

FIGUREHEAD AND LANDLUBBER:

The whaler A. L. Putnam, of Provincetown, recorded an unusual event in her log book. (This famous whaler, and the famous whaling Putnams, was the ship that brought back the authentic figurehead which still can be seen over the door of the old Putnam House on Commercial street in the east end of town.)

A west coast landlubber shipped out on the A. L. Putnam for a whaling voyage and not realizing that wages were determined by shares after the voyage was complete asked for his pay. "November 4, 1873:—At 5 p.m. J. Bemis, one of the green hands shipped at Frisco, come aft to asck when hee was agoin to be paid wages. Commenced talking sarcy like and hirling abuse to me. Captain come on deck to see what the trouble is and I told him wee have a lunatick on board and J. Bemis repeated before the Captain that he wanted his wages and would do no work without wages. Captain ordered him plaiced in irons to wate and see if he is sane. So ends this day with no whale and sweat feelings of home."

"Queen of the Seas"

THERE are three reasons why the era of the clipper ship ended. The Suez Canal opened in 1869. Transcontinental railroads arrived in the United States. The monkey wrench of the steamship took the place of the sailing vessel's marlinspike. But the clipper ship era was a great and romantic one.

America won out over Britain in the competition for commercial mastery of the seas. Freight rates went as high as sixty dollars a ton between the years of 1850 and 1853. And every sea man knew, and many landlubbers as well, that there had never been anything man made which possessed the poetic dignity of the white winged clipper, sweeping along over a sparkling sea.

Elaborate figured heads were part of the clipper's personality. Seductive maidens of heroic proportions were favorites. One such was an amply built lass wearing nothing but a veil and carrying a rolled umbrella to protect her from the storms of the sea. Or she might be a mermaid like the one which held snuggled in her arms a beatific looking apostle. And when a Yankee "sea captain walked his quarter-deck on sunny days, he could see a coquettish curl tossed back over bare shoulders, and glimpse a gown of blue and gold. At night when the moon was big, he could watch the lovely lady turn to silver over the shining water. When his ship was tossed in the fury of the Atlantic storms, he saw his lady plunge beneath the waves to rise sea-drenched but still gallantly fighting an angry Neptune to protect the seamen that she loved."

