

SPECIAL PROVISIONS.

A party of us were gathered about the fire in the sitting room of one of our down east hotels, when the conversation turned upon the subject of special provisions. Some were for, and some against the doctrine. An old man named Aber Britwell, who had come in the stage with us, and who had listened to the conversation for some time, seemed much interested. He remained silent until the subject had been pretty thoroughly discussed, and then he began to speak. "I don't want to argue any upon this subject," he resumed; "but I have had some experience which may be worth relating, even though none of you are infatuated thereby in your ideas upon the question under discussion. When quite young I lost my parents, and in a few years afterwards I went to sea, which occupation I followed until I was twenty and then I got married, and settled down on a small farm. My wife was born to me a boy—and when he was four years of age, his mother died. I broke up housekeeping, and went to live with one of my cousins. My child, whom I called Rufus, was a bright, intelligent little fellow, and I loved him with all my strength and, as he grew up, he returned all my love. When my boy was twelve years of age I fell in business, and came out penniless. A friend of mine, who was the best of mates on board a good ship, and after some persuasion I accepted it. It was hard work to make up my mind to leave my child, but his own good, as well as mine, seemed to demand it, and I finally concluded to go. I left Rufus with my cousin, promising to pay for his keeping on my return.

"I was gone one year, and when I came back I found that my wife and child were considerably larger, and very intelligent, but I was told that he had not been treated well by my cousin. However Rufus said he would remain where he was while I made another voyage, and then he hoped to go to sea with me. I was gone the next time two months over a year, and when I again returned, I found my child missing. My cousin said he had been able to do nothing with him, but the neighbors assured me that he had fled from absolute necessity. "I may simply say here that every feeling of love my soul could experience was fastened upon that boy, but I cannot tell you how heavily this blow fell upon my heart. Suffice it for me to say that I never ceased to pray for him, and that my chiefest hope was centered in him. I searched for him through every channel that was open to me, without effect, and sad and fearful I set forth again upon the ocean.

"I made one more voyage and then I was offered the command of a ship. I accepted it, and after some arrangements for taking possession of my post, three days before the ship sailed, I fell through the hold way and broke my leg. I was carried to the hospital and a new captain took my place. Of course I became a patient, and in a few weeks my leg had healed. In why such ill luck had befallen me, I one week news was brought to me that the ship had gone down, and that all hands were lost. She had proved totally unseaworthy, and she could not have sunk as she did. My wife was now changed to thanks, and I bore my confinement without further murmuring.

"When I was strong once more my employers gave me a ship, and I made two successful voyages in her. The third voyage was to the Pacific. I had a new crew, and after we had doubled Cape Horn, I began to fear that a mutiny was on foot. It was before I became convinced that such was not only the fact but that I had some desperate men on board. I could see the cloud and hear the muttering, but I could not fathom the secret of the impending storm. I had watched until I had become assured that the most diabolical plot was on foot, but I knew not where to place my hands. One night while we were off the Chilean coast, I dreamed that I was keeping my mate's watch, and that I had crawled into the long boat to get out of the way of the rain. While there I thought three of my men came and sat down beside me, and commenced to converse upon the subject of murdering their officers, and taking the ship. The names of these three were Brant, Cummings and McDermot. I had suspected them from the start. I could hear every word they spoke, and my heart beat painfully as they laid bare step by step the plan they had concocted. They were the leaders and were to have the officers when the ship was there. On the third night from that the blow was to be struck. We in the cabin were to be cut down first, and then four of the men whom they dare not trust were to follow.

"I started up from my sleep. My heart was beating quickly, and a cold sweat was upon my brow. The dream still sounded in my ears, and at some moments as I could realize that I was in my own bunk. When I had fairly collected my thoughts, I turned out and went on deck, and by a sort of instinctive impulse I walked forward. It was an hour past midnight, and the moon was just rising. I saw three men sitting upon the heel of a spare topmast—exactly where I had seen the three men sitting in my dream—and as I came near I heard them say, 'Brant has come's number, and then they started up and went to the fore-castle. I saw who they were—Brant, Cummings and McDermot—the trio of my dream! "To be continued."

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