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Schooner Days DCXXI (621)
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The MAPLE LEAF MAN

IN Port Whitby there is a comfortable big brick house, very neat, with a garden and orchard behind and a lawn and ornamental trees in front, and two anchors, laid out with a good and seamen-like lead, in the cement walk to the welcoming door. In the parlor within are models of schooners and yachts in full sail, painted or carved so as to show the beautiful grain of the red cedar. One of these is our boyhood friend the, *Maple Leaf*, in full-rigged model and in two crayon drawings by Gibbons, the tug fireman, of course. All lake schooners of sixty years ago sat to him for their portraits.

On the west wall hangs an oil painting, the more arresting the longer you look at it.

At first glance you think of a powerful divine of mid-Victorian days, from the authoritative poise of the head, the stock-like arrangement of collar and cravat. At second, you realize that what you took for snowy throat-linen is the man's beard, trimmed in the fashion of the bygone time which left the whole face clean shaven but the throat protected.

And after the second you cannot tear your glance away, for you are looking into bold, adventurous, stormy eyes, with great courage and more than a hint of fun in them, eyes that follow you whichever way you turn, eyes meant for the binnacle light and far horizons, with cheek and chin and brow to match. Not (with respect to the cloth) a pulpit face, though two clergymen call the subject of the portrait grandfather, and his descendants are in the learned professions and all the fighting services. He was seriatim or simultaneously, a shoemaker, fisherman, gardener, sailor, carpenter, shipowner, wharfinger and captain of his family's fortune. In a word, a pioneer. He was a Britisher's heart-of-oak. It is a pleasant bit of symbolism that the *Maple Leaf* grew from this English acorn.

Shoemaking was not his means of livelihood, it was a necessity for his time and his growing family but it was his hobby, his recreation. In all his fortunes he stuck to his fast literally and in spirit. Two barrels of foot shapes, hand-whittled, followed him from cottage to coaster and to the big house he bought when Duke street was desirable. He only left his last when he went to the long home which is the portion of all mankind. From craft to craft he carefully removed the two barrels and the hard-worked shoemaker's kit, which had been his first love. He was a wonderful man with his knee high "long boots" or "top boots," fashionable alike in church and cow byre in the 1860's. They had acres of leather for little boys to polish, copper toes, and perforated fringes of red, green or blue morocco at the tops. He had less time for shoemaking, or none at all, with so many other things to do, when he had to move into Toronto and rent a wharf at the foot of Frederick street. He was director-general of a large family enterprise, employing all his sons and a dozen more men. The biggest row he ever raised was when he discovered that in selling or trading off one of the family vessels the boys had let his

precious lasts go with her. Until those lasts came back not a vessel left the wharf.

The man hung in oil in a big gilt frame was William Goldring, grandfather of Dr. C.C. Goldring, now superintendent of schools and chief inspector in Toronto, and Father, with a capital F, to six sailor sons – including the nimble gentleman of eighty-four who breaks off his task of cutting up trees for firewood behind the neat house described to come in and greet the caller. His is this house and home and his treasured painting.

What a wake streams astern of Captain Richard Goldring, back towards an eighty-fourth Christmas counting from the one to come next Saturday! Eighty-four year-miles, and every one of them in sight and sound of the lake.

As a baby he was rocked to sleep to the sound of Lake Ontario booming across the bar at the mouth of Mimico Creek. As a boy, little and big, his lullaby was the slap and scuffle of wavelets against the sides of a hooker. As a man, for thirty-five years, he slept to the music of bigger waves against the sides of a bigger vessel – his own. He was master that long, for most of the time in the one vessel, so that he was known all over Schoonerdom as “the *Maple Leaf* Man.” And now, as it has been for twenty years and more, it is to the crash and croon of breakers on the beach at Port Whitby that he lays him down to sleep.

This started out to give some account of the life of the master of the *Maple Leaf*, Capt. Richard Goldring, but the fascinating portrait of that gentleman’s father has deflected the narrative into next week. Meantime, and in good time, let us wish a Merry Christmas to the *Maple Leaf* Man.

(Caption) THE MAPLE LEAF -Another picture of her in placid mood on a Y.M.C.A. cruise. References to these cruises of forty years ago have produced reminiscences from dozens of boys who took part in them.