandizement, is surely a part of the noble and uplifting side of our nature. It is the romance of mankind's advancement to a higher state of soul existence on earth, just as the common form of romance is the, in a way noble, material bettering of a given person's fortunes. On the other hand the romance of the sea is its own—I mean that here there is a romance apart from man, a romance that is weakened, brought to a lower level, by the intrusion of man.

In every age, great and small, there has been a romantic element which the people of the time did not see. And just as we endeavour to portray in glowing colours the romance of past times, so will those who come after us do with the life we are living now. The only difference will be that the romance drawn by them from this age will be, possibly, less of the personal and more of an abstract nature. To them it will be the romanticism of steam, electricity, science generally, the rugged storm-threatening dawn of a raw and blatant commerce, and other obvious concomitants of these iron days ; a romance

that is hidden from us in the dull fog of that prosaic nearness wherein we move so blindly, strenuously in the battle of living, of getting and keeping; even as other peoples did in more leisurely times, whence we draw a romance of which they, in turn, were ignorant because of their own personal struggles to live.

Modernity is but the spirit of the time, no matter what that time may be or have been. How often do we of to-day come across instances of this fact! Only a short while ago there was discovered in Egypt a tablet-letter concerning a schoolboy, as modern as any letter could be in thought and expression. Within the past decade a manufacturer produced a fabric such as was considered never to have been known before, for which reason he got a patent for it; yet an almost exact facsimile of it was found subsequently wrapped about an Egyptian mummy. And the oldest * sea-song we have, if modernized in spelling, might be thought to have been written by a sailor yesterday. True, there is a certain vague quaintness in the thing, but no more than the average sailorman of the "wind-jammer" shows when he tries his 'prentice hand at such matters. Mark these re-spelt lines from the song:

" Men may leave all games
 When sailing to St. James;
 For many men have grief
 † When they begin to sail.
 For when they take the sea
 At Sandwich or at Winchelsea,
 At Bristol, or where it may be,
 Their hearts begin to fail.

* * * *

* There is some doubt of this being our oldest sea song.

"Haul the bowlin' ! Now veer the sheet !
 Cook, make ready soon our meat ;
 Our passengers have no wish to eat—
 I pray God give them rest.
 Go to the helm ! What-ho, so near ? *
 Steward, fellow, a pot of beer !"
 "You shall have't, sir, with good cheer,
 Presently all of the best."

What difference can you find between this and some parts of "The Dead Horse" chantey and of "The Young Sailor Cut Down in his Pride?" Some, certainly ; but they have a great similarity, all the same ; yes, even with "Barbara Ellen," or my mental vision has taken on an obliquity.

We may ask : Did the ancients, the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Elizabethans, and others see the nautical romance of their days as we see it now ? A thousand to one they did not. What had gone before them, each in their turn, they saw as we see what they did. It is but the inevitable mellowing of time, a kind of glamour cast by an atmosphere that fills the middle distance of the picture, that makes much of this element which we term romance. The sailing of Jason and his shipmates in the *Argo* was perhaps no more to the Thessalonians, than the departure of Franklin to the Arctic was to us. But we know the enchantment of distance. Time has lent to that action a halo of romance such as it will give to this one in centuries to come. In each case the outstanding feature of the voyage was its danger ; its great interest in the popular mind was its lack of the Commonplace, which, after all analysis is done, is the sum total of romance ; but as such it is not seen

* What, will she sail so close to the wind as this ?

by its contemporaries. Running along as we are, before this steady trade wind, with never a sheet or a brace touched from evening to evening; with a clear sky and every stitch of canvas drawing, from the royals downwards, I look around, see romance in the beauty of blues that encompass us; and, personally, I am inclined to go even further still, and to say that romance is no more than an individual attitude of mind; for what is romance to one person is not so to another. How many of my shipmates, think you, see the romance that I see in our surroundings generally?

A romantic episode, in itself all of a piece, is seen by different minds in varying lights or stages of romance, according to the romantic or commonplace cast of each mind. To the person who is accustomed to romantic ideas—and there are probably as many as there were in the golden days of our ocean discoveries—an act that is essentially a part of romance is but little more than commonplace; while to the mind of an every-day turn it is highly romantic. There are many things which we see not as they are in real relation to their concomitants, but in keeping with our individual trend of thought, as separatists or as items in the common crowd of humanity. And this is especially proved by the different outlooks of age and youth, of experience and of unsophisticatedness.

Yet whatever various persons' views may be of a given thing, there is one stable fact that still remains the same: To young and old alike, if they but be uninitiated to the isolation of sea and sky, the ocean

and all its acts and the doings thereon make up such a romance as the land and its more varied life cannot give them. What doings hereon have their imaginations not bodied forth, giving to their airy nothings our local habitations and our name! But the sea itself is to them a glamour apart from man. As a contemporary poet* has written in a beautiful, haunting piece of verse on that far-away romance which ever seems to hover on the sea's horizon:

“ I envied every joyous bird
 And every boat with sails of brown,
 And all the winds that seaward stirred
 The smoke above that little town ;
 For they were free to leave the shore
 And cross the deep beyond the bay ;
 And I, I envied them the more—
 Oh ! Blue Hills far away.

* * * *

“ I was the mate of wind and gull ;
 The night's first star was known to me,
 The blue dove's nest, the stranded hull,
 The cowries shining in the sea ;
 But you were always thought and theme,
 And you were more to me than they,
 And you were but a winsome dream—
 Oh ! Blue Hills far away.”

Ah, how many thousands of us have sighed for those blue hills far away, have cried within our hearts for them! But, as this poet says, “always it was ‘soon and soon’.” To landsmen and to seamen alike those seaward hill-tops of our imaginative romance keep away, away beyond the horizon, much as their material parallels do in actual life. Imagine as we will, sigh as we must, sail on and on as we may, yet the horizon of perfect attainment still keeps its

* John Runcie, author of “Songs of the Stoep.”

illusive distance ; and even still further in that far-away, the blue, sun-misted hills of our desires and fancies beckon us on. And always it is "soon and soon" to the youth who stands on his native cliffs and looks longingly at the distant sky-line, as it is to his elders who gaze into the future for the realization of their wishes, that are too high, too fine, too will-o'-the-wispy for the hard practicality of life to allow of their being attained in the full. Hence we should be the more glad that the sea supplies us, of its own self and direct, with such wonderful blue-green fields of romance, as inexhaustible as the very waters are—this sea that wears on its face the everlasting stamp of youth, a peculiar sort of matured youth, of seasoned freshness, from which, I always think, such women as Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, Catherine of Russia and Emma Hamilton contrived to borrow : or, rather, that Nature—which makes more femininity than masculinity throughout creation—gave to them, as she never gives to man, of *the* prime instance of her never-ending youth, the sea, than which there is nothing in the world that is always young.

In all times, at all seasons, every nation with a seaboard has felt the sway, the pull of the ocean's romance ; it has entered into their lives, their trend of thought, their spoken tongue and their written literature ; tempering or strengthening their characteristics, according to their collective make, and individualizing them from inland peoples who knew of the sea only by repute. This is even further apparent when islanders are contrasted with the

people of a continent. Persons of mature age, the old and the young, have felt it in varying degrees, irrespective of sex ; although on the whole it is the male who is the more influenced by the hidden romance of these blue-green fields and hills of the far-away. Nor is the reason of this a difficult one to find. Woman, the greatest upholder, if not the actual originator, of that conventionality whereof she is the greatest victim, is drawn by the contemplation of romance rather than by the thing itself. This is no defect in her nature ; it is but the inherent outcome of her sex, one of the inevitable expressions of a temperament that is essentially restful within certain natural and well-defined latitudes. Just as her mind generally is occupied with the little details of things, so is her physical activity confined to a multitude of small doings, of comings and goings that are circumscribed by the domesticity of her life and by a training that is apparently as old as her sex. (Here, I beg you to bear in mind, I am writing of *woman* ; not of those freakish phases, strikingly insignificant when compared with the magnitude of the whole, which come and go, and are no more to after times than is a wanton puff of wind on a sailless sea.)

But in all these things man is the reverse of woman. In his mind it is the great matters and the broad issues of life that claim and hold his attention. In action his energy naturally aspires to things of equal dimensions to those which fill his thoughts. He seeks to compass the ample affairs of life and the world. If this had not been an integral part of his make we should not have had an Alexander, a Napo-

leon and a Wellington, a Drake, a Nelson and a Hawke, a Dante, a Goethe and a Shakespeare, an Angelo, a Rubens and a Titian, a Mozart and a Mendelssohn, a Buddha, a Confucius, a Mahomet, and hundreds of other such instances in thought, art, and in action. Hence whilst woman sits on the beach meditating the romance, the charm and the peeping mystery of the water at her feet, and of the horizon further off, man is eager to be away and to discover whatever there may be on the other side of that mystical, magnetical line of sky and sea. To him it is much less a matter of what there is to be seen in the real perspective of the picture, than it is of what he hopes and believes he will see beyond that barrier-mark of vision, where the ocean seems to cut off the boundless arch of space. With him it is a case of the direct pull, the actual magnetism of the thing—an active and often irresistible desire to be up and doing in that distant region of unknown mystery.

* * * * *

And as in art and science so it is in action ; for the best of men in humanity's unmeasureable, slow progress upward are great dreamers who are active in the propagation of their dreams. I have written, and you will agree, that to aspire is the prerogative of the human race ; and if any men have proved this, surely we must put into their very fore-front the early voyagers of the world's history as it is known to us. They were men who went forth into the vastness of a then infinite world of mystery, of awesomeness and unknown danger. The daring flights of thought, excommunicating and life-threatening, by

metaphysicians and embryo scientists against the bigotry of an inquisition that aimed at leading humanity to Heaven by the way of an Al-Serat bridge and a halter, were but commonplace efforts compared to the doings of those ocean explorers who ventured into the heart of the terrors of the deep, in craft wherein no man would now think of risking himself beyond the offing. And what was it that drew them away but the romance, the mysticism of that unfathomed element—those “blue hills far away.” It was a something further off than the pale of physical vision, a something unknown yet guessed at vaguely, the all-powerful magnet of imaginary things undiscovered. It was that baffling, oceanic cry ringing in the hearts and brains of the seekers : “Follow, follow, tack and follow and wondrous things you yet shall see.” These things it was that took them from the land they understood, away into that of which they had but an indifferent conception, while running through their beings was an unsubduable fear of those waters which lay beyond the horizon.

And the romance, the mouth-to-mouth interest of their departures ! What, each at its time, was the sailing of a Cabot, a Hudson, a Cook, a Ross in comparison to those ancient goings forth ? I do not mean the voyage of Jason, who sailed into no unknown seas and whose landward purpose was of far more interest than the voyage itself ; no, nor any such traditions as the wanderings of Ulysses, or Æneas’s search for a new home and country, because they, too, spent their watery pilgrimages within the known and fairly well-defined maritime limits of their days.

And there are similar and greater reasons for dwarfing our interest in the voyages of ocean explorers who are still with us, or who were contemporary with our fathers. Those ancient voyagers of legendary history were at least beset with the daily likelihood of meeting human enemies bent on their destruction. To say nothing of such imaginary dangers as Calypso, in whom there was no doubt, a real belief.

Such, however, was not the case with our modern seekers of the nautical-undiscovered. Not only had centuries of oceanic adventure and exploration made the seas a hundred years ago as familiar to the well-informed mind, as steam has now rendered over-sea travel into a mere commonplace ; but the tremendous advance in ship-building, food-preserving, and the science of navigation have caused ocean discovery to become no more than a day's talk. The real romance of these later ventures will be made possible only when coloured by that lapse of time which alone can do justice to such things ; albeit a continuance of the same has that opposite effect which the common practice of life bids us expect—a mist that blurs the outlines of the actions, as the morning and evening vapours render uncertain the conformation of distant hills. The reality of this is shown to us by the way in which an actual happening has so often become mingled with legend, until finally the bare truth is hard to dis sever from those ornamentations which the romantic imaginings of successive re-tellers have heaped upon the original fact. For this reason it would appear that, both in history and in art, only the middle distance of the picture is perspectively true.

King Necho's Phœnician sailors, in their rounding the Dark Continent from the Red Sea to Alexandria, played only the parts of coasters. During a good half of their journey along the East Coast they were to some extent at home, for they had previously traded there. Thus they could not have felt the real thrill of exploring till they neared the Cape. And in the Atlantic here—"Sea of Darkness" and watery desolation to the ancients—they again hugged the land, you may be sure, until the Pillars of Heracles were passed, and they knew themselves to be once more on their native sea. Herodotus tells us that they spent three years on the voyage, which, owing to the circumstances and conditions of their venture, was probably true. In like manner the abortive effort of Eudoxus, of Cyzicus, was shorn of what glory it might have attained had he kept to the open sea. His great attempt was to coast around Africa from north to south; but the mutinying of his men, away down somewhere by the mouth of the Niger, apparently, forced him to return.

It was the same with Pythias, that young Greek of Massilia (Marseilles) in the time of Alexander. He knew that the Phœnician traders, who carried tin and other merchandize to the Mediterranean ports, sailed away to the north when they had passed between the Pillars. Exactly what there was to be found in those distant regions, whence came the cold winds of winter, he knew not. But the spell of the thing was on him. The romance of ocean exploration and discovery drew him away in the wake of the sailors of Tyre. Yet, after all, his voyage proved to

be more a coasting one than anything else. His real venture was when he crossed the North Sea from the Norsemen's coast to Britain. Otherwise he had hugged the shore from the Pillars northwards, and he hugged it home again—to tell the Greeks and others of his discoveries, things of which those close-mouthed Phoenicians would not tell. And there, indeed, is a subject for a painter or a narrative poet—the return of Pythias and his story to the gape-mouths immediately on landing at some galley-wharf. In fact the uncommon secrecy of the Tyrian traders appears to have been one of their particular traits. In their day they had what was practically the world's over-seas trade in their hands. This they had gained by enterprise, discovery, and their decided bent for a life afloat. They must have been natural sailors. But it was not the romance of discovery, not the spell of that something unknown beyond the horizon yonder, that drew *them* away; it was the purposes of trade, barter and gain, for which they adventured into strange waters and stranger lands. In certain ways they were typical of ourselves, an almost exact ancient parallel to an obvious nautical extent; but they apparently had a binding secret league amongst themselves against free trade. To whatever harbours they sailed, no matter what goods they carried to the coast towns of the classic world, they kept the secrets of their ports of destination, till other Mediterranean seamen found northern Europe by emulating Pythias.

EPISTLE XI

More of Bowman : A tragi-humorous fight : Superiority's humiliation : A new superstition, and others : " shellbacks " and ancient seamen : Disappearing beliefs : Phœnician sailors, an examination : From whence and to where ? : Phœnicians and gipsies, a theory : Jews at sea : Romance of the voyages from Tyre : Some parallels and comparisons.

I WAS considerably annoyed at having to break off as I did in my previous epistle. After spending the greater part of an afternoon watch-below, in my effort to interpret some of this oceanic romance, and feeling that I could continue till eight-bells—and how much thereafter the mood alone could have told—a jar came suddenly by the way of that blatant piece of Cardiffian success, who struts the deck with all the air and pomposity of a person of experience, knowledge, superiority and assured position, yet who is not a pushful or continuous talker, and is not much given to boasting. No, it is not his tongue that is altogether so objectionable, bad enough though it be ; and, you know, one must give even the Devil his due.

Of course, I'm referring to Master Apprentice Bowman. And it is his ways that we all so dislike ; for every one of them seems to be fashioned with the direct ill-intent of ruffling the feathers of some bird or other in the nest. At the same time there is the venom of his tongue to keep them company ; but

this comes in only small doses, because his quite ordinary brain can't rise to volley-firing. Yet, oh! you should be there (in the half-deck, say—where Oskar, Cumming and I are always welcome, although our being there is somewhat against usage) when a discussion is being carried on, and the “little tin god on stilts”—as the third mate describes Bowman—rises from a pretence at reading, or turns from a silent contemplation of nothing in his bunk, over the front board of which he has been leaning, with his back towards the talkers. Then what an exhibition you would get of the “when-I-ope-my-mouth-let-no-dog-bark” sort of person. He is a most insufferable snob, on the sole basis of his own offensive ego and a paternal success of no particular account.

However, it was not with me that the unconscionable, young ignoramus made trouble on that occasion; but with my apprentice-friend, Grimston. He happens to be more bulky than Grimston, and to have a longer reach than the latter has. (Quite fairly, he is far from being good-looking. Yet you should see his conceit, his airs and his lack of grace, his pomades, ties and socks, when he puts on his full, “brass-bounder” rig to go ashore. I saw him in Cardiff, even when the greasy, detestable Welsh coal was coming in. I have seen into his chest and marked some of his gear airing, and can make four out of two and two. My gracious, who wouldn't sell a farm and come to sea?—if only for the sake of such company!)

But the trouble: He and Grimston were working together, chipping the rusty places on the bulwarks

by the starboard-fore-rigging here, when a discussion arose between them—about what I don't know, and no third person seems to have cared to inquire. The point is that they came to blows—or, rather, that Bowman had Grimston on his back in the scuppers and was pommelling him there, when the third mate rushed from under the t'gal'n'-fo'e's'le-head, and dragged Bowman away ; who, in answer to the query as to why he was holding the other down to hit him, could only say : " He struck me first ! " Which was quite true, probably, because it is hard to believe that Bowman would be the first to hit any one who could and would retaliate.

However, the affair was hushed up for the time being. But Grimston was far from satisfied. He wanted an opportunity to pay off the score, although the physical advantages are all on Bowman's side. The latter refused to oblige him, till taunts from Grimston and the other apprentices' general contempt forced him to make an appointment for the second dog-watch, two days after the rough and tumble in the scuppers.

When they came for'ard, with Buckley and Longshanks for seconds (Longshanks is the half-deck nickname of an uncommonly tall, thin, humorous and harmless apprentice with a blotchy face), six or seven of us were sitting or sprawling about in the secluded place they wanted, fore-side the deck-house. So we quickly understood what their business was, and Old Tom Benton immediately up and said that he for one was not going to sit quietly by while two of the " after-guard " used—what is virtually—our

private premises as a fighting-ground. The truth was that he objected to the two youngsters fighting at all, both for their sakes and because we should get a "wiggling" from the mate—if the matter reached his ears—for not interfering. Then, as a compromise, Bristol Bill suggested that they should fight with Cumming's gloves. This was backed up by most of us; with the result that the gloves were brought out. But Grimston opposed this; his object was punishment, and he was prepared to take hard knocks in return. On the other hand it was plain to see that Bowman was glad at the gloves-suggestion. In the midst of the argument Chips and Sails came for'ard, put in their weight on our side, and it was decided that the gloves should be used, or the opponents should go aft to fight. Thus Grimston had to give in, and the contest began. The principals were in dire earnest; while the set-to could be passed off as a boxing-match, if either of the mates came along.

Another thing, B. B. and some others wanted them to fight, both for the sake of the sport and in personal satisfaction to themselves in seeing two embryo "gentlemen of the poop" hammer each other. For our part—Oskar, Chips, Sails, Cummings, Dobey, the other apprentices and I—we desired nothing better than to see Bowman get a hiding, or, rather, suffer a moral defeat, because the gloves would prevent him from being hurt much, in a physical way. And whilst this latter fact was not to our liking, there was the compensation of knowing that "our man" stood to gain in the same manner.

Grimston had Buckley for his second; and

Longshanks, stepping forward just after the fight began, with sundry winks to all but Bowman, proceeded to act in the same capacity for the latter ; and I must say that he added considerably to the entertainment. In a couple of minutes he had been to the half-deck and returned with a big sponge and a towel. With one over his shoulder, the other in his left-hand, the long fingers of his out-stretched, tar-stained right-hand spread over half the compass, the nails ill-kept, and the skinny forearm showing none too clean through his torn shirt-sleeve (for although Longshanks is *par excellence* the gentleman of the half-deck—his father is Captain So-and-So, R.N.—he is a most careless beggar as to his person and appearance), he dodged about behind Bowman with all the manner of a farcical professional of the ring. His black, thick brows twitched in pretended concern ; whilst his big, flat mouth kept up a continual, running commentary, on the actions of his principal chiefly, humorous always, cheering apparently, but with an underlying touch of satire mostly. He also put in many a sally on Grimston, Buckley as a second, any one who happened to be in the way of his own antics and great feet, and on chance remarks that gave him an opportunity to show his mordant wit.

Sails (who could not keep out of such an affair even if he were paid well to do so) posed as referee, twisting his big, handsome moustache first with one hand then with the other, and all the time firing in such remarks as : “ That was a good un, Lankyshire, but not heavy enough—a bit more weight next time ! Well done, Cardiff—parried beautifully ! Now, up

right an' in left!—s-s-s-s, I say, very near! Steady, there, now—mind—well, damn my eyes, if!—Look out, there!” In dodging around so as to keep both opponents well in view, he had collided with Mannheim's heavy figure, stepped sideways on to one of Curly Jones's bare feet, thus causing the black to send up a half-smothered howl of pain, which was mixed with Sails's swearing apology and equally vigorous questions as to what Curly was standing in the way for and why he didn't leave his bare feet in the fo'c's'le at such a time.

Still the fight went on. There were no rounds—it was all one; and Bowman was getting the worst of it, in spite of his advantages of weight and reach. Grimston, I was glad to see, was far the better boxer of the two. Besides, he was much the lighter on his feet, and was quick to work himself around to the weather-side and deliver his attacks from there. In fact, it was from this vantage-point that he by-and-bye got in such a stinger on his opponent's jaw, as to send Bowman backwards into the crowd to leeward.

The strutting embodiment of success had received his quietus. With the instantaneous and much paraded help of Longshanks, he came to his feet. But all that his second could say had no effect. He wanted no more. Offensively knocking the sponge out of Longshanks's hand, as it went towards his face, he turned away, threw his gloves on the deck, and walked aft,—winded completely, bruised to some extent, and beaten into humiliation.

In a moment Sails had picked up the gloves and was offering to box little, elderly Mumbles for a

month's pay, with another month's wages on "heads I win, tails you lose." This set all hands laughing, of course. Some bouts followed. The quick darkness of these latitudes put an end to the pastime. We broke up, to re-gather in groups and talk of the fight, the apprentices going aft to do the same—except Robinson, who happened to have the lee-poop-deck duty. One-bell came, with the usual "Tighten up sheets and braces!" Then eight-bells; the watch was relieved, and once more it was: "Now my lads, get your beds and lie down."

* * * * *

I suppose you will not be surprised to learn that the fact of this trouble between Grimston and Bowman having arisen by the fore-starboard rigging has set our superstitious ones' tongues wagging. They are assured now, that this particular spot has some sort of a curse on it, and are again looking on Appleyard if not exactly as a Jonah at least as one with whom they would rather not be shipmates. This is the fourth piece of disturbance that has sprung up just there, not fifteen feet from our fo'c's'le-doorway; and most of the croakers are convinced that some really serious affair will happen there before the passage is over. How they blame poor, coughing Appleyard for this, may be difficult to understand; but blame him they do, for it is pretty evident that they are beginning to think that his first fall on the spot has given it a most unholy influence on the ship's peace.

Were it not that there is a decidedly serious aspect behind all this—I mean the ever-present probability of an abrupt and searing flare-up out of this Middle

Age sort of attitude towards coincidence—it would be comical indeed. Of course, there is a ludicrous side to it ; but we who know the possibilities of its other side, and who are concerned for our general peace and the efficient working of the ship—which cannot be done comfortably with a shortage of three or four men, dead or in irons—we are careful not to do that which may cause an eruption from this Etna of superstition.

So you see how little changed is the old-school “shellback” of to-day from the galley-seaman of ancient times—or, at least, from what we can argue plausibly to have been the early Greek, Phœnician and Roman sailor. And is there to wonder at in this ? I am gravelled to see there is. Even in these days of science, of the iconoclast’s triumph, “with all means and appliances to boot,” how many hundreds of thousands of your shore-folks, with the solid, prosaic earth ever under their feet, are fearful of the number thirteen, of passing under a ladder, of spilling salt at table, of crossing two knives, of seeing the new moon through glass, of meeting a cross-eyed woman when bent on a particular piece of business, and of meeting even the fairest of women if she be the first person met with on, say, New Year’s morning, rising from a bed of sickness, or—stranger still in a way—when a bridegroom is setting out for church.

Where, then, are “we poor sailor-boys” in this but on the lee-yardarm ? We (I speak for the “old-timers,” whom I like so well, despite their mental backwardness) have just the same position now that the trireme-oarsmen had to the philosophers, whether the latter peregrinated about a garden, sat in a porch

or squatted in a tub. Now, as then, it is a matter only of comparison and degree. The wryneck's cry, that sent a grape-tender scurrying home from the hillside, in horrifying belief that the unmeaning, and in a way, helpless bird, heralded a death in his family, might have no significance for one of any dozen townsmen. An Athenian gentleman would be less affected, ten to one, in having his path crossed by three ravens at a particular time of the moon than would his rural contemporary, who, perhaps, was worth more drachmæ than the townsman was. There were disbelievers in the gods then, even as there are now. And you may rest quietly assured—I do, at any-rate—that at the heavy end of the scale of superstition stood the seaman of his day. They were like, and very little removed from, our “old-timers”

*. . . Who eye their mates and catch their breath
The while they talk of hatches overturned,
Knives stuck in masts, and low blue lights that burned
But yester-eve about the weather-vane ;
Of many foundered ships that tried amain
To run a Friday's voyage ; of drownèd cats,
And vessels out of which the auguring rats
Decamped when last in port ; of sneezes done
To left, night-squealing pigs, and whistling on
The bow by thoughtless lads ; of horsey dreams,
And where the light of woman's eye out-gleams
The brilliance of gems ; and other things
That fill the sailor's mind with murmurings
And speak to him of wrecks.**

* This is the original of the altered passage in “Daughters of Nereus,” published in “The Lure of the Sea.”

Yet the Merchant-Jack is treading along, slowly and far behind you, in the path of materialism. The phantom-ship and its heralding disaster to the vessel whereof some part of the crew see it ; a like result from the catching of a stormy petrel or an albatross ; the sea-serpent and its leaving wreck or foundering in its train ; the hearing of peculiar, wailing singing when near the shore on a calm, dark night and attributing it to a mermaid that will speedily bring about a gale during which she will lead the craft to some rocks or a shoal—these and a few others as greatly-foolish have gone from the mind of the average European seaman. But in this “average” I do not include Finns and the majority of home-trading Mediterranean sailors, French perhaps excepted. The Latins still cling strongly to their old beliefs ; and Finnish seamen are commonly thought to possess a disturbing quantity of the sea’s ancient magic.

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We are drawing down towards the spent end of the north-east trade. Any day now may see us in the doldrums, when writing will be out of the question. So, being moved that way, I am for turning again to those Phœnicians and old ocean’s romance. In the latter I have always found something to absorb me, questions that I cannot answer ; whilst the former, as a sort of Anglo-Saxons of the past, interest me greatly, and I have something to say to you about them. Another thing, I generally feel annoyed at them when I think of the stirring tales of the romance of ocean discoveries they robbed us of by that close-

mouthedness, that ancient "Protection" of theirs. So much were they traders and nothing more, that they seem strongly to have been an old-time parallel to the Jews of later times.

In such a subject as the romance of the seas those Phœnicians are not merely of unusual interest; they are of the greatest, because they were the first of their kind, so far as we can gather from history. On another point, they were like ourselves, successful colonizers. They had a Semitic language; but it appears to be a matter of diverse opinions, amongst scholars, as to whether they came of a Semitic stock or not. Apparently they were not Hebrews. We are told that their form of civilization was an Egypto-Semitic one. With the Egyptians for close neighbours it was only natural that they should borrow from those people in building up a religion, which was like the mythology of the Greeks in that they had personifications of places, streams, etc. Hannibal's oath to Philip of Macedon contains the words "Sun, Moon and Earth and Rivers, Meadows and Waters," indicating that these held the things whereon their religion was based. They worshipped Poseidon and other sea-deities, which were distinct myths from the Babylonian fish-gods. Their art, never original, was first over-influenced by the Egyptian, then by that of the Greeks. They appear to have had no literature of their own, in which respect they again resemble the Jews, who have not produced an individual literature since their early days as a settled race—*i.e.* the days of the Bible. And what sea-tales those mariners of Tyre could have told! What yarns they

must have spun to one another, galley to galley, when they met in the home-port, or later on in Carthage !

It is supposed that those early ocean explorers came originally from a more easterly seaboard than that of Tyre. For my part I am not so much concerned in whence they came, as in what they were and whither they went. We know that after Carthage they were broken up as a nation and became a scattered people—as the Jews were later on, and the Eskimo perhaps earlier. (In my own mind I am convinced that the latter are Mongols who drifted from shore to shore in an easterly direction, and would have continued beyond Greenland had their sea-going craft been large enough, or if they had ever found the Arctic frozen from Greenland to Iceland, and so on to Spitzbergen and possibly back to their ancestors' original starting-place.) But what became of the Phœnicians? Who knows that the gipsies of to-day are not their descendants? We know that these nomads have been scattered about Europe and the nearer east these thousand years or more. And where did they come from? What were they in the beginning? No one knows. Nor, so far as my reading goes, has any one tried to prove them to have been a wandering tribe like the Bedouins. Continental gipsies, especially those of the Mediterranean north littoral, are in appearance much what one would think the Phœnicians were. I remember dwelling on this point when I saw some gipsies dancing and singing, by The Sweet Waters at the head of The Golden Horn.

However, be this as it may, if the Tyrians were

migrants from another seaboard, we can, to some extent at least, at once see why they had a sense of the seas in their veins. And their subsequent and utter disappearance from the great waters, tends to prove my theory about the gipsies. How such a sea-going nation (bear in mind they were very small as a nation) could quit the nautical life completely, and become wanderers on shore may be a puzzle, except for the facts that after their break-up they had neither a country, harbour nor galleys. Again, in their bent for the sea they were the opposite of both the early Hebrews and the later Jews; for it cannot be said that either of these had the slightest leaning to a life afloat.

As to the Jews of to-day, it may surprise you to learn that I have never met a Jewish sailor in any part of the world, nor under any flag. Yet, of course, there are such in the navies of conscript countries; but not even there, in proportion to their numbers. At the same time they have no marked dread of the ocean; on the contrary, their readiness to cross the seas, merely from land to land, is a contradictory trait of theirs, just as we and other peoples have inconsistencies in our national characters. Take the Jew as we know him, as he appears to have been all down the ages. He is a good colonist, in fact one of the best, where trade is an already established feature of the people; but only there, because his whole proclivities are for barter and exchange. This has been so since before the days when "Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep" and, by the use of peeled sticks, secured to himself as payment for the

grazing "all the eanlings which were streaked and pied." As a colonizing agriculturist, or as a mechanic in the starting of a colony on a soil that is virgin to trade, the Jew is a rank failure. Add to this, we are aware that there was trade all over the Eastern world long before the Phœnicians became the race of traders, which history tells us they were, on that strip of the Mediterranean coast from Mount Carmel to Sidon. And a study of peoples in their relation to a nautical life makes these facts a strong denial of the supposition that the Phœnicians were either Hebrews or of a Semitic stock.

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Not only was their skill at sea the wonder of ancient times; it was never equalled till the Vikings took to roving and pillage, and it is not at all unlikely that a love of ocean adventure was first instilled into the Norsemen by the coming of those traders from the Phœnician Sea. The great exactness of the Tyrian sailors' movements aboard their small craft, their minuteness in the stowage of cargoes, the smartness they showed in using every inch of space aboard, their watchfulness at sea—an absolutely essential to good navigation and to general seamanship—all combined to make the surrounding nations look on them as being something in the nature of marvellous. The Greeks spoke of Polaris as "the Phœnician star," because the Phœnicians steered by it. The speed of their vessels was far greater than that of any of their contemporary craft, which proves their supremacy in building and rigging. Tyre, their principal port and the prototype of Venice, was the

emporium of the then known world's merchandise ; and the wondrous Tyrian purples were but symbolical of the Phœnicians' sovereign sway at sea and in trade generally.

Thinking of the two great similarities between those ancient people and the Jews—*i.e.* their trading and having no national literature—makes me wonder if the everlasting tendency to trade kills all literary faculties and activities ? Will the world's industrial war of to-day, this cut-throat madness to get and to keep, continue till it crushes literature out of the lives of the peoples ? or will it involve the wonder of a new literature ? Perhaps ; for world-trade is scarcely yet out of its infancy, and trading is certainly the bitterest foe of literature, as we know it ; trade is the powerful boa constrictor around the body of the gazelle. As the past has proved, war, bloody though it may be, is no enemy to the literary gifts of a people ; but this commodity-war of modernity is a vastly different thing. And it makes us wonder if the Phœnicians' master-passion for trade smothered such bents for literature as they may have had. If those sea captains of theirs had possessed only a part of the intellectuality of their contemporary Greeks, we might—we *should* have had a hundred argonautic voyages where now we have but one. In their silence they defrauded us of a whole literature of sea-adventure, of derring-do afloat and on strange shores, such as were perhaps not more than equalled by the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and ourselves in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Not that the Phœnician seamen were altogether

blind to the romance of the great waters. But the romance which they saw was that of commerce, of wealth got by sea-borne commodities from lands unknown to all except themselves. It was the romance of disappearing into the oblivion of the seaward-horizon, and returning again with marvellous strange goods. Quiet, self-contained, daring, they ventured far and kept the secret of the recurring value of their bravery and enterprise. In that matter they were our opposites. Again, as ocean-venturers, they were the ancient prototypes of Cabot, Raleigh, Drake, Dampier and others of the spacious times of these men; with the exceptions, so far as we know, that they did no freebooting, no buccaneering, no new-land-claiming. They had no territorial object beyond that of trade, which they carried on according to their own peaceful ideas of such. They were, past all doubt and argument, a diplomatic race. An essential part of their overseas romance, especially in contrast to their times on and about the Mediterranean generally, was an inseparable element of quietude. What trouble, if any, they experienced with natives on newly-discovered shores is lost to us by that secrecy of their crews. Their Columbuses, Hawkinses, Frobishers and Cooks, are irrecoverable glories to the world's literature of adventure afloat. On the other hand, their voyages formed the first great opening in the romance of trade; and as it was over-seas trade, it was a part of the ocean's own romance—whereof, in this quiet interval of things aboard generally, I am trying, all to little purpose, I fear, to give you the sum of my present thoughts.

It is easy to imagine the open-mouthed, excited astonishment with which their pioneers were received in eastern harbours of the Mediterranean, when those seafarers returned with precious cargoes of things which were then unknown in that part of the world. How the news would fly from tongue to tongue, as similar tidings did in the southern ports of England during the times of the great Atlantic discoveries! But with what a difference. There the black-haired, black-bearded, brown sailormen moved about their little vessels as if nothing had happened out of the commonplace of seafaring—doing their ships' business in utter silence of the fact that they had just returned from the absolutely unknown to all but themselves in those classic regions—had come back from the maw of oblivion, of the never-to-be of those who gazed, and wondered what magic had been used to such an unwonted end—back with a cargo whereat most men and all women stopped and gaped in something that was more than astonishment—fully aware that they, their goods and their strange secrecy, were “in all men's mouths.” That was where the romance lay, in the fact that those peaceful trading seamen, whose quiet movements savoured of well-nigh everything that was opposite to the strenuous efforts needful to navigate their primitive vessels in northern winds and seas, had passed the Pillars of Heracles—the end of the world to the amazed onlookers—faced the Sea of Darkness, gone to unheard-of climes and returned with such merchandise as set all eyes a-stare and all tongues a-wag.

It was wonderful, mysterious, passing even the

conjecture of busybodies. Surely those mariners had succeeded in enlisting the services of both Poseidon and the thunder-making Jove, for them to have compassed an end as magical as would have been the stopping of Ixion's wheel, or succeeding in the task of Orpheus to get his beloved Eurydice back to earth without a look behind to see if she was there. Had the early fathers of the Romish church been in existence and in power in those parts, such adventuring would certainly have been put down to unholy practices. The daring voyagers would have found themselves haled before a bench of priests, declared guilty there and then of having dealings with the Evil One, and burnt forthwith, lest their awful blasphemy had proved to be contaminating to others.

But what was more amazing still, to those who gazed at the proceedings and asked each other unanswerable questions, the explorers sailed away again and again, whence no man knew outside their own craft, sometimes failing to return, no doubt—for the seas would have their toll of the venturers—yet mostly the reverse. And so keen were they to maintain the secret of their far-off markets that, rather than have them divulged by followers from other Mediterranean nations, they turned back, waited, then started again, when unseen. At times they even drove their vessels ashore to certain wreck on the western coast of Spain, in order to prevent the purpose of those who dogged them. This, as we know with certitude, was one phase of the ocean romance of those distant days; a romance that was

peaceful yet highly mystical at one end, but at the other—a mystery that never can be solved; a mystery that probably did cause those northern inhabitants to become sea-adventurers in their turn, and finally, according to their more turbulent natures, sea-marauders, the first of pirates so far as we are told by history and legend—unless, as we may suppose, and in a way are given to understand, their antitypes existed on classic waters.

And what shall be said of the attitude of the people who saw only this end of those wonderful voyages? How did the coming and going of the Phœnicians affect them? Here was romance far and away greater than it could have been even to the Greeks and others who witnessed the seamen's astonishing return. At this end there was apparently no knowledge of navigation beyond sight of the land. Such science as was known around the eastern part of the Mediterranean was a dead letter here. The only craft of the ancient Briton was his skin and wicker-wrought coracle, a mere lake and river vessel; until he learnt to build larger, mostly of wood, and maintained intercourse with what we now designate Normandy and Brittany. Hence his acquaintance with things and matters outside his own primitive life was entirely *nil* till the coming of those darker skinned mariners. And although the dwellers on the eastern and southern shores of the North Sea were possibly further advanced in the general information of their days, than were their contemporary Britons, that wider knowledge did not compass overseas navigation. For this reason they, too, must have

viewed the Phœnicians with something akin to awe. In spite of the fact that, being on the mainland, they may have heard of such a country as Greece, to them, as to the Britons, the amazing strangers had come from the absolutely unknown—had sailed boldly into their ken from beyond the horizon, that barrier which was to them impassable, whence came the wild winds and the great, fear-inspiring rollers from places unimaginable—wonderful men in strange craft from the more wonderful far-away, men whom they doubtless had to touch to believe to be mortal like themselves. What astounding romance! Earth could not give them the like.

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I have already pointed out, but you will allow me to say once more, that to a certain extent the trading mariners of Phœnicia were an unusual and a very interesting parallel to ourselves. Not that this is a new territorial discovery in the ocean of thought. In all likelihood other voyagers of the mind and the pen have already planted their ensigns on its promontory. We all know the platitude anent history's habit of never being satisfied to be original. Yet to whatever extent we may be a repetition of those ancient seamen, there have been others to whom we are much more closely allied in given ways. These were the Norsemen—those vikings, masters and men, who, midway between ourselves and the old-time Mediterranean sailors, served to hand down to us that love and mastery of nautical affairs which were first matters of romance, daring and geographical conditions, then of inheritance with the other con-

comitants thrown into the scale, and finally of descent and absolute necessity.

And what is this closer link which we have with the early northern voyagers than we have with the Phœnicians, who were so considerably more like us in their lives and purposes at sea? It is not so much a matter of time that separates us more from the latter than from the former. It is a matter of inherent traits and touches of temperament. In thought and feeling, the then and now conditions of life allowed for, we are greatly more akin to the plundering Norsemen of fifteen hundred years ago than we possibly could be to the Phœnicians, even if they had come midway between us and Norsemen. It is a matter of our northern phase of civilization and of racial feeling against a mere coincidence in tendency. Although these geographical definitions are not exactly correct, it is enough to say that the Phœnicians were of the East; we are of the West, and oil cannot mix with raw water. Given understanding, and it would be impossible for bluntness to grasp the essence of subtlety. A common love of the sea shared by two nations of different tendencies, modes of thought and civilization, is no binding link between them; not even so much as one religion that is shared by two peoples who cannot speak the same tongue. Hence that stronger tie which we feel to exist between us and the Norse marauders is not a mere nautical link; it is because we have in our veins something more than a reminiscence of the blood that flowed in those of the vikings. They saw in the ocean's romance a phase to which the

peace- and trade-loving Phœnicians were racially indifferent. Owing to that vast difference in their national temperaments, what was noble to one was degrading to the other.

We may question the infinities at will, and they will answer—at will, which is never directly. In like manner we can pharisaically hold up our hands, and to-day there are those who do, in horror at the thought of our being latently allied so closely to the pioneers of piracy in northern seas; but to hold a screen between us and an ugly spot does not put that piece of ugliness out of existence. Nor can we be sure of our having no cause to be thankful that we have a smack of the pillaging Norsemen in our blood; without it and those racial characteristics which come of a fusion of Teutonic tribes at their best, we should not hold the place which we have to-day in the scale of nations. With this you will not agree; and whether or not it makes for our betterment and happiness as a race we might argue; were I with you.

Yet, to my thinking, that to which we, as a whole, have attained, is that for which we should have hungered and probably striven if it had not become ours. In gaining this place we have but fulfilled our temperamental destiny, have shown the material result of the ocean's powerful romance to a small and geographically isolated nation. A man does not go through stress and loss and suffering to arrive at that desired goal which may be the reverse of his aspirations. And as it is with individuals, so it is with peoples; who, after all, are but the broad though well-defined aggregates of individual temperaments.

Thus it is that with the vikings and their over-sea-doings we find something very much nearer to our own doors than we can possibly discover in the transmarine trading of the Phœnicians. Here we have a romance that is part and parcel of our own—that is part of us, because it sprang from blood and national make whereof we are to some extent the lineal descendants. In the northmen's freebooting on the high seas, and in their general pillaging of coast towns from their own shores down to Gibraltar, we see those things which had their reflections in our own nautical history during a good part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Our Drakes and Raleighs, our Dampiers and Frobishers did but imitate on the Atlantic and on the sea-boards of the Americas what their Norse and Danish antitypes had done nearer home a thousand years before their time; also what the Spanish and French privateers did on our southern shores some generations before them. Hence we find, even in our own strongest phase of the sea's romance, a direct link between ourselves and those early pirates and land-claimers of the north.

But it is only when we come to the wonderful sixteenth century that the true inwardness of the romance of the ocean and men's dealings with it becomes apparent to *us* in all its power of attraction. Here we are in the middle distance of the historical picture, for which reason our sight is all the truer and clearer. Here there is no blurring by the mists of time and fictitious legend. Here we have absolutely authentic records on which to depend. We are not

drawing conclusions, warranted by certain facts and suppositions, from a people with a civilization both of which were to some extent foreign to our understanding; but are face-to-face with a period that stands out in the very forefront of oceanic adventure, enterprise and the romance of both; a period in our history that cannot be matched by either the Portuguese or Dutch, nor even by the Spaniards themselves. It was the golden time of Britain's doings at sea and overseas, the freebooting and the buccaneering notwithstanding. All western Europe was then breathing the air and the spirit of sea-adventure and land-discovery, and England was filling her rejuvenated lungs with an enthusiast's full-blooded share of it all. Later to join the struggle than her rivals were, she threw into the running that grit and get-there which have ever marked her actions when once it came to the point of winning or losing a race of importance. Figuratively to reduce things to the diurnal, the mornings broke with the continual expectation of great tidings and rejoicings; the noons passed in the glare of spacious doings, of happenings that filled the country with talk and wonderment; the evenings closed to the clash of arms, the report of cannon; and the nights went to the telling of strange tales of stranger, far-off scenes, of "feats of broil and battle,"

" of most disastrous chances,
 Of moving accidents by flood and field,
 Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
 Of being taken by the insolent foe
 And sold to slavery; . . .
 . . . of antres vast and deserts idle."

But most it was of the accidents by flood, of the hair-breadth 'scapes due to mastery in seamanship, of the imminent deadly breach of galleass- and galleon-broadsides. The watery plod of those broad-bowed, high-sterned craft, with their primitive lanthorns on the jibboom-end and over the taffrail, was no indication of the speed and excitement of events. The spume of the brine was in the air. There was the whistle of the salt winds in those stories from overseas. The hot glow of these tropics was in and about and through the general doings and the atmosphere of the time. The continual coming and going of sun- and action-hardened sailormen, with their wondrous tales of the far-away, kept anticipation agog. It was our prose epic of the sea written in stirring deeds, quaintly-worded logs and letters—pages of the most outstanding oceanic romance known to history. Throughout the greater portion of those halcyon days of nautical derring-do there were the glory and the glamour and the verve of irresponsible youth playing with things of great magnitude. What but the reply of cocksure, optimistic youth was that utterance on Plymouth Hoe, whether true in actual words or only in substance? —“ We'll finish our game of bowls first, then go out and thrash the haughty Dons.” Those Latin peoples, as authoritative forces, being the first in and over the blue-green fields to the West, and our rushing in to snatch the prizes from them, make up a romance such as militarism can hardly equal. They should have made their goal-winning too effective for the English freebooters to gain an entrance. This they

did not, and the result was the laying of the foundations of an empire such as was probably undreamt of by even the soaring minds of those times of budding greatness. It was a case of buccaneer against buccaneer, till the struggles for supremacy took the shape of regularly organized navies ; which, in a way, culminated in Trafalgar. Practically during eleven reigns, from that of Henry VI well into the time of Charles I, this romance of freebooting was continued, singly or in fleets.

EPISTLE XII

In the doldrums : A great wash-day : The *modus operandi* :
And the fun : Three shameless ones : Mumbles' clothes-
ties : Back to the romance of the seas : A time of greatness :
Phœnicians *versus* Elizabethans : Devonians and oppor-
tunities : Rodney and de Grasse : The romance of battle :
Highwaymen of the deep : Neptune aboard.

WHEN I hastily stowed my writing-gear, at the imperative clang of a one-bell, eleven days ago, it was with the intention of taking it up and returning to my subject on the following day. But that very night saw us into the doldrums. Then—well, when you have spent the whole watch in boxing hurriedly about, often at the double, from brace to sheet, sheet to tack, and back to brace again, fore and aft, port and starboard, trimming sails to catch every blessed breath of wind that comes your way; not to make too much of many a run aloft to take a turn around royals and light staysails, to prevent squalls from banging them about, and perhaps bursting them—well, after four hours of such hauling and hurrying you don't take very readily to a pen. And when this has gone on—as we had it—for eight mortal days and nights, in such downpours as a British landsman can hardly imagine and in an atmosphere like a moist oven at high pitch, you can believe me that one is not disposed to lose, in any pastime or study, even five minutes of a watch-below for some days thereafter.

However, we are now well-into the south-west trade ; so I can settle down again and tell you of the principal scene in that soaking, irritating strenuousness. This was our great wash-day, when Sails, Longshanks and Bristol Bill all came on deck, within a minute or two of one another, minus a rag. It was the sixth day of our immersion, when everything on deck and below had a continual sense of having just been hauled from overboard. Up to then some of the men had found energy enough to wash a few pieces—only to see them lie sodden in a corner, of course, from day to day. But as news had gone around that a wash-day was to be allowed, nearly every one had saved at least a month's dirty clothes for the general muster. This came at noon on the sixth day, when The Old Man reckoned that we were nearly out of the doldrums. During the past five days, whenever the haul, haul, haul, would allow, our day-time intervals had been spent in holystoning the decks and in scrubbing paintwork with sand and old canvas. (This is every deep-water "wind-jammer" crew's occupation whenever the weather is too rainy or boisterous for paint or tar to be in use).

Luckily for us it happened to be our watch-out that afternoon. At two-bells (one o'clock) The Old Man sent up our black-browed steward to tell the second mate "to have the work-gear put away and call all hands to wash clothes." It was like the "Pipe to the wash-tub" in our "Aunt's ships" *—except for the hilarity, the fact that the whole deck

* In Queen Victoria's time—or the last third of it, at any-rate—this was the general lower-deck term for men-o'-war.

was our aggregate tub, and the pre-expulsion Adam-like state in which Sails, B. B. and Longshanks made their appearance.

Rain was coming down at the time ; it came in sheets. Whilst some of us hurried away with the primitive scrubbing-gear and holystones, others hastened to stuff up the lee-scupper-holes with swabs or whatever they could lay hands on. Then—half of the watch at a time, in case there should be a sudden call to sheets and braces—into the fo’c’s’le we went, stripped, put on oilskins (except the few who chanced to have donned clean shirts, etc. recently) and came on deck again, every man with an armful of dirty clothes and something like a bar of soap. Already three or four planks of the lee-deck were covered with fresh water. I was one of the first batch to get to work ; and this is how it was done :

You put your clothes into the water and kept them there with one foot ; otherwise the “wish-wash” of the water, as the ship rolled, would have carried them away, to be mixed hopelessly with every other man’s. Then you soaped them thoroughly, piece by piece, and placed them under the other foot. When this was done, you turned the pile over, and began to rub the first piece that had been soaped ; this turning-over was for the purpose of allowing the soap to have time to soften the dirt in every article. Next—if you were not a weakling of Lately’s sort, whose cough continues, unheeded, and is always worse when there is any work to do ; or slovenly, like most of the Dagoes ; or such a natural lazy-bones as Mannheim—you rinsed out, went through the process of soaping

and rubbing again, gave everything a final rinse, wrang out, left each piece screwed up tightly—to keep the rain out—wrapped them all in one piece, and carried the bundle to some corner under the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head to wait till the great "hang-out" came, when the rain ceased.

This is washing clothes aboard a "wind-jammer" in the doldrums, when the decks are prepared for the purpose, and all hands are allowed to have their fling. But it does not always go through so smoothly as my description may suggest. For instance, if there is any swell on, you may lose your balance on the soaped pile, roll over in the "wish-wash," and spring up again to find your clothes scattered around the feet of the crowd, and every man swearing at you for being so "long-shoreish" or worse; particularly if two of you happen to go over at the same time and near each other. When you have succeeded in gathering your pieces together again, and stowed them safely somewhere for the moment, you begin to hunt for your soap—perhaps a two-pound lump, therefore a rather serious loss, unless you are prepared to go to the "slop-chest" before the passage is over. But if this is not your first, general, doldrums "wash-out," and you are not lucky enough to have a handy chum who has secured the soap for you, you let it go and get another lump, because, ten to one, it has been confiscated by some shipmate as a penalty for allowing your clothes to float around the other washers. It may also happen that a squall comes along during the washing. Then everything has to be bundled up smartly and stowed anywhere till the squall is over.

As a rule, the washing is done watch-and-watch-about—though it may be all done in one afternoon—so that one watch is ready to handle tacks and sheets and braces in any sudden gust or change of wind.

On this occasion Lately, the Finn, and the Portuguese were the ones who lost their soap; but there was neither a squall nor a cat's-paw to interrupt the merry cleansing. The interruption, such as it was, came from the three shameless ones. Sails and Bristol Bill were the first by a minute or so. Had it not been that the former was at work in the sail-locker, under the poop-deck, when the general order was given, he would probably have been one of the first hands on deck. As it happened he was one of the last, and almost side-by-side with B. B., owing to the latter being at the tail-end of our second batch, and to the doors of Sails's cabin and our fo'c's'le being close together.

Both of them were as naked as on the day they were born. Each one had a big bundle of dirty clothes tucked under his left arm, a large piece of soap in his right hand, and a pipe in his mouth. Naturally, their coming was greeted with a roar of chaff and laughter, which travelled aft till it reached the apprentices and the two junior mates by the break of the poop. Without turning a hair, and going straight to his washing, Sails wanted to know what was the matter? Couldn't "a man come on deck in his everlastings without having a parcel o' damn-me-eyes grinnin' an' hollerin' around like a lot o' Spanish mules with belly-ache?" At the same time we knew that half the cause of such an appearance

on his part was his oft-expressed pride in his "proportions"; and, without doubt, he was an exceedingly well-formed man. On the other hand B. B. had nothing to boast of in this way. He was "knotty" enough; but there was no symmetry about him. He ran thin in places, was freely tattooed, and his skin was the colour of a weak solution of Stockholm tar. He went silently to work, without even the excuse that he had dirtied all his clothes and wanted to "wash up to the hilt."

Just as Sails was saying that the hullabaloo was only envy of his "proportions" and telling all and sundry to go to Fiddlers' Green—nautically said to be "ten miles south-south-west of hell"—The Old Man roared from the poop:

"Hi tdere! who tder devil is dat vot gome on my tdeck shaming tder heavens like tdis?"

Sails raised his head and looked aft, his expression all innocence and surprise. B. B. quietly picked up his clothes, placed them on the spare topmast that is lashed to the stanchions, put his soap on the top of them and went into the fo'c's'le. The Old Man began to shout again. Sails was doing as B. B. had done, and muttering aloud:

"Well, I'm damned if I'd be ashamed o' what the Lord's given a man!"

When out of the half-deck came Longshanks in the same primitive and burdened condition, to be at once attacked by the voice over the rail above him, and to go hurriedly back the way he came, his long, thin legs looking like two big whitewood sticks, bent in the middle. We judged by The Old Man's tone that he

was angry, and we were quiet accordingly. The mate was not in evidence. Either he had turned-in and gone to sleep, or, likely enough, he was lying in his bunk, smoking and thinking what a waste of silly kindness and precious time this was—letting all hands wash clothes in the ship's time!

However, the affair went by with nothing worse than the foregone. Twenty-four hours later we slipped the doldrums proper, had a day of cats'-paws and light showers, then struck the south-west trade and with it our great "hang-out." This was where Mumbles shone, and didn't the genial, little, old man's slit of a mouth stretch across his face in a smile of pride. The subject was his clothes-ties. They are not only the neatest, best made, and most plentiful of any man's in the crowd; most of us have never seen clothes-ties to equal them. This is not exactly astonishing; because Mumbles is a tidy sailorman in all he does. (He got a pair of dungaree trousers from the slop-chest; and as they were much too long for him, and he is of rather a queer cut physically, he gave me a half-pound cake of tobacco to re-shape them for him.) Slovenly men use rope yarns to tie their clothes to a line; the generality make them of three parts of sail-twine ("pinched" whenever the opportunity occurs), twisted up and whipped with strong thread. But Mumbles has spun his beautifully from jute.

(*Inter alia*, Old Tom Benton has had me at his letter again—two more dog-watches lost in adding another six pages! I believe he secretly finds a lot of pleasure in occupying my time in this way, and probably in

getting so long and unusual a letter for his "old woman" to read. Oskar, Cummings, and Dobey say they would not write any more for him; but I can't refuse him. It pleases him; and, after all, there are many dog-watches still to come.)

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In between temple-making, clothes-mending, teaching English to Oskar, and to him and others the use of single-sticks—fashioned out of bamboos from the 'tween-decks—watching boxing-matches and taking a hand in things generally, I have been reading a couple of odd, battered volumes of "Purchas, His Pilgrims." And it seems to me to be a strange thing that no kind of monument has yet been raised, no State or public recognition made, to Richard Hakluyt—that great navigator in theory, who never voyaged further than "a trip down the Bay," yet who saved us the prose epic of our adventure-blazoned entry into the world of ocean-daring and romance. Truly, the memory of some patriots has to wait long for the honour due to them from their countries. (You see, I am harping back to the romance of these mighty fields of greenish-blue—or bluey-green, according to their depth and to the sunlight of the moment.)

It was an entry that, as we look back and see it in all its pomp of mystery, uncertainty and world-disturbing effect, makes us feel that no nation has had a greater. And how easy it is to see the influence which those overseas discoveries and adventures had on the poetry, the feeling and the imagination of their own times and on the decades immediately following them. What but a broadening, widening,

colouring effect could they have had? To expect aught else would be to look for the highly improbable, to expect such a break in the regular recurrence of human affairs as would amount to a suspension in the laws of Nature as they apply to man. The chroniclers of the time, one and all, direct and indirect, seem to have said to themselves, and to have taken as their text :

*There's an island that stands in the northern seas,
Where the whips of the wind-gods crack :
With a race that 's at home in the whistling breeze,
And who smiles at the storm-fiend's wrack ;
'Tis a race that has sprung from the loins of the brave,
Who had kinship with tempests and loved the wild wave.*

*'Tis a land that is fair to the eye of the free,
But is fairer by far to slaves ;
For they know that the anthem of liberty
She has set to her marching staves ;
While the pulse of the sea 's in the blood of her sons,
And the world's peace shall live in the threat of her guns.*

It was indeed a time of rich spaciousness—the breaking of a great, broad, gloriously golden day after a night of coldness, narrowness, and general bigotry ; a night in the time of men and history over which the Inquisition had exercised its all too-baneful, ignorant and warping influence. Spain and Portugal had led the way ; and England, which ever went one better than her rivals when once she entered the arena of competition, sprang into the running with all the ardent verve of youth, with the grip of that

northern blood which happily flowed in her veins, and against a royal hesitation that might have been fatal. For in this matter Queen Bess was only a fearing, narrow-minded woman. Greatness, expansion, enthusiasm were in the air, and men of thought and feeling were perforce smitten by the fire of the moment. Others before them had dreamt of those far-away lands and seas ; now came a wider recurrence of the same ideas in the national mind. Given a mountain top in the perspective of our vision, then it is easy enough to imagine higher peaks beyond. It was but a breaking-away from the shackles of that rigid formalism which had been riveted, and was still to remain so in a less extent for some time, on Catholic Europe by the priests of the one dominant church.

Daring spirits, giants of action and conquest, were all the time going forth into the practically unknown and returning with wondrous, almost hair-raising tales of the marvellous things which they had seen and done. More to the point, they came back with spoils to prove their tales, as the Phœnicians did with their merchandise from countries of the whereabouts of which they would not speak. So why should not the English seamen be believed by those who would fain believe them ? Hence it was that the greatness did what an ordered Nature had said it must do—it burst in on the minds of our poets and dramatists, making them see such a phase of the sea's romance as was not seen by even the chief actors in that tremendous, oceanic drama which was being played with almost half the world as wondering

spectators. It flung the imagination of the thinker and the gifted verse-maker as far away as even now lies our world-wide battle line. It made our poets Empire-builders hundreds of years before that term, as such, had entered the minds of modern men, and all this is clearly seen in the imaginative literature of the latter half of the sixteenth century.

The very "ships" in which the men of those times sailed proved every man of them, fore and aft, either a hero such as the Greeks would have magnified into a demi-god, or a creature in the direst possible necessity of something which the dry land could not give him. That they, in part, went in search of new markets and trade-routes lessens neither their heroism nor the romance of it; on the contrary, it adds another phase, therefore another value, to the romanticism of their nautical doings, for it brings in the direct romance of trade. And I, who so detest trade and all that comes of it nowadays as to have cried many a time, young though I am comparatively :

*Oh, blow me where the spite of trade
Comes not !—unholy and afraid :*

I value it the more for the romance that came by the way of trade. Even in leaving their own ever-sunny seas and coming to our southern shores in winter-time, which they did occasionally, those trading mariners of Tyre and Carthage proved their daring to the hilt; for the facing of Nature's elements in a rage and in latitudes that are far colder than are those to which one is regularly accustomed, requires

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a finer courage than is needed to stand up to the anger of one's own kind. Yet what was the daring of those Mediterranean sailors compared to the overseas bravery of their northern post-types? In the earlier case the seamen were but little more than coasters, born to the life, and having well-built craft which were the outcome of long experience in that trade. (Worse still, in my sight, they were traders first and all the time. The romance of their voyaging was only an adjunct, an outcome of their Jew-like tendency.) In the latter instance it was a matter of crossing great, uncharted, almost untravelled oceans, and in vessels every one of which in build, rig, and suitability was more a case of instinctive than intelligent experiment.

Think of it—across the Atlantic in a thing of fifty tons, no bigger than a present-day coasting smack and not so well rigged; and that, too, over waters which were practically unknown! This is what John Davis did in 1585, when he sailed away to the discovery of the great strait on the west coast of Greenland and gave it his name. Curiously, in a way, this was just a year after the birth of Baffin, in London, who, in an equally small craft, sounded and charted the Hudson Strait and what we now know as Baffin's Bay, an open piece of water that is more than twice the size of the North Sea. Yet more wonderful still, accompanying him was a vessel of not much more than thirty tons—into the Arctic Circle and back safely in what were little more than boats! Truly, greatness has in certain ways led us well into the realm of littleness. No temporal thing is ever gained but at the

loss of something. And no great object is achieved without the sufferance and diminution of that which is as good in its own way, or maybe better. This is one of the exacting laws of Nature, so it seems to me. She has but a given amount of each commodity in her stock, and if we take a large share of one we must pay her back an equal proportion of some other. Do what we will or what we may, as individuals or as nations, there is ever an ebb and flow in that tide of equalization which moves for all time beneath the ocean-surface of life as surely as matter is indestructible; and as these heaving waters are as fresh and young to-day as they were at the dawn of time, and as romantic to the youthful mind as they were to Raleigh, Drake, and Hawkins in their boyhood.

Davis's voyage to the coast of Greenland was but one of a type. From many ports in north-western and western Europe men were then constantly going forth to distant and unexplored seas in craft, at the size of which we of these leviathan-marked days almost hold our breath. Five years prior to Davis's venture to the westward, two men, Charles Jackman and Arthur Pet, left our east coast in a couple of craft, the larger of which was only forty tons and the smaller one twenty tons. In those diminutive vessels they rounded the North Cape and penetrated well into the Arctic Ocean, although they had to contend against both foul weather and ice! Such a voyage in such "barques" nowadays would bring civilization's wonderment and plaudits about the voyagers' ears, and would give them such a newspaper-fame that the average novelist or dramatist would turn green with

envy at the sight.* Yet Iceland, Greenland, the islands and seas east of Baffin's Land, the terrible shores of the Labrador and the more repellent ones of Spitzbergen did not compass the voyages of these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century dare-devils of the ocean. As is shown in the nautical records which Purchas and Hakluyt providentially gathered together, thereby rendering the nation their subsequent debtors, even the whole of South America was as much circumnavigated as a tongue of land can be, and that, too, in craft ranging from sixty to ninety tons !

What romance ; what daring of the known and the unknown ; what unrecorded, unbelievable if they had been recorded, privations, escapes, and instances of faith and courage ! What stupendous examples of human endurance, nobility, rapine, bloodshed and even worse were caused by that dream of a shorter and straighter cut to far Cathay ! And in all these features of that unprecedented, never since equalled, rush over the seas, romance was the most prominent trait. Whether we look at the matter broadly, studying that follow-my-leader, better-my-leader

* I have to admit that since this was written, Joshua Slocum, a New Englander of Nova Scotian stock, circumnavigated the world, and some to spare, single-handed, in a sloop of little more than twelve tons gross register. What is more, he was no daring crank, but a man who had been in command of clipper-ships. He found the *Spray*, a worn-out fishing boat, and spent thirteen months in re-building her. During the voyage, from April 1895 to July 1898, he changed her rig from sloop to yawl. In 1909 he sailed away again in the *Spray*, bound on a similar voyage ; but has never been heard of since then.

A later adventurer of the same sort was M. Raymond Raillier du Baty, a French sailor, who, with two other men and three boys, took the *J. B. Charcot*, a 48-ton ketch, from Boulogne to Melbourne, 15,000 miles.

spirit of the age, or examine in detail the doings of an individual captain, we see a continuance of such a romantic heroism that the question arises: Has the land, with all its peoples and its multitudinous opportunities, the sea's equal to show in the magnitude of heroic deeds. No, my friend. We may look at the subject in the light of comparison in numbers, past or present time, or in the matter of outstanding isolated cases; yet the fact still remains (and I am writing this to you after much reading of deeds of military valour) that the ocean is beyond the land's reach as a field of past and future heroism.

Looking back again, especially at that latter half of the sixteenth century, at the first glance it seems curious that, with the exception of Frobisher, a Yorkshireman, nearly every prominent seaman of the time hailed from somewhere between Gloucestershire and Sussex. But there is nothing strange in the fact, when one looks beyond its surface. With regard to the county of Devon alone, one could not say with William Browne, a Tavistock verse-maker:

“Time never can produce men to o’ertake
The fames of Grenville, Davis, Gilbert, Drake,
Of worthy Hawkins, or of thousands more
That by their power made the Devonian shore
Mock the proud Tagus.”

But it is peculiarly the honour of the south-western counties of England that they furnished practically all the daring voyagers of that time. The cause of this fact was, in the first instance, mainly one of location; though, certainly, without the spirit to go forth, the love of enterprise and the disdain of hard

suffering, position would have been of no account. It seemed as if the inrush of western winds and the onset of Atlantic seas called them forth to the unknown infinities of the far-away. This was the potentiality of their geographical position. They were the first in the kingdom to receive tidings of the doings of the Portuguese and the Spaniards; and having the courage and the desire to discover, they readily obeyed that mystic call of distant seas. (Perhaps you will agree with me that to-day the Devonians are, much as they appear to have been in the past, a combative people. And the curious fact is that Yorkshire—a county whose inhabitants are everywhere said to be contentious—furnished the only other ocean-explorer of those times.)

It was back to those western and southern harbours that they came with their stories of the wonderful, thus setting their fellow-countymen agog with the news of marvels, making them also eager to see for themselves, to share in the honour and the spoils of adventure. Here, again, was another phase of the romance of the whole thing—that the people of the north and the eastern ports did not rise to the enthusiasm of the time. Equally as good seamen, equally as full of enterprise and just as keen to have and to hold, those further away inhabitants of England allowed their south-western contemporaries to net all the glory and the material wealth of that striking rush to the far-west. Prior to the coming of the railway and the telegraph, it was always the people of a seaboard who first received tidings from abroad, and

were therefore the first to be influenced by new ideas. Thus it was with the Devonians and their neighbours,

*When 't was up ! and 't was over the smoking seas,
With the reefs shook out and the sheets hauled home,
When the enemy's flag dared flaunt the breeze
That flecked their loyal coasts with foam !
For they knew that the England they loved so well
Would stand or fall by the tale they would tell.*

Yet of the ocean's romance there is one phase that is gone for ever, except as a literary asset to the present-day romancist who knows how to use it, and even he must be a fine, practical tactician under canvas in order to use it properly. But in a hundred years hence it will probably be lost to the romancist also ; because by then sails will be so far passed out of use as to render them unintelligible to all except the antiquary. This was the romance of engagements in the olden time, when a trick in seamanship gave a vessel an advantage over her opponent. The detailing of such tricks, whether as the outcome solely of superior personal skill in the handling of a vessel, or as a combination of that acquirement and of shifts of wind, would not be merely out of place here ; its interesting technicality and its delightful *finesse* would be lost on you, my friend. That would need a sailor's mind to grasp its values. Besides, you want the now, the how *we* live in peace and turmoil. Still, you gave me a free course to follow, and you must come with me. So for your better understanding of what I mean by this particular touch of romance at sea, I may retell you one historical instance. This

was Rodney's defeat of the Comte de Grasse, on April 12, 1782. It was on that exasperating piece of water known as Saints' Passage where the engagement took place. The Passage has a stretch of about fifty by twenty-one miles, broken by the Saints islets, and lying between Dominica on the south and Guadeloupe on the north. There the east trade is the dominant wind. But instead of being the steady breeze there that it is on the open sea it becomes an irregular series of light winds, stronger puffs at times, cats'-paws and calms. This is caused by the mountains of Dominica breaking the trade wind. There one ship may be bounding along with sheets and braces free; while another, often within a few miles, is heading to the same point of the compass, braced sharp-up, her sheets flattened aft, and she hardly feeling enough wind to blow out a candle.

It was this uncertain condition of things, backed by clever seamanship, that largely helped to give the victory to Rodney; who had thirty-five sail of the line at his heels, against the thirty-three of de Grasse, whose ships were bigger, and better sailers, than the English were, in addition to having that natural accompaniment to these advantages—guns of heavier calibre. From Fort Royal in Martinique, Rodney—fresh from recruiting his health and defending himself against scurrilous attacks in Parliament—had chased de Grasse, whose purpose was to end that war by landing men in Jamaica and taking possession of the island.

In the flush of the tropic dawn of April 9, the two fleets were face-to-face in that belt of calms and

cats'-paws under the north coast of Dominica. Rodney, in the *Formidable*, with ninety-eight guns, had, as the leader of his van, Sir Samuel Hood ; who received an Irish peerage for his share of bringing about the victory ; while a namesake of the great Drake had command of the rearward division. As the sun peeped above the horizon eastward of the Saints, an unsteady southerly breeze blew off Dominica. It was now that de Grasse sent the lumbering merchantmen, which he was convoying, away to Guadeloupe in charge of two ships of the line, thus reducing his fleet to thirty-one. Then out of Prince Rupert's Bay he stretched east to weather the Saints, knowing that Rodney would not follow the merchant craft. Hood, with his nine vessels, was then so close to the heels of de Grasse that the latter might have tacked, got the weather-berth of them, and battered away at them to his heart's content ; for Rodney and Drake were out of reach, in a calm. This dangerous position of the English van had been brought about by the uncertainty of the wind, against which Hood had not calculated accurately enough. But the inflexible laws of French naval warfare forbade de Grasse taking the advantage offered him by this quip of fortune. French tactics said that the great object in view should not be risked to gain a part of the issue. For this reason de Grasse merely stretched across the head of Hood's division, raking it ship by ship as his fleet sailed past—and, to a certain extent, being raked in return. Then Rodney got a little wind and crept up between the fighters and the land, hoping to cut off some of the Frenchmen.

Seeing this, de Grasse hauled off to the east again. He had the wind, and he slipped away.

All the next two days both fleets lay becalmed, now and then almost within gunshot, repairing the damage done in the missing of that fine opportunity—two mastiffs at enmity and chained so that they could barely reach each other. During the following day, the 11th., this phase of romance at sea leapt into strong prominence. A piece of smart seamanship on Rodney's part, combined with a windy trick of fortune against the French admiral, brought the latter back from a hard day's tacking in the broiling sun and baffling light breezes to an almost lee position, giving a somewhat weather-gauge to the English fleet. Worse still, de Grasse was left on that touch-and-go area of cats'-paws, where he would probably be on the following morning. Rodney, reckoning on this being the case and to take advantage of it, at once stood away to the southward, then tacked to the north again and held on till he gained his desired position. True enough, at daybreak next morning Sir Charles Douglas, who was Rodney's captain, slipped below, into the admiral's cabin, and awoke him with the words—"God has given you your enemy on the lee-bow."

In a few minutes Rodney was on deck, saw what had happened, and by a feint to overhaul one of de Grasse's ships he drew the Frenchman further away to leeward. Then he suddenly re-formed his fleet into line of battle ahead, making the rear the van and the former van the rear. He was standing north, on the starboard tack ; while de Grasse stood south-east, on

the port tack. Both admirals saw that the hour of battle had come, on the edge of that breeze area, brought about by touches of romance. The Saints lay in the way of de Grasse's escape, unless he put up his helm and ran for Guadeloupe, with the English at his heels and near enough to do him grievous harm. To avoid having the rear of his fleet cut off by the advancing enemy, and to make an effort to get the weather-hand, he tacked. Whilst his fleet lost ground in stays, down swept Rodney. Seeing his error, de Grasse tacked again. By this time Rodney was close under his lee. Then the guns belched out their shot. It was ship to ship along the whole line, as the two fleets slowly passed each other, until the dirty powder of that day had hidden them both in clouds of smoke.

Here it was that the final turning-point came by accident. Owing to a change in the wind, apparently unobserved by the leaders,* but providentially followed by the helmsmen, apparently—to a sailor—because they were steering by the sails and not by the compass, two breaks were made in the French line; and through one of them swept the *Formidable*, whilst the *Bedford*, under Commodore Affleck, took the other, thus completely breaking the enemy's line, and giving to the English guns a crushing victory in which romance had played so large a part.

Of romance on the world's great waters there are other phases—some of them being obvious to all,

* It was said that Sir Charles Douglas persuaded Rodney to alter his course and break the French line; but whether he did so or not no one knows.

Others are patent only to the prober like yourself ; and some of them are of so abstract a nature that they have to be diligently sought out here before they are found even by the thinker. To go back again to those days when Drake, in other words, said to his men—

*By the eyes of our God and the oath of our God,
And the mouths of the guns we serve,
We will lay on these Spaniards' backs a rod
That will lessen their haughtiest nerve ;*

you may include in the first category those picturesque, though often unpardonably bloody, highwaymen of the deep ; the Turpins, Kings, Shepherds, Duvals and Barringtons who said to all and sundry whom they met on the high seas, professional fighters and their own kind alone excepted : “ Your treasure and the best of your merchandise or your lives,” then usually sailed in and took all three. That they were a roughly artistic set of ruffians and scoundrels I will not attempt to deny. That there was pathos amongst them we may rest assured, since nothing human may escape it ; and that there was often romance of a high order in their doings we know full well, because, apart from the ballads of the times, we have sufficiently authentic records to prove that such was the case. We do not need the romantic justice meted out by Southey to “ Sir Ralph the Rover,” by wrecking him on the Inchcape Rock after he had cut away the warning bell to “ vex the Abbot of Aberbrothok,” in order to show us that romance did form a part of their wandering, marauding lives. Nor are such

pieces as "The Last Buccaneers" of Macaulay and Kingsley needed for this purpose. Yet the ballads, in the main, were written around actual facts, such as "Teach, the Rover," "As we were A-sailing," "The Famous Sea-fight between Captain Ward and the *Rainbow*," "The Salcombe Seaman's Flaunt to the proud Pirate," and others. Besides, the romantic doings of Dampier and many another sea captain mentioned by Purchas were neither more nor less than the acts of pirates, the re-telling of which would be the making of books, not of letters.

As to the romance of smuggling as it was carried on in the days of "preventivemen"; of arctic and antarctic exploration; of vessels that sailed away never to return; of others that were "missing" but sailed home again; these points in the ocean's attraction for men and boys are known to all, and therefore need no re-telling to you. Whilst the romance of American clipper ships—how they were driving the slower British craft off the seas, and how the English builders turned out vessels which eventually beat the Yankee clippers—and many even less known romantic matters of the seas and men's connexion therewith, all help to prove, in detail and in the aggregate, that the ocean cannot be surpassed by the land as a field of wonderful and fascinating romance.

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We have left astern of us that place where you can stand a broom-stick upright at noon and be unable to find its shadow—*i.e.* we are over the world's "corporation-belt." And as our master is fond of old sea-

customs and anything generally that makes for the smooth working of our circumscription, Neptune came aboard. This meant more dog-watches of preparation ; but, on the whole, we left it to the principals—Sails, Spunyarn, Old Tom Benton, B. B. and Parsons. As they were to have the “honour” and the fun, we let them do the work.

You may think, from what I have already told you of Sails, that he played the leading rôle ; but, no, he didn't. The part of Neptune was too dignified, too inactive, and too little productive of boisterous merriment for our pushful Bristolian. He must needs be the barber, out of which he could get something like his fill of satisfaction ; and B.B. and Parsons were barber's mates.

Spunyarn expected to be Neptune ; but we elected Old Tom to that dignity, and Spunyarn took it easily. (He is not really a bad sort, and not half the resentful man that one might argue from his long, sharp, gingery face, and sparse, fiery beard and moustache. The faults are that he is not a good seaman, has no distinctive character and is soon argued into silence). We offered him the part of Neptune's wife. He instanced his hairy face as an obstacle, and suggested that Dobey, I, or one of the apprentices—the only “clean-faced” fellows aboard—should “be the old woman” ; but we prevailed by the way of a mask made of stiff brown paper and painted. Chips and Cummings made this marvel of art, and to have seen it would have done you good service on a day of gloom.

It is not my purpose to write at length of the

merry occasion. You are so very likely to have read descriptions of other crossings of the "line"; and they are all the same—that is, the three that have come my way have been just what I had read of in the years before it fell to my turn to be asked where I hailed from, then "shaved" mightily with a wooden "razor" two or three feet long on the "blade," and finally thrown into a sail that was slung up by its corners and full of water. But I wasn't foolish enough to open my mouth to any one of the barber's pertinent questions. And it was the same with our few victims, the greenhorn-apprentice and Sniffles alone excepted.

In my two previous experiences of the old custom this inability to get the awful lather*-brush into the mouth of the novice caused him an exceedingly rough shave and much tumbling in the sail. But it was not so with our barber on this occasion. With all his vigour, pride in his proportions, pushful ideas, contentions that the best of sailors always come from Bristol, etc., Sails is a great lover of fair-play and, at bottom, a humane man to boot. By which signs and tokens you will not wonder at his popularity. He is, in fact, a "loud" facsimile of Chips, and both of them are held in high esteem by The Old Man, who, in turn, is now as much respected by most of us.

The ceremony took place just abaft the pumps, so that our Dutch master could stand by the fore-rail of his poop and see all the fun, the second mate with him. He had given us the afternoon-watch off duty; and as it was the mate's watch-below that officer was

* A mixture of Stockholm tar, grease and soap.

not in evidence. We should have been mortally surprised if he had been there.

As to the origin of the custom, a question that you will be inclined to ask, I know—here I am gravelled completely for an answer. To ask the oldest “shell-back” afloat would be vain; not one could say. Being myself an inquirer into most things I have put the question, long before this, always with an empty result. And it has never occurred to me, when ashore, to hunt in books for the origin. You, however, have a library at hand; so when next you write please enlighten my ignorance.

EPISTLE XIII

Shark-steaks : Dividing spoil : The Portuguese's desire :
Women aboard : Origin of the superstition : Shivers again :
In the Sargasso Sea : An ocean tiger : Captain David's strange
idea : " Will he bite ? " : Painful intensity : Hooked ! : Excite-
ment : Landed : Horror ! : The Old Man's mad idea : Baulked :
" Weather-fore-brace ! " : Set free : Table Bay and a postscript.

WE have caught a shark—one of the white variety, sixteen feet long, and his tail is now nailed to our jibboom-end, as a warning to all his pork-gobbling species. But, as it was just an ordinary incident of its kind, I am not bent to tell you the tale thereof. In place of it I will recount you a shark story that was told to me by Shivers—one that is far more interesting than mine could be, both because of its incidents and the manner in which it was told. I had the most of it from him one calm, dark night, as our rusty old vagrant of the seas was jerking out her eight to nine knots per hour on the way from Alexandria to Marseilles.

But first I must tell you a few items that sprang from the catching of this white sixteen-footer. As neither of the officers claimed the backbone—in a way the brush of the hunt—and both Chips and Sails wanted it, these two agreed to play at euchre to ascertain who should be the possessor. (Chips is the winner ; but Sails is never a bad loser.) Spun-yarn cut some steaks from near the shark's tail and

asked the "doctor" to fry them for him. On this the most of us cried shame. Eating shark that might have recently eaten a human being or a corpse was too disgusting—at first—even though the steaks came from the furthest possible part away from the stomach. But when they were cooked, two or three of the younger men, Longshanks and I, accepted a proffered taste. On the part of the apprentice and myself it was the taste of honest curiosity, and it went no further—unlike our fellow-inquirers, we wanted no more. Briefly, the flesh is similar in appearance to that of a dog-fish, and the flavour is much the same as a cat-fish, but coarser. Under hard circumstances, and apart from associations—I mean the dietetic habit of the beast—it would be welcome enough. You may know, by-the-bye, that the coast Hindus eat ground-shark regularly; but then, those fish don't eat man.

To return to our catch: The skin was taken off and divided for the making of tobacco-pouches and scrubbers for our fo'c's'le-tables. It is so rough and tough that it makes excellent scrubbing-brushes, wrapped around a piece of wood, as a carpenter uses sandpaper. The mate stood near when this began, and by the light in his steely-grey eyes he was half-minded to take the skin for deck-scrubbers; in fact we feared he would, as he, no doubt, has done many a time in smaller craft. Then arose a dispute that was quickly cut short by our energetic Sails. Of course, the flaying and sharing was done before Chips and Sails set to at cutting out the backbone. (We caught the beast near the end of the first dog-watch; so, soon as he was dragged foreside the waist—he came

over abaft the main-rigging—we were all allowed to get our knives to work, for which reason he must have died before his legendary time-limit—*i.e.*, sailormen will have it that a shark won't, or can't, die till sunset, not even if he be caught at sunrise and cut to pieces there and then.

Whilst the dissecting was going on, and most of us were sharing out the skin, Carlos, the Portuguese, hacked off the shark's head and began to cut away the flesh. Mumbles and the Finn, divining his purpose, cried out on him. He, however, paid no heed to them, which brought louder expostulations from them, along with the attentions of others, particularly that of his mortal antagonist, Sing-Song. What he wanted was the skull-bone, to take to some Ratcliff Highway boarding house, no doubt ; it has a crude resemblance to the half of a woman's body. The mate had now gone aft ; so some of our fellows said they would hit him on the head if he persisted in his design—they were the superstitious ones, and they feared that the retention of the bone would bring bad luck to the ship. Anyhow, the talk aroused Sails from his work near the shark's tail. He listened a moment, then strode for'ard to the contending group, shouldered his way into their midst, shoved Carlos aside brusquely, picked up the head—which needed all his strength—hove it over the side, and returned to his dissecting, saying casually : “ We want no Portugee dodges here. This is a British ship, an' don't you forget it, sonny.”

It was all a matter of the feminine ; and in a curious, semi-occult way worse because of so dreaded

and detested a creature as a shark having a suggestion of woman in the formation of its skull-bone. This may prompt you to ask : Why does Jack so dislike to have a woman aboard his packet ? By " Jack " I mean the southern-going " shellback," not the steam-boat man. And remember that our Jack is not the only one whose equanimity is more or less squall-affected by the presence of a woman aboard. The sailors of every white nation under the sun are about the same, with the usual exceptions, of course. In fact, I have reasons for thinking that the Turks and most, if not all, the peoples on the southern coasts of the Mediterranean are prone to the same un-gallant point of view. Why ? At first sight it is utterly illogical. Because, as all the world admits, when Jack is ashore, away from the atmosphere of tar and running-gear, there is not, where females are concerned, a more gallant creature on the whole of God's earth. No class of men is so chivalrous to women, so easily swayed for good or bad by them, so blind to their shortcomings, or so ready to take their part as sailors are.

Jack's hatred of seeing a woman aboard ship is, at its base, solely a piece of superstition. He knows this, yet his faith in it is that of a blind believer. And whence comes it ? What was the origin of an idea that makes a sailor, one of the most elementary of men generally, a direct contradiction of himself ? Merely this : It is a relic, perhaps I ought to say a derelict, of classic times. It might have been, and probably was, in existence before those ancient Greeks who, because of the fabulously sweet-voiced syrens being of feminine

persuasion, saw in every woman at sea a prognostication of evil and ill-fortune. Whether or not the earlier Egyptians, or some other Eastern race, had an equivalent of the Grecian mermaid, I have no knowledge ; you can answer this better than I. But it is only natural to suppose that a previous people originated the idea of feminine wreckers, and thus started the superstition that tells so heavily, even to-day, against women at sea. The ground for this supposition is the fact that the ancient Greeks borrowed so much of their civilization and ideas from other nations, altering them and making them Grecian from sheer individuality.

As to the notion being so prevalent with us, and general amongst the sea-going races of northern Europe : How easy it was for those Phœnician traders, who came for the Cornish tin of their far-off days, to bring with them a thing so tenacious to life as a piece of superstition ! Again, how nimble such an idea would be in spreading from scaboard to seaboard ! Why, one could almost imagine it travelling solely on the wind, without craft or tongue. Besides, note how very superstitious were all the pagan peoples of the upper part of Europe. Their very mythologies were founded, and carried on, on superstition. How, then, could the popular mind keep out a piece of it, especially when that piece appertained to *woman* and to so mysterious and awe-inspiring a region as the high seas, whose rolling tops seemed to come out of the very sky-line afar ? We might even think that Brute, who traditionally peopled our isles with civilized beings, when he and his handful of fellow-

exiles sailed away from burning Tyre, brought this ungallant idea to British shores.

However, here the notion is, and there is a lot of vitality in it still. Many a time have I heard a "shellback" say to another of his kind, on learning that The Old Man was about to take his wife or daughter on the voyage, "M'm, goin' to have a 'long-haired chum,' are we. There'll be plenty o' bad luck this trip, you see if there isn't!" Sometimes the gentle stranger would be aboard, and the vessel five or six days out, ere her presence became known to the hands for'ard, because of her being sea-sick and keeping to the cabin and her own berth, if she happened to be his daughter. In such cases it occasionally chanced that the men's first intimation of her presence came when she sent the steward to hang some article of apparel in the wind to dry, or to air. Then, in the neighbourhood of the fo'c's'le-door there would be such remarks as :

"Well, s'welp me never, if there isn't a petticoat aboard! Now for hard blows!"

"'Ere, boy, go on to the fo'c's'le-head an' see if there isn't a breeze comin'."

"No," another would say, "go an' ask Chips if the old packet hasn't sprung a leak."

"We'll be lucky if we gets out o' this (the voyage) all right, I'll bet a dollar"; or, "If I'd knowed she was comin', the mate wouldn't a-got me here this trip, you take my word for it."

On the other hand, the idea of a woman's presence being an omen of ill-luck during a voyage seldom gets to the front aboard even the most indifferent of small

“tramp” steamers, whose men are barely a hand-spike’s length ahead of the real sailorman in general superstition, yet who are a hundred times less tinged with some of the old-time sea notions. This is a fact that can be attributed only to their constantly being near the land, in harbour more frequently than the “shellback,” and under the dominating, modernizing influence of steam. And for this reason one is disposed to ask: Will steam eventually kill this age-old superstition? In all likelihood it will. But not till our traditions of sailing-ships and their men have become as the myths of ancient Greece.

But I have promised you the shark story that was narrated to me by “Old Man Mystery.” . . . I see, in a letter from you to me at Bristol, that I have also pledged myself to give you many further details about Shivers; but no—not now, at all events. Candidly yet kindly, I don’t quite cozen to your “modern” attitude towards my “queer friend”; it lacks a sort of reverence, respect, or—well, you will know what I mean. It savours rather too much of the unbelieving stay-at-home, whose imagination, intuition, and a proper faith in others go no further than his own knife-edge-like experiences. This, I know, is not really your attitude towards Shivers, any more than you are such a person—you, who are the opposite of all this. But you *are* amused with him—why, I cannot tell. To me, he and all that appertains thereto are the other pole from any source of amusement. I suppose it is just your up-to-date, personal, man-of-the-world point of view—that is all.

Besides, an impressionist sort of colour-summary

of a Constable picture would be unpardonable—wouldn't it? Just so; and to give you a bit (I cannot spare time for more at present) of "Old Man Mystery" (I don't dislike this term of yours—when used without irony) would be to spoil the whole; although you do favour impressionist work—when it is far better done than I can accomplish. Besides, you—despite all that stock of other charity which you have—would possibly doubt my bare outlines; whilst the complete picture, to which I should have to give time and much care, would but make you wonder and ask for more; it would savour so of lost treasure and castaways, of bloody deeds on lone seas, of murder-marked derelicts, of distant waters' weird far-offs—unholy things that happen even nowadays, yet seldom reach the ears of steam-driven, machine-made, materialism-governed modernity. No, my dear, encouraging friend, another time; for the present the story's the thing. Piece of fate's flotsam as he was, I have him stowed away in the pages of my "Journal" and the locker of my memory; and there he must lie till a more opportune moment comes to bring him forth in his entirety.

As I have written, we were throbbing north, in the Mediterranean, on a still dark night. It was my look-out in the first watch, on the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head. Shivers, it appeared, could not sleep, so he came up to me, probably leaving his Bible open on the tiny table under the bulkhead-lamp in his berth. I leaned on the capstan, so as to keep a wary eye ahead. He sat on the deck, a little further for'ard, his back against the windlass, legs drawn up and pipe going.

Presently we were talking of crippled "wind-jammers" drifting into unfrequented parts of these great seas, and I asked him if any voyage of his had taken him into the Sargasso Sea. His reply was :

" Yes, and the way we escaped from it was uncanny, if one looks at it other than as a coincidence. It was due, or appeared to be due, to a shark."

His rather flat, even-toned voice ceased. My mind was all attention, for I felt that I was to hear a story which would make my look-out pass like a twinkling. Footfalls sounded on the ladder from the main-deck. I feared an interrupter ; but the newcomer was our elderly " doctor," whose presence Shivers did not mind. He sprawled, smoking and silent, by the starboard-end of the windlass, and Shivers at once resumed :

" Many a tiger of the great seas have I seen caught in the broiling heat of these Tropics, huge and ferocious devil-fish that would have chewed up in a few minutes any one of us that stood around them on the slimy, brine-splashed, blistering decks. But far and away before all the others this one stands out in my memory as deserving of the name of ' tiger.'

" And in what a fitting scene he came to us ! A calm, perfect as ever dropped out of the heavens, hung upon us—hung upon us and about us like an oppressive shadow of death. We were homeward-bound to Falmouth for orders, with wheat from Portland, Oregon, and had drifted into the Sargasso Sea.

" All around, league after league to the horizon, stretched that glass-like water and the weed. And a hundred and twenty-five days out we were. Should

we ever reach home ? That was the question which every man asked himself, had in his eyes, and was too spiritless to put to his shipmates.

“ Off the Horn a gale had met us, and had driven the old barque away down into the South Pacific, until the white bergs had become too numerous to talk about. And we had lost the bo’sun, smashed the jolly-boat and half the starboard-bulwarks. Up we had come again—to be again driven back ; then once more to toil up slowly, even as that ancient promoter * of navigation—of whom you have told me—toiled behind his stone.

“ How the days of this numbing spell had told on us ! And the face of the water was slimy for the lack of a breeze to stir its oppressing smoothness. Limp and motionless as handkerchiefs in a laundry’s drying-room hung the sails from the jackstays. Even the yards had ceased to creak, worn out by sheer monotony.

“ Twelve times had the sun come up like a great round ball of fire, and gone down the same, since we drifted into the weed. A dozen days of blinding, pitiless heat had come and gone. We had reached the thirteenth—not a superstitious number at sea, as you know. A dozen nights had the moon looked down at us, like some celestial sphinx smiling at our utter helplessness. Would the coming day take us out of the clogging weed, or bring us a cloud ? That was the silent prayer of men who had not prayed since their childhood. For two days the Italian steward had been a prisoner in his berth. An A.B. was in

* Sisyphus.

the galley, and the cook was doing the steward's work.

“ Now there were murmurs of The Old Man being affected in his mind. Otherwise an ominous and stifling kind of silence filled the barque from stem to sternpost. Provisions we had in fair plenty ; but age was telling on them, and they would become unpleasantly short before we got out of that weed, unless better fortune came to us. Worst of all, the scale allowance of water had been reduced to two quarts a day.

“ Four-bells in the afternoon-watch was struck. Along the deck there ran the subdued exclamation : ‘ The shark-hook, the shark-hook ! ’

“ We were lying like a painted ship in a small clearance of the deadly weed. Captain David was on the poop, where he had been walking fore and aft for hours, muttering aloud, as a man does when his senses are gone—muttering about the weed, the weed, the calm and the long passage and the shortage of water ; but always coming back to the weed, the weed, and saying that ships had got into it and never out again. Now he leaned over the port-rail, pointing with his left hand to the black, dorsal fin astern and to port withal, and crying in a kind of whisper :

“ ‘ Catch him ! Catch him ! Or we'll never get out ! Don't you see him ! Are you blind, all of you ? Do you want to be here for ever ? Catch him, men ! Catch him ! ’

“ And so he ran on, all the time in that strained, hoarse way, making out that only by catching the shark should we ever escape from the weed, and all

the time commanding silence and swearing that we should frighten the shark away. Though heaven knows we were as quiet as men could be, in spite of our terrible eagerness to secure the brute. I believe at the moment there was not a man among us that did not attach some strange significance to the catching of the shark—whether it was that we caught the feeling from The Old Man, or because of the awful strain under which we were living, I cannot say; but the same idea seemed to me to be in us all. I slipped along to the galley-door and whispered to the cook:

“ ‘A piece of pork, “doctor!” A piece of pork!’ ”

“He gave me the piece he was putting into soak for next day’s dinner. I hurried aft with it, as the mate came on deck with the great hook * in his hand. Suppressed excitement kept every movement and tongue quiet, except The Old Man’s. If he had not been mad before, he was then—mad with a passion of eagerness and muddled whispers about our lives depending on our catching that horrible tiger of the seas.

“One end of a line was made fast to the chain, the other to a belaying-pin in the rail, and the four pounds of pork slid gently over the side just forward of the poop. As slow as thought in the brain of a waking man, it drifted astern, sinking gently withal, furtively and closely watched by six pairs of eyes from the poop. Meanwhile that little, lithe jackal of salt waters, the pilot-fish, darted excitedly about the

* For the certainty of its holding a ship’s shark-hook is sprunged, and so that it shall not be bitten off it is attached to a fathom or so of chain.

thing, then darted back to the monster further astern, came up to the pork and returned again. The Old Man looked our way a moment, and I saw that his haunting gaze was lit up with a new light. Not a whisper broke the stillness fore and aft.

“The sinking sun threw the shadows of the spars and sails to port and abaft, and blistered the tar and paint on our planks and bulwarks. Astern and to port, some four or five fathoms, stretched the hull’s shadow. Into this, lazily as a big, hulking apprentice to a tar-pot, came the twenty-seven-foot beast. Slowly, steadily, round and round, not altering his speed a jot, he circled upwards. Nearer, silently nearer he approached. Already he was half-turned over, his left eye never off the dangling bait, and his under-side gleaming like a long streak of white linen in the paling blue about him ; while around his head, ever a little above him, came his ‘food-finder.’

“Knives, previously unsheathed for the testing of their edges, were instinctively returned, in readiness for the tussle. This was the dire moment of breathless speculation : Would he bite, or just smell and sheer off, leaving us again to our sinking hearts, our monotony, and the weed that held us like a slimy death-pall ? How we watched him feverishly ! How we craned the tops of our heads over the rail, staring at the beast’s quiet movements, as men might from the edge of a grave back at the life they dreaded, with the horror of hell, to leave ! We dared not show more than down to our eyes, lest he saw us, understood the terrific depth of our anxiety, and swam away, to lie astern and mock us in our extremity.

How we crept about, fearing, for the same reason, to make any sound.

“The Old Man stood in the fore-port-corner of the poop, half-doubled in the intensity of his feelings, and now whispering so low that we could only see his lips move, as he turned his face rapidly from the mate to the shark and back, making motions like spasms to the mate as to the handling of the line, consequent to what the shark was doing. The mate—a youngish, matter-of-fact man, who alone seemed to be keeping his head calmly—was in charge of the line, at a pin in the rail, down on the main-deck. Only he and The Old Man still had their boots on. Every one else of us had shuffled off his foot-gear, except sennet-and-canvas slippers, and was scorching his bare feet on the hot deck and half-melted pitch, for fear of disturbing the brute over the side there. In our palpitating eagerness we even forgot the sanctity of the poop; for most of us stole up the ladder and aft just far enough to get a glance over the rail, at where the pork gleamed white a fathom or so deep and about the same from the snout of the thing we hated and dreaded with the hate and dread of primitive men.”

Here Shivers paused, and I heard the “doctor” murmur in the darkness :

“Go on.”

Half-a-minute’s silence, then the story was continued thus :

“How it was that we were so seized and quickened by the inner spirit of the affair, as you will see presently, I cannot tell; unless we caught it first from The Old Man, then grasped some of its mysterious

significance in a more direct way. At any-rate, there we were—every pair of eyes in the barque, except the sick steward's, was strained at the shark ; though not the whole of a single head, barring The Old Man's, could have been seen by any one over the side. Our hearts were thumping, as we asked ourselves all the time : Would he bite ?

“One more circle he made. A quick movement followed. He was on his back nearly. Those terrible jaws opened, and the tiny hunter swam aside, watching his master. At The Old Man's frantic, silent signal the mate gathered in the slack of his line, as slow as lawyers are said to go to heaven ; but he took care to keep a turn on the pin. The shark turned over again, and swam round the bait, his nose not two feet from it. And our hearts went down, and the weed seemed to close in, and the gloom grew once more, as we looked at his great, black length, swinging about the white pork, as if his head was actually pivoted there. A sudden dart—he was over again ; and through every man, I am sure, ran a shudder at thought of being in the place of the bait, for it was out of sight in that semi-circular cavern of teeth. The line began to tighten. We jumped at it, without waiting for an order. A dozen violent hands at once gave it a jerk to insert the hook, and had it torn away in the next breath.

“There was a wild lashing of water astern. Aboard all was riot, hurry and exclamations. Our enemy was hooked, so there was no longer any need of silence. There had not been half such a hullabaloo aboard the barque since we left Oregon, not even when we lost

the bo'sun off the Horn, and thought we were all going. The delirious steward in his bunk just underneath us heard the tumult and yelled back in his native tongue. For the first time in a week the cockerel in his coop abaft the pumps gave a lusty crow. The pig squealed from his sty by the foremast; and the ordinary seaman, who had dragged his injured foot to the rail forward, shouted: 'Hurrah!'

"If we had known that the hook had a good hold, we could have left the shark to lash away his strength alongside for some hours. But there was no stopping to think of this. We were as mad as Captain David was to see the thing aboard. Oppression was gone. The weed, the calm, the length of days, the shortage of water, our prison-like state—everything of the sort was forgotten in that hurly-burly of capture. So the line was shortened in and belayed, though it was time and time again torn from our grasp, and we tumbled over each other in our anxiety to help, heedless of orders and scorching feet. The end of the line was cast loose, passed forward, outside all standing- and running-gear, and made fast amidships. Like a monkey filled with vengeance and human intelligence an A.B. sprang aloft and out to the port-quarter of the main-yard, with the upper block of a light tackle; for we had nothing else at once handy and strong enough to lift that tiger of the seas then lashing the water madly alongside.

"Sport, with a devilish leavening, filled the heart of every mother's son present, as the line was again seized to haul the ring at the end of the chain high

enough to be hooked to the lower block. Eric, the Swede, got his left hand between the line and the rail, and the skin and flesh were sheared off by the weight and the kicking of the shark. With his left hand he drew his knife, leaned over the side, and threw the weapon with such precision and force that it stuck two inches deep in the back of the brute's head. In another minute the tackle was hooked on. Every hand manned the fall—even the bleeding one, heedless of its pain, was there. The crippled O.S., too, was there, helping to pull back from the cleat on which a turn was kept for safety.

“‘Up with him!’ cried The Old Man. He danced unconsciously by the poop rail, and you could see that his face was full of fierce glee. ‘Up with him!’ he shouted. And up the thing came, its head and the quivering knife level with the rail, and its cruel, glittering little eyes on us. Another pull, and he gave a leap that caused a surge of the fall, as he again tightened out the tackle, and even then threatened to tear the hook from his jaw. This gave new strength to our arms and determination to our maddened wills. The mate put a running-bowline round him, to keep him steady to the side. We were gorged, maddened with the lust of possessing the terrible enemy, which we feared perhaps more than we hated. Looking back at the moment, as I have done scores of times, I don't think the mysteriousness of the occasion had the least hold on our minds just then. The mate cried: ‘Haul away!’ We resumed our ‘Aye-ayes,’ and up the shark came again—up—up—up—till his tail swung in-board. ‘Stand clear!’ yelled The Old

Man and the mate together, in different degrees of franticness.

“There were fear-winged leaps aside. The fall was thrown from its cleat, bringing the monster to the deck with a thud that shook the barque through and through. Then we sprang at him, our natural, our fiendish foe. But that lashing tail at one end, and those gaping jaws at the other drove us back pell-mell. He was a real, white,* man-eating shark that had probably come from the coast of Florida or out of the Mexican Gulf. In the interval Eric had rushed to the galley and got another knife, because his was broken as the shark’s head struck the deck. This was a long, sharp, narrow-bladed thing, with which he made a wild slash at the stomach of the plunging fish. The knife went deep, through flesh and intestines; and, as if shot forth by a physical effort, a half-bare human skull and some large bones followed the knife and lay on the deck. Horror held us spell-bound.

“Every eye was riveted like a magnet on the sickening spectacle. Amongst us there was not one who had not, at some time or other, witnessed moral and physical repulsiveness—ay, almost as foul as can be conceived. But this!—it had been beyond our

* I do not know whether or not Shivers was right in this. Some naturalists, and deep-water sailors generally, will have it that the man-eater is a “white” shark (*Carcharias Vulgaris*), which rarely exceeds twenty feet in length. But most naturalists hold that the true man-eater is the *Carcharodon rondaletii*, a darker-skinned fish—yet not a blue shark—that has been known to reach a length of thirty-six feet, and is found in all temperate and tropical waters, which can hardly be said of the “white” variety. However, when I questioned Shivers he would have it that the twenty-seven-footer was of the latter kind.

thoughts, and its unexpectedness doubled its force. The blistering heat, dazzling as it struck upwards from the deck, was forgotten. The oppressing spell of the weed and the calm, of the possibility of our becoming a derelict in that ocean-waste, was gone with the suddenly evaporated madness of capture and vengeance. We seemed not to know of each other's presence. Formerly a comfortable, homely crowd, with a long pay-day before us; then an irritable, grumbling, suspicious and fault-finding lot, we now stood there, anyhow—an unclean, half-clad, ragged and nondescript gang of fourteen souls transfixed by that damnable basilisk on the deck. Prompted by a common impulse we turned away—heaving, to a man.

“That movement broke the spell. To his galley leaped the cook; he was back in an instant, and dropped a huge chunk of soft firewood into the sea-devil's mouth. The frightful triple rows of teeth closed on it, and were fastened. Within five minutes he lay in a hundred pieces. Now we were a band of mad creatures hacking and slashing for the very lust of it. For a plenitude of blood we had slime, and the lack of danger made us the more senseless in our mince-meat butchery. There was not an idle knife for the moment, nor a frenzied hand without one. Some worked and cursed, while others slashed in a more fiendish silence.

“But The Old Man was amongst us soon enough to save the head. How he got it away aft I don't know; for he was only a slight man, with a bit of a limp in his left leg, and the shark had come aboard fore-side the waist. I suppose he must have got the end of a line

fastened to it somehow and dragged it along the deck. Anyhow, when I looked up by-and-bye, there he was, just abaft and to starboard of the booby-hatch, cutting out the skull-bone. I did not know then what he was after, but something seemed to compel me to watch him. Then I understood, and drew the mate's attention to what The Old Man was doing. So we went quietly together * and stood by, a little behind, to make sure; for we knew that if he was bent on what we suspected, our ill-luck, oppression and melancholy would soon be turned into something not far short of mutiny. The men were about at the end of their patience. Presently he stood upright—only to straighten his back, apparently, and to take that look around which every natural sailor does, as you know, every now and then when he is engaged at something on the deck at such a time. It was the work of Providence, I think, that took us aft to The Old Man and placed us there, where we could see that disturbing light in his eyes, as he turned half-about to look ahead.

“He muttered something about one of us continuing his work, and moved aft. I caught the word ‘revolver,’ as he made for the poop-ladder. A minute later he was out of sight in the cabin—gone for a weapon to guard that which he knew, in his heart and in spite of his tottering mental condition, the

* In all his talk with me and in his stories, except “The Worship of the Dead Hand,” Shivers never said what he was aboard any vessel—a habit of his that was in direct contrariness to the average seaman's. But here, from internal evidence, a sailor would say that Shivers was second mate. I thought so, as he recited the story; yet I did not ask him, because I had never put such a question to him.

average sailorman will not allow to be kept aboard quietly. The mate looked at me and asked if I did not think it time to confine The Old Man to his berth, and take charge of the barque. I said I thought the better thing to do was to heave the shark's head overboard there and then, and await further events. Our chief officer was for the more drastic measure, rather because of this opportunity to shut Captain David in his berth than out of a desire to take his place. For this reason he hesitated. I feared The Old Man's return with a loaded revolver, and so the loss of our chance to balk him in this means of causing further trouble aboard. Thus I urged my alternative. And suddenly the mate stooped to the head, saying: 'Lend a hand.' I did so, and the gashed thing went over the starboard-side in a moment.

"We turned back to port, without a word; but I know that we were both full of the question as to what we should say to The Old Man about the shark's head. Suddenly, amidships, the mate sprang across to the port-rail and was quiet for a moment. I was looking down at the spot where Captain David had hacked some flesh from the bone, and was wondering if I could throw it also over the side and swab the deck just there before he came back, then try to make him believe that he had not dragged the head there. But into the midst of my thoughts came the mate's cry:

" 'Weather-fore-brace!'

"You can imagine the thrill we felt. In an instant I was at his side, and every man was standing upright, gazing away to port. Yes, there it was. Above the

horizon, three or four points abaft the beam, a cloud that meant salvation to us ; and on the water, a couple of cables' length off, a ripple was coming towards us. More still to our satisfaction, as we quickly discovered, dead-ahead there was a sort of lane through the weed—the awful weed that had held us thirteen days in its slimy thrall.

“ Like released prisoners with spirits yet high we rushed over that bloody and slippery deck. The mate eased away the starboard-braces, while with excessive merriment, expressed by snatches of the gayest chanteys known, we checked-in the yards. To his post the helmsman had run. That light, cool wind struck pleasantly on our streaming faces and naked breasts and arms, and the barque gathered steering-way. The mate sent me on to the fore-castle-head to act as pilot along the lane of open water. But the breeze was with us in a few minutes, driving the barque along so that my services were unneeded. I returned aft, to learn that The Old Man had fallen in a stupor on the cabin floor. The ‘ doctor ’ had found him there, called the mate in, and they were bringing him on to the poop. Presently he revived, looked around him in a dazed way ; and we stood about him, all in silence, till by-and-bye the light of sweet sanity came slowly into his eyes again.

“ Then the ghastly relics were carefully gathered up, secured in a piece of canvas, weighted with old iron, and silently lowered over the side and allowed to sink, whilst the mate read the order of service for burial at sea. Man and boy alike, we were touched into a silence that was much akin to tears. At that moment

every one of us had his eyes opened to the unfathomable pathos and mystery of the sea. The barque surged on, spurning the weed from her bows, for the lane had closed in. A row of bubbles, with here and there a speck of foam, was slipping past at the water-line. We turned from the rail and flung the lately quivering pieces of flesh after the buried skull and bones. The monster's tail was nailed to our jibboom-end, decks were washed, darkness came upon us, the watch below went to its bunks, and that night we slept in peace."

* * * * *

Here we are in Table Bay—all sails stowed, the decks cleared up and two anchors down. We came in this afternoon, before a light wind, in glorious sunshine; a sixty-eight days' passage—not so bad, allowing for the set-backs we had after leaving the Channel. Now it is evening. Aboard here all is peace, and pleasant thoughts of by-and-bye footing it once more on the solid land—in the city yonder, that looks so fair on the sloping shore of the bay, with the green "Rump" of The Lion sheltering it from the Indian Ocean, a miniature sea of burnished silver ("silver-leaf" trees) rippling on the inner spur of the "Rump," and across the gorge-like valley the great, brown, frowning "Table." Yes, it is all very fair, to the eyes of ocean wanderers especially. We have not come in here covered with spindrift, hounded in by gales and great seas. We have made our port-of-call under ideal circumstances. Yet for the time being the pull of our Mother the Sea has fallen into abeyance, and in its place the pull of your Mother Earth (the

feminine sea's male twin, to my way of thinking) has all the drawing power of a sympathetic woman's eyes.

I am up here—as far for'ard as I can get on the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-head—"screiving" you my postscript with the stump of a copying-ink pencil, that my epistles may go ashore in the morning, in time for to-morrow's mail. And with all this 'longshore beauty so near, with its influence already settled on the whole ship's company (for I don't believe that even the mate is left out in this), and with the dangers, fights, humours, possibilities of the passage behind us, I could hold forth on this and that of here and yonder. But, no. The short twilight is looming up here east of The Lion. I am one of the first anchor-watch and shall soon be on duty. So I hasten to say that since we caught the shark nothing of particular account has taken place. Of course, we have had the usual disputes, temporary frictions, another "concert," and been within an ace of further trouble between the two blacks and Antonio. Yet here we are, with all things well superficially. For myself, I have been mightily busy with my model-temple, which is nearly finished. When it is done, I shall return to my books and scribbling, and you shall have more epistles after we reach Calcutta—till when and thereafter may your wishes be fulfilled, and you remain the encouraging friend of your ever indebted

J. E. P.

EPISTLE XIV

Merchant-Jack in harbour : Some expeditions : New hands for old : Antonio killed : Who was the murderer ? : Benton's promotion : In the "roaring forties" : Grandeur and movement : A bad time : Friction in high places : All hands uneasy : An ugly moment : A sea to the rescue : The mate and a mauling : Conflicting evidence.

CAPE TOWN: *Sept. 7, 1889.*

It was six weeks yesterday since I posted you the batch of epistles that ended in our arrival here, and to-morrow we set sail for Calcutta. I had intended to send you a diary-record of our stay here, as a further postscript ; but one thing after another came in the way. So that I shall now carry this summary on to India and let you have it from there, along with what I may write between now and then.

And what has happened to us here ? What have we done generally during these weeks under the shadow of Table Mountain ?—in the longed-for shelter of that poor victim of ill-fortune and an unholy oath, Van Derdeken. Well, a few things of note and many of no account. You have some knowledge of the unprofitable ways in which the average merchant-service Jack spends his time in harbour at home ; therefore I may save both you and me a recital of these. The chief reason is that we are in an English-speaking port, where general intercourse, social customs and the like are common

to us as our own daily habits, and whereby we have the same freedom of action as if we were in a home-port. At another time, from another place, I will let you into the mysteries of a Red Ensign crew in a foreign harbour.

To get done, first of all, with the unimportant: A party of us have had a delightful, non-sensational trip up the mountain. We have wasted our amateur-climbing efforts in trying to scale the Devil's Peak, a sky-towering point just east of The Table, but really a part of the mountain. Being sailors, accustomed to initiative in suddenly-tight corners, knowing the use of lines and how to haul on them, and being also strong in limb and head—full of the bulldog perseverance of our ignorance and lack of years—we thought that mere landsmen having failed to ascend the peak was indication enough that we should show them the way. How many falls come ignominiously on the heels of pride!

Our bladder of conceit being pricked and flattened out, we kept quiet for a week, then had a most joyous time (Saturday-evening to five o'clock on Monday-morning) camping in a deep ravine between The Lion's Head and Table Mountain. Oskar had his fiddle there, and a young shore-friend had an English concertina (you know the differences that mark it from the paltry German thing). And you should have seen us marching back, along that deep Kluf Road, with its tropical vegetation on both sides and a mountain on each hand, carrying our camping-gear, the concertina and Cummings's brass whistle going, whilst we others sang chanteys and songs of

the road. Oh, it's good to be young—when there's health in mind and body. You see, we had to be aboard and turn-to at six o'clock. These jaunts of ours were regular week-end affairs, and consisted of five to eight of us—Oskar, Cummings, Dobej, one to three apprentices, your humble correspondent, and a couple of young clerks—in the ship's agents' office—whose acquaintance we made when we first came into the dock, and who have acted as pilots on our various expeditions.

As to our evenings during the week : These have gone as usual—a stroll through the main streets, an hour in a sing-song place, more or less successful efforts at flirting with girls while promenading the shore of the bay at the foot of Adderley Street, or a lounging walk through the splendid Botanical Gardens—whence I have stolen a piece of bark from the so-called “paper-tree.” This bark is made up of almost tissue-like layers ; the outer one is brownish, but the inner ones are a buff colour and easily separable. They come off in a twinkling—in fact they break and seem to work off on their own account, which gives the trunk of the tree a ragged appearance. Thin as these layers are, they will take ink, if you are light and quick with the pen. I have also bought an ostrich's egg, with Table Mountain painted on it, and have paid half-a-crown for a painting of the *Bucephalus* on a silver-leaf, as most of us “youngsters” have done, A.B.'s and apprentices alike—and excellent fine work it is, too, the space considered.

One more personal item and I turn to the larger matters : On the second day of our lying at anchor

outside we began the work of sending royals and t'gal'n-yards down and housing t'gal'n-masts, in expectation of a spell out there ; and, certainly to my surprise, the mate made me a sort of captain of the fore-top—that is, I was responsible for sending down the yards properly. Spunyarn had charge of the main, and the second mate of the mizzen. And, although he suspiciously left me to the work and stayed away till it was done, happily I came through all right ; so none of us know whether the selection was intended as a compliment, or as a by-way—if I had bungled—to reduce my rating, as his enemies here declare he meant, and I should believe if there had been any friction between him and me. But I doubt if any merchant-service master could do so in the face of my R.N.R. certificate. (He had already caused Lately, Yank and the Portuguese to be reduced to O.S., which means a pound a month off each man's pay and the mortification of having to do the humbler parts of our daily work. Of course this would be impossible if we had what we ought to have—a law compelling every ship to carry a fixed number of A.B.'s for, say, each fifty tons of her register. But, oh, “ye gentlemen, who live at home at ease, how little do ye think upon the dangers of the seas !”—and still less of the many hardships and injustices whereof our lives afloat are made.)

Now to the things of more import. For some days before we made the Cape and during the first week of our stay here we had fogs and rain, in which Lately's cough increased so much that it became constantly uncomfortable to be near him. He was

such a sight about the deck and so exasperating to the mate that The Old Man sent him to a doctor: Results—Lately went into the hospital, was pronounced, after a fortnight there, as being unseaworthy; so, at the master's offer and Lately's desire, he was paid-off. Now he is at large again, lounging about the dock here pretty frequently, stopping alongside sometimes, his thin, tall, bent figure and dark face vividly outlined against the blue sky. Nevertheless he commiserates with us on our "passage to Calcutta in the old 'hooker'" (this is his sense of sarcasm) and with "that so-so mate." And, as you may be sure, this makes some of our fellows wish that they could stay behind, as he is doing. Mind, I don't say that he has deceived the doctors. I would rather believe them to have felt pity for him (which a Consul's doctor never does) to the extent of enlarging the matter in his favour. Because he has a genuine cough; yet many another man has had to make a round voyage with a far worse one, in spite of appeals to authority both aboard and ashore. Another missing member—yet one who is not "missed"—is Sniffles. He bolted one evening, after the mate had boxed his ears for impertinence; and even The Old Man had grown so tired of him that nothing has been said to the police.

Antonio is gone, so is Bristol Bill. The latter just smuggled his clothes ashore in parcels, then managed to get his empty chest away, left his money behind and has not been heard of since he disappeared. He must have gone straight up country. He went so quietly that neither of his cronies—Parsons and Old

Tom Benton—knew anything about his going. In fact, Parsons swore “be the ’undred thousand devils of Fiddler’s Green ” that he had never seen a “ jump ” (desertion) done so smart in all his “ born days.”

But Antonio’s going was different. A week ago last Saturday-night he went ashore with five shillings “ liberty ”* money in his pocket, as did all hands for’ard. That he did not return on the Sunday was of small account ; and as he was still missing on the Monday-night, our easy-going Old Man seems to have put him down merely as an absentee, and probably decided to give him a lecture on his return next day, or perhaps log him two days for the one. Tuesday came, yet the Greek did not. On Wednesday the police were put on to find him, and they did, two days later, dead amongst some rocks a little way along the road that skirts The Rump, just outside the dock here. His skull had been knocked in with a single blow—how or by whom no one appears to know, except the man or men who did it.

Of course inquiries have been made, and all the quarrels aboard here brought to light, also a couple ashore. But, then, how could such affairs incriminate any one in particular, when Antonio had more or less violent differences of opinion with nearly every one of us during the passage-out ? At one time or another he had fingered his knife threateningly to one-half of the for’ard crowd, myself included. Amongst ourselves privately we quite expected what

* This is the name given to money “ advanced ”—but earned over and over again—by “ wind-jammer ”-masters in foreign harbours, because in the old days it was customary to grant a “ liberty ” day and money to spend in each port on the outward passages.

has happened, or something in the nature of it ; and the main question with us is : Who did it ? I am neither my brother's keeper nor his judge, nor am I attempting to convict any man in telling you that our suspicions are almost entirely fixed on two certain men. Oskar, Cummings, and I have gathered this from general hints amongst our shipmates. And if I am not mistaken the two men know that we believe them to be guilty. Either their manner has changed, or we think it has. They certainly appear to hold more aloof from us and keep more together than they used to, although they have always been pretty much each other's shadow. Still we say nothing—except cryptically, in twos and threes, and very little of that. We only think, and thinking convicts no man, however guilty he may be. The main thing is that at present there is no scrap of proof as to who killed the Greek, and it seems as if we shall sail before any light is thrown on the crime.

Another change is the departure of Spunyarn. He and the mate got at loggerheads openly ; so he asked outright if he did not give satisfaction. The answer was an emphatic “ No, damn you, you don't ! ” “ Then pay me off, an' let me go,” said Spunyarn. And, rather to our surprise, the mate persuaded The Old Man to comply with this request. Now Old Tom Benton is bo'sun, in virtue whereof he got me to add two more foolscap-pages to his long, long letter ; and when I asked why he had not posted it on our arrival he replied : “ Oh, I takes 'em home. They amuses the old gel w'en I'm out o' nights ; but if I sent 'em home—w'y, she'd hev nuthin' to

read, an' her'd want me to stay in an' tell her w'ere I'd bin all the voyage." And it is really a fact, so far as I can tell at present *—O. T. B. does scrawl long letters on each voyage, or get them scrawled for him, one for each port he calls at and something over, then takes them home. Parsons swears to this, with his usual string of forceful words; and they sailed together on their last voyage before this.

On second thoughts, because of what I have written here, I will post this at once. These blacks are artful fellows; they see a little and guess much, and I have told you the unwritten law about not locking one's chest. You shall hear from me again in Calcutta, till when and thereafter the best of luck to you.

Yours sincerely,

J. E. P.

* * * * *

Cape Town is far astern—how far only the log-book, the officers, and The Old Man could tell you. We are "running the easting down," racing along the 40th parallel of southern latitude at an average of sixteen knots an hour under little more than half the *Bucephalus's* usual canvas, nothing lighter than a reefed main-t'gal'n-sail—except a couple of head-sails and a staysail or two, of course, just to give the ship her proper trim. This is Cunningham's "wet sheet and a flowing sea" as you don't get it fixedly anywhere else in the world. For, so far as I know, to the contrary, you can come here at any time of the year and find these same conditions. This is, indeed, the exhilaration of "life on the ocean

* This was quite true. Benton did take his letters home.

wave." This is *the* occasion at sea when your landsman's blood would leap along its veins, thrilling as at the sight of a great cavalry charge, less the cavalry's blood and carnage—that is, if your landsman had sea-legs and no qualms either in his head, heart or middle. For really to enjoy it you must understand it and be healthy. A great charge, did I say? My friend, you have nothing to compare with this—*nothing*. Your national horse-race, a big yacht-race, a conqueror's chariot-race of old Rome would be small affairs by the side of this.

Imagine: Some two thousand three hundred odd tons of excellent English—or Scots—shipbuilding; with the exceptions of her main- and poop-deck, hatches and interior fittings in cabin and similar places, steel from keel to main-masthead (even her main-, fore-, crojik- and lower topsail-yards are steel); showing the wall-side and the dry deck that come of being only half-loaded—"flying light," as the sailor says—running with the great, white-topped seas; easy enough to steer; leaning but moderately to leeward; tall and graceful and fair like even to Wordsworth's "daughter of the gods"; noble to look at; great in her doing; set in a patch of brilliant moonlight, with masses of white and grey-fringed clouds rolling here and there across the welkin—imagine this, and there you have us. Thus I ask: Do you think that all your dull, cold earth can produce anything so grand and exhilarating? If it can, I pray you tell me what it is when next you write.

But I would not deceive you by giving you the best of the whole. I must complete the totality,

which I do by adding that I say nothing in favour of the occasional squalls of rain, sleet, and even snow, generally accompanied by a sufficient increase in the wind to put another two or three knots per hour on to the ship's speed—times when an anxious look-out has to be kept ahead, when a sail is apt to burst, and does so occasionally, and when it is touch-and-go with a topmast or some important piece of standing-gear. Happily these are usually of short duration, or there would be far too much shortening-sail and making-sail.

Add to these things the officer of the watch pacing fore and aft on the weather-side of the poop; the helmsman; the time-keeping apprentice by the mizzen-mast (he watches the clock in the after-part of the skylight and strikes the small poop-bell); the look-out for'ard, and all the other members of the watch gathered, yarning in semi-whispers, under the poop-deck that juts out over the entrances to the cabin, the half-deck and the sail-locker, every mother's son of 'em, high and low, in oil-skins and sea-boots, ready for anything that happens—add these items, and you have the whole night-time scene of “running the easting down” in a clipper ship. But the movement, the joy in being alive, the energy, the grandeur, the blending of Nature's primitive beauty and savagery—in a word the exhilaration of heart and mind, the leaping thrill of one's sense of all that is splendid in so-called “inanimate” scene and action—ah, my friend, no imagination, nor intuition to boot, can give you this! To know it adequately you must come here and feel it—feel it all.

I have just come off watch—midnight—and having jotted down these things for you, while they are all fresh around me, here goes for my bunk and some "shut-eye." In the dog-watch to-morrow I will, peradventure, tell you somewhat further of the new members of our crew, and of certain things that have come up in my mind in consequence of some contemplation of the grandeur of our surroundings.

* * * * *

Alas for "the best-laid plans o' mice and men"! That dog-watch was spent by all hands in replacing the main-t'gal'n-sail, most of which had gone away in the hurricane-squall that made tatters of it in a minute. And from then on, till we turned up north into the Indian Ocean proper and this better weather, it was rip and tear, hurry-scurry, a seizing * here, a lashing † there, and all hands yonder. Worse still, the loss of the t'gal'n-sail made The Old Man rather anxious, the result being that there was much racing aloft to make-fast or loosen sails. During some days we had the very old Harry of bad luck upon us. But it was the master's nervousness that led to bigger things. The t'gal'n-sail was blown away in the mate's watch; the accident could just as easily have happened in ours, or even with a slap-up angel-sailor in charge of the watch. Yet what must The Old Man do but keep bobbing up and down from the cabin to the poop and back during the mate's watch on deck that night and thereafter whilst the weather

* A piece of thick twine, called "marline," holding two parts of a line together.

† A piece of line that secures a spare spar, boat, or other movable thing, in its place.

lasted, and always, of course, with some question or remark that showed he was rather distrustful of how the mate was handling the ship. Yet very few of our fellows thought of blaming him for the trouble that was put on us.

Now this one-time "Bluenoser" of ours is an able man, a thorough sailor—as good, I have no doubt, as you would find from Archangel to Sydney or Constant' to 'Frisco. (At the moment, mind you, I say nothing of him as a man—though worse there be, and many of 'em, who sail under the Red Ensign and count themselves Englishmen.) Besides, he is quite as old as the master; and I would go so far as to say that he has been as long at sea—longer, most likely. As a seaman I admire him heartily—so does Oskar, and some of the other men, but the latter's admiration is a grudging one—as I admire every man who is a thorough master of work so intricate as the navigation and management of a ship. It was just his ill-luck to be on duty when the sail burst. In plain truth, the squall that went through it, with a report like a 20-pounder, was on us and thrusting the ship over to leeward before you could say Jack Robinson. Our common opinion is that if the sail had not gone, something more serious would have happened.

However, from what I have already told you of our chief officer you will know that he is hardly the man who would take quietly to any master's meddling supervision, and least of all to the sort of half-interference of one on whom he looks as a weakling—or, if he doesn't, I'll be humbled if I can see the meaning

of certain portents of eyes, gestures and mouth. But for his keen sense of discipline, I quite think that he would openly show the contempt he feels. At the same time, I don't believe The Old Man meant it as interference nearly so much as a sort of suggested advice, which was put rather deprecatingly because of the mate's testiness. But there it was—friction was soon rife between them, till it was easy to see that they were at daggers-drawn, as you stood at the wheel, and they, hard by on the poop, argued the point on this or that piece of seamanship then about to be done. So during those days of stress and toil the general feeling aboard was that of a shell—if such a thing could feel—with the fuse burning. The mate was harsh on his men and snappy to the second mate; and the latter, in turn, became “touchy” in his dealings with us. Spunyarn (O.T.B., that is) got a “wiggling” several times a day. The apprentices scurried here and there, were more than usually energetic and dutiful, lingered less in the half-deck and were more on the spot generally. In the beginning it was only a misapprehension, so we believe; but mark the results.

Now when you bear in mind that The Old Man is popular and that the mate is commonly detested and feared largely, you will see at once where our community of sympathy and opinion lay—not with the mate, you may be sure. Add to this that, without mutiny, or even getting themselves logged in a fair way, men can show their dislike to an officer—yes, and make it felt—add this, and you will guess at what sixes and sevens we all were by the time the

awkwardness was two days old. Every tongue was dead against the mate, or nearly so. It was his lack of tact with his own watch in particular and all of us in general that got him the whole of the blame for the miserable condition in which we were working. Even to Oskar and me he appeared to be off his balance a little, especially in the irritating tasks he gave us at the change of watches, watch after watch—work that could have been done quite comfortably by the relieving watch, and all too often work that should have been done by his watch before we relieved them, but which had been held over because of his perversity.

He seemed to know that we blamed him for this condition of things; certainly he resented it, if an increased severity be any proof of the supposition. More than once I saw his greyish eyes flash and his hands clench, when the crowd was purposely behaving in a wooden manner, and he was splashing about on the main-deck, drenched the same as we were. And once, when I was at the wheel in a first dog-watch, and they were all shortening sail in a hurry, how he foamed by the fore-rail of the poop! What names he flung at them! And how he wished openly that he had them in a "Bluenoser"! Meanwhile The Old Man moved about the compass, watching it, the weather, the work in hand, and calling to the mate not to "plame tder men," they were "not a batd lot," more could "always pe got out of a crowd py coaxing t'an py tdriving," etc. All of which made the mate worse; for presently he went down the poop-ladder like his former country's "streak of

greased lightning," his rubber boots hitting the main-deck with a splashing thud that reached me. A moment later I saw him rush into a big group of men, mostly his own watch, by the lee-main-rigging (where a lot of the running-gear comes down), and send them right and left—not exactly with blows squarely dealt, but with such elbow- and shoulder-work as amounted clearly to an attack that was scarcely less brutal than blows would have been.

At this The Old Man hurried his half-limping gait to the fore-part of the poop and shouted a remonstrance to the mate ; by which he, unintentionally, of course, made matters worse, because his action gave strength and colour to the men's resentment. During a flying two or three minutes I thought surely there would be something very ugly down there. In fact, it went so far that some of the more daring spirits were plainly on the point of making a rush at the mate, especially two new hands whom we shipped at Cape Town. Seeing this, the mate snatched an iron belaying-pin from the rail, just abaft the rigging ; and would, I believe, have gone at them there and then—for no man can call him a "hang-back"—but The Old Man yelled in his severest tone, and with an additional emphasis on each successive word of the command.

"Mister Soames, put tdown tdat tder pin ! Will you opey, sir ? Men, get tder vork tdone !"

There was a moment's pause. Apparently both sides were asking themselves whether or not they should obey. Blood was up ; so reason was weak. My interest in the affair was such that I let the ship

swing about three points off her course, to the wind. Of this I was unaware till my attention was jerked back to duty by a fairly big sea flopping over the weather-rail, between the break of the poop and the main-rigging. As we were still running, but now with the wind on our port-quarter, the movement of the sea was for'ard withal; so that, roaring and smothering past the pumps, it had the mate and the men more or less off their feet in a twinkling, all mixed up, and grabbing wherever they could for hand-holds. Their intense preoccupation and the sudden swerve of the ship had prevented them from feeling that the sea was coming.

Half-around turned The Old Man to glance at me and the direction of the wind. Of course, I was heaving up the helm for all my worth, and in low tones urging Bowman—who was acting as lee-helmsman—to lend a hand. Dragging his gaze from the hurly-burly on the main-deck, and seeing at once what our general situation was, he began to pretend to help. The deceitful, young whelp of Success, how I wanted to knock him away from the wheel! The Old Man gave me a quizzical look. At the moment I believe he thought I had purposely brought the sea aboard. He called out, but with very little severity in his tone :

“ Mintd your helem, tder ! ”

Then he turned at once towards the trouble in the waist. In a minute or so most of the sea had gone through the lee-portholes. Work was resumed and to all appearances the rumpus was over. Whilst the shortening of sail, etc., went on, The Old Man came

aft again, lingered about the compass, stood by the weather-rail, and crossed and recrossed the poop between the compass and me. All the time he was watching the work being done, the weather, the ship's movements, and my steering, but most of all he watched my face. Nor could I fail to notice this ; it was flagrant. Yet however much he thrust it on me, I had, naturally, to ignore it, and keep my eyes in a continual round of compass, seas and sails. His face, meanwhile, was full of query ; and I know, as well as it is possible to know an unexpressed fact, that he could hardly keep from asking me point-blank if I had shipped that sea in order to stop the disturbance. In a smaller packet, with less discipline and more homeliness he would certainly have put the question—or, at least, I am certain that he would.

And, "thru for him," as Mumbles so often says, there were these points in favour of the supposition : By all hands, fore and aft, I am counted the best helmsman aboard. (This is merely an outcome of my North Sea experiences. An intelligent seaman, accustomed to handling small craft on the open sea, and having to rely on his own initiative in danger, is always valued in the "crowd" of a square-rigged vessel. So far I have always been called to the wheel whenever it was a case of "all hands shorten sail.") When The Old Man glanced aft at me there was a guilty look on my face, I know ; but it was the guilt of one who had failed in his duty by the sheer fact that he hadn't done it, not by purposely omitting it to do something else. I believe the master thinks of me as being a fairly reasonable

creature. The sea was what any skilful helmsman could have brought over the side almost where and when he pleased, if he ignored his course for the time being ; and it put an end to the trouble, as nine men out of every ten would have foretold. On the other hand, it was just what the unskilful would have done by blundering, and any average man would have reached exactly as I did. So my trick at the wheel ended, and I came for'ard here—to be greeted with queries as to whether or not I had “ been bobbin’ at the wheel ” (*i.e.* asleep) ? if I had “ forgotten how to steer ? ” or wanted “ to give somebody a duckin’ ? ” all of which were laughing or sarcastic, according to my questioner. But not one of them saw that inner, possible reason for the sea being shipped.

Then darkness came, and worse things happened. When the mate and his watch relieved us at midnight the course had to be altered some two or three points to the north. This meant a corresponding bracing up of the yards ; and, as the wind had lessened rather, a little more canvas was needed, so that the ship would be better able to get out of the way of the seas. The Old Man was working her out of the “ roaring forties,” and this partial bringing-to would put the rollers about a point abaft the beam—a ticklish place to have a lumpy sea running, even for a skilled and strong helmsman. I was glad, for my own sake, that my “ trick ” at the wheel was over for a couple of days,* and more pleased still,

* With twelve A.B.'s in a watch each one's turn at the wheel occurs once in every forty-eight hours, because each watch takes five full watches and two dog-watches in that time.

subsequently, that I was not the steersman on that occasion.

The work had just begun when The Old Man came on deck. He at once sent the mate down amongst us to superintend things—the usual course in such circumstances. But how wiser he would have been had he recollected the touch-and-go affair in the dog-watch and now remained in his cabin; or, as the only other alternative, have kept the mate on the poop with him. It shows how easily the best-intentioned of even fairly all-round intelligent men can slip into the making of a mistake.

Of course, the mate, seeing the sort of man he is at heart and remembering, in particular, the class of vessels in which he has sailed, was still raw underneath. The general opinion, for'ard here, is that he would carry animosity from casting off the moorings, outward-bound, to putting them out again on returning home. However, there was pretty soon some evidence that things were not going well amidships. (I was one of four or five of us who were setting the outer jib, under the second mate's supervision.) We could hear "the slave-driver's" shouts, every one being to some extent a curse. Then came the physical clash. The *Bucephalus* had that faint, queer tremor which nearly every vessel has when a big sea is about to board her. I heard the bo'sun yell the well-known warning: "Scaldings!" But it was partially drowned in a great crash of water on deck, as was the mate's "Damn your—" something.

The sea reached even to us, a foot deep, at the

fore-mast. And out of the crashing and banging it made against the steel bulwarks, deck-house, etc., every now and then we heard disjointed, half-smothered cries of different sorts, and quickly understood that something more than usual was wrong. But the jib was loose and half-hoisted. To have left it might have meant the loss of it. Succour or no succour, there was the unwritten shipboard law : " Obey orders, even if you break owners." This was obeying orders in the owners' interest ; so up went the jib. Then at the officer's request, one of the new hands and I hurried aft. The water was subsiding. The men, under Benton's directions, were getting their work done. By such vague light as came filtering from the moon through the clouds I saw nothing unusual, and went for'ard again to say so.

Truth to tell, the happening was all over ; it amounted to this : The sea had flung the mate and some of the men in amongst the pumps, the big five-rail around them and all the mess of running-gear that is made fast to the pins in that rail ; and whilst they were in the hurly-burly of the water, a man seized the mate by his throat, from behind, and knocked his face on some fixture or other—at least, he swears to this, also that he was kicked repeatedly by others of the men. From what we are told by Chips, Sails, and the bo'sun—who get their information from the " doctor " (he sleeps in their berth and is in daily touch with the cabin)—there are finger-marks on the mate's throat. But, then, who, short of a medico, could swear to such impressions on his

red-brown, leathery sort of skin ? Besides, how easy it was for him to get all his bruises when the sea threw him against the pumps ! The end or the bight of a rope might have got around his throat, and his imagination and knowledge of his deserts could have supplied all else. I don't say that he was not attacked. Likely enough—too likely, he speaks the truth. Yet one must look at all probabilities in a case of this nature. And I, hating all kinds of tyranny and foul play and knowing the absolute necessity of discipline aboard-ship, am not disposed to blame either side—any more than, if the attack was made, both sides are to blame, and pretty equally so, in my opinion. Certainly, many a bullying officer, with the courage to be amongst the men on such an occasion, has gone under for his temerity.

However, it seems that when we two went aft to ascertain what was the matter, the mate was then on the poop, swearing to The Old Man what had taken place, according to his idea. When the work was done two of the new hands—big, strong Americans, whom we know to be dead against the mate—Curly and Sam Jones, 'Taliao and the German were summoned to the cabin and charged with this species of mutiny. But they all swore hard and fast that they had done nothing of the sort ; that they were, in fact, swept down to the lee-bulwarks. They called others to witness the truth of this ; so that presently fourteen or fifteen of the men were in the cabin, all giving evidence against the charge. Till finally The Old Man came to the conclusion that either no attack had been made, or, if it had, the mate did not know

who the culprits were. And there the affair stands. What will be the end of it no one knows.

So far as we can see and hear a state of armed neutrality exists between the master and his chief officer. The latter is sullen in his manner towards us ; he has lost much of his energy, or is letting it lie dormant. The men whom he charged say little aloud, beyond a few dark hints as to what may happen to the mate some night ashore in Calcutta. But threats of this sort are the common rule where a bullying officer is concerned, and are as seldom kept. All the same, I have noticed that the Americans, in spite of their dislike of "colour," have had several long, quiet talks with the blacks in the semi-privacy of our concert "cave" ; also that 'Talia and Mannheim seem to have struck up a friendship with each other. But then, again, this can easily be an outcome of their being charged together. Sympathy in victimship must be as quick and active an agent as any criminal bond can be. A further point worthy of note and one on which our little circle has commented, is the fact that this affair has drawn Curly and Sam Jones out of a certain aloofness which they had practised since we left Cape Town. They have now returned to the general communion with us all that marked their conduct before the discovery of Antonio's body.

EPISTLE XV

An uncomfortable "crowd" : Personal items : Byron and the sea : The music of the ocean : Olympian peaks : Nature's organ-notes : Those Greeks again : The fallibility of criticism : Ears, attuned and unattuned : The sea at one with all moods.

HERE we are—across Capricorn and creeping up to the "line" again—yet with no change in anything worthy of mention. The same tense feeling remains fore and aft ; and we lovers of peace—but always at a fair price—(I mean us four chums, Sails, Chips, Old Tom Benton, the "doctor," Mumbles, Saunders, the Norseman, that gay son of Spain—Sing-Song—and most of the apprentices, with a few other possible ones, including the second mate) we are hoping hard that nothing worse will happen before we drop anchor in the muddy waters of the Hoogli. The weather is fairly fine, but equatorial now and then. The Old Man and the mate appear to us to speak to each other only when necessary, and from the cook we learn that the same holds good of their intercourse in the cabin. We also hear, through the same channel, that during the first and second day after the night-rumpus there were sharp arguments between The Old Man and the mate, as to the rights of the latter's case as he presents it. He, no doubt, looks on himself as the victim of insubordination and a weak master's refusal to give him the assistance due. On the other hand it is

pretty plain that The Old Man's hatred of trouble aboard, the element of doubt that he sees (but we don't now) in his chief officer's assertions, and his interest in getting the ship safely to harbour all combine to prevent him from putting some half-dozen men into irons. Personally I believe the two young Americans to have been the principal offenders, nor is my faith in this lessened because of the truth that they are generally "straight up and down" men and quite competent sailors.

You will note that the irony of the situation is increased by the fact that those who have been mostly instrumental in bringing the mate low are of the country whence he professes to hail and which he holds up as being, in its personnel, *the* country on earth—with certain possible doubts as to whether or not Heaven itself is better in some respects. It is also significant that their main abettors are the blacks, whom they would treat as pariah-dogs in that same heaven-fashioned country. Truly, life is full of surprises, afloat perhaps no less than ashore, despite the gentle Will's assertion that "life is as dreary as a twice-told tale, vexing the dull ear of drowsy man." But, mind you, I don't think the two Jonescs would have taken an active part against the mate if he had not treated them so peremptorily immediately we left Cape Town. He appears to have suspected them strongly of the death of Antonio, and is too emphatic a man to hide his thoughts on such a subject.

Returning to him and The Old Man, I can say, at any-rate, they never walk the poop together, talking of this or that, as they did on occasions during the

passage out to Cape Town. Although, mind you, it cannot be said that I ever noticed such "shipmatiness" between them as I have often seen aboard other packets; but not always—oh, no. In, I believe, the majority of cases there is some of the suspicion of rivalry between masters and chief officers, particularly where the latter have masters' certificates. They seem to fear too much the prying eyes of each other. Like your critickins of art, literature and music, they look only for faults, and are therefore blind to virtues.

However, by the foregone you will see that we have drifted unhappily into being anything but a comfortable "crowd." We had cliques and factions on the way out from home, as every big ship's company has. But now we are divided into smaller lots, with sharper lines of demarcation, dangerous suspicions of one another, and each party keenly on the alert for offence. If we reach Calcutta as we stand—and many as badly conditioned a crew have run safely into harbour—there will, I am sure, be some further changes in our personnel, probably aft as well as for'ard.

As to myself and familiars on this passage so far: We have done and are doing much the same as formerly. Cummings reads his "Yellow-backs"—which I abhor and he praises to my teeth. He and Dobeys carry on their harmless arguments; the former washes as many clothes as ever, and is now in proud possession of a bundle of clothes-ties similar to those of lovable, dirty-faced, mumbling, old Tim, whose smile and twinkling eye are about the sweetest

things aboard, the only bright ones, and likely to remain so. He made Dobe the clothes-ties in return for some washing. Oskar continues his study of English, with a fairly regular daily lesson from me and a running commentary from time to time, day and night. He also carries on his navigation and keeps his fiddle in tune and some of our nerves and spirits by the same means. (Saturday-evening concerts are ended.) And when we meet in second dog-watches we usually play four-handed euchre. (You may remember that Dobe and Cummings are in the port-watch, and Oskar and I in the starboard.)

Personally, I have been busy finishing the model-temple, and have also put in much time at writing—including another long addition to O. T. B.'s letter, written in his berth, chiefly on what I have already told you of the conditions here, and more emphatic on certain points than I care to be yet awhile. It was to the end of completing the temple (which The Old Man asked to see, having heard of it, and praised highly) and doing more pen-work, that I sold my books in Cape Town, instead of carrying them on to India as usual, and there selling them and buying others, or exchanging them for curios. Now, with the temple made and cased up and enough writing done for the present, I am left pretty near the middle of the Indian Ocean with my dog-eared "Æneid," a ragged dictionary; and a small copy of Shakespeare!—the latter a gift from a friend when I was last in Cardiff. Were ever a would-be-literary wanderer's needs so circumscribed as mine are? So rich, yet so poor withal. The whole language in a single volume! It was

bought by Oskar, within an hour of sailing, for the purpose of helping him and me to teach him English. But to me it is as masses of dry sticks to a hungry man ; and although promethean fire could be made of these same " dry sticks," I want such a fire-lighter here to do the work. As for the other—well, the human nature and the life-questions of it will not pale their effectual fires in one, two, nor in a dozen Indian Ocean passages. Yet verse, verse, verse, watch after watch, day after day is too much of the proverbial good thing—even when broken by an hour's teaching now and then, a study of derivations, definitions and the like, or an argument on seamanship. It reminds one of that poor fellow who was marooned, and left with only a huge case of jams between him and starvation. So I turn back to my pen and strive, with what success or lack of it no one can tell now, to re-write Shivers's longest story, just as he told it to me—manner, atmosphere and wording—as he sat in the galley-doorway of the *Water-lily* through all the early hours of a wet morning in Alexandria harbour.

Still, O blessed relief ! There are Oskar and his fiddle. Hence our dog-watches are often gracious things, reminding one of " howe swete is tyme in plesante companie." I cannot say whether or not this spelling is correct, but of all sweet times on earth, give me an hour with friends about a frugal board, with wit for the sauce, and reason for the seasoning ; and with Oskar, his violin, and his interest in art generally I have all except the board. I must tell you, by-the-bye, that this instrument is an Amati ; but, of course, no one else here is allowed to know so important a fact.

To the other men it is just a sweet, full-toned fiddle. Oskar's uncle gave it to him ; so he insured it for £500, then smuggled it away to sea. His love for it is such that he could not leave it behind.

But writing of it brings to my recollection what the undefinable music of the sea has been to some of our poets, Byron especially. In two of my pre-*Bucephalus* letters I pointed out to you some of the ways in which the ocean drew this bard of passion—and occasional mirth. Again and again we find him groping about for some adequate expression of the sea's heard and unheard music ; at least to me that seems to be the case. But he never found what he really sought, any more than did bards of finer feeling. Rebellious as he was against the hackneyed conventionality of man and a hybrid civilization, which has gone a mournfully long way from the real thing, he had a temperament that was just as much attuned to the ways of Nature as it was at war with the hypocrisy of man. Naturally, his drifting from one set him towards the other. All-in-all, he was, to me, an illustration of how the sea's complex versatility can play on a man's nature. Luminous individuality that Byron was in the first half of the past century, burdened with his intense love and sympathy for the ocean, possessed of an outstanding faculty in verse where the dominating features are passion, insight and melody, how could he do other than give seer-like peeps into this mystery which so baffles us lesser-gifted mortals ? Truly did he write, " For I was as it were a child of thee." Hence it was that he so poignantly felt the " music by the sad sea shore." Not that the

sea itself was sorrowful even in its temporary expression. The sadness was in his own breast ; it was his feeling at the moment, and imagination at once created a bond of sympathy between it and him. In all old ocean phases of expression it was the same with him ; in every one of them he heard its music, from its thundering organ-notes in a gale down the whole gamut to the “ Lydian airs ” of the calm. Not that he always, nor at any time quite thoroughly, grasped the real essentials of this Nature-music ; thus, with even a wider range of expression, he could not possibly have interpreted that which he but vaguely understood. Nor with this, I think, will you disagree. You have seen enough of our northern seas to be drawn into the glamour of old Ocean’s personality ; have heard enough of her notes, from the high to the undertones, to realize how impossible it is for the tongue of man to express them. I admit that Byron fails ; although he seems generally to have been aware that he was at those times under the influence of the music of the sea. In this matter he is no more than an instance, one who perhaps most fairly represents that vast multitude whereof he is a unit only, yet for whom he so felicitously put his and their case in those words :

. . . “ and feel
What I can ne’er express, yet cannot all conceal.”

Others could just as fittingly be chosen—lovers, every one, of these seas, whose music they heard and in part at least endeavoured to interpret. While beyond them and all the more or less prominent ones there have been a few who got down to the bed-rock of the

matter, such as that revelling soul in Nature's ways who gave us :

“ I was not born for lighted halls,
Or the gay revels' round ;
My music is where Ocean calls,
And echoing rocks resound :
The wandering sailor's life of glee,
That only is the life for me.”

But, despite your very wide reading, those others' confessions of Nature-worship might not be so familiar to you as are Byron's. It is for this reason that I select him as a criterion of the unconfessed millions who have been, or are, or will be, at some period of their lives, stirred unaccountably by the unperceived music of the ocean. Not that they, any more than he, wrote directly of this melody and harmony. Yet, reading between the lines, we cannot for a moment doubt that whilst they were on or near the sea this was largely the influence which it had on them ; that their souls, consciously or unconsciously to them, were listening and responding to the mystic, submerged, unrecognized harmony of the ocean's inarticulate voice ; that their separate portions of human sub-consciousness were receiving and storing them up for future use, as the tinfoil on the drum of the talking machine takes and emits the human voice—both, unhappily, blurring the beautiful original in transmittance ; which forcibly brings back to our minds the apt truthfulness of Holmes's lines : “ Our brightest gems we never find ”—you know the stanzas.

It is a sorrowful truth ; and you will add, most likely : “ Alas, that it is so ! ” And more regretful still is the fact that such must ever be the case. To

the artist, the sculptor, the musician and to the poet alike the blue, sun-misted, halo-encircled Olympian peak of expression is and ever must be in the mind ; it is an essential part of the realm of dreams, of those enraptured hours of conception and up-building when the loom of thought is weaving its resplendent fabrics—never, alas, to be seen in any mart. This is one of Nature's Median laws, which man may not touch—that she alone shall be allowed the limitless acme of expression, whether it be in beauty or in grandeur or in any stage between them. Yet in the very sorrowfulness of this fact there is that which we should not have without it—the consolation of endeavour, those rare sweets of anticipation which are happily never materialized in the ashes of realization. And what, after all, is this but the sport of the seeker, the excitement of the adventurer in far-away realms, the toiler after that prize which others have sought so diligently all down the ages and failed to find ? Thus out of the unattainable comes that which can be had by the way of it alone—the glory of striving for great things beyond our reach, a human trait that has done more for the general betterment of the race than has any other characteristic in our natures. For if the ideal summit of attainment were within even the longest and most sustained reach of mankind, it would then lose much of the potency of its spell to draw us on and on over the misty and mysterious lands and seas of Effort, ever with the thrilling expectation of being the first to discover some wonderful treasure in those Aladdin's caves of unknown gems.

This being so of things that are in a degree common,

how much more true it must be of so little recognized or understood a thing as the music of the ocean. Yet even Wordsworth ("even" merely because of all the poets whom Britain has produced he was particularly *one of the land*) was far from being deaf to this music; witness the second half of the octave of that expressive and beautiful sonnet, "By the Sea":

"The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea:
 Listen! the mighty being is awake,
 And doth with his eternal motion make
 A sound like thunder—everlastingly."

But that thunder which Wordsworth heard was not the thunder of rollers in a gale, it was not the crash of charging waters near or distant. He had found the sea in a state of tranquillity, with "the gentleness of heaven" upon it; yet awake to the extent of giving off that vague sound, mighty in its very muffled uncertainty and suggestion of unlimited grandeur and power, which the attentive ear can always discern on or by the sea even in its quietest of times. And it is a somewhat curious fact, curious in a superficial sense merely, that only men and women of feeling, poets for the most part, have heard this wondrous Nature-melody and so told a duller world of other folk of its existence. But let us pause, you and I, in our reasoning together, and look a little deeper, for, after all, this is no more than a surface-statement. Being persons of feeling, and of varying degrees in the warmth of imagination, they could not do other than feel when in the presence of that which had the power to touch them. Their avocation, their mission in life, was the art of expression in words. Thus in calling attention to this music of the great waters, this

rhythmic phase of their magic spell over mankind, they were but doing a part of their ordinary life's work. Yet, again, here there is one thing that claims our mutual notice. This is the more submerged fact that the subtle, unscored harmony of the sea contains something which directly affects the poetic temperament. In it there is a vague, undefinable power that calls up emotions; that brings imagination into play; that sets fancies working in the brains of those whose hearts respond to its mystical charm. It is another presentment of the ocean's weird influence, of the effect of its hidden romance, on the hearts and minds of us humans. It is a link between us and that wonderful realm and atmosphere of commonly unperceived spirituality by which we are enveloped even in the prosaic and sordid actions of everyday life. And if the recognized members in Apollo's retinue do not answer to its mysterious call, and give us evidences of their being impressed by it, then who shall? For if we are not to look to the priests of a religion to minister its sacraments to the lesser devotees, then we may rightly conclude that they have no warrant, no title to their office. And as priests are to a religion, so are poets to the inarticulate sounds, emotions, and expressions of Nature. In this connexion you will permit me to note the heightened effect of human music heard on still waters, and I cannot do better than quote the following lines; where learnt I don't remember, any more than I know who wrote them:

“ The foot of music is on the waters,
Hark how fairly, sweetly it treads,
As in a dance of Orestes' daughters,
Now it advances and now recedes.

“ Now it lingers among the billows,
Where some one fonder than the rest
Clasps the rover in passing, and pillows
Her softly upon its heaving breast.

“ Oft she flies and her steps, though light,
Make the green waves all tremble beneath her ;
Now the quick ear cannot follow her flight,
And the flood is unstirred as the calm blue heather.”

Of the truthful beauty of this no one should need convincing. Hundreds of thousands of us—nay, millions, surely, have experienced the loveliness of this word-picture. And (as Oskar's fiddle is now voluptuously reminding me) who is there ready to say that music on the water is not far sweeter than when heard on land?—only those whose imagination is of a dull order. I, as you are aware, have heard music—this wordless soul-language that speaks to all ears alike—in many scenes of beauty far from water; not in buildings where the hand of man had been the predominating beautifier, but where Nature herself had done the decorating—in olive groves, where the light of moon and stars was the sole illuminant; by night in gardens, where all the lavished scenic effects were the work of men; in orange groves, where Nature and man had mingled their forces in the creation of a lovely setting for those sweet airs which Lorenzo says never make us merry; and in scenes of natural grandeur on mountain-sides, far away from the habitations of man. Yet in none of them was there that sweetening of music which is experienced on a sufficiently large sheet of water. On a lake, or on the calm waters of a bay, there is a wondrous softening, mellowing of music, such as is quite impossible on the

dull, resisting land—a mellowing that I can attribute only to the blending with the unheard harmony of the waters themselves. There, as the writer above says, it seems literally to dance along; now fleeing like Acantha from Apollo, then appearing to “linger among the billows,” playing at hide-and-seek with one’s hearing, and all the time gaining in a ripened softness that heightens its beauty till it dies away, just as the fading of a sweet-pea increases the delicate loveliness of its tints.

“Music goes on certain laws and rules,” wrote Kingsley. “Man did not make these laws of music; he has only found them; and if he be self-willed and break them, there is an end to his music instantly.” But the laws of the seas’ music man cannot touch. He may send his jarring discords into them; further than that they are beyond his meddling. Nature herself respects them, never breaks them. They are the acme of the order of melody, the mystical far-awayness of which does but give it a value, a charm, a romance such as it would not have if it were nearer, clearer, patent to even the hearing of dullards. But this will never be. The sea (if you will forgive my using, without humour, a simile so incomparably small) does not wear her heart upon her sleeve. While disporting her charms to the eyes of all alike, she is chary of every one of those deeper attractions that lie quiescent behind the open witchery of her smiling face. All are there to be seen by any one who will, or can, see them; but only to the favoured ones, to those who have some sympathetic kin with her and that greater nature whereof she is a part, does she

draw aside the veil that hides the truer temperamental traits. For, mark you, the sea has a temperament in this : She has a strange power of instilling repellent horror and fear into the hearts of persons who do not love her wholly, even to her wildest moods.

And how like to woman, especially the handsome, clever, debonair, we find the sea in this, particularly in all her gentler moods ! Surely those earliest of Greeks were wrong in assigning a male to the throne of the ocean, just as much as they erred in giving a definite sex to love ; for, above all the other feelings we have, love is sexless. And, remembering that their knowledge of the world of waters was confined to the sunny Mediterranean, the Sea of Marmora, the Bosphorus, and the two seas east of that channel, it cannot be said that, in supposing the ocean to be ruled by Poseidon and other male deities, they did so because of its occasional hurly-burly tendencies in latitudes beyond those inner seas. Personally, I am inclined to think that the error was due first to a lack of thought, second to a wrong reading of the ocean's moods and its partially hidden nature. Yet, in a way, they did see its femininity ; had they not done so, they would not have made Calypso, the Oceanides, the Nereides and the Syrens in a manner representative of the seas. As for Oceanus having a queen in Tethys, and Nereus having one in Doris—these are matters which we may easily put down to the ancient Greeks' dislike to having any kind of god without a wife ; in fact this may have been their reason for mind-creating the groups of females just mentioned. To them, intensely human as they were,

it was impossible to think of a celestial being who had not the usual appetites and desires of mankind. In their minds every personification must have sex. A sexless being appears never to have entered their imagination. As for Aphrodite, although a queen in her way, she was only an outcome of the sea's foam; and, typical enough though she was of its fickle moods, she cannot be held as one of its true representatives.

We have heard of "the music of the spheres," "the harmony of Nature," and of many other forms of melodious sound, heard and unheard; but surely of all word-dumb things in existence the ocean is the most harmonious. And to those whose ears are attuned to her harmonies they are practically limitless in range. To enumerate the whole gamut would be to go into a needlessly long exposition of that which must be patent to every mind that is capable of reflection—and has, I know, appealed strongly to you. It is, or it should be, enough to think of the endless changes from the drowsy murmur of calm water on a beach, when its receding makes a faint musical trickling over the shingle, to the mighty notes of Nature's organ in a gale. It is not difficult to believe that Milton had in mind some intuitive knowledge of the slumberous effect of a gentle swell on a tropical strand when he wrote:

"And ever against eating cares
Wrap me in soft Lydian airs."

Tennyson, too, was under this phase of its influence when he penned, "Lap, lap, lap on thy cold grey stones, O Sea" which is the very rhythm of the sea's *lapping* on stones. It was the sea's melancholy

music, in a minor key, that found in his breast the responsive chord that answered in this poem ; a thing that, although not of the sea actually, is in its haunting quality curiously reminiscent of the sea's unwritten, unwritable music. This is one of the proofs of its measureless range, that, from grave to wildly gay, it can touch every emotion known to the heart of humanity. Elizabeth Barrett Browning would have written more truly had she inscribed those lines to the sea instead of to her husband, "thou can'st touch on all the notes God set between His After and Before." To all who hear it in its true key its pathos at certain times is wonderful, and just as distinctive are its exhilarating notes on other occasions. And if he but has the ear to hear and the heart to feel, the whole range is open for the traveller to know and to appreciate, though not to express. This, at least, has been my experience ; and I no more differ from other men than it is the common lot of us mortals to be various in our separate makes.

Nor do I write of present or immediately past sensations, but of the experiences of a number of years. I am writing and judging of that which has been, and this fact should have as much weight with you as you allow to criticism on old things. Judgments on contemporary matters in art and literature are not always merely fallible ; they can never be trusted to contain correct views of their objects. The true perspective of such things comes only in the passing of time. Not that man's taste so radically changes in the course of three or four to a dozen generations. In these affairs we are about the same

as our grandfathers were. Much of what they liked, we like too ; but these are things and traits for which the very mellowing of time compels us all to speak in the same strain—that is things which were old to them. On the other hand, our forbears loved that which their more or less immediate predecessors passed by with indifference because it was then new. So it is with us, and will be with those who come after us. No exponent of any form of art is equally great in his own time and in the eyes of those who come long after him. What one generation relegates to the limbo of the undeserving, another brings forth to adorn niches in the edifice of general art. You landsfolk may wrangle and squabble as much as you please (and there be amongst you those who are greatly pleased in this way) about the merits and the faults of this book or that picture ; but all the contemporary, heated controversies possible make no scrap of difference to that court where we must all appear with our claims, and against the finding of which there is absolutely no appeal—the judgment of posterity, which is rarely at fault when it thinks, but is apt to forget. The histories of painting and literature prove this to the hilt. Truly may you put up over the portals of all your libraries and picture galleries : “Nought here is stable but the dead.” This truth is the watermark on every page of the annals of art, and all men may see it if they but hold up the pages to the light of reason.

Yet why is it that men’s perceptions of art are so much at fault when applied to matters of their own days ? Is it that one of the secret, underlying and

unbreakable laws of things insists that a lapse of time is imperatively essential to the right arrangement of the doings of humanity?—that things must be moved into the middle distance, or into the very background of the canvas before they can be seen in their real proportions? Or is this obliquity of mental vision due merely to the rawness, the newness of that whereon it is levelled so uncertainly. If a painter were to produce his pictures with the genuine appearance of age upon them, softened with all the mellowed richness that we now see on some of the works of the old-time colourists, would your critics rise and acclaim him great—a prophet, a master, a new Daniel come to judgment? No—they would do nothing of the kind. However correct he were in his drawing, perfect in his colouring, felicitious in the grouping of his objects, world-wide in the appeal of his subject and equally tasteful in all, it is a thousand to one that critics would forget his every virtue in condemning him for obtaining that which they considered to be the perquisite of time alone. So far as I have read, the history of decorative art has no such instance; but the wider realm of literature at once furnishes one in the deplorable case of poor Chatterton. And we know, alas! too well, what the world of that day said of his effort when once it discovered the trick to which it had been subjected. In diabolical effect it stood up, turned down its thumbs, and the boy straightway fell the victim of those lions of want, neglect and wounded pride, which the critical and literary world let loose on him.

Nor is this peculiar feature of contemporary

criticism, insight and right measurement true only of matters in the disputable domain of art; it is equally so in politics and in history generally. We cannot possibly see the exact proportions of things in their relation to contemporaneous affairs, nor to past matters in their own separate spheres. It was because of my realizing this truth that whilst I was in Bristol I destroyed much that I had written at sea and in many a picturesque harbour, where the music of the waters was ever indicative of their passing mood and locality. Those pages were crammed with neatly-penned, copious notes on oceanic phases, personal sensations and experiences afloat and other seafaring data. With the latent intention of some day writing a book on these matters, I saw that, to be true to my perspective, I must clear the hold and the decks of all the oddments of cargoes that had been shipped in ports of the past; and rely only, in a sense, on this "photographic memory" and on the reminiscent perfumes of my eastern and southern merchandise—that, in other words, to land a true, crystallized cargo, made up of different bales from the mental voyages of earlier days, I must forget the details of all the previous cargoes I had carried. Thus I come again to the statement that what I am now writing to you is mainly of past experiences that have mellowed and taken definite and abiding shape in the mould of contemplation and the lapse of time.

But there is one thing that I have never been able to analyze, was never sufficiently one with Nature to understand, had never an ear keen enough to take in its hidden meaning and its message. Nay, it behoves

me to leave "I" out of this matter. I am only an acolyte in the temple where there are worthy priests. Yet no man born of a woman could ever so far separate himself from the material as to be priest enough quite to understand the mystical ritual of the sea's cries, of that service of praise and complaining which the ocean is always engaged in rendering. Go where you will about this spinning globe, approach the sea on any shore, listen on any mid-ocean, by night or day, and the weird, inarticulate, disturbing yet melodious local cry at once insists subtly on your attention. The world's great waters are never silent. True, there are the musically deaf, as there are those poor unfortunates to whom all Nature's appeals are made in a language that is more dead to them than Sanscrit is to the noble red man. Time and again have I walked with another straight from inland on to a tall cliff or a sloping shore away from human habitations, in the calm hours of a gloriously beautiful night, to hear, as we stood and looked into the distance, where sky and water seemed to have no dividing-line, such remarks as: "How still!" "How silent!" "Really, everything is so quiet that all the world appears to be asleep!"

"Yes," I rejoined on one occasion, inwardly annoyed at the smug ignorance and complaisant superficiality that lay behind the last ejaculation, "Yes, and snoring. Don't you hear the rhythm of it?" But jokes and explanations are alike all lost on such persons, as mine were then. When such times come along you may talk the night away in explaining the cries and the under-current of melody

which you can hear beneath that surface-veil of silence; and the more you talk on that subject, the madder your listener will consider you to be. All persons of this kind are hopelessly beyond tuition; better a thousand times that you go your way in peace and sad reflection that these are and must be in a world of complexity. For if they are not woodenly-mute and disbelieving, they are so voluble in platitudes that you long to say, as Carlyle did to the empty-headed young man who made an obvious remark after two hours of dumbness by the fireside! "You fool, you interrupted my silence."

Yet the existence of these poor folk—who are nevertheless not unblessed in their way—is no denial to those sub-surface cries which others hear, but cannot either analyse or adequately describe, in the music of the seas. Many a time have I tried, all unsatisfactorily, to put these sounds on paper in such a manner that others would understand my meaning and may-be arrive at hearing them. To do this completely is, I know, as impossible as it is for the musician to note down the music of the spheres. Yet it is given to some of us that we try and try again at the inaccessible peaks of achievement till we can try no more, and we slip back to the for ever quiescent; whilst other climbers take up the task, and we lie in the shadows of the mountain's byways, forgotten.

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter," wrote Keats in that deathless thing on the Grecian urn. And in the music of the sea there is a part of both, inasmuch as the ocean's harmony brings back to one's mind half-forgotten melodies,

reminds us of songs which the soul sung secretly to itself in former years, and suggests such harmonies as mortal ears have never heard, neither in reality, nor in imagination. And this is the omnipotence of the world's great waters, that in the subtlety of their cries they range from the finite that we know to the measureless infinite which we can but partially and vaguely feel; and so wide is their appeal that few, indeed, are the hearts it does not touch. At the same time you must admit that the touching is mostly in accord with the hearts themselves.

I remember one night, resplendent in its tropical beauty, when this truth was brought home to me with some amount of imperative demand for attention. We were then lying at anchor just inside the harbour of Port Louis, Isle of France. A young Scottish engineer, a hard-headed practician in the world's ways, and I were leaning on the vessel's rail, smoking and breaking our contemplation by snatches of conversation. Presently he stood up and broke the silence by saying, in a tone that indicated annoyance: "What a doleful, miserable sound that sea is making out there." He referred to the slumberous, seething wash-and-recede, wash-and-recede of the Indian Ocean swell on the beach without the harbour. Apart from the fact that he was full of trouble anent a letter which he had that day received from home, I knew him to be one whose perceptions were as stone to all the beauties of Nature's rhythms, therefore one on whom all the sea's music and all man's talk of it were lost—but he was a decent fellow withal. Except in such little ways as were by him unperceived and not

visibly effectual, he was temperamentally and psychically dead to all the subtler influences that work beneath the surface of things. For this reason I ignored his remark and launched into another subject. Almost at that minute a handsome, young, French-creole laundress came out of the cabin, stood behind us during a few seconds, then said: "Oh, gen'lemen what a lovely song the sea is singing to-night!" Of the trend of her previous thought I was ignorant, and did not seek to know. It might have concerned some swarthy piece of masculinity ashore, probably it did so. But that was of no consequence to the incident, the only interesting point of which, to me, was the fact that the same rhythm in the sea's music had touched two different persons in opposite ways.

There is one phase of this music whereon I am tempted to dwell, yet will not. The sin of tediousness dissuades me. A reference to it must be enough. It is a phase of which the landsman knows nothing, and the steamboat traveller gets no experience; therefore it is pertinent to you. It is the soft, lapping ripple of gentle wavelets against the sides of a sailing craft in very fine weather and smooth water. To lie in a bunk close to the "skin" of the vessel at such a time, when she is making three or four knots an hour, is to be put under such a somnolent and soothing influence as would surely give peace to the worst sufferers of insomnia. This is the very pianissimo of the music of the seas, and between it and its tremendous fortissimo rage in a gale there is a range such as nothing else in the universe has except the wind, and that not so clearly or so markedly. That the

ancients associated musical sounds with the sea is shown in their giving such wild, sweet singing powers to the syrens ; but that is not the kind of ocean music I mean. Except occasionally in the watery pilgrimage of Ulysses and Æneas the music of the sea was not sweet to them. They knew nothing of those great, grand organ-notes of breaking Atlantic rollers, in a north-west gale, on the high seas or on a rocky shore. And though there be an infinite terribleness in this phase, that fact does but lend an added colour to the music.

EPISTLE XVI

Odds and ends : Shivers's last story : Mutiny and murder :
Leaving the floating coffin : A mysterious chase : Friction in
the boat : " My God, the barque again ! " : Stealing the water :
Worse friction : A madman's act : Ashore ! : Pete and the dead
hand : Uncanny practices : Horror and beauty : Pete mad :
Release : A collision : The scattering of the nationalities.

*And all the while in that opal haze,
With never a hand at wheel or brace,
Through nights of dread and through torrid days,
That blood-stained barque pursued the chase.*

IF you find the preceding epistle fragmentary, pray you blame Oskar's fiddle, the " cut-throat " euchre and the arguments that have seemed to dog me every time I have sat down to write for some days past. You cannot well keep to a continuous line of thought in the midst of such things—at least, I can't. You are bound now and then to listen to one and join in the other. Besides, remember, please, you gave me *carte blanche* to ramble on as mood and circumstance dictated. However, I won't deviate from a set course now for a while, and this is why : There is nothing new to tell you of things abroad here. The strained feeling is becoming habitual ; therefore the fire is more likely to smoulder on and not burst into flame. I suppose that a man could accustom himself to smoking with comfort in a powder factory, pro-

viding that no accident happened before the habit was confirmed.

The only two things of note are these : Off the Chagos Archipelago, Dobey caught a hawk in the lee-main-rigging one night, and got his thumb badly bitten in bringing it down. On The Old Man's order the bird is kept in a "knocked-up" cage in Chips's workshop till we are near enough to land to let him go safely—if he "hangs out" on his diet, of which he plainly thinks but little. Amongst a large section of us there is quite an anxiety to catch rats for him which we skin—when we catch one—and dissect and offer to his proud lordship in legs, shoulders, loins etc. Great was our joy the other day when the black visaged, unlikeable steward came along with a nest of young rats, just about able to leave home. He had found them in an empty biscuit-tin, in the lazaret.* Since then Mr. Hawk has had a royal feast each day. He lives again ; for you should see the glitter of his eyes, as he holds once more the squirming prey with a set of claws and tears it with his beak. The other affair was a fight between a thresher shark and a whale, and great indeed was the turmoil thereof.

But of such things you have read elsewhere, I doubt not ; so I turn to the straight course I have marked out—*i.e.* the recounting of "The Worship of the Dead Hand," as I call it—the story which Shivers told to me in the small hours of a rainy morning in

* In British and American vessels this is pronounced both "lazeret" and "lazerete." It is a place under the cabin-floor, and is used by the steward as a store-house, just as the bo'sun uses the fore-peak, under the t'gal'n-fo'c's'le-floor.

the port of that queen of old Nile, whose infinite variety age could not stale nor custom wither. As already mentioned, I have spent some time recently in a new, earnest endeavour to put this down just as I heard it, whilst Shivers sat on the high doorstep of the galley, talking in his staccato, low-toned, flattish voice straight into the dark alley-way, and I crouched, in a sense, on the locker behind him, seeing not the lantern-lit galley, but the deeds of which he spoke in that impressive, unstrained fashion of his. As usual, he began without any preface, and with these words :

“Astern of us lay the barque. Rather low in the water she was—her mizzen-mast gone by the board, and some of the dead visible through the big holes that heavy weather had made in the bulwarks. I was a youth at the time, and the awful impressioⁿ left on my mind, as we pulled away from the poor old craft, is with me even now, in spite of all I have gone through since that horrible scene of rage and butchery.

“We had left Melbourne in the spring of the year, with four new hands who shipped with us just to get to the States. We were bound to 'Frisco, with the hatches almost bursting over a load of wool and other things. There was no Plimsoll's mark on British ships in those days, and no law against loading a vessel down to the scuppers—if she would carry it. We had bad weather, and bad luck too, from the day we left. It was my first long voyage; and the barque had been nearly two years away from home, so that there was not a single spare sail in the locker to take the place of what we blew away.

“ Then the spars began to go, and the old packet leaked like a riddle. But we crawled away up into the tropics, into light and variable winds. Two of our best hands had been taken away by a heavy sea, making us short-handed ; and there was every prospect of our being short of provisions before we could make Honolulu. This made the rest of the men discontented and some of them were as hard a lot as ever sailed the seas, even in my young days. They wanted The Old Man to put into one of the islands about there and refit as well as we could ; but he was as hard as any of them, and he refused, point-blank. He would put in nowhere so long as we could spread all plain sail.

“ One morning, just as the day was breaking, three of them, who happened to have the morning-watch, broke into open mutiny. It seems they had arranged everything beforehand. First one of them killed the second mate with a single blow of a hand-spike, as he stood by the break of the poop. Then they went into the cabin and stabbed The Old Man and the mate to death in their sleep.

“ I was aloft at the time, putting a roving on the main-top-gallant-sail,* and shaking till I nearly fell at the murder of the second mate. Pete Williams, a big, strapping, determined fellow, the ringleader, called me down and said they would do me no harm, provided I did as they told me. He then sent me forward to call out the other men.

* One curious and rather suggestive point about Shivers was that he did not clip his words as the average seaman does. With him “ fo’c’s’le ” was “ fore-castle,” “ for’ard ” was “ forward,” “ t’gan’sel ” was as above, and so on always.

“ That was the beginning of more trouble, and bloody it was in all conscience. When it came to the point, the other three men, Chips and the ‘ doctor ’ were all against the idea of joining the mutineers, because murder had been done. They held that if they did, the law would say they were as bad as the others. But after a while they were won over, in a way ; though I think they had some scheme of their own behind it all.

“ Then a quarrel sprang up quite unexpectedly. It was only a bit of a difference at the start between Sam Harvey, Pete’s backer, a stubborn sort of man without much grasp of things, and Chips, about the best means of refitting a jury-mizzen-mast. Chips was a hot-headed Welshman. In a spurt he called Sam a liar, and was knocked nearly senseless on the spot. Almost before you could say ‘ Hard-a-lee,’ they were all at it like devils.

“ I was then at the wheel ; Pete, who had taken charge, had put me there, after calling the other men out. And as the awful uproar took place in the barque’s waist, I could easily see all that went on. At the outset Chips was knifed as he lay on the deck, and I never saw him move again.

“ It was one of the most glorious mornings, in a way, that the Almighty ever made—hardly a breath of wind in the whole heavens. There had only been cats’-paws for some days, and the water was as smooth as the top of a pot of tar. But those men—devils, I should say, hacking and slashing like butchers on the main deck—saw none of that.

“ You know what a wonderful beauty there is in

the first lights of the tropic morning ; but to my mind there is nothing of its kind in the world to equal that of the South Pacific. I don't believe there is ever such light on the land anywhere in creation. Not that they even knew of a scrap of it, of course not. Yet I did, in a second-hand sort of way—second-hand because my eyes and senses were fastened on the horrible affair like barnacles on a wreck's bottom. I have seen some mad fights since that day, but nothing that came near it. Of course, Pete and his party knew that if they were beaten it would be a hanging matter for them. And the others equally saw that they would either have to win or die ; there was no half-way course for either of them. The deck around the main-hatch, the pumps and the main-mast was like a slaughter-house. I was sick and giddy, hanging to the wheel-spokes like a limp rag, yet unable to get my eyes off that bloody hell in the waist, where knives and iron belaying-pins were ripping and knocking men's lives out by the fathom. Such another set-to of real devilish hate and desperation I could not imagine. As a matter-of-fact, the two watches had hated each other like poison ever since the bad weather and the breakages began. Pete and the others in his crowd were looked on as the Jonahs of the crew.

“ But it was over at last. The port-watch was dead to a man. The ‘ doctor ’ had been stabbed in the back and crawled away to his galley-door, where he lay groaning. Sam was sitting on the hatch, wounded, in fact he had been rather badly mauled ; and Pete had received a big slash in the

calf of his leg. He was binding it up, when I realized that the butchery was finished. As for Aaron, a stumpy American negro who was one of the three original murderers, the bo'sun had settled him by a crack on the head with a marlinespike then a shove through one of the breaks in the starboard-bulwarks.

“After a while Sam and Pete pulled themselves together and went into the cabin, where they bettered their conditions as well as they could.

“It seemed to me to be nearly midday when they came on deck again. I was almost dead with hunger then as well as fright. I had stood at the wheel all the time, afraid to move away from it; the dead stretched out before me on what had been white, dry decks. The scorching sun was drying the pools of blood into dull red patches. The ‘doctor’s’ groans had mingled with the creaking of the yards and grown fainter. My mind ran from those on the open deck to The Old Man and the mate, soaking in their own blood on their beds. It was awful; but, nevertheless, I realised that I was hungry.

“Then Pete came up the companion-way with some biscuits and cold beef and weak brandy-and-water for me. Pete had always been good to me, especially when any of the others had cuffed my ears or promised me a piece of line; it was he that sent me to the top-gallant-yard, to be out of the way while the fight went on. I was nearly fainting for food; but I could not eat, till he made me.

“While I was eating, Sam came up with a couple of cases under his arms. It seems that whilst they were below they made plans to leave the old barque.

They thought that if she was left unpumped she would sink and take the murdered men with her ; but if they remained aboard they would have to account for things which they could not, and that would mean serious trouble for them—to say nothing of the awkwardness of me being there. By this time the ‘ doctor ’ was dead.

“ So they got the jolly-boat out and loaded her with all we wanted—that is so far as they thought was necessary. We had a lug-sail for the boat ; but there was not a breath of wind to stir the greasy water. They pulled, and I steered south-east, in which direction Pete felt sure an island lay. According to him, we were not far from the Marquesas isles, where he had traded in a Sydney schooner. But as things afterwards turned out we were almost amongst the Paumotu.

“ And how the sun did blister us that day, especially the two men, who worked hard at the oars, with bare arms, off and on. After we left the vessel, it was almost a day of silence, even between the men. The horrible doings of that beautiful morning were having a subsequent effect on their minds—or rather on Pete’s, for he was not merely the dominant character of the two, he was the master, and not by any means a common sort of man. As for me, I was naturally still in something of a dream that was too horrible to talk about. By nightfall the hull of the awful scene was below the horizon.

“ But the curious part of it all was that, when morning came, the barque was not more than four or five miles away. I had been asleep all the night—

Pete had seen to that—and they had taken watch-and-watch-about. Yet both of them swore that they had kept the boat heading steadily to the south-east. Besides, we had pulled straight away from the barque's starboard-beam. Now she bore dead-astern, starboard-beam-on to us. It was strange, and it made Pete and even Sam think. Yet there was much more strangeness to come.

“During that day we dropped into a few light airs, and the sail was set. This gave the men a rest, and put them into something like their former selves, so that they were ready for the oars again, when we ran into another flat calm at sundown. We must have done about twenty knots under the sail, and the barque was hull-down again soon after noon. Pete said we should most likely make land at dawn.

“When the dawn came the only thing that we could see besides sky and water was the barque.

“Pete himself had the morning-watch, and the discovery drew from him a startled oath that fetched both Sam and me to our feet, still half-asleep. During the quick breaking of the dawn Pete, it appeared, had been keeping a close look-out on the vessel; so that when he let out the curse he had made sure what craft she was. Sam rubbed his eyes and swore she was not the *Fortuna*; but he soon had to own himself in the wrong. What was more, her starboard-beam was still dead-on to our stern.

“It was uncanny, even I knew that—I mean I knew it in the same sense as the men did; or rather Pete, because it was plain to see that the affair was making a peculiar impression on his mind. Sam was

of a denser sort. He could not understand the thing, and there it rested with him. In my opinion each man suspected the other of sleeping in his watch and letting the boat go back over her course.

“ All through that day it was easy to see that a cloud had settled over us again. About the men there was an air of gloom and oppression, especially Pete, who changed the course to south-half-east, and worked like a desperate man at his oar to get away from the barque. So as to keep the boat going all the time, I had to relieve each of them now and then, which I had not had to do during the first day. It was owing to this that the barque was low down again by midday.

“ When night came and the watches were set, Pete—whose watch-in it was—took out his fiddle and played to ease his over-strung feelings. He was a natural fiddler, and he played some wonderful music when he was wound up. It was music that seemed to get hold of you and take your heart in amongst the strings and the notes. On this occasion it was wild and full of passion at first, and it sounded very strange on that dead-calm sea, as the full moon was rising. But after a while it grew softer and softer, till at last he played “ Home sweet Home ” in a way that made me cry quietly to myself to be at home again. I was afraid of Sam and dare not let him see me crying.

“ Once during the night I awoke. It must have been somewhere about six-bells in the first-watch, I think, because Pete was lying at my side just as we had gone to sleep together. But I soon saw that

he was awake and watching Sam unknown. Sam, however was pulling quietly at the oars, although he seemed now and then to be nodding a bit. But all the same he bent his head occasionally to look at the box-compass under the binnacle-lamp at his feet.

“ When the sun rose again, it was Sam’s turn to call out that the barque was still there, which he did with the words—‘ My God, the barque again ! ’

“ The exclamation was not drawn from him by sheer surprise, as it had been from Pete. It was a sort of yell of stupefied amazement that, I believe, was dragged out of him immediately after a kind of dose in which he had pulled mechanically at the oars. Sam was on his feet when I awoke, as Pete leaped up in the bows and looked in something like real horror at the barque. She was about three miles away astern, beam-on as before ; and I shall never forget the note of Sam’s shout, asleep aft though I was at the first word.

“ Pete glanced at the compass. The boat’s head was south-a-quarter east. I heard Pete mutter that, as he looked up again and gave a sweeping glance around the horizon ahead. Then he took the glasses and examined every inch of the sky-line. It was easy to see that he was disappointed at there being no land in sight.

“ It is impossible for me to explain the full effect of the barque’s reappearance. By this time it had grown to be something more than strange. There was a real, uncanny weirdness about it. It was no common drifting of a vessel with the current in a

boat's wake, as it might have been if *we* had merely drifted. It seemed that there must be some super-human agency at work during each night to bring our old packet back into our sight, and keep the murderers in actual view of the scene of their crime. Besides, as the two men had to sit with their faces towards the vessel, they were compelled to be all the time seeing her. Not that this played much on the conscience of Sam ; he was of too brutal a grain for that. But it made a lot of difference to Pete. As I sat at the tiller and steered by the compass, when we were under-way again after breakfast, I could see that he looked anywhere rather than at the vessel. There were even times when he shut his eyes for long spells together, and pulled like a half-lifeless machine at the oar.

“ The whole day long there was a complete lack of life in both men, Sam, I think, being more impressed by Pete's manner than by the presence of the *Fortuna* and her dead. Hardly a word was said by either of them that was not actually needed by the management of the boat, or something in direct connexion with our situation. As for me, I did not dare to speak. The weirdness of the whole thing was growing on me like the slow appearance of a ghost in the night. Once, when Pete asked if I could see any land ahead, I caught myself answering in a sort of awed whisper. But the strangest part about the matter at this time was that we seemed to drag away from the barque as if the boat had a ton weight hanging to her heel. We all three saw this. It was possible to think that some invisible tug-boat was towing the

packet after us, broadside-on. It made an awful impression on me, and a worse, but a different kind of one, on Pete. I feel sure that when the oars were laid-in for dinner, we had not increased the distance from her more than a couple of miles.

“ Whilst the meal was going on Sam wished, with another of his big, foul oaths, that a breeze would come along. Pete’s answer was that it was no time for cursing, and that there was something at work somewhere for vengeance ; for his part he would not be surprised if we should sight a Government patrolship at any hour ; God or the Devil was keeping us in the barque’s company for that purpose. He felt sure of this, he said, and was getting himself ready for it when it happened ; and as he looked around the horizon, into the thick sun-haze that hung about us, as if it was the thin coast mist of a northern latitude, he added : ‘ The Lord have mercy on us ! ’ This was so new from him that Sam gave him a long look of surprise and said no more.

“ When the sun went down, blood-red and away to starboard withal, the barque was only hull-down. So much had her uncanny presence taken hold of us that, whether she was worked by some supernatural agency or not, the two men had been unable to exert enough strength to shake her off.

“ There was no music that night from Pete’s fiddle. Sam laid down and went to sleep about as usual. I lit the binnacle-lamp for Pete and put it and the compass at his feet, as he dipped regularly at the oars, but without effort. Every night so far he had

told me cheerily to turn-in. But on that night he said nothing, and this alone was so strange on his part that for a long time I lay awake, hoping he would speak.

“ At day-break, the barque had again gained on us. Just as before, she was beam-on across the boat’s stern. It seemed as if some ghostly crew, doomed to retribution and helped by some mysterious breeze that touched no other craft, was working her after us in each succeeding spell of darkness, then squaring her head to the divine east just before sunrise. By this time there was no surprise at her being there. We all expected her, and should have been more surprised if we had not seen her.

“ That day was like a week in a big, horrible tomb full of dead and hot as an oven, except that there was no stench. So heavy was the awful gloom about us that I don’t believe Pete and Sam spoke to each other more than a dozen times in the whole course of the day. And I noticed that both of them now kept their eyes off the barque all they could. With me it was different. While I sat with my back towards her, as I had to when steering, there was a very creepy feeling all the way from the nape of my neck to the back of my knees. In spite of that I had a powerful desire all the time to look at the dreaded craft, and not a few times as I glanced astern through the day, I fancied I saw men standing by the rail and looking at us. In fact, when I laid down at night, I felt I had seen such, and nothing on earth would have persuaded me otherwise ; but I was too frightened to say so to Pete, who lay along-

side of me, continually turning over and unable to sleep.

“ Next morning there was a surprise for us of another kind, and an unpleasant one it was. Somehow or other the plug had come out of our last water-keg. In all we had there was not above a gallon left, and this was got by draining the other two kegs. Owing to Pete being so sure that we should make one of the islands within twenty-four hours, we had started away with a smaller quantity than we should have done. The boat was loaded more with provisions than anything else, because of the practical certainty of getting water wherever we happened to land. In addition to that, the water had gone much faster than it ought to have done. Pete several times said when doling it out, as he did at regular intervals, that he could not understand why it went so fast. At those times Sam was silent, he being generally busy just then with the provisions ; or he made a remark that was neither here nor there.

“ When Pete had carefully stowed the remainder of the precious liquid in the stern-sheets, he said, with some of his old determination, that no one was to touch it but himself. This was significant enough to me, seeing that the other kegs had all been kept amidships, and that Sam had always stuck to the fore-end of the boat, sleeping and waking, except when at both oars in the night. The barque had gained on us again during the night, and Sam ventured to say in reply that we could easily put back to her and get more water. But Pete swore there was no power on earth or afloat that would send him back

to her. He would die by inches first. Another thing, the man who would take the boat back to the *Fortuna* would have to settle with him before doing so. Besides, the way he said it was proof enough that if ever he meant a thing in his life he meant that. It appeared as if all the conscience and dread in creation had come back to him. Sam stared at him, as though unable to believe his ears ; but he held his tongue.

“ How the next three days passed I don't know, only that the men seemed to let the boat drift more than pull it. There was not even a cat's-paw all the time. The sun glared at us as if it was an open furnace close to us. That thick sort of opal heat-haze appeared to get thicker, making the barque look more and more like a ghost-derelict that we could not get rid of ; and the water was as greasy and glassy as an oiled duck-pond. It was stifling. Hardly casual remarks passed between the two men. There was an unpleasant feeling growing between them, and I knew it very well.

“ Sometimes the *Fortuna* gained on us even during the day, and sometimes we crawled away from her a bit. And still the supernaturalness of her following us and her presence grew on us. But it was much worse during the night, when the great yellow moon got up in the sky and hung over the barque as if directing us to look at her. Then it was hard to think that she was not a real ghost-ship, silently chasing us for justice in that big track of brilliant light through which the flying fish darted now and then. And once, when she drifted near us in the

night, because Sam had hardly given the boat headway during his watch, we heard her big fore-castle-head-bell toll ever so faintly as she rolled on the ground-swell. It was all so solemn and so awesome under the circumstances, and the bell tolled so slowly, that it appeared to me to be the tolling of a funeral-bell. The situation, the time, and the scene together made it appalling.

“At every meal Pete doled out the water, always giving me as much as both of them had. Once Sam raised the subject again of boarding the vessel for more water; but Pete merely said that he was not dead yet, and as he carried the only firearm we possessed—a revolver—he had more weight than mere leadership on his side. The matter dropped for good.

“By this time we were all beginning to feel the agonies of thirst, and there was not more than a pint of water left. When supper was served out, Pete gave me a tiny drink, then plugged up the keg and put it back to its place. Sam asked if he was not to have a drink, and Pete said no; what there was left was ‘for the boy’—meaning me—so long as it lasted.

“At that I thought Sam would have flared up. He looked very like it, but apparently thought better of the job. Then the watches were set, and Pete and I lay down again, with our heads almost close to the water-keg.

“Just as the sun began to peep above the horizon on the following morning, Sam called us with a shout. There was the landfall at last, dead-ahead and not

very far away. This gave us all new life. The barque was still hanging to our heels, at no great distance. But Pete sprang to his oar, and for the next two hours they both pulled for all they were worth, so as to make the best of the time before the sun blazed down on us again. Then they drew in the oars for breakfast. And whilst Sam got out the rations, Pete went to the keg. It was empty. In a rage he turned to Sam and said: 'You cur, you've drunk it!'

"Sam boldly said he had, and that as the land was then so close it would not matter. But Pete was wild. The cowardly act, which he no doubt took as confirmation that Sam had been at the water pretty nearly every night, made him lose all command over himself. All through the past three days there had been a slumbering resentment on both sides. I fancy that Sam hated Pete's mastership. I had seen contempt on his face when Pete said he would sooner die than go back to the barque, and I am sure that Pete had the same feeling for him about the water.

"At any-rate, he rapped out that Sam was a mean hound to do such a thing. Sam snapped, with a curse: 'You're a liar!' and flung out a worse insult. In an instant they were at it, like demons; and it seemed as if the boat, heavy and broad on the bottom though she was, would go over. I knew there were plenty of sharks in those waters, and I was horrified at what was likely to happen at any minute.

"Presently I saw that Sam was trying to get his hand at Pete's hip-pocket, where the revolver was; so I leaned forward and whipped it out myself. I

had no need to. Because just then Pete got free and gave Sam a blow on the head that knocked him over the side. But in going over he somehow managed to get a clutch on the broad gunnel and hang there. Almost before you could think what he was doing, and I don't believe he knew himself, Pete, blinded with rage, had snatched up an axe and chopped Sam's hand clean off at the wrist. Sam had just used the axe for opening a provision-case.

"Sam disappeared, leaving his hand clutching the gunnel, and with a look at Pete that no mind could ever forget. As if he had been suddenly shot with horror, Pete dropped the axe, stared like a madman at the hand, then fell senseless on the bottom of the boat.

"I looked around for Sam ; but there was not even a bubble on the greasy water to show where he went down. Then I fell to trying to rouse Pete to his senses. But it was no good. I might as well have tried to fish Sam out of those deep waters with the boathook. Except that Pete breathed any one might have taken him for a corpse. I began to think that he would die as he was. Of course, I was frightened till I hardly knew what I was doing. Then I looked up and saw the barque again, and the sight of her made me shudder from head to foot. In some wonderful way she and her dead seemed to be the guiding spirits of the whole horrible business. In a flash of thought I saw the dead on those bone-dry decks and in the bunks in the cabin, Sam at the bottom of that glassy water and his hand on the gunnel. The hand brought me back a moment from

the awful terror that had fastened on me, and I made to shove it off, overboard. But somehow I recoiled in horror, was sick, and fell back in the stern-sheets, feeling that I should die there at once in the sweltering heat and super-human oppression of murder and mysterious vengeance.

“After a while I came to again and saw that the barque had gained on us considerably. A little breeze had sprung up from the north-east, swinging her head off in our direction, and sending her along through the water. In a minute I was on my feet and hoisting the sail. I couldn't get it more than half-way up—I wasn't strong enough. But I did the best I could, then put the boat nearly before the breeze and made dead for what appeared to be a small bay.

“How I sat there steering the boat along I cannot tell. All I afterwards remember was my tremendous thirst, the bursting feeling in my head, that ghastly hand, the cooling of the gentle wind, and a feverishness to get away from the *Fortuna*. I have no idea how long I was running like that; but I recollect the great relief I felt when the boat cleared a small headland that shut off the barque from me, as I drew into a little inlet beyond, where I lost the breeze and had to take the sail down. As best I could I then put out the oars and managed to get the boat slowly along till she grounded on the beach.

“With the jar, as the boat touched, Pete groaned, then sat up. I wanted to speak to him, but I did not know what to say. In a sense I was afraid to open my mouth, kindness itself though he had always been

to me ; there was such an awful look in his eyes. I had never seen anything like it, and it made me shiver. It was a curious light, a sort of glitter. He got up, sat on the thwart and looked ashore, his back to the hand all the time. I expected him to speak, as he stared past me so strangely. I sat looking at him, wondering what he would do next, and what he was thinking about.

“ At last the oppressiveness actually forced me to break it with a blurt, that made my voice sound like an awful jar after the long spell of silence that had numbed me worse than the grave could do now. I asked him what we should do. Then he looked straight at me, but it did not seem to me that he either knew me or understood what I had said. However, the strain was broken ; so I spoke up again and asked if we should get the things ashore or take a look round first. At that he stood up, said in a curious, low, soft, voice that we would get ashore ; then he turned about and saw the dead hand gripping the gunnel. Right away at once he made what appeared to me to be a strange sign to it, then took a piece of old sail-cloth and reverently laid it over the hand. Naturally I wondered what he meant to do with the ghastly thing ; but owing to the light in which he stood to it, I was afraid to broach the matter.

“ At any-rate Pete appeared to regain some of his senses from that point ; although he went about without a word, except when I asked him a question on the work in hand, which I had to pretty often. First we dragged the boat as far ashore as possible. Then I felt that I must run up the steep incline

behind and see what there was around. So I ran, as well as I could after that long cramp in the boat, and nearly danced with joy at tumbling on a little stream of fresh water that wound round into the pointed head of the inlet further up. I shouted the news to Pete then dropped on my chest and used my hands to bale the water to my mouth. Although I did not know it at the time, we had landed on Waterland Isle, in the Paumotu group.

“When Pete came up, which he did slowly, as if the water was of no interest to him, he quietly said that I must not make such a noise or ‘he’ would hear me and be disturbed. The way he said this, coupled with that strange light in his eyes, put a new damper on me that I could not shake off. In a dense, unsure sort of manner I realized that Pete was mad. But there was, in a way, even worse to come.

“However, we got the boat unloaded and the things placed in a kind of hollow on the hill-side, with a wall-like rock at the back of it. Then, with the help of the oars and some young saplings we cut down, we rigged up the barque’s poop-awning over the place; the men had tumbled it into the boat at the last minute to keep the sun off the provisions and the water kegs. Every now and then Pete forgot what he was doing and sat down and became lost in thought, till I went to him and roused him up. I did that because I was afraid of the night coming before the work was done.

“The last time we went down to the boat, I ventured to hint that the dead hand should be thrown into deep water or buried. I was troubled to think

that Pete was going to keep it there, that was why I risked the hint. But the way he looked at me made me shiver. He said something about when the hand went it would be the signal for our deaths, then sat on the slope and fixed his strange gaze on the canvas that covered the hand.

“ I was glad to get away from him. So I went up to the tent, thinking of the word ‘ signal.’ There and then I took a bright silk muffler of Sam’s, a piece of line for halyard, the axe to dig with, put the boat’s mast on my shoulder and walked round and out nearly to the edge of the headland ; where I stepped the mast in a hole for a flagpole, and hoisted the muffler as a signal to any passing craft. But I almost wished I had not gone so far out, for it brought me in full sight of the barque. She had still drifted along after us in a fashion that was strange and caused me another shudder or two, little though I knew at that time about currents and the like. To get away from her and the thought of her, I turned and ran back to the tent, as if for my life, fearing all the time that she might drift into the inlet. In fact, I wanted to go and tell Pete of the matter ; but I dreaded to mention it to him.

“ About sundown I went and asked him to come up to supper. He was dead in his own thoughts, sitting by the boat. I could get no answer from him. So I walked back, feeling very miserable and lonely, and had my supper, then turned-in, wondering what would become of me and praying to God, in a way, that Pete would regain his senses. At last I fell asleep.

“ When I awoke it was dark, and I could hear music.

For a while I was puzzled and half-afraid to move. Then I got up and stole outside, listening for all my worth. It was Pete with his fiddle, close to the water. I crept down towards him, fearful of making the least noise, and feeling a weird creepy sensation all through me. He was sitting in the boat, near the dead hand, which he had uncovered.

“ What his music was like I could not say, not if I had all the language on my tongue. It was wonderful—a hundred times more wonderful than anything I had heard him play before, or have ever heard since that night. The moon was up, shining right down into the inlet. And as his strange music stole away from the fiddle, over the water and up the hill-sides, finding soft echoes here and there and mixed with the gentle surge of the water on the beach, it made the whole place seem like a secluded little bay haunted with all the weird sounds and things that could be imagined. I almost fancied that the souls of the dead were roaming and joining in it all; it was so melancholy and awful, so utterly uncanny and fascinating. I shuddered. But I had to sit down and let it master me altogether. I could not do anything else. It was magical—awful and magical.

“ By-and-bye he stopped playing and began to make peculiar signs and mutterings to the dead hand; it was a sort of worship, and made me feel worse than ever. So that I jumped up and ran back to the tent, as if all the ghosts in the South Pacific were after me. In the farthest corner of the tent I threw myself down, and huddled my head up in the blanket. There, at last, I fell asleep again.

“ The sun was away up in the heavens when I awoke next time. Pete was sleeping in the full blaze of it, on the slope, with his feet nearly in the water and the fiddle by his side. He had covered up the dead hand again. I roused him and got him to the tent, he carrying the fiddle, from which he would not part. He was dazed and muttered a lot ; but he had something to eat, and drank pannikin after pannikin of water.

“ When he had finished the meal, I left him and went up to the flagpole, dreading all the time to see the *Fortuna*, and horrified when I saw her topmasts sticking just through the trees on the other slope of the headland. Scared almost out of my wits at some unholy element, which I didn't understand or recognize properly, yet drawn on by an uncanny and powerful desire to see where the barque herself was, I crept down the steep hillside amongst the trees till I saw her lying in another inlet similar to the one which I had entered with the boat.

“ She was apparently lying with her nose just lodged on a sandbank ; because, as I caught sight of her, she rolled in the ground-swell that swept straight into the inlet ; and as she rolled her bell tolled distinctly, not faintly as it had done at sea. This was more than enough for me. There was something so horribly queer in the barque tolling her own bell over the dead, that I took to my heels and ran up the slope again, for my life, seeing the dead on her deck as I ran with my back to her.

“ When I arrived at the tent again—where Pete lay in a sort of stupor with the fiddle near him—I

realized that although the headland was a half-mile or so across, the brig, owing to the set of the two inlets, was quite close to us. In fact, the dividing piece of land was pretty much in the shape of a V, wide at the points, with the front of the headland going from point to point. My discovery made me even more uneasy and miserable, which lasted all the day. I was almost afraid to venture away from the tent or Pete, and was continually looking around as if expecting to see something dreadful.

“The length of that day was like a life-time. I thought it would never pass away. It seemed to me as if the horror of the whole affair grew, as the hours went by, and grew at a rate that was fearful. It was in the air, in the tent, among the cocoa trees and great cactus plants, and, worse still, even on the quiet water of the inlet, because of the dead hand being there. I tried everything I could think of to get away from it; but the more I tried, the worse it got. Besides that, owing to the sheer rise of the headland-side of the inlet, where the light breeze came from, there was not a breath of air from well-above the tent down to the water’s edge. And all through the middle of the day the sun poured down there till it was enough to blister you. I was never in such a stifling place in my life.

“Breathing was difficult and eating was impossible. Pete was still in his stupor, so that I could not talk to him. I was afraid to go up to the high land between us and the other inlet, because some part of the *Fortuna* would then be in sight, reminding me of her still unburied dead. Being near Pete himself

began to be curiously oppressive, owing to his strange attitude towards the dead hand ; so that I wanted to get away from him and the stifling heat and creep under the bushes above the tent, but I feared there might be snakes or something else as deadly. Of the natives, if any should come, I was not afraid because Pete had said they were all of a gentle sort. It was a horrible experience.

“ Then, late in the afternoon, the breeze freshened till some of it came over the headland and struck our slope a little below the tent. How I thanked heaven for that. It was like passing out of a blazing oven into a cool place. By sundown a strong wind was blowing. Then Pete awoke ; but he was too dazed to talk. That glitter in his eyes was still there, worse if anything ; so that I dreaded to look at them, although he seemed to take no notice at all of me. I had eaten nothing since breakfast, and I was hungry. So I got some supper ready and put it before Pete. Talking was out of the question. There was such a horrible ghostly sort of suspicion everywhere that I was afraid to speak. He ate a little, only a little, but he drank so much water that I thought he would never stop.

“ After the meal he took his fiddle and went slowly down to the water’s edge, where he sat down near the boat, and I could see as he went that he was weak. I didn’t know it then ; but I knew afterwards that he was in a high state of fever.

“ Presently, as I sat outside the tent, wondering again what would be the end of it all and what would happen to me before the end came, Pete got into the

boat and uncovered the hand. It was just light enough for me to see what he was doing. Then he began those strange motions again, sometimes kneeling with his head down as if in prayer ; then standing up and making curious signs. For a while it was fascinating to watch him there in the gathering gloom ; but it soon became altogether too weird and supernatural for me to stand it longer. It made my blood creep. So that I jumped up and slipped into the tent, and buried myself again in a blanket.

“ The next thing I knew was waking up, and feeling half-smothered. I could hear the wind blowing half a gale, and to get some fresh air I went outside. Then I heard Pete’s fiddle again. He was playing at that time like the madman he was, not the mournful music of the night before. I thought he would surely break the fiddle with the way he tore the music out of it. Yet so far as I knew (and I had a bit of a bent for the fiddle myself, which he had fostered while aboard the barque) it was music that he was playing. What with it, and the rush of the wind among the trees above, and the patches of moonlight that came streaming down between the clouds, showing him sitting by the naked, dead hand, it was too wild and weird and terrible for anything. I wanted to go inside again ; but I could not. It had me fast.

“ Then he changed the music to some of the sweetest and saddest that was ever got out of a fiddle. It was like wringing your heartstrings. I stood there crying, without knowing it, and wanting to be at home. In the middle of it, came the sound of a bell ; it was a slow, irregular toll, toll, toll that came from I did not

know where at the moment. It mixed with the wind and Pete's divine music in a way that seemed to come from the grave. It startled me nearly off my feet, so that I snatched a look around quite expecting to see some awful apparition. Then the tolling was quiet for a minute or so, a minute that might have been an hour, it seemed so long.

“When it came again I remembered the barque. The breeze was blowing right into the other inlet, which had a wide mouth open to the big swell that must have been running by that time; and I quite saw that the *Fortuna* was most likely rolling pretty heavily in the swell, with her nose wedged in the sandbank. This was why her big bell was tolling so loudly every now and then. But knowing this did not make the whole thing any less uncanny. Instead of that it brought the old craft and the dead on her decks, in those snatches of moonlight, back to my mind as clearly as if I was looking at them, and made it all the more horrible and supernatural than it was before. At the same time, knowing this made a break in that weird spell that had held me, I was on the point of running into the tent and hiding again, when I saw Pete fall into the bottom of the boat.

“Hardly knowing what I did, only that I was anxious to see if Pete had hurt himself, I ran down the slope and jumped over the boat's side. He was lying doubled up and breathing hard close to the dead hand. I got him straightened out, flat on his back, and asked him what was the matter. But I could not get him to speak. He appeared to be trying to say something, as if his mouth was too parched to form words. So I

up and slipped back to the tent, and down again with some water which he drank at greedily. For although he was a mutineer and a murderer, he had been a real friend to me.

“As I stood up again with the pannikin, the barque’s bell began once more to toll like a bell at a funeral, only that it sounded a thousand times more ghastly in that awful scene and moonlight; for the clouds seemed to have passed all away, and the breeze was dropping. Pete heard it, too; and he muttered about the watch being out and tried to struggle up. I helped him to his knees; I could not get him any further, he was too heavy. Then he caught sight of the dead hand and started again to make those peculiar signs, and muttered to it in a way that terrified me; so that I let go of him, and he fell back, with the moonlight right on his face. It was then I saw how glassy his eyes were and his face white. Moonlit as it was, it looked ghastly.

“In a second a new fear fastened on me. He was dying. I could see he was. I nearly shouted in my fright. I jumped out of the boat to run up to the tent for something, but did not know what to go for. Then I jumped back, and tried to get him on to a thwart, but could not move him.

“The bell tolled again, seeming more ghostly than ever, in the lessening wind and the soft lapping of the water about the boat and on the beach. Dying as he was and fast, he heard it, and murmured that his watch was over—it was eight-bells, he said, and he was going below. He meant his watch on deck, right enough. But that bell was tolling out the watch

of his life, blood-stained and horrible. And in a muddled sort of way I saw it all, and fancied that Sam's and the others' ghosts were all looking into the boat. I shrieked in fright, a shriek that was echoed up the slope again and again. Then out of the boat I leaped, as if a thousand apparitions were clutching at me, and up to the tent to hide myself; but I fell senseless as I entered it.

"When I came to men were standing around the place, and it was daylight. A passing trading-schooner had seen the signal and sent a boat ashore. Pete had died of fever. They buried all the dead, and took me with them to Sydney." *

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P.S.—I had just finished transcribing Shivers's story when we made the low landfall of this corpse- and Mollyhawk-infested river, one of the worst on earth for a big "wind-jammer" to be towed up—sailing up is impossible. Then it was tramp and go, if you like, for hours and hours on end. Next, as we were dropping our anchor just above Prince's Ghat, a lumbering British India boat, coming down with the stream, plunged three or four feet straight into our port-bow.

* Some years after Shivers told me this story I ascertained that if the boat had gone up to the north-east the men would have fetched one of the Mendaña Isles. But in that case they would have been going against the South Equatorial Current, which sets right down on to Waterland Isle. It was this current that carried the barque along. She being deeper in the water than the boat was, the stream was able to get more hold on her; and because of this fact, also the shallowness of the boat, the circumstances of the rowing, the course taken, etc., it was quite possible for the barque to overtake the boat, as described by Shivers.

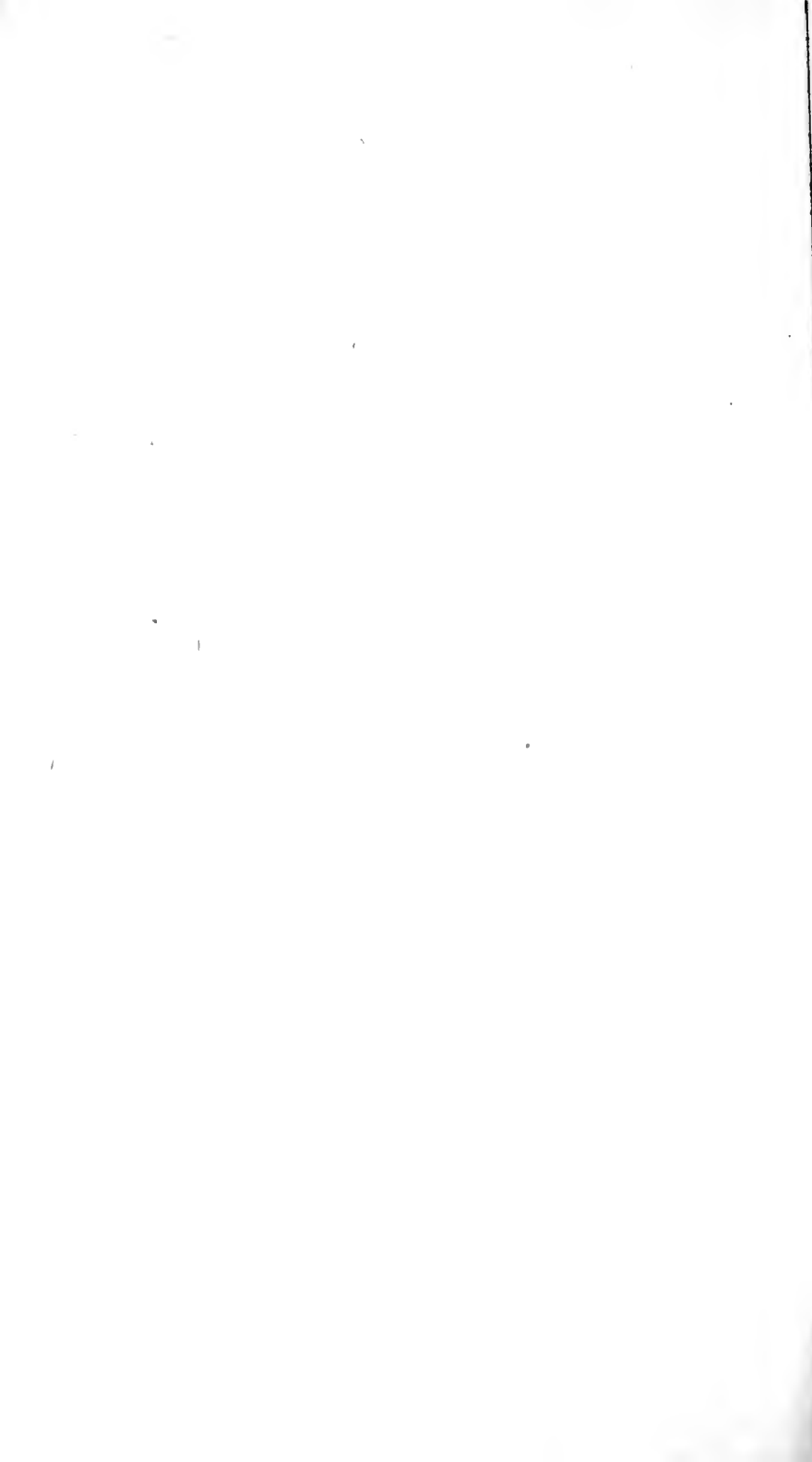
If it had been the starboard-bow some of our fellows would have put it down to the attraction of that ill-fated spot by the fore-rigging, where Lately's brother sent him spinning in Cardiff roads, and where certain other affairs happened.

However, the result was that nearly all of us accepted the master's offer to pay us off, we to find our own way home. That is, every Britisher and American from before the mast has left; so have the two blacks, who, we are collectively sure, are glad to be away from all men that know of the death of Antonio. But the Dagos, with the exception of Sing-Song—whose sunny temperament makes him careless as to where fate lands him, providing it be not a desert island—are remaining, along with the German, the Finn, and the Norseman. They are taking no chances of being in Calcutta here with empty pockets and may-be little opportunity of a ship home. So the Portuguese has lost his mortal enemy; Summers no longer goes in fear of Mannheim's knife or belaying-pin. The threats made against the mate are forgotten, as usual, in pints of bad ale; and he will probably take his pugnacious nose and steely eyes and ways to sea again in the *Bucephalus*, now that his suspected attackers have left her, and he has a long harbour spell wherein to restore peace between himself and The Old Man. O. T. B. is, of course, staying on, being bo'sun now; and on the way home he will talk of us versus the new hands, the while he taps his biscuits on the lid of his chest—as he and delightful old Mumbles did together, out of sheer habit and an inability to forget weevils. Mumbles and Mike Byrne

have gone to a boarding-house together, and the others have scattered in like manner.

We four are domiciled temporarily at the Sailors' Home; we want no Calcutta boarding-house for seamen. Whether or not we shall all ship together again is doubtful; it is seldom that a homeward-packet wants four A.B.'s. Besides, Oskar has the advantage of being able, at a pinch, to return to Europe under a Scandinavian flag. Personally, to which point of the compass I shall now turn my nomadic face only the wrynecks of fate can tell, and they have never been friends of mine. I may stay here a while. It is said that the Maidan is a rare place for evening adventures, and that a young man of parts etc. need not sigh far or long. So I may try my luck there—or on the coast again, with adventures of another sort. Whichever it be, you shall know in due time; till when, yours in the best of health and spirits and wishing you ever the same. J. E. P.

FINIS.





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