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In the Matter of a Derelict.

By CAPTAIN F. H. SHAW.

THE "Uriah B. Juggins" had made two uneventful voyages, and already Captain Jinks was surfeited with ennui.

"A dog's life, that's what it is in my opinion," he observed nastily to his mate, who was trimming a pet corn with the bo'sun's sheath-knife. "Eat, work and sleep, that's all there is to do. No romance, no change, no nothin'."

Mr. Thomas sliced off about a square inch of his second toe, because of the vigorous stamp that Jinks gave on the coaly deck. When the mate got aft to the poop again—Jinks thought he was going to break off the bowsprit by the way he clung to it and yelled—the captain had grown purple in the face with simple joy. Thomas was merely crimson with anything but happiness.

"There'll be somethin' mighty startlin' happenin' soon!" yelled the mate, hobbling about on one foot, and nursing the damaged member tenderly. "S'pose I bleed to death?"

"I've heard it's a painless way," retorted Jinks sympathetically. "And a new mate might liven things up a bit. Goodness knows they need it. You've got no sense of humour, you 'avein'."

"Oh, 'avein' I? Anyway, I don't make a blame' Lotharier of myself over every pettish what shows in the offin'. I'm 'umoris' enough for that."

"Well, when I finds the piece of skin you've sliced off'n your toe," said Jinks, with a broad smile, "I'll keep it. My sea-boots need new soles, any'ow."

Thomas had nothing to say at the moment, and went forward, with his very eyes bristling. Happening to discover the boy asking the cook if he wanted a new cover for the coal bunker, because he'd just found the sliced-off corn, Thomas vented his ill humour on that youthful trader and then leaned sulkily over the forward bulwarks, trying to think of the sharp answers he might have made to the skipper if he'd only remembered them in time. He thought about so many that his good-nature returned, and when he found the cook boiling a pair of pants he asked him facetiously if he was running short of meat for the soup for the crew. The cook looked on him out of steam-filled eyes, and said he'd never run short of meat so long as there was so much dashed cheek going about. Therefore Thomas went aft, and squinted at the barometer.

"You was talkin' about monentary," he said after an hour to Jinks. He cast an uneasy eye at the weather as he spoke. "Don't you think there's a gale comin' up from the sou'-west? You won't emphaizin' about sameness then, I reckon." Now, if there was one thing Captain Jinks hated worse than widows, it was a gale. Though he had used the sea as boy and man for a matter of thirty-five years, to say nothing of a couple of trips in a steam collier, he had never got over a slight but very efficacious tendency towards seasickness. It was no matter that he ascribed it to pickles and tinned meat—seasick he was whenever a storm came on. When he followed the mate's glances and saw the steely glitter that was coming over the sky, and how the piled cloud-masses were shutting out the sun, he put his hand to the pit of his stomach and emitted a low groan.

"I'll tell the cook to fry some of that good fat bacon for supper," said Thomas cruelly. "I'll settle you down comfortably for the night. It's goin' to blow like mad, you see if it won't. I wish I 'adn't pawned my oilskins to buy beer. If you'd been generous, I'd never have needed to. But then—well, beer's beer. So you'll have to keep on deck yourself all night."

"I've got a spare suit of oilskins," said Jinks ingratiatingly. "I intended giving them to you for your birthday. And they aren't bad ones, neither."

"It was my birthday last week," said Thomas, "so you needn't pretend to be wot you ain't. Besides, it's the captain's duty to keep on deck when the sea's rough."

Jinks was painfully aware that such was the case, but he loathed the prospect. A gale was a capital thing to talk about,

when a woman's admiring eyes were glancing timidly at him, and a soft voice was whispering: "I do think sailors are brave men!" but in reality, with wet decks and a howling wind, it was something very unpleasant.

"And, besides," went on Thomas, "a wettin' allus gives me toothache. It takes the best part of a bottle o' brandy to keep the henemy at bay." Jinks remembered then that his medicinal brandy had all been used up to placate the cook when that individual had refused to serve a meal on the occasion of a public holiday. Apparently there was nothing for it but to accept the situation, and do the best. Then a solution presented itself. It was almost trivial, but it might work.

"Didn't I hear you saying that the potatoes were all done?" he asked the mate. "We might run into Mudhaven—it's only forty miles across the shallows, and get some new ones."

"It won't work," grimaced Thomas. "There's six bags of spuds yet. Nasty ones, too," he said with a reminiscent sniff. "All spots an' pimples. I did hear the bo's'n say that he'd been fed on various things during his time at sea, but never on pig's meat. But I s'pose you'll not mind wot the crew says. You'll be thinkin' of them there golden savins you're savin'."

"You mind your own business," snarled Jinks, to whom the suggestion of meanness was a sore point. It rankled, because he knew at the back of his mind that there was reason in the suggestion.

"Well, that's got nothin' to do with the gale," said Thomas, as a merry wavelet frisked over the brigantine's bow, and hurried aft in a whirl of spray. Jinks wiped the salt out of his eyes, and leaned ruminatively over the side. He was feeling unwell. His stomach was several sizes too large for his body, and it would

not keep in one place all the time. There was also a weird dizziness in his head.

"Tisn't as if the Uriah was a seaworthy craft," said the mate, who was chewing tobacco with callous zest. "She ain't. She's a hog in bad weather. But there—that'll only make you uneasy, so I won't say any more about it. Only, I'm glad I can swim. By the way, did you notice 'ow the rats went ashore last time at Limehouse Reach? Every one of 'em went; but that's only a silly superstition." He went below, leaving Jinks to the companionship of his own thoughts, which were not pleasant. For the gallant skipper knew that his ship was not all that could be desired. With the object of hastening the day when he should be able to leave the calling he detested, and settle down in comfort on shore, Jinks had stinted repairs to the craft, and she was now groaning in every timber, and leaking in every seam.

The gale was rising, too. Every fresh gust of wind had an added force, and the upper timbers of the brigantine were cracking ominously. Jinks called out the lumps, and reduced sail, and then, with his oilskins wrapped closely about him, and feeling miserable in every inch of his body, he set to work to keep harassing thought at bay. But though he tried to think of every little episode in love's lists that had studded his chequered career, he was unable to keep from brooding over the possibilities the night held. The North Sea was getting its back up now. A long succession of foaming, surging waves swept up to the labouring craft, and deluged her from stem to stern in spray. Jinks knew that it was going to be a bad night, but how bad he did not fully realise until the cook came aft, and asked him what he was going to do about it.

"About what?" asked the mystified and thoroughly miserable skipper.

"Why, about this 'ere puff o' wind. I washed my shirt this afternoon, and lung it in front o' the galley fire to dry, an' here it's gone and got wet through. An' it's the only one, too. I think you'd better make for shelter."

But Jinks sent the cook forward to the accompaniment of such phrases as made the man of pots and pans stare, and caused him to take down a grimy notebook and the stub of a pencil, with which he entered the skipper's observations for further use.

The night shut down on the foaming, seething water. Fierce gusts of slating

hail came tearing down out of the sou'-west, and they smote the skipper painfully on the face. From the lighted cabin below he could smell the scent of hot cocoa brewed in a tomato tin over a kiosk lamp, and the thought of his mate taking his case made him wild with rage and envy.

"You'd better come on deck, and not skulk away there like a woman," he yelled, lifting the skylight, just as a vicious spray hurtled over the rail.

"Talkin' about women," said Thomas meditatively, lifting the tin off the lamp with the tail of his coat, "ow about that woman at—ere, wot do you think you're at?" He might well have asked, for the spray had descended to the cabin, and had deluged him. The room was the worst sufferer, and was thrown away in disgust a moment later.

"Well," said Jinks, with some approach to cheerfulness, "but not the only uncomfortable man aboard this ship now." From below, through the gusts of the gale, came the sound of Thomas' remarks. He seemed to be disturbed somewhat.

Midnight came, and found the situation unchanged, save that the wind blew still harder. Groaning her protests to the unhandsome treatment that was being shown her, the Uriah B. Juggins swirled through infinite darkness, and played a game of "Pass, pass, come to my corner," with herself, as she leaped and kicked to the heel and toe of the racing seas. In a well-flooded craft, with plenty of sea-room, there was nothing to cause any man the slightest apprehension, but Jinks began to get more and more dismayed as time drew on.

Black forms showed up out of the darkness, and presently the whole crew of the vessel were mustered on the after deck.

"We stood it as long as we could," growled the bo's'un, "but we ain't cold bath manies. Once a year's enough for the likes o' me, and this is indecent. Besides, I've broke my pipe in the dark."

Jinks sent them down to the stuffy cabin, and told them to make themselves comfortable in the mate's berth. But presently there was the scrambling of heavy feet on the wooden holder that led to the cuddy, and Thomas' head appeared. Jinks did not see him until he was at his elbow, and when he spoke the skipper only just saved himself from going overboard by clutching at the boom, which swung him over to the other side of the deck an instant later.

"She's leakin' hard," yelled Thomas. "He's comin' into my room. The door's covered all over, and I dare say your rooms worse. I didn't look, but I heard things swishin' about."

The men appeared shortly afterwards. Greatly against his will the bo's'un was sent forward with a sounding rod, to see how much water was in the well, and he returned to say that he made it eight feet and rising fast.

"What shall we do?" asked Jinks slowly, with fear creeping over him. A voice from the background suggested, "Avin' a drink to cheer folks up a bit," which remark remained unanswered. It was Thomas who supplied the idea. "We'll 'ave to leave 'er," he said with emotion. "We'll 'ave to take to the boats an' make for the shore, I'm afraid."

"You can leave her if you like," said Jinks manfully, "but I'm captain here, and I'll stick to the ship." The cabin boy began to whistle "I'll stick to the ship, lads," through his teeth, but he was promptly kicked into the scupperns by the mate.

Undoubtedly the situation was serious in the extreme. The gale was not increasing now, and, indeed, showed signs of diminution, but there was a sudden lunge to the brigantine that told of her sorry plight. It was a question whether she would live till morning.

"I'll stay behind," said Jinks manfully. It was not that he was imbued with any gallant ideas of going down with the ship, but if there was danger in a brigantine, there was certainly more in a small boat.

"No, you won't," snapped the mate. "Owd we got on ashore, without you, do you think? You're the only man wot's got any money, an' we'd look pretty blighters landin' with empty pockets, an' all the pubs shut, too."

"Yes, we'll make yer come with us," grumbled the crew from the darkness. Jinks went forward despairingly, found the sounding rod, and unscrewed the little brass cap that guarded the well-pipe. He slipped the rod down, and drew it up again with bated breath. Then he carried it gingerly to the side-light, and saw that it marked nine feet of water in the hold. He made up his mind swiftly.



HOW TO BRING UP BABIES.

According to most bachelors, babies ought to be hardened early in life by exposure to the elements and stern treatment generally. The bachelor sometimes to think thus until he becomes a married man. Then he leads his first-born with every sort of luxury, and turns hardening theory into indulgent practice.