J. HABAKUK JEPHSON'S

STATEMENT

By

Arthur Conan Doyle

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Mary Celeste note added by the current Editor:

The Mary Celeste (original name was "Amazon") was launched in Nova Scotia in 1860. She was 103 ft overall, displaced 280 tons, and was listed as a half-brig. Over the next 10 years she was involved in several accidents at sea, and she passed through a number of owners.

Eventually she turned up at a New York salvage auction where she was purchased for $3,000. After extensive repairs she was put under American registry and renamed "Mary Celeste".

The new captain of Mary Celeste was Benjamin Briggs, 37, a master with three previous commands.

On November 7, 1872 the Mary Celeste departed New York with Captain Briggs, his wife, young daughter, and a crew of eight. The ship was loaded with 1700 barrels of raw American alcohol, and was bound for Genoa, Italy.

The captain, his family, and the crew were never seen again.

This material also includes the Appendix - "Mary Celeste Was Abandoned During A Seaquake!" by Captain Dave Williams.

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In the month of December in the year 1873, the British ship Dei Gratia steered into Gibraltar, having in tow the derelict brigantine Marie Celeste, which had been picked up in latitude 38 degrees 40', longitude 17 degrees 15' W. There were several circumstances in connection with the condition and appearance of this abandoned vessel which excited considerable comment at the time, and aroused a curiosity which has never been satisfied. What these circumstances were was summed up in an able article which appeared in the Gibraltar Gazette. The curious can find it in the issue for January 4, 1874, unless my memory deceives me. For the benefit of those, however, who may be unable to refer to the paper in question, I shall subjoin a few extracts which touch upon the leading features of the case.

"We have ourselves," says the anonymous writer in the Gazette, "been over the derelict Marie Celeste, and have closely questioned the officers of the Dei Gratia on every point which might throw light on the affair. They are of opinion that she had been abandoned several days, or perhaps weeks, before being picked up. The official log, which was found in the cabin, states that the vessel sailed from Boston to Lisbon, starting upon October 16. It is, however, most imperfectly kept, and affords little information. There is no reference to rough weather, and, indeed, the state of the vessel's paint and rigging excludes the idea that she was abandoned for any such reason. She is perfectly watertight. No signs of a struggle or of violence are to be detected, and there is absolutely nothing to account for the disappearance of the crew. There are several indications that a lady was present on board, a sewing-machine being found in the cabin and some articles of female attire. These probably belonged to the captain's wife, who is mentioned in the log as having accompanied her husband. As an instance of the mildness of the weather, it may be remarked that a bobbin of silk was found standing upon the sewing-machine, though the least roll of the vessel would have precipitated it to the floor. The boats were intact and slung upon the davits; and the cargo, consisting of tallow and American clocks, was untouched. An old-fashioned sword of curious workmanship was discovered among some lumber in the forecastle, and this weapon is said to exhibit a longitudinal striation on the steel, as if it had been recently wiped. It has been placed in the hands of the police, and submitted to Dr. Monaghan, the analyst, for inspection. The result of his examination has not yet been published. We may remark, in conclusion, that Captain Dalton, of the Dei Gratia, an able and intelligent seaman, is of opinion that the Marie Celeste may have been abandoned a considerable distance from the spot at which she was picked up, since a powerful current runs up in that latitude from the African coast. He confesses his inability, however, to advance any hypothesis which can reconcile all the facts of the case. In the utter absence of a clue or grain of evidence, it is to be feared that the fate of the crew of the Marie Celeste will be added to those numerous mysteries of the deep which will never be solved until the great day when the sea shall give up its dead. If crime has been committed, as is much to be suspected, there is little hope of bringing the perpetrators to justice."

I shall supplement this extract from the Gibraltar Gazette by quoting a telegram from Boston, which went the round of the English papers, and represented the total amount of information which had been collected about the Marie Celeste. "She was," it said, "a brigantine of 170 tons burden, and belonged to White, Russell & White, wine importers, of this city. Captain J. W. Tibbs was an old servant of the firm, and was a man of known ability and tried probity. He was accompanied by his wife, aged thirty-one, and their youngest child, five years old. The crew consisted of seven hands, including two coloured seamen, and a boy. There were three passengers, one of whom was the well-known Brooklyn specialist on consumption, Dr. Habakuk Jephson, who was a distinguished advocate for Abolition in the early days of the movement, and whose pamphlet, entitled "Where is thy Brother?" exercised a strong influence on public opinion before the war. The other passengers were Mr. J. Harton, a writer in the employ of the firm, and Mr. Septimius Goring, a half-caste gentleman, from New Orleans. All investigations have failed to throw any light upon the fate of these fourteen human beings. The loss of Dr. Jephson will be felt both in political and scientific circles."

I have here epitomised, for the benefit of the public, all that has been hitherto known concerning the Marie Celeste and her crew, for the past ten years have not in any way helped to elucidate the mystery. I have now taken up my pen with the intention of telling all that I know of the ill-fated voyage. I consider that it is a duty which I owe to society, for symptoms which I am familiar with in others lead

me to believe that before many months my tongue and hand may be alike incapable of conveying information. Let me remark, as a preface to my narrative, that I am Joseph Habakuk Jephson, Doctor of Medicine of the University of Harvard, and ex- Consulting Physician of the Samaritan Hospital of Brooklyn.

Many will doubtless wonder why I have not proclaimed myself before, and why I have suffered so many conjectures and surmises to pass unchallenged. Could the ends of justice have been served in any way by my revealing the facts in my possession I should unhesitatingly have done so. It seemed to me, however, that there was no possibility of such a result; and when I attempted, after the occurrence, to state my case to an English official, I was met with such offensive incredulity that I determined never again to expose myself to the chance of such an indignity. I can excuse the discourtesy of the Liverpool magistrate, however, when I reflect upon the treatment which I received at the hands of my own relatives, who, though they knew my unimpeachable character, listened to my statement with an indulgent smile as if humouring the delusion of a monomaniac. This slur upon my veracity led to a quarrel between myself and John Vanburger, the brother of my wife, and confirmed me in my resolution to let the matter sink into oblivion--a determination which I have only altered through my son's solicitations. In order to make my narrative intelligible, I must run lightly over one or two incidents in my former life which throw light upon subsequent events.

My father, William K. Jephson, was a preacher of the sect called Plymouth Brethren, and was one of the most respected citizens of Lowell. Like most of the other Puritans of New England, he was a determined opponent to slavery, and it was from his lips that I received those lessons which tinged every action of my life. While I was studying medicine at Harvard University, I had already made a mark as an advanced Abolitionist; and when, after taking my degree, I bought a third share of the practice of Dr. Willis, of Brooklyn, I managed, in spite of my professional duties, to devote a considerable time to the cause which I had at heart, my pamphlet, "Where is thy Brother?" (Swarburgh, Lister & Co., 1859) attracting considerable attention.

When the war broke out I left Brooklyn and accompanied the 113th New York Regiment through the campaign. I was present at the second battle of Bull's Run and at the battle of Gettysburg. Finally, I was severely wounded at Antietam, and would probably have perished on the field had it not been for the kindness of a gentleman named Murray, who had me carried to his house and provided me with every comfort. Thanks to his charity, and to the nursing which I received from his black domestics, I was soon able to get about the plantation with the help of a stick. It was during this period of convalescence that an incident occurred which is closely connected with my story.

Among the most assiduous of the negresses who had watched my couch during my illness there was one old crone who appeared to exert considerable authority over the others. She was exceedingly attentive to me, and I gathered from the few words that passed between us that she had heard of me, and that she was grateful to me for championing her oppressed race.

One day as I was sitting alone in the verandah, basking in the sun, and debating whether I should rejoin Grant's army, I was surprised to see this old creature hobbling towards me. After looking cautiously around to see that we were alone, she fumbled in the front of her dress and produced a small chamois leather bag which was hung round her neck by a white cord.

"Massa," she said, bending down and croaking the words into my ear, "me die soon. Me very old woman. Not stay long on Massa Murray's plantation."

"You may live a long time yet, Martha," I answered. "You know I am a doctor. If you feel ill let me know about it, and I will try to cure you."

"No wish to live--wish to die. I'm gwine to join the heavenly host." Here she relapsed into one of those half-heathenish rhapsodies in which negroes indulge. "But, massa, me have one thing must leave behind me when I go. No able to take it with me across the Jordan. That one thing very precious, more precious and more holy than all thing else in the world. Me, a poor old black woman, have this because my people, very great people, 'spose they was back in the old country. But you cannot understand this same as black folk could. My fader give it me, and his fader give it him, but now who

shall I give it to? Poor Martha hab no child, no relation, nobody. All round I see black man very bad man. Black woman very stupid woman. Nobody worthy of the stone. And so I say, Here is Massa Jephson who write books and fight for coloured folk--he must be good man, and he shall have it though he is white man, and nebber can know what it mean or where it came from." Here the old woman fumbled in the chamois leather bag and pulled out a flattish black stone with a hole through the middle of it. "Here, take it," she said, pressing it into my hand; "take it. No harm nebber come from anything good. Keep it safe--nebber lose it!" and with a warning gesture the old crone hobbled away in the same cautious way as she had come, looking from side to side to see if we had been observed.

I was more amused than impressed by the old woman's earnestness, and was only prevented from laughing during her oration by the fear of hurting her feelings. When she was gone I took a good look at the stone which she had given me. It was intensely black, of extreme hardness, and oval in shape--just such a flat stone as one would pick up on the seashore if one wished to throw a long way. It was about three inches long, and an inch and a half broad at the middle, but rounded off at the extremities. The most curious part about it were several well-marked ridges which ran in semicircles over its surface, and gave it exactly the appearance of a human ear. Altogether I was rather interested in my new possession, and determined to submit it, as a geological specimen, to my friend Professor Shroeder of the New York Institute, upon the earliest opportunity. In the meantime I thrust it into my pocket, and rising from my chair started off for a short stroll in the shrubbery, dismissing the incident from my mind.

As my wound had nearly healed by this time, I took my leave of Mr. Murray shortly afterwards. The Union armies were everywhere victorious and converging on Richmond, so that my assistance seemed unnecessary, and I returned to Brooklyn. There I resumed my practice, and married the second daughter of Josiah Vanburger, the well-known wood engraver. In the course of a few years I built up a good connection and acquired considerable reputation in the treatment of pulmonary complaints. I still kept the old black stone in my pocket, and frequently told the story of the dramatic way in which I had become possessed of it. I also kept my resolution of showing it to Professor Shroeder, who was much interested both by the anecdote and the specimen. He pronounced it to be a piece of meteoric stone, and drew my attention to the fact that its resemblance to an ear was not accidental, but that it was most carefully worked into that shape. A dozen little anatomical points showed that the worker had been as accurate as he was skilful. "I should not wonder," said the Professor, "if it were broken off from some larger statue, though how such hard material could be so perfectly worked is more than I can understand. If there is a statue to correspond I should like to see it!" So I thought at the time, but I have changed my opinion since.

The next seven or eight years of my life were quiet and uneventful.

Summer followed spring, and spring followed winter, without any variation in my duties. As the practice increased I admitted J. S. Jackson as partner, he to have one-fourth of the profits. The continued strain had told upon my constitution, however, and I became at last so unwell that my wife insisted upon my consulting Dr. Kavanagh Smith, who was my colleague at the Samaritan Hospital.

That gentleman examined me, and pronounced the apex of my left lung to be in a state of consolidation, recommending me at the same time to go through a course of medical treatment and to take a long sea-voyage.

My own disposition, which is naturally restless, predisposed me strongly in favour of the latter piece of advice, and the matter was clinched by my meeting young Russell, of the firm of White, Russell & White, who offered me a passage in one of his father's ships, the Marie Celeste, which was just starting from Boston. "She is a snug little ship," he said, "and Tibbs, the captain, is an excellent fellow. There is nothing like a sailing ship for an invalid." I was very much of the same opinion myself, so I closed with the offer on the spot.

My original plan was that my wife should accompany me on my travels. She has always been a very poor sailor, however, and there were strong family reasons against her exposing herself to any risk at the time, so we determined that she should remain at home. I am not a religious or an effusive man; but oh, thank God for that! As to leaving my practice, I was easily reconciled to it, as Jackson, my partner, was a reliable and hard-working man.

I arrived in Boston on October 12, 1873, and proceeded immediately to the office of the firm in order to thank them for their courtesy. As I was sitting in the counting-house waiting until they should be at liberty to see me, the words Marie Celeste suddenly attracted my attention. I looked round and saw a very tall, gaunt man, who was leaning across the polished mahogany counter asking some questions of the clerk at the other side. His face was turned half towards me, and I could see that he had a strong dash of negro blood in him, being probably a quadroon or even nearer akin to the black. His curved aquiline nose and straight lank hair showed the white strain; but the dark restless eye, sensuous mouth, and gleaming teeth all told of his African origin. His complexion was of a sickly, unhealthy yellow, and as his face was deeply pitted with small-pox, the general impression was so unfavourable as to be almost revolting. When he spoke, however, it was in a soft, melodious voice, and in well-chosen words, and he was evidently a man of some education.

"I wished to ask a few questions about the Marie Celeste," he repeated, leaning across to the clerk. "She sails the day after to-morrow, does she not?"

"Yes, sir," said the young clerk, awed into unusual politeness by the glimmer of a large diamond in the stranger's shirt front.

"Where is she bound for?"

"Lisbon."

"How many of a crew?"

"Seven, sir."

"Passengers?"

"Yes, two. One of our young gentlemen, and a doctor from New York."

"No gentleman from the South?" asked the stranger eagerly.

"No, none, sir."

"Is there room for another passenger?"

"Accommodation for three more," answered the clerk.

"I'll go," said the quadroon decisively; "I'll go, I'll engage my passage at once. Put it down, will you--Mr. Septimius Goring, of New Orleans."

The clerk filled up a form and handed it over to the stranger, pointing to a blank space at the bottom. As Mr. Goring stooped over to sign it I was horrified to observe that the fingers of his right hand had been lopped off, and that he was holding the pen between his thumb and the palm. I have seen thousands slain in battle, and assisted at every conceivable surgical operation, but I cannot recall any sight which gave me such a thrill of disgust as that great brown sponge-like hand with the single member protruding from it. He used it skilfully enough, however, for, dashing off his signature, he nodded to the clerk and strolled out of the office just as Mr. White sent out word that he was ready to receive me.

I went down to the Marie Celeste that evening, and looked over my berth, which was extremely comfortable considering the small size of the vessel. Mr. Goring, whom I had seen in the morning, was to have the one next mine. Opposite was the captain's cabin and a small berth for Mr. John Harton, a gentleman who was going out in the interests of the firm. These little rooms were arranged on each side of the passage which led from the main-deck to the saloon. The latter was a comfortable room, the panelling tastefully done in oak and mahogany, with a rich Brussels carpet and luxurious settees. I was very much pleased with the accommodation, and also with Tibbs the captain, a bluff,

sailor- like fellow, with a loud voice and hearty manner, who welcomed me to the ship with effusion, and insisted upon our splitting a bottle of wine in his cabin. He told me that he intended to take his wife and youngest child with him on the voyage, and that he hoped with good luck to make Lisbon in three weeks. We had a pleasant chat and parted the best of friends, he warning me to make the last of my preparations next morning, as he intended to make a start by the midday tide, having now shipped all his cargo. I went back to my hotel, where I found a letter from my wife awaiting me, and, after a refreshing night's sleep, returned to the boat in the morning. From this point I am able to quote from the journal which I kept in order to vary the monotony of the long sea-voyage. If it is somewhat bald in places I can at least rely upon its accuracy in details, as it was written conscientiously from day to day.

October 16.--Cast off our warps at half-past two and were towed out into the bay, where the tug left us, and with all sail set we bowled along at about nine knots an hour. I stood upon the poop watching the low land of America sinking gradually upon the horizon until the evening haze hid it from my sight. A single red light, however, continued to blaze balefully behind us, throwing a long track like a trail of blood upon the water, and it is still visible as I write, though reduced to a mere speck. The Captain is in a bad humour, for two of his hands disappointed him at the last moment, and he was compelled to ship a couple of negroes who happened to be on the quay. The missing men were steady, reliable fellows, who had been with him several voyages, and their non- appearance puzzled as well as irritated him. Where a crew of seven men have to work a fair-sized ship the loss of two experienced seamen is a serious one, for though the negroes may take a spell at the wheel or swab the decks, they are of little or no use in rough weather. Our cook is also a black man, and Mr. Septimius Goring has a little darkie servant, so that we are rather a piebald community. The accountant, John Harton, promises to be an acquisition, for he is a cheery, amusing young fellow. Strange how little wealth has to do with happiness! He has all the world before him and is seeking his fortune in a far land, yet he is as transparently happy as a man can be. Goring is rich, if I am not mistaken, and so am I; but I know that I have a lung, and Goring has some deeper trouble still, to judge by his features. How poorly do we both contrast with the careless, penniless clerk!

October 17.--Mrs. Tibbs appeared upon deck for the first time this morning--a cheerful, energetic woman, with a dear little child just able to walk and prattle. Young Harton pounced on it at once, and carried it away to his cabin, where no doubt he will lay the seeds of future dyspepsia in the child's stomach. Thus medicine doth make cynics of us all! The weather is still all that could be desired, with a fine fresh breeze from the west-sou'-west. The vessel goes so steadily that you would hardly know that she was moving were it not for the creaking of the cordage, the bellying of the sails, and the long white furrow in our wake. Walked the quarter-deck all morning with the Captain, and I think the keen fresh air has already done my breathing good, for the exercise did not fatigue me in any way. Tibbs is a remarkably intelligent man, and we had an interesting argument about Maury's observations on ocean currents, which we terminated by going down into his cabin to consult the original work. There we found Goring, rather to the Captain's surprise, as it is not usual for passengers to enter that sanctum unless specially invited. He apologised for his intrusion, however, pleading his ignorance of the usages of ship life; and the good-natured sailor simply laughed at the incident, begging him to remain and favour us with his company. Goring pointed to the chronometers, the case of which he had opened, and remarked that he had been admiring them. He has evidently some practical knowledge of mathematical instruments, as he told at a glance which was the most trustworthy of the three, and also named their price within a few dollars. He had a discussion with the Captain too upon the variation of the compass, and when we came back to the ocean currents he showed a thorough grasp of the subject. Altogether he rather improves upon acquaintance, and is a man of decided culture and refinement. His voice harmonises with his conversation, and both are the very antithesis of his face and figure.

The noonday observation shows that we have run two hundred and twenty miles. Towards evening the breeze freshened up, and the first mate ordered reefs to be taken in the topsails and top- gallant sails in expectation of a windy night. I observe that the barometer has fallen to twenty-nine. I trust our voyage will not be a rough one, as I am a poor sailor, and my health would probably derive more harm than good from a stormy trip, though I have the greatest confidence in the Captain's seamanship and in the soundness of the vessel. Played cribbage with Mrs. Tibbs after supper, and Harton gave us a couple of tunes on the violin.

October 18.--The gloomy prognostications of last night were not fulfilled, as the wind died away again, and we are lying now in a long greasy swell, ruffled here and there by a fleeting catspaw which is insufficient to fill the sails. The air is colder than it was yesterday, and I have put on one of the thick woollen jerseys which my wife knitted for me. Harton came into my cabin in the morning, and we had a cigar together. He says that he remembers having seen Goring in Cleveland, Ohio, in '69. He was, it appears, a mystery then as now, wandering about without any visible employment, and extremely reticent on his own affairs. The man interests me as a psychological study. At breakfast this morning I suddenly had that vague feeling of uneasiness which comes over some people when closely stared at, and, looking quickly up, I met his eyes bent upon me with an intensity which amounted to ferocity, though their expression instantly softened as he made some conventional remark upon the weather. Curiously enough, Harton says that he had a very similar experience yesterday upon deck. I observe that Goring frequently talks to the coloured seamen as he strolls about--a trait which I rather admire, as it is common to find half-breeds ignore their dark strain and treat their black kinsfolk with greater intolerance than a white man would do. His little page is devoted to him, apparently, which speaks well for his treatment of him. Altogether, the man is a curious mixture of incongruous qualities, and unless I am deceived in him will give me food for observation during the voyage.

The Captain is grumbling about his chronometers, which do not register exactly the same time. He says it is the first time that they have ever disagreed. We were unable to get a noonday observation on account of the haze. By dead reckoning, we have done about a hundred and seventy miles in the twenty-four hours. The dark seamen have proved, as the skipper prophesied, to be very inferior hands, but as they can both manage the wheel well they are kept steering, and so leave the more experienced men to work the ship. These details are trivial enough, but a small thing serves as food for gossip aboard ship. The appearance of a whale in the evening caused quite a flutter among us. From its sharp back and forked tail, I should pronounce it to have been a rorqual, or "finner," as they are called by the fishermen.

October 19.--Wind was cold, so I prudently remained in my cabin all day, only creeping out for dinner. Lying in my bunk I can, without moving, reach my books, pipes, or anything else I may want, which is one advantage of a small apartment. My old wound began to ache a little to-day, probably from the cold. Read "Montaigne's Essays" and nursed myself. Harton came in in the afternoon with Doddy, the Captain's child, and the skipper himself followed, so that I held quite a reception.

October 20 and 21.--Still cold, with a continual drizzle of rain, and I have not been able to leave the cabin. This confinement makes me feel weak and depressed. Goring came in to see me, but his company did not tend to cheer me up much, as he hardly uttered a word, but contented himself with staring at me in a peculiar and rather irritating manner. He then got up and stole out of the cabin without saying anything. I am beginning to suspect that the man is a lunatic. I think I mentioned that his cabin is next to mine. The two are simply divided by a thin wooden partition which is cracked in many places, some of the cracks being so large that I can hardly avoid, as I lie in my bunk, observing his motions in the adjoining room. Without any wish to play the spy, I see him continually stooping over what appears to be a chart and working with a pencil and compasses. I have remarked the interest he displays in matters connected with navigation, but I am surprised that he should take the trouble to work out the course of the ship. However, it is a harmless amusement enough, and no doubt he verifies his results by those of the Captain.

I wish the man did not run in my thoughts so much. I had a nightmare on the night of the 20th, in which I thought my bunk was a coffin, that I was laid out in it, and that Goring was endeavouring to nail up the lid, which I was frantically pushing away. Even when I woke up, I could hardly persuade myself that I was not in a coffin. As a medical man, I know that a nightmare is simply a vascular derangement of the cerebral hemispheres, and yet in my weak state I cannot shake off the morbid impression which it produces.

October 22.--A fine day, with hardly a cloud in the sky, and a fresh breeze from the sou'-west which wafts us gaily on our way. There has evidently been some heavy weather near us, as there is a tremendous swell on, and the ship lurches until the end of the fore-yard nearly touches the water. Had a refreshing walk up and down the quarter-deck, though I have hardly found my sea-legs yet. Several small birds--chaffinches, I think--perched in the rigging.

4.40 P.M.--While I was on deck this morning I heard a sudden explosion from the direction of my cabin, and, hurrying down, found that I had very nearly met with a serious accident. Goring was cleaning a revolver, it seems, in his cabin, when one of the barrels which he thought was unloaded went off. The ball passed through the side partition and imbedded itself in the bulwarks in the exact place where my head usually rests. I have been under fire too often to magnify trifles, but there is no doubt that if I had been in the bunk it must have killed me. Goring, poor fellow, did not know that I had gone on deck that day, and must therefore have felt terribly frightened. I never saw such emotion in a man's face as when, on rushing out of his cabin with the smoking pistol in his hand, he met me face to face as I came down from deck. Of course, he was profuse in his apologies, though I simply laughed at the incident.

11 P.M.--A misfortune has occurred so unexpected and so horrible that my little escape of the morning dwindles into insignificance. Mrs. Tibbs and her child have disappeared--utterly and entirely disappeared. I can hardly compose myself to write the sad details.

About half-past eight Tibbs rushed into my cabin with a very white face and asked me if I had seen his wife. I answered that I had not. He then ran wildly into the saloon and began groping about for any trace of her, while I followed him, endeavouring vainly to persuade him that his fears were ridiculous. We hunted over the ship for an hour and a half without coming on any sign of the missing woman or child. Poor Tibbs lost his voice completely from calling her name. Even the sailors, who are generally stolid enough, were deeply affected by the sight of him as he roamed bareheaded and dishevelled about the deck, searching with feverish anxiety the most impossible places, and returning to them again and again with a piteous pertinacity. The last time she was seen was about seven o'clock, when she took Doddy on to the poop to give him a breath of fresh air before putting him to bed. There was no one there at the time except the black seaman at the wheel, who denies having seen her at all. The whole affair is wrapped in mystery. My own theory is that while Mrs. Tibbs was holding the child and standing near the bulwarks it gave a spring and fell overboard, and that in her convulsive attempt to catch or save it, she followed it. I cannot account for the double disappearance in any other way. It is quite feasible that such a tragedy should be enacted without the knowledge of the man at the wheel, since it was dark at the time, and the peaked skylights of the saloon screen the greater part of the quarter-deck. Whatever the truth may be it is a terrible catastrophe, and has cast the darkest gloom upon our voyage. The mate has put the ship about, but of course there is not the slightest hope of picking them up. The Captain is lying in a state of stupor in his cabin. I gave him a powerful dose of opium in his coffee that for a few hours at least his anguish may be deadened.

October 23.--Woke with a vague feeling of heaviness and misfortune, but it was not until a few moments' reflection that I was able to recall our loss of the night before. When I came on deck I saw the poor skipper standing gazing back at the waste of waters behind us which contains everything dear to him upon earth. I attempted to speak to him, but he turned brusquely away, and began pacing the deck with his head sunk upon his breast. Even now, when the truth is so clear, he cannot pass a boat or an unbent sail without peering under it. He looks ten years older than he did yesterday morning. Harton is terribly cut up, for he was fond of little Doddy, and Goring seems sorry too. At least he has shut himself up in his cabin all day, and when I got a casual glance at him his head was resting on his two hands as if in a melancholy reverie. I fear we are about as dismal a crew as ever sailed. How shocked my wife will be to hear of our disaster! The swell has gone down now, and we are doing about eight knots with all sail set and a nice little breeze. Hyson is practically in command of the ship, as Tibbs, though he does his best to bear up and keep a brave front, is incapable of applying himself to serious work.

October 24.--Is the ship accursed? Was there ever a voyage which began so fairly and which changed so disastrously? Tibbs shot himself through the head during the night. I was awakened about three o'clock in the morning by an explosion, and immediately sprang out of bed and rushed into the Captain's cabin to find out the cause, though with a terrible presentiment in my heart. Quickly as I went, Goring went more quickly still, for he was already in the cabin stooping over the dead body of the Captain. It was a hideous sight, for the whole front of his face was blown in, and the little room was swimming in blood. The pistol was lying beside him on the floor, just as it had dropped from his hand. He had evidently put it to his mouth before pulling the trigger. Goring and I picked him reverently up and laid him on his bed. The crew had all clustered into his cabin, and the six white men were deeply grieved, for they were old hands who had sailed with him many years. There were dark

looks and murmurs among them too, and one of them openly declared that the ship was haunted. Harton helped to lay the poor skipper out, and we did him up in canvas between us. At twelve o'clock the foreyard was hauled aback, and we committed his body to the deep, Goring reading the Church of England burial service. The breeze has freshened up, and we have done ten knots all day and sometimes twelve. The sooner we reach Lisbon and get away from this accursed ship the better pleased shall I be. I feel as though we were in a floating coffin.

Little wonder that the poor sailors are superstitious when I, an educated man, feel it so strongly.

October 25.--Made a good run all day. Feel listless and depressed.

October 26.--Goring, Harton, and I had a chat together on deck in the morning. Harton tried to draw Goring out as to his profession, and his object in going to Europe, but the quadroon parried all his questions and gave us no information. Indeed, he seemed to be slightly offended by Harton's pertinacity, and went down into his cabin. I wonder why we should both take such an interest in this man! I suppose it is his striking appearance, coupled with his apparent wealth, which piques our curiosity. Harton has a theory that he is really a detective, that he is after some criminal who has got away to Portugal, and that he chooses this peculiar way of travelling that he may arrive unnoticed and pounce upon his quarry unawares. I think the supposition is rather a far-fetched one, but Harton bases it upon a book which Goring left on deck, and which he picked up and glanced over. It was a sort of scrap-book it seems, and contained a large number of newspaper cuttings. All these cuttings related to murders which had been committed at various times in the States during the last twenty years or so. The curious thing which Harton observed about them, however, was that they were invariably murders the authors of which had never been brought to justice. They varied in every detail, he says, as to the manner of execution and the social status of the victim, but they uniformly wound up with the same formula that the murderer was still at large, though, of course, the police had every reason to expect his speedy capture. Certainly the incident seems to support Harton's theory, though it may be a mere whim of Gorings, or, as I suggested to Harton, he may be collecting materials for a book which shall outvie De Quincey. In any case it is no business of ours.

October 27, 28.--Wind still fair, and we are making good progress. Strange how easily a human unit may drop out of its place and be forgotten! Tibbs is hardly ever mentioned now; Hyson has taken possession of his cabin, and all goes on as before. Were it not for Mrs. Tibbs's sewing-machine upon a side-table we might forget that the unfortunate family had ever existed. Another accident occurred on board to-day, though fortunately not a very serious one. One of our white hands had gone down the afterhold to fetch up a spare coil of rope, when one of the hatches which he had removed came crashing down on the top of him. He saved his life by springing out of the way, but one of his feet was terribly crushed, and he will be of little use for the remainder of the voyage. He attributes the accident to the carelessness of his negro companion, who had helped him to shift the hatches. The latter, however, puts it down to the roll of the ship. Whatever be the cause, it reduces our shorthanded crew still further. This run of ill-luck seems to be depressing Harton, for he has lost his usual good spirits and joviality. Goring is the only one who preserves his cheerfulness. I see him still working at his chart in his own cabin. His nautical knowledge would be useful should anything happen to Hyson--which God forbid!

October 29, 30.--Still bowling along with a fresh breeze. All quiet and nothing of note to chronicle.

October 31.--My weak lungs, combined with the exciting episodes of the voyage, have shaken my nervous system so much that the most trivial incident affects me. I can hardly believe that I am the same man who tied the external iliac artery, an operation requiring the nicest precision, under a heavy rifle fire at Antietam. I am as nervous as a child. I was lying half dozing last night about four bells in the middle watch trying in vain to drop into a refreshing sleep. There was no light inside my cabin, but a single ray of moonlight streamed in through the port hole, throwing a silvery flickering circle upon the door. As I lay I kept my drowsy eyes upon this circle, and was conscious that it was gradually becoming less well-defined as my senses left me, when I was suddenly recalled to full wakefulness by the appearance of a small dark object in the very centre of the luminous disc. I lay quietly and breathlessly watching it. Gradually it grew larger and plainer, and then I perceived that it was a human hand which had been cautiously inserted through the chink of the half-closed door--a hand which, as I observed with a thrill of horror, was not provided with fingers. The door swung cautiously backwards,

and Goring's head followed his hand. It appeared in the centre of the moonlight, and was framed as it were in a ghastly uncertain halo, against which his features showed out plainly. It seemed to me that I had never seen such an utterly fiendish and merciless expression upon a human face. His eyes were dilated and glaring, his lips drawn back so as to show his white fangs, and his straight black hair appeared to bristle over his low forehead like the hood of a cobra. The sudden and noiseless apparition had such an effect upon me that I sprang up in bed trembling in every limb, and held out my hand towards my revolver. I was heartily ashamed of my hastiness when he explained the object of his intrusion, as he immediately did in the most courteous language. He had been suffering from toothache, poor fellow! and had come in to beg some laudanum, knowing that I possessed a medicine chest. As to a sinister expression he is never a beauty, and what with my state of nervous tension and the effect of the shifting moonlight it was easy to conjure up something horrible. I gave him twenty drops, and he went off again with many expressions of gratitude. I can hardly say how much this trivial incident affected me. I have felt unstrung all day.

A week's record of our voyage is here omitted, as nothing eventful occurred during the time, and my log consists merely of a few pages of unimportant gossip.

November 7.--Harton and I sat on the poop all the morning, for the weather is becoming very warm as we come into southern latitudes. We reckon that we have done two-thirds of our voyage. How glad we shall be to see the green banks of the Tagus, and leave this unlucky ship for ever! I was endeavouring to amuse Harton to- day and to while away the time by telling him some of the experiences of my past life. Among others I related to him how I came into the possession of my black stone, and as a finale I rummaged in the side pocket of my old shooting coat and produced the identical object in question. He and I were bending over it together, I pointing out to him the curious ridges upon its surface, when we were conscious of a shadow falling between us and the sun, and looking round saw Goring standing behind us glaring over our shoulders at the stone. For some reason or other he appeared to be powerfully excited, though he was evidently trying to control himself and to conceal his emotion. He pointed once or twice at my relic with his stubby thumb before he could recover himself sufficiently to ask what it was and how I obtained it--a question put in such a brusque manner that I should have been offended had I not known the man to be an eccentric. I told him the story very much as I had told it to Harton. He listened with the deepest interest, and then asked me if I had any idea what the stone was. I said I had not, beyond that it was meteoric. He asked me if I had ever tried its effect upon a negro. I said I had not. "Come," said he, "we'll see what our black friend at the wheel thinks of it." He took the stone in his hand and went across to the sailor, and the two examined it carefully. I could see the man gesticulating and nodding his head excitedly as if making some assertion, while his face betrayed the utmost astonishment, mixed I think with some reverence. Goring came across the deck to us presently, still holding the stone in his hand. "He says it is a worthless, useless thing," he said, "and fit only to be chucked overboard," with which he raised his hand and would most certainly have made an end of my relic, had the black sailor behind him not rushed forward and seized him by the wrist. Finding himself secured Goring dropped the stone and turned away with a very bad grace to avoid my angry remonstrances at his breach of faith. The black picked up the stone and handed it to me with a low bow and every sign of profound respect. The whole affair is inexplicable. I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that Goring is a maniac or something very near one. When I compare the effect produced by the stone upon the sailor, however, with the respect shown to Martha on the plantation, and the surprise of Goring on its first production, I cannot but come to the conclusion that I have really got hold of some powerful talisman which appeals to the whole dark race. I must not trust it in Goring's hands again.

November 8, 9.--What splendid weather we are having! Beyond one little blow, we have had nothing but fresh breezes the whole voyage. These two days we have made better runs than any hitherto.

It is a pretty thing to watch the spray fly up from our prow as it cuts through the waves. The sun shines through it and breaks it up into a number of miniature rainbows--"sun-dogs," the sailors call them. I stood on the fo'csle-head for several hours to-day watching the effect, and surrounded by a halo of prismatic colours.

The steersman has evidently told the other blacks about my wonderful stone, for I am treated by them all with the greatest respect. Talking about optical phenomena, we had a curious one yesterday evening which was pointed out to me by Hyson. This was the appearance of a triangular well-defined

object high up in the heavens to the north of us. He explained that it was exactly like the Peak of Teneriffe as seen from a great distance--the peak was, however, at that moment at least five hundred miles to the south. It may have been a cloud, or it may have been one of those strange reflections of which one reads. The weather is very warm. The mate says that he never knew it so warm in these latitudes. Played chess with Harton in the evening.

November 10.--It is getting warmer and warmer. Some land birds came and perched in the rigging today, though we are still a considerable way from our destination. The heat is so great that we are too lazy to do anything but lounge about the decks and smoke. Goring came over to me to-day and asked me some more questions about my stone; but I answered him rather shortly, for I have not quite forgiven him yet for the cool way in which he attempted to deprive me of it.

November 11, 12.--Still making good progress. I had no idea Portugal was ever as hot as this, but no doubt it is cooler on land. Hyson himself seemed surprised at it, and so do the men.

November 13.--A most extraordinary event has happened, so extraordinary as to be almost inexplicable. Either Hyson has blundered wonderfully, or some magnetic influence has disturbed our instruments. Just about daybreak the watch on the fo'csle-head shouted out that he heard the sound of surf ahead, and Hyson thought he saw the loom of land. The ship was put about, and, though no lights were seen, none of us doubted that we had struck the Portuguese coast a little sooner than we had expected. What was our surprise to see the scene which was revealed to us at break of day! As far as we could look on either side was one long line of surf, great, green billows rolling in and breaking into a cloud of foam. But behind the surf what was there! Not the green banks nor the high cliffs of the shores of Portugal, but a great sandy waste which stretched away and away until it blended with the skyline. To right and left, look where you would, there was nothing but yellow sand, heaped in some places into fantastic mounds, some of them several hundred feet high, while in other parts were long stretches as level apparently as a billiard board. Harton and I, who had come on deck together, looked at each other in astonishment, and Harton burst out laughing. Hyson is exceedingly mortified at the occurrence, and protests that the instruments have been tampered with. There is no doubt that this is the mainland of Africa, and that it was really the Peak of Teneriffe which we saw some days ago upon the northern horizon. At the time when we saw the land birds we must have been passing some of the Canary Islands. If we continued on the same course, we are now to the north of Cape Blanco, near the unexplored country which skirts the great Sahara. All we can do is to rectify our instruments as far as possible and start afresh for our destination.

8.30 P.M.--Have been lying in a calm all day. The coast is now about a mile and a half from us. Hyson has examined the instruments, but cannot find any reason for their extraordinary deviation.

This is the end of my private journal, and I must make the remainder of my statement from memory. There is little chance of my being mistaken about facts which have seared themselves into my recollection. That very night the storm which had been brewing so long burst over us, and I came to learn whither all those little incidents were tending which I had recorded so aimlessly. Blind fool that I was not to have seen it sooner! I shall tell what occurred as precisely as I can.

I had gone into my cabin about half-past eleven, and was preparing to go to bed, when a tap came at my door. On opening it I saw Goring's little black page, who told me that his master would like to have a word with me on deck. I was rather surprised that he should want me at such a late hour, but I went up without hesitation. I had hardly put my foot on the quarter-deck before I was seized from behind, dragged down upon my back, and a handkerchief slipped round my mouth. I struggled as hard as I could, but a coil of rope was rapidly and firmly wound round me, and I found myself lashed to the davit of one of the boats, utterly powerless to do or say anything, while the point of a knife pressed to my throat warned me to cease my struggles. The night was so dark that I had been unable hitherto to recognise my assailants, but as my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and the moon broke out through the clouds that obscured it, I made out that I was surrounded by the two negro sailors, the black cook, and my fellow- passenger Goring. Another man was crouching on the deck at my feet, but he was in the shadow and I could not recognise him.

All this occurred so rapidly that a minute could hardly have elapsed from the time I mounted the companion until I found myself gagged and powerless. It was so sudden that I could scarce bring

myself to realise it, or to comprehend what it all meant. I heard the gang round me speaking in short, fierce whispers to each other, and some instinct told me that my life was the question at issue. Goring spoke authoritatively and angrily--the others doggedly and all together, as if disputing his commands. Then they moved away in a body to the opposite side of the deck, where I could still hear them whispering, though they were concealed from my view by the saloon skylights.

All this time the voices of the watch on deck chatting and laughing at the other end of the ship were distinctly audible, and I could see them gathered in a group, little dreaming of the dark doings which were going on within thirty yards of them. Oh! that I could have given them one word of warning, even though I had lost my life in doing it I but it was impossible. The moon was shining fitfully through the scattered clouds, and I could see the silvery gleam of the surge, and beyond it the vast weird desert with its fantastic sand-hills. Glancing down, I saw that the man who had been crouching on the deck was still lying there, and as I gazed at him, a flickering ray of moonlight fell full upon his upturned face. Great Heaven! even now, when more than twelve years have elapsed, my hand trembles as I write that, in spite of distorted features and projecting eyes, I recognised the face of Harton, the cheery young clerk who had been my companion during the voyage. It needed no medical eye to see that he was quite dead, while the twisted handkerchief round the neck, and the gag in his mouth, showed the silent way in which the hell-hounds had done their work. The clue which explained every event of our voyage came upon me like a flash of light as I gazed on poor Harton's corpse. Much was dark and unexplained, but I felt a great dim perception of the truth.

I heard the striking of a match at the other side of the skylights, and then I saw the tall, gaunt figure of Goring standing up on the bulwarks and holding in his hands what appeared to be a dark lantern. He lowered this for a moment over the side of the ship, and, to my inexpressible astonishment, I saw it answered instantaneously by a flash among the sand-hills on shore, which came and went so rapidly, that unless I had been following the direction of Goring's gaze, I should never have detected it. Again he lowered the lantern, and again it was answered from the shore. He then stepped down from the bulwarks, and in doing so slipped, making such a noise, that for a moment my heart bounded with the thought that the attention of the watch would be directed to his proceedings. It was a vain hope. The night was calm and the ship motionless, so that no idea of duty kept them vigilant. Hyson, who after the death of Tibbs was in command of both watches, had gone below to snatch a few hours' sleep, and the boatswain who was left in charge was standing with the other two men at the foot of the foremast. Powerless, speechless, with the cords cutting into my flesh and the murdered man at my feet, I awaited the next act in the tragedy.

The four ruffians were standing up now at the other side of the deck. The cook was armed with some sort of a cleaver, the others had knives, and Goring had a revolver. They were all leaning against the rail and looking out over the water as if watching for something. I saw one of them grasp another's arm and point as if at some object, and following the direction I made out the loom of a large moving mass making towards the ship. As it emerged from the gloom I saw that it was a great canoe crammed with men and propelled by at least a score of paddles. As it shot under our stern the watch caught sight of it also, and raising a cry hurried aft. They were too late, however. A swarm of gigantic negroes clambered over the quarter, and led by Goring swept down the deck in an irresistible torrent. All opposition was overpowered in a moment, the unarmed watch were knocked over and bound, and the sleepers dragged out of their bunks and secured in the same manner.

Hyson made an attempt to defend the narrow passage leading to his cabin, and I heard a scuffle, and his voice shouting for assistance. There was none to assist, however, and he was brought on to the poop with the blood streaming from a deep cut in his forehead. He was gagged like the others, and a council was held upon our fate by the negroes. I saw our black seamen pointing towards me and making some statement, which was received with murmurs of astonishment and incredulity by the savages. One of them then came over to me, and plunging his hand into my pocket took out my black stone and held it up. He then handed it to a man who appeared to be a chief, who examined it as minutely as the light would permit, and muttering a few words passed it on to the warrior beside him, who also scrutinised it and passed it on until it had gone from hand to hand round the whole circle. The chief then said a few words to Goring in the native tongue, on which the quadroon addressed me in English. At this moment I seem to see the scene. The tall masts of the ship with the moonlight streaming down, silvering the yards and bringing the network of cordage into hard relief; the group of dusky warriors leaning on their spears; the dead man at my feet; the line of white-faced prisoners, and

in front of me the loathsome half-breed, looking in his white linen and elegant clothes a strange contrast to his associates.

"You will bear me witness," he said in his softest accents, "that I am no party to sparing your life. If it rested with me you would die as these other men are about to do. I have no personal grudge against either you or them, but I have devoted my life to the destruction of the white race, and you are the first that has ever been in my power and has escaped me. You may thank that stone of yours for your life. These poor fellows reverence it, and indeed if it really be what they think it is they have cause. Should it prove when we get ashore that they are mistaken, and that its shape and material is a mere chance, nothing can save your life. In the meantime we wish to treat you well, so if there are any of your possessions which you would like to take with you, you are at liberty to get them." As he finished he gave a sign, and a couple of the negroes unbound me, though without removing the gag. I was led down into the cabin, where I put a few valuables into my pockets, together with a pocket-compass and my journal of the voyage. They then pushed me over the side into a small canoe, which was lying beside the large one, and my guards followed me, and shoving off began paddling for the shore. We had got about a hundred yards or so from the ship when our steersman held up his hand, and the paddlers paused for a moment and listened. Then on the silence of the night I heard a sort of dull, moaning sound, followed by a succession of splashes in the water. That is all I know of the fate of my poor shipmates. Almost immediately afterwards the large canoe followed us, and the deserted ship was left drifting about--a dreary, spectre-like hulk. Nothing was taken from her by the savages. The whole fiendish transaction was carried through as decorously and temperately as though it were a religious rite.

The first grey of daylight was visible in the east as we passed through the surge and reached the shore. Leaving half-a-dozen men with the canoes, the rest of the negroes set off through the sand-hills, leading me with them, but treating me very gently and respectfully. It was difficult walking, as we sank over our ankles into the loose, shifting sand at every step, and I was nearly dead beat by the time we reached the native village, or town rather, for it was a place of considerable dimensions. The houses were conical structures not unlike bee-hives, and were made of compressed seaweed cemented over with a rude form of mortar, there being neither stick nor stone upon the coast nor anywhere within many hundreds of miles. As we entered the town an enormous crowd of both sexes came swarming out to meet us, beating tom-toms and howling and screaming. On seeing me they redoubled their yells and assumed a threatening attitude, which was instantly quelled by a few words shouted by my escort. A buzz of wonder succeeded the war-cries and yells of the moment before, and the whole dense mass proceeded down the broad central street of the town, having my escort and myself in the centre.

My statement hitherto may seem so strange as to excite doubt in the minds of those who do not know me, but it was the fact which I am now about to relate which caused my own brother-in-law to insult me by disbelief. I can but relate the occurrence in the simplest words, and trust to chance and time to prove their truth. In the centre of this main street there was a large building, formed in the same primitive way as the others, but towering high above them; a stockade of beautifully polished ebony rails was planted all round it, the framework of the door was formed by two magnificent elephant's tusks sunk in the ground on each side and meeting at the top, and the aperture was closed by a screen of native cloth richly embroidered with gold. We made our way to this imposing- looking structure, but, on reaching the opening in the stockade, the multitude stopped and squatted down upon their hams, while I was led through into the enclosure by a few of the chiefs and elders of the tribe, Goring accompanying us, and in fact directing the proceedings. On reaching the screen which closed the temple-- for such it evidently was--my hat and my shoes were removed, and I was then led in, a venerable old negro leading the way carrying in his hand my stone, which had been taken from my pocket. The building was only lit up by a few long slits in the roof, through which the tropical sun poured, throwing broad golden bars upon the clay floor, alternating with intervals of darkness.

The interior was even larger than one would have imagined from the outside appearance. The walls were hung with native mats, shells, and other ornaments, but the remainder of the great space was quite empty, with the exception of a single object in the centre. This was the figure of a colossal negro, which I at first thought to be some real king or high priest of titanic size, but as I approached it I saw by the way in which the light was reflected from it that it was a statue admirably cut in jet-black stone. I was led up to this idol, for such it seemed to be, and looking at it closer I saw that though it was

perfect in every other respect, one of its ears had been broken short off. The grey-haired negro who held my relic mounted upon a small stool, and stretching up his arm fitted Martha's black stone on to the jagged surface on the side of the statue's head. There could not be a doubt that the one had been broken off from the other. The parts dovetailed together so accurately that when the old man removed his hand the ear stuck in its place for a few seconds before dropping into his open palm. The group round me prostrated themselves upon the ground at the sight with a cry of reverence, while the crowd outside, to whom the result was communicated, set up a wild whooping and cheering.

In a moment I found myself converted from a prisoner into a demi- god. I was escorted back through the town in triumph, the people pressing forward to touch my clothing and to gather up the dust on which my foot had trod. One of the largest huts was put at my disposal, and a banquet of every native delicacy was served me. I still felt, however, that I was not a free man, as several spearmen were placed as a guard at the entrance of my hut. All day my mind was occupied with plans of escape, but none seemed in any way feasible. On the one side was the great arid desert stretching away to Timbuctoo, on the other was a sea untraversed by vessels. The more I pondered over the problem the more hopeless did it seem.

I little dreamed how near I was to its solution.

Night had fallen, and the clamour of the negroes had died gradually away. I was stretched on the couch of skins which had been provided for me, and was still meditating over my future, when Goring walked stealthily into the hut. My first idea was that he had come to complete his murderous holocaust by making away with me, the last survivor, and I sprang up upon my feet, determined to defend myself to the last. He smiled when he saw the action, and motioned me down again while he seated himself upon the other end of the couch.

"What do you think of me?" was the astonishing question with which he commenced our conversation.

"Think of you!" I almost yelled. "I think you the vilest, most unnatural renegade that ever polluted the earth. If we were away from these black devils of yours I would strangle you with my hands!"

"Don't speak so loud," he said, without the slightest appearance of irritation. "I don't want our chat to be cut short. So you would strangle me, would you!" he went on, with an amused smile. "I suppose I am returning good for evil, for I have come to help you to escape."

"You!" I gasped incredulously.

"Yes, I," he continued.

"Oh, there is no credit to me in the matter. I am quite consistent. There is no reason why I should not be perfectly candid with you. I wish to be king over these fellows--not a very high ambition, certainly, but you know what Caesar said about being first in a village in Gaul. Well, this unlucky stone of yours has not only saved your life, but has turned all their heads so that they think you are come down from heaven, and my influence will be gone until you are out of the way. That is why I am going to help you to escape, since I cannot kill you"--this in the most natural and dulcet voice, as if the desire to do so were a matter of course.

"You would give the world to ask me a few questions," he went on, after a pause; "but you are too proud to do it. Never mind, I'll tell you one or two things, because I want your fellow white men to know them when you go back--if you are lucky enough to get back. About that cursed stone of yours, for instance. These negroes, or at least so the legend goes, were Mahometans originally. While Mahomet himself was still alive, there was a schism among his followers, and the smaller party moved away from Arabia, and eventually crossed Africa. They took away with them, in their exile, a valuable relic of their old faith in the shape of a large piece of the black stone of Mecca. The stone was a meteoric one, as you may have heard, and in its fall upon the earth it broke into two pieces. One of these pieces is still at Mecca. The larger piece was carried away to Barbary, where a skilful worker modelled it into the fashion which you saw to-day. These men are the descendants of the original

seceders from Mahomet, and they have brought their relic safely through all their wanderings until they settled in this strange place, where the desert protects them from their enemies."

"And the ear?" I asked, almost involuntarily.

"Oh, that was the same story over again. Some of the tribe wandered away to the south a few hundred years ago, and one of them, wishing to have good luck for the enterprise, got into the temple at night and carried off one of the ears. There has been a tradition among the negroes ever since that the ear would come back some day. The fellow who carried it was caught by some slaver, no doubt, and that was how it got into America, and so into your hands--and you have had the honour of fulfilling the prophecy."

He paused for a few minutes, resting his head upon his hands, waiting apparently for me to speak. When he looked up again, the whole expression of his face had changed. His features were firm and set, and he changed the air of half levity with which he had spoken before for one of sternness and almost ferocity.

"I wish you to carry a message back," he said, "to the white race, the great dominating race whom I hate and defy. Tell them that I have battened on their blood for twenty years, that I have slain them until even I became tired of what had once been a joy, that I did this unnoticed and unsuspected in the face of every precaution which their civilisation could suggest. There is no satisfaction in revenge when your enemy does not know who has struck him. I am not sorry, therefore, to have you as a messenger. There is no need why I should tell you how this great hate became born in me. See this," and he held up his mutilated hand; "that was done by a white man's knife. My father was white, my mother was a slave. When he died she was sold again, and I, a child then, saw her lashed to death to break her of some of the little airs and graces which her late master had encouraged in her. My young wife, too, oh, my young wife!" a shudder ran through his whole frame. "No matter! I swore my oath, and I kept it. From Maine to Florida, and from Boston to San Francisco, you could track my steps by sudden deaths which baffled the police. I warred against the whole white race as they for centuries had warred against the black one. At last, as I tell you, I sickened of blood. Still, the sight of a white face was abhorrent to me, and I determined to find some bold free black people and to throw in my lot with them, to cultivate their latent powers, and to form a nucleus for a great coloured nation. This idea possessed me, and I travelled over the world for two years seeking for what I desired. At last I almost despaired of finding it. There was no hope of regeneration in the slave-dealing Soudanese, the debased Fantee, or the Americanised negroes of Liberia. I was returning from my quest when chance brought me in contact with this magnificent tribe of dwellers in the desert, and I threw in my lot with them. Before doing so, however, my old instinct of revenge prompted me to make one last visit to the United States, and I returned from it in the Marie Celeste.

"As to the voyage itself, your intelligence will have told you by this time that, thanks to my manipulation, both compasses and chronometers were entirely untrustworthy. I alone worked out the course with correct instruments of my own, while the steering was done by my black friends under my guidance. I pushed Tibbs's wife overboard. What! You look surprised and shrink away. Surely you had guessed that by this time. I would have shot you that day through the partition, but unfortunately you were not there. I tried again afterwards, but you were awake. I shot Tibbs. I think the idea of suicide was carried out rather neatly. Of course when once we got on the coast the rest was simple. I had bargained that all on board should die; but that stone of yours upset my plans. I also bargained that there should be no plunder. No one can say we are pirates. We have acted from principle, not from any sordid motive."

I listened in amazement to the summary of his crimes which this strange man gave me, all in the quietest and most composed of voices, as though detailing incidents of every-day occurrence. I still seem to see him sitting like a hideous nightmare at the end of my couch, with the single rude lamp flickering over his cadaverous features.

"And now," he continued, "there is no difficulty about your escape.

These stupid adopted children of mine will say that you have gone back to heaven from whence you came. The wind blows off the land. I have a boat all ready for you, well stored with provisions and water. I am anxious to be rid of you, so you may rely that nothing is neglected. Rise up and follow me."

I did what he commanded, and he led me through the door of the hut.

The guards had either been withdrawn, or Goring had arranged matters with them. We passed unchallenged through the town and across the sandy plain. Once more I heard the roar of the sea, and saw the long white line of the surge. Two figures were standing upon the shore arranging the gear of a small boat. They were the two sailors who had been with us on the voyage.

"See him safely through the surf," said Goring. The two men sprang in and pushed off, pulling me in after them. With mainsail and jib we ran out from the land and passed safely over the bar. Then my two companions without a word of farewell sprang overboard, and I saw their heads like black dots on the white foam as they made their way back to the shore, while I scudded away into the blackness of the night. Looking back I caught my last glimpse of Goring. He was standing upon the summit of a sand-hill, and the rising moon behind him threw his gaunt angular figure into hard relief. He was waving his arms frantically to and fro; it may have been to encourage me on my way, but the gestures seemed to me at the time to be threatening ones, and I have often thought that it was more likely that his old savage instinct had returned when he realised that I was out of his power. Be that as it may, it was the last that I ever saw or ever shall see of Septimius Goring.

There is no need for me to dwell upon my solitary voyage. I steered as well as I could for the Canaries, but was picked up upon the fifth day by the British and African Steam Navigation Company's boat Monrovia. Let me take this opportunity of tendering my sincerest thanks to Captain Stornoway and his officers for the great kindness which they showed me from that time till they landed me in Liverpool, where I was enabled to take one of the Guion boats to New York.

From the day on which I found myself once more in the bosom of my family I have said little of what I have undergone. The subject is still an intensely painful one to me, and the little which I have dropped has been discredited. I now put the facts before the public as they occurred, careless how far they may be believed, and simply writing them down because my lung is growing weaker, and I feel the responsibility of holding my peace longer. I make no vague statement. Turn to your map of Africa. There above Cape Blanco, where the land trends away north and south from the westernmost point of the continent, there it is that Septimius Goring still reigns over his dark subjects, unless retribution has overtaken him; and there, where the long green ridges run swiftly in to roar and hiss upon the hot yellow sand, it is there that Harton lies with Hyson and the other poor fellows who were done to death in the Marie Celeste.

-THE END-

Arthur Conan Doyle's short story: J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement

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Appendix

Mary Celeste Was Abandoned During A Seaquake!

By

Captain Dave Williams

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Summary

The British brigantine *Dei Gratia* came upon the *Mary Celeste* sailing erratically midway between the Azores and Portugal on 4 December 1872. The crew could spot no one on deck threw their spy glass so the captain of the *Dei Gratia* dispatched a boarding party lead by 1st Mate Oliver Deveau. Deveau's team reported that the ship was fully provisioned and perfectly seaworthy yet mysteriously abandoned. A few clues indicated the crew of the *Mary Celeste* had quickly launched a small yawl for no apparent reason.

The *Mary C* had departed New York on 5 November loaded with 1,709 barrels of grain alcohol bound for Genoa, Italy.

The crew endured strong winds from the time they left New York until arriving at Santa Maria Island in the Azores --- they'd sailed the last few hundreds miles in a gale.

It seems reasonable to suggest that in order to take a break from the pounding, the captain gave the order to sail to the lee side of Santa Maria Island where the cook started a fire in the large galley stove to make hot food while other members of the crew furled most of the sails, leaving just enough canvas up to hold her course as they made their way slowly along the lee shore. Other crew members set about pumping the bilge and doing other chores. When the food was ready, the men stopped what they were doing and ate. After taking a smoke break, the Captain gave orders to get underway and the crew went back to work. Some went back to pumping the bilge; others started to set the sails they had just furled. Just then the seafloor started dancing up and down in a violent seaquake, relatively common in the Azores.

During rapid vertically shifting of the hard bottom, the seabed becomes like a giant transducer, pushing and pulling the water, sending powerful alternating pressure waves towards the surface. The results onboard the boat were as if there was no sea at all under the ship....just as though the vessel was setting on dry land during an earthquake. The deck on the *Mary Celeste* shook violently. The severe vibrations loosened the stays around nine barrels, dumping almost 500 gallons of raw alcohol into the bilge. Fumes spread rapidly throughout the boat. The seaquake also shook the galley stove so violently that it was lifted up from its chocks and set down out of place.

Choking on the alcohol fumes from the leaking barrels while seeing sparks and embers flying about from the fire in the cooking stove was all it took to send the crew into panic and cause them to quickly launch the small yawl and try to get away from the coming explosion.

The elation the crew felt when the alcohol fumes did not explode was short lived.

In the fear of the moment, the crew forgot to secure a line from the life boat to the mother ship. They watched in dismay as the *Mary Celeste,* now crewless, sailed slowly away from the yawl with her jib and two other small sails set. As she pulled away from the small sailing yawl, the men had to decide quickly whether to try to catch up with their ship, or go for the safety of Santa Maria Island, less than 10 miles away. They likely argued about the merits of each course of action, but, knowing they would be disgraced for having abandoned their seaworthy boat and her valuable cargo, they chose to try to catch the *Mary C* in the small yawl, hoping (1) they could overcome her, or (2) the wind would shift and cause her to tack back towards them. Each day of their journey carried them further and further

away from the safety of Santa Maria. They never caught up to their mother ship. Five months later, five highly decomposed bodies were found tied to two rafts off the coast of Spain. One was flying an American flag. Thus is the fate of the crew the greatest sea mystery ever told.

Introduction

The crew was delighted to finally get underway on the morning of 7 November 1872 when Captain Benjamin S. Briggs gave the order to hoist anchor. They had departed New York Harbor two days earlier, but were forced to anchor off Staten Island waiting on the heavy seas to slacken.

On board with the 37-year-old Captain were his 30-year-old wife, Sarah Elizabeth, and their second child, two-year-old Sophia. Sarah had insisted on bringing along her melodeon to break the monotony of the long voyage with song. She had also brought along her sewing machine and toys for Sophia. They had left behind their seven-year-old son so he could stay in school.

The seven-man crew consisted of 28-year-old First Mate Albert G. Richardson, 25-year-old Second Mate Andrew Gillings, and 23-year-old Steward and Cook Edward Head. The four Germans serving as seamen were Volkert Lorenzen (29), his brother Boz Lorenzen (23), Arian Martens (35), and Gottlieb Goodschaad (23).

An hour after weighing anchor, the 103-foot, 282 ton half-brigantine was under full sail on its way to Genoa, Italy. The little ship was due to enter the Mediterranean Sea through the Strait of Gibraltar no later than 6 December.

But something dreadful went wrong. The *Mary Celeste* entered the Strait on 12 December, but rather than set a course on to Genoa, she sailed into the Port of Gibraltar with not a single soul who had departed New York still on board.

The ship was now under the command of Oliver Deveau, the 1st Mate of the British brigantine *Dei Gratia*. Deveau's ship had left New York eight days after the *Mary Celeste*, both vessels heading into the Mediterranean Sea. By a twist of fate, the *Dei Gratia* had caught up with an abandoned *Mary Celeste* 370 nautical miles east of Santa Maria Island in the Azores, midway between Santa Maria and the Strait of Gibraltar.

On 18 December, the Vice-Admiralty Court of Gibraltar held its first session to hear testimony in connection with the claim for salvage made against the derelict and her cargo. The presiding Justice was Sir James Cochrane, a British Knight and the Commissary of the Vice-Admiralty Court. The Queen's Proctor was Frederick Solly Flood.

Flood's suspicions were aroused from the moment he heard a crewmember from the *Dei Gratia* say that the ghost ship was "fit to sail around the world with good crew and good sails." He immediately ordered, and personally attended, a survey made by John Austin, Surveyor of Shipping at Gibraltar, and Ricardo Portunato, diver. This official inspection, done two days before Christmas, failed to uncover any evidence that a crime had been committed.

Flood spent the holidays mulling over the case. He so convinced himself of foul play that he ordered a second detailed survey. The Queen's lawyer now saw the mystery of the missing crew as his big chance to make a name for himself. He was right. Word about the ghost ship quickly spread around the world.

The US State Department became interested because the boat had only three years earlier became a US registered vessel. Horatio J. Sprague, the US Consul to Gibraltar, kept the State Department fully informed with a barrage of cablegrams. He even enlisted the services of US Navy Captain R. W. Shufeldt who arrived at Gibraltar on board the *U.S.S. Plymouth*. Consul Sprague cabled Captain Shufeldt's report on the condition of the abandoned vessel back to the State Department the day it was prepared. Cable services between Gibraltar and New York saw more activity in one month than had occurred in the previous ten years.

Newspapers everywhere gobbled up any hint of news turning the court proceedings into the "O. J. Simpson trial" of the era. Most headlines read the same: "Seaworthy American Brig Abandoned at Sea For Unknown Reason!"

Four insurance companies, three US agencies, three British agencies and numerous other "interested parties" became entangled for two years trying to sort out the truth of what happened to the crew.

Since then more than 30 books, two movies, and several documentaries have focused on the ghost ship. Yet no generally accepted explanation for why Captain Briggs, his wife and daughter, and seven crewmen abandoned ship has ever been put forward.

Pointing out the fact that Captain Briggs was an old friend of Captain Morehouse, master of the *Dei Gratia*, many newspapers of the time reported no mystery, choosing rather to insinuate insurance fraud. Others reported on the possibility of mutiny by a drunken crew. Still others insisted that the ship had encountered pirates. Fiction writers pumped out wild tales that were later published in newspapers as true accounts. None other than Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes series, wrote the most widely read yarn.

Everyone had a theory. Even William Richard, US Secretary of the Treasury, published his idea on what happened on the front page of the New York Times. He, like Queen's Proctor Flood, felt the crew had got at the alcohol and murdered Captain Briggs and his family in a drunken fury. Flood later changed his mind on a drunken crew in favor of a conspiracy between Captains Briggs and Morehouse.

Dr. James Kimble, head of the US Weather Bureau, and author Gershom Bradford both suggested a waterspout had struck the vessel suddenly. Waterspouts are not common outside the tropics, yet Bradford made a convincing argument for such a happening in his book, *The Secret of the Mary Celeste* (W. Foulsham & Co. 1966). Bradford's mistaken concepts will be visited later in this presentation.

US Consul Sprague wrote, "This case of the *Mary Celeste* is startling, since it appears to be one of those mysteries which no human ingenuity can penetrate sufficiently to account for abandonment of this vessel and the disappearance of her master, family and crew."

One newspaperman of the time called the incident, "a detective-story writer's nightmare: the perfect perplexing situation without any logical solution --- a plot which can never be convincingly unraveled."

History of Vessel/Seaquake Encounters

If the incident had occurred 15 years later, in 1887, maybe the Vice-Admiralty Court could have determined what happen. That was the year Eberhart Rudolph, Professor of Geophysics at the University of Strasburg in Germany, published the first part of his detail work on seaquakes in the prestigious German geophysical journal, *Beitrage zur Geophysik*.

By the time he had finished his project, eleven years later, he had published over six hundred pages, documenting more than 550 seaquake/vessel encounters, many resembling the narratives in today's books on the Bermuda Triangle.

Loud--sometimes painful--noises, lasting as long as fifteen minutes, bellowed up from the deep to reverberate against a ship's bottom, generating an incredible rumble throughout. At the same time, the sea rose erratically and violently, causing the ships to heave and roll in all directions.

Often a cannonball, water barrel, or some other heavy spherical object would be jostled from its chocks and set free to roll and lurch about the deck like a boulder crashing down a mountainside. Unable to stand, let alone run, on the quaking decks, the crew was at the mercy of providence, believing all the while each moment would be their last.

If that were not enough to frighten the very breath from the superstitious sailors, the needles of the ships' compasses would often spin in queer directions. At other times the compasses would not be affected at all, and the wind would become the source of puzzlement, sometimes shifting abruptly shortly before or after a seaquake.

One captain wrote in his log that he saw his sister ship being drawn under in a huge dome-shaped mound of frothing water. Another wrote, "The tremendous concussion below the keel made the stout hull vibrate through every beam, and the tall masts quiver like young twigs in a gale."

Hundreds of eyewitnesses told of busted planks, cracked beams, and broken masts as they reminisced about the damage sustained by their vessels during the incredible pounding of a seaquake. But, oddly Rudolph thought, no one ever mentioned a seaquake sinking a vessel. He justified this lack of total loss by reasoning that many ships might have gone down in a seaquake leaving no survivors to tell the story. He also thought the sailing vessels of his day might be somewhat protected from seaquakes. He wrote: "I believe the stout timbers of a wooden vessel and the moisture these timbers soak up give these ships a natural flexibility, enabling them to endure the rigorous shuddering of a seaquake just as a willow might withstand a tempest."

What happens on the surface during a seaquake depends on many factors. If the hypocenter of the quake is deep in the bowels of the earth, little occurs on the bottom or in the water column. On the other hand, if the hypocenter is so shallow that the seabed opens up, the coupling of P-wave energy into the water is greatly enhanced. (Water cannot support shear so S-waves are missing in a seaquake.)

In addition, before a seaquake can generate potent P-waves in the water, the seabed itself must simulate the action of a giant piston, moving up and down rapidly, shoving and pulling at the water column. The faster the piston moves, the more potent is the vertical traveling pressure waves. In fact, *speed* of the vertical quivering plays the determining role in ship damage, not the magnitude of the quake.

Magnitude is more related to the length of the rupture rather than to the power of vertical pressure waves released into the water. A magnitude three seaquake, erupting explosively with predominate up and down motion, might release a hundred times the energy into the water column over a magnitude six event with mostly horizontal motion. For example, a ship directly above a slow moving magnitude six quake might experience only the feeling of running aground or hitting a submerged object. On the other hand, a ship above an explosive magnitude three event, with predominate rapid vertical shifting in the seabed, might join the many thousands of vessels posted as "missing without a trace."

The best way to envision what might happen on board a ship is to imagine no water between the earthquake and the vessel. Keep in mind that a vessel is a sprung mass and, as such, more subject to being "excited" if any portion of the energy is in sync with the ship’s own natural frequencies. In the "sprung mass" state, a ship is more like a tight banjo string than a loose one.

A tall building can also act as a sprung mass during an earthquake, collapsing if the seismic energy resonates with one of many natural frequencies of the building. The same principals that applies to a tall building in an earthquake also applies to a ship in a seaquake.

Both the US and British Navies know of this hazard to shipping. Nevertheless, for reasons of their own, prefer not to release this knowledge, choosing instead to place the danger of seaquakes into a black hole of secrecy.

Seismic Activity In The Azores

According to a chart compiled by the Acoustics Division of the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (1981), a major seaquake has occurred within sixty miles of Santa Maria Island in the Azores every year since the beginning of man's ability to record such happenings. In fact, the ocean floor in the area is one of the most seismically threatened places in the world. The active East Azores Fracture

Zone is located about thirty miles southwest of Santa Maria; about fifteen miles east-northeast lies another hot-spot for undersea earthquakes known as the Gloria Fracture Zone.

When Dr. Lowell Whiteside, a Geophysicist with the National Geophysical Data Center in Boulder, Colorado was asked if he could be certain a seaquake did or did not occur on 25 November 1872 in the sea near Santa Maria, he said: "The problem with identifying the occurrence of historical earthquakes from 1872 is that there were no seismological instruments at the time. The only earthquakes recorded were those that were felt strong enough to be noteworthy. This means that earthquakes outside of populated area and under the ocean were seldom reported. The only evidence of large sub-oceanic event comes from tsunamis and seaquakes noted by people aboard ocean-going vessels. The Azores is a highly seismic region and earthquakes occur often, often they are of moderate to large size. Unfortunately, because of the non-recording of oceanic events in 1872, it cannot be confirmed or denied that an earthquake occurred in that region on November 25, 1872."

He added, "An 8.5 magnitude seaquake did occur in the Azores in late December of that year. This event was the largest in the area in one hundred years. It is probable that many large foreshocks and aftershocks occurred locally within a month of this event."

As Dr. Whiteside confirmed, no instruments or earthquake stations existed at the time to record earthquakes. The historical records of events in 1872 were created in the early 1900's by searching old newspapers and other printed accounts. Since the Azores are located in a seismically active area, to be newsworthy an event would have had to special, causing objects to fall from shelves or in some way disrupting to the lives of the local folk on Santa Maria. The Magnitude 8.5 event in late December was reported all over the Azores. Foreshocks would likely have been too common to make the newspapers, therefore a seaquake under the *Mary Celeste* might have easily frightened the weary crew because of the explosive nature of the cargo they carried while not being especially notable by those on land.

Charles Fay wrote the metrological service in the Azores and ask about the weather and any earthquakes and got the following answer: "From the records from Angra do Heroismo and Ponta Delgada, the only two stations existing in 1872, it is concluded that stormy conditions prevailed in the Azores on the 24th and 25th November 1872. A cold front passed Angra do Heroismo between 3 and 9 PM on the 25th, the wind shifting then from SW to NW. The minimum of pressure was 752 mm and the wind velocity attained to 62 km at Ponta Delgada at 9 PM on the 24th. Calm or light wind prevailed on the forenoon of the 25th, but later, the wind became of a gale force. As usually the wind direction before the cold front was WSW to SW; after the cold front NW. Fourteen mm of rain were collected at Angra from noon on the 24th to noon 25th, and 29 mm at Ponta Delgada. No record of any earthquake is found in the registers, neither in the local newspapers which we have searched."

The Facts of The Case

The crew of the *Dei Gratia* spotted the *Mary Celeste* sailing erratically midway between the Azores and Portugal on the 4th of December. They noticed that she was headed toward them making about two knots under short canvas. They were unable to spot anyone on deck through their glass so, as the *Dei Gratia's* helmsman steered a nearby approach, her crew hailed the deserted vessel over and over. When no response was received, a boarding party, lead by 1st Mate Oliver Deveau, was quickly dispatched to soon discover the *Mary Celeste* was abandoned.

The boarding crew noticed her jib and foretopmast staysail set on a starboard tact. The foresail and the upper foretopsail had been mostly blown away. The standing rigging was in good order, but some of the running rigging was also blow away. Her masts, yards and spars, and anchors and chains were all right. A stout rope about 100 meters long used to hoist the outer end of the gaff sail, called a *main peak halyard,* was broken and most of it missing. The main staysail was lying loose on the forward house and all the rest of the sails were furled.

(painted by John Styga)

The bilge pump, positioned just forward of the mainmast, was found in good working condition. However, Deveau noticed that the sounding rod used to measure water in the bilge was laying on the deck. Next to the rod was a valve that had been removed from one of the two large bilge tubes feeding down to the bilge. Deveau testified that the valve had to be taken out so that the sounding rod could be lowered down the bilge tube to measure the water. It seems the *Mary Celeste* was missing both her sounding pipes.

Besides two larger tubes running to the port and starboard bilge to facilitate hastily pumping out excess water regardless of the tact, a brig of this class normally had two additional smaller pipes just for sounding the bilge, one to port and one to starboard. But, for unknown reasons, the carpenters had failed to install these extra pipes when they had recently put in the new spar deck making it was necessary to remove the valves in the main bilge tubes in order to send the sounding rod down to the bilge. Deveau testified that he dropped the rod down the open tube and found three and one-half feet of water in her; an amount that would not have been noticed above her cargo except by using the sounding rod.

There was a foot of water swashing around on the galley floor in forward house. The water likely came in from the open scuttle on the roof and the open door because the port side of the forward house, which had no door or scuttle, was dry. There was also a great deal of water between decks likely because both the fore cargo hatch and the lazarette hatch were off, lying on the deck nearby. The main hatch was securely fastened.

The compass stand was broken and the compass destroyed. The wheel was not lashed alee as is the procedure normal observed when abandoning a sailing ship in an emergency.

The six windows around the slightly raised aft deck cabin were battened with canvas and board. The skylight on the cabin top was raised open. The Captain’s bed was unmade and wet; the water likely came from the opened skylight. The Captain’s chronometer, sextant, navigation book, ship‘s register and other papers were missing. The logbook and the log slate were found in the mate’s cabin. There were six months’ provisions in the storeroom and plenty of drinking water. We know the food and water was not contaminated because the salvage crew ate and drink from these supplies while they sailed the ship to port.

On inspecting the forward house, Oliver Deveau found the door open. In addition, the scuttle-hatch covering the hatchway in the roof of the galley was off. However, the small windows around the raised portion of the forward house were shut. No cooked food was found anywhere on the vessel; the pots

and pans were cleaned and stored properly. However, the large cast iron galley stove had been lifted up by some strange force and set down out of place, no longer resting inside the four heavy chocks that secured each leg of the stove to the galley floor. The heavy water cask, normally chocked down on the deck to prevent it from sliding when the ship was healed over in a strong wind, was also found moved about as if some powerful force had acted upon it.

The crew's clothing was left behind. Their rain gear, boots, and even their smoking pipes were found near their berths in the forecastle.

There was no sign of fire or smoke damage anywhere on board. Nor was any evidence found that the ship had nearly capsized. Her hull appeared in good condition and was described as "nearly new." However, there was some strange damage noted to the bow timbers down both sides of the vessel.

This damage was the most paradoxical aspect of her condition. John Austin, Gibraltar's Surveyor of Shipping, became highly suspicious. In his official report to the Court of Inquiry, he stated: "On approaching the vessel I found on the bow, between two and three feet above the water line on the port side, a long narrow strip at the edge of a plank under the cat-head cut away to the depth of about three eights of an inch and about one and a quarter inches wide for a length of about six to seven feet. This injury had been sustained recently and could not have been effected by weather or collision and was apparently done by a sharp cutting instrument continuously applied through the whole length of the injury. I found on the starboard bow but a little further from the stern of the vessel a precisely similar injury at the edge of a plank but perhaps an eighth or tenth of an inch wider, which in my opinion had been effected simultaneously and by the same means and not otherwise. However; as the Official Surveyor for this Court of Inquiry, I must profess intense bewilderment as to the tool used to cut such marks and why they would have been cut in any vessel at these locations."

The boarding party concluded that the *Mary Celeste* was in good sailing order. Only the small yawl, lashed on top of the main hatch, was gone. A section of railing running alongside was also removed to allow launching of the boat over the side. Deep cuts in the wooden railing and on top of the hatch, where the yawl had been stored, indicated that the crew had used an axe to cut the yawl loose rather than take the time to untie it properly. The evidence was clear, Captain Briggs and his family and crew had abandoned the *Mary Celeste* in great haste.

Later, when the cargo was unloaded in Genoa, nine barrels was found empty.

Re-enacting The Voyage

We shall not rehash the events prior to departing Staten Island on 7 November. Nor will we deal with the first 15 days of the voyage, reporting only that the wind had been favorable.

By magic, we catch up with life aboard the little half-brig in the Azores on 23 November 1872, where we see her sailing due east with all her sails trimmed to a strong southwest breeze. We can peace together much about the trip and the condition of the seas because the logbook was recovered from Mate's cabin. It showed the tract of the vessel up to 24 November. The first mate's log slate was also found with an entry dated 25 November showing the position of the ship on that date. In addition, we also have the sworn testimony of the crew of the *Dei Gratia* who were not more than ~300 miles from the location of the Mary Celeste during this period.

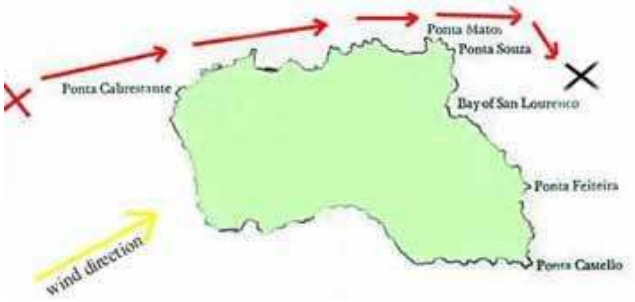
On Board, we notice 1st Mate Albert Richardson gauging speed by hurling wood chips over the bow and counting the seconds until they drift passed the stern. He computes her speed at 8 knots, then turns his attention to calculating their position, reckoning they are at Latitude 36:56 North, Longitude 29:20 West, about 227 nautical miles directly east of Santa Maria Island, near the large red X in the map to the left.

The wind increases all morning. At noon, Mate Richardson orders her sails shortened, putting a reef in her main sail, main-gaff-topsail, main-topmost staysail and middle staysail. As the afternoon progresses and the wind continued to strengthen, one-at-a-time, he has the crew furl the main staysail, fore royal, foretopgallant, and flying jib. The wind reaches a moderate gale by seven that evening, increasing her speed to nine knots.

The night ahead promising to be a stormy one. Mate Richardson consults with the captain and together they see to it that all hatches are secured and that all the six windows around the cabin are battened tight with canvas and boards. At 8 PM when the first watch comes on duty, the storm is raging, making it necessary to put a reef in her foresail and double-reef her upper topsail and furl her lower topsail.

Midnight passes and they progress steadily. One o'clock, two o'clock, and three o'clock--the entry against each hour reads the same--8 knots. Soon the first streaks of dawn will be visible.

At 5 AM the logbook reads, "Made the Island of Saint Mary's, bearing ESE." (Santa Maria Island was know as Saint Mary's in the 1800's.) The point of land observed by the vessel's watch, using this bearing, was probably near Ponta Cabrasante, on the northwestern extremity of the Island. The *Mary Celeste* was located somewhere near the red X on the left side of the chart below.



The fact that the ship had been pushed forcefully along by a gale blowing hard out of the southwest is supported by the course taken by Captain Briggs around Santa Maria Island. The Strait of Gibraltar, entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, lies on a latitude sixty miles south of his present position; therefore, the most direct route would be to go south of Santa Maria Island, yet Captain Briggs steers the little brigantine north of the Island. Why?

The obvious reason would be to get on the lee shore, and take a break from the rough seas. Maybe the Captain’s daughter, Sophia, was sick and had been crying the entire night? Maybe he promised Sarah a break from the pounding sea? Maybe the crew was demanding a hot food? The sea had been so rough the last few days that Cook Edward Head was not likely able to fire the galley stove, let alone cook a meal. If you have ever been on sailing vessel of this size during a heavy wind, you would know better than to ask the cook for hot food. Cooks on sailing vessels are no different today as they where 130 years ago--no cooking whatsoever goes on during a gale!

It was 5 AM when they spotted Santa Maria, and 8 AM when the eastern point of Island bore SSW 6 miles distance. At 5 AM, they would have been somewhere near the red X. By 8 AM they would have been near the black X. The trip along the ten-mile breath of Santa Maria had taken three hours, indicating that they had likely sailed to a point near the black X and then dropped anchor for several hours, or she slowly sailed about in the area with only the jib and foretopmast staysail to hold her in place. It was likely about 6 AM when the cook, knowing they would soon be on the lee side of the island, started a fire in the galley stove.

EVIDENCE OF A SEAQUAKE

Sometime after eight in the morning on the 25th something dreadful happened on board the *Mary Celeste* causing an experienced master mariner to place his wife and 2-year-old daughter and seven other adults besides himself into a yawl with limited freeboard, and hastily abandon a perfectly sea-worthy, 101-foot, 282 ton vessels. The Captain had to believe, as everyone else, that staying aboard the *Mary Celeste* was extremely dangerous.

As the *Dei Gratia* salvage crew noted, most of the sails were furled when the *Mary Celeste* was found, which leads one to believe that whatever had happened on board, happened moments before they departed the lee side of Santa Maria.

Likely, while hoved to near shore or anchored, Sarah tended to Sophia as the cook prepared their first hot meal in days. After the crew ate, they took a well-deserved smoke break and the cook cleaned the pots and stowed things away. Then, sometime after 8 AM, the captain gave the orders to pump the bilges and run up the sails, putting order back into the *Mary Celeste*.

Knowing their new course to be a safe one, he took his wife and retired for a nap, leaving the first mate in charge with instructions to call him only if needed. We know this because the Captain's bed was reported unmade, something that never happened on board a well run ship in the 1872, unless the Captain was in the bed or intended to go back to it later.

The seaquake erupted just as the *Mary Celeste* was about to depart.

The ship shook violently, knocking her wooden compass stand over and breaking the compass housing.

The up and down motion bounced the large drinking-water cast loose from its chocks on the main deck, and danced the huge cast-iron galley stove out of place, likely flinging open the stove door or bouncing one of the top lids off to the side, allowing smoke and embers to whirl out of the stove.

The severe vibrations also jarred the barrels of alcohol she carried, loosening the stays on nine barrels, spilling almost 500 gallons of raw alcohol into the bilge.

The men pumping the bilge must have been knocked off their feet because they stopped what they were doing, leaving the sounding rod and the bilge valve on the deck.

The sailors up in the rigging, in the process of setting the foresail and upper and lower topsail, might have been jolted so hard that they fell into the sea or landed hard on the deck, showing reason why the fore-lower topsail was only partly set. The foresail gear was left dangling, explaining why the gear was later found broken with the clew lines and bunting gone. The fore-braces on the port side were placed out of order, no doubt due to the hysteria of the men. Some of the other running rigging was left hanging loose for the same reason, which explains why two sails apparently tore away from the yards and blew overboard during the time the *Mary Celeste* sailed as a ghost ship.

Bradford was right in his book when he said the cause of the disaster was an "outside destructive force," not something within the ship. However, he made a mistake in developing his waterspout theory by assuming the blown away sails meant only one thing -- excessive wind. He never reasoned that, in a normal breeze, a loose flapping sail could be torn away and/or ripped to shreds within a few days if not set properly.

The leading theory up until Bradford published his book was that alcohol fumes were somehow responsible. He belittled this idea by pointing out that, if any alcohol had leaked into the bilge, it would be mixed with water and pumped out everyday when the bilge was tended. If there had been an alarming amount of alcohol in the bilge water, Bradford reasoned, the seamen would have notified the captain and they would have vented the bilge at all cost. The alcohol expert consulted by Bradford added that, in his opinion, had there been a dangerous alcohol leak, there would have been an explosion and a fire leaving no doubt as to the cause of the abandonment. No one reasoned that a violent shaking of the cargo during a seaquake would cause nine barrels of alcohol to empty into the bilge in less than a minute.

There can be little doubt, the hull of the *Mary Celeste*, like an echo chamber, thunderously reverberated the hammering on her bottom planks, inciting the God-fearing crew to think judgment day had arrived.

To make matters worse, the vibrations likely caused mental confusion making it more difficult for the officers to decide on the proper action. In such a moment one would also wonder how well the Germany crew understood orders yelled at them in English.

Before the first shocks ended, the entire ship began to permeate with alcohol fumes. Fearful of an explosion, the crew dropped whatever they were doing and ran to open the fore hatch to inspect the cargo, throwing the hatch cover to the side. They also quickly opened the lazarette hatch, and the fore and aft sky lights in an attempted to air out the lower decks. However, they did not open the main hatch, in agreement with the evidence, because, at this point in time, the yawl was still lashed to the cover.

Shortly after the main shocks, the aftershocks began and more smoke, embers, and sparking bits of burning wood bellowed from the hot stove. Maybe William Head was brave enough to close the stove as best he could but it is doubtful he or anyone else lingered in the galley for any length of time. The fear of catching on fire in a pending explosion would have caused any member of crew to stay as far away from the galley as possible. No wonder they did not take any personal items since they had to pass by the dancing stove to get to their chest in the forecastle.

No mention was made of the condition of the stove's flue or what type of flue system the stove was equipped with. Nevertheless, one would expect some means of exhausting the burning ash and smoke since the galley was setting just below the canvas. Whatever matter of exhaust the stove was equipped with was likely lost when it was shaken from its chocks. Other safety standards, such as shielding and other means of fire prevention, was also likely breached when the stove was bounced up and down on the galley floor. Under such a situation, the alcohol fumes could explode at any second and everyone knew it.

Captain Briggs did the only rational thing he could do. He yelled out the orders to abandon the *Mary Celeste*.

In a mad dash, someone grabbed an ax and quickly cut the yawl loose from the main hatch and everyone helped drag it over to the starboard rail. At this point, the man with the ax grabbed the main peak halyard from the belaying pin in the pin-rack, played-out a good section, placed the line on the rail and whacked it through, at the same time, making a deep cut into the rail. He let the loose end go, took the end of the line he had just cut off the halyard and tied it to the yawl.

They heaved the yawl over the starboard side and secured it with the line cut from the halyard. The Captain put his wife and daughter in the small boat, snatched his chronometer, sextant, and the ship's papers and jump in. The crew joined him.

At this point, Sarah praying and Sophia screaming and everyone else near panic, one of the crew secured the other end of the halyard to the rail and the yawl drew away. The was standard procedure in those days when a ship was abandoned during a fire. The idea was to tie your life boat a safe distance off the stern and hope the fire went out before the vessel burnt to the waterline. The crew could pull themselves back on board when the danger was over and claim salvage to whatever remained.

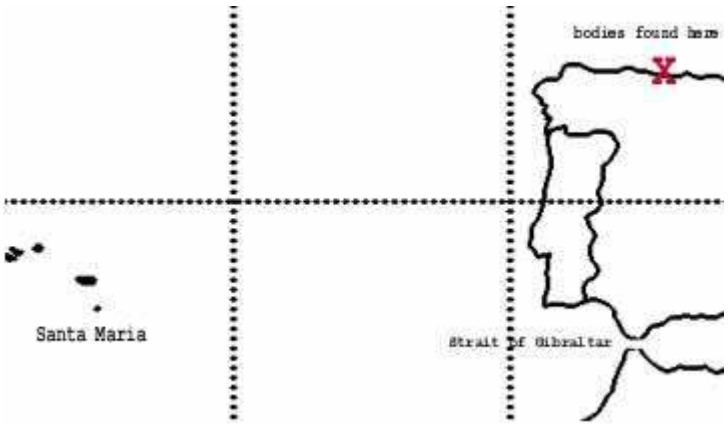
However, as luck was going for the crew of the *Mary Celeste*, another aftershock might have occurred, sinking the yawl, turning its mass into a sea anchor and ripping the halyard loose from the rail.

But what are the odds the little boat was sunk immediately?

The problem in recreating what might have happened on the yawl is that we have no real description of this vessel. The info given by others is that the boat is 15 to 20 feet in length without mention of whether it is a row boat or a sailing yawl. If we assume Captain Briggs was not a complete idiot, then

we must also assume the yawl was capable of carrying everyone. It was likely closer to 20 feet in length and carried a sail along with at least one set of strong oars, maybe two. There might have also been emergency provisions stored on board. The boat was likely lashed to the main hatch because it was too big to fit on the stern davits.

If the yawl was a large 20-foot life boat we can take a different view of what might have happened to the crew after they departed the *Mary Celeste*, especially in view of what appeared in the Liverpool Daily Albion on 16 May 1873. It was reported that two rafts had been found by fishermen from a small town off the Coast of Spain (see chart below). One of the rafts had a corpse lashed to it and was flying an American flag. (No flag was found on board the *Mary Celeste*.) The second raft held five decomposing bodies but no mention was made as to how long the bodies might have been "decomposing."



Was this the crew? Suppose, moments before you realized the mother ship was not going to explode, the halyard holding the yawl off the stern somehow parted or came unknotted. You know you forgot to the wheel lashed, something a good Captain would have done. What do you do now if you were Captain Briggs? Would you try to catch up with your vessel and your valuable cargo, hoping the wind would change and turn her back into your little boat? Or, would you turn the yawl about and head back to the safety of Santa Maria? Capt Briggs had his sextant and charts. Maybe he tried to catch the *Mary Celeste*? They might have lived for weeks on rain water and fish? The yawl could have broke apart in heavy seas? The survivors could have lashed together two crude rafts and drifted for long time before being found off the Coast of Spain?

We know the *Mary Celeste* sailed ~370 nautical miles in a westerly direction as a ghost before being found nine days later. Those who think it impossible for her to travel so far in such a short period with only two small sails set should realize that she was carried more by the Azores Current than by the wind.

The main Gulf Stream passes close to the Grand Banks, south of Newfoundland, where it branches into two currents: the North Atlantic and the Azores Currents. The North Atlantic turns north just east of Newfoundland, and flows east toward the British Isles. The Azores Current, flows east at about two nautical miles per hour past the Azores Islands towards the shores of Portugal before turning south.

Carried by this current, the *Mary Celeste* could have traveled up to 50 nautical miles per day making it reasonable that a *Dei Gratia* came upon her where she did.

Explaining the Cuts in the Bow Planks

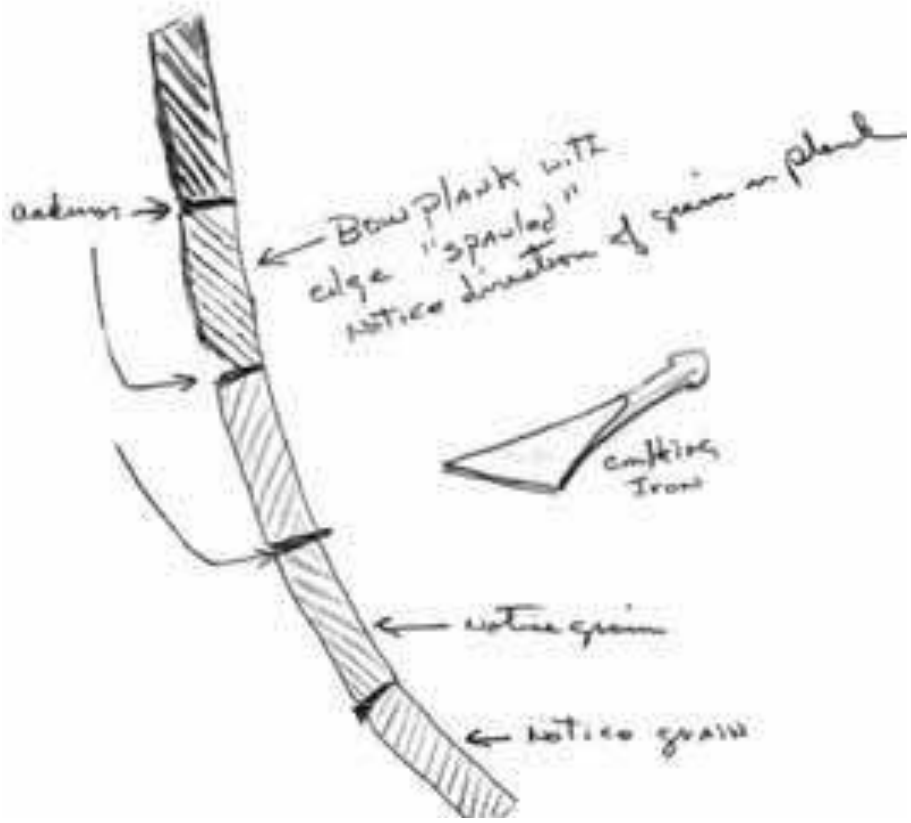
John Austin, Gibraltar's Surveyor of Shipping, testified that he found on the bow, about two and one-half feet above the water line on both sides, a long narrow strip, at the edge of a plank under the cat-head, cut away to the depth of about 3/8 inch and about 1 1/4 inches wide for a length of about six to seven feet. He professed intense bewilderment as to the tool used to cut such marks and why they would have been cut in any vessel at these locations.

Captain Winchester, one of the owners of the *Mary Celeste*, had a different opinion. He agreed with Captain Shufeldt, who had determined that the injury was actually splinters or splints that had popped off the wood, which had been steamed and bent to curve the bow when the boat was recently rebuilt.

The Mary Celeste had been "on the rocks" several times in her long history. She also had been involved in two collisions, one of them recent. According to testimony, just before this trip, she had been purchased at a salvage auction in New York for $2,600 and rebuilt for $14,000. Her rebuilt condition was confirmed by the crew of the Dei Gratia when they said, "Her hull appeared to be nearly new."

We can assume that many of her bow planks were newly replaced. They were probably cut from black spruce, a long-fibered wood used most often in the construction of ships along the Northeastern Coast and in Newfoundland. Slight ring failure along the grain might have occurred in the planks while they were still curing in the repair yard. Even if they were perfect boards, the steaming and bending of the planks to fit the contour of the hull would weaken the grain.

The caulking done during her recent rebuilt could also have been responsible for the edges of the planks to splinter out. Caulking was extremely important process, not only because it rendered the vessel watertight, but also because driving the oakum between the planks put great pressure on and squeezed them together tightly, holding them in tension adding to the rigidity and strength of the vessel. During caulking it was very important to allow for expansion of the planks when wet, especially if the grain ran in a direction that made splintering likely. If too much oakum was pounded in between the planks, then a condition of excessive stress would have been established at the edges of the replaced planks. As these planks soaked up water, the stress would increase.



Accordingly, it is not surprising that during the severe vibrations of the seaquake, long splints would pop from the edges of a few bow planks along the grain, appearing as if it were cut with an unknown instrument.

Captain D. Williams

End

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