

MARINERS AND MINERS

By C. C. G.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM TAYLOR was long a superintendent on the Comstock: first of the Yellow Jacket later of the Savage. The Captain was a fine business man; he ran a mine as he had commanded ships for years, and everything was in ship shape, no matter on what watch you called.

But when the eight bells sounded and he was off duty, he was a most kindly, genial gentleman, and as the whole world had, on his voyages, been photographed upon his mind, one had but to awaken his memories, and then his talk was an education to a landsman.

But he had a great many sailor kinks. One was to every day at noon "take the sun," as had been his wont for so many years at sea. He would never explain why he did it, but we suspect it was not altogether through habit. As men turn the meridian of life they begin, little by little, to live over the scenes and events of earlier days, and it is possible that even when at work, and attending strictly to the business, for which he had sold his time and energies, the other lobe of his brain was at work calling up memories. Looking from the Comstock off to the east, beyond the near hills, stretches "the twenty-six-mile desert" and it, with its changing pictures, now amber under an amber sky; now swept by sand storms in summer, or snow storms in winter; now painted under refracted sunbeams with mirages; it must have often reminded the captain of different sea phases; so when he made his noon observations, he was no longer in Virginia City, but somewhere out to sea, off stormy cape or rounding bold promontories, or lying becalmed under the lee of some island; and "to take the sun" was enough to keep that subjective side of his mind recalling old pictures for hours, even as when a man is at work he sometimes hums, unconsciously, a song of his childhood.

Captain Taylor had for his first assistant, George Hopkins, one of the brightest men on the lode. The Captain and Hopkins were warm friends, but never missed a chance to joke each other. One day at noon, just as the captain, who had been making his observation, lowered his theodolite, Hopkins came along and said: "Were you aboard ship now, Captain, what would you say? Simulating the old sea tone the captain answered: "Go for'ard, you son of a lubber!"

The captain made a stake on the Comstock, invested it in San Francisco real estate, covered the ground with houses and lived on the rentals, and laid up enough to rebuild after the earthquake and fire. But his life wore out at last and his friends hope he has found a sunny island in summer land, against which the low booming of the surf will make for his soul an everlasting lullaby.

A good many sea captains were from time to time superintendents on the Comstock. One of the first was Captain E. H. Wiler. He was not only a mariner, but a mining engineer. A dozen years before the Comstock was discovered he had charge of the copper mines just back of Santiago, Cuba. A little creek ran down from the mines, through the city. Captain Wiler noticed this creek and quietly took a lease on a vacant block, built a high-board fence around it, picked up all the scrap iron he could find and put it in the stream; then hired a colored woman to take out the scraps daily, scrape them and put them back. For a long time he obtained from this source daily about a barrel of chemically pure copper. After a while the company discovered what he was doing, smashed his monopoly and advised him to resign as superintendent.

The captain died in Salt Lake City only four or five years ago, aged about ninety.

About fifteen years before he died a youthful insurance agent called at his office and wanted to

write him a policy on his life. The Captain took to the proposal kindly, kept the young man explaining the special virtues of his company, and the captain seemed more and more entertained by the proposition; found out what a paid-up policy for \$20,000 would cost; but suddenly asked: "Up to what age do you insure?" "Oh," was the reply, "up to sixty years." The captain mournfully responded: "My friend, I am awfully sorry, but really, you are twenty-one years too late."

As the chagrined agent left the office, the captain said: "It is good for babies to "holler," sometimes, it expands their lungs; that baby will be all the better for his call on me."

Captain William Dall was a long-time superintendent of the Cphir. He, for years prior to going to the Comstock, commanded the steamship Columbia, plying between San Francisco and Portland, Ore. On that ship Captain Dall's brother was first officer and Jim Wooley, a great wag, was chief engineer.

Wooley was wont, in later years, to tell of a little incident that happened one morning when the steamer was lying at her wharf in the Wilamette. Wooley was standing in the doorway of his engine room on the main deck, when a long-haired, stoop-shouldered, shy-looking man came aboard and started around the deck, looking at everything. Dall, the mate, came out of his room, and roughly ordering the man to go ashore, aimed a blow at him to accentuate his order. But the blow never landed. The wild man interposed his elbow and the arm of Dall went high in the air, at the same instant with an awkward sweep the other hand of the stranger landed full on the ear of the first officer and he went down as Jeffries did in that final round under the left hook of Johnson. Hearing the racket, Captain Dall sprang out of his cabin, made a rush for the stranger and aimed a terrific, scientific blow at the intruder. But it, too, fell outside the breast-

works. The stranger ducked and evaded it, and in the same awkward way shot a stinger into the stomach of the captain which doubled him up on deck like a camp chair.

Springing up the captain called to Wooley to come and help out on the fight, but Wooley assured him that he had lost no fights, and the captain suddenly turned away and called to his brother to quit and let the wild beast have his way. Both the Dalls went to their rooms and the stranger came over to where Wooley was standing and explained that he was a trapper, just down from the hills, that he had never seen a ship before, was just looking around, did not intend to steal the ship or its engines or either of its smokestacks. Wooley hastened to tender him the freedom of the ship, for he declared that when the "cuss" straightened up he was seven feet tall, agile as a cougar and with a hand on him like the hand of Providence.

Before being chief engineer on the Columbia, Wooley held the same position on the old Cortez, that ran to Panama for years, Captain Cropper, commander. He said that one day when the ship was at her pier in San Francisco, he was sitting on deck talking with the captain, and the first officer was training an awkward squad of sailors how to bend on and furl sails. Most of the sailors had run off to the mines, the ship was shorthanded and the mate was giving some wharf hobos that he had picked up an elementary lesson in handling sails, when a little short Irishman, full of grog; moreover, he was anxious to show the captain, said: "I can bate oney man yes have aboard your ship at that work."

"Very well," said Captain Cropper, go up and help take in that main sail, and if you do it well I will give you a job." The man went to the shrouds, climbed up, walked out on the yard and bent over to help haul in the sail. But he was full of grog; moreover, he was anxious to show

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