

JOHN SHIP

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MARINER

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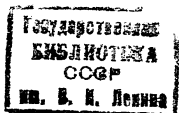
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NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHER



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1898

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THE STORY OF
JOHN SHIP, MARINER

CHAPTER I

MY HOME-LEAVING

IN this the autumn of my life, my dear children have many times urged me to set down in such order as may be the relation of those adventures, hardships, and mishaps through which it has pleased a gracious Providence to bring me scatheless. I know well that their love for me breeds this insistence, and that those to whom I am a stranger will bear me no such kindly tolerance; but I here make shift to satisfy them. Most of these tales have they heard once and again, and the greater number have had far other chronicler than my humble self, for Providence foreordained me to bear my lowly part in adventures that go to make proudest history in our fair land. Of

these latter I shall say nothing, save as in them some purely private matter touched myself. Herein is therefore nothing but the plain tale of a herd's son turned mariner, more especially of those years of his life spent in the far Northern isles of Faroe, whither he was unresisting borne by the stress and accident of his calling, and whereat he found treasure untold, not merely the gross lucre of earthly gold, but prizes of true love and wifely affection, noblest spoil that can fall to any man's winning.

My father, dead these twenty years, was herd to Sir Arthur Courtland in the village of Glaster-ton, three miles from the town of Bath. Three sons had he, of whom I was youngest, and two daughters. My dear mother, living yet as you know, though long past the allotted threescore years and ten, was daughter of a tradesman in the town. It was considered a hard thing to be borne that she should have found a mate in a common laborer on the land; but pure and honest love can no man hinder, and my father's brave blue eyes and burly handsome frame won the day against many a dapper clerk and clothier.

There was a great vein of romance in my mother,