

# 60 YEARS BACK

## FIRST VOYAGE AT SEA — PART II

WHILE THE SAND BALLAST was being unloaded we had four huge long logs, two on each side, suspended by heavy chains, the chains being passed through the scupper holes and made fast on moorings bits. These were to act as temporary ballast while sand was finally discharged. Of course, while this was going on everyone was wondering what we were to load—whether heavy lumber for Australia or another cargo of grain. At the Mission one night the Padre, who knew most of the influential people in Portland, told us two boys that the ship was to load grain for home, but he did not know for what port. We were to keep this news to ourselves till it was officially known on the ship; later we heard that we were to load for Hamburg. Going home, glad we were.

While loading and sails unbent, all yards were given a coat of paint from the jackstay down the fore sides. In those days all paints put aboard were in a solid state, in drums, together with several barrels of raw and boiled linseed oil. A half beef cask was used to mix up the paint, using hands and arms to do the job; how we did not suffer from a skin complaint, I do not know. When the loading was nearly complete all bad weather sails were bent; being Winter, these were needed. At last the day came to leave Portland and, together with a German barque, we were towed down the river by the stern wheeler *Harvest Queen* to the anchorage at Astoria. We had to wait there for a few days, owing to a heavy sea on the river bar, and heard that during our stay at Portland another British sailing ship had been lost in the approaches to the Columbia River—the she was the *Gallina*.

With favourable conditions on the bar we left Astoria towed by the sea-going tug *Tatoosh* and got a good offing from the land. The wind outside was light but at least it was in our favour to start the long voyage to Hamburg by way of the Horn. The next day our anchors were brought on to the forecastle head and well secured, cable ends secured in chain locker. Gradually, we got through the tropics with few calm periods. It was now that all running gear was properly checked for furling sails in a hurry, especially such gear as clew lines, buntlines, leeclines, clew garnets, sheets, tacks, halyards, downhauls, and our own body gear, sea boots (leather) with dubbin well rubbed into them, oilskin trousers and coats (short). Up aloft one needs a "soul and body lashing" when out on

In these reminiscences Captain L. S. Peverley, who holds a square-rigged Master's Ticket, recalls his first voyage in sail. He went on to serve at sea with the Union-Castle Line and from 1928 until his retirement in 1961 was Clan Line Pilot at Gravesend.



a yard arm making a heavy wet sail fast otherwise, when lying over the yard, the coat is sure to blow over one's head. The lashing takes the form of a piece of log line round the waist and tied, then another piece made fast to the former at the centre back and brought between the legs and then up to the waist and tied again.

We were now getting into the high S. Latitudes, with strong winds from a Westerly quarter. The three royals were given additional gaskets in case of there being too strong a breeze for them to be set. One night when I was off watch the order came "all hands on deck. Shorten down to three lower topsails and reefed foresail." The watch "on deck" had already furled the three upper topsails and by the time this operation was completed it was my own watch "on deck." It was certainly blowing a gale, with violent squalls and a mountainous sea rolling up from astern and filling the decks; as fast as the "wash ports" took it away the decks were awash again. That is where those lifelines came in handy going from forward to aft on both sides of the deck houses. Gradually we got to the Latitude of Cape Horn (56°S.) but kept on a S. Easterly course to about 60°S. so as to have plenty of sea room should the wind change direction. Lighting the binnacle lamp one night for the helmsman I noticed we were on a E.N.E. course so guessed we were round the Horn and were gradually to get away on a more Northerly course.

The weather moderated a little, and so we were able to carry six topsails and full foresail for a few days, together with staysails; later mainsail and cross-jack and three topgallant sails. We were now making good progress towards more settled weather conditions, so much so that the royals were set. On approaching the Southern edge of the S.E. Trades the wind fell very light and we were only making a few knots when one of the crew in my watch caught an Albatross. He was going to use two of the wing bones for pipe stems and the webbed feet for tobacco pouches. He gave me the breast and told me how to prepare it. This involved getting a wooden cask hoop and sewing a piece of canvas inside it, then laying the breast, feathers down, on to the canvas and sewing it on, then letting the skin and fat on to dry off in the sun. This I did, gradually scraping the fat off with my sheath knife till the skin was completely clean; I caged some alum from the Steward who was in charge of the medicine chest and spread it