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BILL MARLIN'S THANKSGIVING

BY CAPTAIN W. H. SHELTON.

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"IT'S all in a lifetime, Jack," says Bill Marlin, knucklin the brine out of his eyes. "And I ain't complainin o' grub or grog aboard this 'ere raft, but if the old mat had been so eminded as to take my advise and leave the cook's cat aboard stid der heavin her over the rail soon's we left port the brig 'n'd a-been makin into Boston in another week stidder hevin gone to Davy Jones', and him, with the rest of the crew, clawin sea weed 'longside of her. I wouldn't ku a rope's end fur this 'ere turn in the tide," continued Bill, takin an extra half hitch in his lashin's, "if I hadn't made a date with a shipmet o' mine, Lijah Hawkins by name, hailin from New Bedford, when he's afloat, but now bein ashore in them 'ere parts. When I pass my word, Jack, it's same's if I signed articles, and that's mor'n I've done aboard this crib."

The raft was made of spars and empty pork barrels, with a cutdown jib rigged on a jury mast forward, and our stores and dunnage in a lead colored chest lashed amidships alongside of the water cask, and the whole drippin outfit rolling on the seas, climbin up hill and sousin into the trough and clawin off sideways like a fiddler crab.

Accordin to our reckonin, this was the 18th of November (year '45), and three days before the brig Nancy of Portland, from Liverpool into Boston, with a cargo of tin plate, had been struck by an easter, and the captain had driven her before the winds for 48 hours under next to bare poles until her fore and main sticks went overboard in an extra gale, and her rotten old hull sprang a-leak. When the old man gave up the pumps, expectin her to go down before mornin, we provisioned the two quarter boats regular, and the captain, hevin the compass, and Bill Marlin, bein mate of the Nancy, hevin only the ship's barometer to sail by, the crew was that crazy to go in the captain's boat that they swarmed over the side and swamped her before our eyes, leavin Bill and me leanin on the rail and the old man and all hands goin to the bottom like lead afore we could heave 'em so much as a rope's end.

Me and Bill eased away the other boat, and when she struck the water a cross sea stove her against the brig and crushed her like an eggshell.

"Shipmet," says Bill, "it ain't fittin to go to sea jist yit, and what we've got to do is pump 'er," and pump her we did all that night, watch and watch, the other one lashin the raft. By mornin the water had gained nine inches on us, and the ship had settled that much by the side. Bill's face was long, but he allowed it warn't no use to put off till the raft was shipshape and her stores lashed proper, so we worked and pumped till near noon and swung the whole outfit overboard by the mizzenmast boom and got onto it in our oilskin pajamers and clear of the Nancy in time to see her go down bow on.

When I asked Bill what the nature of his engagement with Hawkins of New Bedford might be, he said it was social and religious and included wearin alongside and heavin aboard a Thanksgivin dinner, and he had the old man's consent beforehand for the cruise ashore.

"I was two year shipmet with Lige abound a Bedford whaler up north in 38 and 9, and then I struck him agin in 42 aboard a West India lime juicer in the coastin trade, and comin into Boston on time we had shore leave together on Thanksgivin day, and bein New England born of honest fisherfolks we kept the day proper, accordin to our lights. The next I seen of o' Lige after we left the lime juicer was when we saw breakin out the Nancy's cargo alongside the Liverpool docks him a-celebratin his last day ashore afore the schooner sailed for New York and long with 'im a Kanaka sailorman what I'd messed with afore time on a guano ship from Callao to Frisco, and after cruisin around with them two all day, bein sober, I made the date with Lige and when the two aboard the Lightfoot, which was a third mate and a-heavin of her anchor then and there for to put to sea."

BILL SAT UPON THE CHEST.

Bill lavin said these words, a cross sea smacked over his side of the raft, when he came up blowin and the blood out of his nose, he allowed it was no sign, only a sneeze of the sea, and he guessed it was time for us to get aboard the brig and pump her out.

"Well, shipmet, I guess we'd better be moving along, ship's been gone up five points, Jack, since we shipped, and I 'low she's moderatin. What quarter's the wind in?"

"How do I know?" says I. "Hain't the old man got the compass?"

"So he has," says Bill, "and he ain't needin of it either, hevin made port. I've been 20 years afore the mast," continued Bill, lookin grieved, "in nigh as many ships, and I've observed that when a sailorman ships in a hurry he generally carries some article in his dunnige what he'd better left behind." The glass was right, and before night set in the sea had moderated perceptibly, and although we were awake all night securely lashed to the raft, drenched with salt water and hevin nearly perished with cold, hope revived at the comin of daylight. The runnin seas had quieted to long smooth swells, and then the sun came up over the port bow and put new life into us. We unlashed ourselves from the chest, where we had been sittin back to back for eight hours, and spread the bit of sail and set her course west, as there away New Bedford lay, and Bill swore while there was a biscuit in the locker he'd do his best to keep his date.

"Lige Hawkins is an out and out sea lawyer," said Bill, "and altho' 'tain't no use I'd feel more easy in my mind to know she's headed for Bedford." Then we ate some pilot bread and dates out of the chest and took a swallow of rum and rummaged down to the pipes and 'bacy and took off our oilskin pajamers to let the sun have leeway onto our woolens. Bein refreshed, Bill set on the chest and tended sheet while I lay astern and held her across the swells with a long oar.

"I won't say as I altogether like this," remarked Bill between pulls at his pipe, "but I tell you, Jack, the next ship I sign aboart 'ull be after I 'zamin her sticks. It's my opinion them as was on the Nancy had dry rot into 'em, not to mention the hull."

"I'm glad you're expectin to have the chance to sign again, Bill," I said.

"In course," cried Bill. "I've been shippin aboard one tub after another all my life, and I 'low to keep on doin of it."

After that the weather held fair, with plenty of wind astern, and we worked the raft, watch and watch, and got our regular sleep. On the sixth day of the cruise, which was the 24th of the month, some wreckage hove in sight dead ahead, and when we made it it proved to be the two masts of a schooner held together by the stays, with booms and gaffs and main sheets complete and all the halliards.

WE CAME ALONGSIDE.

"More dry rot," says Bill, "but I reckon we better wear ship and tackle to it." The sea bein calm, we did so, and Bill got off his togs and boarded the sticks, with a line about his middle and a meat knife from the chest in his teeth. It was an all day's job, but with an occasional dram to keep out the cold we got off the sails and floated the masts end for end and lashed one on our starboard side with the boom across the stern and the other to port with her boom across the bows, and with the gaffs turned up and guyed forward and rigged with canvas we had a craft that no sea could make under, although it might sweep us off.

"There," says Bill after we got her under way, with the sun an hour high over the port bow, "she may not be fast, but she's staunch, and we're b'ilin away for Bedford."

Afore sun set we sighted a ship to leeward beatin up against the wind, and when she came alongside she hove to and sent off a boat.

I was feelin mighty chipper at the prospect of seeing the American flag again, but Bill Marlin sat on the chest amidships puffing away at his pipe.

"Lower away the mainsail and ease 'er," roared Bill.

I lowered the sail, and the raft laid to, and by that time the boat swung alongside, eight oars up, man-o'-war style, and the starchiest Yankee mate in the stern that ever sailed out of Boston.

"Come, tumble aboard here, men," says the airy mate, "and be quick about it. There's no room for that chest."

"Where ye bound?" says Bill Marlin, takin out his pipe and spittin to windward.

"What's that to you where we're bound?" growls the mate from Boston.

"Look a-here," says Bill Marlin, "I've got a date with a shipmet in New Bedford, and your bow looks to be onto the wrong end o' the ship. I ain't goin back to Liverpool, and you better git your boathook out o' my sta'b'ard sail."

"What time are you due in New Bedford on that timber crab?" says the mate, laughin.

"On Thanksgivin day," says Bill.

"Whenever that is."

"Well, that's tomorrow" by order of the governor of the commonwealth of Massachusetts," says the mate.

"You might a-missed yer neck'nin," says Bill.

"No," said the mate. "Here's a Boston paper a week old with the proclamation in it," and with that he hove the newspaper into the raft.

"Well, ye kin git along, ship wind and sea," says Bill, scratchin his head and pullin the glass out of his pocket and holdin it up.

"Are ye comin aboard or ain't ye?" roared the mate, standin up in the stern.

"Stan by, shipmet," says Bill, "and leave me time to settle. Fair and stiddy at that. Thanks kindly, officer," says Bill, standin up himself alongside the chest. "The raft keeps her course for Bedford."

"Anything you're short of?" says the mate.

"I wouldn't refuse a little extra grog and somethin ready cooked," says Bill.

While we were layin to for the donation the moon came up off the stern post, and Bill spelled out the governor's proclamation. The mate did uncommonly well by us, and besides the grog sent us a four pound lump of plumduff. And the quartermaster who brought it had been a shipmet of Bill's somewhere in the China seas, and a finer night with a fairer wind I never saw aboard ship than that was time we got under way.

"I never knew any luck come of changin ships at sea when the other one was goin in the wrong direction," says Bill, "though I wouldn't mind boardin one headed for the 'Merican coast. I know Lige is layin off for me in Bedford, keepin his date, and I 'low to report thar soon's I can get ashore."

Somewhere about two bells Bill turned in behind the chest, and in five minutes he was snorin like a trumpet. The wind freshened, and the rafted bowled along for four hours at a three knot gait, and it must have been past midnight when I gave the helm to him. It seemed like I hadn't more than just got to sleep when Bill woke me up.

"Brace up, Jack," he says, "and lend a hand. There's a wreck o' some sort layin off the sta'bo'rd bow, and I 'low to sheer up and board 'er."

WHEN WE SAT DOWN TO THE SPREAD.

Sure enough, not two miles away was a hull layin rather low in the water, with the mizzenmast standin.

"I've had my eye onto her for an hour," says Bill, "and I'm a lubber if she don't belong to the two sticks we come up with this mornin."

The wind was fallin off, and we beat up slow. When I turned out, she was clean out against the sky, her mizzenmast swayin across the stars, but by the time we made her it was gettin daylight. The sea was like oil when we came alongside and hitched onto her fore chains and climbed on deck.

"I ain't denyin," says Bill, "that there's comfort in standin on solid oak agin, and she ain't no bad stove, but I reckon we could work her by riggin some o' our spare canvas forrid. Jist you leer inter the galley, Jack," says Bill, "and I'll spy out the cabin."

With that he went rollin aft till he pitched up alongside the stumps of the mainmast.

"More dry rot, Jack, just like I told ya," roared Bill lookin back.

That minute I went fell over into the chains, for up out of the cabin companion ladder behind Bill was a human head as bald as a sea gull.

"What the devil," says the head, and Bill sat down on the hatch, rubbin his eyes and lookin up at the head, which was followin the rest of a man up the ladder and now stood on the deck, lookin at us and rub-bin its eyes.

"Git into yer togs," says Bill, "We've got a chest full of plumduff and grog aboard the raft."

The Lightfoot was loaded with wool and some light merchandise, and when the crew left her Hawkins said the sea was so rough the skipper expected her to swamp, and it was all they could do to get off the men. There was no lack of provisions and stores on board, and the Kanaker man and I turned in and did the cookin, and Bill nailed the governor's proclamation to the mizzenmast.

"Business is business," says Bill.

"What's the bloomin cargo worth, Lige?"

"Nothin where she lays," says Hawkins, sorreyful. "If we had her into port, she'd be good for $100,000. It's a pity, Bill, so 'tis, but there ain't a yard of canvas onto 'er."

"That 'u'd be $25,000 apiece, allowin four lays into 'er share and share," says Bill.

"Waal," says Hawkins, "what of it?"

"Nothin," says Bill, "only I've brought along two mainsails and yer far'd sticks."

And with that the two went down the fore chains onto the raft.

By dinner time they had got a new set of sails onto the mizzenmast, hoisted the chest on board and laid their plans for riggin light canvas forward and takin the prize into New York, all of which we afterward did.

When we sat down to the spread on deck, besides the plumduff and the grog, we had soup and salt junk and marmalade and coffee, and Bill said, considerin of what we'd gone through and what we had before us, he'd be willin to give a small lay into the cargo for a sea parson to say grace onto the grub.

When we had cleared the board, we brought out the pipes and bacy from the chest, and all hands 'lowed we had plenty to be thankful for.

"I'm a plain sailorman," says Bill Marlin, "and a yo heave ho, but when I make a date with a shipmet I'm goin to try to keep it if so be I can, and the shipmet Lijah Hawkins from New Bedford town, and a yo heave ho, heave ho."

BREAKING THE WISHBONE.

When to Lose the Wish and When to Win It.

A charming young widow who wants to break a wishbone with you is one of whom you should beware. She is very tantalizing, chic, clever, and, oh, so awfully sorry you didn't get your wish! The young widow is a mind reader and knows just what your thoughts are while you are holding the bone and looking down into her eyes. If you have to look up into a widow's eyes, there may be some hope for you, but when she looks up and you look down she can read every one of your thoughts. By the way, there is only one, only has been one, only can be one, thought passing through a man's mind when he is breaking a wishbone with a charming young widow—possession! She knows it as plainly as though written indelibly upon your forehead. That is her particular forte. And when you break the bone and find yourself possessed of the short end she will look up into your eyes with a look that will cause your poor back hair to crimp and say, with that pitying tone of voice never so well modulated as by a widow:

"I am so sorry you lost!"

No matter what the after result of a good dinner may bring forth, you cannot help but hie yourself away to some quiet resort obscure from prying and meddling eyes and bury your disappointment in beer, books or blues.

But when you break a wishbone with a sweet young girl it is a very different thing. Sweet young girls' hearts were made to be broken like the wishbone. You secure a deal of paradise while breaking bones with a sweet young girl, whereas you get generally wormwood and gall when you break bones with a fair widow. You throw all your art into the act of breaking a bone with a young girl, but when you break a bone with a fair widow you throw your heart in against her art, and she beats you nine times out of ten.

The best place to break a bone with a fair widow is in the corner of a snug sitting room, with the lights turned low. A man's heart fire glows more vividly upon his cheeks then; also it is more fun for the widow. She quite prefers earnestness of purpose and is ever ready for a tilt of hearts against arts. You might win a prize in the lottery of life if you would break a bone with a fair young girl with your heart as fixed upon the one purpose—possession—as it was with the widow.

"I AM SO SORRY YOU LOST."

Did you ever break a bone with a staid old aunt whose fortune you hoped to possess? If you lose your wish, your fortune is made, for she'll put you down as a real nice nephew without sordid fancies, but if you win she'll pierce you with a look and say:

"I expected you wanted me to hurry up and die."

Always make it a point to lose your wish when breaking a bone with an expectant aunt who has a fortune.

When a colored gentleman breaks the wishbone of a turkey, he always throws the shorter end over his left shoulder. That means that he wishes next year's hen and turkey roosts will not be locked nor guarded by a bulldog.

My wife broke a bone with me last Thanksgiving. She won her wish, but has not got it. I haven't been very witty this season; hence have not written the way to that sealskin sack.—H. S. Keller.

Reflections.

The kind word, costing the giver but little, may make glad a lifetime.

A word may be an illuminated thought and become the most treasured of keepsakes.

Some there are whose kindness is so delicately rendered as to make it beyond description.

That creed that is lived out in freely caring for others and doing kind deeds is not to be doubted.

The heart has a language that records deeds as well as words, according to its own interpretation.

The Joy of It.

Thanksgiving day is almost gone,
And peace reigns overhead.
And mother's joy—her own sweet boy—
Is trundled off to bed.

Yet what are those unearthly sounds
That pierce the midnight air?
And what's that throbbing noise we hear
Come running down the stair?

It is our little household pet,
Who tosses upon high
And wages an unequal fight
With turkey and mince pie.

Philosophical.

Wife (gazing at the baby)—Think, darling, how much we have to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.

Husband—That's so. It might have been twins.

THANKSGIVING.

THANKSGIVING day is hailed with equal and uniform delight by the lovers of turkey and the lovers of football. In fact, the honors of this ever pleasant and interesting festival are divided between the rich and toothsome biped and the almost universal pigskin sphere. After the turkey, the plum pudding; after the plum pudding, which soothes and sustains one like the kiss of a summer girl by the moonlit sea, the football.

Some men go from the country to the city to see a game of football, while others go from the city to the country, when there is no game, to shoot birds. But they all eat turkey if this divine bird comes within their pecuniary reach. The Ethiop who is so unfortunate as to have no pecuniary reach worth speaking of must depend upon his natural reach to penetrate the foliage of his neighbor's tree and pluck therefrom the moonlit fowl as a watermelon or a Bartlett pear. Some men will eat corned beef and Irish stew on Thanksgiving day and imagine that they are doing the day and themselves justice. Such men are moral monstrosities that defy analysis. Those who would attempt to fathom them and arrive at an intelligible and satisfactory solution could make more money writing visiting cards with a telegraph office pen. Not more vain would it be to attempt to preserve in musical notation the spirited barcarole of the overripe November pig or to attempt to sound the depths of a country plumber's sophistry with an ordinary plumb line.

The old fan tailed gobbler will no more strut about the farmyard with the dignity and hauteur of a retail floorwalker. No more will he wave his great scarlet wattles like a danger signal preparatory to chasing the small boy, who would make him the unwilling recipient of a bucket of cold water. No more will he sit in a statuesque ball on the old elm and look wistfully over the russet cornfield, whose furrows are picturesquely punctuated with dull gold pumpkins. He has heard the whining winds of autumn rustling in the rosy foliage and his blazing side whiskers for the last time. Yesterday he was full of hope. Today he is full of chestnuts, and his drumsticks play a solo of joy on the souls of the people congregated about the table, especially that of the small boy, whose eyes throb with joy and who is as full of anticipation as the turkey is full of dressing. What a beautiful study is the old gobbler as he lies upon the platter, bronzed to a crisp, with his white meat shining through his tawny envelope that ever and anon breaks with a sound that sends ripples of softest music across the lilied millponds of our souls!

When the turkey is so good, it is no wonder that he usurps that portion of our inner man usually set apart for plum pudding or pumpkin pie. The man who likes plum pudding better than turkey, if such a man exists, should not fail to change matters by putting the last first and the first last. A Shanghai on Thanksgiving day scratches gravel in the background of oblivion. He is more remote and obscure than is a baseball player in the height of the skating season or a furrier in the sweltering dogday.

Thanksgiving day is a day of tender dreams that fill our souls with sweetest music. Usually it is a still, gray day, during which the dark, leafless trees stand sharply etched against a liquid atmosphere in which you can hear the partridge drum and the blue jay squawk a mile away. The smoke curls from the old farmhouse straight into the air, and from its quaint windows the crow can be seen circling wistfully over the old cornfield, with outspread wings, as if fearing to break the silence of the scene. And the old farmer is thankful that his sons have come back to spend this festal day with him at their old home. They are delighted, for once more they scent the roasting gobbler and dream of cracking the wishbone again, just as they did when small boys. And again they will have the dear old nightmare in the attic room that is colder than the barn in winter and hotter than the potato patch in summer. But they are really no happier than those who celebrate the day in a New York flat that is so small that it does not furnish sufficient elbow room to carve a turkey and therefore compels the family to have a fricassee or a canned turkey, neither of which is a dish equal to the requirements of so glorious an occasion.

The only time that Thanksgiving is not a success is when the turkey is so tough that the only way it can be disjointed seems to be by blasting it with dynamite. Such a turkey fills the conscientious housewife with horror and makes her register a vow to ever afterward subject the turkey to a thorough drubbing with a rolling pin in the same way that she does the average mustang steak. A turkey should be treated in this fashion before the dressing is inserted or not at all. Yet the gobbler is a peerless classic fowl that does more for Thanksgiving day than Thanksgiving day does for him, and we should cherish the sweet associations that surround him from the Greco-Roman with his drumsticks to the day of war with his shrapnel enriched wishbone.

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