

GOLDEN HINTS FOR YOUNG MARINERS

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Golden hints for young mariners by James Sedgwick

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JAMES SEDGWICK

**GOLDEN HINTS FOR
YOUNG MARINERS**

GOLDEN HINTS
FOR
YOUNG MARINERS.

BY CAPTAIN JAMES SEDGWICK,
AUTHOR OF "TRUE PRINCIPLES OF THE LAW OF STORMS."

Entered at Stationers' Hall.



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TO THE MERCANTILE MARINE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

THE very flattering manner in which my attempt to simplify the beautiful theory expounded by Sir Wm. Reid, on the Laws of Storms, was received by my nautical brethren, induces me to hope that my present endeavour to write something useful for the guidance of young officers in the merchant-service, when placed in trying positions, will meet with similar approval.

There is much in this little work that may appear trivial to the experienced seaman, and his opinion may be different on many of the subjects treated upon. Still I hope that a great many of my nautical brethren will be disposed to consider the present work, as one likely to prove useful to the rising generation.

My previous work on the Law of Storms was dedicated to the royal navy, as well as to the mercantile marine of this country. But in a work of this kind it would be presumption in me to imagine that I could give any hints likely to be useful to the naval officer, where the rules and regulations of his service are such that almost all emergencies are provided for; at the same time I am not without hope that the young Middy, ambitious to get charge of the quarter-deck as an officer, may find some useful hints in this little work, which, with other resources at his command, he will be able to improve upon.

To the young officers of the merchant-service my present work

I believe will prove useful, although they may learn from after-experience to differ from some of the rules I have laid down. In publishing these directions for the hour of danger, I have done so with the feeling of having had frequent opportunities of putting them to the test, during a life that has been spent at sea, and I trust that the experience I have gained may serve to diminish the difficulties that they will have to contend with.

It is a general idea with people on shore that any boy will make a sailor; this is not the case; the qualifications requisite to make a good seaman are many and various. It does not follow that because a man is a good mathematician, he must necessarily make a good officer; the seaman's art is practical and mechanical; and if he has a sufficient knowledge of navigation to be able, with the aid of instruments and books, to ascertain his position on the broad Atlantic as well as the Astronomer-royal himself could do, surely, if his inclinations are not mathematically inclined, he may be considered quite as competent, if not more so, than the man who has always got his head filled with some abstract idea on mathematics.

The mathematician is intended for the study; he is the seaman's friend, and teaches him how to apply short and easy rules, deduced from long calculations in spherical trigonometry, which enables the mariner to conduct his vessel with perfect safety from port to port; the other part of the profession is longer in being learned, and requires practice combined with quick ideas. In fact, there are many who go to sea all their lives, and never learn it; these are the men who haul the head-sails down, and try to get the foreyard round when the ship is aback, and when caught in a squall make futile efforts to get a topgallant studding-sail in, with the helm hard up, and spanker set; to such this little work may prove useful, they will probably pay

more attention when informed of their deficiencies in print, than when spoken to on the subject by their superior officers.

Unfortunately, the merchant-service is too often made a resort for the destitute; the boy, whose parents are unable to make anything of him on shore, is sent to sea; the man who finds it impossible to obtain a living on shore, doffs the skirted coat, and is soon placed by the crimp on shipboard; these are the lubbers! and the law favours them. I have seen the clearest cases of incompetency made out, but the magistrate (a landsman), unable to understand the matter, leans to the party who apparently requires his commiseration, and the heading in ships' articles thus becomes a dead letter. Surely common sense must suggest that a naval officer, or an officer from the merchant-service, would be more fitted to fill the magistrate's chair on such occasions.

Within the last fifteen years there have been no less than three Merchant-Seaman's Acts in force, the last one a little better than the others; but the whole law required might be contained in a very small space: what is wanted is discipline, obedience, and civility to officers; on the other hand, tyranny should be punished. It is found expedient for the better maintenance of order in the good City of London to send the poor cabman to prison for ten days if he is only insolent to a gentleman; surely, in a confined place like shipboard, the same power should be given to the captain, instead of the absurd notion of stopping two days' pay. Seamen in general think that shipmasters have no authority to confine them, and frequently when an attempt is made to confine an unruly character, scenes occur that never would, if the right to do so was made more explicit, and two years' imprisonment given to those who attempted to intimidate the master in the performance of his duty.

I can hardly hope that these opinions from an humble indi-

vidual like myself will ever carry much weight with them ; but as my whole heart and soul has, for the greater part of my life, been wrapped up in the welfare of the merchant-service, I cannot help raising my feeble voice in behalf of that service I have had the satisfaction of belonging to for so many years.

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages may prove useful to many, and especially to the junior officers of the service. The Hints contained in them are derived from long experience, and much thought on the various subjects treated of; and although some will be too ready to cry out, "These ideas are all very well on paper, but it is not so easy to carry them out in many of the difficult positions imagined," yet I am inclined to think that a man, in the hour of danger, and at his wits' end to know how to act, would have no objection to look at a work where the particular danger he was in was treated on. Many men find resources in the hour of danger, but they are often only impulses, and may or may not succeed. When in doubt or difficulty, sailing directories are pored over by the hour together, why may not practical hints be found equally useful to the man who gets his vessel ashore, has a fire on board, or, in short, meets with any calamity? Some useful hint suggested, and found in this little work, written when the head was clear, may, to many men in their hour of need, prove valuable; and young men may probably appreciate an attempt to teach what is so seldom taught—
PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE.