

Notes By the Way in a Sailor's Life eBook

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A Quick Passage.

To the editor of the "China Mail."

Dear Sir: — I have just read with much pleasure the report of the quick passage made by the sailing-ship "Muskoka" from Cardiff to this port in ninety-two days. This is really a good trip and the captain and his officers may be complimented on having done so well, for, as you know, the ship is of large tonnage and the complement of men is small. I congratulate the captain and his officers, and wish they may be as successful in all their future voyages.

Mr. Editor, no doubt you remember the ship "Northfleet." I was second officer of her, as you know, in the year 1857. In the spring of that year, we loaded government stores, guns, mortars, and general war materials, with two companies of Royal Artillery, for the war at Canton, in which the French and the British were allies. We sailed from Woolwich on the river Thames, and stopped at Gravesend twelve hours, then made our final start for Hongkong, in which port we anchored in the wonderfully short time of eighty-eight days from Woolwich, which is at least three days' sail farther than Cardiff.

On the following voyage we did the same in eighty-eight days and a half. These two were record voyages made in the glorious days of "teaclippers."

A. E. Knights.

Hong Kong, June, 1898.

A Record Long Passage.

First Cotton From China to America.

During the palmy days after the opening of the River Yangtse — when freights were taels 22 per ton from Hankow to Shanghai, a distance of six hundred miles — I was in command of the "Neimen," an auxiliary ship-rigged vessel, engaged in this trade until near the end of 1863, and saw some of the exciting times of the Taiping Rebellion in that part of China. By the end of 1862 the steamers "Huquang" and "Firecracker" had come from New York round the Cape of Good Hope, and later the "Chekiang," "Kiu-kiang," and other paddle steamers were put on the river, and the freights were reduced to taels 4 1/2 per ton. Then we had to clear out.

My employers ordered me to Hongkong to meet new boilers for the "Neimen." Later I received instructions to sell the "Jedda," belonging to the same owners, which was done. Then I had an offer from Mr. Paul Forbes to buy the "Neimen." This arrangement was completed, and I agreed with the new owners (Russell & Co.) to take the engines out of the vessel, and to change the rig from ship to barque, with the object of loading



cotton for New York — the first from China to America. After completing our alterations, and after painting the ship in Whampoa, we came to Hongkong to load at the beginning of May, 1864. The weather and water being warm and the paint new gave a favorable opportunity for the barnacles to attach themselves to the vessel, and by the time we started the barnacles were like coarse gravel on her sides.



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On the 24th of May, 1864, we sailed from Hongkong, and when we got out into the China Sea we had no monsoon, but met with a continuance of calms and squalls. The ship was unable to stand up under her canvas, having no ballast, and being, as it were, stuffed with cotton. Well, at last we reached Anjer, eighty-four days from Hongkong. The ship was one mass of barnacles as large as "egg-cups." I sent overland to Batavia to buy some garden spades, to be fitted on to long poles, so as to try to chop off some of the shells, which we did, and after five days' delay we sailed again. From Sunda Straits we had a good run till near the Cape. Here we had calms again, and the grass and barnacles grew very fast. Indeed, the ship's bottom was like a half-tide rock, and when the water washed up the sides, as she rolled, the noise made by the barnacles was like the surf on a sea-beach. We were followed for several days by a shoal of dolphins, which we caught in great numbers night and morning. Finally we got round the Cape, and to St. Helena, where we stayed four days, and employed men to assist us in chopping off grass and barnacles as far as we could reach. Then we proceeded on our way once more.

We had a wearisome time in the "doldrums" about the equator, only enlivened by catching dolphins and watching crabs, which would leave the grass for a swim and then return to the ship. After getting clear of the calm belt, we had a very good run to Bermuda, where we encountered a heavy gale, with tremendous heavy seas.

When the weather moderated we found to our dismay that the rudder was adrift, the pintles having been broken by the heavy seas. I was now compelled to put before the wind and run for St. Thomas, in the West Indies, and when near the entrance of the port a passenger, Captain George Adams, "went off his head," and thus gave no little addition to my anxieties. Finally we arrived safely in port. Here more troubles began. I was advised to do many things, some of which would have been much to the benefit of some of my advisers. One thing was to land and store the cargo.[*] This I positively refused to do. But after all I found that there was only one European blacksmith in the place, and he had but a small shop. This man contracted to do the repairs, and after I had got the rudder to his shop he coolly asked me if I had a good carpenter or other handy man to help him, as the job was too heavy for his negro assistant to weld. I proposed to him another plan. So at last the work was done satisfactorily, and we went on our way with partly a new negro crew, some of the old crew having left. We made very good progress and were nearly off New York when we got into a violent snowstorm, which greatly amused the negro sailors, who had never seen "white rain" before, but unfortunately for three of them, they got frostbitten and lost their legs. We got into New York at last on the 25th of January, 1865, eight months from Hongkong!



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Although the voyage was so long, I believe the venture turned out to be a good one financially. Gold was at a very high premium, — about two dollars and eighty cents at this time, — and our cotton sold for one dollar and fifty cents per pound. The “Neimen” went into dock, and people came in hundreds to see the strange sight. She was covered with shells like a rook. Some of these shells were sent out to China, and Messrs. Russell & Co. (the owners) had them mounted in silver as inkstands.

28th June, 1898.

[*] To land and store cargo should never be done by a shipmaster without authority from the owners.

A Voyage of Misfortune.

After the last voyage which I gave you an account of I accepted an offer made me by my late employers, and became superintendent of a business under their management in New York. Unfortunately, at the close of the war, this business was temporarily suspended and my contract was annulled. I then tried two or three different things on my own account, and finally settled as agent for a paper-mill; and all things were going on fairly well until in an unguarded moment I read an advertisement in the New York Herald. It ran as follows: “A gentleman with experience requires a partner with capital, in a safe business, with no risks.” The bait took, and I had an interview with “the gentleman,” and saw the persons to whom he referred me, and we joined, with the result that in less than seven months we had changed places. I had the experience and he had the capital, as well as the stock, and had vanished to where the woodbine twineth. His friends told me that this was his usual way of doing business. This was pretty cool. In a short time the same gentleman was seeking another victim in Chicago. My advice to sailors is to “stick to the ship.”

Well, sir, the next thing I thought of was to get a ship before the landsharks took all I had from me; and, with the assistance of Mr. Paul Forbes, I was soon in command of the ship “Royal Saxon,” owned jointly by R. W. Cameron, of New York, and R. Towns, of Sydney. We sailed from New York for Melbourne, and arrived there safely, though in running down our easting about 42° south latitude we had continuous fogs.

Now, sir, to the point. The above firm despatched from New York each alternate week one vessel for Melbourne and one for Sydney. The week before I left, the ship “Eastward Ho,” Captain Byrne, was despatched for Sydney, and apparently all went well until she got into latitude 37° or 38° south, and a little to the eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, when suddenly one night, when running before a strong gale, she came crushing into ice. The shock was so severe that her fore and main topmasts and mizzen-topgallant masts went by the board, and the foremast-head sprung. The hull was considerably shattered, and the main covering-board split up from forward as far aft as the main gangway.



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After this, the captain thought he had better try to reach Simon's Bay or the Cape. For some days they were working through field-ice, getting a little to the north. Patching the vessel with canvas, and rigging jury-masts and sails, finally they got clear of ice, and with fine weather it was decided to stand to the eastward, with the hope of being overtaken by some other vessel (which never came). After many vicissitudes, — taking to the boats, then returning to the ship twice, — it was decided that the ship was the safest place, and she ultimately reached Sydney.

In passing through Bass's Straits, the "Eastward Ho" had been passed at a short distance by a steamer from New Zealand, and reported in Melbourne, but could give no name. This gave great offence to the people of Melbourne for passing a vessel in such a state and not finding her name or her wants, if any.

The "Eastward Ho" was repaired and loaded coals in Sydney for Hongkong, and misfortune again overtook her. In coming through the Eastern seas, her crew mutinied, and the vessel narrowly escaped wreck on one of the islands. Then, later, she got into a typhoon, and was very badly strained, but escaped for what might have been a worse fate — fire. Her cargo of coals caught fire, and after some days of hard work, the fire was extinguished; but when the vessel reached Hongkong and her cargo was discharged, it was found that the hull was a mere shell. Her frames and planking in many places were burnt nearly through.

The vessel was condemned, the crew were paid off, and the captain left Hongkong for New York and Syracuse, where was his home. When he had nearly reached his house he met an old friend who conveyed to him the sad news of his wife's death and of the funeral from which he was just returning. A sailor's life is not always a happy one. Is there a fatality attaching to certain men or things?

Beginning of the German Navy.

In the beginning of the year 1862 I was chief officer of the ship "Ballaarat," with Captain Henry Jones, of Far East fame. We loaded in the East India Docks, London, a full cargo of piece goods for Shanghai and for Taku Bar. We arrived at Shanghai, and, as the war was finished, we were ordered to proceed to Taku to discharge our cargo for Tientsin. In due time we reached Taku Bar, where we found several of the British warships anchored, and the South Forts occupied by British troops.

We anchored in the forenoon very near to a vessel flying the Prussian flag, and when we had furled sails and cleared up decks it was tiffin-time. To our surprise, a boat came from the Prussian, bringing the captain. I met him at the gangway, and reported him to our captain, with the result that he stayed to tiffin with us. And then he stated his business on board our ship. He said he wanted to buy provisions and stores of any kind, sailors' clothing, boots, or anything we could sell, which our captain laughingly agreed to do.

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The following conversation then took place: "What is the name of the vessel you command?"

"She is now the 'Hertha,' and was the British sailing-sloop 'Thetis.' The British Government had her converted into a screw vessel, and presented her to us to bring our Minister, Count von Eulenberg, to negotiate a treaty with China as soon as the war should be ended, and that is why we are here; and the barque with the American flag flying near to us carries extra coals for our use."

"But," said our captain, "you are not a German. How is it that you are in command of that ship?"

"No," said he; "I am an ex-Danish naval officer, and all my officers are Danes, and we have German cadets. There being no German navy, there are no officers yet trained."

Business then began, and the transfer of provisions and stores of almost every kind was made from one ship to the other. After this we used to have daily friendly intercourse for about three weeks, and one fine morning the "Hertha" left her anchorage. A fresh easterly breeze was blowing, and the "Hertha" was working under sail against the wind, which was increasing, and a nasty, short sea rising. After a couple of hours we saw her yards squared, and the vessel put back and she anchored near to us. In the afternoon, the wind having moderated, an officer from her came to buy a grindstone.

This caused some little merriment. Then the officer explained that in the forenoon, when beating down the gulf, in one of the plunges, the grindstone had been washed off the forecastle-head, where the men had been employed in grinding their cutlasses.

They were expecting to hear news of a rupture between France and Germany, and they were on the way to Hongkong for shelter.

It is highly creditable to the Germans that from so humble a beginning they have raised such a fine fleet as they now possess.

After our return to Shanghai from Taku I was permitted to leave the "Ballaarat" and take command of the "Neimen" on the Yangtse.

An Incident in Hongkong Harbour.

The following incident regarding Captain Keppel may be of some interest to sailors, and perhaps is remembered by some residents of Hongkong who may have been there at the time of the last war with China.

Sir Harry Keppel was every inch a sailor, and sometimes did some very strange things, which would annoy his superiors; but the very oddity of his actions gained the hearts



and confidence of those who served under him, and he could rely on every one acting as one machine when he commanded.

One day, for some reason, the Admiral, Sir Michael Seymour, who was then on the flagship "Calcutta," gave orders for the "Raleigh" to proceed to sea in face of a very strong southwest monsoon. The "Raleigh" was to go out by the Lyemoon and return by Green Island. The ship was got under way, and went out in the ordinary way by the Lyemoon, and beat round the island. After some hours she came back by way of Green Island, with all plain sails and all studding-sails set. At first this called for no special attention, except for the grand sight of a man-of-war under full sail.



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At this time, the harbour was full of sailing-ships of all nations, and as the "Raleigh" came near and threaded her way among them, the crews of the various ships became interested. When the "Raleigh" came near to her anchorage, the order was quietly passed, and then, as if by magic, in came all studding-sails; then, in the same manner, all plain sails; after that "Let go the anchor," and a running moor was made. Then came cheers from every sailor who had witnessed the manoeuvre, cheers that could be heard all over Hongkong as it was then.

Well, sir, the Admiral was not pleased with this piece of skill in seamanship, and for coming through a crowded harbour under all sail. The "Raleigh" was ordered out for a twenty-four hours' cruise, and to come in in a shipshape way the next time. Well, she went out again, and as she came in past Green Island, she had all sail as before, and when nearing the shipping, greatly to the astonishment of every one, in came all plain sail and furled, leaving only the studding-sails; and under these she went through the shipping to her anchorage, and then, "In all studding-sails," and a running moor was made as before. And, if possible, the cheers were more vehement than before.

Now, sir, what do you think was the effect? Why, nearly half the sailors in the merchant ships wanted to join the "Raleigh." They could not be accommodated, but many were engaged and put on board the "Sibyl."

It may also be remembered that when the "Raleigh" struck a rock near Macao, a French man-of-war was in sight. The French flag was hoisted and saluted by the "Raleigh." After the salute, the order was given to abandon ship, and all this was done with as much coolness as if going to a church parade.

A Singular Meeting.

A few years ago I had with me as chief mate a man who had left his home when quite a boy to come to China. After arrival in Shanghai, he got a position as quartermaster, and worked his way up to chief mate.

After about eighteen years' absence from his home, an older brother of his came to Shanghai in command of a sailing-ship, and the two brothers met. The captain and I were introduced to each other, and I invited him to spend all the time he could with his young brother on board the steamer. Later the captain asked me to use my influence to get his brother to go home with him to see his mother, who was a very old lady, and always yearning to see her child "Sam."

After some trouble, I persuaded him, as a matter of duty, to go home, and obtained for him a year's leave of absence. He left Shanghai in his brother's ship, and went to Iloilo, where the vessel loaded and sailed for America. When the vessel was well on her way towards the Cape of Good Hope, they had one very calm day, and a short distance from them was another vessel showing the American flag. The two brothers agreed to have

a boat lowered and to pull over to the stranger for a short visit. This was done, and to their great surprise, when they got on board, they found that the captain was their own older brother.

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The two captains had been employed in different ports and on different voyages, and had not met each other in fifteen years, and the oldest and the youngest had never met before.

A Little Railway Experience.

By way of a change, I will tell you of a little railway experience I once had. During the Civil War in America, I had occasion to go from New York to Boston on important business, and I was there some days. When my business was ended I decided on leaving Boston by the midnight train.

Each hotel had its coach to convey guests to the depot or railway station. I took my seat in the coach, and was joined by a gentleman also going to New York. We each got our railway tickets, and sat side by side in the same carriage, or “car,” and after some little time we got into conversation, and when my companion found that I was a “seafaring man,” no one could have been more astonished than he was.

He looked at me and said, “My dear sir, you look to be an intelligent sort of man, and you tell me that you go to sea.”

I said, “Yes, and why not?”

“Well,” said he, “I don’t see how any man possessed with any common sense and reason could ever be such a fool as to go to sea.”

I said that possibly that was the reason for my going to sea — just simply a want of good sense on my part. But it suited me very well, and I should like to know what objections he had against a sea life.

“Why, sir, supposing you are in a gale and a fire breaks out on board, what are you going to do? You have no back door to escape through?”

“Well, we may be able to leave in the boats.”

“But you can’t do it in a terrible storm.”

“Well, then, we will do the best we can, and do as sailors often are compelled to do, trust in Providence. But for my part, I don’t see that we run more risks in a gale at sea than you do in the cities or than we do now on the rail. What is to prevent us from having a smash-up before morning?”

“Well, now, my good sir, I beg of you don’t go to sea any more, but just come out to Iowa and buy a nice farm and settle down ashore. You can buy a nice farm with all improvements at from three thousand to five thousand dollars.”



I asked him what was the matter with the other man, that he wanted to sell his farm and all improvements. I did not get any satisfactory answer to this, as we had something more serious to attend to. Just at this time I felt a peculiar motion in the car, like a horse cantering. I clapped my hand on my friend and said, "Sit still," and in a few moments I felt my heels grinding on some one — and the next thing was, that we were landed bottom up down twenty-five feet of embankment, and terrible shrieks on all sides.

Three cars were capsized. One in front of us went down on its side, endways. Ours went a side-somersault, and the next one endways, on its wheels. En route we had gathered a number of soldiers who had been drafted and were on their way South. The cars were jammed full.

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The furnace in our car did great damage to some, and altogether about seventy were more or less hurt. The accident was caused by a rail breaking, owing to severe frost.

After this I tried to persuade my friend to go to Iowa, sell his store, and come to sea with me, where he would be safe from any more tricks of this sort. He still seemed inclined to hold on to the rail.

A Good Record in Life-Saving.

[From the Shanghai Mercury, April 13, 1887.]

The steamship "Kiang-yu," Captain Knights, left the Kin-lee-yuen Wharf for Hankow, at 2 o'clock on the morning of the 1st instant. On account of the fog prevailing, she anchored at Halfway Point till 6 A. M., when she got under way and ran as far as Lin-ho Point, where she anchored again until 11 o'clock. The wind had been fresh from the south, but at noon it changed in a squall to north, and continued very strong all day. At 4 P. M., when about 75 miles up the Yangtse, a junk that had been capsized was seen. A boat was lowered and six men, two women, and two children were taken off, who were all got safely on board the "Kiang-yu." A change of clothes was raised for them among the Chinese passengers, and over thirty dollars were subscribed for the unfortunates, who were landed at Kiang-yin. Their home was about five miles lower down the river. They had left there in the morning, and were capsized in the sudden change of wind. The poor creatures appeared to be very grateful for their rescue.

This is not the first time that Captain Knights has been instrumental in saving life. During the last six years, he has picked up over thirty people on the Yangtse, and in November, 1858, when second officer of the tea-clipper "Northfleet," he performed a gallant action in going in charge of a boat during a cyclone to the rescue of the crew of the brig "Hebe." This happened about four hundred and fifty miles southwest of the Scilly Islands, Land's End. The "Northfleet" was bound for Portsmouth with some four hundred and fifty soldiers and sailors, invalids from Hongkong, and twenty-four saloon passengers, mostly naval and military officers. The "Hebe" was laden with grain from Alexandria, and was in a sinking condition.

The following testimonial, signed by several of the military and naval officers on board the "Northfleet," who witnessed the rescue, and by the captain and mate of the "Hebe," speaks for itself:

Ship "Northfleet" (at sea),

November 18th, 1858.

We take much pleasure in awarding to Mr. Knights, 2nd officer of this ship, this unsolicited testimonial, expressive of our high sense of the coolness, judgment and



courage he displayed on the morning of November the 13th, 1858, when, under circumstances of great difficulty and imminent danger, when in charge of the cutter, with five men, in a gale of wind and high tumultuous sea running, he was, by the interposition of Divine Providence, mercifully allowed to be the means of rescuing the master, mate, and crew (9 in all) of the brig "Hebe," of Southampton, reported to be in a sinking state.



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J. R. Fittock, Master, R. N.
W. J. Stuart, Lieutenant, R. N.
H. J. Tribe, Captain, R. N.
R. Picken, M. D., R. N.
H. Ward, Captain, R. N.
James Driver, Engineer, R. N.
Geo. A. F. Day, 2nd Master, R. N.
Wm. Donnelly, F. W., R. N.
A. W. Stratton (late Master and Owner of brig "Hebe").
Chas. Clarke, Mate.

The first signature to the testimonial is that of Mr. J. B. Fittock, Master, R. N., father of Mr. Consul Fittock, well known in China. The following letter on the subject was also written to the London Times by the master of the "Hebe": —

Heroism at Sea.

To the Editor of "The Times."

Sir: I wish to acknowledge, through the medium of your journal, my sincere thanks to Captain B. Freeman, of the ship "Northfleet," of London, for having rescued myself and eight men, the crew of the brig "Hebe," of Southampton, when in a sinking state, and at the same time blowing a gale of wind, with a high sea, in latitude 48° 80' N. and longitude 12° 20' W. At the same time, I cannot pass by the courage displayed by Mr. Knights, second mate, and five of the crew of the "Northfleet," in the management of the boat which took us off. Yours respectfully,

A. W. Stratton, Master.

12 Wood Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight, Nov. 30.

The Board of Trade recognized Captain Knights's gallantry by presenting him with a telescope (by Troughton & Sons, London) and recording the fact on his certificate in the following terms: —

"Certified that a telescope was presented by the British Government to Arthur E. Knights for gallantry in saving life at sea."

Recently, Captain Knights received from his old chief, Captain Freeman, who was master of the "Northfleet" when the rescue of the crew of the "Hebe" took place, a large oil-painting descriptive of the scene, accompanied by a letter, from which we take the following extract:

South Hackney, Feb. 25th, 1887.



I have sent you (by favour of Mr. W. Howell, the chief officer of the “Glenroy”) the painting that Captain Stratton gave me of the “Northfleet” rescuing the crew of the brig “Hebe,” of Southampton, and I beg your acceptance of it. I am sure you will like to have it, as you were the principal actor in the scene — and I have a copy of it done by the same artist. I well remember (as if it was only yesterday) how anxious I was during the time you were away on the job, and how my heart was frequently in my mouth (as the saying goes) when the old ship gave an extra heavy lurch, and you and the dear old cutter were out of sight for a few seconds in the trough of the sea; and I often think now what a wonderful and merciful thing it was that we got that boat up without accident, — but you see we had so many willing hands on board that they ran away with her as soon as she was hooked on.

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The painting represents the “Northfleet” in a storm under close-reefed topsails, fore staysail, and main trysail, and the “Hebe” under close-reefed topsails, with heavy seas breaking over her, her boats and house washed away, her stern-post (struck by a heavy sea) started, and the brig in a sinking condition. The cutter, manned by a crew of five, with Captain Knights in charge, and with the rescued crew of the “Hebe” in her, appears under the stern of the “Northfleet,” one man of the “Hebe’s” crew being hoisted on board by a bowline running from the spanker-boom. The whole of the “Hebe’s” crew were got on board the “Northfleet” in the same way, — the cutter, containing Captain Knights and the crew from the “Northfleet” being then hooked on and run up without accident.

It may be mentioned that the “Northfleet” was the ill-fated vessel which some years afterwards was run down, while at anchor under Dungeness, by the Spanish steamer “Murillo,” when over three hundred lives were lost.

Presentation of a Telescope by the British Government.

In the early part of the year 1859 I received a letter from the Board of Trade, notifying me that the British Government had been pleased to award me a telescope in acknowledgment of my service in rescuing the master and crew of the brig “Hebe,” and requesting me to write a statement, of what took place before and after the rescue, and hand it to the President of the Local Marine Board, on a day named, and to be then presented with a telescope.

I appeared at the place and time appointed, and the President rose from his seat and read my statement to the gentlemen of the Board. He then asked me if I had rendered any previous service to British or foreign subjects in distress; if so, had I received any reward or remuneration for the same. If not, then the Board would make application and obtain whatever might be due for such service. Or, did I wish for any further reward for the present service from any Society in Great Britain, application should be made.

I replied that I had not rendered any previous service to any others in distress, and that what I had done on this occasion was voluntary and spontaneous, without thought of reward. I considered it only as a duty to my fellow-man; and since the Government had been pleased to acknowledge the service, I was truly grateful. I was then complimented by the gentlemen of the Board, and was presented with the telescope. The inscription on it is my greatest pride to this day, as is also the honorary testimonial, stamped on my Government certificate of competency by the recommendation of the Local Marine Board.

To the President and Gentleman of the Local Marine Board, London.



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In latitude 48° 30' N., longitude 12° 20' E., on the morning of the 13th of November, 1858, at 7 A. M., it being then just break of day, I saw the brig "Hebe" about three miles on our lee-bow, having the signal of distress flying. I immediately reported it to Captain Freeman, who came on deck and gave orders to bear down upon her and see what was wanted. When near enough we hove to and hailed the brig, asking what they were in want of, and they answered, saying "For God's sake, send us a boat, as we are sinking." Captain Freeman then asked if they wanted to abandon their vessel, and they repeated their supplications, every one on board appearing to be in the greatest mental distress, making signs that their vessel was going down. The men were working vigorously at the pumps at imminent risk of being washed overboard, as the sea was breaking completely over them.

It was now 8 o'clock, and Captain Freeman gave orders for all hands to remain on deck and to clear away the cutter. I then got into the boat and asked who would go with me, when I got several volunteers, out of whom I took five, — viz., Burland, Hill, Hendrickson, Hansen, and Cummins. The boat was lowered very successfully, when we got clear of the ship. The brig was about a quarter of a mile astern. Heading for the ship, I pulled alongside and told them to give me a good line over their quarter, long enough to veer and haul upon. I told the captain of the brig to get his log-book and chronometer, with a few of his own personal effects, but I would not take either bed or bag belonging to any one. I then told them to stand by and to jump in their turns, one by one, as I should direct. We then hauled the boat up with her bow alongside the brig's quarter, taking care lest the stem of the boat should get knocked out, getting one of them off at a time, dropping clear while the heavy seas passed, then hauling up again. In this manner we succeeded in getting them off, nine in all, in about forty minutes, making them lie in the bottom of the boat as ballast till it was covered. We then pulled to the ship. When we reached her, they had a block at the spanker-boom-end, with a single line rove and bowline, into which the men got and were hoisted one by one on deck. After they were all up, I sent one of the boat's crew up, and then went alongside and hooked on the boat, which was quickly run up. There was no other mishap than the breaking of an oar in coming alongside. We had on board about three hundred invalid soldiers and sailors from the Canton war at this time.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

A. E. Knights.

Inscription on Telescope.

Presented by the British Government

To



Mr. Arthur Knights
Second Officer of the "Northfleet"
In Acknowledgment of
His Gallant Conduct
In Rescuing the Master and Crew
Of the "Hebe"
In November, 1858.

The Ship "Bombay."



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(November, 1858.)

At the time that the ship "Northfleet" was rescuing the crew of the brig "Hebe," the ship "Bombay," belonging to the same owner, — Mr. Duncan Dunbar, — was on the side of the same storm, at about one hundred miles distance, and had the wind from just the opposite direction, but with much greater force, and came near being lost.

The "Bombay" had embarked some troops in Portsmouth for the Indian Mutiny, and was ordered to proceed to Queenstown in Ireland to take on board some two hundred more soldiers.

When the vessel got near the entrance of the harbour it was nightfall, and, the wind being unfavourable, when the pilot got on board, he recommended the captain to make everything easy for the night and enter the harbour next morning, when he expected the wind to be fair. But during the night the wind increased and became a violent northeast gale, and the vessel was blown out of the Irish Channel into the Atlantic Ocean. For some days the wind blew with hurricane force. The ship lost some sails, and was at last carrying only a close-reefed main topsail and fore staysail. The sea was mountainous and lashing the ship from all directions. Then late in the day, to the dismay of all on board, the lee main topsail-sheet gave way, and the sail was flapping like thunder and lashing the mast and rigging most furiously. The ship, now having nothing to steady her, was helplessly rolling in the trough of the sea, at the mercy of the waves, which threatened to engulf her, as they were breaking on board from every direction. The deck-houses were washed away and the decks were filled with water, which began to find an entrance to the 'tween-decks, where the poor soldiers were battened down. In this plight it was necessary to get the remnant of the topsail secure, and if possible get a new sail in its place, so as to steady the ship. The second officer was ordered to get the sailors and do this, but he soon reported that the sailors, many of whom were foreigners, would not go aloft. The chief officer then went forward and called for men, and asked if there were any British sailors among them. If there were, for God's sake, to go aloft with him. He led, the way, followed by seventeen British sailors. They had nearly completed the work of securing the sail when the ship gave a tremendous roll on the top of a very heavy wave and the mast went by the board, carrying with it the chief mate and his seventeen followers, and not a soul could be saved. Oh, to think of the horrors of that dark and fearful night!



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Now came the trial for Captain John Flamanek and the remaining portion of his crew. The broken mast and yards, still held by the broken rigging, was lashing against the ship, threatening to break in her side and send all to the bottom. It was necessary to cut away this wreckage as soon as possible so as to free the ship, but before this could be accomplished daylight had set in. Then the captain asked the officer commanding the soldiers to let some of his men give assistance. This he refused to do, and made complaint that his men's food was not being prepared for them as it should be. The men cried shame of their commander, and volunteered to do whatever they could to assist the captain.[*] The weather moderated, and some sails were set on the vessel, which finally unassisted reached Falmouth. Two steam men-of-war had been sent in search of her, but missed her.

[*] For his dastardly conduct the military commanding officer was later dismissed from the army, and was never allowed to enter Her Majesty's service again.

Is There a Fatality Attaching to Men or Inanimate Things?

In another part of this book I have mentioned the ship "Northfleet." In regard to that vessel the above question might almost be answered in the affirmative. The vessel was launched at the place from which she took her name in 1852. She made her first voyage to New Zealand, thence to China, and from there to San Francisco, and back to China and London. Then she went trooping for the Crimean War; then for some years ran between London and China carrying tea, for which she was originally built.

This ship never made a voyage without some one being drowned from her, and finally she was run into and sunk by a steamer, which was afterwards proved to be the Spanish vessel "Murillo." By this collision upwards of three hundred people were drowned. The "Northfleet" was carrying railway workmen to New Zealand, and when coming down the English Channel the weather was stormy and the pilot recommended the captain to anchor under a point called Dungeness. This was done, and the night came on very dark. At some time after midnight a steamer came in under the Point, apparently for the purpose of anchoring, as was afterwards reported by the crew of the tugboat which was at anchor. They saw the steamer moving about for some time. Then a crash was heard, followed by most heartrending cries. The steamer went out to sea, and did not heed the signal rockets which were sent up by the "Northfleet." The little tugboat had only four men and a small boat, which was at once launched, and the mate and the engineer, with one sailor, went to the rescue. When they arrived all that could be found was the captain's wife and an ordinary seaman. All the others had perished, through the dastardly act of the Spaniard in running away.

Captain Knowles of the "Northfleet" was newly married to a very beautiful lady, who was later on by command presented to Queen Victoria, who, after hearing her story, condoled with her, and later gave her a pension of fifty pounds a year as long as she remained a widow.



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Some three years after this the widow was again married, to Captain Cawes, of the ship "Coriolanus." This ship came to Hankow to load tea and I had the pleasure to meet Mrs. Cawes, who had been saved from my old ship in which I had served for years.

The steamer that run down the "Northfleet" was twice arrested, but nothing definite could be proved until some two years later, when one of her officers was near dying, and he confessed that it was the steamer "Murillo," which was later proved to be true, and the vessel was confiscated.

Chinese Politeness.

Whilst running to Hankow with the steamer "Neimen" I had as sailors Malays. The firemen were seedy boys, or Nubians. The steward was a Goa Portuguese. The servants were Chinese, and the cook a Chinese who claimed to be an American, he having been trained by Captain John Parrott, of San Francisco, "a number one American man," who had taught him to swear quite neatly.

Well, on Christmas Day, 1862, we had a very hard gale and snowstorm, and early in the evening we had to anchor. Then we sat down to dinner, which we hoped to enjoy. There were several passengers on board, and when the soup was served and tasted each looked at the other, and I looked at the steward and asked him what kind of soup it was. He said it was plain soup. I asked why some meat had not been used in its making, and he replied that the cook must have eaten the meat, as he was given plenty.

The cook was sent for, and when he was confronted with the steward he began to use the refined language taught him by Captain Parrott. I ordered the steward to put all the soup back into the tureen. Then I invited the cook to take a seat at the table and consume the soup, which he did. When he had taken it he rose and, bowing most politely, tucked the tureen under his arm like an admiral with his cocked hat, and said, "Excusey, my sir; all hab finishee," and backed out of the saloon most politely.

A Brazilian Slaver.

In the year 1851 I was on a voyage to Melbourne, Australia, on the sailing ship "Severn." This was shortly after the opening of the gold mines. We left Southampton with about one hundred passengers, and had a very fine run with fair weather. There was no incident to mar the enjoyment of the trip until we neared the coast of Brazil, when one morning we saw a smart-looking brig hove to, waiting for us to come up, and when we came near our passengers became very much excited, as we could see there was an unusual number of men on her deck; the idea was that it was a pirate vessel.

When we came very near to her, a boat was put off from her, and an officer brought a letter from her captain asking for provisions and water, saying that the vessel was bound for the port of Santos, and had been blown off the coast in a pampero. Neither

the officer nor the boat's crew could or would speak English. They could only ask in Spanish for "tabac." Some of our sailors protested



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that they were either British or — Americans. Well, they were supplied with salt beef and pork, canned meats, water, *etc.* Several trips were made by the boat, and when all was finished, and the boat was at some distance from us, these marauders stood up and gave us three rousing cheers in good plain English, and called out “Good-bye boys, and good luck to you for feeding the blackbirds.” The brig was full of slaves.

This “slave” business was then near its end in Brazil, and, probably this vessel had been chased off the coast by a British war-vessel, as every possible effort was being made by the British Government to suppress the slave trade.

Mary Ann Gander.

On this voyage we had a Mr. and Mrs. Gander and their eight children. Poor Mrs. Gander used to suffer terribly from seasickness, and was totally unfitted to do anything but scold, whilst poor unfortunate Gander used to promenade the deck with a child on each arm and a couple of others tagging on to his coat-tails. He was a wonderfully good-natured fellow, was Gander; otherwise I do believe he would have jumped overboard, for whenever he came near to where Mrs. Gander was, she used to call to him to go to the captain and tell him to put her on shore immediately; she would not go any further in that ship, — no, that she wouldn't. “Now, Mary Ann, what's the use your talking that way; you know that we are a thousand miles from any land and the captain cannot put you on shore.” “Now, Gander, don't you talk to me. How dare you? You just go to the captain at once. Oh! you catch me going to sea again. No, that you won't. When I go home I'll go overland, if I have to walk every step of the way.” Poor Gander! Mary Ann and the children all survived the trials of the voyage and arrived safe in Melbourne, where Gander was very fortunate, and in three years made sufficient money to enable him to retire, and as the English Mail Steamer Company, or the P. & O. Company had put on a line from Ceylon to Australia in 1852, the Gander family were enabled to go home by the overland route, as Mrs. Gander had wished to go.

Hard Times.

In June, 1854, I left Melbourne on the barque “Junior,” bound to Callao, in Peru. We had a fine voyage, and on arrival, being free, I went to Lima, the capital. I found this was a very interesting old city, with beautiful surrounding country, which I enjoyed very much, and spent nearly a month there. Then I had a week in Callao, which was a pretty wild place. I used to sail around the bay, and in sailing near the shore I could look down, at the bottom of the sea, on the houses of old Callao, which was swallowed by an earthquake in the latter part of the last century. And, strange to say, when the town disappeared an island came up out in the bay. This island is very high and is called “San Lorenzo,” after a lone fisherman who had been out in his boat fishing on the night

when the earthquake took place, and in the morning poor old Lorenzo found himself in a boat about a thousand feet up on a mountain and no town in sight.



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Well, I joined the barque "Tropic," loaded with guano, bound for Cork, in Ireland. This vessel was a very rotten old thing, and in getting round Cape Horn we all had a very hard time, and did not know how soon the vessel would sink with us; but we got round the Cape and into the South Atlantic, where we had better weather and proceeded pretty well till in the North Atlantic, when provisions began to get short. When we were off the Azores, watching the beautiful shores and harbours of St. Michael, we came near a Dutch brig from Brazil loaded with coffee. The captain hailed us and asked us for some biscuits. A boat was sent to us bringing us a half-bag of coffee. We had less than a hundred pounds of biscuits. Our captain consulted with us about giving any of it away. It was finally agreed that we would divide with the brig. This was done, and we had to be very careful with so little bread among twelve people. We had plenty of salt beef and pork, and a half-barrel of flour, but no beans or peas or sugar.

We had a fair run till we saw Cape Clear, at the south end of Ireland, on the 30th of January, 1855. We all were in high hopes that a few hours more would see us at anchor in Queenstown; but that night came on an easterly gale, and we were driven out into the Atlantic, where for weeks we were buffeted about, and to our dismay our last fresh-water cask we found had leaked and was empty. We were surrounded with many other vessels in the same plight — short of provisions. We had plenty of snow, with which we could make coffee, but were reduced to salt meat only, which is pretty hard fare. The hardest part was, that the captain had his wife and two children on board, and for the youngest child a goat had been provided to supply milk. This became a scarce article as there was no food for the goat. So every day the carpenter used to plane up a piece of wood to make shavings for the goat to eat. It got along as well or better than any of us.

Finally, on the 10th of March, in the morning early, we had reached near to the Old Head of Kinsale, and near to Cork, when we saw a boat pulling off to us. This proved to be a pilot-boat. The pilot got on board, and told us that ours was the first vessel that could be boarded in six weeks, the weather having been so bad, and that only a few days before the mail-carrier between Clonakilty and Cork had been frozen to death on his journey. The pilot brought us a few potatoes, which gave us one each and two for the captain's wife, and the next morning we got safely into Queenstown, where we were able to get a good supply of milk, bread, butter, and eggs, of which we all made pretty free use, and with a few days' rest we forgot all our late cares, as sailors usually do.



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After being in port a few days we all left the “Tropic,” and I spent a couple of weeks in seeing Cork and the beautiful country where the people are so genial and hospitable. After seeing all I wanted to see, I took steamer from Cork for Bristol, spent one day there, and then left by train for London. The train left in the evening, and here a rather amusing incident occurred. I had taken a second-class ticket, and after taking my seat, it being cold weather, I prepared to make myself comfortable for the night. In my valise I had a rough sealskin or Esquimau jacket with a hood to it. I put this on and was nice and warm, sitting in the corner of the carriage. Shortly afterwards a man in livery came in and sat in the corner opposite to me. Then came an old lady and her husband, an Irish army officer returning to India. The old lady was helped in by the gentleman, but as soon as she saw me she cried out, “O Lord!” and fell back. Then the old gentleman boosted her in again, saying, “Go in, you old stupid!” and after the second attempt she gave it up, saying she wouldn’t travel in a menagerie. She had taken me for a bear, and the man in livery for my keeper. The old gentleman got in, and she remained on the platform until I assured her that there was no danger. Then she came in very reluctantly and sat as far away as possible until we reached Bath, where the man in livery alighted. After that the old lady, her husband, and I became good friends for the remainder of the journey.

Memory For Voices.

After the bear incident I spent some time in London, then joined the emigrant ship “Oriental,” bound to Adelaide, South Australia. I was third officer. We took on board about one hundred families of excellently selected farm labourers, shepherds, and ploughmen, and after having made a good voyage arrived safely in Adelaide. The Immigration Commissioners came on board and inspected the passengers. The result was most satisfactory. There was no complaint of ill-treatment or deficiency in supplies, and in less than thirty-six hours every family was engaged and sent into the country. And the Commissioners awarded to our doctor fifty pounds sterling, the chief officer fifty pounds for his supervision, and myself fifty pounds for the supervision of the commissariat department.

After a short stay in Adelaide, we sailed for Madras, in India, and after a good voyage we arrived and anchored in the evening when it was quite dark. There was quite a number of native business men came off in catamarans and “mussulah,” or surf-boats. Among the number was one noble-looking man, who stepped up near to our captain and, addressing him, said, “How do you do, Captain Mackintosh?”

“How do you know my name is Mackintosh?”

“By your voice, sahib. When you were here in the ‘Lady Mary Harrison,’ eighteen years ago, I was your dubash.”

This was quite correct. This man recognized the captain’s voice after all these years.



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In 1879 I had a similar experience in my own case. I was travelling in Scotland, and in Edinburgh I met some friends and inquired for an old lady whom I had known as a child. I found that she was living at a place called Aberladye, on the seacoast. I decided to go to see her, and was directed to take the train to Dreme Station, and there I should find a conveyance to take me to Aberladye. When I arrived the conveyance was filled with local travellers and I started to walk three and a half miles to my friend. After I had gone about half a mile I passed by a magnificent entrance to a fine estate. Soon after this I heard a carriage coming, and when it caught up to me the gentleman who was driving in the dog-cart pulled up and asked if I was going to Aberladye and invited me to take a lift. I thanked him and mounted beside him. He asked where I wanted to go. I told him to Rose Cottage, when we entered into general conversation. He learned that I was from China, so we had quite a pleasant time, and, arriving opposite to Rose Cottage, he pulled up and graciously pointed to the house, bade me good-bye, and hoped we might meet again.

I went up to the door and rang the bell, and the old lady herself answered it all in a flutter, as she had seen me set down from the trap, which was driven by Lord Rosebery himself. Well, I asked if Mrs. McKippen lived there. She replied, "Yes; I am she." I said, "Perhaps you don't remember me?" She said, "No; but I know your voice." I told her that I was Arthur Knights. "Aye, laddie," she cried, "I heard that you was drowned at sea twenty-five years ago." Well, I need hardly say that I was welcome to her and her husband, who was a retired business man. Poor old gentleman, he cried as a child when she told him of my taking the trouble to come and see her, and how when I was a small boy at a juvenile party I was sore distressed by my dancing slippers being too big and that they kept slipping off. Then she came to the rescue and took me to one side and stitched them to the heel of my stocking to enable me to have a good time.

I spent a couple of days with my friends and then went on my way, and I have often wondered whether that lady could possibly have connected my manhood voice with that of my childhood.

An Incident of the Great Taiping Rebellion.

In the latter part of 1862 I left Shanghai on my usual voyage to Hankow. This port is six hundred miles up the Yangtse River. After we had got about sixty miles up the river, which is here about ten miles wide, our attention was drawn to a number of human bodies floating down the river, most of them mutilated. This lasted about thirty hours. As we steamed along near the shore, the farmers, with their families, were for miles gathered here and there, gesticulating, prostrating themselves, and praying for us to take them on board. The poor creatures were between the Imperialist soldiers and the rebels, or Taipings. Both of these parties were ravaging, devastating, and destroying all before them, and the poor peasants had a very hard time. We could not help these poor creatures, and had to pass on our way.



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On the third day we passed a city called Taiping Foo, “foo” meaning “city” in Chinese. We afterwards learned that for some months the inhabitants of the city had withstood a siege from both belligerents, and one day the Imperialist general conferred with the Taotai, or mayor, and said that it was well known that the inhabitants had been very good and had not favored the rebels, and now if they would open their gates to the Imperial soldiers, he would promise them kind treatment; and the people were weak enough to believe him and opened the city gates, and in a few hours nearly the whole population was butchered and thrown into the river, and those were they whom we had seen floating in clusters a few days before.

Conclusion.

In the course of my journey through life I have been in many strange places, and have met many strange people. I have seen many strange sights — some grave, some gay. For many years I was on passenger-carrying ships, and have carried many travellers, amongst whom some strong and enduring attachments have been made.

Although I have been in some bad places, and met some “hard characters,” yet was I never molested in any country in which I have been. I have seen some misfortunes, but was never depressed by them. I could always see around me others who stood in need of help. I have spent a long life in foreign lands, and happily I can now look back upon the past and say that I have found much good in all the lands which Almighty God has permitted me to visit.

My motto has always been, Never despair; persevere, and never give up hope.

And now with the most happy memories of the past I can look back without a moment's regret and ask God to bless all those who have been good to me. And who has not been good? The Project Gutenberg Etext of Notes by the Way in A Sailor's Life by Arthur E. Knights *****This file should be named nwasl10.txt or nwasl10.zip*****

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