

Wreck of the Heather Bell.

A ballad describing the loss of the wood boat Heather Bell on the St. John River, N. B., in November, A. D. 1877, by collision with the steamer Soulanges, an old and extremely erratic craft, which then ran as a night boat between St. John and Fredericton.

BY FRANK H. RISTEEN.

It was the wood boat Heather Bell
That plowed the wintry main;
And the skipper his name was Bowser,
And the crew his name was Kane.

White was the deck with the evening frost,
Her sails and her mast all white,
And over her bow in the darkling gloom
There glimmered her signal light.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,
His pipe in his mouth was set,
While a gross of matches lay strewn around
He had scratched on his pantalotte.

And with every squally gust that blew
He would light another match,
And for every griping flaw that flew
His gable end he'd scratch.

Then up spoke the skipper's mate
(Like wise his name was Kane),
'I pray thee, put into Onabag,
For I fear a hurricane.

The mainsail sheet is frozen stiff,
The martengale leaks fast,
The piston rod is smashed in twain,
And the spinaker yaws the mast!

'Then haul the bobstay hard to port
And hammer down the hatch!'—
And the skipper laughed a scornful laugh
As he lighted another match.

'No fear have I,' old Bowser cried,
'Of weather, wind or sea;
Trice up the binnacle to the poop
And splice the whiffletree!'

But wilder and wilder came the gale,
And the darkness and the rain,
Twin specters from a world of woe,
Their wings spread o'er the main.

Then up spake the boatswain bold
(His name likewise was Kane),
'O, let us take the larboard tack—
The Jimsag we may gain.'

'Go bowsen up the collar beam,'
The skipper roared aloud,
'And tightly reef the throttle valve
And jibe the scupper shroud!'

And still from the Devil's Back
And o'er the Reach it blew,
And down the vale of Nerepis
The fierce tornado flew.

It swept the jilpoke off the poop,
It ripped the sails like tow,
It stove the gangway into shreds
And bilged the dynamo.

Yet though the wind blew fierce and fast,
And though the blast blew raw,
The skipper cheerily sought to light
The pipe that would not draw.

'O, skipper, I hear the sound of guns,
O, say what may it be?'

'Tis a Nerepis maiden chewing gum
And cracking her teeth, said he.

'O, captain, I hear a wailing cry,
O, say, what may it be?'

'Tis a mermaid singing her bridal song,
In the eel-grass on our lea.'

'Oh, Bowser, I see a gleaming light,
O, say what may it be?'

'Tis old Soulanges on our bows,
And dead men both are we!'

At daybreak on the Long Reach shore
The inhabitants stood aghast
At the sight of a seemingly defunct
Lying close to a broken mast.

The limbs were fixed, and fixed the eyes
That met their startled sight,
And fixed in the stern unyielding mouth
Was the pipe he had tried to light.

They watched and waited long in hope
Some glimmer of life to see,
When lo! the form riz up and roared:
'Bring hither a match to me!'

Ah, sires, 'twas piteous to see
That ancient river man
As in a rage he smote the match
Upon his diaphragm.

'Shake out the mizzen jib,' he cried,
'The whisker pole let free!'
Then jammed his helm hard to port
And steered for the unknown sea.

And this is the tale of the Heather Bell
That plowed the wintry main,
Which the skipper, his name was Bowser,
And the crew, his name was Kane.

A score of years had ebb'd and flowed
Above her resting place,
Yet still her flying form is seen
Where the night-long breakers race.

White is her deck with the evening frost,
Her sails and her masts all white,
And over her bow in the darkling gloom
There glimmers her signal light.

Alfonso Interviewed.

The Boy King Cracks Some Jokes That Cause Trouble

It was a rainy day. I felt as proud as a janitor reigning over his Harlem flat as I skipped up the magnificent Escolera Principal, which led to the king's palace and the gardener's sleeping apartment. I knocked several times, but nobody came to the door, so I walked down the stairway again (as proud, etc.) and went round to the back entrance. After a terrific bombardment of several hours I managed to wake up the cook, who stuck her head out of the door and sweetly screamed:

'Oi tell yez thot we don't want any atlusses of ther wurreld, or histories of Engлинд, or Dorry's galleries, or—'

'But madam, I am no book agent,' I implored, as she was about to slam the door in my face.

'Thin wot is it yez want?'
'I would like to interview the king.'
'Thin woipe yer feet, an Oi'll take yez to ther kid.'

So from the kitchen I was ushered into the Salon de Embajadores, where I sat on a soap box to await the boy ruler of Spain. (Hiss) Suddenly I saw him come sliding down the banister, a page set in black silk on one side of him and another page set in pica on the other side.

'Have I the honor of confronting Alfonso XIII?' I courteously asked.

'Alfonso 12½ instead of thirteenth, I guess.'

'Why, what do you mean?' I impatiently inquired.

'Well, you see, I've got to get another half—a better half. Ha, ha!'

This bit of satire caused an innocent butler to smile, and the king immediately ordered the family butcher to cut his head off, adding, 'Do you think I crack jokes for fun?'

Then I continued my interview:

'Do you think the war is fluctuating your industries?'

'Certainly. Your American shots are making real estate go up and shipbuilding go down, but this may probably be due to England loaning you her ship.'

'Her ship—what ship?'

'Friendship.'

And just then a dynamite shell exploded in the soap box and immediately killed the author of this sad tale.—New York Journal.

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R. W. RICHARDSON,

Hartland, N. B., May 25. 16 24

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Peel N. B. March 18th 1898.

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