

CHAPTER XXXIII

Otard

And here is another little incident.

One afternoon while all by myself curiously penetrating into the hold, I most unexpectedly obtained proof, that the ill-fated captain of the Parki had been a man of sound judgment and most excellent taste. In brief, I lighted upon an aromatic cask of prime old Otard.

Now, I mean not to speak lightly of any thing immediately connected with the unfortunate captain. Nor, on the other hand, would I resemble the inconsolable mourner, who among other tokens of affliction, bound in funereal crape his deceased friend's copy of Joe Miller. Is there not a fitness in things?

But let that pass. I found the Otard, and drank there-of; finding it, moreover, most pleasant to the palate, and right cheering to the soul. My next impulse was to share my prize with my shipmates. But here a judicious reflection obtruded. From the sea-monarchs, his ancestors, my Viking had inherited one of their cardinal virtues, a detestation and abhorrence of all vinous and spirituous beverages; insomuch, that he never could see any, but he instantly quaffed it out of sight. To be short, like Alexander the Great and other royalties, Jarl was prone to overmuch bibing. And though at sea more

sober than a Fifth Monarchy Elder, it was only because he was then removed from temptation. But having thus divulged my Viking's weak; side, I earnestly entreat, that it may not disparage him in any charitable man's estimation. Only think, how many more there are like him to say nothing further of Alexander the Great--especially among his own class; and consider, I beseech, that the most capacious-souled fellows, for that very reason, are the most apt to be too liberal in their libations; since, being so large-hearted, they hold so much more good cheer than others.

For Samoa, from his utter silence hitherto as to aught inebriating on board, I concluded, that, along with his other secrets, the departed captain had very wisely kept his Otard to himself.

Nor did I doubt, but that the Upoluan, like all Polynesians, much loved getting high of head; and in that state, would be more intractable than a Black Forest boar. And concerning Annatoo, I shuddered to think, how that Otard might inflame her into a Fury more fierce than the foremost of those that pursued Orestes.

In good time, then, bethinking me of the peril of publishing my discovery;--bethinking me of the quiet, lazy, ever-present perils of the voyage, of all circumstances, the very worst under which to introduce an intoxicating beverage to my companions, I resolved to withhold it from them altogether.

So impressed was I with all this, that for a moment, I was almost tempted to roll over the cask on its bilge, remove the stopper, and suffer its contents to mix with the foul water at the bottom of the hold.

But no, no: What: dilute the brine with the double distilled soul of the precious grape? Haft himself would have haunted me!

Then again, it might come into play medicinally; and Paracelsus himself stands sponsor for every cup drunk for the good of the abdomen. So at last, I determined to let it remain where it was: visiting it occasionally, by myself, for inspection.

But by way of advice to all ship-masters, let me say, that if your Otard magazine be exposed to view--then, in the evil hour of wreck, stave in your spirit-casks, ere rigging the life-boat.