

All Afloat (A Chronicle of Craft and Waterways)

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William Wood

Excerpt: ...crew, every man of which is smart enough, either with the tools or with the fid and palm and needle, for ordinary work, while some are sure to be equal to any special job. She of course carries two suits of canvas, her new best and older second best. Each sail has required more skill than tailors need to make a perfect fit in clothes, because there is a constant strain on sails, exceeding, if possible, the strains on every other part. But before sail is made her anchor is hove short, that is, the ship is drawn along by her cable till her bows are over it. Heave and she comes! Heave and she must! Heave and bust her! are grunted from the men straining at the longbars of the capstan, which winds the tightening cable in. Click, click, clickety, click go the pawls, which drop every few inches into cavities that, keeping them from slipping back, prevent the capstan from turning the wrong way when the men pause to take breath. Break out the mud-hook! and a tremendous combined effort ensues. Presently a sudden welcome slack 105 shows that the flukes have broken clear. The anchor is then hove up, catted, and fished. All hands make sail! sings out the mate. The wind is nicely on the starboard quarter, that is, abaft the beam and forward of the stern, which gives the best chance to every sail. A wind dead aft, blanketing more than half the canvas, is called a lubbers wind. A soldiers wind is one which comes square on the beam, and so makes equally plain sailing out and back again. What sail a full-rigged ship can carry! The Yankee Great Republic could spread nearly one whole acre of canvas to the breeze. Another Yankee, the R. C. Rickmers, the largest sailing vessel in the world to-day, exceeds this. But her tonnage is much greater, more than eleven thousand gross, and her rig is entirely different. A full-rigged clipper ship might have twenty-two square sails, though it was rare to see so many. In addition she would have

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