

ically funny. A ticket inspector approached him. "Going on, sir?" he asked.

"Goin' on? Of course I am. What in thunder d'ye think I'm stan'in' here for?" demanded the Captain.

"But if you stand there, sir, you'll get left," said the official good humoredly.

"Better get in, John, an' don't argy with the gentleman," said Mrs. Stump.

Her husband obeyed, grudgingly. The inspector examined his ticket, and Royson's, and locked the door.

"Nice thing!" grumbled Stump. "I can't give you a good-by hug now, Becky."

This was literally true. The Captain's breadth of beam had never been contemplated by the designers of Southeastern railway carriages. Even when the door was open, he had to enter sideways, and the brass rail across the window rendered it a physical impossibility to thrust head and shoulders outside.

The shrill whistle of a guard was answered by a colleague.

"Take care of yourself, John!" said Becky.

"No fear! And mind you wait till the bus stops to-night. The other evening—"

Royson never learned what had befallen Mrs. Stump on that other evening. At the moment the train began to move he saw a man peeping into the carriage as if looking for some one. He believed it was the private inquiry agent whom he had shaken off so effectively in Hyde Park. The gloom of the station, and the fact that the man's face was in shadow, made him doubtful; but as the train gathered speed the watcher on the platform nodded to him and smiled derisively. Captain Stump had quick eyes. He turned to Royson.

"Beg pardon, mister; but is that a friend of yours?" he asked.

"No," said Dick.

"Well, he was signalin' somebody, an' it wasn't me."

Then remarking that the unknown craft looked like a curiously colored pirate, the Captain squeezed himself into a seat. When the train ran into and backed out of Cannon-st., Stump was puzzled. He opened the carpetbag, and drew forth a ship's compass, which he consulted. After a few minutes' rapid traveling his doubts seemed to subside, and he replaced the compass. Producing a cake of tobacco, he cut off several shavings with an exceedingly sharp knife, rolled them between his broad palms, filled a pipe, lit it, and whetted the knife on the side of his boot. Dick noticed that all his actions were wonderfully nimble for a man of his build. Any stranger who imagined that this squat Hercules was slow and ponderous in movement would be woefully mistaken if he based hostilities on that presumption.

Perhaps the Captain missed the companionship of the stout woman he had parted from at Charing Cross, or it might be that his gruffness was a matter of habit, at any rate, after a puff or two, he spoke to Royson again.

"D'ye know w'at time we're due at Dover?" he asked.

"Yes, at ten-fifty."

"We don't stop long there?"

"No. The boat sails ten minutes later."

"Good! I don't cotton on to these blessed trains. Every time they jolt I fancy we're on the rocks. Give me a ship, an' the steady beat of the screw, says I; then I know where I am."

"I quite agree with you, Captain; but you must put up with a fair spell of railway bumping before you reach Marseilles."

Stump gave him a questioning look. Royson did not resemble the type of land shark with which he was familiar. Yet his eyes gleamed like those of a perplexed bull.

"I s'pose you heard my missus an' me talking of Marseilles," he growled; "but how do you know I'm a Captain?"

"It is written on your bag."

"Well, my missus wrote that—"

"Moreover," went on Dick, determined to break the ice, "I'm your second mate."

"W'at?" roared Stump, leaning forward and placing a hand on each knee, while his fiery glance took in every detail of Royson's appearance. "You—my—second—mate?"

The words formed a crescendo of contemptuous analysis. But Dick faced the storm boldly.

"Yes," he said. "I don't see any harm in statin' the fact, now that I know who you are."

"Harm! Who said anything about harm? W'at sort of sailor d'ye call yerself? Who ever heard of a sailor in knickers?"

Then it dawned on Royson that the Captain's wrath was comprehensible. There is in every male Briton who goes abroad an ingrained instinct that leads him to don a costume usually associated with a Highland moor. Why this should be no man can tell, but nine out of ten Englishmen cross the Channel in sporting attire, and Royson was no exception to the rule. In his case a sheer revolt against the office suit had induced him to dress in clothes which recalled one glorious summer on the Westmoreland hills. Their incongruity did not appeal to him until Captain Stump forcibly drew attention thereto, and his hearty laugh at the way in which he was enlightened did not tend to soothe his skipper's indignation.

"Second mate!" bellowed Stump again, calling the heavens to witness that there never was such another. "Where's yer ticket? Seein' is believin',

they say. Who did you go to sea with? When did you pass?"

"I have no certificate, if that is what you mean, and I have never been to sea," said Royson.

This remark impressed Stump as an exquisite joke. His rage yielded to a rumble of hoarse laughter. "Lord love a duck!" he guffawed. "If only I'd ha knowed, I could have told my missus. It would have cheered her up for a week. Never mind. We've a few minutes in Dover. I'll send her a picture postcard. It'll 'arf tickle 'er to death."

Evidently the Captain meant to add certain explanatory remarks which would account for that Gargantuan tickling. Dick, anxious not to offend his future commander, smiled sheepishly, and said: "Sorry I can't supply you with a photograph."

Stump's gaze rested on his stockings, loose breeches, Norfolk jacket, and deerstalker cap.

"Damme!" he grinned, "it's better than a pantomime. Second mate! Is there any more like you on the train? P'haps that chap in the next caboose, in a fur coat an' top hat, is the steward. An' w'at'll Tagg say?"

"I don't know," said Dick, half inclined to resent this open scorn. "Who is Tagg, anyhow?"

Stump instantly became silent. He seemed to remember his sailing orders. He muttered something about "playin' me for a sucker," and shut his lips obstinately. Not another word did he utter till they reached Dover. He smoked furiously, gave Royson many a wrathful glance, but bottled up the tumultuous thoughts which troubled him. On board the steamer, however, curiosity conquered prudence. After surveying Dick's unusual proportions from several points of view, he came up and spoke in what he intended to be a light comedy tone.

"I say, Mr. Second Mate," he said, "I don't see the Plimsoll mark on the funnel. Do you?"

"No, Captain. I expect it has been washed off."

"If I was you I'd write to the Board of Trade about it."

"Best let sleeping dogs lie, Captain."

"Why?"

"Because they might look for yours, and as it ought to be round your neck they would say you were unseaworthy."

"So you know what it is, you long swab?"

"Yes. Come and have a drink. That will reach your load line all right."

Royson had hit on the right method of dealing with Stump. The skipper promised himself some fun, and they descended to the saloon. The channel was in boisterous mood, and Dick staggered once or twice in transit. Stump missed none of this, and

became more jovial. Thus might one of the Hereford stots he resembled approach a green pasture.

"If you ask the steward he'll bring you some belayin' tackle," he said.

"I am a trifle crank just now," admitted Royson; "but when the wind freshens I'll take in a reef or two."

Stump looked up at him. "You've put me clean out of reckonin'. Never been to sea, you say? W'at's yer name?"

"King, Richard King."

"Damme! I'm comin' to like you. You're a bit of a charak-ter. By the time the Aphrodite points her nose home again I'll 'ave you licked into shape."

They were crossing the saloon, and were sufficiently noteworthy by force of contrast to draw many eyes. Indeed, if Baron von Kerber had been on board, he must have been disagreeably impressed by the fact that in sending the short skipper and the long second mate of the Aphrodite to Marseilles in company he had supplied an unfailing means of tracking their movements. Of course, he was not responsible for the chance that threw them together; but the mere presence of two such men on the same vessel would be remembered quite easily by those who make it their business to watch transchannel passengers.

Royson gave no thought to this factor in the queer conditions then shaping his life. Had Stump remained taciturn, it might have occurred to him that they were courting observation; but it needed the exercise of much resourcefulness to withstand the stream of questions with which his commander sought to clear the mystery attached to a second mate who knew not the sea. Luckily, he emerged from the flood with credit; nay, the examiner himself was obliged at times to assume a knowledge which he did not possess, for, if Stump knew how to con a ship from port to port, Royson could give reasons for Great Circle sailing which left Stump gasping. At last the stout Captain could no longer conceal his amazement when Royson had recited correctly the rules of the road for steamships crossing:

If to my starboard red appear,
It is my duty to keep clear;
Act as judgment says is proper,—
"Port!" or "Starboard!" "Back!" or "Stop her!"

But when upon my port is seen
A steamer's starboard light of green,
For me there's naught to do, but see
That green to port keeps clear of me.

"Come, now!" he growled, "w'at's your game? D'ye mean to say you've been humbuggin' me all this time?"

His little eyes glared redly from underneath his shaggy eyebrows. He was ready to sulk again, without hope of reconciliation; so Royson perforce explained.

"I have no objection to telling you, Captain, how I came to acquire a good deal of unusual information about the sea; but I wish to stipulate, once and for all, that I shall not be questioned further as to my past life."

"Go ahead! That's fair."

"Well, I have spent many a day, since I was a boy of ten until I was nearly twenty, sailing a schooner rigged yacht on Windermere. My companion and tutor was a retired commander of the royal navy, and he amused himself by teaching me navigation. I learned it better than any of the orthodox sciences I had to study at school. You see, that was my hobby, while a wholesome respect for my skipper led me to work hard. I have not forgotten what I was taught, though the only stretch of water I have seen during the last few years is the Thames from its bridges; and I honestly believe that if you will put up with my want of experience of the sea for a week or so, I shall be quite capable of doing any work you may intrust to me."

"By gad!" said Stump admiringly, "you're a wonder. Come on deck. I'll give you a tip or two as we go into Calais."

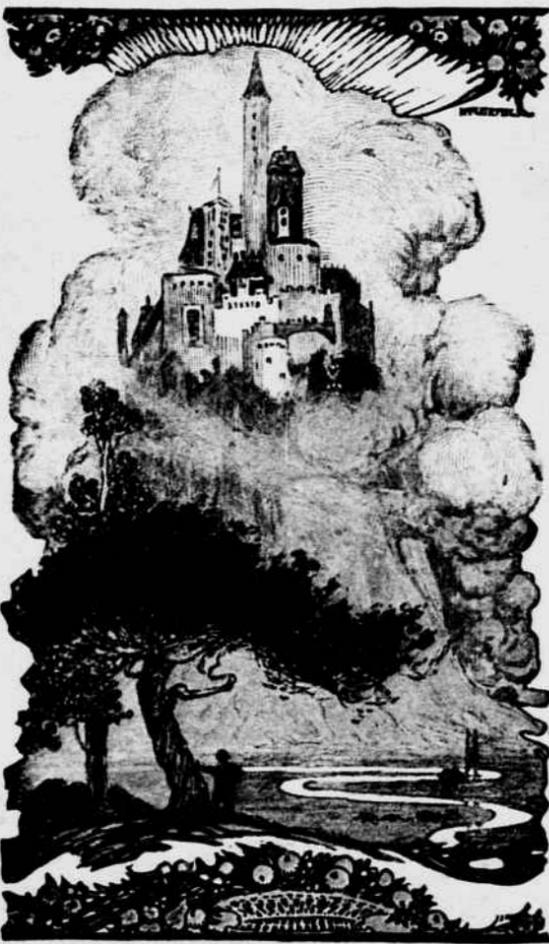
During the journey across France it was natural that Royson should take the lead. He spoke the language fluently, whereas Stump's vocabulary was limited to a few forcible expressions he had picked up from brother mariners. There was a breakdown on the line near Dijon, which delayed them eight hours, and Stump might have had apoplexy if Royson had not been at hand to translate the curt explanations of railway officials. But the two became good friends, which was an excellent thing for Dick, and the latter soon discovered to his great surprise that Stump had never set eyes on the Aphrodite.

"No," he said, when some chance remark from Royson had elicited this curious fact, "she's a stranger to me. Me an' Tagg—Tagg is my first mate, you see—had just left the Chirria when she was sold to the Germans out of the East Indian trade, an' we was lookin' about for w'at might turn up, when the man who chartered the Aphrodite put us onto this job. Tagg has gone ahead with most of the crew; but I had to stop in London a few days—to see after things a bit."

Stump had really remained behind in order to buy a complete set of charts; but he checked his confidences at that point, nor did Royson endeavor to probe further into the recent history of the yacht.

Instead of traversing Marseilles at night, they

INEVITABLE



By Cora Lapham Hazard

He hastes with gay heart on his happy, careless way;
A path of pleasantness doth urge his eager feet;
He pictures wonders of the "Palace Beautiful"
Which his delighted vision now full soon shall greet.

When from the shrouding mists, gigantic, grim, and sheer,
Looms forth a cliff—all progress it would seem to bar.
"Ah, this is fate!" sighs he. "Too high did I aspire."
And thus is mortal punished who would pluck a star.

He sat down and mourned the "Palace Beautiful,"
While thickly round him sprang the bitter cress and rue
That on the dull, stern bulk of cliff were niches set;
For bravely climbing feet, poor soul! he never knew.