
Thirty-Six Years of a Seafaring Life

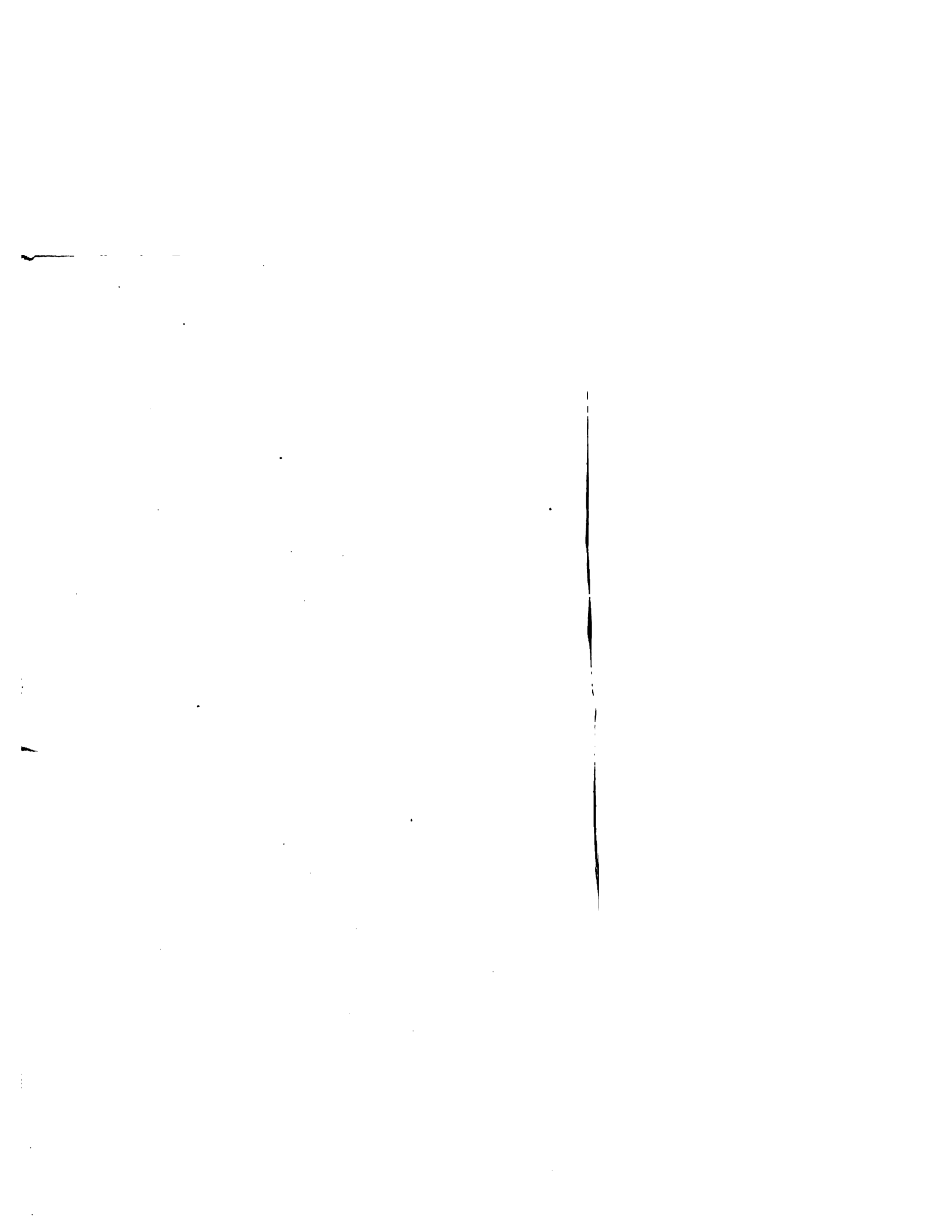
Master Old Quarter

Title: Thirty-Six Years of a Seafaring Life

Author: Master Old Quarter

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THIRTY-SIX YEARS

OF

A SEAFARING LIFE.

BY AN

OLD QUARTER MASTER.

"THE SIMPLE TRUTH."

PORTSEA:

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TO

SIR PHILIP CHARLES HENDERSON DURHAM,

*K. G. C. of the Bath, K. C. of the Military Order of Merit
of France, &c.*

ADMIRAL OF THE WHITE, AND LATE COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF AT PORTSMOUTH.

HONORED SIR,

Without pretension to any thing more than a strict adherence to truth, through your condescending permission, I dedicate to you the Narrative of my chequered Life; which I publish, not without a hope that a Seaman's Story may prove that, in that class of men, there are some who love and feel like others; that they have hearts which respect, and that they can be grateful for the kindness and consideration of their superiors.

That an Officer so distinguished in the annals of our country by a splendid career of service, by a life devoted to her well being and interest, and by a kind feeling to the British Tar, should permit me to dedicate this little volume to him, is highly flattering to me: it will ever be considered by me as a proud event in my life; and with the deepest sense of gratitude,

I remain,

Honored Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

THE OLD QUARTER MASTER.

CHAPTER I.

MY EARLY DAYS.

“ Sweet Aubin, loveliest village of the plain,
“ Where health and plenty blest the frugal swain.”

GOLDSMITH.

THE small village of St. Aubin was the place of my birth; situated at the bottom of an open sandy bay, its beautiful prospects and delightful scenery can never be forgotten by those who have ever had the pleasure of seeing it.

My father, a highly respectable master mariner, at the time of his union with my mother commanded one of the largest ships belonging to the Island; he had been a widower, and at her death his first wife left him a lovely boy, who, after himself was named Philip; this child shortly after the death of his mother was sent into the country to a brother of his mother, and seldom or ever visited us, so that at the age of four years, I was led to suppose myself an only child, and taught to look upon children of equal, if not superior rank as beneath me—I was not even allowed to play with them. No care or attention was spared to adorn my person or improve my mind; and by too great an indulgence from the very best of parents, who granted my every wish, my temper was ruined; and to a mistaken notion of affection, I may attribute many of those evils which have caused the misfortunes of my after years.

I cannot proceed without laying the contrast before the reader. My step-brother, brought up at a small school in the country where barely reading, writing, and the first rules of arithmetic were taught, at a very early age taken to sea,

apprenticed to a ship builder in Newfoundland, served his apprenticeship with credit, and when that was ended remained in the same employ; a few years after became foreman, and when age and infirmity obliged his employer to give up business, he succeeded him; and in 1827, he married a Canadian woman possessed of good property in *Bay des Chaleurs*, and as he tells me in his last letter, carries on his business and cultivates his acres in peaceful retirement. While I, the pampered, spoiled boy, whose education, trifling as it is has been, cost a great sum, am dragging on life within the wooden walls of a ship of war. How frequently in our way through life may we observe in families, that that child which is brought up with the greatest care suffers most, while he who in his childhood meets with the least attention goes on smoothly, passes over the rough path of life without one tumble, frequently accumulates a fortune while the other is only fit to spend one, and leads a life of poverty and grief; such I sincerely regret has been the case with me; but if we, for one moment pause and consider, the ruling of providence is so easily traced in all our concerns, that it becomes a duty however painful, to bow with resignation to our lot.

Of the first year of my life I have but a confused idea, until when a mere child I was sent to a boarding school, situated about the centre of the Island, where I was instructed in the French tongue—the Island French being only a *Patois*, and being some distance from home and only allowed to go there once a fortnight I was less indulged. I felt the confinement painful at first, but conquered it at last, and in a short time got quite reconciled.

Of all the inhabitants of our little Island, very few then spoke English, and any youth who was happy enough to get any thing like an English education was considered as something superior to the rest of the Islanders. It is not therefore to be wondered at that my father had no peace until his consent was obtained that I should go, if only for a year or two, to

a school in England ; a lady with whom my mother had been acquainted in the Isle of Wight, was written to, a school was soon found in Newport, and my mother herself took me across first to Southampton, thence to Cowes, when after a great struggle she left me to the care of a Rev. G. A——d, whose school consisted of only six boarders and twenty day scholars. The only property which my father was possessed of was fifty-two pounds a year in the Bank of England, a small house, and twenty-six acres of land, besides his pay as a master of the ship —— ; take all together the income was genteel and competent ; but my board and education (thirty-two pounds per annum, besides books, clothing, &c.) was a terrible drawback on it. In justice to my dear departed parents, I must say they would have thought no privation too great to contribute to my education and comfort. I was delighted with the idea of an English school, little considering the new scene of life I had to commence ; I well recollect that before leaving me, my poor mother, calling the maid aside, gave her a one pound note, bidding her to be kind to her poor boy, and the girl promised, and faithfully kept that promise, and stood my friend through the whole time of my residence in the school. Of all the scholars, not one spoke a word of French ; the little English I had learnt in Jersey having only been picked here and there, I seldom used, and whenever I spoke it only raised a laugh at my expence, and for some weeks I was really miserable ; the boys too, bent on mischief, if they knew the master out of the way would plague and vex me in order to make me speak English, and then laugh at my foreign accent. That, like most other cares of youth, time overcame, and at the end of two years, when the order arrived for me to be removed to Southampton, I heard of it with regret.

At Mr. ——'s, my situation was very different, and for a time far less comfortable than it had been at Newport ; Mr. W——'s was a very large school, nearly one hundred boarders and above eighty day scholars ; most of them were older than

myself, and many of a superior rank, who from being parlour boarders (one of the greatest errors of boarding schools), took no notice of me, or if ever they did only laughed at my foreign accent—one, only one treated me with kindness and to him I am indebted for many, many acts of friendship. I at last got reconciled to this place, also soon improved with my English, and in December, 1801, when the time appointed for my leaving school arrived, Mr. W——, told me I had improved far beyond his expectation; Indeed the care and attention bestowed by Mr. and Mrs. W——, on the comforts and education of the scholars reflects the highest credit on the school, (*academy* was then a name seldom used), the march of intellect had not reached so far as it has of late years.

Free from the rigid confinement of a school, it was sometime before I could fix my inclination upon any thing for my future life, particularly as my dear mother's hopes ran high. It was her wish that I should go into a counting house, and as a preparation for it, I was placed in the shop of an old aunt of mine who dealt in the general line in a wholesale way; here I should perhaps have passed my time agreeably enough, but that this aunt had an only daughter, about my own age, who like me was a spoiled child; there was no peace between us, ever at war, which could seldom be settled without great trouble to both our parents, and only ended to recommence the first favourable opportunity; in a few months I returned home tired of shop and shop book.

About this time my father having left his employers, went to America where he purchased part of a vessel in which he traded to the West India Islands; with very little consideration, I made up my mind to go out to him; all my friends seemed to approve of my going, saying that America was a fine field for a youth with abilities to make his way through. There was then laying at East Cowes, a brig bound to Boston, a passage was soon agreed for, my mother paid fifteen pounds sterling to have me taken across the Atlantic,

provided me with every thing I could possibly want, and fearing I might be captured by an enemy, sewed nine guineas in a ribbon to stow away in safety.

Never, oh never can I forget the moment of parting, it was early in January, 1803, I was to join the packet at a neighbouring town; the sun rose bright, but our hearts were heavy and full of grief; after an evidently sleepless night we sat down to breakfast, very little was eaten, and not one word spoken on either side. The time appointed arrived, my poor mother endeavoured to give me some parting advice, but her voice became choked, her heart was too full, and lifting up her hands and eyes to heaven, while her bosom heaved with bitter grief, she said, my son may the God of Jacob go with you;—methinks I see her at this very moment; I could hear no more, with an agony of grief not to be described, I left home, peaceful, happy home, and before I completely recovered the faculty of thinking, I found myself on board the Hero on my way to England; none but those who like me have known the luxuries of a home, can feel as I did at my first leaving it, and although years have passed unheeded by, and many a heart that then was gay now soundly sleeps in the grave, still I can never forget the comforts of early days.