

**STORIES OF THE SEA IN
FORMER
DAYS: NARRATIVES
OF WRECK AND RESCUE**

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Stories of the sea in former days: narratives of wreck and rescue by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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Preface

The experiences of those "that go down to the sea in ships" have ever been of the greatest interest to young readers. Stories of shipwreck, famine, mutiny, and the other misfortunes which befall the mariner, always will be appreciated by all who love to read of deeds of daring, and to ponder on the lessons which may be drawn from them. They may serve as examples to be imitated in times of necessity; of dangers, once encountered, to be afterwards avoided; or as beacons to indicate the rocks and shoals which beset nearly every path in life.

In the present volume will be found narratives of occurrences, such as the ever-memorable mutiny of the *Bounty*, which have become historical, and many others of equal interest. They have been compiled from authentic sources; and it is hoped that they will be read with that attention which is ever roused by the perusal of *true* stories of suffering and courage under trying circumstances.

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ADVENTURES OF PIETRO QUIRINI, A VENETIAN

(1431)

Impelled by a strong desire to increase his fortune, Pietro Quirini, a Venetian merchant established at Candia, undertook a voyage to Flanders, in a vessel whose cargo was composed of cotton, wines, and other Candian products. His son, whom he designed to accompany him, died five days before his departure, a calamity which proved too correct a presage of the misfortunes which the future concealed for him.

He sailed from Candia, which then belonged to the Venetians, on the 25th of April, 1431. His ship springing a leak, through the carelessness of the pilot, he was compelled to put into Cadiz to get her repaired. He again put to sea on the 14th of July, but a north-east wind drove him out into the open, near the Canary Isles, shores with which he was unacquainted, and which seemed to him very perilous. Provisions ran short, and the fastenings of the helm giving way, it was necessary to replace them. Thus he was driven into Lisbon, where he arrived on the 29th of August, and from whence he departed on the 14th of September.

Hardly had the ship got out to sea before a terrible tempest overtook her, which lasted several days, and drove her beyond the Scilly Isles, at the very time that she ought to have been sailing up the Channel. On the

10th of November the fury of the storm was much increased, the helm was again unshipped, and the vessel drifted far away to the westward. The crew contrived to repair the helm with some stout cordage, but once more it was rendered useless, and it was only after three days of incredible exertions that they were able to repatch it. In this extremity the greatest economy became needful in the distribution of the provisions, and everybody cheerfully submitted to very limited rations.

The danger grew imminent. The Venetian merchant retired into his cabin. After having collected himself a little, and uttered a few brief earnest prayers, he regained his courage, and returned on deck to reanimate and inspire his crew. After some fruitless trials at new rudders, the 25th of November found them battling with the utmost fury of the winds and waves. But a sudden pause ensued, and delayed the last hour of the ill-fated vessel. The sails, however, were so much damaged that when the crew attempted to hoist them they rent into fragments. Thus deprived of helm and canvas, the ship tossed to and fro on the seething waters, and leaked so rapidly that it was with difficulty she was kept afloat.

On the 4th of December four great waves broke upon the deck, and the ship plunged deeper and more heavily in the sea. The crew, in spite of their fatigue, and though working up to their waists in water, succeeded in pumping her free of water. For the three following days the weather moderated; but on the 7th the hurricane so agitated the ocean that the billows rolled mountains high. At one time the ship was carried up to the skies, at another dashed into an abyss in the middle of the waters, and the profound darkness was only relieved by an occasional flash of vivid lightning. The vessel so hung over to larboard, and the water poured down the hatches in such

abundance, that the sailors, expecting every moment she would founder, looked at each other with a mournful air, as if inquiring what could be done to relieve her. As a last resource they cut away the mainmast. At the moment that it fell the sea threw the ship nearly on her beam ends, and the mast rolled over into the waves. Immediately the ship righted, and the crew, during the dark and miserable night, applied themselves to the pumps. But Quirini called them together, and addressed them in a few sensible words: "You see, my friends," he said, "that it is no longer possible to steer or govern our ship. Our provisions are rapidly diminishing. To remain here is to resign one's self to certain death, either by famine or drowning. Let us then take to the boats with what provisions we have left, and so, with Heaven's help, we may hope to save ourselves if the weather moderates."

The crew consented, believing the nearest coast to be that of Ireland, about twenty leagues distant, and prepared to abandon the ship on the first favourable opportunity. Quirini proposed to draw lots for the forty-seven persons who should embark in the shallop, leaving the other twenty-one to find shelter in the cutter. The number of men required for the latter frail and dangerous skiff voluntarily stepped forward, and Quirini, with the officers, entered into the shallop, though they would have preferred the cutter as the post of honour. Every exertion was then made to get the boats afloat.

The operation was long and troublesome; but at length, on the 17th, was terminated. The provisions were equally divided, but the two boats could only contain a very small quantity of wine.

The moment of parting was a cruel one for all. They embraced each other with lively expressions of regret. The captain was overwhelmed with grief when at last

constrained to bid adieu to the graceful ship he had constructed with so much labour, and upon whose rich cargo he had founded such brilliant hopes of future fortune.

In a mist which gathered over about evening the skiff got separated from the shallop. On the following morning the crew of the latter looked about eagerly for her, but she was no more seen, and never more heard of. They deeply deplored the fate of their comrades, whom they necessarily supposed to have perished, but soon they were menaced with a similar doom. The sea became so furious that a monstrous billow broke over the stern of the shallop, and nearly filled her with water. All hands set to work to bail, and in their frantic terror flung overboard everything on which they laid their hands—wine, provisions, clothing. The loss of a portion of their wine compelled them to restrict each man to one glass per day, and at the end of a week this ration was further reduced one half.

The sufferings of these poor wretches did not diminish. Day and night they were under the necessity of bailing the shallop of the water which constantly flowed into her. They had never experienced at Venice a winter so bitterly cold. The sailors felt it most keenly, being lightly clad, scantily supplied with provisions, and exposed to the inclemency of nights which lasted twenty hours. Their feet grew benumbed, and an entire loss of sensation gradually spread over every limb. Tormented by hunger, they devoured whatever they could grasp, then, stricken suddenly, they fell forward, and breathed their last sigh.

Thus perished two and even four men daily between the 19th and 29th of December; by the 5th of January twenty-six had perished. They were buried in the waves by their trembling comrades.