

Yes I yes! give me this glorious ocean life, this salt-sea life, this briny, foamy life, when the sea neighs and snorts, and you breathe the very breath that the great whales respire! Let me roll around the globe, let me rock upon the sea; let me race and pant out my life, with an eternal breeze astern, and an endless sea before!

But how soon these raptures abated, when after a brief idle interval, we were again set to work, and I had a vile commission to clean out the chicken coops, and make up the beds of the pigs in the long-boat.

Miserable dog's life is this of the sea! commanded like a slave, and set to work like an ass! vulgar and brutal men lording it over me, as if I were an African in Alabama. Yes, yes, blow on, ye breezes, and make a speedy end to this abominable voyage!

XIV. HE CONTEMPLATES MAKING A SOCIAL CALL ON THE CAPTAIN IN HIS CABIN

What reminded me most forcibly of my ignominious condition, was the widely altered manner of the captain toward me.

I had thought him a fine, funny gentleman, full of mirth and good humor, and good will to seamen, and one who could not fail to appreciate the difference between me and the rude sailors among whom I was thrown. Indeed, I had made no doubt that he would in some special manner take me under his protection, and prove a kind friend and benefactor to me; as I had heard that some sea-captains are fathers to their crew; and so they are; but such fathers as Solomon's precepts tend to make--severe and chastising fathers, fathers whose sense of duty overcomes the sense of love, and who every day, in some sort, play the part of Brutus, who ordered his son away to execution, as I have read in our old family Plutarch.

Yes, I thought that Captain Riga, for Riga was his name, would be attentive and considerate to me, and strive to cheer me up, and comfort me in my lonesomeness. I did not even deem it at all impossible that he would invite me down into the cabin of a pleasant night, to ask me questions concerning my parents, and prospects in life; besides obtaining from me some anecdotes touching my great-uncle, the illustrious senator; or give me a slate and pencil, and teach me problems in navigation; or perhaps engage me at a game of chess. I even thought he might invite me to dinner on a sunny Sunday, and help me plentifully to the nice cabin fare, as knowing how distasteful the salt beef and pork, and hard biscuit of the fore-castle must at first be to a boy like me, who had always lived ashore, and at home.

And I could not help regarding him with peculiar emotions, almost of

tenderness and love, as the last visible link in the chain of associations which bound me to my home. For, while yet in port, I had seen him and Mr. Jones, my brother's friend, standing together and conversing; so that from the captain to my brother there was but one intermediate step; and my brother and mother and sisters were one.

And this reminds me how often I used to pass by the places on deck, where I remembered Mr. Jones had stood when we first visited the ship lying at the wharf; and how I tried to convince myself that it was indeed true, that he had stood there, though now the ship was so far away on the wide Atlantic Ocean, and he perhaps was walking down Wall-street, or sitting reading the newspaper in his counting room, while poor I was so differently employed.

When two or three days had passed without the captain's speaking to me in any way, or sending word into the fore-castle that he wished me to drop into the cabin to pay my respects. I began to think whether I should not make the first advances, and whether indeed he did not expect it of me, since I was but a boy, and he a man; and perhaps that might have been the reason why he had not spoken to me yet, deeming it more proper and respectful for me to address him first. I thought he might be offended, too, especially if he were a proud man, with tender feelings. So one evening, a little before sundown, in the second dog-watch, when there was no more work to be done, I concluded to call and see him.

After drawing a bucket of water, and having a good washing, to get off

some of the chicken-coop stains, I went down into the forecastle to dress myself as neatly as I could. I put on a white shirt in place of my red one, and got into a pair of cloth trowsers instead of my duck ones, and put on my new pumps, and then carefully brushing my shooting-jacket, I put that on over all, so that upon the whole, I made quite a genteel figure, at least for a forecastle, though I would not have looked so well in a drawing-room.

When the sailors saw me thus employed, they did not know what to make of it, and wanted to know whether I was dressing to go ashore; I told them no, for we were then out of sight of mind; but that I was going to pay my respects to the captain. Upon which they all laughed and shouted, as if I were a simpleton; though there seemed nothing so very simple in going to make an evening call upon a friend. When some of them tried to dissuade me, saying I was green and raw; but Jackson, who sat looking on, cried out, with a hideous grin, "Let him go, let him go, men--he's a nice boy. Let him go; the captain has some nuts and raisins for him." And so he was going on, when one of his violent fits of coughing seized him, and he almost choked.

As I was about leaving the forecastle, I happened to look at my hands, and seeing them stained all over of a deep yellow, for that morning the mate had set me to tarring some strips of canvas for the rigging I thought it would never do to present myself before a gentleman that way; so for want of lads, I slipped on a pair of woolen mittens, which my mother had knit for me to carry to sea. As I was putting them on,

Jackson asked me whether he shouldn't call a carriage; and another bade me not forget to present his best respects to the skipper. I left them all tittering, and coming on deck was passing the cook-house, when the old cook called after me, saying I had forgot my cane.

But I did not heed their impudence, and was walking straight toward the cabin-door on the quarter-deck, when the chief mate met me. I touched my hat, and was passing him, when, after staring at me till I thought his eyes would burst out, he all at once caught me by the collar, and with a voice of thunder, wanted to know what I meant by playing such tricks aboard a ship that he was mate of? I told him to let go of me, or I would complain to my friend the captain, whom I intended to visit that evening. Upon this he gave me such a whirl round, that I thought the Gulf Stream was in my head; and then shoved me forward, roaring out I know not what. Meanwhile the sailors were all standing round the windlass looking aft, mightily tickled.

Seeing I could not effect my object that night, I thought it best to defer it for the present; and returning among the sailors, Jackson asked me how I had found the captain, and whether the next time I went, I would not take a friend along and introduce him.

The upshot of this business was, that before I went to sleep that night, I felt well satisfied that it was not customary for sailors to call on the captain in the cabin; and I began to have an inkling of the fact, that I had acted like a fool; but it all arose from my ignorance of sea

usages.

And here I may as well state, that I never saw the inside of the cabin during the whole interval that elapsed from our sailing till our return to New York; though I often used to get a peep at it through a little pane of glass, set in the house on deck, just before the helm, where a watch was kept hanging for the helmsman to strike the half hours by, with his little bell in the binnacle, where the compass was. And it used to be the great amusement of the sailors to look in through the pane of glass, when they stood at the wheel, and watch the proceedings in the cabin; especially when the steward was setting the table for dinner, or the captain was lounging over a decanter of wine on a little mahogany stand, or playing the game called solitaire, at cards, of an evening; for at times he was all alone with his dignity; though, as will ere long be shown, he generally had one pleasant companion, whose society he did not dislike.

The day following my attempt to drop in at the cabin, I happened to be making fast a rope on the quarter-deck, when the captain suddenly made his appearance, promenading up and down, and smoking a cigar. He looked very good-humored and amiable, and it being just after his dinner, I thought that this, to be sure, was just the chance I wanted.

I waited a little while, thinking he would speak to me himself; but as he did not, I went up to him, and began by saying it was a very pleasant day, and hoped he was very well. I never saw a man fly into such a rage;

I thought he was going to knock me down; but after standing speechless awhile, he all at once plucked his cap from his head and threw it at me. I don't know what impelled me, but I ran to the lee-scuppers where it fell, picked it up, and gave it to him with a bow; when the mate came running up, and thrust me forward again; and after he had got me as far as the windlass, he wanted to know whether I was crazy or not; for if I was, he would put me in irons right off, and have done with it.

But I assured him I was in my right mind, and knew perfectly well that I had been treated in the most rude and un-gentlemanly manner both by him and Captain Riga. Upon this, he rapped out a great oath, and told me if I ever repeated what I had done that evening, or ever again presumed so much as to lift my hat to the captain, he would tie me into the rigging, and keep me there until I learned better manners. "You are very green," said he, "but I'll ripen you." Indeed this chief mate seemed to have the keeping of the dignity of the captain; who, in some sort, seemed too dignified personally to protect his own dignity.

I thought this strange enough, to be reprimanded, and charged with rudeness for an act of common civility. However, seeing how matters stood, I resolved to let the captain alone for the future, particularly as he had shown himself so deficient in the ordinary breeding of a gentleman. And I could hardly credit it, that this was the same man who had been so very civil, and polite, and witty, when Mr. Jones and I called upon him in port.

But this astonishment of mine was much increased, when some days after, a storm came upon us, and the captain rushed out of the cabin in his nightcap, and nothing else but his shirt on; and leaping up on the poop, began to jump up and down, and curse and swear, and call the men aloft all manner of hard names, just like a common loafer in the street.

Besides all this, too, I noticed that while we were at sea, he wore nothing but old shabby clothes, very different from the glossy suit I had seen him in at our first interview, and after that on the steps of the City Hotel, where he always boarded when in New York. Now, he wore nothing but old-fashioned snuff-colored coats, with high collars and short waists; and faded, short-legged pantaloons, very tight about the knees; and vests, that did not conceal his waistbands, owing to their being so short, just like a little boy's. And his hats were all caved in, and battered, as if they had been knocked about in a cellar; and his boots were sadly patched. Indeed, I began to think that he was but a shabby fellow after all; particularly as his whiskers lost their gloss, and he went days together without shaving; and his hair, by a sort of miracle, began to grow of a pepper and salt color, which might have been owing, though, to his discontinuing the use of some kind of dye while at sea. I put him down as a sort of impostor; and while ashore, a gentleman on false pretenses; for no gentleman would have treated another gentleman as he did me.

Yes, Captain Riga, thought I, you are no gentleman, and you know it!