ADVICE TO SEA LIEUTENANTS

BY AN OFFICER OF RANK

WHEN YOU have the watch, from eight till twelve at night, as soon as you are sure that the captain is in bed, go below, and if you do not find anybody up, shake the *cot* of one of the officers till you oblige him to *turn out*, and take a glass of grog with you, and play a game of backgammon ; when probably the noise of the tables will keep the lieutenant who is to relieve you alert, and in readiness to rise. In your absence leave everything to the discretion of the young gentleman upon the quarter-deck, which is the readiest way to form them into officers, and give them a habit of command. If any disagreeable accident should bring the captain suddenly upon deck, you have always an apology in the old story of the quarter-gallery.

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After being relieved in any of the night watches, when you pass the beds of the other officers in the way to your own shake them one by one, till you are sure the drowsy fellows are perfectly awake, and then tell them that it is a fine night, that the wind has shifted a quarter of a point, or anything else remarkable, and they will certainly be much obliged to you for your attention.

If a stranger of consequence should come on board when you happen to be reprimanding a sailor, heighten immediately the tone of your voice; and when you have drawn the visitor's eyes upon you, give the fellow a volley of kicks and cuffs with all the activity you are master of, and you will doubtless impress the stranger with a respectable opinion of the officers and discipline of the ship.

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In a calm, or in harbour, if you observe a midshipman who has the watch sauntering about the deck, or leaning against a gun, ask him if he thinks he is to stand there like a gentleman with his hands in his pockets.

When fresh provisions begin to grow scarce at sea, you may contrive to say to another lieutenant at table, as if without design, that the goose or turkey died of sickness, that the pig had the mange, or that the liver of the sheep was very much diseased, and it is ten to one but you spoil the appetites of some of the *idlers*, who have not had the advantage of an education in the orlop; consequently you will have a larger proportion of fresh meat, which is not so necessary for these gentlemen who do not keep watch. There are likewise certain little sounds and actions which I have seen answer this purpose wonderfully well.

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If you have any officers of the army or passengers on board who are sea-sick, as soon as you find them beginning to recover talk of fat pork, or something else, the idea of which is disgusting to a disordered stomach, and it is very likely that their sickness will return with great violence. This species of wit, besides entertaining your messmates, is very fair; for it is universally allowed *on board ship* that nobody pities the sea-sickness. You will, likewise, as we express it, save their allowance.

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Whenever you wish, as it is termed emphatically, to *sculk* a few days in bad weather, that is to say when you wish to do no duty, pretend that you have the blind piles, as it is a complaint whose symptoms are not very easy nor very likely to be examined into. In the meantime the master, if necessary, will take a watch, no doubt with great pleasure, as it will enable him to act on more serious emergencies.

When the captain goes out of the ship, and leaves you with the command, make a point of refusing the other officers permission to go on shore, or the use of the boat, for fear they should esteem you a mere *king log.*

When you are carrying on any duty, as, for instance, reefing topsails, and the captain comes to interfere with your command, as this evidently implies a distrust of your abilities, I would advise two or three of you, supposing all hands to be upon deck, to place yourselves close behind him, and clapping the mouths of your speaking trumpets to his ear, to roar out as loud as possible, What are you about, you scoundrels on the fore-topsail yard d—n your bl—ds, you rascals ! — 0 you lubbers ! — or some other innocent commonplace; and I will engage that the captain, if he has not ears of brass, will soon leave you to carry on the duty c*almly* by yourselves.

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When the ship is in chace, the captain will consequently direct the course; but if you do not think it the best — and there is no reason why you should not know as well as the captain — you can alter it a point or so when he goes to his cabin. If, however, he should perceive the alteration, and return to the quarter-deck, the moment you see him fall upon the quarter-master and d-n him for a rascal, for not steering his course So you will escape all blame yourself, and at the worst the quarter-master will come off for a dozen or two of lashes.

When you make a party to go on shore, or when the boat comes in the evening to carry you on board, if you are the *superior* officer do not suffer anybody to give the smallest direction to the boat's crew, who will, from thence, learn to make proper distinctions; and while they name the other officers simply Mr., they will call you, your honour. But, upon recollection, I would advise you to be rather cautious in this point, for I know a lieutenant who, saying rather too harshly to a messmate, Remember, sir, I command this boat, acquired the degrading appellation of *captain of the blue cutter.*

To show the superior importance of the command you exercise on the quarter-deck to the duties of the other officers, I would have you distinguish all who do not keep watch by the obliging denomination of *idlers*, even if the surgeon should have two or three hundred sick in his list, and if the various operations which require the attention of the master should oblige him to be up night and day.

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Wine and spirits being bad things for boys, and the one you have for your servant not being, perhaps, more than fifteen or sixteen years old, stop the whole of his allowance of the above articles, and oblige him to drink water, which, as it stinks terribly, will accustom him to the hardships he is

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likely to meet with in his way of life. So without being obliged to the purser, you will have a glass to comfort you in a cold middle watch, or at any time when you do not choose to let all the world observe what you drink.

Nothing is more advantageous than to have the command of a prize, for in that case all the private stock of liquors, wines, and eatables become your own, and if you have a wife at any of the seaports, you can always make a foul wind of it, and go in to put ashore anything you wish. The swords and pistols of the captured officers are likewise considered as your property, for though it is true that some people leave them in their possession, it is certainly a folly to allow arms to remain in the hands of prisoners.

There are also some loose articles generally lying about in prizes, which I would advise you to appropriate to yourself; for even if they were sold, and the produce divided among the captors, it would amount to a mere nothing; but as it seldom happens that they are brought to account by the agent, everybody will agree that the value is better in your pockets than in his, who, has sufficient opportunities to do handsomely for himself, and who very often takes ship and cargo to his own share. [113]

When you go on board the admiral's ship to receive orders, as the flag officers generally hurry you away without giving you time to look about you, pretend that you have forgot your orderly book, and go down to the ward-room to beg the favour of a bit of paper. When you are there they can do no less than ask you to take some refreshment, and you will, besides, have an opportunity of hearing all the news.

As the master, though only a warrant officer, from his being sometimes allowed to take a watch, and put the ship about, is apt to give himself airs of consequence, and frequently has the astonishing impudence to think himself your equal, whenever you send for him, or address yourself to him, do not call him by his name, as Mr. Black or Mr. Brown, but say, Send the master to me. — Pray, master, how much water is there on board ? and be assured there is not a more effectual way to lower this gentleman's pride.

As you certainly would not wish to resemble the fops of the army, it would be well to oppose a contrast to their manner of dressing; for instance, when you wear a small sword, put on your round hat and boots, and, above all, do not forget, as it will give a harmony to your appearance very pleasing to the eye, to accompany your boots with black breeches. But as there are some little brilliant particulars, which the Army seems to wish to appropriate to itself, it would be a want of spirit not to vindicate the right every man has to wear what he can afford to purchase. Should you, therefore, be tall and well made, do not hesitate to distinguish your figure by wearing a pair of epaulets, and hooking back your skirts; but if, on the contrary, you are little, nothing will be more advantageous than light infantry wings on your jacket, and feathers in your hat. If you are afraid when you go to take orders on board the *Admiral* that you will not be received with the feathers, you can borrow the coxswain's hat when you are alongside. [114]

When you purchase fresh stock for the ward-room mess, do not buy many sheep, as the hay they consume is expensive; but procure abundance of hogs, who thrive amazingly well at sea upon peas and oatmeal, which cost you nothing, and only make a difference in the savings of the purser, generally a keen hand, who has always ways and means to make up such a loss.

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When you cut up a duck or fowl do not be over polite, and begin by helping all who send their plates, till perhaps there is nothing left for yourself but the neck; but as soon as you have hacked off a wing or a leg, secure them upon your plate, and distribute the rest as far as it will go.

In long cruises there are generally a few fowls reserved of the fresh stock for those who may fall ill but as poultry generally lose flesh at sea, and as they must be killed soon or late, you can denominate any little heat, occasioned by strong grog, a fever, and nobody will object to your having a fowl boiled every day for your dinner, which you will find infinitely more agreeable than salt beef [115]

Whenever a ward-room servant does amiss, exert your authority *in the mess*, and check any one of the idlers, even if *caterer*, who presumes to interfere, *where duty is concerned*, in dictating punishment for a fault committed by *one of the ship's company.*

In hot climates the sailors are very apt to sleep in the night watches when there is nothing to do. This being contrary to the discipline of the Navy, whenever it happens, order up three or four buckets of water, and pour them upon the delinquent. If the sudden check given to his perspiration should cause a fatal fever, so much the better, he will learn not to sleep on his watch again.

If a seaman has been long and frequently in the sick list, and is consequently a very idle fellow, hasten his return to the deck, and as convalescents are apt to be inactive, and require something to stimulate them, and give motion to their stagnant fluids, apply the *main braces* on his coming aft dexterously to his shoulders, and, fearing the efficacy of this treatment, let the boatswain's mates try the effect of their sticks upon him. If, spite of all this, he should *unaccountably* relapse, lay the blame upon the surgeon for not giving him plenty of bark before he discharged him his list. [116]

If, when first lieutenant, you have a dispute with one of your messmates, you must revenge the quarrel upon the posteriors of his servant, which, as boys are almost always in mischief, you will soon find an opportunity of doing. If your antagonist chances to be surgeon or purser, the loblolly man and ship's steward are sure game, and you may likewise *punish the surgeon*, by harassing his assistants in the night watches about some mistake or other in the sick-list, and by denying to the sick a sufficient quantity of fresh water, on a supposition of its becoming scarce.

If the marine officer is a raw lad, and therefore troublesome, as no one can dictate to you what steps you ought to take in carrying on service, impose duties on his people which may appear to him to be forbid by his instructions from headquarters; at the same time keep a good oak stick on deck, to prevent breaking your speaking trumpet, for the particular use of the marines. If the other foolishly takes their part, it is a great chance but he is guilty of some hasty indiscretions that may render him no longer an obstacle to your *official tranquillity.*

Whenever you dislike your captain, or the station on which your ship is ordered, flatter the surgeon a little, and he will send you ashore with a sick ticket, where you will enjoy your full pay and sick-quarter money; this will enable you to amuse yourself very tolerably, and, if you are a man of intrigue, to seduce your landlady's daughter. Do not forget, when you are ashore, to ingratiate yourself with the agent charged with the care of the sick, who will keep you on his list as long as you wish. [117]

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Many military folks who rank with you have a notion that they are privileged, as esquires, to kill game. I do not take upon me to controvert this doctrine of theirs, but leave it to those superlative judges of the game-laws, the country squires; however, when you are employed, if you can by your eloquence, and the knowledge of those matters you must have acquired on board His Majesty's ships, persuade the tonies in your neighbourhood that you are thus qualified, it will furnish you a great fund of amusement, and will supply your *half-pay table* with every species of that article.

I advise the whole of you to unite in a memorial for a more elegant uniform with lace, and for an addition to your full and half pay ; your present dress scarcely vies with that of a midshipman, and many of you think they require something glaring, to point out their advanced situation in the Navy. In regard to your pay, as you have the rank *on service* of captain in the Army, you should have incomes accordingly, particularly as an idea has been lately started that you do not *in private* enjoy the same rank, seeing that His Majesty, God bless him, neither titles you esquires, nor enables you to support their consequence.

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