



*The barque Invercramsy, 1,321 tons, which belonged to the Inver Line of Aberdeen. The author sailed on this vessel as an Able Seaman, circa 1910/11.*

over the skin and let it remain for a few days, after which I removed it from the hoop and sewed it up completely in a piece of new No. 5 canvas. This Albatross breast was later given to a furrier in my home town and was made up into a muff, a present for my sister, in the days when they were often in use.

We had quite fresh S.E. Trades but the No. 2 suit of sails replaced the No. 1 suit for the sailmaker and one hand to effect some repairs to them after some had taken a little hammering South of the Horn. Round the vicinity of the Equator we had several days of light winds and airs and the watches were kept busy squaring and bracing the yards to take every advantage of what wind there was. In between times preparations were made to get the ship in a spick and span condition for her home-coming. Back stays and fore and aft stays were given a coat of black varnish and all yards and masts, jibboom, spanker boom and gaff were painted. We apprentices had the job of painting all the royals about one hundred or so feet up, sitting on the footrope, hanging on to the jackstay with one hand, with the officer of the watch making sure there were no "holidays" (bare places) left. We also had to paint the inside of the lighthouses, which was done from inside two storerooms; most sailing ships had lighthouses to house their Port and Starboard sidelights and so were not subjected to the elements. Deck House, lifeboats, bulwarks, etc., had to be painted, all teakwood sandpapered, oiled and varnished. All this work had to be effected in the tropics when the weather was quiet.

After crossing the Equator we picked up the N.E. Trades, which were well northerly, and so we were braced well up on starboard tack. When unable to steer a course, it was "by the wind," which meant watching the weather leech of the Royal, or the uppermost sail on the mizzen mast. The time came for the changing of the sails again and the stowing away of the light weather suit; it was not long before we encountered the North Atlantic Westerlies and were bowling along with a good breeze just abaft the port beam, all the canvas drawing well and steering a course for the English Channel. As we got into the steamship lanes the man on the lookout on the forecastle head at night had to report every half hour on the condition of the sidelights and the officer on watch on the poop would keep an eye on the stern light.

One day quite a few steamers were sighted and we passed some of the slower ones. We noticed also that the colour of the sea was changing which told us we were nearing land, the first to be seen since leaving the Columbia River. The anchor cables were brought up from the chain locker through the hawse pipes and shackled to the anchors, then the fish tackle was rigged and the anchors hoisted from their clamped position, hung overside and secured by the ring stopper at the cat head and by the shank painter to a set of mooring bits; then, if necessary, they were ready. The following night the Lizard Light was observed from aloft and so we were making the Channel approaches at last and, with a strong fair wind and Royals made fast, were making good progress towards the Straits of Dover. After passing through, a couple of days later the wind fell away to a light breeze and so we were once again under full sail. Eventually we got near to either Borkum or Nordenay where a Pilot vessel was sighted making for the ship. All sails were clewed up in the gear except the six topsails, and when the pilot vessel was close by the main and mizzen yards were backed to stop the ship for the pilot to board. Afterwards they were braced forward and the sails filled and away we proceeded again with all sail set except the three Royals, which were furled with what old sailors used to say a "harbour stow." The next day we were approaching the entrance to the Elbe when a tug was sighted and it was not long before she was alongside and, after a lot of battering, was engaged to tow us into the Elbe and up the river to Hamburg. All sails were given the "harbour stow" for the last time, and my first voyage as an Apprentice in Sail was ended after 18 months.

*Deck view of the Andrew Weir barque Beechbank, in which the author served as Second Officer, leaving Valparaiso, 14th March 1912.*

