

THE CAPTAIN'S FAITH

"Good evening, Captain," said Peter Dawson, addressing his uncle, captain John Tierney, as he stepped in to visit him one evening.

"Hello, Pete, my boy, where did you drop from now?" said the cheerful old sea captain with a smile.

"Oh I come from home of course," said Pete. "Mother wants you to try the Farador for your rheumatism, so I have brought it down to you this evening," he continued as he drew a rather small, yet heavy parcel from his overcoat pocket.

"It is very thoughtful of her to send it to me; but I am afraid that neither quack doctors, nor any of their fake cures will mend my old frame now," said the old man. "However, you can place it there on the table, and I may try it tonight when I retire."

Captain John Tierney, more familiarly known as Captain Jack, was a short, thick-set man, with a broad countenance, seamed by age and toil. He was rough in his manners, monopolized conversation, and immovably fixed in his opinion on every subject. To his friends, he was apparently indifferent to religion, and he avoided all conversation on religious topics. His only mention of God was when, in a fit of rage, he would utter some of the many oaths with which most sailors are familiar. His peculiar, rough characteristics appealed strongly to his nephew, Peter Dawson, whose only desire was to be ever in his presence.

"I suppose the hardships you endured at sea are taking effect on you now?" said the boy, endeavouring to move the old tar to tell him about one of his experiences.

"Yes," replied the old man; "and I have wondered many a time, how it can be possible for me to be living today, and not lying in the kelp on the bottom of the ocean with the ground-fish."

"It is a wonder such a thought never occurred to you while out on some of your voyages, especially the long ones?" said Peter.

"Me think of danger while on the sea! My boy, such a thought never entered my mind," exclaimed the old seaman. "There never was a timid sailor yet; for if anyone had the least streak of yellow in his makeup, he would likely be a tailor or a butter merchant, rather than

a sailor," he continued. "Give me a good staunch ship, the piping wind whistling in the shrouds, and the swelling billows snorting their foamy defiance,—that's life."

The youth noticed immediately that his old friend had that far-away look in his eye, which intimated his musing on old seafaring days. The invigorating smile had vanished, as he bowed his head in thought. His twinkling eyes now lost their merriment, and peered into the carpet before him. Pete thought that he was likely sailing one of his voyages a second time, and consequently said nothing to disturb him, as he sat eagerly watching him. Tales of the sea were very interesting to Pete, and probably his companion would tell him one. Presently the old man looked up with the same old smile, which so often lit up his countenance, and seemed to relieve those who beheld it from their earthly cares, and induce them to believe that this old world is not such a bad place after all.

"What were you thinking about?" asked Pete, hopefully.

"Oh! I was thinking about a trip I had to the West Indies one time," was the reply.

"Please tell me about it!" pleaded Pete.

"Well, I will, since you are never tired listening to stories of adventure on the sea. It was the spring of eighty seven that we loaded the Hudson, at Souris, with a cargo of merchandise for the West Indies. I was only twenty-eight years of age then, and that was my first voyage as captain. The evening before we set sail, I was up to one of the grocery stores getting supplies, and there met the parish priest. He conversed with me some time about my voyage, as well as other topics, and happened to mention that he intended to have a mission in August. He hoped that I would be back in time to attend it. But as I knew the uncertainty of the weather in the South, I told him that it was hardly possible for us to be back so quickly, as it was then the first week in June. 'Oh, yes you can,' said he, and taking a little statue of St. Joseph from his pocket, he asked me to carry it and to pray for a speedy voyage. Placing it in my vest pocket, I thanked him; and giving him a hearty farewell shake of the hand, made haste to the wharf and went aboard.

"Next morning we set sail with a strong north wind behind us. As soon as we had cleared the harbour, we

gave her all the canvas she would carry; and before noon we had crossed the Strait, slipped through the Gut of Canso, and were out on the broad Atlantic. I ordered the mate to go aloft to let out the top-sails, and then our ship fairly flew before the breeze. We had a wonderful trip going down, and were just three weeks out when we reached Havana, then only a large trading post on Cuba Island.

"Cuba is only a small island, somewhat flat with a few peaks in the interior. The inhabitants were almost all Spaniards at that time, and these people employed themselves in the cultivation of sugar-cane and tobacco. It is very warm there in July, and consequently we suffered much from the intense heat. However we disposed of our cargo and in ten days time had the hatches sealed down over a rich cargo of spices, sugar, and molasses, which we received in exchange for the merchandise we unloaded.

"We immediately set sail for home, but made very slow progress. At night there would be a slight breeze, which would die down towards morning and we were often becalmed all day. Once there came a stiff breeze from the nor'west accompanied with thunder showers, and we were driven back nearly fifty miles, as the cable on our mud-hook was too short to reach the bottom there. It took us almost six weeks to get back up to the Nova Scotian coast. We were making fine progress up past Halifax, as the wind was blowing pretty stiffly from the sou'west, but it pulled in nor'nor'west on the second day, and began to raise mountainous seas. It kept changing around until evening and then it came with full force from the north-east. I knew that we were in for a gale, so I ordered the crew to take in the mainsail and to set the riding sail.

Darkness gathered in around us as we rounded Cape North and headed the Hudson for East Point. Every sea came aboard us now, and we were in constant danger of being washed overboard. We ran ropes from bow to stern, so that we might grasp them and hold on. On one occasion a great wave turned her on her side, and she rolled around like a porpoise for a quarter of an hour in danger of foundering every moment, before she righted herself again. These were certainly thrilling moments for us. I now produced the little statue of St. Joseph,

to whom I had prayed every morning and evening, and holding it in my hand I went aft and took the wheel. I prayed now with redoubled fervour that I might steer the ship to safety. But God willed otherwise. I held her up on the wind too strongly; and later found, much to my sorrow, that we were on the north side of the Island. It was almost day-break when we discovered our plight. The gale had increased tremendously during the night, and the breakers were running high. I continued to pray as I endeavoured to head her out to sea, but my efforts were in vain, she would *not* come up on the wind. The huge waves were churning up sand and gravel when they broke now, and from that fact I knew that we were nearing the shoal. At length the mate made his way aft along the ropes, and told me that he could see a light to lee-ward. Two or three big seas carried us right in on the shore, and the vessel struck. Now we discovered that the light, which the mate saw was a fire up on the bank. We could discern a number of men scrambling down the bank between us and the fire. I knew at once that they had seen our ship strike, and were coming to rescue us. I quickly got our mascot out of the cabin, tied a small line about his neck, and threw him overboard. He was immediately washed in towards the shore, and the men there soon had the line in their hands. With the small line they pulled in a larger one; and on this we all managed to reach dry land once more. There we learned that two other ships had already gone ashore that night. The men on them were not as fortunate as we had been. They both struck on Rose's Point about a quarter of a mile west of where we landed. The ships were lost on the rocks, and only five of the twenty men on them were saved. All my crew of seven men were saved. But for our deliverance from a watery grave, I thank God, to Whom I had prayed during the voyage; also St. Joseph, for I am certain that that venerable saint interceded for us, because I carried his statue, and prayed to him for his intercession. I've more faith in that statue, Pete, than in all the Faradors that were ever manufactured."

As Pete wandered along home that night, his thoughts remained with his uncle. A new trait of his character had been revealed to him, for never before had he heard him speak of his belief in the Faith. It was a great surprise to him to learn that his old friend, who was looked

upon in the neighbourhood as a rough old seaman who apparently scorned all religion, had cloaked within his bluff exterior a soul as simple and trusting as a child's.

—D. I. C., '32



THE WORLD OVER

In vain we call old notions fudge,
And bend our conscience to our dealing;
The Ten Commandments will not budge,
And stealing will continue stealing.

—Lowell

Believe not each accusing tongue,
As most weak persons do;
But still believe that story wrong
Which ought not to be true.

—Sheridan

