

A QUEER CABIN COMPANION.



"DOCTOR," said one of a party of diggers snugly ensconced one rainy winter's night in front of the Red Shirt Store's huge chimney, piled high with blazing logs, "spin us a yarn."

The doctor, nothing loth to display his talents, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, finished his grog, pushed his glass over to be filled again, and began as follows :

Fortune has made me a digger, but my uncle intended me for a physician. He was a crusty old bachelor, generous and open-handed, but irascible and obstinate. My father, his brother, having been a genius, had naturally come to grief. He married my mother for her beauty, which was her sole dower. It would have been a good thing for both of them, had Heaven taken away a trifle of the beauty on the one side and the genius on the other, and endowed each with a little sound sense. After a life of makeshifts, they both died when I was very young, leaving me nothing for my fortune but a fair share of the gifts which they had individually possessed. Did not old Jack Godfrey say of me, when I set his leg, that I was the cleverest chap in Victoria? And Bill, the fop, will bear testimony to the effect of my appearance, as I have cut him clean out of the good graces of the fair landlady of the Pick and

Shovel. About my common sense I won't brag, but I fancy I have acquired a wrinkle or two since I came to this golden country. Well, while my father was dissipating what little patrimony he had possessed in wild schemes, each of which was certain to bring him in at least a million, only it didn't, my uncle commenced business in a small way, saved and scraped, and when my parents died, in spite of the continual drain his brother had been upon him, was tolerably well off. When a lad, his great desire had been to be a doctor. Circumstances prevented the wish being gratified; but at any rate he determined that I should become one. So he sent me to a capital school, where I remained till I was eighteen, picking up a very small allowance of learning and a great deal of cricket and football, and then I was apprenticed to the principal surgeon in the town, from whom I acquired what little knowledge of medicine I possess. Now I have given you all this information, not because it has in the slightest degree anything to do with my story, but simply for the sheer pleasure of talking about myself; so, if you wish to raise any objections, you had better do so while I am taking a pull at my grog. (After a long draught the narrator continued.) When I was twenty-one I came up to a London hospital. My old uncle made

me a tidy allowance, and I determined to see life. My knowledge of drugs did not increase, it is true, but I became a wonderful judge of beer; my botanical studies were limited, but I culled the choicest flowers of speech that flourish on the cab-ranks, and had a large stock of chaff always on hand; and though I never paid much attention to anatomy, I have spent many a night over the bones. Now this sort of thing could not last. My old uncle was the style of man who does not object to outlay, but always expects a proportionate return; so that after I had been plucked a second time, he answered my application for a third payment of my debts by a letter, short but to the purpose. I remember it perfectly, so I'll give it to you. "Sir,—I enclose you a check for 100*l.*; you won't get any more when that is done, so you may go to the devil, or to Australia, which you like." I liked the latter; so, as my creditors were troublesome, before a week had elapsed I found myself on board the *Ocean King*, 1200 tons register, A 1, and carrying a competent surgeon, bound for Port Phillip direct. When I went down to engage a berth, I found that they were all taken up. At the last moment, however, a large compartment in the second cabin, which had been reserved for a hospital, was objected to by the surgeon as not adapted for the purpose, so I got billeted in it along with three others, and arranged to mess in the chief cabin. While we were running down Channel the sea was as calm as a mill-pond, with a fine breeze on the quarter, and all sail set. I felt as jolly as a sandboy, smoked cigars, swaggered about the deck, and talked as if I had been accustomed to the ocean all my life—in fact, any one might have imagined that it had acted as my nurse, and rocked me in my cradle. But when we got into the Bay I soon changed my tone. I believe that in that disgusting portion of the world it generally manages to blow two ways at once, or something of the kind; but on this occasion, as the mate, who was a rough old fellow, with a face made of unpolished mahogany, informed me, it had been blowing hard from three different quarters within the last twenty-four hours. The consequences were extremely unpleasant. There was an awful sea on—not a good high steady one, each billow half a mile long or so, like you see at the Cape—but a lot of horrid, high, short waves, all jumbled together, one going one way and another another. First the ship got a tremendous rap on her starboard side, sending her over to port; then, before she could get any distance down, she was knocked violently back again; then she would jump over the top of a wave as steep as a house side, and plunge bows under, as if she suddenly remembered that she had a particular engagement under water, and was going down to keep it; then she would be steady for a moment, and then down she would go again to port, and when she was laying over so much that she appeared to be making the interesting but slightly dangerous experiment of how far she could heel over without capsizing, a second sea would give her a malicious knock, as if bent on making her lose her balance, till you held your breath for fear that the slightest movement on your part should send her then and there on her

beam ends; and just as you had made up your mind that it was all over, and were regretting that you had neglected furnishing yourself with a life-belt, up she would come again, shivering from stem to stern, as if terrified at the fate she had so barely escaped—or rather, perhaps, as a prosaic passenger put it, shaking all over with suppressed laughter at the jolly fright she had given every one on board. When to all this was added the cursing of the captain, the bawling of the sailors, the roaring of the wind through the rigging, the creaking of the wooden partitions between the cabins, and the perpetual rolling to and fro of chests, trunks, washstands, basins, cooking utensils, &c., &c., not one of which, as a matter of course, had been properly secured, you may think that the situation was by no means an agreeable one. I stuck by the deck as long as I could, for, frightfully sea-sick as I was, I had a horror of the close air below; but at last the seas began to break over the ship so fast that I was obliged to go down.

On entering my cabin I was struck with the strong odour of tobacco and whisky that pervaded the atmosphere. At a glance the cause was evident. My cabin-companions—three old diggers on their return to Australia—were tucked snugly in their bunks, each with a bottle of whisky and a tin pannikin wedged in behind his pillow, and a clay pipe in his mouth. Now, if there was any one thing I abhorred more than another, it was the smell of tobacco in a small room. Cigars I liked, but a pipe smoked immediately under my nose within doors, I hated. So to the kind invitations of my shipmates to turn in and do likewise, I returned no very polite reply, but begged to recall to their memories that smoking below was strictly forbidden; to which the biggest and ugliest of them replied, using a great many adjectives, which I shall omit, that I was a fool; that I didn't think that they were going to be done out of their smoke for me,—did I? and that I had better go and complain to the captain, as he would be sure to leave the deck at that particular moment to put out their pipes if a swell, like myself, was to ask him. As I did not feel quite so sure of this, and had a sort of notion that I was being chaffed as well as smoked, I said nothing more, but turned in, in silence. For several hours I tossed and tumbled about, vainly endeavouring to get a few winks of sleep to alleviate the horrible pangs of sea-sickness, trebled by the stifling atmosphere and the fumes of bad tobacco, and worse spirits. At first I hoped that my companions would become stupefied by their incessant smoking and drinking, and would, at last, allow me a little repose. No such thing, such seasoned old chums as they, were not to be affected by a bottle of whisky or a few ounces more or less of bird's-eye. At first they contented themselves with interminable tales of how Squinting Jack, or some such interesting person had struck a new lead on a kangaroo flat, and had had his claimed jumped by the Tipperary boys; and how when he objected to this operation—with regard to the meaning of which I was in the most perfect ignorance—they had argued with him by the

unanswerable, and, as it appeared to me, consequent process of knocking him down and jumping on him afterwards; how Sydney Bill had kept a sly grog-shop and done the traps by having Old Tom, whoever he might be, up in a coffin, which, he said, was for his father, who insisted upon being buried in a civilised manner; how Cornish Dick had dropped on a cove sitting on his wash dirt, and had shot him then and there, and how this summary proceeding had been very much applauded by the whole diggings, although it turned out that the man was simply drunk, and no more a thief, bless you, than the Bishop. This last agreeable anecdote, by-the-by, was the cause of some very severe remarks against drinking by the ugliest and dirtiest of the three ruffians, who was then just about opening his second bottle. As it got dark they added to the generally cheerful frame of my mind, by lighting little bits of tallow candle and sticking them in an ingenious manner to the woodwork of their bunks by the aid of a little melted grease, so that my previous anxiety to see them speechlessly drunk was now converted into an agonised desire that they should remain sober, that being the only possible chance I could perceive of not adding the horrors of fire to the miseries of the tempest. By this time they had left off story-telling, and taken to singing, and as they all sang at once, and each of them a different song, the effect was infinitely more striking than agreeable. When the ugliest of them had sufficiently exercised his lungs, it seemed suddenly to strike him that I had made some personal remarks of an extremely offensive character on entering the cabin, whereupon he inquired whether I wanted anything for myself, and, if so, why I didn't stand up to him like a man, and he would let me have it as easily as rolling off a log. At last, maddened by this everlasting persecution, I rose, dressed myself as well as I could, and went on deck again. Here, however, it was impossible for me to remain, as the waves were breaking over the ship every moment with such violence that the scuppers were insufficient to carry off the water, and the deck was knee-deep in it. Four men were at the helm, and by their side stood the captain, a mass of waterproof. To the inquiry shouted in his ear, of whether he thought things were likely to mend soon, the only answer I got was how the devil could he tell, and what the devil I wanted on deck in everybody's way. As, under the circumstances, I did not think this a very favourable opportunity of laying my complaint before him, I took myself down to the chief cabin, and after ingeniously, as I imagined, lashing myself to a sofa, was soon asleep. I had not been so, however, many minutes before I was awakened by a tremendous concussion. For a moment I imagined that the ship had struck, and was going down, but I very soon discovered that she had only given a heavier lurch than usual, causing my ill-contrived knots to slip, and that the striking had been confined to my forehead which had come against the leg of the table with such force as to raise a lump on it as big as an egg. I had almost made up my mind to return to my disagreeable companions, when happening to cast my eyes upon the door of one of the

state-cabins, I remembered having heard my next neighbour remark, at dinner, on the preceding day, that the gentleman who had taken it had not come on board as had been expected.

"By Jove!" I exclaimed, "how can I have been such an ass as not to have thought of this before. Here, steward!"

The steward emerged from his den, and balanced himself carefully in front of me.

"The state-cabin that is unoccupied, I will remove into it, and will readily pay any additional sum that may be required."

"Very sorry, but you can't have it, sir."

"Can't have it—why not?"

"Why, you see, sir, that cabin was engaged by a gentleman as came aboard late one night, about a fortnight before we sailed. He comes down, and, says he, 'Steward, have you a cabin disengaged.' 'Yes,' says I, 'state-cabin.' 'I'll take it,' says he. 'Can I pay for it now, for it won't be convenient for me to call at the office and arrange.' 'Well, there is no one here at this time of night authorised to take the money; but if you do not mind trusting me with it, I've been man and boy twenty years in Mr. Green's service, and though I say it—who shouldn't say it—I am to be trusted.' Well, with that he hands me a purse, and, says he, 'you'll find there more than you'll want; get me any cabin furniture you may think right, and keep what's over for yourself. But mind one thing, when you've got all straight, lock the door, and don't open it again until you get to Melbourne, unless I give you express orders to do so.' 'Very good, sir,' says I; and off he goes. Well, I did as he told me, fitted the cabin up first-rate, locked it, and as he isn't come on board to give me my orders, why it won't be opened till we reach Hobson's Bay." "But, steward," said I, "what's the use of keeping the place locked up when the owner is not on board?" "Ah, you see our captain's a strict sort of a chap. He holds that a bargain's a bargain, and if he was to know that I opened that door after the gent had paid for its being kept shut, why, I should jolly soon get the sack, and that wouldn't pay me at any price." "But, steward, just look here; I am dying for a sleep; let me turn in for this night only. You can lock me up, you know, and let me out when no one is about: and here's a sovereign to get yourself something to drink." "Well, sir, seeing as how you are a gentleman, I don't mind if I do let you in for one night; but you must mind and not split on me to any one, for things get pretty soon known on board ship by all hands, from the cabin boy to the skipper, as soon as they have once been mentioned." "All right," says I, "you may rely upon me." "Mind," says he, "you don't make any noise in the morning. I'll come and let you out before breakfast when the skipper's on deck, and all hands are at work, swabbing themselves down."

With that he opened the cabin-door, handed me a candle, pushed me hastily in, and turned the key in the lock. The cabin was a model of neatness—a nice carpet on the floor, a first-rate bunk on one side, and a delightfully soft sofa on the other; in fact, all that one could desire; everything, too, well cleeted and fastened down in its

proper place, so as to prevent the possibility of any of the furniture taking to execute the very unpleasant nautical hornpipes which I had witnessed in the second cabin, and which had been the cause of a very considerable amount of diminution in the skin that ought to have covered my ankles. I did not, however, waste much time in contemplation, but undressed, inserted myself within the snow-white sheets, and, in spite of the roaring of the tempest, and the trampling of the sailors overhead, was soon sound asleep. And then I dreamt that I was haunted by a huge pipe, which persisted in following me all over the world. I fled to the interior of Africa, there was the pipe; I hurried off to Spitzbergen, there was the pipe. At last, in disgust, I returned to England, to my old lodgings, and the pipe came and took up its abode with me, and smoked all day long, and in the smoke I seemed to see all manner of strange things; first, my creditors—a fearful sight—each man with a writ in his hand as big as himself. Then, floating lightly on the smoke, came my uncle, with his pockets buttoned very tightly, and my creditors immediately made a rush towards him, and up they all went to the ceiling, and I saw them no more. Then, out of the pipe, there came a whisky bottle, and inside it (not at all injured by being soaked in spirits) were my three cabin companions, who tapped upon the glass, and nodded at me in a threatening manner, as much as to say, if you want anything for yourself, just pull out the cork, and we will step out and give it you. And then the tobacco seemed to grow more strong and pungent, and the smoke got up my nose, and I gave a great sneeze, and awoke.

"I hope, sir, you have had a comfortable nap."

I started up and looked across the cabin to the sofa, whence the voice proceeded. There, stretched out at his ease, lay a little fat man, with a long clay pipe in his mouth, from which a perfect column of smoke went up into the air. He had relighted the candle, and fixed it on the table in front of him, so that I could see him very well. He was rather ugly, with a pimply nose, as if given to drinking, badly made clothes, and an altogether mouldy appearance, as if he had been kept for some time in a damp place.

"Pray, sir," said I, "might I ask you what the deuce you want in this cabin?"

The little man took the pipe from his mouth, allowed a dense volume of smoke to escape, and then gently replied:

"I might ask you the same question in equally strong terms, if it was the practice in my part of the universe to be so rude."

"It's that rascally steward who has done this," exclaimed I, in a rage. "First he takes my money, which I pay for a quiet night's rest, and then he turns in a horrid, tobacco-smoking wretch, to torment my life out; but I won't stand it, so I should recommend you to make yourself scarce, or else you'll soon find yourself in the wrong box."

"Oh, no, I shan't," said he, stretching himself out at his full length, "you see, the fact of the matter is, that it is you who are the intruder, and not I: this cabin happens to be mine."

"Yours, indeed; come now, that won't go down with me: this cabin was hired by a person

who ordered it to be kept locked during the voyage, and who never came on board at all."

"That is to say,—no one saw him come on board; but, nevertheless, I was the person who hired it, and I came on board on Tuesday evening last, at a quarter past twelve, just as you were passing the Start."

"Why, you confounded old liar, no boat ever came near us after the pilot left; and he had been gone hours before that."

"Very likely—very likely: but I never said I came in a boat."

"Oh, I suppose you swam, then?"

"No, I didn't swim either."

"Then, sir, if you neither came in a boat nor swam, pray may I ask you how you did get on board?"

"Well, if you want to know, I walked."

"Oh, you walked, did you? Now, do you think I am drunk, or mad, which? Did ever anybody hear of a living being walking about on the British Channel?"

"Perhaps nobody ever did hear of a living being doing it, but you see, sir, I don't happen to be a living being."

"Then what in the name of goodness are you?"

"I am a ghost."

"A ghost?"

"Yes, a ghost."

With that the little man re-lighted his pipe, which had gone out during the foregoing conversation, and set to work again to smoke like a chimney. This was too much for me.

"Confound you," cried I, "do you think you are going to humbug me with any of your cock-and-bull stories? Out you go at once, or I'll make you."

"All right," says he, "make away," and with that he puffs a whiff of smoke right across the room into my face. Well, this made me pretty wild, you may guess; so up I jumped, took one stride to the sofa, and seized the little man, that is to say, attempted to seize the little man, by his nose, for, to my utter astonishment, instead of holding anything, my finger and thumb went through it like air. Utterly perplexed, I grasped at his neck with the same result, my hands met with nothing to resist them in their passage, and yet there he lay grinning from ear to ear, and smoking away as calmly as ever. I staggered back to my bunk in amazement.

"Well now, Mr. Campbell, I hope you are satisfied that what I told you is correct. And so, if you'll just tuck yourself up again, I'll tell you what brings me on board this ship, for I am sure you must be anxious to hear my story."

"Not a bit of it," said I. "Don't let me put you to any unnecessary trouble; I haven't the slightest curiosity in my composition."

You see I was awfully sleepy, and it was quite clear to me, by the way, the old fellow was settling himself down and clearing his throat that he meant to talk for the next hour at the least, which wasn't at all to my fancy.

"Well," says he, "if you are not curious, you ought to be; so here goes, and mind you pay attention, or else I shall have to waken you up as

I did before, by sticking my pipe under your nose. I was born in a little town in the north of England—"

"Oh, confound it," cried I, "hadn't you better begin at the beginning of the world at once? How do you think I am to get my pound's worth of sleep, if you give me your history from the cradle to the grave?"

"Well now," said he, "I should have liked to tell you something about my early life, for I was always considered a very remarkable child, but perhaps, upon consideration, I had better postpone that subject till some other night."

"Yes, old fellow," thought I, "you can tell me all that when you catch me in here again, but that won't be for some time, I know."

"When I was about thirty," he continued (I made a gesture of impatience). "I must begin somewhere," said he, angrily, "and if you don't let me start at thirty, may I never smoke again if I won't go back to my grandfather."

"Thirty be it then, and now bowl along."

"Well, as I said, when I was about thirty I came up to London, and went into business as a tobacconist; I had a snug little trade, and managed to scrape together a goodish bit of money. I wasn't quite such a fool as to trouble myself with a wife, so I got along first rate. I had been in the business about twenty years—there's a skip for you—when one fine morning I received a letter with the American post-mark on it. It was from my brother, the only relation I had to my knowledge, who had left England years before, and from whom I had never heard since his departure. It was short, for he had never been a man of many words."

"I should have preferred his ghost to yours, then," thought I.

"He told me that he was writing on his death-bed, and recommended to me his only son. As he hadn't any money, he couldn't leave me anything; but my nephew would bring me a valuable meerschaum pipe, which he himself had smoked for many years, and of which he begged my acceptance. This was all. A few days after, I received a note, informing me that my nephew had arrived at Liverpool. I went down and found a fine strapping youth of fifteen. I brought him up to London and put him in the shop, where he soon made himself uncommonly useful, so that I was pretty well contented with my bargain. The pipe was indeed a splendid one. Never had I seen one so perfectly coloured, never had I possessed one out of which the tobacco tasted so sweet. It was universally admired, and many a time have I been offered fabulous prices for it. But though I was by no means disinclined to turn a penny as a general rule, yet somehow I had an affection for that pipe, which increased every day. It seemed to me that ever since I had possessed it my food had tasted better, my sleep had been sounder, my health improved. Some one or another at the public I used once ventured to hint that the companionship of my nephew was the real cause of all this, but I knew better. The pipe did it, and the pipe alone. I don't deny that I found it very pleasant to have some one to take a fancy to, but I don't see how

affection for one's nephew could improve one's appetite, do you? But, bless me, you are half asleep; allow me to waken you."

With that he thrust the bowl of his pipe under my nose, causing me a fit of coughing and sneezing which lasted for five minutes.

"Confound you," said I, when I at last managed to speak, "why can't you come to the pith of your story, then? What on earth has all this nonsense about meerschaum pipes, and nephews, and appetites got to do with your being on board this ship?"

"Just you be a little patient, and then you'll learn; and let me beg to inform you that it is exceedingly ill-bred on your part, after occupying my private cabin, to go to sleep when I am doing my best to entertain you."

"Oh!" groaned I, "what cruel fate tempted me to leave England!"

"No cruel fate at all," says he, "but the fear of the Queen's Bench."

"Allow me to say, sir, that that is a most impertinent observation."

"None the less true for all that; you know as well as I do that your uncle wouldn't pay anything more for you, and that you'd have been locked up if you had stayed. I don't want to rake up unpleasant reminiscences, but if you won't treat me with common politeness, why you can hardly expect it at my hands; but to proceed. I grew fonder of my pipe every day, till at last I think no price that could have been offered me, would have induced me to part with it. As I grew older I gradually handed the management of my business to my nephew, who understood it as well, or better than I did, and spent most of my time in talking and smoking. At last I was taken ill. The doctor was sent for, and found me in bed with my pipe in my mouth. 'Put away that nasty thing,' said he. 'What nasty thing?' said I. 'Why, that pipe.' 'Put away my pipe? not if I know it.' 'Very good,' said he, 'only if you don't give up smoking, it'll give you up.' 'Oh, you mean I shall die?' 'Exactly,' said he. 'That's your decided opinion?' 'Nothing can save you.' 'Oh,' said I, 'in that case, as I don't mean to leave off smoking, I don't see the necessity of incurring useless expense; so Jack, that was my nephew, 'pay the doctor his fee, show him out, and mind you don't let him in again.' When Jack came upstairs, I said to him, 'I feel that I shan't last long: there isn't much use in making a will, for you are my only relation, and of course, you'll take all that belongs to me when I am dead; only one thing I don't mean you to have, and that is this pipe.' 'Why?' said he, 'you don't mean to give my father's pipe away from me?' 'Not I, indeed, I mean to take it with me.' 'To take it with you, where?' 'Why, in my coffin to be sure.' 'And what shall you want with it; you don't think you're going to smoke after you are dead.' 'Now, look you here, Jack Simpson, it seems to me that you don't seem to fancy parting with this pipe, and as I am determined you shan't have it, just you go up to Mr. Smale's, the lawyer's and tell him to come down and make my will.' 'I thought you didn't want your will making just now,' says he. 'Ah,

well, I've altered my mind, it won't be the first time I have done it in my life, but I shan't about the pipe though, so look sharp.' Well, when the lawyer came, though I felt very bad, I made my will, leaving everything to my nephew, but I took care to insert a condition that he was to bury me in my every-day costume, and put a hundred weight of the best bird's eye and the meerschaum pipe into my coffin along with me; if he did not choose to do this, everything was to go over to my friend, the landlord of the Golden Bull. Well, when my will had been duly signed and attested, I stuffed my pipe once more, lighted it, smoked it out, and died. Well, of course, until I was under ground, my ghost could hang about where it liked; so I kept a sharp look-out on my nephew. The night before I was to be buried, up he came into the room with the lawyer, the landlord of the Golden Bull, and the undertaker's man; put the tobacco and meerschaum pipe into the coffin, though much against his will, as I could see, whereupon the lid was screwed down. And now, thought I, everything is all right, so off I went to look about me a bit. Well, I was buried the next day, and at midnight, as soon as ever the ghosts were allowed out, off I went to have a smoke. But what do you think, instead of my meerschaum pipe, I found a score of long clays, such as I am now smoking, and a short note from my nephew, informing me, if ever I came to look for my pipe, that he had taken the liberty of making the undertaker's man drunk, unscrewing the coffin, and effecting an exchange, and wishing me a pleasant time of it with my new acquaintances in the other world. I was burning with indignation, when up came the ghost of an old friend of mine, a solicitor, who had been dead some half-dozen years. 'What Simpson, you here!' said he, 'I am glad to see you; but what's the matter, man; you seem put out at something?' 'Put out! so would you be if you had been robbed like I have.' 'And who has robbed you?' 'Why, my nephew, Jack, the scapegrace.' With that I told him the whole story, and asked him what he would advise me to do. 'Well,' said he, 'the new ghost regulations are very severe upon us; we are not allowed to go about frightening people into fits as we used to do, at least not in a usual way; but I believe, in fact I am sure, that in a case like yours, the injured ghost is allowed to visit the ill-doer every night until he obtains restitution of his property. There are, I know, several cases in the books almost on all fours with yours, though I can't call any of them to mind just at this moment.' 'Then,' said, 'I may go down and claim my pipe?' 'Yes, you may appear to your nephew, or to any one else who has anything unlawfully in his possession or occupation which belongs to you as ghost; but, mind, you are not to attempt to take your pipe away, you must obtain it by fair means, or not at all.' 'All right,' said I, turning to go. 'Wish you luck,' said he, 'mind you are in at sunrise.' When I came down to the shop, I got quietly in through the key-hole and went upstairs into my nephew's room. He was in bed asleep. There was a strong smell of tobacco, and on a chair by the side of the bed lay my beloved pipe. The room was lighted with gas, which was not quite

out, so I turned it on, and then went and took a seat on the bed and called out 'Jack, Jack,' half a dozen times. He didn't wake at first, for he was always a sound sleeper, but after a little, he roused up a bit, and without opening his eyes, he cried out, 'What do you want; and who are you?' 'I am your uncle's ghost, Jack, and I am come for my pipe.' With that he jumps up as if he had been shot, and seizing hold of the pipe, clapped it under his pillow, and says he, 'I am very glad to see you, uncle, but you don't get this pipe, I can tell you; so you had better go back to your coffin again, and leave me to have my sleep out.' 'You won't have any sleep, Jack, unless I get that pipe. I shall come to you every night at twelve precisely, wherever you may be, and stop till daybreak, so you had better make up your mind and give it up at once.' 'Why didn't you take it,' said artful Jack, 'while it was lying on the chair?' 'Because I mayn't; but if you don't give it up, you shan't have a wink of sleep as long as you live.' 'All right, uncle,' says he, 'I shall always be glad to see you, but you don't get the pipe, as I said before; however, as I am to have the pleasure of your company for several hours, I may just as well make myself comfortable.' So with that he pulls out the pipe, stuffs it, and lights up as coolly as could be. 'Now,' says he, 'this is what I call jolly,' and with that he got quite talkative, and gave me a full account of everything that had taken place after my death, and how cleverly he had done the publican. Well, this did not put me in a better temper, as you may imagine; so I sat there quite glum and silent, till just before cock-crow, when I got up to go. 'What, off already, uncle,' said he; 'why, really it does not appear to me as if you had been with me half-an-hour. You see how agreeable your company is.' 'You'll find me disagreeable enough before you have done with me, I dare say.' 'Shall I?' said he, laughing. 'Then you mean to come again?' 'Come again! I should rather think so. I shall come every night till I get my pipe.' 'Then you'll have to come pretty often, that's all I can say—so good morning to you.'

"Well, I went away pretty cross, I can tell you. However, obstinate though I knew him to be, I felt sure that I must succeed in time, for his business kept him late in the shop, and as he had to be up early in the morning, want of sleep must soon bring him to terms. As soon as the clock struck twelve the next night I was at the house. As I entered the bedroom a delicious scent greeted me. Whisky-punch, as I was a ghost! Yes, in an arm-chair, by the side of a blazing fire, sat my nephew with my pipe in his mouth, looking as fresh and rosy as though his rest had never been disturbed. His elbow rested on a small table, on which was a steaming bowl of punch, with glasses, tobacco, and a pipe; on the other side of the table stood an easy-chair. 'Glad to see you, uncle,' said he; 'take a seat, and make yourself at home. You see, I woke up this morning, and thought over all you told me the night before, and I came to the conclusion that it wouldn't be polite on my part always to be in bed when you came. So this

morning I hired an assistant who had been recommended to me, went to bed at six, leaving him to look after the shop, and I have just been up long enough to brew this jorum of punch, which I think you'll find to your liking—so, light up, fill your glass, and let's have a night of it.'

"Now, I never could resist whisky-punch at any time; so, enraged as I was at my nephew's cuteness, I nevertheless, somehow or other, did as he told me, and in half-an-hour we were chatting together as friendly as could be.

"'Take care of yourself,' said he, as I rose to depart, "and don't assault the police. You will find me at home again to-morrow at the same hour.'

"Well, this went on night after night for some months, and at last I really think I should have been sorry had he given up the pipe, inasmuch as I should have then had no excuse for paying him any more visits. Under the influence of punch, I was fool enough to let him into a few of our ghost secrets which I had much better have kept to myself. Amongst other things, I informed him that our superintendent, who was exceedingly strict, never allowed us to remove ourselves more than one thousand miles from our coffins of a night, which was a cause of great annoyance to many of us, who were anxious occasionally to travel abroad and see what was going on there."

"Excuse me interrupting you," said I, "but that does not at all agree with many of the ghost stories I have read. Why, it is the commonest thing in the world for a ghost to come all the way from India, or some other distant place, to announce his own death."

"Ah! Indian ghosts may be allowed to do that, but not English ones, I can assure you. We are subjected to the strictest rules."

"Well, I knew before that ghosts and spirits had to go out at the same entrance by which they came in, for I learnt that from Mephistopheles, but I never knew that they were tied to one spot before."

"I don't know anything about Mephistopheles," replied the ghost, "but you may rely upon it that the information I am giving you is as correct as anything he can furnish. I am very glad, too, to see that you are becoming interested in my story."

"Not a bit of it," said I, "but I can't let you have all the talk to yourself. However, go a-head."

"Well, as I told you, I had been visiting my nephew regularly every night, for about three months, when there was a general order issued, that from and after the 1st of the next month, no ghost was to be allowed out for twenty-eight days, as it was intended to take the decennial census, and also to obtain certain ghostly statistics which had been long needed by the administration. For this purpose commissioners were appointed to ask each individual a certain number of totally useless questions, and although only a few of us could be examined every night, it was considered necessary to confine us all until the investigation was at an end. On the last night of liberty my nephew perceived I was out of sorts when I came, and asked me the reason. I told him that I should be unable to see him for a whole month,

as I should be detained by business, but that I should renew my visits as soon as ever that term had expired. He made no remark at the time, but as I rose to depart he said: 'My dear uncle, your visits have caused me the greatest pleasure, but you will at once see the propriety of discontinuing them in future, when I inform you that this day week I am about to marry. You would not, I am sure, think of intruding into my bedroom, and frightening my wife out of her wits, and, as a matter of course, it would be highly improper on my part to spend my nights in future in carousing and smoking.'

"'Oh, you are going to get married, are you, and that without consulting me? Very well, sir, you can of course please yourself; but if I am to be denied in future the charms of your conversation and your punch, at any rate, I will carry off my pipe to comfort me, so hand it over, and you will have done with me now and for ever.'

"'How many times have I told you that you will never get the pipe.'

"'Very good, then, you had better inform your wife beforehand that your house is haunted, for rest assured I shall never discontinue my visits until that pipe is restored to me.'

"'That is your fixed determination?'

"'It is.'

"'Very well, we shall see.'

"'So we shall.'

"Never do I remember so irksome a month as the ensuing one. The instant I was freed from restraint I was at my nephew's house. I entered; the stairs were bare of carpets. I passed into his bed-chamber; it was empty. Not a stick of furniture in any room in the house, not an ounce of tobacco in the shop. The bird was flown.

"Oh, ho, thought I, so he thinks to escape me in this way, does he; but the possession of that pipe insures my entry wherever he may have gone, and I don't think it will take me very long to find him out. I was just leaving, when I noticed a note on the floor. I took it up. It contained the following words:

"'Dear Uncle,—As you won't agree to leave me in peace, I am obliged to resort to extreme measures. I have, therefore, sold my business, and am going with my wife to Australia. I sail to-morrow; the wind is fair, so that by the time you get this I shall be further away than your nightly limit of 1000 miles. Your affectionate nephew, JACK SIMPSON.'

"I looked at the date. He had been gone fifteen days. Furious, I rushed back, and laid the matter before the superintendent. He admitted the gross injustice with which I had been treated, was extremely sorry for me, but was unable to act in the matter. My case was perfectly new; there was no precedent. But I was not to be put off in this way, and made myself so general a nuisance, that for the sake of peace and quietness I was allowed the indulgence of a year's absence, upon the condition, however, that I went out to Australia decently on board ship, paying for my passage like a respectable ghost, and carrying my coffin with me, 'Into which,' added the venerable magistrate, 'you will retire regularly during the

day; but as a compensation for so strict a confinement, you have my permission to be upon deck from sunset till sunrise. You will of course behave yourself in a decent and becoming manner, not allowing yourself to be led away to beguile the monotony of the voyage by making strange and unearthly noises, or by alarming any one in any way, as has been frequently the custom among ghosts of bad manners in former times. I have myself an objection to smoking, but I shall not interfere with your indulgence in that pursuit any further than by refusing to confer upon you the power of rendering your pipe invisible; and as it would be unseemly, opposed to the recognised order of things, and creative of remarks derogatory to our order, that a pipe should be seen of itself in mid-air, I must request that you will retire below whenever you feel inclined to indulge yourself in that, to me, offensive habit. You will order your cabin to be kept locked during the voyage; but should any one, nevertheless, intrude himself upon your privacy, you will of course have the right of appearing to and conversing with him so long as such intrusion shall continue. You will receive the requisite funds for your journey, upon application at the proper office, and you are authorised to appear in a human form for the purpose of taking your passage. Having concluded this lengthy harangue, he bowed me out, and I lost no time in securing this cabin. I was afraid that I should pass the whole voyage without the pleasure of conversation, but your lucky invasion has caused me to enjoy a very pleasant night. Now that we have once made acquaintance, I shall be delighted to see more of you." "Shall you?" said I; "and pray do you think I have nothing better to do with my nights than to spend them in listening to your dreary stories? No, sir; sooner than that, I will endure all the inconveniences which a sojourn with the three ruffians whose companionship I enjoy can inflict upon me." "Sir," said he, "your remarks surprise me. You bribe the steward to admit you into my private cabin, exposing him upon detection to the chances of dismissal; you occupy my bed, you deposit your clothes upon my sofa, and when I seek to entertain you and refresh myself by my highly instructive conversation, you treat me with insult. I can only inform you, sir, that you will find out the harshness of your conduct as soon as you are condemned to spend sixteen consecutive hours in an elm coffin down in the hold of a ship amongst the bilge water. But it is time for me to retire. Though it is dark enough below, here; yet I feel that daylight is at hand." With these words he arose, made me a formal bow, extinguished the light, and, I suppose, vanished through the key-hole, for when I awoke in the morning, I was alone.

"And did you never see anything more of him?" inquired one of the listeners.

"Never. As I did not consider his conversation cheap at the price of one pound per night, I did not buy any more of it; but, instead of wasting my money, I made friends with my whisky-drinking companions, who turned out very good

fellows, and with whom, on my arrival here, I came up to the diggings. Last year, about this time, I had some business at Mr. John Simpson's station, near which I was at work. A violent storm came on while I was there, and the creek rose so much that it was impossible for me to return to the camp that night. Mr. Simpson, therefore, very kindly offered me supper and a bed. During the evening I had the misfortune to break my pipe. 'I can,' he said, 'only offer you a clay, for I have no other in the house.' 'Have you not a very handsome meerschaum?' said I, involuntarily. He looked at me for a moment with surprise, and then replied, laughing: 'I had certainly, but my wife, there, compelled me to part with it.' 'And with good reason,' said she. I made no remark, but from their words I infer that my friend, the ghost, had at last succeeded in securing his prize."

"Well," said the storekeeper, "I suppose that's all true."

"Every word of it."

"Then all I can say is, that I shouldn't have believed it had I heard it from any one else."

AN OLD CHUM.

THE COD FISHERY.

HAVING in a previous paper given a brief account of the method used in "Trawl Fishing" with the net for the supply of metropolitan and other tables with soles, plaice, and such like staple commodities of the fish-market, it may be interesting to contrast with that fishery the means employed for taking the cod, whiting, and other choice inhabitants of the seas which are not usually caught with nets, but with hooks and lines.

"Long-lining," as it is familiarly called by those who prosecute this kind of fishery, is not only practised most extensively on our own coasts, but also on those of Newfoundland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and other countries. To say nothing of the many thousands to whom this kind of fishery affords a means of livelihood, it is in itself, as a matter of pleasure to the sea-side visitor, one of the most amusing pastimes possible to conceive. The writer, who has enjoyed this exciting sport times innumerable, knows of no other—not even salmon fishing—more exciting and exhilarating.

The wholesale fishery is carried on by small fishing smacks or "bangers," as the fishermen popularly term them, each of which is constructed with a large deep well, into which the fresh seawater is allowed to enter by means of a grating. This is for a double purpose, viz., to keep the fish alive after taken as long as possible, and also to enable the cod-smack to remain at sea as long as may suffice to catch a good supply of fish before proceeding to that part of the coast where there may be a market for them. Each smack carries a "fleet" of lines, as they are termed, varying in length from one to three miles, but of course the amateur fisherman would commence with a small "fleet" of not a tenth part that number. The cod line itself is in thickness about that of a blacklead pencil, and to it are attached, at intervals of a fathom apart, smaller lines a yard long, and not much thicker than twine. These are