



JOHN TAYLOR PARKERSON.

THE British tramp steamer West Point, as stout a craft as ever shipped a cargo, is now only a memory. Somewhere on the bottom of the old Atlantic lies her storm-hewn and fire-eaten hulk. A brief record, hidden away among the dust-covered files of the New York Maritime Exchange, tells the story, but only the bravest weather-beaten men of the sea who have studied in the school of experience and learned their lesson well know what that story is.

It was a little over two years ago that the West Point steamed out of Glasgow bound for Charleston, S. C. She had covered the same course a number of times, so that the thirty-two happy and lucky souls comprising her company looked forward to their arrival in the hospitable American port with a feeling of joy and good fellowship. On deck and below there was a ceaseless humming of routine and weird, fantastic times, such as are common among the busy stevedores along the docks in any southern port.

And thus, in a spirit of merriment, passed the first half of the voyage. Captain Pinkham, jolly, good natured, but with a resolute and ideal shipmaster's way to say it reminded him of the good old days of the clippers, when the crews sang incessantly and a first class chummy man was considered worth four men in a watch.

Even after the storm broke there was little change. The men went about their work happily and without thought of fear, regarding it quite ordinary and as a part of a sailor's life. Indeed, the West Point might now be plying her old course had the fire in her bunkers been discovered a few hours earlier.

It all came about so suddenly and unexpectedly that Capt. Pinkham himself, a man who had faced death so often that it was said he bore a charmed life, showed unmistakable traces of uneasiness. The West Point at that time was

DEEP SEA STORIES

Thrilling Experiences in the Lives of Captains of Big Liners

Remarkable Meeting of Captain Capper of the Pannonia and Captain Pinkham of the West Point When the Latter Vessel Went Down Marks One of the Strangest Pages in Deep Sea History

about midway of her voyage, and the good skipper realized more than any one else what it meant to battle with fire and water under such circumstances. After one hurried trip below deck he remarked to the chief officer:

"Meikle, we're in for the toughest fight of our lives!"

Time proved the truthfulness of this prediction. The fire had gained such headway there was no possible way of checking it, although for five long, nerve-racking days it was confined to the bunkers. Then, as if to defy all human efforts, it began to spread slowly, until the entire hold became a seething

mass of flame and smoke, so that all hands had to battle for their very lives. Dozens of bales of yellow oakum, soaked in sea water, were spread out over the decks. Not a soul ventured below, indeed, to do so would have meant almost instant asphyxiation, owing to the dense smoke and deadly fumes that issued from the red hot coals. Luckily, for cargo the West Point carried mostly canned goods, else would the flames have spread with greater rapidity above. For six days the two

liferboats were made ready for any emergency. It was well so, for on the morning of the seventh day the ship foundered and all had to quit her on short notice.

As the two little shells backed away from the side of the sinking ship great tongues of fire leaped high above the

"The Mauretania, men. The Mauretania!" A wireless message had informed Captain Turner of the giant Cunarder that the steamship Devonian had picked up Chief Officer Meikle and his men and that Captain Pinkham and fifteen others were adrift somewhere in the

the West Point eyed him keenly, admiringly, gratefully. "Fifteen years ago," continued Capt. Pinkham, reminiscently. "It was a narrow escape, Capper—the narrowest I ever had."

"Aye, sir," answered the Mauretania's first officer.

Capper, scarcely more than a boy, had shipped from Liverpool on another windjammer, bound out to Sydney. He was aglow with youthful enthusiasm as his ship hove in sight of the Australian port, because the snug old craft on which he had gained his first practical knowledge of the sea had broken a sailing record.

It was while Capper and other members of the crew were standing on deck singing the praises of their ship that a deafening roar came to their ears. An instant later they were tumbling over themselves, owing to the sudden and violent rocking of their craft, as a earthquake might pitch and sway in an earthquake. They scrambled to their feet and looked out over the water.

In less than half a mile to starboard was a ship completely enveloped in flames. The crew, some of whom were severely burned and moaning in agony, were swimming about the sides of the burning ship in circles.

Capper without a moment's hesitation put out with four others in a small boat, reaching the unfortunate crew of the nitrate ship just in time to save Capt. Pinkham and one or two others from drowning. Incidentally the young seafarer, who had leaped into the whirling waters to aid a poor fellow who had thrown up his hands in despair and

a full rigged ship, he would live and die by it.

And it was little short of a miracle that Capt. Capper survived his first voyage in a nitrate ship, for scarcely had he cleared Iquique bound for San Francisco than a similar explosion to that he had witnessed in Australian waters occurred aboard his own vessel.

There were several casualties then, but Capt. Capper remembers very little of what happened. He knows he was standing forward, when of a sudden there was a loud, piercing roar, like the firing of a cannon, which was quickly followed by a great puff of steam and smoke and the sickening crash of timbers and falling steel and brass work.

The scene shifted to a crude hospital ward in Iquique, where the youthful skipper lay hovering between life and death for weeks afterward. When he recovered they told him he had been picked up from the stump of a mast, around which there was some rope and torn canvas which held his prostrate form as fast as if he had been lashed to the mast.

Capper returned to England, and soon thereafter entered the service of the Cunard Line. Strangely enough the Mauretania was establishing a new ocean record for steam craft, just as his first ship had established a sailing record between England and Australia, when Capper rescued Capt. Pinkham a second time.

Now, at the age of 35, Capt. Capper is master of the steamship Pannonia, plying between New York and Austrian ports.

Remembrances in Smoke. Harvard's class day elm had to be cut down recently because of a fatal attack made upon it by the elm tree beetle. For numberless years Harvard men have gathered around a tree grown to love every inch of bark on its trunk. There was mourning among alumni everywhere when they heard the axe had been applied.

An enterprising tobacco merchant of Cambridge saw a profitable way to perpetuate the memory of the old tree. He had 200 pipes carved from the wood of the old tree and in an hour he had sold them all at prices that made rival pipe merchants bemoan their shortsightedness. They are reported to have all made a rush for even the splinters and sawdust of the old elm in the hope that some sort of a glue combination could be made into money turning mementoes.

Some years ago there was an old stone residence of the century before pulled down in Paris. In the neighborhood was a thrifty barber. He became his own press agent during the day and his own collector at night. That is, he expatiated upon the outrage of not preserving such a historical old dwelling as that being demolished, declaring its stone was of a peculiarly interesting and valuable character. His patrons significantly tapped their heads and considered that their barber had become a trifle deranged through antiquarian pursuits. When night came the barber secretly gathered pieces of the stone that had formed the old building. He had noted its odd grit and had decided accordingly. When the stone had all been removed and dumped into a distant river where a pier was being constructed the barber made known his great secret. He had the finest bones in the world, all made from the stone of the old residence. The bones sold like hot cakes. The barber's fame spread. Orders were received from all over France. It was so antiquarian to hone your razor and think of the old house. The barber sold his shop, but kept up his bone trade. Rumor had it that the last, however, that all the stone the barber had gathered at night from the old residence had long been exhausted, but the sale went merrily on. Harvard men are already beginning to joke on the likelihood that thousands of pipes from the historic elm will no doubt be sold for the next decade or two.

The Little Red School House Society was organized in the western part of the State several years ago. The purpose was the perpetuation of memories connected with school days in and out of the primitive little building where a great number of men who had become prominent had received the first rudiments of the three Rs. One alumnus, more sentimental than the others, bought the old chair of the old schoolmaster of half a century before. He had it made into penholders and rulers and souvenir picture frames. Before he died the chair had furnished enough mementoes to supply hundreds more than five chairs could have possibly turned out, and the keeprake demand was still on. But it was not the sentimental chap who did it. The chair had been discovered again and again by a commercial antiquarian. The owners of many penholders and rulers and picture frames were just as well satisfied—so the antiquarian said.

Delusions of Cranks. Writing in Case and Comment on the mental status of some cranks who have been under his observation in the Government Hospital for Insane at Washington, Shepherd Ivory Franz, scientific director of the institute, tells of the interesting facts about some of those who have gone to Washington to obtain the personal aid of the President in securing imaginary and high salaried positions; to sell absurd patent rights, to annoy Judges, Congressmen, society leaders, &c. Among the cases he describes is that of a man who called at the Capitol and represented himself as the original "Bull Moose"; and another who demanded to see Uncle Sam; another who reported to detective headquarters as a new detective.

For his heroism on this occasion Capper gained a promotion, and a few months later he was himself master of a sailing craft bound out to Iquique to load nitrate. Most men would have balked at the idea after an experience such as Capper had, but not so with him.

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Aeroplane Too Dangerous, Says Scott

RILEY SCOTT, a graduate of West Point and inventor of a device for dropping bombs from an aeroplane, with which he won the Michelin prize, has returned from Europe to make experiments in this country. He comes back with the opinion that in its present state of development the aeroplane has but one important use, and it is military.

He declares that the aeroplane is still a dangerous vehicle, too dangerous for general use, either in transportation or sport. He should know, because he has witnessed twenty accidents in which aviators have lost their lives. In warfare, he says, where danger is a part of the game, the aeroplane's versatility has overshadowed its drawbacks and it has become an important factor in modern military equipment. In fact, people generally hardly realize the immense importance that military authorities at present attach to the aeroplane. The great Powers of Europe are spending millions of dollars every year on aviation, and France is making a desperate effort to keep in the lead.

This is not the result of guesswork or half-baked theory, he continues, but has come about because the aeroplane has become the "eyes of the army." The struggle for military supremacy in Europe is such that nothing is adopted except that which is fully tried and proved. When military men have long recognized the value of the aeroplane in gathering information, they have just begun to find that it can also be made into a destructive weapon of vast importance.

Naturally a great deal is not said or written about these things in Europe, for the War Offices over there have the faculty of keeping things to themselves. It is only by "my observation" leads to the prophetic that the next war will see the aeroplane play a vastly important part in the people of France have recently organized a popular subscription considering over a million dollars and they firmly believe that "les petits oiseaux de bois" will some day fly over the borders and return with their lost provinces. How much money a popular subscription for aviation would produce is hard to say.

Right here I want to say that the House of Congress to provide for our army and navy is not only shortsighted and unpatriotic, but it verges on treason. No sane man would build a skyscraper without having it fully insured, yet our nation is contemplating a canal far from our borders, costing hundreds of millions of dollars, which will soon be open and which is fortified as Gowanus, L. I. If it had been built that canal it would have been bursting with cannon long ago. The Philippines and Hawaii are to be sold for the taking, and our coal-mines are sold for the taking. Does any sane man really believe that we are so stupid as to risk an universal peace that a rich nation can safely neglect its armaments without courting disaster? Since when has human nature changed?

Mr. Scott further declared that since the aeroplane is a scientific instrument depending on laws that are not well known and having in them an element of danger untrained novices and daredevils have no place in aviation. He said it was not his intention to argue that every aviator should

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decks. Now and then the heavy seas washed over them. But again and again they reappeared until the entire vessel was enveloped in flame.

The men in the small boats tugged at their oars aimlessly and silently. Capt. Pinkham's keen, piercing eyes were fixed intently upon the old ship as he stood statue-like in the stern of one of the boats. After half an hour the blaze seemed to subside, and within ten minutes the vessel filled and, caving in, plunged down. A great puff of steam and smoke shot skyward. The men in the boats looked back, but now all they could see was the broad ocean.

When night fell there was still a very heavy sea running. The small boats drifted on, only to become separated ere the dawn of another day. Neither the men in the shipper's boat nor those in Chief Officer Meikle's dared think of each other's fate. It was enough to know they were shipwrecked in mid-ocean with hardly two days' rations, all they could carry, and odds strongly against the possibility of rescue.

But somehow the men under Capt. Pinkham were less alarmed than those in the other boat. Perhaps this was due to the coolness of the good skipper himself, who laughed and joked with the seafarers quite as unobtrusively as he did on the deck of the West Point at the commencement of her voyage, when clear skies and a comparatively calm sea marked her passage.

"We've managed to keep afloat thus far, men, in spite of a treacherous fire and an angry sea," he said, "and, by the gods, we'll not give up now!" There was a defiant tone in his voice which seemed to electrify the men and spur them on. Although near to exhaustion after a week's struggle with the fire and storm they tugged hopefully at the oars. The six hundred or more miles that stood between them and land seemed but an inconsequential span, which they would bridge and remember ever after as a priceless legacy to their families of their prowess.

During the next two days of hardship and hunger in the open boat this spirit of bravado and feeling of ultimate triumph continued. Darkness came, whereas the two preceding nights had been fairly clear, but it meant nothing to these hardy, God-fearing men of the sea. They had received a new lease of life, as it were, through the encouraging words of their captain. The desire to fight on and win burned within them.

Some one in the bow of the boat began humming one of the worst Southern refrains so familiar to the men. It was the first time since the fire was discovered aboard the West Point that any member of the crew had turned to song. When he had finished the others applauded. Capt. Pinkham was moved to remark that the old devil himself would be at a loss to know what to do with such a crew if they should drop in upon him in such a joyous mood.

Whether it was the sailor instinct that told them unconsciously they were soon to be rescued is a matter for conjecture. But ere the strains of the melody died away a great blaze of light appeared in the distance. The man in the bow of the little craft swung out his lantern, while the others peered intently at the brilliantly lighted object which was bearing down upon them with the speed of a railroad train. As the vessel drew nearer Captain Pinkham exclaimed:

Mauretania's course. It was not Captain Turner, however, that sighted the flarelight distress signal from the small, open boat, but his first officer, a tall, athletic young man of the name of Capper.

"Take five of your best men, Capper," said Captain Turner, "and lower a boat from the port quarter."

It was shortly before midnight when the big liner's engines were stopped and the first officer and his picked crew put out to the rescue. The sea was considerably calmer than it had been for a week previously, and the survivors of the West Point were taken aboard the Mauretania with little or no difficulty.

On the deck of the liner again, Capper stood silently gazing at Captain Pinkham. The latter, observing this, held out his hand to the young officer a second time. For a moment the two men were speechless. "Great God!" cried Captain Pinkham, finally. "You, Capper? You again?" The young officer nodded in the affirmative, while the rescued skipper of

A hundred or more passengers and members of the crew, who had surrounded the little group of rescued men, moved closer and craned their necks. Capt. Pinkham and Capper strode away in the direction of the first officer's cabin.

It was a moment in their lives that the two men held sacred—one of those remarkable coincidences that you read about in fiction, then close your book and pronounce it an impossibility. Neither Capt. Pinkham nor Capper ever talks of it, except to his closest friends, and then only in a casual way. But piece by piece the story has come to light and marks a strange, unusual page in deep sea history.

Spread out upon your table a map of the world. Follow with your pencil the west coast of South America until you come to a point called Iquique. Then trace the waters of the South Pacific to the Australian coast, coming to a stop as you near the port of Sydney. Fifteen years ago Capt. Pinkham was master of a sailing vessel, which had loaded nitrate at Iquique for Sydney,

gone down, came near losing his own life. He had extended his arm to grab the drowning sailor as the latter's head reappeared above the surface, when another unfortunate one caught hold of him and nearly sent the trio to the bottom. Capper, however, never lost presence of mind, but kept up until within oar's length of his boat, and thus succeeded in getting all hands of the ill fated vessel safely into the small boat.

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