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Published Monthly by THE CONSTRUCTIVE PUBLISHING CORPORATION, Washington and South Aves., Dunellen, N. J.  
 Editorial and General Offices, Macfadden Building, 1926 Broadway, N. Y.

Charles Mendel, *President* William Thompson, *Secretary*  
 M. L. Wilson, Jr., *Advertising Manager*, Graybar Building, 420 Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y.

Entered as second class matter April 30th, 1926, at the Post Office at Dunellen, N. J., under the act of March 3rd, 1879. Additional entry at New York, N. Y.  
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 Price 25c a copy in U. S.—30c in Canada. Subscription price \$2.50 a year in the United States and its possessions; also Cuba, Mexico and Panama. All other countries including Canada \$4.00 per year.

Chicago Office: 168 North Michigan Blvd., C. H. Shattuck, Manager.  
 London Agents: Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co., Ltd., 18 Bride Lane, London, E. C.

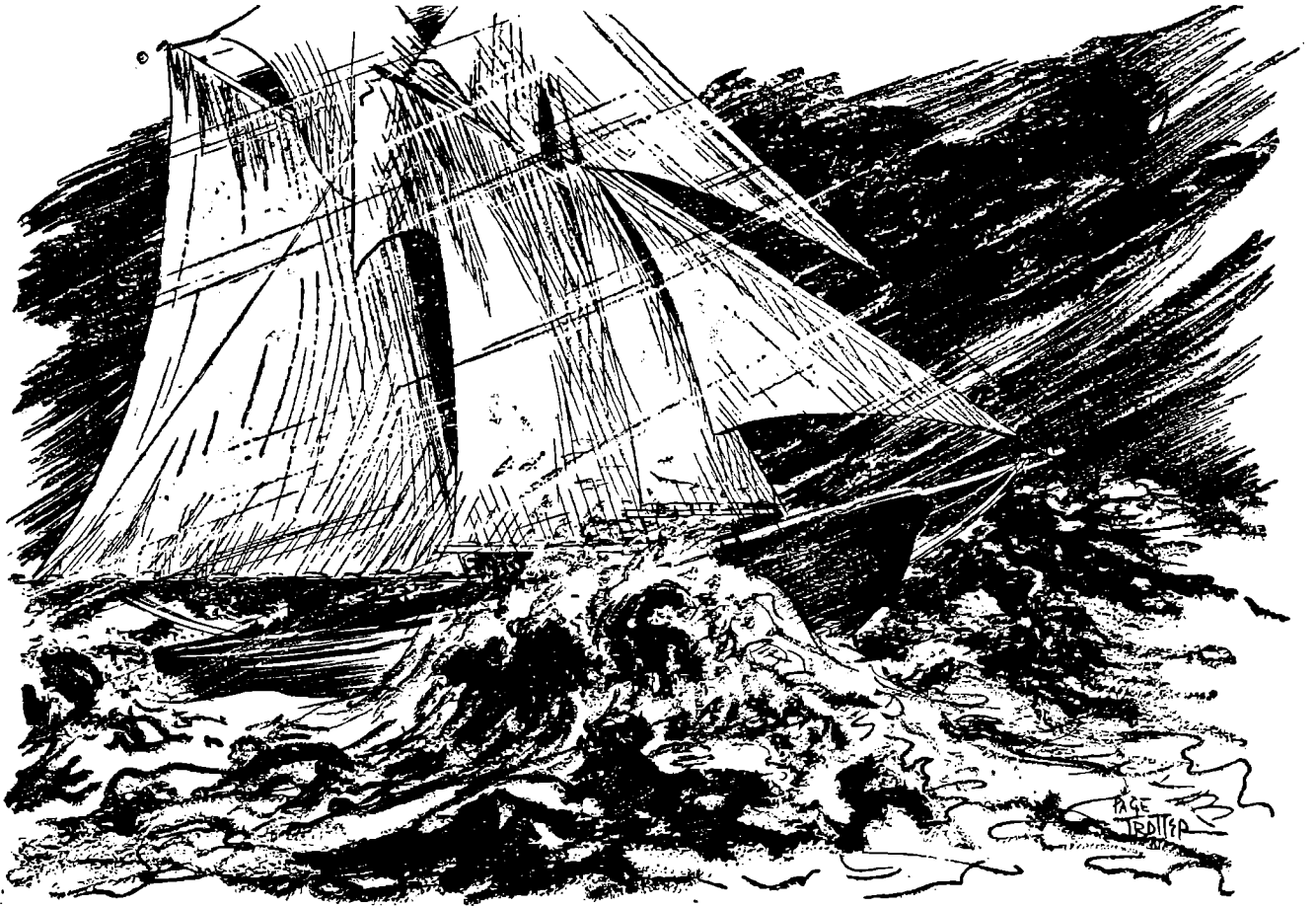
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# The Invisible Man

## at the Helm

*The Story of Jess Tiverton*  
By WIN BROOKS



*Old, lonely, grief-stricken, the skipper found a new happiness in the companionship of a beloved phantom! Was he crazy—or did some unknown power really guide his ship through storm and danger?*

**R**UTH McKELVIE was fair haired, wind freckled, straight as a young tree. It was her eyes probably, eyes as blue as the zenith of a winter sky at sea, which caught Jess Tiverton. She was twenty-five then, Jess turning forty-seven. After they were married Ruth continued to teach the fifth grade of the Bradley school in Winthrop while her husband sought fish with the *Blue Belle*, second best love.

You might suppose, considering the difference in their ages and education, that theirs was a course precarious, destined by all odds to end up on some submerged reef of incompatibility. It was not so. She was a woman wise in many ways and not without a knowledge of man's shortcomings. That which she gleaned beneath the surface of Jess Tiverton's rough exterior remained foremost in her vision when the false glamor of courting days had worn off. There was for her no disillusionment.

As for Jess, those were no doubt the happiest days of his life, short-lived days, to be sure, but made up in part for their brevity by their overwhelming sweetness. Very often it is true that a man who has not known womankind until comparatively late in life discovers in the companionship a

happiness and understanding more complete than his fellows.

He was a good man on the fishing grounds; his was a well-faring, contented crew, the *Blue Belle* one of the staunchest and fastest of the fleet's two-masters. Never a man to drive, he had yet accomplished much, and in the record of fish tonnage and quick trips his vessel stood high.

Never a man to drive; on the other hand, never a man to quibble. What orders Jess gave aboardship were spoken in quiet tones save when necessity ruled otherwise. In the quality of his voice in those days, however, there was a note which commanded respect, and respect he had from his crew and his associates in the Banks fleet. And, for a long time, admiration also.

**T**RIPPER TARBOY, George Suttle and one or two others will tell you that the two years of Jess Tiverton's married life were supremely happy ones. A strangely silent man for the most part heretofore, although good-humored enough for a fishing master, he became a whistling, singing captain—an uncommon occurrence in the fleet—ready always to pass a little better than the time of day with any member of his crew, never hesitant in lending a helping hand where

he deemed such aid to be needed. Not a marked change, for Jess Tiverton had never been other than a good fellow, but an obvious surface indication of an increasingly pleasant frame of mind.

A crew accepts its master as it finds him—or finds another master. Give a fisherman an inch and he'll take just that. No more. The *Blue Belle's* crew took their captain's new happiness just as it was proffered them, nor attempted to encroach upon his good nature; they allowed that good nature to expand and envelop them. The results were immediately apparent. Jess Tiverton and his *Blue Belle* brought increasingly larger hauls of fish in shorter periods of time than ever before. There were no changes in the personnel of the vessel's crew, ever an indication to careful owners of a money-making boat.

The second autumn following their marriage, Ruth Tiverton failed to return to her teaching, and aboard the *Blue Belle* there ran a rumor that Jess had high hopes of a prospective member of his crew. The man himself, of course, made no allusion to the affair, but they marked that he ceased his whistling and was given to long periods of silent thought.

On December 17th, when the *Blue Belle* had been two days only on Brown's Bank there occurred that which men who have grown old with Jess Tiverton still speak of in hushed tones and with a wagging of sage heads.

It was a fine clear day for winter fishing, a light breeze out of the southwest and a comparative calm upon the sea. Twenty-eight men of the vessel were over the side in their fourteen dories, the farthest of them not a mile away. They worked fast and sure, with a promise of Christmas ashore.

Jess was below; besides himself only his mate, George Suttle, a capable Gloucesterman, and Farley Manser, the cook, remained aboard. A little past noonday Jess came up forward where Suttle was idly splicing cable line. Beneath the brown of the captain's features the mate distinguished an alarming pallor.

"Get your horn going," Jess ordered. "We're heading home."

Just like that! Two days on the Bank, a hold not beginning to fill with fish.

"You're sick?" Suttle asked.

"Don't stop to ask me questions," Jess snapped. "Get your horn going—quick!"

The mate, filled with wonder, complied—two long blasts on the fog-horn repeated at intervals of a minute, for five minutes.

To windward where the dories worked, men ceased their pulling of trawl-lines and, themselves wondering, made a course for their ship standing plainly within sight.

**I**N almost shorter time than it takes to tell, the *Blue Belle's* dories were aboard and stowed, the anchor broken out, mainsail, foresail, jib and jack set and drawing and she was off for Boston.

Only a light breeze out of the southwest, as I told you, and it gave little evidence of growing stronger. Yet it was a homing wind and the *Blue Belle*, light in her ballast with only her ice, gave her lee rail to the sea and made off on a port run. A fast boat always, more so in a fair blow and to windward but speedy in any breeze, she was not fast enough for Jess Tiverton that day.

A changed man, he paced the windward deck of his vessel barking orders in a language the key to which they never believed he possessed. Now and again he took the wheel himself, trying to draw out of her every bit of speed of which she was capable. Fair time they made; no better.

About sunset the wind swung to the southeast and came on to blow, a strong breeze at first, with the darkness a moderate gale. The *Blue Belle* went hard over and as the seas began to make they broke steadily over her bows, racing aft across the gurry kids and smashing against the deck-house. She needed a reef in jib sail then to keep her head up.

"Be better going if we claw in one forward," Suttle got up courage enough to suggest.

"You'll take no reefs, mister," Jess answered. "Not this night. She'll sail as she be or she'll not sail at all. And I'll need no help as to her handling."

**T**HAT was enough for Suttle. Enough for any man, for that matter. They sailed her that night with no reef in any sail while Jess stood his deck with neither food nor sleep. It blew a moderate gale, a half gale, a full gale, and Jess Tiverton, who no longer whistled and said kind words, cursed his crew to greater efforts. It was an all-hands job with life-lines rigged fore and aft, for nearly every sea was a breach, and no man slept. The wonder of it is she carried through without mishap of any kind.

That crew asked no questions, received no information. The men knew only that they must get home, that Jess Tiverton was in a hurry.

The *Blue Belle* beat up past the Graves at daybreak of as nasty a winter morning as you'd care to see. When she swung alongside T-Wharf, Jess was the first man off.

Some say he reached home before his wife died, that he was with her at the end, his strong, brown hands clasping hers. Others tell you Ruth died during that night. Jess himself never said.

There was a baby who could not live, the doctor predicted. Jess Tiverton thought otherwise. For three months he did not go to sea; when he sailed again, Young Jess was as healthy as any youngster of his age, well cared for in the home of the captain's sister.

It early became apparent, following Jess Tiverton's return to his vessel, that his whole heart and soul were centered in his boy. The love and the adoration which had belonged to the woman with whom he found happiness were transferred to Young Jess.

Never once aboard the *Blue Belle* did Jess make reference to the loss of his wife. Nor did he ever speak of that driving trip home in a gale of wind from Brown's Bank.

How had Jess Tiverton known that his wife needed him that day? The men of his ship asked that question among themselves, not of Jess.

And the answer to it was ever a mooted one, although most agreed it could be traced to a premonition inspired by a knowledge of her condition. Perhaps Jess himself would not have answered differently.



Sonny was only a boy when his daddy took him to sea. No one could have foreseen the weird drama that lay ahead

The story of that trip got around, as such stories are bound to get around after a fashion, and it was told on other vessels out of Boston. All who heard had occasion some years later to recall it.

The *Blue Belle's* captain became a counterpart of his old self in the days before he had known Ruth McKelvie. Gone the whistling and singing; gone also the willingness to fraternize to such an extent with the members of his crew. A good skipper he remained. And a good "fin" man, which covers the necessary qualities of a leader in the Banks fleet.

It was when his boy was about a year old that Jess first began to speak of him to George Suttle.

"I got a fellar growing up to home who's going to push you for your job some day," he told the mate one trip.

"Well, now, I wonder," George retorted. "Got sea legs yet? And a sense of fish?"

"Got big blue eyes like—like—Sea legs, hell! Wait till he's growed, man."

That was the nearest he ever came to the mention of his wife's name in Suttle's presence. But reference to the boy became an almost daily occurrence with him after that.

"Getting big," he'd say. "Ought to heft him now."

Sometimes on a voyage he would converse with Tripper Tarboy, an old man who had sailed with him for years.

"Have to come up to the house and see him when we get home, Trip. Most as big as a trawl tub now. And strong as a gale of wind off Provincetown."

Old Tripper, who was lank and brown as an ancient mast and had a lower jaw shaped like the bow of a clipper ship, would nod his grizzled head in sympathetic understanding.

WHEN the boy was six years old Jess Tiverton bought for him one of those little model sailboats which are the delight of every child. The next trip he was on Suttle's ear with an account of the happening.

"Held that boat in his hands just looking at it all morning. In the afternoon I took him down the beach and showed him how to sail her. But he didn't need much showing, I'm telling you. She only capsized two or three times—and she's got no keel to speak of, at that.

"You want to know what he said to me after she went over the first time?" he asked, pride in the rising inflection of his voice. "'She needs weight on the bottom, Daddy.' What do you think of that?"

"I suggested he could take off some of her sail and what do you suppose he said to that? 'You'd spoil her, Daddy, taking the sail off, and she'll go better if you just weight her on the bottom.'"

"He'll take no reefs," Suttle chuckled.

"That he won't," agreed Jess, and went forward to hunt up old Tarboy and tell the story all over again.

After a while he talked so much about his boy that men at the wharf got in the habit of hailing him with, "How's the youngster, Jess?" "When you shippin' that new mate, Tiverton?"; or just, "How's the new mate makin' out to home?" They poked no fun at Jess Tiverton because of his enthusiasm; they knew the man too well for that. And Jess, recognizing their interest as sincere, basked in the sunshine of their friendship and his own hopes.

When Young Jess was twelve years old he went his first

trip to sea on the last voyage the *Blue Belle* ever made. It was July, with schooling at an end until autumn, and Jess figured the boy was old enough to make a start. He had been talking about it for weeks, making up to Suttle, who by this time knew from the captain's description the youngster's every mood and characteristic.

With his father, Young Jess went down to the boat at T-Wharf late one afternoon when the *Blue Belle* was "iced" and had her herring aboard, ready to sail when the breeze sprang up at sundown. He was a little fellow for his age with fair hair inclined to curl down over his forehead and eyes as deeply blue as his mother's. His father took him aboard and introduced him all around.

"A good hand and bound to be a real fisherman," Jess said.

"Think you're goin' to like shippin' on a smelly old fish boat?" Tripper Tarboy asked him.

"You bet I am," the little chap answered.

Before the *Blue Belle* sailed, word got about the wharf that Jess Tiverton's prospective mate had finally arrived and a number of men from the other boats came to wish him well.

The vessel went down the harbor with the sunset, old Tripper Tarboy at the wheel and Young Jess by his side.

"You swing her over like this," Tripper was saying, "and keep her foremast leanin' onto that island there; that's Peddock's. Here, feel of her."

Not tall enough to stand over the wheel, Young Jess spread his arms and scarcely touched the spokes on either side. George Suttle happened along and stood for a while watching the fun.

"HE'S a-sailin' of her right enough," cackled Tripper, his wrinkled hands holding the helm steady.

"That he is," said George. "I'm thinking I'll have to be looking for a new berth shortly."

It was the Grand Banks that trip and Young Jess had experienced his spell of sickness and caught his sea legs before they passed Sable Island. He had the spare bunk aft in the cabin with his father and Suttle,

and what they did not attempt to teach him about a ship's handling and rigging wasn't worth knowing. He was a capable as well as a lovable chap, and the manner in which he would repeat aloud their instructions would have been laughable but for the sincerity of his efforts.

The *Blue Belle's* captain elected to fish the south outside shoals of the Grand Banks and met with fair success. Young Jess went as third dory mate with Tarboy and Clem Haliday and learned from those old-timers how best to snub his hooks, bait and lay his trawl-lines and, what is more important, pull them afterwards.

The avidity with which he seized upon every little detail of knowledge, his eagerness to learn and his ability to retain what they taught him pleased Jess in no little degree. Nor was the boy's father the only one to experience pleasure in the teaching of Young Jess; Suttle and other members of the *Blue Belle's* crew, particularly Tarboy, took a keen interest in his advancement.

"Think he's going to make the grade?" Jess asked Suttle one evening of a day when the fish had been coming particularly well and the outlook was excellent for an early

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## Was This Father's Love Stronger Than Death?

When Captain Tiverton sat in his cabin, talking aloud to an invisible guest, the sailors said he was "batty."

But—was he? Read the whole story of the bewildering events on that haunted schooner—and then decide for yourself whether the eyes of faith can see more clearly than those of unbelief.

Here is a story of great pathos and beauty that you will remember for a long time.

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trip home. "Does he show any promise as a fisherman?"

"I'm ready to step out after this trip," the mate replied, smiling. "He knows as much as I do now."

Heavy weather seldom bothers a good fisherman. Given a staunch-ribbed vessel and the luck of the fleet, those well-laid two-masters, ranging anywhere from fifty to one hundred and twenty-five tons, make a go of it in any sort of wind and sea—provided that they have plenty of water beneath their keels. But ships have foundered and fishermen have come to grief when caught with shoal water on their lee side during a blow. That has been so since ever the first market fisherman put out to sea; will remain so until the world decides to eat no more fish.

There is an element in the life of the Banks fisherman, however, more treacherous than hurricane or mountainous sea, shoal water on the sands or quick water on the ledges. It is fog.

Men who have spent nearly all their lives upon the water may speak to you lightly of wind and rough weather, yet tell you they know fear when fog sets in. Heavy as a sea may be, blow a gale ever so strong, you can see what is ahead and have a definite knowledge of what to expect and prepare for. Not so in a fog.

Fog shut down on the south shoals of the Grand Banks on the 17th of July when the *Blue Belle* was fair loaded for a run home the next day. There may be spots on the Atlantic where fog sets in more quickly and with greater density than upon the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. But they have yet to be located.

Jess Tiverton had smelled the fog coming; no boat of his vessel was over the side when it arrived.

"We'll call it a trip, I guess," he told George Suttle. "When it lifts we'll get along for home."

The *Blue Belle* rode at anchor that night in thirty-six fathoms with a calm sea and a fog as thick as a horse blanket. From the deck the masthead lights were barely visible. There was a double watch and the fog-horn was sounded every sixty seconds. Below deck forward, men played cards or reclined in their bunks, smoking and talking of the prospects for a fair voyage home.

At exactly eleven o'clock Farley Manser, who had been Jess Tiverton's cook for years, was serving a round of coffee and pie in the forecabin to men who laughed when old Tripper Tarboy spilled his cupful of steaming liquid down his pants leg and into his boot, and jocularly intimated that Tripper was becoming too old to "handle his vittals."

Fifteen minutes later the *Blue Belle*, or what remained of her, rested on gray sand at the bottom of those thirty-six fathoms of water. Eleven of her crew were with her. Tragedy that night for many homes. Greater tragedy for Jess Tiverton. For Young Jess drowned on his first trip to sea.

OUT of the darkness and the fog,

off her course and speeding between fourteen and sixteen knots against all maritime regulations governing the movements of steamers in a fog, came the *Triumph*, pride of the Barthlemess line, New York bound from Cherbourg and overdue.

The watch of the *Blue Belle* saw her lights only when the thirty-two thousand ton express loomed immediately above them. Time only to shout an unheard warning. Time only to sound the fog-horn in one quick, anguished wail. The steel bow of the liner split the fishing schooner from starboard bow to port 'midships, snapping her foremast like a stick of brittle coral. Men were crushed to death and men were drowned by the flooding sea even before the *Blue Belle* sank. She went down almost immediately, however, while the *Triumph*, only jarred by the impact, slowed down, reversed her engines and came finally to a dead stop an

eighth of a mile away from the scene of the collision.

No need to describe the horror attending that scene nor the manner of Young Jess' death. None could save him.

The liner, her havoc wrought, steamed splendidly up, brought her battery of searchlights to play on the wreckage and lowered her port-side lifeboats. They picked up the survivors and recovered what bodies it was possible to recover. Two hours later the *Triumph* was again steaming towards New York, speed undiminished, and her wireless was flashing the first cryptic message of the disaster to a world where fishermen count but little in the day's news.

It would have been melodramatic had Jess Tiverton fought against his rescuers. He did not do so; there was in his nature no melodrama of that sort. Nor would he take advantage of the *Triumph's* offer to send his own version of the tragedy through the air.

"I've nothing to tell," he told the *Triumph's* master. And he had nothing to tell, for until they landed in New York he spoke no other word.

"JESS TIVERTON will never sail again," they said along the water-front. In Boston, Gloucester and Nantucket men who knew his story shook their heads.

"The sea has beaten him," was their verdict.

"All his heart and all his soul, if a man has a soul were given to that youngster," George Suttle told old Tarboy. "A man can only fight so long," he added significantly.

Josiah Mulvaney and James Tempor, the *Blue Belle's* owners, sent for Jess to come to Salem.

"There's talk you'll never take out another boat," Mulvaney put it straight up to him.

"I have no boat to take out," Jess answered simply.

"Which means, I take it, that you'll sail again providing you get the boat?"

"Why not?" Answer enough there.

"We're going to build a new boat. You're the man to have her if you want to," Tempor said. Then they asked him for specifications and whether he had any ideas of his own he might wish to incorporate in the new vessel.

"Have her built from the *Blue Belle's* prints," said Jess. "There's no better boat afloat than she was."

And Mulvaney, who was an understanding sort of man despite an exterior as sharply cold as cracked ice, advised: "Go down and help them build her. And name her what you wish."

But after he had gone, Tempor remarked: "Jess Tiverton is getting old. He will not sail any boat for long."

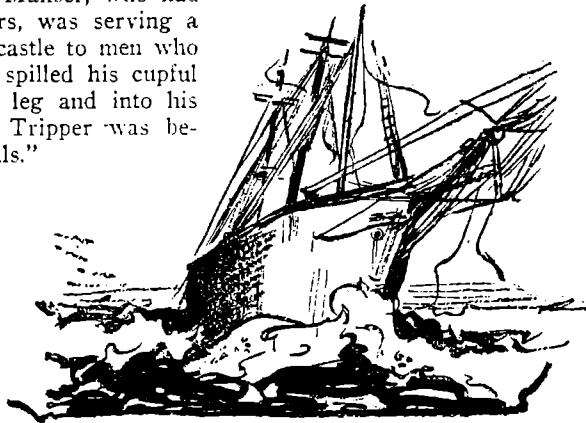
"He is past sixty," Mulvaney said. "Too old a man to hold up against his loss."

Jess Tiverton was getting old; sorrow laid gaunt hands upon his shoulders and weighed them down. But he went down to Sib Benton's shipyard at Gloucester and superintended the building of the new craft he was to sail. They laid her keel line while he looked on and he was there when they bent her ribs in place.

"I want the best job you've done," he told Benton, a strange catch in his voice. "I won't be sailing her long and I want the finest fishing boat in the fleet for the one who takes her over."

He never left the shipyard till she slid down the ways one raw March day when it seemed that spring must never come.

George Suttle was there at the launching. And Tripper Tarboy. They were near enough to Jess to hear him say: "I christen you 'Ruth McKelvie.' Good luck and a bundle of fish, and God be with you." (Continued on page 83)



# The Invisible Man at the Helm

(Continued from page 36)

So they painted "Ruth McKelvie" along her bows and across her stern in fine gold letters. Then they stepped a mainmast into her and later a foremast and bent on her bleached new canvas sails.

A white, eager gull she went down to Georges early in May on her maiden trip, as pretty and able a fishing schooner as ever left the Highland Light to stern. George Suttle was her mate. Tripper Tarboy squatted at her windward rail and painted white numbers on the trail tubs. Two or three others who had been with Jess Tiverton on the *Blue Belle* were also along; the remainder long since had shipped on other vessels, for a fisherman cannot allow sentiment to interfere with the appetite of his family.

THEY had ten days of fair fishing and ticed upwards of one hundred thousand pounds before bad weather struck in. Then it blew three days steadily out of the northeast and the sun failed to break through the low-lying, driving clouds. On the afternoon of the third day it fell a flat calm for an hour and a new breeze followed out of the southeast.

Jess had been below the greater part of the afternoon, but he came on deck before the wind shifted. Mark what he said to Suttle.

"We been talking it over down below and we think it's going to come a blow. Let's get for home."

"Talking it over," Suttle began. "Who you been—" He stopped suddenly. Something in Jess Tiverton's eyes made him hold his tongue.

The mate went forward and passed the word. Not until they were laying off for Boston did he seek old Tripper out.

"He said they'd been talking it over and had decided it was going to blow. What do you think of that, now? Who'd he been talking it over with?"

No man to intrude, Tripper; the years had taught him discretion.

"It's none o' my business and little o' yours," he answered. "You let Jess be. He's missin' that boy some."

"You should have seen his eyes when he told me to get sail up," Suttle protested. "It was like I wasn't there."

"Maybe you wasn't. Maybe you wasn't there. For him, anyway. We'll do as we're told and leave Jess be."

An hour later it became apparent that he from whom Jess Tiverton took advice had displayed good sense. It blew a screaming late May gale out of the southeast all night, but the storm found the *Ruth McKelvie* in deep water. A Gloucester ship went on the shoals that night and four men were drowned; a Gay Head fourteen-tonner lost her single mast and helmsman; other vessels came to grief in lesser degree.

The *Ruth* made heavy weather but her reefs were in and her dories stowed

and she ran off that blow like geese flying down wind from the futile guns. Jess Tiverton sailed her himself; he held her wheel in water sometimes to his waist.

"Sail her, Sonny, sail her!" he cried above the noise of wind and sea.

Once he turned his head to where Suttle stood just at his elbow. "Tell George," he shouted, just as if George wasn't there—"Tell George he better spike in his jib or the sea'll carry it out. What do you think?"

George Suttle knew better than to answer. That question was not meant for him. It was Old Jess at the wheel, Young Jess by his side.

That voyage marked the beginning of as queer a story as ever was repeated in the North Atlantic fishing fleet, the story of Jess Tiverton and his mate, Young Jess, who had drowned on his first trip to sea. George Suttle continued to sail aboard the *Ruth McKelvie*, mate in name only, because there had grown in his heart over a long period of years a great and sure love of this captain whom sorrow had claimed. He continued to occupy the cabin with Jess, although he knew that for the *Ruth's* master another slept there also.

Never, following that maiden voyage of the *Ruth McKelvie*, did Jess Tiverton address an order directly to Suttle. He spoke always to an unseen third person.

"Wind's laying off and we got ballast. Don't you think you better get George to shake a reef? Carry it, can't we?"

And George Suttle would wait a reasonable length of time and pass the order along.

It came, as it was sure to come where such a situation existed—misgiving in place of trust, doubt dispelling confidence, incredulity displacing stoicism. Aboard his own ship they began talking about Jess Tiverton. Young fellows who had no understanding of the cross he was bearing.

"ME? I think the old fellow's nutty, if you ask me. Mumblin' all the time to himself and never speakin' outright to his mate. What's he got a mate for, anyway?"

And: "Believe me, I wouldn't stand for it if I was in Suttle's boots. No sir, not me."

They went on thus, but when wrinkled Tripper Tarboy was around they kept their mouths closed.

"Put a lock on your tongue, young feller, or I'll sure hand you one," he'd threaten them. And they would, too, for the old man's fists had lost none of their weight and speed.

But though old Tripper's threats served the purpose when he was about, they could not hope to put an end to the talk altogether, and the story was not slow in traveling. Crews visit

while ashore; the word was spoken among other boats. Men of the fleet who had known Jess since long before the *Blue Belle* met her fate expressed sympathy for the man. There were others who saw in the situation an opportunity for unkind, sacrilegious jest.

One day at the wharf Jess was hailed by Torrey Lamberts, a New Bedford motor swordfisherman.

Lamberts called: "I hear you got two mates aboard that vessel of yours, Tiverton. How's to lend me one? I need a good man."

THERE was no reply forthcoming from the *Ruth's* master. But he went chalk-white and his fingers clenched.

A month later Jess Tiverton took his new boat on the Nantucket shoals in the dead of a pitch-black night and a gale of wind that blew her jib out, and rescued a half dozen of the crew of Torrey Lamberts' ship, which had gone ashore with a stalled engine in the storm. Lamberts himself was drowned.

But it was the manner of the *Ruth's* going to the rescue, rather than the rescue itself, which afforded a topic of conversation. Jess Tiverton's vessel was caught with others in shoal water when the storm broke without fifteen minutes' warning. She had, however, ample opportunity to get rigged and into deeper soundings and was well into twenty-five fathoms when Tiverton came to Suttle, who was at the helm.

"He says he sees flares," Jess called above the storm. "They'll be a couple of miles off your starboard on the shoals. We better run in, he says."

So they ran her in while those of the crew who were skeptical of their captain's mentality cursed him for a fool. Even George Suttle's faith was strained that night. No lights showed; there was no sign of any vessel in distress, but Jess gripped Suttle by the arm.

"It's Torrey Lamberts and his *Sleepwalker*, you say! Well, we'll get them just the same, Sonny."

The lead showed six fathoms of water when they made out her single mast-head light. She was hard on, with the seas breaking over her, but Jess took the wheel away from his mate and brought his own vessel in as close as he dared. Then he floated two dories, on lines, down wind to the beached swordfisherman. One of them was swamped. The other brought back six of the *Sleepwalker's* crew.

When the *Ruth* was safe in deep water again, George Suttle turned to one of the rescued men and asked: "How long had you been burning flares?"

"We didn't burn no flares," came the answer. "We didn't have none."

None asked Jess Tiverton how he knew there was a vessel in distress. No man inquired from Jess Tiverton from whom he learned it was Torrey Lamberts' boat there on the sands. Tripper

Tarboy shook his head when Suttle told him the facts.

"It's as I told you. I've heard o' such things before. The boy is with him all the time."

There were others who thought the same after that rescue, but who refused to accept the belief with Tripper's complaisance. The *Ruth* lost eight men of her crew when the voyage ended.

"He's a madman," one of them said in explanation. "He risks your life and his own on some mad twist of his brain and because he happens to be lucky once is no reason you won't go to Davy Jones the next time."

**H**ARBINGERS of bad times, those words. For the *Ruth* began to experience difficulty signing crews. One-trip men are neither satisfactory nor satisfied fishermen. All men of the sea are superstitious and fishermen are no exception; not many could bear the thoughts of their lives entrusted to the wisdom of a mate they had never seen.

"It's a hell ship he'll make of her," some said. "Another *Night Hawk*."

The *Ruth's* trips became of increasing duration; her hauls smaller. The boat was hardly paying; not paying well enough to keep a steady crew under normal conditions. Such a situation is not allowed to exist for long without some word from those chiefly interested financially.

Tempor was in Boston at the conclusion of one of the *Ruth's* unprofitable trips and held a conference with Jess Tiverton in the cabin while the ship was being unloaded. It lasted upward of an hour and when it ended Tempor left the ship alone.

George Suttle, going below, paused outside the closed cabin door at the sound of Jess Tiverton's voice.

"They're finding fault with us, Sonny. Perhaps they've reason to, but it ain't your fault. It's mine. But I'll give you a little more time and you'll be ready."

Suttle heard no more, for he turned on his heel and left. That night the mate had another talk with Tripper Tarboy, but found little solace in the old fisherman's words.

"Tempor's right," Tripper said. "You and I know the reasons for his actions right enough, but others don't. And every crew's a worsen one and we ain't pullin' the fish. It's lookin' blacker."

To the story of Jess Tiverton there remains but one more episode, the last trip he made as master of the *Ruth McKelvie*. Autumn fishing passed with conditions going from bad to worse and the *Ruth* went down the harbor one morning late in October with as rough and poor a crew as ever sailed on a Banker out of Boston. Hangers-on about the wharves, most of them, fellows who were down-and-out and saw a bed and food aboard the ship. The longer the trip the better they would like it. Fellows who had heard the stories of Tiverton's eccentricities, yet took the jobs because they needed jobs badly, not because they had a glimmer of understanding of the captain's sorrow.

"Imagine those rats forward aboard

the *Blue Belle* in the old days," said Suttle disgustedly to old Tarboy.

"You've little call to kick," answered Tripper, taking a liberty born of long years and of friendship. "I have to sleep along with 'em."

On the trip down some of them overheard Jess talking to himself, and one, a burly Swede shipping his first trip, made free to mock him behind his back. Suttle overheard and swung once with his big right fist, setting the fellow down and knocking a tooth out.

"I'll teach you manners to your captain," the mate gattered. "You won't ever stand knee-high to him if you live a thousand years."

That ended that, and the others took cognizance, yet it was the first time George Suttle had used his fists aboard any boat in nearly twenty years; there is in the fishing fleet small necessity of brutality. His action was a bad sign.

The Swede was a vindictive sort and he made small talk in the forecabin, and such was the crew that he soon had organized a little clique of trouble-makers.

The vessel had fair weather until she made easterly of Sable Island on the outside run, when a cold northerly blow set in for two days. Followed another spell of clear days with a bit of excellent fishing for a change and then an easterly wind, accompanied by fog. When the shroud lifted there was a full week of fine, calm weather and Suttle drove the men in the knowledge that Jess Tiverton's *Ruth* needed a good trip in order to set her master right with the owners. He recognized the difficulties of overcoming any handicap with such a crew as was given him, but he did his best with men who took no interest in the size of their shares.

He drove them and they cared not for the driving. The Swede and his dory mate pulled the smallest hauls; others, influenced by the fellow, soldiered at their work and accomplished as little as possible without incurring the anger of the mate.

**T**HEY awakened one morning to a light drizzle of rain, a flat calm of sea and a promise of fog. The rain ended at noonday and the fog set in; the dories which had been ordered to work close at hand came over the side.

Jess Tiverton went to his cabin and stayed there and because he hesitated to intrude, Suttle ate his dinner alone. Later he played cribbage with Tripper Tarboy and they had, as usual, some talk of the captain.

"It's a fog like this'll take his memory back," said Tripper. "He'll be makin' bad weather of it there alone. Maybe you better go in with him."

With the dusk the fog set in heavier than before and Suttle named the watches, doubling them, for every two hours. He retired early, leaving the captain reading half aloud by the light of the big lamp swinging from the center of the ceiling beam.

Suttle fell off to sleep quickly enough, for Tiverton's reading was a habit of

long standing to which he had become accustomed. He was not due on deck himself until one o'clock, and his was the faculty of being able to waken at any hour he chose.

Jess Tiverton's voice brought him sitting up in his bunk. The lamp, still lit, was dying and beneath it and within its sickly, shifting glare Jess stood staring past the shadow of his own bunk.

"Quick, Sonny! Quick now!" he cried. "Call all hands and get sail on her!"

Suttle swung his feet onto the floor. "What's up?" he asked.

Jess Tiverton never looked at him. "All hands!" he shouted again. "Get her anchor broke out!"

**S**UTTLE glanced at the clock nailed beside his berth. Its hands showed five minutes of midnight. Midnight, and a wool fog, and a skipper calling for all hands and sail!

The mate looked once more at Jess Tiverton and had a flashing thought of Torrey Lamberts. He pulled on his boots and ran on deck where the watch was smoking and using the fog-horn to good effect.

"All hands!" he roared. "Rout 'em out and set her jib to break her anchor out. We're moving in a hurry!"

The spark of a cigarette butt went spinning over the side and somebody drawled, "God's sake! Listen to the man."

Suttle paused, undecided whether to knock the man down, and then made a rush for the forecabin, half tumbling down the ladder and shouting as he went. Men crawled out of their bunks, cursing, and the mate felt Tripper's hand upon his sleeve.

"What's wrong?" old Tarboy asked.

"You know as much as I do. Jess is carrying on again. He says all hands and sail on her in a hurry."

The big Swede paused in the act of pulling on his sou'wester and remarked, "Ay ban tink he captain baffy." He got no further because Suttle hit him again.

Somebody in the half darkness said, "To hell with Tiverton and his crazy notions. I'm goin' back to sleep." Tripper Tarboy's hand reached out and caught the man by the throat.

"Git up, you scum, or I'll bash your head," threatened Tripper.

On deck again Suttle found the watch, aroused, setting the jib. Only a faint breath of a breeze but the sail filled and carried the bow around, breaking the anchor loose. They had it in.

Jess Tiverton was on deck then. They heard his voice, a new note in the fog: "Tell 'em to get mainsail up, Sonny. Tell 'em quick, now. Hurry!"

Most of the crew stood dumb, aghast at the madness of it. A young voice called, "Pipe down, you old nut!" but Jess Tiverton did not hear.

They got her mainsail up, Suttle and Tripper doing most of the work and Tripper wasting a lot of breath to swear at the good-for-nothing crew. The big sheet filled and the *Ruth McKelvie* started to lay off.

Then, right above the schooner's deck and a little off her port side, there came the weird scream of a liner's siren and a hundred lights snapped out of the fog! She came rushing toward the *Ruth*, was off her stern for a moment, on the starboard the next. And was gone! They felt the breath of her as she passed scant feet away. Scant feet to spare.

From the time that racing liner shot out of the fog until she had disappeared again in the void—a matter of less than a minute—no word was spoken aloud aboard the *Ruth McKelvie*, nor was the fog-horn sounded. Men who had mocked Jess Tiverton were in turn mocked by that silence.

As the *Ruth* dipped forward in the

wash her captain's voice rang clear along the ship: "You did a nice job, Sonny. I guess you're ready."

The vessel didn't drop anchor again that voyage. Old age had caught Jess Tiverton that night. He was an old, old man.

"WELL go along in, George," he told Suttle. "I've sailed my last trip to sea and I guess you and Young Jess can look after her alone now. And do a better job." He laid his hand on Suttle's arm and his voice was that of a pleading, old man. "We ain't been making good trips, George. All on account of me and my goings on. I've known all along. But I had to be sure

he was ready to take her over. I had to be sure, didn't I, George?"

George Suttle answered, his own voice a little shaky: "I guess you ain't got no cause to worry."

That is why, between his stories at the new Fish Pier, if you ask old Jess Tiverton about himself he will mumble and look off up the harbor and out to where the green water merges with the deeper blue of the sea itself. His boy, Young Jess, is out there with George Suttle on the *Ruth McKelvie*. Young Jess is the skipper now. He's a-sailin' of her.

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