

AN OXFORDSHIRE SONG.

"In the time of the year, if beechen roots be
The green, like a brooker, rolls steady up the
And surges in the spaces and floods the trunk
And leaves
With little angry spray that is the underwhite
And lying in a row against the chilly north,
Incise a place without a wind for tender
lambs to sleep.
The time of the year, in early light and
The lark has a music to drive a lover mad;
The downs are dripping nightly, the breathless
snows arise,
Deliciously the freshets cool the grayling's
golden eyes;
And from the bank into the lane the primroses
do crowd,
All colored like the twilight moon and spread-
ing like a cloud.
The time of the year when over Botley first
I watched from my narrow the clouds that
build and burst;
And if before the sun be hid comes slowly up
the vale
Pastors with her dimpled throat, Pastors with
her pall—
Hey, but there's many a March for me, and
many and many a lass!
I fall to work and song again, and let Pastors
jam.
—Louise Imogene Guiney in New York Inde-
pendent.

THE LAST PLANK.

I was first mate of the ship Triumph,
bound from Boston to New Orleans, with
an assorted cargo of great value. The
captain, Habbit by name, was an oddity
in every way. He always struck for new
courses, took all tracks but those pre-
scribed by custom, and thought nobody
knew anything but himself.
For instance, he insisted that a counter-
current ran southward inside the Gulf
stream, and that the only way to make a
quick voyage to New Orleans was to hug
close in on the shore side of it: all the way
out, despite the danger of capes, rocks and
reefs, the whereabouts of which he said he
knew too well not to avoid them.
Who could gain say him? He was cap-
tain of his own ship—monarch of it and
all aboard. So, sailing with a stiff nor'-
wester on our quarter, we sped swiftly on,
passing all the dangers of the coast suc-
cessively, such as Barnegat, Hatteras, etc.,
and found ourselves on a morning sud-
denly becalmed off Cape Florida, close in
with the land, but soon drifting northward
despite the captain's "southerly current."
It was very clear—not a cloud in sight—
warm and close, though it was September
and the time for an equinoctial gale to be
upon us.
"Have the deep sea lead, Mr. R.," said
the captain to me, "and see if it is shoal
enough to get an anchor to hold."
I sounded and forty fathoms were given.
"Send your hawsers together and drop
our heaviest keel," was his next order.
"Then close turl every sail but the fore
storm staysail and balance reefed spanker,
send down all the light spars from aloft,
and get ready to hoist topmasts and se-
cure lower yards; get up preventer braces,
and see all secure below and aloft."
"AY, AY, SIR!" And it was done.
We were now ready for a storm, but I,
old as I am in sea matters, could see no
token of it anywhere.
"We're going to have a tough time of it,
Mr. R.," said Captain Habbit to me.
"Why, sir," said I, "the sky is as clear as
my love's dear eyes, and the water is as
smooth as a mill pond. I see no sign of
wind."
"Wait about two hours, and you'll sing
another tune," he replied. "I've been in
these latitudes before. The worst of this
will be that it will come dead off shore,
and if we must send Cuba and her reefs
will be under our lee. If we bump our
heads there, it will be the last of the old
Triumph, and us too."
I made no reply, for I thought it only
one of his fancies, and leaving the second
mate in charge of the deck, went below to
take a nap, for I'd had the mid watch and
felt rather unwell. I went to my state-
room and threw myself on my bunk, and
soon was dreaming of a blue-eyed angel
ashore, whom I hoped to be applied to at a
not far distant time. A heavy tramping
overhead and the shout of "all hands
aboy!" brought me out of sleep and to my
feet in an instant. I hurried on deck.
Never can I forget the change of scene, of
sky and sea, from the calm beauty in
which I had left it when I went below.
Now, black clouds were rolling up to the
northward, coming on in great blotchy
waves, like crags of ebony mountains over-
hanging and about to fall upon us. The
sea was black under the shadowy wing of
the storm, and the roar of the tempest,
like a hoarse, angry voice, came to our
ears from a distance.
"Up with the foremast staysail—never
mind the spanker," shouted the captain.
"You two mates take the helm; men, lash
yourselves to the rigging; it will wash us
fore and aft before we get headway." And
seizing an ax from the becket, he bounded
forward and cut away the hawsers which
held us at anchor.
As he did this I looked off on our star-
board beam, and saw the water apparently
rolling in a huge white breaker toward us.
The next instant the wind struck us, and
for a moment I thought all was over, for
the ship heeled until her lower yardarms
were in the water.
"Hard up—hard up the helm!" shouted
the captain in my ear.
I could not just hear him, and pointing
to the wheel he saw that his order had been
anticipated.
Just then away went our mainmast
close by the deck, and that alone saved us,
for now her head paid off before the wind
and the ship righted. Then the staysail
filled and away the old craft shot, like an
arrow sped from a well string bow. As
we got out into the gulf the sea rose liter-
ally so high that the foam was scattered in
cloudy mists through the air.
"How does she head?" asked the captain,
who stood forward of the wheel.
"Son' son' west, sir," I replied in a shout,
for the gale drowned all common tones.
"If she goes at this rate and holds that
course we will strike Cuban rock inside of
ten hours!" he cried.
"Why not try to leave her to?" I asked.
"In such a sea and gale we would be bot-
tom up in a minute were we to try it. All

our hope is in a change of wind or a fall
which will let us put the mainmast on her."
"This looks rough, but what is to be will
be. There is no rubbing that out," I re-
plied, and then I did my best to steer as
nicely as I could, so that no broaching to
should hasten our fate.
On, on—once passing a hapless vessel
drifting bottom up, with her sails and
spurs alongside of her—we swept until the
night was upon us. Then the captain and
a good seaman relieved us from the helm,
and I had time to think. I went below
and looked at the chart. I made an esti-
mate of our speed, and to my horror saw
we could not be over twenty or, at the
most, thirty miles to windward of the
reckiest part of the Cuban coast.
I went on deck sick at heart, for sea and
gale seemed higher than ever. I told the
captain how near the last peril was, but he
did not seem to heed me. He stood with
his shoulder to the wheel, and the ship
flew madly on. Never had she sailed with
such speed before.
I went forward, and while I looked at
the phosphoric flame flashing from be-
neath the bow I thought of home, of my
own loved Ella—and I groaned in bitter
agony. I never before had feared death,
but now—now so near, it was terrible!
An hour, maybe more, and then I heard
all too plain, even above the wild roar of
the storm, the sound so sullen and deep
of the surging breakers. I rushed aft and
shouted the fearful tidings in the cap-
tain's ear.
"God help us! God help us!" was all he
said.
An instant after we were in white, seeth-
ing, hissing water, and then, lifted sky-
ward on a mountain roller, we were dashed
down with a terrible crash upon the dread-
ed rocks. Darkness above—flashing phos-
phoric all around—the ship shattering,
parting beneath our feet, men shrieking in
wild misery—my pen cannot paint the
picture.
And now wave after wave swept on over
us, lifting the ship up and crushing her
down, tearing her all asunder, and yet I
clung to a rope which I had fastened to a
bolt in the deck, not knowing whether one
was alive beside me or not, for all was
silent but the winds and waters. Like
howling demons they went on with their
fearful chorus.
How long seemed that night, while I
could feel that the shattered remnants of
the old ship were going fast from under
me! But the blessed daylight came at last,
and even the sun shone out. And I saw,
lashed like myself to the deck, but one
man—that man was the captain. Whiter
than foam was his face, and full as white
his hair, which had been glossy brown on
the day before. Our eyes met—his were
wild and wolfish—insanity's fire was in
them.
The sea now drove the last part of the
wreck asunder, and for a moment I thought
we both were gone; but on one high spot
of rock we got a foothold, and there clutch-
ing the coral crag with bleeding hands we
hung.
Until then neither of us had looked
away from each other or the wreck. But
together glancing southward, there we
saw, not a mile distant, beautiful, flower
carpeted, fruit laden Cuba. White cast-
les, groves of golden oranges, and tall
palm trees—never had they looked so beau-
tiful to me. Yet a mile of terrible break-
ers lay between us and it—a "waste of wa-
ters," through which the strongest swim-
mer could not hope to pass.
And the ship was gone—no, one plank—
a single plank—small, but large enough
for one to cling to, came drifting in our
reach. With one hand each of us seized it,
while with the other we clung to the peak
of rock which alone had saved us from in-
stant destruction.
"Let go the plank, it is mine! I will
lash myself to it and live!" cried the cap-
tain, his eyes glaring fiercely on me.
"I will not yield my right; the plank is
mine, and life is as dear to me as to you!"
I shouted.
"I have a wife and children; you have
none; let me live for them!" he pleaded.
"I have one dearer than all the world; I
will live for her who yet shall be my wife!"
I cried.
" Fool—fool! she shall look for you in
vain!" And as he said this he drew a pis-
tol from his bosom. Well I knew it was
capped, waterproof; well I knew how sure
he was in aim; but I drew the plank
toward me which he had let go of when he
clutched his weapon. He raised his hand,
his weapon was leveled at my heart.
"Give up the plank!" he shouted.
"Never, coward—never! Fire, and my
dying curse go with you!"
I closed my eyes—I knew my fate—but a
wild rush of water, a fearful wave, swept
me far, far away from the rock. Then I
was drowning—gurgling, choking in the
water. But I rose, and as I did, something
hard touched my body. I clutched it—it
was that blessed plank. To it I clung with
a death grasp; yet it seemed as if I was
doomed to die, after all, for the waters cov-
ered me and I lost all consciousness.
But not for all time. I was restored to a
knowledge that dear life was yet mine by
the kind acts of Cubans, who had drawn
my body, yet clinging to the plank, from
the surf, and were applying stimulants
when I opened my glad eyes once more on
the face of bright humanity.
I asked if any others had got to the shore.
They carried me to a mournful looking
group of bodies. I saw several of the crew,
but not him—not the captain. But even
while we stood there a great rolling wave
swept him in, and for an instant I thought
he lived; he looked so grim, with the pistol
yet clutched in his hand. But he was cold
and dead, and after they bore him to the
corpse pile of the rest, and I had grown
stronger, I took the pistol from his stiffened
grasp, took aim at a piece of the wreck
and fired. The bullet which had been in-
tended for my heart went deep into the
oaken wood. I went down on my knees
then and there and thanked the Almighty
that I was saved for my poor Ella; and
though I have since done a sailor's duty in
protecting and aiding the widow and or-
phans of the poor captain, I never have
been so unselfish as to regret that I had pos-
session of the last plank.—True Flag.

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cluded. It leans toward universal, all-deter-
mining law; towards facts, not fancies. It
leans toward immutable principles and in-
vincible truth, and away from superan-
nated authority, organized ignorance and
dye-in-the-wool prejudice. Blind empiric-
ism in medicine has, with other fossilized
bivalves, had its day. Yes, there are plenty
of "belated crabs," but being born of dark-
ness and fear—twin sisters of intellectual
infancy—they cannot much longer with-
stand the civilizing influence of advancing
science. They are slowly but surely "dy-
ing Egypt, dying" before the "search
light" of investigation. The advancing
thinker wonders how it was possible for
that monstrosity—the medical science (?)
extant now—to have survived to this late
day! But where was the reform to come
from? It is not only a waste to attempt
reform, it is outright dangerous. It requires
a boldness akin to reckless. Legion is
the name who have tried; they have left
their bleaching bones as a warning. An at-
tempt at reforming theology brands you a
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every infamy under the sun, and in medi-
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MANY SUCH.
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in the engine-room when one said:
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