

XV. THE MELANCHOLY STATE OF HIS WARDROBE

And now that I have been speaking of the captain's old clothes, I may as well speak of mine.

It was very early in the month of June that we sailed; and I had greatly rejoiced that it was that time of the year; for it would be warm and pleasant upon the ocean, I thought; and my voyage would be like a summer excursion to the sea shore, for the benefit of the salt water, and a change of scene and society.

So I had not given myself much concern about what I should wear; and deemed it wholly unnecessary to provide myself with a great outfit of pilot-cloth jackets, and browsers, and Guernsey frocks, and oil-skin suits, and sea-boots, and many other things, which old seamen carry in their chests. But one reason was, that I did not have the money to buy them with, even if I had wanted to. So in addition to the clothes I had brought from home, I had only bought a red shirt, a tarpaulin hat, and a belt and knife, as I have previously related, which gave me a sea outfit, something like the Texan rangers', whose uniform, they say, consists of a shirt collar and a pair of spurs.

But I was not many days at sea, when I found that my shore clothing, or "long togs," as the sailors call them, were but ill adapted to the life I now led. When I went aloft, at my yard-arm gymnastics, my pantaloons were all the time ripping and splitting in every direction, particularly about the seat, owing to their not being cut sailor-fashion, with low waistbands, and to wear without suspenders. So that I was often placed in most unpleasant predicaments, straddling the rigging, sometimes in plain sight of the cabin, with my table linen exposed in the most inelegant and ungentlemanly manner possible.

And worse than all, my best pair of pantaloons, and the pair I most prided myself upon, was a very conspicuous and remarkable looking pair.

I had had them made to order by our village tailor, a little fat man, very thin in the legs, and who used to say he imported the latest fashions direct from Paris; though all the fashion plates in his shop were very dirty with fly-marks.

Well, this tailor made the pantaloons I speak of, and while he had them in hand, I used to call and see him two or three times a day to try them on, and hurry him forward; for he was an old man with large round spectacles, and could not see very well, and had no one to help him but a sick wife, with five grandchildren to take care of; and besides that, he was such a great snuff-taker, that it interfered with his business; for he took several pinches for every stitch, and would sit snuffing and blowing his nose over my pantaloons, till I used to get disgusted with

him. Now, this old tailor had shown me the pattern, after which he intended to make my pantaloons; but I improved upon it, and bade him have a slit on the outside of each leg, at the foot, to button up with a row of six brass bell buttons; for a grown-up cousin of mine, who was a great sportsman, used to wear a beautiful pair of pantaloons, made precisely in that way.

And these were the very pair I now had at sea; the sailors made a great deal of fun of them, and were all the time calling on each other to "ftoig" them; and they would ask me to lend them a button or two, by way of a joke; and then they would ask me if I was not a soldier. Showing very plainly that they had no idea that my pantaloons were a very genteel pair, made in the height of the sporting fashion, and copied from my cousin's, who was a young man of fortune and drove a tilbury.

When my pantaloons ripped and tore, as I have said, I did my best to mend and patch them; but not being much of a sempstress, the more I patched the more they parted; because I put my patches on, without heeding the joints of the legs, which only irritated my poor pants the more, and put them out of temper.

Nor must I forget my boots, which were almost new when I left home. They had been my Sunday boots, and fitted me to a charm. I never had had a pair of boots that I liked better; I used to turn my toes out when I walked in them, unless it was night time, when no one could see me, and I had something else to think of; and I used to keep looking at them

during church; so that I lost a good deal of the sermon. In a word, they were a beautiful pair of boots. But all this only unfitted them the more for sea-service; as I soon discovered. They had very high heels, which were all the time tripping me in the rigging, and several times came near pitching me overboard; and the salt water made them shrink in such a manner, that they pinched me terribly about the instep; and I was obliged to gash them cruelly, which went to my very heart. The legs were quite long, coming a good way up toward my knees, and the edges were mounted with red morocco. The sailors used to call them my "gaff-topsail-boots." And sometimes they used to call me "Boots," and sometimes "Buttons," on account of the ornaments on my pantaloons and shooting-jacket.

At last, I took their advice, and "razeed" them, as they phrased it. That is, I amputated the legs, and shaved off the heels to the bare soles; which, however, did not much improve them, for it made my feet feel flat as flounders, and besides, brought me down in the world, and made me slip and slide about the decks, as I used to at home, when I wore straps on the ice.

As for my tarpaulin hat, it was a very cheap one; and therefore proved a real sham and shave; it leaked like an old shingle roof; and in a rain storm, kept my hair wet and disagreeable. Besides, from lying down on deck in it, during the night watches, it got bruised and battered, and lost all its beauty; so that it was unprofitable every way.

But I had almost forgotten my shooting-jacket, which was made of moleskin. Every day, it grew smaller and smaller, particularly after a rain, until at last I thought it would completely exhale, and leave nothing but the bare seams, by way of a skeleton, on my back. It became unspeakably unpleasant, when we got into rather cold weather, crossing the Banks of Newfoundland, when the only way I had to keep warm during the night, was to pull on my waistcoat and my roundabout, and then clap the shooting-jacket over all. This made it pinch me under the arms, and it vexed, irritated, and tormented me every way; and used to incommode my arms seriously when I was pulling the ropes; so much so, that the mate asked me once if I had the cramp.

I may as well here glance at some trials and tribulations of a similar kind. I had no mattress, or bed-clothes, of any sort; for the thought of them had never entered my mind before going to sea; so that I was obliged to sleep on the bare boards of my bunk; and when the ship pitched violently, and almost stood upon end, I must have looked like an Indian baby tied to a plank, and hung up against a tree like a crucifix.

I have already mentioned my total want of table-tools; never dreaming, that, in this respect, going to sea as a sailor was something like going to a boarding-school, where you must furnish your own spoon and knife, fork, and napkin. But at length, I was so happy as to barter with a steerage passenger a silk handkerchief of mine for a half-gallon iron pot, with hooks to it, to hang on a grate; and this pot I used to present at the cook-house for my allowance of coffee and tea. It gave me

a good deal of trouble, though, to keep it clean, being much disposed to rust; and the hooks sometimes scratched my face when I was drinking; and it was unusually large and heavy; so that my breakfasts were deprived of all ease and satisfaction, and became a toil and a labor to me. And I was forced to use the same pot for my bean-soup, three times a week, which imparted to it a bad flavor for coffee.

I can not tell how I really suffered in many ways for my improvidence and heedlessness, in going to sea so ill provided with every thing calculated to make my situation at all comfortable, or even tolerable. In time, my wretched "long togs" began to drop off my back, and I looked like a Sam Patch, shambling round the deck in my rags and the wreck of my gaff-topsail-boots. I often thought what my friends at home would have said, if they could but get one peep at me. But I hugged myself in my miserable shooting-jacket, when I considered that that degradation and shame never could overtake me; yet, I thought it a galling mockery, when I remembered that my sisters had promised to tell all inquiring friends, that Wellingborough had gone "abroad" just as if I was visiting Europe on a tour with my tutor, as poor simple Mr. Jones had hinted to the captain.

Still, in spite of the melancholy which sometimes overtook me, there were several little incidents that made me forget myself in the contemplation of the strange and to me most wonderful sights of the sea.

And perhaps nothing struck into me such a feeling of wild romance, as a

view of the first vessel we spoke. It was of a clear sunny afternoon, and she came bearing down upon us, a most beautiful sight, with all her sails spread wide. She came very near, and passed under our stern; and as she leaned over to the breeze, showed her decks fore and aft; and I saw the strange sailors grouped upon the forecastle, and the cook look-cook-house with a ladle in his hand, and the captain in a green jacket sitting on the taffrail with a speaking-trumpet.

And here, had this vessel come out of the infinite blue ocean, with all these human beings on board, and the smoke tranquilly mounting up into the sea-air from the cook's funnel as if it were a chimney in a city; and every thing looking so cool, and calm, and of-course, in the midst of what to me, at least, seemed a superlative marvel.

Hoisted at her mizzen-peak was a red flag, with a turreted white castle in the middle, which looked foreign enough, and made me stare all the harder.

Our captain, who had put on another hat and coat, and was lounging in an elegant attitude on the poop, now put his high polished brass trumpet to his mouth, and said in a very rude voice for conversation, "Where from?"

To which the other captain rejoined with some outlandish Dutch gibberish, of which we could only make out, that the ship belonged to Hamburg, as her flag denoted.

Hamburg!

Bless my soul! and here I am on the great Atlantic Ocean, actually beholding a ship from Holland! It was passing strange. In my intervals of leisure from other duties, I followed the strange ship till she was quite a little speck in the distance.

I could not but be struck with the manner of the two sea-captains during their brief interview. Seated at their ease on their respective "poops" toward the stern of their ships, while the sailors were obeying their behests; they touched hats to each other, exchanged compliments, and drove on, with all the indifference of two Arab horsemen accosting each other on an airing in the Desert. To them, I suppose, the great Atlantic Ocean was a puddle.

XVI. AT DEAD OF NIGHT HE IS SENT UP TO LOOSE THE MAIN-SKYSAIL

I must now run back a little, and tell of my first going aloft at middle watch, when the sea was quite calm, and the breeze was mild.

The order was given to loose the main-skysail, which is the fifth and highest sail from deck. It was a very small sail, and from the