

rious in the narratives of my companions, was the large mixture of the supernatural which they almost always exhibited. The story of Jack Grant the mate, given in an early chapter, may be regarded as not inadequately representative of the sailor stories which were told on deck and fore-castle, along at least the northern coasts of Scotland, nearly thirty years later. That life of peril which casts the seaman much at the mercy of every rough gale and lee-shore, and in which his calculations regarding ultimate results must be always very doubtful, has a strong tendency to render him superstitious. He is more removed, too, than the landsman of his education and standing, from the influence of general opinion, and the mayhap over-sceptical teaching of the Press; and, as a consequence of their position and circumstances, I found, at this period, seamen of the generation to which I myself belonged as firm believers in wraiths, ghosts, and death-warnings, as the landward contemporaries of my grandfather had been sixty years before. A series of well-written nautical tales had appeared shortly previous to this time in one of the metropolitan monthlies,—the *London Magazine*, if I rightly remember; and was now interested to find in one of the sailors' stories, the original of decidedly the best of their number,—“The Doomed Man.” The author of the series,—a Mr. Hamilton, it was said, who afterwards became an Irvingite teacher, and grew too scrupulous to exercise in fiction a very pleasing pen, though he continued to employ, as a portrait-painter, a rather indifferent pencil,—had evidently sought such opportunities of listening to sailors' stories as those on which I had at this time thrust myself. Very curious materials for fiction may be found in this way by the *litterateur*. It must be held that Sir Walter Scott was no incompetent judge of the capabilities, for the purposes of the novelist, of a piece of narrative; and yet we find him saying of the story told by a common sailor to his friend William Clerk, which he records in the “Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft,” that “the tale, properly managed, might have made the fortune of a romancer.”

At times by day,—for the sailors' stories were stories of the