

1889

Scotland and Helena

Harbour Mishap at Greenock. Yesterday morning, while a horse and cart were conveying 6 creels of sugar on the quay at Albert Harbour, one of the wheels of the cart caught a mooring stanchion, which caused horse and cart to fall over into the water. The poor animal made desperate efforts to free itself, and was successful in casting off all the harness except the collar, which, being attached to the laden cart, held its head under water until it was drowned. The dead animal and the cart were raised during the forenoon by the Greenock harbour diver.

--Glasgow Caledonian, June 22

To say the truth, it was not how I expected--stepping off toward America past a drowned horse.

You would remember too well, Rob, that I already was of more than one mind about the Atlantic Ocean. And here we were, not even within sniff of the big water, not even out onto the oily River Clyde yet, and here this heap of creature that would make, what, four times the sum total of Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill, here on the Greenock dock it lay gawping up at us with a wild dead eye. A situation like that asks a lot of a man who cannot swim. Or at least who never has.

But depend on you, Rob. In those times you could make light of it all. "See now, Angus. So long as we don't let them hitch a cart to us we'll be safe as saints."

"A good enough theory," I had to agree, "as far as it goes."

Then came commotion, the grieved sugar carter and several dockmen and a blindered team of horses being brought to drag their dead ilk away. The rest of us were waved along by a whiskery geezer from the Cumbrae Steamship Line: "You're for the James Watt? Right ahead, the queue there, New York at its other end." Onto line we got with our fellow steerage ticket-holders beside the bulk of the steamship. Our fellow Scotland-leavers, each and every of us openly staring sidelong at this black iron island that was to carry us to America. Even you were squinting a bit, Rob, as if calculating how it was that this much metal could float.

Over our heads deckhands were going through the motions of some groaning chore I couldn't begin to figure. "Now if this was fresh water, like," sang out one above the dirge of their task. "I'd wager ye a guinea this harbor'd right now taste sweet as treacle."

"But it's not, ye bleedin' daftie. The bleedin' Clyde is tide salt from the Tail of the Bank the full way up to bleedin' Glasgow, now en't it? And what to hell kind of concoction are ye going to get when ye mix sugar and salt?"

"Ask that bedamned cook," put in a third. "All the time he must be doing it, else why's our mess taste like what the China dog walked away from?" As emphasis he spat a throat gob over the side into the

harbor water, and my stomach joined my heart in doubt about this journey of ours. A week and a half of the Atlantic and uncertain food besides?

The steerage queue seemed eternal. Seagulls mocked the line of us with awful cries. A mist verging on rain dimmed out the Ayr hills beyond Greenock's uncountable roofs. I started to say aloud that if Noah had taken this much time to load the ark only the giraffes would have lasted through the deluge, but that was remindful of the drowned horse again. I knew I oughtn't, but instead I turned and looked up the river, east up the great broad trough of the Clyde. East into yesterday, may as well say. For it was only the day before that the pair of us had been hurled almost all the way across Scotland by train from Nethermuir into Glasgow. A further train across the Clyde bridge and westward alongside mile upon mile of the river's tideflats and their smell. Then here came Greenock to us, all its shipyards and docks, the chimney stalks of its sugar refineries, its sharp church spires and high above them its municipal tower of crisp new stone the color of pie crust. It took just that first look to know Greenock was a more going town than our Nethermuir could be in ten centuries. For night, we bedded where the emigration agent had advised, the Model Boarding House. Which may have been a model of something but boarding wasn't it. Then this morning, Greenock true to reputation waking into rain but every Scotsman has seen rain before and so off we set, to ask our way to the Cumbrae Line's moorage, to the James Watt, and to be told in a Clydeside gabble it took the both of us to understand:

"The Jemmy, lads? Ye wan' tae gi doon tae Pa'rick Stree'."

And there at the foot of Patrick Street was the Albert Harbor, there was the green-funneled steam swimmer to America, there were the two of us.

For I can't but think of you then, Rob. In all that we said to each other, before and thereafter, that step from our old land to our new was flat fact with you. The Atlantic Ocean and the American continent all the way across to Montana were but the width of a cottage's threshold, so far as you ever let on. No second guessing, never a might-have-done-instead out of our Rob. A silence too total, I realize at last. You had family and a trade to look back at and I had neither, yet I was the one giving puppy looks back up the Clyde to yesterday. Man, man, what I would give to know. Under the stream of words with which we talked each other into our long step to America, what were your deep reasons?

I am late about asking, yes. Years and years and years late. But when was such asking ever not late? And by the time I learned there was so much within you that I did not know and you were learning the same of me, we had greater questions for each other, did we not?

A soft push on my shoulder. When I turned to your touch you were grinning, that Barclay mix of amusement and estimation. We had reached the head of the queue, some other whiskery geezer in Cumbræ uniform was instructing us to find Steerage Number One, go forward toward the bow, descend those stairs the full way down, watch our footing and our heads...

You stayed ~~where~~ you stood, though, facing me instead of the steamship.

You still had the grin on, but your voice was as serious as I ever had heard it.

"Truth now, Angus. Are we both for it?"

I filled myself with breath, the last I intended to draw of the air of the pinched old earth called Scotland.

"Both," I made myself say, and up the gangplank we climbed.

Robert Burns Barclay: that was Rob on the passenger list of the James Watt, 22 June of the year 1889. Angus Alexander McCaskill, myself. The both of us, nineteen and green as the cheese of the moon and trying our double dammedest not to show it.

Scotch Heaven

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5 spaces more*

Prophetic indeed was the man who uttered, "You can fight armies or disease or trespass, but the settler never." Word comes of yet another settlement of homesteaders in this burgeoning province of ours. Who can ever doubt, with the influx which is peopling a childless land and planting schools by the side of cattle corrals, that Teton County is destined to be the most populous in Montana? Of this latest colony, situated into the foothills a dozen or so miles west of Gros Ventre, it is said so many of the arrivees originated in the land of the kilt and the bagpipe that ~~Gors~~ Ventrians call the elevated new neighborhood Scotch Heaven.

--Choteau Quill, July 00, 1891

now, Angus

a hair more...

"Tenderly...up a bit with your end...almost there...there.

Ready to drop?"

"Let's do."

With a sound like a big box lid closing, the log fell into place, its notched ends meeting with the notches of logs at each end *of the cabin wall.*

"Well?" Rob demanded. "Does it fit?"

*The wall
was 00
high.*

I carry that in my head each time I ride past Breed Butte. Not all that much of a load, I suppose, but it adds up over time.

MORE TO COME

A spring seeped from under a small brow of the butte, like a weeping eye. But Rob wouldn't hear of building up there by it; the only site that would do for him was a hundred paces below that, a flat shelf of the butteside.

"You'll carry water every day of your life, is that the plan?"

rather

"There'll be a rainbarrel at each corner of the house, to help."

"They'd better be the size of brewery vats."

"Besides, you'll see the day when water runs in a pipe from that spring into the house."

MORE TO COME

I ran a finger around the inside leather of my hat, wiping the sweat out.

Ninian drives team of
matched bays

School board business, this could only be.

Ninian pulled his bays to a halt and ^{announced} ~~said~~ down to me: "News;

noans

Angus. We've lost our teacher. George Frew is marrying

her in ~~two weeks~~ a month's time. Maybe she'll teach him to talk."

"So we've an advertisement to write, have we? Come down and
come in, I'll--"

Ninian inserted, "In point of fact, ~~Angus~~ Willy and ^{already} I have

located a new teacher. Haven't we, ^{now,} Willy?" Willy dipped his head yes.

"More than that," ^{even,} Ninian swept on, "we've voted to hire." Willy
dipped again.

I was peeved to hear this. By damn, I was more than that. These
two old puffed-up whiskerheads. "Well, then. Since the ^{pair} ~~two~~ of you

high-
handed

are running the school board so aptly without me, we haven't anything
more to talk about, ^{Don't let me keep you here, busy persons like yourselves.} now have we."

Ninian winked to Willy. "The man doesn't see it."

"What is to see?" I blazed. "You two parade in here and--"

"Angus," Willy ^{put in} ~~said~~ mildly, "It ^{is} you we voted to hire."

prairie. Geography was something I knew, but colors on a map in no way convey the distances of this earth. America seemed to go on and on, and our keenness for Montana and Lucas Barclay gained with every mile.

"He'll see himself in you," I said out of nowhere to Rob. I meant Lucas, his uncle; and I meant what I was saying, too. I have seen it happen any number of times. Rob will crack out a remark that draws dubious looks. Then a second, which starts a smile or two. Then he turns the conversation earnest, and by the time all is done, his hearers are ready to make him Lord Mayor. The Barclays all had a sauce to them. ^{you ed. resist} Even Rob's young sister Adair, if you ^{slip of a girl,} teased her with "Hello, you" right back came "Hello yourself," ^{angus Mac} Lucas Barclay had that ^{identical} same burnish that glowed on Rob. Years and years back, some afternoon my mother had sent me on an errand to my father at the wheelwright shop, and I found my father and Lucas and Rob's father John in the woodyard, eyeing out oak for spokes. I startled myself and them by popping around a stack of planks into the midst of their deliberation, and I remember as clear as now the pair of bright Barclay faces and my father's pale one. Was that the final time I'd seen Lucas before his leaving ^{at} Scotland, that instant of rosy grin at a flummoxed boy? Most probably. The lasting one, at least.

"I hope Lucas doesn't inspect too close, then," Rob tossed off. "Else we may get the door of the Great Maybe slammed in our faces."

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to
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For I was
remembering me

use ~~the~~
transcript

"He'll see himself in you," I said out of nowhere. ^{to Rob} I meant Lucas, his uncle; and I meant what I was saying, too. Lucas Barclay had that same burnish that glowed on Rob. Years and years back, some afternoon my mother had sent me on an errand to my father at the wheelwright shop, and I found my father and Lucas and Rob's father John in the woodyard, eyeing out oak for spokes. I startled myself and them by popping around a stack of planks into the midst of their deliberation, and I remember as clear as now the pair of bright Barclay faces and my father's pale one. Was that the final time I'd seen Lucas before his leaving Scotland, that instant of rosy grin at a flummoxed boy? Most probably. ~~It was~~ ^g the lasting one, at least.

Rob -
I had seen it happen as - Jimmy, A had seen it

~~I~~ "I hope ^{Lucas} ~~he~~ doesn't inspect too close, then," Rob tossed off. "Else we may get the door of the Great Maybe slammed in our faces."

"Man," I decided to tease, "who could ever slam a door to you? Shut with firmness and barricade it to keep you from their maidens, maybe, but--"

Rob gave my shoulder a push. "I can't wait to see the surprise on Lucas," he said laughing. "Seven years. I can't wait."

"I wonder ^{just} what his life is like, there."

^{away until day after tomorrow}
"You can wonder ~~for another week or so~~ ^{one day}. Then you can see the man himself and know."

In truth, we knew little ^{more than - least} about Lucas Barclay in these Montana years. ^{of his} There had been a first letter or two from Lucas to Nethermuir, telling that he had made his way to the Montana city of

Helena and of his mining endeavor there, but nobody who knew Lucas expected him to spend time over paper and pen. After his letters quit, a more characteristic Lucas message continued to arrive, each Christmas since. A hundred-dollar bill, alone in its envelope. The Montana money, Rob's family called it. Lucas is still Lucas, they said with affection and rue; as freehanded a man as God ever set loose. ^{Indeed, no generous side of} It was Lucas's generosity that made Rob know we could walk in on him ^{like this} and be ^{most by} welcome. ^{Having} I had spent ~~all~~ my life around Barclays ^{I had seen too} and knew that is how they were, right enough. Shipwreck a Barclay on Crusoe's island, then shipwreck another Barclay there ten years later, and the first would only say to the second, What kept you from visiting this long while?

Can I make you know what it meant to Rob and me to have this uncle of his as our forerunner? As our American edition of Croft, waiting and willing to instruct? Oh, I won't deny that we found it sufficiently impressive that money was sent as Christmas cards ^{from} in ^{then} America. But the true trove over there, we considered, was Lucas himself. Put yourself where we were, young and stepping off to a new world, and now tell me whether or not you want to have a Lucas Barclay ahead, knowing where the best land beckons, what a fair price is for anything, whether they do so-and-so in Montana just as we are used to in Scotland, whether they ever do thus-and -such at all. Bold is one thing and reckless is another, yes?

in our
dec in
for amca,
R ob & I

I thought at
+ end of I'll
depend it yet,
Lucas Barclay
was our ticket of
leave

Helena. Helena looked as if it had been put into place last week

and might be moved around again next week. ^{Helena} It had three times the

in people of Nethermuir and twenty times the area. It has aspects of

several different civic
onto

A castellated edge, great houses
with sharp-twd
roofs,

went right up the start of the mountains around. Then there was a

every with evidently ~~waiting to~~ be filled
shambles of all kinds of structures and gaping spots where new fashions
between which

of habitation had been thought up; and then a great raw gash of gulch,

in which sat ~~an~~ fine block after block of fine red brick buildings.

Queenstown harbor, and the Jemmy was underway once more.

My first night in steerage, on our way to Queenstown, already had shown that I was not born to sleep on water. The berth was both too short and too narrow for me, so that I had to kink myself radically. Meanwhile Rob, who could snooze through Judgment Day, was composing a nose song below me. But discomfort and snores had been the least of my wakefulness, for in that first grief of a night--oh yes, and the Jemmy letting forth an iron groan whenever its bow met the waves some certain way--my mind rang with everything I did not want to think of. Casting myself from Nethermuir. The drowned horse Ginger. Walls of this moaning ship, so close. The coffin confines of my bedamned berth. I rose in heart-rattling startlement once when I accidentally touched one hand against the other and felt moisture there. My own sweat.

And now, after Queenstown and with only ocean ahead for a week and a day, this second seagoing night had even less sleep in it than that first. I lay crammed into the berth trying to put my mind anywhere--multiplication, geography, poetry--other than Steerage Number One. But what insisistently came back to me again was Nethermuir. Old grayrock town Nethermuir, with your High Street wandering down the hill the way a drowsy cow would, to come to the River Carrou. Be what it may, a fence, a house, a street, for a thousand years we Scots had been fashioning it of stone, and from below along River Street, Nethermuir, you as a town looked as if you

had been chiseled out complete rather than erected. The accusing spires of your churches. Your five clock towers that meted our lives with anvil clangs. I thought at the time that you looked down your stone nose at those of us of River Street; and I still think so. Weave my linen for me, you said to us. Make the paper for my hand to move on as I keep my prosperous accounts. Harvest my grain and hay in the fields I own all around. But River Street was beginning to say things back, wasn't it. The linen workers were learning the word union; trying to get 8 shillings a week. The papermakers were questioning six days of work every week of their lives. Even the farm laborers were bargaining harder than ever at the rascal fair. Sad, that a handsome town and a striving folk could not say better to each other. Well, now Rob and I were having our say back to you, weren't we, and doubly--America; Montana. My mind went to those, too. What would the place Montana be like? Alp after alp after alp, as the Alberta adherent assured us? Five times the size of all of Scotland, Crofutt defined, The Territory of Montana stands as a tremendous land as yet virtually untapped. How was it going to be to live within such distances? To be pioneers in filling such emptiness? At least we can be our own men there, Rob and I had told each other repeatedly. And now what kind of men was that?

But in that stifling steerage berth neither worked for long, Nethermuir nor Montana. Both kept reminding me that at the moment I was between. It was water that was solidly on my mind, under my

mind, all around, the water called Atlantic. And what night journey of thoughts could ever cope with that?

Where I ended up was the past. The past past, so to speak, back beyond myself. For with me on this voyage, into this unquiet night, had come the fact that I was the first McCaskill since my father's grandfather to go upon the sea. His voyage was only eleven miles, but the most famous eleven miles in Great Britain of the time and he voyaged them over and over and over again. He was one of the stone masons of Arbroath who worked with the great engineer Robert Stevenson to build the Bell Rock lighthouse. On the clearest of days I have seen that lighthouse from the Arbroath harbor and have heard the story of the years of workships and cranes and winches and giant blocks of granite and sandstone, and to this moment I don't know how they could do what was done out there, build a hundred-foot tower of stone on a reef that vanished deep beneath every high tide. But there it winks at the world even today, impossible Bell Rock, standing in the North Sea announcing the Firth of Forth and Edinburgh beyond, and my great-grandfather's toolmarks are on its stones. Ever since him, Alexander has been the first or second name of a McCaskill in each of our generations. Ever since him, we have possessed a saga to measure ourselves against. The one family story my father would ever tell was this one of his grandfather at Bell Rock. On a day in 1807 when Alexander McCaskill and the other stonemen were excavating the foundation for the lighthouse, they concluded work and gathered their tools as the tide began to seep

in. Stevenson, superintending from the reef's highest ledge, stood peering across the hazed water. I knew there was wrong as soon as I saw Mr. Stevenson, my great-grandfather's words. He was pale as the cat's milk. A boat from the attending ship had been delayed for some reason, was nowhere in sight. On Bell Rock just then were thirty-two men; boats enough to crowd aboard only twenty-four. The coming flood tide would bury Bell Rock beneath twelve feet of water. Stevenson the great engineer of the Northern Lights was going to need to calculate something miraculous. Meantime, other calculation was occurring. The pickmen--they were a rough lot anyway--flocked right around one of the boats, their implements casually and dangerously at hand. The forgemen silently counted their own number, the stonemen theirs. Nothing was said, but every man on Bell Rock steadfastly watched Stevenson prowl on his lookout ledge. The wind freshened, helping the tide to rise. The stone mason Alexander McCaskill saw Robert Stevenson turn to speak to the men. This I'll swear to, his mouth moved just as if he was saying, but no words came out. Stevenson dropped to a rockpool, cupped his hands to bring moisture to his fear-dried mouth. As he lapped, there was a shout. A boat! There, a boat! We almost ran out onto the water to hail it. Out of the haze emerged a pilot boat bringing the week's mail, and rescue.

I lay there in the Atlantic-plowing Jemmy trying to think myself back into that other manhood, to leave myself, damp sackful of apprehension that I was, and to feel from the skin inward what it

would have been like to be Alexander McCaskill of Bell Rock eighty years ago. Besides that story my family's one scrap of our historic man was his ticket of freedom from the press gangs which otherwise would have swept him into the navy to fight Napoleon, and I had it with me here now, carefully pasted inside the back cover of Croft: Alexander Angus McCaskill, seaman in the service of the Honourable Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses, aged 26 years, 6 feet high, red of hair, light complexion, marked with the smallpox. (signed) Robert Stevenson, Engineer for Northern Lights, 7 August 1807. That height and hair and complexion I have, although thankfully not the pocked face. The same set of names, just swapped about. But employ my imagination to its utmost, I could not see myself doing what Alexander Angus McCaskill did in his three Bell Rock years, live shipboard for months, travel each day to set Arbroath stone onto reef stone. Feed me first to the flaming hounds of Hell. My fear of water had no logic, no beginning, and evidently no end. It simply was in me, like life's blood. How does it happen that we can come to this earth with unchosen hazards already in us? The medaled soldier cried, here's battle's truth:/Fear ached ^{within} in me like a rotten tooth. For all I knew, my great-grandfather was afraid of the dark or whimpered at the sight of a spider, but any such perturbances were whited out by time. Only his fearless accomplishment was left to sight. The generations of us dangle from him and his achievement, all McCaskills since had derived from that one bold man who went to perform stonework in the worst of the ocean around

at a time

1

Scotland. Like seeing a hoisted load hanging for eighty years from a single solitary rope, when you looked at it that way. My father remembered the teasing from old Alexander, And where would you be, Alexander the Second, if old Bell Rock had drowned me? Where, if? It was a question up there with Shakespeare's best. Where would I be right now if my father had not been the smith for John and Lucas Barclay's wheelwright shop? Where, if the McCaskills and Barclays had not been braided together that way we were and Rob and I had not grown up side by side, where--

I was noticing something I devoutly did not want to. The Jemmy seemed to be groaning more often.

I held myself dead-still to be sure.

Yes, oh sweet Christ and every dimpled disciple, yes: my berth was starting to sway and dive.

I heard Rob wake with a sleepy "What?" just before full tumult set in. The Jemmy stumbled against every wave, conked its iron beak onto the ocean, rose to tumble again. Barrels, trunks, tins, whatever was movable flew from side to side, and we poor human things clung in our berths to keep from flying too. What was out there? My blood sped as I tried to imagine the boiling oceanic weather which could turn a steamship into an iron cask, ^{like this} Cloudcaps darker than night itself. High lumpy waves, foaming as they came. Wind trying to lift the sea into the air with it. Rain, a downward flood. ¶ In an awful way, the storm tranced a person. At least thirty times in three minutes I retraced in my mind every stairstep

from deck down into Steerage Number One; which was to say down into the basement of the titanic Atlantic, down into the country where humans are hash for fish.

Then the Jemmy dropped into a pause where we did not teeter-totter so violently. We were havened between crags of the sea. Rob's face swung up into view and he began, "See now, Angus, that all could have been worse. A ship's like a wagon, as long as it creaks it holds, and--" The steamship shuddered sideways and tipped ponderously at the same time, and Rob's face snapped back into his berth. Now the ship grunted and creaked constantly--you could positively feel the Jemmy trying to flee this maelstrom--and these grindstone sounds of its exertions drew screams from women and children in the midship compartments, and yes, from more than a few men as well, whenever the vessel rolled far over. Someone among the officers had a voice the size of a cannon shot and even all the way down where we were could be heard his blasts of "BOS'N!" and "ALL HANDS!" Those did not improve a nonswimmer's frame of mind, either.

But nothing to do but hold onto the side of the berth, hold myself as level as possible on a crooked ocean. Nothing, that is, until somebody made the first retching sound.

That alarm instantly reached all our gullets. I knew what Grofutt advised. Any internal discomfort whilst aboard ship is best ameliorated by the fresh air of deck. Face the world of air; you will be new again. If I'd had the strength I'd have hurled Grofutt up onto that crashing deck. As it was, I lay as still as possible

and strove not think of what was en route from my stomach to my mouth.

Steerage Number One's vomiting was phenomenal. Meals from a month ago were trying to come out of us.

I heaved up, Rob heaved up, every steerage soul heaved up. Our poor storm-bounced guts strained, strained, strained some more. The stench of it all and the foulness of my mouth kept making me sicker yet. Until I remembered the limes.

I fumbled them out and took a desperate suck of one. Another I thrust down to the bunk below. "Rob, here. Try this."

His hand found mine and the round rind in it.

"Eat at a time like now? Angus, you're--"

"Suck it. For the taste." I could see white faces in the two bunks across from us and tossed a lime apiece over there as well. The Jemmy rose and fell, rose and fell, and stomachs began to be heard from again in all precincts of the compartment except ours.

Bless you, Madam Irish. Maybe it was that the limes put their stern taste in place of the putrid. Maybe that they puckered our mouths as if with drawstrings. Maybe only that any remedy seemed better than none. Whatever effect it may have been, Rob and I and the other limejuiced pair managed to abstain from the rest of the general retching and spewing. We could never be mistaken for well, but we were not heaving our socks up.

I suppose it was not so much of an ocean gale as those events go. The Atlantic out for a summer evening trot. But that storm was

more than enough for us in steerage. By dawn the Atlantic had got the commotion out of its system and the Jemmy ploughed calmly along. Even I conceded that we probably were going to live, now.

"Mates, what's all this muss?" The steward put in an appearance and chivvied us into sluicing and scrubbing the compartment. For breakfast Rob and I put shaky cups of tea into ourselves and I had another lime, just for luck. Then Rob returned to his berth, claiming there was lost sleep to be found there, and I headed up for deck.

I knew I was still giddy from the night of storm. But as I began to walk my first lap of the deck, the scene that came into my eyes made me all the more woolheaded.

By now the weather was clement, so that matter was no longer foremost in me. And I knew, the way you know a map fact, that the night's steaming progress must have carried us out of sight of land on all sides. But the ocean. There my senses stood themselves on end. The ocean I was not prepared for nor ever could be.

Anywhere my eyes went, water bent away over the curve of the world. Yet at the same time the Jemmy and I were in a vast washbasin, the rims of the Atlantic perfectly evident out there over us. Slow calm waves wherever I faced, only an occasional far one bothering to flash into foam like a white swimmer appearing and disappearing. No savage liquid plains these. This was the lyric sea, absently humming the round ocean and the living air, the blue sky and the mind of man in the assured sameness of the gray and

green play of its waves, in its profound pattern of water always wrinkling, moving, yet other water instantly filling the place..

Up on the deck of the Jemmy that morning with the world turned into purely satin-like water and open sky, I felt like a child who had only been around things small, suddenly seeing there is such a thing as big. All this, and a week of water extending yet ahead. Hour by hour I watched and watched for the secret of how this ocean called Atlantic could endlessly go on. But only discerned more wrinkling water, fresh motion.

"How many voyages do you suppose this tea has made?"

"Definitely enough for retirement."

"Mahogany horse at dinner, Aberdeen cutlet at supper." Which was to say, ^{dried} salt beef and ^{dried} salt haddock. "You wouldn't get such food just anywhere. The potatoes aren't so bad, though."

"Man, potatoes are never so bad. That's the principle of potatoes."

Somewhere there on the Atlantic rests a line, invisible but valid, like Greenwich's meridian or the equator.

East of there, Robert Burns Barclay and Angus Alexander McCaskill were leavers of Scotland; young men on the way from a life. West across that division, older by maybe only a minute, we knew ourselves to be heading to a life. Call it my bridling of the fact that I would sink like a statue if the Jemmy wrecked, that nobody could outswim the old Atlantic anyway and so why nettle

change

myself over it; better a standing fact, I figured, than the crawling fear I had known the first nights in my berth. Call it Rob's avidness for all that awaited us in Montana, land of our own and a fresh world to make our way in and the reunion with Lucas. Call it the penstrokes of change from emigrant to immigrant, call it whatever. But that line through our lives did exist, definite as an incision.

"These ocean nights are dark as the inside of a cow, aren't they?"

"At least, at least."

I slept no better. But you can plunder yourself endlessly when you are nineteen. And during the days--which for me meant from before dawn on--we did our best to occupy ourselves. We very nearly did walk the distance to America, around and around the Jemmy's deck. Rob and I talked incessantly about Montana, we seemed to catch if from each other. He would page through Crofutt, asking me how true I thought this or that could be. We studied and restudied the map of America's railroads, our route across two-thirds of America. Some of it might have been in retaliation against the brags of Manitoba and Alberta our compartment was full of, but...

"Suppose we're Papists yet?" Sunday, and the priest's words were carrying to us from the Irish congregation on the 00 deck.

"I may be. There's no hope for you."

Rob was restless after the first few days of shipboard life, gathering and trading stories.

"Step out here and show us how they do it in Ayrshire."

"I hate to put you to shame, but since you've asked

"Did you hear about the Highlander who wondered why angels don't borrow bagpipes instead of playing trumpets?"

"I trust it was pointed out to him the Devil asked for them first."

"00" Rob was saying, to an audience of Manitoba-manorholders-to be.

I have seen it happen any number of times. Rob will crack out a remark that draws dubious looks. Then a second, which starts a smile or two. Then he turns the conversation earnest, and by the time all is done, his hearers are ready to make him Lord Mayor. The Barclays all had a sauce to them. Even Rob's young sister Adair, if you teased her with "Hello, you" right back came "Hello yourself."

WJP

crack
widens

are
Say you were a stone that blinked once a year, when the sun of

~~draws~~
summer drew the last of winter from you. You would have seen eight

houses where there had been two. You ~~would~~ see the retreat of the

timber on OO Butte, where we sawed lodgepole pines to build those houses.

~~You would have seen~~ Were not stones famously deaf, you would hear the sheep

of one or another of us, maybe mine and Rob's as we grazed them back

But as it is you see
and forth on the slopes of Breed Butte. You see Ninian Duff's lines

of fence, straight ~~is~~ and taut as OO. You see the Erskine boy, Davy,

riding behind the saddle... You see OO's laundry flying from a hayrack,

to the disgust of the other wives. You see the mountains over this

valley, watching like cathedral walls.

well
weather
Buster

miles
of
stone
stars

~~47~~

Scotch Heaven

Prophetic indeed was the man who uttered, "You can fight armies or disease or trespass, but the settler never."

Word comes of yet another settlement of homesteaders in this burgeoning province of ours. Who can ever doubt, with the influx which is peopling a childless land and planting schools by the side of cattle corrals, that Teton County is destined to be the most populous in Montana? Of this latest colony, situated into the foothills a dozen or so miles west of Gros Ventre, it is said so many of the arrivees originated in the land of the kilt and the bagpipe that Gros Ventrians call the elevated new neighborhood Scotch Heaven.

--Choteau Quill, July 00, 1891

Anger

"Tenderly...up a bit with your end...almost there...there.

a hair more

Ready to drop?"

"Let's do."

With a sound like a big box lid closing, the log fell into place, its notched ends meeting with the notches of logs at each end.

well was 00 high

"Well?" Rob demanded. "Does it fit?"

"Snug enough. You could barely toss a cat through the crack."

306

"Naw, you'd be bored fast."

"Whyn't you let me judge that."

"You got better use for your ears."

"Jesus, Stanley--"

All this while I was attempting to pry sense out of Stanley, the tail of my eye was trying to tell me something again. Someone had come up behind me. Which wasn't particular news in the Medicine Lodge throng, except this someone evidently had no other site in mind; his presence stayed steadily there, close enough to make me edgy about it, sitting half-braced as I was in case this guy too was going to crash in our direction.

I half-turned on the bar stool to cope with the interloper and gazed full into the face, not all that many inches away, of Velma Simms.

I must tell you, it was like opening a kitchen drawer to reach in for a jelly spoon and finding instead the crown jewels of England. For I had never been close enough, head-on, to Velma to learn that her eyes were gray. Gray! Like mine! Possibly our four were the world's only. And to garner further that her lipstick, on the very lips that ruled the rodeo whistle, was the beautiful dark-beyond-red of ripe cherries. And that she was wearing tiny pearl earrings, below the chestnut hair, as if her ears could be unbuttoned to further secrets even there. And that while the male population of northern Montana was focusing on the backside of Velma's renowned slacks, they were missing important announcements up front. Sure, there could be found a few battlelines at the corners of her eyes and across her

middle name? Angus

red of hair, light complexion, marked with the smallpox. (signed) Robert Stevenson, Engineer for Northern Lights, 7 August 1807. That height and hair and complexion I have, although thankfully not the pocked face. But what else. ^{same set of names, true, just swapped about} Could I have done what Alexander ^{Angus} McCaskill did, live shipboard for months, travel each day to set Arbroath stone onto reef stone? I did not see how. Those old ones; what do we bring of them? What--

The generations of us dangle from him. From that man who went to perform stonework in the worst of the ocean around Scotland, all McCaskills since had derived. Like seeing a load depending on one ^{solitary} thin rope, when you looked at it that way. My father remembered the teasing from old Alexander, Where would you be if old Bell Rock had drowned me? Where. It was a question up there with Shakespeare's best.

Alexander
Second

where wd
I be
right now
4

My father was the smith for John and Lucas Barclay's wheelwright shop. The keenest of workmen, him; the master in that part of Scotland at OOing a wagon wheel. Skill will ask its price, though; the years of anvil din ^{took} had taken nearly all of ^{my father's} ~~his~~ hearing, and to attract his attention as he stood there working a piece of iron you had to toss a wood chip against his shirt. At home my father lived--how best to say this?--he lived alongside my mother and me rather than with us. Sealed into himself, like someone of another country who happened to be traveling beside us.

I was their child who lived. Of their three, the only one left to my parents after the OO had done with Nethermuir. If a friend of

This will mark the fifteenth fourth
of July in a row that Gros Ventre
has mustered a creek picnic, a rodeo

Regarding those festivities, *let's do it* almost there - there.
~~They~~ "Tenderly, tenderly, ^{now} It's about to fit."

Ready to sleep?
Let's do.

"Did you use the end of the axe that has a sort of a piece of
metal on it? The other is what is called the handle, and you..."

Nothing
you cd
row a cat
thru.

"Does she fit?"

"What, did you ever notch a log that doesn't?"

Manitara loop
has mounds
of the own

"I can't say. I only remember until I was 0."

I have to honestly say that the next few weeks of this remembered
summer look somewhat pale in comparison with my Stanley episode.
Only in comparison, though.
You can believe that I arrived back to English Creek from the land
of sheepherders and packhorses in no mood to take any further guff from
that father of mine. What is Holy H. Hell was that all about, his and
Stanley McKell's pussyfooting around each other the way they had when
they met there on the mountain, then before it was over my father handing
me over to Stanley like an orphan. Some counting trip, that one. I
could spend the rest of the summer just trying to dope out why and what

TWO

This will mark the fifteenth Fourth of July in a row that Gros Ventre has mustered a creek picnic, a rodeo and a dance. Regarding those festivities, ye editor's wife inquires whether somebody still has her big yellow potato-salad bowl from last year; the rodeo will feature \$140 in prize money; and the dance music will again be by Nola Atkins, piano, and Jeff Swan, fiddle.

--Gros Ventre Weekly Gleaner, June 29

I have to honestly say that the next few weeks of this remembered summer look somewhat pale in comparison with my Stanley episode.

Only in comparison, though.

You can believe that I arrived back to English Creek from the land of shepherders and packhorses in no mood to take any further guff from that father of mine. What in Holy H. Hell was that all about, him and Stanley Meixell pussyfooting around each other the way they had when they met there on the mountain, then before it was over my father handing me over to Stanley like an orphan? Some counting trip, that one. I could spend the rest of the summer just trying to dope out why and what

use for Ninian Duff?

(faced based on Dr. John Adamson, p. 15, Vic'n & Edw'n Fife)

I always thought Adam Willox looked more like a lord than Lord Keir did, which is saying much. Adam had an auburn beard that followed his jaw and chin around his face, which was carefully shaved above that. A face of power in that frame of whiskers; blue eyes under thick auburn eyebrows, substantial nose, set mouth. And though he had a bountiful head of hair, the part in it went far back on the right side, almost back even with his ear. It gave that face of his the look of being unveiled before a crowd, a curtain tugged aside and the pronouncement: Here, people, is Adam Willox.

even
important
than be
thought
he did

brought with him was a wad of cash and the picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt which had adorned the wall of his Fort Peck enterprise. But also, as it proved out, along with him came a set of invisible rules of saloon behavior, which every so often somebody would stray across. I think of the night when my father and I were entering the Medicine Lodge and met a stranger with a cigar in his mouth being forcibly propelled into the street. It turned out that although Tom Harry himself went around under a blue cigarette haze--tailormades; no Fort Peck bartender ever had time to roll his own--he would not tolerate cigar smoke.

Be that as it may, in the Medicine Lodge FDR was promptly joined on the wall by a minor menagerie of stuffed animal heads Tom Harry acquired from somewhere. Several buck deer and an antelope and a mountain sheep and a bobcat snarling about the company he was in; not to mention the six-point elk head which set off arguments every hunting season about how much his absent body would weigh.

In itself, this taxidermy herd populated the Medicine Lodge considerably. But the place also held a constant legion of the living, more or less. These setters, as my father called the six or eight guys who sat around in there--he was not above stepping in for a beer after our Lunchery meal, and if nobody official-looking was on hand Tom Harry didn't seem to mind my being with him--the setters always occupied the stools at the far end of the bar, and anybody who entered got long gazes from them as if they were cataloguing the human race.

Decapitated animals and owlsh geezers do not, I realize, sound like much of a decor. And yet the Medicine Lodge did three times as much

Fixes needed:

--Rob must be a clear and somehow attractive personality.

--Nancy's allure must be conveyed.

--Lucas has to be shown in an everyday but memorable way.

- make him grief?

"Have you said this to Rob?"

"Not yet, ~~h~~ but I'm about to."

"Hold off a day or so, if you would. I'd like you to help ~~Demetrius and his mother~~

me with some matters before you desert us for Choteau, and we might

~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ as well have peace in the family until then." I thought, peace is

not the likeliest outlook among the Barclays, but aloud I agreed.

When Rob and I came into the house for supper, ~~it~~ already was

on the table, covered with dish towels. The places were set, with

the plates turned face down.

for a bit

"We're on our own," Lucas announced. "Nancy has gone to see

her people. She has brothers ^{out} along Badger Creek. ~~So~~ tonight it's

a cold bite but plenty of it." He sat down, put his right stub at

the far edge of his plate and nudged it until it ~~it~~ lipped over the

edge of the table; the lip of the plate he grasped next with both

stubs and flipped it over into place. "Turn up your plates and

let's begin/Eat the meat and spit the skin." He swung his head

toward me. ^{most} "Likely not ^{Burns} Stevenson?"

*Sledge
taken
in
saloon*

waited

waited

of Lucas

2 incomes

"Sheep may be the thing. The tale I hear is that Ninian Duff is ^{selling his} going from cattle ^{for} to sheep. And Ninian is a man with an eye for

a dollar." Nancy came and put the pipe ~~in~~ in Lucas's mouth.

After she had lit it and he puffed sufficiently, he pushed it to

a corner of his mouth and said: "I'll go with you on them."

Neither Rob nor I took his meaning at first.

"The sheep," Lucas said impatiently. "I'll partner you in getting sheep. A hundred or so apiece, to start you off."

"Lucas, man," Rob ~~gave~~ began, "that's beyond generous."

My mind was whirling. Was Lucas doing this to get us out of his house, get Rob away from Nancy's vicinity? Answer, yes. Might he have made this offer even if I hadn't dropped the hint to him about Rob? Answer, quite possibly yes.

..."And what do you say to the idea, Angus?"

"Yes," I said.

She did!
He R's way, &
he was
try's
not
to
watch
her

sat at
Rob but up.
Probably &
rose some
myself.
a
addressed
L in his
mind

You know
what I
cal, not
avoid
saying
"Yes."
I should it.

Use out
of you?

asked him how he was doing: Just trying to stay level.

In that time when young Varick McCaskill became their association rider there still would have been several Noon Creek ranchers, guys getting along nicely on a hundred or so head of cattle apiece. Now nearly all of those places either were bought up by Wendell Williamson's Double W or under lease to it. The Williamsons of life always do try to latch onto all the land that touches theirs, was my father's view on that. What I am aiming at, though, is that among those Noon Creek stockmen when my father was hired on was Isaac Reese, mostly a horse raiser but under the inspiration of wartime prices also running cattle just then. It was when my father rode in to pick up those Reese cattle for the drive into the mountains that he first saw my mother. Saw her as a woman, that is. Oh, I had known she had some promise. Lisabeth Reese. The name alone made you keep her somewhere in mind.

Long-range opportunities seemed to elude my father, but he could be nimble enough in the short run. I wasn't without some practice at girling. And Beth was worth extra effort.

The McCaskill-Reese matrimony ensued, and a year or so after that, Alec ensued. Which then meant that my father and mother were supporting themselves and a youngster by a job that my father had been given because he was single and didn't need much wage. This is the brand of situation you can find yourself in without much effort in Montana, but that it is common does not make it one damn bit more acceptable. I am sure as anything that the memory of that predicament at the start of my parents'

shad of
a white

As we rode--why I ~~remember~~^{recall} this I haven't an idea, memory

turns on and off as it likes--we could see in outline on a ridgetop

in the next field a mare and her colt. I remember her as a blood bay,

and the ~~colt~~^{colt} ~~colt~~^{use} about the same but with white stockings. What has

stuck with me is the difference in the pair: the colt was not simply

the miniature of its mother, the mare was somehow more than a larger

version of its offspring. They were separate species. The same

with a lamb, or calf, ~~or~~^{or chicks.} kitten or pup. They arrive alien to the

creatures that parented them. The young of the earth are pure

existence--breath, ~~and~~^{hair,} hide, ~~and~~^{any} nothing more complicated. It is

a kind of trade when they grow older...the strangeness that the

passage of time has to go through all of us, every cell...

Two different

time
has
to pass
right
thru

The Barclays all had a sauce to them. Even Rob's young sister, Adair.

Adair
Say to ~~her~~ some teasing greeting such as "Hello, you," and although ~~Adair~~^{she}
was only twelve or so you got right back, "Hello yourself." John Barclay,

Rob's father, spent time chaffing with any farmer or carter who brought
a lame wheel to the shop. Really, I owed my job as morning clerk to

John Barclay's love of banter and gossip, for he could not tend the affairs
of Nethermuir and the accounts of Barclay's Wheelwright Shop both. I know

that some of the older 'wrights thought Rob shared all too much his father's
propensity to make a joke, but I observed in ~~my~~ the "materials used" column

of my ledger that Rob turned out work with the best of them--his simply
had a topping of Barclay on it.

more?
did you?

To us from the east of Scotland, the fishing ports of our counties of Forfar and Fife and Aberdeen were the proper entrances to the ocean, and Rob and I had the natural attitude that we now were going out the back door of Scotland. Here the Clyde had a lesson for us. Although Rob and I did not admit it to one another, the Firth of Clyde made our old Firth of Forth look like a millpond. Out and out the Jemmy steamed, Arran ahead somewhere. and still there were hilly shores. Argyll. Ayr. (etc.) This west of Scotland all sounded like gargle, but it was handsome land. And each everlastingly ~~every~~ last inch of it owned, I reminded myself, by people higher than Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay. No, America was the place with land for us.

Daylight lingered along with the shore. Rain ~~a~~ came and went...

You saw a field, a 00, and then didn't.

I thought to myself, Scotland as I will remember her.

#

describer
Rob
in
conversion
- somebody
more
Barclay
name

more

2 Below in my berth later, I underwent the worst night ever.

Of course I had to kink myself radically, the berth space both too short and too narrow, as I tried to sleep. And of course Rob, who

could sleep through Judgment Day, was OOing a nose song below me.

But discomfort and snores were the least of my wakefulness. In that

grief of a night--oh yes, the Jemmy also groaning an iron groan

whenever its bow met the water some certain way--I met fear as I

never had before. Fear in a galloping tribe.

Casting myself from Nethermuir. Sight of the drowned horse Nip.

All of it clattered through my mind; I was surprised the noise of

my thoughts didn't rouse the whole ship. Times when it seemed my

skin was crawling from my bones. My breath, my throat...

Rob, I wanted to ~~exit~~ cry down to him, Rob, I can't do this. I can't.

Can not.

walk
of 200
ship,
score

I was
startled
to feel
moisture
o my
hands
sweat

A soft push on my shoulder. When I turned to your touch, Rob, you were grinning, but I did see you swallow behind it. We were at the head

reached
caught
in
numbers

^{some other} another whiskery geezer of the queue now, ~~the man~~ ^{instructing} was telling us to find Steerage Number One,

go forward toward the bow, ~~then~~ descend those stairs the full way down, watch

our footing and ~~hold~~ our heads...

You stayed where you stood, though, still facing me instead of the

steamship. You still had the grin on, but your voice was serious.

as a as
I ever had
heard it

Angus

"Are we both for it?"

I filled myself with breath, the last I intended ever to draw on the place called Scotland.

of a bit
of earth
punched
call
Scotland

"Both," I made myself say, and up the gangplank we climbed.

summarized

^{Robert Burns Barclay} Robert Burns Barclay, ^{him} him. ^{Angus Alexander McCaskill} Angus Alexander McCaskill, ^{myself} ~~me~~. The both

date
myself
double

of us, ~~nineteen~~ and green as the cheese of the moon and trying our damndest not to show it.

switch
to
3d
person
Rob

a lot of a man who cannot swim. Or at least who never has.

But depend on you, Rob. In those times you could make light of it all. "See now, Angus. So long as we don't let them hitch a cart to us we'll be safe as saints out there."

"A good enough theory," I had to agree, "as far as it goes."

Then came commotion, the ^{grieved} ~~distressed~~ sugar carter and several dockmen and a blindered team of horses being brought to drag their dead ilk away.

The rest of us were waved along by a whiskery geezer from the Cumbrae

Steamship Line: "You're for the James Watt? Right ahead, the queue there,

New York at its other end." ^{Onto line we got} ~~we got on line~~ with our fellow steerage

^{beside the bulk of the steamship.} ticket-holders. Our fellow Scotland-leavers, each and every of us openly

^{staring} ~~gazing~~ sidelong at this black iron island that was to carry us to America.

Even you were squinting a bit, Rob, as if calculating how it was that

this ^{much} ~~total~~ of metal could float.

Over our heads deckhands were going through the motions of ~~some~~ some groaning chore I couldn't begin to ~~discern~~ figure ~~out~~.

^{no 4} "Now if this was fresh water, like," ^{sang out} ~~and~~ one above them ^{dirge} ~~clatter~~ of

^{task} ~~chore~~. "I'd wager ye a guinea this harbor'd right now taste ~~as~~ sweet as treacle."

"But it's not, ye bleedin' daftie. The bleedin' Clyde is tide salt from the Tail of the Bank the full way up to bleedin' Glasgow, now ~~en't~~ it? And what to hell kind of concoction are ye going to get when ye mix sugar and salt?"

"Ask that bedamned cook, ~~of ours~~ put in a third. "All the time he must be doing it, else why's our mess taste like what the China dog walked away from?" As emphasis he spat a throat gob over the side into the harbor water, and my stomach joined my heart in doubt about this journey of ours.

a bit of a hell
 Nine days of the Atlantic and ^{uncertain} poor food besides?

steerage
 The queue seemed eternal. *Seagulls mocked us a awful cries.* I started to say aloud that if Noah had

taken this much time to load the ark only the giraffes would have lasted, but that was remindful of the drowned horse again. I knew I oughtn't, but

I turned and looked up the river instead, east up the great trough of the Clyde. East into yesterday, may as well say, ^{only} for ~~just~~ the day before, the

pair of us had been hurled almost all the way across Scotland, by train from Nethermuir into Glasgow. A further train, ^{westward} across the OO Bridge and

of their smells
 alongside mile upon mile of the Clyde's tideflats, then here came Greenock to us, all its shipyards and docks, the chimney stalks of its sugar refineries,

sharp
 its church spires and ^{highest of all} its proud municipal tower of crisp new stone the color

~~en't~~

gulls -
 - cool day
 rain -

then
 deluge

load
 song
 cry

1889

Scotland ^{and} ~~to~~ Helena

^{Harbour at Greenock.}
~~Greenock~~ Mishap. About 7 o'clock yesterday morning, while a horse and cart were conveying 6 creels of sugar on the quay at Albert Harbour, ~~Greenock~~, one of the wheels of the cart caught a mooring stanchion, which caused horse and cart to fall over into the water. The poor animal made desperate efforts to free itself, and was successful in casting off all the harness except the collar, which, being attached to the laden cart, held its head under water until it was drowned. The dead animal and the cart were raised during the forenoon by the ~~Greenock~~ Harbour diver.

--~~The~~ Glasgow Caledonian, May 11, 1889

To say the truth, it was not how I expected--stepping off toward America past a drowned horse.

But depend on Rob. In those times he could make light of almost anything. "See now, Angus, we'll be safe as ^{saints} babes out there so long as we don't let them hitch a cart to us."

"A good enough theory," I had to agree, "as far as it goes."

a deal of
I am no
swimmer

~~of the~~

+ heavy
matters
his
great
on water

They were
at young Mark's
little more
now that
They 1.00
was heading
aboard

Robert

of pie crust. At first look we knew Greenock was a more going town than Nethermuir could be in ten centuries. Last night we passed, if that is the word, in the Model Boarding House, which must have been the model for bedlam. Then this morning, Greenock true to reputation waking into rain, but we had seen rain before and so off we set, to ask our way to

it was a model of things all night.

the Cumbrae Line's moorage, to the James Watt, and to be told in a ~~Greenock~~

Clydeside

"The accent we could only barely fathom: ~~the~~ Jemmy? Ye want tae gi doon tae Pa'rick Street." And here at the foot of Patrick Street was the Albert

Yalbe

Street

there... there... there...

Harbor, here was the green-funneled ~~ship~~ steam swimmer to America, here were

~~the~~ two of us.

rain

For I can't but think of you then, Rob. In all that we said to each other, before and thereafter, that step from our old land to our new was flat fact with you. No second guessing, never a might-have-done-instead ~~our~~ Rob. You had matters to look back at, a family, a trade, and I had

A threshold of ~~the~~ place a home

neither, yet I was the one gazing back up the Clyde. Under the ~~bright lake~~ ^{trestle} of words with which we talked each other into going to America, what were your deep reasons? ⁷ But by the time I learned there was ^{so} much within you that

bridge over's nappys - like

Man, man, tells me... even yet

I did not know, and you were learning the same of me, it was ^{for} too late to ask ^{begin} ~~ing~~

18
"Now if this was fresh water, like. I'd ^{wager} bet ye a guinea this harbor'd taste sweet as treacle."

"But it's not, yet bleedin' daftie. The bleedin' Clyde is salt from the Tail of the Bank the full way up to bleedin' Glasgow, now isn't it? And what to hell are ye going to get when ye mix salt and sugar?"

that of ours
"Ask Cook," put in the third. "All the time he must be doing it,

else why's our mess taste as it does?" ~~So saying he spat over the~~ *As emphasis he spat a throat gob*

water,
side into the harbor, and my stomach joined my heart in doubt about

this journey. Nine days of the Atlantic and poor food besides?

of ours