

**FO'C'S'LE YARNS:
INCLUDING BETSY LEE,
AND OTHER POEMS**

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Fo'c's'le Yarns: Including Betsy Lee, and Other Poems by Thomas Edward Brown

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THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

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BETSY LEE, AND OTHER POEMS

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. BETSY LEE	I
II. CHRISTMAS ROSE	61
III. CAPTAIN TOM AND CAPTAIN HUGH	145
IV. TOMMY BIG-EYES	192

I.

BETSY LEE.

I SAID I would? Well, I hardly know,
But a yarn's a yarn; so here we go.
It's along of me and a Lawyer's Clerk,
You've seen mayhap that sort of spark!
As neat and as pert, and as sharp as a pin,
With a mossel of hair on the tip of his chin;
With his face so fine, and his tongue so glib,
And a saucy cock in the set of his jib;
With his rings and his studs and all the rest,
And half a chain cable paid out on his breast.
Now there's different divils ashore and at sea,
And a divil's a divil wherever he be;
But if you want the rael ould mark,
The divil of divil's is the Lawyer's Clerk.
Well—out it must come, though it be with a wrench,
And I must tell you about a wench
That I was a courtin of, yes me!
Aye, and her name it was Betsy Lee.

Now most of you lads has had a spell
 Of courtin and that, and it's hard to tell
 How ever a youngster comes to fancy
 That of all the gels it's Jinny or Nancy,
 Or Mary or Betsy that must be hisn.
 I don't know how it is or it isn,
 But some time or other it comes to us all,
 Just like a clap of shoot¹ or a squall,
 Or a snake or a viper, or some such dirt,
 Creep—creep—creepin under your shirt,
 And slidin and slippin right into your breast,
 And makin you as you can't get rest :
 And it works and it works till you feel your heart risin—
 God knows what it is if it isn pisin.

You see—we're a roughish set of chaps,
 That's brought up rough on our mammies' laps ;
 And we grow and we run about shoutin and foolin
 Till we gets to be lumps² and fit for the schoolin.
 Then we gets to know the marks³ and the signs,³
 And we leaves the school, and we sticks to the lines,
 Baitin and settin and haulin and that,
 Till we know every fish from a whale to a sprat ;
 And we gets big and strong, for it do make you stronger
 To row a big boat, and to pull at a conger.
 Then what with a cobblin up of the yawl,
 And a patchin and mendin the nets for the trawl,

¹ Sudden fall of soot in the chimney.

² Good-sized lads.

³ -Of the fishing grounds.

And a risin early and a goin to bed late,
And a drammin of scollops as big as a plate,
And the hooks and the creels and the oars and the gut,
You'd say there's no room for a little slut.
But howsomdever it's not the case,
And a pretty face is a pretty face ;
And through the whole coil, as bright as a star,
A gel slips in, and there you are !

Well, that was just the way with me
And the gel I'm speakin of—Betsy Lee.
Ah, mates ! it's wonderful too—the years
You may live dead-on-end with your eyes and your ears
Right alongside of the lass that's goin
To be your sweetheart, and you never knowin !

That's the way. For her father and mine
Was neighbours, and both in the fisherman line ;
And their cottages stood on the open beach,
With a nice bit of garden aback of them each.
You know the way them houses is fixed,
With the pigs and the hens and the childher mixed ;
And the mothers go round when the nights begin,
And whips up their own, and takes them in.
Her father was terrible fond of flowers,
And his garden was twice as handsome as ours—
A mortal keen eye he had for the varmin,
And his talk was always of plantin and farmin.
He had roses hangin above his door,

Uncommon fine roses they was to be sure,
 And the joy of my heart was to pull them there,
 And break them in pieces on Betsy's hair.
 Not that Betsy was much of a size
 At the time I mean, but she had big eyes,
 So big and so blue, and so far asunder,
 And she looked so sollum I used to wonder.
 That was all—just baby play,
 Knockin about the boats all day,
 And sometimes a lot of us takin hands
 And racin like mad things over the sands.
 Ah! it wouldn be bad for some of us
 If we'd never gone funder, and never fared wuss;¹
 If we'd never grown up, and never got big,
 If we'd never took the brandy swig,
 If we were skippin and scamp'rin and cap'rin still
 On the sand that lies below the hill,
 Crunchin its grey ribs with the beat
 Of our little patterin naked feet;
 If we'd just kept childher upon the shore
 For ever and ever and ever more.

Now the beauty of the thing when childher plays is
 The terrible wonderful length the days is,
 Up you jumps, and out in the sun,
 And you fancy the day will never be done:
 And you're chasin the bumbees hummin so cross
 In the hot sweet air among the goss,²

¹ Worse.

² Gorse.