

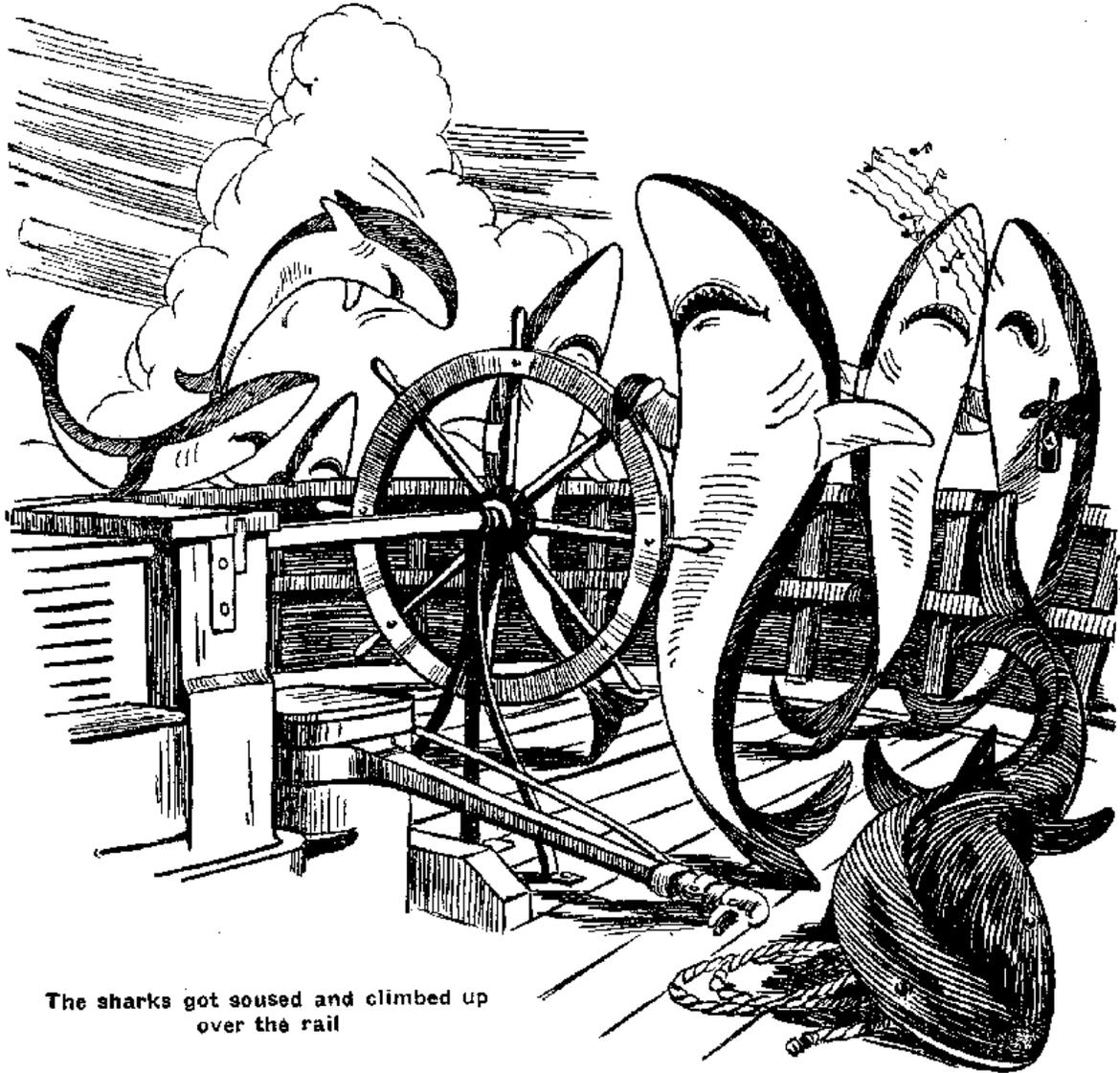
Nothing but the Truth

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

Meet Swivel tongue Saunders, the seafaring prevaricator – in other words, the biggest liar unhung!

SWIVELTONGUE SAUNDERS, basking in the tropical sunset, came suddenly erect as clear to the fo'c's'le-head of the freighter Ainault (Lagos to Beira) reached the noise of argument in the galley, profanely and emphatically disturbing the peace of the second dog watch.

Others might raise on one elbow from their mattress, or even get up to peer midships and mutter inquiries back and forth. Swiveltongue Saunders only smiled and allowed his faded blue eyes to grow wide and innocent.



The sharks got soused and climbed up over the rail

His toothless gums clamped the more kindly on the stem of his short clay pipe, while benevolence lifted his fringe of white whiskers and

caused a series of surprised looking wrinkles to slide in view across his sunburned baldness. Rubberneck Billson was in trouble and

Swiveltongue was invariably pleased when such a thing happened. It eased his rheumatism, made him feel younger. A liar and an upstart like Rubberneck deserved to be in trouble. Swiveltongue cleared his throat, spat from a slit beneath his whiskers, and out of deference to an ancient shellback, and from long custom the fo'c's'le-head turned as one man to listen.

"There ain't no manner of use in arguing with cooks," stated Swiveltongue as Mr. Billson shot from the galley and slammed against the main deck rail. "For that matter wot's a few cockroaches? They eats the same grub as us an' they're tender t' munch on. Rubberneck's getting old and finicky, that's wot!"

It had been a matter of cockroaches swimming in the evening soup, and Mr. Billson had taken a spoonful midships to show the cook. From the sound of things the cook had defended his art by hammering on the range with an iron frying pan, and the whole ship had heard his indignant declaration that he had been extra careful in straining the roaches out of the soup before sending it for'ard. He may have become exasperated by Mr. Billson's spoonful of evidence, or possibly found himself unable to cope with that ancient's language. In any event the frying pan clanged against the main deck rail just a fraction of a second after Mr. Billson had hurriedly vacated the spot, and it was thereupon tacitly understood by all hands that the matter had better be dropped, cooks being what they were, and touchy.

Mr. Billson came muttering for'ard, quite briskly for a man of age and with a gammy kg, and from the manner in which he was

chewing his grizzled buffalo-horn mustaches the fo'c's'le-head judged his annoyance was considerable. Swiveltongue Saunders spat with relish and eyed his foe with tolerant scorn.

"Getting soft, that's wot," he said distinctly. "Getting finicky!... Now, a 'undred years ago . . . , when I was a boy . . ."

Rubberneck Billson seated himself on a coil of hawser, worried a chew from a gnawed tobacco plug, and glared his wrath.

"Was you ever a boy?" he demanded bitterly. "Then you ain't growed up yet. 'Oo's getting soft?"

"A 'undred years ago . . . when I was a boy," Swiveltongue went on remorselessly, "we didn't mind a few roaches now and then. No, sir! We didn't have no such grub as you get now. Nary any soft bread. Nor fresh beef nor such. Nor spuds an' greens. Nothing like that at all . . . Salt 'orse we had, an' pickled beef. You could open a 'ogshead aft and the smell'd knock a man off th' bowsprit, I seen it happen many a time, an' once we lost the 'eadsails when the old man pried th' top off a keg of Chinese sardines 'e'd bought cheap as a experiment. Laid up for a month 'e was, an' his face never did get t' looking right again. Sort of greeny."

Mr. Billson snarled.

"Like th' time, I suppose, you navigated through th' fog by the barnyards ashore," he said sarcastic. "Every barnyard different an' you had 'em all named and numbered on th' chart."

"Correct," agreed Swiveltongue mildly. "There was them as smelled of 'ogs, and them as smelled of 'orses, and them as smelled of sheep, and we alius knew just where we was by taking a good long sniff . . ."

. But to resoom ... We didn't 'ave much else beside salt 'orse and such when I was a boy ... a 'undred years ago . . . except maybe Liverpool pancakes. Big as a dinner plate they was, an' twice as 'ard. Every time you'd pick one up th' weevils'd stick up an' look at you, an' there was some ignerant crews as would spend 'ole watches below trying t' pick 'em out I 'ad a trained louse myself, named Oscar, an' 'e'd go in after 'em and chase 'em out jest like a ferret chases rabbits ... Ah, me . . . Times ain't wot they was. We 'ad *men* them days. Now we gotta listen to a lot of belly-aching over a few poor cockroaches."

"If that's meant for me—" said Mr. Billson belligerently, but Swiveltongue beat him down by the sheer power of an eye that did not blink.

"It ain't meant for no one, " he said calmly, "unless it splices on t' your particular 'awser. I was jest getting around to a yarn or so. Speaking of th' men we 'ad, see? Take Larry Costain now, on board the Ainault here. He ain't a day over seventy, yet when 'e busts his finger in a winch 'e has to lay up for a week, which is a cruel 'ardship on his shipmates wot has to stand 'is wheel and lookout. Can't work, poor old man. Jest turns into a bunk rat an' starts sending roots down to his mattress. If them fo'c's'le mattresses are stuffed with what I thinks they is 'e'll be sprouting oats mighty soon. An' there he is. Got th' skipper an' mate a-tying of him up and a-wrapping of him around. Enough stuff on 'is finger to make oakum for all th' poop deck seams."

"It ain't his finger, " objected Rubberneck Billson, squirting tobacco juice through the rail." It's his 'ole blinking arm wot 'ad to come

off."

"No matter, " said Swiveltongue loftily. "It wouldn't 'ave counted no more than a finger a 'undred years ago . . . when I was a boy! Why, I can remember, when I was cabin boy on th' Bluenose Annie, old Double jaw Murphy fell from the yard a-trying to blow 'is nose on the reefed tops'l. Came down awalloping 'e did, and as luck would 'ave it the cook 'ad left a big meat 'ook lying around. Poor Double jaw couldn't miss it and it caught him fair an' tore him all open.

"Now Doublejaw weren't no sort of man t' make any fuss about a little fall from th' tops'l yard, but it was misconvenient to be a-walking around with all 'is innards tangling up 'is feet. The old man... that was Sarsaparilla Jones, what maybe you've heard of, Rubberneck . . . The old man, as I said, didn't know anything much about innards an' nor did the mate. So I said to 'em—Doublejaw being a special friend of mine—an' me being leading seaman—"

Rubberneck choked. "I thought you was cabin boy on the Bluenose Annie. Now it's a leading seaman you were."

Swiveltongue eyed him glassily.

"Them was the days when you 'ad to be a leading seaman to be a cabin boy," he explained. "Now where was' I ? Oh, aye, I said, sez I, 'There ain't no use letting poor Doublejaw run around like that. We've gotta stow 'is innards back where they belong and make 'em fast.' ' I ain't never sat for no examination that 'ad to do with stowing innards,' sez the old man, ' but I guess we'll have to makeshift somehow.'

"So the old man an' the mate an' me

goes to work, an' we coils down Doublejaw's innards the way it looked they ought to go . . . th' small ones going down left-'anded . . . same as a log line . . . an' the big ones going down right-'anded , . . , same as a heaving line. The only real trouble we 'ad was with his stomach . . . that being quite a size . . . but we got it shipped 'ome at last with some handspikes and a watch tackle, an' then we got our palms and needles and sewed poor Doublejaw up, as fancy a bit of cross-stitching as I ever see He was very proud of it afterwards.

"I don't know as I feels jest right, boys," he sez when we'd got through.

'Seems like there's a bit too much cargo to starboard.' It was a fact, I gotta admit, that 'e had a bad list, but that couldn't be helped seeing 'ow little we knowed about stowing innards."

"So 'e got better, did 'e?" said Rubberneck with skepticism. "Wot a yarn!"

"I said we was men them days, didn't I?" Swiveltongue observed amiably. "Of course 'e got better. 'E was up and working the same as ever not an' hour after we'd got through with him. There was only one funny thing 'e used to do afterwards, an' I always said that was because we'd maybe got 'is stomach wrong side up.

"But 'e'd never let us have another crack at it."

"What was it?" Mr. Billson demanded. "Did 'e have to eat through the keel instead of the main hatch?"

"He did not," stated Swiveltongue dispassionately. "But every time 'e sneezed 'e sneezed through his ears!"

MR. BILLSON coughed and meditated for a long time.

"Y'know," he said at last, stroking his buffalo-horn mustaches, "I ain't sure but wot you're sometimes right, Swiveltongue. It ain't often you are right, but I suppose even you 'as to be right now an' then. I calls to mind that men did used to be men sixty or seventy years ago, when I was in my prime. An' that little blizzard I jest went through with the cook 'ere reminds me of a man jest like that Doublejaw Murphy who sneezed through his ears."

"This ain't th' one about the skipper wot died?" demanded Swiveltongue suspiciously. Mr. Billson looked hurt. "Wot skipper 'oo died where?"

"The Scotch skipper they 'ad to get a glass cutter for, to get th' whisky bottle outer 'is clenched hand afore they could bury him."

"No," said Rubberneck disgustedly. "This ain't that one. You mean th' skipper who was so full of rum when they dropped him overside all th' sharks got soused and climbed up over the poop rail! . . . This one's about a cook, a cook as was a cook an' a man as was a man."

"Proceed," said Swiveltongue, magnanimously bending his bald head, "It's probably one of me own stories mistreated, but maybe not." Rubberneck Billson strangled back some profane language and then cleared his throat.

"It was in th' days when I was seventh mate of th' 'Andmedown Gaffer," he said defiantly. "Out of Archangel fer Wapping Stairs—"

"Jest a minute," Swiveltongue interrupted. "Seventh mate did you say? When was you ever a mate? An' a seventh mate at that, "

"When I was a younger and 'andsomer man, " said Rubberneck coldly. " Round seventy years ago. And that ship was a bigger packet than you've ever seen or will see. Eighty thousand tons an' full-rigged on nine masts."

"We'll take that up later, " declared Swiveltongue ominously. "A bigger ship than I ever seen, hey? Yes, we'll take that up later . . . Square away an' get along."

"To be sure," Mr. Billson agreed, squirting tobacco juice through the rail, "It was a cook, then, on board th' Andmedown Gaffer—when I was seventh mate—and 'is name was Plumduff Rollins."

"I know 'im, " agreed Swiveltongue. "We was shipmates on th' Legs Eleven . . . th' time old Cap'n Throttle-neck caught th' green whale . . .

" If it ain't too much to ask, " said Mr. Billson, " I'd like to make a few remarks about Plumduff Rollins." Swiveltongue blinked and waved for him to go on, and Mr. Billson spat again, disgusted.

"Well, " he said, "we was comin' south from Spitzbergen one time, when we raised a big shark lying off t' port . . .

SWIVELTONGUE ruffled his whiskers.

"A Spitzbergen shark, hey? That reminds me—"

"No!" Mr. Billson blared. "This was a ice shark. Th' sort wot knocks th' bergs over after eating all the bottoms away. An' as I said, we lifted sech a shark south of Spitzbergen, and jest about then th' fool cabin boy drops a crate of apples over th' side which th' ice shark gollops down as sweet as you please. Th' creature was sort of

'ungry from the way it kept alongside us, an' a while later, when th' mate's cleaning off a chair on th' poop, the chair goes accidentally overside and I'll be caulked down if the blamed ice shark didn't swallow that too.

"Now, I ain't quite sure 'ow long after that it was, but about a couple of watches later Plumduff Rollins, feeling kind of sickish, leans over th' rail to discharge, an' being the man 'e was 'is first heave takes him clear into th' drink, an' I'll be double-damned if the shark doesn't get 'im as well. Sorta making a day of it, see?"

"Well,' sez the old man. 'We can't stand fer that sort of thing. Th' next we know th' ferocious animal will be taking chunks out of th' Andmedown Gaffer. We gotta stop it!' So 'e sends me an' the bosun down into the lazarette an' we bring up a couple of salted 'ogs which we spears to th' flukes of the port anchor . . . th' ice shark being some considerable size an' we not having no hooks on board bigger than a fathom across.

" Well, Swiveltongue, we'd no sooner got th' anchor baited than th' blasted shark 'eads away to the south- 'ard as fast as 'e can go. There were some of us figured that ended the business, an' we'd have to say good-by to poor old Plumduff Rollins. But th' old man was as obstinate as a barnacle. 'E sez, sez 'e, ' No nice shark's a-going to have th' laugh on me an' get away with th' best cook the Andmedown Gaffer ever had, even if Plumduff is cross-eyed.'

"So we gets all sail on th' Andmedown Gaffer—and we carried moon-s'ls, winds'ls and stars'ls above the skys'ls, ten yards to a mast—an' we

chases after th' shark. Followed 'im for seventeen days, we did, tacking clear across from Cape Race to Cape Town an' back, an' at last we jest naturally wears th' beastie out. We come alongside 'im then an' dropped the anchor with the salt pork right under 'is nose, and 'e opens his mouth and swallows the lot as lively as you please, 'im being somewhat 'ungry again since we'd given him no time to stop and eat.

"We 'ad to play him for another week after that, using the big towing wire for a line along with the anchor cable, an' when we lifted 'im aboard it took all 'ands—three 'undred and fifty-two men—an' all th' tackle we'd got to 'oist him clear. Then of course we cut 'im open an' there was Plumduff Rollins in th' middle of 'is stomach, a-sitting on th' chair as lively as you please. 'Adn't lost any sleep nor any weight either, but 'e was a mite grieved we'd kept 'im waiting so long." Mr. Billson paused to eject tobacco juice and wipe his mustaches.

"'E was a man," Swiveltongue conceded judicially. "A real man—such as we 'ad when I was a boy. I presoom 'e kept hissself alive eating th' apples wot the cabin boy 'ad dropped overside."

"You've near guessed it, " agreed Mr. Billson."But 'e was a bit choked up and there was a fathom of roots growing out of 'is scuppers. Y'see, being cross-eyed 'e'd been eating the cores of the apples and throwing th' proper part away, an' the seeds 'ad sprouted inside him. Wot was worse, 'e'd got to doing 'is daily constitooshunal up an' down the ice shark's belly, and 'e'd mashed the apples all down. When we got 'im loose 'e was soused to the gills, hiccapping all over—a-sitting on his

chair an' up to 'is knees in 'ard cider!"

SWIVELTONGUE SAUNDERS carefully refilled his pipe, lighted it and let the rank smoke trickle down his spongy red nose.

"Fair, " he conceded graciously. "Pretty fair for th' likes of you, Rubberneck. I ain't th' man not to give credit where credit is due. Plumduff Rollins was a man *an'* a cook. But 'e wasn't th' man nor th' cook old Haddockface Scroggins was—the same 'oo was cook on the Bluenose Annie when I was bosun of 'er."

Mr. Billson almost swallowed his quid but saved himself in time.

"You was cabin boy afore," he said indignantly. "Then you was leading seaman. Now you sez you was bosun on the Bluenose Annie. Ain't you got no memory?"

"Bosun I said an' bosun it were," declared Swiveltongue, his eyes fishy and cold. "The old man—Sarsaparilla Jones like I said—made me bosun after I'd saved all 'ands an' the ship, wot time we 'ad a hepidemic of whale fleas on th' run from Jerusalem to Nome. Big as chickens they were, 'opping all over, 'an when they bit they meant business—I'll give you th' rights of that yarn sometime, Rubberneck—But to resoom. Haddockface Scroggins was cook of the Bluenose Annie when I was bosun.

"Now, it's a peculiar thing, Rubberneck, but just like th' Andmedown Gaffer, the Bluenose Annie lifted th' mains'l fin of a shark one day, one of them big bull sharks. 'E was about seven 'undred feet over all, I'd judge, with a 'undred foot beam an' a draft of some eighty feet er so. You know, Rubberneck, one of them bull

sharks wot feeds on them ice sharks you was speakin' of.

"Anyway, jest about the time we spots this whopper, old Haddockface Scroggins lets go a box of onions which 'e was bringing along to the galley from a deck cargo we 'd stowed on number fifteen 'atch. The onions jest slipped out of Haddockface's arms and through a port—the Bluenose Annie being rolling sixty degrees or more—an' getting all excited what does Haddockface do but dive right through th' port after them. Of course that was criminal suicide, for the bull shark jest gives a beller an' swallows Haddockface and the onions an' all.

"I was standing near th' galley at th' time, an' Haddockface being—an old shipmate o' mine I gets excited m'self and heaves a frying pan at th' shark t' try and scare 'im away. Then th' old man—Sarsaparilla Jones—goes and 'eaves a cracker box, but it weren't any use at all. The bull shark jest swallows whatever's coming and the old man decides we've gotta finish the shark, same as your skipper decided on th' Andmedown Gaffer."

Mr. Billson spurted tobacco juice, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and squinted at Swiveltongue.

"There ain't," he announced, "no anchor built wot'd hook a bull shark. So wot?"

"We didn't use no anchor," explained Swiveltongue gently. "We didn't need t' use nothing. Right as soon as th' bull shark got Haddockface properly swallowed 'e jest naturally up and died. Them's the sort of men we 'ad in those days . . . an' that was the sort of man Haddockface was. The bull shark

jest died."

"All right," conceded Mr. Billson. "We'll say Haddockface was so tough th' bull shark jest died. But Haddockface was gone. 'E was gone in th' shark's stomach."

"Now you ain't giving me time t' come in and dock," Swiveltongue protested mildly, "I didn't say Haddockface was dead an' gone. Nor 'e wasn't in no stomach. Nothing of th' sort. 'E was jest naturally rank poison to anything wot swallowed him. We got th' shark alongside an' we dug into 'im. Took us five days, using dynamite an' drills to get down to 'is innards. 'E was quite a tidy size, like I said. But we did get down, an' wot d'you suppose we found?"

Mr. Billson was sarcastic.

"I suppose you found Haddockface a-running round and round chasing them ice sharks wot you said th' bull shark feeded on!" SWIVELTONGUE allowed himself a seraphic smile.

"Nothing of th' sort, Rubberneck. I can tell you ain't been around much, t' be so ignerant. Bull sharks jest chew up th' ice sharks so there'd be nothing left t' chase . . . No, sir! We found Haddockface squatting down in th' middle of a couple of acres of liver 'e'd located. An' there 'e was, close to a fire 'e'd built from the cracker box, a-cooking liver an' onions in 'is frying pan an' looking as 'appy as you please. Shark's liver an' onions, Rubberneck, fried by a cook as was a cook, an' a man as was a man . . . All 'ands et nothing else fer two months and outa that bull shark's backbone we got a cargo of eight thousand, four 'undred and twenty-two walking sticks which we traded to th' Fiji Islanders fer muskrats."

Mr. Billson swallowed hard, "Muskrats?" he said incredulously. "In the Fiji Islands? An' wot would you be wanting muskrats for?"

"Well, y'see," explained Swiveltongue patiently, "these was special muskrats an' being in th' tropics as they were their fur 'ad become sort of bronzed. Very valuable fur. Then the old man—Sarsaparilla Jones;—'ad some queer ideas. 'E liked to make money on th' side an' 'e was always raising something. This trip 'e had th' whole of number twelve 'old filled with white Eskimo cats wot 'e was raising for their 'ides, an' fur of course. An' he figured 'e'd raise these bronze muskrats too. That was th' way 'e solved perpetual motion."

Against his will Mr. Billson's eyes popped out and he was distinctly shocked.

"Per—perpetual motion, " he mumbled inarticulately. "What?" Swiveltongue waved his pipe.

"Oh, I didn't expect you'd ever 'ave heard of it, Rubberneck. It's a sort of thing that goes on and on or something. Anyway, Sarsaparilla Jones claimed 'ed got it when 'e started raising 'is Eskimo cats an' 'is bronze muskrats. You see, 'e killed 'em off when they was fur ripe, an' 'e fed th' cats to the rats an' the rats to th' cats, so 'e had never a bit of grub to buy, an' th' fur was all clear profit. 'E was a clever man, Rubberneck. A very clever man."

MR. BILLSON moodily chewed on his mustaches and was temporarily crushed. Swiveltongue smiled, munched his toothless gums on the stem of his clay pipe and ploughed remorselessly on.

" Maybe I should tell you some

more about Sarsaparilla Jones an' the Bluenose Annie, Rubberneck. Specially about th' Bluenose Annie. I seems to recall 'earing you remark, a little previous, about a packet called th' Andmedown Gaffer wot you stated, off'and like, was eighty thousand tons an' full rigged on nine masts.

"Now I wouldn't dream of questioning that statement none, none at all, Rubberneck, but you went on to make the insinuation that 'twas a bigger ship than I ever saw or was ever like t' see! . . . There's times when I'm surprised at yer ignerance, Rubberneck. There ain't a fo'c's'le but wot knows the Bluenose Annie was th' biggest ship ever built—saving for th'

Yankee Doodle, which I'll tell you of later—The Bluenose Annie was jest a 'undred thousand tons an' she was special built. She was th' only ship I ever sailed wot could make her way on nothin' but a 'eavy dew, 'aving been designed with no draft at all, which was some ways convenient an' some ways not."

Mr. Billson made a desperate attempt to rally.

"Did you never 'ear of th' time th' Andmedown Gaffer got into that fog?" he said. "Off Cape Race it were, an' when it cleared she was sailing fifty feet above th' water—'aving lost 'er bearings an' being able t' navigate on a mist. I'm telling you, Swiveltongue. Did you never 'ear of that?"

' Swiveltongue nodded amiably.

"I'll take that up some time, " he agreed. "A 'undred years ago . . . when I was a boy . . . such doings was common. But fer now let me tell you of th' big storm th' Bluenose Annie got in once. We was sailing from Denver, Colorado ... or maybe

it was Winnipeg ... I misremember . . . Anyway we was bound for Moscow with a cargo of whisky so th' Laplanders could civilize th' country ... an' right off Cape Souser we ran into th' worst gale I ever seen ... an' I been to sea, man an' boy, fer nigh on a 'undred an' twenty years.

"I've 'eard you, Rubberneck, boasting of light airs you'd known wot took th' hair off th' old man's chest and took th' kinks outa of th' mate's corkscrew when he was tryin' to open a bottle on the poop deck. But that's childish, Rubberneck. Our old man, Sarsaparilla Jones, was real 'ard. The 'air on *his* chest was like towing 'awsers an' when it blew real good all wot 'appened was that you'd see sparks flying out from th' friction. The worst wot ever did 'appen to 'im was after one bad blow when 'e got rid of all 'is dandruff, an' when it was over 'is ears, wot 'ad stood out like stuns'ls, was permanent flat against 'is head.

"However, that ain't the story. Th' one gale I wishes t' recall blew all th' seams outer the decks, an' the paint was just slicked off like it 'ad never been put on. Poor Haddockface Jones—the same wot invented fried shark's liver an' onions—was standing outside th' galley when one extra big gust came, and 'is false teeth went clear down 'is throat. 'E couldn't eat a thing until after e'd drunk a gallon of castor oil from th' medicine chest an' got 'em back, an' th' while 'e was waiting for that you could 'ear 'em chattering all th' way through 'is innards.

"Well, along about th' second day of this gale I'm speakin' of old Sarsaparilla Jones decided 'e might as well make use of so much wind—seeing it wasn't fair for our course—so he 'ad all the cargo shifted aft t'

bring the Bluenose Annie's 'ead up, and as soon as th' wind got under 'er it lifted her 'alf outa the water. We let 'er stay that way for a day or so an' then we put 'er about and shifted the cargo for'ard t' bring 'er stern up,'

"WELL," demanded Mr. Billson, "wot was the idea of that?"

"The idea," explained Swiveltongue, "was that we was pretty foul along th' bottom so we jest let the wind careen her. Blew off all th' grass and barnacles as slick as if she'd been dry-docked an' scraped. An' let me tell you, th' Bluenose Annie's barnacles was something to 'andle. A fathom across, the most of them. Sarsaparilla Jones got so tired of 'aving to clean 'em away at last 'e trained 'em instead. Taught 'em all to come out and wriggle, sort of, an' help push the ship ahead. We got three more knots an hour out of 'er that way."

"Ah," groaned Mr. Billson. "Wot next?"

"I ain't a-going t' tell you no lies," Swiveltongue went on complacently. "We didn't lose no masts and spars an' such in that gale. The Bluenose Annie was a bit too big t' be bothered much save for her small gear. Maybe perhaps we 'ad good luck. Sarsaparilla Jones was 'andicapped some though for a spell when 'is shadder blew away, an' I do recall th' mate 'aving his socks taken clean outa 'is seaboots an' off 'is feet and all. But things like that we jest took as a matter of course on the Bluenose Annie."

"I sorta forget how long it was that gale lasted, but anyways we got clear of it at last and Sarsaparilla Jones decided we ought t' lay up somewheres and overhaul a bit. So

we put in for th' coast an' runs inter jest such a fog as you was speaking of, Rubberneck— when the Andmedown Gaffer found 'erself sailing fifty feet above the water. I was at th' wheel at the time we got inter this fog, an' it was fair thick, I can tell you. Couldn't see outa your eyeballs even, but the old man didn't fret none nor stew around same as some would 'ave, though it was that bad 'e had to 'ave two men on th' poop a-cutting a road for 'im so 'e could walk up an' down as 'e was habited to.

"Figuring, naturally, as 'ow the Bluenose Annie had been built t' sail on a 'eavy dew 'e knew nothing wouldn't hurt us unless we ran smack into a cliff or something. An' as it 'appened nothing did 'urt us. We sailed on as fair as you please, until th' fog got so 'eavy it jest sank down outer sight. . . an' when that 'appened and we could see, where d' you suppose we wus?"

"Climbed up a mountain, I suppose," said Mr. Billson wearily.

"No, no!" reproved Swiveltongue. "You're exaggerating. We was fifty miles up a dry creek an' still making seven knots!"

Mr. Billson shook his head. "I ain't never 'eard of that," he confessed.

"There's a lot of things you ain't 'eard of," Swiveltongue reminded him. "Like you makin' such statements that the Andmedown Gaffer was th' biggest ship. I've told you th' Bluenose Annie was bigger by twenty thousand tons, and until we built the Yankee Doodle—I was 'ead-rigger on that job, seeing Sarsaparilla Jones wouldn't trust no one else—she was th' biggest packet afloat. We found 'er pretty 'andy though when we built th' Yankee

Doodle. Sarsaparilla Jones didn't want to break her up."

"Why didn't 'e want to break her up?" Mr. Billson demanded sarcastically. "I should think 'e'd want t' try and find 'is shadder what 'ad been blown away. Maybe it was down in th' olds, 'iding out on him."

"No, it wasn't that," said Swiveltongue gently. "The shadow was picked up at sea by the barkentine Wobbygong an' shipped by express back to Sarsaparilla. 'E didn't want to break up th' Bluenose Annie because she was so big an' it'd take so long. So 'e jest put 'er on board th' Yankee Doodle and used 'er for a lifeboat!"