



LITERATURE.

THE RED BLOOMING HEATHER OF SCOTLAND.

Some delight in the rose in the garden that grows,
The daisy, carnation, and pink;
But dearer than either to me is the heather
That waves on the wild rocky brink.

Thou sweet little plant! to thee I will chant,
For thou art the gem of our mountains,
Thou adornest our hills and steep sloping vales,
Where gurgle the clear winding fountains.

On sweet Lammas day, when all nature looks gay,
And the sportsman goes out with his gun,
How sweet is the smell of my red heather bell,
When warm'd by the bright summer's sun?

Whenever I view thy red blooming hue,
The days of my youth I remember,
When often I've trod on the soft heathy sod,
And the blackberry bushes so slender.

After many a scramble I've gained the wild bramble,
As through the deep glen I did wander,
While tending the flocks among the steep rocks,
Where the streamlets so sweetly meander.

How soft is the gale that sweeps through the vale,
Which the tourist and sportsmen do breathe!
How pure are the rills that descend the steep hills,
That defend our old Scotia from shaft!

How oft have the men of the heath-covered glen,
In defence of their country here stood,
While cannons did roar, and the flashing claymore
Stain'd the heath with the foeman's red blood.

Then sweet be the smell of the red heather bell
That blooms on the warrior's grave,
Who defended our land from the Tyrant's rude hand,
Choosing death to the life of a slave.

And green be the heath long after my death
On the hills where in boyhood I stray'd
When in some foreign strand I'll muse on the land
With the red blooming heath all array'd

THE OCEAN-TOLLED BELL.
A SEA ADVENTURE.

AN EXTRACT FROM JOHN SMITH'S LOG.

It was an evening of surpassing beauty, and the almost vertical moon poured down a flood of radiance which seemed but a more subdued and softer daylight. It had been oppressively warm during the day, and the passengers of the good ship *Iris* were seated on deck, enjoying the freshness of the evening air, and gazing upon the star gemmed sky of the tropics, so different from the Northern hemisphere in the disposition of its twinkling glories.

We had two lovers on board, and two persons, at least, who were fast becoming such. Their names were Louis and Linda.

"There is nothing," exclaimed Linda, after a long silence, "which brings so vividly to my mind the fact that we are so many thousand miles from home as the strange appearance of the heavens. The southern constellations which shone so beautifully before the moon became so bright, have still no look of home about them, and I am afraid they will never make the amends for the loss of my poor bears, one of which is gone altogether, while the other, for the last three or four nights, can do little more than show us the tip of his tail."

"Bears, Miss Linda!—bears at sea!—I never heard of such a thing! Have you actually seen bears at sea?"

"Yes, sir; and monkeys too."

The recipient of this laconic reply was our dandy passenger, Mr. Daisy. Not knowing very well what to make of Miss Linda's rejoinder, he grinned prodigiously, looked excessively silly, and eventually stretched himself upon a bench near the binnacle, with his back to the company and his face towards the bear about which he had been so fruitlessly inquisitive.

All were now silent for several minutes, and the gentle rippling of the water at the bows and the occasional creaking of the timbers came as soothingly upon our ears as the summer moonlight upon our drooping eyelids. I was watching the long line of silver light which "Dian's crescent" threw upon the heaving ocean, when our lover, Louis Allwyn, seemed suddenly to rouse himself from the stealthy contemplation of Miss Linda's charms, and to assume a listening posture. After a moment's silence he threw up his hand, and cried:

"Hark! do you hear nothing?"

All listened and replied, one by one, in the negative.

"I must have been deceived, then," said Louis; "but no, there it is again!"

"What?—what is it?" exclaimed all the company in a breath.

"Listen again," replied Louis.

They did so, for a minute or two, at the end of which time Linda cried:

"I hear it,—I hear it now! It is the faint far off tolling of a bell. We must be near the land."

"That is hardly possible," murmured Louis; "it is very strange."

The difference in the sensibility of the auditory apparatus is greater than is generally supposed, and a considerable length of time had elapsed before the rest of the passengers were able to hear what the practised organ of Louis and the delicate nerves of Linda had enabled them to detect so soon.

Mr. Daisy, who had been indulging in a comfortable nap—no uncommon thing with him, by the way—was awakened by the sudden cessation of the conversation, as sleepers in church are aroused at the conclusion of the sermon.

"Aw!—aw!—yes, very strange—very strange if deed," he exclaimed, with a brace of yawns, as he caught the last words of Louis, and coupled them with something he had heard about a bell:—"very strange that the—aw!—the tea-bell has not rung yet;—it's—aw!—it's time it had, I'm sure;—it is, 'pon my honor."

"Why, Mr. Daisy," said Linda, laughing, "you're dreaming;—you had your tea long ago. Listen, and tell us what you hear."

"It's the Devil's supper-bell," muttered an old salt who was taking his *trick* at the wheel, just behind us. "I've never heard no sich thing as that at sea afore, in all my born days."

"This old sea-dog, by the way, was quite a character." He had been a man-o'-war's-man for many years, and was universally known by the sobriquet of *Back-stay Bob*.

All were now silent again for some time, and the melancholy sound was now plainly heard by every one, as it came looming over the moonlit waters, and grew more and more distinct as the vessel advanced. Mr. Daisy, who by this time was thoroughly awake, began to wear an expression of countenance which might possibly have been astonishment, but which looked wonderfully like fear; and after listening for some time, he hastily jumped up and dived into the cabin for the purpose of calling the captain, who was examining some charts below. At his earnest request, the captain, after a little delay, put away his maps and went on deck.

After listening for some time, he seized his night-glass, and looked long and intently in the direction of the sound, whose sad, monotonous clang, was every moment becoming more distinctly audible. He then walked aft, and taking hold of the spokes of the wheel, gave the glass to Back-stay Bob, who was remarkable for his powers of vision, and directed him to take a look in the same direction, and report what he saw. Bob adjusted the glass, took a "long squint," hitched up his trousers, shifted his quid, and then took another squint, still longer than the first.

"Well, Bob," said the Captain, "What do you see?"

"Dog my grandmarmy's buttons! sir, if I can even begin to tell what I see. It's a kind of a craft of some sort or other; but it 'll take more larnin' nor I've got, by a jug full, to figure out what it is or what it comes from."

"Do you see any thing like a sail?"

"Not a morsel;—and no place to put one, cyther, as I can see. I can't make out the least mite of a yard, or a boom, or anything of the sort. It looks more like some great, gawny, outlandish, unuttered looking light-boat, cut adrift, nor any I ever seed afore. And now I can see the bell, too; they've got it rigged up at the mast-head, so that it swings back'ard and for'ard every time the thing gives a lurch to leeward."

"Can you make out whether there is any one aboard?"

"Not a soul, sir;—that is, not a soul as can be seed.—And it's my opinion, sir, that if that craft's manned at all, it's by somebod' that's not to be seed through a spy glass."

"You mean something supernatural?"

"Ezactly, so, sir; somethin' more sooperfine than natural—so sooperfine they can't be seed with the glass, let alone with the naked eye."

"Nonsense, nonsense!—I didn't think you were so superstitious, Bob," said the Captain, as he took the glass again and walked away from the wheel.

"There's three soopers, one on top o' t'other," muttered the seaman as his superior left him,— "but all that won't make the least—"

"Keep her away a couple of points," cried the Captain, interrupting the soliloquy.

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded Bob, and the ship's course was altered, so as to bring her rapidly nearer to the mysterious craft, to which all eyes were now directed.

The second mate, (our first officer, Harry Wharton, had died during the voyage) had had the glass to his eye for some time, and showed evident symptoms of uneasiness. At length, sidling up to the Captain, he whispered:

"Don't you think it's got something to do with poor Wharton?"

"Bah! Mr. Davit," replied the Captain, "you're just as bad as Bob, and he thinks Old Nick's aboard of the thing, with a crew of invisible imps, bound for Sicily, I suppose, with a cargo of brimstone. If you'll wait half an hour I'll tell you something more about it, for I mean to board the concern, though it should turn out to be a flying Dutchman, or Davy Jones' flag-ship."

In pursuance of this intention orders were given "to heave too" and get one of the boats in readiness. The vessel with the bell was now plainly to be seen—a nondescript sort of a hulk, with a single mast in the centre of it, and only rigged enough to keep this mast in its place. The bell was suspended from the mast-head, and ever and anon sent forth its doleful clang, as it swayed to and fro with the heavings of the sea. As the ship drew nearer, the strange-looking craft seemed to be moving rapidly towards us, as if impelled by some ocean spirit, "a thousand fathoms deep, from the land of mist and snow."

The curiosity of the crew was so great, and the eyes of all had been so frequently diverted from the matter in hand, that the ship had not been brought to soon enough,

but had shot ahead a good deal farther than had been intended, so that when the manoeuvre was at last accomplished, and the vessel had become stationary, the mysterious barque was at a considerable distance. A boat was lowered away, however, and the captain, having with some difficulty selected a crew, put off from the ship.

Louis Allwyn and myself had both wished to accompany the expedition, but recent illness made it a matter of common prudence with both of us to avoid all unnecessary exertion, and we remained behind.

Every individual among the crew and passengers was on deck, watching the motions of the boat that was to solve the mystery which occupied their thoughts—many of them with intense curiosity. There was no apparent cause for anxiety or alarm, but there was something so singular in the incident which had thus suddenly and unexpectedly broken in upon the monotony of their tedious voyage, that almost every one felt that there would be something like disappointment experienced if the mysterious boat should be found to contain nothing extraordinary. In the minds of the second mate, and some of the more superstitious of the sailors, there was a confused sensation of dread of something, they knew not what; and they would probably have been ashamed to communicate their thoughts to one another. In the mean time the boat was seen to reach the side of the strange vessel, but there was not light enough to enable the gazers to see anything more. A profound silence reigned throughout the crowded deck, interrupted only by the distant tolling of the mysterious bell.

Suddenly a score of voices exclaimed in a startled whisper: "Hark! what's that?"

Some had heard nothing, but the majority declared that a strange, peculiar noise had come to their ears from the direction of the boat. Curiosity was now on tip-toe, and eyes and ears were both strained to the utmost with the hope of catching some sight or sound to gratify it. In a little time it became evident that the ship's boat had put off again, and that it was rapidly returning. As soon as the men could be distinguished, it was observed that they were rowing with all the speed of which they were capable, and a few minutes later it was discovered that the captain was not with them. They were soon alongside, and their faces looked pale and ghastly, as if they belonged to as many corpses.

To the questions which were eagerly put to them from all quarters, they answered, that the moment they came to the strange craft they heard a low, hollow, unearthly sound, which caused them to hesitate about going aboard. The captain, however, climbed up the side of the vessel, and after looking about the deck a moment, disappeared down a hatchway, as they supposed. He was hardly out of sight when the noise they had heard before was repeated, so loudly, that it shook the very timbers of the vessel. The next moment they heard the report of a pistol, followed by a terrible shriek from the captain—and then all was still! Horror-struck, they called loudly and respectfully upon their commander, but receiving no answer, they pushed off, and seizing their oars "gave way" with all their strength until they reached the ship.

This report was received with indignation by some, but with amazement and terror by the greater number. Few classes of men are more courageous than sailors, when opposed to any known and tangible danger; while, at the same time, few are more cowardly when their superstitions and their dread of the supernatural are aroused.

"Now a'n't you a purty passel o' lubberly, knock-kneed, cowardly sneaks, for to go for to run off that-a-way, and leave your captain in the lurch?" roared Backstay Bob, as soon as they had finished their narrative. "You ought to be dressed in petticoats, and be made to feed five-week-old babies for a month o' Sundays, so you ought."

"Well, Bob," said young Allwyn, as soon as the former had given vent to a portion of his indignation, "I suppose you will volunteer with me to take another trip, and endeavour to rescue the captain?"

"Won't I though, 'Squire? I'm your man; even if we should have to tote him, neck and heels, out of Belzebub's back kitchen!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" cried Bob, as he ran forward to make the attempt; and, with the co-operation and assistance of Mr. Davit, and with no small display of eloquence on his own part, it was at last accomplished.

Bob's determination, in this instance, evinced no ordinary degree of courage, for he was among the most superstitious of the crew, and firmly believed that evil spirits, in some shape, had something to do with the queer-looking craft, and the detention of the captain aboard of her. If he had been nothing more than an ordinary seaman, "before the mast," it is not improbable that he might have displayed less boldness on this occasion; but, having the character of an officer to maintain, he felt that the least sign of fear would be unworthy of the dignity of his station, and altogether unbecoming his official rank as boatswain of the *Iris*, and late captain of the main-top on board of one of Uncle Sam's crack frigates.

Mr. Davit was probably influenced by somewhat similar feelings, for he had really very little faith in any efforts they might make for the recovery of the captain. He was evidently resolved to do every thing that could be done however, and in a much shorter space of time than could have been expected, he and Louis were in the boat, and on their way to the strange vessel.

I had offered myself as a volunteer, but they would not hear of accepting me, and as I was really too much debilitated to be of any service, it was not a very difficult matter for them to prevail upon me to stay behind. Allwyn was far from being well, but he was young and adventurous, and no argument, not even the fearful glances of Linda, could induce him to remain inactive.

Swiftly and silently the little boat approached its destination, while its crew gazed anxiously upon the mysterious barque, a problem which they were, somewhat reluctantly, about to solve. A few minutes more and they were alongside. After a moment's consultation, the men were ordered to remain in the boat until they should be called for, and Allwyn and Davit, with some difficulty, managed to get aboard. They remained for a short time