AN INCIDENT DURING A VOYAGE TO NEW SWEDEN

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While our condition was the most miserable the Turk approached us with three of his ships to attack and molest us. How it turned out you shall observe shortly. Herewith the proverb is verified: "Nulla calamitas sola." Everyone can imagine, where such a multitude of people are packed and crowded together, as was the case on this our ship, and [when] such infectious diseases in addition gain a foothold, how they then might infect one another. [Thus] many died in consequence of it, yes, frequently, when the roll was called in the morning, there would be 3, 6, 8 or 9 corpses which one after the other would be laid out on board, and after the clergyman had thrown three shovels of ashes on them and performed a ceremony, they were shoved overboard and their grave was dug deep enough for them. The bodies were sewn into sheets or skins and stones or iron balls tied to the feet and arms so that they might sink the faster, that the fishes might not swallow them up; but it is not likely that they could come to any bottom before they became food for the fishes.

It could not have been otherwise than that many people would be sick, partly because they were too closely packed together in the unnatural heat of the sun, and it was so very warm on the upper deck that indeed one could have fried a herring in the sun. Besides this, the common people, had no clean linen for a change, so that (speaking with respect) much vermin grew in their clothes, so that these beasts tortured and tormented them terribly. Besides they had to content themselves with coarse and rotten victuals, such as entirely decayed fish; putrid water to drink, so that it stank like the worst of carrion, in which grew long worms, so tough that we could draw it out to the length of an ell and [it] hung together like a twisted thread; by which sickness could surely be caused. Therefore, after calling the roll in the morning we had to distribute mysk of brandy to each person for refreshment.

The 11th of April the Turk came with three ships, wishing to attack us in a hostile manner. When we first observed these three ships early in the morning, we could not immediately see what ships they might be, because they were yet a great distance away from us out in the sea, but about two hours afterwards, when they came nearer to us and pursued us hard, then we saw with [our] telescope that they were Turkish ships. Then we beat alarm quickly and prepared ourselves for battle. There was such misery upon misery with us on our ship among our people, as above stated, that we hardly knew in a hurry what to take hold of to make a resistance against the enemy. And our cannon around the portholes we could not in such excitement touch or use, because there was such an enormous amount of trumpery packed in between and above the cannon, up under the roof, with the people's boxes, chests, tubs and all sorts of other [things] which one cannot enumerate. But the two largest guns that were in the gun room and four small ones which stood on the upper deck, these we made up our minds to play with, since there was no other way in such haste. [We] then had all the sick people carried on deck, even if they were half dead, every man had to go up, and only hold a gun in their hands, if they could do no more; but those who had not enough strength to stand were propped up and supported between two healthy men and so close together that the sick could lean on those who were well. When all the men were thus stationed on the upper deck, weapons, such as musket word belts, storm-clubs, "storm-wreaths," spears and all kinds of other implements of war were carried up, which were distributed to the men, to each man such a weapon as he was able to handle and use. When this had been arranged in the best manner to suit our miserable condition and situation, brandy was carried out for the people to strengthen them somewhat.

When now the Turk came so near to us that we could play with cannon upon one another, we opened fire on him with our heaviest cannon that were in the gun room, [at the same time] we laveered about a little to see what he intended to do. He also laveered and hesitated, but did not shoot, which gave us more courage, because we observed that he played with uncertainty, whether he should risk to attack us or not. We fired twice in succession at him with the same guns, yet he did not answer; for [it seems that] when he saw such a large number of men on our ship and observed that we had so heavy cannon he did not dare risk an attack. Consequently, he set his course back again. We fired still two cannon after him and then continued on our [West] Indian course again, with joy, in that we so happily escaped him.
Life On Board A 17th Century Ship

**Food** Sailors had no way to keep their food fresh while on board ship. Dried or salted beef, pork, and fish were the sailor's main foods. This meat was kept in large salt barrels in the ship's hold. The sailors also brought live animals, such as pigs, chickens and goats, for fresh meat and milk. Along with their meat, they would also eat hard biscuits, dried beans, peas and onions. Because most fresh vegetables would rot if kept on board, they were generally not a part of the sailor's diet. In fair weather the ship's cook would prepare a hot meal in the ship's galley each day.

**Drink** Water spoiled quickly, so beer was the main drink on the ship. In addition, sailors collected rain water in large barrels during storms, to drink later.

**Sleep** Most of the crew slept on deck or between decks. They commonly used small mattresses which could be rolled up easily and stowed away. Each officer and some crew members usually had sea chests in which to store personal items. The ship's captain and first mate had small sleeping quarters of their own on the main deck.

**Sanitation** Baths were taken only one or two times a year. The "toilets" were located at the forward end of the ship and were called the "head". They were simply an opening which emptied into the ocean.

**Daily Routine** Decks were probably scrubbed with salt water every morning around 5am. This kept them clean, stopped the wood from rotting and prevented the decks from drying out and shrinking. It was necessary to keep a careful eye on the weather, the ship's direction and the ship's sails and rigging. A sailor knew every rope and it's purpose. The rigging required constant repair or replacement. Pitch was used to seal seams in the ship and pine tar was used to protect the rigging from the weather. Since all ships leaked, they needed to be pumped out periodically.

**Entertainment** Life was rough and often boring on sea voyages that lasted for months or even years. There was often a daily religious service. Sailors who could read often did so for their friends. Games and handicrafts were also a means of passing time. Sailors created carvings of wood, bone or ivory. Simple instruments were often played, and the crew would join in with songs and dances.

**Punishment** While at sea, the captain was in charge of the ship, and could punish a crew member in a number of ways. Crew members might be whipped, given less food or drink, or be locked up in a dark area below decks called the "hold". A sailor could also be left on a deserted island in response to a very serious crime.
Navigation For many years astronomers had studied and mapped the stars in the sky. The captain navigated by using this information, and particularly using the North Star to determine latitude. A very simple compass was used to find direction. Since clocks did not work well at sea, sailors used an hour glass to measure time.

Dangers At sea, many suffered from accidents, falls and lack of food. Falling overboard was almost always fatal because few sailors knew how to swim. Lightning was also a constant threat and could result in electrocution. The lack of fresh vegetables and fruit in a sailor’s diet caused a sickness known as Scurvy. On the long voyages, this illness killed one out of every five sailors. There were other dangers at sea, such as storms, pirates, sharks, shipwrecks, enemy ships and fires. Since few vessels survived a fire, a ship's cook had to be very careful. Rats, ants and roaches were often everywhere. Many dangers also existed on shore, such as mosquitoes, alligators, unfriendly natives, piranha fish and other predatory animals. Also, many deadly diseases could be caught at a seaport.