

The Christmas Wreck

Frank Stockton

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"Well, sir," said old Silas, as he gave a preliminary puff to the pipe he had just lighted, and so satisfied himself that the draught was all right, "the wind's a-comin', an' so's Christmas. But it's no use bein' in a hurry fur either of 'em, fur sometimes they come afore you want 'em, anyway."

Silas was sitting in the stern of a small sailing-boat which he owned, and in which he sometimes took the Sandport visitors out for a sail, and at other times applied to its more legitimate but less profitable use, that of fishing. That afternoon he had taken young Mr. Nugent for a brief excursion on that portion of the Atlantic Ocean which sends its breakers up on the beach of Sandport. But he had found it difficult, nay, impossible, just now, to bring him back, for the wind had gradually died away until there was not a breath of it left. Mr. Nugent, to whom nautical experiences were as new as the very nautical suit of blue flannel which he wore, rather liked the calm. It was such a relief to the monotony of rolling waves. He took out a cigar and lighted it, and then he remarked:

"I can easily imagine how a wind might come before you sailors might want it, but I don't see how Christmas could come too soon."

"It come wunst on me when things couldn't `a' looked more onready fur it," said Silas.

"How was that?" asked Mr. Nugent, settling himself a little more comfortably on the hard thwart. "If it's a story, let's have it. This is a good time to spin a yarn."

"Very well," said old Silas. "I'll spin her."

The bare-legged boy whose duty it was to stay forward and mind the jib came aft as soon as he smelt a story, and took a nautical position, which was duly studied by Mr. Nugent, on a bag of ballast in the bottom of the boat.

"It's nigh on to fifteen year ago," said Silas, "that I was on the bark Mary Auguster, bound for Sydney, New South Wales, with a cargo of canned goods. We was somewhere about longitood a hundred an' seventy, latitood nothin', an' it was the twenty-second o' December, when we was ketched by a reg'lar typhoon which blew straight along, end on, fur a day an' a half. It blew away the storm-sails. It blew away every yard, spar, shroud, an' every strand o' riggin', an' snapped the masts off close to the deck. It blew away all the boats. It blew away the cook's caboose, an' everythin' else on deck. It blew off the hatches, an' sent 'em spinnin' in the air about a mile to leeward. An' afore it got through, it washed away the cap'n an' all the crew 'cept me an' two others. These was Tom Simmons, the second mate, an' Andy Boyle, a chap from the Adirondack Mount'ins, who'd never been to sea afore. As he was a landsman, he ought, by rights, to 'a' been swep' off by the wind an' water, consid'rin' that the cap'n an' sixteen good seamen had gone a'ready. But he had hands eleven inches long, an' that give him a grip which no typhoon could git the better of. Andy had let out that his father was a miller up there in York State, an' a story had got round among the crew that his granfather an' great-gran'father was millers, too; an' the way the fam'ly got such big hands come from their habit of scoopin' up a extry quart or two of meal or flour fur themselves when they was levellin' off their customers' measures. He was a good-natered feller, though, an' never got riled when I'd tell him to clap his flour-scoops onter a halyard. "We was all soaked, an' washed, an' beat, an' battered. We held on some way or other till the wind blowed itself out, an' then we got on our legs an' began to look about us to see how things stood. The sea had washed into the open hatches till the vessel was more'n half full of water, an' that had sunk her, so deep that she must 'a' looked like a canal-boat loaded with gravel. We hadn't had a thing to eat or drink durin' that whole blow, an' we was pretty ravenous. We found a keg of water which was all right, and a box of biscuit which was what you might call softtack, fur they was soaked through an' through with sea-water.

We eat a lot of them so, fur we couldn't wait, an' the rest we spread on the deck to dry, fur the sun was now shinin' hot enough to bake bread. We couldn't go below much, fur there was a pretty good swell on the sea, an' things was floatin' about so's to make it dangerous. But we fished out a piece of canvas, which we rigged up ag'in' the stump of the mainmast so that we could have somethin' that we could sit down an' grumble under. What struck

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us all the hardest was that the bark was loaded with a whole cargo of jolly things to eat, which was just as good as ever they was, fur the water couldn't git through the tin cans in which they was all put up, an' here we was with nothin' to live on but them salted biscuit. There wasn't no way of gittin' at any of the ship's stores, or any of the fancy prog, fur everythin' was stowed away tight under six or seven feet of water, an' pretty nigh all the room that was left between decks was filled up with extry spars, lumber, boxes, an' other floatin' stuff. All was shiftin', an' bumpin', an' bangin' every time the vessel rolled.

"As I said afore, Tom was second mate, an' I was bo's'n. Says I to Tom, 'The thing we've got to do is to put up some kind of a spar with a rag on it fur a distress flag, so that we'll lose no time bein' took off.' 'There's no use a-slavin' at anythin' like that,' says Tom, 'fur we've been blowed off the track of traders, an' the more we work the hungrier we'll git, an' the sooner will them biscuit be gone.'

"Now when I heard Tom say this I sot still an' began to consider. Bein' second mate, Tom was, by rights, in command of this craft. But it was easy enough to see that if he commanded there'd never be nothin' fur Andy an' me to do. All the grit he had in him he'd used up in holdin' on durin' that typhoon. What he wanted to do now was to make himself comfortable till the time come for him to go to Davy Jones's locker—an' thinkin', most likely, that Davy couldn't make it any hotter fur him than it was on that deck, still in latitood nothin' at all, fur we'd been blowed along the line pretty nigh due west. So I calls to Andy, who was busy turnin' over the biscuits on the deck. 'Andy,' says I, when he had got under the canvas, 'we's goin' to have a 'lection fur skipper. Tom, here, is about played out. He's one candydate, an' I'm another. Now, who do you vote fur? An' mind yer eye, youngster, that you don't make no mistake.' 'I vote fur you' says Andy. 'Carried unanermous!' says I. 'An' I want you to take notice that I'm cap'n of what's left of the Mary Auguster, an' you two has got to keep your minds on that, an' obey orders.' If Davy Jones was to do all that Tom Simmons said when he heard this, the old chap would be kept busier than he ever was yit. But I let him growl his growl out, knowin' he'd come round all right, fur there wasn't no help fur it, consid'rin' Andy an' me was two to his one. Pretty soon we all went to work, an' got up a spar from below, which we rigged to the stump of the foremast, with Andy's shirt atop of it.

"Them sea-soaked, sun-dried biscuit was pretty mean prog, as you might think, but we eat so many of 'em that afternoon, an' 'cordingly drank so much water, that I was obliged to put us all on short rations the next day. 'This is the day afore Christmas,' says Andy Boyle, 'an' to-night will be Christmas eve, an' it's pretty tough fur us to be sittin' here with not even so much hardtack as we want, an' all the time thinkin' that the hold of this ship is packed full of the gayest kind of good things to eat.' 'Shut up about Christmas!' says Tom Simmons. 'Them two youngsters of mine, up in Bangor, is havin' their toes and noses pretty nigh froze, I 'spect, but they'll hang up their stockin's all the same to-night, never thinkin' that their dad's bein' cooked alive on a empty stomach.' 'Of course they wouldn't hang 'em up,' says I, if they knowed what a fix you was in, but they don't know it, an' what's the use of grumblin' at 'em fur bein' a little jolly?' 'Well,' says Andy 'they couldn't be more jollier than I'd be if I could git at some of them fancy fixin's down in the hold. I worked well on to a week at 'Frisco puttin' in them boxes, an' the names of the things was on the outside of most of 'em; an' I tell you what it is, mates, it made my mouth water, even then, to read 'em, an' I wasn't hungry, nuther, havin' plenty to eat three times a day. There was roast beef, an' roast mutton, an' duck, an' chicken, an' soup, an' peas, an' beans, an' termaters, an' plum-puddin', an' mince-pie—' 'Shut up with your mince-pie!' sung out Tom Simmons. 'Isn't it enough to have to gnaw on these salt chips, without hearin' about mince-pie?' 'An' more'n that' says Andy, 'there was canned peaches, an' pears, an' plums, an' cherries.'

"Now these things did sound so cool an' good to me on that br'ilin' deck that I couldn't stand it, an' I leans over to Andy, an' I says: 'Now look—a here; if you don't shut up talkin' about them things what's stowed below, an' what we can't git at nohow, overboard you go!' 'That would make you short-handed,' says Andy, with a grin. 'Which is more'n you could say,' says I, 'if you'd chuck Tom an, me over—alludin' to his eleven-inch grip. Andy didn't say no more then, but after a while he comes to me, as I was lookin' round to see if anything was in sight, an' says he, 'I spose you ain't got nothin' to say ag'in' my divin' into the hold just aft of the foremast, where there seems to be a bit of pretty clear water, an' see if I can't git up somethin'?' 'You kin do it, if you like,' says I, 'but it's at your own risk.'

You can't take out no insurance at this office.' 'All right, then,' says Andy; 'an' if I git stove in by floatin' boxes, you an' Tom'll have to eat the rest of them salt crackers.' 'Now, boy,' says I,—an' he wasn't much more, bein' only nineteen year old,—'you'd better keep out o' that hold. You'll just git yourself smashed. An' as to

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movin' any of them there heavy boxes, which must be swelled up as tight as if they was part of the ship, you might as well try to pull out one of the Mary Auguster's ribs.' 'I'll try it,' says Andy, 'fur to-morrer is Christmas, an' if I kin help it I ain't goin' to be floatin' atop of a Christmas dinner without eatin' any on it.' I let him go, fur he was a good swimmer an' diver, an' I did hope he might root out somethin' or other, fur Christmas is about the worst day in the year fur men to be starvin' on, an' that's what we was a-comin' to.

"Well, fur about two hours Andy swum, an' dove, an' come up blubberin', an' dodged all sorts of floatin' an' pitchin' stuff, fur the swell was still on. But he couldn't even be so much as sartin that he'd found the canned vittles. To dive down through hatchways, an' among broken bulkheads, to hunt fur any partiklar kind o' boxes under seven foot of sea-water, ain't no easy job. An' though Andy said he got hold of the end of a box that felt to him like the big uns he'd noticed as havin' the meat-pies in, he couldn't move it no more'n if it had been the stump of the foremast. If we could have pumped the water out of the hold we could have got at any part of the cargo we wanted, but as it was, we couldn't even reach the ship's stores, which, of course, must have been mostly sp'iled anyway, whereas the canned vittles was just as good as new. The pumps was all smashed or stopped up, for we tried 'em, but if they hadn't 'a' been we three couldn't never have pumped out that ship on three biscuit a day, an' only about two days' rations at that.

"So Andy he come up, so fagged out that it was as much as he could do to get his clothes on, though they wasn't much, an' then he stretched himself out under the canvas an' went to sleep, an' it wasn't long afore he was talkin' about roast turkey an' cranberry sass, an' punkin-pie, an' sech stuff, most of which we knowed was under our feet that present minnit. Tom Simmons he just b'iled over, an' sung out: 'Roll him out in the sun an' let him cook! I can't stand no more of this!' But I wasn't goin' to have Andy treated no sech way as that, fur if it hadn't been fur Tom Simmons' wife an' young uns, Andy'd been worth two of him to anybody who was consid'rin' savin' life. But I give the boy a good punch in the ribs to stop his dreamin', fur I was as hungry as Tom was, an' couldn't stand no nonsense about Christmas dinners.

"It was a little arter noon when Andy woke up, an' he went outside to stretch himself. In about a minute he give a yell that made Tom an' me jump. 'A sail!' he hollered. 'A sail!' An' you may bet your life, young man, that 'twasn't more'n half a second afore us two had scuffled out from under that canvas, an' was standin' by Andy. 'There she is!' he shouted, 'not a mile to win'ard.' I give one look, an' then I sings out: 'Tain't a sail! It's a flag of distress! Can't you see, you land-lubber, that that's the Stars and Stripes upside down?' 'Why, so it is,' says Andy, with a couple of reefs in the joyfulness of his voice. An' Tom he began to growl as if somebody had cheated him out of half a year's wages.

"The flag that we saw was on the hull of a steamer that had been driftin' down on us while we was sittin' under our canvas. It was plain to see she'd been caught in the typhoon, too, fur there wasn't a mast or a smoke-stack on her. But her hull was high enough out of the water to catch what wind there was, while we was so low sunk that we didn't make no way at all. There was people aboard, and they saw us, an' waved their hats an' arms, an' Andy an' me waved ours; but all we could do was to wait till they drifted nearer, fur we hadn't no boats to go to 'em if we'd wanted to.

"'I'd like to know what good that old hulk is to us,' says Tom Simmons. 'She can't take us off.' It did look to me somethin' like the blind leadin' the blind. But Andy he sings out: 'We'd be better off aboard of her, fur she ain't water-logged, an', more'n that, I don't s'pose her stores are all soaked up in salt water.' There was some sense in that, an' when the steamer had got to within half a mile of us, we was glad to see a boat put out from her with three men in it. It was a queer boat, very low an' flat, an' not like any ship's boat I ever see.

But the two fellers at the oars pulled stiddy, an' pretty soon the boat was 'longside of us, an' the three men on our deck. One of 'em was the first mate of the other wreck, an' when he found out what was the matter with us, he spun his yarn, which was a longer one than ours. His vessel was the Water Crescent, nine hundred tons, from 'Frisco to Melbourne, an' they had sailed about six weeks afore we did. They was about two weeks out when some of their machinery broke down, an' when they got it patched up it broke ag'in, worse than afore, so that they couldn't do nothin' with it. They kep' along under sail for about a month, makin' mighty poor headway till the typhoon struck 'em, an' that cleaned their decks off about as slick as it did ours, but their hatches wasn't blowed off, an' they didn't ship no water wuth mentionin', an' the crew havin' kep' below, none of 'em was lost. But now they was clean out of provisions an' water, havin' been short when the breakdown happened, fur they had sold all the stores they could spare to a French brig in distress that they overhauled when about a week out. When they

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sighted us they felt pretty sure they'd git some provisions out of us. But when I told the mate what a fix we was in his jaw dropped till his face was as long as one of Andy's hands. Howsomdever, he said he'd send the boat back fur as many men as it could bring over, an' see if they couldn't git up some of our stores. Even if they was soaked with salt water, they'd be better than nothin'. Part of the cargo of the Water Crescent was tools an, things fur some railway contractors out in Australier, an' the mate told the men to bring over some of them irons that might be used to fish out the stores. All their ship's boats had been blowed away, an' the one they had was a kind of shore boat for fresh water, that had been shipped as part of the cargo, an' stowed below. It couldn't stand no kind of a sea, but there wasn't nothin' but a swell on, an' when it come back it had the cap'n in it, an' five men, besides a lot of chains an' tools.

"Them fellers an' us worked pretty nigh the rest of the day, an' we got out a couple of bar'ls of water, which was all right, havin' been tight bunged, an' a lot of sea-biscuit, all soaked an sloppy, but we only got a half-bar'l of meat, though three or four of the men stripped an' dove fur more'n an hour. We cut up some of the meat an' eat it raw, an' the cap'n sent some over to the other wreck, which had drifted past us to leeward, an' would have gone clean away from us if the cap'n hadn't had a line got out an' made us fast to it while we was a- workin' at the stores.

"That night the cap'n took us three, as well as the provisions we'd got out, on board his hull, where the 'commodations was consid'able better than they was on the half-sunk Mary Auguster. An' afore we turned in he took me aft an' had a talk with me as commandin' off'cer of my vessel. 'That wreck o' yourn,' says he, 'has got a vallyble cargo in it, which isn't sp'iled by bein' under water. Now, if you could get that cargo into port it would put a lot of money in your pocket, fur the owners couldn't git out of payin' you fur takin' charge of it an' havin' it brung in. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll lie by you, an' I've got carpenters aboard that'll put your pumps in order, an' I'll set my men to work to pump out your vessel. An' then, when she's afloat all right, I'll go to work ag'in at my vessel—which I didn't s'pose there was any use o' doin', but whilst I was huntin' round amongst our cargo to-day I found that some of the machinery we carried might be worked up so's to take the place of what is broke in our engine. We've got a forge aboard, an' I believe we can make these pieces of machinery fit, an' git goin' ag'in. Then I'll tow you into Sydney, an' we'll divide the salvage money. I won't git nothin' fur savin' my vessel, coz that's my business, but you wasn't cap'n o' yourn, an' took charge of her a-purpose to save her, which is another thing.'

"I wasn't at all sure that I didn't take charge of the Mary Auguster to save myself an' not the vessel, but I didn't mention that, an' asked the cap'n how he expected to live all this time.

"'Oh, we kin git at your stores easy enough,' says he, when the water's pumped out.' 'They'll be mostly sp'iled,' says I. 'That don't matter' says he. 'Men'll eat anything when they can't git nothin' else.' An' with that he left me to think it over.

"I must say, young man, an' you kin b'lieve me if you know anything about sech things, that the idee of a pile of money was mighty temptin' to a feller like me, who had a girl at home ready to marry him, and who would like nothin' better'n to have a little house of his own, an' a little vessel of his own, an' give up the other side of the world altogether. But while I was goin' over all this in my mind, an' wonderin' if the cap'n ever could git us into port, along comes Andy Boyle, an' sits down beside me. 'It drives me pretty nigh crazy,' says he, 'to think that to-morrer's Christmas, an' we've got to feed on that sloppy stuff we fished out of our stores, an' not much of it, nuther, while there's all that roast turkey an' plum-pudding an' mince-pie a- floatin' out there just afore our eyes, an' we can't have none of it.' 'You hadn't oughter think so much about eatin', Andy,' says I, 'but if I was talkin' about them things I wouldn't leave out canned peaches. By George! On a hot Christmas like this is goin' to be, I'd be the jolliest Jack on the ocean if I could git at that canned fruit.' 'Well, there's a way,' says Andy, 'that we might git some of 'em. A part of the cargo of this ship is stuff far blastin' rocks—ca'tridges, 'lectric bat'ries, an' that sort of thing; an' there's a man aboard who's goin' out to take charge of 'em. I've been talkin' to this bat'ry man, an' I've made up my mind it'll be easy enough to lower a little ca'tridge down among our cargo an' blow out a part of it.' 'What 'u'd be the good of it,' says I, 'blowed into chips?' 'It might smash some,' says he, 'but others would be only loosened, an' they'd float up to the top, where we could git 'em, specially them as was packed with pies, which must be pretty light.' 'Git out, Andy,' says I, 'with all that stuff!' An' he got out.

"But the ideas he'd put into my head didn't git out, an' as I laid on my back on the deck, lookin' up at the stars, they sometimes seemed to put themselves into the shape of a little house, with a little woman cookin' at the

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kitchin fire, an' a little schooner layin' at anchor just off shore. An' then ag'in they'd hump themselves up till they looked like a lot of new tin cans with their tops off, an' all kinds of good things to eat inside, specially canned peaches—the big white kind, soft an' cool, each one split in half, with a holler in the middle filled with juice. By George, sir! the very thought of a tin can like that made me beat my heels ag'in the deck. I'd been mighty hungry, an' had eat a lot of salt pork, wet an' raw, an' now the very idee of it, even cooked, turned my stomach. I looked up to the stars ag'in, an' the little house an' the little schooner was clean gone, an' the whole sky was filled with nothin' but bright new tin cans.

"In the mornin' Andy he come to me ag'in. 'Have you made up your mind,' says he, 'about gittin' some of them good things fur Christmas dinner?' 'Confound you!' says I, 'you talk as if all we had to do was to go an' git 'em.' 'An' that's what I b'lieve we kin do,' says he, 'with the help of that bat'ry man.' 'Yes,' says I, 'an' blow a lot of the cargo into flinders, an' damage the Mary Auguster so's she couldn't never be took into port.' An' then I told him what the cap'n had said to me, an' what I was goin' to do with the money. 'A little ca'tridge,' says Andy, 'would do all we want, an' wouldn't hurt the vessel, nuther. Besides that, I don't b'lieve what this cap'n says about tinkerin' up his engine. 'Tain't likely he'll ever git her runnin' ag'in, nor pump out the Mary Auguster, nuther. If I was you I'd a durned sight ruther have a Christmas dinner in hand than a house an' wife in the bush.' 'I ain't thinkin' o' marryin' a girl in Australier,' says I. An' Andy he grinned, an' said I wouldn't marry nobody if I had to live on sp'iled vittles till I got her.

"A little arter that I went to the cap'n an' I told him about Andy's idee, but he was down on it. 'It's your vessel, an' not mine,' says he, 'an' if you want to try to git a dinner out of her I'll not stand in your way. But it's my 'pinion you'll just damage the ship, an' do nothin'.' Howsomdever, I talked to the bat'ry man about it, an' he thought it could be done, an' not hurt the ship, nuther. The men was all in favor of it, fur none of 'em had forgot it was Christmas day. But Tom Simmons he was ag'in' it strong, fur he was thinkin' he'd git some of the money if we got the Mary Auguster into port. He was a selfish– minded man, was Tom, but it was his nater, an' I s'pose he couldn't help it.

"Well, it wasn't long afore I began to feel pretty empty an' mean, an' if I'd wanted any of the prog we got out the day afore, I couldn't have found much, fur the men had eat it up nearly all in the night. An' so I just made up my mind without any more foolin', an' me an' Andy Boyle an' the bat'ry man, with some ca'tridges an' a coil of wire, got into the little shore boat, an' pulled over to the Mary Auguster. There we lowered a small ca'tridge down the main hatchway, an' let it rest down among the cargo. Then we rowed back to the steamer, uncoilin' the wire as we went. The bat'ry man clumb up on deck, an' fixed his wire to a 'lectric machine, which he'd got all ready afore we started. Andy an' me didn't git out of the boat. We had too much sense fur that, with all them hungry fellers waitin' to jump in her. But we just pushed a little off, an' sot waitin', with our mouths awaterin', fur him to touch her off. He seemed to be a long time about it, but at last he did it, an' that instant there was a bang on board the Mary Auguster that made my heart jump. Andy an' me pulled fur her like mad, the others a– hollerin' arter us, an' we was on deck in no time. The deck was all covered with the water that had been throwed up. But I tell you, sir, that we poked an' fished about, an' Andy stripped an' went down an' swum all round, an' we couldn't find one floatin' box of canned goods. There was a lot of splinters, but where they come from we didn't know. By this time my dander was up, an' I just pitched around savage. That little ca'tridge wasn't no good, an' I didn't intend to stand any more foolin'. We just rowed back to the other wreck, an' I called to the ba'try man to come down, an' bring some bigger ca'tridges with him, fur if we was goin' to do anything we might as well do it right. So he got down with a package of bigger ones, an' jumped into the boat.

The cap'n he called out to us to be keerful, an' Tom Simmons leaned over the rail an' swore; but I didn't pay no 'tention to nuther of 'em, an' we pulled away.

"When I got aboard the Mary Auguster, I says to the bat'ry man: 'We don't want no nonsense this time, an' I want you to put in enough ca'tridges to heave up somethin' that'll do fur a Christmas dinner. I don't know how the cargo is stored, but you kin put one big ca'tridge 'midship, another for'ard, an' another aft, an' one or nuther of 'em oughter fetch up somethin'.' Well, we got the three ca'tridges into place. They was a good deal bigger than the one we fust used, an' we j'ined 'em all to one wire, an' then we rowed back, carryin' the long wire with us. When we reached the steamer, me an' Andy was a– goin' to stay in the boat as we did afore, but the cap'n sung out that he wouldn't allow the bat'ry to be touched off till we come aboard. 'Ther's got to be fair play,' says he. 'It's your vittles, but it's my side that's doin' the work. After we've blasted her this time you two can go in the boat an' see

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what there is to git hold of, but two of my men must go along.' So me an' Andy had to go on deck, an' two big fellers was detailed to go with us in the little boat when the time come, an' then the bat'ry man he teched her off.

"Well, sir, the pop that followed that tech was somethin' to remember. It shuck the water, it shuck the air, an' it shuck the hull we was on. A reg'lar cloud of smoke an' flyin' bits of things rose up out of the Mary Auguster; an' when that smoke cleared away, an' the water was all b'ilin' with the splash of various-sized hunks that come rainin' down from the sky, what was left of the Mary Auguster was sprinkled over the sea like a wooden carpet fur water—birds to walk on.

"Some of the men sung out one thing, an' some another, an' I could hear Tom Simmons swear; but Andy an' me said never a word, but scuttled down into the boat, follered close by the two men who was to go with us. Then we rowed like devils fur the lot of stuff that was bobbin' about on the water, out where the Mary Auguster had been. In we went among the floatin' spars and ship's timbers, I keepin' the things off with an oar, the two men rowin', an' Andy in the bow.

"Suddenly Andy give a yell, an' then he reached himself for'ard with sech a bounce that I thought he'd go overboard. But up he come in a minnit, his two 'leven-inch hands gripped round a box. He sot down in the bottom of the boat with the box on his lap an' his eyes screwed on some letters that was stamped on one end. 'Pidjin-pies!' he sings out. "Tain't turkeys, nor 'tain't cranberries but, by the Lord Harry, it's Christmas pies all the same!' After that Andy didn't do no more work, but sot holdin' that box as if it had been his fust baby. But we kep' pushin' on to see what else there was. It's my 'pinion that the biggest part of that bark's cargo was blowed into mince-meat, an' the most of the rest of it was so heavy that it sunk. But it wasn't all busted up, an' it didn't all sink. There was a big piece of wreck with a lot of boxes stove into the timbers, and some of these had in 'em beef ready b'iled an' packed into cans, an' there was other kinds of meat, an' dif'rent sorts of vegetables, an' one box of turtle soup. I looked at every one of 'em as we took 'em in, an' when we got the little boat pretty well loaded I wanted to still keep on searchin'; but the men they said that shore boat 'u'd sink if we took in any more cargo, an' so we put back, I feelin' glummer'n I oughter felt, fur I had begun to be afeared that canned fruit, sech as peaches, was heavy, an' li'ble to sink.

"As soon as we had got our boxes aboard, four fresh men put out in the boat, an' after a while they come back with another load. An' I was mighty keerful to read the names on all the boxes. Some was meat-pies, an' some was salmon, an' some was potted herrin's, an' some was lobsters. But nary a thing could I see that ever had growed on a tree.

"Well, sir, there was three loads brought in altogether, an' the Christmas dinner we had on the for'ard deck of that steamer's hull was about the jolliest one that was ever seen of a hot day aboard of a wreck in the Pacific Ocean. The cap'n kept good order, an' when all was ready the tops was jerked off the boxes, and each man grabbed a can an' opened it with his knife. When he had cleaned it out, he tuk another without doin' much questionin' as to the bill of fare. Whether anybody got pidjin-pie 'cept Andy, I can't say, but the way we piled in Delmoniker prog would 'a' made people open their eyes as was eatin' their Christmas dinners on shore that day. Some of the things would 'a' been better cooked a little more, or het up, but we was too fearful hungry to wait fur that, an' they was tiptop as they was.

"The cap'n went out afterwards, an' towed in a couple of bar'ls of flour that was only part soaked through, an' he got some other plain prog that would do fur future use. But none of us give our minds to stuff like this arter the glorious Christmas dinner that we'd quarried out of the Mary Auguster. Every man that wasn't on duty went below and turned in fur a snooze— all 'cept me, an' I didn't feel just altogether satisfied. To be sure, I'd had an A1 dinner, an', though a little mixed, I'd never eat a jollier one on any Christmas that I kin look back at. But, fur all that, there was a hanker inside o' me. I hadn't got all I'd laid out to git when we teched off the Mary Auguster. The day was blazin' hot, an' a lot of the things I'd eat was pretty peppery. 'Now,' thinks I, 'if there had been just one can o' peaches sech as I seen shinin' in the stars last night!' An' just then, as I was walkin' aft, all by myself, I seed lodged on the stump of the mizzenmast a box with one corner druv down among the splinters. It was half split open, an' I could see the tin cans shinin' through the crack. I give one jump at it, an' wrenched the side off. On the top of the first can I seed was a picture of a big white peach with green leaves. That box had been blowed up so high that if it had come down anywhere 'cept among them splinters it would 'a' smashed itself to flinders, or killed somebody. So fur as I know, it was the only thing that fell nigh us, an' by George, sir, I got it! When I had finished a can of 'em I hunted up Andy, an' then we went aft an' eat some more. 'Well,' says Andy, as we was

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a-eatin', `how d'ye feel now about blowin' up your wife, an' your house, an' that little schooner you was goin' to own?'

"`Andy,' says I, `this is the joyfulest Christmas I've had yit, an' if I was to live till twenty hundred I don't b'lieve I'd have no joyfuler, with things comin' in so pat; so don't you throw no shadders.'

"`Shadders!' says Andy. `That ain't me. I leave that sort of thing fur Tom Simmons.'

"`Shadders is cool,' says I, `an' I kin go to sleep under all he throws.'

"Well, sir," continued old Silas, putting his hand on the tiller and turning his face seaward, "if Tom Simmons had kept command of that wreck, we all would 'a' laid there an' waited an' waited till some of us was starved, an' the others got nothin' fur it, fur the cap'n never mended his engine, an' it wasn't more'n a week afore we was took off, an' then it was by a sailin' vessel, which left the hull of the Water Crescent behind her, just as she would 'a' had to leave the Mary Auguster if that jolly old Christmas wreck had been there.

"An' now, sir," said Silas, "d'ye see that stretch o' little ripples over yander, lookin' as if it was a lot o' herrin' turnin' over to dry their sides? Do you know what that is? That's the supper wind. That means coffee, an' hot cakes, an' a bit of br'iled fish, an' pertaters, an' p'r'aps, if the old woman feels in a partiklar good humor, some canned peaches—big white uns, cut in half, with a holler place in the middle filled with cool, sweet juice."