

## GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN

Ned Blake yawned, rubbed his eyes, and wondered what had awakened him. It seemed but a few moments since he had tumbled into bed, in reality it was about an hour, after a monotonous day's work. Again he heard a sound, a loud and insistent knocking at the door, which demanded immediate attention. He sprang out of bed and opened the door to admit an oilskin clad man who appeared as if he had but that moment been tossed up by the sea.

"Report for duty at once, skipper's orders," said the newcomer, as he wiped a wet face with an equally wet hand. "It's blowin' to beat an Indian Typhoon, and it aint rainin' much, just one cloud burst after another; storm came up in a few minutes; must get the rest of the crew on the job; see you later;" and he departed in a sheet of rain.

Ned was a member of boat crew No. 16, Coast Guard Station No. 4, situated near Cape Gage on a particularly dangerous section of the Atlantic Coast. Directly off shore lay the treacherous Sharktooth Shoals with its shallow waters and jagged rocks from which it got its name, the dread of seamen who frequented these waters, and the graveyard of more than one gallant craft. Especially on such a night as this was it to be feared, with a hurricane driving in from the open sea, and the dangerous cross-currents of Cape Gage rendering a boat almost helpless if she were unfortunate enough to be driven within their clutches.

In a bustle of rubber boots and oilskins Ned left his cottage, which was situated about half a mile from the Station, and amid blinding rain and falling debris, made his way towards the beach. The night was as dark as the proverbial "squaw's pocket," and so he could guide himself only by the direction of the wind and his knowledge of his surroundings. Something was amiss he felt, something—

"Why in the name of the Flying Dutchman isn't the light burning?" he exclaimed at last, as he rounded a bluff. Peer as he would through the darkness, no flashes of light at intervals of five seconds—the Cape Gage Signal—met his eye.

"Durned funny, I know that the keeper was on the job when I went to bed at eleven o'clock."

Suddenly, two figures confronted him, and one of them shouted: "Is that you, Ned? We're putting on double patrols all along the beach; you go with Jack and cover from Corbett's Reef to the Cove. The light house has blown down. Watch for rockets," and Captain Guy Stewart, "The Skipper" of Station 4, departed into the night, leaving his companion with Ned.

All day long a swell had been heaving in from the ocean and breaking along the reefs and shoals with a sullen roar. In the evening, the sky turned from gray to copper with long clouds known as "Mare's Tails" drifted across it, and the water appeared to have been stained a dull green. These were storm signals which the fishing fleet, lying a dozen miles off shore where the first big run of fall mackerel were being taken, should have heeded, even if the glass had not been falling all day. But caution was not a virtue with those sturdy skippers when a good catch was to be had, and, when Ned had gone off duty at ten o'clock that night, several boats were still outside.

"Heaven help those chaps if they are out beyond!" shouted Ned to his companion, but received no reply, and his inquiries as to how many vessels had come in received but sullen responses from Jack.

Several months previous to this time an announcement had been made to the effect that Capt. Stewart was to be retired with a pension, and that Bill Daly, Mate of No. 16 boat, was to be promoted to fill the vacancy. This brought about conjectures as to who would be appointed to fill Bill's position as mate. According to custom, when a mate gave up his position for any reason, one of his own crew was appointed to fill his place.

"Which of 'em will it be?" was a question often asked by the men of the station. The choice lay between Ned Blake, bow oarsman of No. 16, a young man who knew the sea from his childhood, always cool, rather quiet, and possessing an uncanny knowledge of how much sea a boat could stand, (knowledge often mistaken for over caution), and Jack Doyle, No. 2 oarsman of the same boat, a man somewhat older than Ned, and known as the most daring seaman on the coast.

The two men had always been friends, though seldom in each other's company except in the line of duty; but



since the captain's intention of retiring had been made known, an enmity had grown up between them. Vague rumors concerning Ned, the sources of which were unknown, had from time to time reached the ears of the officials with whom the appointment rested. Nothing was said directly against him, but hints were dropped to the effect that, should No. 16 get in a tight place with Ned in command, all would not be well. He was not openly accused of being 'yellow' but what about his caution, which did not fit in with the making of a good Coast Guard's mate. Rumor, however, did *not* say that on the few occasions when Ned Blake had offered a word of advice to his superiors, his advice had always been sound, or that he was always the first man at the oars in time of danger. Such was the case, however, and his boatmen were always ready with denials as soon as those reports began to circulate, and, with one exception, they were ready and willing to fight the man or men who hinted that Blake was a coward. The exception was Jack Doyle, who was never heard to say a word either in defence of, or derogatory to, the man who might be chosen for the position which he himself had set his mind to acquire. Yet, on several occasions, when the boys were louder than usual in their praise of Ned, he was seen to smile in a peculiar way, and more than once, when about to put out for the several wrecks which had been added to the Shoals' list of casualties that fall, he had asked Ned in a tone loud enough for all to hear:

"Do you think we can make it, or had we better stay ashore and not risk our lives?"

Men had begun to suspect Jack of being the author of the cowardly insinuations regarding Ned, with the result that they began to cast their votes for the latter. This did not improve their friendship, and although Ned always strove to appear as if nothing had come between them, Jack became more and more sullen towards his shipmate. Such was the state of affairs on the night when our story opens. The two men continued their way along the beach, wading through the surf and stumbling over the driftwood cast up by the waves. Suddenly a rocket roared out of the blackness whence came the thunder as of great guns, the sound of the surf on the shoals.

"Back to the station, quick!" panted Ned, as he turned and dashed away, closely followed by his boatmate.

Men were running the heavy boat, No. 16, out of the

shed as they arrived. Flares and rockets were now rising steadily from the water, and the rain having eased up a bit, they were seen to come from a vessel directly over the north-east corner of the shoals, the most dangerous spot on the coast.

"Everybody here?" called Capt. Stewart, as the boat floated on the surf. "Bill, you go first. No. 5 will follow as soon as you are beyond the land surf. I doubt whether you can make it from here, but the Point Station just phoned that No. 12 was smashed on the rocks."

"All together now!" shouted the mate; "shove her off! In your places, bow and three! Hold her there! All aboard! Now together! Easy till it smoothes off a bit! Now give it to her hard!"

The men labored like demons but with the regularity of the well trained crew that they were, now pulling swiftly where the waves were not curling too dangerously, now slowing down to await an opportune moment to cross a reef, and always listening for the voice of the mate in the stern, where he handled the great steering oar and shouted commands.

"Steady in the bow!" as the boat reared up on the crest of a great comber and came crashing down on the other side; not too hard now or you won't last; we're drawing nearer."

The water raced madly by, foaming and clutching at the boat; now a sea would break over the bow, but still they labored on. Differences were forgotten in the battle with the common enemy, or, if not entirely forgotten, were put aside to be settled at some future time.

"No use tryin' to come down to her from the wind'ard" muttered Bill, "we'd be dashed to pieces against her sides. The only plan is to run to leeward and have her crew jump overboard. She is right on the centre of the reef and we can't get within a hundred yards of her. A rope would be no good in this sea, and we couldn't hold on if we did get it across."

After what seemed like years to the laboring oarsmen, they finally arrived at a position on the inside edge of the reef where the force of the seas was broken, and Bill called out:

"Hold steady, all! keep her in position; here comes No. 5."

The flares from the stricken vessel, a fisherman out



of Port Gage, which was piled midway across the reef, lighted up the surrounding water and, upon the arrival of the lifeboats, men were seen picking up pieces of loose wreckage and jumping overboard, trusting to be picked up by the guards.

"Ease her around stern to. All right, watch out for the men."

A dark blotch on an incoming breaker was the immediate object of No. 5. A man was pulled out of the water. Amid drifting spars and other wreckage the boats laboured until the vessel's crew of ten men had been accounted for.

"Away we go! look lively now!" and the boats headed back for the beach and safety. But in the midst of victory came an angry cross-rip, bearing on its foamy crest a boom of the illfated craft. One end of the boom was tossed up, swung round, and two places were left vacant in the bow of No. 16.

"Man overboard! Back water! Back I say!" shouted the mate. But he was too late. An immense breaker, rolling shoreward, caught the boats and carried them on to safety or destruction.

Ned recovered his senses amid a swirling of waters, and instinctively he began to kick out. Coming to the surface, he gasped and clutched a piece of plank borne on by an oncoming wave. Here, at last, was temporary safety, if he had strength enough to hang on. Yes, it would bear up the weight of one man.

What was that object bobbing up a few feet away? He reached out to grasp what appeared to be a piece of sail but which proved to be an oilcoat.

"What! another man overboard? Lord! it's D~~olly~~!"

Clinging to the plank with one arm, he drew his boat-mate toward him.

"Buck up Jack, you're all right; here, grab this plank and hang on."

But the plank was sinking. Two men would never remain above water with such a frail support as this. Slim enough chance for one to be saved, but yet a chance. Such thoughts was Ned thinking as his erstwhile enemy added his weight to his already overburdened support. Life was sweet, and here was an enemy, one who had wronged him, claiming the supreme sacrifice of him. Should he let him go? No, Jack had a wife and kiddies waiting for him, while he was alone.

"Guess this stick won't hold the two of us, old man; you go on alone; I'll find something else," and Blake released his grasp of the plank to which Doyle was clinging half consciously. Immediately, the plank was swept beyond his reach.

Anxious boatmen, returning as soon as they regained control of their boats, picked up a partially conscious man who was clinging to a piece of boat's timber. But of the other there was no sign, and not until the following morning did they find their boatmate. His body was picked up near the cape, but his soul had departed with the storm to its Maker.

No. 16 has a new commander, a sadder and gentler man than the oldtime Jack Doyle, a man who admitted wronging a buddy, and who told of a great part played by that buddy.

In the graveyard near the little church at Gageville is a well kept grave, and upon that grave is a wreath placed there by a man with a mate's rating, and bearing this inscription:

"Greater love hath no man than this."

—E. '29.

---

How beautiful is youth ! how bright it gleams,  
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams !  
Book of beginnings, Story without End,  
Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend !

—Longfellow.

---

So shall inferior eyes,  
That borrow their behavior from the great,  
Grow great by your example and put on  
The dauntless spirit of resolution.

—Shakespeare.

---

Our doubts are traitors,  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt

—Shakespeare.