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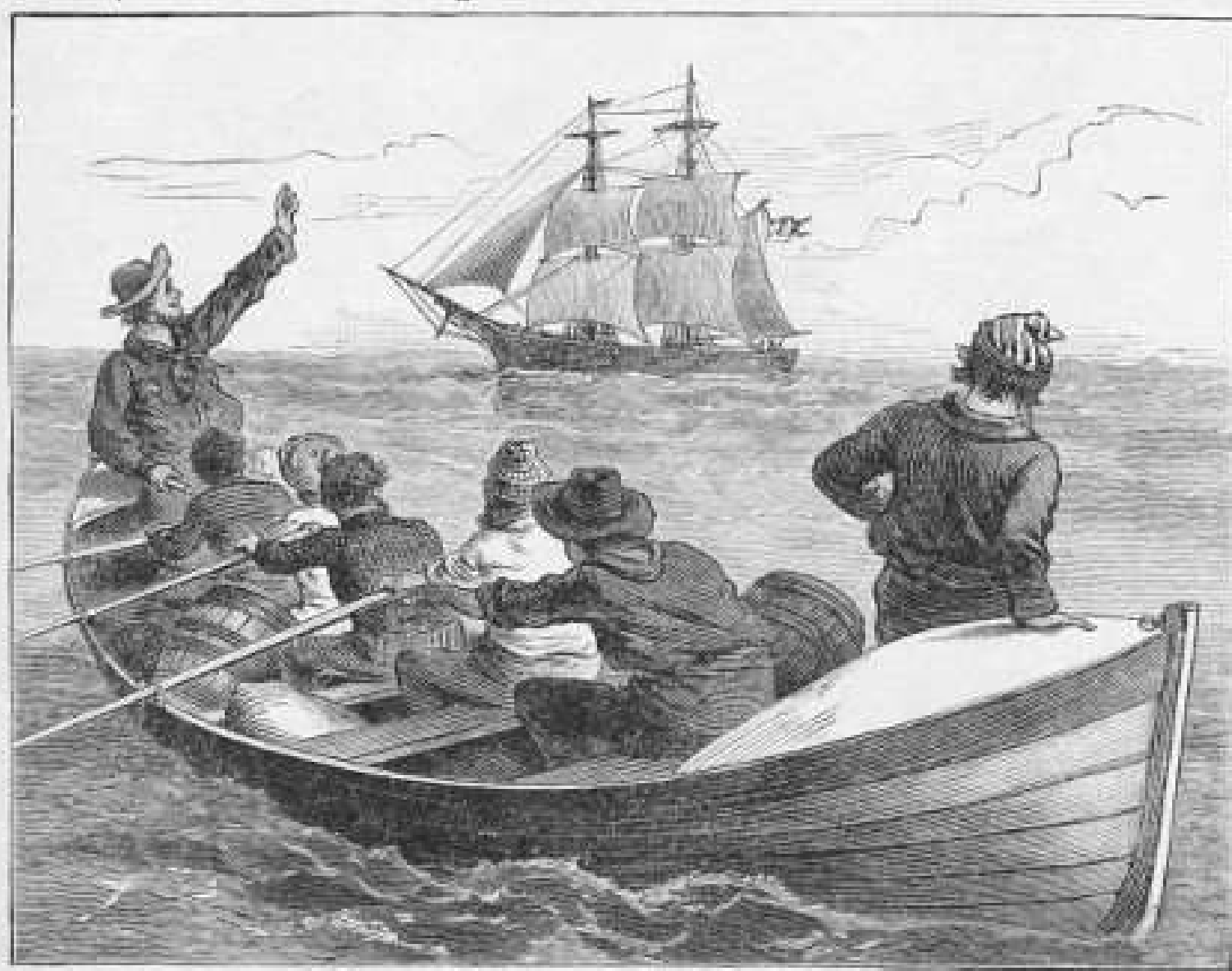
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Vol. XL.

BARNEY BLAKE, THE BOY PRIVATEER;

Or, The Cruise of the Queer Fish.

BY HERRICK JOHNSTONE



WITH A LONG CODE-TRAY FOR GOING TO THE SHIP.

Project Gutenberg's Barney Blake, The Boy Privateer, by Herrick Johnstone

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Barney Blake, the Boy Privateer;

OR,

THE CRUISE of the QUEER FISH.



BY HERRICK JOHNSTONE.



CHAPTER I. THE SHIP AND HER CREW.

It was upon a bright morning of the month of May, 1813, as I, a sailor just paid off from my last ship, was wandering along the wharves of Boston, that I was hailed by an old messmate, named Tony Trybrace.

"Ship ahoy!" cried Tony.

"The Barney Blake," I responded. "Out of employment, with compass gone, and nothing to steer by."

"What!" cried Tony, giving me his flipper. "Do you want a ship? A strange wish to go unsatisfied in these times."

"Yes," I hesitatingly rejoined, "but, you see, I've never been in the navy—always sailed in a merchantman—and—"

"Nonsense!" cried Tony. "That kind of blarney won't do for these times. I shipped the other day on as cracky a craft as ever kicked the spray behind her. Come and join us."

"What! on a man-o'-war?"

"Better than that. On a bold privateer! Look out there to windward," said Tony, directing my attention with his pointing hand, "and tell me what you think of her. That's her, the brigantine, with her r'yals half furled."

The vessel indicated to me by my friend did not go back on his off-hand description of her.

"She's a splendid ship!" I exclaimed. "What name does she go by?"

"The Queer Fish," was the reply. "She has six guns—eighteen-pounders—three on each side—with the prettiest thirty-pound brass swivel at her stern, this side of Davy Jones. She starts to-morrow for a year's cruise. Will you go?"

"Yes."

"Spoken like a Yankee tar. Come."

A boat of the privateer was in waiting, and in a few moments we were in it.

Scarcely had we pulled half way before a funny looking old fellow, squint-eyed, red-whiskered, and enormously wide-mouthed, whom they called Old Nick—a Norwegian by birth, was detected by the second mate attempting to take a pull at a green bottle, which he slyly whisked from the inside breast pocket of his pea-jacket. He was rowing at the time, and it required much sleight of hand to disengage one of his hands for the purpose in view. Nevertheless, he succeeded, took a long pull at the bottle, thinking no one saw him, corked it up again, and was about to return it to his pocket, when, at a wink from the second mate, Tony Trybrace, accidentally on purpose, skipped the plunge of his oar and brought it up against the old fellow with such a jostle that overboard flew the bottle, where it bobbed about.

Every one who saw the trick burst into fits of laughter. For a moment Old Nick seemed undetermined what course to pursue. Then nature vindicated her sway. He dropped his oar, rose in his seat, and plunged overboard after the green bottle and its precious contents!

He made straight for the bottle, recovered it, took a long pull at it while he trod water, returned it to his bosom, and made a back track to the yawl.

"You'll git up early in de morgen to rob ein Deitcher of his schnapps," he growled, as he clambered over the gunwale.

So, with many a laugh and jeer at the old fellow's expense, we pulled the balance of the way without further incident, and were soon upon the deck of the Queer Fish Privateer.

I was pleased with her more than ever upon a closer acquaintance. Everything was trim and tidy. Her decks were almost spotless, and nothing could exceed the beauty of her long bright swivel. She was polished up like a looking-glass, and I longed to hear her speak, with an iron pill in her throat.

Tony Trybrace had told nothing but the truth, when he had said that the people of the privateer were the jolliest afloat. They were a comical set from Captain Joker down to Peter Pun, the cabin-boy. Tony was the boatswain, and, as soon as we were aboard, he escorted me down to the cabin, to see the captain and sign the ship's papers.

I shall never forget the impression created upon me by my first introduction to

the captain. I thought him the funniest-looking little man I had ever seen. He was a dried-up, weazen-faced, bald-headed little fellow, of fifty or thereabouts, with a red, gin-loving nose, twinkling gray eyes, so small that they were usually almost out of sight, and the expression of his mouth was so intensely humorous, that his lips always seemed to be fighting back a burst of laughter. To add to this, he was every inch a seaman, with the freshness of the ocean breathing from every pore of his wiry frame, and every seam of his weather-beaten face giving evidence of stormy service in sun and clime.

By a great effort, Captain Joker put on a severe expression of countenance as I entered, eyed me with those quick professional eyes of his, and emptied, at a draught, the tumbler of old Santa Cruz which stood at his side on the cabin-table.

Upon Tony's saying that I wished to ship on the Queer Fish, the captain, by a still greater effort, put on a still severer expression, and began to catechize me, while a wink from Tony told me which way the land lay.

"Where do you hail from?" demanded the captain pompously.

"From Salem, sir."

CAPTAIN. (*With a sly twinkle in his eyes, in spite of himself.*) What are the chief staples of Salem?

I. Shoemakers, old maids and sharks' teeth.

CAPTAIN. What is your name?

I. Barney Blake, sir.

CAPTAIN. Who was your mother?

I. Never had any.

CAPTAIN. (*With his eyes twinkling more than ever.*) Who are you the son of?

I. I'm the son of a sea-cook, was weaned on salt water, reared on sea-biscuit, and am thirsty for prize-money.

"You'll do!" cried the captain, shaking with merriment like a bowl of bonnyclabber, and striking the table with his fat fist. "Boatswain, enter him on the books as Barney Blake, son of a sea-cook; give him a cutlass and two pistols, and make him stand around. Avast, you vagabonds, and look sharp, or I'll be

down on you with a cat and spread-eagle!"

The laughter of the captain, as we left him, was anything but in accordance with this monstrous threat.

"Good for you!" whispered Tony, encouragingly, as we ascended the companion-ladder.

He then brought me forward and introduced me to the entire fore-castle. His words, upon this occasion, were somewhat characteristic, and here they are:

"Look yer', messmates, this 'ere cove is a perticklar chum o' mine. I've know'd him fer ten year—ran away from school with him, fell in love with the same gal, and cruised with him on the Constitution for three year. All I got ter say is, treat him well, or some o' yer'll git a eye so black yer own mother won't know yer, unless she's a black woman with a sore head: for he's as lively on his pins as a four-year-old cater-mountain, plucky as a Mexican gamecock, and the sweep of his fist is like the flounder of a ground-shark's fluke. Messmates, this 'ere is Barney Blake, Son of a Sea-Cook."

Although I could not consistently indorse this opinion of my abilities, the gusto with which it was received by my future messmates rendered it poor policy to deny it, so I went forward, and a general handshake was the result.

How shall I describe the crew of the Queer Fish? They numbered one hundred and twenty-five men, all told, and were as motley a set as were ever grouped together under hatches.

The majority were American-born, but there were four Hollanders, two Englishmen, six Frenchmen, two Malays, one Norwegian (Old Nick) and half a score of Irishmen. Each one was a character, but to describe each separately, and do him justice, would alone require a thousand pages; so I must be content with sketching the few who most prominently figured in the scenes I am about to narrate.

I have already mentioned Tony Trybrace and Old Nick, as well as the second mate, whose name was Pat Pickle, at least, so-called—a capital fellow as ever spoke through a trumpet, and brave as steel. Next in importance to these worthies was, perhaps, Dicky Drake, the butt of the whole crew. He was a green chap from somewhere down in Pennsylvania—had never been to sea before, except as a cod-fisher—and was the subject of a great number of practical jokes

some of which will be duly recorded.

Probably the next worthy to be considered was our cook, a gigantic negro from the Virginia swamps, who went by the name of Snollygoster. I verily believe he was seven feet high, if an inch, and was possessed of the most prodigious strength.

I never saw the celebrated Milo of old. He must have been considerable in his way; but all I have got to say is that I would pit Snollygoster against him any day in the week and have no fear of my money. I have seen him raise a barrel of Santa Cruz and drink from the bunghole as easy as a common mortal would lift a box of cheese, and he was said to have felled an ox by a single blow of his fist. He was as good-humored a fellow as ever lived, and stood any amount of practical joking. The queerest inconsistency in his character was his peaceable disposition. Although no one could accuse him of downright cowardice, he was as timid as a hare and would go a long way out of his way to avoid a fight. But, if this was shown in his intercourse with men, it did not appear, it seems, in any other description of danger. He was the merriest man on board the ship in a tempest, and one of the Malays who had shipped with him in the Indian Ocean, swore that he had no more fear of sharks than of so many flying fish.

There was another queer fellow by the name of Roderick Prinn, who hailed from Southampton. There was nothing very funny about him, either. He had a sad, puritanical aspect, never drank, smoked or even chewed, and had very little to say. The most singular thing was his extraordinary attachment to another of the crew. This was a boy, and a very pretty little fellow to boot, named Willie Warner. They had both shipped at Philadelphia, and there was a thread of mystery between them, which was quite incomprehensible. They would associate together almost entirely, and would frequently converse together in the low tones of a language which no one else could understand. Nevertheless, they did their work well, and, although they were considerably reserved with the rest of the crew, they were generally so kindly and agreeable in what they *had* to say, that no one could find fault.

Then there was an old salt, just such another as Old Nick, who was full of an innumerable quantity of stories. I don't know what his real name was, but we called him Bluefish, and he liked the name. The amount of *yarn* that was wound round somewhere inside that old fellow's jaw was somewhat marvelous. He was a regular old spool, and had only to open his mouth to let out the longest and wildest lies on record, this or the other side of the Equator. Many a night, I can

tell you, did we sit, gaping, round that old man of the sea, when the gale was blowing through the rigging a boreal tune, and all was snug below, to listen to his wild, weird, and, sometimes, humorous tales. Perhaps the reader will have one or two of them before we get through—who knows?

Well, I must let up on these descriptions, or our story will go a-begging.

I must say a few words about our first mate, and then I shall be all ready for the story, with royals spread, rigging taut, and everything trim to scud before the wind.

There wasn't anything funny about our first mate. He was, on the whole, an ugly, ill-natured dog, and thoroughly hated by every one on the ship, except the captain, who generally stuck to him through thick and thin. He was a Scotchman—one of your low-browed, lantern-jawed, gaunt-boned, mean-livered Scotchmen—a regular Sawney all over, from the top of his red head to the sole of his bunioned feet. He had a voice like a cracked bugle and a heart as hard as the hardest flint on Ben Inverness, with never anything pleasant to say or do. We detested him, and only waited our chance to play a joke upon him.

That will suffice for the men. As for the ship, she was as stanch and pretty a craft as ever plowed the blue waters, was built at Portland, masted at Bangor, and rigged at Boston, with an armament the best that money could procure. She was also a very swift sailer, and we calculated to play hob with John Bull's East Indiamen and whalers before we got through with the cruise.



CHAPTER II. OUTWARD BOUND.

"Then come,
My friends, and, sitting well in order, strike
The sounding furrows, for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars until I die."

—TENNYSON.

A brighter morning never flung its golden beams upon the dancing dominion of old Neptune than that bright May morning when the windlass of the Queer Fish creaked with the rising anchor, and the mainsails, topsails and top-gallants fluttered slowly out from her graceful spars. All Boston knew we were going, and a large number of people were out upon the piers to see us start. So we ran up the Stars and Stripes to our peak, and gave a rousing salute with our guns, as we moved majestically down the harbor. We were soon out of it, and "the world was all before us," our path to choose. Taking the line of the southeast, we got all of the gale into our bellying sails, and bowled along gleefully, with a good lookout at the mast-head, to spy a prize, or sing out, if a cruiser hove in sight.

How could the Queer Fish even *start* to sea without something funny happening? There was one incident which I must not omit mentioning.

We had been overwhelmed with peddlers, bumboat women and fruit-sellers, for some time before our departure. Although they had all been warned to leave the ship in time, one of them, a Polish Jew, allowed his avarice to get the better of him, and remained parleying and auctioneering his trinkets till the anchor was up and we were fairly under way. He then coolly went to the captain, and requested to have a boat to be put ashore, when he was greeted by a sound rating, and an assurance that he couldn't leave the ship short of the Bay of Bengal.

The astonishment of the unfortunate Hebrew can better be imagined than

described. At first, he was simply crushed, and, like Shylock, kept a quiet despair. Then, as the land grew beautifully less behind us, terror and rage began to take possession of his soul.

"Mine Gott! mine Gott!" he exclaimed, tearing up and down the deck, and wringing his hands. "V'at vill de vife of mine poosom zay v'en I comes not vonce more to mine house? Oh, Repecca, Repecca, mine peloved vife, varevell, varevell!"

We all enjoyed his misery to our hearts' content, for he was an arrant skinflint, who had swindled three or four of the crew out of their very boots. The captain also enjoyed the sight until we brought up alongside a pilot-boat, on board of which we put the pork-despiser in a summary way, and left him to find his way back to Boston as best he might.

A number of British cruisers were hovering along the coast, and we expected to have some trouble before getting fairly to sea. Nor were we disappointed. We were hardly four hours out before a sail was descried on our starboard quarter and another on our larboard bow. We hoisted the British jack and drove right between them, hoping to escape molestation, as we had little doubt that the sails in view belonged to British men-o'-war. We were correct in this. And, although we escaped the bigger customer to the northward, the other stranger came so close that we were right under her guns. She was a heavily-armed brig, and could have sunk us at a single broadside, but contented herself with questioning us.

"What ship is that?" was bellowed from her quarter deck.

"The brigantine Spitfire," sung our little captain through his trumpet.

"What luck have you had?"

"Have destroyed sixteen smacks off Gloucester and are now in the wake of an Indiaman that got out last night."

"All right."

And the unsuspecting brig drove by us with all sails set.

"We pulled the wool over *her* eyes, at any rate," mused our little captain, with twinkling eyes, as we continued on our course.

We next fell in with an American vessel, homeward bound, and gave her directions how to escape the blockaders.

"Sail ho!" sung out the lookout, an hour later.

We were immediately in a stew of excitement, thinking that this, at least, must be a prize. But this also proved to be an American, and we were compelled to chew the cud of disappointment.

"Why in blazes ain't you a Britisher?" muttered Tony Trybrace, yawning indignantly, as the true character of the stranger was discovered.

We kept our course, without incident, until the sun went down behind us, and the stars, one by one, began to stud the darkening vault.

Behind us flowed our wake of fire; Tony Trybrace played several tunes on his scrappy violin; and then, as it bade fair to be a peaceful night, we gathered round old Bluefish for a promised yarn.



CHAPTER III.

THE YARN OF THE YELLOW MAST—CUTTING HAMMOCKS.

"Yer see," said old Bluefish, lighting his pipe, "it all happened on board the Big Thunder. She was a splendid East Indiaman, and I was captain onto her."

"Captain? You captain?" exclaimed Snollygoster. "Come now, Massa Bluefish, dat won't do, you know. Dat am de—"

"Hold yer tongue, yer red-mouthed savage, and let me spin my yarn without a break in the thread! Yer see," continued Bluefish, "it all happened on board the Big Thunder. I went to bed feelin' fu'st-rate. It was kinder calm, with a prospect of being more so 'an ever. When I wakes up in the mornin' I was somewhat taken aback at seein' that a new post had sprung up in the cabin durin' the night. It ran straight up through the center of the cabin and was as yaller as a chaw of cavendish, when it's pretty well chewed.

"Well, while I lay there, wondering at the cussed affair, the first lieutenant, he comes roarin' down the companionway, thumpin' at my door like mad:

"Come in!' I sings out.

"He dropped in, accordin' to orders, lookin' like the very Old Scratch, and inspectin' the new post of the cabin with curious eyes.

"What's up?' says I.

"Captain, does yer see this 'ere yaller post?" says he solemnly.

"I does,' I replies.

"Captain,' says he, 'this 'ere yaller post takes its root somewhere at the keel and grows up higher than the peak of the mainmast. An' what's more,' says he, 'it all grewed up in one night.'

"Ye'r' talkin' like a ravin', incomprehensible, idiotic fool,' says I.

"It may seem so,' says the lieutenant, 'but come an' see for yourself.'

"This wasn't no more'n fair. So I gits into my duds, and goes on deck. Thar, sure as yer live, this 'ere yaller post run straight up between the mizzenmast and the tiller, reachin' about forty feet higher than the tallest mast on board. All the crew were standin' round, gaping, and nudging each other, and lookin' kinder skeered, when I begins to take observations from a philosophic point of view."

"From a *what*?" interrupted Tony Trybrace. "Takin' observations, from a phil—phil—philly—*what*?"

"Avast, you lubber, and let me spin my yarn! If yer ain't got no edication, is it *my* fault? If you was brought up outside o' college, am I to blame? Avast, I tell yer.

"Well, as I was a-sayin'. I begins to look at the thing kinder sharp. So I takes a cutlass down from the mast, and begins to cut little chips off the yaller mast. What do yer think came out o' that 'ere yaller mast?"

"Pitch," suggested one.

"Turpentine," said another.

"Old Jamaica," suggested Old Nick.

"Not a bit of it," resumed the narrator. "Nothin' longer, nor shorter, nor hotter, nor redden'n BLOOD. That 'ere's what came out o' that 'ere yaller mast. Blood, and nothin' else!

"Well, all of 'em were sort o' dumb-founded when they see'd the blood flowin', and some on 'em was more skeery 'n ever. But I turns to 'em, an' says I:

""Does yer notice how slow the ship is goin'?"

"And they says:

""Yes, we does. She isn't makin' much o' any headway, though the breeze are a fair capful."

""Well," says I, 'and doesn't yer know the reason why?'

""Not a bit on it," says they.

""*It's because ye'r' towin' a sword-fish under yer keelson,*" says I. 'He's pierced the craft in the night, an' this 'ere yaller mast ain't nothin' short of his cussed nose.'

"Well, they were all taken aback at this, yer see, an' now began to crowd up an' examine the thing. It was perfectly round, about two feet through, an' the eend of it was as taperin' an' sharp as a needle. Sure as yer live, it was all true. Well, it was a question what to do with the thing. Most on 'em was in favor of goin' down inter the hold, and cuttin' off the snout, in order to let the thing float; for, as it was, if we should come anywhar whar the water was less'n fifteen fathoms, we should be stranded by the cussed critter afoul of us.

"Not at all,' says I. 'We don't git a good tough mast for nothin' every day in the week, and I'm in favor of cuttin' clear of the fish on the outside.'

"They were all kinder astonished at this 'ere, but I didn't give 'em breathin'-time, but says again:

"Now which one on yer'll volunteer to dive under the keel with a handsaw and cut loose from the varmint on the outside?'

"Would yer believe it, not one on 'em wanted to go. So I says:

"If ye'r' all so pesky skeered, why, *I'll* go myself. Carpenter, bring me yer handsaw, an' jist sharpen her up while I'm disrobin' my graceful form.'

"So the carpenter brings his handsaw, with a piece of bacon-fat to grease her with, and, when I gits ondressed, overboard I goes with the saw between my teeth. I dove right under the keel in a jiffy, and thar, sure enough, lays the sword-fish, with his nose hard up ag'in' the timbers, and his body danglin' down through the brine about seventy-five feet.

"What are you goin' ter do?' says he.

"Says *who*?" broke in Tony.

"Yas, Massa Bluefish, who was it says dat?" demanded Snollygoster, with an incredulous look on his ebony face.

"Why, the sword-fish, yer ignorant lubbers! Doesn't yer know that they talk like lawyers when they git inter a scrape? I knowed a feller what heerd one of 'em sing the Star Spangled Banner fit to kill.

"Well, as I was a-sayin', says he ter me, 'What air you goin' ter do?'

"Ter saw yer loose from the ship,' I corresponded.

"'All right,' says he," only I'm afeard it'll hurt some.'

"'I shouldn't wonder if it do,' says I; and with that I grabs his nozzle an' begins to saw like sixty.

"The way that poor devil hollered and snorted and flopped was a caution to seafarin' men. The men above water swore it sounded like ninety-three earthquakes piled on to a bu'stin' big volcano, an' I reckon it did. But I kept on sawin' and sawin', till at last the varmint dropped off, while the sea for 'bout ten miles round the ship became perfectly crimson with his blood. He made a big bite at me, but I ducked about like a porpoise, and succeeded in reachin' the deck without a scratch.

"The varmint was bent on vengeance, and made his appearance with his mouth wide open—big enough to have swallowed a seventy-four, without so much as a toothache. But we fired a broadside of shrapnel and red-hot shot down his throat, an' he went off, waggin' his tail as if he didn't like it.

"Well, yer see, the blood all ran out of the yaller mast, and left it hard and dry. So I jist had a set of spars and sails rigged on to the thing, an' we arrove into Southampton with four masts."

Bluefish knocked the ashes out of his pipe, from which we judged that his yarn was brought to a close.

"Am dat all true, Massa Bluefish?" asked the innocent giant of a snollygoster.

"Every word on it," was the solemn rejoinder. "It was a thing as occurred in my actual experience."

Singular to relate, some of us had our doubts on this subject.

It was now bedtime for those who were not on duty, and we prepared to turn in.

I was up to seamen's tricks, and examined the stays of my hammock carefully before getting into it. I found them firm, and was about to turn in for a long snooze, when a crash in another corner of the forecastle told me that *some* one had had the trick played on him, at least.

The dim light of the lantern revealed the state of the case. Dicky Drake's hammock-strings had been all but severed, and he, upon turning in, had come down on the floor with a hard head-bump.

"Who did that? Where is he? Show him to me!" exclaimed the verdant youth, in a rage, plucking out his jack-knife and running through the laughing crew like a wild man.

"It was a mighty mean thing!" Tony Trybrace opined, roaring with laughter.

"Dat's so. I wonder who did it?" Snollygoster asked.

Every one else had some suggestion to make, but the doer of the deed was not found; and Dicky Drake swallowed his fury, reslung his hammock and turned in.

We were all tired and sleepy. I, at least, was soon in the arms of Morpheus, dreaming of the land I had left, and of the bright eyes that would look so long in vain for my return.



CHAPTER IV. A PRIZE AND A JOHN BULL.

BUTLER. Footman, why art so happy? Art going to be married?

FOOTMAN. No, meester.

B. Then thou art married already, and art going to be divorced?

F. No, meester.

B. What then?

F. I've drawn a *prize*.

—OLD PLAY.

I was awakened about daylight by a tramping on deck, and presently Tony Trybrace's shrill boatswain's whistle pealed out, followed almost immediately by his merry voice with:

"Tumble up! tumble up, you lubbers, if you care for prize-money!"

Every one heard what he said, and every one was on deck in a twinkling.

The morning was just dawning, and, far off, set against the just brightening sky, a sail was visible. I was rather provoked at having been summoned up from my nap, because the vessel was a good five miles off, and, if it was to be a stern chase, a long time would elapse before we could bring her to. Nevertheless, as I was on deck, and as my watch would be on hand in an hour, I thought I might as well stay up and see the thing out.

The men were all stationed, as if for battle, as was the custom of the captain on the slightest provocation. This was certainly the safest and wisest plan, but sailors seldom lose a chance for grumbling. Our little captain himself, however, if he brought the men up to the mark, never failed to toe it himself. There he was now, pacing the poop in his merriest mood. He was always familiar with us, and now he had a smart word for everybody.

"Take a peep through my telescope and tell me what you think of her, Barney."

This was addressed to me, and as there was quite a compliment in the request, I was not slow to comply. I sighted the strange craft well and examined every inch of her as well as the imperfect light would permit.

"Well, well, well," said the captain, impatiently. "What do you make of her?"

"She's a British brig," I replied. "She was built in London. Her name is the Boomerang. Her captain's name is George Willis, and she's very probably loaded with rum and sugar from Jamaica."

The captain was astounded.

"Are you crazy?" he ejaculated.

"I sincerely hope not, captain," was my smiling reply.

"How do you know what you say to be true?"

"Because I made a six months' cruise in that brig, captain, and I know every spar and ratlin of her from the mizzen-peak to the for'ard spankers."

"Well, if that is so, you certainly are the Son of a Sea-Cook all over and a sailor worth promoting," said Captain Joker, laughing as he spoke. "Clap on more sail!" he bawled. "Let out the r'yals to the full! Loosen the jib-sheets! I'll catch the stranger if I have to scrape the sky in doing it."

We sprung into the shrouds, and his orders were promptly executed. The gale, which had been stiff before, also blew stronger, and we bounded from crest to crest like a sea-bird under the influence of the fresh canvas. But when the sun arose we were still three miles from the stranger, who evidently had a suspicion of our character and was cracking on all sail for escape. But we now let out our skysails and came down on her rapidly. Our masts fairly groaned under the added impulse. We actually seemed lifted from billow to billow, rather than to plow through them.

At eight bells we were a mile and a half from the flying ship and fired a shot from our swivel to bring her to. We saw the shot dance off and kick up the spray right under her bows, but she ran up the Union Jack of England and kept on her way. Another shot from our bow-gun had no better effect. We, however, kept on our way, until within a mile, when we let fly again with the swivel, this time

striking the vessel in the stern, and sending up a shower of splinters. We thought this would bring her to. But, she was plucky, and seemed determined to show fight. Scarcely had the boom of our Long Tom died away before a column of smoke shot out from the stern of the merchantman, and, before we could fairly make up our minds as to what was going to happen, the end of our bowsprit was knocked off like a pipe-stem, as well as a big splinter gouged out of our mainmast by a thirty-two pound shot.

"She's determined not to be taken alive," said Tony Trybrace.

"We'll see about that!" exclaimed our little captain; "just let *me* have a shy at her with that bow gun!"

With that he jumped down from his station on the poop, sighted the bow-gun carefully, and, just as we rose majestically on the summit of a huge wave, let her off. The ball danced over the crests with a charming ricochet, and we saw it strike the stranger fair and broad in the mizzenmast, which instantly went by the board, trailing a tangled maze of rigging and canvas into the sea.

"I thought she'd think better of it, after a little while," exclaimed the captain, triumphantly, as we saw the ensign of the stranger lowered in token of surrender, and, at the same time, she hove to. We came on with a rush, and hauled to close under her bows.

"What ship is that?" bawled Captain Joker through his trumpet.

"The brig, Boomerang, of London," was the reply.

"What are you loaded with?"

"Rum and sugar."

"Just stand where you are, and consider yourself a prize. You were right, you Son-of-a-Sea-Cook," added the captain, turning to me. "I'll promote you as soon as I get a chance."

A boat was immediately lowered, placed in command of Pat Pickle, the second mate, and in her a dozen sailors, I among them, pulled for the prize. We boarded her, and she came up to our largest expectations. I here had the satisfaction of renewing my acquaintance with my old skipper, Captain Willis, as well as with some of the crew. They all expressed their regret at seeing me in the character of a privateersman, at which I was not at all put out, but recommended them to

merciful treatment, and succeeded in enlisting three of the crew, who were Canadians, for a cruise on the Queer Fish.

There was an Englishman on board the Boomerang, who was a passenger, but as he admitted that he was a consul to the South-American port of Rio de Janeiro, we made a prisoner of him in short order. This worthy will bear a brief description. He was one of the most genuine examples of the John Bull cockney genus it had ever been my fortune to fall in with. Rather short—about five feet and a half, I should judge—he weighed fully two hundred pounds, was dressed in the genuine London plaid trowsers, gaiter shoes and bell-crown hat of the time. His features were red and coarse, and his hair as red as fire. His name was Mr. Adolphus de Courcy. His indignation at learning that he was a prisoner was extreme, but, as the second mate didn't look as if he could bear much bullying, the dignitary reserved his spleen for the captain's ears.

Well, after we had supplied the Queer Fish with all the rum she would be likely to consume in the next six months, we put a prize crew on board the Boomerang, and started her for home, leaving her captain and crew on board. We brought off Mr. Adolphus de Courcy, determining to keep him until we should fall in with some American cruiser to whose safe-keeping we could transfer him. It took several hours to complete all these arrangements, but they were completed at last, and we rowed back to the Queer Fish, leaving the prize crew behind us, and, shortly afterward, the two vessels parted company.

As soon as we were on our own deck once more, Mr. Adolphus de Courcy strode up to our little captain with a majestic air.

"Ave I the honor to haddress the captain of this piratical craft?" he asked in a most grandiloquent way.

"My name is Captain Joker, and this ship, which I have the honor and good fortune to command, is the Queer Fish, a regular letter-of-marque, commissioned by the United States Government."

"Wery vell, all I 'ave to say is, as 'ow I consider this transaction a wery houtrageous haffair; and I demand hinstant release from your villainous ship."

By this time the Boomerang was a mile or two away, and I saw a merry gleam in the little eyes of Captain Joker, which was premonitory of some fun.

"How can I release you now, sir?" said he, with an air of some concern.

"No matter 'ow, sir, I demand hinstant release from this willainous wessel," exclaimed the cockney, thinking that he had succeeded in browbeating the captain, and that he should now have it all his own way.

"I understand you to mean what you say?" asked the captain.

"Hexactly!" was the lofty reply. "I demand a hinstantaneous deliverance from this wile captivity! I demand it as a peaceable citizen of hold Hingland, whose broad hægis is powerful alike hon the land hand hon the briny deep."

"All right, sir, you shall have your wish: only be careful that you do not change your mind, as it will be of no use. Trybrace!" added Captain Joker, singing out to the boatswain: "have that ar little gig provisioned for two days, put in this little man's luggage, then put *him* in, and cut him loose. He wants to leave the Queer Fish."

"Ay, ay, sir," sung out Tony, cheery as a cricket; and he immediately set about giving the necessary directions.

"I wish you a good-morning, sir," and, with this Captain Joker bowed courteously to the cockney, and retired to the precincts.

Mr. Adolphus de Courcy appeared at first unable to comprehend what was to be done with him; but, when the truth dawned that he really was to be turned adrift, he seemed perfectly stunned.

"Vill you 'ave the kindness to hexplain this 'ere little harrangement?" he said, going up to Tony, who was busily superintending the outfit of the little boat.

"Ain't got no time, sir. The captain's orders were positive, and he ain't in the habit of repeating them. Clew up that gearing at the bows, you lubbers. And caulk up that 'ere seam in the labbard side. Do you suppose the gentleman wants ter go to Davy Jones's Locker afore he gits well started on his way? Put in the water and the sea-biscuit. Now for the gentleman's luggage. All right! Lower her!"

The arrangements were all completed, and the little craft was lowered from the davits over the stern. She was so small, and her cargo was so great, that she settled down almost to the gunwales, and it was questionable how long she would float after the bulky form of the cockney should have occupied the small amount of room left vacant for him at the stern.

We all preserved a solemn silence. The wretched Englander kept flattering himself that it was a good joke until the final preparations left no room for a doubt.

"All ready, sir," said Tony, touching his hat respectfully. "Will yer Honor be pleased to step inter yer Honor's craft?"

"Ha! ha! a wery good joke hindeed!" exclaimed the cockney, with a forced laugh. "A wery good joke! 'Ave you got out a patent for it? I should like to 'ave it, to hintroduce into hold Hingland."

"It's no joke at all, yer Honor," said Tony, as sober as a judge. "Will yer Honor condescend to make haste? We cain't stand in the middle of the ocean in this way, while there's so much prize-money lyin' about loose."

"My wery good friend," said De Courcy, taking the boatswain affectionately by the hand, "'ave you the serious intention of perwiding a fellow 'uman being with such han houtfit, and consigning him to the mercy of the wast and 'eaving hocean?"

"Them's the orders, sir."

"I then demand to see the captain of this willainous craft hinstantaneously."

"All right, sir. Dicky Drake, jist tell the skipper as how the gentleman wants to bid him good-by."

The message was sent, and Captain Joker made his appearance almost immediately. His face was beaming with cordial farewells as he advanced with outstretched hand toward the dumfounded De Courcy.

"Good-by! good-by, my dear fellow, and a prosperous voyage!" he exclaimed, shaking him warmly by the hand.

"Captain, I vant to know as 'ow—"

"No thanks! no thanks! my dear sir: I make you a present of the boat. There, there, good-by!" and the captain, in the zeal of his farewell, almost thrust the poor fellow over the bulwarks.

"But," persisted the latter, "I vant to know as 'ow—"

"I tell you I will not hear any thanks at all! There, there, farewell!"

The crew now crowded forward, with similar well-wishes, and the unfortunate cockney was fairly hustled over the ship's side into the frail gig, which was almost swamped by his weight.

"There are the oars, sir," sung out the captain. "I hope you will find them easy to your hands. Farewell! *Bon voyage!* Cut her loose, lads!"

The order was executed at once, and the boat, with its occupant, drifted off. At the same moment we let out our main sheet and continued on our course. We looked back over the stern, and saw the little boat going up and down, in and out of the troughs of the great swells, with its occupant sitting in the stern, looking the very picture of despair.

You needn't suppose that Captain Joker was cruel enough to leave the cockney in this predicament. He merely wanted to learn him a lesson in good manners. And, just as the gig and its occupant were almost cut of sight, we rounded to and bore down for her, tacking against the strong breeze. To show you the captain's kindness of heart, just as we were preparing to round to, a sail was signaled on our starboard bow. Ten chances to one it was another prize, and the temptations to keep on our course were exceedingly strong in us all, especially in the skipper, who was as fond of prize-money as any man I ever saw. Nevertheless, he ordered us to round to and bear up for the gig. The mean old dog of a first mate undertook to argue him into leaving the Englishman to his fate, when he was met with a stern rebuke.

"Mr. Saunders," (that was the name of the first mate) said he, "if you have nothing but such heartless cruelty to urge, I will beg you to defer your suggestions to a more fitting occasion. I am compelled to say, sir, that your heartlessness—not to say avarice—is astonishing, sir, astonishing!"

But the merry captain could not remain long in a bad humor, even with such a flinty-minded old Sawney as Saunders. When we had got pretty close to the gig, the forlorn, disconsolate aspect of Adolphus de Courcy was too much for a mirth loving nature to endure with solemnity, and Joker burst into laughter, as did the entire ship's company, who were all congregated forward, looking over the bows.

At a look from the captain, Tony Trybrace sung out:

"Would your Honor like to come aboard?"

A motion of the Britisher's head signified his assent to the proposition, and, with

great difficulty, owing to the roughness of the running sea, we grappled the boat, and hoisted the entire compoodle, bag and baggage, to the deck of the Queer Fish.

The cockney had long ago resigned himself to despair, and when he found himself safe and dry at last, the revulsion was too great, and he burst into tears.

Captain Joker went up and took him by the hand, kindly.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I had no intention of cutting you adrift more than temporarily. It seemed to me that the tone which you assumed to me, on board my ship, was so very extraordinary for a prisoner to address his captor with, that a little lesson of this kind would not be bestowed in vain. Trust me, my dear sir, if I have caused you any pain, you compelled me to do so, and I'm sorry for it. As long as you remain upon my ship, pray consider my cabin your own. I would treat you as a guest rather than as a prisoner. Pray dine with me to-day. And dinner is almost on the table."

This magnanimity almost crushed the poor prisoner. He dried his tears, and said in a much manlier voice than heretofore, as he grasped the hand of his generous foe:

"Captain, you 'ave the goodness to treat me like ha gentleman. This 'ere is returning good for evil with a wengeance, hand I beg to hacknowledge that I ham halmost crushed by your noble hand belated sentiments."

With that, they went down into the cabin together, and, from the way we heard the corks popping, they must have had a jolly time.

The lesson was not lost upon the cockney. His tone to everybody was thereafter greatly improved. He remained for some time with us, and, though we were frequently amused at his vanity and his antipathy to the letter H, we found him, in the main, a pretty good fellow.



CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER PRIZE—FISHING FOR SHARKS.

It was on the third morning following the event narrated in our last chapter that we fell in with another—our second prize. She was a noble East Indiaman, a ship that could almost have picked up our saucy little privateer, and carried her at her stern like a yawl, had it not been for the difference of the cannon we carried. But, of course, that made all the difference in the world.

She was loaded with silks, spices and preserved fruits, and was immensely valuable. We had a brisk chase after her, but brought her to in an hour by a shot from our irresistible amidships gun. A large number of passengers were on board, which made a disposal of her somewhat uncomfortable. We had to deplete our ship's company again by putting a prize-crew on board. But we, here again, had some consolation in this, inasmuch as we received several recruits from the crew of the prize.

We had struck a bee-line southward some days before, and were now approaching the equator—the days not growing much cooler in consequence. One day, when we had got becalmed, the whole ship's company (almost) went in bathing, and a thrilling incident was the result.

The captain, always glad to make the men happy, had caused the mainsail to be slung over the side, with either end upheld by the overhanging yards, the belly of the canvas making a long dip in the brine, thus making a delightful shallow for the more timid swimmers to exercise their talents in, while bolder spirits might strike out to any distance they pleased. A great peril was involved in this operation of mid-sea tropical bathing, on account of the sharks, which are always more or less numerous in the wake of a ship.

Well, we all had an excellent time in the water, and were not in a hurry to come out. The captain had got tired of laughing at us, and had gone below for a siesta.

Old Snollygoster, after having got through with his ablutions, was lazily watching us from the rail of the ship. He was probably as able a swimmer as ever lived. He now amused us with sundry suggestions and cautions with regard to sharks, warning us not to go too far from the ship, and solemnly averring that

his assistance need not be counted on, in event we were attacked. Several of us had swum to a considerable distance from the vessel, when suddenly some one sung out:

"Sharks! sharks!"

I thought it was a joke at first, but upon turning and casting a look seaward, I, sure enough, discovered several of the ominous black fins cutting water toward us.

I gave the alarm and struck out for the ship, with the strength of forlorn hope, followed by all the rest. To experience the horrible sensations of such a situation is an event which no after events, however stirring, can ever obliterate. It is horrible! horrible! That is all I can say. Every instant you expect to hear the snap of the ravenous jaws in your rear, and the next to feel them on your limbs. I think I never in my life swam so swiftly as upon that occasion. The ship was not distant—only a few rods, but it seemed a league to our excited imaginations. At length, however, with a wild cry of relief, I felt the canvas of the outstretched sail under me, and, clambering quickly up the side, was safe on the bulwarks. My comrades followed right at my heels, and the next moment I had the satisfaction of seeing them safe at my side. *All* of them? No, not all. A feeble cry behind apprised us that one was less fortunate than the rest. It was Dicky Drake. He had succeeded in almost reaching the sail, and was now all but surrounded by the infernal, swiftly-moving black fins of the monsters, who were actually pushing him about with their muzzles. They evidently thought that they had a sure thing, and might as well have a little sport with their morsel before devouring it. The poor fellow floated on the waves, paralyzed with horror and fright, unable to move hand or foot for his own salvation. It is very probable that this circumstance helped to save his life.

We were all so horrified at the spectacle that we were powerless to render any assistance, even if it were possible.

"Avast there, you lubbers!" said a clear, rough voice behind us.

Upon looking back we saw that it was the giant negro, Snollygoster, who spoke. Unbeknown to us, he had stripped himself, and now stood naked, with a long clasp-knife, open, and between his teeth. With one bound he was in the shallow of the sail below, and, with another, he grasped poor Dicky Drake by the hair of the head and drew him in, and we let down a rope and had the satisfaction of drawing the poor devil, more dead than alive, to the deck.

But the matter did not end here. Right in the midst of the sharks sprung the heroic Snollygoster. He dove out of sight. In an instant the water became suffused with blood.

"By Jove! they've nabbed him!" exclaimed old Bluefish, excitedly.

But they hadn't done anything of the kind. The next instant the woolly head of the negro made its appearance above the surface. It was shark's blood that was dyeing the water. Again the darky disappeared, and the water grew redder and redder, as another of the monsters floated, belly up, with a terrific gash in his paunch. The negro seemed to be as much at home in the sea as the fish themselves. It was a terrific combat, but one of intense interest. In vain would the monsters roll over on their backs and snap at their inexorable foe, or attempt to cut him in two with a sweep of their tremendous flukes. He was away again as quick as he came, attacking them from under the surface. In this he now had an advantage, as the water was so bloody that the fish could not see the blows by which they were being momentarily stricken to death, by the terrible right arm of heroic negro. At length, five of them were floating, dead or dying, on the surface, and the rest of them, with one exception, beat a retreat and did not venture within several rods. But the grand combat was yet to come. The one shark that lingered was by far the biggest of the group. I think he was, without doubt, the largest of the species I have ever seen, and I have seen plenty to choose from. He was thirty-five feet in length, if an inch, and when he opened his jaws the cavity Within was a terrible affair, with its double rows of tusks.

He seemed determined to take upon himself the championship of the whole family and advanced warily upon the negro, who did not flinch for a single instant. At length and as quick as lightning the monster leaped entirely clear of the sea and brought around his tail like the sweep of a scythe. The darky was out of reach just in time. As it was, the ragged edge of the animal's fluke just grazed his temple, drawing the blood. But before the unwieldy monster could recover himself for a renewal of the attack the knife of the negro was buried in his side. The wound was not mortal, but it must have been a painful one, to judge by the way the brute lashed the sea in his fury. It, however, served to render him more wary than before. He now began to swim round and round his foe in the hope of wearying him. But the negro stood bolt upright in the water, treading it with perfect ease, and ever keeping his face to the shark.

At length the latter, losing patience, charged, hoping to tear down Snolly with his snout. But quick as a wink, just as the animal was upon him, the negro

disappeared, and the great effusion of blood that instantly followed made us aware that he had received his death-blow from beneath.

I shall never forget the shout with which we greeted the invincible Snollygoster as his woolly head appeared above the blood-dyed waters, while the conquered monster drifted off from the side of the ship, lashing the sea feebly with his tail, but fast expiring. Snolly slowly came out of the water and up the ship's side.

The captain, who had witnessed the last combat, shook him warmly by the hand when he reached the deck, while we all gathered around him with rousing cheers. Little Dicky Drake caught him by the hand and fairly sobbed. I must say that I had a strong impulse to catch the great negro in my arms and hug him for very joy. But Snolly rapidly replaced his clothes, with the simple remark:

"Dis nigga nebber see'd de fish he was afeard of."

You may think that this is quite sufficient for one fish story, but it isn't. We weren't done with the sharks yet. As the blood faded out of the water the school of sharks again clustered about the ship, and the captain determined to afford the men greater sport by catching one, if possible.

"Ow will you do it?" exclaimed our prisoner. "Ow will you 'ook one when you 'aven't any *worms* to bait with?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the captain. "It's true we haven't any fishing worms, nor grasshoppers, for that matter. But you have been complaining of the mosquitoes all day, my dear sir, and why not use them? However, we might as well try 'em first with a little bacon. So Pickle, just order some one to fetch up the carcass of that pig that died last night."

The bait was duly brought up on deck, much to the astonishment of the Britisher.

In the mean time Tony Trybrace proceeded to rig up the necessary tackle. Upon the end of a rope about an inch and a half in thickness he fastened a large boat-hook. We then slung the rope through a block and made the latter fast to the jibboom. We thus had a first-rate purchase wherewith to fetch up anything short of a few tons' weight. Having made all ready, we hooked on the bait, and with a dozen stout seamen holding on to the other end, to be ready for any emergency, we lowered her slowly down. The stench of the putrid meat had already set the sharks wild for first bite, but as we wanted to take our choice and capture one of fair size, whenever a little fellow would jump at the bait we would quickly haul

up and let his jaws gnash together with nothing between them.

At last, however, one rousing big fellow, who had evidently scented the battle from afar, came rushing up at railroad speed, pushing his voracious way through his smaller fellows. The bait was suspended fully six feet from the surface of the sea, but with a flying leap he took the whole hog at a swallow, and was hooked, of course. His weight drew the line down into the sea with a tremendous splash, almost jerking one or two of us overboard. But the next instant we were ready for him, and began to haul in with a will and a "yo-heave-ho!"

The old fellow didn't like it, but come he must, and, in spite of himself, he began to rise clear of the water. He then endeavored to bite off the rope, but Tony had been too sharp for him there, by twining the line, for three or four feet above the hook, with stout wire, so that the teeth of the monster gritted but harmlessly against the tough rope by which he was held.

Slowly but surely we drew him up until we got him taut up against the tackle-block, when another squad of sailors threw out some grapnels to haul him on deck, tail-foremost. The other men stood by, armed with cutlasses, hatchets and boarding-pikes.

"Now, be ready to pull him in when I give the word," sung out the captain, who was dancing about, the merriest man on the ship. "And be sure you keep out of reach of his flukes, or your mothers will forget you before they see you."

"'Eave 'im hin! 'eave 'im hin!" cried Adolphus de Courcy, who was impatient to try the efficacy of a sword-cane, which he held in his hand.

"Now, lads, haul away!" ordered the captain.

Slowly we brought him in, lowering him by the head as the other squad dragged in the tail. At last the monster was fairly on deck, when, at a signal from the captain, the men at the tail released the grip of their grapnels, while we simultaneously cut the line at his head. You had better believe we sprung out of reach lively, as soon as we had done this. And with reason; for the shark began to flounder at a most terrific rate, and if any one had happened within the reach of his flukes, he would have been a goner.

One laughable incident occurred.

The cockney was either not spry enough in getting out of the way, or he was too intent to get in a shy with his sword-cane; at any rate he caught a side wipe from

the flat of one of the flukes, which sent him head over heels into the bow-scuppers.

"W'y, 'ow did that 'appen?" exclaimed the poor fellow, picking himself up, amid a storm of applause. "You see, I just wanted to get von vipe at the willain vith my walliant blade, when down I goes vithout knowing v'ere I vas hit."

It is astonishing how high a shark can leap from the water, but to see one of them bounce up when he has got solid oak beneath him as a purchase, is worth a long voyage. This shark would leap up perpendicularly fully thirty feet in the air, and come down with a crash that would make the vessel tremble to her keel. The blood poured from his mouth from the severe contusions he had received, but he seemed to lose nothing of vitality; until, at length, when we had enjoyed his gymnastics sufficiently, the captain made a sign to commence the assault.

The sailor regards the shark as his natural enemy, and never misses a chance to slay or maim him. So, as soon as the signal was received, we all began to dance about our victim, to get in a blow, which was anything but an easy matter, and, at the same time, avoid the sweep of his flukes, or the snap of his awful jaws.

"First blood!" yelled the cockney, with enthusiasm, as he succeeded in inflicting a slight scratch from which a few drops of blood oozed out.

"Do yer call *that* blood?" exclaimed old Bluefish contemptuously, as he danced in and fetched the shark a deep gash with his tomahawk, and this time the fountain of life began to flow in earnest.

Then the captain got in a blow, with his cutlass, between the eyes, and almost at the same time I ran my sharp pike clear through the black fin on the shark's back.

The struggles grew sensibly more feeble as the wounds told upon him, until at length the shark lay almost motionless. You may be sure that all hands, even down to Dicky Drake, were as brave as lions when injuries could be inflicted without danger to themselves.

Everybody now rushed, and a general thrusting, slashing and hacking took place until there was nothing left of the shark but a bloody and shapeless mass.

Every one then fell off exhausted, except Adolphus de Courcy, who enjoyed the fun so much that he couldn't be prevailed upon to stop.

"Just let me 'ave von more vipe at the willain!" he exclaimed, stabbing the

lifeless mass again and again, until forced at last to desist by the laughter which his ferocity called forth.

Well, the fun was all over, and the next thing to do was to heave the carcass overboard, and to wash the decks, the last of which was performed in a vein somewhat less merry than before. But the captain made quite a holiday of it, gave us plenty of grog, and there was as little grumbling on board the Queer Fish that day as you would be likely to fall in with in a year's voyage.



CHAPTER VI. CROSSING THE LINE.

The greatest holiday at sea is that of crossing the Equator. It is rare fun to the initiated, but to those who have the process in prospect it is a cause of sleepless nights and considerable mental anguish.

The time drew rapidly on for the celebration of this holiday on board the Queer Fish. We were busy making preparations for it, a long time beforehand. Almost every one was in excellent humor. Our cruise had, thus far, been eminently successful. We had captured upward of twelve vessels since our departure from Boston—a period of not more than two months. The prospect was that, if we should bring the cruise to a successful conclusion, we would each and all have something snug laid up at home, with ease and comfort the balance of our lives. So we were in a most excellent frame of mind for the merry-making that drew nigh.

Stop! There were a few exceptions. If any of you had been on the Queer Fish for a day or two prior to the passage of the equinox, you would have noticed, I think, a certain fidgetyness in the manner of both Dicky Drake and Mr. Adolphus de Courcy, in strange contrast to the general cheerfulness of every one else. The latter of these individuals, it is true, would pretend to be exceedingly careless and free-and-easy. He would be heard to hum the scraps of a great many little melodies and to whistle scraps of a great many more, but you would notice, upon close observation, that it was all put on, and that he was in reality faint at heart.

Poor Dicky Drake hadn't the duplicity necessary for any such make-believe as this. He began to look miserable from the very moment that it became known that the equinox was to be passed, and continued to grow worse from day to day, until the despondency of the poor lad was positively pitiful, and I secretly promised myself to exert my influence to render *his* share of the initiation as light as possible.

There had existed some controversy as to whether Roddy Prinn and his little chum, Willie Warner, were not also "liable." But they had succeeded in proving to the satisfaction of Captain Joker, that they had made the passage from Rio to

the Bermudas, and it had eventually been decided that they were exempt.

There were several others of the crew, who were prospective victims. But they were genuine sailors, who really took the thing philosophically. One of them, a little Irishman, by the name of Teddy Tight, swore that he longed for the day to arrive, and that he didn't sleep "aisy" for thinking of the fun in store for him.

The preparations we had been and were making, were somewhat extensive. Everything was prepared beforehand, and we had several rehearsals. Old Nick was to represent Neptune, and, from the description I have given of him, you may judge that he suited the character to a T. Bluefish was chosen for Amphitrite, the wife of the Ruler of the Waves, and, though he had an unladylike habit of hitching up his skirts whenever he wanted to use his jack-knife, it was thought that he would go off very creditably. I was one of the Tritons, whose principal duty, on the occasion, was to assist at the initiation of neophytes, while Tony Trybrace, Roddy Prinn and Willie Warner were among the Nereids, who sung the mystic songs of the ceremony. I can't vouch for the poetic merit of these musical attempts. One of them was:

"We come from the depths of the ocean
Where Neptune is the king.
And the waves, with their commotion,
Keep time with what we sing.

"Huzza for the flag of the Union,
The Stars and the Stripes of the free
Our flag is the flag of the ocean,
Huzza for the flag of the free!"

I cannot say who was the author of these stanzas, but am compelled to admit that I should keep exceedingly dark on the subject, if *I* were the author.

Another fragment (even worse than that already quoted) ran:

"Father Neptune, he is jolly,
Drink, lads, drink away!
Father Nep. hates melancholy,
Joy reigns at the bottom of the *say*.

"Drink, lads, drink, for Union,
The old flag must have sway,
Father Nep. hates communion,
Down at the bottom of the *say*."

I reckon the author of these must have been an Irishman; at any rate, no one can question him as a poet.

Well, the day at length arrived.

According to rules, the novices were kept in strict confinement, till the performance was ready to commence. The little captain stood looking on, impatiently waiting for the opening ceremonies.

At eight bells, all was ready. Neptune was in his throne, with a beard as blue as the sea, and with a great crown of shells and sea-weed strung round his brows. He had a conch-shell for a breast-pin, and each of his shoes, or, rather, slippers, were surmounted with a large, brilliant-hued bivalve.

Amphitrite sat by his side, with her flowing locks—constructed of oakum—spangled with many varieties of weeds and shells and her long beard (think of a sea queen with a beard!) daintily braided and plaited into grotesque ringlets, while her long, blue paper-muslin robe was intended to have a resemblance to the sea she ruled. The Nereids were grouped around, looking excessively feminine and bewitching (to a sailor), with their long hair, and sea-green garments; while we merry Tritons were rigged in a little more convenient costume, as our work was to be heavy; but, rely on it, we looked hideous enough.

As the ship's bells struck eight, three of us, at a signal from the Ruler of the Waves, dove down below, and appeared, a moment afterward, with Dicky Drake, our first victim.

The poor fellow was almost scared to death. He eyed the various contrivances, which had been prepared for his benefit, and shuddered from his cap to his boots.

"Bring forth the culprit!" roared Father Neptune, in a voice of thunder; and we led the trembling victim before the throne.

"What is his crime?" was the lofty question of the ocean king.

"I ain't done nothin', yer Honor," began Dicky, thinking he might get off by an eloquent appeal. "Yer see, I was brought up in Salem, I was—a place as has furnished a great many sailors for yer Majesty's dominions. It's true I never crossed the line, yer know, but yer see, I almost did it onc't. It all as happened in this 'ere way. Ole Si Jenkins and I, we started out on a mackerel fishin' an' got driv' away down south, almost onto the equator, when a sou'east storm springs up, and sends us back a joe-kiting. Well, as I was about ter say—"

"Peace!" roared Neptune in a voice of thunder.

"Yes, your Majesty, but yer see—"

"Peace!"

"Oh, yes! Wery good! but, as I was about ter say, the—"

"Peace, or I'll kick yer inter Davy Jones's locker!" was the dignified interruption, and Dicky stopped short.

"Lead the prisoner to the plank!" was the final order of Neptune.

Visions of "walking the plank" immediately rose up before the wretched youth, and he began to appeal in heartrending accents.

"But I didn't go an' do nothin', yer know. I was allers exceedingly respectful and perlite. Onc't on a time, I see'd a feller spit inter the sea, an' I remonstrated with indignation, because I thought yer Honor might be averse to tobacco. Yer see—"

"Silence! Lead him to the plank and shave him!" roared the implacable sea-god, and we led him away.

A great tank of water was situated right in front of the throne, and between the fore and mainmasts of the ship. Over this was drawn a light plank of pine. And the tank, we might as well mention now as any time, was filled with salt water.

Upon this plank we seated our victim, and began to lather him with soft-soap, without paying any regard to his sight. He gave a wild shriek as the suds went into his eyes (but he had had fair warning from me to keep them shut). Then, as my comrade held him fast, I proceeded to scrape his face with the piece of an iron hoop, which I had picked up and somewhat sharpened for the purpose. I laid it on as lightly as I could, but, nevertheless, the performance was so ridiculously painful that the poor fellow yelled again with agony. For the sharp but gritty edge of the saw-like razor would grab the few hairs he had on the chin, and would pull outrageously.

At length the barbering performance was over, and poor Dicky thought that he had got through the whole passage of the equinox.

But, no sooner was he shaved than the plank was suddenly jerked from under him, and down he went into the cold sea-water, where he floundered about fully a dozen seconds before he could scramble out.

He was next submitted to the tumbling apparatus. This was nothing more nor less than the mizzen-royal in the hands of a dozen men or so, two or three grabbing each corner, while the victim was tossed into the middle, where he was flung up and down, now and then letting him down far enough to give him a good bump against the deck. We finished him up with a keel-haul. There are two ways of doing this. The old way consisted in making the victim fast by either ankle, and then flinging him overboard at the bow, dragging him under the keel, with a rope on either side of the ship. But this was never resorted to as pastime;

in fact, it was considered the worst of nautical punishments. Victims frequently died under its infliction. If anything of that kind had been tried under the Queer Fish, the sufferer would most certainly have had a hard time of it. For our bottom was completely covered with that small variety of the carbuncle shell-fish, known to seamen as ship-lice, and any one being dragged against them, would have been terribly lacerated.

But, of course, nothing of *that* kind was to be attempted upon such a merry and good-humored craft as the Queer Fish. *Our* keel-hauling simply consisted in making the victim fast by the ankles, and shooting him out far behind in the wake of the vessel (always making sure that there were no sharks in the neighborhood), and whisking him back again before he could well know how wet he was.

Poor Dicky Drake had stood everything else like a man, but his soul instinctively revolted from keel-hauling—though, to tell the truth, it was by far the easiest punishment inflicted in our category.

We made fast to his ankles, and swung him over the side, in spite of his entreaties. The ship was going at a spanking pace—a good eight knots an hour—as Dicky touched the water at her foaming wake. We let out lively on the lines, and away he sped, a good fifteen fathoms, from the ship. He squealed like a stuck pig as he hit the water, but we brought him back so quick that his head swam.

We then led him up to the throne of Father Neptune, who stretched his withered hands over his head, blessed him, and proclaimed him a true son of the sea—made so by his last baptism therein. The victim was then permitted to dress himself, was given a rousing glass of grog, and in a few moments felt as merry as a king, quite anxious to laugh at the next victim. They followed, one after another, amid roars of laughter. Most of them were old tars, who took the thing as an excellent joke, and we therefore made little out of them.

At last there were only two victims left. These were Teddy Tight and Mr. Adolphus de Courcy. The latter was reserved as the last, because we expected to have the most fun out of him; and the former was kept as next to last, because we half suspected that his eager anticipation of the fun that was in store for him was all gammon, and merely put on to cloak his terror.

In fact it was the testimony of each of his predecessors in the "ceremonies" that, as his turn came nearer and nearer, Teddy's courage began to sink until, at last, it

was at zero. When we led the doughty little Irishman on deck, he was as pale as a ghost, and shook like a leaf.

On being led before the august presence of Father Neptune, however, his native blarney began to overflow, and excuse after excuse began to be poured out in a profusion which would have been limitless, if we had not cut him short.

"Och, yer Honor!" he cried, "w'at has yer Honor got ag'in' sich a poor little spalpeen as meself? Sure, an' hav'n't I sarved yer Honor well, by land and by say? Let me off this time, and I'll sarve ye better than iver. Och, yer Honor, ye must surely remimber me father. He was owld Barney Tight of Killarney. The way he would lick any one who would dare to say onything ag'in' yer Honor's character was a caution to the woorld. An' there was me uncle. Och, an' he was an ixcellent mon, yer Honor. I see'd him onc't knock the top-lights out of a murtherin' spalpeen who was afther injurin' yer Honor's reputation. An' there was my sister—God rest her sowl!—you should 'a' see'd her when she—"

"Silence!" was the gruff reply of the ruler of the waves; and Teddy, though he kicked and squirmed like an ugly worm on a bodkin, was put through the necessary course of sprouts in short order, but with a will.

Then Mr. Adolphus de Courcy was led up amid peals of laughter. He had had the philosophy to strip himself, with the exception of a pair of old pantaloons, and now appeared on deck with an air of offended dignity, which made him ridiculous in his present attire.

"What is yer crime?" was the gruff question of Neptune.

Adolphus eyed the venerable figure of the ruler of the waves with a lofty air of scorn, and did not, at first, deign to reply.

"Yer crime?" bawled the king, seizing his scepter with a menacing gesture.

"May hit please your hill-favored 'Ighness, has I hain't got hanything of that kind habout my person, I hain't hable to produce hany."

"You'r' accused of striving to usurp our throne," exclaimed old Neptune, wrathfully.

"W'ot!" exclaimed the astonished cockney, with his breath almost taken away by the novelty of the charge. "I—I husurp your throne! My dear hold fellow, I wouldn't 'ave it for ha gift."

"Ha! do yer insult us? Executioners, do your duty!" roared the indignant monarch.

"Now, 'old hon, hexecutioners," argued the cockney, remonstrating, "let me warn you not to go han' do hanything so wery rash. Do you 'appen to know 'oo I ham?"

"Yes, you're the grandson of—the Lord Knows Who," said Father Nep.

"Bless me, now, and 'ow did you know that my grandfather was a lord? That's wery astonishing, I declare. Wery well, you see I'm considerably different from halmost all of you fellows, hinhasmuch has I was brought hup a gentleman, hand was born hin dear hold Hingland, the Hempress of the Hocean. Now, certainly, your Hexcellency won't be so unfortunately rash has to hoffend the Hempress of the Hocean by hany hundue hinterference with one of her favorite sons, while hin the pursuit of 'is peaceful havocation."

The Britisher argued this in his most solemn and impressive style, and looked, when he was through, as if he thought the argument to be conclusive. But he roused a new enemy in an unexpected quarter. Scarcely had he finished his harangue, before Amphitrite (*née* Bluefish) sprung from her throne, with a wild yell, and caught him by the hair.

"Who dares to style any other than me the hempress of the briny deep?" she shrieked in his ear. "Ha! villain, thou art convicted out of thine own mouth. Usurper, thy time's come! Tritons, do your work!"

"But I protest! I demand ha hinstantaneous release has a Hinglishman on the 'igh seas! Captain, I happeal to you! This houtrage to Hinglishmen will be hawfully havenged! I protest—I—"

But he was now on the plank, undergoing the operation of shaving, and his open mouth received the great brush of lather full between his teeth, almost choking him, and completely gagging him for some time to come. Then the plank was whipped from under him, and down he went with an awful splash into the tub, protesting, amid the shouts of laughter, something about his being "a chosen son of hold Hingland."

We tossed him in the sail with the jolliest vehemence, but, when the ropes were being adjusted for the final part of the programme, that of keel-hauling, he begged off piteously.

"Captain, I shall drown, I know I shall," he pleaded, turning with an imploring gesture, to Captain Joker, who was enjoying the thing amazingly. "Captain, I 'ave a natural hantipathy to hanything but 'ot water. A bath hin my present state of perspiration will be the certain death of me, I know hit will. Now, please, captain, for the sake of hour hold and hardent friendship—for the sake—"

But the captain was implacable, and the cockney, though struggling violently, was swung over the taffrail. He was truly in a melting mood. The day was hot enough, as you may judge by the latitude we were in, and the course of sprouts through which we had been rushing our English victim, had made the sweat come from every pore of his skin. The revulsion, therefore, as his body hit the coolness of the rushing ocean stream, must have been very great. As it was, he gave an awful scream, and floundered like a stranded shark. Away he went, far out from the stern in the swift wake of the gliding ship. When we drew him in and landed him safe and sound, once more on deck, he was so overjoyed at his rescue, that he pretended to have liked his bath.

"Do you know, I henjoyed hit himmensely," he exclaimed.

And when he was dressed, with a good, stiff glass of grog in his hold, he really was one of the merriest men on the ship.

Well, that ended the ceremonies, but the holiday was not over by any means. We had an extraordinary dinner, and, after the sun had set and the bright tropic moon had risen, Snollygoster brought out his violin, and we had a glorious dance. Grog was freely distributed, and I am afraid there were a good many heads that felt abnormally large next morning.



CHAPTER VII.

FUN ON SHORE.

In the latter part of the month of July, we succeeded in making a safe entrance into the neutral port of Rio de Janeiro, after having captured several more valuable prizes, and bringing two or three along with us. There was a British man-o'-war, the *Atalanta*, in this port, when we entered. She could have blown us out of water by one broadside of her great guns, but, nevertheless, she respected the neutrality of the port, and did not dare to molest us.

It may seem strange, from the manner in which Adolphus de Courcy had been treated on board the *Queer Fish*, that he should regret leaving us. But it is, nevertheless, a fact. When his freedom was given him, he assembled the entire crew around him, thanked them for the jolly time they had afforded him, and shook the captain warmly by the hand. He was really an excellent-hearted fellow, and we gave him three hearty cheers as he went over the ship's side to the boat which was to convey him and his luggage to the British ship before-mentioned. And his sincerity was not of a transient kind; for we afterward learned that he spoke well of us to the officers of the *Atalanta*.

Going on shore, after a long voyage, is the sailor's paradise. I reckon some of those old streets of Rio were glad enough when we disappeared; for a noisier, wilder, more devil-may-care set of tars never raised a rumpus in a seaport town than did we in Rio. We were allowed to go on shore in squads alternately; and as many of the British sailors were also, more or less, in the town, we had several collisions of a very serious character, though the disturbances were usually speedily quelled by the authorities.

The first disturbance of this kind that I was in happened a few days after we entered the port. A large squad of us—perhaps twenty—had gone on shore, but Tony Trybrace and I had somehow got separated from our companions. We were both of us somewhat in liquor, and had a hankering—a usual one under the circumstances—to have something more to drink. So we entered a queer sort of Spanish gin-shop, and, not understanding the lingo very fluently, proceeded to help ourselves—of course with the intention of paying our way.

In the course of this proceeding, Tony was rudely thrust back from the counter

by the proprietor of the place, a wiry Brazilian, and, at the same time, admonished by a torrent of invectives in the unknown lingo.

It is poor policy to treat a drunken man rudely, unless you are a policeman. A sailor, especially, will bear but little handling. Tony staggered back a moment, but, the next, the Brazilian was lying on the floor from a terrific blow between the eyes. Just at this moment, several English sailors entered the room, and, seeing that we were Americans, of course took the landlord's part. The latter was but little hurt and soon got up, muttering a great string of oaths, the usual consolation of the Spaniard, but, this time, in a much lower voice, and taking care to be out of the reach of Tony's powerful fist.

"Hit's ha hawful mean shame for to see ha poor cuss treated hin that 'ere way," mused one of the Englishmen to his comrades, in a tone so loud that it was evidently meant for our special benefit.

"That's so! Shiver my timbers eff I would stand it eff I was the Spanish cuss," was the elegant rejoinder.

"Whoever don't like it, can take it up whenever he wants," bluntly interposed Tony.

"His that 'ere remark hintended for me?" asked the first speaker.

"Well, it is," said Tony, "and so is this 'ere."

And before I could guess his intention, or move an inch to hinder it, down went the cockney before the same stanch fist of the Yankee sailor. The rest of the Britishers immediately sprung forward to avenge their comrade's fall; and, as I couldn't stand by and see little Tony overpowered, I also went in. There were ten of them, at least, and we were soon on the verge of destruction, when our cries for help reached the ears of friends outside, and in dashed Old Nick and Bluefish, at the head of a dozen or more of our lads, when the way that the Britishers and that entire gin-shop was cleaned out was a caution. Three policemen now dropped in, but we *dropped* them in as summary a way as the rest of them, and made our escape up the street.

This may be a rude picture, but it is one of truth, and I merely give it as a sample of sailors' life ashore in foreign parts.

But there were other scenes in our Brazilian experience that were much more novel and satisfactory than the foregoing. The town itself—or, rather, city; for it

is a large place—is full of interest to the foreigner.

The men are mostly very homely, the women very pretty. The higher classes make a great display in a worldly way. I have seen as elegant "turn-outs" here, as in other parts of the globe. The ladies—some of them—are attired with unparalleled magnificence. You know it is a country of diamonds. The ladies sport a good many of them, but they have another kind of ornament which, perhaps, will be new to most of you. This is a peculiar kind of *firefly* which the ladies wear in their hair. I have seen them fastened among the black locks of a Brazilian belle at night-time, when the effect was striking in the extreme.

Gambling is very prevalent among the people.

Even the lowest classes are infatuated with their favorite game of *monte*. They play the clothes off their backs, and would play the hair off their heads, if they wore wigs. They are great lovers of spicy food, like all the rest of the South Americans, as well as the Mexicans. The amount of red peppers which a genuine Spanish-American will consume at one sitting would make a Yankee sneeze for the balance of his lifetime. They stew it and fry it and broil it, and eat it as we do tomatoes.

When I was in Mexico, the body of a Mexican, who had died of exposure, remained all night exposed on the mountains, where the wolves are as thick as grasshoppers, and we found the body next morning untouched. I verily believe that he was so excessively peppery that the wolves couldn't find palate or stomach for him.

Another favorite article of food is the inevitable *tortillo*. This is almost identical with what our hunters and soldiers call slapjacks. It is a sort of pancake in a modified form, and goes very well on a hungry stomach.

There are also many lamentable things to witness in Brazil. The condition of the slaves is wretched in the extreme. Never—except, perhaps, it was in the Isle of France—did I witness the yoke of slavery fit the neck of the poor negro so gallingly as at Rio; and I was told that the condition of the slaves further up the country—especially in the diamond districts—was even more deplorable.

But my intention is to devote myself mainly to the fun we had, so we will quit this distressing subject for a livelier theme.

One of the greatest attractions which Rio afforded us was the inevitable bull-

fight. Great preparations had been making for one of these performances before we arrived. Of course, as soon as we got wind of it on board the Queer Fish, every man was wild to see the show. The dear little captain wished to oblige us all; but, as all could not go, it was decided who should, by lots. It was my fortune to be one of the lucky ones.

So, on an exceedingly bright morning in the month of July, we—about twenty of us—landed at Rio to see the bull-fight. The affair was to take place at a distance of several miles from the city, and we had taken the precaution, several days beforehand, of securing conveyances. These were nothing to boast of. They consisted of one barouche, an old-fashioned transportation wagon, and a light, rickety affair, with shafts about fifteen feet long, which is of very frequent use in Spanish countries (*vide* Havana).

We made some wry faces at seeing these turn-outs, but the horses attached to them looked spry, and we were resolved to make the best of the bargain. We were soon seated, or, rather, *heaped* upon the sorry vehicles, the drivers cracked their long whips, and away we went through the narrow streets of Rio, singing songs, yelling discordantly, and getting outside of a large amount of bad alcohol.

At length we reached the plains back of the city—the pampas—the broad, glorious, rolling pampas; and we could see the inclosure where the bull-fight was to take place, together with the flag-decorated, red-roofed buildings surrounding it. A vast concourse had preceded us there, but we had secured seats beforehand, and had no difficulty in reaching our places. Those Brazilians in our immediate vicinity must have remembered for a long time the crowd of Yankee privateersmen. These Spanish people have ways and manners very singular to a foreigner. While we were waiting for the bulls, all the ladies amused themselves with smoking their universal cigarettos and fanning themselves. They never stop smoking, save, perhaps, to make and light a new cigar, and it has often been a matter of reflection to me, how they could keep up that everlasting fanning of their pretty faces. They never stop. The fan keeps moving incessantly. They must be very powerful in the right arm. I am sure it would make me, or any other strong man, very tired to swing one of those fans for half an hour, yet these pretty ladies keep it up continually and never seem fatigued.

While waiting for the bulls, the men either talk to the ladies or play *monte* among themselves. They frequently quarrel during their games, talk very boisterously, lay their hands on their knives, and look very savage. But gaming quarrels among them very seldom go any further.

We had plenty of time to observe all these things, as we were fully half an hour before the time, as was almost everybody else. We spent a portion of our time in eating Brazil-nuts, oranges, bananas and other fruit, with now and then a cheer or two for the Queer Fish and the flag that flew at her peak. The native policemen would bob up and down about us, endeavoring to maintain better order, but not liking to arrest any individual one of us, while they did not dare to attempt a whole arrest. All this weary interval of waiting an American caterer would have filled up with strains of music; but not until almost at the moment of the commencement of the performance, did the Brazilian musicians (wretched ones) discourse their strains.

At last, however, the band pealed out, and the performers came running into the ring. The fighters of the bull, on this occasion, were of two classes. One class consisted of men, dressed in tights and spangles, after the manner of our circus actors. These men bore red scarfs or flags, wherewith to blind the beast, while each of them carried a number of little darts at his belt. The darts were a sort of fireworks, one of the various modes adopted for the torture and goading of the bulls. The other class consisted of the *matadores*, whose duties are of a more sanguinary nature than their brothers of the arena. Most of them on this occasion were mounted, and armed with spears, but the most famous were on foot, armed simply with a long, sheathless rapier. These latter are in a bull-fighting country about the same as first-class theatrical performers are in America and England. They become very famous when successful, and star it through the country in the same way as our actors. The main office of the star *matadore* is to give the finishing blow to the bull—the height of the accomplishment being in the art of killing at a single, graceful thrust of the sword.

When the performers had taken their positions, a signal from the major domo caused the opening of a suspicious-looking door at the upper end of the arena, and out bounded an enormous black bull, with a bellowing noise, and lashing his sides furiously with his tail.

The game now commenced in earnest.

The ball was opened by one of the horsemen couching his spear and rushing in to the attack. But, quick as a wink, and as lively as a cat, the bull leaped on one side, avoided the thrust, and ripped up the *matadore's* steed, killing him instantly. The poor bull-fighter was hurled high in the air, and fell to the ground. I looked to see him destroyed instantly. But now the flag-bearers rushed in, flinging their red scarfs over the animal's horns, and engaging his attention until their

discomfited comrade recovered, and was enabled to limp out of the ring. The other horsemen, three in number, now spurred forward, and succeeded in inflicting several painful wounds.

Infuriated with agony, the bull rushed at them blindly, this way and that; but they glided away from him, and inflicted new wounds.

At last the flagmen (I forget what the Spanish name for them is) rushed in and flung their little darts into the animal's side. The torch was applied immediately afterward, and the bull was transformed into an enormous fiery porcupine, and a very frightful-looking figure he cut. Although considerably enfeebled by loss of blood, the ungovernable fury of the bull sustained him for another assault, when he gored another horse and tossed the rider almost to the top of the pavilion. But now the master of ceremonies gave the signal, and one of the pedestrian *matadores* stepped out, sword in hand.

There were three of these men. They had remained standing motionless in a very nonchalant way, waiting for the signal of the *coup de grace*. The one who now stepped out to the task, was a lithe, handsome fellow. With a light bound, he sprung at the side of the bull, avoided the side-sweep of his angry horn, and plunged his weapon in the animal's neck.

A storm of hisses burst from the audience, for the blow was not the death-blow; and the *matadore* recovered his sword and returned to his former position; for one of the rules of the bull-fight is that the blow which is intended to be final must not be repeated, if it be unsuccessful.

And now, at another signal from the major domo, an old *matadore*, who had stood gravely in front of us throughout the entire performance, now advanced easily toward the bull, who made a staggering charge upon him. But he easily evaded the charge, gained the animal's side, and drove in his thin sword to the hilt, right behind the shoulder-blade. This time it was the *coup de grace*. The bull stumbled forward, and then fell to the ground dead, while a thundering cheer greeted the successful *matadore*, who bowed carelessly, as if he was used to it, wiped his sword, and quietly resumed his former position.

Now the supernumeraries entered the ring, with a wagon, to remove the dead bull and horses and other *débris*.

Several other bulls, more or less formidable, were disposed of in rapid succession.

But the greatest bull was reserved for the *finale*. A hum went through the audience as he sprung into the arena. I think I never saw a nobler animal than this bull. He was of a bright bay, and as glossy as the costliest satin. His eyes were brilliant and large. The strength as displayed in the splendid limbs and glorious neck was prodigious. All "our crowd" sent up a rousing cheer as soon as this animal made its appearance.

Well, the usual performance was gone through with at first. The horsemen charged; one of the horses was killed; the flag-bearers charged, and one of them was killed. The fireworks had become exhausted: so *that* part of the show—a very disgusting part to me, I must say—had to be skipped. The master of ceremonies seemed loth to give the signal for the death of this noble beast. And while he was deliberating, the bull made a sudden and most effective charge upon all the horsemen and flagmen, who were very injudiciously, all grouped together. The result was that the horses were immediately overthrown and disabled, one of the flagmen was immediately killed, and another one badly hurt, while one of the three *matadores*,[\[1\]](#) who had been in the group, was tossed high into the air and, by the rules of the arena, was out of the fight, on account of his having left his proper position at the edge of the ring. There were now, literally, as the only remaining fighters, two *matadores* or swordsmen. One of these, at the sign from the master of ceremonies—which was now very hastily given—rushed in to the attack. But his blow was a bad one. The old *matadore*—the one who had finished up the the first bull so nicely, was now the only one left, and he, without losing a particle of his composure, went in with a confident air.

But he made a mistake, just as he reached the animal's side, and had his arm paralyzed by hitting a horn with his crazy-bone, and away flew his sword out of his hand. The next instant, he was tossed sky-high and Mr. Bull had it all his own way.

A murmur of horror ran through the audience, for it seemed that now, as every one of the fighters was either prostrate or weaponless, there would be a great carnage. Even the hitherto imperturbable major domo lost his presence of mind and turned as pale as death.

At this momentous juncture, old Bluefish, to our unmitigated astonishment, started up with a wild whoop.

"I'll spike him! I'll spike him! Smash my top-lights, if I don't spike him!" he shouted.

And, before we could guess his intention, he had leaped the railing, and was in the ring. Snatching up the sword of one of the fallen *matadores*, he made at the bull. The latter charged him, with a roar that shook the pavilion to its center. But the sturdy old sailor leaped on one side, got in his blow, and drove it in behind the shoulder, the weapon rapping up against the skin, close to the hilt. The magnificent beast tottered forward an instant, and then dropped to the earth, stone dead.

Cheer after cheer greeted the brave deed of the Yankee tar.

"Bravo! bravo! Americano! Americano!" echoed from the crowd of Brazilians.

"I told yer I'd spike him!" was the simple and only self-comment of Bluefish, as he returned to our midst.

We were proud enough of him, you may be sure. But we were prouder still, when, as we were going out with the throng, the band struck up "Hail Columbia." The master of ceremonies had ordered it as a compliment to us.



CHAPTER VIII.

ROUND THE HORN—THE PATAGONIANS.

A week after our experience at the bull-fight, we were ready for sea. It was an easier matter, however, to be ready for sea, than to be able to get to sea. For several of John Bull's cruisers were watching for us just outside the harbor, determined, if possible, to put a stop to further depredations on British commerce as far as we were concerned. But, on a stormy night in the early part of August, Captain Joker determined to make an attempt to run the blockade. All the men were quietly posted at quarters, and we started, cautiously hugging the land on the south side of the bay. We got along capitally till we reached the mouth of the harbor. Here we almost ran into a man-o'-war. The night was so dark that you couldn't see your hand before your face. We just saw her lantern in time to bring our helm hard-a-port. As it was, we grazed her stern with our bowsprit.

"What ship is that?" was immediately bawled from the man-o'-war.

"British sloop-of-war Achilles," sung out Captain Joker. "What ship is that?"

"The Hercules."

"All right!"

We passed on, holding our breaths, and were soon out of reach.

But we were scarcely two miles out to sea, when the signal lantern of another of our blockaders appeared, and a shot was fired across our bows. But we kept straight on our way without paying the least attention to it. Another shot followed us as harmlessly as its predecessor, but a third struck the taffrail of our stern, sending up a shower of splinters.

"Blast 'em! blaze away with the Long Tom!" cried our little captain, getting in considerable of a tantrum for such a good natured fellow.

Bang! went the long brass swivel, and a flash from the enemy's guns, immediately afterward, let us see our ball strike her fair and broad in the starboard bow. We gave her one more compliment of a similar character, and

then kept on our way, without further molestation, for we could easily outsail anything the enemy could bring against us.

It was the beginning of a tempest which raged with but little intermission, for several days; and we were kept hard at work, as a consequence. It let up, however, when we had reached a latitude far down the coast. We here had the satisfaction of capturing two richly-laden brigs from Valparaiso, which more than compensated us for our privations.

It had been decided, at first, to double the Horn, but as the weather bade fair to be more than commonly bad, we entered the Straits of Magellan, intending to gain the Pacific by this avenue. There was more danger attended by this route than by the Horn, as it was quite probable that we should meet some armed vessel of the enemy. In view of this probability, Captain Jorker decided to make no captures while in the straits, however tempting an opportunity might offer, in order to disarm suspicion, if we should happen to fall in with a man-o'-war.

The Straits of Magellan—that broad avenue between the southern portion of the South American Continent and Terra del Fuego—links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by a fine channel, deep enough for the largest ship that floats. It is a wild and dreary scene. On both sides of the straits the character of the shore is eminently precipitous and inhospitable. The great cliffs of black granite rise from the water's edge, in most places, to a great height, sparsely grown with stunted trees and a description of rank grass. The climate is almost always cold and dismal, with something falling all the time—snow or rain.

The impression produced upon the mind of the rover, when, for the first time, he views these remote and cheerless scenes, is one that can never be effaced. One of the first queries which one makes to himself is, "How can anything—man or beast—live in the region of desolation and gloom?" Yet inhabitants there are, of both species.

It was snowing furiously as we entered the straits, and we had not proceeded far, with the Patagonian coast in view, before we saw an immense flock of ostriches on the high table-land, looking down at us in a very curious way. Something, however, occurred to frighten them, and away they went, vanishing inland. These South American ostriches are not quite so large as their brothers of tropical Africa; but they seem to be stronger. Their legs are much thicker, and their wings are so small as hardly to appear at all, being concealed under the heavy feathers of the side. They run with great speed, outstripping the swiftest

racer. They seem to resemble the cassowaries of Southeastern Asia more than the ostriches of the Sahara, and are not nearly so valuable as the latter for their plumage.

We also saw some wolves before the day was over. We lay up for the night, under the shelter of the high cliffs of the Terra del Fuego side of the straits. It blew strong during the night, and was so cold that we suffered considerably. The next morning a boat expedition was started, to obtain some wood. I was along, and Tony Trybrace was in command. We rowed up an inlet which deeply indented the coast, in order to find, if possible, a landing-place, where wood could be obtained.

The scenery of Terra del Fuego is, if possible, more desolate and cheerless than the opposite side of the straits. It was the very incarnation of gloomy solitude, as we pulled up the narrow inlet, with the high, rocky cliffs on either side; and I felt a sensation of loneliness and awe creep over me as the ship was shut from our view. The very waters through which we glided appeared black and somber—there was nothing of the glad coast greenness, or of the true sea-blue about it. Now and then a lone eagle would rise from some jagged crag, and soar over us with a hungry scream, which only served to render the solitude more impressive and solemn.

It was up this inlet that we saw human inhabitants for the first time since entering the straits.

The Indians of Terra del Fuego are nothing like so formidable in size as their brethren of Patagonia. In fact, they are rather below than above the medium size of humanity. They are extremely filthy in their habits.

"As for their customs," as the midshipman said, "they are incomprehensible; and as for their manners, they haven't got any."

They live in wretched habitations, which are semi-subterranean, and are partially dressed in the skins of wild beasts—mostly of wolves and foxes.

As we rowed up the estuary, quite a number of these savages appeared upon the rocks to our left, and greeted us with friendly gestures. As we, soon after, descried a favorable landing-place, we made for the shore, and, as soon as we were on it, were surrounded by upward of fifty Indians. We took good care to keep together, with an eye always on our arms, for we did not know what treachery might be preparing for us. But we wronged these savages in our

suspensions. They were of an exceedingly mild disposition, and manifested no other feeling for us than friendship, though the curiosity with which they examined our clothes and arms was rather annoying. They had evidently seen but few white men, as the Straits of Magellan were not frequently visited by vessels in those days. One of the young lady Terra del Fuegians, who appeared to be quite a "belle" among her companions, took quite a fancy to me. She examined my hands with wonder, but, upon pushing up my sleeve and viewing the whiteness of my arm, she was much struck at my appearance, and greeted me with a torrent of questions in her native lingo, which must surpass the Chinese in incomprehensibility, I think. These people are not devoid of a certain frankness of expression, which commends them to the notice of the stranger. They have a mild, placid look, but, when angry, give tokens of the most furious tempers. They are armed with bows and arrows and rude spears, and live to a large extent upon fish and shell-fish. The latter are procurable in large numbers, and the former are generally captured by means of the spear, after the manner of the Northern tribes of North American Indians. The males and females dress precisely alike—the garment generally consisting of a loose robe of skins, reaching from the neck to the feet—and this, together with a very slight dissimilarity of facial characteristics, renders it difficult to distinguish the two sexes apart. One very praiseworthy quality in these Indians—in strong contradistinction to the savages of North America—is displayed in their almost universal contempt for trinkets. They do not seem to care a button for any ornament—unless it comes in the shape of a piece of useful clothing—while any gift which they can put to immediate use is received with exuberant tokens of delight and satisfaction.

One of our men offered to one of the chiefs a large, bright naval button, when it was discarded with contempt, with the single comment of "*waywoo nexel*," which, by a free translation, may be rendered into "What is it good for?" "It is pretty, but worthless." Whereas, a large nail which was offered by another of the men, was delightedly accepted, with a profusion of thanks.

There was some utility in *this*. It might be fashioned into a spear or arrow-head, or crooked for a hook to hang dried fish on. And it was, therefore, far more valuable to the simple natives than the brightest ornament of gold or precious stones.

We gathered our boat full of wood—such as it was—which we cut and collected from the dwarf forests in the vicinity, and in a few hours were ready to take our departure. I do not know whether they had ever seen a ship, but, by some

intuitive faculty, they seemed to conjecture that we hadn't come all the way from the other side of the world in the long boat—that there must be a vessel of larger proportions somewhere in our vicinity, and they all wanted to accompany us on board the ship. Strange to say, these natives are very poor boatmen. They are almost devoid of any water conveyance.

We could not accommodate all of them, so they deputed one of their number—quite a lad—to accompany us. He got in at the bow, we followed, and pushed off, with our load of fuel, having a much better opinion of the natives than before.

It was worth a long journey to witness the wonder and awe of our little passenger upon first beholding the Queer Fish, as she lay at anchor in the straits. At first the solemnity of the thing kept him silent. His feelings of awe, however, gradually wore off, and he began to clap his hands and utter wild exclamations at everything he saw. When on board of the ship, he danced about in perfect ecstasy. We had a great deal of fun with him, and the captain offered him a glass of grog, "just to see," to use the skipper's own language, "how civilized the youngster was." Upon the latter's rejecting the liquor in unutterable disgust, Joker unhesitatingly declared him to be in the lowest depths of primitive barbarism.

The next day, after putting our guest ashore—much to his dissatisfaction—we proceeded westward through the straits. In two days we arrived at the western extremity, without encountering a solitary ship. It was here that I met with quite an adventure.

I was again a member of a boat expedition to procure wood, and as we had seen a good many animals on the rocks, I, together with several others, provided myself with a musket and ammunition, in hopes of procuring something edible in the way of game.

So, after we had loaded our boat, those who had guns—myself among them—started off in different directions through the rocks and woods. For my part, I struck a bee-line inland, through the scrub trees, and had not proceeded more than a mile or so when I sighted a small grayish fox, and brought him to a standstill with a bullet through his skull. It occurred in a singularly gloomy and dreary sort of dingle or ravine, surrounded by frowning rocks and ragged trees. I hastened forward to secure my prey, but, just as I was bending down to pick it up, a deep growl startled me, and upon looking up I perceived a monstrous gray

wolf, who was approaching me with a hungry and ferocious aspect. Almost immediately I perceived several more of the same ugly customers approaching from the summit of the ridge. I had neglected to reload my gun, and was somewhat taken aback by this strange apparition. But I have seldom been at a loss for expedients in times of peril. I now snatched up the carcass of the little fox, and tossed it at the wolf to attract his attention, at the same time springing to a scrub-oak, which I succeeded in climbing, bringing my gun with me.

No sooner was I safely ensconced in the crotch of the tree, than I saw myself surrounded by a pack of at least fifty of the gaunt, ferocious beasts, who had gobbled up the little fox in the twinkling of an eye—more or less—and now seemed especially thirsty for my blood. To my further dismay, I now saw a large reinforcement of wolves coming at a brisk trot over the opposite ridge. You see, I was considerably uneasy in my mind, on account of the lowness of the tree. I straddled the crotch, and my feet swung, at most, only six feet from *terra firma*, and there wasn't much chance of standing on my feet without dropping my gun. I was debating the grave question in my mind as to whether the wolves were spry enough to leap as high as my feet, when the biggest "varmint" among them dissolved all dubiousness on the subject by taking a short run and a flying leap at my feet. He missed them by about six inches, and his teeth gnashed together with a most villainous snap. He made several more trials, as did some others of the pack, but as they could not succeed in coming any nearer, I felt easier in my mind on this score. The entire pack then surrounded me, gazing up at me wistfully, as at a dainty piece of meat hung beyond their reach, and set up a prolonged, dismal howl.

I forgot all about my gun at first. The strangeness of my situation, as well as its peril, lay upon my spirit like a spell. Can you imagine anything more ridiculously lonesome and desolate than a Yankee tar treed in the middle of Terra del Fuego by a pack of unreasonable, gigantic and hungry wolves? I can't. I believe I would as lief climb the North Pole and take a lonely roost on its summit.

Presently, however, I remembered that I had a musket and a large quantity of ammunition; and the idea occurred to me that, as the wolves were hungry, I had better feed them on each other, as the most charitable course I could pursue.

So, having found a niche in the trunk of the tree, just below my right foot, where I could securely rest my gun, I rapidly reloaded. Having done so, I took a steady aim, and knocked over the biggest, ugliest rascal I could see. No sooner did the

other wolves see and scent the running blood of their comrade than they rushed upon him with joyful yells and rapidly tore him to pieces—for many mouths make light work, as well as many hands. As soon as this was disposed of I shot another, which was also instantly devoured. So I went on, knocking them down as fast as I could reload, and rarely missing my aim. But the voracity of the infernal brutes seemed to have no end, and fresh squads kept coming in from every side, until I began to think that it was incumbent upon me to fill the stomachs of the entire wolf population. I destroyed fifty of them, if I did one, and yet they yelped for more, as if they hadn't had a meal in six weeks. Only having about ten charges left, I now ceased firing for a while, sincerely hoping that the wolves would leave me in peace. But they had not the remotest idea of doing anything of the kind.

I remained six mortal hours a prisoner in the crotch of that miserable tree. At length, however, as it began to grow dark, I began to be alarmed, and recommenced my firing, in the hope that it would bring my comrades to the rescue. By the blessing of Providence, they did at last hear me, and I was saved. I shall never forget the thrill of deep joy with which I heard their encouraging cheer, as they advanced to the rescue, over the summit of the eastern ridge. They numbered a dozen stout fellows, each armed with a musket, led on in solid column by little Tony Trybrace. A loud shout of laughter burst from their lips upon perceiving the ridiculous position in which I was placed. But their merriment was something that I was little disposed to join in.

Nevertheless they advanced resolutely forward, pouring destructive volleys into the bewildered wolves, who now began to scatter in every direction. And, in a few moments not a live one was to be seen.

I slid down from the tree as lively as possible, and told the story of my adventures; but they had to support me to the boat, as I was so weak from the cramped position I had so long maintained, that I could hardly use my legs at all.

That was the last of my experience in Terra del Fuego. The next morning we sailed northward, skirting the western coast of Patagonia.

The water which we had taken on board at Rio having proved of very inferior quality, the captain decided to make a stop somewhere on the Patagonian coast—where the water is very delicious—in order to refill the casks. In several days we arrived at Wellington Island. This is a long, narrow, almost herbless island on the western coast, about midway between the Island of Chiloe and the western

extremity of the Straits of Magellan. There is quite an archipelago here, there being a continuous line of islands stretching along almost the entire coast. Keeping the southern extremity of Wellington Island on our left, we steered in toward the coast, and soon made an excellent natural harbor on the mainland.

The country here is not nearly so bleak as down at the straits. There is quite a spontaneous growth of grass, forests of oak, beech and cedar; and I was told that there were extensive grassy plains inland. Indeed, there must be something of the kind to feed the large numbers of horses and guanacos (a wool-growing beast, a sort of Patagonian llama) that roam the wastes, many of which we saw, even on the coast, which is rocky and bold. You can't say much for the climate, even in antithesis to Terra del Fuego. It is simply, universally, equably wretched. It rains all the time, with no cessation at all. At least, it did while we were there, and the natives assured us that it always rained. They did not know what a dry day was, and laughed heartily when told of countries where the sun frequently deigned to smile for an entire day at a stretch.

We remained at our anchorage off the mainland for nearly a week, and as there were plenty of natives in the vicinity, we had an excellent opportunity of observing them, which we were glad to improve. The coast of this remote region was not visited in those days, except at rare intervals. Some few adventurous navigators had explored the seas and inlets to some extent; but to most of the natives whom we met, we were as strange a race as though we had dropped from the sky.

Many erroneous ideas were then, and are to the present day, entertained with regard to the inhabitants of Patagonia. They were represented as of gigantic proportions, herculean strength and ferocious and cannibalistic propensities. Nothing of the kind. It is true, they are a very tall race. I have seen them as high as seven feet. But six feet four inches is not considered dwarfish, even in Patagonia. I am told that the natives of the west coast are the shortest of the different races of Patagonia, and that those of the most easterly and central regions are of an average height of seven feet, frequently attaining a still loftier growth. This is doubtless true, as it comes from sources that should be authentic. But those of the west coast are as I have indicated. They are also very bulky of body, but their limbs are quite disproportionate, and I do not think them equal to the Caucasian race in point of physique. As in the case of the Terra del Fuegians, the men and women dress alike, are of almost equal height, and are with difficulty distinguished from each other. They dress in long, loose robes, reaching nearly to the feet. They are excellent horsemen, and skillful hunters with their spears.

They are also expert with the bow and arrow. The principal game consists of horses (large herds of which range the country), ostriches and guanacos, which we have already described as being a species of llama. Besides these, there is a species of hare, several kinds of edible birds, and shellfish are most abundant on all parts of the coast. The latter is one of the principal articles of food, and the manner of obtaining the oysters, clams and mussels is excessively primitive. The women dive for them. As the climate is very cold, the privations which these poor creatures undergo to supply the appetites of their selfish lords with the luscious bivalves are very great. The water is always of icy temperature. I have seen these poor women kept in the sea for an hour diving for mussels, and, when they were permitted to come out, they were so benumbed as to be hardly able to stand. As soon as they come out of the sea, they are carried in front of blazing fires, where they are gradually thawed into their normal state. I think this must be a main cause for the paucity of the inhabitants of this coast. If they increase in population at all, it must be very tardily. The women, on account of these cruel privations they undergo, are seldom so long lived as the men. Some of them are not devoid of beauty, but, as with our own savages, an excessive prominence of features is the ruling facial characteristic.

Another article of food which is much prized, is a species of wild celery which grows in great quantities along the coast. It makes an excellent salad, and is the only vegetable I saw in use among the natives. The people are very similar in disposition to their brethren of the Cape. Their voices are sometimes of surprising sweetness, although the language they use is harsh and unmusical. They are usually of a mild and serene temperament, but, when thoroughly aroused, exhibit passions of an ungovernable fury, which I have never seen equaled outside of Africa. Unlike the Terra del Fuegians, they are a nomadic race. They wander from place to place, engaged in hunting and fishing, and in the course of a year probably traverse a distance of many hundred miles.

Their lodges consist of skins, sticks and earth, and are, owing to their temporary occupation, less substantial than those of the Fuegians, but, from what I saw, I should judge that the Patagonians are a much cleaner people.

We were on very friendly terms with them, and made them several presents of a useful character, for which they were duly grateful. In return, they brought us large quantities of shell-fish and the delicious wild celery.



CHAPTER IX.

HUNTING THE OSTRICH.

Before we set out from the coasts of Patagonia, Captain Joker, together with several of his crew—myself among the number—who had ingratiated themselves in the good graces of the natives, received an invitation from the chief to go with him upon an ostrich-hunt in the interior.

We gladly accepted the offer.

The chief, whose name was Walgilka—I spell it to produce the pronunciation as I remember it—signified the day upon which we were to start, and promised to have the requisite number of horses in readiness. The party who were to accompany him consisted of the captain, the second mate (Pat Pickle), Tony Trybrace, Bluefish, Dicky Drake and myself. Dicky had specially ingratiated himself with the chieftain by presenting that individual with an old, dog-eared testament, which was looked upon by the natives as containing something of mystical import.

On the appointed morning, we duly landed, each provided with a musket, and were escorted by several natives to Walgilka's lodge, which was located inland, about a mile from the coast.

When we came in sight of it, we saw that about twenty horses were in waiting, saddled and bridled after the primitive manner of the Patagonians.

The horses are not large, but are strong and wiry; usually of an iron gray or sorrel hue. The "saddle" is merely a wolf or guanaco skin bound over the back in several folds; and the "bridle" consists of a stout thong of hide made fast, from shifting, at the throat, but connected with a piece of hide of greater thickness, which goes through the mouth after the manner of a bit.

As I gazed upon these uncouth, stirrupless steeds, I must confess that my heart sunk within me, and, in imagination, I felt sore already, as I thought of the ten or fifteen mile gallop that was probably in store for us. But I put as cheerful a face on the matter as was possible.

The chieftain came out from his lodge, attended by numerous huntsmen, armed

with their spears and bows, in readiness for the chase. He greeted us cordially, and in a short time we were mounted and moving at a brisk pace for the prairies of the interior, where the ostriches most do congregate.

It would be impossible to chase the ostrich successfully if he started as fresh as his pursuer, as they are not only far fleeter than the swiftest steed, but have also far greater powers of endurance. But they have a way of managing it in Patagonia, by which the birds are taken at a disadvantage. It is one of the peculiarities of the ostrich of South America to always run before the wind, if possible, when pursued.

The strong gales that are prevalent, and, indeed, almost incessant in this region, blowing against their plumes from behind, thus serve to give them a considerable acceleration of speed. Therefore, when a Patagonian chief decides to have a day of ostrich-hunting, he usually, the night beforehand, sends some of his people twenty or thirty miles down the coast (that is, if a *south* wind is blowing, for instance.) These outriders then proceed inland, and slowly drive what birds they may meet with northward. The men do not approach near enough to cause any excessive alarm, but maintain a sufficient distance in the rear to keep the timid creatures on a moderate trot before the wind, giving them no time to halt for any considerable length of time. In this way, they keep them almost perpetually on a trot for the entire distance of twenty or thirty miles, whatever it may be. Then the sagacious chieftain, with his train of fresh horsemen, do not have much difficulty in running down the poor ostriches, already fatigued from their long thirty-mile trot. In this way the endurance of the ostrich is tested by the combined endurance of two stout horses, and, of course, is found wanting.

Dicky Drake, when he heard of this *modus operandi*, swore that it was a mean, unfair thing on the ostrich, and vowed, if it wasn't for the sake of seeing the thing through, he would drop the enterprise.

Well, *our* outriders had been dispatched down the coast on the preceding night, and Walgilka assured us we should meet with excellent sport. The inevitable, incessant rain of Patagonia was falling, but not heavily, and we had come to look upon a mere drizzle almost as a sunshiny day.

At length we broke from the rough country, upon a bare hill, whence, far below and beyond us, rolled the glorious land of the pampas—portions of it almost as level as a floor, but the greater part rolling like the billows of the sea. A large

troop of ostriches were feeding below us, and we could see several herds of horses and guanacos in the distance.

Walgilka immediately gave the signal to charge, and, with a ringing shout, we dashed down the hill upon the astonished ostriches, who immediately started off at a tremendous pace.

"They run well for having just finished a twenty-mile trot!" said Tony Trybrace, who was riding at my side.

I thought the same thing. But we had not got very far before we heard a cry in our rear.

Walgilka turned and then gave the signal for a halt. When we looked back we perceived one of the natives pursuing us at a great rate, and, upon coming up, we were informed that we were pursuing the wrong flock of birds. Those which had been specially fatigued for our benefit were feeding some miles further inland. So, with many a joke at our own mistake, we left the pursuit of the fresh flock—and it would probably have been a long stern-chase, if we had kept it up—and proceeded eastward, over the pampas, to find the tired game.

We came upon them in about half an hour. And this time it was no mistake. Although the birds ran very swiftly at first, several of them limped painfully, and soon, one by one, they began to drop behind each other. We could see them flap their little wings painfully, as they panted on before our fresh and momentarily nearing steeds. At length, one of the poor creatures stopped and laid down, at the same time extending its head despairingly along the ground, and tacitly receiving the deadly arrow of the nearest horseman.

We rapidly gained on the whole flock and were soon in the midst of them, knocking them down in every direction. I got a shot at a very fine bird and laid him low, while, almost simultaneously, Tony and the captain each brought one down. Bluefish also did well, but little Dicky Drake, as usual, made a laughing-stock of himself. His tender heart got the better of his desire for carnage just as we got in the midst of the flock, and he conceived the brilliant conception of taking one of the birds alive.

Springing from his horse, he made at a very large ostrich with outstretched arms, when he received a most unmerciful kick from the powerful leg of the bird, which doubled him up and laid him sprawling. Nevertheless, he was plucky and immediately got up to try it again. This time, evading the legs of the bird, he

made a spring and alighted upon her back, when the bird, no doubt extremely terrified at this maneuver, summoned up her remaining energies and started on a brisk run. Dicky clung to her, probably as much frightened as she, and bellowing like a good 'un amid the noisy laughter of all the huntsmen.

"Stick to her! Good-by, Dicky!" shouted old Bluefish.

But the bird ran only a few rods before she dropped and expired, and the amateur hunter returned to his horse looking rather sheepish.

We killed about thirty birds altogether and took up our homeward way with our horses heavily laden, after having enjoyed the novel sport hugely.

We saw vast herds of guanacos, as well as a great many horses on our way back, but we were in no condition to take up another chase, although the opportunity was very tempting.

I here also had the opportunity of seeing, for the first time in my life, that enormous bird, the Condor of the Andes. He had been feeding upon some carrion a few rods in front of us, and, startled at our approach, rose slowly up with a guttural cry and flew toward his mountain home. I let off my gun at him at rather short range, I thought, but without effect.

The reports of the size of this bird have been greatly exaggerated, but I am sure this one was twice as large as the largest eagle I ever saw. The condor flies higher than any other bird and is only found in the Andes of South America—usually frequenting the most elevated and inaccessible parts. Its strength is prodigious. Walgilk informed me that it was not an unfrequent thing to see them seize upon and carry off the guanaco; and this animal is of about equal weight I think with the merino sheep.



CHAPTER X.

VALPARAISO.

In a few days after our ostrich-hunt, our preparations for leaving Wellington Sound and our kind Patagonian friends were complete. Walgilka was very pressing in his desire for us to defer our departure, promising us all the hunting we could desire, but duty was duty, so we bade farewell to him and his people, and hoisted sail.

The American Government had agents in the Chilian port of Valparaiso, whom it was important for Captain Joker to see, and it was therefore decided to make sail in that direction. Another inducement for entering Valparaiso was our scarcity of hands, owing to the depletion our crew had suffered through the many detachments we had been compelled to make in the way of prize-crews. We hoped to obtain some recruits among the merchantmen of Valparaiso. But there was even more difficulty in entering this port than we had experienced at Rio, because the former was then one of the principal rendezvous of the British Pacific squadron, and we expected little mercy if we should be so unfortunate as to run afoul of one of them.

Nevertheless, we had been so successful thus far that we were not by any means specially apprehensive. We had not lost a single man since we started. But now, on our way to Valparaiso, there was a little event happened on board the Queer Fish, which, though it at first appeared trifling, was afterward viewed in the light of importance.

Little Willie Warner, our pretty cabin-boy, received a severe contusion of the head by a fall down the companionway, and had to go under medical treatment in consequence. He had always been exceedingly quiet and reticent, but was beloved by the whole crew on account of his gentleness and beauty. Every kindness was now evinced for him from every quarter. The captain especially was very considerate. He allowed Roddy Prinn to be nearly altogether excused from duty, in order that he might wait upon his little chum—a favor for which Roddy was exceedingly grateful. The doctor—I have forgotten to mention him; he was a good old body by the name of Benedict—the doctor was very attentive to Willie Warner, and always had something encouraging to say about his charge.

But, one day, we noticed Doctor Benedict come hastily up from below, looking very queer in the face. He went up to Captain Joker, and spoke apart with him in low tones, when they both looked pretty serious, and there was an expression on the captain's smiling lips—they always smiled more or less—which I had never noticed them wear before. Well, we didn't know what to make of this mystery; and it was not cleared up for a long time afterward.

Willie got well and returned to his duties, but the captain and doctor were, somehow, kinder and more gentle with him than they had ever been before, and his duties were made as light as possible.

Before Willie's convalescence was thoroughly over, we arrived off Valparaiso, but did not dare to enter openly, for fear of being stopped at the entrance by a British man-o'-war. We expected a signal from our agents, and hung off the coast a long time, watching for it. But none appeared, and Captain Joker resolved to attempt an entrance at his own hazard.

Luckily, he was perfectly familiar with the harbor, and, choosing a dark and stormy night, we succeeded in running in, without meeting any molestation.

The tempest went off during the night, and the bright sunlight of the ensuing morning saw us riding safely at anchor, not forty fathoms from the city's wharves.

Valparaiso was a city of much less importance then than now, but it was, nevertheless, a smart seaport for that remote portion of the globe. It is built right at the water's edge, with the grand mountain-wall of the Andes running so stiffly, loftily and impenetrably up behind, that you wonder how the rays of the rising sun ever reach the little city nestled at their rocky feet. At least you think they must have daylight on the level pampas beyond many moments before it surmounts those mountains to reach the narrow strip of plain between them and the sea. There is a fine cathedral in the city now, but when I was there, the largest establishment of this kind appeared to be a wooden structure. It was surmounted by a great red, wooden cross, and every morning and evening, we heard the sweet music of the Catholic service come floating to us over the waters of the bay.

We only remained in this port a few days, but, while at anchor there, I was a party in a kind of sport seldom, probably never, met with in any other portion of the globe. This was nothing more nor less than a hunt for electric eels.

Tony Trybrace and I became acquainted, while at Valparaiso, with a Chilean gentleman named Jose Gonzales. He possessed a large landed estate in the interior, and, when Tony had told him of our ostrich hunt in Patagonia, invited us to visit him at his country place, and he would promise us sport of, at least, a more novel character. Dicky Drake begged us to have the invitation extended to him also, which was readily complied with by Don Jose. And, one morning, having obtained a three-days' "leave" of Captain Joker, we mounted some fine mules, and set forth with our pleasant host. A portion of our journey lay through mountain land—the outskirts of the Andes, and we had a good opportunity of observing the inhabitants of the country.

Chile is, at present, considered, and with justice, the first of South American countries in point of everything pertaining to population; and evidences of her future were not lacking in the year 1812. The Spanish population of the mountain region were a simple and hardy race; whose hospitality alone causes the heart of the stranger to warm toward them with a kindly thrill.

We saw a great many of the llamas of the country, more condors, as well as monkeys, and many other strange and interesting individuals of brute creation.

A ride of about six hours from Valparaiso brought us to the ranch of our host. It was most beautifully situated on the fertile table-land, and made me in love with South American rural life. As we approached the mansion, we passed several black-looking pools, or lagoons, and were much surprised when told, by our host, that they were to be our hunting-grounds.

As we rode by the largest of these lagoons, which was scarcely a furlong from the ranch, Don Jose drew a biscuit from his saddle-bags and tossed it into the middle of the still, black waters. Instantly, and before it touched the surface, the lifeless-looking lagoon was filled with a strange and horrible existence. Myriads of snakes (as they appeared) rose suddenly to the surface, and engaged in a furious combat for the floating biscuit. Presently we saw the little fins on either side of their necks, and we then knew them to be eels. Some of them were very large—from six to seven feet in length, I should judge—but they averaged a much briefer length. Presently one of the larger snapped the biscuit under the water, which caused a sudden disappearance of all of them. One little fellow, however, swam around the edge of the tarn, in hopes of more food, projecting his shining head out of the water, and even climbed up the slimy bank, eyeing us with a peculiarly villainous gaze from his dull, leaden-colored eyes. Here was a chance for Dicky Drake, for, of course, there was no liability of a scrape that he

did not seize with avidity.

"I allers wanted a specimen of that cuss for my old uncle's cabinet at hum', and here's my chance!" he exclaimed, springing from his mule, and advancing, with hands innocently outstretched; while, from the peculiar expression of Don Jose's features, Tony and I suspected that there was something in the wind.

"I've got yer, yer varmint!" exclaimed Dicky, stooping joyfully over the reptile.

But no sooner did he clutch it than over he went, head over heels, with a bellow of pain, at the same time dropping the "critter" as if it was a candent thunderbolt.

"Don't give it up, Dicky! At him again!" roared Tony through his laughter.

"Bravo! Buena!" exclaimed the señor.

Smarting at the merriment which his mishap occasioned, Dicky picked himself up in a rage and again grabbed the reptile, which was making tracks for the water. But again he was knocked over by the electric shock, and the eel made its escape to the water.

The discomfited eel-catcher regained his feet, and slowly returned to his mule.

"Where's your specimen?" I asked.

Everybody else had something similar to say.

"Blast ther critter!" said Dicky, sulkily. "I never heer'd of a snake as was stuffed with red-hot needles afore."

With no other incident worthy of recording, our party soon arrived at the comfortable ranch of Don Jose.

The next day, at an early hour, we were summoned from our beds by the servants, and, descending, found our host already on muleback, with an eel-prong in his hand. Our mules and weapons of the same kind were awaiting us. We mounted and were soon on our way to the lagoon.

It was a glorious morning. The sun had not yet appeared, but the golden spears of his coming shot high above the sublime peaks of the Andes, gilding their ancient summits with a thousand hues, and flashing down, with a glittering swoop, upon the luxuriant plains. Everything was bright and blooming. Monkeys were leaping amid the branches of the tropical trees, and gaudy-plumed

paroquets were flitting here and there; while the bright-green lizards glided across our path, rejoicing silently in the morning beams.

We reached the lagoon, which looked as lifeless and stagnant as ever. I was surprised at not seeing any boats; for I thought that, of course, they were necessary for the pursuit of our game. But they have a better, though more cruel, way of catching the festive eel in Chili.

We were accompanied by a large number of Don Jose's peons, who proceeded on foot, with legs bare as far up as the thigh, and each armed with an eel-prong, which is a four-pronged "trident," so to speak, sharply pointed, and provided with a wooden handle, or stalk, about four feet in length. They were a merry set, and kept up an incessant conversation and song in their mongrel Spanish, which the devil's interpreter couldn't understand.

We reached the margin of the lagoon, and waited there a short time, when we were aroused by a great trampling of the ground, and perceived a herd of some hundreds of wild horses and mules coming over the prairie toward the tarn at a thundering gait.

Don Jose now condescended to explain. These animals had been purposely kept without water for two days, and now, so soon as released, were rushing to the nearest lagoon to satisfy their fiery thirst. The character of the inhabitants of the pool was well known to them, and, under ordinary circumstances, not a horse or mule could be induced to put nose or foot into the electric waters. But now, maddened by thirst, and forgetful of everything but the frantic desire to satisfy it, they were making for the nearest water that glittered on the plain.

On came the thundering troop of steeds from the opposite side neighing and snorting, with their tongues lolling out. They burst through the chaparral and thick-growing cacti of the border, and in a moment were in the center of the pool—which was but a few rods in diameter.

Then commenced a scene which completely beggars description.

A most furious contest commenced between the animals and the electric-eels—who, thus suddenly aroused and trampled upon, were striking their strong enemies with all their power. Now and then an eel or two would flash up through the surface, but they were mostly invisible. The horses plunged frantically, uttering cries of agony almost human-like. They bit at the water, shrieked, and endeavored to reach the bank, but in vain. Stricken down by their unseen foes,

many of them lost their legs, and went down, with difficulty keeping their heads above the water; and those that fell blocked the path of escape to those less fortunate. The appearance of the horses was most agonizing. Their manes fairly bristled with horror and pain, while it made me sick to hear their cries. The mules also suffered terribly, but not quite so acutely, it seemed to me, as the horses. Don Jose and his people enjoyed the scene immensely, shouting and crying out in the exuberance of their joy.

The singular contest lasted fully ten minutes, when it became evident that the fury of the attack of the eels was sensibly abating. In about five minutes more, the fear and pain of the horses and mules totally ceased. Those which had fallen regained their feet, and the whole herd, after quietly drinking their fill, left the pool, and galloped off over the pampas.

The reason of this was that the electric power of these eels becomes completely exhausted or expended after it has been exercised malignantly for a certain time, and it requires several hours of rest to recuperate their electric power. And during this time they are powerless of harm.

And now the peons advanced into the lagoon, brandishing their spears, while the Don, Tony, Dicky and myself dismounted and stood on the margin, watching our chance. The peons drove their prongs along the bottom, spiking the enfeebled reptiles, which they threw on the shore in great numbers, and then, retracing their steps, drove them toward our position on the bank, where we soon had our fill of the sport. The eels came up, first singly, then in knotted masses, and we darted our spears into them at our pleasure.

Dicky Drake enjoyed the sport hugely, but, as usual, met with some mishap. He had taken off his shoes, and was toddling barefoot in the slime, when he accidentally trod on an eel which had been prudent enough to hold off from the attack on the horses.

The poor fellow leaped back, with a loud scream, and went limping up the bank.

"Did you ever tread on a paper of red-hot pins?" he asked of me at the conclusion of the sport.

"Never did," I replied.

"If you'd like to know how it feels, just sot yer hoof on that air innocent-lookin' varmint," said he, pointing ruefully to the reptile by which he had suffered; but I

had no anxiety to make the attempt.

At length we grew weary of the sport, left the peons to carry home the captured eels—which are much esteemed as an article of food—and proceeded on our return. Many thousands of eels were captured on that day.

We returned to the ranch and enjoyed ourselves in other, and less novel, ways than eel-hunting.

Before we left, our hospitable host showed us some curious relics of the ancient Indian inhabitants. These, from appearances, seem to have been mound-builders. We saw one of the mounds which had been excavated, and Don Jose, afterward, shewed us some specimens of earthenware and instruments of war—the latter fashioned of stone—which he had procured in the neighborhood.

We also made a short expedition with our host, to the crater of an extinct volcano, and looked with wonder, upon the vast basin, which had once—long, long ago, perhaps—vomited fire and lava upon the plains below.

Thanking our host for the pleasure he had afforded us, we, at the close of the second day, set out upon our return to Valparaiso, at which place we shortly arrived.

Captain Joker having transacted his business to his satisfaction, and the coast being clear of British cruisers, we, shortly afterward, weighed anchor, set all sail to catch the trade-winds, and danced out seaward and westward, intending to create an excitement among the British whalers of the South Pacific.



CHAPTER XI. AMONG THE WHALERS.

One interesting point which we visited on our way westward was the Island of Juan Fernandez, which has been made so famous by the fabulous adventures of Robinson Crusoe.

The island is quite small and girt with a thin line of reefs through whose intricacies it is almost impossible for a vessel larger than a long-boat to make a channel. The island itself is surpassingly beautiful. It is one of these little heavens of the summer sea which forcibly recalls the beautiful description of Tennyson:—

"Oh to burst all links of habit, and to wander far away,
On from island unto island, at the gateways of the day.
Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade, and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.
Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag.
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag;
Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the heavy fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in the dark-purple spheres of sea.
There, methinks, would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind.
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.
There the passions, cramped no longer, shall have scope and breathing
space:
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.
Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive and they shall run.
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;
Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks.
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books."

We left this delightful isle astern and drove to the westward, capturing many whalers by the way. We had succeeded in filling up our ship's company to more than repletion at Valparaiso, and now had prize-crews in abundance. When we had been short of men Captain Joker, in as many as three cases, had allowed

valuable vessels of the enemy to go on their course on account of not having sufficient men to put prize-crews aboard.

It had been frequently urged by the first mate to destroy such vessels (after the manner of Captain Semmes) but Captain Joker invariably refused to do anything of the kind, swearing, in his rough, manly fashion, that he would sooner let the vessels go free than give them to the flames.

There was not much adventure in the capture of these vessels. It was merely a firing of a few shots across the bows of the blunt-bowed, heavily-laden craft, which seldom failed to bring her to, and then a peaceable taking possession of her. There was one instance in which there was a difference.

We one day (in the latter part of October, I think,) brought a vessel to somewhere within two degrees southward of the Sandwich Islands. She was a whaler from Hull, England, and as we came up to capture her was engaged in the capture of a whale. All her boats were out in pursuit. When we boarded her (her name was the Jenny Hollins) and the captain learned our true character, he immediately signaled his boats to return—or was about to do so, when Captain Joker stopped him with:

"Let them alone, my dear captain, they're very creditably engaged."

"But, sir," exclaimed the English skipper, "I have surrendered to you. I do not care to have my men employed to enrich your Government."

"My dear captain, pray let them alone. Boatswain," (turning to Tony Trybrace) "just take the long-boat with a complement of men, follow the boats of the Jenny Hollins and see that they do their work well, and then order them to the ship. We cannot afford to lose a good whale in these times."

So, in spite of the mortified pride of the skipper of the Jenny Hollins, Tony set out in the long-boat, wherein myself and most of my chums were rowers. The whale-boats were busily engaged in tackling a huge whale, probably thinking our craft to be nothing more than a brother whaler, stopped to take pot-luck.

They had harpooned their prey several times, and he had come up to breathe for the last time, and to die, when we rowed up. Now, a sperm whale in his death-flurry, as it is called, is not to be approached incautiously, without danger. But we were by no means experienced whalers, and rowed in, regardless of expense or peril, when, suddenly, we caught his tail squarely under our keel, and were

lifted up skyward about forty feet, the boat capsizing in the air and tumbling everybody and everything out in the shake of a sheep's tail. Well, we all came down with a rush, as you may be sure. I am sorry to state that I, instead of coming down in the water, alit, head-first, on the back of the Leviathan, stunning me, and leaving me floating around in the water like a dead man. But, fortunately, our boat had fallen bottom downward, old Bluefish had regained her, and we were all picked up, one after another, more dripping than hurt. I remember coming to slowly, and hearing old Bluefish murmuring in my ears, with as much of tenderness as could inform his rude voice:

"Wake up! wake up! There's a dear fellow! I know'd as how a son of a sea-cook was never born to be drowned in salt water!"

Well, the whale breathed his last soon after our mishap, and we helped the men tow her to the ship; though they were, of course, somewhat crestfallen to learn that they had been in the employ of Uncle Sam for the last hour or two.

Nevertheless, we had a gay time in trying out and cutting up the monster. There was a singular mishap occurred at about the close of this operation.

It is the custom to have the carcass of the whale lashed to the side of the ship while the work of cutting up is going on. I may as well mention, by way of parenthesis, that this operation of cutting up allures a great number of sharks to the side of the ship, for the sake of the worthless blubber and other *débris*. And, at this time, any man may venture among the black-fins with perfect impunity—so much more is whale-meat esteemed above human flesh by epicurean sharks. As soon as the flesh that is triable is taken from the whale, the carcass becomes a dead weight in the water, descending through the waves with a rush as soon as the stays are cut.

It happened that, in the case of our whale, when all but the last lashing were cut, one of the crew of the whaler, who was standing on the carcass, got his feet entangled in some of the cordage remaining on it. Just as the last stay was severed, he was discovered, and was rapidly being drawn to the bottom of the sea, when Old Nick threw a rope about his shoulders, and this served to hold him up. But, in the interim, the entire weight of the enormous skeleton was sustained by the body of the unfortunate seaman, who thereupon began to shriek out in mortal agony. The poor fellow would very probably have been dismembered, had not our heroic and shark-defying Snollygoster jumped overboard, with a knife, and severed the lashings by which he was held to the carcass. The latter

immediately disappeared, followed by a great whirlpool of brine. Had the man not been caught, he would have been dragged down many fathoms below the sea; had his feet not been released from the weight of the carcass in time, he would very probably have been disjointed and slain with horrible agonies. As it was, he was more scared than hurt, and Snollygoster added another plume to his cap.

Before I quit our whaling experience, I must recur to another striking event of a more truly tragic character than the one just described.

We had captured a whaler from Southampton under very similar circumstances with the foregoing. Her boats were out—all but one—and I got permission from the captain to accompany this one, as I was anxious to see a whale capture through, from its inception to its close.

There were six boats in all, and ours the hindmost, but the whale—a very large one—dove and came up nearest us, so that we got in the first harpoon. Our harpooner, an athletic Yorkshireman, stood up in the bow of the boat, and struck home in the broad back of the whale as it rose above the water. The whale went down like lightning at the first prick of the harpoon. The lines connected with the harpoon are carefully coiled around in the middle of large tubs, with grooves at the bow for them to slip over. When a whale dives, these lines run out with indescribable swiftness. The groove fairly smokes, and several buckets of water are always dashed upon it to prevent the boat from taking fire. At the same time, a leg or an arm, caught in one of the coils, would be almost certain death to the owner.

On the occasion of which I speak, one of the oarsmen, with his back to the bow of the boat, had carelessly stepped into one of these tubs when the whale was struck. Down went the whale with a flash and a whirlpool. The man saw his danger, but too late, and just had time to sing out, "Clear away the line!" when he was whipped overboard and was never seen again.

We played havoc among the whalers for a long time, capturing as many as thirty valuable vessels, and sending them home.

We met with a terrible squall when a few leagues north of Otaheite, and weathered it with much difficulty. As it was, we sustained such damages that it was imperative to make for some port for repairs. It wouldn't do to enter Otaheite (Tahiti, it is sometimes called—probably the most beautiful spot in the world in all respects) on account of British influence prevailing there, so we set

sail for the Sandwich Islands—intending, if unable to procure the necessary repairs there, to proceed to some port on the coast of California.



CHAPTER XII.

THE WATER-SPOUT—THE ONLY TRAGEDY ON BOARD THE QUEER FISH.

When we were about half-way to Honolulu—the chief island of the Sandwich group—we had the monotony of our voyage broken by an adventure with those dangerous phenomena of the ocean water-spouts. Early in the morning, Dicky Drake, who was at the mast-head, descried a vessel to the northeastward, and we immediately steered for her. We had come within a mile or so, and easily made her out to be a brigantine—of what nation we could not determine when the lookout again sung out:

"Water spouts on the larboard bow!"

We could see nothing of the kind at first, but the captain brought his glasses to bear, and reported that the lookout was correct.

Presently every one could see them from the deck. They appeared far away, like vast water-trees, growing from the sea to the sky, and expanding there in funnel shape; but as they appeared to be going away from us, we kept on our course, in order to overtake the brigantine.

The best definition of a water-spout represents it as a remarkable natural phenomenon, usually observed over the sea, but sometimes over the land. "It usually consists of a dense, black cloud, depending from the sky in a conical form toward the earth. Sometimes it unites with a corresponding portion, ascending from below, thus forming a continuous column from the surface of the earth (or sea) to the cloud."

The genuine—destructive—water-spout, that of the sea, consists of cloud thus partially depended from the sky, while the column which ascends to meet it is of the ocean brine. An immense quantity of water—probably many millions or billions of tons—is thus elevated to an enormous height above the surface—following the course of the cloud, as it is driven by the wind, and falling, when deprived of the cloud-suction above, with a force sufficient to crush to splinters the combined navies of the world.

We had about lessened the interval between us and the stranger craft to one-half, when we saw her suddenly 'bout ship and tack toward us with all possible speed. This singular-conduct upon her part was soon explained by our perceiving that the wind had changed, and that the water spouts—of which there appeared to lie about a dozen—were bearing down upon us, with a rapidity which was terrible.

We 'bout ship with all possible speed, and tacked away from the danger with every stitch of canvas that we could cram. But our speed was as a snail's pace compared to the awful swiftness of the scudding water-spouts. In less than five minutes after we tacked, we were completely surrounded by the terrible columns of smooth, up-lifted brine, and we came almost to a standstill. It was a very terrible thing, for, as the water-spouts reached our position, the gale died away, and we, together with the strange brigantine, were left immediately in their midst, until it appeared that we were about to be forever entombed in a magnificent temple of pillared brine. For it was next to impossible to steer clear of them, without bringing one of them upon our heads, by the wind of our motion. They leaned to the eastward—still feeling the influence of the gale that had just died away.

If we had been either altogether to the larboard or starboard of them, we might have let them all down to their proper level by a few cannon-shots, but, surrounded as we were, our predicament was most distressing.

The water-spouts kept wheeling about us, slowly and silently. They were vast, smooth, glassy columns of brine, reaching to the heavens, some of them four or five feet in diameter in the most slender part.

At length, however, a broad opening was created to the southward and we, throwing out our sweeps, made for it with the good will of men whose lives are suspended upon the muscles of the arm. We reached it and were soon out of danger of the *forest* (so to speak) of water-spouts; but several more were to be seen far to the southward, and we swung around our swivel to send a shot in the midst of the multitude from which we had just escaped.

Now here was a predicament, for the brigantine was unprovided with sweeps, and, as there was not a breath of wind—a dead calm—was compelled to remain where she was. In vain we signaled her to put out her boats and attempt to tow out; she paid no attention to us whatever. Through the telescope we could see her crew kneeling and praying upon the deck. Her officers had evidently lost their presence of mind, and piped all hands to prayers when work with a will might

have saved her.

And now, to our anguish, a slight breath of air came from the northward. It would freshen to a gale in ten minutes. We would again have the watery labyrinth around us, with little hope of escape. What were we to do? If we fired our guns we would envelope the unfortunate brigantine in certain destruction; if we neglected to fire them we would, just as certainly, involve the destruction of our own ship. It was one of those hard questions of fatality where self-preservation is the only solution.

So, with a heavy heart, doubtless, the captain gave the order and our Long Tom sent a shower of grape-shot and six-pounders among the labyrinth of water-columns. The effect was grand and terrible.

Simultaneously with the report of the swivel the tops of the water-spouts were seen to tremble, then to sway to and fro, and then, down they came with the most terrific noise I ever heard in my life.

"Try up the main-to'gallants! All hands aloft! Steady, there, at the helm! Port! hard a-port!" bawled our captain through his trumpet, and his orders were just obeyed in time to allow us to breast the enormous billows occasioned by the falling water-spouts, while we were all drenched to the skin by the spray of their splash, although the one which had stood nearest to us was fully half a mile away.

As for the stranger—the brigantine—she was never seen again. We never saw a floating splinter of that ill-fated ship, whereby to tell the port whence she came or whither she was bound.



I come now to the most painful episode that was connected with the cruise of our almost uniformly merry privateer, the Queer Fish. I have had little of the painful—much of the glad and rollicking—to treat of thus far, and would gladly spin my yarn to its termination as merrily as I began. But truth directs me to a different course.

Besides, as this event which I am about to describe is about the only one of a sorrowful character directly connected with the Queer Fish, it may serve to throw the other features of my yarn into a more distinctly cheerful light.

Nevertheless, be that as it may, the truth must, like murder, out at last, and here it is.

Little Willie Warner, our pet, the cabin-boy, had never totally recovered from the effects of the accident we have narrated as having befallen him. The climate was exceedingly bad as we approached the latitude of the Sandwich Islands—much rain, followed by days of the most intense tropic heat—and little Willie, probably from the cerebral contusion he had formerly received, contracted a brain fever, which soon brought him very low.

Roddy Prinn, as in the former instance, was permitted to devote all his time to the duties of a nurse, and all of us did what we could. But, on the morning of the fourth day of the fever, good Doctor Benedict sorrowfully informed the captain that the days and hours of little Willie Warner were numbered, and that the number was brief indeed.

We had noticed, from the commencement of this illness, that same appearance of mysterious information, between the captain and the doctor, which had before been indicated to us. And now, at this solemn moment of the announcement of the approaching end of the sufferer, this mystery was still more apparent.

The prognostication of the doctor proved only too true. Willie Warner breathed his last before the set of sun.

Deeply grieved as was every one on the ship at this deplorable event, there was one whose grief dwarfed all others in the magnitude of its agony. This was Roddy Prinn. The poor fellow went almost insane. Above all, he besought the captain to preserve the body of his little chum, until our approach to the islands would enable us to accord a Christian burial on land to the remains. But, as we were yet within a hundred and fifty miles of our destination, compliance with this request was rendered impossible.

Poor Roddy then waxed violent, but was only confined in the gun-room. For, in keeping with the gentle treatment which Willie Warner had always received from the captain, he (Roddy) was treated with an unaccountable leniency. The poor fellow's mind was, undoubtedly, somewhat deranged through his grief.

The day after the death of Willie Warner, the body of the little cabin-boy was consigned to the deep.

It was a sad and impressive ceremony.

All the crew stood around, with their heads uncovered, preserving a deep silence, while the funeral Service was read in measured tones by Doctor Benedict. Then, with a heavy plunge, the shotted sack struck the blue waters, and the form of him we had loved so much was lost to us forever.

On the same day, an excitement was created on shipboard by intelligence that Roddy Prinn had attempted suicide, while in his confinement, he had opened a vein in his arms, and was discovered by Doctor Benedict just in time to be saved. As it was, he was almost exhausted through loss of blood, and was not able to be about for some days afterward. He next threw himself into the sea, out of the ports of the gun-room, but was rescued by Snollygoster. Roddy then seemed to give up self-destruction as a bad job, acted very reasonably, and was allowed to return to his duty.

A few nights after this last attempt, it was my watch upon deck, and, observing that Roddy was more melancholy than usual, I resolved to keep a sharp eye upon him.

The night was one of surpassing beauty. I think I never saw so many stars as studded the glorious vault upon that night; and, presently, the moon, the broad, lucid, tropic moon rose above the ocean's edge, with a luster by which you could have read small print with no difficulty. In spite of myself, my attention was directed to the beauty of the heavens, and was only called thence by the noise of a loud splash in the water, over the starboard bow.

Instantly divining that Roddy had made another attempt at suicide, I sung out, "Man overboard!" and ran to the bow.

We were completely becalmed, and, as the water was devoid of even a ripple, I could see far down into the sea. And, looking down, I was not long in discovering the figure of the unfortunate young man. Just then the captain, first mate and Doctor Benedict came to the bows, and looked over.

Snollygoster had also heard the splash, had also rightly conjectured the cause, and was tearing off his coat and shoes, preparatory for a plunge to the rescue.

One remarkable thing in the appearance of the figure below the water was that it neither sunk any deeper, nor rose up, but appeared silently suspended, face downward, at a distance of several fathoms below the surface. We were at a loss to account for this singular phenomenon.

Suddenly Snollygoster went overboard with a sharp dive. The water was shaken so much by the plunge that we, for a moment, lost sight of everything below the surface. But the disturbance quickly faded out of the glassy brine, and we could see both the silent form of the drowner and the active figure of the would-be rescuer.

We saw Snolly keep under the water by great effort and skill, and frequently touch the body to draw it to the surface, but it as often resisted his efforts, floated about uneasily when disturbed, and then settled down into quiescence, as before—with the head down, silently suspended in the blue crystal of the sea. After repeated efforts, all of which were unavailing, the heroic negro was compelled to come up to the surface for breath.

"Try it once more—that is, if possible!" cried Doctor Benedict and down again went the indefatigable rescuer.

We, this time, saw him tug with all his force at the suspended form of Roddy Prinn. This time he was more successful; for suddenly, as if relieved of some heavy weight, the body became wonderfully buoyant, and swiftly rose to the surface of its own accord, whence, with the assistance of Snollygoster and a line from the Queer Fish, it was brought on deck. But all restoratives were of no avail. The suicide was a *fait accompli* at last, and Roddy Prinn was no more.

"What caused the body to come up so suddenly, Snolly?" asked Doctor Benedict.

"Bekase, Massa Ben'dick, I shook out de t'irty-pound shot which it held in de hands," was the reply.

It was true.

In order to be successful in drowning himself, the suicide, before leaping over the taffrail into the sea, had firmly clutched in his two hands a thirty-pound cannon-ball. This had kept him silently suspended below the surface, until at last, the cannon-ball being shaken from its hold by the rude grasp of the negro, the body had risen to the surface.

Whatever may be said of this singular suicide, it must be acknowledged that Roddy displayed considerable resolution in carrying out his intention.

Next day the body of this unfortunate young man was also consigned to the deep. And then the mystery, which we had noticed to exist between the captain and the doctor, leaked out, and became the property of all.

It became known that Willie Warner was not a man, but a woman, and that Roddy Prinn was her husband.

They had shipped on board the Queer Fish at the Boston docks, and it was only upon the occasion of the first sickness of the pseudo-cabin-boy that her sex was revealed to the physician, and, through him, to the captain.

The reasons which induced the lady to assume the disguise of a sailor may have been known to the captain or doctor, but they never transpired among the crew.

In consequence of this we had many preposterous rumors afloat—strange stories wherein cruel parents, inexorable step-mothers, crimes committed on land, and other wild theories as to the history of the lovers, whose lives were so mysterious, and whose deaths were so melancholy and strange.

But, however wild the stories may have been, and however far from the real history of the lovers, we held their memory dear and sacred. And while we remembered with gentle kindness the gentle disposition of Roddy Prinn, our recollections of our pretty little cabin-boy, Willie Warner, were mixed up with purity and sweetness.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE VOLCANO.

We must have been still fifty miles from our destination, when the bright and continued light to the northward made it evident that the volcanic mountain of the Sandwich Islands was in active operation.

No one was especially apprehensive of this, for chances to witness volcanoes are not to be met with every day in the year.

As night came on, the light to the northward became more and more vivid, and as we neared the islands, we could hear the roar of the volcano, resembling the rumble of distant thunder.

We drew within ten knots of the scene, and then came to anchor on a coral foundation—in water about twelve fathoms deep.

The scene of a great volcano, in process of eruption, is an event to be remembered throughout one's immortality. Words can but faintly express its grandeur, its terrible splendor. The painter's brush is powerless here, even if wielded by the hand of genius.

The noise of the eruption was terrible as we cast anchor, and the waves were running high, although there was but little wind. From this circumstance we judged that the eruption was accompanied by an earthquake of no ordinary character.

Imagine to yourselves a lofty mountain-peak, surrounded by many others of lesser height and magnitude, piled around, with their clothing of dark and somber trees. Then fancy this central peak to become an instrument for flooding the world with the original fire, and you may have some faint conception of the grandeur of the scene we witnessed.

The stars, except at the horizon's edge, were completely dimmed by the mighty effulgence of the blazing peak, or blotted out by the dense volumes of smoke which drifted in the light breeze between the sea and the heavens like a pall for the world.

The whole of that side of the peak presented to our view was a liquid mass of red-hot lava. It rolled down the smooth slopes, or plunged from the cliffs in cataracts of living flame. We could see the ocean boiling along the shores as the hot rivers found their way to the water; and millions of dead fishes floated by the ship on the surface of the sea.

The sides and rigging of the Queer Fish were thronged with the crew, who gazed long upon the terrible but fascinating scene.

The smoke which poured in black volumes from the crater of the mountain was usually intermingled with sheets of flame in about equal quantity; but sometimes the smoke would preponderate so much as almost to shut out the fire, while at others the crater would vomit flame alone, when the glare would be so distressingly vivid that we were compelled to shield our eyes with our hands.

The gray ashes emitted by the eruption must also have been very great, for the deck of the ship was covered with a thin coating of it as it drifted aboard like snow, being so fine and dense as to render the air difficult to breathe.

The eruption continued all night, and as there appeared no evidence that it would be likely soon to abate we hoisted anchor and sailed for California on the following morning.



CHAPTER XIV.

CALIFORNIA IN EARLY TIMES.

We had succeeded much better than we had anticipated in making our own repairs, so that our object in making for the port of Santa Barbara was more to obtain fresh water and provisions than anything else.

Our passage to this little port was attended by some rough weather, but on the whole we had not much to complain of throughout our entire Pacific Ocean experience. We made two prizes on the way. One of them was a British brig from the Columbia River of tolerable value; the other was a rich whaler from Acapulco, on her way to the northern whale-fields, but already half-full of excellent sperm; and we also captured a schooner, but as she had nothing in her hold but ballast we permitted her to pursue the even tenor of her way—not thinking her of sufficient value to warrant our depleting our company by another prize-crew.

We arrived at Santa Barbara in the early part of January—just at the close of the rainy season, and came to anchor close under the town, for the harbor is deep.

California in the time of which I treat was far different from now. With the exception of a few Mexican settlements along and near the coast, it was nothing but wilderness. There was probably not a house where the present fine and populous city of San Francisco stands, and very few settlements in that neighborhood of the coast—the northern part of which was but little known.

Santa Barbara was nothing but a collection of fifty or sixty adobe houses, with a larger structure called (I could never understand why) the Fort, in which the Mexican commandant of the place made his residence. The coast range of the Rocky Mountains comes down close to the water here and, back of the town, we could see lofty peaks uplift themselves grandly (though not so lofty as in the case of Valparaiso), some of them covered with perpetual snow. But their lower slopes are fertile and sunny, and the natives had done a good deal in the raising of vineyards upon them—terracing the steep slopes to prevent the soil from washing down by the rains or the melting of the snows above.

Ships very seldom made a port of entry of Santa Barbara in those days, and the

arrival of the Queer Fish was quite an event among the inhabitants, who treated us with uniform kindness.

As with the other inhabitants of Spanish America, hospitality is a ruling and virtuous feature of the poor, ignorant Mexicans. Long after the time I speak of, I traveled much among them, and was ever received with the open arms of hospitable friendliness by even the most ignorant and indigent among them.

We got excellent water at this place, as well as plenty of grapes and other fruit.

As we remained here several weeks, we had many adventures on shore. One of the most interesting of these occurred shortly after our coming to an anchorage.

Old Bluefish and myself had obtained permission for a day on shore to enjoy ourselves hunting, and having each of us procured an excellent mustang, set off at a brisk pace in the early morning. We were not long in getting through the mountains—wherein we saw several grizzlies which were too far off to be attacked—and soon emerged from the defiles upon the level plains that lie to the westward.

We halted for refreshments at a little town called San Fernandino, if I remember rightly, and then proceeded on our way, through a colony of marmots or prairie-dogs, intending or hoping to kill some antelope farther on.

We had a first-rate day's sport, considering that we were sailors. We killed three antelope and about a dozen of the large hares, which have since won the name of jackass-rabbits. The name is not altogether inappropriate—so far as it applies to the animal's ears, which are of extraordinary length and size. The animals themselves are of the hare species. They do not jump as a rabbit, but run as a fox, and with surprising swiftness withal. They are very large, much larger than the English hare, and are excellent eating.

It was growing late in the afternoon when we concluded to relinquish our hunt, and return homeward. So we slung our game across the necks of our steeds, and proceeded westward, over the faintly-distinguished trail whereby we had come.

We had not traveled many miles before we witnessed a singular and novel sight.

Old Bluefish called my attention to a great dust in our advance, which we soon perceived to be caused by four Mexican hunters in pursuit of a grizzly bear. We took our stand on a little eminence, and waited to see the sport.

The bear could run almost as fast as the horses of his pursuers, and on they all came at a terrific pace, the Mexicans shouting at the top of their lungs and brandishing their lassoes at a great rate. We now saw that their intention was to take his bearship alive.

Just as the grizzly came opposite our point of observation, one of the Californians let his lariat fly, and, catching Bruin by the hind paw tripped him up, while the rest of the horsemen began to circle round the beast on their wild steeds, swinging their lariats, and watching for a chance to noose the monster.

The latter rose up on his hind feet, clutched the line which held him, and began to draw his entrapper toward him—horse and all. I never saw a more striking instance of the great muscular strength of the grizzly than this. He seemed to draw the horse and rider toward him with the most perfect ease.

We expected to see the Californian draw his knife and cut the line immediately, thus releasing himself from his unpleasant predicament. But he did nothing of the kind. He retained his seat with the most perfect coolness—exhibiting his exquisite horsemanship in so doing; for, although the horse which he bestrode gave tokens of the utmost fright, the horseman kept him in perfect subjection to his will, and calmly allowed the bear to pull him forward inch by inch.

I was almost ready to yell out with excitement when I saw the fearless horseman dragged up to within a few feet of the ferocious beast. But, at this instant, whiz went another lariat through the air, and Bruin was caught around the gullet and choked so taut that he could hardly breathe. This caused him to release his hold on the line of his first captor and make at the new assailant. But another noose quickly followed the second, catching him by one of his forepaws, while his remaining hind-foot was quickly caught up by the remaining hunter.

Poor Bruin was fairly in the toils, for his prodigious strength could now avail him nothing.

The horsemen commenced circling around him on their swift and well-trained steeds, in such a manner as to wind their long, stout lariats of hide repeatedly round the body and limbs of their prey. When he was no longer capable of effective exertion, the horsemen dismounted, and completed their work by a few ingenious knots, so that the bear was completely powerless.

A light wagon or cart, which had been waiting in the distance, then came up, and, after a great deal of pulling and hauling and leverage, the monster was

safely loaded.

We now made our appearance, and made friends with the hunters, as well as imperfect knowledge of their language would admit of. We were surprised and gratified to learn that the bear had been entrapped for a show—a bear and bull fight—which was to take place at Santa Barbara in a few days.

So, as we all had one destination, we started homeward together, and arrived at the town shortly after dark.



CHAPTER XV.

BULL VERSUS BEAR.

Two days after this, a great festival came off, and almost all the people of the Queer Fish were on shore to see the fun.

Mexican holy days are a singular institution, if the one about to be cited may be considered a fair sample of them all.

Church-going forms a small portion of the ceremonies. It is true, the priests went through the town in the morning, jingling their little bells, and asking for alms, while the people of the place almost prostrated themselves before them, and the miserable old bell in the belfry of the adobe cathedral kept up a dismal clang all the time, as if tolling the burial service of all mankind. But then, a few hours later, and the population were amusing themselves with firing off cannon at imaginary demons in the air—the priests directing the guns to the proper spots. I could not believe this at first, and it was only upon diligent inquiry that I found it to be true. But I never before heard of this duty being numbered among the sacerdotal functions of any country—even those of Catholic persuasion.

Horse-racing was the next celebration in order, and we experienced considerable pleasure in seeing the Californians compete with each other on their swift steeds.

After the horse-racing came the bull and bear fight, in which old Bluefish and myself evinced an especial interest.

A broad tract of sward was inclosed in palings and ropes, just outside the town, on the ocean-shore. Long before the animals appeared, the merry people of Santa Barbara crowded round this inclosure, smoking their cigarettoes and having a good time generally, while the distinguished visitors from the Queer Fish were allotted a good place of observation underneath a little pavilion, which was reared at the command, and for the benefit, of the commandant and his family.

We waited a good while, but it was almost sunset, and the heat was not oppressive. At last, amid the cheers of the populace, the cart appeared bearing the grizzly. He was driven, still bound, within the inclosure, and there dumped unceremoniously upon the ground. Then the bull, a very fine and ferocious one, was driven into the inclosure. While he was prancing and bellowing about,

taking his "bearings," the strong gates of the palisades were closed, and one of the Californians, who officiated, proceeded to cut the thongs which fettered the bear, by means of a knife made fast to the end of a long pole, thus enabling him to perform the operation and stand outside the stockade at the same time.

Released from his long confinement, Bruin staggered to his feet and stretched himself. He was pretty soon himself again, and now began to eye the bull with suspicious glances, keeping on the opposite side of the ring, and not seeming especially anxious for a nearer acquaintance. The bull appeared somewhat more belligerent, but likewise averse to commence the fight. He would advance this way and that, pawing the ground and lashing his flanks with his angry tail, while the great bear—which probably outweighed his antagonist by several hundred pounds, although he was not quite so bulky—shifted as the bull did, keeping his nose close to the ground, but apparently ready for any emergency.

The ceremony of making each other's acquaintance becoming rather tedious to the impatient spectators, the latter began to yell and shriek in a hideous manner, in the apparent hope of inducing a commencement of the scrimmage. But both bull and bear still being wary and cautious, the man who had cut the thongs of the former commenced to goad, now the bull and then the bear with his pole-knife.

This had the desired effect, for presently the bull lowered his horns, and rushed upon the bear with a fierce bellow. Bruin took it coolly, stood on his hind legs, avoided the coming horns, and fetched his antagonist such a wipe with one of his terrible forepaws that the bull staggered back to his side of the arena, with one side of his neck raw and bloody.

But Bruin, elated with his success, no doubt, forgot his caution, and followed up his antagonist, fetching him another wipe between the hips, but receiving, in his turn, one of the formidable horns under his left shoulder, which seemed to paralyze one of his paws. He then retreated in his turn, walking on three feet, and watching the bull with a distrustful wariness.

The spectators were very much excited at this exhibition, and began to make wagers as to the result of the combat. But I took notice that almost all of them preferred to bet on the bull.

At length the bull lowered his head again and made another rush, but only to be repulsed a second time by his powerful antagonist. But this time the "round" was much more protracted than before, and both of the beasts were much injured.

The bear moved about with evident pain, but his injuries were more of the character of bruises than otherwise, while those of the bull occasioned much loss of blood, the effects of which were already beginning to tell painfully upon him. His courage was sublime. He did all the attacking, charging repeatedly, in spite of the terrible slashing he received from the forepaw of the grizzly, until at last both of his sides were streaming with gore, and his eyes were almost blinded with his blood.

But now the bull, evidently feeling that his strength would soon be exhausted, gathered himself up for a prodigious effort, and sprung upon his adversary with the momentum of a locomotive.

In vain did Bruin lash out with those long sharp talons of his; the bull would not be denied, and goring him to the ground, fairly pinned him to the earth. One of his horns held the bear by the neck and the other pierced deeply into his breast. The bear bellowed with pain and fought with all his paws, but his struggles grew gradually feebler, and the bull held him down bravely, until at last the movements of Bruin ceased altogether, a token that he breathed no more.

Then, and only then, did the bull extract his horns from the fallen body and lift his bloody head. The plaudits of the spectators rung loud, but the brave animal only staggered a few paces, when he fell in the center of the arena and expired. His victory had cost him his life.



CHAPTER XVI.

ACAPULCO—ANOTHER YARN FROM BLUEFISH.

After a delay of a week or more with our friends at Santa Barbara we weighed anchor one bright morning in the middle of January and started southward for Acapulco, intending to pick up what prizes might chance to cross our path on the way thither.

But our passage southward was scarcely broken by a single event so important as the capture of a British trader. We had splendid weather all the way down.

When off Cape St. Lucas I for the first time witnessed that phenomenon of the desert and of the ocean which is denominated a mirage. It happened just about an hour before sunset. The day had been characterized by a peculiar kind of haze ever since noon. This silvery haze or vapor completely banked the western horizon, and was smitten by the beams of the descending sun into many beautiful hues, when—about the time before mentioned—the lookout suddenly sung out:

"A sail on the larboard bow!" then again in a few seconds:

"A sail on the starboard bow!"

At last he sung out in a tone of amazement:

"Sails all around the ships!"

This was true enough, but they were visionary sails, not on the ocean, but high up in the misty air, and probably belonging to those vessels which came to the poet in his visions, when he

"Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue."

Some of these visionary vessels were very distinctly seen, with men on their decks and flags flying, but, as the apparitions were colorless, of course, the character of the airy flags could not be determined. We were almost becalmed while we were the witnesses of this strange phenomenon, and we had an hour or so to observe it in. But, as the night began to fall, an easterly gale sprung up, and, in a few moments, our "airy navies" vanished away.

We arrived at Acapulco, after a prosperous voyage of only a few days' duration, and remained there two days.

Acapulco was much then as it is now. It is a very solidly-built place, resembling Panama in this, and is possessed of more than one handsome ecclesiastical building. The bay of Acapulco is one of the finest in the world—by far *the* finest in America. It is well sheltered, is capacious, deep and excellent in every respect. The region around Acapulco equals any in Mexico in point of fertility. Almost every tropical fruit flourishes profusely, and most of us were down somewhat with dysentery, through indulging too freely.

Our ship was surrounded most of the time while in port by natives, most of them children, who almost live in the water. Probably no people in the world—except, perhaps, the natives of the South Sea Islands—are so much at home in the water as these Mexicans of the Southwest Coast. They would swim and dance in the water around us by the hour, begging to have some one toss a shilling to them. I have repeatedly tossed a small silver coin overboard into the sea, when one of these children of the waters would dive like a fish, catch the coveted coin before it reached a depth of many fathoms, return to the surface, display it triumphantly, and then put it in his mouth for safe-keeping and clamor for some one to try him again with a similar bribe.

The people are very ignorant, contented and happy. They have few or no cares to distract their attention. Their wherewithal of subsistence grows on the trees above their heads; and for clothing—they wear so little that it can hardly be taken into account as an item of expense.

We intended to sail from Acapulco on a certain day in the latter part of January, but a severe storm sprung up in the afternoon which made it much more prudent to lie for a while longer under the shelter of the excellent harborage in which we were. Nevertheless all hands were got aboard ship and everything put in readiness for a start on the morrow, wind and weather permitting.

It was on this evening, when a number of us were merrily gathered round our table in the forecabin discussing our grog and pipes, that old Bluefish, upon earnest solicitation, spun us one of his exceedingly improbable yarns.

Clearing his throat with a long pull at his glass of rum, and lighting a fresh pipe, he commenced his yarn of

THE PHANTOM SHIP.

"P'r'aps most on yer," said he, "has hearn tell on the Phantom Ship, but I'll bet my old boots ag'in' a new tarpaulin and westcut that none on yer ever was aboard o' that craft, as my mother's son was, in the person of myself. Howsomedever that is neither this way nor that, for I must pick up the eend of my yarn at a shorter beginning.

"It happened all along o' the schooner Jolly Admiral. I was a cabin-boy on her. We had been to Hong Kong for a load o' tea and was somewhar atwixt Bombay and the Cape of Good Hope on a bright moonlight night in the month of June when we first see'd the Phantom Ship. We didn't know her true character until we came within a quarter of a mile of her and saw her flimsy, threadbare canvas and the devil's blue-lights burning on her bowsprit and after-jib. We could see the captain and the crew going about on her in a ghostly sort of way. They all looked very melancholy and didn't pay any attention to us whatsoever.

"We could hear their voices, too, and jist let me tell yer, if you had heard them 'ere voices you wouldn't want to do it ag'in in a hurry. Well, all of a sudden, although there warn't no breeze to speak of, the sails of the Phantom Ship bellied out, and away she scudded to the southward like a streak of blue thunder stuffed with lightning, leaving us jist nowhars at all.

"We was somewhat taken aback, but not so much surprised nuther, for, yer see, we had been made acquainted with the fact that them 'ere seas was particularly haunted by the devil's craft, and we was, therefore, sort of prepared for meeting her. But somehow, as soon as the critters faded away from our sight I jist whispers to myself, 'If ever I gits the chance I'm going to board that 'ere craft, or

I ain't a Bluefish, but only a blarsted mackerel.'

"It warn't long afore I had the chance. Only two nights arter the one aforesaid, the sea was swept by one of them 'ere orful hurricanes or simooms as is nat'ral to them parts. Although we was pretty well prepared to meet it, the darned thing struck us so suddenly that we was almost throwed on our beam-eends. The night grew as black as pitch. You couldn't 'a see'd your hand afore your face if you was as white as a snowdrift. I never see'd, afore or since, sich orful waves. You'd go down inter the hollers of 'em and think you'd never come up ag'in. And the wind—well, it's no use tryin' to describe one o' them 'ere simooms. Suffice ter say that it lifted us clean out of the sea more than once, and sometimes carried us, like a Mother Carey's chicken, for a mile or two over the waves, without our keel touchin' a single crest."

"Is this story true?" I here interposed, with a solemn voice, quite aghast at the imagination of the old salt.

"In course it is, yer lubberly son of a sea-cook! Does yer suppose a cove as old as I be would tell yer anything as wasn't right-down genuine?"

"As I was a-sayin', the force of the wind was orful. Howsomdever, we had as jolly a little craft as ever cut blue water, and we weathered it bravely. Sometimes, when the wind would sort of sink away a little, we would drive right through the big waves, until even our main-tops were all under water; but, as our hatches were clewed down and our deck was pretty tight, we allers came out of our bath as fresh as ever. Then the gale would start up again, and away we would go over the tops of the waves.

"It was on one of these occasions that our lookout sung out, 'Lights on the starboard bow!' In course, we was all curious enough at first; but, jist as we rose up on a big crest, what should we see but the Phantom Ship, holdin' right across our course, and we jist ready to run inter her larboard bulwarks with the next pitch we made. She had all her blue lights burnin', and there was a sort of yaller haze all around her. Notwithstandin' we was under bare poles, and found it hard work to keep from bein' blown skywards at that, the stranger had every stitch of canvas spread, and didn't seem to suffer anywise nuther. We hadn't time to make many observations, howsomdever, before we struck the cussed thing right in her side, and began to shoot through her, jist as if she was made of smoke. I was standin' in the bows of the Jolly Admiral at the time. 'Now or never!' I sings out to myself; and, simultaneous, I made a jump and caught the ratlin's of the

stranger, while the Jolly Admiral passed on her way and left me swingin' like a pendulum in the air.

"I fell down on the deck of the stranger, but immejiately resumed my legs and took a survey of things in gineral. All the crew moped about the deck, attendin' to their duties, while the captain bellered out his orders through a trumpet made of condensed wind, lined with p'izen and streaks of lightning.

"At first none on 'em paid any attention to me. But at last the first mate—an orful-lookin' cuss—came right up to me, grabbed me by the gullet, and dragged me to the quarter-deck, and stood me up afore the skipper of the Phantom Ship.

""Here, Cap,' says he, 'is a little cuss of a cabin-boy, as was left behind by that infernal craft as jist ran through us.'

"(I forgot to mention as how the hole, which the Jolly Admiral made in passin' through the stranger, healed itself up ag'in in the most supernatural way in the world.)

"Well, the phantom skipper looked at me a moment without sayin' a word, even so much as a civil 'How d'ye do?' He was the orfulest-lookin' cuss it was ever my fortin' to stumble across. His flippers were those of a skeleton, and his head was a reg'lar death's head, with eyes as burned like two coals of fire, while a pair o' cross bones was suspended across his bosom. I suppose they was some sort o' medals given the cuss on account o' meritorious conduct. At length the critter spoke to me, an' his voice was orful strange. You could hear it very distinctly, but it sort o' seemed to come from a long ways off, jist like the voice of a speerit.

""What's the name o' that 'ere ship what jist ran through us?' says he, in a melancholy way.

""Please yer Honor,' says I, respectfully touchin' my cap, 'it warn't a ship, but a schooner—the Jolly Admiral of New Bedford.'

""Ha, boy,' says he, 'dostest thou dare to banter me with thy jokes. Howsomdever, what's your name?'

""Bluefish,' says I.

""The son of old Sol Bluefish of Nantucket, the man as was hanged?' says he.

""The same,' says I.

"'Ha! is it indeed so?' he ejaculated, leanin' his chin on his breast, in a meditatatin' mood. 'He was a nice man,' he added; 'he was also a particular friend o' mine.'

"'Allow me to take your flipper,' says I, puttin' on a free-and-easy air. 'It allers gives me a vast amount of pleasure to meet any one as was on good terms with the old man.'

"With that, I grabbed him by the bony hand, but immediately let the thing drop like a piece of a thunderbolt, for it burned like a coal of fire. He contemplated me with an affectionate smile.

"'Yes,' said he, 'I knowed the old man well. And how's your mother? Do you know,' says he, 'I came mighty near marryin' that gal once myself?'

"'God forbid!' says I, with a unconscious shudder.

"When I said these 'ere words, the skipper's knees trembled, and he almost fainted away.

"'Young man,' says he, slowly recoverin' himself, 'be very careful how you utters the name o' that individual on this 'ere ship, or we'll all be knocked into the middle of kingdom come. Tell me,' says he, 'what was your object in boardin' this 'ere craft?'

"'I was jist sort o' curious ter see about the state of yer health,' says I. 'And now, if its all the same to you, suppose you put me ashore.'

"'Thou hastest thy wish, my son,' says he, in a kindly voice. And with that he taps me gently over the head with that 'ere trumpet of his, and I immediately sunk inter a deep state of non-sensibility.

"When I woke, I found myself sleeping quietly in my hammock on board the Jolly Admiral, and when I tells my story, all on 'em laughs at me, and even denies that there was any Phantom Ship at all.

"But, in course, that didn't make no difference to me, since it was all true."

"It was a dream," suggested Tony Trybrace.

"Certainly," said I.

"Avast, yer lubbers! Doesn't I know as what I knows?"

And with this conclusive argument, Bluefish "turned in."

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CHAPTER XVII. HOMEWARD BOUND.

The next day, the tempest having abated, and everything being snug on board the Queer Fish, we weighed anchor, took the northeasterly trades on our top-gallants, and started on our return round the Cape.

Every one was exceedingly jolly, as is usually the case on board a vessel homeward bound, after a long and prosperous voyage.

Very little occurred worth recording. We didn't meet with a single prize on our way to the Cape, but had another merry time with our Patagonian friends.

On the voyage up, on the Atlantic side, however, we captured four more prizes, one of them a very large and valuable ship, loaded down almost to the gunwales with coffee and spices.

When off the Bahama Banks, we were chased by a fast-sailing British war-vessel, and had our mizzen-top knocked off by her bow-chasers. But we successfully returned the compliment with our swivel, and, as nothing could overhaul the Queer Fish before a stiff breeze, succeeded in making our escape.

We arrived at Boston in the early part of March, after one of the most memorably successful voyages on record. Our prizes numbered thirty-six in all, and, of these, all but one safely reached American seaports.

So, with our pockets stuffed with prize-money, you may guess that we had a jolly time. My yarn is over, and you will hear no more at present from The Boy Privateer.

THE END.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] *Matadore* is a name applied generally to the men who attack the bull, either on horse or on foot; but the distinctive and legitimate meaning of the term applies to those footmen who carry swords and whose office is especially that of the *coup de grace*.

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