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TALE OF TOUGH OLD SHIP "GARTHWRAY" BRINGS BACK INDOMITABLE DAYS OF MAGELLAN

Five Hundred And Nineteen Days Vessel Battled Her Way 'Round The Globe And Establishes Record At Sea For "Wind Jammers"—Dismasted Twice And Had Three Captains.

"Coastwise—cross seas — round
the world and back again—
Where the flaw shall head us or
the full Trade suits—
Plain sail—storm sail—lay your
board and tack again—
And that's the way we'll pay
Paddy Doyle for his boots!"

Beaten back from "Cape Stiff" by bull-mouthed seas lifting sixty feet of sheer green water, dismasted and water logged—the tale of the tough old ship Garthwray brings back the indomitable days of Magellan and "Frankie" Drake himself. Five hundred and nineteen days the Garthwray took to battle her way around the globe from Grangemouth, Scotland, with a cargo of briquet coal for Iquique, Chile. Veteran shipmasters along New York waterfront are said to have declared that this establishes the record at sea for "windjammers" in modern times. Certainly the story of the voyage constitutes an epic of persistence as it is told by "Skipper" Williams, reporter, who is said to have a "Round the Horn" record himself.

The gallant ship was dismasted twice, had three captains and was compelled to sail around the world, going south of Australia to get to the coast of Chile because she could not weather Cape Horn. Her log showed a total distance of 21,000 miles and the only members of the original crew who remained on the ship from Grangemouth to Iquique were the carpenter, steward and nine cadets. Possibly one of these cadets or "middies" will some day write another "Two Years Before the Mast." According to another account a first officer and a mate who had been part of the original crew were left, but possibly these were two of the nine midshipmen, since three are reported ready to pass their examinations for mate.

This sea story was brought from Iquique by J. R. Griffiths, assistant purser of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's liner Ebro, which arrived recently from Valparaiso. The purser's curiosity appears to have been excited in Iquipue harbor by the sight of the vessel, which then looked as if each of the seven seas had been playing cat and mouse with her for years. This vessel, originally the Wray Castle, built in 1889 as a full-rigged ship of 1937 tons, had left Scotland as a bark, and now, described as a full rigged ship again, was refitting for the back trek to Scotland with a new crew. An illustration perhaps of Kipling's line that

"The game is more than the player of the game,
And the ship is more than the crew!"

Here is the story as "Skipper" Williams tells it:

The ship encountered bad luck from the day she left Scotland and was delayed by head-winds and calms, and finally lost her fore and main topmast and jibboom in a pampero off the River Plate, and had her bulwarks swept away fore and aft. As the captain was unable to make the mouth of the river with the ship in her disabled condition, he signaled to a passing steamer to send out a tugboat, and was finally towed into Montevideo to refit. Captain Henry, the marine superintendent of the Marine Navigation Company of Canada, owners of the Garthwray, took command there and the captain who had brought her out from home went ashore for a rest.

With new spars and fresh provisions and a few changes in the crew the Garthwray sailed away from Montevideo to weather Cape Horn, known to old sailors as "Cape Stiff," and it was thirty two days before she reached the stormy headland of South America. It was a case of one westerly hurricane after another, and although Captain Henry tried his best to drive his ship round the Pacific he could not accomplish it. Sail after sail was blown from the boltropes, and he was finally reduced to keeping her head to sea under a goosewing main topsail. The Garthwray was blown down to 58 south latitude, and several times Captain Henry went about when the weather moderated.

She stood into Cape Horn three degrees to the northward of his position, but each time was driven back again by the westerly gales and great green seas with white tops fully sixty feet high, which came over the bows with terrific force and dashed along her decks. The only place where the watch on deck could stand was on the poop under the lee of a weather cloth lashed to the jogger rigging. They risked their lives every four hours to get forward to the topgallant fo'csle.

When it seemed a hopeless task to weather the Cape, the captain tried to make Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands to anchor and refit, but again the elements were against him, and he decided to run before the wind down to the Cape of Good Hope, a distance of 4,000 miles. For ninety-nine days without a break the crew of the Garthwray lived on salt beef and salt pork with hard biscuits, pea soup and occasionally some Australian soup and bouilli, preserved meat like strings with rice and dried vegetables mixed with it. The apprentices said that the salt beef got so hard with being so long in the brine that they polished it with linseed oil and carved models from it. The hardtack became so infested with weevils that when a biscuit was broken into small pieces they would separate and travel in all directions on the backs of the insects.

When the Garthwray went into drydock at Cape Town to have about three feet of grass and several tons of barnacles scraped off her hull, Miggs, the ship's pet tortoise-shell cat, which had sailed seven times round Cape Horn and was entitled to walk on the weather side of the poop deck, went ashore and started up country, toward Rhodesia, and never came back. The feline had lived precariously on the flying fish that came over the bulwarks in the main rigging at night, and occasionally a piece of dolphin or porpoise when the crew managed to stick any fish.

The first mate went home sick from Cape town, and another captain took charge, with more changes in the crew. After the vessel had been refitted with new spars, and canvas, and the bulwarks repaired she started to sail down to Tasmania and round South Australia to Iquique instead of trying to weather Cape Horn again. A stop was made at Hobart, Tasmania, for fresh water and provisions, and with fair winds all the way the ship finally anchored in the harbor of Iquique on December 23, 1923, about fourteen months late in delivering her cargo of briquets to the Chilean consignees.

The fuel was being unloaded when the Ebro left two weeks ago, and is expected to be finished at the end of this month, and then the captain of the Garthwray will look for a freight to Scotland or any old port in the United Kingdom. The nine cadets have become skillful able seamen on the long voyage, and three of them are out of their time and ready to pass their examinations for second mate.

The Garthwray on a previous voyage made the passage from Taltal, Chile, round Cape Horn to Falmouth, England, with a cargo of nitrate in eighty-four days. The vessel is 1,957 registered tonnage, 264 feet long, and was built at Workington in 1889. She is one of twelve big sailing ships remaining under the British flag and sailing out of the United Kingdom.

Here is an old salt's story of the first gale that stripped the Garthwray:

The skippper saw by the signs of the sky and by the changes of wind that something out of the usual was impending. He gave orders to take in sail, for we were jogging along quite comfortably. The members of the watch were up aloft, obeying orders, when down came the wind in its strength. Sails, rigging, spars were smashed, but the good ship kept above.

For two hours the gale lasted at its height. After that time it began to die down, but while it raged at its full strength the crew of the Garthwray had their time cut out to keep the ship afloat. Just before the first squall struck us we were going along quite smoothly and very comfortably, everybody on board —it being summer time in these latitudes—anticipating an easy passage around the Horn.

We were so badly smashed up in the blow that Captain Mann determined to seek shelter, so the ship made for the River Plate port, Montevideo, into which the ship was towed, after having been nearly 150 days out from the Firth of Forth. We had to stay in Montevideo for over four months.

The first Cape Horn blow was thus calmly described by the second skipper, Captain Henry, as follows:

When in 58.22 degrees S. and about 70 degrees W. on May 22, the first of the winter Cape Horn gales was met. The records of the log book show that the wind was W. S. W., with squalls of hurricane force, heavy hail and snow. The gale lasted for rather more thain 48 hours, during which a good deal of damage was done to the spars, one of the yards being entirely lost after great efforts had been made to save it.

Then they crossed the South Atlantic—that is all, and at anchor in Table Bay, South Africa, he reported:

While the ship has been well "dusted" by wind and weather, not a member of the crew suffered any damage. In fact, a more cheerful lot of young men, for most of them are youngsters, it would be difficult to find anywhere. More than anything else, every one is in the best of health. No one was hurt during the long-drawn voyage, and no one fell ill.

Perhaps that is how the nine

(Continued on Page 6)

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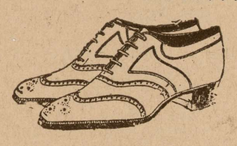

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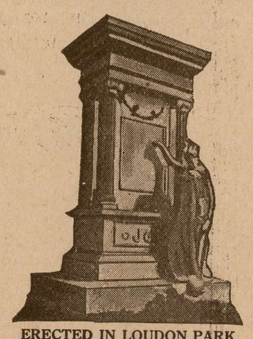

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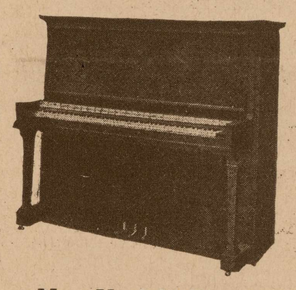

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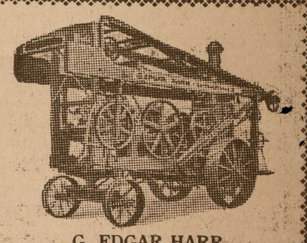

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