

(Copyright, 1898, by Cutcliffe Hyne.) Captain Owen Kettle folded the lettercard, put it in his pocket and relit his tigar. He drew paper toward him and took out a stub of pencil and tried to make verse which was his habit when things were shaping themselves awry, but the rhymes refused to come. He changed the meter: he gave up laboring to fit the words to the air of "Suwanee River," and started fresh lines which would go to the tune of "Greenland's Icy Mountains," a meter with which at other times he had been notoriously successful. But it failed him now. He could not get the jingle; spare feet bristled at every turn; and the field of poppies on which his muse was engaged became every moment

more and more clusive. It was no use. He put down the pencil and sighed; and then frowning at himself for his indecision, took out the letter-card again and deliberately reread it, front and

Captain Kettle was a man who made up his mind over most matters with the quickness of a pistol shot and once settled rightly or wrongly he always stuck to his decision. But here, on the letter-card, was a matter he could not get the balance of at all; it refused to be dismissed, even temporarily, from his mind; it involved interests far too large to be hazarded by a hasty verdict either one way or the other and the difficulty in coming to any satisfactory conclu-

sion irritated him heavily. The letter-card was anonymous and seemed to present no clue to its authorship. It was typewritten; it was posted, as the stamp showed, in Newcastle; it committed its writer in no degree whatever. But it made statements which, if true, ought to have sent somebody to penal servitude, and it threw out hints which, true or untrue, made Captain Kettle heir to a whole world

of anxiety and trouble. It is an excellent academic rule to entirely disregard anonymous letters, but it is by no means always an easy rule to And there are times when a follow. friendly warning must be conveyed anonymously, or not at all. But Kettle did not worry his head about the ethics of anonymous letter-writing as a profession; his attention was taken up by this typewritten card from Well Wisher, which he held in his hand.

"Your ship goes to sea never to reach port," he read. "There is an insurance robbery cleverly rigged. You think yourself very smart, I know, but this time you are being made a common gull of." the writer wound up by saying: "I can't give you any hint of how its going to be done. Only I know the game's fixed. So keep your weather eye skinned and take the Sultan of Labuan safely out and back and maybe you'll get something more solid than a drink, From Your Well Wisher."

Captain Cuttle was torn, as he read, by many conflicting sentiments. Loyalty to Mr. Gedge, his owner, was one of them. Gedge had sold him before, but that was in a way condoned by this present appointment to the Sultan of Labuan. And he wanted very much to know what were Mr. Gedge's wishes over the matter.

His own code of morality on this sub-Sect was peculiar. Ashore in South Shields he was as honest as a bishop; he was a strict chapel member; he did not even steal matches from the captain's room at Hallett's, his house of call, which has always been accounted a recognized peculation. At sea he conceived himself to be bought body and soul by his owner for the time being, and was perfectly ready to risk body and soul in earning his pay-But the question was: How was this pay to be carned? Up till then he would have said, "by driving the Sultan of Labuan over the seas as fast as could be done on a given coal consumption; by ruthlessly keeping down expense, and, in fact, by making the steamer earn the largest possible dividend in the ordinary way of commerce." But this typewritten letter card hinted at other purposes, which he knew were quite within the bounds of possibility and if he was being made into a catspaw-

He hit the unfinished poems on the table a blow with his fist. "By James!" he mut-



AFTER HOUR UNDER SHELTER

a clear understanding about the matter." into his pocket and took his cap. kitchen below, "I've got to run up to the office to see Mr. Gedge. I don't think I to the full. quite understand his wishes about running | A train clattered him into Monmouth-

a shipmaster's timidity at tackling a shipowner in his lair, and this of course handi-

Talk ahead. I can listen whilst I sign these letters."

you about running the boat." 'Want Miss Payne to go out?"

Gedge jerked his head toward the door. "Type out what you've got," he said. The shorthand writer went out and closed the glass door after her. "Now, Kettle?" Captain Kettle hesitated. It was an awk-

I'm in the devil of a hurry."

wish you'd let me know a little more like."

wish me to run this steamboat. Do you

want me to-I mean-" 'Well, get on, get on.'

"When do you want her back?" Gedge leaned back in his chair, tapped his teeth with the end of his pen. "Look here, captain," he said, "you didn't come here to talk rot like this. You've had your orders already. You aren't a drinking man. or I'd say you were screwed. So there's something else behind. Come, out with it." "I hardly know how to begin."

"I don't want rhetoric. If you've got a tale, tell it, if not"-Mr. Gedge leaned over his desk again and went on signing his let-

Cantain Kettle stood the rudeness without so much as a flush. He sighed a little, and then after another few moments' thought took the letter card from his pocket and laid it on his employer's table. After Gedge had conned through and signed a couple more sheets he took the card up in his fingers and skimmed it through.

As he read the color deepened in his face and Kettle saw that he was moved, but said nothing. For a moment there was silence between them and Gedge tapped at his teeth and was apparently lost in thought. Then he said: "Where did you get this?"

"Through the post." "And why did you bring it to me?" "I thought you might have something to

say about it. "Shown It to anyone else?" "No, sir; I'm in your service and earning

your pay." "Yes, I pulled you out of the gutter again quite recently and you said you'd be able to get your wife's clothes out of pawn with your advance note.'

"I'm very grateful to you for giving me the berth sir and I shall be a faithful servant to you as long as I'm in your employ But if there's anything on I'd like to be in your confidence. I know she isn't an old ship,

"But what?"

"She's uneconomical. Her engines are old fashioned. It wouldn't pay to fit her with triple expansions and new boilers."

"I see. Your appear to know a lot about the ship, captain, more than I do myself, in fact. I know you're a small tin sain when you're within hail of that Ebenezer or Bethel or whatever you call it here ashore, but at sea you've got the name for not being over particular."

"At sea," said the little sailor with sigh. "I am what I have to be. But I couldn't do that. I'm a poor man, sir, I'm pretty nearly a desperate man, but there are some kind of things that are beyond me I know it's done often enough, but-you'll have to excuse me. I can't lose her for you.

"Who's asking you?" said Gedge cheerily. "I'm not. Don't jump at conclusions man. I don't want the Sultan of Labuar lost. She's not my best ship, I'll grant but I can run her at a profit for all that, and even if I couldn't I'm not the sort of man to try and make my dividends out o Lloyds'. No, not by any means, captain; I've got my name to keep up.'

Captain Kettle brought up a sigh of relief. "Glad to hear it, sir; I'm glad to hear it. But I thought it best to have it out with you. That beastly letter upset

Gedge laughed slily. "Well, if you want to know who wrote the letter, I did myself." Kettle started. He was obviously in

"Well, to be accurate, I did it by deputy, You hae yer doots, eh? Hang it, man, what an unbelieving Jew you are-" He pressed one of the electric pushes by the side of his desk and the shorthand writer came in and stood at the doorway. "Miss Payne, you typed this letter card, didn't and Miss Payne dutifully answered,

"Thank you. That's do. Well, Kettle, I hope you're satisfied now? I sent this blessed card because I wanted to see how deep this shore-going honesty of went, which I've heard so much about; and now I know, and you may take it from me that you'll profit by it financially in the very near future. The ship masters I've had to do with have been mostly rogues, and when I get hold of a straight man know how to appreciate him. Now, goodby, captain, and a prosperous voyage to you. If you catch the midnight mail tonight from here you'll just get down to Newport tomorrow in time to see her come into dock. Take her over at once, you know; we can't have any time wasted. Here,

goodby, I'm frantically busy." "But, busy though he might be, Mr. Gedge did not immediately return to signing his letters after Captain Kettle's departure. Instead he took out a handkerchief and wiped his forehead and wiped his hands, which for some reason seemed to have grown unaccountably clammy, and for a while he lay back in his writing chair like a man who feels physically sick.

Captain Kettle, however, went his ways humming a cheerful air, and as the 12 "A catspaw? I didn't think of it o'clock mail roared out that night across in that light before. Well, we'd better have the high level bridge, he settled himself to sleep in his corner of a third class He got up, crammed the blue letter-card carriage and to dream the dreams of a man who, after many vicissitudes, has at dear," he called down to Mrs. Kettle, who last found righteous employment. It was was engaged on the family wash in the a new experience for him, and he permitted himself the luxury of enjoying it

the boat. Get your ten when its ready, shire some twelve hours later, and he I don't want to keep you and the youngsters stepped out on Newport platform into a tog, raw and fresh from the Bristol channel. His small, worn portmanteau he could hour before, and so Kettle, obedient to his coal. A wagon was shunted up, dandled orders, went down at once to take her

> It was not a pleasant operation, this oustnumber of times himself he thought he knew pretty well the feelings of the man dle, but for all that it did not break the coal whom he had come to replace. His recep- unduly. tion, however, surprised him. Williams, handed over his charge with an air of obvious and sincere relief, and Kettle felt that he was being eyed with a certain embarrassing curiosity. The man was not dis-

posed to be verbally communicative. You look knocked up," said Kettle. 'Might well be," retorted Captain Williams. "I haven't had a blessed wink of sleep since I pulled my anchors out of

Thames mud. 'Not had bad weather, have you?" weather's been right enough. Bit

thickish, that's all." "What's kept you from having a watch below, then? 'Fraid of losing the ship, captain.

"So I might have guessed," said Wil-Bams dryly. "Look here," said Kettle, "what are you driving at?"

"No offense, captain, no offense. I'll just shut my head now. Guess I've been talking too much already. Result of being ship's papers. They're all in this tin

"But I'd rather you said out what you got to say. "Thanks, captain, but no. This is the

first time we've met, I think." "So far as I remember.

"Well, there you are then; personally you no doubt are a very nice, pleasant gentleman, but still there's no getting over the fact that you're a stranger to me; and not; and there's a law of libel in this country which gets up and hits you whether you are talking truth or lies." "English laws are beastly, and that's a

fact. "Reading about them in the paper's quite enough for me. Now, captain, suppose we go ashore with these papers and I can sign off and you can sign on. Afterwards we'll have a drop of whisky together if you like,

just to show there's no ill-will." "You are very polite, captain," said Ket-"I'm sure I don't like the notion of stepping in to take away your employment. But if hadn't been for me, he'd have got some one else."

The other turned on him quickly.

rible; they're brutes. I know. I have been ited to its legal bounds, and Kettle got ranged for her never again to come into his clearance papers with the same flerce port. business-like bustle, and came back and

The pilot was there waiting for him, half admiring, half repelled; the old blue-faced mate and the carpenter were on the forecastle head, the second mate was aft, the chief overtired, I suppose. Let's get on with the himself and the third engineer were at the throttle and the reversing gear below. The ship's entire complement had quite rendered to the sway of this new taskmaster, and stood in their coal grime and their tiredness ready to jump at his bidding.

Bristol channel tides are high, and the current of the Usk was swift. It was going to be quick work if they did not miss the tide, and the pilot, who had no special stake in the matter, said it could not be done. anyway you're in Gedge's employ, and I'm Kettle, however, thought otherwise, and the pilot in consequence saw some seamanship which gave him chills down the back.

"By gum, captain," he said when they were fairly out of the river, "you can handle

"Wait till I know her, pilot, and then I'll show you.' "Haven't got perves enough. Look you captain, you'll be having a bad crumple-up f you bustle a big loaded steamboat about cks at that rate.

"Never bent a plate in my life." "Well, I hope you never will. Look you

now; you're a little tin wonder in the way of seamanship."

"Quartermaster." said Kettle, "tell my 'Don't think you're doing me a bad turn, steward to bring two goes of whisky up here captain, because you aren't. I was never on the bridge. Pilot, if you say such things so pleased to step out of a chart house in to me, you make me feel like a girl with a



CAPTAIN KETTLE REPLIED TO THE FIRST OF THESE COMPLIMENTS BY THREE PROMPT REVOLVER SHOTS.

my life. Only thing is, I hope I aren't doing new dress, and I want a drop of Dutch couryou a bad turn by letting you step in."

"I am maundering on too much, captain, and that's a fact. Result of being about tired out, I suppose. But you must excuse ne speaking further; there's that blasted libel law to think about. Now, captain here's the key of the chart house door and if you'll let me I'll go out first and you can lock it behind you. You'll find one of the tumblers beside the water bottle, broken it fell out of my hand this morning jus after I'd docked her; but all the rest is according to the inventory, and I'll kneck off threepence for the tumbler when we

further revelations was gone. Captain Wilforce dragged him off to bed at a tem labor, and for a minute or so Kettle stood beside the bed and gazed upon him thought

"By James," he muttered, "if I could make you speak, captain, I believe you

could tell a queerish tale." But Kettle did not loiter by this taciturn bedside. He had signed on as master of the Sultan of Labuan; he was in Mr. Gedge's employ, and earning Gedge's pay, and every lost. He went briskly across to the south dock and set the machinery of business to work without delay. There was grumbling from both mates, engineers and crew that they had been given leisure for scarcely a breath of shore air, but Kettle was not a man who courted popularity from his underlings by offering them indulgences. He stated that their duty was to get the water ballast out and the coal under the hatches in the shortest time on record, and mentioned that he was the man who would see

it done. The men grumbled, of course; behind their driver's back they swore; two deck hands and three of the stoke hold crew de and still the work went remorselessly on under the gray glow of the fog so long as daylight lasted, and then under the glare sloft in hydraulic arms, ignominiously emptied end-first and then put to ground again and petulantly sent away to find a fresh as Kettle had been supplanted a weary and relieved. Two hundred tons to the hour was what that bydraulic staith could han-

sure over their tasks.

Down to her fresh-water Plimsol the ceased. Even Kettle did not dare to overnever been up before the Board of Trade on the quays and if she was trimmed an yet, and don't want to try what it feels inch above her marks the Sultan of Lua-

"Well, said the pilot, when the whiskey ame, here's lots of cargo, captain, of good bonuses." "Here's deep-draft steamers for you, pilot, and plenty of water under 'em.

The whisky drained down its appointed channels, and the pilot said, "By the by, 've this for you, captain," and he brought ut a letter card.

"Man I came across. Look you, though, I don't know him. But he said there was a useful tip in the letter which it would please you to have after you sailed." Kettle tore off the perforated edges and looked inside the card. Here was another

Wisher, and, as before, warning him against the machinations of Gedge, "Got no idea "Well, I did have a bit of talk with him and a drink, and I rather gathered he might

he didn't say his name. Why, isn't he a friend of yours?" "I rather think he is." said Kettle, "but can't be quite sure yet." He did not add that the anonymous writer guaranteed him

drew no insurance money till he had moored From the very outset the voyage of the Sultan of Labuan was uppropitious. Before she was clear of the Usk it was found that three more of her crew had managed to slip away ashore and so were gone beyond replacement. Whilst she was still in the brown, muddy waters of the Bristol channel there were several breakdowns in the engine room which necessitated stoppages and

machines were old, wasteful in steam and made all the difference in economy which divides a profit from a loss in these modern days of fierce sea competition. With Murgatroyd, the old blue-faced mate, Kettle had been shipmates before, and there existed between the two men a strong disike and a certain mutual esteem. They

nterviewed over duty matters when the ollot left. "Mr. Murgatroyd," said the little skipper, "you'll keep hatches off and do everything for ventilation. This Welsh coal's as gassy as petroleum."

decks are full of water?" "You'll have fresh orders from me before then. Get your hoses to work now and

sluice down. The ship's a pigsty." "Aye, aye, sir. But the hands are dog

right now." The old mate's face grew purple. "If you

want a driver," he said, "you shall have one." And with that he went his way and roused the tired deck hands to work after the time-honored methods But if Captain Kettle did not spare his

crew he was equally hard on himself. He was at sea now, and wearing his seagoing conscience, which was an entirely different piece of mental mechanism to that which the afterhatch also. It was a triumph of regulated his actions ashore. He had received Mr. Gedge's precise instructions to run the coal boat in the ordinary methods. and he intended to do it relentlessly and to the letter. He had had his doubts about Mr. Gedge's real wishes before, and even steamer was sunk, and then the loading the episode of Miss Payne, the typewriter had not altogether deceived him, but the load. He knew quite well that there were second letter from "Well Wisher" which the jeglous eyes of a seamen and firemen's the pilot brought on board cleared the union official watching him from somewhere | matter up beyond a doubt. There was not the faintest chance Gedge had written that; there was not the faintest reason to disbebuan would never be let go through the lieve now that Gedge wished his uneconom "Oh," said Kettle with a sigh, "it's hor- outer deck gate. So the burden was lim- ical atcamboat off his hands, and had ar-

Now properly approached-say with scaled stepped lightly up on the tramp's upper orders to be opened only at sea-I think they drew nearer to the bay the weather Kettle would have undertaken to carry out age traveler does of robbing his fellow countrymen by the importation of Belgian cigars him squarely, ranked high. But for a second not have used a better spur.

The little captain's face grow grim as be ead it. "By James!" he muttered, "if that's the game he's tryng to play, I'll make him

However, though at the beginning of

voyage it may be easy to make a resolve like this, it is not so easy to carry into practical effect. If the machinery was on board, human or otherwise, for making the Sultan of Labuan fail to reach port, it was not at all probable that Kettle would find it before he saw it in working order. When arrangements for a bit of barratry of this kind are gone about nowadays, they are performed with shrewdness. Your ingenious gentlemen who makes a devil of a clockwork and guncotton to blow out a steamer's bottom, or makes a compact with one of her crew to open the bulgecocks, is dexterous enough to cover up his trail very completely. having a wholesome awe of the law of the land and a large distaste for penal servitude Moreover, Owen Kettle was not the man to receive gratuitous information on such a point from his underlings. To begin with, he was the Suftan Labuan's captain, and by the immemorial etiquette of the sea a ship's captain is always a man socially apart. He is a dictator for the time being, with supreme power of life and death, is addressed as "sir" and would be regarded with social awe and coldness by his own brother if the said brother were on board as one of the mates or one of the assistant engineers. With the chief engineer alone, although he does not sit at meat with him. may a merchant cantain unbend; and with the chief of the Sultan of Labuan Kettle had picked a difference over a commission on bunkering not ten minutes after he had first stepped on board. He had the undoubted knack of commanding men; he could look exactly after his employer's property; but he had an unfortunate habit of making himself hated in the process.

Over that initial episode of washing the coal grime from the ship's outer fabric, he had already come into intimate contact with his crew. The tired deck hands had refused duty; clumsy old Murgatroyd had endeavored to force them into it by the timehonored methods and had been knocked down in the scuffle and trampled on; when up came Kettle, already spruce and clean, and laid impartially into the whole grimy gang of them with a deck scrubber. They were new to their little skiper's virtues and thought at first that they would treat him as they had already treated the fat old mate and as a consequence bleeding faces and cracked heads were plentiful, and curses went up, bitter and deep, in half the tongues of Europe. But Kettle still remained spruce, clean and aggressive and untouched.

It takes some art to thoroughly thrash lozen savage, full-grown men with a light broom without breaking the stick or knocking off the head, and the crew of the Sultan of Labuan were not slow to recognize their captain's ability. But at the same time they vere not inspired with any overpowering love for him. In the course of that night an iron belaying pin whisked up out of the darkness and knocked off his cap as he stood dawn a chunk of coal whizzed up and smashed itself to splinters on the wheelhouse wall not an inch from his ear. But as Cap tain Kettle replied to the first of these compliments by three prompt revolver shots al most before the thrower had time to think, and rushed out and caught his second assailant by the neck scruff and forced him to eat every scrap of coal than had been "Typewritten address," said Kettle. "No thrown, the all-nation crew decided that he was too ugly to tackle usefully, and tacitly agreed to let him along for the future, and

to do their lawful work. The which, of course, was exactly what Kettle desired. By this time the Sultan of Labuan had rur down the Cornish coast, had rounded Land's End, and was standing off on a course which would make Finisterre her next landfall. The glass was sinking steadily; the seascape was made up of blacks and whites, who the man was who gave it to you?" he and lurid grays, but though the air was cold and raw, the weather was not any worse than need have been expected for the time of year. The hatches were off, and a good strong smell of coal gas billowed up from

below and mingled with the sea scents. With all a northern sailor's distrust for a "Dago," Kettle had spotted his spruce able tool and watched him like the apple of his eye. No man's actions could have been more innocent and normal and this. of course, made things all the more suspicious. The engineer staff, who had access to machinery, were likewise ex-officio suspicious persons, but as it was quite imthem very largely on trust.

Blundering, incompetent old Murgatroyd, the mate, was the only man on board in whose honesty Kettle had the least faith, simply because he considered him too stupid to be intrusted with any operation so delicate as barratry and to Murgatroyd he more or less confided his intentions.

"I hear there's a scheme on board to scuttle this steamboat," he said, "because she's too expensive to run. Well, Mr. Gedge, the owner, gave me orders to run her and he told me he made a profit on her. I'm going by Mr. Gedge's words and I'm going to take her to Port Said. And let me tell you this: If she stops anywhere on the road and goes down all hands go down with her, even if I have to shoot them myself. So they'd better hear what's in the wind and have a chance to save their own skins. You understand what I mean?"

"Ay," grunted the mate. right way, you understand."

'Aye, aye, Hadn't we better get them ping it green pretty often now and the tle of her wheel engines as they gave her to Port Said now." of water getting down below and they say it's all the bilge pumps can do to keep it peering at him through the drifting sea under."

napped, "are you master of this blame this bridge." grunted the mate and waddled

clumsily down below. The old man's suggestion about hatches had touched upon a sore point. Kettle knew quite well that it was dangerous to leave the great gaps in the decks undefended by planking and tarpaulin. A coal boat rode both deep and sodden. Al-

ready he had put her a point and a half to westward of her course so as to take the of spouting scuppers. Watch had succeeded oncoming seas more fairly on the bow. But still he hung on to the open batches The coal below was gassy to a segrec, and f the ventilation was stopped it would be terribly liable to explosion. The engine eyed and white cheeked, his torpedo beard there was no danger from these, but the subtle coal gas would spread over all the much awake, and when the accident came

no wish to meet Mr. Gedgo's unspoken wishes by an accident of this sort,

However, it began to be plain that as there is very little doubt but what Captain grew worse steadily, and at last it came at that moment happened to be free of to be a choice between battening down the this piece of nefarious business himself. hatches both forward and aft or being in-The average mariner thinks no more of continently swamped. Hour after hour Ket-'making the insurance pay" than the aver- tie, in his glistening oilskins, had been stumping backward and forward across the upper bridge, watching his steamboat like and Tauchnitz novels from the channel a cat, and holding on with his order till packet. And with Kettle, too, loyalty to au the very last moment. But at last he gave employer, so long as that employer treated the command to batten down, and both watches rushed to help the carpenter carry time Well Wisher had repeated the word it out. The men were horribly frightened. "catspaw," and for his purpose he could In seemed to them that in that gale, and with that sea running, it was insane not to have battened her down long before.

The bands clustered on the lurching iron locks with the water swirling against them waist-high, and shipped the heavy hatch covers and got the tarpaulins over, and then the Norwegian carpenter keyed all fast with the wedges, working like some ampara as

animal, half his time under water. The Sultan of Labuan was fitted with no owl ventilators to her holds, and even if these had been fitted they would have been carried away. So from the moment of batening down the gas which cozed from the oal mixed with the air till the whole ship secame one huge explosive bomb, which the merest spark would touch off. Captain Kettle called his mate to him and gave xplicit orders.

"You know what a powder hulk is like, Mr. Mate?"

"Ay," sald Murgatroyd. "Well, this ship is a sight more dangerous, and we have got to take care if we to not want to go to heaven quick. It's got o be 'all lights out' abourd this ship till the weather eases, and we can get hatches off again. Go round now and see it done yourself, Mr. Murgatroyd, please. Watch the doctor dowse the galley fire, and then go and take away all the forecastle matches so the men can't smoke. Put out the side lights, the mast head light and the binnacle lamps. The quartermasters must steer as best they can from the unlit card."

"Aye, aye. But you don't mean the side light, too, do ye? There's a big lot of ship ping here in the bay, and we might casy get run down-" The old man caught an ugly look from Kettle's face and broke off. And grumbling some ancient saw about "obeying orders if you break owners," he shuffled off down the ladder.

Heavier and heavier grew the squalls, car rying with them spindrift which beat like gravel against the two oil-skinned tenants of the collier's upper bridge; worse and worse grew the sea. Great green waves reared up like walls, crashed on board and filled the lower decks with boiling, yeasty surge. The funnel stays and the scanty rigging hummed like harp strings to the gale. Deep though she was in the water there were times when her stern heaved up clear, and the propeller raced in a nelsy catherine wheel of fire and foam. On every side, ahead, abeam and astern, were nod ding yellow lights jerked about by unseen ships over thunderous, unseen waves. It was a regular Biscay gale, such as all vessels may count on in that corner of the seas one voyage out of eight, a gale with beavy seas in the midst of a dense crowd of shin ping. But there was nothing in it which zeamanship, under ordinary circumstances

ould not meet: Captain Kettle hung on hour after hour under the shelter of the dodgers on the upper bridge, a small wind-brush figure in vellow oilskins and black rubber thigh boots About such a "breeze" in an ordinary way he would have thought little. Taking his vessel through it with the minimum of danthat he bimself and all hands would be drowned; but at the same time Gedge would be gratified in so easily touching the coveted insurance money. The fear of death did not worry the little skipper in the very least degree whatever; but he had a most thorouh objection to being in any way Mr. Gedge's catspaw.

Twice they had near escapes from being run down. The first time was from a sodden, blundering Cardiff ore steamer, which was dilling north through the thick of it with very little of herself showing except two stumpy masts and a brine-washed smokestack. She would have obviously drowned out any lookout on her fore deck and the bridge officers got too much spindrift in their eyes to see with any clearness But time is money, and even Cardiff or steamers must make passages, and so her master drove her blindly ahead full steam. slap-slop-wallow, and trusted that other

people would get out of his way. Kettle's keen eyes picked her up out of the sea mists just in time, and norted his young Italian second mate as Gedge's prob- own helm and missed her sheering bow with the Sultan of Labaun's quarter by a short two fathoms. A touch in that insune turmoll of sea would have sent both steam ers down to the shells and the filekering weed below; but there was no touch, and to bilge-cocks and could arrange disasters so each went her way with merely a perfunctory interchange of curses, which were blown into nothingness by the gale. Espossible to overlook them at all hours and capes on these occasions don't count, and on all occasions, he had regretfully to take it is etiquette not to speak about them ashore afterward.

The second shave can e from a big, whitepainted Cape liner, which came up from astern, lit like a theater, and almost defy ing the very gale itself. Her lookouts and officers were on the watch for lights. But the unlit collier, which was half her time masked by the seas like a half-tide rock,

Kettle, with all a shipmaster's sturdy dis

never struck her notice.

had the right of the road, held on till the great knife-like bow was not a yards from his taffrail. But then he gave way, reared out an order to the quartermaster at the wheel, and the Sultan of Labaun fell away to port. As if the coal boat had been a magnet, the Cape liner followed, drawing nearer hand over fist Changing direction further was as dangerous as keeping on as he was, so Kettle bawled to the quartermaster to "steady on that," and then the great white steam "Well, just let word of it slip out-in the hotel suddenly seemed to wake to her danger and swerved off on her old course again. So close were they that Kettle fanhatches on and battened down? She's ship- cied he could hear the quick agitated ratweather's worsening. There's a good slop a "hard down" helm. And he certainly saw officers on her high upper bridge end smoke with a curiosity that was more than Meddle Murgatroyd," Kettle pleasant.

"Trying to pick out the old tub's name." ship or am I? You leave me to give my he mused grimly, "so as to report me for orders when I think fit and get down off carrying no lights. By James I wish some of those dandy passenger boat officers could rich ground, and on Bonanza creek, every try this low down end of the tramping trade foot of which has been advertised as paying,

Night went and day came, gray and wet and desolate. The heavier squalls had passed away, but a whole gale still remained, and the sea was if anything heavier. The coal boat rarely showed all of high sea was running, and the heavily laden herself at once above the water. Her progress was a succession of dives, her decoration (when she was visible) a fringe watch with the dogged patience of sailormen, but watch after watch Kettle hung on behind the canvas dodgers at the weather end of the bridge. He was red and boiler rooms were bulkheaded off and was foul with sea salt, he was unpleasant to look upon, but he was undeniably very rest of the vessel's living quasters as the (which he concluded was Mr. Gerigi's effort smell binted-and a carelessly lit match to realize the coal boat's insurance) he was might very comfortably send the whole of quite ready to cope with emergencies. her decks hurling into the air. Kettle had | From somewhere in the bowels of the ship

there came the muffled boom of an explosion; the bridge sprang up beneath his feet so that he was very nearly wrenched from his hold, and the iron main deck, which water, rippled and heaved as a tin biscuit box moves when it is kicked. There was a tinkle of broken glass as some blown-

out skylights crashed back upon the deck He looked forward and he looked att, and to his surprise saw that both batches were still in place, and that very little actual damage was visible, and then he hadhis attention occupied by another matter. From the stokehold, from the forecastle and from the engine room the frightened crew poured out into the open, and some scared wretch cried out to "lower away zem

Here was a situation that needed dealing with at once and Kettle was the man to do it. From beneath his oilskins be lugged out the revolver, which they knew so painfully already, and showed it with ostentation. "By James," he shouted, "do you want to be taught who's captain here? I'll give

cheap lessons if you ask." His words reached them above the hooting and brawl of the gale, and they were

cowed into sullen obedience. "Carpenter, take a couple of men and away below with you and see what's broke. You blessed split-trousered mechanics, away down to your engine room or 111 come and kick you there. The second mate and his watch get tarpaulins over those broken skylights. Where's Mr. Murgatroyd? In his bunk, I suppose, as usual; not his watch; no affair of his if the ship's blown to heaven when he's off duty. Here, you steward, go and root out Mr. Murgatroyd."

The men bustled about after their errands and the engines, which had stopped for a minute, began to rumble on again. Captain Kettle paraded the swaving bridge and

awaited developments. Presently a bare-headed steward fought his way up the bridge ladder against the tearing wind and bawled out some startling news: "It's Mr. Murgatroyd's room that's been blown up, sir; made a 'orrid mess of; Chins says 'e picked up 'i slighted pipe in the alleyway, sir, an' it must 'a' been that that fired the gas."

The blamed old thickhead," said Kettle avagely. 'E was arskin' for you, sir, was the mate,

though we couldn't rightly make out what e said. "He won't be pleased to see me. Smoking,

by James, was he?" 'The mate's burnt up, like a piece of oke," said the steward persuasively.

cawn't last long. It's a marvel 'ow 'e's alive at all, sir!" The carpenter came up on the bridge. Doze blow-up was not so bad for der ole ship, sir. She nod got any plates started dot I can see. Dey have der bilge pumps running, but dere's nod much water. Und der mate, sir. He say he vould like to see

you. He's in ver' bad way." "All right!" said Kettle, "I'll go and see im." He called up the Italian second mate onto the bridge and gave over charge of the ship to him and then went below. The gas explosion had made havor of all woodwork and fittings, but apparently the iron sheathng of the ship was still undamaged. The scare of the crew was quieting down and with the sailers' instinct of tidyness they were commencing to make fast the larger fragments of wreckage which were rataling about amongst the slop of water and coal and broken crockery, to the dancing of the

ship. The author of all the mischief, the stupid old man who, through sheer gross ignorance had gone to bed and smoked a pipe in this powder magazine, lay horribly jured in the littered alleyway, with a burst ger was only part of the daily mechanical straw cushion under the shocking remnants routine. But he stood there, a prey to the of his head. Most of his injuries were plain liveliest anxiety. The thousand and one to the eye and it was a marvel that he lingered on at all. It was very evident that te could not live for long, and it was clear,

too, that he wanted to speak. Keitle's resentment died at the sight of this poor charred cinder of humanity, and he knelt in the litter and listened. The sea noises and the ship noises without almost drowned the words, and the old mate's voice was very weak. It was only here and there

he could pick up a sentence. "Nearly got to wind ard of you, skipper It was me-Gedge paid me £50 for the jobscuttle her-after Gib-would 'a' done it too-in spite of your teeth."

The old fellow broke off, and Kettle leaned near to him. "How were you going to scuttle her?" he asked.

There was no answer. A second time he repeated the question, and then again a third time. The mate heard him. The sea roared outside, the wind boomed overhead, the cluttered wreckage clanged about the alleyway. The old man was past speech, but he opened an eye, his one remaining eye, and slowly and solemnly winked.

It was his one recorded attempt at humor during a lifetime, and the effort was his last. His jaw dropped, wagging to the thud of the ship, his eye opened in a glassy unseeing stare, and he was as dead a thing as the iron deck he lay upon. "Well, matey," said Kettle, apostrophizing

the poor, charred form, "we've been shipmates before and I never liked you. But by James, you had your points. You shall be buried by a pukka parson in Gib and have a stone put over your ugly old head f I have to pay for it myself. I think I can ammer out a bit of verse, too, which'll make that stone a thing people will remem-

"By James, though, won't Gedge be mad over this! Gedge will think I spotted the game you were playing for him, and murdered you out of hand, Well, that's all right, and it won't hurt you, matey. I want Gedge to understand I'm a man that's got to be dealt straight with. I want Mr. Blessed Gedge to understand that I'm not the kind of lamb to make into a cats-paw like for shifting his belm when he legally by any manner of means. I bet he does tumble to that, too. But I bet also that he sacks me from this berth before I've got the coals over into the lighters of Port Said. By James! yes. Gedge is a man that sticks to his plans, and as he can't lose the Sultan of Labuan with me as her skipper, he'll jerk another old man into the chart house on the end of a wire, who'll do the job more to his satisfaction." The Norwegian carpenter came up and

asked a question. "No, no, Chips; put the canvas away, I want you to knock up some sort of a box for the poor old mate, and we'll take him to Gib and plant him there in style. I owe him a bit. We'll all get safe enough

Only One Claim in Ten Pays. SAN FRANCISCO, July 29 .- E. Lewis of Circle City, Alaska, came down on the teamer Portland. He states that only one out of every ten claims around Dawson is paying wages. Those that pay at all are paying big money. On Eldorado creek he snys there are about three miles of really there are more than twenty miles o lutely worthless claims. Captain Lindquist of the Portland reports that on the 16th instant, he sighted the steamer Tillamook, with the Ridcout in tow, just off St. Lawrence. On the 18th the stieamer Navarro, towing the State of Minnesota, was sighted ten miles north of Unalaska. When Portland left Dutch Harbor, on the 19th, the steamer Brunswick, the tug Holyoke and three barges, were in port. The schooner H. C. Wright arrived there on the

Substitute for Lemons. Morsferd's Acid Phosphate

16th of last month

is cooling, quenches thirst, and acts as a Yonio.
Shun Impations. Sold only in bottles. Consequences of the animals

exactly-in confidence, of course-how you



Captain Kettle thought out many things as he journeyed from South Shields to the easily have carried in his hand; but there grimp office of his employer in Newcastle, is an etiquette about these matters which serted, leaving their wages, and were rebut his data were insufficient, and he was even the hard-up ship masters to whom a placed by others from the shipping office: unable to get hold of any scheme by which shilling is a financial rarity must observe; he could safely approach what was to say and so he took a four-wheeler down to the the very least of it, a very delicate subject. agent's office and made himself known. The Mr. Gedge had hired him as captain of the Sultan of Labuan, it seemed, had come up of raw electric are lamps. The air was Sultan of Labuan; had said no word about the Usk and gone into dock barely an full of gritty dust and the roar of falling losing her, and how was he to force the man's confidence? It looked the most unpromising enterprise in the world. More- over. over, although in the outer world he was as brave a fellow as ever lived, he had all ing another man from his livelihood, and load, whilst its successor was being nursed

capped him. In this mood then he was ushered upon Gedge in his office, and saw him signing letters, and casting occasional sentences to the former master of the Sultan of Labuan, a young woman who flicked them down in

The shipewner frowned. He was busy. "Well, captain," he said, "what is "It's a private question I'd like to ask

"If I might trouble her so far."

ward subject to begin upon. 'Now, then, captain, out with it quick.

"By James," said Kettle, "do speak plain,

They plunged straightway into the aridities of business and kept at it till the captaincy had been formally laid down and handed over, and then the opportunity for liams was clearly worn out with weariness; asked." responsibility had kept him going till then, but now that responsibility had ended, he was like a man in a trance. His eyes drooped; his knees failed drunkenly; he was past speech, and if Kettle had not by main perance hotel he would have toppled down incontinently and slept like one dead in the gutter. As it was, he lay on the counterpane in the heaviest of sleep, the picture of strong man worn out with watching and

fully.

In the forehold the trimmers gasped and choked as they steered the black avalanches into place, and presently another of the huge staithes crawled up along the dock wall, with a gasping tank-loco and a train of wagons in attendance, and then the sultan of Labuan was being loaded through machinery and organization, and tried men in a dozen departments cursed Kettle for keeping them at such a remorseless pres-

age to keep my blushes back."

ostmark on the stamp Who's it from?" anonymous communication, also from Well

have something to do with insurance. But

present of £50 if the Sultan of Labuan her in Port Said.

anxious repairs. The engines of the Sultan minute wasted on a steamer means money of Labuan were her weak spot, for otherwise her hull was sound enough. But these

"Ave, ave," rambled the mate. "But how about when heavy weather comes and the

"Then it's your place to drive them. I should have thought you'd been long enough at sea to know that. But if you aren't up to your business, just say, and I'll swap you over with the second mate