

On the Rocks

By HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

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For they are best that have much to lose, that have not oft misheard the prompter's cue.

THE gale was apparently at its height—that is to say, it was blowing harder than it had blown all through the night—but those whose business is on the great waters know that a gale usually finishes its wrath in a few wild squalls. "The getting puff," the sailors say, "is nearly over."

"A man hurrying through the narrow main street of Yport was thrown against the shutters of the little baker's shop on the left hand side and stood there gasping for breath. "Mon Dieu!" he muttered. "It's a dog's night."

And he wiped the rain from his face. The wind, which blew from a wild northwest, roared against the towering cliffs and from east and west concentrated itself funnel-wise on the gap where Yport lives. Out seaward there was a queer ghostly light lying on the face of the waters—the storm light—and landmen rarely see it, for the sea was beaten into unbroken foam. The man, who was clad in oilskins, was in the neck of the funnel. Overhead he heard the wind roaring through the plies far up on the slope of the narrow valley. Close at hand a continuous whistle told of its passage across the house tops. The man steadied himself with his left hand. He had but one, and he cursed the empty sleeve which flapped across his face.

"Provided," he muttered, "that I can walk that cure."

He kept on while the gale passed to take breath and a moment later covered in the porch of a little yellow house. He kicked the door with his heel and then waited, with his ear to the great keyhole. Surely the cure must have been a good man to sleep in such a night. The street had naturally been deserted, for it was nearly 3 o'clock in the morning, and dawn could not be far off.

"A one armed man and a priest!" said the man to himself, with an expressive jerk of the head. And indeed all the men of Yport had sailed for the northern fisheries, leaving the village to the women and children and the maid.

Within the house there were sounds of some one astir.

"One comes!" cried a cheery voice belonging assuredly to some one who was brave, for none expects to be called from his bed to hear good news. A single bolt was drawn and the door thrown open. The cure, a little man, stood back, shading the candle with his hand.

"Ah, Jean Belfort! It is you."

"Yes, I and my one arm," replied the man, coming in and closing the door. The rain dripped from his oilskins to the clean floor.

"Ah, but this is no night to complain! Better be on shore with one arm than at sea with two tonight."

The little cure looked at his visitor with bright eyes and a shake of the head. A quick spoken man this, with a little square mouth, a soft heart, a keen sense of humor.

"Why have you got me from my bed, m'lord?" he asked.

"Because there are some out there that want your prayers," replied Belfort, jerking his head toward the sea. He was an unbeliever, this maided sailor. He spoke mockingly.

"One can pray in the morning. Come with me while I get on some clothes—if it is a wreck," said the priest simply.

The man followed him to a little bare room of which the walls were decorated by two cheap sacred prints and a crucifix such as may be bought for 10 sous at any fair on the coast.

"Never mind your hat," said the priest, seeing the man's fingers at the strings of his sou'wester. "Give me my great boots from the cupboard. A wreck, is it? The summer storms are always the worst. Is it a boat?"

"Who knows?" replied the man. "It is my wife who looked from the window an hour ago and saw a light out at sea two points to the east of north—a red light and then a green and then the masthead light."

"A steamer."

"So it would appear. And now there are no lights. That is all."

The priest tied the strings of a sou'wester under his pink chin. He was little more than a boy, after all, or else he was the possessor of a very young heart.

"Between us we make a whole man, you and I," he said cheerily. "Perhaps we can do something."

They went out into the night, the priest locking the door and pausing to hide the key under the mat in the porch. They all keep the house door key under the mat at Yport. In the narrow street which forms the whole village, running down the valley to the sea, they met the full force of the gale and stood for a moment breathlessly fighting against it. In a full they pushed on.

"And the tide!" shouted the priest. "It is high at 4 o'clock—a spring tide

and the wind in the northwest—not standing room on the shore against the cliff for a man from here to Glainval." At high tide the waves beat against the towering cliff all along this grim coast, and a man standing on the turf may not recognize his son on the rocks below, while the human voice can only span the distance in calmest weather. There are spaces of three and four miles between the gaps in the great and inaccessible bluffs—an evil leech-shore to have under one's quarter, one of the waste places of the world which Nature has set apart for her own use. When Nature speaks, it is with no uncertain voice.

"There is no reason to suppose it!" shouted the man in reply. "No, my father, if there is ought to be done, you and I must do it."

What with the wind and the flannel ear flaps of the sou'wester it was hard to make oneself heard, and the two faces almost touched, the unbeliever who knew so little and the priest who knew not only books, but men. They made their way to the little quay, or rather, the few yards of sea wall that protect the houses at the corner of the street. But here they could not stand and were forced to retire to the lee side of the Hotel de la Plage, which stands at the corner, with two flouris windows turned seaward and all the rest seeking the comfort of the street.

In a few words Belfort explained where the lights had been seen and where, according to his judgment, a steamer must have taken the rocks.

"If the good God has further use for any of them he will throw them on the shore a kilometer to the east of us, where the wire rope descends from the cliff to the shore for the seaweed," said the priest.

The other nodded.

"What must be done must be done quickly. Let us go," said the little cure in his rather bustling manner, at which the great, slow limbed fishermen went to laugh.

"Where to?"

"Along the shore."

"With a rising tide racing in before a northwesterly wind?" said Belfort grimly and shook his head.

"Why not? You have your two legs, and there is some one—up there!"

"I shouldn't have thought it," answered the man, glancing up at the storm driven clouds. "However, where a priest can go a one armed man can surely follow. We need lanterns."

"Yes; I will wait and watch here while you fetch them."

The priest, left alone, peered round the corner, shading his eyes with his

soft white hand, upon which the cold rain pattered. To the east of him he knew that there were three miles of almost impassable shore, of unbroken unsalable cliff; to the west of him the same; on the one hand Fecamp, five miles away by a cliff path that none would attempt by night, nine miles by road; on the other Etretat, still farther by road and cliff path; inland a few farms and many miles of forest. He and Belfort had stumbled over the fatal telegraph wires as they straggled down the village street. No; if there was a wreck out there in the darkness, and men, clinging half drowned to the rigging, were looking toward the shore, they had better look elsewhere. The sea, like the wind, treated Yport as the mouth of a funnel, and a hundred cross currents were piling up such waves as no boat could pass, though the Yport women were skillful as any man with our or sail.

Presently Belfort returned, carrying two lanterns.

"I have told her that we will not quit the sea wall," he said, with a short laugh, and straightway they both clambered over the wall and down the iron ladder to the beach. A meandering narrow pathway is worn on the weed green ground from the village to the washing ground on the beach, a mile to the eastward, where at low tide a spring of fresh water wells up amid the shingle and the rock. Along this pathway the two men made their way, the cure following on his companion's heel. They stumbled and fell many times. At every step they slipped, for their boots were soaked, and the chalk is greasy and half decomposed by the salt water. At times they glanced to the right and through the roar of the wind and sea came the distant note of a bell clanging continuously.

"It is the bell on Fecamp pier," said

Belfort. "The mist is coming before dawn."

To the east the long arm of Fecamp light swung slowly round the horizon from the summit of the great bluff of Notre Dame du Salut, and in the way of this sea eye showing away all that dared approach so grim a coast.

"Ah!" exclaimed the priest. "I am in the water. The tide is coming up."

To their left a wall of foam and spray shut off all view of the sea. On the right the cliff rose, a vast barrier, and cut the sky in two. These two men had nothing in common. They had indeed standing between them that several which was brought into the world nineteen hundred years ago and is still unshattered. But neither thought of turning back. It had been agreed between them that they should make what speed they could along the shore and only turn back at the last moment, searching the sea and beach as they returned in the light of dawn.

Belfort, the leader, the expert in night and tide and wind, led the way. He spoke grimly as one who knew that it is not the deep sea that must be paid its toll, but the shall water, where the rocks and quicksands and crabs and gulls are waiting. They made their way back in silence, and slowly a new gray day crept into life. At last they could see the horizon and read the face of the water still torn into a seething chaos of foam. There was no slip upon them. If there had been a wreck the storm had done its work thoroughly. Belfort climbed to the summit of a rock and looked back toward Fecamp. Then he turned and searched the shore toward Yport.

"There is one," he cried, "half in, half out, as I said. We shall cheat the crabs at all events, my father."

And, clambering down, he stumbled on with a reckless haste that contrasted strangely with his speech, for whatever our words may be, a human life must ever command respect. Any man, as some have done, die laughing, but his last sigh must necessarily be of grave faces.

"This one is not dead," said the priest when they had turned the man over and dragged him to dry land. Belfort cut away the life belt, examining it as he did so.

"No name," he said. "They will have to wait over there in London till he can tell them what ship it was. See; he has been struck on the head, but he is alive—a marvel. He is a small made man and light enough to carry—some town mouse this, my father, who has never had a wet jacket before. See his face, how white it is, and his little arms and hands. We can carry him, turn and turn about, and shall reach the sea wall, but the tide is up, provided we find no more."

It was full daylight when they at length reached the weed grown steps at the side of the sea wall, and the smoke was already beginning to rise from the chimneys of Yport. The gale was waning as the day came, but the sea was at its highest, and all the houses facing northward had their wooden shutters up. The waves were breaking over the sea wall, but the two men with their senseless burden took no heed of it. They were all past thinking of salt water.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DANGER SPOTS IN A STORM.

Places to Avoid When the Lightning Is Flashing.

Out of doors trees should be avoided in a thunder storm, and if from the rapidly with which the explosion follows the flash it is evident that electric clouds are near at hand a recumbent posture is the safest. It is seldom dangerous to take shelter under sheds, carts or low buildings or under the arch of a bridge, and a distance of twenty or thirty feet from tall trees or houses is an eligible situation.

It is also well to avoid water, for it is a good conductor, and the height of a human being near the stream may determine the direction of a discharge. Within doors we are tolerably safe in the middle of a carpeted room or when standing on a thick hearth rug. The chimney should be taken place, for the electric power of the carbon deposited in it, and gilt moldings or bell wires are sources of risk. In bed we are tolerably safe, since blankets and feathers are bad conductors.

It is injudicious to take refuge in a cellar, because the discharge is often from the earth to a cloud, and buildings frequently sustain the greatest injury in their basements.

An Anecdote of Whittier.

A friend in conversation with Mr. Whittier, the poet, remarked that he was about to contract to furnish a lot of oak timber for the government gunboats and asked him if he thought it was in consistency with the peace doctrine of the Quaker denomination.

Without saying anything calculated to decide the question the two arrived at their parting place, when Mr. Whittier, shaking his friend's hand, said, "Moses, if he does furnish any of that oak timber there speaks of, be sure that it is all sound."

Antiquity of Pins.

Pins of various sorts have been in existence ever since our "first parents" clothed themselves in palm leaves which grew wild in the garden of Eden. As a matter of fact, pins claim a very high antiquity, the earliest form being a natural horn, which is still used to some extent for fastening the dress by the peasant women of upper Egypt. In prehistoric times pins were also made of the small bones of fish and animals.

THE DESPISED TOAD.

POPULAR HATRED OF THE ANIMAL IS OF GREAT ANTIQUITY.

In a legend of the West an Englishman showed Lord the Unhappy and the throned Creature Place No Small Part—The Public in Good Nature.

The unfortunate toad has from time immemorial been an object of distrust and aversion, especially among the common people. A pleasing tale runs that a gentleman, walking along a country lane, came suddenly upon a village boy belaboring the crushed body of a toad with a heavy stick and exclaiming at each blow, "I'll lick 'e to a toad!" whereat the indignant newcomer, seizing the miscreant by his collar, vigorously applied a cane to his legs, remarking, "I'll lick you to be a toad!" The popular hatred of the toad, indeed, is of such antiquity and is still so general as to seem ineradicable. That the creature is not dangerously poisonous it is hopeless to attempt to convince the ordinary rustic. Doubtless this belief has its origin in the acrid secretion which the toad has the power of emitting when disturbed or annoyed untidily and which will cause a dog that has incautiously picked up a toad to foam at the mouth. Again, the uncouth appearance of the creature has much to do with the feeling of repulsion with which it has always been regarded. "Squat like a toad" is the phrase by which Milton denounces the evil one essaying to reach the ear of Eve.

Superstition, in truth, has laid a firm hold on the toad's misshapen figure. "Toad stief," not only in the existence of "toad stief," but in their efficacy as a sovereign remedy for certain ills, which is still common in parts of the country, is of very ancient date.

"There is to be found in the heads of old and great toads," says Fenton, in his "Natural History," "a little box or stone, which, being used as rings, gives forewarning of venom."

In the Londesborough collection is a silver ring of the fifteenth century in which one of these toad stones is set. They were supposed always to bear on their surface a figure resembling a toad, being somewhat similar trinkets, one may imagine, to the scarabæus ornaments of the Egyptians. Another writer remarks, "A toad stone called 'crepanda,' touching any part envenomed by the bite of rat, wasp, spider or other venomous beast, ceases the pain and swelling thereof." It was believed that when brought near to poison the stone sweated and changed color, thus conveying to its wearer a timely warning of danger.

It is to these peculiar amulets that Shakespeare is supposed to refer in "As You Like It."

Sweet are the uses of adversity, which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

It is not probable, however, that the poet, being a poet, is here alluding to the eye of the toad, an object, as all who are really familiar with the appearance of this humble batrachian will agree, that which there are few more beautiful in nature?

Perhaps the most familiar superstition in regard to toads is that, still rife, which supposes them capable of existing for an indefinite period in the interior of rocks, stones or hermetically sealed caskets. Numberless "authentic instances" of this remarkable power have been brought forward from time to time. The following example from an old book is typical: "In 1703 Mr. George Wilson, a mason, met with a toad, which he wantonly mured in a stone wall that he was then building. In the middle of the wall he made a close cell of lime and stone, just fit for the magnitude of its body and seemingly so plastered as to prevent the admission of air. In 1809, sixteen years afterward, he found necessary to open a gap in this wall for a passage of carts, when the poor creature was found alive in its stronghold. It seemed at first in a very torpid state, but it soon recovered animation and activity and, as if sensible of the blessings of freedom, made its way to a collection of stones and disappeared."

It is known that toads can exist for a long time without food, and it is generally believed that they live to a great age, and doubtless these two peculiarities have had much to do with the superstition in regard to their supposed penchant for a hermit's life. The fallacy, however, was completely exposed by Dean Buckland, father of Frank Buckland, the great naturalist, who went to the trouble of testing the truth of the theory by an exhaustive series of experiments. He not only remarked that none of his victims survived the incarceration.

In legendary as in superstitious lore the toad plays no small part. It may not be generally known that the fleur-de-lis of France was originally in shape of a toad. Thus at least runs the tale. Clovis, king of France, bore on his banner the device of three toads, or "botes," the toad was called in old French. His baptism gave great umbrage to the Arians, who rebelled and assembled a large host against him under King Caudat. Clovis while on his way to meet the heretics was granted a vision, wherein he saw in the heavens his device of three toads miraculously changed into three lilies "or" on a banner "lazar." Such a banner he caused instantly to be made, calling it his "lily-lamb."—London Globe.

Gordon at Gettysburg.

Major Robert Stiles, author of "Four Years Under Mars Robert," thus describes General Gordon at Gettysburg: "His face was radiant, his figure erect, mounted on a splendid ebony charger, with gleaming eyes and proud arched neck. The rider fairly stood in his stirrups and, bareheaded, waved both hands, while his sonorous voice rolled out such exhortations as only he knew how to make to soldiers. Thus they charged, with the great black charger joyful in the midst of the flashing muskets."

Willing to Forget.

"Then he doesn't want to be called the Hon. Mr. Smith?"

"No. It's an unpleasant reminder that he used to be in politics, and with strangers it might hurt his reputation."—Puck.

It is supposed that the average depth of sand in the deserts of Africa is from forty to sixty feet.

A NEST BUILDING FISH.

Nature Affords a Safe Asylum For the Helpless Fishes.

It is doubtful whether protective mimicry among animals is better exemplified than in the case of the fish commonly known as the marbled angler of the Sargasso sea (Tetraodon lineatus). Owing to its peculiar structure it is a poor swimmer, and it therefore spends most of its life moving slowly about on the bottom among corals, seaweeds, etc., which these fishes closely resemble in color and in outline. They cling, too, to the floating masses of sargassum weed with their peculiar fins, and the color markings of the fish closely resemble the weed itself. Not only does the weed thus furnish a home for this species, but the fish actually constructs a nest from it and therein deposits its eggs. One of these nests, found in connection with the Hassler expedition, was described as consisting of a round mass of sargassum about the size of two fists rolled up together. To all appearances it was made of nothing but this gulf weed, the branches and leaves of which were, however, evidently knit together and not merely tangled into a roundish mass, for though some of the leaves and branches hung loose from the nest, the ball was held together by threads trailing in every direction among the seaweed. By close observation it became apparent that this mass of seaweed was a nest, the central part of which was bound up in the form of a ball, with several loose branches extending in various directions. On still closer examination the nest above described was found to be full of eggs, which were scattered throughout the mass.

Nature has thus afforded a safe asylum for these somewhat helpless fishes, whose cutaneous filaments, which are plentifully provided on the belly, around the mouth and on the dorsal spine, so nearly resemble the weed itself that predaceous fishes doubtless fail to recognize the living animals, and thus the latter escape extermination.—Scientific American.

IMAGINATION.

Instances Showing How It Has Made Well Men Sick.

The domination of imagination over the natural senses of the human mind is no new idea. Samuel Rogers suffered from a violent cold from the effects of what he believed to be an open window at his back, which in reality was closed. An instance of this known to the medical faculty is more strange still. Two men stayed at a house in which an inmate had died of cholera. One man placed in the room in which the patient had died was in ignorance of what had occurred. He slept well and was no worse. The other, wrongly told that the room in which he slept was that in which the cholera patient had died, spent a night of mental agony and in the morning was actually found to be suffering from this complaint. He died of cholera.

A similar instance was mentioned the other day by a friend of the writer. Two London men stayed in the country at a house where cholera fever was reported. One, an unimaginative, healthy minded fellow, awoke all right in the morning. The other, a nervous, sensitive man, was very ill—had not slept and had broken out into a terrible rash which both declared to be scarlet fever. A wire to a London medical man was dispatched, and by the first train he hurried down. The supposed fever patient proved to have no fever at all beyond an imaginary one. As a fact, there was no scarlet fever in the house, the case had been wrongly diagnosed, and the frightened visitor had tortured himself into a violent rash, all without cause.—St. James Gazette.

TIPPING IN LONDON.

No End to the Fees to Servitors in Restaurants.

As an old Londoner I have seen changes in the manners of the city which amount to a complete transformation. I remember well the time when there wasn't really a good restaurant in all London and when men had to content with dining and men pling in the back parlors of public houses. You got very good food in those dark, low ceilings, stuffy rooms, and I remember when you were considered to be doing very well when you handed the somewhat time worn and ill clad waiter twopenny or threepence as a tip.

Nowadays you go into a restaurant which is palatial, and you see men, especially if they belong to the Stock Exchange, giving huge tips that in olden times would have paid the price of a whole dinner for half a dozen friends. And the tipping never seems to end. You tip one waiter for one thing and another for another, and you tip the carver, and then you tip the man who gives you your wine, and as you are leaving you tip the porter who puts on your coat and the waiting waiter who calls your car. It is, in fact, becoming almost impossible for men of moderate means to go to most of the restaurants of today.—M. A. P.

Flowers For London.

In Selly and Guernsey the industry of growing early flowers for the London market has reached large proportions. From the former island as many as fifty tons of early spring blossoms are shipped to the mainland in a single day. The flower season begins in January, when the early varieties are coming into bloom. Often, when the weather is cold and cloudy, the buds are tardy in opening, and it is necessary to resort to artificial aid in order that the waiting markets may be supplied. The flower heads are picked as soon as one bud penetrates the calyx and placed in jars of water, which are ranged upon the shelves of a greenhouse kept at a temperature of 90 to 70 degrees. In a few hours the backward buds respond to the genial warmth, spread their petals, assume their glowing colors and are ready for bunching and packing.

Deserving of Pity.

"There goes Roxham. Every time I think of that man's financial embarrassment it makes me yearn to help him."

Financial embarrassment?

"Yes, it's such an amount of money he doesn't know what to do with it."—Catholic Standard and Times.

WOMAN AND FASHION

A Pretty Stock.

This dainty stock is made of strips of Valenciennes insertion corded on a collar of handkerchief linen, with pale blue lagoon floss. Three strands of the floss make the right sized cord. The lace edging which is at the top of the neck and around the tab is first

MADE WITH STRIPS OF VALENCIENNES. knife plaited and then corded on. A small design of forget-me-nots is embroidered in the center of the tab in the pale blue dyes. This stock is very pretty when finished and if done carefully launders beautifully.

Little Folks' Fashions.

There is little change in styles for small boys, says a writer in the *Pilgrim*. Trousers of the comfortable, scant bloomer pattern have entirely superseded the tight fitting sort and are gathered well up above the knee, falling rather scantily over the gathering tape. The Russian blouse still holds its own and requires no tie at the throat. Sailor blouses are not in favor for very small boys, but are worn by the boy of seven to ten. The best dressed child is most simply clothed and with greatest regard to personal comfort. Overabundance of ruffles and exaggerated bows are a source of annoyance if not discomfort to the child and an indication of poor taste in the mother. Little girls wear their skirts very short, only to the knees, and made quite full.

Voiles of Silk and Wool.

The voiles for the spring costumes are really novel, says a Paris fashion letter. An attractive design has a stone colored ground woven in irregular fashion with an indistinct plaid pattern blocked off with lines of dots. The dots are raised and of irregular sizes. The gown is made up over stone colored taffeta and trimmed with a lot of narrow fringe made of the bright colors seen in the plaid pattern. There are three deep plaits taken in the bottom skirt, all edged with the fringe, which is scarcely more than an inch wide. The front of the bodice is arranged in surplice folds, edged with the fringe.

From Paris.

The illustration, reproduced from the *Brooklyn Eagle*, shows an afternoon gown of blue canvas, with tucks and applique of embroidered linen.

Dainty Gown.

A very pretty white crepe de chine has a yoke on the bodice formed of bands of silk caught together by bands of fagoting. This falls well over the shoulders, and from this the crape is accorded plaited, falling very full in front over a white silk girdle. The sleeves are composed of bands fagoted together at the top, the rest being accorded plaited and completed by wristbands of the material, fagoted. The yoke of the bodice corresponds, as does also the V collar.

He Wouldn't Ask Further.

Contributor—Would you take it kindly if I were to ask you on what grounds you refused my latest poem? Editor—Yes, if you'll take kindly to my true statement of the case. Contributor (after slight hesitation)—Good day, sir.—Baltimore American.

Her Marriage.

"Did she make a good marriage?"

"That depends on whether you figure by years or dollars. He's sixty and she's sixty.—Exchange.

A Temporary Opinion.

The Fiancee—The idea of his thinking that I'm unworthy of me! The Confidante—Yes, but you needn't argue the matter with him. He'll discover his error in time.—Brooklyn Life.

We Can't Afford to Recognize them.

Their ancestors were in trade."

"Weren't ours?"

"Of course, but our trade ancestors are two generations farther back than theirs."—Exchange.

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