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HOW TO WRITE A BURLESQUE.

If you want to write a musical burlesque,
The recipes you never must ignore.
You needn't be amusing or grotesque.
Per contra, you should never fail to bore.
You needn't care a jot for the nature of the plot—
Coherency may run the booking dry—
But you certainly will fail if your idiotic tale
Doesn't introduce a nigger lullaby.

You must make a naughty reference now and then
To the funny little things they do in France,
And, if failing to express it with your pen,
You can illustrate your meaning with a dance,
While no matter what your story, you must mouth about the glory
Of the soldier or the sailor far away.
Like a strippling of a Kipling or like Tommy when he's tippling,
You are bound to write a patriotic lay.

Then you introduce a broker or a Jew,
A soldier must be pitted with a snob,
And the idiotic heroine must woo
In a song that is supposed to make you sob.
If you start act one at home, in the second you must roam
To the continent, to India or Japan.
And of late the dolly ditty is considered rather pretty,
For it's well to be domestic—when you can.

You needn't be particular with rhymes.
"Mamma" and "far" are jingled by the throng,
While "love" and "move"—how many, many times!—
Are coupled in the sentimental song.
A lavish lot of frocks (that display the wearer's clocks)
Must never, never possibly be missed.
While your prospects will be bright if the risky opening night
Sees your "comedy" most vigorously hissed.
—J. M. Barrie in Sketch.

A HEROIC ACT.

One fine evening in December I pulled off in the coaling company's smart gig to the 3,000 ton tramp steamer Corona, then rolling on the long Atlantic swell just outside the breakwater of Las Palmas harbor, Grand Canary. As the white gig flashed through the clear green water there was ample opportunity to look at the vessel, and her appearance was by no means pleasing. With her full bows, square quarters, huge upright funnel and rusty sides, she was not an attractive object as, loaded down to the last inch with nitrate from South America, she wallowed in the long sea slopes that swept round the end of the breakwater. Climbing over the low rail and forcing my way through a pandemonium of swarthy Spanish coal heavers, dealers in fruit and tobacco and venders of canaries, the latter alternately coaxing and abusing their feathered merchandise in the vain hope of making them sing, I met Captain Cranton.

"She's not exactly a floating palace, but with fine weather will take you home all right, and you can see what a deep tramp is like at sea," said the latter.

Just then a dilapidated looking Englishman, clad in greasy dungaree, with a battered engineer's silk cap on his head, thrust on one side a gesticulating Spaniard who was trying to force a bunch of hard bananas and a half dead canary on a grinning fireman and, touching his grimy forehead, asked:

"Are you Captain Cranton, sir?"

"Yes," said the officer. "What is it you want?"

"I want to see if there's any chance of working a passage home. I'm a boiler maker and have served as fourth engineer. I'm starving here," was the answer.

"H'm! What are you doing in Las Palmas then—deserted, I suppose?" said the captain.

"No, sir. It was this way. I shipped at Liverpool aboard of the Coquimbo to load coal at Cardiff for Rio, and the night afore she sailed I met Tom Stevenson, who served his time at Dunlop's."

"Never mind Stevenson—go on," interjected the skipper.

"Well, we went to have a partin glass or two—not too much, sir; about a bottle of whisky atween two of us—an when they turned us out at 11 Tom, he sits in the gutter, and sez he, 'I won't go home till morning.' I sez, 'Don't be a fool, Tom,' and a p'leeceman comes, so I goes off and makes down to the coal tips. It didn't seem quite the right tip, but I sees a big four masted boat with a yellow funnel, and sez I, 'That's the Coquimbo—I knows the ugly look of her.' So I crawled aboard and goes to sleep in the fo'c'sle. When I awakened up, she were rolling heavy far out at sea, and when I got on deck I says to myself, 'It's another sanguinary African boat.' So it was, and they made me scrape paint, and when we got here the skipper he sez, 'Clear out and be thankful you ain't locked up by the consul,' and I landed without a cent."

The captain hesitated and looked at the man once or twice, while the latter spat calmly on the deck. At last he said half to himself: "The chief wants another hand with that broken down engine of his," then, raising his voice: "All right, I'll take you if the chief engineer approves. Go and see him. Mind, I'm not going to sign you on and pay more than you're worth for stamps, but if you behave I'll give you a trifle to go ashore with."

While I leaned over the rail, smoking and watching the foam crawl past—crawl is the proper word—the chief officer came along, and in reply to my query said:

"What kind of a boat is she? Well, you can see—about as hard an old tramp as was ever launched into the German ocean. Besides, we've been knocking about for months, and there's shells and grass on her a foot long. The engineer says his mill is all to bits too." Subsequent experience proved that this description was by no means exaggerated.

Turning out early nearly next morning, I climbed to the poop—for the Corona was of the usual well deck build—and could see nothing but an azure circle above and a sweep of sparkling, foam flecked sea below, piled into ridges by the fresh trade breeze, across which the steamer slowly rolled.

One glance at the water, without looking at the log dial, was sufficient to show that she was only going six knots. So, climbing down the narrow, steel runged ladder, I made my way forward over the slippery iron deck, dodging the spouts of water which gushed in through the scuppers at every roll, to look for the chief engineer. Passing the engine room door, the thumping and clanging that floated up were quite enough to tell of worn out journals and general out of lineness to one who could interpret it. I found the chief in his room, rubbing his hands with the inevitable ball of waste, and said:

"What kind of mill have you got?"

"Weel," he said—for most marine engineers are Clydesdale men—"there's may be waur jobs afloat, but I havena seen yin. Man, do ye no hear her clack-clackin and wheeze-wheezin? There's a third o' the tubes in the port boiler plugged and a leakin, forby the firemen canna keep steam wi' they dirt o' coals."

Now, a Clydesdale man is rarely satisfied with his engine and would burn gold if he could get it, so I did not think too much of this outburst, but had only to understand that the engine was not what he would have called an "A1 mill."

Soon afterward the already strong breeze began to freshen up, and when the sun sank, a glowing orb of copper beneath a ragged edged bank of dark clouds, leaving a brassy yellow glare glowing across threatening sky and angry water, it was evident we were in for bad weather.

The seas were rapidly growing steeper and breaking more sharply, while the heavy steamer flung herself about as if she would shake the masts out of her, with water and spray already flying in all directions.

For some hours I hung about under the lee of the "dodgers," or canvas screens, chatting with the mate and trying to evade the stinging spindrift which lashed our faces like a whip from time to time. At last, as the poop disappeared to the top of the hand wheel in a rush of water, the mate, shaking the water from his sou'wester, said:

"If she jumps any more, the chief will be slowing her down. He's an awful old heathen over that broken down engine of his, and the second says he sits and talks to it in bad weather. Anyway, the sooner we get this hooker home the better."

Sleep that night was difficult, for every now and then, as the steamer lifted her stem clear of the sea, the whole poop shook to the heavy vibration of the whirring propeller, until, knowing what ship it was and bad rivets are, I sincerely wished myself out of it.

In the morning I found the water pouring in over either rail, while all around was a wild, drifting, crested sea. Some of the cargo had shifted, and the ship lay down to it and wallowed, as only a tramp can, shoving her bows up to foremast into the big ridges that rolled upon her. The chief said:

"Man, the auld mill's turning half speed, but we'r baun back sterrun first tae Las Palmas."

Then misfortunes began to arise. Something got adrift on the forecastle head and clanged about. It may have been an unshackled chain or anchor lashing. Three men, watching their time and clinging to the rail when a heavy sea came on board, crawled forward. I was watching them from the bridge, and I saw an unusually large wave rising ahead—a wall of glittering green water, curling over into foam at the summit. The captain waved his hand to the men and they grasped the rails. Next moment the bows disappeared deep in the sea, and when the steamer slowly lifted a streaming forecastle out of the ocean only one remained, clinging, half drowned, to the rails, while as the vessel rolled heavily down and the sea poured out I saw his companion clutch at the bulwarks, miss them and disappear beyond all hope of rescue in a smother of foam.

The other poor fellow lay washing about the deck beneath with broken ribs, and as three or four seamen crept forward to go to his aid Mack came up with a long face to say that more of the tubes in the port boiler had burst and that the water was pouring out under the grates from a leak in the back end. He said:

"I hae scaulded baith hands an feet trying tae pit in the patent stoppers, but there's that much steam an hot water flyin round it canna be done."

There was a brief consultation, and it was decided to draw the fires in one boiler while the firemen did their best to raise enough steam from the remaining one to keep the ship head to sea.

"Mind, Mack, if she falls off in this sea it's all up. Be quick," said the captain, to which the chief answered briefly:

"I hae been in a hot furnace afore, an I can gang again. There'll be no time lost." So the rest of the day and all night we lay to, every man at his post, while with ventilators torn up, hatch covers ripped off and water gurgling about deep in the holds the Corona swung to the heavy Atlantic sea in imminent peril.

Next morning a steady clang and clatter floated up through the stokehold gratings, and a fireman, wiping the sweat from his sooty face, came up to say that the chief wanted me below to see how repairs were done at sea. The chief engineer, looking gaunter and grimmer than ever, was swathing himself in sacks opposite the front of the port boiler, which, although the fires had been drawn, was still almost at blue heat. His third was trying to persuade him not to enter the flue himself, but the chief shook him off.

An acrid smell of charring wood floated out of the three feet flues, and then, while we held our breath, the chief slowly crawled down the hot furnace and disappeared into the dark boiler, while a fireman followed him along the wing flue.

For some minutes there was a clattering of hammers, and then a nerve trying silence. We listened with hearts in our mouths, but only heard the hammering of the runaway engines and the vibrating of the plates as a heavy sea struck the ship. Then a smothered cry came from the flue, "For God's sake get me out!" and, leaning forward, two firemen dragged the engineer forth, blackened and burned, after which he promptly collapsed into a dead faint, while a fireman went into the other flue at the risk of his life, and, making fast a rope, his comrade was hauled out.

Presently the chief gasped and sat up, holding out a hand on which the flesh was peeling from the bones in rags. "I can do nae mair," he said. "It's a boilermaker's job. An we canna drive the ither boiler at that rate any longer. It's no safe the noo. She'll fall off in the trough of the sea when the engine slows—an roll over. Lord have mercy on us!"

Just then a dilapidated greaser came in from the engine room, and I recognized the man who was working his passage. "You should have sent for me before," he said. "Give me the tools."

"What dae ye ken aboot calking?" asked the chief roughly.

"I was the best boilermaker in Hartlepool before I took to drink," was the quiet reply.

"Give him the tools. It's neck or nothing the noo," said the chief.

The stranger carefully wrapped his hands in the sacks and then, with a hammer slung round his neck, crawled into the black mouth of the flue, pushing a flat engine lamp before him.

The red glare of the boiler lamps fell on anxious faces, dripping with sweat and smeared with soot, all turned toward the yawning mouth of the flue, and as I watched I could plainly feel a tiny artery pulsing as if it would burst beneath my ear. Then the tap of the hammer ceased, there was a clatter, as of something dropping in the combustion chamber and with a low hiss, as of water on hot metal, the dim light went out.

"He's dropped his lamp. Get in, some of you, and bring him out," said the third engineer. And while four firemen struggled to be first to undertake the dangerous work the chief staggered across the stokehole, and, turning a wheel, the sharp clang of the brass ram: pumping up the half empty boiler rang out across the silence.

The seconds d agged slowly past in anxious suspense, while only a rustling sound and a so r smell of charring wood and smolde ing cloth drifted out of the black furnace. Then there was a shuffling along the plank, and the fireman fell out a limp heap amid the coal below.

"I'm done; take hold!" he gasped. And his comrades seized a shriveled, blackened hand that lay upon the deal plank, ringed round with a smoldering sleeve. A moment later they hauled out a ghastly object with charred clothing, singed hair and blackened face and laid it, with the features distorted in a sightless spasm of pain, carefully upon the floorplates.

"Poor fellow! I'm afraid he's gone. Get those fires started," said the third engineer, kneeling down and lifting the unconscious form in his arms.

Presently the relighted fires roared and crackled, and while the half hours crept slowly by and the finger of the steam gauge steadily mounted the scale the third engineer, surrounded by such firemen whose duties were over, knelt on the coal, bathing the blistered face and hands with the healing oil and trying to force a few drops of spirits between the clenched teeth. At last, just before the change of the morning watch, the burned and blackened lids fell back and the eyes opened.

A faint smile crept over the scorched face, softening away the stamp of pain, and the voice of the dying man sounded hollow and strange as he spoke in low gasps. "I've earned my passage—anyway—the leak's stopped. Mine's been a hard—hard life—it's finished now—goodby." Then the weary eyes closed forever on this world.

There is little more to be told. With steam from both boilers the Corona was able to keep head to sea until the gale broke and a faint, watery sunlight streamed down between lines of whirling clouds and shone across the foaming ridges below.

At eight bells the engines stopped for a few minutes, and as the solemn words, "We therefore commit his body to the deep, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," sounded clearly above the gurgle and swish of the water along the plates of the plunging ship, the stern grating was tipped up, and there was a heavy splash in the sea.

Then a silence fell over the bareheaded crew, and they turned softly away, a hazy idea in each man's heart—for Jack is not much given to sentiment and can rarely express himself clearly—that whatever the boilermaker's past life may have been he had at least made a good end, and possibly also a vague pride in another proof—although he has proved it over and over again—that even the "drunken sailorman" can occasionally die in a manner of which his countrymen have no cause to be ashamed.

Though he could never put it into words, poor Jack has got the feeling in him which a poet has expressed:

But once in a while we can finish in style—
For the ends of the earth to view.
—Temple Bar.

Gave Her a Good Chance.

She—The thing that surprises me is that I didn't discover how hopeless a fool you were before we were married.

He—Well, you have only yourself to blame for it. I asked you in plain English to be my wife.—Cleveland Leader.

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