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The Wrecked Galleon

(By "The Exile")

**Another Vision Or Hallucination
And Something Definite**

"Duck! Keep you're *[sic]* head down. They're going to fire. Bang! bang!! There they go. They're at it. Don't look over yet. A stray cannon ball might knock off your note."

I always think of the above exhortations and the peculiar circumstances under which they were made, when the Mahogany ship mystery is brought out about every decade for discussion. During one of those periods in the some-time ago Peg-leg Jake Ivens stumped into my emporium with the news - "I want a bob, quick and lively; I'm going along to Viney's" (Royal Archer). I may mention here that old Jake never asked for a "bob" in the usual way by telling a tale. With him it was a case of payment on demand, a modified sort of assault and battery. He rarely met a refusal from those with whom he played football or cricket in his boyhood days, when he promised to become a fine athlete. He went to Melbourne as a young man, and had his leg broken in a scrimmage with a boxer of repute on the wharf at Port Melbourne. In this respect, he and Victoria's present Governor had something in common - each had a fistic battle and received a hiding on Port Melbourne pier during his youthful days. That affair settled Ivens' career as an athlete. Even had he not gone on with cricket and football, he probably would have become a capable boxer.

After getting the shilling, Jake gave me a "tip" for the Melbourne Cup, a few months ahead, and then said with an air of mystery - "I know more about the Spanish Galleon than those gasbags writing in the papers. I've kept it to myself so far. If you care to see me any night and go over to the end of Shelly Beach, I'll show you something." I thought it might be a scheme for more liquor, but finally agreed to give the invitation a try-out, although it was a bit of the usual routine going to Shelly Beach at night-time to look for adventure. He fixed the time for that night at 10 o'clock, and the meeting place at the footbridge crossing over a little backwater and leading to the drive to the cliffs. As Jake stumped away he called out - "Bring a bottle of Sheldrick's for me, and whatever you like for yourself. "

It was winter time, a bleak, dark night, with a fairly high wind and a touch of rain, when I rode on a bicycle to the bridge, arriving shortly before the appointed time. Jake was there, and after making a few biting remarks about the "men who make the weather," tersely said - "Follow me close up, and you'll be all right." (So far he had not spoken about the bottle of ale, which surprised me, as I thought a reference to it was certain to be chapter one of the expedition). His foreign leg made him travel slowly, and he was easy to follow. At the top of the drive he turned to the right. I was not a bit in love with the trip then, but kept straight behind him and not too close noting with some satisfaction that if one of us went over a cliff, it was long odds-on that Jake would be first. After getting to near where the cliffs end and a stretch of sand occurs, he stopped behind a sandy hillock. Before arriving there Jake had a few stumbles. Modesty prevents me recording what he said each time he sprawled on the ground. Only the winds heard and they did not care, and I did not

matter. A minute or two after stopping, he looked over the hillock towards the sea, and then suddenly barked out the words, quoted at the beginning of this epistle - "Duck! Keep down your head" etc.

I lay low, and wondered - what next? My companion uttered - "Keep down a while, a 32lb cannon-ball might come this way. I wish one of them would knock over the boob at South". (Presumably he meant the lock-up). After keeping down for a few minutes I was told to "look over the top now, they've stopped firing, and you'll see something like a fireworks display." I looked. It was a fairly wild night. Lines of white crested waves could be faintly seen through the gloom as they raced to the shore, the bash of the rollers on the reefs outside and on the rocks near the edge of the cliffs, the continual eerie cries of penguins, the absence of stars overhead, and raindrops falling spasmodically, were enough to damp anyone's ardour. Despite that, I was glad I had come along. It was another experience, if nothing else. I could not see any fireworks, or ships, not even a light at sea. But Jake's brain had something mirrored in it. I listened to his broken sentences, and found out it was a scene like this:- Two ships in battle to the westward of Dutton's Rock, not far out. One surrenders; beaten ship' [*sic*] crew taken on board the victor. Crews line up on deck to witness what Jake at first said was to be a "scrap" between officers in uniform, but it was evidently a duel, as swords were used; one combatant killed, and his body tossed overboard.

Then a sudden cry from my companion - "Duck down; listen; they are sinking the beaten ship. Are you deaf that you can't hear the bangs." After bending behind the ridge for a few minutes, Jake again looked over it and casually remarked - "The fight's over, and one ship is sunk, its Commander killed, and the live members of the crew are on board the victor." He peered seawards and remarked that the ship afloat had gone away with all lights out. Ivens then commanded - "Follow me as before", and set off homewards. He did a better job of it than the trip to the ridge. Up to this time he had made no reference to the bottle of Sheldrick's, but when we reached the bridge he abruptly asked - Where's the bottle of beer. I want it; it's late; the best way for you to ride home is around the cricket ground road." It was one a.m. when I got to roost. I went with Ivens the two following Thursday nights at his invitation, when he saw the same visions, a programme exactly similar being gone through each time. Although he made appointments for two other occasions, he did not turn up at the bridge, so on the second time I went to the breakwater viaduct and had a try for rock cod, as I had a hand-line in my pocket, and bait. Threw in line on west side of viaduct, and noticed the figure of another person about 20 yards further on.

I heard what sounded like a small dog's bark. A voice called out - "Did you hear that bark?" I replied "Yes".

The voice then informed me that it had been emitted by a large conger eel he had landed. I went to investigate, and found the speaker was George Thompson, a well known angler, who for a number of years before he passed away about four years ago, was care taker of the local Bowling green.

A curious thing about Jake Ivens' vision of a sea-fight off Dutton's Rocks, was that I could never get him to talk about it afterwards, that is to have a discussion about the episode. I often when we were alone tried to get his daylight views of the sea-fight

and other details, but his usual reply was - "Never mind about it; shout me a couple of pints, and don't talk of the subject any more".

The mystery of the Mahogany ship may be blamed for the above.

From a very old Western District resident I learned this week that as a lad, in 1879 or 1880, he often saw part of the bow and ribs of what looked like a good-sized ship sticking out of the sand near "Tara" homestead (close to Port Fairy). His people owned the state named *[sic]*, and it was built of Tasmanian timber. The site of the "wreck" he reckons he could pick out, although his opinion is that it would now be covered by 30 or 40 feet of sand. What made him wonder as a lad, was, how the "wreck" got so far inland as there were two large hummocks between it and the sea. It was partly in a bed of rushes and the tail-end of the dune and the former has been covered up long ago. I will get further particulars as to ... *[remainder of article unreadable]*