

# *Storm Ship on the Hudson*

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North American

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It was noised about New Amsterdam, two hundred years ago, that a round and bulky ship flying Dutch colors from her lofty quarter was careering up the harbor in the teeth of a north wind, through the swift waters of an ebbing tide, and making for the Hudson. A signal from the Battery to heave to and account for herself being disregarded, a cannon was trained upon her, and a ball went whistling through her cloudy and imponderable mass, for timbers she had none. Some of the sailor-folk talked of mirages that rose into the air of northern coasts and seas, but the wise ones put their fingers beside their noses and called to memory the Flying Dutchman, that wanderer of the seas whose captain, having sworn that he would round Cape Horn in spite of heaven and hell, has been beating to and fro along the bleak Fuegian coast and elsewhere for centuries, being allowed to land but once in seven years, when he can break the curse if he finds a girl who will love him. Perhaps Captain Vanderdecken found this maiden of his hopes in some Dutch settlement on the Hudson, or perhaps he expiated his rashness by prayer and penitence; howbeit, he never came down again, unless he slipped away to sea in snow or fog so dense that watchers and boatmen saw nothing of his passing. A few old settlers declared the vessel to be the Half Moon, and there were some who testified to seeing that identical ship with Hudson and his spectre crew on board making for the Catskills to hold carouse.

This fleeting vision has been confounded with the storm ship that lurks about the foot of the Palisades and Point-no-Point, cruising through Tappan Zee at night when a gale is coming up. The Hudson is four miles wide at Tappan, and squalls have space enough to gather force; hence, when old skippers saw the misty form of a ship steal out from the shadows of the western hills, then fly like a gull from shore to shore, catching the

moonlight on her topsails, but showing no lanterns, they made to windward and dropped anchor, unless their craft were staunch and their pilot's brains unvexed with liquor. On summer nights, when falls that curious silence which is ominous of tempest, the storm ship is not only seen spinning across the mirror surface of the river, but the voices of the crew are heard as they chant at the braces and halyards in words devoid of meaning to the listeners.

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