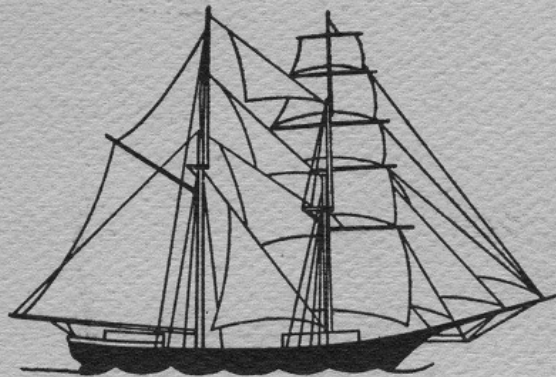
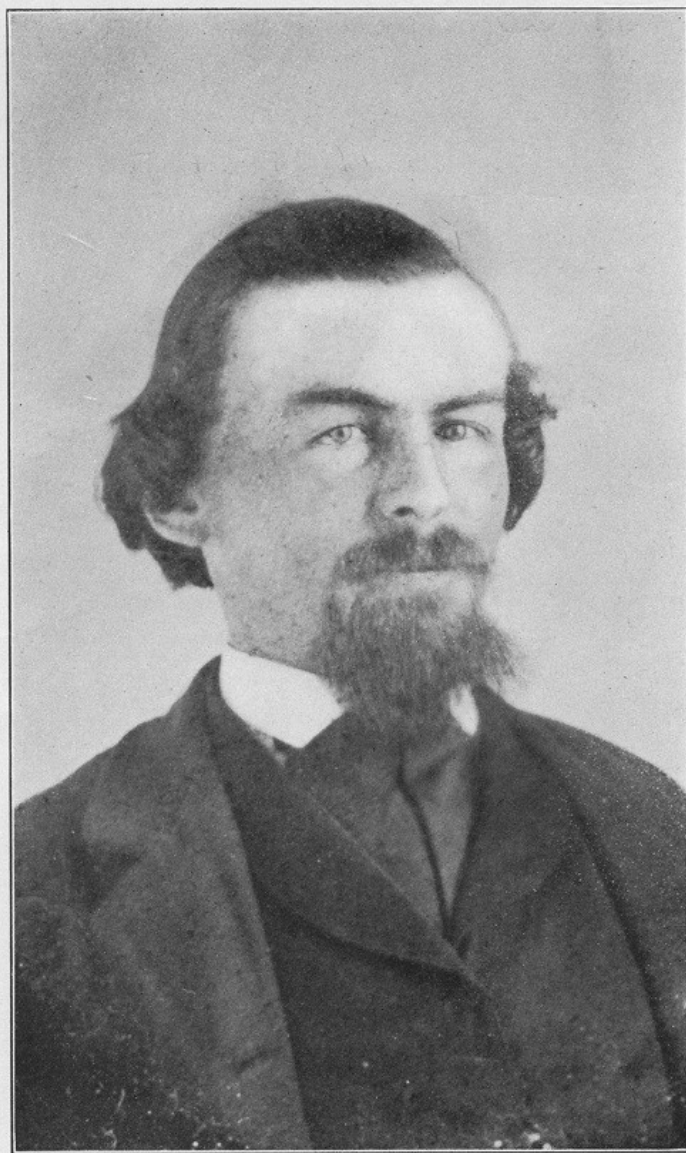


**IN THE WAKE OF THE
MARY CELESTE**





Captain Benjamin S. Briggs

IN THE WAKE OF THE MARY CELESTE

BY JAMES FRANKLIN BRIGGS



Old Dartmouth
Historical Sketches

No. 74

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From childhood I have heard stories of the disappearance of my Uncle Benjamin, his family and his crew from the brig *Mary Celeste* which was found sailing along in the Atlantic Ocean with not a person on board. I often wished my father and other members of the family to correct some of the false statements appearing in print. But those who knew and loved Uncle Ben and his little family were too anxious and grieved by their disappearance to attempt any controversy with people whose sole interest in the matter seemed to be in writing sensational tales. The passing of the years has brought inevitable changes so that those who were nearest and dearest to Uncle Ben have now all passed beyond this earthly sphere. Perhaps they who were separated and overwhelmed with grief by the sad event are now happily reunited, and perhaps they now know, what is denied to us, the true solution of the mysterious riddle.

The years that I have spent in collecting information about the *Mary Celeste* have been made pleasurable by the many friends who have given me generous help. I cannot name them all, but I feel moved to give public acknowledgement to my father, James C. Briggs, for his first awakening my interest in the story; to my cousin, Dr. Oliver W. Cobb, who has written much about the known facts; to my good friend, Mr Charles Edey Fay, author of the excellent book entitled "*Mary Celeste*, the Odyssey of an Abandoned Ship"; to Mr. George S. Bryan, author of "Mystery Ship, the *Mary Celeste* in Fancy and in Fact"; and to Mr. J. G. Lockhart of London, author of "A Great Sea Mystery". I have received valuable aid also from Mr. J. C. Anakin of Liverpool, who rescued from oblivion the stenographic notes of the Vice-Admiralty Court of Gibraltar; from Mr. Harry S. Morehouse, son of Captain David Reed Morehouse; from Mr. Winchester Noyes, grandson of Captain James H. Winchester; from Mr. R. Lester Dewis, Captain William M. Collins, and Dr. S. W. Spicer all of Nova Scotia and all closely connected with the builders of the *Mary Celeste*; from Mr. William H. Tripp and Miss Helen E. Ellis, of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, from Mrs. Alice Melanson, daughter of Mate Oliver Deveau; from Mrs. Robert Vaughan, grand daughter of the owner of the rescue vessel, brig *Dei Gratia*; and from Mr. Thomas W.

Williams, who completed the sketch of the *Mary Celeste* shown on the cover.

And my most heartfelt acknowledgment must go to my beloved wife, who with great patience accompanied me on my lengthy researches from New York City all along our coasts eastward to Spencer's Island, Nova Scotia, who carefully read my manuscript, offering valuable suggestions, and who capped the conclusion of the work with the seal of her approval.

JAMES FRANKLIN BRIGGS

New Bedford, Massachusetts

August 8, 1944

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

On the northern shores of the Basin of Minas, in Nova Scotia, lies a country little visited by tourists, of exceptional charm and beauty, and of rich historic interest. The solitary road penetrates dark forests of spruce, mounts precipitous headlands of granite and red clay, and skirts the curving shores of quiet bays, offering the traveler vistas of majestic Blomidon across the swift tides of Minas Channel. There once lived scattered Acadians, French settlers from the coast of the Bay of Biscay, tilling their farms, building their dikes, smuggling from their mother country tomahawks and scalping knives to be traded to the Micmac Indians and used against the hated English.

Dr. Eaton*, in his *History of King's County*, speaks of them as "those thrifty French people who in 1755 were forcibly taken from their fertile farms and rich dike lands into suffering exile in unfriendly colonies, and placed as wretched paupers among people who had no sympathy with their traditions or habits of mind, who were unfamiliar with their faces, and who profoundly hated their speech.

"When the Acadians had been deported, the red tide floods of the Bay of Fundy bore to Minas Basin's shores a new population, representing families that had long been conspicuous for energy and worth in various parts of New England, and these began a fresh civilization that continued and conserved much that had been best from the beginning in New England's own life."

This migration to the sparsely settled British province of Nova Scotia closely touches our local history, for in 1785 Governor Parr induced twenty Quaker families of Nantucket to move to Nova Scotia. With their whaling vessels, equipment, and household goods they came and settled across the harbor from Halifax at a place they named *Dartmouth*, "after the whaling port in Massachusetts of that name", as stated by Thomas C. Haliburton, that early and painstaking historian of Nova Scotia.

The sum of £1541 was granted by the provincial government to construct houses and buildings for the Nantucket people, who

*Dr. Arthur Wentworth Hamilton Eaton

came in three brigantines and one schooner with crews and the necessary whaling gear. Among those who came were Samuel Starbuck and Timothy Folger, — good old Nantucket names.

Whaling was carried on from this point as far south as Barbadoes and the twelve forty ground. Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, was well equipped for the industry with wharves, stores, coopering establishments, and a factory for making candles. In July 1788 five whaling vessels returned with full cargoes of oil, but in 1792 the failure of a firm handicapped the enterprise and it was soon afterwards totally ruined. The settlers from Nantucket packed up and migrated from Dartmouth to Milford Haven, England, being induced to go there by liberal offers, "and", says Haliburton, "the Province lost these orderly and industrious people."

BUILDING THE VESSEL

Some of the English settlers who had congregated in communities along the eastern coast of Nova Scotia were persuaded to migrate to the shores of the Basin of Minas by gifts of land, the remittance of taxes for a given time, and the grant of money for buying tools and farm stock. These settlers of Puritan stock were not familiar with the building and upkeep of dikes and so made their farms on the less productive uplands. After a century of wringing a bare living out of a stubborn soil their descendants began to seek other means of livelihood. Stories of the success of New England ship-builders came to their ears and fired them with ambition to enter into ventures beyond their own farms. Their forests would furnish abundant material for ship building, their hardy sons the skill and brawn, and the nearby waters the opportunity for transport and trade.

So it is not strange that Joshua Dewis of Advocate Harbor in 1860 decided to seek the help of his friends and neighbors in a new enterprise, the building of a ship. Jacob Spicer and his brother Isaac Spicer readily joined the company as did others along the Parrsboro shore. Joshua Dewis, master builder and largest owner, laid out a new shipyard on the crescent shore of Spencer's Island, which is not an island, but a small village on the mainland.

The workmen were boarded among the farmers in the neighborhood and supplies were furnished from a general store set up in the shipyard. When the ship carpenters in the new yard

were laying the keel and setting up the frames, they could hear the axes ringing in the nearby forest of Jacob and Isaac Spicer and the falling of the spruce trees that would soon be fashioned into planking and attached to the frames by wooden pegs called treenails. Except for a small amount of maple, all of the wood going into the new vessel was soft wood, — spruce, fir, and pine, — and none of it was seasoned. To prevent dry rot, so deadly to green wood, chocks were built between the frames and filled with tons of rock salt. The work progressed rapidly and by May 1861 the little half-brig of about 200 tons stood on the ways complete with masts, yards, and rigging well set up, and with a new suit of sails made of flax duck bent on the yards.

Came the day for her launching, when not only her builders and owners viewed her with pride, but also the people who came in crowds on steamboats, in sloops and schooners from the little villages on both sides of the Basin of Minas. Some of them had dug deep into their savings in order to have a part in the venture, and all looked forward with hope to the new vessel giving a good account of herself and bringing in dividends enough to allow them to build more vessels. Freights were good, England needed the timber that Nova Scotia so richly possessed, and often these little soft-wood ships built at low cost were sold at a good profit on their first foreign voyages.

The new craft was christened *Amazon*. Some writers have asserted that she stuck on the ways and was loath to enter that element that was to bear her through many troubles to her inglorious end. But Captain George Spicer who helped rig her and was on board when she was launched says, "No." She slid gently down the launching ways, entered the water with a beautiful splurge, and curtsied gracefully to the admiring on-lookers.

FIRST CATASTROPHE

Soon after the *Amazon* was registered at Parrsboro, the nearest custom house, she started on her maiden voyage under the command of Captain Robert McLellan of the town of Economy. She sailed up Minas Basin to Five Islands and there loaded deals, heavy lumber, for London. On her way down the Bay of Fundy Captain McLellan became ill, and at Quaco, near St. John, turned back. The captain was taken ashore at Spencer's Island where he lingered a few days and died. The crew placed his body in a small open boat for his last quiet trip. As they

approached the shore of his home, his young wife, who supposed her husband well on his way to London, came down to the shore to see what the men had in the boat.

A new captain, John Nutting Parker, took the *Amazon* and her cargo of deals to London. While in Marseilles in November 1861 he ordered painted an oil portrait of the vessel, which is now in the Fort Beausejour Museum in Aulac, New Brunswick. This picture shows that she was rigged as an hermaphrodite brig, or half brig. Such vessels were commonly called *brigs* for short, and were so classed in lists of shipping.

MORE ILL-LUCK

For a few years the *Amazon* made fair voyages and good returns, but in 1867 the owners became dissatisfied with her master, Captain William Thompson, and sent a new master to Halifax where she had unloaded a cargo of corn from Baltimore. Before his arrival, however, Captain Thompson put to sea, and shortly after, about November 1, the vessel went ashore at Cow Bay, Cape Breton Island. As the insurance on the vessel did not cover damage to her on the Cape Breton coast after November 1, and as the farmer owners could not raise the cash to pay for her salvage, she was surrendered to her salvors.

Perhaps she was not much damaged and Captain Thompson sold out the owners. At any rate the *Amazon's* register was cancelled and a new register, issued from Sydney, Cape Breton, named as sole owner Alexander MacBean of Big Glace Bay, Gentleman. He hurried to get her off his hands and resold her at once to John Howard Beatty, Gentleman. The transaction between these two "gentlemen" looks very shady because a vessel could not be legally registered until fit to go to sea, and this all took place within a week of her being wrecked. Furthermore the Registrar ducked responsibility by endorsing the paper as follows: "Registered by order of the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia." Thus passed from the hands of her honest farmer owners this first vessel built on their shores, their pride, and the bearer of their hopes. Henceforth they thought of her as "the vessel that made us eat with tin spoons."

What happened to the *Amazon* under her new owner, J. H. Beatty, Gentleman, is unknown. The *Sackville Tribune* of New Brunswick says, "She went ashore on the rugged coast of Cape Breton Island near Port Morien. Refloated and repaired she

sailed again only to meet a similar fate on the coast of Maine." Of this there appears to be no confirmation. Beatty, owned her only a year, however, for in November 1868 she arrived in New York and was sold as a wrecked vessel at public auction to Richard W. Haines for the sum of \$1750. He repaired her by putting in a new keel, stern and bottom, with new spars, rigging and sails at an expense of \$8825 as reported. Claiming he was entitled to put her under the American flag, he obtained through a custom house broker an American register, which was subsequently held to be fraudulent.

NEW NAME

Haines changed the vessel's name from *Amazon* to *Mary Celeste*, but where he got the new name no one knows. A more appropriate name would have been *Mary Diabliesse*,—not *Heavenly Mary*, but *Mary the She-Devil*, for she brought disaster on every man that put his trust in her.

In many accounts her name is spelled *Marie Celeste*, although this is plainly an error. Her name is spelled *Mary* on her many official registers,* on her crew list in the New York Custom House, in the records of the Vice Admiralty Court at Gibraltar, and in letters written on board by Captain Briggs and his wife. The mis-spelling *Marie* appears first in the New York Pilotage Record of November 7, 1872,** and again in a letter of Robert S. Baynes, British Colonial Secretary at Gibraltar, to United States Consul Horatio J. Sprague, dated March 1, 1873. The earliest instance of the error in print is found in *Lloyd's List* of London, March 25, 1873, reporting the arrival of the vessel in Genoa. Earlier and later issues of *Lloyd's List* spell the name *Mary*.

The mis-spelling was widely publicized, however, by A. Conan Doyle in his imaginative tale, *J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement*, published in the *Cornhill Magazine* of January 1884.

Haines, the new owner of the *Mary Celeste*, became her captain but could not make enough money in her to keep clear of the sheriff. Within ten months the unfortunate vessel was seized for debt and sold at marshal's sale in New York. This time she was bought by Captain James H. Winchester who had

*See Digest of Registers in Mr. Charles Edey Fay's painstaking and comprehensive book entitled "Mary Celeste, The Odyssey of an Abandoned Ship," page 199 and following pages.

**"Mystery Ship, The *Mary Celeste* in Fancy and in Fact" by George S. Bryan, page 126.

given up the sea three years before and started in business as a ship owner, agent, and broker. This business under the name of J. H. Winchester & Co. is today one of the largest ship brokerage houses in New York City.

Recalced and sheathed with yellow metal the *Mary Celeste* sailed under various masters till 1872. In April of that year a certain U.S. deputy surveyor named Abeel came to the office of J. H. Winchester & Co. and claimed that the *Mary Celeste* was fraudulently registered. According to an interview published in the *New York World* of January 24, 1886, Captain Winchester said that after considerable talk and quibbling the deputy surveyor said he knew Winchester was an innocent party and he did not want to be hard on him and the matter could be settled out of court. This looked so much like blackmail that Capt. Winchester told him if the vessel belonged to the United States government they would have to take her, as he had no money to settle with him or anybody else. He telegraphed the captain of the *Mary Celeste* at St. Thomas to take the best freight he could get and bring the vessel home. When the brig arrived in Boston she was seized on account of her register, appraised, and bonded for \$2,600. The case was finally decided in favor of Captain Winchester because he was not responsible for the alleged fraud.

ALTERATIONS

In the fall of 1872 the *Mary Celeste* was brought to New York for repairs. Captain Winchester decided to change her from a single to a double decked vessel. On opening her it was found that the unseasoned timber put into her when she was built had decayed, doubtless because the rock salt in the pockets between her timbers had not been renewed often enough, and they had to tear her to pieces clear down to the water's edge, and put in nearly an entire new frame. At the same time, it is believed, her rig was changed from a single topsail to double topsails. By the changes in the hull her tonnage was increased from 206 tons to 282 tons, making her about the size of Ship *Charles W. Morgan*, formerly exhibited on the estate of Colonel Edward H. R. Greene at Round Hills, South Dartmouth. The repairs to the *Mary Celeste* cost \$11,500 instead of about \$3,000 as had been contemplated. Doubtless Winchester was glad to recoup some of his outlay by selling a one third interest in her to Captain Benjamin S. Briggs, who became her new master.

CAPTAIN BRIGGS AND THE FAMOUS VOYAGE

Benjamin Spooner Briggs, numbering among his ancestors Mayflower Pilgrims and Revolutionary patriots, was born in Wareham, Massachusetts, in 1835 and spent his boyhood in the nearby town of Marion at Rose Cottage where his father lived when home from foreign voyages. Following in the steps of his father and grandfather he went to sea at an early age. In 1855, sailing before the mast, he was one of a crew of 47 men on Ship *Hope*, commanded by his father, Captain Nathan Briggs, on a voyage from New York to San Francisco, Callao, Chincha Islands, and thence around "the Horn" to London. In a few years Benjamin rose to be master and commanded in succession Brig *Sea Foam*, Schooner *Forest King*, Bark *Prima Dona*, and Bark *Arthur*.

About the middle of October 1872 Captain Ben left his family in Marion to go to New York to finish fitting out and loading his latest charge, brig *Mary Celeste*. On Saturday October 26 his wife Sarah and daughter Sophy, two years old, went by Fall River Line boat to New York, leaving son Arthur, aged seven, with his grandmother in Marion to continue his schooling in the village. In her letter to Arthur, dated Sunday October 27, Sarah writes:

"Well, Sophy and I got here all right this morning, and father met us at the boat and brought us over to his vessel, which is the brig *Mary Celeste*."

Little Sophy was interested in the ship's cat that was tied up down below so it could not run away and kept crying to get out. Sophy called her "Poo-uh Poo!"

"She was very much delighted," writes her mother, "to see Sarah Jane and Daisy [her dolls] when we gave them to her. After a while Mother was playing on the melodeon and she wanted Sarah Jane to play, too, so Mother took her to teach her. Finding that it was her right arm that was broken and not wishing her to play left-handed, Mother turned her round back-to, and she played quite as well as if she had faced the music. Afterwards Father made Daisy play two parts with her two feet, so that Sophy seemed quite proud of her two children. She has got them cuddled up in bed with her now and they are all fast asleep."

Life on board the vessel was not without its social moments, and Sarah always saw the amusing side of every occurrence. In a

letter which she wrote to her sister Mary Scribner Cobb in Marion, Mass., dated November 2, 1872 she says:

"I suppose about the time this reaches you Willie and bride will be with you. They will tell you of their call on board *Mary Celeste* and the ride [to Central Park] which followed. Emmie seemed to think our little home was quite cozy, but she must also have thought it rather low in the walls, as her bonnet was pushed off in coming down stairs and she had quite a laugh over the undignified appearance she presented on her presentation to me with her bonnet hanging around her neck. That made the introduction (which might otherwise have been a little formal, owing to a slight precision of manner on her part, and a natural bashfulness on mine) quite easy, and the manner I did not notice at all after a time, she seemed so glad to see us, and said she did not feel as if she were meeting strangers, she had heard so much of us from Willie and brother Charlie."

The "Willie" spoken of here was Sarah's younger brother, who at the age of 14 years through his knowledge of trigonometry and logarithms helped to navigate a ship. He became later a doctor of divinity, a Sanskrit scholar, and the learned librarian of the Congregational Library on Beacon Street in Boston.

On Sunday November 3 the Captain wrote to his mother in Marion: "It seems real homelike since Sarah and Sophia got here, and we enjoy our little quarters. . . . We seem to have a very good mate [Albert G. Richardson from Maine] and steward, and I hope shall have a pleasant voyage. We both have missed Arthur and I believe I should have sent for him, if I could have thought of a good place to stow him away"

"Our vessel is in beautiful trim and I hope we shall have a fine passage, but as I have never been in her before, I can't say how she'll sail"

"Hoping to be with you again in the spring, with much love, I am

Yours affectionately,
Benj."

At pier 50 East River the vessel was loaded with 1700 barrels of alcohol in red oak casks, to the disturbance of Sarah who wrote, "The fact is there is such an amount of thumping and bumping, of shakings and tossings to and fro of the cargo, and of

screechings and growlings by escaping steam, that I believe I've gone slightly daft."

On Monday November 4, with the loading completed, Captain Briggs signed the crew list and articles of agreement at the New York Custom House. On Tuesday morning the *Mary Celeste* was towed out from the pier, but did not proceed to sea at once as is evidenced by the following letter penned by the captain's wife and mailed on shore by the pilot. This is the last word ever received from any of the ten people who embarked on this fatal voyage.

"Brig *Mary Celeste*

Off Staten Island, November 7

"Dear Mother Briggs, —

"Probably you will be a little surprised to receive a letter with this date, but instead of proceeding to sea when we came out Tuesday morning, we anchored about a mile or so from the city, as it was strong head wind, and Ben said it looked so thick and nasty ahead we shouldn't gain much if we were beating and banging about. Accordingly we took a fresh departure this morning with wind light but favorable, so we hope to get outside without being obliged to anchor . . .

"Benjie thinks we have got a pretty peaceable set this time all around if they continue as they have begun. Can't tell yet how smart they are. B. reports a good breeze now, says we are going along nicely . . .

"As I have nothing more to say I will follow A. Ward's advice and say it at once. Farewell.

"Yours affectionately,
Sarah."

Bound for Genoa with a cargo of Alcohol the *Mary Celeste* sailed with a fair wind from New York and made good time until she reached the Azores Islands. There is no reason to believe that she experienced any unusual incident up to this time. On Monday November 25, according to the log slate the wind was fresh and the vessel was making eight knots. At 9 P.M. "Got in Royal and top G. sail." At midnight the wind was west, the weather rainy, and the course of the vessel E. by S. At 8 o'clock the following morning the eastern point of the island of Santa Maria bore S.S.W. 6 miles distant.

From that hour there is no record of what happened to any of the ten people on the little brig. From the evidence found by those who ten days later boarded the vessel we may believe that the captain became suddenly alarmed, hauled aback the square sails to stop her headway, ordered all hands into the yawl boat, and temporarily left the ship, which subsequently gathered way and sailed off. As the salvors made no mention of finding even the cat, we may conclude that when little Sophy was summoned to go, she took in her arms "Poo-uh Poo," and in the heavily laden open boat all perished together.

"History is written with something besides ink; the overtones of its . . . tragedies are part of the still, sad music of humanity. One cannot write of them unmoved."^{*}

THE DEI GRATIA AND THE DERELICT

Eight days after the *Mary Celeste* put to sea the Nova Scotia brig *Dei Gratia* sailed from the port of New York with a cargo of petroleum bound to Gibraltar for orders. She was about the same size as the *Mary Celeste*, being but thirteen gross tons larger, she was rigged in the same way, and she carried the same number of men in her crew. Sailing steadily eastward she experienced stormy weather all the way to the Azores. Soon after noon on December 4, that is on December 5 sea time, the man at the wheel called to the attention of Captain David Reed Morehouse a vessel under short sail headed toward them. The captain reached for his spy-glass hanging in the companionway, took one look at her, and called his mate from below.

Mate Oliver Deveau described the next events as follows:

"I came on deck and saw a vessel through the glass,--she appeared about four or five miles off [on the windward bow]. The master proposed to speak the vessel in order to render assistance if necessary and to haul wind for the purpose. We did. By my reckoning we were 38° 20' North Latitude and 17° 15' West Longitude by dead reckoning of our own ship." [This is roughly about half way between the Azores and the coast of Portugal]. They hauled up and hailed the vessel, but received no answering hail. The mate's narrative continues:

"I cannot say whether the master or I proposed to lower the boat, but one of us did so, and a boat was launched, and I and

^{*}Quoted from "History of American Congregationalism" by Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick L. Fagley.

two men with me went in her to board the vessel. The sea was running high, the weather having been stormy, though then the wind was moderating. I boarded the vessel and the first thing I did was to sound the pumps which were in good order.

"I found no one on board the vessel. I found three and a half feet of water in the pumps on sounding them . . . I found the fore hatch and the lazarette hatch both off, — the binnacle stove in — I found everything wet in the cabin, in which there had been a great deal of water — the skylight of the cabin was open and raised,—the compass in the binnacle was destroyed. I found all the captain's effects had been left, — I mean his clothing, furniture, etc. . . . I found the Log Book in the mate's cabin on his desk; the Log Slate I found on the cabin table. I found an entry in the Log Book up to the 24th of November, and an entry on the Log Slate dated 25th November showing that they had made the island of St. Mary.

"There seemed to be everything left behind in the cabin as if left in a hurry, but everything in its place. I noticed the impression in the captain's bed as of a child having lain there. The hull of the vessel appeared in good condition and nearly new . . .

The masts were good, the spars all right, the rigging in very bad order — some of the running rigging carried away, gone, — the standing rigging was all right; the upper foretopsail and fore-sail gone, — apparently blown away from the yards. Lower foretopsail hanging by the four corners. Mainstaysail hauled down and lying on the forward house, loose, as if it had been let run down. Jib and foretopstaysail set; all the rest of the sails being furled . . .

"There were no boats and no davits at the side. I don't think she used davits. It appeared as if she carried her boat on deck. There was a spar lashed across the stern davits, so that no boat had been there."

Later Deveau reported that he found a section of the vessel's rail on the port side removed and lying on deck, leaving a gangway for launching the small boat from the deck.

"I went back to my vessel," he continues, "and reported the state of the brigantine to the captain. I proposed taking her in. He told me well to consider the matter, as there was great risk and danger to our lives and also to our own vessel. We consulted among ourselves and crew and resolved to bring her in."

[Deveau was an experienced seaman of large frame, of great physical strength, and absolutely fearless]

"The captain gave me two men," he continues, "the small boat, a barometer, compass and watch. I took with me my own nautical instruments and whatever food our steward had prepared. I went on board the same afternoon, the 5th, about an hour afterwards perhaps, hoisted the boat on deck, pumped her out, and took charge of the vessel . . .

"When first we went on board we had a good deal to do to get the ship in order. I found a spare trysail which I used as a foresail . . . We had fine weather at first and until we got into the Straits, when it came on a storm, so that I dare not make the Bay [of Gibraltar], but laid to under Ceuta [on the African coast] and afterwards on the Spanish coast to the east. When I arrived at Gibraltar I found the *Dei Gratia* already there."

On the day after his arrival Mate Deveau wrote to his wife in Nova Scotia. The letter reads in part as follows:

Gibraltar, December 14, 1872.

"Dear Wife: I write you these lines to let you know that I arrived here safe and well, and hope you are the same. We left New York the 15th November and had a very hard passage of 26 days. We had nothing but westerly gales till we got to the Western Isles, and then we had a very moderate passage.

"From there I must inform you of our good luck in Lat. 38.20 North and Long. 17.15 West. We fell in with the brig *Mary Celeste* of New York abandoned . . .

"I took two men out of the brig and brought her in here . . . and I had a hard time of it. I would not like to undertake it again. I had very fine weather for the first two or three days, and then we had it hot and heavy. I made the land all right and it was blowing a gale at the time, and I got drove through the gut [meaning the Strait of Gibraltar] and 40 miles to leeward.

"The Brig only got in one day before me. My men were all but done out when I got in here, and I think it will be a week before I can do anything, for I never was so tired in my life. I can hardly tell what I am made of, but I do not care as long as I got in safe.

"I shall be well paid, for the *Mary Celeste* belongs to New York and was loaded with alcohol bound for Genoa, Italy, and her cargo is worth eighty thousand dollars besides the vessel. We do not know how it will be settled yet. I expect the captain will have to stop, and I will proceed on the voyage with the *Dei Gratia*.

They seem to say that we will draw half salvage. I think you will see this reported in the papers.

"I forget to state when we boarded her,—the 4th December, and I arrived here the 13th. That is very good time for a wreck to come about six hundred miles in nine days, with only a captain, mate and a cook in a vessel of over 200 tons.

"I am very sorry that I did not get any letters here, but I suppose that they have had not time to get here. I would like to hear from you and I would like to hear from James if he can talk yet [James was his little baby boy] I have nothing more at present. I shall write again soon.

"I still remain your most affectionate husband

Oliver Deveau"

Then follow fifteen crosses, evidently kisses that he sent to his wife and little son.

PROCEEDINGS IN GIBRALTAR

When the *Mary Celeste* arrived at Gibraltar she was promptly arrested by the Marshal of the Vice Admiralty Court. Five days later the court sat to hear the salvage claim of the *Dei Gratia*. A transcript of the proceedings begins:

"Before the Worshipful Sir James Cochrane, Knight, Judge, and Commissary of the Vice Admiralty Court of Gibraltar."

With many adjournments the proceedings were not finished until March 4, 1873. Oliver Deveau, Chief Mate, John Wright, Second Mate, and three sailors of the *Dei Gratia* testified as to the condition of the *Mary Celeste* when they found her, substantially the facts already recited. Frederick Solly Flood, Esquire, Advocate and Proctor for the Queen in her office of Admiralty, an excitable Irishman, was not satisfied with the testimony and was bound to find evidences of crime if possible. He ordered a survey of the *Mary Celeste* which was made by John Austin, Surveyor of Shipping, a diver, the Marshal of the Court, and Mr. Flood. The written report of the Surveyor concludes with these words:

"I am wholly unable to discover any reason whatever why the said vessel should have been abandoned." The diver reported the bottom in good condition showing no evidence of collision or accident.

Solly Flood still unconvinced made a more minute examination, found an old sword in the cabin, and what he considered blood stains on the deck. A chemical examination by Dr. J. Patron indicated that there was no trace of blood on the sword or on the deck. Mate Deveau was recalled for cross examination. In answer to questions he said:

"I noticed no marks or traces of blood upon the deck — I found that sword under the Captain's berth. I took it out from there, I looked at it, drew it from its sheath. There was nothing remarkable on it; I do not think there is anything remarkable about it now; it seems rusty."

Meanwhile in New York, where cable messages had been received, Captain Winchester principal owner and agent of the *Mary Celeste* had been given powers of attorney by the underwriters insuring the vessel and had taken passage for Gibraltar. U.S. Consul Horatio J. Sprague wrote to the Department of State under date of January 20, 1873:

"I have now to inform you that her principal owner, Mr. James H. Winchester, arrived here on the 15th instant from New York for the purpose of claiming the Brig and attending to the interests of all those concerned in her case, including the New York underwriters who have also empowered him to that effect. Mr. Winchester is now about entering his claim in the Vice Admiralty Court, with the assistance of a Proctor as required by British law in such cases. A claim for the cargo has already been entered by the holders of the Bill of Lading through their proctor; in the meanwhile nothing is heard from the missing crew of the *Mary Celeste*, and in the face of the apparently sea-worthy condition of this vessel, it is difficult to account for her abandonment, particularly as her Master, who was well-known, bore the highest character for seamanship and correctness; besides he had his wife and young child with him and was part owner of the *Mary Celeste*."

[Captain Benjamin S. Briggs called frequently at Gibraltar and was a member of St. John's Lodge of Masons at Gibraltar]

Captain Winchester was displeased at the seemingly endless delays of the Admiralty Court. He was anxious for his vessel to be released so that she could proceed to Genoa and complete her voyage. For this purpose he had brought over a new master, Captain George W. Blatchford of Wrentham, Mass.

When Captain Winchester appeared before the Court, according to family tradition, the following exchange took place:

"What is your name, sir?"

"James H. Winchester."

"Of what country are you a citizen?"

"Of the United States of America."

"Of what descent are you?"

"British, sir, but if I knew where the British blood was I would open my veins and let it out."

The Queen's Proctor wanted him to furnish surety against all claims, not only of the salvors and the costs of court, but also possible claims of the missing captain and crew of the *Mary Celeste*. This Capt. Winchester refused to do. Early in February he went to Cadiz where his friend, Captain Henry O. Appleby of the Brigantine *Daisy Boynton* lent him sufficient cash to pay the most pressing claims against the *Mary Celeste*.*

On Feb. 6, 1873 Capt. Winchester wrote from Lisbon to U. S. Consul Horatio J. Sprague stating that he had decided to return to New York by the Anchor Line Steamer *Caledonia* then about leaving that port. His reasons for this determination are sufficiently stated in a subsequent letter to Consul Sprague, reading as follows:

"New York, March 10th 1873.

H. J. Sprague Esq.
U. S. Consul
Gibraltar

"Dear Sir

"Enclosed pleas find Simpson Harts power of attorney duly leagised by the English consul.

"On my arrival home I find my wife a mear Skiliten She has feel away So with a very bad coff and raising a great deal which is no dout consumption this was one reason wi I was anshos to git home and a nother reason was that I found I could do no good by Staying thare on expence and leaving my business to Suffer then again a gentleman came to me while at gibraltar and told me that after the Judge and the attorney general had used up every other pretence to caus delay and expence they

*See Charles Edey Fay's "Mary Celeste, The Odyssey of an Abandoned Ship," pp. 87-90.

ware going to arest me for hiring the crue to make way with the officers the Idear was very rediculas but from what you and every body elce in Gibraltar had told me about the attorney general I did not know but they might do it as they Seam to do Just as they like when I left gibraltar I expected to come back but after talking with the consul at cadiz I decided to come home

"All the other legalized dockaments you now have pleas wright me what has been done

"very respectfuley yours

J. H. Winchester."

This letter, preserved in the National Archives at Washington, D.C., shows much better hand writing than spelling.

FURTHER PROCEEDINGS

Meanwhile Captain Winchester through his proctor, George F. Cornwell, had submitted to the court his plea as lawful owner of the *Mary Celeste* for restitution of the vessel to her owners upon payment of salvage and salvage expenses and upon finding sureties to answer all latent claims. To this plea the Queen's Advocate and also Pisani, proctor for the salvors, consented, but the judge refused, saying:

"There are certain matters which have been brought to my notice respecting this vessel, my opinion about which I have already very decidedly expressed, and which make it desirable and even very necessary that further investigation should take place before the release of the vessel can be sanctioned or before she can quit this port.

"The conduct of the Salvors in going away as they have done has in my opinion been most reprehensible and may probably influence the decision as to their claim for remuneration for their services; and it appears very strange why the Captain of the *Dei Gratia*, who knows little or nothing to help the investigation should have remained here whilst the first mate and the crew who boarded the *Celeste* and brought her here should have been allowed to go away as they have done.

"The court will take time to consider the decree of restitution."

The court did take time to consider, and not until 25 days later, when Captain Winchester on Steamship *Caledonia* was

neering the port of New York, did the court restore the *Mary Celeste* to her owners. Then it took two weeks more to refit the vessel. Finally on March 10th the *Mary Celeste* cleared from Gibraltar for Genoa under command of Captain George W. Blatchford with a new crew. At Genoa the cargo of alcohol was discharged and found in good order. The vessel was hove down, her bottom surveyed and found to be not damaged in any way. Three months later she sailed from Genoa for Boston where she arrived September 1st.

Leaving Captain Morehouse in Gibraltar to receive the award of salvage, Mate Deveau took the *Dei Gratia* to Genoa where he arrived January 16th. While she was discharging her cargo of petroleum Deveau was recalled to Gibraltar to be cross examined in court by the Queen's Advocate, still anxious to discover crime. He ended his testimony by stating:

"It did not occur to me that there had been any act of violence; there was nothing to induce one to believe or to show that there had been any violence."

Deveau returned to the *Dei Gratia* and on March 17th sailed from Genoa for Messina. While loading fruit at Messina he had a portrait of the vessel painted. On this painting is lettered "Brig Dei Gratia, Capt. Oliver Deveau, Giuseppi Coli Dipense, Messina Aprile 1873." Sailing from Messina he stopped at Gibraltar on May 13th and arrived at New York June 19th. On the list of vessels arriving in New York, according to the National Archives, is the following notation: June 19, 1873; Brig *Dei Gratia*; Deveau; Messina; British; 1412.94."

On March 14th 1873 the Honorable Chief Justice of the Vice Admiralty Court at Gibraltar awarded the salvors of the *Mary Celeste* the sum of £1,700 for the services rendered by them. This was slightly less than 20% of the estimated value of the vessel plus the cargo, and was considered a very small award. Apparently insurance on the vessel and her cargo covered the sum to be paid to the salvors and the expenses of the suit. The master of the *Dei Gratia*, Captain David Reed Morehouse, as agent for the owners, officers and crew, had been waiting in Gibraltar for the judgment of the court, and to receive the salvage money awarded. When this long-deferred business was concluded, Capt. Morehouse took passage from Gibraltar via London, it is believed, for America.

LITTLE ARTHUR

The letters of Captain Benjamin Briggs and his wife written before the *Mary Celeste* sailed show careful solicitation for their son Arthur whom they left in Marion in care of his grandmother. The captain wrote to his mother, "I wrote James to pay you for A's board and rent. If he forgets call on him, also for any money that may be necessary for clothes. Please get Eben to see his skates are all right and the holes in his new thick boot heels. I hope he'll keep well as I think if he does he'll be some help as well as company for you."

Arthur's mother wrote to him: "I suppose you have been to meeting and Sunday school today with Grandma and Uncle James. I hope you heard some good things that you will not soon forget. . . . I think if you remember that verse in your 'First Reader' beginning, 'I will not fear,' you will not be afraid to go after milk if it is dark.

"Tell both Grandma's I shall write to them very soon. Try to get plenty of wood in for Grandma Briggs because you are the man of the house now you know.

In her next letter to Arthur his mother writes to acknowledge the receipt of a printed letter from him and continues:

"When you write again tell how you get along in arithmetic and spelling, and if you have learned to skate. If grandmother hasn't got any other bedtime for you I think you had better go to bed every night at half past seven, so as to feel bright in the morning. Sophy has put a kiss for Arthur right here on the paper so you will know it is there if you can't see it. Mother wants you to go to the graves of your little brother and sister sometimes with grandmother."

So little seven-year-old Arthur studied his arithmetic and spelling, and after school screwed his wooden bottomed skates into his thick boot-heels and skated with his cousin Natie during that winter which was to make them both orphans. Little Arthur brought in the stove wood from the wood shed because he was the man of the house, and when he walked through the black pine woods to fetch the milk for his grandmother, he tried not to mind the hoot-owls, but to remember the verse beginning "I will not fear."

All through the winter his grandmother shielded him from the knowledge of the disappearance of his father, his mother,

and his little sister. But in the spring he must have known, when he saw the beds and chairs and the family belongings moved out of his own home and distributed to others. Doubtless his grandmother with breaking heart told him as gently as she could and kept alive in him the hope that he would some day be rejoined by his dear ones.

A year passed by and then arrived strange packages bearing the seal of the U. S. Consul at Gibraltar. When they were opened he gazed with silent grief on his mother's melodeon, his father's ceremonial sword, and among many other articles two dolls,—motherly little Sophy's Daisy and Sarah Jane with her broken arm.

Another year passed and with it his last hopes, for during that year he was sent to Uxbridge, Mass. to live with his uncle, the Reverend William H. Cobb, who had been appointed his legal guardian. There he grew up as older brother in a family of five happy children.

UNSOLVED RIDDLE

Why was the *Mary Celeste* abandoned? Many answers to this question have been advanced, none wholly satisfactory. Discarding such alleged causes as Algerian pirates, mutiny, the impressment of seamen, and even the attack of a giant octopus, let us turn our attention briefly to two reasonable theories and the objections to them.

One of these is set forth in a letter by Captain Ansel Weeks, Jr. of Mattapoisett, published in the *Journal of Commerce*, March 28, 1873.

"Editor of the *Journal of Commerce*:

"It appears strange to me that in attributing the affair of the *Mary Celeste* to mutiny, or criminal desertion, with the view of defrauding the underwriters, the more probable and common-sense view of the matter has been overlooked.

"According to the log, the vessel had made from the previous noon up to 8 A. M. about 140 miles, having averaged about 5 knots, which shows that the wind must have been quite moderate. Now suppose that during the forenoon it should have fallen calm, as is frequently the case in November, especially with northerly and north-west winds, according to the log at 8 A. M. with the eastern point of Santa Maria bearing S.S.W.,

which, allowing for the variations, would be about due south only about 6 miles [distant], between that time and night, with a heavy northerly swell rolling toward and on the island, as is generally the case during that season of the year, the vessel probably would have drifted very near the breakers. Under these circumstances, as every nautical man knows, they would have lowered, manned and sent ahead a boat to endeavor to keep the vessel out of the breakers.

"Now suppose that, notwithstanding their utmost efforts (anchoring being out of the question on account of depth of water and boldness of shore), the vessel should have approached so near the breakers as to make it dangerous to remain any longer on board, then of course the only recourse would be to take to the boat.

"At that late season, with the boat overcrowded by the captain and family, officers and crew, and on the weather or inaccessible side of the island, and taking for granted that the vessel was doomed, they would naturally pull away and endeavor to make a landing on some accessible part. They may have been deceived by appearances (a surf never showing its worst from off shore) and have been swamped, or even may have been swamped in trying to reach the port on the south side of the island, and of course all on board would have perished.

"The shore being so very bold, the vessel before entering the breakers or grounding may have been kept off by the undertows, and possibly, as is often the case after a calm, a faint air might have struck from the land and have drifted her clear of the eastern point, and then the shore making off a broad southerly, the vessel with the wind from the west quarter, and drawing off the island, might easily have drifted into the position in which she was discovered, more especially as a vessel of that rig having so much fore-and-aft canvas would work off quite fast, even if the square sails were aback.

"This would account for everything in the cabin having been found undisturbed, as probably the captain would defer until the last moment imparting to his wife the facts of the situation; also the men being in the boat would have little or no time for gathering together their effects.

signed "Capt. Ansel Weeks, Jr.

Mattapoisett, Mass."

We like the salty flavor of Captain Ansel's letter. He knew well the island of Santa Maria and the tricks of old Ocean, but obviously he had not been informed of the lack of sail on the *Mary Celeste* when boarded by the sailors from the *Dei Gratia*. In a calm such as he describes no sea captain trying to keep his vessel from drifting ashore would furl his topgallant sail, royal, staysails, mainsail, and gafftopsail. These sails were found furled or lowered.

The second reasonable theory is best told by Dr. Oliver W. Cobb, formerly of New Bedford, in an article which appeared in 1940 in the February issue of *Yachting*. That part of the article that gives the theory is as follows:

"As the entry in the log book at noon November 24th indicates light southerly wind the *Mary Celeste* was probably under full sail. This enables us to reconstruct what probably happened. At some time after noon of November 24th, Captain Briggs determined to take in sail . . . The royal and topgallant sail, the flying jib, maintopmast staysail, middle staysail, gaff topsail and the mainsail were furled.

"The vessel was still on the starboard tack as is shown by the jibs being set on the port side. That the yards were braced around so as to back the square sails is evident from the position of the yards when the salvors went on board. The movable section of the rail abreast the main hatch had been taken out and laid on deck where Mr. Deveau said that he left it until he went back on board the second time. All the above movements indicate good seamanship and preparation to leave the vessel. We do not know why, but I think that, the cargo of alcohol having been loaded in cold weather at New York early in November and the vessel having crossed the Gulf Stream and being now in comparatively warm weather, there may have been some leakage and gas may have accumulated in the hold. The captain, having care for his wife and daughter, was probably unjustifiably alarmed and, fearing a fire or an explosion, determined to take his people in the boat from the vessel until the immediate danger should pass . . .

"There is some evidence of haste in the act of leaving the vessel. The sailors left their pipes. The mainstaysail was not furled. The wheel was left loose. The binnacle was displaced and the compass broken, probably in a clumsy attempt to get the compass quickly.

"It may well have been that just at that time came an explosion which might have accounted for the fore hatch being upside down on deck, as found . . .

"Whatever happened it is evident that the boat with ten people in her left the vessel and that the peak halyard was taken as a tow line and as a means of bringing the boat back to the *Mary Celeste* in case no explosion or fire had destroyed the vessel. Probably a fresh northerly wind sprang up, filled the square sails, and the vessel gathered way quickly. The peak halyard made fast at the usual place on the gaff would be brought at an acute angle across the bulwarks at the gangway. With the heavy boat standing still at the end, I do not wonder that the halyard parted. This would tally exactly with the evidence given in court that 'the peak halyard was broken and gone.' This fact was impressed upon the sailors as they had to get a coil of rope from the lazarette and reeve off a new peak halyard before they could set the mainsail.

"When the tow rope parted these people were left in an open boat on the ocean as the brig sailed away from them. The wind that took the vessel away may have caused sea enough to wreck them. They perished — let us hope quickly. Nothing has appeared in all these sixty seven years to tell us of their end."

This theory is based on the supposition that the vapor of alcohol mixed with air can explode spontaneously in the hold of a vessel. Inquiry directed to the alcohol division of duPont in Wilmington brought this reply:

"While it is true that if alcohol vapors and air are mingled in rather exact proportions they will explode if subjected to a spark or open flame, it must be remembered that such an explosion would be accompanied by fire, and there appears to have been no evidence of fire when the '*Mary Celeste*' was discovered."

In the affidavit of John Austin, Surveyor of Shipping at Gibraltar, in which he reports to the Admiralty Court the details of his survey of the *Mary Celeste* he states:

"I made the most careful and minute examination through every part of the vessel to which I had access to discover whether there had been any explosion on board and whether there had been any fire or any accident calculated to create an alarm of an explosion or of fire, and did not discover the slightest trace of there having been any explosion or any fire or of anything calculated to create an alarm of an explosion or of fire."

It may be stated, however, that in 1872 the captains of vessels and many others held the opinion that an explosion was possible. With such a belief, and the knowledge that he had 1700 barrels of alcohol under the hatches, perhaps the captain felt he was taking the safest course in getting his family and crew into the yawl boat and pulling away some distance until the danger was over.

MORE HARD LUCK

We left the *Mary Celeste* under the command of Captain George W. Blatchford who brought her across the ocean to Boston, arriving at that port September 1st, 1873. Immediately Captain Winchester tried to sell her, although she then had a reputation about as wholesome as that of a haunted house.

"When she arrived," says Winchester, "a great many people came to look at her, but as soon as they found out her history they would not touch her." The captain brought her to New York where he had the same experience. He went by ferry with one prospective customer, a negro, from New York to Brooklyn, where the vessel was lying. When the negro saw the name *Mary Celeste* he cried, "Oh Lordy!" and turning around he ran as fast as he could and jumped on the ferry boat again just as it was about to leave.

Finally Winchester succeeded in selling her to the firm of Cartwright and Harrison of Brooklyn. "On closing her account," Winchester says, "I found I had lost \$8000 by her."

Years later Captain David Cartwright formerly at the head of the firm of Cartwright and Harrison said, as quoted in the *N. Y. World* of Sunday Jan. 24, 1886:

"Do I remember the brig *Mary Celeste*? Well, I should think I did. We owned her for five years, and of all the unlucky vessels I ever heard of she was the most unlucky. When we sold her we found that we had lost by her some \$5000. For the most of the time that we owned her she was in the general West Indian trade, and sometimes she lost her deck load of molasses, and sometimes she didn't but generally she did. We sent her out to Montevideo with a cargo of lumber and of course she arrived there minus her deck load; but we had got to expecting this. She had heavy weather, lost sail and spars, etc. There was nothing made on that trip. There the captain got a charter for the Mauritius to carry horses. He had dreadful weather off the Cape of Good Hope, and on arriving at the

Mauritius the few horses left alive were too ill to be worth anything. The captain—his name was Tuttle [Edgar M. Tuthill]—then obtained a good charter to bring a freight from Calcutta. On the passage home he was taken sick, and in consequence the brig had to put in to St. Helena, where, after a detention of three weeks, the captain died and the mate brought the brig home. We next sent her to the coast of Africa and on this voyage she lost \$1000. After this we kept her in the general West Indian trade, and at the end of five years were glad to sell her at a low figure to a Boston house."

LAST VOYAGE

The new owner was Wesley A. Gove who soon sold 10/16 of the vessel to four associates. After four years of unprofitable operation they engaged as master Gilman E. Parker, who took a desperate gamble with the ill-omened ship. In December 1884 he loaded her with 475 barrels of alewives and a miscellaneous cargo for Port-au-Prince, Haiti. According to the vessel's manifest she carried enough food and drink to supply the natives of Haiti for a long siege, enough boots to shoe all the barefoot negroes on the island, and enough paint and varnish to decorate all the crude shanties in the West Indies. Insurance was placed on the vessel and cargo in the amount of \$25,000.

The *Mary Celeste* cleared through the Boston custom house on December 11, 1884 and sailed for Port-au-Prince five days later. The voyage was without incident until near the end. On Saturday January 3rd, 1885 the *Mary Celeste* with clear skies and a fair wind was sailing between Ile de la Gonave and the southern jaw of Haiti. There was plenty of sea room, as much as between Naushon and New Bedford. Captain Gilman E. Parker directed the man at the wheel to keep her on her course directly for a plainly visible coral reef called Rochelois Bank. At half past one in the afternoon she struck the middle of the reef head on. The coral "chewed" at her and the vessel carried away her foremast. The captain ordered the mast cut free to ease her, and then invited the men below to help themselves to liquor. They launched the yawl boat and all rowed ashore leaving their vessel hogged on the reef.

Thus ingloriously the unlucky *Mary Celeste* met her end, totally abandoned and exposed on a coral reef where the tropical sun and torrential rains bleached her bones till they fell apart.

PLOT SUSPECTED

Captain Parker and his crew landed at Miragoane, the nearest town on the island of Haiti, and sold to the United States consular agent, a man named Mitchell, the whole cargo for five hundred dollars. Later Mitchell reported that he recovered most all of the cargo and lost money on the deal.

Claim was made on the insurance companies for the face value of the policies \$25,000. The suspicions of the underwriters were aroused, however, when they noted that the bills of lading called for more bottles of ale to the barrel than would go in a barrel, it being known that regular shipments were so many dozen to a flour barrel, and a dozen more for a sugar barrel. The insurance companies engaged to investigate the case Mr. Kingman N. Putnam, a well-known marine surveyor of 16 Exchange Place, New York City. Here is the story as told by Putnam:

"I had been requested to go to the port of Aux Cayes on the south side of Haiti to investigate the loss of a schooner called the *Mary L. Phipps*. Several of the underwriters told me that they had just received claims from the shippers of the cargo of the *Mary Celeste*. They gave me all these documents. The steamer I took to Haiti stopped at Port-au-Prince. I called upon the firms who were consignees of this merchandise and obtained from them copies of letters they had received from the Boston shippers. My steamer did not stop at Miragoane, but Captain Low told me that if I did not get back to Petit Goave in time, he would stop off Miragoane, where I found that Mitchell had saved most of the cargo of the *Mary Celeste* in sound condition and lost money in the transaction. Some of the packages of this cargo were still on hand. I opened one case which had been shipped as cutlery and insured for \$1000. It contained dog collars worth about \$50.—Cases insured as boots and shoes contained shoddy rubbers worth about 25 cents each. That night I slept on board the schooner *Mary E. Douglas*. I gave the captain some money and requested him to buy certain of these cases from Mitchell and obtain from him a consular certificate that these packages were part of the *Mary Celeste* cargo. The captain did this and delivered these cases to a lawyer in Boston." [This lawyer was Henry M. Rogers, employed by the insurance companies.]

"Upon my return to New York I went to Boston. The consequence was that Captain Parker, the master of the *Mary*

Celeste, was indicted for barratry and conspiracy, and the shippers of the cargo were indicted for conspiracy. This necessitated getting the original letters written by these firms to the consignees at Port-au-Prince. There was no steamer going for several weeks, so we chartered the steamer *Saxon*. I was made a United States Deputy Marshal with power to subpoena men in Haiti to come to Boston. I also received from Washington an order directing Mitchell to return with me. Of course the subpoenas were of no legal value, but they enabled me to obtain from the merchants in Port-au-Prince all the documents I wanted. When we went to Miragoane a Haitian General boarded the *Saxon* and told me that Mitchell would take to the woods, but that he had instructions from President Solomon to put Mitchell on board the *Saxon* with a file of soldiers at my request. I thought that to shanghai an American Consul on a vessel carrying a British flag might entail some consequences which I did not care to assume, especially as I had signed the *Saxon's* crew list as 'Chaplain.' [She was not allowed to carry passengers.] The General's invitation was therefore politely declined. I went ashore. Mitchell did take to the woods. We cleaned out his place."

MORE EVIDENCE GATHERED

Meantime the underwriters were investigating the case in Boston. They engaged to collect evidence Attorney Henry M. Rogers, who subsequently was the oldest living alumnus of Harvard University. His personal experiences, as related in the *Boston Sunday Globe* of January 6, 1929, rival in dramatic interest those of Kingman N. Putnam.

"I kept detectives in two of the stores of Boston merchants for more than 40 days," Rogers says. "They found that the *Marie* (sic) *Celeste's* cargo was of dried fish and ale; that the fish was spoiled and valueless fish that stank; the ale was the rinsings of casks and some ullaged ale, also worthless.

"Then I began on preparing the case. I haunted the waterfront, and was so much in saloons that I had to warn my wife that if she heard that I had been seen drinking with sailors in tough barrooms she was not to mind; it was all true.

"Little by little I began to get the story. I found that the captain of the *Marie Celeste* had been asked whether he was not afraid some of the crew would give him away, and that he had

replied that he could buy any of them for a glass of rum. That glass of rum proved to be the most expensive one ever heard of.

"The mate of the *Celeste* had been shipped only the day before she sailed. If I could get him, and get him to tell the true story, he would be my most important witness. I found that he was in a ship expected to arrive at Boston from Hamburg, and arranged to get word as soon as she was reported from Highland Light. Unfortunately I didn't get word until she was already in the harbor.

"I hustled down aboard of her, but my man—he was captain of her—had already left. Pretending to be a friend, I asked where 'Cap'n Joe' might be, and the watchman said he had gone home to East Boston, and would come back next morning for his dunnage. Still, casually, I managed to find out that he had been gone about 40 minutes, and to get a description of what he wore. I, of course, had never seen the man.

"I figured—a sailor ashore—nearest saloon—say 20 minutes for a glass or two — then by the ferry — the North Ferry would be the nearest — and at the North Ferry there was Cap'n Joe.

"I trailed him to his home in East Boston, and as soon as he was safely indoors hustled back to my office for the paper I needed. When I got back and rang his doorbell he had gone out again because his wife was out. I hunted up the nearest saloon, and there he was in the back room having a drink all by himself. I pretended to have taken a few myself and to know him. I bought more than one drink; he bought some, and then I said, 'I want you to tell me, Joe, all you know about the *Marie Celeste*.'

"He shut up then, but I began to feed him what I already knew — that the cargo was a fake, that the ship was piled up in broad daylight on a sunny morning on the only rock anywhere near, and that the captain wasn't afraid of what he, Joe, might say, because he could buy him for a glass of rum.

"By this time Joe was somewhat alarmed. He took me to his home and his wife joined me in pleading with him to make disclosure. I was really trying to protect him against any claim that he was a partner and a profiteer in the wrecking.

"Eventually he told me the story — that on the way south the captain had disclosed his intention, but said he was going to pile her up on Turks Island. I said, 'For God's sake, don't pile her up there; we shall all be drowned.' Joe said. Then the captain

marked the rock at the entrance to Port-au-Prince harbor, and Joe asked him, 'Do you think you can hit that rock?'

"He told me how in a bright sun with a fair wind she went on. Her masts were cut away, and then she was abandoned. There was more difficulty to get this into an affidavit, but I finally got that also.

"Now came the crew of the *Marie Celeste*. As they landed from this or that voyage, I had them clapped into jail to make sure of them.

THE TRIAL

"And then came the trial," says Henry M. Rogers. "It lasted six weeks, and the defense attorneys were wild because they claimed this criminal case was really being tried and built up by the lawyer for the insurance companies.

"This was all they could do, for I never put my head inside the court room. I had Joe there, though, scowling at the witnesses as they went on, and none of them dared to tell any different story. He never took the stand himself."

At the trial Joe's wife testified that two or three days after her husband, former mate of the *Celeste*, had returned from Haiti to Boston, Captain Parker had handed her the following letter:

"E. Boston March 5, '85.

Cap. J. E. Howe:

I would advise you not to know too much about cargo for the shippers have put in their bill of Invoice to the adgestors and the Protest and Log Book as they stand is all that I want. You will be cald over to the Insurance. look out you do not get in the Roung track by knowing too much.

G. C. Parker."

"The result of the trial in Boston," says Kingman N. Putnam, "was that the jury disagreed. They stood nine to three in our favor. The three men declined to convict Captain Parker on the charge of conspiracy for fear it might influence the jury who were going to try him for barratry. [Conviction of barratry was punishable by death at that time] I believe the jury in this case were locked up forty-eight hours before the judge

discharged them. Of course a notice of a new trial was immediately given. All the shippers came forward and acknowledged their guilt. One firm which had collected a loss of \$5000 on some rotten fish paid it back with interest. It also paid \$1000 to the Government toward the cost of the suit."

Continuing Putnam says, "A member of one of the firms committed suicide. They all failed and went out of business within six months. Captain Parker died in three months. His mate died in six months. The Steamer *Saxon* was wrecked the next voyage and all hands lost, and so was the Schooner *Mary E. Douglas*. Of course it is absurd to suppose that these fatalities had anything to do with the *Mary Celeste*, but sometimes I do not wonder that sailors are superstitious."

ENVOY

So ends the strange story of an unlucky ship. The little vessel's log is closed — but not the reader's interest. Still sails the *Mary Celeste* through waves of conjecture and waves of literature, and in her troubled wake still follow, unanswered, the questioners of a great sea mystery.

Compliments of
J. F. Briggs

February 14, 1947.