

Yarns from Captains' Logs.

I.

BY ALFRED T. STORY.



SAILORS' yarns are proverbially interesting. This arises largely from the element of mystery which envelops the whale's bath, as the ocean is named in the oldest English epic, and from the spirit of adventure which attaches to all who go down to the sea in ships.

It was the boldest and most daring spirits who in the earliest of early times ventured from land in the frail coracle or simple dug-out canoe. And yet these must have seemed but timid seafarers in comparison with the adventurous souls who yoked the wind to their tiny keels, and, emulating the strong-winged sea-birds, made the waves their home, and ploughed its furrows for their food. But what was the taking of a coracle or an ancient galley out to sea in comparison with the running of the passenger steamers that ply between Liverpool or Southampton and New York, or between London and the Australian Colonies or India?

Hence it is that the sailor's story is as full of charm as ever to the landsman, and that, if well told, it rarely palls upon the taste. It is not every seaman, however, who has got a yarn to tell like that of the Ancient Mariner or the Flying Dutchman, although there are still living numberless old salts who are ready to take their affidavit on the fact of having seen the redoubtable Mynheer's phantom ship.

Science and steam have effected much for those who do business in the great deep, but they have not yet killed the sea-serpent; neither have modern enlightenment and the School Board altogether exorcised the Spirit of Evil from the face of the waters—or, perhaps, we should say that they have not as yet quite enfranchised the mind of the sailor from the superstitions that formerly were as prevalent as the tang of the salt in the air we breathed, and that so largely influenced his actions and conduct. Of this the following incident is a witness. The amusing little drama was narrated to the writer by the wife of one of the actors therein, and though the event did not appear in the captain's log, that circumstance arose simply from the fact that he could not write.

On a dark and dismal night a few years ago a small coasting schooner was tossing about off the south-east coast. The wind whistled ominously, telling in its own unmis-

takable language of a rapidly approaching storm. The skipper, a seasoned old salt, felt, with a knowledge that had become instinct, that they were going to have a dirty night. He knew that there was not a moment to be lost if he would have his vessel put in readiness to meet the coming tempest. The first thing to be done was to get in the topsail, and he accordingly gave the order to a man standing near him:—

"Jack, go aloft and furl the tops'el!"

To the master's astonishment, the man he addressed, though a sailor of undoubted bravery, hesitated to obey. The skipper rapped out an oath, and bade him do as he was bid. But the sailor still held back, and when reproached for a coward and a poltroon, the poor fellow blurted out the reason of his extraordinary conduct by saying:—

"A darn't, sir. A've 'eard queer sounds in th' rigg'in' as a don't much care for. It strikes me there's somethin' unnat'ral 'bout it."

"Rubbish!" cried the skipper, now well-nigh boiling with rage. "Do as I tell ye this moment, or it'll be the worse for ye."

Jack, fearing the rough treatment he would inevitably bring down upon himself if he persisted in his disobedience, made up his mind to dare the terror that lurked in the pitch darkness enshrouding the rigging, and began to ascend towards the topsail yard. But he had not gone far aloft ere he came to a sudden stop. Then with a precipitancy which he had not shown in going up, he tumbled down to the deck again.

"Now, then, you lubber! What's taken possession of you now?" demanded the skipper.

"Oh, Cap'n!" cried the terrified fellow, as soon as his agitation would permit him to speak, "the bad un's in the rigg'in'. I ain't agoin' t' furl that ere tops'el with 'im a lurkin' there."

The skipper ground his teeth, but vouchsafed not a word to the scared man. With a look of contempt he pushed past him, and commanded a young Irishman to perform the task, adding: "And look smart about it, d'ye hear?"

"Ay, ay, skipper!" responded Paddy, who, glad to show his superiority to danger and fear, swung himself aloft with the alacrity of a monkey. But no sooner had he reached the top than, like Jack, Paddy

became transfixed with horror. Not another step did he venture to take, but instead went helter-skelter downwards, reaching the deck even quicker than his shipmate had done. Nor did he attempt to hide the white feather either.

"Och, sure!" cried he, "an' if it ain't the foul fiend himself that has got into the tops'el."

"Get along, you cowardly lubber!" cried the incensed skipper.

"Faix, mas-ther, but I heerd him say, 'Rough wea-

ther, mates,' as plain as plain could be—an' as fur furling the sail in face of that imp of sin—you may do it yourself, for, begor, I won't."

"Fiend or no fiend," shouted the captain, who was now in a towering rage, "I'll have that topsail down"; and seizing a knife, he proceeded to climb the rigging.

But no sooner had he reached the top than he received, in a harsh, rancous voice, the same greeting as his men:—

"Rough weather, mates—rough weather!"

Needless to say that, like Jack and Paddy, the skipper was terribly scared; and if he did not get down to the deck as quickly as they, it was because he was less supple in the joints, not because his hurry was less.

There was now no doubt as to the ship being, for the time, the abode of a demon. The only question was what to do with the schooner with such an unwelcome visitor on board. A hasty council of war was held, with the resulting unanimous feeling that their prospects of ever seeing daylight again were very small. All were of opinion that the



"NOW, THEN, YOU LUBBER! WHAT'S TAKEN POSSESSION OF YOU?"

only chance they had lay in being very good, and doing nothing to anger the Evil One. Accordingly they steered the ship to the best of their ability, and kept very quiet, fearing all the time lest the grim terror in the rigging should lead them to destruction upon a treacherous

sand, or against some sunken rock.

In this state of anxiety and fear they passed the night; and gladly did they hail the first faint gleam of returning day, which also brought some mitigation of the tempest. Then the eyes of the crew were strained

as they gazed up into the rigging to see if perchance the demon was still there. Nothing as yet could they descry, for the mist continued to cling about the masts and shrouds; but the Irish sailor vowed that he could make out a pair of eyes a-gleam near the mast-head; and there was no mistake about the voice that suddenly cried down to them, making Jack almost jump overboard with fright:—

"Now, then, you lubbers, belay, there, belay!"

Everybody expected next moment to see the grim monster show himself in their midst. But behold their surprise when, instead, they saw a large, handsome parrot fly down into the top and salute them with something very much like a laugh. The accomplished bird had flown into the schooner's rigging from a passing vessel, and was thus, no doubt innocently enough, the cause of a night of heart-quaking and anxiety to a whole crew.

One could not have got that story from the good skipper himself, for, like the rest of us, the sailor is reluctant to let out that which



"NOW, THEN, YOU LUBBERS, BELAY, THERE, BELAY!"

tells against himself. Thus it often happens that Jack's best yarns are rounded off with a "But you must not tell that," or it may be that you may only tell it with a variation.

But such is not the case in the following experiences taken from the lips of masters of some of the largest vessels belonging to our mercantile marine. They are selected with a view to show what are the kind of men who hold command in our moving cities of the deep, what are the perils they go through, and what the training they receive in order to be able to cope with them.

It is fitting to begin with the Commodore of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's fleet, Captain William Andrews, master of the *Caledonia*, the newest and largest of the vessels that carry the P. and O. flag, and capable of accommodating eight hundred passengers. It is interesting to record that Captain Andrews ran away to sea when he was sixteen years of age—the more so because lads do not do such things now, and not many girls. His first voyage was to the West Indies, with a hard master, and plenty of salt junk, and little else, to eat. He lived through it, however, gained his experience by

years of hard work in sailing ships, then joined the P. and O. and became a "steam-sailor." Much of his early years in the service was spent in the India and China seas. That was in the pre-Suez Canal days, when the

company gave extra pay to those who worked on "the other side," that is, on the Red Sea side of the Isthmus of Suez.

Captain Andrews tells an interesting experience of his voyage, as a passenger, from Singapore to Hong Kong, to take his first command. This

was in December, 1864:—

"In the middle of the China Seas a typhoon came on"—I tell the story, as nearly as possible, in the captain's own words. "It was out of season, the regular season for such cyclonic disturbances being July, August, and September,

and came on unexpectedly. We got into the centre of it and tried to run back, but it overtook us; and there we were, with the wind now coming in a gust from this quarter and now from that, so that you did not know how to take it, and the sea jumping up all about you, with no regular motion as at ordinary times. I volunteered to assist at the helm, which it took two or three men to hold, it tugged so terribly at times, owing to the heavy seas striking the rudder. Big seas were coming over us all the time, and again and again the men assisting me were thrown down, and I had to sustain the tug of the helm alone. You see, I was bigger than they were, and at that time very powerful."

A query at this point elicited the fact that Captain Andrews's height is 5ft. 10in., that he is 47in. round the chest, and that his present weight is 16st.

He went on: "We stood it for sixteen hours, and then the hurricane moderated. When it was over, and we were going on again all right, we came in sight of a steamer with her foremast gone right down to the deck. She had lost her mainmast, too, and a lot of spars. We spoke her, but she did not want any assistance.

"After the storm, during the whole of which—a stretch of sixteen hours—I was at the helm and wet through to the skin, I got into a hot bath to prevent me from taking cold, and then went to bed. The next day, when I awoke, I was all over black marks. Wherever there had been a strain of the muscles, through holding on to the helm—and it was sometimes as much as I could do to keep my grip—there was a black mark, just as though I had been struck a heavy blow. I shall never forget that typhoon, coming as it did in the fine season. It was one of those experiences which, when you are in the midst of it, makes you say to yourself: 'If I get out of this, I will quit the sea'; but you soon forget that feeling when the storm is past. For some years after that I was chiefly in the China Seas, where I had command of a vessel."

Two of the captain's experiences in Celestial waters are worth recording. The P. and O. boats are largely manned by Lascars—a name commonly applied to Hindu, Malay, and even negro sailors, and sometimes—especially those engaged in the China trade—to Chinese. On one occasion Captain Andrews had shipped a lot of Celestials, and he was afraid, from their looks, that some of them were no good, and bent on mischief. There had been cases of Chinese shipping in this way, and then, when the vessel had reached a certain point down the river, giving a signal to piratical junks lying hidden in creeks, and so making a simultaneous attack on the ship and capturing her.

"Not liking the looks of the fellows," said the captain, "and thinking there might be some pirates among them, I put a revolver in my pocket, gave one to each of my officers, and then went down to the engineers and handed one to each of them, and told them to be on their guard. Then to foil the wretches, in case any mischief was to the fore, I ran out of sight of land, knowing that they could do nothing if they lost their bearings. It is usual in going down the Canton River to keep in sight of land; but it

is easy to run ten or twelve miles out, and so lose it, and this I did. Nothing happened, and my doubts of the Chinese may have been unfounded; but from my knowledge of the Celestials and their ways, I hold my precaution to have been wise.

"Talking about pirates," continued Captain Andrews, "I once witnessed a funny sight, off the Chinese coast, which never was explained. We heard guns firing, and then saw a lot of junks letting fly at each other like mad. They were going it hot and strong with gingals; but, as it was no affair of mine, and as a stray shot from a gingal would have gone through the hull of my vessel (our boats not being made to stand gun-shot), I gave them a wide berth. And whether it was junks of the Chinese navy attacking pirates, or pirates attacking naval junks or merchant vessels, and what was the result of the action, I never heard. I daresay it was much the same, which ever side beat."

But Captain Andrews's most curious and interesting story was the following. It is connected with the navigation of the Hooghly, perhaps the most difficult in the world, chiefly because of the changing sandbanks in its course. These are so variable that fresh soundings have to be taken every day. Calcutta is nearly ninety miles up the

river, which is fifteen miles wide at its mouth. The incident occurred in November, 1856, Captain Andrews being then in command of the *Oriental*, one of the P. and O. Company's steamers.

"It was the fine season," said the captain, "and we were just coming in from sea, bound for Calcutta. We had reached Sandheads all right, and the men were busy aloft scraping the masts and polishing-up in readiness for harbour. Suddenly, when a little north of Saugor Island, a man aloft sang out that there was a white man in the water. I gave a look through the glass, and there, sure enough, I saw a white man splashing about amid the waves a little way ahead of us. There was no land or any ship near. We had passed the lightship an hour before. Lowering a boat, we quickly brought



CAPTAIN WILLIAM ANDREWS, OF THE "CALEDONIA."
From a Photo. by Fradell & Young.



"LOWERING A BOAT, WE QUICKLY BROUGHT HIM ALONGSIDE."

him alongside and assisted him up the ladder ; for he was so exhausted that he could hardly move a limb, and all that he could say was, ' *Tubal Cain* lost and all hands.' He turned out to be a pilot belonging to the Calcutta pilot service, and had been in the water sixteen hours. He was put to bed and attended to by the doctor, and we went on our way up the river. When passing some dangerous rocks just before reaching Hooghly Bight, called 'The James and Mary,' we saw a sailing vessel—a barque—capsized, and a lot of men in the rigging and on the rocks. We lowered boats and went to their assistance, though there was a tremendous tide running. The waves were literally mountains high, and we had great difficulty in rescuing them, some of them being on the rocks and almost covered with water, while others were on the ends of the yards, singing out, 'Come here! Come here! Take us off!' By pulling up on the eddy we managed to get near enough to take off eleven of the crew.

"Just then I saw a tug-boat plying about them, and as my ship fired a gun and I was obliged to go on board, I transferred the rescued crew to the tug, as most of them were without clothing, and so not in a fit state to go on board my vessel, which carried passengers. I found that the tug had tried to rescue the men with her boat, but it had capsized and its crew been drowned.

"It turned out that this vessel had gone in at the same time as the *Tubal Cain* ; but the *Tubal Cain* had struck on a reef or on a

sandbank, while the *Alma* had passed in as far as the Bight. There the *Alma* came to grief, while the *Tubal Cain*, after a time, floated off.

"The *Tubal Cain* belonged to the East India Company, and had a Lascar crew with English officers. When it struck, the pilot told them that, when the flood-tide came, it would roll over and all would be lost. He advised, therefore, taking to the boats. This they did, the captain, the pilot, the cook, and their one passenger taking to one boat, and the officers to the other. The captain's boat capsized, however, and all hands were lost except the pilot.

"Meanwhile, the Lascars, left to perish on the *Tubal Cain*, clung to the ship, expecting, when the flood-tide came, to be drowned like rats. But when the tide rose, the ship, instead of rolling over, simply floated and came off the rocks, and the Serang (as the head of a Lascar crew is called) found, when she was in deep water, that she was but little damaged and could be navigated up to Calcutta.

"Early in the morning came a steamer which was taking out pilots to Sandheads. The tug which had on board the crew of the *Alma* also put in an appearance, as well as the boat with the officers of the *Tubal Cain*, they having weathered the gale. The latter wanted to take charge of the ship, but the Serang would not let them. He said they had deserted the ship in one boat, and the captain and the pilot in another, and now he and the crew were going to take the ship up

to Calcutta without them. And this they did, accepting, however, the services of a pilot. The officers went up on board the tug."

Captain Duncan, of the South African Royal Mail steamer *Norham Castle*, has stirring yarns to tell of dangers encountered and perils gone through, amongst others of his only shipwreck, when, through following an accidental shore light, instead of the proper beacon, a Liverpool pilot ran them ashore on the north side of the Mersey. The stem of the steamer was deeply embedded and held fast in the sand, while the working of the tide washed away all support from under the stern. "And," said the captain (though not then master), "she snapped in two amidships just as you would snap a stick across your knee." But Captain Duncan's most interesting story is that relating to the rescue of the crew of the sailing ship *Fascadale*, in February, 1895. On the 7th of that month, early in the morning, as the *Norham Castle* was about three miles from land, off the mouth of the Impenjali River, on the borders of Natal and Pondoland, proceeding north, the look-out man descried a large four-masted vessel lying broadside on a reef about a mile from shore, with a list to seaward, while the breakers were

dashing over its hull, sweeping the deck, and breaking in foam half-mast high. The sun was shining brightly at the time, and with the aid of a glass a number of men could be seen clinging to the rigging, and making frantic signs of distress. The fore and main masts had lower square sails set; but the mizzenmast had gone by the board, and only the bare rigging remained on the jigger.

As the wind caught the sails, the vessel heeled over shorewards; but the backwash of the breakers carried the hull to its first position. The Mozambique current, which tends southwards along this coast, was at the time running with great rapidity, and as the wind was driving inshore, causing a heavy ground-swell, which was breaking on shore in gigantic rollers, Captain Duncan deemed it imprudent to venture too close to the wreck.

He therefore slowed down and sent off two lifeboats to the rescue, one of them being under the command of the chief officer, Mr. Frank Whitehead. The wreck was about three miles away, and the men had considerable difficulty in rowing against the heavy swell. Before they could reach the ill-fated vessel she parted amidships, leaving a number of men clinging to the rigging of the jigger, while several others had sought refuge on the jibboom. As the majority of the shipwrecked sailors were on the after-part of the ship, Mr. Whitehead first turned his attention to them; but the sea was running so high, and the breakers were sweeping with such violence over the poop, that he saw there was imminent danger of the boat being carried forward by the waves and dashed to pieces against the hull. Several attempts were

made to cast a line to the shipwrecked men, so that communications might be established between them and Mr. Whitehead's boat; but it fell short of the mark and was carried away by the current.

In the hopelessness of effecting the rescue of the men in this way, the first officer took a gallant resolve. Throwing off his sea-boots and upper garments, he fixed the end of a log-line round his body, and plunging into the water, he struck out boldly for the wreck. It required

both nerve and muscle to contend with the foaming surge, especially as by this time the sky had become overcast, and a squall, accompanied by torrents of rain, had set in.

Meanwhile one of the young apprentices on board the wreck—a boy named Ferris—decided to assist Mr. Whitehead in carrying out his plan. With the aid of some of his mates he tied a small rope round his waist, sprang into the sea, and bravely swam towards Mr. Whitehead. It was an exciting moment alike for the shipwrecked sailors, whose lives depended on the success of these two dauntless swimmers, and for the boat's crew, who saw their chief officer thus risking his life. For some time the contest seemed doubtful; but at length, half-swimming, half-floating, the swimmers came within reach of each



CAPTAIN DUNCAN, OF THE "NORHAM CASTLE."
From a Photo. by W. E. Wright, Forest Gate.



"THE SWIMMERS CAME WITHIN REACH OF EACH OTHER."

other; and there in the water, between the wrecked ship and the lifeboat, the two lines were tied together, and communications established. Mr. Whitehead and the plucky young 'prentice were drawn aboard the lifeboat, and a strong rope was sent on to the stranded wreck. By means of it the survivors were one by one brought to the lifeboat — the apprentice boys first and then the men, until the whole of the men on the poop, except the captain, were rescued. The captain refused to leave his ship until every man had been saved, and there were still five or six men on the jibboom, whom the other boat's crew were doing their best to save, though vainly. Under the circumstances, and for the reason that the captain was so badly bruised by the wreckage that was rushing about the quarter-deck as to be almost helpless, Mr. Whitehead, although much exhausted by his previous efforts, once more plunged into the sea, swam to the wreck, and tying a rope about himself and the captain, they were both drawn to the lifeboat. Meanwhile the men on the other part of the wreck, all except one, had been rescued by some Kaffirs on shore, under the direction of a colonist.

Captain Duncan tells another incident of his career with the Castle Line, whereby he possibly averted a great disaster. It occurred some years ago when he was master of the *Ionic*, one of the New Zealand line of steamers, and 400ft. in length. When 900 miles from Cape Town he picked up

a vessel, which was lying helpless upon the water with a broken shaft. The *Ionic* was on the way to England when the accident occurred. "All told," said Captain Duncan, "she had 280 persons on board. The broken shaft had knocked a hole in one of her plates, and there was nothing but the plates of the bulkhead to save her. She was just on the other side of the line of navigation, and was drifting north at the rate of fifteen miles a day. Two or three days more and she would have been out of the track of vessels going north and south, and no steamer would have been likely to see her. We towed her back to Cape Town."

Captain Harris, of the *Doune Castle*, another of Messrs. Donald Currie's magnificent vessels, tells a similar stirring incident of coming to the rescue of a passenger steamer with a broken shaft. The *Doune Castle* left Southampton on December 8th. On Sunday, December 16th, off Cape Verd, the look-out reported a two-funnel steamer to the south-west which seemed to be disabled. Captain Harris concluded that it must be the *Moor Castle*, of the Union Line, the mail boat which had sailed just before the *Doune Castle*, and so it turned out. "She told us by signal," said Captain Harris, "that her machinery had broken down, and asked us to steam into the anchorage of Goree and take off the Christmas mails for the Cape. Goree is a little south of the promontory that forms Cape Verd, and there is a very safe anchorage. We went there

and transferred from the *Moor Castle* 500 large boxes of mails, 120 cases of parcel post, and 70 tons of periodicals by means of boats. It took us from five o'clock on Sunday afternoon until 3.30 on Monday morning, working all night without intermission. We got into Cape Town on the morning of the 27th. The passengers had to wait and be passed on to Cape Town by the next steamer."

A more startling incident in Captain Harris's experience on the same ship was the following, which happened three or four years ago.

"We were steaming on somewhere near the Equator," said Captain Harris, "when, about ten o'clock at night, there came on a summer shower, with thunder and lightning. This came on very suddenly, but it was not particularly heavy. It was my bed-time; but before going to my room I went up to the officer on the bridge to see that all was right. As I was walking down the bridge ladder again, there was a terrific crash. It was completely stunning, and nobody could tell what had happened. To me it was more like the crashing of a salvo of artillery than anything else.

It was accompanied by a bright blue flame, which for a moment almost blinded us. At the same time something brilliant struck the foremast like a ball of fire, which afterwards went off with a hissing noise into the sea. Many of the passengers and officers thought the boilers had burst. The passengers came running out of their beds half-dressed, and for a moment it seemed as if we were going to have a panic; but I put my head down the skylight and told the steward to say that everything was all right. The explanation of the matter was that a thunderbolt had struck the vessel. The strange part of the affair was that the next morning, when

I came to correct the errors of my own compass, I found that the ship's compass had deviated half a point. The compasses gradually settled back, however, and by the time we reached Cape Town they were in their normal position."

When Captain Harris was a young man—little over nineteen years of age, in fact—he had a most thrilling experience—such an experience, in fact, as does not occur to one man in ten thousand. I will again let him tell it in his own way.

"It was in August, 1864, at the close of the American Civil War," said he. "I was second officer of an American brig called the *Rebecca Shepherd*, of about 500 tons, bound from Moulmein, in Burma, to Falmouth for orders. After passing down the Indian Seas, we were somewhere off the south coast of Madagascar, a hundred or two miles away quite. It was a dead calm; the sea was like glass; and the brig was literally lying 'like a painted ship upon a painted ocean.' We were loaded with teak-wood timber, and the water came to within a few feet of the deck. It had been my forenoon watch from eight till twelve. The first mate came

up to relieve me at twelve o'clock, and, as you may imagine, in a sailing vessel like that, with no ladies on board, we were not fastidious about our dress. I had on a pair of white duck trousers, a shirt, and no shoes or stockings. I said to the mate when he came up to relieve me, 'What a frightful day! I should like to jump overboard and have a swim.' He said: 'You dare not.' I said: 'Will you bet me a sovereign on it?' He said 'Yes.' No sooner said than done. I accepted the bet, threw my cap on the deck, and took a plunge overboard. The water was beautifully refreshing, neither too cold nor too warm. I swam about in the neighbourhood of the ship for some time, enjoying



CAPTAIN HARRIS, OF THE "DOUNE CASTLE."
From a Photo. by W. E. Wright, Forest Gate.

myself immensely. Suddenly, as I was about thirty yards from the ship, the mate shouted, 'Come on board—quick!' I wondered whether a breeze had sprung up and the vessel was sailing away, or anything, and swam towards the ship. But the mate still continued to shout, 'Come on board as quickly as you can—faster! faster!' I did not realize then what was the matter. But when I saw the ship's carpenter come to the brig's side with a sharp-pointed boat-hook in his hand, it suddenly struck me what was wrong. I glanced over my shoulder as I swam, and could see a dark, black object on

for my feelings. The men threw two ropes from the ship's side, about a foot apart, and still they cried, 'Faster! Faster!' I did my best, as you may imagine. I reached the ship, seized hold of the two ropes, and they fairly jerked me out of the water and on to the deck as if I had been a fish at the end of a line. At the same time the carpenter made a jab down into the water with the sharp-pointed boat-hook, and just as the shark—for it was a huge shark that I saw over my shoulder—just as the shark turned over to make a snap at me, he got the boat-



"THE SHARK TURNED OVER TO MAKE A SNAP AT ME."

the surface of the water, coming along like a streak of lightning. I knew what it was, and I did not want any more urging. I made two or three desperate strokes, and went ahead at a great pace. I was a good swimmer in those days, and could swim as few can; but I did not go along fast enough

hook fair into his jaw. The men told me afterwards that the shark did not miss me by more than two inches—which was a near enough shave. The moral of the yarn is that I have never jumped overboard from that day to this, a period of more than thirty years."

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II.

BY ALFRED T. STORY.



HE next incident I shall give is of a fire at sea. The narrator is Captain George William Banks, of the *Waikato*, one of the fleet of the New Zealand Shipping Company. At the time referred to, 1883, he was third officer of the *Piako*, which was a sailing vessel of 1,075 tons, engaged in the emigration trade, and had for master, Captain W. B. Boyd, the first and second officers being respectively Mr. Holbeach and Mr. Hazlewood.

"We left London on the 10th of October," said Captain Banks, "and took our emigrants on board at Plymouth. There were 317 of them in all, besides a crew of forty. All went well until we had reached about 4deg. south of the Equator, our west longitude being 30deg. The weather was very calm, and, as you may imagine so near the Equator, exceedingly hot. It was a Sunday — I remember it as though it were but yesterday. We had a clergyman amongst the passengers, and he had been reading service under an awning aft, when one of the crew going for'a'd noticed smoke rising from the fore-hatch. You may imagine the consternation there soon was on board among the passengers. We tried at first to keep the fact of the fire from them, but this could not be done long: for when we raised the hatch to try and get at the fire, the flames leapt out of the hold to a height of fifteen or twenty feet. We poured in water to try to subdue the flames, but in vain,

and we were compelled to batten down the hatch again. That was all that we could do to keep the fire under subjection.

"It is impossible for me to give you a consecutive narrative of what occurred. We never knew what caused the fire. We had a general cargo, and from the way it was packed we could not get near the fire. All we could do was to pour in water fore and aft to keep it from spreading as much as possible. By that means we checked the progress of the fire to some extent, but it gradually spread, nevertheless.

"When Captain Boyd perceived that we could not subdue the fire, he had all the boats lowered and as many of the passengers put into them as they would hold, the women and children being sent down first. It was at this point that some of the passengers behaved the worst, and it required all the captain's coolness and determination to prevent a

panic. Amongst the emigrants were 160 single men, and a lot of them, when they saw the boats being lowered, tried to rush them. Things looked nasty for a minute or two; but the crew were all staunch and cool to a man, and with the assistance of the married men and the better-behaved of the unmarried, they soon put the unruly ones to the right-about. But while the rush lasted it was pitiful to see the terror of the women—especially the mothers, who would hold out their babies to the captain and the officers, imploring them to save the little ones.

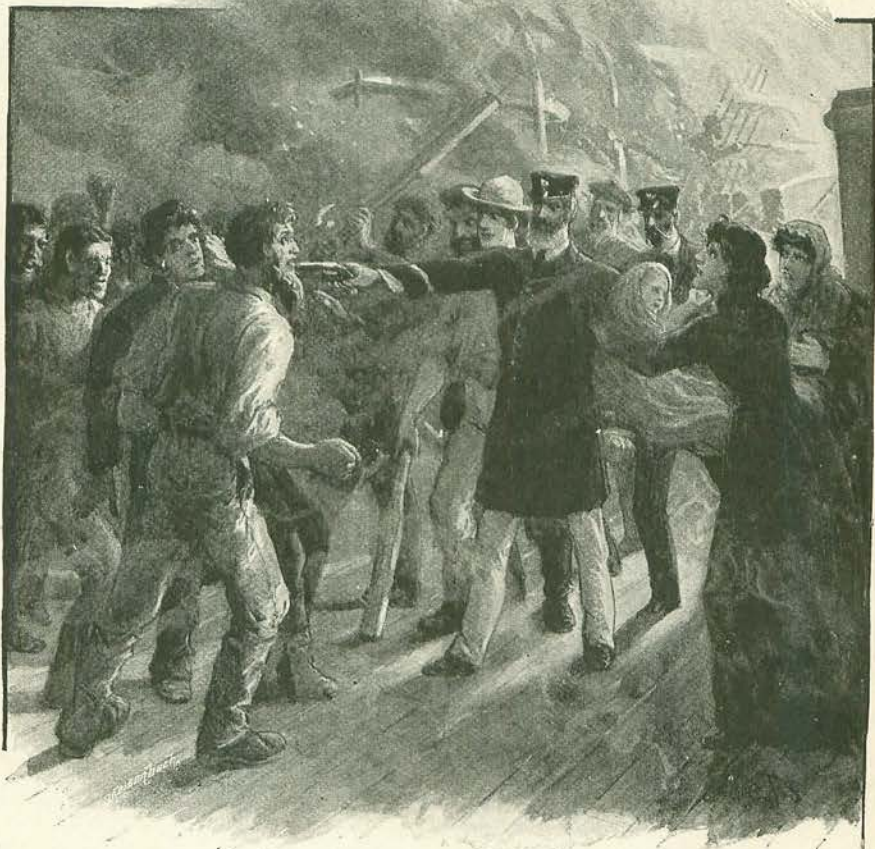
"The boats were towed alongside the ship, which we sailed as quickly as we could in



CAPTAIN BANKS, OF THE "WAIKATO."
From a Photo. by G. West & Son, Southsea.

the direction of the nearest port. An officer was appointed for each boat, and they were given their courses and distance for Pernambuco, in case the *Piako* were destroyed and the boats had to part company. We, at the same time, placed look-outs at the mast-

men to vomit a black, slime-like stuff. At the same time the heat was so great that when the vessel made a lurch in sailing, the water seethed from her side. Of course, all



"THINGS LOOKED NASTY FOR A MINUTE OR TWO."

heads to see if they could discover another ship to help us. About four o'clock on Monday, the day after the fire broke out, a vessel was reported on the starboard bow, which turned out to be the barque *Loch Doon*. We immediately bore up for her. She was on the lee bow, as we were in the south-east trades.

"All this time the smoke and stench from the burning stores below, together with the paint and oil, were so bad that the crew had to put their heads over the ship's rails to get a breath of fresh air. The smoke came up in volumes through the crevices of the planking—thick, black smoke, that caused the

while we had been letting water into the hold, and opening valves—to try to get at the fire—all over the place.

"About three hours after sighting the *Loch Doon*, she came close enough to render assistance. We told them we were on fire, which they had been pretty sure of before, on account of the smoke they saw rising from the *Piako*. We got all the emigrants on board the barque, with the exception of a few single men who volunteered to stand by and help the crew. The *Loch Doon* was loaded with grain, and had several feet of spare room between the upper deck beams and the cargo, so the emigrants

camped out on the top of the grain. After the transfer of the passengers was finished, the *Loch Doon* and the burning ship both made sail for Pernambuco, where they arrived the next day, the *Piako* four hours before the barque. All this time we had had nothing to eat but raw salt pork and biscuits, and the water was black with the smoke.

"But with our arrival at Pernambuco our adventures were by no means over. Small-pox turned out to be raging so violently there that we could have no communication with the town. People were dying at the rate of 400 a day. When Captain Boyd discovered this, he hired an island about seven miles up the river, called Cocoa-nut Island, on account of being thickly covered in the centre with cocoa-nut trees. The ship's doctor and I were sent in charge of the emigrants, who were carried up to the island in barges. When we landed, the thermometer was standing at 92deg. in the shade, and there were four miles to walk over burning sand to reach the camping-ground. The horror of those four miles was something indescribable. Many of the people—especially the poor women—fell down fainting upon the sand.

"When we got to the camping-ground we had to build huts of bamboo canes and leaves. There was an old barn there, and that was all, and in it we had to lock up the unmarried women of nights. There were eighty of them, and the 160 unmarried men made love to them all the day, wandering among the beautiful cocoa-nut groves. Here we camped out for nine weeks, food being sent up to us in boats from Pernambuco; and if the life was not altogether idyllic, it was pleasant enough at times.

"While we were stationed on the island, Captain Boyd and the other officers found it necessary to scuttle the ship in order to put the fire out. She went down under water all but the poop deck. When the fire was quite subdued, she was, after several vain attempts, finally successfully floated. We then got out all the burnt cargo, which was sold by auction. Nearly all the emigrants' luggage was burnt, and many of the poor people landed with scarcely anything on. There was little damage done to the *Piako*, however, beyond the destruction of the cargo, the galley, and the donkey engine, so that by the time we had got fresh stores from England, she was ready to proceed on her voyage, and we finally reached New Zealand two months behind time. In spite of all the hardships and adventures the emigrants went through, not a life was lost, except that of a baby, which,

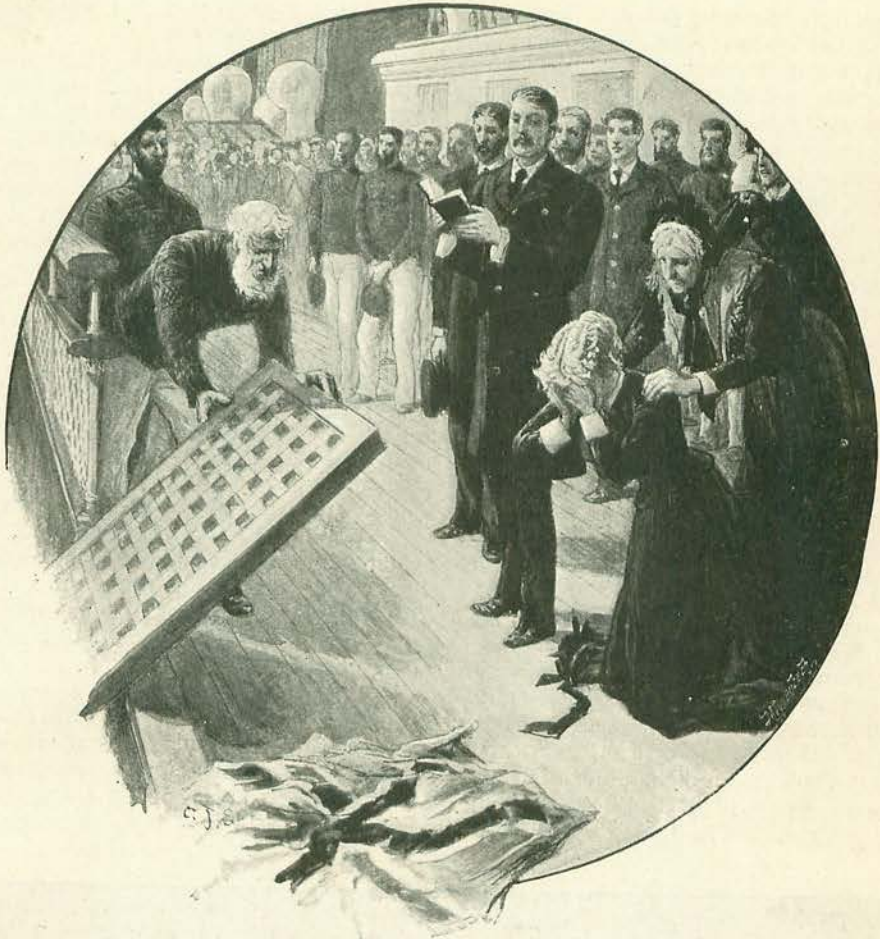
however, died from the effects of violet powder, not from the effects of the voyage."

Speaking of the death of a child on the voyage recalls to mind an incident in the experience of Captain R. J. Cringle, of the *Unfuli*, whose sea-monster story was published in a previous number.* "I have carried some hundreds of passengers between Natal and England," said he, "but I never had a death amongst them until last voyage, coming home, when we lost a little boy six years of age. To bury that little fellow was the most trying ordeal that I ever went through. He was a bright little boy, and a favourite with everybody; but he took bronchitis, and though the doctor did everything he could for him, he died when we were about 500 miles south of the Canary Isles. You know, of course, that it is not only a captain's duty to conduct service on board ship on Sundays, but also to read the burial service over anyone who dies during the voyage. As I have said, this was the first time I had been called upon to conduct a funeral service, and I need not say that I sincerely hope it may be the last. It is always a solemn thing to take part in the service over the dead, but away on the ocean it seems doubly impressive. Unlike burial on land, where you can set up a stone by which you can always identify the spot where the beloved one lies buried, at sea you commit the body to the deep in the midst of a world of waters. In an instant it disappears, and there is nothing to mark the spot thenceforth and for ever. This is the trying time. When the reading of the funeral service commenced, the engines slowed down until we came to the point where the body is cast overboard, when the ship stopped.

"Up to this point I got on fairly well, although I heard the sobs of the poor mother; but when the body—wrapped neatly in its canvas covering, and weighted to make it sink—was dropped overboard, her cries were such as to melt the heart of a stone. After that the funeral service was the shortest on record. I could not go on.

"As soon as the body was put overboard the ship began to move again, very slowly at first, then gradually faster, until the engines were going at their usual speed, and the business of the vessel went on as before. But the incident cast a gloom over the ship for days." Captain Cringle added: "Another time I might read the service with less feeling; but I should not like the mother to be there."

* August, 1895.



"THE BURIAL AT SEA."

Amongst the many striking yarns which it has been my good fortune to listen to of late years, few left a deeper impression than one told me by the skipper of a carrier steamer, plying between London and the North Sea fishing fleets. The carrier is the boat that collects the fish from the trawlers and brings it to market. There are a number of boats engaged in this service. As soon as they have discharged their load of fish, they start off back to the fleet. They are usually away six days; but if the weather has been at all rough, the trawlers are liable to get dispersed; it then takes the carriers some time to hunt them up and relieve them of their fish. In these cases they may be out as long as nine days. But as soon as they have got their full complement of fish, they return to London full speed.

My friend the captain of the carrier was a rough, unsophisticated specimen—a perfect

sea-dog in his way. Big, burly, broad-shouldered, his face the picture of rude health and good humour, he seemed to be the chosen nursling of the elements amidst which he had spent most of his time. He was occupying one seat—and that hardly sufficient for his large frame—of a third-class compartment in a night train from Liverpool. After enjoying a pretty long nap, he opened a pair of bright, laughing blue eyes, and manifested a desire to enter into conversation. A word or two brought out a flood of entertaining autobiographical and descriptive talk, as fresh as it was original. He had been engaged for years in connection with one of the North Sea fishing companies, and of late had commanded a carrier bringing the fish to Shadwell. But for some reason or other he had recently decided to have a change, and so had been on a trip to the Mediterranean on a fruit boat. He was now going back to his old job.

"Taint no blooming m'lasses, that ain't—bringing the fish to market," said he. "It's all very well if th' weather's fine. Then you know pretty well where you'll find the fishing smacks, and you can get their fish, fill up your boxes, crack up steam, and get back to Shadwell as quickly as you can—yer on'y concern bein' to let nobody get in afore you. Of course, you time yourself to reach London as nearly as possible for the morning market—and the usual run from the fleet home is thirty-six hours. But let it be at all nasty weather, and I don't know anything that will make your hair creep like carrying fish to Shadwell.

"It don't do to be at all narvous," continued the skipper, pulling his hand through his hair; "and you mustn't think about sudden death without burial if you want to get your fish alive to market. I've had some near squeaks afore now, but the narrowest escape from going into the cellar that I ever run was last fall. Bad weather came on just as we were finishing our loading. We started on our journey home in the teeth of a sou'-west gale. It increased as we neared the Thames, and by nightfall it had become a reg'lar hurricane. I didn't think it was possible for us to keep above water through such a night, though our boats are strong and will float in any sea, if they don't get their backs broke. But I never

saw such a night as that, and you may bet I never wish to see another.

"It was as black as pitch. You could see nothing, and couldn't have done if you hadn't, besides, been blinded by the spray. It lashed you in the face like whipcord as you stood on the bridge, and tons of water swept over the craft with every plunge she made. More than half the time she was bodily under water, and the beast groaned and screeched and seemed to draw her breath hard with every stroke of the piston—for all the world as though she was dying—and she knew it. I felt the same. I didn't think it possible to live through that night. I made up my mind that I should be dead—drowned—within the hour. You haven't time to think much, except of what you're about. But I remember giving a thought to the old girl at home, and what she would do when I was gone. We make fairly good money in my calling, but we don't think much of saving—leastways, I didn't. I wished then I had. Anyhow, we all have to take our chance; so, thought I, she'd have to do the same, Providence being for us all.

"But, although I thought it was all up with us, I didn't give in. You can't do that; you fight to the end. A man is born a fighter, and when he's in a tussle, whether it's against men or against a storm, it works up all the bulldog in him, an' he thinks of



"WE SEEMED TO MAKE NO HEADWAY."

nothing but his grip. You feel sometimes you could laugh out in the middle of it—an' I've known men do it, spite of the danger. Lord, you do live then!

"The worst of the storm was when we got nearly opposite Southend. We seemed to make no headway, an' the creatur' was groaning and creaking as though she would go to pieces. I knew that couldn't last, so I called down to the engineer, asking him if he couldn't put on more power. 'She won't stand it,' said he. 'Why won't she?' said I. 'She's straining now so bad that, if I put on more steam, I fear she'll go to pieces,' said he. 'At this rate,' said I, 'with every sea striking her like this, she'll break her back in no time.' 'If I put on more she'll go to bits sure,' the engineer shouted back. 'Let her go, then, and be hanged!' cried I. 'Put on steam for all she is worth, and chance the result. We might as well go down one way as another.'

"He put on all the steam he could," continued the skipper, "and the effect was soon apparent. We began to forge ahead. The old boat creaked and laboured like a wheezy old engine up an incline, but she went ahead all the same. Then, as good luck would have it, shortly after we had passed Southend the storm moderated, and we gradually began to think that our time was not yet."

"And you got your fish to market in good time?"

"Yes, we were at Shadwell by nine o'clock. One of our directors was there when we arrived. He could hardly believe his eyes. Said he, 'I would never have believed you could live through it, Bill.' 'Well, I have, thank God,' said I; 'but it has been a stiff-un, and the nearest chance I've ever had.' 'I believe you,' said he, 'and as you are the only one in, and the only one likely to-day, we have the market pretty much to ourselves.' Then he gave me a fiver, and we went to a place near by to have some breakfast, and while we were there he gave me another. That was for saving the market, d'ye see?—and it was worth it.

"Presently, up come the wife t'inquire if there was any news of my boat. An' wasn't she struck of a heap when she see'd me? She couldn't believe her eyes. She had t'wipe 'em two or three times afore she could believe 'twas myself."

"No doubt you gave her a good hug to reassure her?"

"Should think I did!"

The next yarns I shall give are from the private log of Captain J. C. Robinson,

commander of the *Tantallon Castle*, whose experience at sea has been long and varied. Captain Robinson is a man of striking presence, but of still more striking character. In speaking of himself, he said, "I am a Westmorland man, my ancestors having been squires of Bongate, and holders of very considerable property in the beautiful vale of Eden for many generations—until a better and more wholesome state of things came in, and their successors, despising the lap of luxury, scattered their enervating influence to the four winds, and joined the ranks of that noble army of soldiers who are employed in the manly struggle for liberty and daily bread. My father was the first to drift away from the old patrimonial scenes, and having passed through Oxford with credit to himself and family and taken holy orders, he joined Bishop Lipscombe in Jamaica for some years, and then, having been driven from the West Indies by repeated attacks of yellow fever, he returned to England and settled down as rector of St. Mary's, Newmarket, where he did good work for six years, when he died, a young man still, from a chill contracted in the performance of the duties of his office. I myself was educated at Appleby, and still look upon and love that place as my particular corner in our beloved country. I first went to sea in the year '68, in the employ of the Blackwall Line, and after making a number of voyages to Australia, New Zealand, India, China, America, and elsewhere, I entered the P. and O. service, finally joining the Castle Line, and taking command of the sailing vessel, the *Carnarvon Castle*, in '74. I remained in command of the *Carnarvon Castle* two years, and was then transferred to the steam service. I have had the honour of commanding in nine of the company's ships, finishing with the *Tantallon Castle*, in which Sir Donald Currie recently carried Mr. Gladstone and a large party of friends to witness the opening of the Emperor William Canal.

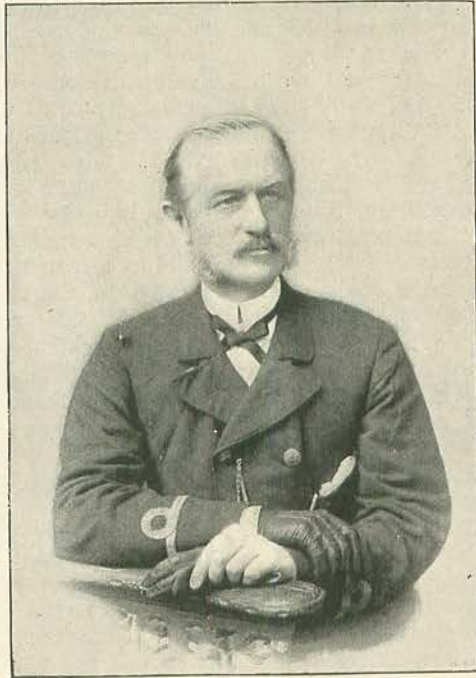
"My early days at sea, like those of most other sailors, were chequered with the usual round of amusement and privation, hard work and danger. When I look back upon those days it always seems to me a miracle of Divine Providence how so many boys who go to sea, and remain there to become experienced seamen, get through scatheless, seeing the many perils that surround them. I could give you numberless instances from my own experience, and as you doubtless wish to make your yarns as varied as possible, a few instances

of the way in which Providence preserves youths in the midst of perils will be interesting. When a midshipman in the *La Hogue*, while lying in Sydney Harbour, I was cast away in a dinghey, alone, during what is called by sailors a 'southerly buster'—that is, a squall—and having escaped to the signal ship at anchor, was given up as lost. Early the next morning I frightened all my companions by turning up in the cabin, they thinking it was my ghost. On another occasion, while sailing a ship's boat during a regatta, also in Sydney Harbour, we were run down and smashed up by a brig, and I, along with another, went right under the brig's bottom, and came up astern, much to the surprise of those who witnessed the accident.

"On another occasion we were starved at sea until we were really reduced to skeletons. For three weeks we had no meat of any kind; for a fortnight we had nothing but biscuit and water, and for one week the biscuit was reduced to a pound per man at work, and half a pound to those who were laid up with scurvy—the latter being twenty-five out of thirty-two; and the water was reduced, for that last week, to a teacupful per day. We were all going about watching for showers, and when the showers did come, we would tie our handkerchiefs round anything that would afford an opportunity for the water to trickle down it, for the sake of having something wet in our mouths. When we got into Falmouth, the captain went on shore and sent off provisions, and the men fell to on the raw meat as it came over the side and gnawed it like hungry dogs. We who belonged to the caddy set a better example by cutting off a hunk of beef and sending it to the cook to fry, with the intimation that he need not take too long over it, as we did not wish it to be overdone. On my arrival at home they had my portrait taken, and they keep it to

this day as the best possible visible definition of a line—length without breadth.

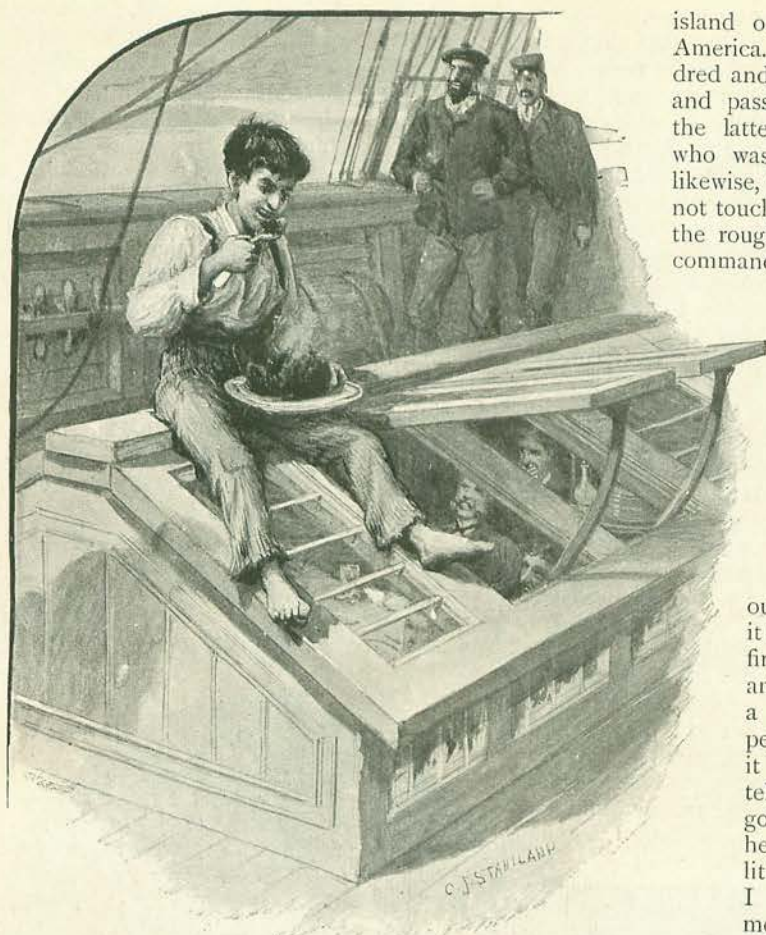
"I can give you an instance of the opposite danger of a boy going to sea—though it did not happen to myself. A little gutter-snipe stowed himself away on board a ship I was in, sailing from London, and having been brought to light after we had got to sea, he was carried before the captain. He was a rosy-cheeked, smart-looking little fellow; but his cheek paled and his eye dimmed before the harsh looks and threatening words of the captain. 'Which shall it be,' at length said the skipper—'four dozen with a rope's end, or go up the mast for four hours? Which do you prefer?' The little fellow looked up at the swaying masts and from them into the captain's face; then in a tremulous voice he said he would rather have the four dozen. He got nothing, of course, but was set to work, and became one of the ship's boys. Harry soon developed into a prime favourite with everybody on board; he was smart and active, and as the



CAPTAIN ROBINSON, OF THE "TANTALLON CASTLE."
From a Photo. by Thos. Fall, Baker Street.

life agreed with him he became quite fat.

"It is the custom on board ship to have plum-duff—that is, plum-pudding—on Sundays and Thursdays. One Sunday a pudding was placed before the captain. It weighed at least a pound, and as everybody declined to be served with any, he said, 'Somebody has got to eat it,' and told the steward to fetch the boy Harry. He came up, and the captain asked him if he would like some plum-pudding. 'Yes, sir,' said the boy. The skipper told the steward to seat him on the beam in the skylight—over the top of the table. This was done, and the plum-duff and a spoon handed up to him. 'You are not coming down out of that until you have finished the pudding,' said the captain. The dinner went on, and had been nearly completed when, glancing up at the lad in the



"YOU ARE NOT COMING DOWN TILL YOU HAVE FINISHED THE PUDDING."

skylight, the captain asked him if he had finished the pudding. Harry said he had. The steward was ordered to lift him down. When this was done the captain said, 'Come here, sir! Did you enjoy that pudding?' 'Yes, sir, please, sir,' said the boy. 'But I should have enjoyed it much better if I had not already had a good dinner'—a reply which elicited a hearty laugh from all present.

"While on the subject of food on board ship, I may as well give you a yarn or two in which I acted as cook. It is a good thing for a lad who intends trying his luck at sea to learn a little about cookery. My education was not attended to in this direction, and on the few occasions when I have turned my hand to the culinary art it has been for the most part with indifferent success. But on one occasion I may pride myself on the result of my labours. We had been wrecked and were living for the time on a desert

island on the coast of South America. There were a hundred and ten of us in all, crew and passengers; and amongst the latter was a young lady who was very delicate and, likewise, very pretty, who could not touch the food prepared in the rough way we had at our command. On noticing this,

being naturally moved by beauty and suffering, I took a line and hastened to the rocks, and, after a deal of trouble, caught a decent-looking fish, which I prepared in the usual way.

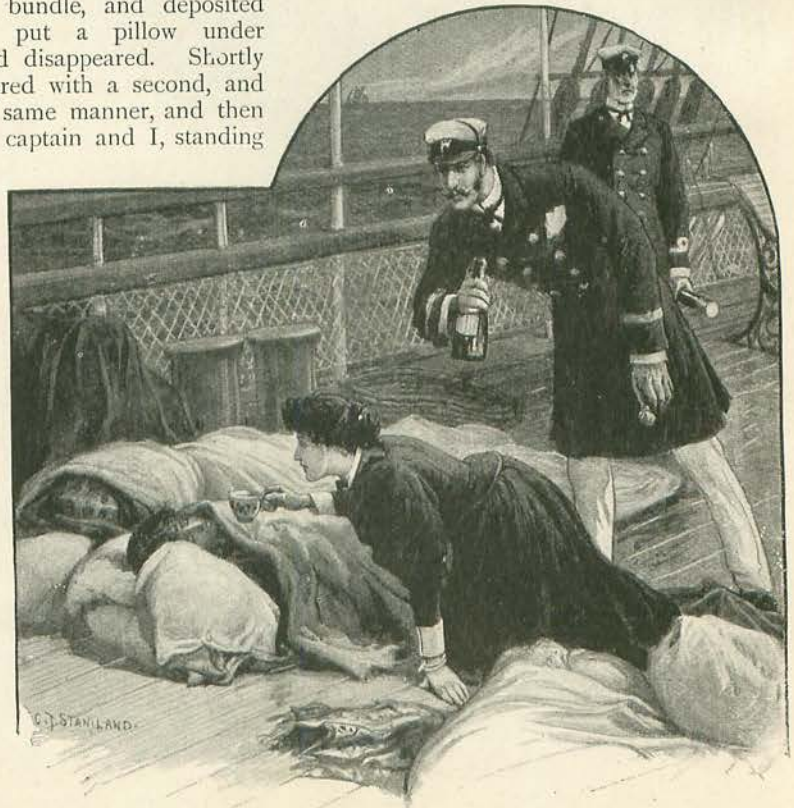
I scraped the scales off the skin, took out the entrails, toasted it on a ramrod over the fire, browned it nicely, and then, putting it on a biscuit with a little pepper and salt, I took it to the young lady, telling her that I had got it on purpose for her, and she must eat a little. She did so, and I believe it was the means of so tickling her palate, that from that day she took quite naturally to her food.

"My second experience in the culinary art had a different sort of ending. Having arrived in the Port of London from Australia, the captain sent for his wife from the north of England to live with him while in dock. The next morning after her arrival, having come on board the vessel from my lodgings, the captain heard me moving about, and called out to know if there was no breakfast. I said no, there was no breakfast and no cook. He then begged me to go and buy some meat and cook them something for breakfast. I replied that I was no cook, but that I would get something and see if I could make a stew. Having procured some steak and onions and potatoes, I proceeded to make what I thought was a very nice Irish stew. The smell of it was very appetizing, and when placed in the cuddy, the captain and his wife did not need much pressing to set-to upon it. When he had

had a plate of it the skipper hurried away to dress, in order to go and enter the ship at the Customs, leaving his wife still at table. After he had left, Mrs. Skipper devoured two or three more platefuls of the stew. Indeed, I thought she would never finish, and was not a little disgusted, although she did praise my cooking. After a while, however, she became violently sick, and remained so for several hours, all the while blaming me for having put some deleterious compound in the stew. I could not think what had happened at the time, but have since learned that copper pans should always be carefully cleaned before being used—which I, only a first mate, and no cook, had not done.

"Talking about wives," said Captain Robinson, "reminds me of my own wife, whom I first met at sea." He then proceeded to narrate the following yarn: "We had set out from Plymouth, where we took up passengers for New Zealand, and were bowling along in fine breezy weather across the Bay of Biscay. I being the chief officer, the captain and I were walking up and down the deck yawning, when the steward struggled up the ladder with a bundle, and deposited it on the deck, put a pillow under one end of it, and disappeared. Shortly afterwards he appeared with a second, and deposited it in the same manner, and then with a third. The captain and I, standing at a respectful distance, concluded that he was handling human beings, and from the way in which they were bundled up that they were feminine. Drawing up towards them stealthily, the old man pointed his finger at them, and whispered: 'Ladies — champagne!' I went down below, and got a bottle of champagne; and, as the ship was rolling about, I took a teacup, fearing a glass would come to grief. Having opened the bottle, I handed it to the captain. He

approached the first of the bundles, fuked it, and came back. He then told me to take the champagne to the ladies. I made an attempt to do so, but being at that time as bashful as the captain, I also shirked the job, and told him it was his business and not mine. Whereupon he ordered me to go and give it them at once. Having approached the first bundle, I knelt down to summon up courage to lift up the rug that covered her, when the old man brought matters to a crisis by giving her a kick. Instantly a pair of black eyes, looking startled and indignant, showed themselves from under the wrappings, and I explained as well as I could that it was not I who had thus called her attention, but the captain, who wished her to have a little champagne, as he thought it would do her good. Having taken a little with the blandest smile, she asked if she might give a little to the other ladies, and sick as she was, she crawled on her hands and knees, and quietly gave a little to the two other girls who were lying on the deck. Then returning to her place, she thanked me for the cham-



HOW CAPTAIN ROBINSON MET HIS WIFE.

pagne, and tumbled once more into a heap, covering her head with a shawl.

"The captain and I retired to a distance to discuss the situation, and after a bit he suggested that they might require a little more champagne. I said: 'Very well, sir, you need not bother, I will go and give it to them.' Upon which he replied, very curtly, 'I can do it myself. You go forward and haul down the jib.'

"This," continued Captain Robinson, "was my first introduction to my wife. Being struck not only by her personal appearance, but also by her consideration for her sisters in adversity, I thought probably she might be equally good to me some day. At all events, one thing led to another, until, at the end of the voyage, we were on speaking terms, and before I left the port we were taking the passengers to, I had given her an engagement ring.

"We sailed to India with horses, and then proceeded to England. I was to write to her from India, and she was to answer my letter to England. I duly wrote, but on my arrival in England I found no reply. I waited for a mail—still no letter. I then concluded that our brief acquaintance had proved like many others of the same nature—too fragile to last, and so I wrote to her to the effect that as I supposed she had repented our engagement, and that that was the reason of her not replying to my letter from India, according to arrangement, I took leave to release her.

"I then sailed for China. In China I received a brief note from her, informing me that, 'having received no letter from India, no reply was possible.' At the same time she returned me the engagement ring and two or three other little mementos. Acknowledging these in due form, I said that I thought she might have dismissed me with a little more ceremony, without the necessity of denying the receipt of the Indian letter. In process of time—and this correspondence occupied in all something like four years—I received a still more curt reply: 'Dear Sir,—I repeat that there was no Indian letter.—Yours truly, —.' I was now indignant, and replied, 'Dear Madam,—Let it be sufficient, once for all, that, whether you received the letter from India or not, I wrote from India.—Yours truly, —.'

"Now it appears that on receipt of this note, the lady for the first time began to think that I was telling the truth, and went to the provincial post-office, where she was living with her brother and sister, and made

inquiries that resulted in nothing. Not satisfied with this, however, she wrote to the Postmaster-General in Melbourne; but still failing to get any satisfaction, she persuaded her brother to take her to Melbourne—a distance of 130 miles, most of it being done by horse and trap. There she saw the Postmaster-General in person, and succeeded in so interesting him by the story of the lost letter and her concern about it, that he had the post-office turned inside out to try to find it. Still, however, without effect. Then the Postmaster-General asked to know all the dates and circumstances touching this important letter. The young lady told her story—the date I should have arrived in India, the date of my sailing for England, etc. Naturally he came to the conclusion that the letter must have been posted between the dates of my arriving in India and my departure for England. Then the records were looked up, and the Postmaster-General, putting his finger upon a line in the ledger, said: 'On such a date the mail steamer *Rangoon*, carrying the mails from India, sank in Galle Harbour, in the Island of Ceylon. The mails were recovered after being a fortnight at the bottom of the Bay. Having been dried, those letters that were decipherable were sent to their respective addresses; but the major part of the correspondence, being pulped up and illegible, was packed in bales and sent to their destinations. Those that came here,' said the Postmaster-General, 'were put down in the cellar, and there they have remained ever since.'

"The strangest part of this strange yarn," said Captain Robinson, "is still to be told. More and more anxious to help to unravel the young lady's romantic story, the Postmaster-General had these bales brought out of the cellar and opened, and the dried-up paper pulp gone over piece by piece, and everything decipherable laid on one side. The whole of the staff of the post-office was drawn into the work, so interested was everyone in finding the missing letter. The name sought was 'Sayer,' and all bales marked 'S' were ransacked without success. But still the work was not given up yet. They began again at 'A' and worked right through the alphabet until they came to the bale marked 'T,' and as the letters were passed from one to another the lady finally put her hand on one and said, 'That is the letter.' The Postmaster-General and all the rest gathered round said, 'That is not "S"—that is "T" and the name is Taylor.' The

lady said, 'You do not know how badly he writes; that is an "S" and the name is "Sayer."' "

Well, to cut a long story short, this proved to be the missing letter, and Captain Robinson subsequently received a formal note stating how it had been recovered. He replied in the same strain; but before dispatching the letter, memory carrying him back to the time when the dark-eyed beauty was lying sick on the deck of the *Star of India* bound for New Zealand, and the champagne that was a means of introduction to her, he inclosed a second letter in which he allowed his feelings to flow in the old groove. This was marked not to be opened until twenty-four hours after receipt, but the sender afterwards learned that of the two missives this one was opened first—a woman's instinct telling the recipient which letter contained that which would be the most pleasing to her.

"I need not tell you that we were married not long after that," concluded Captain Robinson.

Captain Webster, the commodore of the Castle Line, had an interesting experience in Mauritius in 1862. He was then first officer of the *Ellen Lee*, which was lying at Port Louis in that island. "One Sunday morning," said Captain Webster, "we were told to prepare for a hurricane, and as a hurricane in the Mauritius is no joke, we instantly made ready. As it happened, however, we did not get the wind, but we had instead a perfect deluge of rain. The hurricane was there, but as we were just on the fringe of the disturbance, the wind did but pass over us. As to

the rain, I never saw anything like it; it came down in a sheet. It did immense damage in Port Louis, and caused great loss of life too. The streets of the town are very hilly, with deep valleys like ravines between. The rain ran down into these ravines and turned them into roaring water-courses. No fewer than forty persons, caught by the floods in the streets, were washed into these torrents and drowned. One of our men was missing, and on Monday morning, as I was passing the dead-house, I felt that I must go in; and in looking over the bodies, I recognised one of our sailors—the missing man, in short. We got a hearse, brought down some of our men, and gave him a decent funeral. But the poor fellow seems to have been born to occupy a watery grave, and do what we would we could not give him a dry one. As you know, perhaps, Port Louis is a terrible place for fever, and as the climate of Mauritius is very hot, the dead have to be interred very quickly. Hence there are always a lot of graves ready made, so that there need be no delay in getting in the coffins and covering them up. Unfortunately, when we

reached the cemetery, we found all the graves full of water, in consequence of the deluge of the previous day. We tried to bale out the one selected for our friend, but in vain, for the water ran into it again from the saturated earth as fast as it was taken out; so we had to bury the poor fellow as though at sea, sinking the coffin in water and putting a weight upon it to keep it down until the grave could be properly filled up with earth."



CAPTAIN WEBSTER, OF THE CASTLE LINE.
From a Photo. by J. Harsburgh & Son, Edinburgh.