

# Under Sail

*An Account of a Voyage Around Cape Stiff to Honolulu and Return in One of the Last of the Big American Windjammers, the Ship A. J. Fuller, as Told by One of Her Foremast Hands.*

By FELIX RIESENBERG

## The Seagoing Yesterdays

TAKE your old square-rigger as she was; yes, as she was at her best, in those almost forgotten days when South Street presented a maritime appearance. Then tall masts and tapering yards, carrying their tracery of shroud and rigging, filled the view above the wharves from the Battery to the Bridge—a vista now smudged by smoke from many stacks, a factory aspect far removed from the romantic days of sail.

Looking back, and as time goes it is not so very far away, we can, in our mind's eye, see the old wood-built craft that lined the waterfront. Honest traders entering and clearing from and to every seaport under heaven. Not the famous California clippers of an earlier day, or the swift Western ocean packet ships, or the storied tea ships of the China trade, but their legitimate successors. These were larger ships, as a rule, vessels built for the long haul, for the grain trade, for the sugar trade, and as carriers of general cargo to the Orient and the western coast of North America.

Among the survivors of that noble fleet of sail at the time of which I am writing, the last years of the nineties—1897, to be precise—were such vessels as the *El Capitan*, the *Charmer*, the *A. J. Fuller*, the *Pactolus*, the *Roanoke*, and the *Shenandoah*. Larger ships than those of an earlier day and manned by smaller crews. They brought to the seven seas a reputation for relentless driving and manhandling never before equalled. They bred a type of sea officer peculiar to the time. Hard-fisted they were, for discipline was enforced by might as well as by right, and also they mostly lacked in the polish acquired by sea officers of an earlier day when the sailer was a passenger-carrier and intercourse with people of refinement had its influence on the men of the after guard.

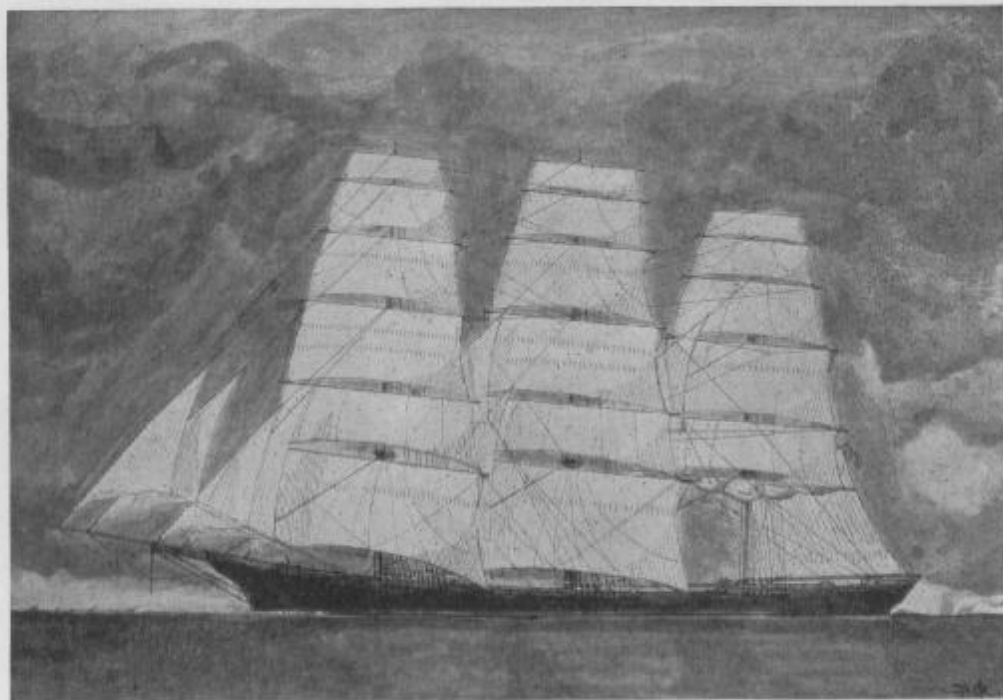
These craft were rigged right, and that meant *ship rigged*—none of your hermaphrodite messes of a schooner chasing a full brig and all on the same keel. They were noble square-rigged craft, mostly three-masted with the exception of a few like the *Roanoke* and the *Shenandoah*, and with perhaps here and there a bark. All of them were of wood, "built upon honor," and in their rig and lines they embodied the best traditions of the sea.

Then men still signed articles, voyage after voyage, for the long drill around the Horn, or, to vary the monotony, if such it could be called, made the passage to Australia, "Running their Easting down" from the Cape of Good Hope to Melbourne or Sydney; or they shipped for an occasional voyage to China. In the main, however,

the voyages were to the West coast of the United States or to the Hawaiian Islands.

These men were, many of them at least, real sailors at a time when being a sailor meant something more than being a sea laborer dressed up in a rig resembling that of an organ grinder's monkey. An *able seaman*, a man rated A.B., needed to be a person of experience and long training in the lore of the sea. The complicated gear of a ship was as simple to him as the A, B,

So let us go back for a spell of years, a mere score or so, and sign on, as I did at the age of eighteen, having just graduated from the old St. Mary's, the New York State schoolship in which I had served a two years' apprenticeship, for a voyage around Cape Horn in a wooden ship, propelled by sail alone—a ship without a donkey engine; a wooden Bath-built packet; a Yankee three-skysail-yarder; a vessel in her prime in point of age and upkeep.



THE AMERICAN THREE-SKYSAIL-YARDER BATH-BUILT SHIP A. J. FULLER. FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR MADE ON THE VOYAGE

C, of the primer. He could, besides being able to "hand, reef and steer," pass the weather earing of a course or tops'l; he was able to turn in a dead eye in wire or hemp, and could cast a lanyard knot in the stiff four-stranded tarred hemp rope, now largely replaced by steel screws and turnbuckles.

With the passing of the sailing ship of the old days went the real sailorman. The breed, while not dead yet, for the old salts die hard, has, by force of circumstances, failed to rear a younger generation to take its place. In not many more years those who know the sea and the old ships of the days of sail will have passed beyond to that snug harbor from which no mariner returns. Going to sea nowadays is different. It is a safer and an easier life, so far as traveling goes; and in the passenger lines at least, the deck hands—never call them sailors—are more likely to suffer from the gout than from the scurvy.

The advance notes have been cashed by our boarding masters who have us in tow, and, after deducting ninety per cent of it for board and dunnage, the last remaining dollars are blown in on the Bowery under the watchful eyes of the runners, who see to it that we are delivered on board.

Our ship is the *A. J. Fuller*, of New York, Captain Charles M. Nichols, and she waits her crew, ready to cast off from her berth in the East River at the turn of the tide at daybreak on December 5, 1897, having cleared for the port of Honolulu, capital of the Republic of Hawaii, with a general cargo consigned to the old island house of Brewer & Company.

## CHAPTER I Outward Bound

"Cook!" bawled a deep voice from a door that burst open with a flood of yellow light under the break of the poop, "Serve a round of hot *café nore* to them passen-



choice between them," he said. "One may be easier, but give me the best sailor. A good sailor aft saves work for his watch forward. See if I don't figger it right. Take it any way you like, there's no choosing between them rotten apples aft, and let it go at that."

Mr. Zerk, a man of about forty, medium in height, broad shouldered, bull necked, with close cropped yellow hair, grey eyes set in a very red, smooth-shaven face, except for a sweeping blond mustache, was a native of Nova Scotia, brought up in "blue nose" ships. He eyed us with the cold look of a surgeon about to amputate. Walking up to the group just abaft of the mainmast, he made his first choice without a moment's hesitation.

"Frenchy, come here," and Victor Mathes of Dunkirk went to the port watch, chosen by the mate.

"Smith," was the laconic reply of Mr. Stoddard to the first choice of the mate. Honors were even, for it was a toss up between the two men.

Brenden, a husky, well-set-up sailor, trained in the sailing ships out of Hamburg, with plenty of beef and a good head, was the second choice of the mate.

"Axel," said the second mate, scoring the first advantage in the choosing of the watches. Axel proved one of the best men in the crew, a big, boyish Swede, a sailor and a gentleman.

"Roth, come here," and John Roth, late of the opal mines in Australia, one of the deserters from the Falls of Ettrick, and the artist of the crew, went to port. We soon dubbed him "Australia." The mate sent "Australia" to relieve the wheel and the second mate paused a moment, weighing the merits of the remaining men.

Tom was his choice, and another sailor, also a deserter from the Ettrick, went to starboard.

Things were lining down, and the remaining members in this heartless process of elimination were becoming increasingly apprehensive, while those who had been chosen grinned at us with aggravating candor. The mates were getting less and less sure of their choice as the pickings became more and more undesirable. It was getting to be a question of brains versus brawn. Husky young clodhoppers, shipped as A.B. by the greedy boarding masters; young mules with nothing but their thick hides and an abundance of main strength and stupidity to recommend them, placed in the balance with such old fellows as Jimmy Marshall and Jack Hitchen. Jimmy, who claimed to be sixty-five, a wizened little old sea-horse, but a wonderful "chanty man," won the choice and was taken by the mate.

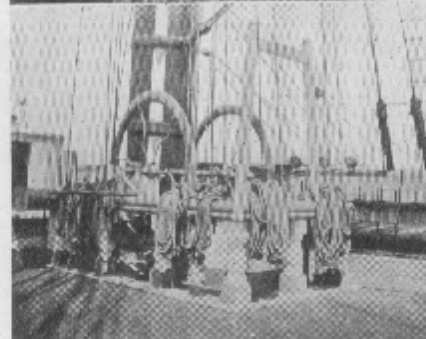
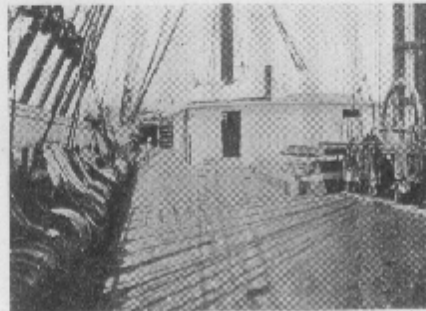
Hitchen was called to starboard, and the honors still remained about even in the contest of wit and experience, for both mates had studied the paces of each individual with critical eyes during that eventful day.

The next choice was a painful one. There was a short pause; it seemed to us that "Charlie Horse," who had once been mate on a coaster in the oyster trade, or Dago Tony, would surely be chosen next.

"Felix, come here," said the mate, running his eye over the dago and Charlie and lighting on me. I stepped over to the boys lined up on the lee side, a weight lifted from my mind, as Frenchy, destined to be my chum, moved near me.

It was getting on by then; Chips went aft, carrying the side lights, and Captain Nichols was stumping the poop with some impatience, as a hint to his officers to bring things to a close.

The second mate chose Charlie, and George Krug, or "Skouse," as we called him, was taken by the mate. Dago Tony



FULLER'S MAIN DECK AND FORWARD HOUSE  
LOOKING TOWARDS FO'C'SLE HEAD, THE  
MAIN FIRE RAIL AND PUMP

went to the second mate, and Fred Erricson, a good sailor, also an Ettrick deserter, went to port.

Mike, the wood turner, went to starboard, and Joe Johnson, one time a cobler's apprentice, and general all-round husky son of toil, was taken by the mate.

The left-overs, Martin and Peter, were divided by the call of Peter Stewart to the starboard watch, and the last man, Martin, fell to the mate. Peter, a true American, ex-reporter on a Worcester paper, one time foreman in a corset factory, and a bright, wide awake boy of something over twenty-one, had shipped for eight dollars a month *god his health*. I am sure the voyage has netted him his payday many times over, for he was endowed with brains and, starting out a wreck, he came back a tough-handed deep-waterman.

"Starboard watch below for tucker!"

ordered the mate; and then turning to the men of his watch, he ordered, "Man the pump!"

It was dark as we bent to the cranks of the big pump, and with the hum of wind and the swish of water in our ears we realized that we were truly at sea; insignificant mortals riding on the low deck of a vast fabric of wood and canvas, venturing far from land on the mighty stretches of the Western Ocean.

That first night at the pump, forerunner of many, many other nights, our little band of watchmates toiled in silence, except for a few monosyllables. Four men to each crank, two on a side, facing each other, our tired arms and back reciprocated to the action of rotation like so many toy figures actuated by some hidden clock-work; the new labor was almost a rest after the constant pulling and hauling of the day. Finally the low, raucous wheezing of the valves told us we were sucking air, and the mate, from the darkness of the poop, called out, "Belay pump!"

It is the custom of the sea, handed down from time immemorial, that "The Captain takes her out and the mate brings her back." That is, the first regular watch at sea is taken by the captain's watch on the outward passage, and the same watch is taken by the port, or mate's watch, on the start for home. Of course the second mate stands the starboard watch except in case of emergency.

Accordingly, at four bells, we went below, and after a hasty supper we sought our bunks for a brief rest before turning out for the watch from eight to midnight. We were tired—some of us to the point of utter exhaustion—and not a few of the older men claimed that we were being cheated out of our right to the first four-hour watch below, ours having merely been a dogwatch of two hours, from 6 to 8. Anyhow, whatever we thought about that, nothing was said above a mild growling in the fo'c'sle, and as we tumbled out at eight bells, and both watches lined up in the waist to muster, the chill wind cut through us, and a moment later we were greeted by an order from aft.

"Hands aloft to overhaul the t'gallant and royal hantlines!"

Up I went to the mizzen, never caring to lag behind on an order to lay aloft, a piece of twine in my pocket. The gear was overhauled and stopped just below the blocks, so the buntlines would not chafe the sails, and at the same time the stops of cotton twine were frail enough to be easily broken. When at times they were not, some unlucky wight would clamber aloft at the critical moment of taking in sail amid the slatting of canvas and the most profuse showers of artistic abuse.

Coming down from this task, I was in time to witness a burst of profanity on the part of the mate. "Keep moving, you beach-combing——! Every lousy

— —! I won't have no lime juice sleeping on deck this voyage. D'ye hear that?" All heard, for there was a shuffle of weary feet about the main hatch, where several of the watch had perched comfortably in the dark, and, after a moment of indecision sprinkled with derogatory mutterings, we paired off in little groups of twos, walking the swaying deck wherever we could find places free from the back draft of the sails.

Frenchy was my first chum on the Fuller, and though for periods we drifted apart through sheer mutual exhaustion of our interchangeable ideas, yet we always came together again and again. Somehow, on the very start of the voyage, when the crimps and runners bade us that sad farewell from the port of New York, we were drawn together. Frenchy was a heavy-whiskered, ruddy specimen, sporting the square-cut beard of the French sailor. He was an ex-naval man, and one-time prison guard in the penal settlement of New Caledonia. Trained to the sea since boyhood in the fishing fleet of Dunkirk, for many years a rigger in the naval yards at Brest, a sailor man on every type of craft from the Mediterranean xebec to a ship, Victor Mathes was one of the finest types of the Gallic seaman, and I hope is as hale and hearty to-day as the day we parted in the office of the shipping commissioner at New York, where we had assembled to draw our pay for the voyage.

Night after night we paced the deck during the long, cold watches, and between the calls to man this rope or that, and the

horsing and rustling about that was always indulged in, we swapped information of all kinds, related all sorts of experiences, truthful and otherwise, and each man unfolded his meager mental storehouse for the amusement and benefit of his chum. For hours at a time Frenchy would talk of good things to eat; this was a hobby, in fact a sort of passion, with him and often drove me to the verge of distraction. He would go into the minutest detail of how his sister, Madeline, back in Dunkirk, prepared some particular dish, telling not only of the delightful flavor and succulent qualities, but he would go into the subject of the way things smelled; roast fowl, with all sorts of fancy stuffing. My mouth would water at these cruel recitals, and I know Frenchy suffered as much as I did at the poignant recollections of gastronomic joys long past.

When well clear of the coast we roused the bower anchors up on the fo'c'sle head and lashed them. "A sure sign, sonny, that you are off soundings," said Brenden; "these wind wagons don't take no chances till they get a safe offing." The cables were unshackled, and the ends stoppered abaft the wildcats. Canvas coats were put on to them just over the chain pipes leading to the locker. "Jackasses" were then bowled into the hawse holes *for fair*, taking the "tails" to the windlass. With the ground tackle secured, the "cat" and "fish" were unrove, and this gear stowed away in the forepeak. We had entered upon the real deepwater stage of the voyage, with lee shores and soundings many miles away.

The Fuller carried a complement of seventeen hands forward, not counting the "idlers"—that is, the carpenter, cook and cabin steward—a small enough crew for a vessel displacing in the neighborhood of 2,500 tons, a craft 229 feet between perpendiculars, 41½ feet beam and 23 feet depth of hold; ship rigged, with skysails, royals, single t'gans'ls, double tops'ls, and courses. Her main yard was 100 feet from tip to tip. A crojik was carried as well as a spanker. On her stays, she carried flying jib, jib tops'l, jib and fore topmast stays'l, main t'gallant stays'l, main topmast stays'l. Mizzen t'gallant stays'l and main spencer completed her spread of canvas. When on a wind, in a whole-sail breeze, with crojik furled and spanker set, the ship ruller spread twenty-five kites to the wind.

Now think of the handsome way in which they manned their ships in the olden days of the tea clippers when a vessel half her size would carry forty men forward! As it was, we were hard put to it in an emergency and "all hands" was the rule on every occasion demanding quick work in going about or in making or taking in sail. When tacking, it was "all hands, and the cook at the fore sheet." One watch could not hoist the main upper tops'le except in the finest kind of weather, and then only by taking the halyards to the main deck capstan and "inching" the great yard up in slow and painful fashion with much singing and "yo ho-ing."

(To be continued).

## An Old-Time Cruiser

*Cruising as It Was Done in the Early Fifties and the Type of Boat Then in Use*

By ALBERT STRANGE

(Courtesy of *The Yachting Monthly*)

SIXTY-THREE years ago, when England was entering on a period of commercial prosperity, there appeared the first number of "Hunt's Yachting Magazine," the first attempt to preserve in an enduring form records of the racing, cruising and construction of yachts. The magazine found its public, and the cruising man, ever the mainstay of undertakings of this nature, began to contribute. In October appeared an account of a "Cruise from Blackwall to Boulogne and Back in the Idas." She was only 5½ tons O.M.—quite a small craft, though no particulars are given. The log is a dull record of times of arrival and departure, with nothing in the way of adventure or observation of human nature set down. But it was evidently regarded as a great performance by the editor, who adds at the end: "Cruising, even to

Boulogne in a small craft like the Idas, will not exactly suit gentlemen much given to kid gloves and patent leather boots, but the practical knowledge that may be picked up in a five- or six-tonner is by none of us to be despised." This is the first indication I have come across of the contempt supposed to be felt by the hardy cruiser for any of the refinements of such civilization as existed in the 'fifties.

In January, 1853, appeared the first chapters of "Circumnavigation, or the Log of the Pet," by R. E. H. Written in clear, vigorous English by one who was evidently a "scholar and a gentleman," this log exactly sets the style in which such reminiscences should be written. The only possible fault that can be found with it is for the very meagre amount of actual detail about the yacht and its fittings, though I suppose all eight-ton cutters of that day

were practically exactly alike—oversparred, overcanvassed and overballasted, in imitation of the contemporary racing yacht. What few details are granted are offered in a very apologetic way, with the excuse that they are inflicted because a "sailor loves his craft." These are the author's words:

"The Pet is a Poole boat, built by Wanhill, very deep, drawing six feet and a half, very sharp, and very much oversparred. Her boom projects seven feet over her taffrail, and her other sticks are in proportion, or rather in similar disproportion. She carries seven tons of iron ballast, and in her cabin you sit, move and live a long way under water. She has shown herself a good little sea boat in many a rough berth; in forereaching we did not think much of her, but in working to windward we seldom met anything that