THE DISTURBER OF TRAFFIC.

(CONTINUED.)

"'Challong,' he says, 'there's too much traffic here, and that's why the water's so streaky as it is. It's the junks and the brigs and the steamers that do it,' he says; and all the time he was speaking he was thinking, "Lord, Lord, what a crazy fool I am!' Challong said nothing, because he couldn't speak a word of English except say, 'dam,' and he said that where you or me would say 'yes.' Dowse lay down on the planking of the Light with his eye to the crack, and he saw the muddy water streaking below, and he never said a word till slack water, because the streaks kept him tongue-tied at such times. At slack water he says, 'Challong, we must buoy this fairway for wrecks' and holds up his hands several times, showing that dozens of wrecks had come about in the fairway; and Challong says, 'Dam.'

"That very afternoon he and Challong goes to Wurlee, the village in the woods that the Light was named after, and buys canes,—stacks and stacks of canes and coir rope thick and fine, all sorts,—and they sets to work making square floats by lashing of the canes togetner. Dowse said he took longer over those floats than might have been needed, because he rejoiced in the corners, they being square, and the streaks in his head all running longways. He lashed the canes together, criss-cross and thwartways, —any way but longwas,—and they made up twelve-foot-square floats, like rafts. Then he stepped a twelvefoot bamboo or a bundle of canes in the centre, and to the head of that he lashed a big six-foot W letter, all made of canes, and painted the float dark green and the W white, as a wreck-buoy should be painted. Between them two they makes a round dozen of these new kind of wreck-bouys, and it was a two months' job. There was no big traffic, owing to it being on the turn of the monsoon, but what there was Dowse cursed at, and the streaks in his head, they ran with the tides, as usual.

"Day after day, so soon as a buoy was ready, Challong would take it out, with a big rock that halt sunk the prow and a bamboo grapnel, and drop it dead in the fairway. He did this day or night, and Dowse could see him of a clear night, when the sea brimed, climbing about the buoys with the sea fire dripping off him. They was all put into place, twelve of them, in seventeen-fathom water; not in a straight line, on account of a well-known shoal there, but slantways, and two, one behind the other, mostly in the centre of the fairway. You must keep the centre of those Javva urrents, for currents at the side is different, and in narrow water, before you can turn a spoke, you get your nose took round and rubbed upon the rocks and the woods. Dowse knew that just as well as any skipper. Likeways he knew that no skipper dare n't run through unchartered wrecks in a six-knot current. He told me he used to lie outside the Light watching his buoys ducking and dipping so friendly with the tide; and the motion was comforting to him on account of its being different from the run of the streaks in his head.

"Three weeks after he'd done his business up comes a steamer through Loby Toby Straits, thinking she'd run into Flores Sea before night. He saw her slow down; then she backed. Then one man and another come up on the bridge, and he could see there was a regular powwow and the flood was driving her right on to Dowse's wreck-buoys. After that she spun round and went back south, and Dowse nearly killed himself with laughing. But a few weeks after that a couple of junks came shouldering through from the north, arm in arm, like junks go. It takes a good deal to make a Chinaman understand danger. The junks set well in the current, and were down the fairway, right among the buoys, ten knots an hour, blowing horns and banging tin pots all the time That made Dowse very angry; he having taken so much trouble to stop the fairway. No boats run Flores Straits by night, but it seemed to Dowse that if junks 'd do that in the day, the Lord knew but what a steamer might trip over his bouys at night; and he sent Challong to run a coir rope between three of the buoys in the middle of the fairway, and he fixed naked lights of coir steeped in oil to that rope. The tides was the only things that moved in those seas, for the airs was dead still till they began to blow, and then they would blow your hair off. Challong tended those lights every night after the junks had been so impident,—four lights in about a quarter of a mile, hung up in iron skillets on the rope; and when they was alight,—and coir burns well, most like a lamp wick,—the fairway seemed more madder than anything else in the world. Fust there was the Wurlee Light, then these four queer lights, that could'nt be riding-lights, almost flush with the water, and behind them twenty mile off, but the biggest light of all, there was the red top of old Loby Toby Volcano. Dowse told me that he used to go out into the prow and look at his handiwork, and it made him scared, being like no lights that ever was fixed.

"By and by some more steamers came along, snorting and sniffing at the buoys, but never going through, and Dowse says to himself: 'Thank goodness, I've taught them not to come streaking through my water. Ombay Passage is good enough for them and the like of them.' But he didn't remember how quick that sort of news spreads among the shipping Every steamer that fetched up by those buoys told another steamer and all the port officers concerned in those seas that there was something wrong with Flores Straits that had n't been charted yet. It was block-buoyed for weeks in the fairway, they said, and no sort of passage to use. Well, the Dutch, of course they didn't know anything about it. They thought our Admiralty Survey had been there, and they thought it very queer but neighborly. You understand us English are always looking up marks and lightening sea-ways all the world over, never asking with your leave or by your leave, seeing that the sea concerns us more than any one else. So the news went to and back from Flores to Bali, and Bali to Probolingo, where the railway is that runs to Batavia. All through the Javva seas everybody got the word to keep clear o' Flores Straits, and Dowse, he was left alone except for such steamers and small craft as didn't know. They'd come up and look at the straits like a bull over a gate, but those nodding wreck-buoys scared them away. By and by the Admiralty Survey ship—the Britomarte I think she was—lay in Macassar Road off Fort Rotterdom, alongside of the Amboina, a dirty little Dutch gunboat that used to clean there; and the Dutch captain says to our captain, "What's wrong with Flores Straits?' he says.

"'Blowed if I know,' says our captain, who'd just come up from the Angelica Shoal.

"'Then why did you go and buoy it?' says the Dutchman.

"'Blowed if I have,' says our captain. 'That's your lookout.'

"'Buoyed it is,' says the Dutch captain, 'according to what they tell me; and a whole fleet of wreck-buoys, too.'

"'Gummy! says the captain. It's a dorg's life at sea any way. I must have a look at this. You come along after me as soon as you can;' and down he skimmed that very night, round the heel of Celebes, three days' steam to Flores Head, and he met a Two-streak liner, very angry, backing out of the head of the strait; and the merchant captain gave our Survey ship something of his mind for leaving wrecks uncharted in those narrow waters and wasting his company's coal.

"'It's no fault o' mine,' says our captain.

"'I don't care whose fault it is,' says the merchant captain, who had come abroad to speak to him just at dusk. 'The fairway's choked with wreck enough to knock a hole through a dock-gate. I saw their big ugly masts sticking up just under my forefoot. Lord ha mercy on us!' he says, spinning round. 'The place is like Regent Street of a hot summer night.'

"And so it was. They two looked at Flores Straits, and they saw lights one after the other stringing across the fairway. Dowse, he had seen the steamers hanging there before dark, and he said to Challong: 'We'll give 'em something to remember. Get all the skillets and iron pots you can and hang them up alongside o' the regular four lights. We must teach 'em to go round by the Ombay Passage, or they'll be streaking up our water again!' Challong took a header off the lighthouse, got aboard the little leaking prow, with his coir soaked in oil and all the skillets he could muster, and he began to show his lights, four regulation ones and half a dozen new lights hung on that rope which was a little above the water. Then he went to all the spare buoys with all his spare coir, and hung a skillet-flare on every pole that he could get at,—about seven poles. So you see, taking one with another, there was the Wurlee Light, four lights on the rope between the three centre fairway wreck-buoys that was hungout as a usual custom, six or eight extry ones that Challong had hung up on the same rope, and seven dancing flares that belonged to seven wreck-buoys,—eighteen or twenty lights in all crowded into a mile of seventeen-fathom water, where no tide'd ever let a wreck rest for three weeks, let alone ten or twelve wrecks, as the flares showed.

"The Admiralty captain, he saw the lights come out one after another, same as the merchant skipper did who was standing at his side, and he said:—

"'There's been an international catastrophe here or elseways," and then he whistled. 'I'm going to stand on and off all night till the Dutchman comes,' he says.

"'I'm off,' says the merchant skipper. 'My owners don't wish for me to watch illuminations. That strait's choked with wreck, and I should n't wonder if a typhoon hadn't driven half the junks o China there." With that he went away; but the Survey ship, she stayed all night at the head o' Flores Strait, and the men admired the lights till the lights was burning out, and then they admired more than ever.

"A little bit before morning the Dutch gunboat come flustering up, and the two ships stood together watching the lights burn out and out, till there was nothing left 'cept Flores Straits, all green and wet, and a dozen wreck-buoys, and Wurlee Light.

"Dowse had slept very quiet that night, and got rid of his streaks by means of thinking of the angry steamers outside. Challong was busy, and didn't come back to his bunk till late. In the very early morning Dowse looked out to sea, being, as he said, in torment, and saw all the navies of the world riding outside Flores Straits fairway in a half-moon seven miles from wing to wing, most wonderful to behold. Those were the words he used to me time and again in telling the tale.

"Then, he says, he heard a gun fired with a most tremenjus explosion, and all them great navies crumbled to little pieces of clouds, and there was only a man-o'-war's boat rowing to the Li ht, with the oars going sideways instead o' longways as the morning tides, ebb or flow, would continually run.

"'What the devil's wrong with this strait?' says a man in the boat as soon as they was in hailihg distance. 'Has the whole English Navy sunk here, or what?"

"'There's nothing wrong,' says Dowse, sitting on the platform outside the Light, and keeping one eye very watchful on the streakiness of the tide, which he always hated, 'specially in the morning. 'You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone. Go round by the Ombay Passage, and don't cut up my water. You're making it streaky.' All the time he was saying that he kept on thinking to himself, 'Now that's foolishness,—now that's nothing but foolishness;' and all the time he was holding tight to the edge of the platform in case the streakiness of the tide should cary him away.

"Somebody answers from the boat, very soft and quiet, 'We're going round by Ombay in a minute, if you'll just come and speak to our captain and give him his bearings."

"Dowse, he felt very highly flattered, and he slipped into the boat, not paying any attention to Challong. But Challong swum along to the ship after the boat. When Dowse was in the boat, he found, so he says, he couldn't speak to the sailors 'cept to call them 'white mice with chains about their neck,' and Lord knows he hand't seen or thought o' white mice since he was a little bit of a boy. So he kept himself quiet, and so they come to the Survey ship; and the man in the boat hails the quarter-deck with something that Dowse could not rightly understand, but there was one word he spelt out again and again,—m-a-d, mad.—and he heard some behind saying it backwards. So he had two words,—m-a-d, mad, d-a-m, dam; and he put those two words together as he come on the quarter-deck, and he says to the captain very slowly, 'I be damned if I am mad,' but all the time his eye was held like by the coils of rope on the belaying pins, and he followed those ropes up and up with his eye till he was quite lost and comfortable among the rigging, which ran criss-cross, and slopeways, and up and down, and any way but straight along under his feet north and south The deck-seams, they ran *that* way, and Dowse daren't look at them. They was the same as the streaks of the water under the planking of the lighthouse.

"Then he heard the captain talking to him very kindly, and for the life of him he couldn't tell why; and what he wanted to tell the captain was that Flores Strait was too streaky, like bacon, and the steamers only made it worse; but all he could do was to keep his eye very careful on the rigging and sing:—

'I saw a ship a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea;
And oh, it was all laden
With pretty things for me!'

Then he remembered that was foolishness, and he started off to say something about the Ombay Passage, but all he said was: 'The captain was a duck,—meaning no offense to you, sir,—but there was something on his back that I've forgotten.

'And when the ship began to move
The captain says, "Quack-quack."'

"He noticed the captain turn very red and angry, and he says to himself, 'My foolish tongue's run away with me again. I'll go forward;' and he went forward, and catched the reflection of himself in the binnacle brasses; and he saw that he was standing there and talking mother-naked in front of all them sailors, and he ran into the fo'c's'le howling most grievous. He must ha' gone naked for weeks on the Light, and Challong o' course never noticed it. Challong was swimmin' round and round the ship, sayin' 'dam' for to please the men and to be took aboard, because he didn't know any better.

"Dowse didn't tell what happened after this, but seemingly our Survey ship lowered two boats and went over to Dowse's buoys. They took one sounding, and then finding it was all correct they cut the buoys that Dowse and Challong had made, and let the tide carry 'em out through the Loby Toby end of the strait; and the Dutch gunboat, she sent two men ashore to take care of the Wurlee Light, and the Britomarte, she went away with Dowse, leaving Challong to try to follow them, a-calling 'dam —dam' all among the wake of the screw, and half heaving himself out of water and joining his webby-foot hands together. He dropped astern in five minutes, and I suppose he went back to the Wurlee Light. You can't drown an Orange-Lord, not even in Flores Strait on flood-tide.

"Dowse come across me when he came to England with the Survey ship, after being more than six months in her, and cured of his streaks by working hard and not looking over the side more than he could help. He told me what I've told you, sir, and he was very much ashamed of himself; but the trouble on his mind was to know whether he hadn't sent something or other to the bottom with his buoyings and his lightings and such like. He put it to me many times, and each time more and more sure he was that something had happened in the straits because of him. I think that distracted him, because I found him up at Fratton one day, in a red jersey, a-praying before the Salvation Army, which had produced him in their papers as a Reformed Pirate. They knew from his mouth that he had committed evil on the deep waters, — that was what he told them, — and piracy, which no one does now except Chineses, was all they knew of. I says to him: 'Dowse, don't be a fool. Take off that jersey and come along with me.' He says: 'Fenwick, I'm a-saving of my soul; for I do believe that I have killed more men in Flores Strait than Trafalgar.' I says: 'A man that thought he'd seen all the navies of the earth, standing round in a ring to watch his foolish false wreck-buoys,' (those was the very words I used) 'ain't fit to have a soul, and if he did he couldn't kill a flea with it. John Dowse, you was mad then, but you are a damn sight madder now. Take off that there jersey."

"He took it off and come along with me, but he never got rid o' that suspicion that he'd sunk some ships a-cause of his foolishnesses at Flores Straits; and now he's a wherryman from Portsmouth to Gosport, where the tides run crossways and you can't row straight for ten strokes together. . .

. So late as all this! Look!"

Fenwick left his chair, passed to the Light, touched something that clicked, and the glare ceased with a suddenness that was pain. Day had come, and the Channel needed St. Cecilia no longer. The sea-fog rolled back from the cliffs in trailed wreaths and dragged patches, as the sun rose and made the dead sea alive and splendid. The stillness of the morning held us both silent as we stepped on the balcony. A lark went up from the cliffs behind St. Cecilia, and we smelt a smell of cows in the light-house pastures below.

So you see we were both at liberty to thank the Lord for another day of clean and wholesome life.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

[THE END.]

A Send-Off or a Stand-Off.

Parkly Saunters.—I—I—I want your daughter, sir, to be my wife.

Old Dukkets.—Wait a year!

Parkly.—It's a long time to wait, sir!

Dukkets.—Oh, I don't mean for you to wait *here*. Call again in about a year.—[Puck.

A Cool Suggestion.

Checkley Spatts.—Deah me! I weally don't know what to do this Summer to occupy my mind!

Sally de Witt.—Why don't you take a trip to the Antarctic Ocean? There's absolutely nothing going on there.—[Puck.

Member of the Legislature.

In addition to the testimony of the Governor of the State of Maryland, U. S. A., a member of the Maryland Legislature, Hon. Wm. C. Harden, testifies as follows: "746 Dolphin St., Balto., Md., U. S. A., Jan 18, '90. Gentlemen: I met with a severe accident by falling down the back stairs of my residence, in the darkness, and was bruised badly in my hip and side, and suffered severely. One and a half bottles of St. Jacobs Oil completely cured me. WM. C. HARDEN." Member of State Legislature.

CONVICT AND SOLDIER.

A Tragedy of Siberia.

There comes from Vladivostok a story remarkable for its pathos and tragedy even among the dark tales that make up the record of Siberian life. At that city, as has already been announced, the construction of the trans-Siberian railroad was begun some months ago. The work was formally entered upon with imposing formalities at the time of the visit of the Czarewitch. For this purpose a number of convicts were taken thither, as laborers, under a strong military guard. Among these convicts was one white-haired old man, of patriarchal aspect. He was a native of Koorok, and had always been a law-abiding subject. But on one occasion the Government surveyors were measuring off a slice of his ground, which they proposed to seize. He protested, and in his earnestness, chanced to step upon the surveyor's chain, as it lay on the ground, before him. Now, the surveyor was the representative of the Czar, and his chain for the time being represented the Imperial sceptre. The peasant's mis-step, therefore, was an act not only of gross disrespect to the Little Father, but high treason itself. The culprit was instantly arrested, put in irons and locked in a cell. On being brought to trial, however, he succeeded in convincing his judges that his fault was accidental and not intentional, and accordingly the utmost leniency of the tribunal was extended to him.

He was not sentenced to death, but was sent to toil in a Siberian chain-gang for the remainder of his life.

Working on the railroad at Vladivostok, this poor old man one day noticed the soldier who, with loaded rifle, acted as guard over him and his companions. The soldier looked wonderfully familiar to him and the old man gazed at him so steadily as to neglect his work and to bring upon himself from the overseer a reprimand and a threat of the knout. After a time, the work man edged his way so close to the guard that he could speak to him, and he asked him who he was and whence he came. The soldier, of course, made no reply, and did not even notice who was addressing him. The military law absolutely forbids a soldier to speak to a convict or to notice him in any way, unless to shoot him if he try to escape. But those of his comrades who stood near saw the soldier turn deathly pale, and then brace himself up with more than ordinary rigidity.

But the old man persevered. Heedless of the threats of the overseer, he threw down his tools, left his work, and staggered up to the guard, who remained silent and motionless. Their eyes met, the old man's streaming with tears, the soldier's dry and fixed as those of the dead.

"Alexis, my son! It is thou? It is thou?" cried the hoary-headed convict.

Still military discipline kept the guard as silent and motionless as a statue. His face was a picture of mortal torment. Then, despite his efforts to control himself, his lips quivered, his knees trembled. He swayed to and fro. He grasped his rifle convulsively and drew himself up as if on dress parade. The next moment his arms fell to his sides, his rifle dropped to the ground, and without a word, or even a groan, he fell at his father's feet, apparently a corpse.

The convict threw himself upon his son's body, covering it with kisses and uttering wild cries of endearment and of grief. The overseer and the other guards, seeing what had happened, but not understanding it, rushed to the spot. They supposed that the old convict had attacked the soldier, perhaps killed him. It was their business to suppose that, anyway. So they raised the butts of their rifles and in a moment would have knocked out the old man's brains. But one suggested that they should first drag the convict from the soldier's body, lest some of their blows should fall upon the latter. This they struggled in vain to do. Though half a dozen of them tugged at them, they could not separate the two bodies, and the old man never noticed them even, but kept on kissing his unconscious son and uttering his wild, inarticulate cries.

A cart was then brought, and the two bodies, inseparably clasped together, were laid in it and taken, under a strong guard, to the hospital, where the surgeon would quickly cut off the old man's arms and thus part the two. But when the surgeon saw them, the truth dawned upon him. He told the soldiers, and they, who had been eager to toss the old man on their bayonets, marched off with tears flowing down their cheeks. Presently the doctors got the old man to loosen his hold upon the soldier's body, and, dreadful to relate, he was instantly taken back to the railroad and forced, under the lash, to resume his work. Then they turned their attention to the soldier. Under their efforts he soon regained consciousness, but not reason. He was incurably mad. They took him that night to an asylum, The next morning the old man was marched out to work again.

"But, my son!" he cried. "How is my son this morning? Is he living or dead?"

Then one of the soldiers for the first time broke military discipline and incurred the risk of heavy punishment.

"Your son," he said, "lives; but he is hopelessly insane."

At the word the old man stared, burst into a peal of fearful laughter, and fell forward in convulsions. They carried him away to the hospital, and from there to the asylum, where they put him into the cell next to his son's. There were then two hopeless maniacs in that madhouse.

TEACHER—"Johnnie, you must bring an excuse for being absent yesterday from the head of your family." Johnnie—"She's away, ma'am; I'll have to get it from my fader."

Clocks are too cheap for the tired housewife to spend her time and strength in running from the kitchen to some other room to consult one.

No Chicken.—Teacher: Parse "eggs."—Pupil: Third person, plural number—after a moment's pause—one might be one gender, and one the other—more hesitation, and then a triumphant finish—and objective case unless they are fresh.

The report of the Grand Trunk Railway Company was issued in London, England on Tuesday. It attributes the poor business of the past half year to low freight and passenger rates and the deficient harvest of the previous autumn. Whereas the real cause is the active, stirring rivalry of the Canadian Pacific and poor management of the Grand Trunk. No railway can be successfully managed by a president and board of directors three thousand miles away who have neither knowledge nor sympathy with the requirements of the road and the country through which it passes.

Of the three principal grains—corn, wheat, and oats—grown in the United States, the total yield this year is estimated by the Department of Agriculture at not less than 3,400,000,000 bushels. That is equivalent to more than fifty bushels for every man, woman, and child in the country, or about fifty pounds a week apiece. When due allowance is made for infants, who do not count for much, it is easy to see how plenty of seed grain can be saved out of such bounteous crops and abundant food provided for all the domestic animals that need grain in any form and still enough breadstuffs remain to help Europe through a very bad year.