

GOLDEN ARGOSSY

FREIGHTED WITH TREASURES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

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The Boys in the Forecastle.

A Tale of Real Ships and Real Sailors.

By GEORGE H. COOMER.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WEIGHT OF A SHIP.

THE sincerity of the boys' grief was unmistakable. We would all lament unaffectedly the death of any human being if the chance were good of his taking us with him.

But Ching-Chow revived very quickly—like a cat which has fallen from a barn or been curled up by a brickbat in the side. The opening of his narrow eyes gave Bob and Tom more delight than they had ever expected to feel at the convalescence of any injured Chinaman; and they stooped by his side with an earnestness which made Captain Tillinghast laugh.

The "old man," as the sailors always called their good commander, suspected the feeling most at work in these young hearts, for he knew it to be one of the most natural things imaginable. And, indeed, he himself saw in the pilot's resuscitation a happy deliverance from an otherwise almost inevitable trouble.

"Somee he hittee-hittee!" said the Chinaman. "Gettee vellee bellee sonee. No gettee Foo-Fou, no gettee Chee-Wow, no gettee Low-Cow pilot shippee. Vellee quick he Ching-Chow gettee standee, tellee-teltee Melican man howee steeree. No gettee more he Chinaman pilot. Ching-Chow most vellee-vellee!"

The apprehension of losing his job thus seeming the most momentous consideration which dawned on the mind of the reviving Celestial, Bob and Tom were placed comparatively at ease; for they thought that did he intend to die immediately he would show less anxiety in regard to the possible competition of Low-Cow and the others for the pilotage of the "Melican" ship.

By the time the Ganges had fairly begun to gather way, Ching-Chow was able to sit on a hen-coop, whence he faintly issued his commands. For my boy readers must understand that from the moment a pilot reaches the deck

of the vessel of which he is to have charge, the entire responsibility of her management remains in his hands till he goes away. Should the captain interfere, the insurance, in case of disaster, could not be recovered. And thus, while going down Canton River, Captain Tillinghast might have busied himself with a book in the cabin, or turned into his berth, without incurring the least blame from any ordinary construction of marine law. He became, so far as the sailing of the ship was concerned, simply a passenger.

It was Ching-Chow who directed the mate to give a "smallee pullee on le lee blaee," or "putee le leelee lon pointee a-portee." It was Ching-Chow who watched the weather leach of the top-sails; and it was Ching-Chow who knew that if she got ashore, Ching-Chow must be accountable.

The monsoon being fresh and the tide fair, in six or seven hours the Ganges was abreast of Hong Kong; and now, taking leave of the ship, the pilot stepped into his boat, which had all the while been

towing astern. It was not until they saw him well off, and standing away under his bamboo sail, that Bob and Tom felt really at ease, and ceased to ponder upon the possible contingency of a lot drawing.

The feelings of the boys at this moment can be fully appreciated only by one who has himself at some time from a far-off foreign shore set sail for home.

They revolved in their minds the probable number of days which the passage would occupy, and thought of making a corresponding number of marks on the bulkhead of the fore-castle, so that by rubbing out one each day they would be the better able to realize the gradual diminution of the long interval before them.

Feeling and calculation were at variance; for on

The glorious monsoon was blowing on the quarter, and there was no call to start sheet or brace. Indeed, the ship had more wind than she really needed, so that the sky-sails and top-gallant studding-sails were not yet set, though all the top-gallant sails, all the royals, and all the lower and topmast studding-sails were doing full duty.

Next morning the land had been long out of sight, and still the good ship was going off at a prodigious rate, rolling deeply, and slatting her fore topsail back against the mast, as the after sails took the wind from it.

"Give her the sky-sails, Mr. Olney," said the captain; "we must make the most of the monsoon, and if we can have it all the way as strong as this

"How gallantly, how merrily,
We ride along the sea!
The morning is all sunshine,
The wind is blowing free.
Strange sights are all around us,
Strange birds about us sweep,
Strange things come up to look at us,
The masters of the deep!"

All that day, before the unvarying monsoon, and most of the next night, the noble ship swept on. It was eight bells, or four o'clock, in the twelve-to-four watch, the men of which were upon the point of going below, while those of the morning watch had just come on deck. The man who had been last on the lookout was yielding his position between the night-heads to one of the other watch, when a

sail was discovered close off the port bow, heading athwart the course of the ship. The Ganges was standing south-by-west, and the stranger west-by-north; the courses of the two vessels fast closing up a triangle, to the apex of which they were equally near.

Captain Tillinghast, who had just come up from the cabin, as he frequently did at the changing of the night watches, ordered the helm a-port; taking it as a matter of course that the other vessel would put her wheel a-starboard. Had she done so, no harm would have ensued. But her officer of the deck, no doubt confused, acting upon the supposition that the Ganges would keep her course, ported his own helm also, in hopes of luffing across her stern.

His vessel almost instantly struck the Canton ship, cutting the Ganges' planking both above and below the water-line, and carrying away her mizzen-mast.

Captain Tillinghast ordered the sails on the main-mast laid aback, the yawl cleared away, and the long-boat hoisted out. Bread, meat and water were hastily tumbled into them, and all hands followed, saving no clothing but such as they stood in, and a thousand dollars in silver, which the ship had on board for incidental expenses or use in case of accident.

The alternative of thus putting out from a sinking ship, sad as it appeared, was far less discouraging than it would have been had it taken place during a storm; for the monsoon, although fresh, was steady, and the swell regular.

In about fifteen minutes after they had pushed off from her side, the Ganges sank,

and our two little youngsters could scarcely keep down their tears as the last vestige of the stout old ship which had borne them so many thousand miles disappeared beneath the waves. Still, it was not a shipwreck like that of Don Juan, for there was no "solitary shriek," no "bubbling cry." It was only a case where eighteen men and two boys were surprised by the sudden dropping out of the bottom of their floating world!

Captain Tillinghast said that the vessel which had struck them was a ship-of-war, a conclusion made probable by the sound of a boatswain's whistle on her decks; and he thought it likely that she was bound for the Gulf of Tonquin, on the west side of the China Sea.

All were in hopes that she would lie by for them; but when the light had broadened, two hours after the accident, sufficiently to reveal the horizon, she was nowhere to be seen. It was possible that she had sunk, but more probable that she had continued her course.



"AND THE BOY, SPRINGING UP, GAVE THE OMINOUS BLUE BODY THE WHOLE LENGTH OF THE WEAPON."

this first evening out, they felt home to be close ahead of the ship's bowsprit, while knowing it to be immensely far away. It seemed as if every mile which the Ganges was now making counted more than a week's sailing had done on the passage out; yet reason told them that the entire length of her run for the next twenty-four hours, even with the most favorable wind, would be almost imperceptible on the chart; a mere nothing as compared with the vast expanse she must traverse.

The sun had grown low when Hong Kong was left on the quarter; and of all the dog-watches the boys had known since leaving home, the two in which they now took part were the happiest. From four to six and from six to eight all hands, except the silent tar at the wheel, sat or lay or paced in their accustomed places with nothing to do save to eat their supper from the rude tin pans, and talk with each other under that exhilaration of spirit which the first evening of the homeward passage always inspires.

we shall be down to Java Head in six or seven days."

Bob and Tom ran aloft to loose the sky-sails. There was an indescribable fullness in their young, hopeful hearts. The sky was clear, the sea sweeping strongly in the course of the ship, the breeze piping with just the requisite power. Porpoises leaped blowing from the sides of the waves; white gulls, that thus far seaward had soared from the viewless land, were seen here and there upon the swells like specks of foam; and more than all this to the boys was the feeling that at last they were homeward bound!

"Isn't she walking along!" cried Tom, from the fore sky-sail yard.

"She is that!" answered Bob from the main; "I'm glad the old main isn't afraid to crack on her!"

Barry Cornwall had not then written, yet our heroes felt all the spirit the scene described in his "Return of the Admiral":

