

DEEP PERILS

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In the New York Journal of Commerce there is a daily column entitled "MARINE DISASTERS", giving the bare facts of the wrecks, collisions, fires at sea, sinkings and other mishaps that befall those who go down to the sea in ships. Here, in ten lines unadorned by interpretive reporting was, for instance, a report of the sinking of the ANDREA DORIA. Here also will be reported a fire on the docks in Liverpool, or the mere statement that such and such a ship grounded while entering the harbor of Singapore, or that the tug NELLIE is en route to salvage a steamer out of fuel 800 miles east of Bermuda.

Here, about ten years ago, appeared the following, which I quote in its entirety; "LIBERATOR (Canadian fishing vessel) - Halifax, Feb. 10. - Fishing vessel LIBERATOR sailed unmanned into her home port Clace Bay, N. S. The three man crew was apparently lost at sea. The vessel followed into port a long trail of broken hatch covers, rigging and lights that were torn from her in heavy seas. There were no signs of crew." Three other entries that same day from Halifax bear witness to the severity of the weather.

Certainly to leave the comparative comfort and safety of a sea-going vessel, whatever her size, for the rigors of a small lifeboat that can be carried on the deck of such a vessel, a crew of sailors must have an overwhelmingly powerful reason. They must be in imminent peril of their lives, must be convinced that no other course is open to them - that to remain is impossible, no matter what the alternative.

Yet in some cases exactly the reverse is true - to remain is the best decision.

Whatever the reason for the predicament, there occasionally comes a time when prudence seems to dictate abandoning ship. A fire, a collision, stranding on a shoal, or enemy action, or disastrous storm may make it impossible to stay on board a vessel and in spite of any seemingly insurmountable difficulties to take ones chances in whatever other choices there may be.

The captain of a ship is always in a lonely position, as is anyone with such complete authority, but never so dreadful or so lonely as when he must take the lives of his passengers, his crew, in addition to his own life, in his hands and make the decision as to whether or not he should abandon his ship. This decision is never made in the calm and contemplative surroundings of a library, or in the course of a peaceful walk through the park. Nor is there time to give dispassionate consideration to all the possible ramifications and all the possible alternatives. Considered they all must be, of course, but hurriedly and under the worst of circumstances. Very likely it is bitterly cold, with rain stinging the captain's face, huge waves breaking over the ship, people shouting, and all the myriad distractions caused by a storm at sea, or a fire.

Very often there will be no alternative, as with a collision such as caused the sinking of the ANDREA DORIA. The only decision is how, not whether.

Maritime history records many cases of abandoned ships. And if the true cases of history were not enough, then fiction can supply many more, such as were written by Joseph Conrad in Lord Jim or Youth.

For purposes of rough classification the historical cases can be divided into two broad categories - those connected with Arctic exploration and those resulting from what might be called normal perils of the sea. But there is another classification possible - those where the right decision was made and those where it was not.

Any decision to abandon ship cannot be questioned after the fact. For it is more than fact which determines such a decision. There is the matter of mental stress, and what the captain believed, perhaps erroneously, the situation to be. Sometimes, in fact, it is simply not known what the situation may have been, as those who abandoned the ship were never heard from again; for in some cases the ship that was abandoned was subsequently found, and found in circumstances which make completely ununderstandable the decision to abandon. Such cases have occurred both in the Arctic and in the tropics.

To understand the circumstances surrounding a man or a crew making this choice one must have some idea of the magnitude of the situation. In most cases, magnitude means simply the condition of the ocean. In a fourteen foot canoe a two foot wave looks almost insurmountable, yet from the deck of an ocean liner this would be entirely indistinguishable. Consider then, a storm at sea when the

waves may be forty or more feet high from trough to crest. In this storm there is a small - or a large - ship, built to sail the ocean, built to withstand whatever she may meet, and a crew which has had experience. What terrible thoughts must they have as they abandon this known haven of safety to entrust themselves to a small open boat, in many cases not much larger than a canoe? Yet abandon they feel they must - no matter what perils they face.

No wonder that several such cases have aroused the interest of novelists and writers of fiction. Such a one was Conan Doyle, who seized upon such a story almost a hundred years ago and succeeded in blowing up a storm which has never since died down. Naturally, in the course of arousing world-wide interest certain facts must be given tremendous importance and certain others must be mentioned but not given great importance. Even the best story needs a little dramatization.

The strange tale which Conan Doyle dramatized was the case of the MARY CELESTE. The first alteration in fact, was the spelling of the name - which Doyle changed to MARIE CELESTE. The MARY CELESTE was a small brigantine of about 600 tons. She carried a crew of five, plus captain and mate. On her eventful voyage from New York in December of 1872 the wife of the captain and their seven-year-old son were also aboard. She was bound for Genoa with a cargo of seventeen hundred barrels of alcohol - a common article of commerce not considered dangerous.

Leaving New York she sailed in a southerly and then easterly direction toward Gibraltar and the Mediterranean - sailed toward a peril so deep and so terrible as to cause her captain, his wife and child and the whole crew to abandon her, never to be heard from again. Nor was any plausible reason ever found - no storm, no evidence of piracy, no clear evidence of mutiny - nothing. Nothing but a ship in perfectly sound and seaworthy condition, with no human being on board. Why they left, where they went, what happened to them, whether they went willingly or under duress, no-one knows.

The MARY CELESTE was found thus in the middle of the ocean, on a calm day, southwest of the Azores, by a following ship of about the same size, bound also for the Mediterranean and which had left New York a few days after the CELESTE, and which was captained by a good personal friend of Captain Briggs of the CELESTE. Approaching the CELESTE he of course hailed her, and hearing no reply went closer and hailed again. Still getting no answer he sent his mate to investigate, thinking no doubt that possibly accident or cholera or a plague had rendered the whole crew helpless, in which case he could assist. How dumfounded he must have been to receive the report of the mate that there was no-one aboard the MARY CELESTE! There had been no unusually bad weather, there had been no storm, in fact, since the two ships left New York - other than the usual blustery weather of that time of year. The mate was ordered to investigate further, and could find no apparent damage to the ship.

Something, though, had caused seven experienced men to abandon. The only possible clue to what may have been the reason was the fact that one hatch cover had been removed. Normally on a ship of this kind the hatches are battened down tight before reaching the open ocean and are not again opened until reaching the destination. To open hatches on a small ship at sea is to court disaster from a sudden storm or a big wave. Flooding of the hold and foundering are not perils to which even an inexperienced sailor willfully exposes himself. Could this crew perhaps have thought that the barrels of alcohol were about to explode? No evidence was found of any unusual situation, no basis for such a fear.

It has been recited that a full meal, hot, was found on the galley table, and that the warm impression of a boy's body was found on a bunk in the captain's cabin. Actually, it would appear that a meal had been hastily eaten and the galley not subsequently cleaned. There was also evidence that some water had entered the ship through a porthole in the captain's cabin. This porthole was broken, as by a wave, but this would not have been regarded, normally, as a serious difficulty and would have been soon repaired. The damage apparently happened after the ship was abandoned, for the water sloshing around in the cabin had caused a mess which would otherwise have been cleaned up immediately, particularly with the captain's wife and child living in the cabin.

Whatever it was that caused the sudden lack of faith in their ship on the part of the entire crew must, naturally, have been something

tremendous - but completely illusory, for within two hours the mate of the DEI GRATIA, with a crew of two men, had the ship under way and followed the DEI GRATIA into Gibraltar, encountering no difficulty on the way.

Then ensued a tangled web of legal mumbo-jumbo which is not part of this story, but which ruined many reputations, even though it did finally result in Captain Morehouse of the DEI GRATIA receiving his salvage award.

Naturally, in such a case one immediately thinks of piracy - yet a comparison of the manifest and the cargo showed nothing missing. Mutiny? But why mutiny only to abandon the ship, along with those against whom you mutiny? Barratry was alleged, and collusion between the two shipmasters, but this is not only risky but is not undertaken without better assurance of success than appears possible under these circumstances, and for larger stakes than a few hundred barrels of alcohol. Besides, the missing captain was a part owner of ship and cargo.

Consider now a more recent and perhaps even more mysterious case. This quotation is from the New York Times of June 21, 1921:

"PIRACY SUSPECTED IN DISAPPEARANCE OF 3 AMERICAN SHIPS. CREW OF 4TH VANISHED MYSTERIOUSLY OFF CAROLINA COAST SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. HINT OF SOVIET SEIZURE. BOTTLE MESSAGE TOLD OF DEERING'S CAPTURE BY 'TANKER OR SUBMARINE'."

Parenthetically, may I, as one who has seen both at sea, question for a moment the credibility of a seaman who cannot, at close range,

distinguish between a tanker and a submarine? The gist of the story is that the 5 masted schooner, CAROL A. DEERING, was found abandoned off Diamond Shoals, North Carolina, with all sails set and her officers and crew missing. She went ashore near Diamond Shoals lightship, and when the men of the nearby lifeboat station went aboard they found evidence indicating a hurried departure for no conceivable reason. The vessel was in good shape, with plenty of food. Again, as in the case of the MARY CELESTE, it was stated that a meal was about to be served. It would almost seem to be traditional that the cook must prepare a meal and set it on the table before seizing his life-jacket and jumping over the side. Again, the small boats were gone.

But in the case of the DEERING there is a difference, for the crew was heard from again, in a way, when a little later a bottle came ashore containing a note purportedly written by the mate of the schooner.

It read: "An oil-burning tanker or submarine has boarded us and placed our crew in irons. Get word to headquarters of company at once." Possibly the most amazing part of this whole occurrence is this note, for surely these are strange words to be written by an experienced sailor in obvious fear of his life. No request for help, no plea for assistance - just tell the company - presumably so they can collect the insurance. Yet the handwriting of this note was positively identified as that of the missing mate. And missing the twelve men of the DEERING have been ever since.

The CAROL A. DEERING was even more of a mystery, for she left Portland, Maine in December of 1920, sailed to Rio de Janeiro, unloaded her cargo, took on a return cargo, and passed Cape Lookout lightship on her return voyage on January 29, 1921. Surely a remarkably fast trip! The Cape Lookout lightship was quoted in the New Republic of July 6, 1921 to have reported that she sighted the DEERING with all sails set, lifeboats gone, no-one on board - later piled up on Diamond Shoals on January 31. One cannot help wondering how the crew of the lightship knew that no-one was on board.

This, if you will remember, was at the height of the Red scares of the early twenties when, as now, there was a Communist under every bed. So the government, of course, investigated. No result. Miss LuLu Wormwell of Portland, Maine, daughter of the captain, believed at the time and attempted to secure recognition of her belief, that this was a case of piracy. It has never been proven - or disproven. The weather bureau at the time said this was due to severe storms.

Storm? Piracy? Soviet intrigue? Who knows? And who knows what terrible thoughts must have raced through the minds of those who abandoned their ship - whether it was willingly or unwillingly. Did they perhaps believe themselves about to pile up on the sands of Cape Hatteras - driven toward disaster by a storm they could not buck, unable to claw away from this worst of all lee shores? Yet to leave the ship meant entrusting themselves to small lifeboats - just rowboats, really, and not at all designed to weather a storm as capably as a

big ship. A lifeboat is a last resort. It is designed to be a refuge only when all other possibilities are exhausted. While a well-designed lifeboat properly manned by experienced sailors can probably live through almost any sea, there are some conditions under which it cannot hope to live. A lifeboat, furthermore, faces one very critical situation - it must be launched. It is one thing to be in a boat, already water-borne, in a heavy sea, and to maneuver that boat safely through the wind and sea. It is quite another to lower that boat from the deck of a larger ship, to have it become safely water-borne without either capsizing or being smashed against the side of the ship, to effect the transfer of men from the ship to the boat, and then to sheer away from the side of the ship - and to do all this with the wind screaming, the rain and spray driving into the faces of men already hardly able to see, and above all with waves of mountainous size throwing the little boat in all directions. Yet this feat, impossible as it may sound, has been done successfully many times. The risks involved are so great, the difficulties so overwhelming, that nothing short of complete and imminent disaster, or the necessity of a rescue from a foundering ship, could possibly persuade sane men to attempt it. This is perhaps the most apt use of the phrase of the law - "a clear and present danger". Certainly men who have spent their lives at sea, professional sailors such as presumably formed at least a substantial part of the crew of the DEERING are well aware of the risks involved and would not take such a step lightly.

In the case of the MARY CELESTE the sea was comparatively calm, and there would have been little or no difficulty in getting a lifeboat away from the ship. Not so with the DEERING. Here the conditions were at their worst. Heavy storms such as were prevailing at the time produce not only high waves, but in this particular area these waves are so steep as to seem almost vertical. On seeing them one wonders at the ability of any ship, let alone a small lifeboat, to climb them. The very utmost in skillful handling is required to have even the slightest hope of a successful launching. Perfect coordination in the handling of the ship, the lowering of the boat, the manning of that boat, and the handling of the sweep oar together with absolutely perfect timing of the whole operation with respect to the onrushing waves is essential.

Under the conditions which apparently were prevailing with the DEERING, this whole operation is very much like parachute jumping - practice is not worthwhile, for it must be done perfectly the first time.

No-one who was reading newspapers 30 years ago will ever forget the picture taken on the steeply slanting deck of the VESTRIS as that ship was burning a few miles off Atlantic City. The sheer terror shown in those faces is due partly of course to the horror of fire at sea - but also it is due to the recognized difficulty of launching lifeboats. In that case the sea was relatively calm, and it might be thought that launching boats would be a routine operation. Yet the ship was listing so badly that the boats on one side could not be lowered into the water, and on the other side they were out of reach of those trying to climb

down ropes and ladders to get in the boats. How much greater the difficulty when the list of the ship is not constant, as it was while the VESTRIS was lowering boats, but shifting wildly as when a ship is in a storm and presumably out of control.

For if a ship is not out of control, and not on fire, and not suffering any other apparent handicap, then there is no-one who would in his right mind attempt to launch small boats and abandon the ship. So long as there remains the ability, even in the smallest measure, to control the speed and course of the ship, there must remain some small hope of saving the ship. And as long as the hope of saving the ship remains, the chance of saving the lives of the crew is greatest. And even should the ship be completely out of control - particularly in a wild storm - but not in imminent danger of sinking, the ship is still the safest place to be. This is true even should the ship be plunging toward certain destruction on a lee shore.

Another category of ship abandonment is concerned with Arctic exploration.

One of the earliest cases of ship abandonment in the Arctic was in connection with the unusually ill-fated Arctic expedition of Sir John Franklin, which sailed for the Arctic in 1845. Few expeditions before or since have been as well fitted out, or as capably staffed, yet the complete failure not only of that expedition but of the myriads of rescue parties that went in search of him is equally outstanding. Many men and many ships, in the course of the following ten years, were lost - and some of them under interesting circumstances.

Sir John Franklin was an officer of renown with experience not only in the Arctic but all over the world. He had with him in the EREBUS and the TERROR captains who were capable leaders and sailors in their own right. When he sailed from England with the announced purpose of once again searching for the northwest passage there was every reason to believe that this time that fabled waterway would be located. Located it was, but by a ship sent in search of Franklin. Neither Franklin nor any member of his crew was ever found alive, nor were his ships or any vestige of them ever seen again. Eleven years later the bones of men believed to be from Franklin's party were found, together with some equipment and some rather uninformative diaries or notes.

Both of the ships of this great expedition were especially outfitted and rebuilt for this expedition. Strengthened to resist crushing by the ice, and manned by able crews, they were in prime condition for the task. ~~Permanently~~ Victualled for an almost indefinite stay, there would appear to be no reason to abandon them. Actually, in this case it was probably a combination of boredom and hopelessness, for they became inextricably stuck in the ice, never to get free. The first winter of the trip apparently passed normally - they had expected to be there. But the second summer they did not get very far, and became stuck in the ice again. That time they were permanently caught.

In the spring of 1848, three years after leaving England, the survivors started the long trek back to civilization, having abandoned their ships. This is one of those cases where they made the right decision, apparently, yet made it too late, for by this time they were

too weak to make the long and arduous journey. From what little is known of this ill-fated venture it would seem that the ships were in perfectly sound shape, no reason was evident for the abandonment, yet as ships they were of course completely useless.

Now there opened a chapter in the history of Arctic exploration probably never equalled, for Sir John Franklin was such a famous man, and such an able one, and the expedition had sailed under such a spate of publicity, that relief expeditions were organized for years - both by the British government and privately, mainly due to the efforts of Lady Franklin. In the course of these relief expeditions the actual Northwest Passage was definitely charted and traversed. Traversed is the correct word, for it took two ships to do it, with a walk of a few miles between. And both of these ships were abandoned - and both were abandoned against the wishes of their commanding officers.

Two ships, of which one was the INVESTIGATOR, under Captain McClure, started from the west, going north through the Bering Straits and then east along the northern coast of Canada. Others, of which one was the RESOLUTE, under Captain Kellett, made the attack from the east.

After a trip of many vicissitudes the INVESTIGATOR finally, for the second winter, became hopelessly caught in the ice. Captain McClure continued to explore, and continued to send out sledging parties for hundreds of miles in search of Franklin. When the ice failed to loosen its grasp in the following summer the situation began to look desperate,

but McClure stayed on, and stayed with his ship. Now occurred one of the most dramatic rescues of Arctic exploration, for the RESOLUTE, not having left England until three years later, had orders to search not only for Franklin but also for McClure in the INVESTIGATOR.

A sledging party from the RESOLUTE - herself by now trapped in the ice - did find the INVESTIGATOR, and brought the whole crew of that ship back to the RESOLUTE. Here, Captain McClure made strong representations against abandoning his ship, and asked to be allowed to return with sufficient provisions to see him through the coming winter. But upon examination by the doctors on board the RESOLUTE permission was denied and McClure and his crew thus unwillingly abandoned their ship. Actually, this rescue came in the nick of time, when they were about to give up their attempts to stay with their ship and were making preparations to provision their sledges and make their way over the ice to open water where they might hope to find whalers to take them back to civilization.

This abandonment of the INVESTIGATOR against the wishes of her captain was only the first of a long series. This wholesale ship abandonment probably has few equals in the annals of the British Navy, and ~~gave rise to~~ ^{that day on of its} ~~few~~ more embarrassing moments.

Sir Edward Belcher commanding the expedition of which the RESOLUTE was one part, suddenly decided for reasons that have never been adequately explained, that the RESOLUTE should also be abandoned and her crew transferred to one of the other ships of the expedition. True, the RESOLUTE was still frozen in, but this was only the beginning of May, and there

was reason to hope that the coming summer might free her. Captain Kellett, in his turn, protested the order, but discipline prevailed and he made preparations for what must really have been one of the most luxurious ship abandonments in history. After fourteen days preparation, each sailor carried away with him 30 pounds of personal belongings and each officer forty five pounds, plus many tons of stores.

The crew of the INVESTIGATOR had by now abandoned two ships - and they were not yet at the end. They were transferred to the ASSISTANCE - also abandoned a short time later and also in perfect condition although also frozen in the ice. Nor was this all. A smaller ship of the expedition - the PIONEER - was also left in the ice.

Of all four ships of this group, only one - INVESTIGATOR - actually was seen to sink. Some days after being abandoned some members of her crew returned from the RESOLUTE and were present to see her ~~sink beneath the waves, having been~~ crushed by the ice.

On the way back to England there was of course a court-martial, as there must be when any ship of the navy is abandoned for any reason whatsoever. The captains of the four individual ships were acquitted because they had acted upon the orders of higher authority and against their own wishes. Sir Edward Belcher was also acquitted, but only because his orders from the Admiralty were so vague as to make it seem possible that even abandonment was authorized.

Not until the next year was the final chapter written in this strange tale.

The RESOLUTE, having been abandoned in the ice on May 15, 1854, in Latitude 74-41-30N, Longitude 101-22-06W, was sighted still frozen in the ice on September 10, 1855 in Latitude 67 north, twenty miles from Cape Mercy, having traveled about one thousand miles still locked in the ice, and having sailed through Barrow Strait, Lancaster Sound and the full length of Baffin Bay to the southeastern tip of Baffin Island. There she was found by the American whaling bark GEORGE HENRY, commanded by Capt. James M. Budington. Budington, with eleven men from his whaler, went aboard the RESOLUTE, found everything ship-shape and prepared to sail his prize home. The ice soon broke up, the ship was made ready to sail, and on Christmas Day 1855 Captain Budington sailed into the harbor at New London.

Then she was bought from Budington for \$40,000 by the U.S. government and completely reconditioned and again outfitted for Arctic service. This time, however, she did not sail to the Arctic, but to England. Arriving at Spithead in December 1856 she received a royal welcome from the British Navy and from Queen Victoria herself, after which she was given back to the Admiralty. The record does not say whether Captain Kellett, who abandoned her, or Sir Edward Belcher who ordered the abandonment, were present, but whatever British officer had the unpleasant duty of accepting the return of a British naval vessel abandoned by her crew must have suffered the tortures of the damned.

As proof that ships are not lightly abandoned, in spite of the greatest difficulties, consider the case of another ship engaged in Arctic exploration - the JEANNETTE, in 1879. By this time the emphasis in Arctic

exploration had shifted from a search for the Northwest Passage to a desire to reach the North Pole.

In July of 1879, the JEANNETTE under Captain George Washington De Long, sailed from San Francisco north through the Bering Straits with the intention of sailing from that point northwest to the North Pole. But she sailed only a short distance and for only a short time, for early in September of that same year she also became locked in the ice.

At a longitude of only 71 degrees thirty minutes north, the JEANNETTE was firmly and permanently a prisoner of the ice. And there she stayed for two whole years, drifting with the ice-pack, moving only as the ice moved. The first winter in the ice was of course no surprise to Captain De Long. He had expected to be frozen in and was prepared for it, although he had hoped to be considerably north of this position. There was of course no thought of abandonment. The second summer would bring freedom. But the second summer did not bring any lessening of the tight hold of the ice. Still, there was no despair - disappointment, naturally, but not abandonment.

Yet the thought of abandonment must inevitably have occurred to De Long. One cannot sit ~~idly~~ by while your ship just remains stuck in the ice. At some point the possibility of never getting loose must be considered. And then comes the most agonizing decision, for here is not a sudden disaster with which to cope - no collision, no fire, no wild storm overwhelming the ship. Just a dawning awareness and then a certainty that the ship will not move again. Yet even then De Long did not abandon.

In the first place to abandon ship in the Arctic, even the comparatively mild southern regions of the Arctic, presents formidable difficulties in the way of transportation. And, of course, to abandon under these circumstances is an even more unpalatable pill - a more disheartening confession of failure. But even to De Long the day finally came when he had no choice.

Ominous creakings of the ice - ice which by this time had reached a depth of fourteen to sixteen feet - began to sound even worse than the usual crackings to which they had in two years become accustomed. Then a lead appeared in the ice not a mile away and hope again was raised, stirring them to unprecedented activity. The crew even tried to saw the ice away from around the ship. First drilling a hole through the fourteen feet of ice they next lowered a small anchor on a short line to which they had tied the bottom end of a long saw. By alternately heaving up on the saw and then letting the anchor drag it down they hoped to saw the ship free and be ready to sail away should the hopeful opening in the ice grow larger and extend near them. But after two days work they had managed to saw a distance of only three feet.

Meanwhile the shifting ice had canted the JEANNETTE to an angle of thirty degrees - which seemed uncomfortable even to men who had lived for all the time they were frozen in the ice on a ship which had a list of nine degrees. Obviously the ice was moving, and the worst must be momentarily expected. Then began a piecemeal abandonment.

First all the ships boats were hauled out on the ice, then a supply of stores, sledges, clothing, and coal. Still, the ship had not been abandoned - but all was in readiness should that be necessary. Some days later the ice really moved in and began to squeeze the JEANNETTE in earnest. When the deck heaved upward and her sides were stove in De Long finally gave the word. His unwillingness to leave was amply justified by the horrors that followed.

The difficulties De Long and his crew encountered before the few survivors finally reached civilization again are almost unbelievable. First, they had to put the boats on the sledges, along with all the supplies, and drag them over the ice. This meant not only the hardest kind of work, but uncounted miles of it. Every mile gained toward the objective meant at least eight miles traveled, for the whole crew had to push and pull on every sledge - advance one, walk back for the next, pull that one up, go back for the next. To make good a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles they actually traveled about thirteen hundred. To add to their difficulties, the ice pack over which they were traveling southward with such difficulty was being itself blown northward. Some days they worked all day to find themselves five or ten miles back of where they started.

Finally, however, they reached open water. Rejoicing, for they were sailors and not draft horses, they took to the boats. But one boat capsized almost immediately and all were lost. The survivors in the other two boats sailed south in violent gales, were separated from each other,

and finally made shore at the mouth of the Lena River in Siberia. Even then De Long and the members of his boat crew all starved to death before help reached them. The other boat had slightly better success and most survived, due to being found by a roving band of natives.

This tale of hardship is testimony again, if such were needed, of the fact that abandoning ship does not always provide an easy solution, and that it is not a matter lightly to be decided.

Sometimes abandoning proves to be the wrong answer - and those who abandon are not the survivors, whereas those who stay on the ship come out better. For such an instance, on the opposite side of the world, consider another English naval vessel - HMS GUARDIAN.

The GUARDIAN, a new ship, left the Cape of Good Hope on December 11, 1789, bound for the prison colonies of Australia with a large cargo of supplies, a deck-load of animals, twenty-five convicts and three jailers, plus her normal complement of 96 sailors.

After twelve days of storms in the roaring forties during which she sailed twelve hundred miles to the southeast, she hit an ice-berg head-on. Slewng around, her stern brought up on the berg and her rudder was torn off. After two days of manning the pumps during which the water continued to gain and the storm continued to rage it became obvious that it was a hopeless task. Part of the crew, the one woman passenger and two of the convicts abandoned ship with the consent of the captain, but not at his orders. All would have abandoned but there were not enough life boats.

Then the sixty-two souls left on the ship began to make emergency repairs. Miraculously, the pumps which had broken down previously were found to be not irreparably damaged, sails were thrummed and passed under the hull to cover the hole torn by the ice, a jury rudder was rigged, and sails of a sort were rigged on the remaining stumps of the masts. Two months later she sailed back into Table Bay at the Cape of Good Hope - a trip which on the outbound voyage had taken only twelve days.

But how about the 63 people who abandoned the bigger ship to entrust themselves to the perils of a lifeboat in a raging storm in that vast stretch of stormy ocean known as the roaring forties and where the wind blows up mountainous seas that roll unhindered around the world?

One life boat capsized while being launched, but three others were safely gotten away. The smallest one filled and sank almost immediately. The second was never heard from again, having probably suffered the same fate. The third was more fortunate, being picked up only one week later by a French ship. Thus, of sixty-three persons who abandoned only fourteen were saved, whereas all 62 who remained with the ship made it back to harbor. Ironically, the GUARDIAN was driven ashore, a complete wreck, but without loss of life, shortly after returning to Table Bay.

When your ship is sinking and you must abandon, the only thought can be the successful launching of lifeboats. Subsequent dangers will just have to wait. But the normal perils of the sea are of course, just a part of the situation, for even supposing a successful maneuver in

which all the perils of the sea are avoided, what then? It is not enough just to be afloat in a lifeboat. Progress must be made, and either someone rows the boat home, or if luck holds a passing ship will find the boats and pick up the survivors.

The case of the GUARDIAN illustrates the chances - and actually it is remarkable that even one lifeboat was found. Back in 1789 - or even today for that matter - there is not so much traffic on the oceans of the world that one small boat has much chance of being seen. That lonely stretch of water southeast of Africa on the way to Australia is a vast expanse of rolling waves behind which a small boat is easily lost, and over which there are many routes. Even from the top of a mast the maximum distance to the horizon is a very few miles - a mast one hundred feet high will give a limit of visibility of only eleven and a half miles. So, in effect, a ship sails down a corridor only twenty-three miles wide. But who has eyes keen enough to see a small boat from a distance of more than two or three miles? And what if the ship should happen to pass at night when the visibility is probably not more than a few yards? Under these circumstances, it is remarkable that even one of the GUARDIAN's boats was sighted.

From the moment he leaves port on his first voyage as a commanding officer a man must give some thought to the possibility that some day - perhaps on that very voyage - he must give the word to abandon ship. Short of mutiny it is a decision which he alone can make - and under

the worst conditions. Upon the right answer depend the lives of his crew and passengers. No matter that abandoning appears to be the only solution, for there are times, as in the case of the GUARDIAN, when it is not the right answer. No wonder that the Book of Common Prayer devotes a section to "Prayers for Use at Sea", and that an old stand-by in most hymnals is the one which ends with the words -

"O hear us when we cry to Thee

For those in peril on the sea."