

A CIRCULAR TOUR



ILLNESS? said the night watchman, slowly. Yes, sailormen get ill sometimes, but not 'aving the time for it that other people have, and there being no doctors at sea, they soon pick up agin. Ashore, if a man's ill he goes to a horsepittle and 'as a nice nurse to wait on 'im; at sea the mate comes down and tells 'im that there is nothing the matter with 'im, and asks 'im if he ain't ashamed of 'imself. The only mate I ever knew that showed any feeling was one who 'ad been a doctor and 'ad gone to sea to better 'imself. He didn't believe in medicine; his idea was to cut things out, and he was so kind and tender, and so fond of 'is box of knives and saws, that you wouldn't ha' thought anybody could 'ave had the 'art to say "no" to him. But they did. I remember 'im getting up at four o'clock one morning to cut a man's leg off, and at ha'-past three the chap was sitting up aloft with four pairs o' trousers on and a belaying-pin in his 'and.

One chap I knew, Joe Summers by name, got so sick o' work one v'y'ge that he went mad. Not dangerous mad, mind you. Just silly. One thing he did was to pretend that

the skipper was 'is little boy, and foller 'im up unbeknown and pat his 'ed. At last, to pacify him, the old man pretended that he was 'is little boy, and a precious handful of a boy he was too, I can tell you. Fust of all he showed 'is father 'ow they wrestled at school, and arter that he showed 'im 'ow he 'arf killed another boy in fifteen rounds. Leastways he was going to, but arter seven rounds Joe's madness left 'im all of a sudden and he was as right as ever he was.

Sailormen are more frequent ill ashore than at sea; they've got more time for it, I s'pose. Old Sam Small, a man you may remember by name as a pal o' mine, got ill once, and, like most 'ealthy men who get a little something the matter with 'em, he made sure 'e was dying. He was sharing a bedroom with Ginger Dick and Peter Russet at the time, and early one morning he woke up groaning with a chill or something which he couldn't account for, but which Ginger thought might ha' been partly caused through 'im sleeping in the fireplace.

"Is that you, Sam?" ses Ginger, waking up with the noise and rubbing his eyes. "Wot's the matter?"

"I'm dying," ses Sam, with another awful groan. "Good-bye, Ginger."

"Goo'bye," ses Ginger, turning over and falling fast asleep agin.

Old Sam picked 'imself up arter two or three tries, and then he staggered over to Peter Russet's bed and sat on the foot of it, groaning, until Peter woke up very cross and tried to push 'im off with his feet.

"I'm dying, Peter," ses Sam, and 'e rolled over and buried his face in the bed-clo'es and kicked. Peter Russet, who was a bit scared, sat up in bed and called for Ginger, and arter he 'ad called pretty near a dozen times Ginger 'arf woke up and asked 'im wot was the matter.

"Poor old Sam's dying," ses Peter.

"I know," ses Ginger, laying down and cuddling into the piller agin. "He told me just now. I've bid 'im good-bye."

Peter Russet asked 'im where his 'art was, but Ginger was asleep agin. Then Peter sat up in bed and tried to comfort Sam, and listened while 'e told 'im wot it felt like to die. How 'e was 'ot and cold all over, burning and shivering, with pains in his inside that he couldn't describe if 'e tried.

"It'll soon be over, Sam," ses Peter, kindly, "and all your troubles will be at an end. While me and Ginger are knocking about at sea trying to earn a crust o' bread to keep ourselves alive, you'll be quiet at peace."

Sam groaned. "I don't like being too quiet," he ses. "I was always one for a bit o' fun—innercent fun."

Peter coughed.

"You and Ginger 'ave been good pals," ses Sam; "it's hard to go and leave you."

"We've all got to go some time, Sam," ses Peter, soothing-like. "It's a wonder to me, with your 'abits, that you've lasted as long as you 'ave."

"My 'abits?" ses Sam, sitting up all of a sudden. "Why, you monkey-faced son of a sea-cook, for two pins I'd chuck you out of the winder."

"Don't talk like that on your death-bed," ses Peter, very shocked.

Sam was going to answer 'im sharp agin, but just then 'e got a pain which made 'im roll about on the bed and groan to such an extent that Ginger woke up agin and got out o' bed.

"Pore old Sam!" he ses, walking across the room and looking at 'im. "'Ave you got any pain anywhere?"

"*Pain?*" ses Sam. "Pain? I'm a mask o' pains all over."

Sam and Peter looked at 'im and shook their 'eds, and then they went a little way off and talked about 'im in whispers.

"He looks 'arf dead now," ses Peter, coming back and staring at 'im. "Let's take 'is clothes off, Ginger; it's more decent to die with 'em off."

"I think I'll 'ave a doctor," ses Sam, in a faint voice.

"You're past doctors, Sam," ses Ginger, in a kind voice.

"Better 'ave your last moments in peace," ses Peter, "and keep your money in your trouser-pockets."

"You go and fetch a doctor, you murderers," ses Sam, groaning, as Peter started to undress 'im. "Go on, else I'll haunt you with my ghost."

Ginger tried to talk to 'im about the sin o' wasting money, but it was no good, and, arter telling Peter wot to do in case Sam died afore he come back, he went off. He was gone about 'arf an hour, and then he come back with a sandy-aired young man with red eyelids and a black bag.

"Am I dying, sir?" ses Sam, arter the doctor 'ad listened to his lungs and his 'art and prodded 'im all over.

"We're all dying," ses the doctor, "only some of us'll go sooner than others."

"Will he last the day, sir?" ses Ginger.

The doctor looked at Sam agin, and Sam held 'is breath while 'e waited for him to answer. "Yes," ses the doctor at last, "if he does just wot I tell him and takes the medicine I send 'im."

He wasn't in the room 'arf an hour altogether, and he charged pore Sam a shilling; but wot 'urt Sam even more than that was to hear 'im go off downstairs whistling as cheerful as if there wasn't a dying man within a 'undred miles.

Peter and Ginger Dick took turns to be with Sam that morning, but in the arternoon the landlady's mother, an old lady who was almost as fat as Sam 'imself, came up to look arter 'im a bit. She sat on a chair by the side of 'is bed and tried to amuse 'im by telling 'im of all the death-beds she'd been at, and partikler of one man, the living image of Sam, who passed away in his sleep. It was past ten o'clock when Peter and Ginger came 'ome, but pore Sam was still awake and sitting up in bed holding 'is eyes open with his fingers.

Sam had another shilling's-worth the next day, and 'is medicine was changed for the worse. If anything he seemed a trifle better, but the landlady's mother, wot came up to nurse 'im agin, said it was a bad sign, and that people often brightened up just afore the end. She asked 'im whether 'e'd got a

fancy for any partikler spot to be buried in, and, talking about wot a lot o' people 'ad been buried alive, said she'd ask the doctor to cut Sam's 'ed off to prevent mistakes. She got



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quite annoyed with Sam for saying, supposing there *was* a mistake and he came round in the middle of it, how'd he feel? and said there was no satisfying some people, do wot you would.

At the end o' six days Sam was still alive and losing a shilling a day, to say nothing of buying 'is own beef-tea and such-like. Ginger said it was fair highway robbery, and tried to persuade Sam to go to a horsepittle, where he'd 'ave lovely nurses to wait on 'im hand and foot, and wouldn't keep 'is best friends awake of a night making 'orrible noises.

Sam didn't take kindly to the idea at fust, but as the doctor forbid 'im to get up, although he felt much better, and his money was wasting away, he gave way at last, and at seven o'clock one evening he sent Ginger off to fetch a cab to take 'im to the London Horsepittle. Sam said something about putting 'is clothes on, but Peter Russet said the horsepittle would be more likely to take him in if he went in the blanket and counterpane, and at last Sam give way. Ginger and Peter helped 'im downstairs, and the cabman laid hold o' one end o' the blanket as they

got to the street-door, under the idea that he was helping, and very near gave Sam another chill.

"Keep your hair on," he ses, as Sam started on 'im. "It'll be three-and-six for the fare, and I'll take the money now."

"You'll 'ave it when you get there," ses Ginger.

"I'll 'ave it now," ses the cabman. "I 'ad a fare die on the way once afore."

Ginger—who was mind-ing Sam's money for 'im because there wasn't a pocket in the counterpane—paid 'im, and the cab started. It jolted and rattled over the stones, but Sam said the air was doing 'im good. He kept 'is pluck up until they got close to the horsepittle, and then 'e got nervous. And 'e got more nervous when the cabman got down off 'is box and put his 'ed in at the winder and spoke to 'im.

"'Ave you got any partikler fancy for the London Horsepittle?" he ses.

"No," ses Sam. "Why?"

"Well, I s'pose it don't matter, if wot your mate ses is true—that you're dying," ses the cabman.

"Wot d'ye mean?" says Sam.

"Nothing," ses the cabman; "only, fust and last, I s'pose I've driven five 'undred people to that horsepittle, and only one ever came out agin—and he was smuggled out in a bread-basket."

Sam's flesh began to creep all over.

"It's a pity they don't 'ave the same rules as Charing Cross Horsepittle," ses the cabman. "The doctors 'ave five pounds apiece for every patient that gets well there, and the consequence is they ain't 'ad the blinds down for over five months."

"Drive me there," ses Sam.

"It's a long way," ses the cabman, shaking his 'ed, "and it 'ud cost you another 'arf-dollar. S'pose you give the London a try?"

"You drive to Charing Cross," ses Sam, telling Ginger to give 'im the 'arf-dollar. "And look sharp; these things ain't as warm as they might be."

The cabman turned his 'orse round and set off agin, singing. It stopped once or twice for a little while, and then it stopped

for quite a long time, and the cabman climbed down off 'is box and came to the winder agin.

"I'm sorry, mate," he ses, "but did you see me speak to that party just now?"

"The one you flicked with your whip?" ses Ginger.

"No; he was speaking to me," ses the cabman. "The last one, I mean."

"Wot about it?" ses Peter.

"He's the under-porter at the horsepittle," ses the cabman, spitting; "and he tells me that every bed is bung full, and two patients apiece in some of 'em."

"I don't mind sleeping two in a bed," ses Sam, who was very tired and cold.

"No," ses the cabman, looking at 'im; "but wot about the other one?"

"Well, wot's to be done?" ses Peter.

"You might go to Guy's," ses the cabman; "that's as good as Charing Cross."

"I b'lieve you're telling a pack o' lies," ses Ginger.

"Come out o' my cab," ses the cabman, very fierce. "Come on, all of you. Out you get."

Ginger and Peter was for getting out, but Sam wouldn't 'ear of it. It was bad enough being wrapped up in a blanket in a cab, without being turned out in 'is bare feet on the pavement, and at last Ginger apologized to the cabman by saying 'e supposed if he was a liar he couldn't 'elp it. The cabman collected three shillings more to go to Guy's horsepittle, and, arter a few words with Ginger, climbed up on 'is box and drove off agin.

They were all rather tired of the cab by this time, and, going over Waterloo Bridge, Ginger began to feel uncommon thirsty, and, leaning out of the winder, he told the cabman to pull up for a drink. He was so long about it that Ginger began to think he was bearing malice, but just as he was going to tell 'im agin the cab pulled up in a quiet little street opposite a small pub. Ginger Dick and Peter went in and 'ad something and brought one out for Sam. They 'ad another arter that, and Ginger, getting 'is good temper back agin, asked the cabman to 'ave one.

"Look lively about it, Ginger," ses Sam, very sharp. "You forget 'ow ill I am."

Ginger said they wouldn't be two seconds, and, the cabman calling a boy to mind his 'orse, they went inside. It was a quiet little place, but very cosy, and Sam, peeping out of the winder, could see all three of 'em leaning against the bar and making themselves comfortable. Twice he made the boy go in to

hurry them up, and all the notice they took was to go on at the boy for leaving the horse.

Pore old Sam sat there hugging 'imself in the bed-clo'es, and getting wilder and wilder. He couldn't get out of the cab, and 'e couldn't call to them for fear of people coming up and staring at 'im. Ginger, smiling all over with 'appiness, 'ad got a big cigar on and was pretending to pinch the barmaid's flowers, and Peter and the cabman was talking to some other chaps there. The only change Sam 'ad was when the boy walked the 'orse up and down the road.

He sat there for an hour and then 'e sent the boy in agin. This time the cabman lost 'is temper, and, arter chasing the boy up the road, gave a young feller twopence to take 'is place and promised 'im another twopence when he came out. Sam tried to get a word with 'im as 'e passed, but he wouldn't listen, and it was pretty near 'arf an hour later afore they all came out, talking and laughing.

"Now for the 'orsepittle," ses Ginger, opening the door. "Come on, Peter; don't keep pore old Sam waiting all night."

"'Arf a tic," ses the cabman, "'arf a tic; there's five shillings for waiting, fust."

"Wot?" ses Ginger, staring at 'im. "Arter giving you all them drinks?"

"Five shillings," ses the cabman; "two hours' waiting at half a crown an hour. That's the proper charge."

Ginger thought 'e was joking at fust, and when he found 'e wasn't he called 'im all the names he could think of, while Peter Russet stood by smiling and trying to think where 'e was and wot it was all about.

"Pay 'im the five bob, Ginger, and 'ave done with it," ses pore Sam, at last. "I shall never get to the horsepittle at this rate."

"Cert'inly not," ses Ginger, "not if we stay 'ere all night."

"Pay 'im the five bob," ses Sam, raising 'is voice; "it's my money."

"You keep quiet," ses Ginger, "and speak when you're spoken to. Get inside, Peter."

Peter, wot was standing by blinking and smiling, misunderstood 'im, and went back inside the pub. Ginger went arter 'im to fetch 'im back, and hearing a noise turned round and saw the cabman pulling Sam out o' the cab. He was just in time to shove 'im back agin, and for the next two or three minutes 'im and the cabman was 'ard at it. Sam was too busy holding 'is clothes on to do much, and twice the cabman got 'im 'arf out, and twice Ginger got him back agin and bumped 'im back in 'is seat and shut the

door. Then they both stopped and took breath.

"We'll see which gets tired fust," ses Ginger. "Hold the door inside, Sam."

The cabman looked at 'im, and then 'e climbed up on to 'is seat and, just as Ginger ran back for Peter Russet, drove off full speed.

Pore Sam leaned back in 'is seat panting and trying to wrap 'imself up better in the counterpane, which 'ad got torn in the struggle. They went through street arter street, and 'e was just thinking of a nice warm bed and a kind nurse listening to all 'is troubles when 'e found they was going over London Bridge.

"You've passed it," he ses, putting his 'ed out of the winder.

The cabman took no notice, and afore Sam could think wot to make of it they was in the Whitechapel Road, and arter that, although Sam kept putting his 'ed out of the winder and asking 'im questions, they kept going through a lot o' little back streets until 'e began to think the cabman 'ad lost 'is way. They stopped at last in a dark little road, in front of a brick wall, and then the cabman got down and opened a door and led his 'orse and cab into a yard.

"Do you call this Guy's Horsepittle?" ses Sam.

"Hullo!" ses the cabman. "Why, I thought I put you out o' my cab once."

"I'll give you five minutes to drive me to the horsepittle," ses Sam. "Arter that I shall go for the police."

"All right," ses the cabman, taking his 'orse out and leading it into a stable. "Mind you don't catch cold."

He lighted a lantern and began to look arter the 'orse, and pore Sam sat there getting colder and colder and wondering wot 'e was going to do.

"I shall give you in charge for kidnapping me," he calls out very loud.

"Kidnapping?" ses the cabman. "Who do you think wants to kidnap you? The gate's open, and you can go as soon as you like."

Sam climbed out of the cab, and holding up the counterpane walked across the yard in 'is bare feet to the stable. "Well, will you drive me 'ome?" he ses.

"Cert'inly not," ses the cabman; "I'm going 'ome myself now. It's time you went, 'cos I'm going to lock up."

"Ow can I go like this?" ses Sam, bursting with passion. "Ain't you got any sense?"

"Well, wot are you going to do?" ses the cabman, picking 'is teeth with a bit o' straw.

"Wot would you do if you was me?" ses Sam, calming down a bit and trying to speak civil.

"Well, if I was you," said the cabman, speaking very slow, "I should be more perlite to begin with; you accused me just

now — me, a 'ard-working man — o' kidnapping you."

"It was only my fun," ses Sam, very quick.

"I ain't kidnapping you, am I?" ses the cabman.

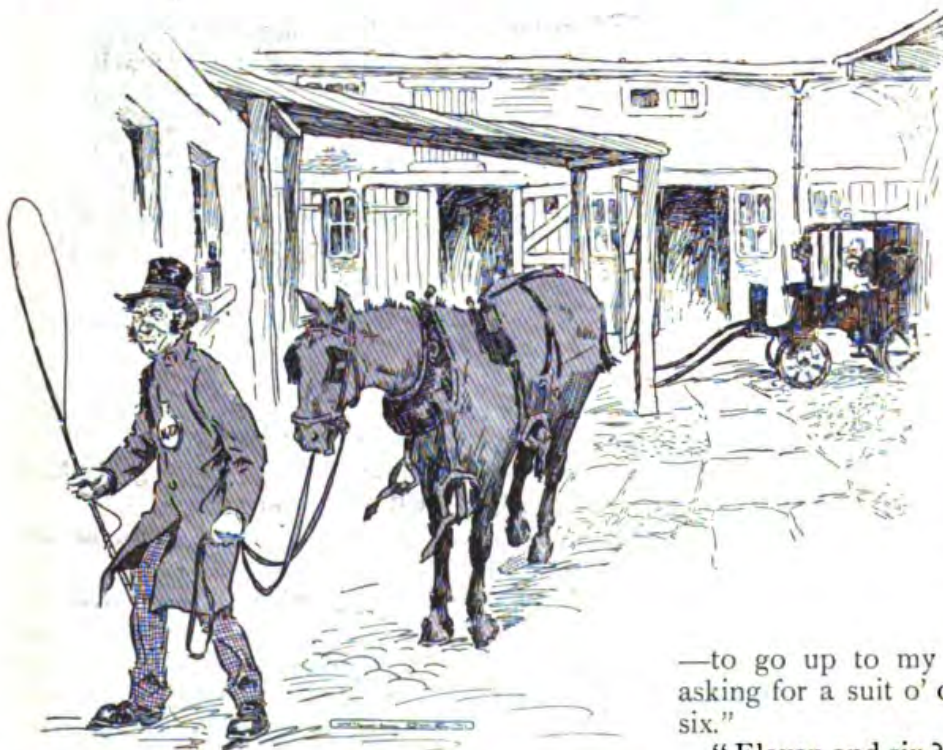
"Cert'inly not," ses Sam.

"Well, then," ses the cabman, "if I was you I should pay 'arf a crown for a night's lodging in this nice warm stable, and in the morning I should ask the man it belongs to—that's me

—to go up to my lodging with a letter, asking for a suit o' clothes and eleven-and-six."

"Eleven-and-six?" ses Sam, staring.

"Five bob for two hours' wait," ses the



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cabman, "four shillings for the drive here, and 'arf a crown for the stable. That's fair, ain't it?"

Sam said it was—as soon as he was able to speak—and then the cabman gave 'im a truss of straw to lay on and a rug to cover 'im up with. And then, calling 'imself a fool for being so tender-hearted, he left Sam the lantern, and locked the stable-door and went off.

It seemed like a 'orrid dream to Sam, and the only thing that comforted 'im was the fact that 'e felt much better. His illness seemed to 'ave gone, and arter hunting round the stable to see whether 'e could find anything to eat, 'e pulled the rug over 'im and went to sleep.

He was woke up at six o'clock in the morning by the cabman opening the door. There was a lovely smell o' hot tea from a tin he 'ad in one 'and, and a lovelier smell still from a plate o' bread and butter and bloaters in the other. Sam sniffed so 'ard that at last the cabman noticed it, and asked 'im whither he 'ad got a cold. When Sam explained he seemed to think a minute or two, and then 'e said that it was 'is breakfast, but Sam could 'ave it if 'e liked to make up the money to a pound.

"Take it or leave it," he ses, as Sam began to grumble.

Poor Sam was so 'ungry he took it, and it done 'im good. By the time he 'ad eaten it he felt as right as ninepence, and 'e took such a dislike to the cabman 'e could hardly be civil to 'im. And when the cabman spoke about the letter to Ginger Dick he spoke up and tried to bate 'im down to seven-and-six.

"You write that letter for a pound," ses the cabman, looking at 'im very fierce, "or else you can walk 'ome in your counterpane, with 'arf the boys in London follering you and trying to pull it off."

Sam rose 'im to seventeen-and-six, but it was all no good, and at last 'e wrote a letter to Ginger Dick, telling 'im to

give the cabman a suit of clothes and a pound.

"And look sharp about it," he ses. "I shall expect 'em in 'arf an hour."

"You'll 'ave 'em, if you're lucky, when I come back to change 'orses at four o'clock," ses the cabman. "D'ye think I've got nothing to do but fuss about arter you?"

"Why not drive me back in the cab?" ses Sam.

"'Cos I wasn't born yesterday," ses the cabman.

He winked at Sam, and then, whistling very cheerful, took his 'orse out and put it



"HE WAS WOKE UP AT SIX O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING BY THE CABMAN OPENING THE DOOR."

in the cab. He was so good-tempered that 'e got quite playful, and Sam 'ad to tell 'im that when 'e wanted to 'ave his legs tickled with a straw he'd let 'im know.

Some people can't take a 'int, and, as the cabman wouldn't be 'ave 'imself, Sam walked into a shed that was handy and pulled the door to, and he stayed there until he 'eard 'im go back to the stable for 'is rug. It was only a yard or two from the shed to the cab, and, 'ardly thinking wot he was doing, Sam nipped out and got into it and sat huddled up on the floor.

He sat there holding 'is breath and not daring to move until the cabman 'ad shut the gate and was driving off up the road, and then 'e got up on the seat and lolled back out of sight. The shops were just opening, the sun was shining, and Sam felt so well that 'e was thankful that 'e hadn't got to the horsepittle arter all.

The cab was going very slow, and two or three times the cabman 'arf pulled up and waved his whip at people wot he thought wanted a cab, but at last an old lady and gentleman, standing on the edge of the kerb with a big bag, held up their 'ands to 'im. The cab pulled in to the kerb, and the old gentleman 'ad just got hold of the door and was trying to open it when he caught sight of Sam.

"Why, you've got a fare," he ses.

"No, sir," ses the cabman.

"But I say you 'ave," ses the old gentleman.

The cabman climbed down off 'is box and looked in at the winder, and for over two minutes he couldn't speak a word. He just stood there looking at Sam and getting purpler and purpler about the face.

"Drive on, cabby," ses Sam. "Wot are you stopping for?"

The cabman tried to tell 'im, but just then a policeman came walking up to see wot was the matter, and 'e got on the box agin and drove off. Cabmen love policemen just about as much as cats love dogs, and he drove down two streets afore he stopped and got down agin to finish 'is remarks.

"Not so much talk, cabman," ses Sam, who was beginning to enjoy 'imself, "else I shall call the police."

"Are you coming out o' my cab?" ses the cabman, "or 'ave I got to put you out?"

"You put me out!" ses Sam, who 'ad tied 'is clothes up with string while 'e was in the stable, and 'ad got his arms free.

The cabman looked at 'im 'elpless for a moment, and then he got up and drove off agin. At fust Sam thought 'e was going to drive back to the stable, and he clenched 'is teeth and made up 'is mind to 'ave a fight for it. Then he saw that 'e was really being driven 'ome, and at last the cab pulled up in the next street to 'is lodgings, and the cabman, asking a man to give an eye to his 'orse, walked on with the letter. He was back agin in a few minutes, and Sam could see by 'is face that something had 'appened.

"They ain't been 'ome all night," he ses, sulky-like.

"Well, I shall 'ave to send the money on to you," ses Sam, in a off-hand way. "Unless you like to call for it."

"I'll call for it," ses the cabman, with a kind smile, as he took 'old of his 'orse and led it up to Sam's lodgings. "I know I can trust you, but it'll save you trouble. But s'pose he's been on the drink and lost the money?"

Sam got out and made a dash for the door, which 'appened to be open. "It won't make no difference," he ses.

"No difference?" ses the cabman, staring.

"Not to you, I mean," ses Sam, shutting the door very slow. "So long."



"SO LONG."