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# "NUMBER ONE" MACEY

by Norman Springer  
and Jim Desmond



**WE** PASSED in through the Golden Gate late in the afternoon—the schooner *Mose*, in which I was before the mast—and it was already dark when we finished tying up to the Main Street wharf. Then when I was breaking out my go-ashore togs the mate told me off as ship-keeper.

I felt picked on—although I knew it was my turn. But it was hard luck. All hands except myself went up-town; I had to stick around and feel sorry for myself.

It wasn't a nice night to be outdoors; or indoors either if one were alone and just off the sea. The bitter December gale which had

chased us down the coast blew up again with the darkness and whipped over the wharves, driving a cold, stinging rain before it. It was the kind of night that makes a fellow want company.

It got lonelier and lonelier on board, and finally I banked the galley fire, and went up the dock to Harry Kline's West Wind Exchange, which, in those days before San Francisco had burned down and grown up again respectable, stood on the corner opposite the dock-head.

I didn't expect to run into any excitement in the West Wind, because it was Saturday night and I knew the whole neighborhood was along with my shipmates, whooping it up on the

Barbary Coast. In fact when I opened the door and literally blew in I found Harry Kline and one other man the only occupants of the saloon. They were sitting by the big stove in the middle of the room, just finishing a game of checkers, and when they looked up at my entrance I saw that Harry's companion was Captain Abner King, a retired shipmaster, a huge-bodied, bluff-aired, Father-Christmas sort of old man who was known by sight at least to nearly everybody in the port. He had commanded big clippers in the gold days, and afterward had sailed as master on the coast until he grew old enough to want to stay ashore.

Harry gave me a hearty greeting. I knew him pretty well, for he had been mate of the clipper *Dashing Wave* at a time when I was pulling a whitehall for the Golden State Butchers, and I had hooked his ship many times when she was making port. He introduced me to Captain King, and after a drink around I joined them by the stove.

The captain wanted to know right away where I was from. I told him Coquille River with lumber, and, seeing he was interested, went on with the yarn and described how it had blown blazes all the way down the coast and how when we came up to the heads the night before, the wind hauled ahead and lightened at the moment we didn't want it to, and out we went again and rolled and tumbled on the bar half the night.

Maybe I spread it pretty thick about the bar; I was young, you know, and I hadn't spoken to a soul for hours. I noticed him smile when I went into details.

"Yes, I know that bar," he commented when I finished.

Then he added to Harry—

"Remember that big gale in the Winter of '89?"

"You bet I do," replied Harry. "Didn't I have a dose of it myself? Twenty-eight days from Puget Sound in the *Dashing Wave*. Then over a week outside before we dared more than look at the bar. Why, Captain King, when you went scotting by that morning, bound in, I says to my 'old man'—"

"There goes a — fool to Davy Jones'!

"Yes, sir; and I believed it, too. And my old man takes a squint and he says—"

"I know Ab King knows his business, but I'm inclined to agree with you, mister."

"I don't think there was a living soul in all the fleet outside that morning who thought you could make it."

"I had my doubts myself," said the captain. "I never would have made it if it hadn't been for 'Number One' Macey. That confounded beach-comber pulled me through; it was Macey who really ran the bar."

"So I've been told," said Harry. "But I never did hear you tell about it, captain; and

the lad here, I guess, has never heard the yarn."

I had. Twice before; once in Guaymas, and another time in Dutch Harbor. It is quite a famous yarn on the West Coast. But I had never heard it from the lips of a principal in the adventure; and, seeing that the old man was willing to talk, I promptly joined my request with Harry's.



WELL (began Captain King) the yarn really begins with my shipping Number One Macey in my crew up in Coos Bay. My mate thought that was a grave mistake, and I had my doubts myself after sizing up the man; but as it turned out, taking Macey on board was nothing less than our salvation.

I had the three-masted schooner *James Townsend* at the time, and we were loading in Coos Bay for this port, with lumber in the hold, which was all right, and a deck-load of butcher-blocks, which was all wrong. You know these butcher's chopping-blocks, Harry—sections of tree-trunks about four feet high and as many in diameter. As nasty a deck-load as a vessel could have, for there is no lashing them so they won't work loose in a sea. When they do get loose they take charge of the decks.

It was while we were loading these devil's playthings that Number One Macey introduced himself to me and the ship. I was on the poop at the time and saw the whole thing with my own eyes. It described as well as anything just what sort of man this Macey was.

The blocks were being hoisted inboard three at a time, and a sling gave way in mid-air. The blocks fell back upon the wharf, and one of them rolled across the foot of one of my Swedes. A chap who was lounging upon a lumber-pile watching the loading, got up and went over to the Swede and helped him take his boot off.

He took a look at the foot and turned away without even offering to help the poor devil to his feet. Instead he trotted down the wharf until he was opposite me, his face cracked like a crescent moon, he was smiling that wide, and sang out with the best cheer in the world:

"Captain, your squarehead's got a busted leg. I'm going south, sir; I'll ship in his place."

That was Number One Macey. If the block had smashed the Swede's head instead of his foot Macey would have acted just as he did. Never a thought for any one or anything in the world except himself—his own safety or comfort or pleasure. That is how he got his name—just thinking of "number one."

Well, I admit it gave me somewhat of a jolt to be tackled for a man's berth before he was even picked up and carried off the dock; and I never was a man to sentimentalize about former hands, either. But this affair made me think of what the London men used to say about getting jobs in the East India lines—waiting at the gangway until a coffin was carried down.

However, I was short-handed anyway and expected a lively time outside, it being January; and when the mate came to me and said the Swede was signed up for the hospital I took another look at this fellow on the dock. I could see by the cut of his jib he was a sailor man—a little, lean, bandy-legged, sandy-haired bully, with "deep water" and "hard case" written all over him—and I told him he could take off his coat and turn to. In a half-minute he was doing the injured Swede's work, and doing it handily.

Carlson, my mate, came to me with a protest. Seems he knew Macey of old—had once made an offshore passage with him to the Cape—and he didn't have any fond recollections of that voyage.

"He's a desperate hard case and trouble-maker, captain," he told me.

"He's a sailorman, isn't he?" I asked.

"Never saw a better," admitted Carlson. "But he's a bad man on a ship, captain. Trouble sails with him like wind sails with Winter. I'd rather you shipped some stiff who didn't know soup from sails than that bully."

"It isn't what you'd rather; it's what I'd rather," I said a bit testily, for Carlson was a man who was always stepping out of his place. "I've shipped the man. You'll see that he does his work. If you can't handle him I'll lend you a hand."

Carlson went off forward with a flea in his ear at this, for he was a big fellow and a bit of a bucko, and the new man was as I said under-sized.

We went to sea at the flood of the tide, and when the tug dropped us outside of Coos Bay bar we found ourselves in a screaming sou'east gale of wind. I was expecting weather, but nothing as bad as this. We had our hands full for a while, I can tell you. I stood offshore all night under close-reefed sails, and with the dawn hove to.

It was all hands and hard work all that first night, and I had no thought to waste upon the new hand. The Swede had been in Carlson's watch, so I knew the mate had the fellow under his eye.

But with the daylight and the breathing-spell that followed heaving her to, I chanced to observe Macey at the wheel. It was bitter cold, and rain-squalls blew up and broke upon us occasionally, and Macey was facing the weather like an old-time packet-rat.

He stood hunched against the wheel, visibly shaking with cold; he was dressed in the same clothes in which he came on board—a suit of thin, patched dungaree—and they, being wet, clung so closely to his body that I suspected he had on no underwear. The uppers of his shoes had come adrift from the soles, and I could see his toes sticking out. He looked so utterly forlorn and miserable—like a cat that had been

doused in the wash-deck tub—that I spoke to him and discovered that what I suspected was true; he had made a pier-head jump into my ship, and all the outfit he had for Winter seafaring was the few sodden rags upon his back.

"I'll tell the steward to give you some clothes and oilskins out of the slop-chest," I said to him.

Would you believe it, the little runt declined with thanks? Yes, sir. His face was blue with cold and his teeth clicking like a fandango but says he:

"The more slops the less whisky, captain. Thank ye kindly, sir, but I'll want no more from the slops than a bit of tobacco."

I told the mate about it later.

"That bad man of yours is no more than a bad bar-fly," said I. "He'll freeze to death at sea, so he may have a dollar or two more for whisky ashore."

"Freeze? Not him," says Carlson. "Others may freeze, but not that bucko. He hasn't had time yet to feather his nest, but you just keep an eye on him, sir, and you'll see."

"Oh, but don't I know the lad and his tricks! Without knowing what's in his mind I'll lay you five dollars, sir, that he'll come on deck after his first watch below in dry clothes, and they-won't be slop-chest clothes."



I LAUGHED at Carlson and took the bet. I knew my fo'c's'le crew—squareheads to a man, and as clannish as Hieland Scots. I knew they would hold two things against the new man—the fact that he was an alien, and the fact that Macey had exhibited a heartless promptness to profit by their shipmate's misfortune.

I knew there was some bitter feeling about the last, because I overheard some words on deck as we were casting off from the dock. The beach-comber was likely to get hard knocks and black looks from his shipmates, but little else.

I'll be hanged if the swab didn't show up in the afternoon wearing the oilskins of the biggest man in the crew, and the seaboots of the next biggest man. I recognized the clothes, and looked about for the owners.

Well, Swanson, who belonged in the oilskins, was standing his watch in a pea-jacket and a most beautifully blackened eye. Hansen, who had been proud to possess the best sea-boots on board, was kicking his cold heels together and paddling about the wet decks in a pair of ruined gaiters, and Hansen also had one side of his face in mourning. Both men looked as if they had spent a hard night on Pacific Street.

It looked mighty interesting. I paid Carlson his five dollars and asked him if he knew how it happened.

"Not yet; but I'll find out soon enough," says he, not seeming a bit elated over winning. "I knew this was coming. Trouble—and then

more trouble. I know that man, captain; he's a bad actor. You'll find out, too."

But a little later Carlson came to me with the yarn of how it happened. Seems he had it from the carpenter, who had it from the cook, who had it from the fo'c's'le direct.

Macey had drawn a couple of pounds of plug from the slop-chest, taken it for'ard and agitated a poker-game in the fo'c's'le with the strips of tobacco as currency. Well, like all coast sailors my squareheads were poker fiends, and every man Jack in the port watch sat in the game with his supply of plug at his right hand. It didn't matter that they had been on deck all night and all the day before—the game was more exciting than the bunk.

It seemed that Macey played in luck. Phenomenal luck. He held everything in the deck, just at the right time.

First he won every stick of tobacco in the fo'c's'le. Then when the watch was properly blooded and wedded to the game he began to stake his tobacco against clothes. Yes, sir; he went through the circle picking and choosing the best, taking woolen underwear from one chap, socks from another, a cloth suit from a third. He couldn't lose.

He was staking Hansen's sea-boots against Swanson's Guernsey—he already had Swanson's oilskins—when the row occurred. There happened a sad mistake. Swanson held an ace too many at the showdown, and it was Hansen's deal and Hansen's deck, and Hansen had his new brown bowler hat, which Swanson had openly admired, in the pot.

Well, Hansen said it was a misdeal and Swanson said it was a skin game and the bet stood, and Macey laid down four deuces—which was high hand—and said he believed in peace, but he never knew a Norwegian yet who wouldn't double-cross a Swede when he got a chance. The upshot was that Swanson mixed it with Hansen there on the fo'c's'le floor, and in the scuffle the cards were scattered.

After the pair had thumped each other properly and Swanson had won because he was the bigger man, Macey claimed the pot on the strength of his high hand, which all had seen, and Swanson, having fought to make the bet stand, couldn't deny it him.

"Didn't I tell you, sir, that that bird would feather his nest?" demanded Carlson triumphantly. "Oh, I know him! He played the same sort of tricks on the *Lucy Parker*, and had the crowd for'ard swearing gory murder at each other the whole time, and he profited in some way by every row. He's a trouble-bird, captain!"

"So long as he confines his tricks to the fo'c's'le and doesn't interfere with the ship's work it's none of our business," I told Carlson. "Besides you have no proof—just suspicion. Perhaps Hansen did slip in the extra ace."

The mate went away with a snort of disbelief. I put the gossip out of my mind, but not before I resolved to keep an eye on the fellow, as Carlson advised, for he seemed to be a pretty slick sea-lawyer, and a sea-lawyer is nearly always a shirker.

But I didn't have much thought to waste upon any foremast hand during the next couple of weeks. I had my hands too filled with other things—the gale and the ship.

I was hove to out there for twelve days. I never saw such weather north of Cape Horn; and even down under I never saw it worse. The ship was old and loose, and after a two-days' pounding by the seas she opened up like a fan. Then it was pump or sink, and so we pumped.

Then there was the deck-load, those cursed butcher-blocks, to worry me. Every day or so some of them would come out of their lashings and go rampaging about the decks. It wouldn't have been so bad if the deck-load had filled the decks; but it only filled the amidship space, and when blocks got loose they had a clean space both fore and aft in which to work havoc.

Capturing one of those runaways was like capturing a wild, dangerous beast. They weighed over half a ton each, were too wet and slippery to grab hold of, and because of their shape it was next to impossible to get a hitch about them with a rope. I never tried to save one that broke loose; merely prayed we might get it over the side and away from the ship before it killed some one.

If I had been able I'd have jettisoned the lot. I think the blasted things might have wrecked us, but for one man. And that man was Number One Macey.



THE first time we had trouble with the deck-load, three of the blocks got loose at once and took charge of the forward decks. I roused all hands to get rid of them, and after a risky tussle we did get two of them over the side—though we lost a strip of teakwood rail, and one lad had his hand smashed during the operation.

But the third block defied us. It was possessed of the devil. It smashed the fore fife-rail, flattened the bosun's locker and spilled fifty dollars' worth of good paint on the deck, and threatened to make matchwood of the deck-house.

Talk about guns breaking loose on the old time men-o'-war! This was just as bad. That block charged about like a wild bull, and every time we got it cornered and thought we had it, it broke loose again and came within an ace of flattening somebody into two dimensions.

We worked all morning at the job, and when eight bells went I told Carlson we would have to continue and get the thing over the side before the watch went below. The mate passed the

word to the men, and it brought Macey to the front.

I had noticed the fellow occasionally during the hot work of the morning. Noticed him lagging behind, not shirking exactly, but never jumping forward unbidden like the other hands were doing. When one of the mates gave him an order he obeyed it, and waited in the back-ground for the next order. I thought to myself—

"You're a true sea-lawyer, my fancy man; you're not going to risk your precious hide if you can prevent it."

Now I saw him come lounging out from under the fo'c's'le head with a piece of half-inch board about six feet long in his hand. The butcher-block had come to rest for the moment in the center of the forehatch and was quietly teetering to and fro, getting ready for a wild dash with the next heave of the ship.

Macey walked up to it and stood in front of it with this silly piece of board sticking out before him. I yelled to him—so did all hands—to get away from there and have a care for himself. He never let on he heard. I really thought the man had gone mad.

The ship lunged, and the block hurled itself toward Macey as if cast from a catapult. The man never budged, and in my mind he was just as good as dead.

Well, sir, would you believe it, he changed the direction of that charging mass with the little strip of wood he had in his hand, and a flip of his wrist! Then he coolly jockeyed the block over to the lee rail, using the stick and the jump of the ship as leverage, and when he got it to the rail he jumped the thing clean into the sea.

Yes, sir. I never before in my life saw a bit of nerve quite so cold-blooded or a bit of work so skilfully done. And when he was through and the block had drifted away to leeward he tossed his stick overboard and walked into the fo'c's'le with never a look to right or left.

A moment later he was at the galley door with his pannikin and plate, getting his dinner. I stepped up to him, told him he was a smart lad and asked him where he learned that trick with the board.

"I've sailed on the Slave Coast, captain," says he.

"Maybe," I agreed. "But where did you learn to handle butcher-blocks in that fashion?"

"Lightering—on the Slave Coast of Africa," says he. "Palm oil, captain—bleeding big puncheons of the stuff. And they'd come adrift in the surf or when we were crossing the bar in a breeze, and we'd have to spring 'em back in place again. The natives could do it with two foot o' bamboo."

There you have another glimpse of Macey—Number One Macey. The runt knew all along how to get that block over the side, but he let all hands take chances for three hours that no insurance company in the world would have

underwritten, and he never offered a hint, or a help that he could avoid. It just wasn't his affair! But when the butcher-block threatened to seriously inconvenience him, when it stood between him and dinner and his watch below—why, he promptly eliminated the block.

I was grateful to him, for all that, and I sent forward to him a swig of hot whisky. It was the best thing I could have done, for when Macey discovered that whisky would follow ridding the decks of runaway butcher-blocks he promptly took that office upon himself.

In the days that followed he jumped a dozen or more of the devilish things over the side in the same way he had handled the first and without accident to himself. He even came up from his watch below to do the job.

For my part, I never failed to come through with the drink, and never grudged it either. Toward the last Carlson was openly suspecting the fellow of helping the blocks slip their lashings.

But butcher-blocks and leaks were not the only troubles I had on my mind during these days. My provisions were giving out. I left Coquille Bay with less than two weeks' supply on board, expecting to be in San Francisco in less than a week, and here I was with the week well past still hove-to in the teeth of the sou'-easter and getting farther and farther away from my port each day.

There was but one thing to do. On the ninth day I put the ship on half allowance. Of course it was hard with the men laboring at the pumps continuously, but there was no help for it. Indeed, I figured that if there was no change within four days I'd have to make it quarter rations.

But on the twelfth day the wind chopped around to the west'ard, and I was able to lay a course in for the coast. The seas were running mountain high, and our diving into them caused the vessel to leak worse than ever. If she hadn't been lumber-laden I think she would have foundered under our feet.

We made bad going of it. The westerly gale behind us was just as heavy as the easterly that had driven us offshore, but we were in no condition to take advantage of the strength of the wind and make a passage of it. The vessel was crank and lopy, and I dared show no more than rags of canvas.

We wallowed down the coast like some barge adrift, breaking through the seas instead of mounting them, with all hands half-frozen, half-drowned and half-starved, and with "karachi" watch at the pumps.



THE day the wind veered Macey came prominently to the fore again. But this time he was the villain instead of the hero of the situation.

The second mate ran out of his store tobacco,

and on attempting to obtain a plug from the steward discovered that the slop-chest supply was exhausted. Carlson was religious and didn't smoke. My jar of fine-cut was almost empty.

I was surprised at the disappearance of the slop-chest plug. Of course, being a coaster, I didn't carry much tobacco in the slops because the men preferred getting their own supply on shore. There had been only five or six pounds in the steward's locker when we left Coquille River. The steward said that the new man, Macey, had drawn all of it.

"You said, captain, to give him all the 'baccy he wanted," says he, "and he wanted it all."

It was a physical impossibility for Macey to have consumed it all, or even the major portion of it, so soon. I supposed he needed the sticks for his adventures in poker. The second mate went forward to negotiate for a couple of plugs.

Pretty soon he came aft with a very red face and the astonishing news that there was plenty of tobacco in the fo'c's'le which was for sale—for sale, mind you—at a price. Macey held the tobacco, and he was willing to sell it at one dollar a strip, ten strips to a pound; and, seeing he was dealing with the afterguard, he would take our I. O. U.'s in case we were short of cash. Yes, sir, that is what the little runt told my second mate, and the second mate was so taken aback by the proposition he couldn't even curse the man.

Nor was this all—or the worst. It seemed the fo'c's'le was on the verge of mutiny and had been for nearly two days, and if I didn't compose matters very shortly there was likely to be murder done on my ship. For Macey not only held all the slop-chest tobacco; he held all the tobacco on the ship.

It seems he had taught the squareheads how to shoot craps, and when he finished every scrap of tobacco for'ard was in his hands. And he was selling the tobacco to his shipmates at twenty-five cents a pipeful and fifteen cents a chew—he cutting it—and threatening to boost prices. Already he had most of the cash in the fo'c's'le in his pocket, and men were going smokeless.

You would think that a crowd of men would refuse to be imposed on in such a fashion. Especially my squareheads, for they weren't particularly stupid or meek; in fact they were rather a hard lot, full grown, with hair on their faces and fights to their credit. A better lot of sailormen than you could pick up today in any port you might name.

But by this time Macey was autocrat of that fo'c's'le. Yes, sir, and his influence pervaded the whole ship. My mate was afraid of him, I know, and my second mate was too slow of mind to circumvent his nimbler wits. Macey was having things his own way.

He didn't get his own way by force. Indeed, the runt was the smallest man on board. It seems strange to mention character in connection with that whisky-soaked little beach bummer, but character is just the thing that gave him his advantage over his shipmates.

His will, his personality, his wits—oh, call it what you wish! The fact is, there was a positiveness, a certitude, about him that was appalling. He took what he wanted; and he displayed the devil's cunning in keeping what he got. Why, from the first he kept the fo'c's'le divided and at daggers' points with itself by slyly fostering the ancient race feud between the Norwegians and the Swedes. He espoused first one side and then the other, and always half of the crew was willing to fight the other half at his behest. As Carlson was never tired of telling me, Macey knew how to "feather his own nest."

But of course I immediately put an end to his tobacco venture. Smokes and chews were too important to the morale of the ship's company in such a stressful time to allow them to be doled out in such a conscientious fashion. I confiscated the whole supply, and had it removed to my own room and had the steward whack it out evenly to all on board as long as it lasted. That wasn't very long.

When we finally made our landfall of Point Reyes we had for two days been living on weak coffee and hardtack with never a taste of tobacco to cheer us up. Even the tea-leaves which kept our pipes alight for a day were exhausted.

The gale was still blowing heavily from the west'ard, and when we came inside the Farallones we fell in with fully forty sail of vessels, all bar-bound and unable to get to port until the weather moderated. There were square-riggers from offshore, and the China steamer and the Panama steamer, and a whole fleet of coastwise vessels.

A good many of the ships had been standing off and on before the port for weeks, afraid to chance the bar. It was the longest spell of continuous bad weather any one remembered.

Practically all of the coastwise craft were in the same fix as I; that is, they were starving. The barkentine *Melancthon*, which had left Coos Bay seven days before me, had been there for two weeks, and her crew had already eaten the ship's dog. So had the crew of the *Discovery*, over two months out from Port Ludlow. So had other crews in the fleet. So would have my crew, had we been lucky enough to have a dog on board. Indeed, we did try, without success, to capture sea-gulls for the table.

Things on board my old packet were in a bad way. The morning we fell in with the fleet we finished our coffee, and there was nothing left in the victual line save the sea-biscuits and a pound or two of rice. All hands on board were

worn out by the combination of short rations and hard work. We pumped continuously, and there was not a dry stitch of clothes on board. Aye, we were a miserable lot!



WE STOOD in to the bar, and I went aloft to have a look at it. A look was sufficient. As far as I could see was white water; the bar was breaking clear across in to the land. It was just a mass of huge combers. I came down on deck and put the ship about, and all day and all night we stood off and on with the rest of the fleet.

Next morning there was no sign of any change or moderation of wind; it still came out of the west with frequent heavy squalls of hail and rain. The bar was breaking, if anything, worse than before.

My plight was becoming almost desperate. The water in the hold was gaining on us steadily, and the crew was losing strength just as steadily. I knew I had to get across that bar soon, and into quiet water, or my ship would be diving from under my feet. The lumber cargo was about the only thing that was keeping us afloat as it was.

I thought the matter over very carefully, and decided to attempt to sail in. I knew it was a desperate chance, but conditions on board warranted my taking it; indeed, it was a more desperate chance to stay outside. I consulted my almanac, and learned that the tide would make flood at eight that morning; and then I called the hands aft and told them I was going to run the bar.

I expected an outcry of protest when I made known my decision. Indeed, I got one from my mate when I informed him beforehand. He begged me with tears in his eyes not to try the bar, to wait another day or two, and prophesized dire disaster if I did not heed him.

Fact was, the man was hysterical. Carlson had a family dependent upon him, and his nerve had not stood up under the buffets of the trip. His going to pieces was another reason why I felt I must get inside at once, for the second mate was laid up in his bunk with three broken ribs, caused by a shipped sea washing him against the deck-load, and for two days I had stood watch and watch with Carlson, and felt that I myself was the only person aft I could depend upon in an emergency.

The men listened quietly enough while I pointed out my reasons for making the attempt. They knew, being sailors, just what the chance was I was offering them; but they also knew the plight of the ship. They just looked scared.

I painted matters as brightly as I could, and told them I was sure—which I wasn't—that the flood tide would moderate the seas on the bar, and the gale of wind behind us would shove us safely across in jig time. I pointed out that if we waited we should likely be blown offshore to

founder, because the barometer was down and indications were that the gale would make stronger instead of moderating.

When I finished, Swanson spoke up and said: "The bar vas —. Ay tank, zur, we should vait!"

Well, I knew by their faces that the men were with the Swede, and I did not blame them for their fear, for if the ship touched bottom on that breaking bar it was good-by all hands, and every one knew it. I did not feel justified in attempting the crossing without their consent. I dare say I'd have stayed outside and sunk if it hadn't been for that blessed beach-comber.

Macey spoke up when the Swede finished, and before any one else could stick in his oar.

"Have ye no guts at all, mates?" he says to the gang of them. "Standing there like a flock o' wet sheep when the captain asks you to take a chance! Sailors? Why, you're no more sailors than the blocks in that deck-load!"

He went on and swore at them in a prime fashion; aye, he had the gift of tongues when it came to hard language, had Macey.

"I know what's in your minds," says he. "You're thinking with the big Swede there that when the old wagon goes under you'll pile into the long boat and make one o' these other ships. Aye, you will if you're lucky; if you're not you'll drown. Same chance as you'll have on the bar. And outside here is starvation, and inside there is plenty. And all you are afraid of is a bit o' white water. And you'd lose your ship because of it?"

"Call yourself sailor men, hey? Have you no feeling for your ship? Aye, I know that Swede hasn't got the guts; but how about you Norway lads? We'll take her in—hey?—and show the — Swedes!"

With that Macey turned to me and sang out before any of the crowd had a chance to answer him:

"Aye, aye, captain, we're with you to a man. We'll take her in."

Then he swung on the men again.

"Won't we, lads?" he cried.

The influence Macey had acquired over the slower-moving minds of his shipmates was aptly illustrated at that moment. The men looked at him and at me and at each other; there was not a one who had the wish to say "Yes," and there was not a one had the nerve to say, "No." The only sound that came from them was a sort of chorused groan which sounded like a protest, but which I chose to consider a cheer of agreement.

"All right, lads; we're going in," I said hurriedly. "Now I want a couple of steady hands for the wheel. Who'll volunteer?"

There was a dead silence. Then Macey spoke up again.

"I'll be taking that job, captain," says he.



It was the very first time he had volunteered for a job on the ship.

"You'll need a lee wheel," said I, having in mind his smallness.

"I'd better be taking it by myself," he replied, stepping closer and speaking confidentially, though all hands heard him. "There isn't a squarehead in the bunch, captain, that wouldn't get galleyed and broach her to with the first bit o' water that came on board.

"It will be looking pretty bad for a minute or two. But I can handle her, captain; I've steered a ship across a breaking bar before now, captain—in the palm-oil trade. Aye, and I've done a bit o' surf-boating, too. Let me take the helm, sir."

I said "Yes" in a hurry. I was pleased. I can tell you. That item of a trustworthy helmsman had worried me. I felt I couldn't trust Carlson, for his nerve was already gone, and the second mate couldn't stand. I feared too that, as Macey said, any of the squareheads I sent to the wheel would get "galleyed" on the bar and get us into a mess.

I hadn't thought of Macey for the job—indeed his siding with me in the enterprise I considered astonishing; for, being such a practised malingerer, he should by all signs have been opposed to the risk—but now I gave him the job, feeling I couldn't have found a better man. There was his character, his hard, cold-blooded recklessness to reassure me; and besides I had said to the Slave Coast myself in my younger days, and marveled at the superb boatmanship and steady nerve of the riders of the worst surf in the world.

I began to prepare for the run immediately, for I didn't want to give the men a chance to get together and talk things over. Though for that matter I'm confident Macey could have held them in line with his tongue. They obeyed orders willingly enough, though without any display of enthusiasm. Poor devils—I guess every man Jack save Macey thought he would go to bed that night a dead man!



THE tide flooded at eight, and about eleven o'clock I planned to cross, because the set would be strongest at that hour. I stood out on the offshore tack and went very carefully over the deck-load lashings, making them doubly secure and praying none of the blocks might come adrift while we were on the bar. Then I shook out the reefs in the main and fore sails and put the ship about, taking in the mizzen sail while in stays, and stood in for the bar with our sheets off.

Macey was lashed to the wheel. In the fore rigging two other men were stationed ready to haul the jib to wind'ard in case the vessel should come to. The rest of the crew, including the second mate, who had to be hoisted aloft, were in the main rigging.

I had ordered a piece of two-by-four scantling lashed to the mizzen rigging for me to stand on and con her in. Before going aloft I told Macey if he needed help to signal me and I'd come down and give him a hand. He looked a pretty weak brother, standing hunched up and alone on that bitter deck, shaking with the cold, with his empty pipe clamped between his teeth. But he answered me cheerily and boldly enough.

"Don't have a care for me, captain," says he. "I'll do my part, for I'm minded to spend this night ashore on East Street."

I went aloft to my station wishing I had a ship full of Maceys.

We came booming up to the bar, going like a race-horse, with wet decks and a list, and the top hamper threatening to come down from the press of sail on her. We passed ship after ship of the bar-bound fleet. They could see I was making the run, and ship after ship gave me a signal or a hail or cheer, and several stood in after me to see the fun. We passed the schooner *Venus* close aboard, and old Dodd hailed me to know if I was crazy.

"You will never make it, King—it's suicide!" he shouted.

I thought this was an ill-omened send-off, and I was immensely cheered up when a little later the barkentine *Discovery* passed us, tacking out to sea, and her crew manned the rigging and gave us a good hurrah.

The closer we got to the bar the worse it looked. I knew of course there could be no turning back this time; but I'll freely admit the sight I had from my vantage-point almost "galleyed" me! The bar was a seething caldron, as the books say—a great mass of swirling foam in which a ship would stand no more show than a chip.

As we drew nearer I could make out the endless procession of great combers marching up to and breaking upon the shallow. Aye, but they looked wicked.

Then all at once we were in the midst of it. The ship plowed into the back of one of the combers, which was just rolling up, and for a time we seemed to be sailing through the air on the back of a bird. At least, that's what it felt like.

But we were in luck for that wave carried us a long way in on the bar before it broke; and then it broke well forward. We were in the white water then, and the decks were smothered. I looked at my deck-load and prayed the lashings would hold; and I looked forward and quiet water seemed a long, long way off; and then I looked astern, for the next comber was the ticklish one, the one which would decide our fate.

It was coming, rolling up behind us like a tidal wave. I tell you it was a terrific sight; it dragged my heart right up into my mouth. Aye, it looked to me, that huge, leaping, arching

wave, like the devouring tongue of God licking out to annihilate us.

It rose higher and higher behind us, and raced closer and closer to us. Our sails were topped and swung in amidships. The ship seemed to be going astern, to be drawn beneath the breaker.

I looked at that mighty wall of curving water and thought it was the end—and my men thought so too, for I could hear their despairing cries from the main rigging. I was sure that sea would poop us and crush in our decks.

I glanced down at Macey. Would you believe it, the runt was behaving as nonchalantly as if he were steering the ship through a millpond.

I saw him look over his shoulder at the fearful spectacle—then he turned forward again, and there wasn't a trace of anxiety in his bearing or actions. He merely gave her a spoke or two, and lounged against the wheel. Aye, that lad had nerve—or no imagination. I don't know which.

But maybe Macey knew more about that oncoming sea than I. It didn't topple down upon us—or I wouldn't be sitting here, spinning the yarn. Instead its life began to work beneath us, and our stern rose.

Aye, it went up, up, to the very crest of the wave, and the ship seemed to be standing on her nose—while all the time we were being rushed forward at a terrific pace. As I live, I feared she would trip and go end over end in a somersault. The stern seemed to move faster than the bows.

However, the wave was working forward, and very gradually her head lifted. Then for a time—it seemed for an age, though I suppose it was but a moment—we settled into the comber and raced along with it with the wave's crest spurting from either side fully ten feet above the rail.

Then the breaker broke, and the fore deck was smothered. The ship promptly came to several points, and it looked as if the next sea would board us broadside on and roll us over.

"Keep her off, man, for —'s sake!" I screamed to Macey.

He was hanging to the wheel for dear life.

"I have it hard up—clear across her," he shouted back.

"Then ease her a couple of spokes," I cried, "or you'll have her in irons."

I started down to the deck to help him, but hesitated when I saw another breaker rolling up against us. I saw this one would break before reaching us. But its crest came aboard over the quarter, burying the after part of the ship and tossing a couple of tons of water plump into the belly of the main sail, splitting it from boom to gaff.

Looking down, all I could see was the top of Macey's sou'wester above the foam and water—

and then I saw his hand, and the wheel-spokes turning! Yes, sir, that lad was on the job even under water. And the sea breaking as it did really helped us, perhaps saved us, for it carried the vessel's head to leeward, and Macey got control of her again.



THE worst was past then. The next comber broke ahead of us, and the next two astern. We were scudding along on the back of the next one when the men forward suddenly shouted and pointed into the water to leeward.

I looked down and in the trough of the sea saw the "nine-fathom buoy" bobbing around. It seemed the most beautiful thing I ever beheld! It told me I was on the inner edge of the bar, and getting into deeper water every foot I traveled.

The glimpse of that buoy also gave me an idea how fast we were going, for it was astern and out of our sight almost before a man could say Jack Robinson. Out of mind, too, for we were well inside the Golden Gate, and chopping down the channel through a nasty sea—and never did green hills look so good to a man as did the Marin Hills to me that hour.

When we got inside the Heads I dropped to the deck and called the rest of the hands down. Then I ran to Macey and fairly hugged the man.

"Easy, easy, captain!" he exclaimed when he felt my arms about him, and I could feel him wincing. "That — sea that boarded us beat me up as well as drowned me. I'm killed entirely—and wet all over, except inside."

"That's soon cured," says I, and I had Carlson relieve the wheel and sent Macey below to the cabin with the steward in attendance to look after his bruises, and with permission to make as free as he wished with my private bottle. And he emptied it.

I was minded to finish our adventure in style, so I got the mizzen sail set, and the ensign at the gaff, and hoisted an old deck-broom to the mast-head. Aye, that was a touch, that last, that the port appreciated—the old Townsend coming into port in clipper style.

Inside the bay from the Presidio to Meiggs' Wharf was a great fleet of vessels anchored, all bar-bound and waiting to get to sea—just as outside they were waiting to get in. From every last ship we got a cheer as we lumbered proudly past, our torn sails and wrecked decks eloquent evidence of our recent peril.

A tug came out and grabbed us and docked us at the bulk-head. Captain Nelson, the owner, was the first man on board—followed by a throng of owners and agents anxious for news of the fleet outside, who they were and what their state.

Nelson was overjoyed by my arrival. Besides the money it meant, it was a bright feather

in his hat to be the owner of the first vessel to cross the bar in three weeks, and that old codger was a prime sport! Aye, he couldn't make enough fuss over me.

"I didn't bring your ship in, captain," I told him. "The man you want to thank is in the cabin."

I told him about Macey, and he couldn't get below quick enough to see the man.

Well, we found him gone. The steward was there, the empty bottle in his hand and a look of disgust on his face. He said that Macey had gone over the rail the moment we touched the wharf. I sent forward, and found it was true. During the confusion of docking, his shipmates had seen Macey crossing East Street, still in his sea-gear.

Nelson said it was too bad, and that he would remember the lad when he paid off—which he did, and handsomely—and in the mean time he would see to the comfort of the rest of us. He turned the ship over to the boss stevedore, sent an order to a restaurant to have a feast prepared in a hurry and marshaled all hands over to the 'Young America' in Steuart Street. He told us to put our feet on the rail and order the best in the house, and all we wanted of it. Aye, it was a cheerful hour.

In a twinkling, almost, the place was crowded to the doors—with people who wanted to have a look at the lads who had braved one bar, and were now, without rest, braving another. My squareheads strutted finely, considering they were heroes for the first time in their lives.

Into this jolly party burst Macey. Aye, burst is right. He was in a place across the street, and heard about the free drinks the *Townsend's* boys were getting. So he came in a hurry.

I saw him pushing his way forward; he was still in his oilskins, and his old pipe was still clamped between his teeth like it was the moment he took the wheel outside the bar—but now he was puffing at it like a bellows, and

smoke poured from his mouth as from a smoke-stack. What with the bottle he had emptied on board and the drinks he had had since coming ashore, he was already more than half seas over.

"There's the lad who saved your ship," says I to Nelson.

Nelson grabbed both Macey's hands and pumped his arms and hugged him and danced around him and shoved him up to the rail and put a glass in his hand. Macey downed the drink and blinked his eyes. I could see he didn't know what it was all about—but he was willing to profit by it.

The crowd caught on and began to cheer. It was "Hurrah for Macey; he's the lad!"

Macey blinked and drank, and drank and blinked, and looked around. Then when the noise died down so one could talk, he demanded of me—

"Say, what's all this, captain?"

"It's because you steered the ship in. You're a hero," I told him.

"You certainly are!" exclaimed Nelson. "And I'll not forget it, my man. I appreciate men who look after my interests."

Macey batted an eye at Nelson, and then at me.

"He's the owner," I explained.

"Is he?" said Macey.

Then he began to grin. All at once he took his pipe out of his mouth and laughed; just roared, as if he had suddenly thought of the funniest joke in the world. Nelson was astonished. So was I.

"Your interests?" said Macey when he was able to talk. "And will you tell me why I should look after your interests? 'Tis my own interests, me, number one, I'm thinking about!"

He puffed a moment pensively.

"Never a smoke for three mortal days," said he. "Did you think now that I'd stay outside and suffer?"

