

# THE GOOD SHIP "MOHOCK"

W. CLARK RUSSELL

her own foaming speed only, nor in the spirit of vitality I seemed to find in every swollen cloth; it was in the passengers too; children were playing in the scuppers, groups on the quarter deck lounged in easy talk, there was an alacrity in the motion of the sailors, a cheerful hoarseness in the crowing of the coxks, and the smoke from the galley chimney flew merrily down upon the sea over the bulwark rail.

This fine weather, and still finer breeze lasted some days, and drove us eight hundred miles towards the heart of the North Atlantic. The voyage promised in sunshine and company to be as jolly as a yachting jaunt, and again and again I told Captain Sinclair that I had never enjoyed myself so much in my life. The passengers were exceedingly agreeable. Mr. Jackson was excellent company at table; never went louder laughing through a ship's skylight than ours through the Mohock's, and I peculiarly relished some quiet strolls and equally quiet arguments with Monsignor Luard. I speedily saw that priest-like, he would be glad to convert me, and I was pleased to let him see by my opinions and views how well sunk were the foundations of my faith as an English Church woman.

But, unconsciously to themselves, the most diverting people on board were Mr. and Mrs. Macbride. They were fresh from a rural parish, the hayseed smelt strongly in their hair, as the sailors say, and this was a source of wonder and enchantment. They smiled arm in arm all day long, peered into everything, asked questions from morning till night. I see them now, always arm in arm, abreast of the galley, and smiling into the doorway past which the cook and his mate were at work. Captain Sinclair, standing beside me, said, "He's a good cook, but he's a sot and swears terribly; I wish he mayn't soil himself or break anything whilst Adam and Eve yonder are looking on."

It was strange he should have said this; for a moment later the clergyman whipped his bride round, she still smiling, he with a face pale with disgust. Captain Sinclair, biting his lip, walked aft. But the clergyman soon called his spirits, whilst she clearly had heard nothing she understood, and presently they were at their old amusements of staring and prying again, smiling at the hoochops, peeping under the long boat at the old sow, stopping aft to examine the pumps, whose mechanism I overheard him explaining to her, then inspecting the quarter-deck captain whose use he with smiling civility called to the mate to explain, but old Gordon, with a sour face, told him that he had the ship to look after, and that as he was a man born with but one head and two hands, he never undertook two jobs at once.

This day I noticed for the first time a gloom and anxiety in the look of my stepfather. He had been comparatively cheerful to this period. He now recalled the manner I had remarked in him when I met him on returning home from my sister's. He held aloof, walked the deck alone, spoke only when he was accosted and then briefly.

They usually dined at three on board the American pockets in those days, and at half-past seven a substantial meat tea was served. Sometime before we were summoned to this last meal I had been walking the deck with a lady, and I thought to myself that my stepfather seemed to be keeping a curiously vigilant look upon the sea. He would dart a falcun glance at the horizon from under a seemingly drooping droop of lid, sweeping with these lightning quick looks the line of the deep on either hand. His handsome face was grim with its habitual frown. I wondered if he expected a shift of wind, or saw signs of a change of weather in the flight of the clouds, and the ragged line of the sea-drode, defined as the edge of a saw against the hard, faint, distant blue of the afternoon.

When we went below to tea, I heard him at the head of the companion ladder call to the second mate, one Mr. Turnbull, to report anything that should leave in sight. He took his place in silence, merely giving a stiff bow to one or two of the ladies. Sunbeams still threw a red glare over the green Atlantic, but down in this cabin the lamps were lighted, for the dusk of the night was inside the ship. Most of the gentlemen seemed in high spirits.

"Let me send you a slice of this pork, captain?" called out Colonel Wills.

"I do not digest pork," answered the Captain, distantly.

"Well, I am one of those clever people who do not trouble to digest," said the Colonel, with a loud laugh, helping himself to a great slice.

"Mr. Jackson," exclaimed Mr. Berghelm, "what might be your opinion of Mr. Macbride's fat?"

"Why, that he is one of those clever people who can do everything but get a living," answered Mr. Jackson.

"I am an imitator of yours," called Colonel Wills.

"You are," answered the actor, "but those cheap who call the name of a brother's name, but he is from France."

earnestly.

"He'll be glad when he gets it," said Mr. Jackson, with a sarcastic glance at his own coat, which was a brand new garment of a very loud pattern.

"We shall have made a good run by tomorrow, captain, if this wind lasts," said Monsignor Luard.

"Yes, sir, we are a fast ship."

"Do you know I am of opinion that steam will never supersede sail," said Mr. Macbride, looking nervously around.

Mr. Jackson, leaning backwards to see me past the huge figure of Mrs. Wills, whom I sat next to, exclaimed, contorting his face, "Do you know why man is inferior to beasts? Because beasts have no opinions."

Mrs. Wills chuckled in her bass, and said in a low voice, "One beast has though."

"That is my opinion," said Mr. Macbride.

Nobody cared about the subject and it dropped.

The colonel told a story of two men who went into partnership. Each wanted the other to die. One was consumptive, the other rheumatic. He amused us with his description of the pleasure the rheumatic man took in saying that he didn't think his partner looked so well, and the happiness of the other when, in answer to enquiries, he'd say, "You should have heard him a-hollering." Mr. Berghelm laughed heartily at this. In the midst of this gentleman's high notes of merriment my stepfather rose, bowed, and went on deck.

"Anything going to happen to the weather, Mr. Gordon?" said the Colonel to the mate, who was following the captain.

"If I could answer that question, gentlemen," answered Mr. Gordon, halting at the foot of the steps, "I'd not be mate of a ship," and with that he went up the ladder, leaving us to guess his reason.

"He means of course that he would get his fortune ashore," said Monsignor Luard.

"The captain doesn't seem very well," said Mr. Berghelm, looking at me.

"He is quite well, I believe," I answered.

"What says the barometer?" cried Mr. Jackson, with a theatrical start in his chair, and he walked on melodramatic legs to the shaft of the mizzenmast where the weather-glass was hanging; but though he looked at it first with his head on one side, then on t'other, it was clear he didn't understand it.

The ladies rose and I went to my cabin. When I stepped on deck it was dark, but I had not been long above when the moon rose; she streaked the line of the horizon under her with crystal that looked, with the play of the sea, like the flashing of bubbles under foot. She made a fair light presently, and the horizon opened to its recesses.

"What is more beautiful than a ship under sail, lighted by the moon?" said Monsignor Luard, approaching me.

"Look at those heights of canvas; they stream into vapor to the stars."

It was blowing a fine sailing wind; I leaned with Monsignor over the side, and watched the water roaring off at each plinge of the bows in sheets of liquid ivory. The fore-castle was covered with 'tween decks passengers and sailors who moved about in groups of ash shapes; a fiddle and flute were making a concert in the forepart, and whilst I watched the foam with the priest, the musicians, along with a powerful, clear voice, struck up, "The Bay of Biscay." Mr. Jackson, coming to me, said, "What is the captain looking at?"

I turned and saw my stepfather standing on the quarter-deck, not far from the wheel, with a binocular glass at his eye. He let drop the glass presently, and shouted:

"Clew up the fore and mizzen royals, and take in the flying jib."

The order was repeated by the second mate, and in a few moments we heard a noise of sailors' hoarse bawling forward, and on the quarter-deck; the high light sails melted out, and I watched the figure of a young seaman spring into the mizzen shrouds.

"In main royal," presently cried out the captain. "Get the mizzen to gallant sail clewed up and stowed," and when this was done the great mainmast was taken in and rolled up by a crowd of men.

The ship then looked half-old, and her appearance seemed to cast a menace of storm into the night. Yet it was fine weather, the moon and stars bright, the clouds fleecy and nimble of wing; the sea under the moon rolled in broken silver, and the horizon showed clearly to its confines, a dark girdle, like a belt silver-clasped.

"What's wrong with the weather?" exclaimed the actor at my side. "Why split me if the ship isn't sitting upright—there's nothing left for the wind to blow into."

"I will trust to the captain's judgment," said Monsignor.

"He has been at sea all his life," I exclaimed. "There is no more experienced sailor out of London."

"But don't you know, Monsignor," said Mr. Jackson, looking aloft with a woe-begone expression in his moon-whitened face, "that discretion may be more licentious than art? Here is a noble breeze and a fine night."

"There is always a grumbler amongst passengers, Miss Hoya," said Monsignor, laughing. "Who could take a despondent view of a careful skipper who understands the barometer?"

"Seems a pity though," said Mr. Jackson, looking down at the white passing water.

"Jump below and see what further fall there is, if any."

Turnbull returned and said, "There's no further fall, sir."

"It's drop enough," exclaimed the captain, as though he wished others than Turnbull to hear him, and then told the officer to haul down the standing jib and clew up the fore topgallant sail, and when these sails were stowed away to brail up the spanker.

There could be no doubt from this that he was expecting heavy weather. Monsignor, who had not looked at the barometer, stepped below after an uneasy glance around. He returned soon and said that the fall, so far as he could judge, was about half an inch.

"Is that serious?" said Jackson.

"There's your answer," responded the priest, with a flourish of his hand at the masts.

"A ship!" shouted Mr. Berghelm springing with excitement off the grating abaft the wheel.

The sail I had seen was now under the moon, and on a sudden after some minutes, as though by magic, it swept out of the black curve it made upon the rolling river of silver into the lines and pale canvas of a schooner. She came along heading for us in a racing way, the white water thrabbling to her figure head, and rushing from her swiftly as foam runs to the ocean's steep.

"What an apparition!" shouted Mr. Jackson, flying across the deck.

We crowded to the side to look. She foamed to within pistol shot, then put her helm down, and ranged abreast with rattling canvas, chopping into the long black tumbling seas, and showing a fabric of about a hundred tons, keen as a knife in the entry, and she whitened the night where she was by the breadth and the height of her moonlit sails. The moonbeams sparkled in her wet sides; you saw green stars of it in the bright stuff upon her decks. She was a phantom just now in the airy distance, and as she lay pitching close abreast, easily holding her own with a frequent shuddering of her sails, one thought of her has sprung from the deep or fallen from the heavens, so sudden the dusk and the wild flying lights of the night made it all.

Her white decks glauced as she rolled towards us, and I saw two or three figures near her long tiller.

"Ship ahoy!" was shouted, "what ship's that?"

"Captain Sinclair answered, and asked what schooner was that?"

"The Reindeer, from New Orleans to Bristol," was the reply delivered by a hoarse salt throat. Those notes from the sea sounded wildly through the noise of the wind aloft, and the boiling hiss of the water alongside.

"Our chronometer's stopped. We've lost our reckoning. Will you give us the longitude and your time?"

This was promptly done.

"Thank you, sir," was shouted. "Good night, and a prosperous voyage to you."

The schooner's helm was shifted, her head fell off, she rounded and swept away astern of us, and was swiftly showing as a star in mist in the distant gloom.

I observed that the second mate watched her. I was standing near the skylight at the time, not far from Captain Sinclair who gazed fixedly seawards, as though conjecturing the weather. The second mate came up, touching his cap, and I heard him say,

"If that schooner's bound for Bristol, sir, she's lost scent of it."

The Captain turned his head quickly and looked at the distant figure of light.

"Well, she must be allowed to know her own business," said he after a short pause, and there was temper enough in his voice I thought to account for the second mate slinking away forward.

It was about half past nine; grog and biscuits were upon the cabin table, and the lamps shone upon the figures of some of the passengers playing at cribbage or chess.

"I guess, Captain, by the look of your ship we're to smell hell before morning!" said Colonel Wills, stepping into the moonlight with a cigar in his mouth out of the ebony shadow of the mizzen-mast that swung on the white planks almost as a pendulum goes.

"There's a considerable fall in the glass," answered the Captain, "a sudden fall; there will be a sudden rise, no doubt, but I will not trust the weather in this sea with the mercury at that indication."

## CHAPTER III

A SHIP'S BOAT OF TWELVE MEN.

When I went to bed I expected the night would prove sleepless with storm. The ship was under small canvas and the water fell from her side sloppily, and without life, as she drove slowly, with floating langes, over the long flowing lines of brine. I got into bed and put on the lamp, but had not been resting twenty minutes when I heard my stepfather's voice outside my door. You could hear plainly owing to the ventilating arrangement of Venetian blinds over the doors of the berth.

"The glass remains steady."

"The man who answered was the mate. 'I don't understand it, sir, my glass shows a rise.'"

"Since when?"

"Since seven o'clock."

"The cabin glass and the glass in my berth tally. What sort of a glass is yours?"

They were moving when this was said, and I lost the answer. I fell asleep soon afterwards, and when I awoke next morning my cabin was full of sunlight and the ship sailing along quietly. I dressed, and entering the saloon, met Monsignor coming down the companion ladder. He saluted me and said it was a beautiful morning, and that the sea was like a frozen lake under the sun, and at the edge of it was a little pinnacle of ice.

"Ice!" cried I.

"Yes," he answered, "and when you go on deck you'll taste its breath in the wind."

of his cabin, gravely laced me on the forehead, and shook hands with the priest.

"So we had a fine night after all, Captain," exclaimed Monsignor.

"I have crossed the Atlantic many times and this puzzles me," answered the captain, making a step to the mizzenmast and looking at the barometer.

"But the atmosphere is a mystery, full of stealthy qualities. They creep into those indications," said he, pointing to the mercury, "and perplex us. I looked for a gale last night, and prepared the ship for it."

I had heard so much about the barometer that my curiosity was excited, and I went to my stepfather's side to look at the thing. It consisted of a tube of glass, with a bulb full of mercury at the bottom of it; this was sunk into a wooden backing, and the whole contained in a long narrow case with a glass door of which the captain had the key, though I will not be sure that the instrument had not hitherto been set day by day by the mate.

"There has been no rise," says Monsignor peering at the mercury.

"Yes, there is a fine weather on every side. It will keep fine I believe," said the Captain, and he went on deck.

I followed, but did not join him, for despite his kiss, and his grave courtous manner to the priest, there was a subtle something in his manner that was as good as a hint to me to leave him alone.

The wind had shifted, was blowing on the port quarter, and had fallen somewhat light, and the ship fluted slowly forwards in ontrays as regular as the rhymes of a song over the wide blue Atlantic heave. I never saw the sky look so high before. It was a pavement of delicate cloud, all rose with the morning light, plume-shaped, overwreathed and motionless. The sun sparkled with a frosty whiteness, and there was in the air an edge that had been wanting yesterday. To the trucks soared the sails, the yards almost square, and on the left hung wide spaces of lustrous canvas called studding-sails; their light in the sea ran steady by the side of the ship. The sun was behind us, and when I looked that way I could see nothing for the dazzle.

Mr. Jackson, however, stood staring through the ship's telescope which he had levelled directly into the heart of the bed of brilliance.

"What do you see?" said I.

"Ice," said he turning his head; the eye he had been using showed as though he had caught a cold in it. Look, Miss Haya."

He held the glass, but when I looked I was blinded by the glory. Mr. Macbride and his wife came up arm in arm, and the clergyman asked us what we saw.

"There's an iceberg out there under the sun," said Mr. Jackson.

"An iceberg?" exclaimed Mr. Macbride. "Where? Dear me! Are we approaching it? No, it is astern. It is under the sun, and may melt before we can catch a clear view of it. An iceberg, Oh, Joanna, we must not think of returning without having beheld one of the greatest wonders of the deep."

"I cannot see it," whined his wife, crying with the blaze she was screwing up her pretty eyes at.

"Look!" exclaimed the comedian, pointing—"just over the end of my finger. Now you have it."

But now they hadn't it, nor could I catch the least glimpse of the object, and wondered that the priest and the actor should both agree it was there. And yet it was there, the captain called across the deck to tell us so, and after we had waited a little it stole out of the effulgence into the blue on the right. It might have been the sail of a cutter; it was a mere gleam upon the horizon. Yet it was ice, the topmost point of an island sunk beyond our sight, and I viewed it with silent wonder.

"Is it solid?" asked Mr. Macbride.

"As the floor of a ball-room, and as unsubstantial as a shadow on a fog," answered the actor.

A passenger who carried his elbows like a grasshopper—I forgot his name—joined us in staring at the distant gleam.

"I wonder if I could get a slide representing an iceberg for a magic lantern?" said Mr. Macbride.

Mr. Jackson smiled with one eye at me; it was like a wink.

"Were you ever cast ashore, and left alone upon an iceberg?" asked the passenger with the grasshopper elbows, addressing Mr. Macbride.

"Oh, dear no! Oh, certainly not," answered the person, looking at his wife and laughing, and they laughed together.

"I was then," said the passenger, "I went on a whaling cruise for my health, and they sent me in a boat to an ice island at my request. I climbed a bit, and looked about me, and when I returned the boat was gone. They found me again after two days."

"Alive?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"The worst part of it" continued the passenger, deepening and subduing his voice till I saw the parson straining at him with an open mouth, "was not the hunger, nor the cold, nor even the solitude. It was the midnight silence. A stillness unutterable, so deep, so awful, I vow to heaven I could hear my beard growing."

He turned his back upon us and walked forward.

"There are as many lies in that little tale as a cat has hairs in hers," said Mr. Jackson. "He speaks of the silence of ice. Nothing is noisier than a berg. It is splittling ceaselessly in all parts, and roars through its own dismemberment like a line-of-battle ship in action."

"The breakfast bell, my dear!" said Mr. Macbride, who always hearkened with a doubting, suspicious face when the actor spoke, and presently we were all at table.

Nothing more was said about the fall of the glass on the previous evening, nor of the eight hours' arrest of the ship through the deceit of the mercury. Captain Sinclair's manner was hard and reserved. He ate quickly, and was gone from the table before we were half-way through the meal. I guessed from the looks of the passengers that they would have talked about him had I been out of hearing.

The needle of ice on the far verge of the deep had vanished when I returned on deck, and the sea was a barren breast, but flashing like a silver shield under the springing light. The wind had freshened, shifted into a quarter that was good for the slide of our keel, and the ship was winging nimbly onwards, pointing her yardarms at the sky, and throwing the water in colored fountains of foam from her sheering bows with every stoop into the blue hollow.

Captain Sinclair paced the weather side of the quarter-deck alone. I saw the Colonel go up to him as though for a chat; he drew off after a few minutes. Two ladies then went and addressed the commander. His manner gave them no encouragement, and he was soon walking alone again. From time to time he would dart a swift glance in my direction, and I seemed to know instinctively that he suspected I was watching him. It is true I should have done so, but his looks were like a warning, topped as they were with the shadow of his habitual frown, and I crossed the deck to leeward out of his observation, and entertained myself for a long hour in looking at the ship, and studying the marvelous from traceries which darted like tongues into the clear blue from the bows, and in watching the seaman at work aloft and on deck.

It was still all wondrous strange and new to me. I thought I might never again have a chance to make a voyage, and I let the whole miracle of sails and sunshine and gleaming waters sink into me in all its glory and freshness. Nor did my eyes and sympathies fail me; the memory of it is a brilliant picture still.

This morning at about eleven o'clock a smoke sprang up right ahead. A great smoke it was, as though a ship lay burning there, but after a while the telescope resolved the throat of it into the mouth of a red funnel, and in three quarters of an hour a large paddle steamer was on the bow. Our number flew in a string of bright colors at the mizzen gaff, and the steamer's name streamed in colored bunting at her masthead. She was the Britannia, memorable as one of the earliest of the Cunard steamers. With my mind's eye I beheld her distinctly. She had a tall red funnel, and three masts, and a frigate-like bow, with a row of gleaming square ports abaft. She was but a little bigger than our ship, yet looked a lump as she rolled by. She was from Boston for Liverpool. All her canvas was furled, and she was churning through the water at about eight knots, which was fast as speed then went in steam. She had met with a gale and looked wrecked. One paddle-box was gone, and the huge wheel whirled round naked, slinging the foam on high, and filling the air all about the black and plunging circle with fragments of flying rainbow. The face of her funnel was whitened as by snow with a crust of salt. Dense volumes of smoke poured from her chimney. How those old steamers smoked! The end of the stream of soot went out of sight past the horizon.

A large crowd of people surveyed us from her deck, but the two ships were too far apart for hallooing. Broken as she appeared by storm, rolling heavily too whilst our own ship took the rhythm of the sea with a dancing grace that never brought her spar erect, we viewed her with wonder, with almost breathless interest. You who are living in an age of huge steamers, whose accustomed eye finds something insipid in the prodigious of the glaucous of the ocean procession, will not, unless you be old and of good memory, realize the enthusiastic interest people took in those early experiments. Then you might sail the sea for months without seeing a steamer. When such a spectacle offered the eye devoured it. It was a miracle, the lodestone of the achievements of human genius and invention. The seamen dropped their tasks to look; the 'tween decks passengers crowded the bulwark rail; we sailors folks lined the bulwarks all staring. Yonder she walked, as independent of the wind of heaven as the sea bird that followed her.

"In so many days," we said to one another, "her people will have arrived at home," and it was astounding to think a ship could be timed, as if she were a coach or a locomotive.

Her white wake made a wide path on the sea, and her windows shone like jewels over it.

"After that who shall tell you man hasn't an immortal soul!" said Colonel Wills.

Monsignor Luard smiled his approval of the sentiment.

"I hope the weather that hammered her will have blown itself out before we arrive," said some one.

"Charles Dickens went out to Boston in that ship two years ago," said the grasshopper passenger. "I made the passage with him."

"Is he funny in his conversation?" said Mr. Macbride, catching at this remark with a literary sympathy.

"Soul-splitting," answered the grasshopper. "And he wears four pins in his cravat."

"Is she a comfortable vessel, sir?" enquired Mr. Gordon.

"Look at her rolling out yonder. And this is a fine morning," said the grasshopper. "Comfortable! Given but a little piece of weather and you don't know what's become of her. I'm an old sailor, yet could never stand upright on that ship in a seaway, and when I went ashore at Boston my mother wouldn't have known me for sticking plaster."

The comedian eyed him with a sneer. There could be no doubt the grasshopper was a great liar.

Mr. Gordon brought his eyes awav

form the steamer and looked aloft, and though there was about as much sentiment in the man as there was in the harness coat out of which the sailors picked their beef, yet I seemed to see the spirit of the sea-man—of the old seaman—gleam in his eyes with an instant's pride as he gazed. He could not but contrast; he could not but delight in the beauty of this fabric of vision, alive with the spirit of the wondrous winds, sentient with the intelligence of the ocean itself.

This was fine weather for the Atlantic. I had never dared dream of such continuity of blue sky and sparkling nights as had been granted us. Captain Sinclair would often talk of this sea at home; many a yarn of its and its hurricane, its surge taller than the Andean billow of the Horn had he recited, and I had reeked upon the excitement of half a dozen gales of wind at least—the ship, stopped, the rigging raving, the hurricane of the midnight white with foam—before we arrived at New York.

A strange mysterious thing happened this day—a silent tragedy. It may have occurred when the Britannia was abreast of us, or when her smoke was as dim as a length of spider's web above the horizon.

To be Continued.

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