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Adventures of Capt. David A. McLeod In the August Gale, 1873 We must have had six feet of a deck load; it was level to the forward house. While we were laying in the river (St. Lawrence), a boarding-master came off with our new crew but not near as good a crew as we had paid off--a lot of them fresh water sailors came down from the Lakes, others were fish? ermen with big cod head boots, not two good sail? ors in the bunch. Our new mate was an American Ger? man; the boswain was a Shetland Islander, very broad dialect and a good man. Heaving up anchor, the mate sings out, "Strike a light"--but then not one word. "Have none of you fellows got a shot in your locker? If you have, let us hear you"--but not one word. The boswain, who was a great chanty man, struck a light with "Hurrah, my boys, we're outward bound"--no answering chorus--but he kept on. We left Quebec early Friday morning. The mate or? dered the fishermen to lay aloft and shake out the main top gallant sail. He started crawling up. The mate ordered him to haul off those cursed coffins of boots he had on and a half dozen old coats, and to get a move on. He demurred. The mate fetched him a lick and sent him sprawling. He stood over him till he got out of the big boots and went a- loft. He did not know what the top gallant sail meant. The mate came aft where the Captain was walking on the poop and he said to the Captain, "This crowd will never get the sails off her in a breeze." "Well," the Captain said, "it's summer time anyway, but they are the toughest gang of far? mers I ever had at one time." Saturday, August 23rd, was a nice day, warm, light wind, all sails set; but Sunday, the 24th, when I came on deck at 4 o'clock the breeze commenced to freshen from the North-east and stiff. With three other boys, I was ordered up to stow the mizzen- royal. I had never stowed a sail in a breeze in my life. All the sail was blown to leeward and down on the lee yard arm we went, and whenever we would get it smothered in a little, it would blow out to leeward. We were at it quite awhile when I looked down. I could see the Captain swinging his arms, but could not hear the orders. I thoOght he was hurrying us up. I looked forward and saw that the fore top mast had broken off at the cap and every? thing was flying loose on deck. I said, "I am go? ing down whatever happens." So I got on the top gallant back stay and landed on the poop. The Cap? tain said, "Why in the H... did you not come down when I called? Don't you see the gear towing over the side? You might have been yanked to H... over the side clear to H... out of my sight." Well, there was pandemonium on the main deck. When the top mast went, there were five men aloft in the top gallant rigging, one after stowing the roy? al was going down to the top gallant yard. I no? ticed in the wreck the Frenchman that the mate made take off his cod head boots. I told the bo? swain and he at once helped him out. He was none the worse of it, but we did not see anything of the other four men. After a lot of loud cursing and swearing, we got some of the sail off her, and stowed; and after trying to save some of the gear towing alongside, the Captain ordered it cut away. It was blowing harder all the time. The Captain and the mate were talking together. I heard the mate say, "If we budge the foresail, it will go to pieces," and the Captain said, "You better go up yourself, and take some of



the best men with you, and cut the rovans and head earrings and drop it on deck." I never saw it done before or since, but the sheets held it and it came down on deck. It was now about 10 o'clock and blowing a living gale with a blinding rain-storm. The three upper top-sails blew to pieces. We were ordered up to furl the mizzen lower top-sail--several men with the 2nd mates-and boswain. Only 6 of the best men would come out of the fore-castle; the deck load was so high that they had to go in and push them out. You could not understand their talk but they were praying and had crucifixes in their hands. The mate said, "Just look at them on their knees, and D... your pictures what took you on board with a roar like a report of a cannon?" Away blows the main and mizzen, lower and upper top sails all to pieces, followed soon after by everything on the fore, but the foresail that was on deck. About then the deck load broke loose and went over the starboard side carrying away bulwarks and stenchions. This was the first fear I felt, and although we had not a bite to eat I did not feel hungry. There was no sail aloft, but the main lower top sail--and a wild sea running. Then, away goes the main lower top sail, out of the bolt ropes. (Now you landsmen may laugh, but I say that (63)