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THE RELIGION OF SAILORS.

SAILORS are not, in outward show and profession, a religious class of men, nor is the religion which some of them avow and profess characterised by the same superstition as formerly; at any rate, they are not quite so frequent and absurd. Still there are traces of it among them just as among all other classes of society, especially at those frequent intervals of life when fancy is more active than reason and judgment, and when wonders very doubtfully attested are held to be more religiously suggestive than facts that can be proved. Even men of some education are apt to mistake a coincidence for a connexion, to confound sequence with consequence, and to assert supernatural cause or supernatural effect upon evidence which proves nothing but that certain events, common or strange, happened one after the other, or simultaneously. If such is the case amongst those who might be expected to know better, one cannot be surprised that superstition should linger in the minds of sailors who, for the most part, have had but little logical training, and frequently no intellectual training whatever. Even if they were a more thoughtful and intelligent class of men, a little superstition might well be excused when found as an ingredient in their religion; for if they have travelled far and often, they must undoubtedly have seen many wonderful and awful things not easily explained away by the small amount of scientific information at their command. They see nature upon a large scale and under extraordinary circumstances. In certain

VOL. XLI

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electrical states of the air and sea they witness strange grouping of phenomena, hear strange sounds, and feel strange influences, and hence in men of their small culture an occasional tendency to forms of religious emotion, fanatic, fantastic, or wild. It is probably not very easy in the midst of a hurricane on the Atlantic to realise and be sustained by the thought that God "holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand." To an affrighted mind it might seem as if some other description of being or beings were handling the waves at that moment, and hence a momentary perversion of the religious sentiment, an appeal, deprecatory or imploring, to some inferior spirit or spirits supposed to have a share in the power which rouses into violence and subdues into stillness the wondrous elements of air and sea. True there may be among sailors many with so thick an integument of mere animalism about their souls, that they can scarcely be said to feel anything except through the medium of sensual appetite, and who quickly obliterate any rising emotion of the spiritual kind by means of their grog; but this is not true of them as a body. With all their ignorance and occasional coarseness they are by no means a hard, impassive, insensible class of men. They are not sentimental, but they are often sensitive, and hence a capability of religious feeling which sometimes takes a sober and reasonable, and sometimes a wild and superstitious form, according to the influences to which they have been exposed in the country of their birth and the homes of their childhood. Sailors belonging to Roman Catholic countries, and thoroughly saturated with ecclesiastical teaching of the marvellous, are more prone to wild superstition than English, American, or Scandinavian sailors, who have had less training in mystical and imaginative things. They may be all admirable seamen, technically considered as such, but there must necessarily be a difference in their habits and conduct under circumstances which in any way excite the religious feelings.

All natural objects are impregnated with a divinity that stirs within them, and are intended, probably, not only to yield us the physical and material benefit we get from them, but also to express some spiritual significance—to give some religious hint or suggestion of that mysterious life from which they sprung, whether by immediate creative impulse, or by lengthened chain of causation; and the man who has no conception of this, who looks at objects on their material and utilitarian side, and no other, has cultivated only half his faculties, and is only half a man—a very useful and necessary half, no doubt, but still an incomplete and fragmentary man. Nature, through forest and field, mountain and valley, is full of sublime and tender teaching; but nowhere is she more eloquent,

in sublime suggestiveness, than at sea. The deep, earnest heavings of the waves ; their mysterious sighs ; their frolic dance, under calm sunlight ; their irritable hissing foam, under the influence of wind, are all poetic and religious influences ; and it is a pity that ladies and gentlemen, who make short voyages, in luxurious yachts or steam vessels, should almost purposely shut out this higher class of impressions, by diligently filling up every moment with some artificial amusement, and by encumbering themselves with superfluity and excess of mere sensuous pleasure. The poor, wet, sea-boy, furling the sails, and looking out upon the main, from the yards of some sailing vessel, travelling far away into new scenes and distant climes, may possibly get more natural influence out of the situation, than the luxurious traveller, in a richly appointed yacht. Whether he likes it or not, he is obliged to expose himself to the influences of the scene around him. As he listens to the solemn voices of the night, sighing, whispering, roaring, thundering, the gale shrieking through the cordage ; as he sees the white foam curling over the bulwarks, and splashing upward to the very shrouds ; as he becomes conscious how frail the partition between himself and a watery grave, when some unusual strain of wave or wind makes the vessel tremble, quiver and groan in every plank and beam ; as he looks upward to the quiet stars, and down upon the solemn deep, a certain religious awe is very likely to creep over his spirit, and when his watch is over, he may turn into his hammock, a sadder and a wiser man. He does not give sentimental expression to his feeling ; he may hardly be conscious exactly of what kind of feeling it is, whence it came, and whither it tends ; he may even, in the wild vagaries of uncultivated fancy, interweave with it some ludicrous associations with a Flying Dutchman above the waves, or a Davy Jones beneath them ; but, under apparent stolidity and coarseness, behind the odd and the vulgar, there is often real feeling, toned with sufficient awe to make it sacred. It is a rudimentary part of that religion which is suggested by the sea to the mind of a sailor.

The religion of English sailors, though often superstitious, has, generally, something practical in its manifestation, in hours of difficulty and danger. They trust in Providence ; but they also trust in ropes, chains, shrouds, anchors, skilful steering, and other agencies, which Providence directs all earnest men to use in such circumstances. They recognise self-help as a proper accompaniment, if not an indispensable part of Divine help ; and the rough, ready, unceremonious movements of a ship's crew in a storm is an eloquent illustration of natural religion in full energy and hard work. It is a religion that drops for awhile its pious words and phrases, and takes to vigorous duty ; and the chaplain

of the ship, if there happen to be one, would do well to join in the rough worship, by "lending a hand," if he knows how, or by keeping out of the way, in perfect silence, if he does not. The rough boatswain, in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, is not necessarily void of religious feeling, and certainly not of good sense, when, with the proper spirit of a seaman, he stops the meddlesome talk of the Neapolitan courtier :—

"You mar our labour; keep your cabins; you do assist the storm.  
\* \* \* \* If you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority; if you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap. Cheerly, good hearts! Out of our way, I say."

This ship had a king on board, but it was none the safer on that account; for, as the boatswain remarked, "What care these roarers for the name of king?" and had there been besides a dozen bishops in the cabin, with all the millinery, upholstery, and mechanism of their church ready to hand, they could not in the least have helped the matter; for the thing wanted just at that moment was not the king's religion or the priest's religion, but the sailor's religion—the religion of manly effort, patient endurance, hard work, and heroic struggle, and the words of the rough boatswain (assuming that his directions were the right things to be done), "Down with the topmast! Yare! Lower, lower! Bring her to try with main course!" have, under the circumstances, as much sacred efficacy as a church canticle. And mark, moreover, the pleasant, encouraging pathos of his expression, "Cheerly, good hearts!"

The religion of English sailors has, besides its practical, its dogmatic form. It is not by any means its best aspect whether it incline to orthodoxy or heterodoxy, conformity or nonconformity. The sailor's creed, when he professes one, is generally a copy of the one inculcated on shore and at home by his pastor in church or chapel. He is not often disposed to *argue* out the postulates of his religious theory, and when he does make the attempt he is not particularly correct in his logic. Fortunately for him, however, as for other men with much greater pretensions to learning and philosophy, it happens that the mind may be honest and sincere, and the heart warm and sound, when the speculative opinions are logically indefensible, doubtful, and obscure. By a happy inconsistency we sometimes see a gentle life in connexion with a harsh creed, figs of thorns and grapes of thistles as it were; but the truth is that it is not in these instances the creed which puts forth the life, but certain spiritual instincts in the life which overrule the creed. Jack in the fore-castle, when he professes any special dogma, is like all other dogmatists, sometimes better than his theory, and sometimes worse.

Religious instructors and spiritual guides to sailors are not, we fear, very well adapted to their functions generally; but there have been instances of success here and there. Many years ago there was a man who ministered somewhere near the Commercial Road in the eastern part of London, and was commonly known there as Boatswain Smith. He had a wide popularity, and we are credibly informed by those who have heard him that his influence on the whole was salutary. But the finest example of a preacher fitted for seamen was to be found in Father Taylor, the American, a man of marked originality and real genius, a born poet, whose illustrations went home because they were taken from homely things, from nature and the common life of man. Earnest and well-meaning persons are still carrying on the work of Smith and Taylor, but only with a very partial success. When they belong to the clerical order they are apt to be narrow, tied down to foregone conclusions and settled creeds inherited from their sect or church. They may be cultivated and even learned men, but seldom endowed with that broad genial humanity which makes the common people hear them gladly. If sailors are to be mentally saturated with any particular theology out of the many that have been invented by the subtle ingenuities of men, it ought to be one of the broadest, the freest, the most liberal and comprehensive that can be found. Men who travel far and wide do not live in holes and corners, either intellectually or physically. Accustomed to a wide, wide world, to scenery on a large scale, to mountains and valleys, and prairies and plains, to mighty seas and deep heavens, they are prone to acquire, even when unassisted by much culture, a certain preference for greatness and breadth in the treatment of subjects relating to intellect and spirit; and when ministers of any denomination undertake to teach religion to sailors and to men of the world who have *seen* the world, it ought to be a religion broad, beautiful and magnificent, full of natural elements, and illustrated by natural imagery. Let those who have the choice of instructors avoid above all men the presumptuous theologians, men without diffidence or modesty of intellect, who are dictatorial, authoritative, and positive in relation to subjects that should be approached in deep humility of mind, and carefully put forth in the most modest forms of expression. Unfortunately for the world it is still infested by a few spiritual teachers who presume to know and say much about the nature of God before they have gained even an elementary knowledge of the nature of man, who profess a reverence and rapture for the things which they have *not* seen before they have developed any healthy sensibility to the beauty and moral significance of the things which they have seen.

Simultaneously with the awakening and cherishing of a religious life which shall sustain and comfort the mariner at sea, it were much to be desired to see him under some restraint and prudential guidance in his life ashore. What with the harpies and the harlots of Ratcliff Highway, and other places of that kind in London, Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Liverpool; what with the incessant activity of influence upon him of the coarsest sensual temptations, the grog-shop, the penny gaff, the dancing saloons in low public-houses, where "Black-eyed Susans," and "Mollys," of "Wapping Old Stairs," haunt him with demoniacal fascination, poor Jack is apt to be turned inside out, both in character and purse, within a week of his coming ashore. With respect to these things, there is a discernible improvement in his habits of life of late years, and benevolent and judicious men are worthily occupied, through the agency of Sailors' Homes, Clubs, Institutes, Depôts, and places of that kind, in endeavouring to improve his habits still further. A great deal, however, yet remains to be done. Many a Trinity Pilot taking a ship from London to the Downs, or Dungeness, has reason to complain that just at the time and place where he has need of a sober, steady, active crew, he has a crowd of unmanageable sots, staring and stupid, only half-awakened from the effect of their dissipated saturnalia on shore. Ultimately, however, they wake up, and recover something approaching to a right mind. As they leave behind the town and its temptations, and glide down the river into open sea, nature begins to act upon them with salutary spell. The horizon widens, the world grows large and awful; the winds blow, and the waters roll; the sun goes down, and the stars come out in spiritual splendour; a religious influence creeps over the mind of the poor mariner, sometimes with only momentary, but sometimes with abiding power; and when the time comes for his evening rest, it may be, that ere he sinks into slumber, he feels some regret at his past folly—some humiliating sense of his present weakness—some vague yearning for light and love, for purer tastes and desires; and though all this may not be expressed in the language of catechism, prayer-book, or tract, or may not even be clothed in any words at all, yet it is veritably the working of a healthy, religious sentiment, a whispering of the angels, as it were, bidding the poor prodigal to arise and go to his Father. Of course, these angel voices, if there are such, are intended for the comfort and instruction of all men, and not for sailors exclusively; but they are best heard, and most impressively felt, in a wide, silent horizon, and in the presence of vastness, sublimity and awe; in such scenes as a mariner becomes familiar with more frequently than other men. The influence is vague; it is "of such stuff as dreams

are made of ;" nevertheless, all beautiful and effective religions have had this mystic element as one of their component parts, and no religion can be worth much that totally ignores it. When our little life comes to be rounded with its inevitable sleep, it will be found, perhaps, that not only the hard, stern realities of life, but even dreams, when touched with pathos and beauty, have had their part in discipline and instruction, and that the seemingly vague emotions of wonder, awe, terror, rapture, hope and fear, in the presence of danger ; joy and delight in visions of the majestic, the beautiful, and the sweet, were all full of spiritual suggestiveness, and made helpful in the building up of true and noble character.

The vocation of the sailor is so high, so noble, so useful, so indispensable, that one is anxious to have it surrounded with all associations of honour and of public interest and regard. Not the refuse of the earth, but the very best of our vigorous youth, should be encouraged to take to the sea, as a profession, and to feel that when there, they have noble and dignified employment, even though it be before the mast, in the commonest capacity. The training of a sailor, before he goes to sea, should be such as to establish sound health, firm muscle, steady nerves, an open, free, intelligent, teachable mind. It should be practical and experimental, and to some extent, technical and scientific. The care of the sailor, when he comes back from sea, ought to be considerate, kind and indulgent, but, at the same time, judiciously repressive of those tendencies to tumultuous outbreak in mere animal pleasures, to which he is prone, on account of his long separations from town life and its social enjoyments. The religion of the sailor ought to be his own. We should prefer to see him forming his own creed, and taking care of his own soul. God and nature will help him in many mysterious ways—gentle, stern, awful, beautiful and terrible, but all beneficent in their ultimate aim. When a more liberal culture has enlarged the mind of the sailor, we shall probably find that his religion will partake of the benefit, casting off much of its superstition and absurdity, but retaining something of its mysticism and poetry. A sailor's religion, too, will always be more manifest in generous deeds than in fine words. The reverential, awe-touched attitude of his mind towards God will never paralyze his energies in rendering service to his fellow-men.

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THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT :  
 A DESCRIPTION OF THE WAY IN WHICH THE LAWS OF ENGLAND ARE  
 MADE AND ADMINISTERED.

*(Continued from our June Number.)*

CHAPTER VII.—THE ASSEMBLING OF PARLIAMENT.

At the time appointed for the assembling of Parliament, certain Peers, generally numbering five, and including the Lord Chancellor, and other Privy Councillors, appear in the House of Lords as Lords Commissioners. They wear the robes proper to their rank, and carry white staves in their hands; but, instead of their coronets, they wear three-cornered hats, such as judges wear on State occasions. They take their places on a form placed between the Throne and the Woolsack, and so seated, represent the Sovereign. Perhaps there may be a few other Peers present, but as the proceedings of the day are somewhat formal, they would be few. Such as are present sit in the House itself, and being there as members of the Legislature, and not as Lords Commissioners, they do not wear their robes. The Commissioners having taken their seats, the Lord Chancellor informs the House that as it was not convenient for the Sovereign to attend the House in person, they had been commissioned to act in His or Her Majesty's stead. Accordingly, in virtue of that Commission, the Lord Chancellor orders the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod to summon the Commons to the bar of the House of Lords. Black Rod goes upon his errand, and in the meantime the Lords Commissioners sit in silence.

The Commons are discovered by Black Rod without a Speaker, conversing with one another, without regard to the ordinary rules of the House, because, at this time, the House has not been fully constituted. In the first place they have no Speaker or President, and they have no power to proceed to business, until they have leave to do so from the Sovereign.

But, although there is no Speaker on the assembling of a new Parliament, the officers are there, because they are appointed by the Crown. Chief among these is the Clerk of the House of Commons, who is appointed by letters patent, and with him his two deputies. They sit in a row at the table, in front of the Speaker's chair; and at the other end of the House, by the bar, sits the Serjeant-at-Arms, also appointed by the Crown specially to wait on the House of Commons. He also has two deputies, and a number of assistants. It is his duty to apprehend and keep in custody all persons committed by the House. He has to keep order, either by his own interference, or that of his subordinates, in the galleries, and the arrangements connected with the lobbies and approaches



to the House are carried out under his direction. Either he or his deputy remains in the House throughout the sitting. It is the duty of the Clerk of the House to administer the oath to each member of the House upon his first presenting himself after election, whether in the case of a new Parliament, or in the case of a casual election, to fill a vacancy; and in order that he may be properly informed at the commencement of a new Parliament as to who has been returned, the very first act done upon the assembling of a new Parliament is for the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to deliver to the Clerk of the House of Commons a book containing a list of the names of those returned. As soon as this is done neither the Lord Chancellor, nor the Court of Chancery, nor the Sovereign, have anything to do with the composition of the House of Commons, except by direction of the House itself. From that moment it conducts its own affairs. The Crown has called it into being, and can dissolve it, but cannot interfere with its deliberations while Parliament is sitting.

On arriving at the House of Commons, Black Rod informs the Clerk that the Commissioners desire the attendance of the Commons at the bar of the House of Lords to hear the Commission read. The members, accompanied by the Clerk, immediately go to the House of Lords, and upon their arrival the Lord Chancellor directs the Reading Clerk of the House of Lords to read the Commission, which proves to be a very voluminous document, appointing the five Peers who form the Commission, and several others, who do not happen to attend, always including the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Princes of the Blood Royal being Peers, to act in behalf of the Sovereign in the matters named in the Commission. As soon as the Commission has been read, the Lord Chancellor addresses the Commons in these words:—

“ Her Majesty will, as soon as the members of both Houses shall be sworn, declare the causes of her calling this Parliament; and it being necessary a Speaker of the House of Commons should be first chosen, we have it in command from Her Majesty, that you, Gentlemen of the House of Commons, repair to the place where you are to sit, and then proceed to the appointment of some proper person to be your Speaker, and that you present such person whom you shall choose here to-morrow (at an hour stated, which would probably be two o'clock), for Her Majesty's royal approbation.” This ceremony being ended, the Commons return to their own Chamber.

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#### CHAPTER VIII.—THE SPEAKER AND HIS OFFICE.

It is customary before the actual election of the Speaker for the Prime Minister to take counsel with other prominent members of the House

as to the most desirable member for the office, and to arrange the programme of his nomination. The arrangement come to is privately communicated to the Clerk, who, sitting in his usual place in front of the Chair, points to the member who is about to nominate the Speaker, and in this way calls upon him to address the House, without mentioning his name. The member rises and formally moves that Mr. —— be chosen Speaker, and he prefaces his motion by stating the qualifications his nominee possesses for the office. The motion being seconded, it is put to the House by the Clerk, and is usually carried unanimously. The Speaker-Elect then acknowledges the honour done him, and is conducted to the Chair by his mover and seconder. Upon taking his seat the Serjeant-at-Arms approaches the table of the House, and places the mace upon the table, an act which signifies that the House is “made.” But the Speaker is not yet fully appointed, for his election must be approved by the Crown.

The duties of the Speaker are varied and onerous. He is the spokesman of the House of Commons in all its dealings with others. He has to manage in the name of the House when counsel, witnesses, or prisoners appear at the bar ; to reprimand those who have incurred the displeasure of the House, and to offer the thanks of the House to those whom it may desire so to distinguish. When witnesses are wanted he summons them, and can compel attendance. Whenever a vacancy occurs, the Speaker, in accordance with a resolution of the House, issues the writ for the election of a new member, and when the House is not in Session he directs writs to be issued on his own authority. When a member of the House of Commons succeeds to a Peerage, for instance, the Speaker obtains cognizance of the vacancy from the Crown Office and orders a writ to be issued as a matter of course ; and on being informed of the death of a member by two others he does the same. His ordinary duty is to preside at the debates of the House of Commons, and regulate them according to the rules of the House. Should a member persevere in breaches of order, the Speaker may “name” him as it is called, a course uniformly followed by the censure of the House. In extreme cases the Speaker may order a member or other person into the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms, who holds him prisoner until the pleasure of the House be signified. If the House take no action respecting such committals, the prisoner is liberated at the close of the Session, for the House has no power to retain anyone in custody after Parliament has been prorogued by the Crown.

Some of the duties of the Speaker as President of the House of Commons will be more properly described when we come to the proceedings in Parliament, but sufficient has been said here to show that the nature of his duties requires that he should possess many qualities