GOOD STORIES OF THE PRESENT DAY.

Supernatural Manifestations in Mr. Robinson's New Home.

In the year 1870 a family named Robinson removed from Medina county, Ohio, to a farm near Davenport, Iowa. Mr. Robinson made the purchase before his family left Ohio, and bought of a real estate agent in Davenport. It appeared that the farm had changed hands several times within a few years, and that the last owner had lived on it less than a fortnight. There was a good frame house on the place, the barns and sheds were in good repair, and the land was certainly rich and fertile.

Mr. Robinson got the place at what he called a great bargain, and he had few questions to ask about the former owners and why they left. As the house had been tenantless for several months, there was need of repairs. Robinson hired a couple of painters, and was with them about the place for three days, all taking board at a near farm house. On the evening of the first day one of the painters went over to the house after a pipe he had left. The time was just after sundown. The kitchen door was not locked, and he went in that way to go up stairs, leaving the door wide open. The door leading from the kitchen to the cellar was shut. The door leading into the sitting room was open.

As the painter halted in the kitchen for a moment to look at the new paper on the walls he heard a sound on the cellar stairs which filled him with amazement. It was as if somebody was walking backward down the stairs and dragging something which bumped on every step. This noise continued until the bottom step was reached, and then there was a dull blow, a half cry, and all was still. The painter pulled the door open and asked who was there, but all was quiet. At this same moment the kitchen door, which he had left wide open, and the sitting room door, which he had noticed was open, both slammed shut. Then, from some spot he could not locate, came the sounds of sobbing and moaning.

The painter had the courage of the average man, but he could not face that. He pulled the back door open and rushed out, all desire for an evening's smoke having been driven from his mind. However, on the way back to the other house he made up his mind to say nothing of his adventure, fearing the ridicule which is always justly or unjustly heaped upon the man who becomes frightened over what he cannot see. His pale face and agitated manner were subjects for inquiry, but he excused himself on the ground of sickness. The next morning he wondered if he had really heard what he thought he had. The more he thought of it the stronger became his conviction that he was the victim of some temporary hallucination. To prove or disprove this he put up a job on his comrade by borrowing his knife and leaving it on the sill of one of the windows. He took notice as they quit work that every door in the lower part of the house was shut.

After supper the painter asked for his knife, as was expected, and when told where it had been left he set out for the house. He entered also by the back door. The knife was in the sitting room. As he crossed the kitchen, the sitting room door, which he saw was shut, was violently opened. The painter stopped in his tracks, believing at first that some tramp was in the house. After half a minute the door shut with a slam and the cellar door flew open. Then came the sounds which the other had heard, and as they died away the back door shut to with a bang. The man, as he readily acknowledged, flew out of the house with his hair on end. Not being easily cowed by ridicule, he returned to the other house, called his companion out, and related his adventure. When they came to compare notes they agreed that the house was haunted. There was no wind stirring to operate the doors in that manner, and if there had been, how could the noise on the cellar stairs and the sobs be explained? It was agreed to say nothing to Robinson or others, and this compact was held to. The work in hand was finished next day, and the men went home, Robinson at the same time leaving for Ohio to bring on his family.

What occurred after the family reached the farm is learned solely from Mrs. Robinson, his wife, and, in the light of all circumstances, must be taken for truth. The household goods were teamed out, and as they got there late in the afternoon the family were invited to remain at their neighbor's over night. This was the same farmer with whom Robinson and the painters had stopped. After supper Robinson, his boy, 12 years old, and a son of the farmer, two years younger, went over to the house to unbox and unpack some of the goods, taking a couple of candles along. It was not yet dark when they reached the house, and the boys started out to take a tour of the premises. They had gone up stairs about five minutes when they came rushing down in great excitement, declaring that they had heard a woman crying. Robinson laughed at the idea, telling them to look more carefully and they would find a cat. The lads refused to leave the room in which he was at work, but he was busy and paid no particular heed to them.

It was midsummer, and the evening was without a breath of air to move a leaf. Robinson had passed into the parlor with an armful of goods, and the boys stood by an open box in the kitchen, when the cellar door suddenly opened. They had seen nothing to scare them, and their terror was so manifest that Robinson was for the moment unnerved. He was sure that the cellar door had been shut for an hour, and when he walked out and found the door wide open, he was, to say the least, greatly astonished. It might be some one from the other house playing this trick. He took a candle and went down cellar, but it was empty of any living thing. He finally concluded that the door had not been fully shut, and that some movement of the boys had opened it, and as nothing further occurred he worked for an hour, and went away laughing at the boys who hugged him so closely.

During the next day the house was so far settled that the family occupied it after supper. Everybody being tired out by the day's work, they were off to bed at an early hour. There was a bedroom off the kitchen, and in this the boy slept. There was another off the sitting room, and this was occupied by the parents, while the daughter, a girl of 17, slept up stairs. Robinson saw to it personally that all the doors were locked. There was no lock on the cellar door, but he saw that it was shut. The two bedroom doors were left open, as also the door between the sitting room and kitchen, nothing whatever occurred to alarm any one until about 10 o'clock. The boy was fast asleep, Mrs. Robinson snoring, and Robinson was dozing off, when the daughter came running down stairs and cried out that she had heard the sounds of a woman moaning and sobbing. The father ridiculed it, but upon her when speaking the sitting room door shut with a bang. He sprang out of bed to open it, followed by his wife, and as the three entered the kitchen the bumpety-bump began on the stairs and finished off with a blow and a stifled cry at the bottom. This cry awoke the boy from his deep sleep.

Robinson was an old soldier and a brave man, and he did not hesitate a moment to begin an investigation. He lighted a lamp and went down cellar, and then he made a trip up stairs, but he could not discover the slightest cause for the mysterious sounds, let alone the curious manner in which the doors had operated. The men of the family retired to bed, but he loaded his revolver and sat up all night, fully determined on solving the mystery. Nothing further occurred, however. When morning came he tried hard to convince himself that everything had proceeded from natural causes—a cat in the garret, rats in the cellar, a draught of air, or something of the sort. His family tried hard to agree with him, but they were so timid that none of them would go up stairs or down cellar alone.

After supper of the second night Robinson made a careful inspection of the cellar. It was an ordinary farm-house cellar, lighted by two windows, and contained nothing but an empty box and a few stone jars. He then went to the garret, and he found it entirely empty. He sounded the various walls, but there were no hiding places he could discover. No one went to bed. The cellar door was shut, the sitting-room door left open, and two lamps were left burning. At 9 o'clock Robinson went up stairs alone, determined to investigate the mysterious sounds, which seemed to start there. He sat for half an hour alone in the dark, when the sobbing and moaning suddenly began. There could be no mistake. The tones were those of a woman, who seemed to be pleading and grieving. They had not continued about two minutes, and before you had not yet located them as coming from any particular spot, when he heard a door down stairs slam to, and the wife and children screamed out in terror. He hastened down. The sitting-room door was shut. He opened it. The cellar door was wide open. The sounds on the stairs began and ended as usual, and Mrs. Robinson was so worked up that she fainted away.

The next day Robinson took his family to a country hotel a few miles away, hired a sturdy young fellow to go back with him, and passed two nights in the house. On the first night the noise came at half past 8 o'clock; on the second not until after 10. Robinson acknowledged that after the noises ceased on the second night, both left the house and slept in the barn. He packed up his goods and lived in Davenport for several months, or until he had a chance to dispose of the farm. It was his policy to keep the matter quiet, but among the few who heard of the strange proceedings were two men who one day accompanied him to the farm, and gave the cellar a careful looking over. In one corner was found a spot where the earth had at some time been dug up, as if to bury some large object, but they dug down several feet without making any discovery. It was intended to remain in the house all night, but as darkness fell Robinson's companions weakened, and all left the place. The farm was sold to a Swede, but, before he was ready to move in, the house burned down one night, and nothing further was ever learned of the great mystery.

What Became of the Ben Bolt on that Dead Calm Night at Sea?

There are mysteries of the sea which fascinate, and there are mysteries which appal. One cannot read the record of ships which have sailed forth from the great ports of the world to be heard of never again without feeling a mighty awe creep upon him.

"I had been ill of fever at Valparaiso for several weeks," said a seaman named William Bondwell, "and about the time I was fit for duty a Boston bark which had been above the equator and was now homeward bound called in for some slight repairs, and was a man short. She was a snug craft, well officered and found, and after a few days we were booming down the Pacific on our way to Cape Horn. We were running the Cape pretty well down to a point, when we one day fell in with an English whaler—a brig from Portsmouth, I believe. She was three-quarters full of oil, and was working down to the south to catch a few more whales before heaving the brickwork overboard and squaring away for the English Channel. The way I came to know these things and a good many others was because we overhauled her one morning about 10 o'clock, and just at that time the wind died away and the two crafts were becalmed until about sundown.

"Some of our men were permitted to visit the Ben Bolt, and some of her men came over to chat with us. They were a hardy, jolly set of fellows, and were making a successful voyage of it. I don't know as the Captains had any understanding about it, but as we were both bound the same way, we kept company as the breeze came out of the northeast. The bark was a better sailor than the brig, and we were also homeward bound; but, much to our surprise, our Captain did not crack on and leave the Englishman astern. On the contrary, he kept us under reduced sail to allow the brig to lie on our starboard quarter almost within hailing distance. And when night shut down what did the old man do but give orders that a lantern be hung over the stern, and the brig dropped into our wake as if we had her towrope aboard. We of the fo'castle couldn't make out what these things meant, but finally agreed that there was some understanding between the Captains. There was a stiffish breeze through the night, and when morning came the Ben Bolt was not over a mile astern. She showed her colors and the compliment was returned. I am satisfied that we could have run her hull down in two hours, but we made no more sail than we had carried through the night.

"The breeze began to die out toward noon, but it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon before it let us entirely go. Then the brig was a full mile away, and dead astern. The weather was intolerably hot, and perhaps that was the reason why neither Captain lowered a boat for another 'yarn.' It was evident from the looks of the sky and the run of the sea that we need expect no change of weather before sunrise next morning. Just at dusk lights in lantern appeared on the bow of the brig, and one was suspended over our stern in answer. I was at the wheel, though we had lost steerage way, and the Captain stood near me and surveyed the brig for a long time thro' his glass. As he shut the glass and turned away he shook his head and muttered under his breath, but I could not catch any of the words. It was as quiet a night as a sailor ever saw at sea. There was a long, glassy run to the ground swell, and, as we rose and fell to it, there was the creaking and cheeping and groaning from hull and aloft, which always gives a sailor a fit of the blues. One of the last things I saw before my watch turned in was the lantern on the bow of the brig rising and falling as regularly as clock work. As I turned out at daylight neither lantern nor the slightest sign of the brig could be seen. The first mate had just gone to arouse the Captain, and in a few minutes everybody aboard had heard the news. From our deck we could have seen the hull of her for miles, and from a spare aloft, with a good glass, her upper sails could be seen for twenty miles or more. We looked for her from the deck, and we looked from aloft, but neither eye nor glass could find the faintest trace.

"The excitement of the men was shared by the officers. The Captain hurried to the cabin to look at his last observation and consult the chart. There were no currents to drift the brig away from us. If she had drifted we must have gone, too. From dusk to daylight there had not been wind enough to flare a candle. Her lanterns had been noticed by the watch at 2 o'clock. Then what had become of her? I tell you, sir, every man felt as if a hand was clutching his throat as his eyes surveyed that glassy sea and failed to find a trace of the brig. We heard the officers talking among themselves, and it was the Captain who said:

"'There's no other way to account for it—she's gone to the bottom!'

"As soon as the breeze came up we worked the bark down to the locality where the brig had last been seen, and we ran back and forth and circled around for hours, every man, from Captain to cook, keeping his eyes open for wreckage. We could find nothing, she had sailed away from us, and if she had gone down there would be wreckage floating about—a boat, a spar, ropes, belaying pins, buckets—something from the litter of a ship's decks. We found nothing, absolutely nothing. Our Captain didn't give up in an hour, nor half a day, nor until it was dead certain that we were losing time back and forth across a space at least ten miles wide, and we had failed to discover even a floating chip. Toward night it came on to blow pretty stiff, and we squared away for the Cape, leaving behind us, and unsolved, one of the greatest mysteries of the sea.

"It came out later that we had finished our voyage that the Captain of the brig had been ailing for some time when we overhauled him, and he was what you might call a bit babyish. Our old man had given him some medicines from his chest, and some delicacies from his pantry, and had stood by him as related to cheer him up a bit. We spoke two whalers before we rounded the Cape, and gave to both the particulars about the mysterious disappearance. We also reported the case to a homeward-bound English ship. The affair happened over twenty years ago. Since that time I have sailed from several English ports, and met English sailors who knew the Ben Bolt and her Captain. After about a year she was given up as lost, and from that day to this not the slightest trace of ship or crew has ever been turned up. No longer than two years ago I saw the case mentioned in a London paper, and reference was made to Lloyd's and Cutting. What do I think? Well, that case has been talked over by sailor men in more than one fo'castle, and it has always been a stunner. She couldn't have burned, because we saw no fire. She couldn't have floated away, because there was no current. Suppose that the weight of her cargo forced a large section of her bottom out, shouldn't we have discovered some of the wreckage floating about? I long ago gave up trying to satisfactorily solve the case."

Queer Doings in No. 14.

There may be found at some of the lake ports to-day, in case she was not knocked to pieces last winter for firewood, an old barge which was formerly a side-wheel steamer plying the blue waters and known as a favorite passenger steamer. She was at the zenith of her popularity in 1870. In June of that year, on her third or fourth trip, there was developed a mystery which was the beginning of her ruin. The particulars have several times been referred to by the press, but what is about to be related here comes direct from her then Captain, who should above all others be well posted in all the details.

The steamer left one of her terminal ports about 10 o'clock at night. On this particular night to which we refer she had about thirty passengers, most of whom had retired to their berths before she left port. She was only about ten miles out when the occupant of stateroom No. 14, which contained only one berth, entered the cabin half dressed and in very angry temper, and sent chambermaids for the Captain.

"See here, sir!" he said to that official when he responded to the call, "I can take a joke as well as the next man, but this is carrying the thing too far!"

"What do you mean? Who has been joking with you?" asked the officer.

"That's what I want to know. I was scarcely in bed before some one entered the room. My coat and vest were pulled off the hooks to the floor, a chair upset, and the pillow was pulled from under my head."

"I can't be, I replied the Captain.

"But I tell you it was," he persisted. "Do I look or act like a lunatic? Am I drunk? Would I leave my room if there was nothing wrong?"

The Captain entered the stateroom with him and lighted the lamp. The pillow was on the floor and the chair upset. There was no entrance to this room except from the main cabin. There was no communication with other staterooms. It was absolutely impossible that any living person could have entered it after the door was locked. He told the occupant so, and by and by the man admitted that perhaps he had been dreaming. He locked his door and returned to bed, but in the course of half an hour he bounded out into the cabin again. This time he was greatly agitated. He declared that his throat had been clutched by a hand as cold as ice, and as the Captain examined it he found finger marks to prove the man's assertions. It was no use to argue—he would not go back. There were other unoccupied staterooms, and he was changed.

"I believed," said the Captain, "that he was in the first place overtired. He had not made a steamboat trip for several years, and the motion of the boat was new to him. Added to this, I suspected him of being a morphine eater, who was out of his stimulant, or seeking to break off the habit. Indeed, I could find a dozen excuses for his conduct. I had no more idea that anything was wrong with No. 14 than I have that I shall see the old boat sailing her route again."

The passenger left the boat next day without referring to the troubles of the night. At 8 o'clock of the second night the steamer started on her return trip. No. 14 was occupied by a lady. The Captain did not know this, as he had not given the room the slightest thought since changing the man the night before. At about half-past 10 o'clock, while yet a few passengers remained up, he was sent for by the lady. He found her on a sofa in the cabin, agitated and indignant.

"Sir," she began, "some scoundrel boat entered my room just as I was falling asleep!"

He asked if her door was locked, and she was certain that such was the case. A woman who sat on a sofa opposite the door, intending to leave the boat at 11 o'clock, asserted that no person had been near the door of No. 14 for half an hour previous. The Captain then entered the room and showed the lady that there was no other entrance. It was not possible that any one could have got in there. In reply she said that a hand had passed over her face, a chair had been upset, and that she had certainly felt the presence of some one. She could not be convinced to the contrary, and another room was given to her.

"While this seemed strange," said the Captain, "I had no superstitions. It was just possible that these two persons were alike in temperament. It might be that the jar of the machinery somehow affected No. 14, although I had commanded the boat for three seasons previous, and had heard no complaints. I could not just then investigate this idea, my presence being required on deck, and the voyage continued without the matter troubling me beyond a few minutes."

The room was again given out without the Captain having knowledge of the occupant. This was on the third trip, and the occupant was one of the partners in a wholesale house in the East, who was travelling for pleasure. He was a strong, robust man, in good health, and he retired to bed about 10 o'clock. Just an hour later he left his stateroom in a very quiet manner, fully dressed, and hunted up the Captain and said:

"You may think I am pretty soft-headed, but I tell you I cannot sleep in the stateroom assigned me. There is something going on there which I can't understand."

"What has happened?" asked the Captain.

"Soon after I got into bed I felt some one moving about in the room. Then a hand clutched my wrist and tried to pull me out of bed. The clothing which I had hung up was flung down, and a chair was tipped over. There was light enough from the cabin for me to see that I was alone, but things happened just as I have told you."

"You couldn't have been dreaming?" queried the Captain.

"Dreaming! Why, man, no one could be more wide awake. Even while I was dressing I had to fight a something away."

"And what do you think it is?"

"That I am either suddenly breaking down and about to become an idiot or a lunatic, or that No. 14 is haunted. Have you had any previous complaints?"

"I think I will turn in there myself for the rest of the night," answered the Captain, and he saw that the gentleman got another room.

It was a quiet night out and no sea on, did the Captain, and the engines were working very smoothly. The jar of the boat was therefore reduced to a minimum. I locked the door, and was only three or four minutes getting into bed. You may guess that I was very wide awake. I did not intend to go to sleep, but to solve the mystery. I hung my clothes on and threw my trousers across the chair. I had been in bed perhaps five minutes, both my arms outside the coverings, when my left wrist was suddenly grasped by a strong hand. My left arm was the outside one. The grip was not only strong, but as cold as ice. In a second I received a fright such as I never had. We encountered nothing, while the grip shut down on my wrist until it was positively painful, and my arm was dragged off the bed. I was out of bed in three seconds. The room was light enough for me to have seen a mouse cross the floor. After looking around I got back into bed, but I did not sleep. The chair fell over and my coat and vest dropped from the hook. Was I frightened? No. I was vexed and annoyed. It looked to me more like a practical joke than ghosts and goblins, but who could the joker be?

"I had not been in bed ten minutes when the same cold hand clutched my throat. You smile, but you must remember that I was undressed, I was the Captain of the boat, and it was my duty to investigate the affair. Let the report get out that there was something wrong with No. 14, and the business of the boat would be ruined in a few weeks. You must reason that I would not permit my imagination to get the slightest hold of me on this occasion, but, sir, a hand not only clutched my throat, but left marks there which were visible two days afterward. I got up and searched over every square foot of floor, ceiling, and sides, and I pulled all the clothes off the bed, and examined every crack and crevice, but I was no wiser for it. I finally dressed myself and went out, and I remained in the stateroom until 11 o'clock. When he came out his face was whiter than snow. What he saw or heard or felt he did not tell me, but his orders were to remove everything from the room and lock it up. How the matter leaked out I do not know, but in a short time our decks and waters were ransacked behind every bale and package, and the queer proceedings in No. 14, a great deal exaggerated, were published in two or three papers. When we denied the story we were asked why the stateroom was kept closed. Before the 1st of August, strange as it may seem to you, our passenger trade was ruined. It was hard work to get a crew to make the trip. I had individuals come to me and offer as high as $100 for the privilege of occupying No. 14 over night, but of course it was my policy to ridicule the whole story, and make out that there was nothing in it. If people did not deserve us on account of the stateroom, the reputation of the boat was under a cloud. There were plenty to affirm that it was a sign of impending disaster, and that the mysterious proceedings should be taken as a warning. We cut down rates, inserted big advertisements, and laughed at the stories; but after the 1st of August we did not average three passengers to a trip, and we were continually short-handed for men. The matter was no doubt kept alive and enlarged upon by a rival line, but along in October what had so often been predicted by weak-brained people actually came to pass. We came into collision with a schooner one night and went down in forty-five feet of water, losing five lives. After a year or two the steamer was raised, her engines removed, and she was made a lumber barge and renamed. She had no further misfortune as I ever heard of, but she had a bad reputation, and never made a dollar for her owner. She was, the last I heard of her, rotting away in ordinary, while other barges had all the charters they could take care of.

"What do I think of the queer proceedings in No. 14? I have never been able to fathom them to my own satisfaction. Call them what you will, and place the causes as you may, they ruined the boat and brought my employers great loss."

They Were All Ready for the Pirate.

"I've knocked about a bit in my time," said Charles Miller, a white-headed old Jack Tar, who leaned heavily on a crutch, "and I've seen some things on land and sea which were too deep for my grappling-irons. I went out to Australia in the sixties as a foremast hand on a British ship. I shipped for the voyage, but bad food and worse treatment so disgusted me that when we arrived at Melbourne I took French leave, and for that matter the bulk of the crew was ahead of me. After making two or three coast voyages I brought up at Sydney and engaged for a trading voyage to the Northwest, after sandal wood, spices, and the likes of that. I shipped on a small schooner called the Sparrow, the master of which was an Englishman named Davidson. There were seven of us all told, and we were loaded with a trading cargo. We had axes, hoes, hatchets, shovels, nails, wire, cloths, trinkets, whiskey, shoes, muskets, powder and shot, clothing, and almost everything else you can think of. We had twelve cannon mounted on deck, with a supply of small arms, and the captain made no secret of the fact that we might have use for them. You see, we were to round Cape York, which I calculate is the north point of Australia, and there bear up for Borneo. While the waters in that direction are a part of the Indian Ocean, you know of the Java Sea, the Banda Sea, the Arafura Sea, and several other seas, and there are enough straits, islands, and channels to turn the head of the average captain. The Venture, as I understood it, belonged to parties in Sydney, though I think the Captain had a small financial interest.

"We had fair weather and good and bad luck to be looked for on the voyage, and finally rounded the cape. When we had been three days headed to the northwest we spoke a Frenchman, who gave us a tip. He had come down from the Spices, and on two or three occasions had been dogged by piratical native crafts, which had been intended to attack him on account of his size. He had four cannon and a big crew, and on one occasion had been compelled to broadside a chap who evidently intended to lay him aboard. He warned our Captain to keep his eyes open day and night, and called out his good-by in a way to plainly show that he expected he had heard the last of us. While his news had no effect on our voyage, we went at it and put things in shape to make a fight if attacked.

"As we bore up we passed between the Timor Laut and the Aroo Islands and made the Banda Sea, and then navigation became more difficult. That sea is dotted with islands and reefs, and we had plenty to do to keep clear of them. We sighted a few sails, but no alarm until well into Banda waters. Then, one afternoon, we made out a strange-looking craft to the north of us which had evidently come out from some port or bay along the chain of islands between us and the New Guinea coast. Though she had the wind with her she was in no hurry to close in. The Captain suspected her from the first, and there wasn't a man of us who did not give his promise to go down with the schooner rather than let her fall into the hands of the pirate. She came down on a diagonal course to cut us off, and at sundown, when the Captain went aloft with his glass for a look at her, she was so near that he could make out enough to bring him down with face as white as a new flying-jib.

"'It's no use to deceive ourselves,' he said as we gathered around him. 'The fellow means mischief. While he has no cannon, he has men enough to eat us up in case he can put them aboard.'

"As for getting away from him, we had seen that he could easily outsail us, and, too, the wind was rapidly dying out. In half an hour more we were lying becalmed, and as night came down the fellow was within a mile and a half of us. Every one of us knew enough about those native craft to know that the chap could be worked down to us by means of oars or sweeps, and there was no doubt that he would come. We got the big guns over on the starboard side, placed the muskets and cutlasses handy, and the cook was ordered to keep a hot fire in the galley and give us the best that he could cook. We knew that most of the pirates would be barefooted, and we hunted up all the old bottles aboard, and took all the glassware from the pantry, and broke the articles on deck. The broken glass would inflict savage wounds on their bare feet. You see we did not mean to be taken without a fight to the last, and it was understood among us that, sooner than have hands laid on us, we'd go overboard to the sharks. Capture would mean death, anyhow.

"Well, when we'd done all we could in the way of preparation, and when each man thoroughly understood what was expected of him as the attack began, we had nothing to do but wait. He could sweep down to us in the course of an hour, but, much to our surprise, he did not appear when the hour was up. The Captain's night glass had been broken by accident, and we had no means of knowing what the fellow was about. The night was not over dark, and we counted on having him in sight for four or five minutes before he could lay us aboard. A second hour dragged away, and still no sign. Then a third went, and the men began to be nervous. The mate suggested to the Captain that we provision the yawl and abandon the vessel; and if the idea had been backed by the crew I think it would have been carried out. You see, the waiting had upset the mate, though he was a brave man. I think the Captain was a bit rattled, but he had made up his mind to save his schooner or go down with her.

"A third hour passed, then a fourth, and then we began to believe that we had been fooled. The strangers had evidently a native trader, and meant us no harm, and the crowd of people on his decks might be islanders who were being transferred from one island to another. The Captain acknowledged that he had been too quick in his conclusions, and as midnight came the off watch turned in with many a joke on the way we had been fooled. I was on watch when daylight came. Naturally enough, we had an eye out for the trader, and as the gray mists lifted we got a surprise. In the quarter where we had seen him the previous night, but not more than a mile away, there was a great heap of wreck stuff on the smooth surface of the sea, but no trader. The Captain was soon on deck with his glass, and when he had taken a look at the wreckage he announced it to be the remains of the trader. A boat was lowered, and two of us pulled the mate to the spot. There were spars, planks, timbers, cordage, furniture, and other articles mixed up in a helter-skelter way. It might be compared to a house which had been blown down by a tornado. Among the wreckage we found dead bodies, though the sharks took them before we had made a close inspection. The hull of the craft was not there, but there were many bottom planks, a portion of the rudder, and all her sails and cordage.

"You will ask What had happened? but I cannot answer you with any satisfaction. The trader or pirate had been wrecked, but not on the rocks nor by wind or explosion. We had heard no noise from her during the night. Planks and beams were broken and shattered in a strange way, and none of us had the same theory about it. What do I think? Well, sir, I believe that the fellow was a pirate, and that he was working down to us when a white rose under him. His craft was a light one, and the blow was enough to completely wreck it. If you have any better theory I shall be glad to accept it."

Only an Idiot on Board.

"I had been up the Rio de la Plata in a British brig," said Charles Williamson, "and as we came back to Montevideo to finish our loading we had to make considerable repairs above the water line. There were ten or twelve of us all told when we hauled out and were about ready to trip anchor for home, and of all the hard cases I ever saw put aboard a ship this crew capped the climax. The Captain and myself were the only two left of the crew which had come out from Liverpool. Some of the men had died, some skipped out, and we had picked up negroes, Lascars, Americans, Englishmen, and Swedes, just as we happened to find them, until we had a sprinkling of everything under the sun. We had hauled out into the harbor to sober up the crew and finish the repairs, when the Captain was taken suddenly ill. He was drinking after dinner, and he was rowed off to the town to consult a doctor. The proper thing, as it seemed to me, would have been to send and bring a medical man aboard, but things took place as I told you.

"The old man was no sooner clear of the brig than the half-sobered men broke loose from all restraint. The mate was secured and secured in his state room, and the mutineers, for such they had now become, carried things with a high hand. They rummaged the cabin and the stores, drank themselves into a frenzy, and, as night came on, they hoisted out the long boat, filled her with plunder, and all deserted the brig together. I had not joined with them, and, but for my having fallen into a deep sleep, they would have either done for me, or forced me to go along in the boat. As soon as they were well away we took the dingy, which had returned after leaving the Captain on shore, and rowed in to inform the old man of what had happened. As the cook went with the mutineers, not a soul was left aboard of the Clarence. It seemed that the Captain was taken much worse after getting ashore, and when we found him, which was only after a couple of hours, he had a high fever and was out of his head. The doctor said he was in for it for half a month at least, and so Mr. Carpenter—that was the name of the mate—and myself started back to the brig. We had not yet reached our boat, when a sudden and violent storm arose, and it continued during the entire night with such fury that it was idle to think of leaving the wharf. During that storm a ship in the harbor was dismasted, a schooner dragged her anchor and crashed into a brig, and thousands of dollars' damage was done to shipping. We were out at daylight to look for the Clarence, but she was nowhere to be seen. The crew of the dismasted ship reported having seen the brig drive out to sea with the gale, and there could be no doubt of her loss.

"In a day or two we heard from the mutineers, or at least the long boat was picked up at sea, bottom side up, with every chance that not a man had escaped. Inside of a week the Captain was dead, and the mate shipped one way and I the other. I made a voyage to Rio Janeiro and back, and then shipped for a run around the Horn and up the Chili coast. Sixty-five days after the Clarence drove out to sea I was on the American ship Henry Jordon, with the Falkland Islands bearing due west and thirty or forty miles away. It was mid-afternoon, with a fair sailing breeze, when I heard a man from aloft hail the deck with:

"'Dismasted hulk dead ahead and about five miles away, sir.'

"There was a general stir among officers and men, and every one of us had the wreck under his eye long enough before we came up to it. She was driving broadside on, masts and jibboom gone, and a tangled wreck stuff alongside, but the hull appeared perfectly sound. When we had approached her within a quarter of a mile the ship lay to, and a boat was lowered. It was my luck to be sent along, and to be allowed on board with the mate. I had no sooner passed over the rail than I recognized the hulk as that of the lost brig Clarence. The bulwarks were stoven in places, but not $50 damage had been done to the hull. She was dismasted, as I have said, but she hadn't a quart of water in her hold, and her cargo had not been disturbed or damaged. That was strange enough, considering how far she had drifted and the storms she had encountered, but there was something stranger still. In the cabin we found a man in hiding—a white man and a sailor, about 40 years of age. We had to drag him out by main force, but we could not get a word out of him. He shrank from us as if terribly frightened, and we had to drop him into the boat neck and heels.

"Now, you know of being pleasant, with a prospect of its holding so, our Captain decided to pick up the derelict and take her to the islands. Her steering gear was in good order, and inside of thirty hours we had her securely anchored in a sheltered bay in the Falklands, and two of us were left aboard as her shipkeepers. The stranger we had found aboard was taken along with the ship, but on the third day, not having yet spoken nor made a sign in answer to a question, he flung himself overboard and was drowned. I am just as certain he was not aboard of the brig when the mate and I left her as I am that I live. We had no such man among the crew, nor could he have come off to the brig after we left without being seen. It is a solemn fact that he must have boarded her in midocean. How? From what? How long before we found him? Was it the loneliness of his solitary existence that drove him mad or idiotic? The land may have its mysteries, but those of the sea overshadow them."

The Influence of the Press.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The other night Prof. Gleason was handling a vicious horse, but coaxing, pulling, and whipping did no good. The Professor called for some paper, and his attendant handed him a page of THE SUN, which he stuffed into the horse's ears. The latter immediately started forward, making the circuit amid the applause of the audience. "The influence of the press" is scarcely limited. E. B. MARRIN.

A HOT COLD DECK.

A Poker Story of Early Days on the Pacific Coast.

VIRGINIA CITY, May 20.—Observing of late in Eastern papers many sporting anecdotes, I have been reminded of a lively game which actually occurred just as related in the flush times of placer mining in California, and which I think will interest some of the sports of the Atlantic States, where now are not a few of our old timers, many of whom will remember the names of the persons I shall mention.

In the early days of California—in the good old times before the ranchmen and Judge Sawyer came with their injunctions to put a stop to hydraulic mining, and a stopper on the men of the mountains who first lifted California out of the hide and tallow trade and placed her in the sisterhood of States—in those days when the honest miner was digging his bushels of money out of the gulches and hills, and making life possible and profitable to those on the ranches in the valleys, gold coin and gold dust were not held with the throttling grasp characteristic of this horticultural and bucolic era. Then the eager and alert eye of the calculating rancher sought out the miner as he descended from the heights of the Sierras, and his hand was extended in welcome while the man of nuggets and "chispas" was still afar off.

In those "days of old, and days of gold," Reddy & Andrews (Tom Andrews, a man well known to all the old-time Pacific coast sports) owned immensely rich diggings at Forest City, Sierra county. They frequently cleaned up from $20,000 to $30,000 at one time. When a clean up was made one of the partners would take the dust to San Francisco to the Mint.

In making these trips they generally took turns. It was before the days of the railroads—was in the old, romantic, sociable, happy times of the steamer lines on the rivers of the Golden State. It was the regular habit of the partners, on getting off the rolling, thumping stagecoach, to stay over night at Sacramento, taking the boat the next afternoon at 2 o'clock for San Francisco.

When it was the turn of Andrews to go down to the Bay with the dust, he frequently did battle with the tiger while lying over at Sacramento, but Reddy's strong suit was poker. Three aces was his big hand. When he held three aces he would bet his "bottom dollar and go his liver and lights blind." This was so well known that it had passed into a proverb among the Sacramento sports.

On one occasion, when Reddy had been playing all night with some Sacramento men and quit $8,000 ahead of the game, it was concluded to follow him up in the morning, and so during the night—Charley Dawson among the number—told Reddy that they had concluded, just for the fun of the thing, to take a little run with him down to the Bay.

The boat had not proceeded far down the river before, as the most natural thing in the world, a poker game was started. Of the game were Reddy, Foster, a hotel keeper from one of the southern counties, Charley Dawson, and two other sports.

A job had been put up to raise a cold deck, and give Reddy his favorite hand of three aces. The game proceeded, and at the proper time Dawson dealed himself the aces.

The cards were dealt and Reddy got his three aces, Dawson three kings, and the others indifferent hands. In the draw, Dawson got the other king. Reddy drew two cards, but having his three aces he felt strong enough to fight an army, and did not pick up or look at the two cards he had drawn.

Betting began and Foster and the two sports with Dawson did not come in.

Having four kings, and being confident that Reddy had only his three aces, Dawson went in strong; and, having his three aces, Reddy felt that nothing could ship him. He was so sure that he was right that he paid no attention to the cards lying by his side, which he had gotten in the draw.

The betting very shortly became red hot. Most of the loungers about the boat were soon gathered around the two men, watching the game with breathless interest.

Among the spectators—Domingo Joe, a nervous and restless little sport, who was Dawson's friend and chum. Joe—a Portuguese or Spaniard—was skipping back and forth in the restless way that seems characteristic of undersized men—manikins—peeping over the shoulders of the two men at their cards as often as the opportunity offered, his eyes sparkling and dancing with excitement. He felt pretty confident that the cards had been properly stocked, yet he would have given whole handfuls of gold for a single peep at those which Reddy had not yet picked up.

Several thousand dollars had already been bet, finally, Reddy, in a stunner, threw out $2,000 better. Reddy promptly saw the raise, and said: "I go you another $2,000 better!"

Quite absent-mindedly he then picked up the two cards that had all the time been lying unnoticed by his side.

The weasel eye of Domingo Joe detected the other ace as the cards were lifted. Instantly an ashy pallor spread over his wenzen visage. It was almost as though he had been stricken with death.

However, the stroke paralyzed him for only a moment. Almost instantly he recovered his self-possession, and, thrusting both hands into his trousers pockets, he assumed an indifferent air, he sheered off from the party. Carelessly sauntering up and down the boat, he began singing:

And the other fell in too, boys,
And the other fell in there, too.

This was enough for Dawson. The words of Domingo Joe's pretended song came to his ears as a death knell. He turned pale, then red, threw down his cards, and said: "Take it all—I squeal!"

As Reddy raked down the whole pile he threw a glance around the circle of pale and silent spectators, and, as murmurs through the words of Domingo Joe had just reached his ears:

And the other fell in too, boys,
And the other fell in there, too!

DAN DE QUILLE.

DOWN A FLUME.

Riding Down the Sierra Nevada Mountains at the Rate of Two Miles a Minute.

A Chicago newspaper man tells in the *Herald* of that city an experience he once had riding in a Nevada lumber flume. "Lumber flumes in the Sierra Nevadas," he said, "are all the way from five to forty miles long. They are built on a regular engineer's grade. The bed of the flume is made of two-inch plank in the form of a V, the sides of the V being from eighteen to twenty-six inches high. They are built on a grade of about sixteen feet drop to the thousand. They carry eight inches of water in the acute angle, and discharge it at the rate of 400 miner's inches a minute. In other words, turn in your water at the head of the flume, and it will carry a log weighing 400 pounds with a velocity greater than the fastest freight train was ever run. The log is placed in an distinguishable mass. It was as if one was blown through the air from a catapult.

"Well, from the time we weighed anchor up at Lake Tahoe until Patton put on his brakes just outside the lumber field at Carson City it seemed like a minute or two. We all looked at our watches. We had made just sixteen miles in eight minutes and forty seconds. I never in all my life had such an illustration of the force of water."

JIM FOSTER AND OLD BENNETT.

A Horse-Stealing Tale of Deadwood—Foster Didn't Stretch Hemp.

DEADWOOD, May 17.—At the Drum last night some of the pioneers of the Black Hills were talking about the old timers, when one of them said: "But nobody ever found out what became of Jim Foster."

"No, nobody ever heard from him," said half a dozen at once, and then the crowd became reflective, as if wondering what had happened to Jim. After a few minutes' silence, one man said that Jim Foster was a good fellow, but that he ought to have been hanged all the same, and others observed that he would have been hanged if he had been caught at a certain period in his career.

At this juncture a stranger, who had heard all that had been said, asked what there was about Foster.

"Oh, nothing much," was the reply of the first speaker. "Jim was one of the boys that was first in here, that's all, and he went away rather sudden. He never was cut out for a pioneer, he wan't. He was born for a tender-foot. He'd no more'n got into the hills before he began to figure on the best way of getting out. A more homesick chap you never saw. He didn't seem to get along very well, either. He was out of money, though nobody knew it at first, and he found that he had made a great mistake in coming here. One fine morning Jim turned up missing, and with him went a horse that belonged to a man who believed in having somebody hung for every horse that was stolen from him. That was the worst break of Jim's life. He had to skip, and he had to steal a horse, but he didn't have to steal one of old Bennett's horses. Well, they went after him hot, but he got away and wasn't heard from. We've often talked about him, because there wasn't so many of us then that we'd be likely to forget anybody, and