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THE DISTURBER OF TRAFFIC.

THE Brothers of the Trinity order that none unconnected with their service shall be found in or on one of their Lights during the hours of darkness. Their employees can be led to think otherwise. If you are fair-spoken and take an interest in their duties, they will permit you to sit with them through the long night and help to scare the ships into mid-channel.

Of all the English south-coast Lights, that of St. Cecilia-under-the-Cliff is the most powerful, for it guards a very foggy coast. When the sea-mist veils all, St. Cecilia turns a hooded head to the sea and sings a song of two words once every minute. From the land that song resembles the bellowing of a brazen bull; but at sea they understand, and the steamers grunt gratefully in answer.

Fenwick, who was on duty one night, lent me a pair of black glass spectacles, without which no man can look at the Light unblinded, and busied himself with last touches to the lenses before twilight fell. The width of the English Channel beneath us lay as smooth and as many-colored as the inside of an oyster shell. A little Sunderland cargo-boat had made her signal to Lloyd's Agency, half a mile up the coast, and was lumbering down to the sunset, her wake lying white behind her. One star came out over the cliffs, the waters turned to lead color, and St. Cecilia's Light shot out across the sea in eight long pencils that wheeled slowly from right to left, melted into one beam of

solid light laid down directly in front of the tower, dissolved again into eight, and passed away. The light-frame of the thousand lenses circled on its rollers, and the compressed-air engine that drove it hummed like a bluebottle under a glass. The hand of the indicator on the wall pulsed from mark to mark. Eight pulse-beats timed one half-revolution of the Light; neither more nor less.

Fenwick checked the first few revolutions carefully; he opened the engine's feed pipe a trifle, looked at the racing governor, and again at the indicator, and said: "She'll do for the next few hours. We've just sent our regular engine to London, and this spare one's not by any manner so accurate."

"And what would happen if the compressed air gave out?" I asked, out of curiosity.

"We'd have to turn the flash by hand, keeping an eye on the indicator. There's a regular crank for that. But it has n't happened yet. We'll need all our compressed air to-night."

"Why?" said I. I had been watching him for not more than a minute.

"Look," he answered, and I saw that the dead sea-mist had risen out of the lifeless sea and wrapped us while my back had been turned. The pencils of the Light marched staggeringly across tilted floors of white cloud. From the balcony round the light-room the white walls of the lighthouse ran down into swirling, smoking space. The noise of the tide coming in very lazily over

the rocks was choked down to a thick drawl.

“That’s the way our sea-fogs come,” said Fenwick, with an air of proprietorship. “Hark, now, to that little fool calling out ’fore he’s hurt.”

Something in the mist was bleating like an indignant calf; it might have been half a mile or half a hundred miles away.

“Does he suppose we’ve gone to bed?” continued Fenwick. “You’ll hear us talk to him in a minute. He knows puffickly where he is, and he’s carrying on to be told like if he was insured.”

“Who is ‘he’?”

“That Sunderland boat, o’ course. Ah!”

I could hear a steam-engine hiss down below in the mist where the dynamos that fed the Light were clacking together. Then there came a roar that split the fog and shook the lighthouse.

“GIT-toot!” blared the foghorn of St. Cecilia. The bleating ceased.

“Little fool!” Fenwick repeated. Then, listening: “Blest if that are n’t another of them! Well, well, they always say that a fog do draw the ships of the sea together. They’ll be calling all night, and so’ll the siren. We’re expecting some tea ships up-Channel. . . . If you put my coat on that chair, you’ll feel more so fash, sir.”

It is no pleasant thing to thrust your company upon a man for the night. I looked at Fenwick, and Fenwick looked at me; each gauging the other’s capacities for boring and being bored. Fenwick was an old, clean-shaven, gray-haired man who had followed the sea for thirty years, and knew nothing of the land except the lighthouse in which he served. He fenced cautiously to find out the little that I knew, and talked down to my level till it came out that I had met a captain in the merchant service who had once commanded a ship in which Fenwick’s son had served; and further, that I had seen some places that

Fenwick had touched at. He began with a dissertation on pilotage in the Hugli. I had been privileged to know a Hugli pilot intimately. Fenwick had only seen the imposing and masterful breed from a ship’s chains, and his intercourse had been limited to “Quarter less five,” and remarks of a strictly business-like nature. Hereupon he ceased to talk down to me, and became so amazingly technical that I was forced to beg him to explain every other sentence. This set him fully at his ease; and then we spoke as men together, each too interested to think of anything except the subject in hand. And that subject was wrecks, and voyages, and old-time trading, and ships cast away in desolate seas, steamers we both had known, their merits and demerits, lading, Lloyd’s, and, above all, Lights. The talk always came back to Lights: Lights of the Channel; Lights on forgotten islands, and men forgotten on them; Light-ships — two months’ duty and one month’s leave — tossing on kinked cables in ever-troubled tideways; and Lights that men had seen where never lighthouse was marked on the charts.

Omitting all those stories, and omitting also the wonderful ways by which he arrived at them, I tell here, from Fenwick’s mouth, one that was not the least amazing. It was delivered in pieces between the roller-skate rattle of the revolving lenses, the bellowing of the foghorn below, the answering calls from the sea, and the sharp tap of reckless night-birds that flung themselves at the glasses. It concerned a man called Dowse, once an intimate friend of Fenwick, now a waterman at Portsmouth, believing that the guilt of blood is on his head, and finding no rest either at Portsmouth or Gosport Hard.

. . . “And if anybody was to come to you and say, ‘I know the Javva currents,’ don’t you listen to him; for those currents is never yet known to mortal

man. Sometimes they're here, sometimes they're there, but they never runs less than five knots an hour through and among those islands of the Eastern Archipelagus. There's reverse currents in the Gulf of Boni — and that's up north in Celebes — that no man can explain; and through all those Javva passages from the Bali Narrows, Dutch Gut, and Ombay, which I take it is the safest, they chop and they change, and they banks the tides fust on one shore and then on another, till your ship's tore in two. I've come through the Bali Narrows, stern first, in the heart o' the southeast monsoon, with a sou'-sou'west wind blowing atop of the northerly flood, and our skipper said he would n't do it again, not for all Jamrach's. You've heard o' Jamrach's, sir?"

"Yes; and was Dowse stationed in the Bali Narrows?" I said.

"No, he was not at Bali, but much more east o' them passages, and that's Flores Strait, at the east end o' Flores. It's all on the way south to Australia when you're running through that Eastern Archipelagus. Sometimes you go through Bali Narrows if you're full-powered, and sometimes through Flores Strait, so as to stand south at once, and fetch round Timor, keeping well clear o' the Sahul Bank. Elseways, if you are n't full-powered, why it stands to reason you go round by the Ombay Passage, keeping careful to the north side. You understand that, sir?"

I was not full-powered, and judged it safer to keep to the north side — of Silence.

"And on Flores Strait, in the fairway between Adonare Island and the mainland, they put Dowse in charge of a screw-pile Light called the Wurlee Light. It's less than a mile across the head of Flores Strait. Then it opens out to ten or twelve mile for Solor Strait, and then it narrows again to a three-mile gut, with a topplin' flamin' volcano by it. That's old Loby Toby by Loby

Toby Strait, and if you keep his Light and the Wurlee Light in a line you won't take much harm, not on the darkest night. That's what Dowse told me, and I can well believe him, knowing these seas myself; but you must ever be mindful of the currents. And there they put Dowse, since he was the only man that that Dutch government which owns Flores could find that would go to Wurlee and tend a fixed Light. Mostly they uses Dutch and Italians, Englishmen being said to drink when alone. I never could rightly find out what made Dowse accept of that position, but accept he did, and used to sit watching the tigers come out of the forests to hunt for crabs and such like round about the lighthouse at low tide. The water was always warm in those parts, as I know well, and uncommon sticky, and it ran with the tides as thick and smooth as hogwash in a trough. There was another man along with Dowse in the Light, but he was n't rightly a man. He was a Kling. No, nor yet a Kling he was n't, but his skin was in little flakes and cracks all over, from living so much in the salt water as was his usual custom. His hands was all webby-foot, too. He was called, I remember Dowse saying now, an Orange-Lord, on account of his habits. You've heard of an Orange-Lord, sir?"

"Orang-Laut?" I suggested.

"That's the name," said Fenwick, smacking his knee. "An Orang-Laut, of course, and his name was Challong; what they call a sea-gypsy. Dowse told me that that man, long hair and all, would go swimming up and down the straits just for something to do; running down on one tide and back again with the other, swimming side-stroke, and the tides going tremenjus strong. Elseways he'd be skipping about the beach along with the tigers at low tide, for he was most part a beast; or he'd sit in a little boat praying to old Loby Toby of an evening when the volcano was spitting red at the south end of the

strait. Dowse told me that he was n't a companionable man, like you and me might have been to Dowse.

“Now I can never rightly come at what it was that began to ail Dowse after he had been there a year or something less. He was saving all his pay and tending his Light, and now and again he'd have a fight with Challong and tip him off the Light into the sea. Then, he told me, his head begun to feel streaky from looking at the tides so long. He said there was long streaks of white running inside it; like wall paper that had n't been properly pasted up, he said. The streaks, they would run with the tides, north and south, twice a day, accordin' to them currents, and he'd lie down on the planking — it was a screw-pile Light — with his eye to a crack and watch the water streaking through the piles just so quiet as hogwash. He said the only comfort he got was at slack water. Then the streaks in his head went round and round like a sampan in a tide-rip; but that was heaven, he said, to the other kind of streaks, — the straight ones that looked like arrows on a wind-chart, but much more regular, and that was the trouble of it. No more he could n't ever keep his eyes off the tides that ran up and down so strong, but as soon as ever he looked at the high hills standing all along Flores Strait for rest and comfort his eyes would be pulled down like to the nesty streaky water; and when they once got there he could n't pull them away again till the tide changed. He told me all this himself, speaking just as though he was talking of somebody else.”

“Where did you meet him?” I asked.

“In Portsmouth harbor, a-cleaning the brasses of a Ryde boat, but I'd known him off and on through following the sea for many years. Yes, he spoke about himself very curious, and all as if he was in the next room laying there dead. Those streaks, they preyed upon his intellecks, he said; and he

made up his mind, every time that the Dutch gunboat that attends to the Lights in those parts come along, that he'd ask to be took off. But as soon as she did come something went click in his throat, and he was so took up with watching her masts, because they ran longways, in the contrary direction to his streaks, that he could never say a word until she was gone away and her masts was under sea again. Then, he said, he'd cry by the hour; and Challong swum round and round the Light, laughin' at him and splashin' water with his webby-foot hands. At last he took it into his pore sick head that the ships, and particularly the steamers that came by, — there was n't many of them, — made the streaks, instead of the tides as was natural. He used to sit, he told me, cursing every boat that come along, — sometimes a junk, sometimes a Dutch brig, and now and again a steamer rounding Flores Head and poking about in the mouth of the strait. Or there'd come a boat from Australia running north past old Loby Toby hunting for a fair current, but never throwing out any papers that Challong might pick up for Dowse to read. Generally speaking, the steamers kept more westerly, but now and again they came looking for Timor and the west coast of Australia. Dowse used to shout to them to go round by the Ombay Passage, and not to come streaking past him, making the water all streaky, but it was n't likely they'd hear. He says to himself after a month, ‘I'll give them one more chance,’ he says. ‘If the next boat don't attend to my just representations,’ — he says he remembers using those very words to Challong, — ‘I'll stop the fairway.’

“The next boat was a Two-streak cargo-boat very anxious to make her northing. She waddled through under old Loby Toby at the south end of the strait, and she passed within a quarter of a mile of the Wurlee Light at the north end, in seventeen fathom o' water, the tide

against her. Dowse took the trouble to come out with Challong in a little prow that they had, — all bamboos and leakage, — and he lay in the fairway waving a palm-branch, and, so he told me, wondering why and what for he was making this fool of himself. Up come the Two-streak boat, and Dowse shouts: ‘Don’t you come this way again, making my head all streaky! Go round by Ombay, and leave me alone.’ Some one looks over the port bulwarks and shies a banana at Dowse, and that’s all. Dowse sits down in the bottom of the boat and cries fit to break his heart. Then he says, ‘Challong, what am I a-crying for?’ and they fetch up by the Wurlee Light on the half flood.

“‘Challong,’ he says, ‘there’s too much traffic here, and that’s why the water’s so streaky as it is. It’s the junks and the brigs and the steamers that do it,’ he says; and all the time he was speaking he was thinking, ‘Lord, Lord, what a crazy fool I am!’ Challong said nothing, because he could n’t speak a word of English except say ‘dam,’ and he said that where you or me would say ‘yes.’ Dowse lay down on the planking of the Light with his eye to the crack, and he saw the muddy water streaking below, and he never said a word till slack water, because the streaks kept him tongue-tied at such times. At slack water he says, ‘Challong, we must buoy this fairway for wrecks,’ and he holds up his hands several times, showing that dozens of wrecks had come about in the fairway; and Challong says, ‘Dam.’

“That very afternoon he and Challong goes to Wurlee, the village in the woods that the Light was named after, and buys canes, — stacks and stacks of canes, and coir rope thick and fine, all sorts, — and they sets to work making square floats by lashing of the canes together. Dowse said he took longer over those floats than might have been needed, because he rejoiced in the corners, they being square, and the streaks in his

head all running longways. He lashed the canes together, criss-cross and thwartways, — any way but longways, — and they made up twelve-foot-square floats, like rafts. Then he stepped a twelve-foot bamboo or a bundle of canes in the centre, and to the head of that he lashed a big six-foot W letter, all made of canes, and painted the float dark green and the W white, as a wreck-buoy should be painted. Between them two they makes a round dozen of these new kind of wreck-buoys, and it was a two months’ job. There was no big traffic, owing to it being on the turn of the monsoon, but what there was Dowse cursed at, and the streaks in his head, they ran with the tides, as usual.

“Day after day, so soon as a buoy was ready, Challong would take it out, with a big rock that half sunk the prow and a bamboo grapnel, and drop it dead in the fairway. He did this day or night, and Dowse could see him of a clear night, when the sea brimed, climbing about the buoys with the sea-fire dripping off him. They was all put into place, twelve of them, in seventeen-fathom water; not in a straight line, on account of a well-known shoal there, but slantways, and two, one behind the other, mostly in the centre of the fairway. You must keep the centre of those Javva currents, for currents at the side is different, and in narrow water, before you can turn a spoke, you get your nose took round and rubbed upon the rocks and the woods. Dowse knew that just as well as any skipper. Likeways he knew that no skipper dare n’t run through uncharted wrecks in a six-knot current. He told me he used to lie outside the Light watching his buoys ducking and dipping so friendly with the tide; and the motion was comforting to him on account of its being different from the run of the streaks in his head.

“Three weeks after he’d done his business up comes a steamer through Loby Toby Straits, thinking she’d run into Flores Sea before night. He saw her

slow down ; then she backed. Then one man and another come up on the bridge, and he could see there was a regular powwow, and the flood was driving her right on to Dowse's wreck-buoys. After that she spun round and went back south, and Dowse nearly killed himself with laughing. But a few weeks after that a couple of junks came shouldering through from the north, arm in arm, like junks go. It takes a good deal to make a Chinaman understand danger. They junks set well in the current, and went down the fairway, right among the buoys, ten knots an hour, blowing horns and banging tin pots all the time. That made Dowse very angry ; he having taken so much trouble to stop the fairway. No boats run Flores Straits by night, but it seemed to Dowse that if junks 'd do that in the day, the Lord knew but what a steamer might trip over his buoys at night ; and he sent Challong to run a coir rope between three of the buoys in the middle of the fairway, and he fixed naked lights of coir steeped in oil to that rope. The tides was the only things that moved in those seas, for the air was dead still till they began to blow, and *then* they would blow your hair off. Challong tended those lights every night after the junks had been so impudent, — four lights in about a quarter of a mile, hung up in iron skillets on the rope ; and when they was alight, — and coir burns well, most like a lamp wick, — the fairway seemed more madder than anything else in the world. Fust there was the Wurlee Light, then these four queer lights, that could n't be riding-lights, almost flush with the water, and behind them twenty mile off, but the biggest light of all, there was the red top of old Loby Toby volcano. Dowse told me that he used to go out in the prow and look at his handiwork, and it made him scared, being like no lights that ever was fixed.

“ By and by some more steamers came along, snorting and snifiting at the buoys,

but never going through, and Dowse says to himself : ‘ Thank goodness, I've taught them not to come streaking through my water. Ombay Passage is good enough for them and the like of them.’ But he did n't remember how quick that sort of news spreads among the shipping. Every steamer that fetched up by those buoys told another steamer and all the port officers concerned in those seas that there was something wrong with Flores Straits that had n't been charted yet. It was block-buoyed for weeks in the fairway, they said, and no sort of passage to use. Well, the Dutch, of course they did n't know anything about it. They thought our Admiralty Survey had been there, and they thought it very queer but neighborly. You understand us English are always looking up marks and lighting sea-ways all the world over, never asking with your leave or by your leave, seeing that the sea concerns us more than any one else. So the news went to and back from Flores to Bali, and Bali to Probolinggo, where the railway is that runs to Batavia. All through the Javva seas everybody got the word to keep clear o' Flores Straits, and Dowse, he was left alone except for such steamers and small craft as did n't know. They 'd come up and look at the straits like a bull over a gate, but those nodding wreck-buoys scared them away. By and by the Admiralty Survey ship — the Britomarte I think she was — lay in Macassar Roads off Fort Rotterdam, alongside of the Amboina, a dirty little Dutch gunboat that used to clean there ; and the Dutch captain says to our captain, ‘ What's wrong with Flores Straits?’ he says.

“ ‘ Blowed if I know,’ says our captain, who 'd just come up from the Angelica Shoal.

“ ‘ Then why did you go and buoy it?’ says the Dutchman.

“ ‘ Blowed if I have,’ says our captain. ‘ That's your lookout.’

“ ‘ Buoyed it is,’ says the Dutch cap-

tain, 'according to what they tell me ; and a whole fleet of wreck-buoys, too.'

" 'Gummy!' says our captain. 'It's a dorg's life at sea, any way. I must have a look at this. You come along after me as soon as you can;' and down he skimmed that very night, round the heel of Celebes, three days' steam to Flores Head, and he met a Two-streak liner, very angry, backing out of the head of the strait; and the merchant captain gave our Survey ship something of his mind for leaving wrecks uncharted in those narrow waters and wasting his company's coal.

" 'It's no fault o' mine,' says our captain.

" 'I don't care whose fault it is,' says the merchant captain, who had come aboard to speak to him just at dusk. 'The fairway's choked with wreck enough to knock a hole through a dock-gate. I saw their big ugly masts sticking up just under my forefoot. Lord ha' mercy on us!' he says, spinning round. 'The place is like Regent Street of a hot summer night.'

" And so it was. They two looked at Flores Straits, and they saw lights one after the other stringing across the fairway. Dowse, he had seen the steamers hanging there before dark, and he said to Challong: 'We'll give 'em something to remember. Get all the skillets and iron pots you can and hang them up alongside o' the regular four lights. We must teach 'em to go round by the Ombay Passage, or they'll be streaking up our water again!' Challong took a header off the lighthouse, got aboard the little leaking prow, with his coir soaked in oil and all the skillets he could muster, and he began to show his lights, four regulation ones and half a dozen new lights hung on that rope which was a little above the water. Then he went to all the spare buoys with all his spare coir, and hung a skillet-flare on every pole that he could get at, — about seven poles. So you see, taking one with

another, there was the Wurlee Light, four lights on the rope between the three centre fairway wreck-buoys that was hung out as a usual custom, six or eight extra ones that Challong had hung up on the same rope, and seven dancing flares that belonged to seven wreck-buoys, — eighteen or twenty lights in all crowded into a mile of seventeen-fathom water, where no tide'd ever let a wreck rest for three weeks, let alone ten or twelve wrecks, as the flares showed.

" The Admiralty captain, he saw the lights come out one after another, same as the merchant skipper did who was standing at his side, and he said: —

" 'There's been an international catastrophe here or elseways,' and then he whistled. 'I'm going to stand on and off all night till the Dutchman comes,' he says.

" 'I'm off,' says the merchant skipper. 'My owners don't wish for me to watch illuminations. That strait's choked with wreck, and I should n't wonder if a typhoon had n't driven half the junks o' China there.' With that he went away; but the Survey ship, she stayed all night at the head o' Flores Strait, and the men admired the lights till the lights was burning out, and then they admired more than ever.

" A little bit before morning the Dutch gunboat come flustering up, and the two ships stood together watching the lights burn out and out, till there was nothing left 'cept Flores Straits, all green and wet, and a dozen wreck-buoys, and Wurlee Light.

" Dowse had slept very quiet that night, and got rid of his streaks by means of thinking of the angry steamers outside. Challong was busy, and did n't come back to his bunk till late. In the very early morning Dowse looked out to sea, being, as he said, in torment, and saw all the navies of the world riding outside Flores Straits fairway in a half-moon, seven miles from wing to wing, most wonderful to behold. Those were the

words he used to me time and again in telling the tale.

“Then, he says, he heard a gun fired with a most tremendous explosion, and all them great navies crumbled to little pieces of clouds, and there was only two ships remaining, and a man-o’-war’s boat rowing to the Light, with the oars going sideways instead o’ longways as the morning tides, ebb or flow, would continually run.

“‘What the devil’s wrong with this strait?’ says a man in the boat as soon as they was in hailing distance. ‘Has the whole English Navy sunk here, or what?’

“‘There’s nothing wrong,’ says Dowse, sitting on the platform outside the Light, and keeping one eye very watchful on the streakiness of the tide, which he always hated, ‘specially in the morning. ‘You leave me alone and I’ll leave you alone. Go round by the Ombay Passage, and don’t cut up my water. You’re making it streaky.’ All the time he was saying that he kept on thinking to himself, ‘Now that’s foolishness, — now that’s nothing but foolishness;’ and all the time he was holding tight to the edge of the platform in case the streakiness of the tide should carry him away.

“Somebody answers from the boat, very soft and quiet, ‘We’re going round by Ombay in a minute, if you’ll just come and speak to our captain and give him his bearings.’

“Dowse, he felt very highly flattered, and he slipped into the boat, not paying any attention to Challong. But Challong swum along to the ship after the boat. When Dowse was in the boat, he found, so he says, he could n’t speak to the sailors ’cept to call them ‘white mice with chains about their neck,’ and Lord knows he had n’t seen or thought o’ white mice since he was a little bit of a boy. So he kept himself quiet, and so they come to the Survey ship; and the man in the boat hails the quarter-deck with something that Dowse could

not rightly understand, but there was one word he spelt out again and again, — m-a-d, mad, — and he heard some one behind him saying it backwards. So he had two words, — m-a-d, mad, d-a-m, dam; and he put those two words together as he come on the quarter-deck, and he says to the captain very slowly, ‘I be damned if I am mad,’ but all the time his eye was held like by the coils of rope on the belaying pins, and he followed those ropes up and up with his eye till he was quite lost and comfortable among the rigging, which ran criss-cross, and slopeways, and up and down, and any way but straight along under his feet north and south. The deck-seams, they ran *that* way, and Dowse dares n’t look at them. They was the same as the streaks of the water under the planking of the lighthouse.

“Then he heard the captain talking to him very kindly, and for the life of him he could n’t tell why; and what he wanted to tell the captain was that Flores Strait was too streaky, like bacon, and the steamers only made it worse; but all he could do was to keep his eye very careful on the rigging and sing: —

‘I saw a ship a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea;
And oh, it was all lading
With pretty things for me!’

Then he remembered that was foolishness, and he started off to say about the Ombay Passage, but all he said was: ‘The captain was a duck, — meaning no offense to you, sir, — but there was something on his back that I’ve forgotten.

‘And when the ship began to move
The captain says, “Quack-quack.”’

“He noticed the captain turn very red and angry, and he says to himself, ‘My foolish tongue’s run away with me again. I’ll go forward;’ and he went forward, and caught the reflection of himself in the binnacle brasses; and he saw that he was standing there and talking mother-naked in front of all them sailors, and he ran into the fo’c’s’le howling most

grievous. He must ha' gone naked for weeks on the Light, and Challong o' course never noticed it. Challong was swimmin' round and round the ship, sayin' 'dam' for to please the men and to be took aboard, because he did n't know any better.

"Dowse did n't tell what happened after this, but seemingly our Survey ship lowered two boats and went over to Dowse's buoys. They took one sounding, and then finding it was all correct they cut the buoys that Dowse and Challong had made, and let the tide carry 'em out through the Loby Toby end of the strait; and the Dutch gunboat, she sent two men ashore to take care o' the Wurlee Light, and the Britomarte, she went away with Dowse, leaving Challong to try to follow them, a-calling 'dam — dam' all among the wake of the screw, and half heaving himself out of water and joining his webby-foot hands together. He dropped astern in five minutes, and I suppose he went back to the Wurlee Light. You can't drown an Orange-Lord, not even in Flores Strait on flood-tide.

"Dowse come across me when he came to England with the Survey ship, after being more than six months in her, and cured of his streaks by working hard and not looking over the side more than he could help. He told me what I've told you, sir, and he was very much ashamed of himself; but the trouble on his mind was to know whether he had n't sent something or other to the bottom with his buoyings and his lightings and such like. He put it to me many times, and each time more and more sure he was that something had happened in the straits because of him. I think that distructed him, because I found him up at Fratton one day, in a red jersey, a-praying before the Salvation Army, which had produced him in their papers

as a Reformed Pirate. They knew from his mouth that he had committed evil on the deep waters, — that was what he told them, — and piracy, which no one does now except Chinese, was all they knew of. I says to him: 'Dowse, don't be a fool. Take off that jersey and come along with me.' He says: 'Fenwick, I'm a-saving of my soul; for I do believe that I have killed more men in Flores Strait than Trafalgar.' I says: 'A man that thought he'd seen all the navies of the earth standing round in a ring to watch his foolish false wreck-buoys' (those was the very words I used) 'ain't fit to have a soul, and if he did he could n't kill a flea with it. John Dowse, you was mad then, but you are a damn sight madder now. Take off that there jersey.'

"He took it off and come along with me, but he never got rid o' that suspicion that he'd sunk some ships a-cause of his foolishnesses at Flores Straits; and now he's a wherryman from Portsmouth to Gosport, where the tides run cross-ways and you can't row straight for ten strokes together. . . . So late as all this! Look!"

Fenwick left his chair, passed to the Light, touched something that clicked, and the glare ceased with a suddenness that was pain. Day had come, and the Channel needed St. Cecilia no longer. The sea-fog rolled back from the cliffs in trailed wreaths and dragged patches, as the sun rose and made the dead sea alive and splendid. The stillness of the morning held us both silent as we stepped on the balcony. A lark went up from the cliffs behind St. Cecilia, and we smelt a smell of cows in the lighthouse pastures below.

So you see we were both at liberty to thank the Lord for another day of clean and wholesome life.

Rudyard Kipling.