

**CAPTAIN ANTLE:
THE
SAILOR'S FRIEND**

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Captain Antle: The Sailor's Friend by Charles Mortimer

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CHARLES MORTIMER

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BY

CHARLES MORTIMER

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BY CHARLES HENRY ST. JOHN



THEY that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters ;
These see the works of the Lord,
And his wonders in the deep.
For he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind,
Which lifteth the waves thereof.
They mount up to heaven,
They go down again to the depths :
Their soul is melted because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wit's end.
Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.
He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
Then they are glad because they be quiet ;
So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

CAPTAIN ANTLE

THE SAILOR'S FRIEND

I.

MY early life was passed in an eastern seaport which, in those days, could boast of an extensive and prosperous commerce with all quarters of the world. Fleets of magnificent ships and square-rigged vessels rode proudly in the harbor or surrounded the wharves with a forest of masts. Owing to causes not necessary to specify, shipping has long since all but forsaken those waters, and wharves which were once alive with business are now deserted and gone to decay.

From the fact that a great proportion of the inhabitants were more or less interested in maritime affairs, nearly every seaman, certainly every master-mariner, was a familiar figure about town, and his characteristics known to all. While a number of these "old salts" were highly esteemed, both as citizens and sailors (the majority of them being neither better nor worse than their class everywhere), there were a few whose reputation was a reproach to the trade, and who, but for their success and efficiency as navigators, would scarcely have been endured for a single voyage. Among the most

notorious of the latter class was the person whom I shall attempt to describe in the following pages — Captain George Antle.

Such a terror was George Antle, not only to the whole ship's company which he commanded, but to all who had any dealings with him, that he became proverbial, and to be called "a regular Antle" was considered anything but complimentary. He was a man with a temper so quick, uncertain, and violent, that a word or even a glance was often sufficient to rouse his ire; and then, as the almanac reads, "look out for squalls."

A stalwart sailor, with fierce, gray-green eyes deep set in a square face covered with tawny hair, his aspect, when excited, was that of a lion, a blow from whose "paw" would prove fatal to the strongest. Even the wind of this formidable weapon was sufficiently paralyzing as it swung past the retreating nose of his antagonist.

"Feared and hated by all," I presume you expect me to add. By no means. Feared, possibly, by some; but scarcely hated, because, to give Antle his due, he was possessed of a manly, generous nature, and many of his worst exhibitions of passion were in defense of others' rights rather than his own. When once roused, however, it was best not to cross his path or permit anything of a movable description, such as a chair or table, to stand in his way; for it would inevitably need repairs, if enough of the fragments could be found to make it worth while.

How a wife might have fared at his hands can only be

conjectured, as no woman, up to the date of the reader's introduction to him, seems to have cared to run the risk. Possibly the captain's own good sense may have forewarned him of the "failure" of any such alliance.

As a master-mariner, however, no abler man than Captain Antle sailed out of port or trod a quarter-deck. Of his voyages, he seldom or ever made a failure; and his ship, the "Saucy Lass," had the credit of being always the most successful of the fleet.

In spite of Antle's reputation as a martinet and "terror to evil doers," he rarely had any great difficulty in procuring a crew, and a good one, too; for everyone knew that his men were well fed, well cared for, and, if they deserved it, well treated. But, all the same, from cabin-boy up to cook, nay, up to first mate, all were liable to feel, at some time or other during the voyage, the wind of the captain's fist or the lash of his tongue.

That he loved his grog and his pipe goes without saying, for he was a thorough jack-tar, even in his vices; nor did he expect others, landsmen or sailors, to be any better than himself. In fact, he had the broadest toleration for everything except incompetence, duplicity, and meanness,—these failings he would not put up with from anyone, and hence many of his wildest explosions.

In spite of the inevitable "damages" that strewed his path, like that of a cyclone, Antle was so valuable a man that his employers never found themselves in a position to dispense with his services. Two things, to be sure, they would have