

THREE SHEETS in the WIND

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ILLUSTRATIONS
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THE MOST CONVINCING lecture or lesson on morals is the one delivered by an immoral, or unmoral, person. I learned this early in life, when, with a crowd of other youngsters, I was trying to drown a half-grown puppy. We would have succeeded; but along

came a tramp—a ragged, dirty, black-bearded derelict—who watched us a moment, then gave utterance to a villainous flood of billingsgate. I can not write down the names he called us, nor the adjectives with which he qualified the names; but his concluding speech, expurgated, ran something like this: "Any man or boy, who will illtreat a dumb and defenseless animal that can't talk back and explain matters, is mean, that's all—just mean. He's mean enough to steal the cross off a donkey's back."

Then, still storming at us, he reeled on his way, while we rescued the half-dead creature and nursed it back to life. Later, we found it a home, and became an unorganized, unofficial Humane Society. We lied, stole, tickled the devil and played truant as before, but were a menace to other boys who, with the savagery of children, found pleasure in cruelty. The tramp's anger and disgust had done more for us than the behests of father, mother or Sunday school teacher.

With pity for dumb brutes my one moral quality, I grew up and went to sea, where morals are not taught—where nothing is taught or acquired but seamanship, navigation and an iron-clad stamina and endurance. These attributes came to me in time, as well as a mate's certificate; but in all else I remained at a standstill, or went backward. Sailors are children, it is said, and like all sailors, even when I berthed aft, I grumbled, quarreled, swore and drank, with no restraining influence or principle to curb me until I received my second lesson in morals—or ethics, if you like—and this time from a man I despised as a I might have despised the tramp had he not impressed me. Afterward I received other tutelage, and finally became the civilized commander of a passenger steamship; but my later development has no place in this story, which is concerned only with that second lecture and the events which followed—events that made me a teetotaler for life.

This lecture came from Bill Edwards who, as second mate of my first ship, had kicked me off the poop and hazed me for the whole voyage because I had dared raise my voice in boyish protest at his "spritsail-yarding" of a shark that he had caught with a line and pulled aboard. I lacked the vocabulary and

the superiority in size and strength possessed by the tramp, so my protest was ignored, and the shark, alive and uninjured, went overboard with a small spar lashed athwart its mouth, to die of starvation. Later, however, having attained my growth, strength and chest measurement, I met Edwards in a Rangoon boarding-house, and thrashed him within an inch of his life. Then we had gone our separate ways—he to the hospital, I to jail—not to meet again until Frisco Frank, a Honolulu boarding master, having taken my last cent for bed, board and bar, turned me out without my dunnage, without another boarding-house to take me in, and without a ship in port to sign in. It was then, sitting on a string piece of the wharf, staring at the water with aching eyes while I nursed an aching head, that Edwards approached from behind me and, stooping over my shoulder, peered into my face.

"It's you, Jack," he said, not unkindly. "Heard you were in port; but what's the matter? Lost your mother?"

"**O**N the beach," I answered, bitterly. I did not welcome his presence, but in my extremity I would have talked with a coolie. "Fired out when I'd blown my last cent; and his bill was big enough to give him an excuse to hold my clothes."

"Frisco Frank, hey! He can't hold a sailor's clothes. Don't you know that?"

"Yes, but I don't care to fall back on sailor's rights,

for was a run ashore, and a big drunk. You've had them, and now you're paying."

"You're a fine preacher," I rejoined.

"I'm not preaching—that is, about right and wrong. It's the dam'foolishness of it. I've been called all kinds of a scoundrel; but no man ever called me a fool, even though I can just write my name and can't read it in print. No man ever saw me drunk. In all my life I never spent as much as a dollar over a bar. I know the taste of the stuff and don't like it. Do you like it?"

"No," I answered, dubiously. "Can't say that I do. It's the stimulation I like."

"Dutch courage, that lasts about fifteen minutes, then needs replenishing. Then you're sleepy or quarrelsome, according to your liver—in either case in danger of robbery or arrest. Who benefits, any way? The men behind the bar, but they don't drink. Did you ever see a saloonkeeper or bartender drunk?"

"I've seen them drink," I replied, doggedly.

"Yes, for sociability or business, and then the smallest drink possible. It's the dam'fools in front of the bar that take all they can decently get into a glass, and then some more. And think of the cost at the end of a year. Why, the price of one drink will buy three loaves of bread, and three loaves of bread will keep a big man alive three days. That's the foolishness of it. Poverty all over the world and saloon keepers getting rich. Frisco Frank has his house and horses. Where's yours?"

"Oh, shut up! I've got what he has n't got."

"An education and a mate's license. What does he want of them? He has brains and money—all your money. I tell you, if it was n't for the bar, boarding masters would go out of business and Fo'castle Jack could ship where he likes on his own terms. If all men would swear off, saloon keepers, bartenders, and every man connected with making or selling the stuff would take to the ground and grow something that could be eaten. As it is, more grain goes into the making of booze than of bread. Dead broke?"

I nodded.

"I'm not, even though I never had your chance, not having any schooling. I never signed above second mate because I could n't learn navigation. But I've jumped above first mate and skipper. I'm an owner—I employ skippers and mates."

I looked at him in surprise. He certainly was well dressed.

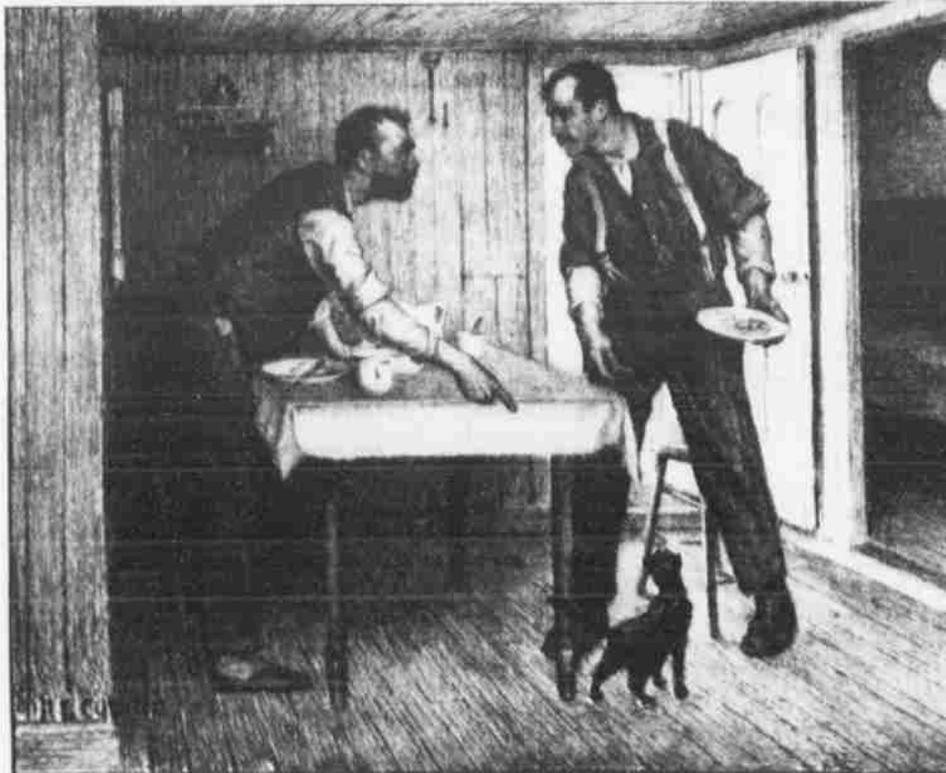
"I've made money," he went on. "Never mind how. I've made it, and taken a Chinese partner with more. We bought a schooner from the underwriters, patched her up, and mean to make some more money with her. She's up at the Carriage Drive. I go out skipper, for I can handle her; but I want a licensed sailing master with papers to satisfy the law. You've got 'em. Want the berth?"

"Want a drink more than anything else," I answered, abandonedly.

"**Y**OU want your breakfast more than anything else, I take it. But if you'll ship with me I'll buy you a drink of Frisco's grog to steady you, and get your clothes, but there'll be no advance; I'm too short. We can get aboard just in time for dinner, which will be breakfast for you. I'll give you another brace at five o'clock, and that will end it. We sail to Yokohama in ballast for a cargo to Frisco. And remember, in port I am managing owner and you are skipper; but at sea I'm skipper and you're mate. You are to navigate, keep the log correctly, and oversee the accounts and ship's papers. What do you say?"

"I'll go you," I said, rising. "Any port in a storm."

"You mean any ship in (Continued on Page 8)



"I want no cats aboard. They're bad luck"

I've had papers too long," I sneered ill-naturedly.

"You came in first mate of the Century, I heard. Discharged?"

"Quit, if it's any of your business," I answered, savagely. "Did n't like her."

"Oh, don't get wrathy! I'm not looking for scraps, for I know you can lick me. But I'm older than you, and never having held any grudge, I feel like telling you something. You did n't quit that big ship because you did n't like her. You had a good berth, a good skipper, and good prospects. What you quit