

PAIRT ANE

Cheptour Ane

The Auld Sie Dug at the 'Ammiral Barton'

The Laird o Cockburnspeth, Dr Livingston, an the lave o thur gentrie haein speired at me ti dounskreive the hale parteiklarities anent Traisur Insch, frae the mou til the en, bak-hauddin naethin bot the beirins o the eyland, an thon anerlie kiz the'r traisur yit ti be upliftit. A uptak ma penn eir o grace 17__ an gang baklins ti the tyme whan ma faither kept the 'Ammiral Barton' inns, an the auld broun taurrie-breiks, arrit wi a culmas, firstlins uptuik hiz ludgin unner wir ruif.

A mynd him lik yestrein, as he cam stodgin ti the howff duir, hiz sie-kist follaein in a haun-barrae; a lairge, strang, wechtie, nit-broun buddie; hiz taurrie plet fawin owre the shouthers o hiz tashit bew coit; hiz hauns raggetie an skartit wi blak, brukken nails; an the culmas cutt acorss ae chaft, a mirkie blae-whyte. A mynd him luikin roun the yoe an whussilin til hissell as he duin sae, an than outbrakkin i thon auld sie-sang at he sang that aften eftirwarts:

‘Fiftene men on a deid man’s kist
Yo-ho-ho an a bottil o rumb!’

i the hie auld, stotterie voss at semed ti bene tuined an brak at the capill-stok rungs.

Than he chappit at the duir wi a bit stik lik a haunspail at he cairriet, an, whan ma faither kythit, cawed roch-lik fur a gless o rumb. This, whan it wes brocht til'm, he drank slaw, lik a cunnar, dakklin owre the gust, an aye vissiein about him at the cliffs, an up at wir seinyie-brod.

“This is a hantie yoe,” he says at lang lenth; an a bonie sitwat howff. Mukkil companie, billie?”

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Ma faither telt'm nae, verra smaw companie, the mair wes the peitie.

"Weill, than," sayed he, "this is the coy fur me. Heir yow, lathie," he cawed ti the cheil at trinnilt the barra, "fess up alang-syde an heize up ma kist. A'l byde heir a bittie," he contined. "A'm a plenn man, rumb an saunie an egs is whit A wiss, an thon heid upby ti waache schips aff. Whitlik ye mote cry me? Ye maun cry me Skipper. Ai! A sei whit ye'r ettlin at. Thare!" an he flang doun thrie, fowre gowd peces on the thrashel. "Ye'l can tel me whan A hae wirked throu thon," he says, luikin fairce as a commandar.

An, atweill, ill as hiz claes wes, an courss-lik as he spak, he hed nane o the apperance o a man at saulit afoir the moste, bot semed lik a contermaister ir chaptane, yaised ti be obayit ir ti strik. The cheil at cam wi the barra telt uz at the mail hed set him doun yestrein at the 'Ryal Chairlie'; at he hed speired whit-lik cheinge-houssis the wes alang the cost, an herin ours weill spak o, A suppose, an deskreived as lanerlie, hed waled it out frae the tithers ti mak habitautioun. An that wes aw we cuid leir o wir gast.

He wes a verra seilent buddie bi habit. Aw day he hantit the yoe, ir upo the clifts wi a bress keikin gless; aw evinin he set i the ingil neuk o the spence, an drunk rumb an wattir verra strang. Maist he wuidna spak whan spakken til; anerlie luik up, suddent an faircelins, an blaw throu hiz neb lik a horne, an we an the fowk at cam about our howff suin leirit ti lat him abie.

Dailie day, whan he cam bak frae'z daunner, he wuid ax gif onie sie-farin men hed gaed by alang the rodd. At first we thocht it wes the waant o companie o hiz ain keind at garred him speir this quastioun; bot at lang an lest we begoud sie at he ettilt ti eveit thaim. Whan a sie-man bydit ben the 'Ammiral Barton' (as nou an than a curn duin, gaun bi the cost rodd ti Leith) he wuid keik in at thaim throu the hingit duir afoir he cam inby the spence, an he wes aye siccar ti be as seilent as a mouss whan onie siclik cheils wes praisent.

Fur me, at laist, the wes nae saicret anent the maitter; fur A wes, in a wey, a skairer in hiz alairms. He hed taen me asyde ae day an promitt

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me a siller fowre pennie on the first o ilka moneth gif A wuid anerlie haud ma wedder-ei apen fur 'a sie-farin man wi ae shank'; an lat him ken the mament he kythit. Aften eneuch, whan the first o the moneth wun roun an A priggit at'm fur ma wauge he wud bot blaw throu hiz neb an dounluik me; bot afoir the ouk wes gane he wes shuir ti think bettir o't, fess me ma fowre pennie bit, an repete hiz ordours ti luik out fur 'the sie-farin man wi ae shank'.

Whitwey thon buddie hantit ma drames A note skarcelins tel ye. On stormryfe nichts, whan the win shakkit the fowre cunyies o the houss, an the laun-brist raired alang the yoe an up the clifts, A wuid sei'm in a thousand furms, an wi a thousand deivilik murgeons. Nou the shank wuid be sneddit aff at the k'nie, nou at the hurkil bane; nou he wes ane onbeiss kinna craitur at nivver hed mair nir ae louman, an thon i the mids o'z bouk. Ti sei'm lowpin, rin an persew me owre hege an sheuch wes the warst o wuddrums. An aw thegither A peyed geir fur ma monethlie grott, i the shap o thur gruesum fantises.

Bot tho A wes that terrified bi the idaia o the sie-farin man wi ae shank A wesna sae feirt o the skipper hissell as ither buddies at kent him. The wes nichts whan he tuik a dale mair rumb an wattir nir hiz heid cuid cairrie; an than he wuid betymes sit an sing hiz wikkit, auld, wuld sie-sangs, takkin tent o nane; bot betymes he wuid caw fur glessis aw roun, an gar aw the trimmlin companie leisten til hiz stores ir beir ane owrewird til hiz singin. Aft A hae hard the houss shakkin wi 'Yo ho ho, an a bottil o rumb', aw the neipours jynin in fur thair verra wizen, wi the feir o daith upo'm, an ilkane singin louder nir the tither, ti haud wyde o remarkin. Fur i thae tirrories he wes the maist dauntounin compaignen ivver kent; he wuid skelp hiz haun on the buird fur wheisht aw roun; he wuid flie up rid wudd at a quastioun, ir betymes kiz nane wes pitten, an thusgates he duimed the gaitherin wesna follaen hiz store. Nir wuid he allou onie ti skail frae the taivern ontil he hed drunk hissell sleipryfe, an reled aff til hiz bed.

Hiz stores wes whit frichtenit fowk warst o aw. Dreidfu stores thai wes; anent hingin, an traivellin the dell, an stormes at sie, an the Dray Tortugas, an wuld dedes an pleges on the Spanye Main. Bi hiz ain

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accompt he maun leived hiz lyfe amang a curn o the maist wikkit men at God ivver alloued on the sie: an the langage at he telt thae stores in stammiegastert wir plenn kintra pepill maist as mich as the ill-daeins he deskreived. Ma father wes aye sayin we wuid be rewynit, fur fowk wuid suin quat cummin thare ti bi tirraneised owre an doun-pit, an sent chitterin ti thair beds, bot A trewlins belevit at hiz praiseince duin uz guid. Fowk wes frichtent at the tyme, bot luikin baklins thai lyked it fine; it wes a rare kittil in a quate kintra lyfe; an the wes evin a pairtie o the yinger carles at med on ti admeir him, cryin him ane ‘trew sie-dug’ an a ‘rare auld saut’, an siclik nems, an sayin thare wes the kinna man at med Scotland terrel at sie.

In ae wey atweill he bad fair ti rewyne uz; fur he steyed on, ouk eftir ouk, an, at lang lest, moneth eftir moneth, sae at aw the siller bene lang syne exowstit an aye ma faither nivver poukit up the saul ti threip at him ti hae mair. Gif ivver ye mentiount it the skipper blawit throu hiz neb sae loud at ye nicht cry it rairin, an glowerit ma puir faither out the ruim. A hae sein’m thrawin hiz hauns eftir siccan a snotter, an A’m shuir at the fasherie an terrour he leived in maun a heistent hiz aire an onhappie daith.

Aw the tyme he ludged wi’z the skipper med nae shift o’z abuliments awaw, bot ti coff sum stokkins frae a cadger. Ae o the coks o’z hatt haein doun-fawen, he lat it hing frae thon day furth, tho it wes a gryte fasherie whan it blawit. A mynd the apperance o’z coit, at he spatchit hissell, up the sterr ben hiz chaumer, an at wes aw eiks an naethin els or the en.

He nivver wrate ir resaived a pistil, an nivver spak wi onie bot the neipours, an wi thur, fur the maist pairt, anerlie whan drouthie wi rumb. The gryte sie-kist nane o’z sein apen.

He wes anerlie the aince thortert, an thon wes towart the en, whan ma puir faither wes ferr gane in a dwyne at tuik him aff. Dr Livingston cam i the fureday ti vissie the pacient, tuik a bit denner frae ma mither, an gaed ben the spence ti smeik a pype ontill hiz horss wes doun-fessit frae the clachan, fur we hed nae stabill at the auld ‘Barton’. A follaed him ben, an A mynd obsairvin the contrairitie atwein the nate, bricht

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doctour, wi'z pouter as whyt as snaw, an hiz bricht, blak ein an cantie mainners, med wi the cowt-lik kintra fowk, an, abuin aw, thon fousum, gurthie, bleirit, craw-bogilo o a peratt o ours, sittin ferr gane wi rumb, wi'z airms on the taibil. Suddentlie he, the Skipper that is, – begoud ti pype up hiz eternell sang,

‘Fiftene men on a deid man’s kist
Yo ho ho an a bottil o rumb!
Drink an the deil hae duin fur the rist
Yo ho ho an a bottil o rumb!’

At firstlins A supposed the ‘deid man’s kist’ ti be thon sell an sam beig buist o hiz up the sterr i the foir ruim, an the thocht bene melled in ma wuddrums wi thon o the singil-leggit sie-farin man. Bot bi nou we hed lang gied-owre peyin onie parteiklar nott til the sang; it wes nyow, thon nicht, ti naebuddie bot Dr Livingston, an on him A obsairved at it didna crie ae seilfu effek, fur he luikit up a mament, a bittie angirt-lik, afoir he ongaed wi'z speik ti auld Taylor, the gairdener, on a nyow cuir fur the rheumatese. Atwein hauns the skipper pece an pece kittilt up at hiz ain muisik an at lest skelpit his haun on the buird afoir’m in a wey at we kent ti mene – seilens. The vossis devauled immediantlie, aw bot Dr Livingston; at gaed on as afoir, speikin clair an kynd, an soukin gleglie at his pipe atwein ilka wird ir twa. The skipper glowered at him fur a whyllie, skelpit hiz haun agane, glowerit the haurder, an at lest outbrak wi a veillanous laich aith, “Seilens, thare, atwein deks!”

“Wes ye addressin me, sir?” says the doctour, an whan the rochian hed telt’m, wi anither aith, at this wes sae, “A hae anerlie the ae thing ti say til ye, sir,” repones the doctour, “at gif ye haud on swalliein rumb, the warl wul suin be quat o a verra rauchil skellum!”

The auld carl’s tirrivie wes fair awfae. He stendit til hiz feit, drew an apent a sauler’s jokteleg, an ballancin it apen on the luif o’z haun, threitent ti prein the doctour ti the waw.

The doctour nivver’s mukkil’s muivit. He spak til’m, as afoir, owre hiz shouter, an in the samen tuin o voss; raither hie, sae at aw the ruim micht here, bot perfit lown an stiddie.

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“Wes ye addressin me, sir?”

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“Gif ye dinna pit thon blad this verra gliff intil yer poke, A hecht ye, ye’s be hangit at the neist assyse!”

Than follaed a battil o luiks atwein thaim; bot the skipper suin knukkilt unner, pit up hiz wappen an tuik hiz sate agane, grummlin lik a skelpit dug.

“An nou, sir,” contined the doctour, “sin A ken nou at the’r siccan a fellae in ma distrik, ye mey compt A’l hae ane ei upo ye day an nicht. A’m no a doctour anerlie; A’m a bailie; an gif A kep a braith o complent agin ye, gin it’s anerlie fur a bit onciveilitie lik the nicht’s, A’l tak in haun fekfu menes ti hae ye huntit doun an rowstit out o this. Lat thon serr,”

Suin eftir Dr Livingston’s horss cam ti the duir, an he rade away; bot the skipper hauddit hiz wheisht thon evenin, an fur mony evenins ti cum.