

SMOKED SKIPPER.

By W. W. JACOBS.

Author of "Many Carcasses" and "The Skipper's Woeing."

(Copyright, 1898, by W. W. Jacobs.) "Wapping Old Stairs," said the rough individual, shouldering the brand new sea chest and starting off at a trot with it. "Yus, I know the place, cap'n. Pust 'y'g's, sir?" "Ay, ay, my hearty," replied the owner of the chest, a small, ill-looking lad of 14. "Not so fast with those timbers of yours. D'ye hear?" "All right, sir," said the man, slackening his pace, twisted his head around to take stock of his companion.

"This ain't your fust 'y'g's, cap'n," he said, admiringly; "don't tell me, I could swag that directly I see you. Ho, what's the use of trying to fool over a poor, arduous man like that?" "I don't think there's much about the sea I don't know," said the boy in a satisfied voice. "Starboard, starboard, your 's'tum a bit."

The man obeyed promptly. They went the remainder of the distance in this fashion to the great inconvenience of people coming from the other direction. "And a cheap 'arf crown's worth, too, cap'n," said the boy, turning to a waterman who was sitting in his boat, holding on to the side of the steps with his hand.

"Put it aboard," said the man to the other man. "A' right, cap'n," said the man, with a cheerful smile, "but I'll 'ave my 'arf crown fust, if you don't mind." "But you said sixpence at the station," said the boy.

"Two an' sixpence, cap'n," said the man, still smiling, "but I'm a bit 'usky an' 'praps you didn't ear the two. 'Arf a crown's the reg'lar price. They ain't allowed to do it no more."

"Well, I won't tell anybody," said the boy. "Give the man 'is 'arf crown," said the waterman with sudden heat; "that's 'is price an' my fare's 15 pence."

"All right, said the boy, readily, "cheap, too. I didn't know the price, that's all. But you said sixpence at the station, I get aboard. I've only got sixpence. I'll tell the captain to give you the rest."

"Tell 'em," demanded the light porter with some violence. "The captain," said the boy. "Look 'ere, you give me that 'arf crown," said the other, "else I'll chuck your box overboard an' you after it."

"Wait a minute, then," said the boy darting away up the narrow alley which led to the stairs. "I'll go and get change." "Es goin' to change 'arf a sovren' or 'praps a sovren'," said the waterman, "you'd better make it five bob, matey."

"Ah, an' you make yours more," said the light porter, cordially. "Well I'm well of all the—"

"Get off that box," said the big policeman who had come back with the boy. "Take your sixpence an' go. If I catch you down this way again—"

He finished the sentence by giving the fellow by the scruff of the neck and giving him a violent push as he passed him. "Waterman's fare is three pence," he said to the boy as the man in the boat with an utterly expressionless face took the chest from him. "I'll stay here till he has put you aboard."

The boy took his seat and the waterman breathing hard pulled out toward the vessels in the pier. He looked and pulled and then at the figure on the steps and apparently suppressing a strong inclination to speak spat violently over the side.

"Fine big chap, ain't he?" said the boy. The waterman, affecting not to hear, looked over his shoulder and pulled strongly with his left toward a small schooner, from the deck of which a couple of men were watching the small figure in the boat.

from," he said, coming aft with a big bundle of penny papers. "Look at the titles of 'em," "The Lies of the Pacific," "The One-Armed Buccaneer," "Captain Kidd's Last Voyage."

He sat down on the cabin skylight and began turning them over and picking out certain gems of phraseology, read them aloud to the skipper. The latter listened at first with scorn and then with impatience.

"I can't make head or tail out of what you're reading, George," he said, snappishly. "Who was Rudolph? Read straight ahead."

"That's the mate, leaning forward so that his listener might hear better, read steadily through a serial in the first three numbers. The third instalment left Rudolph swimming in a race with three sharks and a boatload of cannibals and the joint efforts of both men failed to discover the other numbers.

"Just wot I should 'ave expected of 'im," said the skipper after the mate returned from a fruitless search in the boy's chest. "I'll make 'im a bit more orderly on this ship. Go an' lock them other things up in your drawer, George. He's not to 'ave 'em again."

The schooner was getting into open water now, and began to feel it. In front of them was the blue sea, dotted with white sails and funnels belching smoke speeding from England to worlds of romance and adventure. Something of the kind the cook said to Ralph and urged him to get up and look for himself. He also, with the best intentions, discussed the restorative properties of fat pork from a medical point of view.

The next few days the boy divided between seasickness and work, the latter from the cook's trembling tones as he held it to the lamp.

"We don't want to 'ear it," said Jim. "Shut up, d'ye hear?" But there was that in the cook's manner which averted them.

"Dear cook," he read, feverishly, "I have made an infernal machine with clockwork, and hid it in the hold near the gunpowder when we were at Fairhaven. I think it will go off between 10 and 11 tonight, but I am not quite sure about the time. Don't tell those other beasts, but jump overboard and swim ashore. I have taken the boat, I would have taken you, too, but you told me you swam seven miles once, so you can swim."

The reading came to an abrupt termination as his listeners sprang out of their bunks, and bolting on deck, burst wildly into the cabin, and breathlessly rooled off the heads of the letter to its astonished occupants.

"Stuck a wot in the hold?" gasped the skipper. "Infernal machine," said the mate. "One o' them things wot you blow up the 'ouses of parliament with."

"Wot's the time now?" interrupted Jim, anxiously. "Bout 'at past 10," said the cook, trembling. "Let's give 'em a hail ashore."

They leaned over the side and sent a mighty shout across the water. Most of Lowport had gone to bed, but the windows in the inn were bright and lights showed in the upper windows of two or three of the cottages.

Again they shouted in deafening chorus, casting fearful looks behind them, and in the silence a faint answering "hail" came from the shore. They shouted again like madmen and then, listening intently, heard

the wondrous click of oars in the rowlocks. "Make haste," bawled Dobbs, vociferously, as the boat came creeping out of the darkness. "W'y don't you make haste?" "Wot's the row?" cried a voice from the boat.

"Gunpowder!" yelled the cook, frantically. "There's ten tons of it aboard, just going to explode. Hurry up!"

The sound of the oars ceased and a startled murmur was heard from the boat; then an oar was pulled jerkily. "They're putting back," said Jim, suddenly. "I'm going to swim for it. Stand by to pick me up, mates," he shouted, and, lowering himself with a splash into the water, struck out strongly toward them.

Dobbs, a poor swimmer, after a moment's hesitation, followed his example. "I can't swim a stroke," cried the cook, his teeth chattering. "The others, who were in the same predicament, leaned over the side, listening. The swimmers were invisible in the darkness, but their progress was easily followed by the noise they made. Jim was the first to have got on board and a minute or two later the listeners on the schooner heard him assisting Dobbs. Then the sound of strife, of thumps and wicked words, broke on their delighted ears.

"They're coming back for us," said the mate, taking a deep breath. "Well done, Jim." The boat came toward them, impelled by powerful strokes, and was soon alongside. The three men tumbled in hurriedly, their fall being modified by the original crew, who were lying crouched up in the bottom of the boat, and Dobbs gave way with hearty good will and the doomed skipper receded into the darkness. A little knot of people had gathered on the shore and, receiving the things, became anxious for the safety of their town. It was felt that the windows at least were in imminent peril, and messengers were hastily sent round to have them opened.

Still the deserted Susan Jane made no sign. Twelve o'clock struck from the little church at the back of the town and she was still silent.

"Something's gone wrong," said an old fisherman with a bad way of putting things. "Now's the time for somebody to go and tow her out to sea."

There was no response. "To save Lowport," continued the speaker, feelingly. "If I were only twenty years younger—"

"It's old men's work," said a voice. The skipper, straining his eyes through the gloom in the direction of his craft, said nothing. He began to think that she had escaped after all.

Two o'clock struck and the crowd began to disperse. Some of the older inhabitants who were elderly about drafts closed their windows, and children who had been routed out of their beds to take a nocturnal walk inland were led slowly back. By 3 o'clock the darkness was deep and the day broke and revealed the forlorn Susan Jane still riding at anchor.

"I'm going aboard," said the skipper, suddenly. "Who's coming with me?" Jim and the mate and the town policeman volunteered, and, borrowing the boat which had served them before, pulled swiftly out to their vessel, and taking the hatches off with unusual gentleness commenced their search. It was nervous work at first, but they became inured to it, and moreover a certain suspicion, slight at first, but increasing in interest as the search proceeded, gave them some sense of security. Later still they began to eye each other shamefacedly.

"I don't believe there's anything there," said the policeman, sitting down and laughing and trying to reach the cook with his clenched fist.

"That's about the size of it," growled the mate, "we'll be laughing stock of the town."

The skipper, who was standing with his back toward him, said nothing, but peering about, stooped suddenly, and with a sharp exclamation, picked up something from behind a damaged case.

"Was that an infernal machine?" whispered the bewildered Jim to the mate. "Why it looked to me like one o' them tins o' oarred beef."

The mate glanced longingly over the side. "Well, I've 'eard of people being killed by them sometimes," he said, with a grin. W. W. JACOBS.

TOO HEAVY FOR UNCLE SAM. Noted Tennessee Character Who Violated the Revenue Law. Mahala Mullins, "sockless Mahala," a noted Tennessee character, who has for a quarter of a century openly violated the United States revenue laws by selling whisky without a license, is dead.

This remarkable character has been noted in the modern history of the east Tennessee mountain clans. Her home was in Hancock county, eighty miles from Knoxville. She lived and died in the remote sections of the Cumberland mountains. She is known far and wide by reason of her remarkable life of defiance of Uncle Sam's laws and, at the same time, on account of her physical condition, which in itself is worthy of note.

For many years Mahala Mullins' husband was a moonshine distiller. He eventually was corralled by the revenue officers and his case was dismissed on the promise that he would quit the moonshine traffic. This decision on his part was followed by the establishment of a licensed distillery in his name. The distillery was small in its equipment, but it was large enough to "run" a sufficient amount to supply the mountain people for many miles around.

The manner in which she disposed of the liquor is the feature of Mahala Mullins' life. Mahala, being a woman of unusually large physique, it was practically an impossibility to remove her from her home to home. She realized this fact, as did her husband. It was therefore agreed that she should assume the role of dispenser of the beverage.

Seated in her mountain cabin, she was always ready to serve the whisky made under government protection, but said in violation of her retailing regulations. She had at her command a small cask, in which the whisky was deposited. The article was drawn from this cask by means of a homemade faucet, bent out of a Cumberland mountain pipe. She always used a small pint copper cup in which to draw the whisky, and a funnel of the same material completed the outfit with which she carried on her illicit bar business.

There was no secret in this enterprise of Mrs. Mullins. It was known throughout east Tennessee that she sold whisky regardless of the revenue laws. The revenue men knew it, and many times have they made an attempt to arrest her. Every effort of this nature was baffled on account of her enormous size. The officers found it impossible to remove her from her home. It is a fact, strange though it may seem, that she never left her home on account of being too large to pass its portals. The revenue men were compelled to indulge her, not from choice or sympathy, but from a compulsory state of affairs.

Mrs. Mullins' individuality is interesting, as well as her open violation of the laws in selling whisky. She weighed, a short time previous to her death, 519 pounds. She was 74 years of age a few months ago. Her chest measure, contracted, was five feet six inches. She measured seven feet six and one-half inches about the hips. This remarkable woman enjoyed the best of health until within three weeks of her death, when she was stricken with mountain fever, which, owing to her age, proved fatal.

For many years Mahala Mullins had been prepared to meet death. She was a Christian woman, notwithstanding the fact that she sold liquor. She believed in the prerogative of every man, woman and child to make and drink whisky, and saw in it no wrong to either religious, social, or legal legislation. She had prepared her coffin, in which she was buried, and had also ordered her grave dug.

East Tennessee has lost a noted character in the death of Mrs. Mullins. The fact of the existence of such a woman has been heralded all over the country. Scarcely a month has gone by for many years but that some tourist going to Knoxville sought an opportunity to climb into the Cumberland mountains in the hope of seeing her. An effort was made last year to take her to the Tennessee centennial exposition at Nashville, where she might be seen. The difficulty encountered was in transporting her from her mountain home to the railroad station,

and will have to be given up to the crown, because one condition of the grant is that every person having a claim must work it continuously for three months each year. Ninety days' labor at \$10 a day is a good deal to risk upon one claim, and a good many who cannot afford it will surrender them. The creek claims have been reduced in size from 300 to 250 feet.

Estimates of last year's output range from \$8,000,000 to \$12,000,000. Work has largely been confined to Bonanza and Eldorado creeks. Dominion, Sulphur and Eureka creeks will be opened up next winter, as they promise good results. One cannot prospect in summer, as the pits which are dug then fill with water. It is by the merest chance that one may strike a rich claim. No poor man should sell out and come here. Organized companies with capital will do much better, as they can hire work much more cheaply than individuals.

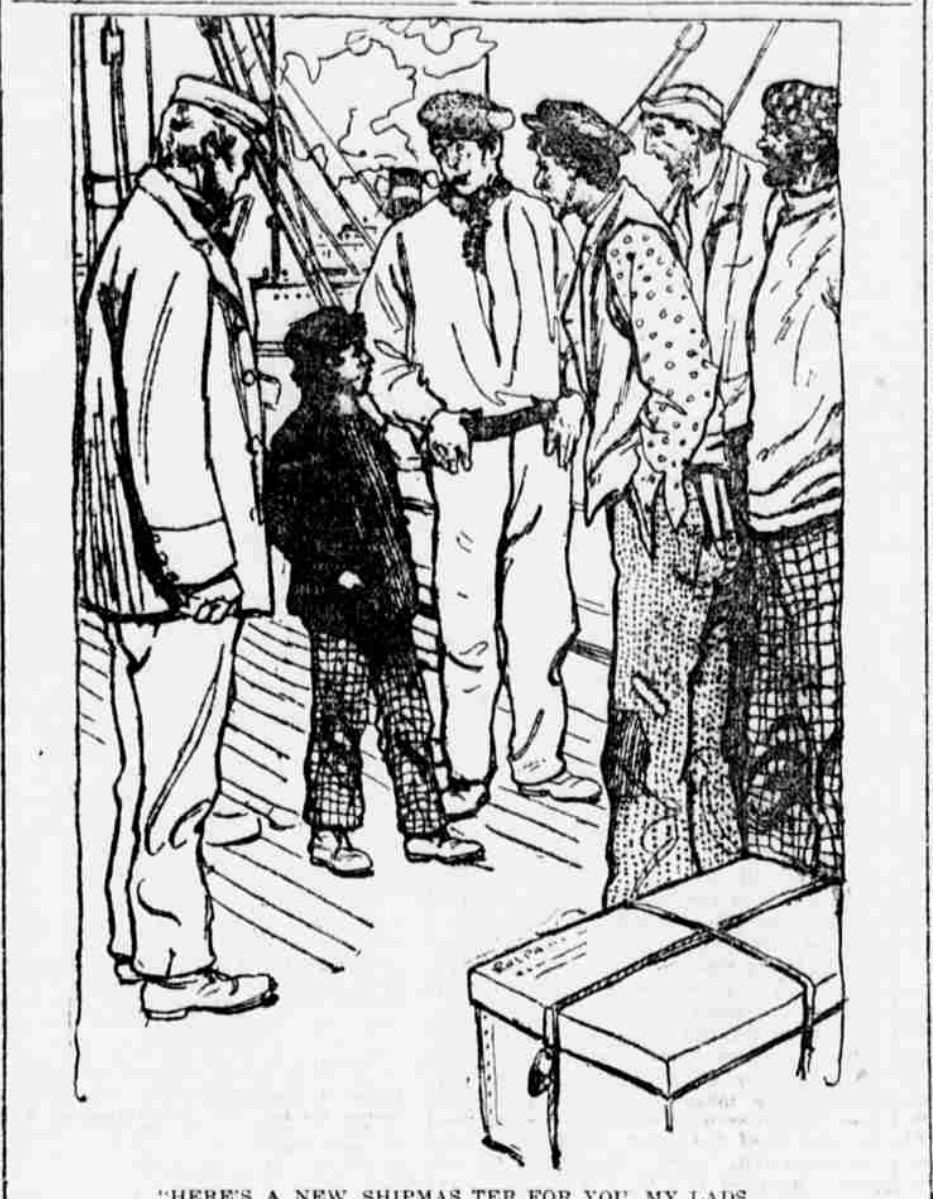
In a report dated August 21, Consul McCook further emphasizes the distress among the prospectors in and around Dawson City and strongly advises no one to join in the hunt for gold unless he has at least enough provisions to last over winter and enough money in bank to take him home if unsuccessful. The consul says he is appealed to daily by men who have no money and cannot get work, and he advises each of them as are able to travel to go to St. Michael, where, he is informed, the government is arranging to take care of them by putting them in communication with friends in the United States.

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None of It Lost. Chicago Tribune. The steady stranger at the hotel had deliberately tried to suffocate himself by closing the room tightly so he could not turn on the gas.

"You miserable varabond!" exclaimed the doctor, after he had succeeded in reviving him. "What did you want to do that for? You have given this hotel a bad name and wanted about 500 feet of gas!"

"No, I'm not wasted," growled the landlady. "The meter will register every foot of it."



HERE'S A NEW SHIPMAST TER FOR YOU, MY LADS.

being the skipper's great remedy for political yearning. Three or four times he received a mild drubbing, and what was worse than the drubbing, had to give an answer in the affirmative to the skipper's inquiry as to whether he felt in a more wholesome frame of mind. On the fifth morning they stood in toward Fairhaven, and to his great joy he saw trees and houses again.

They stayed at Fairhaven just long enough to put out a small portion of their cargo, Ralph, stripped to his shirt and trousers, having to work in the hold with the rest, and proceeded to Lowport, a little place some thirty miles distant, to put out their powder. It was evening before they arrived, and the tide being out, they anchored in the mouth of the river on which the town stands.

"Git in about 4 o'clock," said the skipper to the mate, as he looked over the side toward the little cluster of houses on the shore. "I'll be right in," said the mate, who knocked some o' that nonsense out o' you, boy."

"Much better, sir," said Ralph, respectfully. "Be a good boy," said the skipper, pausing on the companion ladder, "and you can stay with us if you like. Better turn in now, as you'll have to make yourself useful again in the morning working out the cargo."

He went below, leaving the boy on deck. The crew were in the forecastle smoking, with the exception of the cook, who was in the gallery over a little private business of his own.

An hour later the cook went below to prepare for sleep. The other two men were already in bed, and he was just about to get into his when he noticed that Ralph's bunk, which was under his own, was empty. He went up on deck and looked round, and, returning below, scratched his nose in thought.

"Where's the boy?" he demanded, taking Jim by the arm and shaking him. "Eh?" said Jim, rousing. "Where's boy?" "Our boy, Ralph," said the cook. "I can't see 'im nowhere. I hope 'e ain't gone overboard, poor little chap."

Jim refused to discuss the matter, the cook awoke Dobbs. Dobbs swore at him peacefully and resumed his slumbers. The cook went up again and probed round the deck, looking in all sorts of unlikely places for the boy. He even climbed a little way into the rigging, and, finding no traces of him, was reluctantly forced to the conclusion that he had gone overboard.

"I don't think the worse of him for that," said Ralph, regarding the fermenting Dobbs kindly.