

LITERATURE.

A SISTER'S LOVE.

BY CHARLES H. BACON.

Reader, listen to me for a few moments, and I will tell you a tale of the sea. The sea! how it thrills my heart to hear that word; for it seems like the name of some friend in the past, that has been almost forgotten. For years have I been cradled on the briny ocean, and often rocked to sleep upon its ever-heaving billows; and when life's fever is over, I would be laid to sleep down in the deep blue sea, where I might rest in death as I have lived in life, friendless, alone, unpitied, and uncared for.

It was a pleasant afternoon in the month of June, 18—, that I embarked on board the fine barque Alexander, bound from Boston to Canton. My prospects for a pleasant and speedy voyage were certainly fair, for everything about the vessel was in ship-shape, and she had long had the reputation of being a crack sailer. Her captain was a young man, of not more than twenty-five years of age, of a prepossessing appearance, a perfect gentleman, and, as an additional recommendation, he could give an order to his crew without accompanying it with an oath. At about four in the afternoon, the last mooring line was cast off, sails sheeted home, and amid the good-byes of friends, we went bounding on our way over the broad blue Atlantic. Late in the evening we were off Race Point Light, had the last glimpse of our own dear native land, and were fairly on our way. We were favored with fine weather, and our ship went merrily ploughing through the trackless foam, each hour adding to the distance between home and friends.

Being the only passenger on board, I was compelled to violate rules, and chat with the crew, when the "old man" and his mates were on duty. The first person among the crew that particularly attracted my notice, was the cook. He was a young man, apparently not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, of a tall figure, well formed and beautifully proportioned. His face, though somewhat bronzed by the sun and constant exposure to the winds, was handsome and intelligent; and his eyes, which were of the soul, were of a deep, clear blue. He invariably wore his tar-bowling as much as any other part of his dress; and, far from carrying this habit, that it was a consequence, but remark among the sailors, that the cook was completely absorbed with his own thoughts, though speaking to any one unless spoken to.

Mr. then often replying in monosyllables. I but would not believe that a form so delicate and synopimate as his, had been born and reared in the seclusion of poverty, which rendered it necessary for him to follow the sea as a means of obtaining subsistence. He had every appearance of being gently born and bred, and I suspected to him to be the son of wealthy parents, who had sent him to sea to see the world. Poor boy, thought I, how would, in the storm, when the winds seem shrieking dirge for gallant hearts, and the lightnings had on the heaving billows, will you regret the have step. How often will the mother that by the knee at evening's calm and holy home and pray that her boy may return safe to her; how often, when far away in a lieved land, will thy young heart yearn for wish, for the voice of some kind friend to they one kind word to cheer thee on in the order voyage of life. All my endeavors to learn the meaning of his past history were useless, for \$100, that subject he was as reserved as ladies, on this shady side of a certain age, are to a to \$15 agent, and I gave it up as a hopeless made.

There was another young man among the passengers whom I then devoted my attention, never had just escaped from my native village, the tea parties and sewing circles were men in vogue, and in attending these I had had a horrible penchant for learning the present and future state of the affairs of the country, that circumstances placed in my way. This young man was like the cook, taciturn, taking part in that exercise so common

to sailors when off duty, that of telling yarns. He seemed to be very intimate with the cook, and the rest of the crew grumblingly complained that the softest biscuit and the most tender pieces of beef were given to Tom Davis.

One pleasant evening, two or three weeks after leaving port, I stood leaning over the taffrail, indulging in a quiet reverie, when the strange sailor approached to within a short distance of my position, and gazed down upon the beautiful mirror below us. At this moment, as he leaned his arm upon the sail, I detected on it a peculiar mark, and advanced nearer to him for the purpose of inspection. He noticed me, and extended his arm at full length in the bright moonlight.

It was the figure of a rose, having in its centre a heart, and on each side the initials T. D., done with India ink. I looked at it for a few seconds, and was about to leave him, when he exclaimed:—

"Stop a few moments, I feel rather communicative to-night, and if you wish I will tell you the history of that mark."

Seating myself on the deck, and expressing a desire to hear his tale, he proceeded:—

"I was born and reared in one of the many rural villages of New England. I was an only son of fond parents, and but one other child, an only daughter, to share with me their love.—There I passed the early years of my life in happiness and peace. Grievs were few and easily forgotten, and sorrow found no resting-place in my light heart.

One pleasant afternoon in my tenth summer, I, with my only sister—who was four years my senior—were at play, when we caught sight of a stranger coming on foot up the road. He was a young man, and his dress answered the many descriptions I had read of sailors. He was evidently unwell, for as he came near, I saw that his face was thin and haggard, and his voice sounded hollow and sepulchral, when he asked me if I would get him a drink of water. I ran to the house, and soon returned with a large dish of milk and several biscuit. The man thanked me kindly, and while he was dispatching his repast I mustered up courage enough to ask him if he was not a sailor.

He answered me in the affirmative; he had long followed the sea, and a few weeks before we came here he had been taken sick in a distant city, but had then recovered sufficiently to undertake a journey home.

I noticed, as did my sister, letters in India ink upon the back of his hand, and we both urged him to make something on our arms.—After some little time he consented, and tattooed on our arms the rose and our initials. While engaged in doing it, he told us of the many wonders he had seen, and first created the desire in my mind to go to sea.

"But," continued he, "I have told you thus much of my life, and I may as well go on. Years passed slowly on until I reached the age of sixteen, and was in my estimation quite a man. My supply of pocket money was too small for me in my association with other young men, and my father being a religious man of stern, cold and unsocial feeling, often reprimanded me for my levity and extravagance. This I could not bear, and my spirit chafed under his reproaches like the caged lion under the lash of his keeper. I resolved to leave my home, and one night, having packed a small bundle of clothes, I bade adieu to my room and sallied forth. I paused for an instant at the door of my sister's chamber, and knew from her breathing that Somaus held her fast in his embrace. I cautiously opened the door and entered the room. The moon shed its soft silver light full upon her face, where a sweet smile was resting, and she looked so lovely that I gazed at her but a moment, through fear that the sight might cause me to alter my determination. I gave her a farewell look, slowly closed the door, and hastily left the house.

The next day I obtained a situation on board an East-Indiaman at Boston. I was soon out on the trackless ocean, in the full enjoyment of my first voyage. That was six years ago; and since then I have experienced much suffering and privation. My companions were vicious, and I soon left the paths of virtue and rectitude and became but a miserable wreck of humanity—a wretched, degraded inebriate. At the

close of every voyage, my wages, clothes, in short, every thing that would procure it went for rum. I continued thus for about four years, when I first became acquainted with Jim Long our cook.

It was near a year ago that I was in one of the low grog shops of Liverpool—without a particle of clothing on my person, save an old pair of duck trousers—and suffering all the horrors of the *delirium tremens*. He had me removed from that hovel to comfortable quarters, where I remained until I recovered, he in the meantime watching over me tenderly and procuring everything necessary to my comfort. On my recovering, I promised him that I would never again taste of intoxicating drink. I have kept my word until now, and by the blessing of God I will keep it forever. Jim is the only one, save you, sir, to whom I ever told aught of my past life. He has often urged me to return home, but poverty has rendered his appeals unavailing. But when I return from this voyage, like the prodigal son, I shall seek my home."

It being late when the sailor finished, I descended into the cabin and "turned in," to remember it in my dreams."

Our voyage continued prosperous and pleasant, and the cook gradually worked himself into the good graces of the crew, who unanimously agreed that, though he acted strange, Jim was a first rate fellow.

At noon, on the fifty-third day of our voyage, we were in the latitude of Rio Janeiro, and somewhere about four hundred miles east of it, according to the captain's calculation. After finishing dinner, I stretched myself out upon a settee in the cabin to take an afternoon nap. I had just got comfortably settled, and was about resigning myself to Morpheus, when I heard the chief mate shouting down the hatchway—

"Fire! fire! Captain, the ship's on fire." I rushed up at the heels of the captain, and soon saw the cause of the alarm. By some unaccountable means a fire had originated in the fore-castle, and had not been discovered until it burst through the deck. Buckets were instantly in use, but water seemed only to increase the flame, and at the time I sprang on deck the fire was raging intensely. It was soon evident that the ship must be abandoned, for the flames were already hissing among the rigging, and brands, blocks, and shreds of burning cordage were falling in a shower upon our devoted heads. The long boat was cast off, and into it we all piled, seventeen persons in an open boat without a drop of water or morsel of bread, and four hundred miles from land.

It was impossible to obtain any provisions for our boat, as the falling pieces of the wreck rendered it too hazardous to approach her. We pulled off a little distance, and remained passive spectators of the scene. Ere two hours had passed from the time the fire was first discovered, the sole remains of our gallant ship were the floating fragments and blackened smoking hull burned to the water's edge. The nearest land was the coast of Brazil, about four hundred miles, a little north of west, and for it we set sail. Our boat had but one small sail, and frequent calms rendered the voyage insufferably tedious to a crew of starving men. Days came and passed; nights swept slowly by, and yet no land greeted our sunken weary eyes.

It was on the afternoon of the eighth day, all were yet alive; seventeen men who eight days before embarked in the boat, robust and strong, were now reduced to mere skeletons, many of them unable to crawl the length of the boat. A silence broken only by the rippling of the water against the side of our frail vessel, and the low breathing of those living skeletons, reigned supreme. One of the crew suddenly whispered out—

"It's no use, we can't stand it: we must draw lots."

The men gazed at the speaker with their sunken, wolfish-looking eyes, but made no reply. The man taking it for granted that silence gave consent, proceeded to pick the requisite number of splinters from a broken oar near him, and crawled with them to each one in the boat.

The drawing went on in silence, and on finishing, it was found that the lot had fallen up-

on the cook. The next thing was to draw for an executioner, as none seemed willing to volunteer. The sticks were drawn again, and the lot fell on the cook's best friend, Tom Davis.

All the preliminaries were now settled, and nothing remained but to slaughter one of our own comrades that we might prolong for a few short hours a miserable existence.

I had often read of men reduced to such an extremity by hunger, but I never believed until then that hunger could make me eat of human flesh. None except those who have suffered them can realize the pangs of starvation: the man that would be burned to death at the stake to save the life of a friend, would then kill him, drink his blood, and eat his flesh. Thus it was with Tom Davis.

The captain took a small penknife from his pocket—for it was decided that the victim should be bled to death—handed it to Tom, who slowly crept towards the doomed man. Several of the men assisted Jim in removing his jacket, and one of them held out his tarpaulin, for want of something better to catch the life blood. Tom tremblingly took the cook's hand and slid up the shirt-sleeve. He looked at the arm, and dropping it, sank down upon the bottom of the boat, and hoarsely whispered, "*My God, June, is it you?*"

The person addressed made no reply, but raised his hat from his head, when a flood of soft auburn curls fell down his neck. The transformation was complete. A woman stood before us, and none other than the sister of Tom Davis.

In an instant Davis sprang to his feet, and drawing his large sheath knife, exclaimed—"Let a man touch her and he dies."

The men looked at one another, and seemed about to attempt carrying out their intentions, when the mate, who had raised himself up by the gunwale of the boat, shouted hoarsely—"Land ho, land ho! boys, there's the land," and he fell exhausted upon the bottom of the boat.

All eyes were strained in the direction pointed, and we could just distinguish the long low coast stretching to the right and left, far away in the western horizon. It had been nearly a dead calm for two or three hours, but now a good breeze had sprung up. Tom Davis took the tiller, and as the breeze freshened, our boat went bounding along as though it was glad to see the land once more. Just at sunset, we landed near a few huts, the residence of some Brazilian fishermen. The inhabitants kindly ministered to our wants, and in a few days we had so far recovered our strength as to start for Rio Janerio, which was about twelve leagues to the southward, where we arrived safely.

There being no homeward-bound American vessels in port, the crew shipped on different vessels as opportunities offered. About three weeks after our arrival at Rio, a homeward-bound American Indiaman put in, and on it Captain Harris, of the Alexander, Tom Davis and sister, and the reader's humble servant, the narrator, took passage for Yankee Land. We arrived safe after a short and pleasant voyage, and each of us sought our respective homes.

Three or four months afterward I received a note from Captain Harris, requesting my attendance that evening at No. — street. Evening came, and to use a Yankee phrase, I was there.

The servant showed me into a well-lighted drawing room, where was assembled a large party of persons, grave and gay, old and young, and all seemed silently waiting the denouement.

I had just seated myself when the door at the other end of the room opened, and Captain Harris entered with a lady hanging on his arm, that I had once known as the cook on board the good ship Alexander. The gray-haired minister rose from his seat, the marriage ceremony was soon finished, and they were no longer captain and cook, but husband and wife.

On the next voyage of Captain Harris, Tom Davis was his first mate, and Tom was soon owner and commander of as fine a vessel as ever kissed the wave, or ever spread her snow-white wings to the breeze. But ere many years had passed over his head, he was convinced of the truth of the scriptural assertion that it is not good for man to be alone, and ac-