



TATTOOING is a gift, said the night watchman, firmly. It 'as to be a gift, as you can well see. A man 'as to know wot 'e is going to tattoo an' 'ow to do it; there's no rubbing out or altering. It's a gift, an' it can't be learnt. I knew a man once as used to tattoo a cabin-boy all over every v'y'ge trying to learn. 'E was a slow, painstaking sort o' man, and the langwidge those boys used to use while 'e was at work would 'ardly be believed, but 'e 'ad to give up trying arter about fifteen years and take to crochet-work instead.

Some men won't be tattooed at all, being proud o' their skins or sich-like, and for a good many years Ginger Dick, a man I've spoke to you of before, was one o' that sort. Like many red-aired men 'e 'ad a very white skin, which 'e was very proud of, but at last, owing to a unfortnit idea o' making 'is fortin, 'e let hisself be done.

It come about in this way: Him and old Sam Small and Peter Russet 'ad been paid off from their ship and was 'aving a very 'appy, pleasant time ashore. They was careful men in a way, and they 'ad taken a room down East India Road way, and paid up the rent for a month. It came cheaper than a lodging-'ouse, besides being a bit more private and respectable, a thing old Sam was always very pertickler about.

They 'ad been ashore about three weeks when one day old Sam and Peter went off alone becous Ginger said 'e wasn't going with 'em. He said a lot more things, too: 'ow 'e was going to see wot it felt like to be in bed without 'aving a fat old man groaning 'is 'eart out and another one knocking on the mantelpiece all night with twopence and wanting to know why he wasn't being served.

Ginger Dick fell into a quiet sleep arter they'd gone; then 'e woke up and 'ad a sip from the water-jug—he'd 'a had more, only somebody 'ad dropped the soap in it—and then dozed off agin. It was late in the afternoon when 'e woke, and then 'e see Sam and Peter Russet standing by the side o' the bed looking at 'im.

"Where've you been?" ses Ginger, stretching hisself and yawning.

"Business," ses Sam, sitting down an' looking very important. "While you've been laying on your back all day me an' Peter Russet 'as been doing a little 'ead-work."

"Oh!" ses Ginger. "Wot with?" Sam coughed and Peter began to whistle, an' Ginger he laid still and smiled up at the ceiling, and began to feel good-tempered agin.

"Well, wot's the business?" he ses at last.

Sam looked at Peter, but Peter shook 'is 'ead at him.

"It's just a little bit o' bisness we 'appened

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to drop on," ses Sam at last, "me an' Peter, and I think that, with luck and management, we're in a fair way to make our fortunes. Peter, 'ere, ain't given to looking on the cheerful side o' things, but 'e thinks so, too."

"I do," ses Peter, "but it won't be managed right if you go blabbing it to everybody."

"We must 'ave another man in it, Peter," ses Sam; "and, wot's more, 'e must 'ave ginger-coloured 'air. That being so, it's only right and proper that our dear old pal Ginger should 'ave the fust offer."

It wasn't often that Sam was so affectshunate, and Ginger couldn't make it out at all. Ever since 'e'd known 'im the old man 'ad been full o' plans o' making money without earning it. Stupid plans they was, too, but the stupider they was the more old Sam liked 'em.

"Well, wot is it?" asks Ginger, agin.

Old Sam walked over to the door and shut it; then 'e sat down on the bed and spoke low so that Ginger could hardly 'ear 'im.

"A little public-'ouse," he ses, "to say nothing of 'ouse property, and a red-'aired old landlady wots a widdler. As nice a old lady as anyone could wish for, for a mother."

"For a mother!" ses Ginger, staring.

"And a lovely barmaid with blue eyes and yellow 'air, wot ud be the red-'edded man's cousin," ses Peter Russet.

"Look 'ere," ses Ginger, "are you going to tell me in plain English wot it's all about, or are you not?"

"We've been in a little pub down Bow way, me an' Peter," ses Sam, "and we'll tell you more about it if you promise to join us an' go shares. It's kep' by a widdler woman whose on'y son—*red-'aired son*—went to sea twenty-three years ago, at the age o' fourteen, an' was never 'eard of arterwards. Seeing we was sailor-men, she told us all about it, an' 'ow she still 'opes for him to walk into 'er arms afore she dies.

"She dreamt a fortnit ago that 'e turned up safe and sound, with red whiskers," ses Peter.

Ginger Dick sat up and looked at 'em without a word; then 'e got up out o' bed, an' pushing old Sam out of the way began to dress, and at last 'e turned round and asked Sam whether he was drunk or only mad.

"All right," ses Sam; "if you won't take it on we'll find somebody as will, that's all; there's no call to get huffy about it. You ain't the on'y red-'edded man in the world."

Ginger didn't answer 'im; he went on dressing, but every now and then 'e'd look at

Sam and give a little larf wot made Sam's blood boil.

"You've got nothin' to larf àt, Ginger," he ses at last; "the landlady's boy 'ud be about the same age as wot you are now; 'e 'ad a scar over the left eyebrow same as wot you've got, though I don't suppose *he* got it by fighting a chap three times 'is size. 'E 'ad bright blue eyes, a small, well-shaped nose, and a nice mouth."

"Same as you, Ginger," ses Peter, looking out of the winder.

Ginger coughed and looked thoughtful.

"It sounds all right, mates," 'e ses at last, "but I don't see 'ow we're to go to work. I don't want to get locked up for deceiving."

"You can't get locked up," ses Sam; "if you let 'er discover you and claim you, 'ow can you get locked up for it? We shall go in an' see her agin, and larn all there is to larn, especially about the tattoo marks, and then——"

"*Tattoo marks!*" ses Ginger.

"That's the strong p'int," ses Sam. "'Er boy 'ad a sailor dancing a 'ornpipe on 'is left wrist, an a couple o' dolphins on his right. On 'is chest 'e 'ad a full-rigged ship, and on 'is back between 'is shoulder-blades was the letters of 'is name—C. R. S. : Charles Robert Smith."

"Well, you silly old fool," ses Ginger, starting up in a temper, "that spiles it all. I ain't got a mark on me."

Old Sam smiles at 'im and pats him on the shoulder. "That's where you show your want of intelleck, Ginger," he ses, kindly. "Why don't you think afore you speak? Wot's easier than to 'ave 'em put on?"

"*Wot?*" screams Ginger. "*Tattoo me!* Spile my skin with a lot o' beastly blue marks! Not me, not if I know it. I'd like to see anybody try it, that's all."

He was that mad 'e wouldn't listen to reason, and, as old Sam said, 'e couldn't have made more fuss if they'd offered to skin 'im alive, an' Peter Russet tried to prove that a man's skin was made to be tattooed on, or else there wouldn't be tattooers; same as a man 'ad been given two legs so as 'e could wear trousers. But reason was chucked away on Ginger, an' 'e wouldn't listen to 'em.

They started on 'im agin next day, but all Sam and Peter could say didn't move 'im, although Sam spoke so feeling about the joy of a pore widdler woman getting 'er son back agin arter all these years that 'e nearly cried.

They went down agin to the pub that evening, and Ginger, who said 'e was curious



to see, wanted to go, too. Sam, who still 'ad 'opes of 'im, wouldn't 'ear of it, but at last it was arranged " 'WOT?' SCREAMS GINGER. 'TATTOO ME!'" that 'e wasn't to go

inside, but should take a peep through the door. They got on a tram at Aldgate, and Ginger didn't like it becous Sam and Peter talked it over between theirselves in whispers and pointed out likely red-'aired men in the road.

And 'e didn't like it when they got to the Blue Lion, and Sam and Peter went in and left 'im outside, peeping through the door. The landlady shook 'ands with them quite friendly, and the barmaid, a fine-looking girl, seemed to take a lot o' notice of Peter. Ginger waited about outside for nearly a couple of hours, and at last they came out, talking and larfing, with Peter wearing a white rose wot the barmaid 'ad given 'im.

Ginger Dick 'ad a good bit to say about keeping 'im waiting all that time, but Sam said that they'd been getting valuable information, an' the more 'e could see of it the easier the job appeared to be, an' then him an' Peter wished for to bid Ginger good-bye, while they went and 'unted up a red-'aired friend o' Peter's named Charlie Bates.

They all went in somewhere and 'ad a few drinks first, though, and arter a time Ginger began to see things in a different light to wot 'e 'ad before, an' to be arf ashamed of 'is selfishness, and 'e called Sam's pot a loving-cup, an' kep' on drinking out of it to show there was no ill-feeling, although Sam kep' telling him there wasn't. Then Sam spoke

up about tattooing agin, and Ginger said that every man in the country ought to be tattooed to prevent the small-pox. He got so excited about it that old Sam 'ad to promise 'im that he should be tattooed that very night, before he could pacify 'im.

They all went off 'ome with their arms round each other's necks, but arter a time Ginger found that Sam's neck wasn't there, an' 'e stopped and spoke serious to Peter about it. Peter said 'e couldn't account for it, an' 'e had such a job to get Ginger 'ome that 'e thought they would never ha' got there. He got 'im to bed at last an' then 'e sat down and fell asleep waiting for Sam.

Ginger was the last one to wake up in the morning, an' before 'e woke he kept making a moaning noise. His 'ead felt as though it was going to bust, 'is tongue felt like a brick, and 'is chest was so sore 'e could 'ardly breathe. Then at last 'e opened 'is eyes and looked up and saw Sam an' Peter and a little man with a black moustache.

"Cheer up, Ginger," ses Sam, in a kind voice, "it's going on beautiful."

"My 'ead's splittin'," ses Ginger, with a groan, "an' I've got pins an' needles all over my chest."

"Needles," ses the man with the black moustache. "I never use pins; they'd pison the flesh."

Ginger sat up in bed and stared at 'im; then 'e bent 'is 'ead down and squinted at 'is chest, and next moment 'e was out of bed and all three of 'em was holding 'im down on the floor to prevent 'im breaking the tattooer's neck which 'e'd set 'is 'art upon doing, and explaining to 'im that the tattooer was at the top of 'is profession, and that it was only by a stroke of luck 'e had got 'im. And Sam reminded 'im of wot 'e 'ad said the night before, and said he'd live to thank 'im for it.

"'Ow much is there done?" ses Ginger, at last, in a desprit voice.

Sam told 'im, and Ginger lay still and called the tattooer all the names he could think of; which took 'im some time.

"It's no good going on like that, Ginger," ses Sam. "Your chest is quite spiled at

present, but if you ony let 'im finish it'll be a perfect picter."

"I take pride in it," ses the tattooer; "working on your skin, mate, is like painting on a bit o' silk."

Ginger gave in at last, and told the man to go on with the job and finish it, and 'e even went so far as to do a little bit o' tattooing 'imself on Sam when he wasn't looking. 'E only made one mark, becous the needle broke off, and Sam made such a fuss that Ginger said anyone would ha' thought 'e'd hurt 'im.

It took three days to do Ginger altogether, and he was that sore 'e could 'ardly move or breathe, and all the time 'e was laying on 'is bed of pain Sam and Peter Russet was round

which Ginger said it was impossible for 'im to say 'ow much money he would 'ave the handling of. Once the tattooing was done 'e began to take a'most kindly to the plan, an' being an orfin, so far as 'e knew, he almost began to persuade hisself that the red-'aired landlady *was* 'is mother.

They 'ad a little call over in their room to see 'ow Ginger was to do it, and to discover the weak p'int. Sam worked up a squeaky voice, and pretended to be the landlady, and Peter pretended to be the good-looking barmaid.

They went all through it over and over agin, the only unpleasantness being caused by Peter Russet letting off a screech every time Ginger alluded to 'is chest wot set 'is teeth on edge, and old Sam as the landlady offering Ginger pots o' beer which made 'is mouth water.

"We shall go round to-morrow for the last time," ses Sam, "as we told 'er we're sailing the day arter. Of course me an' Peter, 'aving made your fortin, drop out altogether, but I dessay we shall look in agin in about six months' time, and then perhaps the landlady will interduce us to you."

"Meantime," ses Peter Russet, "you mustn't forget that you've got to send us Post Office money-orders every week."

Ginger said 'e wouldn't forget, and they shook 'ands all round and 'ad a drink together, and the next arternoon Sam and Peter went to the Blue Lion for a last visit.

It was quite early when they came back. Ginger was surprised to see 'em, and he said so, but 'e was more surprised when 'e heard their reasons.

"It come over us all at once as we'd bin doing wrong," Sam ses, setting down with a sigh.

"Come over us like a chill, it did," ses Peter.



"IT TOOK THREE DAYS TO DO GINGER ALTOGETHER."

at the Blue Lion enjoying themselves and picking up information. The second day was the worst, owing to the tattooer being the worse for licker. Drink affects different people in different ways, and Ginger said the way it affected that chap was to make 'im think 'e was sewing buttons on instead o' tattooing.

'Owever 'e was done at last; his chest and 'is arms and 'is shoulders, and he nearly broke down when Sam borrowed a bit o' looking-glass and let 'im see hisself. Then the tattooer rubbed in some stuff to make 'is skin soft agin, and some more stuff to make the marks look a bit old.

Sam wanted to draw up an agreement, but Ginger Dick and Peter Russet wouldn't 'ear of it. They both said that that sort o' thing wouldn't look well in writing, not if anybody else happened to see it, that is; besides

"Doing wrong?" ses Ginger Dick, staring.
"Wot are you talking about?"

"Something the landlady said showed us as we was doin' wrong," ses old Sam, very solemn; "it come over us in a flash."

"Like lightning," ses Peter.

"All of a sudden we see wot a cruel, 'ard thing it was to go and try and deceive a poor widdler woman," ses Sam, in a 'usky voice; "we both see it at once."

Ginger Dick looks at 'em, 'ard 'e did, and then 'e ses, jeering like:—

"I 'spose you don't want any Post Office money-orders sent you, then?" he ses.

"No," says Sam and Peter, both together.

"You may have 'em all," ses Sam; "but if you'll be ruled by us, Ginger, you'll give it up, same as wot we 'ave—you'll sleep the sweeter for it."

"Give it up!" shouts Ginger, dancing up an' down the room, "arter being tattooed all over? Why, you must be crazy, Sam—wot's the matter with you?"

"It ain't fair play agin a woman," says old Sam, "three strong men agin one poor old woman; that's wot we feel, Ginger."

"Well, I don't feel like it," ses Ginger; "you please yourself, and I'll please myself."

'E went off in a huff, an' next morning 'e was so disagreeable that Sam an' Peter went and signed on board a steamer called the *Penguin*, which was to sail the day arter. They parted bad friends all round, and Ginger Dick gave Peter a nasty black eye, and Sam said that when Ginger came to see things in a proper way agin he'd be sorry for wot 'e'd said. And 'e said that 'im and Peter never wanted to look on 'is face agin.

Ginger Dick was a bit lonesome arter they'd gone, but 'e thought it better to let a few days go by afore 'e went and adopted the red-aided landlady. He waited a week, and at last, unable to wait any longer, 'e went out

and 'ad a shave and smartened hissself up, and went off to the Blue Lion.

It was about three o'clock when 'e got there, and the little public-ouse was empty except for two old men in the jug-and-bottle entrance. Ginger stopped outside a minute or two to try and stop 'is trembling, and then 'e walks into the private bar and raps on the counter.

"Glass o' bitter, ma'am, please," he ses to the old lady as she came out o' the little parlour at the back o' the bar.

The old lady drew the beer, and then stood with one 'and holding the beer-pull and the other on the counter, looking at Ginger Dick in 'is new blue jersey and cloth cap.

"Lovely weather, ma'am," ses Ginger, putting his left arm on the counter and showing the sailor-boy dancing the horn-pipe.

"Very nice," ses the landlady, catching sight of 'is wrist an' staring at it. "I suppose you sailors like fine weather?"

"Yes, ma'am," ses Ginger, putting his elbows on the counter so that the tattoo marks on both wrists was showing. "Fine weather an' a fair wind suits us."

"It's a 'ard life, the sea," ses the old lady.

She kept wiping down the counter in front of 'im over an' over agin, an' 'e could see 'er staring at 'is wrists as tho'gh she could 'ardly believe her eyes. Then she went back into the parlour, and Ginger 'eard her whispering, and by-and-by she came out agin with the blue-eyed barmaid.

"Have you been at sea long?" ses the old lady.

"Over twenty-three years, ma'am," ses Ginger, avoiding the barmaid's eye wot was fixed on 'is wrists, "and I've been ship-wrecked four times; the fust time when I was a little nipper o' fourteen."

"Pore thing," ses the landlady, shaking 'er 'ead. "I can feel for you; my boy went to sea at that age, and I've never seen 'im since."



"GINGER DICK WAS A BIT LONESOME."

"I'm sorry to 'ear it, ma'am," ses Ginger, very respectful-like. "I suppose I've lost my mother, so I can feel for you."

"Suppose you've lost your mother!" ses the barmaid; "don't you know whether you have?"

"No," ses Ginger Dick, very sad. "When I was wrecked the fust time I was in a open boat for three weeks, and, wot with the exposure and 'ardly any food, I got brain fever and lost my memory."

"Pore thing," ses the landlady agin.

"I might as well be a orfin," ses Ginger, looking down; "sometimes I seem to see a kind, 'andsome face bending over me, and fancy it's my mother's, but I can't remember 'er name, or my name, or anythink about 'er."

"You remind me o my boy very much," ses the landlady, shaking 'er 'ead; "you've got the same coloured 'air, and, wot's extraordinary, you've got the same tattoo marks on your wrists. Sailor-boy dancing on one and a couple of dolphins on the other. And 'e 'ad a little scar on 'is eye-brow, much the same as yours."

"Good 'evins," ses Ginger Dick, starting back and looking as though 'e was trying to remember something.

"I s'pose they're common among sea-faring men?" ses the landlady, going off to attend to a customer.

Ginger Dick would ha' liked to ha' seen 'er a bit more excited, but 'e ordered another glass o' bitter from the barmaid, and tried to think 'ow he was to bring out about the ship on 'is chest and the letters on 'is back. The landlady served a couple o' men, and by-and-by she came back and began talking agin.

"I like sailors," she ses; "one thing is, my boy was a sailor; and another thing is, they've got such feelin' 'earts. There was two of 'em in 'ere the other day, who'd been in

'ere once or twice, and one of them was that kind 'earted I thought he would ha' 'ad a fit at something I told him."

"Ho," ses Ginger, pricking up his ears. "Wot for?"

"I was just talking to 'im about my boy, same as I might be to you," ses the old lady, "and I was just telling 'im about the pooi child losing 'is finger——"

"Losing 'is wot?" ses Ginger, turning pale and staggering back.

"Finger," ses the landlady. "'E was only ten years old at the time, and I'd sent 'im out to—— Wot's the matter? Ain't you well?"

Ginger didn't answer 'er a word, he



"WOT'S THE MATTER? AIN'T YOU WELL?"

couldn't. 'E went on going backwards until 'e got to the door, and then 'e suddenly fell through it into the street, and tried to think.

Then 'e remembered Sam and Peter, and when 'e thought of them safe and sound aboard the *Penguin* he nearly broke down altogether, as 'e thought how lonesome he was.

All 'e wanted was 'is arms round both their necks same as they was the night afore they 'ad 'im tattooed.