

# "THREE IN CHARGE."

A Story of the Sea.

BY W. CLARK RUSSELL.

### CHAPTER I.

It is an episode of ocean life, now a good many years old, but human nature was the same then as it is now, and, indeed, the older I grow the more I find human nature the same now as it was then.

Business had carried me to the East Indies. I had visited Madras, whence I had proceeded to Calcutta, and from Calcutta I had made my way to Rangoon. I stayed in that place a month, by which time my health had suffered so greatly from the climate that I made up my mind to return to Europe in a sailing ship that I might spend many long weeks among the fresh breezes of the sea and get all the benefit I could out of the incessant changes of climate which a voyage down the Indian Ocean and round the Cape of Good Hope and up the Atlantic provides you with.

There was a full-rigged ship lying at Rangoon, called the Biddy McDougal. I heard that she would suit my convenience, and as she looked a comfortable, stout ship, I inquired the name of the agent, called upon him and asked if I could get a passage to England by his vessel. He answered "Yes." She was bound for London; she was a sailing ship, but the captain would, no doubt be glad to accommodate me with a cabin. The charge would be so much. I forgot the figure, but recollect that it was moderate, something short of \$100. For this money I was to have a cabin passage, but the spirits and wine I might need I must myself lay in.

Next day I went aboard the Biddy McDougal to inspect her accommodations. On climbing over the gangway I was received by a tall, rather good-looking man, with a face remarkable for its expression of sternness. His skin was blackened by exposure to the sea and weather, and his hair, which would have qualified him to pass for a native, he frowned as he surveyed me, and inquired my business on board.

"I am going to England in this ship," I said, "and I have come to see what sort of a cabin you can furnish for me."

"Oh, I beg pardon!" he exclaimed, but without relaxing his stern expression. "I thought—he broke off and muttered behind his teeth.

"Who are you?" said I to the mate.  
"No, sir, I am the captain." "Pray, what name?"  
"Mr. Wilson," he answered. "It is a fashion among the merchant seamen who obtain command to style themselves captain. It is a piece of impudence. The only captain at sea is in the royal navy. A merchant skipper is a master mariner. All merchant captains are misters. I am plain Mr. Wilson, at your service, sir."

He spoke with considerable heat, but I was willing to attribute his temper to the weather, which was certainly very trying. And then, again, his men might have given him trouble, for numerous and deep are the worries and anxieties of the British shipmaster. Much is expected of him and little given. His energy is slender, and he is called upon upon him every outrage that is perpetrated by the owner, and often would the men be glad to cut his throat before the land is out of sight; he has no professional prospects, and when at last he runs his ship ashore or loses her in a gale of wind or by fire, and is compelled by a court of inquiry to withdraw from the vocation which he has pursued, if not adorned, man and boy, for perhaps forty years, there is no other port under a lee for him to bring up in than the comfortable berth of a pensioner, which, I regret to say, is always in want of funds and always inconveniently full.

Therefore it was that when Mr. Wilson spoke with heat about shipmasters styling themselves captains I made allowance as, as the phrase goes, and did not briefly or angrily reply. He then requested to be allowed to see the cabin the agent had offered me. I viewed that cabin, and found it small and ill-lighted, but, on the whole, it was a better cabin than I had expected to find on board such a ship as the Biddy McDougal. The situation in his cabin, however, were taken, was a tolerably cheerful interior, very plainly furnished, with a large skylight over the table, a stove for cold weather, a lamp, a clock in the cabin-way, and a big telescope in the corner. There were three cabins, one forward and two cabins abaft. My cabin was forward, on the starboard side.

Mr. Wilson and I went on deck, and we stood conversing a while under the shelter of an awning. I inquired as to the number of the crew, the time the ship had occupied in making the outward passage, and so on, and then went ashore, understanding that the vessel would not sail for another week.

Three days later I paid a second visit to the ship, for by this time I had purchased what I needed, and I wished to see where the cases and parcels had been stowed. On stepping on board I beheld an immensely stout, red-faced man with a white straw hat on his head, dressed in white drill, seated in a chair with poles attached to the sides. I approached him, who, after a brief exchange of words, told me that this man might be the officer, and, approaching him I said:

"Who are you?" I asked.

"No, sir," he answered, leisurely bringing his eyes down from aloft and fastening them upon me. "If it is the mate or the man who cooks the mate."

"Who are you?" said I, nettled by his brusque manner.

"I am the captain," said he.

"What is your name?" said I, approaching him.

"What is your business, sir?" I inquired.

"I have taken a passage in the Biddy McDougal for England."

"Oh, you're the gent!" he cried, and his manner immediately became respectful. "You'll excuse me for not rising. I'm full flush to the hatches with you, and I'm a plain sailor."

"I may take it," said I, "that there has been a fresh captain appointed to this ship since I visited her a few days ago?"

"You may take it," he noisily wheezed, "that the captain of this ship is Timothy Punch. He brought the Biddy McDougal out and he's going to take the Biddy McDougal home."

I viewed him with astonishment, but held my tongue, never doubting that the "Mr. Wilson" whom I had met and who might have happened to be on board as a guest or as a sightseer when I arrived, had entertained himself at my expense by a deliberate falsehood.

Capt. Punch again apologized for not being able to rise, but made an effort to stir in his chair for no other purpose, however, than that I could see that to force a groan that sounded like an execration. He told me that my private stock of wine and the other matters I had laid in were safely housed in the best adjoining mine, a berth that was unoccupied, and was, therefore, at my service, as well as the cabin I had paid for. Nevertheless, I went below to make sure. In the cabin I found a young fellow cleaning some glasses.

"Are you the steward?" said I.

"I wait upon the Captain," he answered.

"The Captain?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, I am the captain," said I, "and on each occasion I have not with a few captain. The first time it was Capt. Wilson; there he is." I exclaimed, pointing to the forecastle, where the man Wilson who had called

the deck in search of any signs of old Capt. Punch.

"Only one," said he, "and I'm that man."

"I have been aboard this vessel three times," said I, "and on each occasion I have not with a few captain. The first time it was Capt. Wilson; there he is."

I exclaimed, pointing to the forecastle, where the man Wilson who had called

himself the master now stood looking toward me, and plainly visible. "Next it was Capt. Timothy Punch, a gouty, red-faced man, who sat helpless in a chair on this quarter-deck. And now it is you."

A sour smile curled the man's lips. "They haven't been quite above board with you, sir," said he. "The long and short of it is this. Capt. Punch was in charge during the outward voyage right enough; but he was too good for it, and he was sent away under sealed orders, or when he'd get an official letter marked 'confidential,' the inside of which he was to keep strictly secret."

"I was proceeding," he said, "to the garret, when I met you. I'm a plain sailor, and I may take it, that there has been a fresh captain appointed to this ship since I visited her a few days ago?"

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be glad to know, gentlemen, which of you will consider it my duty to put the Biddy McDougal" said I, looking at this stilled but nevertheless resolutely uttered address to clear the air somewhat and do some good.

"I am captain," said Punch, with his mouth full of beer.

"Yes, and I am in charge," said Capt. Parfit.

"You mean I am in charge," cried Mr. Wilson.

"I am captain of this ship and the supreme head, sir," cried Punch, addressing me; "but Mr. Wilson represents me while I'm out duty through illness, and so long as he represents me he is master-heretofore as I understand, and there is no man aboard this ship who's going to say contrary."

"Yes, there is," said Capt. Parfit; "but I don't mean to waste no words on either of ye. You know where my authority comes from. I'm master of the Biddy McDougal till I've berthed her in the dock sho's bound to, and if in her mate of yours interferes with me I'll log him for mutiny, break him, and send him overboard, as he both know I've got the power to do. And if that don't answer—he interrupted himself by exclaiming: "Put I don't want no words."

And so saying he rose, having eaten little of anything, and went on deck.

Well, as may be supposed, this was but the first of a long series of uncomfortable quarrels. I cannot positively say that Capt. Parfit did not log Mr. Wilson for mutiny and order him forward into the forecastle to work before the mast. This I cannot say, but it is certain that Mr. Wilson did not go forward; on the contrary, he remained very much aft, giving instructions without regard to Capt. Parfit's orders, and he acted in all ways as though he were, alone, were master of the vessel.

Queen Victoria's Dogs. An Aristocratic Trio in Very Comfortable Quarters.

Dogs were first admitted to the court of England in the reign of Henry VIII., says the Sportsman's Review. Under the present reign three dogs have been elevated to the highest canine dignities on account of their aristocratic families and their own peculiar merits. The names of the aristocratic trio are Marco, Roy and Spot. Marco is the Queen's favorite, and he used to be very jealous of John Brown. His ancestry can be traced back to the crusaders. He is what they call in England a Dogoman, and at one of the recent dog shows he won the first prize, the meg of honor. The other favorite, Roy, is a collie, and Spot is a fox terrier with a record of twenty-two rats in a quarter of an hour.

These canine lords have their residences within their special names. Her majesty's dog place is divided into three parts, the queen's veranda, collie court, and umbrella court. The veranda is the principal one. It is a covered gallery around the kennel, and the queen likes to walk there.

Each kennel has a dining-room and a bedroom. The floor of the dining-room is separated from the veranda by an iron grating. It is paved with red and blue bricks, and the furniture consists of a trough, always full of fresh water. The bedrooms have two large windows, generally kept open for the purpose of ventilation, and in a snug corner in each room is a very low bed with a mattress of fresh straw.

Umbrella court gets its name from the big umbrella in the middle of it, under which the dogs can shelter themselves from the sun and rain. A host of servants wait upon the canine nobility, and the queen is very severe with the officials who do not pay proper attention to her dogs. A chief is provided for them, and his instructions are to vary the menu of the dinners of her majesty's pets, and to consult their tastes.

Outcasts from Society. Queer People That Live on the Rivers of China.

The origin of the Chinese river population is shrouded in mystery. According to one version it originated from people who were convicted of treason, and who were declared unworthy of residence on terra firma. The people that live on the Canton river are said to be descendants of a certain Lu-Tsun, who was chief of a tribe and lived in the village of Naniku, on the island of Homan, 2,000 years before our era. Lu-Tsun was said to have been a general in the Chinese army, and to have rebelled after acquiring power and authority. After many combats with the imperial troops he conquered Canton, where he maintained himself as an absolute ruler for 30 years. After his death his children were persecuted, and all of his descendants were considered accursed and soon compelled to take refuge on river boats.

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