

Captain Weed, Woman.



THE inquiry following the death of Captain John Weed early in the present week disclosed the fact that the person who had borne this name for many years, both as the commanding officer of transatlantic vessels and an inmate of the sailors' Snug Harbor, on Staten Island, was a woman.

That a woman was able to conceal her sex for many years, under circumstances which forced her into constant contact with men, is hardly more interesting than that she was able to discharge the duties which devolve upon the master of an ocean vessel.

If this proves anything it proves that sex does not necessarily debar women from following occupations which demand in an extraordinary degree the qualities of firmness, endurance and courage. What one woman has done, other women can do, and clearly nothing stands in the way of woman's entering upon a seafaring life save the conventional restraint which social laws, mostly of man's creation, have placed upon her.

This is one view to take of it; but there is another. Captain Weed was a successful shipmaster only because she was able to disguise herself completely as a man. She could not have enforced discipline on shipboard nor commanded the respect of her officers and crew as a woman, and this is eloquently suggestive of the great difference which exists between trousers and petticoats.

Maybe time will bring about a revolution in this as it has in so many other matters of deep concern to the sex which, up to a half a century ago, man was taught to consider weak. Maybe sex will not in the future, as in the past, determine in advance woman's place in the world of strenuous endeavor.

Maybe trousers will not always take precedence of petticoats on the high seas. Maybe we are approaching the time when women need not disguise themselves in or-

der to demonstrate that they are the equal of men in occupations which men like to think of as exclusively their own.

Maybe so. And yet it is impossible that the late Captain Weed was an exceptional woman. The average man—and particularly the average married man—will find it difficult to conceive how a woman that was not exceptional could for years draw on her boots while sitting in the middle of the cabin floor, hitch up her trousers before ascending the bridge ladder, reach for the place where the back of her skirt should be before walking across a wet deck, feel for the steels in her waistcoat in times of great emergency, sit on her feet while writing up her log book, and yet have escaped detection. The only explanation for this is that sailors, as a rule, are not men of much experience in woman's ways.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

