GOOD STORIES OF THE PRESENT DAY.

The Sea has its Mysteries, and Some of them are Never Solved.

The sea is of itself a mystery, but the mysteries of the sea are many and deep, and are added to each month. A ship's boat, from which the name has carefully been obliterated, and which holds the emaciated bodies of two men who have starved to death, is picked up in the Pacific to-day; to-morrow a Cunarder crossing the Atlantic reports seeing a sailing ship bottom up; next day a derelict schooner sails herself into some port in the Caribbean Sea, and nothing can be learned of the crew who manned her. And it may be that on the next some great steamer leaves port on her voyage to Europe and never to be heard of more. As an old sailor, I have had the luck to encounter some of these strange things, and I will relate the incidents without exaggeration.

In the year 1861 I was mate of a brig called the Henry and William, sailing between San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands. She was a small, snug vessel, a fast sailer, and the Captain was William Lansing. He and his brother Henry were the owners, and the brig was named after them. Just at daylight one June morning, in the year I have mentioned, while we were 300 miles from the Islands, a schooner was sighted dead ahead. We had a fair breeze over the starboard quarter, and the schooner was all sail set, and was making good progress. Sails were not an unusual sight on that route, and we gave the stranger little attention until we found that we were overhauling her. She was exactly on the true course to the islands, and we were therefore in her wake. She was hull down when we first discovered her, but by the time we had washed down and breakfast had been served she was not over two miles ahead. There were some smart schooners flying in that trade, and the fact of our outsailing this one so handsomely put us all in good spirits. We were humming along after her at nine or ten knots an hour, when she suddenly came up into the wind in the most lubberly fashion, shivered there for a moment, and then broached to and was driven off before the wind sideways. It was lucky for her that the breeze was no stronger, for the schooner was light and the movement would have brought disaster.

As soon as I saw the schooner in trouble I seized the glass and ran half way up the foreshrouds, and it wasn't a minute before I made the discovery that her decks were entirely clear of men. As this hour of the morning both watches should have been on deck, but no a sailor was visible. This was an unheard-of occurrence, but, as she had no signal of distress flying, and stood too high in the water to have been abandoned for a leaking vessel, I could hardly credit my vision. I looked again and again, examining every foot of her decks, but it was a plain fact that not a living person was in sight. I reported the matter to the Captain, and by that time we were so close aboard that all our crew could note the condition of things with the naked eye. Our ship's bell was rung, and the men shouted in chorus, but nothing came of it. It was then determined to board her, and, as the brig was laid to, I went off with three men in the yawl and was soon at the stranger's side. I was burning with curiosity as I jumped aboard, but the nearer we approached the stranger the more curiosity gave way to awe and fear. There had been some terrible work aboard of her, or she would not be in that condition. Had a malignant fever taken off the last of the crew, or was it mutiny and a ghastly ending? I waited a long minute after hooking on to her forechains to listen for some sound aboard, but the stillness of death reigned from bowsprit to companionway. I nodded to one of the men to come along, and next moment was over her bows.

I had expected to meet with some shocking sight, but was disappointed. The decks were free and passably clear of raffle. Some of the coils had fallen off their belaying pins, and I could see at a glance that the decks had not been washed for several days, but aside from this I could detect nothing out of the way. The scuttle was drawn over the forecastle entrance and bolted. My first action was to open this, and the rush of air told me that the forecastle had not been ventilated for several days. Seizing a capstan bar which leaned against the anchor windlass, I pounded smartly on the door and called out to know if anybody was below, but no answer came. The man with me, who was an old salt, grew so nervous that he would have returned to the boat but for my positive commands to the contrary. As soon as satisfied that the forecastle was clear of men I felt that the schooner was deserted, and we at once lowered away the sails. This checked her drift, and the brig turned on her heel, and came down close to us again.

The next point for inspection was the cabin. I went down alone, and in two or three minutes was satisfied that it had no occupants, living or dead. There was no sign of haste or plunder. I was sniffing the air as I moved about, and I could detect no odor to prove that an epidemic had raged. When I went on deck the brig was within speaking distance, drifting at the same pace as the schooner, and I informed Capt. Lansing of the state of affairs and suggested that he come in over. When he came we descended into the forecastle and lighted the lamp. There was plenty of oil in it, proving that some hand had turned out the light in the usual way. We then went to the cabin. Everything appeared as if the officers had simply gone on deck, except that there was not a single article of wearing apparel. This was likewise true of the forecastle. We looked for the schooner's log, but it was gone, as also were her papers and charts. We rummaged the cabin for half an hour, but found nothing whatever to enlighten us. We were humming along after her at nine or ten knots an hour, when she suddenly came up into the wind in the most lubberly fashion, shivered there for a moment, and then broached to and was driven off before the wind sideways. It was lucky for her that the breeze was no stronger, for the schooner was light and the movement would have brought disaster.

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