

# The "Hoodooed" Yacht

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Illustrated by W. E. Wigfull.

*A "hoodoo," in American parlance, is a curse, a kind of malignant fetish—attaching to some person or thing; and if ever any object was "hoodooed," it was the motor-yacht that figures in this story. He would be a bold man who, after reading it, declared that there is no such thing as bad luck. From first to last the worst of ill-fortune dogged the vessel and her owner, and even shipwreck and foundering did not satisfy the relentless "hoodoo."*

I WAS the proud owner of a forty-five-foot gas-oil launch, fitted with auxiliary sails, electric lights, copper gas-tanks, galvanized water-tanks, and a four-cylinder twenty-horse-power engine. This outfit cost me £800, and, by chartering, furnished my wife and myself with a comfortable living.

On November 1st, 1910, I secured a six-months' charter to take a party south for the winter. At the same time, although I did not know it then, I acquired a persistent and hard-working hoodoo. A foolish little dispute over a bill of less than £2 led to a lawsuit that kept me in New York until November 25th, and lost me the charter.

On November 28th we decided to go to Florida and take a chance of getting charters. We were lying at anchor off College Point at the time. I winched in all the slack of the chain, but could not budge the anchor. I therefore started the engine, and, with the timely help of a swell from a passing Sound steamer, managed to break the shank of the seventy-six-pound Babbitt anchor.

We started to cross the East River to get gasoline at Clason Point, but our hoodoo promptly placed a submerged mooring-log in the way. When the propeller had ceased its argument with this obstacle, the engine was racing at about a thousand revolutions per minute, while the propeller was only making about fifty. The tide being favourable towards an adjacent quay, we managed to keep steerage-way, but, having no anchor, had to trust to luck in stopping.

Our hoodoo had left a nice new row-boat on the near side of the landingstage. This lessened the blow somewhat, and after ploughing through the planking of the unfortunate skiff we stopped at the stage.

I left instructions to repair the row-boat, haul out the yacht, and put in a new propeller key, the old one having been sheared off by the blow against the log.

Someone told me that I could get information about the canals from the information bureau of a certain paper. I called them up, and learned that the

ready. I tried to get an anchor, but there was nothing doing. Then it started to rain.

My wife had gone to a friend's house to get our trunk, and to a tailor to have two of my suits pressed. Away in the distance I saw a large moving van, rolling and pitching along in the rain, with my wife perched up on the top, directing the driver as to the best course. After my wife, her trunk, and my newly pressed clothes had been safely landed at the wharf, and the trunk covered with



"She was escorted back to the yacht by an inquisitive crowd."

an old piece of canvas to keep out some of the rain, we rowed out in our dinghy to the yacht and put on dry clothes.

By the time I had settled my bill and put the trunk aboard it was dark, and we started out again for gasoline. Ordinarily you cannot get gasoline after dark, but I convinced the man in charge that there would be no danger in using my electric lights, so I ran a sixty-foot extension-cord to his tap, and made it light enough for him to fill his cans. We took on two hundred gallons of gas and rain. This combination did not bother me, however, as there was a separator between the tank and the feed-pipe capable of holding half a gallon of water and dirt, without interfering with the flow.

A run of half an hour brought us to the Harlem River side of Ward's Island, where I filled the water tanks with city water and rain that ran off my oilskins.

About 9.30 p.m., with a fair tide, we started through Hell Gate and the East River. At eleven o'clock we were abreast of the Statue of Liberty, when a sleet squall swooped down upon us, and then the engine began to back-fire through the carburetors. Sheets of flame lit up the engine room, but as we were in a heavy sea and could hear the howling of tugs, and ocean liners all round us, I let the engine keep up its cannonading until we passed Robbin's Reef light and were in the shelter of the Kill von Kull. Then, as we had no anchor, we ran in to a Standard Oil Company slip and tied up for the night.

Both of us had been soaked through for hours, so we got outside of a hand ful of quinine pills and some whisky. Now, my wife is a good sailor and can handle the wheel better than the average man, but she lacks experience in carrying a combination of quinine and whisky.

The cold grey dawn of the 29th found her "down and out."

While the yacht was on the ways our industrious hoodoo had led some kind friends unknown to inspect my carburetors. They forgot to screw the tops on tight when they had finished, and the vibration of the engine had loosened the bolts, so that the tops of the carburetors were almost falling off. Sheets of



"My wife held the stern of the yacht close to the bank, her heels sunk deep into the mud."

flame had shot across the exposed gasoline, but our hoodoo had prevented it from igniting, evidently saving us for more extended attentions.

We turned into the Raritan River at ten o'clock. The rain was now beginning to have some effect on the ice-covered decks and cabin, and just as we sighted New Brunswick the downpour ceased. We locked in, and while my wife went after a supply of eatables I scouted for an anchor. The best I could get was a watch charm kind of thing weighing about twenty-five pounds, so I decided to wait until we reached Trenton.

My wife long ago adopted overalls as a comfortable sailing costume, but always put on the conventional skirt when going ashore. As her skirts were wet, however, she rolled up the legs of her overalls and put on her long coat. After she had been shopping for about half an hour, one leg unrolled itself, and she was escorted back to the yacht by an inquisitive crowd. We disappointed them by getting under way before my wife removed her coat.

It was almost dark when nearing Bound Brook Lock, we met a craft towing down. As the canal was very wide at this point, we kept to the middle of the canal to let the other people have the tow-path side. Guided by our hoodoo, we ran hard and fast aground. Then it rained some more. After supper we turned in.

We had breakfast early on the 30th, and I commenced removing the ballast. There was four thousand three hundred pounds of it to be lifted out, carried up the five steps of the companion, lowered to the dinghy, rowed ashore and dumped, while the rain poured down in sheets. About ten o'clock the Pearl of Tamton came along and tried to get us off, but she only succeeded in getting herself on the rocks as well. She got off in a few minutes, but had to leave us for something with more power. About noon a tow came along, and I rowed out to meet them with a heavy cable. They did not stop but threw the eye of our cable over a bit, and the yacht climbed over boulders and submarine hills to deep water. We had to return for the ballast, however, so I started to back up. The stern-line had been coiled on the aft-deck, but, using the bouncing and tilting due to our submarine mountain climbing as an excuse, our hoodoo kicked the line overboard, where it proceeded to make a bobbin of the propeller. All things come to an end, however, and so did the rope.



"I passed blankets, pillows, and clothing to my wife, who threw them ashore."

I formerly wondered why women wore high-heeled shoes. Now I know. After breaking through the frozen crust of the bank, they made a fine anchorage in the mud. With my wife holding the stern of the yacht close to the bank, her heels sunk deep in the mud. I used a boat hook with a knive lashed to it, and cut the rope into small, frayed chunks. I also used some language. And still it rained in torrents.

By the time the rope was frayed off and the ballast replaced it was three o'clock, and we started on. The yacht, as the result of our shipwreck, was now somewhat shaky. The three-quarter-inch iron shoe had been torn loose, the rudder-head torn out, and the new propeller-key cut half-way through. We wobbled into Griggstown at dusk, just as it stopped raining. Two deserted houses and a gaping small bay were all we could see.

Owing to the rather rapid succession of events, my wife had not made any bread, and I accordingly bribed the boy to get us a loaf, for which he had to walk three-quarters of a mile.

Just as it started to rain again our hoodoo led a native along, and I invited him aboard. He told me that the nearest shipyard where I could get my damages repaired was at Bordentown. After looking the boat over he went ashore, leaving a little remembrance, which I found the next day.

On December 1st the sun came out for half an hour, but got digested at the prospect, and retired for a whole week. I discovered that a valve was out of commission, so spent a few hours taking it apart, and found a tinful of tobacco in it, evidently dropped by the native, who said he was a plumber.

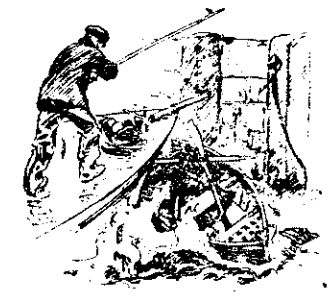
After dinner we started for Trenton, and reached there at sundown. While it was still light enough to read a newspaper, the lock-tender refused us admittance, until I lit our green light. We then looked through and tied up for the night. The rain was now succeeded by snow.

December 2nd was very cold, and threatened more snow. We went ashore to do some shopping, my wife to get food, and I tobacco and an anchor; but I found there were no large anchors to be had.

While returning to the boat my hoodoo played a little joke. I was arrested and almost locked up, being mistaken for someone badly "wanted" in Ohio. We got under way about half-past ten, and locked out at Bordentown. I failed to find any shipyard, however, and was told that there was only a three foot tide, so beaching the boat would not do any good. I bought an old, rusty mud-hook for an anchor, as there was nothing better to be had.

We started for Philadelphia at two o'clock in a driving sleet. This cut our faces so badly that we were compelled to face aft, with only an occasional glance forward to direct our course. No matter what kind of weather we had (and we had everything on the calendar, except snow, my wife always stayed outside with me to take a spell at the wheel.

When about ten miles south of Bordentown I smelt smoke, and opened the cabin doors. A cloud of dense black smoke poured out. I jumped inside, and found that the large oil-burner was one mass of flame. Fortunately, my frozen mittens protected my hands, and I carried the stove out on the aft-deck, where I left it to burn out. The excess



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Raritan and the Chesapeake Canals closed on December 1st. By sailing night and day, we could get through to Chesapeake Bay before the canals closed. (A few days later I found that the canals closed only when frozen up.)

It was up to me to get busy, so I hustled down town and bought £2 worth of charts. Chart No. 120, from Bordentown to Delaware City, was out of print, I was told.

When I got back to the shipyard I found the yacht lying at mooring, all