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SONGS OF THE SAILOR.

READER, have you ever, when ramb-
ling along the wharves of some sea port,
felt a mingled thrill of pleasure and sym-
pathy, as you gazed on some noble ship
weighing anchor and unfurling its sails,
ready to take its flight to some far away
shore? Its beautiful model, and the
freedom of which it seems the imperson-
ation, give you pleasure; but with this
mingles the thought of peril, storms and
shipwreck—forebodings of possible fate,
hopes for her ultimate safety.

And then, on the still morning air,
there comes floating to you, mellowed by
the distance, the sailor's work song,
keeping time to the monotonous "click,
click" of the windlass pawls, as the an-
chor comes slowly up:

"We've a bully ship and a bully crew,
Heigho, heave and go;
We've a bully mate and a captain too;
Heigho, heave and go."

That monotonous chorus is just as
essential to the proper working of the
ship as the ropes and windlass. The an-
chor sticks as if it had grown to the bot-
tom, and nothing but a song can get it

up. The topsails are down for reefing,
and the ship strains and pitches over
the "seas," while the wind over head
howls and whistles the chorus of trium-
phant storm-fiends; but the song rises:

"Oh haullee, heigho, cheeryman!
O! pull like brothers, heigho, cheeryman,
And not like lubbers, heigho, cheeryman;
O! haullee, heigho, cheeryman!"

And up goes the topsail: the laboring
ship feels it, and plunges off like a race-
horse, and the enraged wind follows
whistling and howling astern.

There was one ditty often used at the
windlass, that frequently gave rise to a
train of reverie in my mind, especially
when combined with surrounding circum-
stances. The forest-crowned hills, the
waving palms and cocoas, the peculiar
fragrance borne to us on the land-
breeze, the solemn roar of the distant
surf, the red, blue and white dresses of
the men, as bare-armed and footed, they
worked at the windlass and elsewhere,
the hundreds of swarthy forms on deck
and in canoes dancing over the blue
waves, all combined to give force to the

idea, that you were in a foreign land. And then, amid the barbarous jargon of tongues, the crew at the windlass strike up:

"I wish I were a stormy's son;
Hurrah, storm along!
I'd storm 'em up and storm 'em down;
Storm along my stormies.
Hurrah! John Rowley,
John, storm along—
We'll storm 'em up and storm 'em down,
Storm along, my stormies.
We'll make them hear our thundering guns,
Storm along my stormies."

And then it proceeds pathetically to inform us that "Old Rowley is dead and gone," and that "they lowered him down with a golden chain," and that they'll proceed to storm somebody or other.

Now where did that old song come from? I couldn't help thinking that it had birth among the old buccaneers of the West Indies, the Vikings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who claimed and proved claim to the title of "sons of the storm," whether of the battle or the wave it mattered not to them; and it was easy to picture those firm old fellows, corseleted and helmeted, marching along with matchlock and sword, keeping step to that tune, to the "storming" of some town in Spanish America. They have long ago passed away, but their spirit of daring still remains in the Anglo Saxon character, and their songs in the minds of our sailors.

I have somewhere seen a dissertation on "the philosophy of common things;" and since my subject is a "common thing," if that author had ever undertaken to philosophize on the apparent necessity of the sailor's work-song, it would have been something perhaps after this fashion.

Work never goes well unless we are in a good humor; we cannot sing when angry or sad, and thus the song is the thermometer of our temper and effective working power. I saw an instance of this once.

Through the stinginess of the captain, we were about to start on our homeward voyage with a short allowance of water. Now of all the wants felt at sea in a tropical climate, that of thirst is the most imperious;

"Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink."

And the very idea increases and madens your thirst.

At dinner time the mate's news and orders were discussed, and that and the dinner being found equally indigestible under the circumstances, muttered threats and curses were frequent. "Ship the handles; man the windlass!" shouted the mate. It was done in silence.

Slowly the slack cable came up, and then came the tug; the anchor wouldn't come. "Heave, lads!" cried the mate, standing on the arms-head, grinding his teeth and trying to look peculiarly pleasant. All was to no purpose; nothing started. "Give us a song boys, and up with her!" One struck up a doleful strain; but it would not do, all broke down. "Come boys," coaxed the mate again, "tisn't my fault about the water, the anchor must come up; why don't you sing?" "Can't," growls one, "I'm so dry." "Got summut in my throat," says another. Then a row began, the mate threatening on one side, and the men on the other, ending by the men refusing to weigh anchor till a proper supply of water was provided.

There stuck the anchor till the captain came aboard and another row, and water as a result. Then the anchor came up and we sailed away to the tune of—

"And now our prize we'll take in tow,
And for old England we will go;
Our pockets all well lined with brass,
We'll drink a health to our favorite lass!
Hurrah! we're homeward bou-ou-ound!
Hurrah! we're homeward bound."

But strange as it may seem, however varied the appearance and nationality of the ship and its crew, be they from Archangel's icebound coast, or India's coral strand, Saxon or Celt, Frenchman or Turk, Russian or African, we invariably find that the strain of the sailor's work-song has the same plaintive minor key, strongly reminding one of their similarity in this respect to the sad-toned melodies of the negro race.

This peculiarity is found not only in the strain of the sailor's work-song, but also in the character and ideas of the songs he has picked up ashore and taken to sea with him. In speculating on the probable cause of this peculiarity, I could not suppose that it was simply the characteristic of the songs of the native land of the sailor; what then could it be? Had he struck the key note from the deep solemn bass of old ocean?

Now among all the favorite songs of the sailor, I cannot remember one expressive of peace or joy, or of the beauties of nature; no sentimentalism about

"The sea, the sea, the open sea,
The blue, the fresh, the ever free."

Not of the sea, but of human thought, action and passion—the sea-fights and the storm, the tale of love or sorrow, of blighted hopes and early death, are the songs of the sailor. The sea is to him a solemn, terrible reality, not to be sentimentalized or sung about; but coming at first from among the most adventurous and reckless of our population, and accustomed to scenes of toil and constant peril, his mind naturally assimilates to itself such songs and ideas as are best expressive of his position.

But isolated as the sailor is from society, he is still a man, and when in the dog-watch, after viewing the glorious sunset fade into darkness, he sits down on deck with his shipmates, and each one in turn gives his "song or yarn," one song will often strike a chord of remembrance, and the tear will fall unbidden as he thinks of the almost heart-

broken mother, mourning for her runaway sailor boy, or of some loved ones far away, who "are thinking of me as I roam," and perhaps praying that "amid peril and storm, may God protect him!"

One evening as we were thus seated on deck, among the eager listeners to the usual songs and ghost stories, there was a young colored man who was working his passage home. "Come Pete," said one of the men, "it's your turn now; give us a song." "Can't massa, only savy (know) my country song." "Oh well, let's have one of them." After considerable parleying, a dirge-like whine issued from Pete's corner, which no one suspected was intended for a song. At last one, getting impatient, cried out, "That's enough tuning up; let's have the song." Another, "What are you crying about? We only asked for a song." "Dat my country song!" retorted the indignant Pete; and the roar with which this announcement was greeted upsetting the nerves of poor Pete, we soon found there was a slight difference between his singing and crying. Along the African coast you will hear that dirge-like strain in all their songs, as at work or paddling their canoes to and from shore, they keep time to the music. On the southern plantations you will hear it also, and in the negro melodies every where, plaintive and melodious, sad and earnest. It seems like the dirge of national degradation, the wail of a race, stricken and crushed, familiar with tyranny, submission and unrequited labor.

And here I cannot help noticing the similarity existing between the working chorus of the sailors and the dirge-like negro melody, to which my attention was specially directed by an incident I witnessed or rather heard.

One day we had anchored off a small town, and soon the canoe fleet of the natives was seen coming off to trade. Suddenly a well known strain of music comes floating to us on the land breeze.

"Where's that singing?" cries one, "can't be that yon ship is weighing anchor?" "Why, it's the darkies!" shouts another of the listeners; and, sure enough, there were five or six hundred of them coming off singing in two parts and keeping time with their paddles to

"Heigh Jim along, Jim along Josey,
Heigh Jim along, Jim along Jo!"

They had made an advance in the scale of civilization and taken their place in the world of harmony. Then the conclusions of my speculation on the probable cause of this evident similarity between the chorus melodies of the sailor and the negro were something like these—First, the similarity of the object; that is, the unifying of effort in labor, and thus to secure simultaneous action, as in rowing, pulling, hoeing, &c., &c., by the measured and rythmical occurrence of vowel sounds.

Next, only as man advances in the social scale does he invent harmonic chords and sounds, for the savage takes his notes from the voice of nature around him, and that everywhere sings in a plaintive minor key. The sighing, howling wind, the murmuring brook, the moaning, creaking forest trees, the soft cadence or angry roar of the ocean, all have but one part and one key; it seems as if nature were mourning the curse of sin and sighing for the promised redemption.

So it is with the sailor. Shut out in a great measure from civil society, he makes little progress in the march of civilization. Reckless or careless at home, he carries but few of the restraints of education and refinement on shipboard. The broad expanse of his ocean home becomes, as it were, his native element, his head enlarges in sympathy with it, his thought and language

tinged with the salt spray. He is sometimes rocked to sleep by the lullaby of the gentle ripple at the ships' bows, and sometimes amid dreams of home, the crack of the handspike on deck, and the shout down the hatchway of "Eight bells there below, d'ye hear the news?" brings him on deck to hear a genuine "song of the sea."

Through the pitchy darkness the ship is making on as if a thing of life, quivering and groaning with terror as she flies from the spirit of the storm-blast. Over head you can hear his dirge notes now low, now high, as at every plunge he grasps the topsails and shakes the quivering vessel.

Now she plunges down into the depths, and with a dull, heavy "thud," the mountain wave, impatient for his victim, ceases its bass to the requiem and plunges down the decks. "Hold on all!" is the cry; then it sweeps over you and passes away and the ship rises and shakes herself—but, sometimes, she goes too far, she founders, and the requiem is finished!

In that grand concert, the shrill tenor of the shrieking winds, the treble of the thrilling shrouds and straining timbers, the deep bass of the waves rushing and roaring around, and ever and anon the solemn double bass of the thunder peal, however "earnest" life may be ashore, the sailor feels it is earnest there; and the hoarse voice of command summoning him to do battle with the elements, is instantly obeyed fearless of peril to life or limb.

Amid such circumstances and surroundings, no wonder that the mind of the sailor becomes imbued with the ideas which are heart in the sad, earnest strains that characterize the "songs of the sailor."