

## JACK ASHORE: NEW STYLE.



HAVE you ever roughed it? Life is made so easy now that one may well ask the question, even of a constant traveller. Voyagers talk of hardship if they have to wait awhile till the bath-room is vacated of a morning, or when the piano is out of tune, or the vibrations of the screw become unpleasant; while the shipping of a sea, and consequent inundation of the cabin, is considered as an experience to be handed down to a shuddering posterity. But have you ever passed a few weeks on board a trading-ship not intended to carry passengers, or a coasting-vessel owned and manned by semi-civilised people? Have you ever walked or ridden through a country where roads and wheels were unknown, and the nights had to be passed in the open, or on the mud floor of the chimneyless hut of a mountaineer? Have you ever served in a campaign? Should any of these experiences have been yours, you will probably remember the joyous excitement which animated you on first returning to the luxuries of civilisation. New white bread, and fresh sweet butter, pleased your palate more than *pâté de foie gras* had ever done before; and as for that first long draught of porter, no vintage, however rare, ever stole over your palate and thrilled the whole network of your nerves with such a sense of rapture. Rude health and forced abstinence gave a keen edge to all your senses, and the animal half of you was rather inclined, you may remember, to assume an undue preponderance over the intellectual. I do not mean for one moment to insinuate that you allowed this inclination to take a practical form. You have had the advantages of a moral and religious training, and know how to curb any tendency to self-indulgence; but I think you will confess that the temptation to transgress the limits of strict propriety was exceptionally great. Any reasonable man who can recall some such experience will make allowance for Jack's aberrations on first reaching port. Jack's education has been purely technical, and apart from his profession his resources in the way of intellectual amusement are slight. The senses appear to him to be the natural channels for gratification; and the pains you, sir, take to mortify them would inspire him with pity rather than admiration. Go between-decks and see how he is lodged; a bee in its cell has as much space to move in. Hardship for him is a matter of course—no man is exposed to such constant variations of climate. Now his feet are blistered by a deck through the seams of which the pitch is seething, and now he is hauling at a rope which is glazed with ice. When the winter wind roars in a manner which causes you to drag your easy chair close to the fire,

and plunge the poker into its glowing depths, he is lying out on the yard-arm, clinging for life with his numbed legs and feet, while he gathers in the stiffened canvas, which wrestles with him like a spiteful demon, and the straining mast reels madly, and the wolfish waves leap up at him. He is wet to the skin for weeks together; he can never be sure of his natural rest, but is startled by the rousing pipe from the sleep of exhaustion before his strength is half recruited. When the ship is small and the weather bad he rarely gets a comfortable meal; and when a tot of grog is served out to him, he has to swallow it at the tub-side at a gulp, like medicine. Tobacco is his principal solace; but he may only smoke at certain specified times, in certain allotted places. Indeed, he is subject to never-ending restriction, and lives as much by rule as a monk of La Trappe.

I do not say this is bad for him—on the contrary, a little more discipline might be good for all of us—but think of the reaction when all these restraints are suddenly removed, and he steps on shore with money in his pocket and free as an Arab!

You have probably heard the characteristic story of the sailor who was told the fable of "The Three Wishes," and was afterwards asked what he would have chosen, supposing the fairy gift had been his.

"Well," said he promptly, "I'd have asked for all the rum in the world."

"Very good; and next?"

"Next, all the 'baccy in the world."

"Exactly; and for the third wish?"

Jack was puzzled for a moment; he hitched up his trousers, scratched his head, and finally blurted out—

"A little more rum and 'baccy."

Well, the sailor who has just been paid off in a maritime town can enjoy unlimited grog and tobacco; he has not seen the face of a countrywoman for months, perhaps for years, and sirens surround him. He is in high spirits, and inclined to fraternise with everybody; full of health and strength, and ready to fight with anybody, for the mere fun of using his muscles. Left to himself, all this exuberance of animal life would soon tone down, but he is no more neglected than a dying camel in the desert, or a wealthy uncle at a Christmas gathering. A whole population depends for its livelihood upon the vices and follies of Jack ashore; if he did not drink, it could not eat: he is as necessary to its prosperity as the ship which brought him is to that of the respectable inhabitants of the town.

So Jack, with his pay in his pocket, and geniality in his heart, not knowing where to go, and not much caring what turns up next, falls a ready victim to the seemingly jovial scoundrel who first proposes to take him in. Really, he is so easy a prey, that to rob him would be almost as mean as that "kinching lay" proposed by Fagin to Noah Claypole, and which proved to be thieves' Latin for robbing little children sent

on errands, were it not that the sailor is allured by vicious proposals which he knows that he ought to resist. A few years ago indeed he had hardly any choice but to go to a lodging-house, which was a veritable spider's parlour; but nowadays almost every sea-port has its Home, and if the majority of these institutions are half as comfortable and well-conducted as one I went over the other day, the good they do must be incalculable. It was my good fortune to be the guest of an old college friend who had developed into a merchant, a savant, and a philanthropist, and who carried out hospitality to the extent of devoting some of the most valuable hours of the day to showing me the lions of Liverpool.

"What a capital frontage that house has! I wonder they do not make an hotel of it," said I, desirous of letting my companion see that I too had a shrewd eye for a sound speculation, and might also, under happier circumstances, have become a millionaire.

The building in question was situated at the apex of a block which terminated in an acute angle, so that the windows of each face looked into a different street.

"That is our Sailor's Home," cried my friend eagerly. "Would you like to see it?"

Of course I would; what could be a better sequel to a morning spent amongst ships?

So we passed through the door, and stood in a large, lofty hall, queer in form, for it was broad at one end and tapered towards the other, much like the bow section of a ship, which struck one as a curious coincidence, for it is impossible to suspect grave Liverpool signors of punning in stone, and intimating by the form of the building that all its arrangements were ship-shape. Round this hall ran tiers of galleries, into which the cabin-doors opened. The ground-floor was well supplied with benches, strong chairs, and tables calculated to stand a good deal of rough usage. There was a roaring fire, and a bagatelle-table; and newspapers and backgammon-boards were scattered about. And the men who were playing, or reading, or laughing and chatting, or smoking contemplative pipes, looked just as thoroughly at their ease as if they had been in the bar-room of a public-house—far more so than people appear to be in the coffee-room of an hotel. On the left as we entered was an office, where my friend inquired for the manager, who presently came forward and kindly showed us over the building, affording just the information which was wanting to make the visit interesting. I felt ashamed at first of interrupting this gentleman, who was evidently busy when we entered, causing him to waste his time in acting as my cicerone, but he was so interested in everything connected with the welfare of seamen, that I do not think my questions bored him; or, at any rate, his courtesy entirely concealed the fact. Perhaps he felt proud of the order and comfort which characterised every department of the establishment under his control; and if so, that pride was indeed legitimate; but I think he took it all as a matter of course. Yet the command of such an institution must be very difficult, requiring a great deal of tact. If there were the slightest attempt at

patronage, or undue assumption of authority—if the Home were conducted on the principles of a school or an asylum—if the mistake which mars the good intentions of so many rich people were made, of classing all persons who have to work for their bread with children and negroes—the place would soon be empty. But on the other hand, if a certain amount of discipline were not enforced, no society of men, of any class, could live together in comfort; and in the case of sailors taking a moral and physical stretch after having been cabined, cribbed, confined for some months, the absence of proper laws and regulations might be confidently expected to end in a "row."

Every boarder has a separate little cabin to himself, with a cheery, airy window, a substantial table and chair, and an exceedingly comfortable bed, in which he may work out any arrears of sleep that may be due to his constitution over the last voyage. But he must not smoke there, or anywhere on the premises, except in the common hall; but since this is just outside his door, the restriction, which is a necessary precaution against fire, is not a severe one. There are washing-places at frequent intervals in the corridors, the basins being of metal, and extra solid in make; for it seems that Jack has quite a special propensity for smashing everything which will break. Amongst men of the Royal Navy one could imagine that a familiarity with ramming and *x* ton guns might induce this, but in sailors of the Mercantile Marine it is somewhat inexplicable. There are likewise plenty of baths.

Meals are taken in a large and handsome dining-room, where breakfast is served at eight, dinner at twelve, tea at six, supper at half-past nine. If any man is too late for a meal, and can give a good reason for his unpunctuality, he can have it in the steward's room. The street-door is locked at half-past eleven at night, and a too jolly Tar who fails to come home at that hour, cannot, unless he has a pass, be admitted until six o'clock next morning. There are morning prayers at eight o'clock, and evening prayers at nine, in the public room. Sunday services are also held in a room appointed for the purpose, but of course attendance is optional. Concerts, lectures, and other entertainments are constantly given during the winter months. Medical attendance is provided; a reading-room, library, and savings bank are attached to the institution; and all these advantages are to be obtained for a payment at the rate of sixteen shillings a week for seamen, and twelve shillings a week for apprentices.

So that the newly-landed sailor, instead of going off with a crimp—who, if he does not hocus and rob him, is sure to fleece him of all he has in a more legitimate manner—has merely to get a cab and drive to the Home, enter his name, lodge his chest in his cabin, and then, if his wages have not as yet been paid, the house steward will make him an advance not exceeding twenty shillings. When he gets his pay, he is invited to lodge it with the cashier, instead of leaving it in his cabin, or carrying it in his very leaky pockets. When thus deposited, he can draw upon it as freely as

you or I can upon the balance at our banker's. Or, if he likes, he can place it in the regular Board of Trade's Savings Bank, where three per cent. interest is allowed, and money so deposited can be drawn at any seaport in the United Kingdom.

Without leaving the building, Jack can pass through a door into a registry office, and learn the demand for his future services, so that he can consider at his leisure what ship he will next sail in. A registry of character is likewise kept in the Home, "with a view of securing to the able and well-conducted seaman a rate of wages proportionate to his merits."

It sometimes happens that a boarder who has engaged himself for another voyage is the possessor of some property on which he sets a value, and does not know what to do with it. He is soon informed; he merely has to secure and mark it properly, and give it over to the storekeeper, who will take care of it until his return. If, however, he is not heard of at the end of three years, the property is sold, and the proceeds placed to a suspense account.

In short, all a seaman's pecuniary business is transacted, and his interests are as carefully looked after as they would be by a respectable family solicitor, if Jack could afford such a luxury.

And really, as a set-off against all these advantages, the restrictions imposed are very slight. Swearing is forbidden; and everything is so comfortable, that one cannot imagine why a boarder should particularly want to swear. Drunkenness is not allowed; and where the food is so good and plentiful, the temptation to get drunk is but slight. Fighting is unlawful; but then sober men are rarely quarrelsome. Besides which, these regulations only bind Jack while he is indoors; he is free to go out and indulge in any little eccentricities of language or conduct he chooses. If he gets into trouble with the police, that is a matter for the magistrate to settle; the Home has nothing to say to it.

However, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the true test of an institution is the use made of it, so pardon a little bit of statistics. In the course of 1874, the number of boarders amounted to 9,872 sea-

men and 479 apprentices, making a total of 10,351; and the money deposited came to a sum of £50,390. I think that is pretty good work for one institution. Ten thousand men kept out of the low lodging-houses; fifty thousand pounds diverted from the pockets of the crimps! I know that it took my breath away at the time, and has caused me to write this paper, for it is possible that many other inland people may have as vague ideas about Sailors' Homes as I had, and may be equally glad to be better informed.

One Home, however, is not found nearly sufficient for the requirements of Liverpool, and a second is being formed at the north end of the town, to catch sailors who are discharged and paid off at a branch shipping office two miles distant; and since, directly the proposition was mooted, the majority of the principal merchants of the town came forward with handsome subscriptions, it will doubtless soon be in working order.

A somewhat wild outcry has been raised against the shipowners of Great Britain. No doubt certain unscrupulous men *have* sent ships to sea in a dangerous state, and other firms, who would not wittingly commit such a crime for any profit, have nevertheless been guilty of culpable carelessness. But to draw a general rule from exceptional cases, to assume that every accident at sea might have been avoided, if it was not an intentional massacre, is neither a just nor a rational proceeding; and yet really some of the stories, illustrations, and sensational articles in several widely-read periodicals amount to this. There was certainly a great need for investigation, and for taking some steps for the better protection of our sailors, and Mr. Plimsoll has done a good work in forcing the matter upon the attention of Parliament and the country. But to suppose that the British merchant is not, as a rule, far more interested in the safety, health, moral and physical well-being of those who man his ships than the outside public can be, is a pessimist fallacy, that a glimpse at the heartiness with which the great shipowners take up any scheme like the establishment of one of these Sailors' Homes would be sufficient at once to dispel.

LEWIS HOUGH.



### THE TWO CHARGERS: A FABLE.

**Y**ES! Mad "Battle" hath raged like a fiend o'er  
the plain  
And strewn it with thousands of wounded and slain;  
The carnage-sick Sun to the sea hath gone down  
With a dull glare of anger and ominous frown,  
Leaving darkness to bury and snow to conceal

The murders committed by Battle's red heel:  
So the snow falleth softly from war-saddened cloud,  
To spread o'er the dead its white funeral shroud.

Yes! The fight is all over—a victory won—  
And two gallant chargers alone by a gun