

# THE POLYNESIAN.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, AT HONOLULU, OAHU, SANDWICH ISLANDS.

J. JARVES, Editor.

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1841.

Vol. 1.—No. 43.

## SELECTED.

From the Gentleman's Magazine.

### GENTLEMEN IN THEIR MESS.

By the Author of 'Old Ironsides off a Lee Shore.'

A sea life is a curious medley of incidents. Every day brings forth new pleasures or new pains. Novelty is the altar before which Jack worships: and Fidler's Green, a place situated according to the imagination of old tars, three miles beyond the location of a certain fiery old gentleman called Belzebub, is, according to his creed, the final resting place of the sons of the sea. Grog is the solace of the old man-of-war's man—grog and its accompaniment tobacco—with a full can and a full pouch, with a shot in the locker, and a Sunday suit, he rides the ocean with a few planks between him and eternity, and whistles a merry strain, amid the awful piping of the midnight storm. An old sailor is a great curiosity; his whole life spent in endeavoring to out-wit his officers; but when he has played his pranks, he is generous to a fault. He cannot endure the tears of a woman, and many a time I have seen a bluff old sea dog, half as over, throw a third of his hard earnings into a weeping widow's lap, and while he wiped his eyes with his apology in a pocket handkerchief, sing out in a sky voice—'Belay there your pumps sorrow—the longest storm must have an end,' and then depart, hitching up his arboard waistband before the astonished recipient of his favor-found words with which to return her heart-telt thanks.

There has of late, however, been a great revolution worked by philanthropists in the condition of the seamen, both the naval and merchant service. The sea jacket now worships at the altar of God, and from beneath the Bethel

Loud hallelujahs to the Lord,  
Die sweetly on the distant sea.

There is another class of persons, however, who ride the leaping ocean who differ from the seamen in every particular. They are the souls of the trumpet, the masters of thunder, the monarchs of the peopled deck. Their hail is as omnipotent from stem to stern as the clapping of the sultan's hands. Sky pole and orlop deck answer tremblingly to their summons; and even the very rats in a war ship show by their scampering whenever the first luff has the sulks—that

By the itching of their thumbs  
Something savage towards them comes.

With this class of sea-faring men, those gentlemen who enter the cabin windows, instead of working their way up through the hawse-holes—we have had something to do in our early days, and feeling in the humor of story-telling, we trust we shall not be condemned for noticing some of the laughable peculiarities incidental to their lives at sea.

The captain of a ship of war is the first great man on board—he, like the king, can do no wrong. He can break his own regulations, and reprimand himself in private for the offence. He, in fact, is the great grand Turk, and if he see fit he can whip his officers in as pretty a little Toppet as one can well conceive of. The next in rank and power is the first lieutenant—he is the executive officer, he is

the oracle of the ship, no one need differ with him, for rank is powerful and must prevail. He knows best what every one ought to have. Does a home-sick middy thrum an old fiddle in the steerage, the first lieutenant knows whether he makes too much noise—he knows too when he has done playing, for he tells him when to bag his fiddle and ride the mast-head; the first lieutenant knows, too, when a person wants to go on shore, for he tells him to go at nine in the morning, and he knows when he will desire to come on board, for he tells him to come off at ten in the evening; he knows when a man has had sleep enough, for he sets the holy stones and wet sand a going at six bells in the morning, and he knows, furthermore, when he wishes to go to bed, for he claps a stopper upon his talking tacks, and sends the master-at-arms to extinguish his light at nine in the evening—He knows, too, when to whip, and when to sit in jewels, when to administer tarred rope ends, and when to cool off with cold iron. He knows how much water is drunk, how many tacks and sheets of sand-paper are used in the ship; and, above all things, he knows his own power. With all this knowledge, would you believe it, he has a hard task, for he takes the fault-finding, fresh from its fountain-head, the captain, and receives the sly cuts of the juniors, when they whip the devil around a stump.

The officer of the deck is the next great man—for four hours he is vicegerent—he holds the trumpet; at his command the studding-sails spread out their giant pinions and woo the dying gale, or come thundering in like lightning. At his command the hours are tolled upon the ship's bell—his eye is upon the water and the sky—he sees to sagging of a yard—the fluttering of a rope—the flapping of a splitting sheet—and the spitting of windward of a land lubber, as easy as any one can see his own face in the water. He knows when the cook's pudding is boiled, and when the meat is fit to eat. He knows the strength of the grog tub, and the degree of temperature reached by any one of the ship's company. He knows every body, and every body knows him.

The purser and the doctor are the next great men. The boatswain is not always a great man—he swears and drinks grog—talks with the sailors—and tells improper stories, and when he gets a little elevated, he whips the whole party, and goes home with a black eye—the boatswain is not a great man; he never wears white gloves, and it is affirmed that but one was ever known to wear a smelling bottle and sing psalms.

Here, perhaps, the reader may think that original characters are to be sketched, but in this he will find that he is mistaken. Follies will be rapped, but personalities will be left out of the question.

Having thus briefly shewn our colors—'all hands up anchor'—'man the bars'—'walk away with the cat'—'ha, there it comes'—'lay aloft'—'sheet home the topsails'—'set the jib and spanker'—'there comes the breeze'—'haul aft the main sheet'—'she pays off sweetly'—'pipe down, boatswain's mate'—'good bye, Mr. Pilot'—'we are at sea.'

Let us now go down into the ward-room—this is easily accomplished, the companion-way is just forward of the bin-

nacle, and the binnacle is just forward of the wheel, and the wheel is just forward of the mizen-mast. After descending the companion-way we reach the gun-deck, the heavy battery of a ship, and turning round the ward room sky-light, which rises like the roof of a house, in the centre of the deck, just forward of the cabin bulk-head, we descend another ladder which lands us in the steerage, (the young gentleman's apartment, as it is termed) which is on the birth deck, and turning to the right, we enter the ward room—the aristocratic corner of a ship of war. Here reigns rank in eagle buttons, and golden cap-bands; here glory lingers around the proud moustache; and honor rides upon a full blown swab. This is the second heaven to the middy, but not to its inmates.

The mess are at supper; a long table extends from side to side of the mess room; at the starboard end sits the first lieutenant—roast pig, turkey and plum-pudding always luxuriate under his rubicund nose—at his right, at the side of the table, sits the second lieutenant, then the third, then the fourth, and then the master; at the opposite end sits the purser—the lord of fish, pies and jellies—caviare and *old cheese*—at his right, at the side of the table, sits the doctor, then the marine officer, then the chaplain; and at the side next the first lieutenant's left hand sits the fifth, the youngest of the mess—he knows the exact length of a dog watch, and can tell the exact time when his relief should come upon deck: lights are now brought in and placed upon the table; a substantial supper smokes before the hungry mess. The first lieutenant has deposited a full allowance of fried beef-steak and onions upon his plate, and is just dipping his spoon in the mysterious mustard pot, which appears to have Moll Thompson's mark upon it. M. T. (empty) when lo! in pops the gunner and master-at-arms, while the ship's cooper and two gunner's mates stand at the door. The gunner in a long flannel suit, free from buttons and buckles, with a long green baize night cap on his head, and the master-at-arms in his every day toggery, with a bull's eye lantern in his hand, complete the variety of the group.

'The captain has directed the magazine to be opened, sir,' says the gunner, giving his eyes a twist towards the savory mess.

'What do you say, sir,' says the first lieutenant, who is a little deaf, and pretends to be still more so, bolting at the same time a square inch of beef, and sending down after it a large allowance of sliced onions.

'The captain has ordered the magazine to be opened,' screams the gunner, while the mess, following the example of their head, made a diligent use of their masticators, notwithstanding they are nearly ready to suffocate with laughter. By this time the first lieutenant has deposited the contents of his plate between his teeth and his bread-room, and having swallowed a cup of coffee at a draught, springs up and hands the gunner the keys of the magazine, then turning to the mess, who continue with unremitted exertions to provide themselves, roars out the cabalistic words—'Going to open the magazine, gentlemen, master-at-arms, put out the lights and drop the screen.'

In a moment all is darkness and confusion; away springs each mess boy with a well filled dish; away fly the mess to their various stations—out go the lights, down falls the flannel screen—and a marine with a drawn bayonet enters the ward room, and paces along the outside of the table that was so lately filled with animated countenances—all now is silent; a strong sulphurous smoke penetrates the curtain and fills the ship; while the echo of the old tar's curse rises in hollow murmurs and dies away in the distance.

Well may Ichabod be now written over the entrance of the ward-room, for surely *its glory has departed!*

A gloomy change has now come over the spirit of their dreams. A few officers pace the gun deck in sullen humor, but the majority loof about the spar deck, now watching the silver moon as she rises beautifully from the dazzling sea, and now endeavoring to make out in the distance the appearance of a ship, or the jet of a spouting whale. At length the dreary job is over—the magazine hatch closes—up goes the screen—and down come the lights; a scanty supper is now saved from the pilferers at the galley, and then come the wine bottle and a pine-apple cheese, like two good companions, faithful even in death.

'Give us a yarn, gentlemen,' says the first lieutenant, pulling down his little waistcoat, over his little round belly, and slewing himself in his chair so as to turn his deaf ear towards the company.

'Well, doctor,' says the purser, taking another and heavier pull at the halvyards, 'did you ever hear how the old Culloden lost her stick just about here many years ago?'

'No,' cries the doctor, joined by the voices of the whole mess, 'let's hear it.'

'Well, then,' says the purser, 'here it goes.'

### THE DEAD MAN'S LEDGE.

'Not more than a hundred miles from the southern extremity of England, rise in awful majesty above the tempestuous ocean, the dreadful breakers of the Dead Man's Ledge. Nothing can exceed the solitary appearance—the look of dreary loneliness that they present to the eye of the watchful seaman when the heavy swell of Biscay comes rolling up towards the northern ocean, and the light scud spreads its flitting screen of frosted silver before the face of the broad red harvest moon. When the night comes on in black rolling shadows from windward, and the stormy petrel calls his little band together, to dance upon the white foam that hisses in the vessel's wake, then may be heard the terrific music of the Dead Man's Ledge, louder than the roar of heaven's artillery, louder than the wail of the canvass-splitting tempest, louder than the moan of the wilderness of waters, as it heaves up its blackened breast to own its God.

'From the days of the earliest navigators, these rocks have been famous in story, and when the shades of evening settle upon the deep, we be unto the outward bound mariner that sees not their dark summits sink into the waste of foam-capped waves astern.

'It was at the commencement of the nineteenth century, when a heavy armed Corvette, under double-reefed topsails, came running before a heavy south-west-