

N=1909

The waterfront loafers always called her "the drudge", and that is really ~~XXXXXX~~ The Public Works Department called her "dredge 909, dipper-type, five-yard capacity, wooden hull." The waterfront loafers always called her simply "the drudge", and that is what she really was. Once she had ~~passed~~ a name, a beautiful Indian name, Malawaka, but that ~~was~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ painted out when the Department decided to number everything. She was very ~~bugly~~, but she was well suited to her trade, which was the business of scooping ~~mud~~ out of harbors and rivers so that ships could pass up and down.

A good deal of thought had gone into her conception. An expert had even visited the Panama Canal, which was still being dug in those days ( I shall be telling you her age next), and he came back with the latest in dipper-dredge ideas. And so 1909 was born in a scow-yard up the St. Lawrence with a timber hull ninety-five feet long by forty-five wide, and nine feet deep from deck to bottom. Upon that ~~massive~~ hull they built a wooden house, square and flatroofed, with common doors and windows like almost any house ~~ashore~~, so that at a distance the whole thing looked like a doll's house floating on a herring box.

The house contained quarters for the crew; and the house and hull together contained the ponderous hoisting machinery, as well, and a condenser, a Scotch boiler, a dynamo and so on. Of course you saw none of that ~~inner~~ machinery when you stood on the dock. What took your eye when you stood on the dock was the great steel boom, which was fifty feet long and weighed fifteen tons by itself; and at the forward end of that boom the six-ton dipper handle and the four-ton dipper bucket. All that weight was supported by three-inch steel cables rigged over a high steel A-frame and fastened to the hull aft. with heavy iron bull heads. You looked at the ponderous boom and bucket thrusting out from her forward end and ~~you~~ wondered what kept her from pitching forward on her nose, not knowing how cunningly the weight of her machinery had been distributed in the hull to balance it.

When at work 909 anchored herself to the river bottom by thrusting down two long ~~XXXXXX~~ timber ~~legs~~, called spuds, each sixty-five feet long; and there she stood like a stork in deep water, scooping at the bottom ~~XXXXXX~~ with her beak. She had a third spud which she trailed astern, and by this she steered. When she wished to move ahead for another bite at the mud, she hoisted her legs straight up into the air and dropped the heavy bucket to the bottom, and she hauled herself forward by dragging on the sunken bucket, as a ship warps herself up to an anchor. ~~XXXXXX~~ All this made sailors laugh, ~~XXXXXX~~

When Johnnie Wister joined 909 as her engineer he was thirty years old and he had worked in dredges since he was a boy. Besides himself the crew consisted of a captain, an oiler, a fireman, three deck hands and a cook. There was a bit of trouble on the first job. The tall girders of the A-frame suddenly toppled back on the house and crushed the trim funnel like a can under a steam roller, and the boom swung wildly and knocked seven bells out of an iron scow loading mud alongside. But that was a little accident of design, a growing pain you might say. They coked up the A-frame at a sharper angle and after that she behaved properly.

It was a seasonal job, for of course the St. Lawrence froze every winter and stayed frozen for several months. Every Fall she was laid up carefully in one of the river ports, with water drained and pipes disconnected, to suffer the winter and await the spring. And Johnnie was left in charge of her, with a stove set up in his bedroom in the house. ~~XXXXXX~~ the winters were lonely until he met Melisse.

Then he met Melisse, who lived near the dock where the dredge was moored. She was not pretty but she was respectable, and she could cook and sew. Johnnie's courting was awkward, for he spoke French a little worse than Melisse spoke English. They spent a couple of months learning to talk to each other, and soon after the New Year they were married, and Melisse came down to live with Johnnie on board the dredge. She fitted up their room with curtains and bits of printed stuff, and they bought new bedding and a couple of easy chairs, and altogether it was a snug and happy winter. For the first time Johnnie was sorry when spring came. But it

called her

sturdy

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Melisse

came, and Melisse had to go ashore and stay with her parents when the crew arrived. It was a busy summer for 909. In November, when the dredge returned to the familiar winter berth, the crew departed as usual and Melisse came aboard -- with a baby. This became usual, too. They were married in the early part of the 1914 war, and when the post-war slump ~~xxxxx~~ fell upon the world in 1921 there were five children, three girls and two boys, all of whom looked exactly like Melisse.

With the slump there was talk of retrenchment, a strange word. The dredging schedules were cut like everything else, and amongst other economies Dredge 909 was laid up until further notice. Johnnie's job remained, for there had to be someone to look after 909, and he got permission to keep his family on board with him. Men out of work about the docks thought he had the softest job in the world. They envied him. But after a year or two Johnnie became restless. It was strange and disturbing, the summer days and months going by in idleness, the dredge silent except for the voices of his children, nothing moving but the family wash fluttering on the line rigged to the funnel. But Melisse was quite satisfied. Every month she put part of Johnnie's pay in the bank, in her own name, for she ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and she had the French-Canadian woman's instinct in such matters and she was the family treasurer.

Several years went by like this, like an idle dream. As the children grew bigger the family took over the rest of the sleeping quarters, and Melisse fitted curtains in the other windows, and little pots of geraniums. She was a pious woman and she took the children regularly to church. She was ambitious for them, too, and every morning she packed them off to school. Her own family lived not far from the dock and there was a great visiting back and forth, with a lively chatter of ~~XXXXXX~~ Quebecois French, a language that Johnnie found difficult. Melisse in her calm sensible way had learned quite a bit of English, and she talked to him in his own tongue with a mixture of the French words that he knew; but the presence of her family he might as well have been deaf and dumb. He felt a foreigner amongst them, and although he taught his children a little English there were times when he felt a foreigner amongst them, too.

The post-war world seemed to be in a very queer state. Sometimes there came sudden flurries, telegrams demanding to know how soon 909 could be made ready for a dredging job, and Johnnie after much furrowed thinking would wire back "Two weeks" or "Three weeks" according to his state of mind. But nothing came of these affairs until the year 1927. Then at last Dredge 909 was ordered into commission, a commission at what seemed the end of the earth, a port on the salty coast of Nova Scotia. Johnnie, Melisse, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ her family, everyone was astounded. "Comment? Nouvelle-Ecosse? Impossible!" But it was possible, they found out. When the new crew arrived, Melisse moved her ~~XXXX~~ children ashore and rented a house close by the home of her own people. She kissed Johnnie goodbye in her matter-of-fact way, and the children, seven now, did the same.

The dredge and its attendant scows went down the broad river and the gulf, each in tow of a tug, a queer little flotilla. It irked Johnnie to see a crowd of total strangers moving about the rooms which Melisse had made so bright and comfortable with her bits of chintz and little home-made rugs. They chaffed him about the curtains and the floerpots in the windows. But he said nothing. ~~XXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ It was good to be doing his proper job, and at full pay again, after all that pinching and scraping. And winter would come, even in Nova Scotia, and then he could send for Melisse and have his family about him once again. He even cherished a hope that down there where everyone spoke English, the children might learn to come a little closer to him.

But when winter came and the crew departed, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and the dredge was snugly moored to a Nova Scotia wharf, there came a letter from Melisse. Impossible to come down there, she wrote. Seven hundred miles, someone had told her. Too far. Much too expensive. Besides there was the children's schooling, and the church. Although Melisse spoke English quite well in her fashion she could not write it, and so the letter was in French. It took Johnnie some time to puzzle it all out. But in the end he shrugged, as a Frenchman might have done, and made

*she was living in her own house. She had a steady job. She had children. I told her she would cry some more.*

*terement*

*returned to go for some all the words.*

*she did*

*North Carolina*

the best of a lonely winter in the dredge, at the dock in Port Ballard, seven hundred miles from Melisse *and those seven young replicas of her.*

*The dredge worked at moon harbors on the rugged North Carolina coast.*

For two summers 909 worked away at Port Ballard. It was a river mouth with a ~~hard~~ bar composed of ~~silt and muck~~ *crushed by the tides* from the stream and muck from the town. Outside the bar a mile or two was a long concrete mole that guarded the anchorage, for the estuary was exposed to the sweep of south easterly winds from the Atlantic. 909 scooped away at the channel, ~~in the bar~~ *and* and dropped the reeking muck into her scows; and a docent little tug dragged the scows out to sea where they could dump the stuff. Each winter she was laid up, and at Christmas Johnnie got permission to leave her for a week to visit his family far away up the St. Lawrence. Port Ballard was a quiet place in winter. It was not a large town and along the waterfront everybody knew everybody else. Before long everybody knew Johnnie Wister. They called him Cap'n, facetiously but pleasantly, and never failed to ask him how things were aboard his "ship". They were a seafaring people and the window curtains and geraniums of 909 amused them very much.

At the end of the second summer the crew were laid off in the usual manner. It had been rumored amongst them that 909 would be returned to the St. Lawrence now that the Port Ballard job was done, after they had gone a telegram came to Johnnie, which he opened in hope and read in dismay. Dredge 909 will remain laid up at Port Ballard until further notice you remain as caretaker. So he remained aboard, cooking his simple meals, sweeping, polishing, greasing, painting, awaiting that further notice.

*And so again*

Seasons came and went, years crawled by. From time to time a government inspector came, otherwise Johnnie felt that the Public Works Department had forgotten 909. His children were growing up far away. They were complete strangers now. They wrote to him, rarely and stiffly, evidently at the command of Melisse; always in French. Once or twice at his urging Melisse left her brood and came east by train to stay a summer fortnight with him on the dredge. Her hair was getting grey and her face was now quite worn. It had not been easy, bringing up that large family on a dredge-engineer's pay. She met his clumsy affection with indifference, with the air of a woman past that sort of thing and wishing an end to his nonsense, and something inside him was chilled. He yearned to go home, not just for Christmas but for a month or two, time enough to get acquainted with his children once again. But the dredge inspector said, "Times are hard, Wister. There's been a big slump since '29. Men out of work everywhere. Government's cutting expenses. Watchmen -- they could hire a watchman cheaper than an engineer like you. I wouldn't call attention to myself in your shoes, not for a minute. Sit tight, say nothing, and take your pay and be thankful. That's my advice." *to you*

*like everybody else.*

Johnnie took it. All through the hungry 1930's people came down to the Port Ballard docks and stopped to gaze at the dredge, pointing out the great boom, the heavy bucket, the size of the supporting cables, and laughing at the curtains and the flower pots. 909 had become a fixture, a permanent curiosity of the waterfront. Melisse's letters became fewer and shorter and more empty as the time went by. Her one cry was expense. Expense of shoes, of clothes, of schooling, of rent, of everything but the expense of separation that gnawed at his heart.

*Johnnie's*

He occupied himself with painting. The PWD doted on paint as a preservative and the dredge inspector sent him a good supply each year. 909 had a large surface to paint, inside and out. Johnnie always began aft and worked forward, plying his brush with slow and careful strokes. He painted the hull and topsides a deep yellow and trimmed it with red. The funnel was yellow with a black top, and PWD 909 in clear white letters on the black part. The big turntable forward was a bright red, and the same red went on the capstans at each corner of the deck, on the great steel boom. He clambered about the steep girders of the A-frame painting them the same deep yellow as the hull. The dingy, ~~did not escape~~ the one nautical touch ~~did not escape~~ *his notice & his happy brush.*



"I don't believe it"  
Johnnie cried

up for ever, and nothin' to do but paint."

The inspector looked uneasy. "Wister," he said carefully, "take a reef in that tongue of yours, that's my advice. It could cost you your job, a nice soft job with, as you say, nothing to do but paint. Where do you hear these things? <sup>my way?</sup> Johnnie shrugged. "It's common talk in the town. Everybody knows. D'you think the whole world's blind?"

"Um," the inspector grunted. "Well, <sup>get</sup> listen to this. 909's old -- old as the Ark. And obsolete, like I said. Takes eight men to operate her, all on wages, government scale. Oh no! ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Sheaper, cheaper far to <sup>bring her up</sup> lay her up where she is and let out the work to some of these nifty new diesel-electric rigs that private owners operate. This thing? Cha! She'll never dig another yard o' mud. Should ha' been junked years ago, tell the truth, and saved all this expense. But I s'pose she's on the books somewhere for what she cost and they hate to write it off."

"But," Johnnie cried, "she's in good shape. I've kept her fine. I've painted..."  
"Ah!" They were standing in the engineroom, and the inspector noted the ornamental gilt stars with which Johnnie had touched off the ends of the pressure tank. "Paint!" he said. "IT's your paint that's holdin' her together, Wister. That, and a book-keeper's entry at Ottawa." As he went ashore he stabbed a thick finger at the tidal flats across the harbor. "That's where she belongs. Tow her over there and let her rot, if I'd my way. She isn't worth another dollar's wharfage. If you come to the fine point, Wister, she isn't worth another day's <sup>of your</sup> pay. Not another lick of your ~~paint~~-brush <sup>even</sup>. She isn't worth a damn."

Long after the man had gone Johnnie Wister stared across the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ narrow harbor. Gulls drowsed ~~XXXXXX~~ like small whitewashed images in rows along the tidal flats. He tried to imagine 909 over there, stripped of his paint by suns and frosts and rains, her wooden hull a roost for those feckless birds. Old? The very ~~word~~ was shocking. He went to the chamber where the ~~KILLER~~ clean but rotten shreds of Mellisse's curtains still hung, and stared at himself in the mirror she had left behind. Old!. It was true. <sup>He was old himself.</sup> He had passed half his life in this floating tomb, this painted coffin. <sup>It was incredible. But it was true.</sup>

He moved about in a trance for days, for ~~XXXXXX~~ months. His paint-pots were forgotten. Parmentter, the grocer at the head of the dock lane, declared that the old boy had gone queer at last, and no wonder after <sup>painting</sup> that old tub from end to end, <sup>over and over again</sup>, for years and years, and ~~nothing else to do~~. He went no more to the post office. He was afraid to go <sup>to there</sup>, for fear there might be a letter, not from Mellisse but the P.W.D., remembering him after all these years and getting rid of him. He had ~~XXXXXXXX~~ often pictured himself on their books as a cipher like 909, to which money went automatically in the mysterious government way. He stayed on board, mostly lying in his bunk, thinking on Melisse and his children, most of them now grown up, but still somehow under the eternal depende that took his pay. Charles, for example, le petit Charlot was about to start college, and there would be more depende. It had no end, the depende. I must go on, he thought, I must keep the job, I must cling to 909 until they wake up in Ottawa and give her to the birds.

He was lying there in just that fashion, at the end of the summer of '39, when the inspector came thumping up the worn gangway, straight from the train. It was raining and the inspector's bowler shone with wet, and the drip from his raincoat made a small pool on Johnnie's painted floor.

"Wister!" he shouted. "Wister, wake up, man! There's a job for 909. Believe or not. By gosh, it took a war ..."

"War?" Johnnie said, rising slowly and staring at the man. "War?" His mind was still ~~benused~~. The word meant nothing to him except <sup>a</sup> memory of 1914, when he and Mellisse had married in the little town beside the St. Lawrence, when he and she and 909 were young.

"War!" the inspector repeated loudly. "The Germans again. Don't you ever read the ~~newspapers~~? It's been coming on for months, and now it's here, and hell's <sup>a-</sup> popping everywhere. Amongst other things and places the Canadian Navy's decided to use Port Ballard for a refitting base. They want the bar dredged down to <sup>another</sup> twenty feet and 909's the only ~~xxxxxx~~ thing available. Don't stare at me like that. Snap

people's

to the work of what

a-

two fine

another

out of it, <sup>man!</sup> ~~Wister, for the love of Mike.~~"

"They want 909?" whispered Johnnie, staring ~~at the man~~. The inspector regarded ~~him~~ a thin, stopped, grey wisp of a man, a ghost of a man, but <sup>for all that</sup> still the engineer of 909.

"She's a god-sand, Wister, ~~sittin' right here~~ <sup>not</sup> on the spot the way she is. Not a right job for a dipper, mind, as dredgin' goes ~~nowadays~~ nowadays. To <sup>do the</sup> take the channel ~~down to twenty feet~~ they ought to have a suction-dredge, nothin' less, but try and find one now! The crew'll be here in a day or two. I just ~~dropped off the train to warn you and take a look around.~~"

He threw open a club-bag, pulled out a suit of ~~denim~~ <sup>blue</sup> overalls and drew them over his neat brown serge. Then, regardless of rain, he ran about the deck, squinting at the steel cables stretched over the A-frame, staring at the heavy bull-heads aft as if in some inhuman fashion he could see the cable-ends under the mass of babbitt there. He swarmed up the boom on all fours like a fat blue ape to look at the sheaves. He came down and dived into the engineeroom. Then he was out on deck again, pulling up the plates of man-holes, rattling down iron rungs, ferreting about inside the hull with a pocket-knife and an electric torch. At last he went away saying fiercely, "I dunno, Wister. It's deuced long lay up when you stop to think of it. Ain't in the nature o' things to stand idle <sup>so long</sup> and still be fit to run without a thorough overhaul at a shipfitter's dock. But there y'are. What's a man to say, and a war on? She'll do. She's ~~can~~ <sup>done</sup> well got to do."

<sup>every</sup> The crew came, a scratch crew picked up in Halifax in a hurry, for three weeks the interior of 909 gave forth the sounds of men in struggle with wood and metal. The new captain <sup>looked</sup> on Johnnie Wister with some doubt at first. The ~~man~~ <sup>engineer</sup> looked as old, as crazy as the dredge itself. But the man actually knew where everything was, the parts carefully laid away in grease, all those important nuts and bolts and fittings whose fate in laid-up dredges is to disappear. And he knew where ~~all these things belonged~~. Under his eager direction the bowels of 909 were drawn together once again and made to work.

Port Ballard beheld a phenomenon, 909 actually moving, not from one political wharf to another but down the harbor itself, towed by a tug and flanked by a pair of iron scows. <sup>Behind her the wharf</sup> looked naked and forlorn, as if a large and unusually well-painted part of it had <sup>suddenly</sup> floated away. Port Ballard, without warning, <sup>seemed to have</sup> lost its best and oldest joke. <sup>Over</sup> the harbor bar 909 halted, put down her spuds and gripped the bottom. Johnnie went trembling to his levers, <sup>fearful</sup> for his old ~~knack~~ <sup>skill</sup> with them. ~~Would it come back after all this idle time?~~ It took several working hours, it cost the scows a resounding thump or two as the bucket came down too far or too fast, but the ~~knack~~ <sup>skill</sup> came back. Johnnie sweated over the levers, his pale blue eyes ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> anxious in the grey unshaven face, but there was a ~~triumphant~~ <sup>triumphant</sup> smile on his lips. He wanted to shout. He wanted to dance. He glanced back towards Port Ballard, <sup>to</sup> the huddle of roofs and wharf-ends where the river entered salt water. He shook his fist. He cried aloud, "Laugh now, damn you, all of you! ~~Didn't I always say she was kept here for a purpose? And here it is. The~~ <sup>a</sup> war -- a war, that's what she was kept here for. The Navy, ~~it was the Navy sent for her and put her on the job at last. At last!~~"

The captain surveyed him curiously, a little uneasily. Cracked, he thought. A good enough engineer, familiar with this ~~old museum~~ <sup>old</sup>, that's a cinch, but cracked <sup>alright</sup>, a bit, no doubt of that. Oh well. ~~He was no worse than the dredge itself, at that.~~

(Printer: leave double space here)

*The harbor bar was quite narrow and the channel was not wide. Working day & night the old dredge made good progress.*

The job was almost done, the channel was almost clear to twenty feet, when early one October morning the lightkeeper on ~~Bar Point~~ <sup>Point</sup> came out of his white wooden dwelling to hoist a black drum and cone on the yard-arm of the signal mast. It was a fine Fall day. The chimneys of Port Ballard, two miles up the estuary, smoked peacefully in the sunshine. The symbols on the lighthouse mast were noted aboard 909.

"Hello," the captain said, <sup>regarding the symbols on the mast-heads.</sup> "That's a storm wannin', ain't it?"

And the down means it's a by one

"Yes," Johnnie said. "And the cone's pointin' down -- that means a <sup>gale</sup> buster from the east. Better shift up into Port Ballard."

"Itchin' to get back to that ol' wharf ~~spurs~~, ain't you?" returned the captain amiably.

"Look," Johnnie mumbled. "The bay's wide open to the sou'east."

"~~#####~~ What d'you mean, 'wide open'? There's the breakwater, Johnnie. Shelter there. That's what they built it for. I'll get the tug to pull us ~~XXX~~ out clear of the bar and into the lee of the breakwater. We can get bottom there with the spuds -- I've seen the harbor chart -- and if it'll make you feel any safer I'll put out the anchors too, all four of 'em. There we'll be, hooked to the bottom like a cat to a carpet, and the breakwater between us and the wind. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~g." Then let it blow." He turned to hail the tug and make these arrangements.

As the tug moved 909 and the two scows into the lee of the breakwater Johnnie caught the captain's arm again.

"Moon," he said. "Moon's nigh full. Come a sou'easter and a full-moon tide, you'll see things fly. I know. I ain't been here in salt water all these years for nothin'." The captain shrugged. He was looking at the breakwater, ~~now~~ <sup>now</sup> looming close and large between the ~~XXXX~~ river mouth and the sea.

"I seen the sea goin' clean over that, like it wasn't there, in a sou'easter," Johnnie said. "And here 'tis Fall, the hurricane season."

"This ain't the West Indies," chuckled the captain. He was a St. Lawrence river man himself and he had a freshwater man's opinion of saltwater yarns. The breakwater was of reinforced steel and concrete and it ~~stood~~ <sup>stood</sup> well into the bay. Moreover it stood twelve feet above ordinary spring tides, and its top was flat and wide enough to make a favorite parking place for Port Ballard cars on balmy summer nights.

A low grey scud drew in from the south and covered the autumn sky. Rain fell lightly, for a time, then stopped, and then came down in a deluge. A long low swell began to roll into the estuary. It curled around the end of the breakwater and set up a rocking motion in the tug, the dredge and the scows. 909 lifted and dropped hard on her spuds once or twice, and the captain ordered Johnnie to draw them up clear. She lay comfortably to her anchors then, all four of them. <sup>the Captain said,</sup>

The swell increased, and suddenly the wind came swooping up the bay, lifting spray from the swags as it came and driving it in a fine mist through the harbor and the town. By the middle of the morning the estuary was a shrieking white froth. The growing gale whistled through the highgirders of 909's A-frame and ~~set the heavy steel stays humming moaning in bass voices.~~ set up a deep bass moaning in the great steel stays of the boom. But the house and hull were sheltered by the solid bulk of the breakwater. The crew amused themselves with poker, and looked up from time to time to watch the rain cascading down the window panes.

Johnnie remained ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> the top, where he could look over the breakwater ~~top~~ and watch the sea. The tide ~~XXXX~~ was getting low when the wind began. Finally it turned. As the flow increased so did the gale, piling the sea into the river mouth in steep lumpy waves that came quicly on each other's heels. Borne on the wind Johnnie could hear the dismal clang of the harbor fairway buoy, somewhere in the path to seaward. In Port Ballard by mid-afternoon trees ~~were blowing down~~ that had stood for centiries were blowing down. At four o'clock the steeple of the Baptist church, the tallest in town, ~~XXXX~~ toppled into the graveyard and demolished twenty tombstones. At five o'clock shingles were flying in the streets, half a dozen ~~plate glass windows~~ <sup>plate glass windows</sup> blew in and opened the stores to the full cataract of the rain and wind. At half-past five the steam laundry lost its tall brick chimney. By that time most of the inhabitants of Port Ballard were huddling in their cellars, feelling the house frames shudder in the gusts, hearing the great wind rushing through the streets like an ~~invasion~~ <sup>invasion</sup> of mad locomotives. It was a hurricane, alright, they said; the worst in fifty years, in a hundred years, in the whole history of the town. All this time the tide was coming in.

At six o'clock the tide had risen almost ~~level~~ <sup>close to</sup> level with the breakwater top. The skipper of the tug bawled ~~XXXX~~ through a megaphone that he was pulling up his hook and making for the inner harbor. He offered to take the dredge in tow, a brave ~~offer~~ <sup>offer</sup> in view of the tumult on the harbor bar. The captain of 909 ~~would have~~ <sup>would have</sup> looked at the harbor bar and would have none of it. He was frightened now, <sup>enough</sup>

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the Captain said

with rich

Port Ballard

seas on the

but it was too late for rgerets. He stood on the deck, in the full blast of the wind and rain, shaking his head to the tug skipper's offer, and finally waving him off with a hand in which, forgotten, the last deal of poker cards was still firmly clutched. He pinned his faith on the breakwater, the good, long, solid breakwater, and a ~~once calm, now desperate,~~ <sup>the chance of a</sup> belief that the tide and sea could rise no further. <sup>more</sup>

The tug steamed away. As she made the passage of the harbor bar she leaped and plunged like a rodeo pony in the great seas piling up and breaking there, but she made the passage right enough, and disappeared in the spume beyond. The dredge cook, an unimaginative man, had prepared supper in his stolid way and the crew sat down to eat. They kept their eyes on the windward windows and ate uneasily, for as the tide rose their floating home lifted and exposed itself more and more to the blast coming ~~in from the sea,~~ <sup>with gusts</sup> and they looked at the shrinking lee of the breakwater incredulously, as if the thing for some preposterous reason were sinking <sup>under its own weight</sup> towards the harbor bottom. Only two nights ago ~~it~~ it had stood tall and massive, dotted with the parked cars of spooning couples from Port Ballard. Now it was ~~nothing~~ but a ~~man-made~~ <sup>long</sup> reef on which the heavy seas were breaking and leaping in white explosions, tossing spray clean across that ~~spattered on the dredge-house walls and windows.~~ <sup>and splashing</sup>

The dredge had only ~~two~~ two feet or so of freeboard, and the seas washing around the end of the breakwater had begun to sweep her deck. But the hull was tight. Johnnie sounded the well frequently and found no water.

"What time's high tide?" the captain said in a shaken voice.

"Eight o'clock," Johnnie said coldly.

"The wind's got to shift soon, eh? ~~These~~ hurricanes -- when they get to the worst you're right in the eye of the storm and the wind comes round the other way -- ain't that right? That'll give us an off-shore wind and blow the sea down, won't it?"

*that's right*

For answer Johnnie jerked a thumb at the barometer on the cabin wall. It stood at 29. The captain gave it a rap and the needle flickered a fraction lower.

"We ain't seen the worst yet," Johnnie said.

By seven o'clock the breakwater had disappeared under the enormous tide built up by the maniac strength of the wind. Far away to leeward, at the end of the harbor bar, huge broken seas were leaping and ~~aplashing~~ <sup>plunging</sup> amongst the trees in the little park on Lighthouse Point, washing the green-painted benches before them like bits of driftwood, hurling stones, some as big as footballs, into Park Road itself. At twenty minutes past seven a long green fold of the tortured North Atlantic rose <sup>above</sup> before the vanished breakwater, climbed, towered, curled and toppled upon the anchored dredge, like a sudden Niagara. It smote the brightly painted house, ~~and~~ smashed every window on the seaward side, and poured a torrent inside the full width of every window frame.

The crew uttered a chorus of shouts, screams, oaths, prayers, and the more active of them seized ~~boards~~ <sup>boards</sup>, hammers, nails, and attempted to close the empty window frames, knee-deep in cold Atlantic water swashing about inside. Johnnie flew to start his steam pumps, and then, glancing to leeward, he saw the town of Port Ballard apparently afloat itself, and moving steadily towards the dredge. Illusion! It came to him at once that the great wave had broken the windward anchors of the dredge, and that she was now drifting over the other two. He turned to the captain, mouthg words in the uproar of the wind, and the frightened crew. But ~~now~~ <sup>now</sup> already the dredge was over the other anchors, was past them. As the cables came taut, 909 brought up with a ponderous jerk that parted them both as a grocer parts the string on his parcels. In another moment 909 was ~~free~~ <sup>free</sup>, ~~and~~ <sup>remained</sup> ~~falling~~ <sup>on the deck</sup> on the ~~waves~~ <sup>waves</sup> and making straight for the harbor bar.

The wind's pressure on the great boom and dipper-bucket swung the dredge roughly stern to the sea, not that it mattered. She was vulnerable from all sides, now, she was like a raft that bore a riddled box, a still nicely painted box, that drifted rapidly towards the bar, where the tide and the incoming seas were tossing up walls and towers of green water capped with dirty yellow froth. The crew huddled together in the pilothouse, not crying any more, not fumbling any more with nails and boards,

*drifting*



towards the other side of the <sup>harbor</sup> river.

On that side ~~of the river~~ the familiar mud-flats opposite the town were now lost <sup>under</sup> in the deep flood. The sea had even risen several feet over the marsh beyond and was washing at the ~~roots of~~ the railway line. Johnnie Wister, alone in the deserted pilot-house, peered hard in that direction, but ~~of course~~ <sup>he</sup> could see nothing. <sup>Further</sup> inshore he could hear a terrific ~~metal~~ <sup>metal</sup> clanging, and <sup>he</sup> guessed <sup>exactly</sup> correctly what it was. One or perhaps both of the runaway scows, <sup>new</sup> lifting and falling amongst the boulders by the edge of the railway line and ~~knocking~~ <sup>knocking</sup> ringing through the storm like ~~iron~~ <sup>iron</sup> gongs. ~~XNAXXNAXXNAXX~~

The ~~centre~~ <sup>centre</sup> of the storm <sup>had</sup> passed ~~at last~~, and now the wind was <sup>coming</sup> around the other way, blowing as hard as ever. As 909 sailed over the flooded flats Johnnie made a last attempt to save her. He released the brakes on the <sup>boom</sup> cables, heard a shriek and a whirr, felt the jar of ~~ten~~ <sup>ten</sup> tons of dipper-bucket striking bottom. For a minute or two she held, clutching the bottom with her iron fist. Then she lifted on another mighty swell and came down, stiff-armed, on the dipper. The strain of ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> was too much for the tired old cables over the A-frame, ~~They had~~ corroded at the bull-heads, eaten out beneath the babbitt in all those years of idleness. The A-frame bent forward, drooped, and ~~gave up the ghost~~ <sup>gave up the ghost</sup>. and its weight, added to the ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> now unsupported tons of the boom and dipper, tore the turntable clean out of the forward deck. The whole iron mass went overboard into the yeasty sea; and the hull, eased of the burden it had borne so long, bobbed up at the ~~forward~~ <sup>forward</sup> end like a released cork. There was no hope for 909 now. The mighty <sup>wind</sup> ~~wind~~ pressing on the house thrust her over the flats and over a ~~large~~ <sup>large</sup> part of the flooded marsh, where the broken waves from the bar were romping <sup>in</sup> ~~in~~ freely. ~~as if glad of a place to spread themselves at last~~. And there stood a tooth of Port Ballard granite, waiting for her.

(Printer; leave double space here)

When the sea went down in the morning the old dredge lay high and dry ~~on the~~ <sup>on the</sup> ravaged marsh, like the Ark on Ararat, with an acre of ~~sodden~~ <sup>sodden</sup> salt-grass around her ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> the great granite tooth through her belly. The water had run out of her through the rent in the ~~hull~~ <sup>hull</sup>. When the captain and crew and the men from Port Ballard reached her shortly after noon ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~, wading through the ~~marsh~~ <sup>marsh</sup> pools and the sodden grass, they found what was left of Johnnie Wister on the engineroom floor. His hands and mouth were full of sand, and across his skinny chest lay a broad ribbon of kelp like the sash of a sea-order.

<sup>Looked.</sup> "How did he look?" asked the Port Ballard ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ editor later, busy <sup>with his</sup> pencil.

<sup>Johnny</sup> "Well," <sup>said</sup> the captain. He tipped up his <sup>cap</sup> and scratched his head. "That ain't the word, <sup>exactly</sup>. Funny thing, he looked sort of, well, satisfied." ~~Beautiful? Something like that, and satisfied etc.~~

~~Funny thing. He looked sorta satisfied.~~

You may chuck it a funny thing to say. But he looked sorta peaceful, no, that's not the word. Satisfied. He looked satisfied."