"IF YOU SEE IT IN The Sun IT'S SO."

The Sun.

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 8, 1892.

'AR-R BLOWS!!

OR,

Four Years on a New Bedford Whaler, Being the Straightforward Tale of a Plain Sailorman.

By

CAPT. J. H. R. ROBINSON.

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CHAPTER IV.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

On Jan. 10 we were sent to masthead earlier than usual, as the mate stoutly insisted that he could "smell" whales. It is true that there is a very perceptible odor from a whale, and with the wind favorable his presence is often noticed at night when it is too dark for him to be seen. On the present occasion there was a reward offered for the man who should first announce the presence of a whale, provided we afterwards succeeded in securing him. So we ran up the rigging willingly, although as yet we could hardly see a mile in any direction. Hardly had I reached the topsail yard, when the man at the mizzen shouted:

"There she whits waters!" And in another instant the boat steerer at the main had caught sight of something off the lee beam, and, hailing the deck, he shouted excitedly:

"Large school of sperm whales on lee beam, sir, big ones, only about two miles away!"

By this time every man was on deck, and the boats were rapidly lowered.

Whenever we had lowered for practice the mate had invariably succeeded in capsizing or staving his boat, and on the present occasion the big Dutchman, Hans, who was one of the mate's boat's crew, whose duty it was to see that the oars and bailers were all in the boat, made his appearance with a huge bucket, which he was placing in the boat, when the mate snarled out:

"You big double-headed Dutchman, what are you putting that in the boat for?"

"Vell, Mr. Laurie, I don' was know how to swim, and I dinks ve bedder dake it along to bail de boad vid van we gets dipped ofer!"

The look of perfect honesty with which he said this satisfied even the mate that no reflection on his skill as a boatman was intended, but the second mate and I had hard work to smother our amusement.

Once clear of the ship up went the sails, as the whales were to the leoward of us, and away we went with a good breeze. We soon ran down among them and Mr. Perry, our fourth officer, who was harpooner in the Captain's boat, stood up with his knee in the "clumsy cleat," and every nerve braced for throwing the keen iron. We shot across the corner of the whale's flukes, and I looked over the side of the boat, where I could see the huge black fan moving from side to side, not more than two feet under us. I knew if he lifted it we should be sent flying into the air like things of no weight whatever. However, we passed safely over and shot alongside the whale's hump. I saw Mr. Perry draw back his arm and like a flash the iron flew through the air and buried itself near the whale's shoulder blade. The second iron was poised for a throw, but the whale settled like lead upon feeling himself wounded, and up went the dreaded flukes, just clearing our boat, and filling it half full of water.

"Stern all! I'm fast!" cried the boat steerer.

"Stern! Stern!!"

"Stern for your lives!" cried the old man, and then with a yell:

"Good God! Look out!"

Before we had time to realize what new danger threatened us, a loose whale shot its enormous head out of the water not ten feet away, apparently coming directly for us. While we sat almost stunned and waiting to be crushed, the line was flying out of our tubs as the whale we had struck "sounded" at a great speed.

Our new neighbor came slowly toward us, and when his head almost touched ours he sank under the surface and went directly under the boat, his "hump" raising us gently a few inches, but doing no damage. I cannot answer for the feelings of the other men, but I am sure I should not have crushed an egg had it been between me and the seat I occupied.

I was aroused by the voice of the old man:

"By thunder, Mr. Perry, that was a purty clus shave! Now get the mast and sail in lively, and we won't haul up alongside our fish yet. There's three or four loose fellers round, and mebbe when he comes up they'll run with him and give the other boats a chance to get fast. There he is now, to wind'ard! And thar goes the second mate and mate, too, after 'em other fish. Somebody gimme a chaw o' tobacker!"

I passed over my plug and saw half of it disappear into his mouth, while the remainder went into his pocket. (To do him justice I will say that some days afterward he gave me a pound of the weed to remunerate me.)

The boat steerer now went aft and took the steering oar. The mast and sail were carried aft and one end of the former placed under the after thwart, while the better part of both projected far over the stern and out of our way. We then "peaked" our oars and faced the bow of the boat. The old man occupied the bow, and we pulled in the line "hand over hand," while the boat steerer allowed it to pass over the stern into the water. For a short distance the whale towed us at a speed certainly not less than fifteen miles an hour, but the iron interfered sadly with his locomotion, and he soon allowed us to come up with him, and then the old man sent the sharp lance again and again into his vitals until the water from his spout holes began to be tinged with red, and a shout went up from the boat's crew, as we saw the infallible sign that the whale was mortally wounded.

We backed off out of the way while the death agony or "flurry" lasted. At last the monster slowly rolled over, "fin up," and we knew he was dead.

In his agony he had wound our line more than a score of times around his body, and while we were clearing it the other whales, pursued by the two boats, came close by us and we saw an exciting chase. The old man was wild with eagerness, and danced and yelled as if he could in that way assist in the speed of the two boats, which were close to the whales, the men pulling like giants, while the officers in the stern, each eager to be the first to "get fast," under the Captain's eye, used every known method to urge their men on. We could hear them like bidders at an auction.

"Pull, boys, pull! You ain't half pulling! Put in another pound of backbone! Jump her, I say! Do you want the mate to beat us? A new shirt for every man in the boat if we get fast before 'em! That's the way to do it! We're gaining on 'em!"

While from the other boat a stream of entreaty and profanity, coupled with offers of everything a sailor values, testified to the enthusiasm of his officers.

As luck would have it, poor Hans "caught a crab" with his oar, and the second mate's boat shot ahead and "Long Joe" Lumbert drove two irons into a large bull whale. Away they went to windward at a terrific speed, while the old man chewed and laughed and the tobacco juice rolled down his neck and stained his hairy bosom without his noticing it.

The mate was cursing everything "an inch high and a minute old" when up came a large whale a short distance away, and off went the boat in pursuit. This time no accident occurred and they soon started off in tow of the whale, cutting through the seas at racehorse speed. We now placed a "waif" or flag in our whale and returned to the ship, put the Captain on board, and taking some coffee in a bucket, and some salt beef also, went back to stay by our whale while the old man worked the ship to windward after the other boats.

All day we lay alongside the dead whale, while the old Triton beat to windward, and finally we lost sight of her entirely. Then night came on and a strong breeze sprang up, but we fastened our boat close to the leeward of our prize, cut a gash in his blubber, and the "slick" formed by the oil prevented the boat from shipping any water. The sharks were now attracted, and the water was fairly alive with them. We killed dozens of huge monsters with our boat spade, one night on the nose being sufficient to render them "hors du combat," but still they increased in number until we were very uneasy. To sit in a frail boat and look over the side directly into the cold, green eye of a ten-foot shark without flinching is a feat few can perform. There is something blood curdling in the expression of a shark's eye that I am at a loss to describe.

The sea birds were also on hand in thousands, and their discordant screams as they fought for tidbits with the sharks and with each other rendered sleep impossible, even had not the danger of our position precluded any such idea on our part.

It was a night long to be remembered—the sharks tearing at the whale's blubber, splashing and fighting, the wind sending occasional showers of spray over us as a larger sea than usual struck the body of the whale and broke high above it. Wet, cold, and hungry, as I was, I missed my tobacco more than anything else, and I mentally registered a vow never to offer the old man my plug again, if indeed I was spared and had the chance. But at last daylight came, and, to our astonishment and delight, revealed the old Triton about a mile to windward, while we could plainly see the other boats hoisted on their cranes, and the huge cutting gear was being hoisted in place. The old bark was soon near enough for us to see that she had a large whale alongside. We towed our "double spouter" to the vessel and found the second mate had been obliged to cut from his whale on account of darkness, but the mate had been more fortunate and had killed his without accident.

CHAPTER V.

DOUBLING THE CAPE.

For several days after the events recorded in the last chapter we were hard at work night and day cutting in our whales, and "trying out" the oil, which at last was under hatches.

A most amusing incident occurred during the process. One dark night, when the fire was streaming from our two smokestacks as the scraps were shoveled into the fireplaces, a large ship ran down within hailing distance, and the Captain shouted through his trumpet:

"Bark ahoy!"

Capt. Keys immediately answered:

"Ahoy there!"

"Want any help?"

"No, thank ye," from our skipper, "we're all right."

"What's all the blaze?"

"We're 'trying.'"

"Trying? Looks as though you were trying to set your ship afire!"

And we heard the disgusted philanthropist shout:

"Keep her on her course again. It's nothing but a bloody Yankee whaler!"

Day after day the weather now grew perceptibly cooler. Slowly the old craft ploughed along till at length we passed the Cape, and on Feb. 14 we were agreeably surprised to meet the bark Atlantic again. She had taken some 300 barrels of oil. We "gammed" all day, and I came away richer by three pounds of tobacco.

On Feb. 17 we ran down between Hog Island and the Twelve Apostles, among the Crozet Islands, where a few years before the English ship Strathmore was wrecked and forty-one persons, including one lady, lived over six months on a barren rock, subsisting on crabs and mussels, when the whaler Young Phœnix, Capt. Gifford, of New Bedford, rescued them.

While our people at home were celebrating Washington's Birthday, we were cutting in a huge whale which made over 100 barrels of oil.

I shall not attempt to give an account of our dreary cruise around Desolation Island, but at last the Captain gave orders to head for Amsterdam, one of the St. Paul group in the Indian Ocean, where we hoped to obtain a supply of fresh fish. After a favorable passage we arrived one morning off a low, rocky island, where the kelp was so thick around the shore that it was almost impossible to force a boat through it.

The bark hove to and two boats were lowered, equipped with lines and salt pork for bait. We pulled within a short distance of the shore, and then threw over our lines.

Great fish, small fish, fish of all colors, came tumbling in, and occasionally some huge fish would be hooked which would decamp with the gear, or else lose about all our lines. This was finally finally, but not until we had loaded the two boats to the water's edge. They were a treat to us fresh, but the bulk of them were salted for future use, and we resumed our long voyage for New Zealand with nothing to chronicle of interest until April 14, when our third mate, who had long since been replaced by Mr. Perry on account of his failing health, passed quietly away, and we buried him at sea. Nothing can equal the solemnity of such an occasion, as the bell tolls every the age of a departed shipmate and the impressive words of the burial service are chokingly read by the Captain. Although Mr. Blaine had been a very reserved man and had no intimate friends on board, I saw many a bronzed face wet with tears of sympathy as the body shot from the planks into the blue waves and was lost to our sight forever.

The morning after the funeral we had a glimpse of Australia and I recalled the books of adventure I had read at school of Ben Digo mines and Keeler, the bushranger. We did not have a chance to see much of the famous island, as a strong gale prevented our landing for water, as was intended. So we ran before the gale, and on April 21, after rounding the north island of New Zealand, we met the ship California, Capt. Brightman. She left home the December previous, and several of our crew found letters and bundles of "goodies" from friends at home. The first mate bought a tom tide banjo from one of the crew, and I was made the happy custodian of the same.

I have mentioned an old sailor we shipped in Fayal named Peter Lee, and also made reference to his love for spinning yarns. He had an ugly scar on the top of one foot, and often regaled us with a thrilling tale of how he served in the cavalry with the Union forces in the war of the rebellion, and in a desperate charge upon the rebels was wounded in the foot by a bayonet, while at the same time he cut down the rebel with his sabre. When we "gammed" the California we found an old shipmate of his, who assured us that from '61 to '65 they were both on a whaler in the Pacific Ocean. This opened our eyes a little, and in revenge for being so unmercifully humbugged I determined to make it my business to get even with him. Accordingly I jotted down every business or trade in which he said he had been engaged, together with the number of years he had devoted to the same, and on Sunday, when nothing else was available for amusement, I confronted him with the list, which proved him, by his own confession, to be 125 years of age. He never forgave me, but in future we heard no more miraculous tales of adventures.

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For a little time we did fair enough, and I was successfully for whales, going as far south as French Rock. On the date above mentioned we dropped anchor in the almost land-locked bay of Mongonui, on the northeastern extremity of the north island of New Zealand. The ship California piloted us in and anchored near us. The outer harbor is several miles in extent, while a narrow passage between the rocks, barely wide enough for a ship to enter, connects it with a circular bay or inner harbor, where no swell ever is felt, which is surrounded by high hills. There is a wooden pier, and a small steamer arrives once a week from Auckland with the mails and what little freight there may be. The town proper consists of a dozen or more small houses, occupied by English settlers, two stores, a church, and a schoolhouse. The township includes over forty square miles.

The half-caste Maoris and full-blooded natives bring down the famous "cowry" gum to the stores, where they exchange it for the necessaries of life. The gum is shipped by steamer to Auckland.

For the first few days after our arrival we were busy carrying water casks ashore, filling them at a little spring, towing them alongside, and hoisting them on board. We took 200 barrels in this manner during our stay, and well could we need it, for I should mention that the Captain had sent to Auckland for our letters, directed there by his advice.

We now had plenty of fresh beef every day, and, what pleased me the most, we found an abundance of small quahogs, which the natives call "pipis." Every evening after work was finished the crews of the two ships visited freely, and the hills echoed to the chorus of our rollicking sailor songs.

After we had been here a week the steamer Iona arrived with our letters, and all work was suspended for a day. I had several from relatives and friends, and an abundance of Boston papers, which I read and re-read until I almost knew them by heart. After I had read my letters the first time I had an opportunity of watching the rest at a time, and it was a sight never to be forgotten. Some had received pictures of relatives and friends, and so in a we were all telling each other about our news, comparing pictures and boasting of the amount of mail we had received. I neglected to state that when we were at Fayal some of us had received letters, and I noticed that one fine looking young man named Henry North, a native of Prince Edward's Island, received no mail whatever. I asked him the cause, and he confessed his family were in ignorance of his whereabouts, as he had left home three years before, and never written to them. I was no saint, but I told him in my rough way that in common decency he ought at least to let them know that their son was alive, and finally persuaded him to send a letter from Fayal, and this day in Mongonui I was rewarded for my trouble a thousandfold, for, as we had since become very good friends, I looked around for him to see if he had received any letters, and also to show him mine.

At length I found him stowed away by the heel of the bowsprit, seated on a coil of rope, with a letter in his hand and the tears rolling down his cheeks. I stole softly away, and after a while he came and held out his hand, which I grasped, fully understanding the thanks which he could not find words to express. He afterward told me of the joy his letter had brought his aged parents, and how happy he was to hear from them, and for the rest of the voyage his mail compared favorably with mine.

CHAPTER VI.

A RUN ASHORE.

For a few days after our mail arrived we were kept busy painting the ship, but when we had finished we were allowed some liberty, each watch going ashore on alternate days. Of course there was the usual rush for the little public house, and as the California's men were given liberty at the same time a large majority of the men were soon drunk and noisy. We were each allowed six English shillings to spend as our tastes might incline us, and, with two others, I paid the landlord four shillings of mine to get us up the best dinner the house afforded, and we dined in royal style on wild game, including pheasant, squabs, rabbit, and duck, and topped off with a good cigar, an antiquated copy of the *London Punch*, and a bottle of execrable claret. There was a piano also available, and I made out to bang out an accompaniment, to the delight of the host and his family. Toward night we heard a terrible war of words in front of the house, and upon rushing out to ascertain the cause we found every one half or wholly drunk, and it appeared that one of the crew of the California had struck Peter Lee, whereupon an athletic half caste, who stood near by, marched up to the aggressor shouting:

"You are a coward to strike that old man. Come out here on the green and strike me!"

A ring was quickly formed, and when I saw the Maori square himself for battle I knew the sailor had no chance, but as he was a quarrelsome man I felt rather glad than otherwise.

The sailor, whose name was Macan, rushed furiously at the Maori, but no sooner was he within reaching distance than a straight left-hander sent him to the earth.

Three times this was repeated, until, maddened by the science he could not combat, the sailor ran forward with his head down, and, unmindful of a stinging uppercut, succeeded in closing with his opponent. The struggle now became more even, and how it would have terminated is uncertain, but at that instant the burly constable put in an appearance and arrested the Maori for picking a quarrel with the sailors, while the other participant was not molested. We were evidently expected to fight and get drunk and must not be interfered with. So the Maori paid fifteen shillings for espousing Peter's cause, and the latter carried a black eye for a week, never failing to remark that if he had been sober he could have thashed a dozen like his assailant.

Having despatched our letters by the steamer and finished repairing ship and taking water, we left Mongonui June 22 and made a straight course for French Rock, which we reached in three days. From thence we proceeded to Sunday Island, where we met the whaling bark Alaska of New Bedford, and I found a townsman of mine in the cooper, and enjoyed a pleasant chat of home and mutual acquaintances.

The glorious Fourth was much like other days, except that some one stole a piece of tobacco which the Captain had carelessly left on deck, and we were informed that, until the thief was found, our allowance of tobacco would be stopped. It is needless to say he was soon produced.

We cruised without seeing "fins or flukes" until at last the old man became disgusted, not having taken a whale for five months, and we shaped our course for the Friendly Islands, where we intended to obtain fresh provisions and fruit. The weather grew warmer as we gradually ran down toward the equator, and I turned myself into ship's barber and trimmed the hair of most of the white men, for which I received a stipulated amount of tobacco.

On Aug. 29, one year from home, we raised an enormous school of whales, and although three boats had excellent chances to strike, the boat steerers missed invariably, and we saw the whales disappear to the windward, leaving us disconsolate. Oct. 11, nearly eight months since we had "greased our irons," we killed our first six small whales which yielded us about 150 barrels, and we began to take courage once more.

Again our course was changed, and now the report was we were bound for the Chatham Islands in lat. 48° south, and about 600 miles southeast of New Zealand.

In a few days the weather grew cooler and we began to see numbers of albatross, or "goneys," as the whaler calls them. We caught one with a hook and line, but he became seasick in a few minutes and we set him at liberty again. We measured over five feet from tip to tip, and was unable to rise from the ship's deck. So a sailor seized the tip of each wing, and, with a "one, two, three," swung him up over the bulwarks into the wind, when he at once regained control of his faculties and sailed majestically away to tell, perhaps, of his miraculous escape, which was owing to the Captain's superstition or kind-heartedness, I never knew which.

A favorite amusement with us was to tie a piece of pork to other end of a fathom of manila rope yarn and throw it among a flock of these monstrous birds. In an instant each piece was swallowed by different birds and they would attempt to fly away. Of course their flight was suddenly arrested, and either one or the other would involuntarily disgorge his share, which would be almost instantly swallowed by another ravenous "goney," and the pieces of pork would be swallowed and resurrected many times before the rope yarn finally broke and allowed the lucky possessors of the pork at that particular instant to retain the choice morsel.

In November we again had an opportunity of striking a large whale, but the mate's boat steerer missed with both irons and a general gloom settled over the ship, but we continued in luck. As for the mate himself, I will not sully my pages with the profanity in which he indulged, but he wound up by shaking his fist under the poor fellow's nose and saying:

"Look here, you clumsy lubber, if I had an old potato in another hand I'd see if I could n't throw an iron better'n you. I'd tie her heels to her head and drop her over the stern and be d—— to you!"

The same ill fortune attended us until at last we started for the land, and on the first day of January, 1878, we dropped anchor at Big Chatham Island, a large, dreary-looking place, with no harbor or decent landing, and began felling trees for fuel. The wood was of a hard, close kind of which I could not ascertain the name. We cut the fallen trees into cord-wood lengths and piled it to season, in order to have a supply when next we touched there. The native name of the port is Iwanui. While in the woods I accidentally discovered a field of wild strawberries and we sat down and satisfied our appetites to the utmost.

The natives of this place are an offshoot from the New Zealand Maoris, and there are also half a dozen white settlers here engaged in raising flax, which is shipped to New Zealand in a trading schooner which calls twice a year, and is the only connecting link between them and civilization.

The next day we got under way and ran over to Pitts Island in company with the bark Alaska and obtained a fine supply of fuel. We stayed here several days and became tolerably familiar with the history of the hardy old Englishman, whose life almost equals that of Robinson Crusoe in many respects, to whom I propose to devote a short chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

A MODERN ROBINSON CRUSO.

Somewhere about the year 1848 an Englishman named Hunt came from England to New Zealand with his wife and infant son, and after roaming about for some time finally took passage for Chatham Islands with a partner, intending to engage in sheep raising. Upon arriving at the latter place his partner died, and Hunt settling upon a fertile island about ten miles from Big Chatham and unhabited. Twice a year the natives went to it in their canoes for birds' eggs, and at last he moved his family to it, coolly took possession of the land, built a rude hut, and in spite of the threats of the natives and the rigors of the climate in winter, he lived there year after year, until at length he came to be known as the owner of the whole island, and it is usually called Hunt's Island by sailors to-day.

As time passed on his family increased, and two sons grew to manhood, who knew no other home than that bounded by the rocky shores of the little isle. Two daughters also grew up and married the officers of a trading schooner which called semi-annually for wool, for his few sheep had increased till they were number by thousands. The sons-in-law forsook the sea, built houses near by, and thus, with his own immediate family around him, the sturdy pioneer has lived to a good old age, while his sheep number over 10,000 and over 100 cows are grazing on the green hills. Of late years it has become a custom for whaling ships to call there, as beef can be had for a trifle, and wild sheep may be captured by the score without price.

The jovial old chap gave us an ox, eighty sheep, the wool of which was inferior and valueless to us, and turned loose in his dairy to drink milk to our hearts' content. We also purchased a field of potatoes and dug them ourselves, but as the supply of hoes and shovels was limited, I, among others, was obliged to use my fingers. A cracked old plate was the house, and in the evening I was invited to favor the company with a few selections. I insisted that my fingers were too sore from my agricultural efforts, and after that I dug no more "spuds."

The island comprises 16,400 acres of land, he informed me, and at that time he employed four white men and two Portuguese. He had a large herd of horses, which, however, are useful only for riding. A sound young horse in some parts of New Zealand, by the way, is worth only from £1 to £5 sterling.

The old man was occasionally fond of music, and on this account I was always one of the crew to pull the Captain ashore in the evening, and my musical performances, which would have disgraced a dime museum, were simply marvellous to the unsophisticated sotiers. I had collected a piccolo, harmonica, banjo, and flute from various sources, and, as one of our crew played very nicely on a large German accordion, we had several "star" pieces which we performed in a most agonizing manner. Under the combined influences of our music and repeated potations the old gentleman finally dragged his better half to the piano one night, and together they sang "The Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon" in the fashion of half a century ago. Words are weak to describe the performance, but they meant well, and I felt quite encouraged in regard to the merits of my own efforts in that line. Two of our men ran away here and hid in the hills, and we went to sea for a week's cruise, knowing that they would be glad to return by that time. For several days we kept company with the Alaska, and "gammed" at night.

One evening I was chatting with the second mate of the Alaska, an old but stalwart negro, when he informed me that his Captain and himself had been boat steerers together. As he evidently felt how much more favored the Captain had been by Dame Fortune, he remarked sadly:

"Yaas, sir; we was bofe ob us boat steerers togetder, and now he's marster ob dis ship, an' dis poor ole debbil kaint hed no better'n South!"

No one but a sailor can fully appreciate the simile, but it expressed his meaning better than a more elaborate speech could possibly have done.

At last we caught our two runaways and resumed our cruise. We took several large whales during the remainder of the season, and on April 11 we raised a strange sail, which proved to be the new ship Horatio, Capt. Charles Grant, one of the oldest and most successful of Nantucket Captains, who had been ever sixty years at sea. He was accompanied by his wife, who had spent nearly all her wedded life with him on whale ships, and was a first-rate sailor. They were near neighbors of mine at home, and I was kindly received by them, and presented with letters and a large box of home comforts sent by my mother and sisters.

One of our Portuguese died of consumption shortly after we left the Horatio, and we buried him at sea.

Nothing occurred to break the monotony for several weeks, until, at last, we met the English ship Splendid from Dunedin. She had a motley crew, including an ex-Lieutenant in the British army and a Maori prince, who informed us he shipped "for the fun of the thing, you know."

At length we turned toward New Zealand once more, and on June 1 we dropped anchor in Mongonui to refit our ship and prepare for a cruise among the Friendly Islands.

[To be continued.]

BOTTLED GASES.

A Great and Curious Trade that Has Sprung Up of Late Years.

"Leave orders for oxygen under the door" is the odd legend that greets the eye in the second floor hall of an upper Broadway building. The door in question leads to the living apartments, to use a complimentary plural, of the dealer in oxygen. His office is the front hall room on the same floor, sufficiently cramped quarters for one whose stock in trade is of so expansive a nature. He is one of a great many persons whose business it is to purvey wind, sweetened and otherwise, to the inhabitants of this town.

The sale of invisible and almost intangible and imponderable merchandise is one of the most curious of the many strange business developments of this great community. You may buy bottled gases as you buy bottled beer, and have them delivered at your house as newspapers, or soda, or fresh vegetables are delivered. Oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbonic acid, are sold daily as boots and shoes are sold. They are handled with indifference, just as other freight is handled, sent by express, carried on the backs of nonchalant messenger boys, and, in fact, treated as if they were not tremendously expansive agencies packed away under a pressure of 1,800 pounds to the square inch. One factory sells 30,000 feet of oxygen per month, and keeps on hand nearly that quantity in storage tanks. That volume of the gas weighs more than a ton and a quarter. Several other concerns sell nearly as much more, and a large quantity of hydrogen is sold to go with it for use in producing the lime light at theatres, lectures, and clinics. Besides this, oxygen and hydrogen are sold in mixtures of various proportions, and a great volume of nitrous oxide or laughing gas is sold to dentists, surgeons, and hospitals. The makers of aerated waters buy carbonic acid in large quantities, and it is used elsewhere in the arts. Its use for aging wines, long practised in France, is scarcely known here. Carbonic acid is usually sold in liquid form. Nitrogen is sold in small quantities for experimental purposes. It can be produced in almost unlimited quantities at low rates, since it is given off as a waste product in one process of making oxygen.

Not only are gases sold in large quantities by local consumers, but they are sent by express all over the country. Laughing gas, in particular, has an enormous sale in various parts of the United States, and is also shipped to the most remote parts of civilized South America. The express companies handle this peculiar freight without special charge, and the makers say that accidents never occur.

The local trade in oxygen has a great many curious kinks. The various kinds of medicinal air advertised are, or pretend to be, mixtures of oxygen with atmospheric air. One dealer in the wind cure, however, assured the agent of an oxygen factory that oxygen was by no means a necessary part of his cure. A little perfume furnished by himself at a low cost and a good deal of wind, which he furnished free by the patient proved vastly cheaper and quite as effective. The use of oxygen upon physicians' prescription is considerable, and many patients order it delivered two or three times a week, and keep up the practice long after the prescription is given. It is taken similarly like any other tonic or stimulant, and not infrequently recommended to others. One concern sells over 250 pounds of oxygen per month for such purposes, and supplies several thousand customers.

If you see a messenger boy carrying on his back an iron cylinder about thirty inches long and five inches in diameter, you may be pretty sure that he is taking some person his supply of gas. If the cylinder is painted red, it contains oxygen; if it is black, hydrogen; if partly colored, inclining gas. The manufacturers have come to an agreement as to colors because such agreement seemed necessary to safety. When oxygen and hydrogen are carelessly mixed an explosion follows. To make it the more difficult even in case of careless boys, the screw threads on the red cylinders and on the black cylinders are run in opposite directions, so that it shall be impossible to couple a cylinder to the wrong reservoir. By way of further precaution the cylinders are tested to a pressure of 2,400 to 3,000 pounds to the square inch. Cylinders hold from 75 to 250 gallons of gas, and gases are sold by the foot for use in the arts, by the gallon for medical use. The fight that has been made over the return of beer bottles and soda siphons has likewise been felt in the return of gas cylinders. The manufacturers have finally settled down to a system under which the cylinder is in theory sold outright, though in practice the purchase price, less a charge for rent, is refunded on return of the cylinder. By a system of checks and tickets the dealers can locate each outgoing cylinder.

The United States Government is likely soon to become an important consumer of oxygen, as it is shortly to be applied to use in the torpedo service. An expert in gases, now residing in Paris, has invented a method for the propulsion of torpedo boats, an important hint on this subject. Goubet had a tiny submarine craft, and he was accustomed to load it before starting on a submarine cruise with great cylinders containing compressed air. As the air loosened in the course of several hours, it was freshened by pure air let out of the cylinders.

The expert suggested the use of pure oxygen instead of air, and at Goubet's suggestion made a careful investigation of the subject. It came to light that because of the fact that the oxygen occupied but one-thirtieth of the space occupied by Goubet's compressed air cylinder enough oxygen to do the work of the air thus carried. He also suggested a simple device for detecting the presence of carbonic acid in the atmosphere of the boat. His device was to light a tiny night lamp such as is used in the sick room. He knew that the flame would almost die in the presence of a dangerous percentage of carbonic acid, and that it would go out when the proportion of carbonic acid was too great.

On the day set for the experiment the little boat was stocked with oxygen in cylinders under a pressure of 1,800 pounds to the square inch. The cylinders were provided with valves that would permit of a very gradual escape of the gas. The night lamp worked to perfection, and Goubet and his companion remained four hours under water, with no greater supply of air than was free in the tiny craft when they descended. The oxygen kept the atmosphere in such condition that they were able to breathe in comfort, and they spent the time in conversation, at luncheon, and at cards. Goubet has continued the experiments on his own hook, and has kept his boat submerged for six hours. The experiment has not yet been tried in torpedo service on this side the water.

THE LOST LEGION.

The Story of a Raid in India.

BY RUDYARD KIPLING.

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When the Indian mutiny broke out and a little time before the siege of Delhi, a regiment of native irregular horse was stationed at Peshawur, on the frontier of India. That regiment caught what John Lawrence called at the time "the prevalent mania," and would have thrown in its lot with the mutineers had it been allowed to do so. The chance never came, for as the regiment swept off down south it was headed off by a remnant of an English corps into the hills of Afghanistan, and there the newly conquered tribesmen turned against it as wolves turn against buck. It was hunted for the sake of its arms and accoutrements from hill to hill, from ravine to ravine, up and down the dried beds of rivers, and round the shoulders of bluffs, till it disappeared as water sinks in the sand—this officerless rebel regiment. The only trace left of its existence today is a nominal roll drawn up in neat round hand and countersigned by an officer who called himself "Adjutant, late —— Irregular Cavalry." The paper is yellow with years and dirt, but on the back of it you can still read a pencil note by John Lawrence to this effect: "See that the two native officers who remained loyal are not deprived of their estates. J. L." Of 650 sabres only two stood the strain, and John Lawrence, in the midst of all the agony of the first months of the mutiny, found time to think about their merits.

That was more than thirty-six years ago, and the tribesmen across the Afghan border who helped to annihilate the regiment are now old men. Sometimes a graybeard speaks of his share in the massacre. "They came," he will say, "across the border very proud, calling upon us to rise and kill the English and go down to the sack of Delhi. But we, who had just been conquered by the same English, knew that they were overbold, and that the Government could account easily for those down-country dogs. This Hindustani regiment, therefore, we treated with fair words, and kept standing in one place till the redcoats came after them very hot and angry. Then this regiment ran forward a little more into our hills to avoid the wrath of the English, and we lay upon their flanks watching from the sides of the hills till we were well assured that their path was lost behind them. Then we came down, for we desired their clothes, and their bridles, and their rifles, and their boots—more especially their boots. That was a great killing—done slowly." Here the old man will rub his nose, and shake his long snaky locks, and lick his bearded lips, and grin till the yellow tooth stumps show. "Yea, we killed them because we needed their gear, and we knew that their lives had been forfeited to God on account of their sin—the sin of treachery to the salt which they had eaten. They rode up and down the valleys, stumbling and rocking in their saddles and howling for mercy. We drove them slowly like cattle till they were all assembled in one place, the flat, wide valley of Sheor Kot. Many had died from want of water, but there still were many left, and they could not make any stand. We went among them, pulling them down with our hands two at a time, and our boys killed them who were new to the sword. My share of the plunder was such and such—so many guns and so many saddles. The guns were good in those days. Now we steal the Government rifles and despise smooth barrels. Yes, beyond doubt we wiped that regiment from off the face of the earth, and even the memory of the deed is now dying. But men say——"

At this point the tale would stop abruptly and it was impossible to find out what men said across the border. The Afghans were always a secretive race, and vastly preferred doing something wicked to saying anything at all. They would be quiet and well-behaved for months, till one night, without word or warning, they would rush a police post, cut the throats of a constable or two, dash through a village, carry away three or four women, and withdraw in the red glare of burning thatch, driving the cattle and goats before them to their own desolate hills. The Indian Government would become almost tearful on these occasions. First it would say, "Please be good and we'll forgive you." The tribe concerned in the latest depredations would collectively put its thumb to its nose and answer rudely. Then the Government would say: "Hadn't you better pay up a little money for those few corpses you left behind you the other night?" Here the tribe would temporize, and lie and bully, and some of the younger men, merely to show contempt of authority, would raid another police post and fire into some frontier mud fort, and, if lucky, kill a real English officer. Then the Government would say: "Observe, if you really persist in this line of conduct you will be hurt." If the tribe knew exactly what was going on in India it would apologize or be rude, according as it learned whether the Government was busy with other things or able to devote its full attention to their performances. Some of the tribes knew to one corpse how far to go. Others became excited, lost their heads, and told the Government to come on. With sorrow and tears, and one eye on the British taxpayer at home, who insisted on regarding these exercises as brutal wars of annexation, the Government would prepare an expensive little field brigade and some guns, and send all up into the hills to chase the wicked tribe out of the valleys, where the corn grew, into the hilltops, where there was nothing to eat. The tribe would turn out in full strength and enjoy the campaign, for they knew that their women would never be touched, that their wounded would be nursed, not mutilated, and that as soon as each man's bag of corn was spent they could surrender and palaver with the English General as though they had been a real enemy. Afterward, years afterward, they would pay the blood money, driblet by driblet, to the Government, and tell their children how they had slain the redcoats by thousands. The only drawback to this kind of picnic war was the weakness of the redcoats for solemnly blowing up with powder their fortified towers and keeps. This the tribe always considered mean.

Chief among the leaders of the smaller tribes—the little clans, who knew to a penny the expense of moving white troops against them—was a priest-bandit-chief, whom we will call the Gulla Kutta Mullah. His enthusiasm for border murder as an art was aim at dignified. He would cut down a mail runner from pure wantonness, or bombard a mud fort with rifle fire when he knew that our men needed to sleep. In his leisure moments he would go on circuit among his neighbors and try to incite other tribes to devilry. Also, he kept a kind of hotel for fellow outlaws in his own village, which lay in a valley called Bersund. Any respectable murderer on that section of the frontier was sure to be at Bersund, for it was reckoned an exceedingly safe place. The way into it ran through a narrow gorge, which could be converted into a death trap in five minutes. It was surrounded by high hills, reckoned inaccessible to all save born mountaineers, and here the Gulla Kutta Mullah lived in great state, the head of a village of mud and stone huts, and mud and turf built round some portion of a red uniform and the plunder of dead men. The Government particularly wished for his capture and once invited him formally to come out and be hanged in accordance with law for a crime in which he had taken a direct part. The replied:

"I am only twenty miles, as the crow flies, from your border. Come and fetch me."

"Some day we will come," said the Government, "and hanged you will be."

The Gulla Kutta Mullah let the matter drop from his mind. "He knew that the patience of the Government was as long as a summer day; but he did not realize that its arm was as long as a winter night. Months afterward, when there was peace on the border and all India was quiet, the Indian Government turned in its sleep and remembered the Gulla Kutta Mullah at Bersund, with his thirteen outlaws. The movement against him of one single regiment—which the telegrams would have translated as war—would have been highly impolitic. This was a time for silence and speed, and, above all, absence of bloodshed.

You must know that all along the northwest frontier of India there is spread a