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The True Story of the Great Sea Mystery of the "Marie Celeste"

The Manifest Absurdity of the Recent Pretended Explanation Pointed Out by Capt. Roden



How the Brig "Celeste" Rolled Heavily in the Sea and Tore Open the Casks of Alcohol in Her Cargo.

By Capt. E. K. Roden,

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THE story published in the Strand Magazine pretending to explain the mysterious abandonment of the brig Marie Celeste near the Azores in 1873 is as ridiculous and preposterous a yarn as has ever come to my notice. According to the solution given, one of the "survivors" of the crew of the Marie Celeste, in notes found after his death and just now come to light through the enterprise of an Oxford scholar, Captain Briggs, of the Marie Celeste, became "daffy" as a result of rough weather encountered after leaving New York.

What particular reason the skipper had to "turn queer" because of bad weather is not stated. Bad weather is a condition generally met with at sea, and is always dealt with as a matter of course, and no seaman, least of all a commander, ever pays but passing attention to it. With a staunch hull, strong rig, and plenty of searoom such as that occupied by Marie Celeste one week out from New York, it is not clear why bad weather should affect the captain in such a way as it did.

However, the captain went queer and persisted in remaining queer for the rest of the trip. His idea to build, in the forward part of the brig just aft of the catheads, a bridge or gangway running athwartship for his five-year-old daughter must be attributed to his mental condition. No sane man would ever put a bridge in such an exposed position where jibsheets with heavy blocks are flapping back and forth on the slightest luffing to the wind of the brig. Whatever the degree of daffiness on the part of the skipper of the Marie Celeste, he certainly never ordered such a bridge to be built, or, if he did, his two mates would surely have prevented the crew from carrying out the order as being a hindrance to the maneuvering of the brig.

The skipper's subsequent suggestion to his mate to swim alongside the brig with their clothes on, and the following out of this scheme by a number of the men, plainly indicates, if the story is to be believed, that the entire ship's company was daffy, or in a state bordering on daffiness. The upsetting of the bridge and the dumping into the sea afterward of the remaining crew

and the captain's wife and child while they were watching the swimming race of the skipper and his crazy companions is a piece of imagination entirely too bulky to be swallowed even by a most phlegmatic Kansas farmer who never saw a vessel in his life.

To complete appropriately the stage setting, sharks had to be introduced, and the author of the story has seen to it that there were plenty of these man-eating monsters to devour ten times the crew carried by the Marie Celeste. Of course, the sharks did their work well and had the vicinity of the brig cleaned up within a short time, except for the survivor, Abel Fosdyk. This worthy individual, unaffected by the daffiness of Captain Briggs and the rest of the crew, smartly dodged the sharks and seated himself comfortably on the upst bridge, calmly awaiting developments. Here the story suddenly ends, with the cheerful information that Fosdyk was picked up by a "boat" and later on safely landed, but no details are given.

Of all fanciful accounts written to explain the abandonment of the Marie Celeste, this story is by far the most clumsy and ridiculous ever penned. How this man Fosdyk could be picked up by a passing vessel without the captain of this ship reporting the fact is beyond the comprehension of the average man. Even if Fosdyk himself had reason to hide his identity, the crew and officers of the rescuing vessel certainly were not bound to keep secret the story that a man and raft had been picked up in the vicinity where Marie Celeste was discovered crewless.

The true account of the Marie Celeste's abandonment is clear and simple, and requires no imagination to explain. I have gone to some little trouble in ascertaining the records in the case, and here is the whole story told in a few lines:

It will be recalled that Marie Celeste was bound for Genoa from New York with a cargo of alcohol in casks. According to the principal owner of the brig, Captain J. H. Winchester, who recently died in Rahway, N. J., she was chartered to Meisner, Ackermann & Co., of New York, to carry alcohol to Italy. Captain B. S. Briggs, of Marion, Mass., was her master, and he took along his wife and young baby. Albert G. Richardson, of Stockton, Me., was her mate, and Albert Gillling, of New York, her second mate, while her crew was composed of Edward William Head, of New York; Volker Lorenser, Arlen Harbens, B. Lorenzer and Gottlieb Goodshood, all of Germany. No such name as Abel Fosdyk appeared on her shipping articles.

One of the stevedores who loaded the Marie Celeste in Brooklyn was a Swede by the name of Lindberg, who at the present time resides in Gothenburg, Sweden. A few years ago this man, in speaking to me about the brig, said that for want of ample time the casks were not properly stowed, and that in case of heavy rolling they might work loose. This fact was known to Captain Briggs, but he did not attach much importance to it, being anxious to get started on the voyage, and depended on the usual good weather prevailing during that time of the year to make a quick passage.

By the records of other vessels traversing the North Atlantic at the same time as the Marie Celeste, she ran into heavy weather, and her cargo, being poorly stowed, began to shift, and naturally some of the casks were smashed. Coming into fine weather with high temperature, the fumes from the spilled alcohol naturally began to expand in the hold. As the pressure increased with the expanding vapor, it blew off the fore hatch, sending up from below gases resembling smoke, that naturally led the crew to believe the brig was on fire.

Captain Briggs, realizing the explosive nature of the brig's cargo, took no chance of being blown up with the crew, and no doubt at once ordered all hands to take to the boat, carrying along the chronometer, ship's papers and such other necessities as could be reached in the short time available. His intention was evidently to stand by at a safe distance from the brig waiting for a chance to be picked up by a passing vessel, or to return to the brig after a reasonable time had elapsed and the danger of explosion was over. As there was no time to belay the sails before leaving, a breeze most likely sprung up and made the brig drift, or run before the wind, faster than the men in the boat could row to follow her, and, consequently, the boat and brig were separated.

This, in all probability, happened during the night following the abandonment of the brig. The rest of the story is brief. The Marie Celeste was overhauled nine days later by the British bark *Del Gratia*, but the boat with Captain Briggs, his wife, child and crew, did not come within sight of any passing vessel. They, like many others who, by stress of circumstances, are forced to take an open boat in less frequented regions of the sea, perished, let us hope, by the swamping of the boat.

The fact that Marie Celeste had been abandoned for fear of being blown up is shown by all circumstances surrounding the case. When boarded by Captain Boyce, of the *Del Gratia*, the fore hatch was found open, and the boat gone, but the cargo was undisturbed and in good condition. The spilled alcohol by that time had had a chance to evaporate and escape through the hatch opening and everything looked normal. The evidence elsewhere about the deck and cabin showing the great haste in which the crew had left is but a confirmation of the fear entertained by Captain Briggs that his ship was in immediate danger of being blown up, and on this account was abandoning his ship.

No amount of imagination or speculative writing can upset the soundness of this reasoning. The writer is perfectly willing to stake his reputation as a seaman and navigator as to its correctness. No professional seaman will contradict this explanation after having looked into all circumstances surrounding the case, and there should be no mysterious or supernatural element at all about finding the brig without a crew, but otherwise in good condition.

Every available evidence points to the fact that the Marie Celeste was abandoned for fear of an explosion of her cargo of alcohol, which did not take place, and her crew, drifting about, failed to get within sight of a succoring ship.



The Imaginary Mishap on Board the "Celeste" Which Captain Roden Declares is Ridiculous.

The 1-Cent Lunch New York School Children Get

Attractive and Nourishing Dishes Provided Little Students in the New Campaign to Protect Them from Poverty's Lack of Food and Ignorance's Wrong Food



Well-Fed for a Penny Each.

There are about twenty-five thousand school children in New York who do not get enough to eat. Whatever they get for breakfast, if anything, they go to school and put in the day without any provision whatever for getting any luncheon. Whatever, if anything, they get at home for their evening meal is not very clearly known.

There is no escaping the fact that this little army of school children go to school every day in New York without luncheon. While the boards of education in many other American cities take care of this situation, the New York school authorities do not bother themselves with the matter. In New York the school authorities spend fifty dollars every year for each child in instruction, but they do not concern themselves with the fact that a hungry child makes a poor student.

What the New York school authorities neglect has been done by the consciences of a number of private citizens, who have formed what is known as the New York School Lunch Committee. This committee, through the generosity of Mrs. Elizabeth Millbank Anderson, has worked out a scheme which enables it to supply lunches to school children for one cent apiece.

What kind of a lunch can possibly be served for one cent? Well, that will be seen by the bill of fares printed a little farther on.

Of course, there is no money being made out of these one-cent lunches. The truth is that the children get a little bit more than one cent's worth of food, but the lunch committee

never mention this fact, because they are very anxious not to have the children suspect that there is any element of charity in this matter. When the poor little child walks up and pays his penny he feels just as independent and just as entitled to everything that is handed him as anybody who pays his check at a Fifth Avenue hotel.

The one-cent meals are nourishing. Mal-nutrition is never necessarily the result of insufficient food. The condition is just as likely to be found among the wealthy as among the less fortunate. It may be due to over-eating of rich things, as well as eating an insufficient quantity of the necessary foods. It is the result, too, often of ignorance of home economics on the part of parents; neglect or wastefulness; congenital, hereditary diseases or physical defects in parent or child, or decayed condition of the teeth and consequent deterioration of the mouth.

No matter from whatever source malnutrition results, this private lunch committee had undertaken to correct it wherever possible.

The service provided is intended primarily to meet the need frequently occasioned by the inability of the mother to prepare the noon meal for the child. This inability is the result of a number of other evils, all of which in some way or other menace the public health or welfare.

It may be that Mary's mother is out working in a factory from early in the morning until late at night, and that Mary must eat a cold lunch of doubtful nutrition which the mother prepared long before Mary gets up from her bed, and which stands until Mary comes home at noon hour to gulp it down.

Or it may be that Mary's mother, pressed by poverty, must supplement whatever meagre income the family receives by homework. She may be finishing coats for one of our prominent clothiers or cracking nuts to go into the candy of some of our popular confectioners, or her ignorance of home economy may render her unable to cook food hygienically and properly, or her lack of knowledge of food values tend to have her purchase foods which, if properly selected, would yield a greater food value for less money. It is because of these varied conditions, only a few of which are mentioned, that the School Lunch Committee proposes to attack the problem.

It is required that children taking the penny lunches must eat a bowl of soup. This is for the purpose of insuring to each child a substantial portion of warm, nourishing food. The soup supplies approximately one-third of the needed noon nutrition for a normal child.

In the service of these lunches it must be taken into consideration that the committee are dealing with three distinct nationalities—American, Jewish and Italian. In order to satisfy national likes and dislikes, they have provided in the districts predominantly Italian, cooks of that nation, and similarly with the American and Jewish districts. In the American schools a half pint bowl of the following soups may be obtained:

Cream of tomato, split pea, tripe, clam chowder, rice soup, vegetable, potato, Scotch broth and macaroni.

The food values in these soups measured by calories vary from 73.72 in vegetable soup to 147.82 in potato soup.

In the Jewish schools the variety

of soups consists of the following:

Potato and barley, cabbage, Lima beans with barley, vegetable, rice and lentils, peas with noodles, pea beans with rice, rice with milk, obergritz with potatoes, noodles and milk.

The caloric value of soups in the Jewish schools seems higher than that of any except perhaps the Italian soups. The food value of the Jewish soups range from 107.51 in rice and milk to 378.30 in rice and lentils, the average number of calories being 189.61.

At the Italian schools the soup variety consists of potato, split pea, rice and lentils, macaroni and tomato, peas and rice, lentil, beans and pasta, menestra, rice and tomato, peas and pasta.

These soups have food values ranging from 136 in the rice and tomato to 203 in the peas and rice, the average number of calories being 138.41.

The penny table has also a variety of two or three things which are chosen from the following list:

Bread fritters, rice pudding, potato salad, tomato salad, corn meal pudding, cabbage salad (with bottled dressing), ice cream, vanilla cake, sandwiches made of jam, egg and onion, lettuce, meat and bologna, pot cheese, bologna (with roasted peppers), American cheese, butter, radish.

There are also baked apples, lentil salad, chocolate pudding, crackers, apples on stick, apples, apple sauce, prunes, sliced bananas with milk, grapes, cocoa, bread pudding, sweet chocolate squares, jelly cake, apple pie.

It was found necessary to direct the choice in respect to soup in order to prevent an indiscriminate



School Children with Their Penny Lunches. Note the Generous Size of the Bowls for the Soup.

purchase of foods regardless of their food values. The quality of the food supplied the children is under the strict supervision of expert dietitians.

During 1912 and 1913, 226,325 lunches were served. For this the children paid an aggregate of \$6,911.37. The cost to the committee of each lunch was approximately \$0.45. The children paid for each meal \$0.25, leaving a deficit of \$0.19 for each meal served. This does not mean that the actual provision of food material is not self-supporting. The deficit here is caused by necessary service and supervision.

An interesting feature of the work of the committee is the service of lunches to the children of the deprived classes. These children, deprived of so much of the happiness of normal children, are at least saved the uncomfortable journey in the stages provided by the Board of Education for conveying them from home to the school and back to lunch. As it is, they have their good food served to them in the school building, and it is making them very

happy and strong.

An innovation soon to be started is that of serving a mid-morning portion of milk and crackers to the children in the anemic classes. These children are chosen because of their devitalized condition. They are taught in open-air classrooms. There is little doubt that the service of milk and crackers in the middle of the morning will materially increase their vitality and make them again normal children.

A child with a limited income may receive, for instance, a half pint bowl of clam chowder, two slices of bread and a generous dish of prunes for three cents, or if it is some day other than Friday and not in a Jewish school, the child may receive vegetable soup, a meat sandwich and a vanilla cake for three cents, and be it thoroughly understood that it is not only the poor child who attends the school lunches. Frequently a child possessed of as much as ten pennies will come to raid the penny table with its tempting delicious things, but his ten cents will be found to go too far. Unless he is

an unusually abnormal child, he will hardly be able to assimilate more than five cents' worth, because for that he could get some clam chowder, a meat sandwich, a cup of cocoa, bread pudding and apple sauce. There is the danger that the child may be tending to mal-nourishment, because of his over-eating one thing, of course, and this the School Lunch Committee is trying to prevent.

In one of the classes of crippled children there is a 200 pound boy, who was advised to give up school lunches because of their tendency to add avoirdupois.

The New York School Lunch Committee consists of Miss Mabel H. Kittredge, chairman; Mr. John A. Kingsbury, secretary; Mr. Edward F. Brown, executive secretary; Mr. Willard D. Straight, Dr. C. Ward Crampton, Mr. John Doty, Miss Lillian D. Wald, Mr. John Martin, Miss M. A. Nutting, Mrs. Ernest Foote, Mrs. V. G. Simkhovitch, Mrs. Benjamin Whittaker, Mrs. Joseph T. Byers, Dr. Ira S. Wile, Dr. Thomas D. Wood, Mr. Bailey B. Burritt, Mr. James H. Hutchens.