

**THE BEST OF A BAD
JOB: A HEARTY TALE
OF THE SEA. [1912]**

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The Best of a Bad Job: A Hearty Tale of the Sea. [1912] by Norman Duncan

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NORMAN DUNCAN

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JOB: A HEARTY TALE
OF THE SEA. [1912]**

The Best of a Bad Job

*A Hearty Tale
of the Sea*

By

NORMAN DUNCAN

Author of "Doctor Lake of the Labrador,"
"The Measure of a Man," etc., etc.



New York Chicago Toronto
Fleming H. Revell Company
London and Edinburgh

To
JOSIAH WINDSOR MANUEL
aboard the "Fog-Free Zone" in
this fall weather

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I

RICKITY TICKLE

IT was beginning to blow when the trader *Quick as Wink* dropped anchor in the lee of Blow-Me of Rickity Tickle. Agile little gusts were already tumbling over the hills to ruffle the soggy calm of harbour; and overhead—between the cozy shelter of the tickle and the dreary gray of day—shreds of white mist were streaming with ominous haste towards the dry inland wastes. The tint and feel of the restless gray world portended storm: so Skipper Jim hung the *Quick as Wink* down for the night; and while the gale was viciously trying to strip the seaward hills of the last branches of the verdure that still remained to grace them we foregathered with the trader of these new days in his shop on the rocks by Squid Cove—old Pinch-a-Penny Peter of other times being then long dead—where Tumm of the *Quick as Wink* began the tale of the man who had made the best of a bad job.

"Pack o' lies!" the cook scoffed, when Tumm had done with the tale for good and all.

"Oh, well, cook," Tumm retorted, grimly, "you're loath t' credit the tale because it shames you!"

Surely not a fair test of the quality of a man! . . . And yet—perhaps so. . . . A singular tale, truly—a shocking humiliation of the achievements of most men! But it was a true enough tale that Tumm began that wild night at Rickity Tickle and went on with in other harbours of the coast. And when you have read the tale through to the end you may discover for yourself whether or not it shames the man that you are. . . .

There is a devil-may-care scattering of black reefs off the narrows to the shelter of the great hills of Rickity Tickle. A naughty place for the mail-boat and strange schooners to be caught of a foggy time or of a night in the dark of the moon! And these frothy fangs—and the soapy seas all roundabout—should be borne in mind. If the reefs are forgotten in the movement of Tumm's incredible yarn the astounding behaviour of old Tom Tulk in the extraordinary

circumstances hereafter to be related will lose its highest significance. Off Rickity Tickle, indeed, lies the meanest patch of outport water known to those harsh parts. It is all sudsy with broken waves in northeasterly gales: in the blowing of which it resembles nothing so nearly, as viewed from the gray smother of the open, as a gigantic basin of mightily agitated lather.

It should be made plain in the beginning, moreover, in somewhat anxious furtherance of Tumm's singular tale, that Rickity Tickle is a fishing outport of the Newfoundland north coast. It is harbour snug enough, to be sure, in any wind—a placid basin, fashioned by Lost Island and a beneficent arm of the Cape, of whose gray rocks the trader's shop and storehouses, and a scattering of squat white cottages, make a sufficient and acceptable home for the lively folk of the place. To deal with deficiency—with a good heart to make the best of short allowance in all things—is the fate and teaching of the coast: otherwise Blind Tom Tulk would surely have capitulated to his astonishing disability and whimpered his way to the grave where his brave old bones were stretched in honour to rest at last.