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# SEA STORIES MAGAZINE

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# The Ship of Dreams

By May Kendall

**I**N its profoundest rest,  
There is a ship comes sailing down  
Upon the river's breast.

Wide-winged as that enchanted swan,  
She saileth through the night,  
And purple grows the gloom upon  
The magic of her flight.

The bark she bears no mortal name,  
No crew of mortal mold,  
Ulysses' ship of song and flame,  
Of cedar wood and gold!

She is the ship that Turner knew  
On the enchanted seas.  
She floats far isles of music through,  
And isles of memories.

And she is mystically fraught  
With dreams remembered long,  
That drift on all the tides of thought  
And all the seas of song.

She hath Ulysses at her helm,  
As in the olden time;  
This ship of a diviner realm,  
And of a fairer clime.

# Sea Stories Magazine

Vol. I

March, 1922

No. 2

## *The LOOTING of the EURANIA*

By  
W. B. M. Ferguson



A friend of ours returned from abroad not long ago, and we asked him what happened on the sea trip. "Nothing," was his reply. "Nothing ever does happen on a transatlantic liner these days." His remark was recalled to us when we read this story by Mr. Ferguson. You will find in it an element of thrill that will make you vote it one of the most exciting tales you ever read—still it happened on a transatlantic liner. It is a story without a female character, but honestly, you won't miss "the woman in it" this time, at all.

### A COMPLETE NOVEL

I TOOK another look at my nearest neighbor—a tall, cadaverous man, with a hollow face, like the crescent moon. He was at least two and one-third yards tall, with raw, lumpy wrist bones, and feet like coffins. He lay stretched at full length in his deck chair, a steamer rug, whose vermillion color scheme seared the eye, enveloping him from neck to heel until he resembled a parboiled mummy of the late Mr. Rameses. A neglected book lay among the scarlet waves of the rug, and without difficulty I could read its title—"The James Boys in Virginia."

It carried me back to the days—not

so very long ago—when I secretly wallowed in paper-back carnage. What boy with a live wire inside him has not? But such diseases should pass with the measles, while here was a man well past the thirties who ignored the literary medicine of the ship's library, and clung to the poison of youth. Despite his big, clever nose, and aggressive chin, he must be of small mental caliber. So I thought, for I was young enough to estimate mankind by little, superficial footnotes.

For the first time, I noticed that from under his fore-and-aft peaked cap my neighbor was intently watching something. I followed the bend of his head,

and found myself looking at a sailor who was busily polishing the brass-bound, smoking-room ports. There was nothing wonderful in this performance. We had just opened up the Narrows, outward bound, and, as is the custom, the crew was cleaning ship, all over the place. I knew it would continue until we sighted the Irish coast; until the forward donkey engines began taking baggage from the hold. Not that the *Eurania* required it, for she shone, as if drawn on cardboard with a BB pencil. But hard work keeps the forecastle out of mischief.

However, undoubtedly, there was something about this sailor or his occupation that deeply interested my neighbor. Perhaps this was his first Atlantic trip, and everything had a fictitious appeal.

"Funny character, that," he said, suddenly turning to me while he thumbed over his shoulder at the sailor. "Noticed him?" His voice was drawling and absolutely devoid of expression, as if it had been left overlong in cold storage. Intonation had been frozen out. And evidently he had no use for certain parts of speech, for he talked like a telegraph message.

"I don't see anything remarkable about him," said I. "He's just an ordinary, everyday seaman."

"Take another look," uttered my neighbor. He did not advise, command, request. He just uttered. There is no other word.

Mechanically I looked again at the sailor, eying him carefully. He was a wiry little fellow with excessively bowed legs, and clean, healthy skin, deeply tanned; otherwise there was nothing remarkable about him. Merely a commonplace sailor whose replica could be found the world over.

"Wrong," said my neighbor, when I voiced this conviction. "Not a sailor."

This dispassionate statement irritated me. I suppose you have met some peo-

ple who deliver an opinion as if they were infallible; the court of last resort. Well, my neighbor was just such a one. Such people don't hazard, they state.

"That is merely your opinion," I replied. "Lacking proof, mine is as correct; more so, for the man is a sailor."

"So far as dress and mere present occupation go," he replied lifelessly. "But he is not a sailor. Thought you would have remarked that. This is his first voyage."

"Indeed. Do you know him?"

"Not at all."

"Then I suppose you have deduced the information," I said sarcastically. "You rival Sherlock Holmes."

"Never heard of the gentleman. What exactly is his line?"

"His name is rather well known," said I.

"Is, eh? Any relation of Oliver Wendell Holmes?"

"No, nor suburban homes," I replied, tartly, thinking he was playing me.

But he was sincerely ignorant, and, so far as a palpable, ingrained indifference to everything permitted, he was anxious to repair his neglect.

"New one on me," he said, when I had explained the interesting personality of Mr. Doyle's creation. "How does he size-up alongside of Nick Carter and Old Sleuth or those boys?" tapping the masterpiece in his lap. "Are the books full of misery and sudden death? Is there plenty of good, solid murder, and all that? You don't get thinking about your digestion, eh? Or the mortgage on the old farm?"

I replied that he would find ample excitement of the right sort; action, sustained interest, character drawing. But this evidently was beyond him, and it was not until I assured him that he might count on one "good, solid murder" in each book, that he asked me for the names of the best. He committed the titles to a huge notebook.

"Have you ever read Poe's best

work?" I asked, really inquisitive as to the profundity of his literary ignorance.

"No," he replied, "but I've seen him play. You mean that Princeton fellow who kicked the goal against Yale? All his family were good players——"

"I mean his ancestor—Edgar Allan Poe," said I.

Instantly he held aloft a mammoth hand. "Stop, sir. I'm not from Boston. Read no fiction but stuff like this," tapping the dime novel. Then he impolitely turned away, and resumed his scrutiny of the sailor.

"I tell you what I'll do," said I. "I'll bet you anything you like that this is not that fellow's first voyage. I'll go further, and bet he's been at least five years before the mast."

"Never bet with strangers."

"No more do I, but we are fellow travelers, and will be for a week," I replied. "I'm merely backing an opinion. Make it the drinks, or a run round the deck. Anything you like."

"The drinks, then." He nodded and called to the sailor: "Hey! You there at the window!"

The other turned, eyed us for a moment, and calmly continued with his work.

"Can you come here, just a moment, please?" I called. "This gentleman and myself," I continued, as he approached, wiping his grimy hands on a bunch of waste, "have made a wager concerning yourself. I hope you will not consider it a liberty, but we are anxious to know if this is your first voyage. If not, how long have you been a sailor?"

"Ten years, sir, come next month," he replied.

My neighbor leaned back and calmly surveyed him. "Not speaking 'the truth," he said placidly.

The sailor's face whitened beneath its healthy tan, and his hand flashed to his belt. Then he straightened. "I'm under ship's orders," he said, his voice

shaking with passion. "If you're a man, you'll say that over again when we land."

"Agreed," replied my neighbor, who had not moved a muscle. "But fighting for a lie—poor policy."

"I'll take the lie from no man," growled the other. Then, as the second officer appeared, he turned on his heel and resumed his work on the smoking-room ports.

"Well?" queried my neighbor. "Know what you're going to say. Take advantage of position to insult servant who has no means of redress. Eh?"

"Exactly," I replied. "The least you can do is apologize."

He sat up and laboriously filled a huge calabash pipe, with straight perique, whose smell defiled the high heavens. "Won't apologize, but lick him if he wants. Man's a liar," he said. Then, his tongue seemingly loosened with the first inhalation of smoke, he lay back talking contentedly and fluently.

"Do you think that fellow acted like a sailor?" he asked. "Why, his first impulse was to shoot me. See how his hand flew to his hip—and not to the place where a seaman carries his knife. He forgot he was under ship's discipline. Notice his walk—his legs? Notice his complexion? Not the tan of wind and sea, but the hot, dry sun of the plains. That fellow has punched cows—and not so long ago, either. I know the brand."

"You may be right," I admitted. "If so, he must be mighty hard up to ship before the mast—and the company must be hard up to take him."

"Not at all," said my neighbor. "There are lots worse sailors than excowmen. A steamer isn't like a sailing vessel; it doesn't demand a great amount of nautical lore. Any one can swab decks or wield the paint brush."

The first bugle announcing lunch terminated the conversation, and we went below.

It was the dead season for eastward travel, and we carried barely fifty first-cabin passengers. America was returning from Europe; not going there.

Scanning the seating arrangements, I found that I was at the purser's table, sandwiched between Michel Parr, the surgeon, and an unknown by the name of Bildad Stark. Owing to the small number of passengers, we had but three small tables—captain's, first-officer's, and purser's. The latter's was between the other two.

Approaching my seat, I at once became aware of the great, gaunt shoulders of the gentleman who resembled the late Mr. Rameses. He was industriously eating everything that came within reach of his compasslike arms, and he looked up and nodded as I squeezed in between the surgeon and himself...

"Eat," he said, shoveling half a dozen sardines into his maw. "An hour from this you won't care to. Glass going down."

"Ay, an' the, brose, too, I'm thinkin', Mr. Star-rk," added the purser dryly. "Ye're still the braw laddie wi' the fork. Lang an' lean as a wor-ram an' wi' the capaceety o' Jonah's whale."

"Dod ay, Mr. McTaivash," mimicked Stark, expressionless as a tombstone. "Come on in, the water's fine," tendering the milk pitcher.

When the severe chaff between the two somewhat subsided, I asked if we were really in for a storm. Somehow, I wished to refute every statement made by the infallible Stark.

"Yes," said the surgeon, a black-whiskered Celt. "We're about due for the equinoctial gales. The sun crosses the equator next week, I think."

"Wrong," said Stark promptly. "Crosses exactly nine days from to-day. The dates are March twenty-first and September twenty-second."

"Hoots," sniffed McTavish, the purser. "Canna' ye no pairmit a mon

to say onything wi'out pittin' in your oar? Mr. Star-rk," he added to me, "is a'ways richt. A heid juist crammed wi' the book learnin'."

I thought of "The James Boys in Virginia," and wondered had I misjudged Mr. Bildad Stark.

It was not long before the surgeon's prediction as to the weather was fulfilled. Coming on deck after lunch, I was almost knocked flat by a gale that was howling out of the northeast. The sea had swollen like a gumboil, and the crew, under direction of the bos'n, was Jashing canvas to the rails and making every preparation against bad weather.

The deck steward had corralled all steamer chairs, or taken such as were wanted to the shelter of the promenade deck. But one or two passengers were in sight, navigating with difficulty, the rolling and pitching having proved too much for the majority.

The pungent odor of straight perique drew me around to the lee side, where I found Mr. Bildad Stark smoking his huge calabash. The vermillion steamer rug was girt about his shoulders, and a Scotch bōnnet was drawn down to his eyes, a knotted handkerchief keeping it secure against the wind.

"Well, we're just beyond the three-mile limit, Mr. Bryce," he greeted.

"That delay in the river lost us three hours. Good-by, now, to the American eagle. Anything that may happen comes under the jurisdiction of the British flag."

"Nothing will happen but dull monotony," I replied. "Some people have an idea that the sea is full of adventure and romance. That is nonsense. I've crossed half a hundred times, and have been as bored as if attending a four-o'clock tea."

"You will find this trip an exception, Mr. Bryce," he said, in his infallible way.

"I hope so. In what manner?"

He shrugged. "Just a premonition, sir. Mine are always correct."

I groaned inwardly. The man considered himself omnipotent.

"But nowadays," continued Mr. Stark musingly, "wireless telegraphy is a serious menace."

"Menace? What do you mean?"

"Menace to criminals," he replied. He pointed a lean finger at the wireless apparatus, that, resembling a wishbone, surmounted our foremast.

"That little contrivance, Mr. Bryce, is the eye of the universe, of law and order. We are never alone. The world can know immediately of anything untoward that may happen on this ship. How frail an object to be vested with such power!"

"Your thoughts run in a queer channel," I replied, wondering at his new humor. "Too many dime novels, Mr. Stark. You will be disappointed if you think anything untoward will happen."

"Premonition — premonition," he croaked, wagging his head. Then aiming a long finger at me, he added solemnly: "Mr. Bryce, something untoward always happens wherever I am. I am a bird of ill omen. It's a family failing."

Abruptly turning on his heel, he strode aft, the vermillion rug whipping about him. He made a ludicrous, yet sinister, picture. Somehow, I could not laugh with sincerity. I believed him half fool, half egotist, and yet his eccentricities of dress, speech, and manner defied ridicule. There was something underneath them all that commanded respect.

The phrase, "I am a bird of ill omen," stuck in my mind, approved by my inner consciousness. In appearance he was that, or nothing; human brother to Poe's croaking raven.

## II.

Angus McTavish hailed from Loch Katrine, and he had been born with a

love for the sea, and a love for money. The Scotch thrift was in him strong, but, apart from that, he revered "the siller" for its own sake, whether it was his or another's.

Possessing these two widely divergent passions, the berth of purser fitted him like a glove. He could have been contented in no other calling. He was a small, wiry man; hard-fisted, hard-eyed; a monochrome in red, for his hair was flamelike; his freckles large and numerous; his eyes a peculiar burnt-sienna color.

On shore he had the reputation of being a leader in the "auld kirk," a copious drinker, and a disturber of the peace. He could bellow the Psalms of David and swear like a parrot in the one breath, play a sterling game of bridge, smoke innumerable Virginia cigarettes, and deliver a knockout punch with either hand. To give him due credit, he never drank aboard ship, but comported himself like a strict 'totaler.'

To McTavish, then, I took my growing inquisitiveness regarding the "bird of ill omen."

"You've evidently met him before," I said, entering the purser's room, which opened off the main saloon. "Is he what you would call 'fey'?"

"Ay, mebbe that," said McTavish, closing his desk, and wheeling about. "What's he been saying th' noo?"

"Oh, just croaking generally. Predicts disaster and all that. Not, of course, that it weighs with me a particle. But he has such an infernal way of saying things—as if he were a director of destinies. Who is he, anyway?"

"I dinna' ken—richtly." Then dropping his broad Scotch, the purser added: "He's crossed wi' us about three times in as many years, and something's always happened; something to make the trip unusual."

"In what way? Fire? Shipwreck? Mutiny?"

"No."

I saw he would say nothing further. "Well, he terms himself a bird of ill omen," I said. "I wonder what his line is."

"Find out, and you'll know more than I do, Mr. Bryce. Mebbe he's the original Salathiel."

After dinner, I sought the smoking room, which Michel Parr, the surgeon, McTavish, Stark, and myself soon started a game of bridge. The ship was pitching vilely, the sea and heavens as black as Parr's whiskers.

We had hardly started the second rubber when the distant, dread cry of "Man overboard!" brought us up standing—all except Stark, who calmly exposed our discarded cards, and proceeded to play out the three dummy hands.

McTavish tore open the door, and, followed by Parr, myself, and the few occupants of the room, dashed into the companionway. Here the purser and surgeon promptly disappeared, while I fought my way forward in the teeth of the gale, until under the bridge. Far below me was the main deck and forecastle. A shrill blast of the bos'n's whistle mingled with the shrieking of the storm, and I expected every moment to hear our engines stop, and the order given for piping away a starboard life-boat.

But nothing happened. The hubbub forward gradually subsided, lanterns ceased to flicker, and the ship continued to hurl herself against the seemingly impassable wall of black water.

Shivering—and not entirely with the cold—I retraced my steps to the warm smoking room. Some poor devil had gone to a bleak death, and we had not lost the fraction of a knot. Stark was still playing dummy, and his cold-blooded indifference incensed me.

"Well?" he queried, without glancing up. "You'll have a fine cold in the nose

for braving, bareheaded, a night like this. Too bad our game was interrupted. Another lead, and I would have wiggled Parr's king."

"A fine obituary for a man who has just died in the course of duty," said I.

"Well, it comes to the best of us, and won't be stayed for the asking," he returned. But I remarked that, for all his seeming indifference, his usually lack-luster eyes held a glowing spark of interest.

"Perhaps you won't be so philosophical when it comes your turn," I commented. "No doubt dime-novel literature lends a fictitious charm to violence and death—when it doesn't strike home."

"Will you play double dummy?" he asked politely.

"I will not, Mr. Stark."

He looked up, as McTavish and Parr entered, backed by a wind that swept a glass from the bar.

"I fear Mr. Bryce is incensed because the ship was not stopped, nor the lifeboats manned," he observed tentatively.

"It's all in the day's work, Mr. Bryce," said Parr, plucking at his black whiskers. "The man would have been a mile astern before we could have stopped, and no boat could live in the sea that's running. One of the hands heaved a buoy—hit or miss. That's all that could be done. It's hard, but it's all in the game."

"An able seaman?" I asked.

The surgeon nodded. "Name of Jones, and one of the best we had. An old servant of the company."

"How did it happen?"

"It's hard to ken richtly," put in McTavish, hunting an eternal cigarette. "Gang aloft to relieve the lookout. There's lots easier things to lift a leg ower than yon crow's-nest a nicht like the nicht. When near the top he slipped and—weel, that's a'."

"Who was the lookout?" asked

Stark. "A little fellow with bandy legs and clean-shaven face?"

"The same," said Parr. "The only clean-shaven man in the fo'c'sle. Name of Bass. You've remarked him, then?"

Stark nodded. "He's no sailor," he said.

"A poor one, anyway," qualified Parr. "I've been doping him all day for seasickness."

Stark looked up and met my eyes. "Do I get the drinks, Mr. Bryce? Will you accept the surgeon's opinion?"

"Two against one is good enough for me," I replied, pushing the button for the steward. Then I told the purser and surgeon of the bet I had made with Stark regarding the little bow-legged man, Bass.

"You've a keen and knowing eye in your head, Mr. Star-rk," commented McTavish, with some irony.

"And a gift for prophecy," I added. "You predicted misfortune, and here comes the first dose before we've reached the banks."

"Ay, and I'm no' forgetting the ither times you crossed wi' us lang syne," said McTavish. "There's whales waiting for mony a Jonah body yet, I'm thinking."

Stark had begun a game of Canfield's solitaire. With some care he placed the deuce of spades upon the trey of diamonds. "Have you ever deduced a moral from the cards?" he asked idly, addressing no one in particular. "They say a mad king invented them. Have you ever wondered why the four suits were named as they are?"

"I was speaking of Jonahs, Mr. Star-rk," said McTavish, patently representing the abrupt change of subject.

"And you're answered, my friend," said Stark, tapping the spade card with a lean finger. "There's the grave-digger's spade upon a trey of diamonds. Can you deduce the moral? Look for the Jonah in men's hearts. A word to the wise, Mr. McTavish."

"You talk in pairables," said the other, glancing from the cards to Stark's lean, brown face.

The other, making no reply, rifled the cards. "Cut," he said, offering them to the purser. The latter mechanically obeyed.

Stark joined the split deck and slowly peeled off card after card, throwing them face up on the green baize table. "One," he said, "two, three—" and so on. Parr and I drew nearer, impelled by an interest, which I, for one, could not explain.

"Ten, eleven," called Stark, in his lifeless voice, "twelve, thirteen—" He stopped abruptly. The thirteenth pasteboard was the ace of spades.

"The death card!" exclaimed Parr, plucking at his whiskers.

"Hoots!" said McTavish, with open contempt. "Keep your auld wives' tricks for fools and bairns. Are you trying to fash grown men?"

"Merely an experiment," said Stark. "I have never fancied the number thirteen. This is the thirteenth of the month. We left the dock at exactly thirteen minutes past one—the thirteenth hour. I wonder, is the fatal number contained in anything else on board?" And he stared hard at McTavish.

"Ay, mebbe you'll find thirteen peas in your soup, or thirteen maggots in your head," grinned the other. "Awa' to bed wi' ye, Mr. Star-rk. For a learned mon, ye can be a sair clashbag."

"You're a capable man, Mr. McTavish," said Stark, arising, "but there's one great thing you lack—"

"Ay—a muckle drap o' whisky. And if I dinna' keep the pledge aboard ship I'd drink the health o' your braw ace o' spades," scoffed the purser.

Stark laughed—a wonderfully mellow laugh, that transformed his almost saturnine expression. Then, bidding us good night, he left without stating the precise attribute which Mr. Angus McTavish lacked.

There came silence—one that my intimacy with the two men rendered natural and unrestrained. Once or twice I caught the purser eying the surgeon in a speculative manner. Finally, Parr spoke, voicing the question I was turning over in my mind.

"Do you think that business with the cards was a trick or—chance?" he asked.

"I'm inclined to think the deck was stacked under our eyes," I replied.

"If so, Mr. Stark is a card sharp, for I'll guarantee to detect the ordinary manipulation. I think he was playing us just to see how many grains of superstition we contained. After the death of that seaman, Jones, and with such a wild night for a background, he might strike the root of superstition hidden in every one. His entire manner was very like an egotistical pose. Some people think they must be eccentric to attract notice."

"But, dang his lang bones! He's a'ways richt," said McTavish in a half-peevish, half-amused voice. "He as good as told me the Van Dam diamonds would be stolen." The purser was in an unusually communicative mood, and I was careful not to interrupt. A question, and he would have closed 'like a clam. "That was his first trip wi' us—three years ago; before you joined," added McTavish, addressing Parr. "It was a sair mishap." Then, the purser related the incident, which, briefly, was as follows:

Mrs. Van Dam, widow of a well-known New York millionaire, missing her boat, and anxious to reach London, had sailed on the *Eurania*—a much slower and less pretentious vessel than her modern sisters. Mrs. Van Dam had with her a priceless collection of diamonds; these she carried on all her travels. McTavish had earnestly advised the placing of them in his charge, but she refused, a constant fondling of them was, to her, a necessity.

It was Mr. Bildad Stark's first trip on the *Eurania*, and throughout the voyage he kept hinting to McTavish that if a guard were not placed over the diamonds they would be stolen. He advised the purser to bring pressure to bear on Mrs. Van Dam, affirming that they should be locked in the other's safe.

McTavish, wearied by Stark's eternal croaking, finally told him to mind his own business—or words to that effect. He, McTavish, had offered his services, and would not do so again. He ridiculed the robbery idea, resented the slur cast upon the ship's officers and men, and held that, even if a thief succeeded in securing the jewels, the owner would immediately discover her loss, and, all baggage being promptly searched, the thief could not escape detection.

However, the diamonds were stolen. Arriving at Liverpool, Mrs. Van Dam, for the first time, discovered her supposedly priceless collection to be comparatively worthless paste. The best and biggest gems had been stolen, remarkably well-executed counterfeits being substituted. As the stones had been cleaned by a reputable New York firm just before their owner sailed, and as the labor of substituting the imitation for the genuine must have consumed some time, there was no doubt but that the theft had been committed on board the *Eurania*.

It was a hard slap at Mrs. Van Dam's assumed ability as a connoisseur, although the imitation gems had been so skillfully constructed as to deceive all but the eye of an expert. Whether the jewels were ever recovered, McTavish did not know. Mrs. Van Dam had succeeded in keeping the matter quiet, for she was greatly averse to acknowledging herself the victim of such a wholesale fraud.

Such was the purser's account of his first trip with Bildad Stark. What unusual incidents happened on the sec-

ond and third voyages he did not say, for, as it was now eleven-thirty—the hour at which the smoking room closed—the lights were put out, and Parr and I went for a short promenade.

III.

But our walk lasted longer than we had intended, for the surgeon, of his own volition, pursued the theme begun by Angus McTavish.

"That's the first full account I've heard of the diamond robbery," he said meditatively, "for I wasn't transferred to the *Eurania* until the following year. But I have an intimate knowledge of the last two 'sair mishaps'—as McTavish styles them." Parr talked as if to relieve his mind.

"The second occurred two years ago, come December," he continued. "It was my first meeting with Mr. Stark. We were carrying a consignment of uncut diamonds, mined in South Africa, and shipped from a London house to their New York branch. McTavish had them in his safe. I remember Mr. Stark croaked all the way over, saying nothing specific, but just handing around hints of vague misfortune—the way he's doing now. Since the time McTavish and Captain Stone had told him to mind his own business, Mr. Stark had never come out with anything direct.

"Well, when McTavish came to turn over the consignment, the biggest and best part of it was gone. As in the Van Dam case, the biggest and best stones were gone. Some one had solved the combination of the safe. The consignment had been intact the night we picked up Fire Island lightship. Next morning, when the customs officers came aboard, McTavish discovered the theft. No one could leave the ship, and we lay at Quarantine until central office men boarded us and searched all baggage and every square inch of the ship. But not a trace of the stones was found."

"I remember the case," said I, "for an account was in the papers. The purser claimed he was in his room all night."

"Ay, sound asleep. McTavish suspects he was drugged; his lemon squash doped. It took the hardest kind of nerve, the coolest head; the soundest judgment to enter McTavish's room. And none but an expert could solve the combination of that safe."

"But where could the thief have hidden his booty?" I asked.

"It's a mystery to this day—so far as I'm concerned," said Parr, refilling his pipe. "We don't suspect a soul."

"Weren't the stones eventually returned to the London firm?"

"Yes, and that's all that saved McTavish's head, for the company was held responsible," said Parr. "The jewels were returned, but just how, or by whom, I don't rightly know. And if the thief was ever caught, I've never heard about it."

"And the last 'sair mishap?'" I queried, as we sought a seat in the lee of the companion.

"That was last year—my second crossing with Mr. Stark," replied the surgeon. "Murder was done, Mr. Bryce. That doesn't give a ship a good name, and no more publicity was allowed than could be helped. The victim was an American Episcopal clergyman, Doctor Beech, of the most inoffensive type; a lovable old man. Two days out from New York, he was found in the morning by the bath steward, with a couple of knife wounds in his heart—wounds that had gone clean through to the mattress. He was traveling alone and had the stateroom to himself. Not a motive, weapon, clew could be found. Both the American and British police did their utmost, but the case remains a mystery—like the other two."

"The *Eurania* seems a hard luck boat," I commented soberly. "It looks as if there was a hoodoo somewhere."

"Ay," said Parr, sucking his pipe until it gurgled. "And it's funny nothing goes wrong until Mr. Stark comes aboard. Every other trip but those three has been as uneventful as an old wives' sewing bee. I've come to look with dread for the name of Stark on the sailing list."

"You're not superstitious, Parr?"

"Well, I've a good slice of the Celt in me," he said slowly. "No doubt Mr. Stark's presence on those three occasions was pure coincidence; all the same, I want no more of them. He's got a gift for prophecy, there's no denying—so far as I'm concerned."

"Did he predict the murder of Doctor Beech?"

"No. That is, he was no more specific than he is now. I told you Captain Stone and McTavish had shut off his straight-arm warnings. He just croaked generally; said that he felt trouble in his bones, and that he wouldn't be surprised if there was a sudden death."

"Did the police ask him to explain his forebodings?"

"I don't know. We all attributed them to his mere habit of croaking. But, perhaps, it was second sight, or whatever you like to call it."

"How did Mr. Stark hear of Mrs. Van Dam's diamonds?"

"Well, I think it was pretty generally known—I don't mean so much aboard ship as in the outside world. Things like that get into the paper. As for the consignment of uncut diamonds, he could have learned of it from any one in the trade. But I'm not saying he *did* know. His predictions of misfortune weren't specific."

"You've reason, then, to heed his present forebodings?"

"Well, I admit, I haven't McTavish's germ-proof skepticism," said the surgeon. "Perhaps it's racial. He's a hard-headed Scot and believes in nothing he can't see. He'd ask Hamlet's

paternal ghost to come have a drink with him—ay, and he'd see that the ghost paid for it, and in good British coin, too. You understand, Mr. Bryce, I'm not saying I believe in portents, spooks, and all that nonsense. I'm a man grown, with my university degree, and ten hard years' medical experience behind me. But I do think some people possess the gift of reading the future. Mark my words—Mr. Stark is right. We're in for a voyage of disaster and death. I think if Captain Stone and McTavish weren't so contemptuous, Mr. Stark would be more specific."

"You're talking nonsense," I laughed. "Mr. Stark is no more prescient than you or I. He's a natural-born pessimist, and that's all. There's more sorrow in the world than happiness, so a prediction of trouble is bound to be ultimately fulfilled. What could happen on this voyage any more than on a hundred others?"

"There's the death of that seaman, Jones," he replied. "To-day's the thirteenth, and we sailed at thirteen minutes past the thirteenth hour. A bad time for a voyage, Mr. Bryce."

"Oh, come out of it!" I exclaimed. "You're becoming worse than that lank signal of distress—Mr. Bildad Stark himself. You believe in such rot concerning the number thirteen?"

"Perhaps you remember," he replied, "Mr. Stark asking McTavish if that number was contained in anything else on board?"

"Yes, and I also remember the purser's answer—one quite to the point."

"If he told the truth, it might be more to the point," said Parr.

"What do you mean? What is the number thirteen contained in?"

"Thirteen hundred thousand dollars in gold," replied the surgeon, knocking out his pipe.

"About one and one third millions!" I exclaimed. "That's a big shipment."

"Yes, for the *Eurania*. It was booked on the *Romania* for the mid-week sailing, but a hitch or delay occurred somewhere, so we got it. Consigned to a London bank."

"Well, you can make your mind easy, doctor. That mint can't disappear like Mrs. Van Dani's diamonds or the other consignment. That yellow metal must weigh close to three tons. The number thirteen is good enough for me, if it means a fortune like that."

We arose and entered the companionway. "It may be good enough for you," said Parr. "It's the number of your stateroom, isn't it?"

"Yes. Why?"

The surgeon descended a step or two while I leaned over the railing. For my room was on the bridge deck, flush with the companionway.

"Why?" I repeated, as the black-whiskered doctor continued his descent.

"Oh, nothing," he replied. "Only, that's the room in which Doctor Beech—" And he nodded the conclusion. "Thought I'd tell you, so you can get transferred. But, if you're not superstitious, it doesn't matter."

"Good night," I laughed. "Should I see any ghosts, I'll act as you said McTavish would act. Nothing like being hospitable."

"Especially if you aren't the one to pay," came his musical voice.

#### IV.

The *Eurania* was a fifteen-thousand-ton vessel, with triple expansion engines that gave her twin screws an average of eighteen knots per hour. She was an old boat, reckoned by the swift changes of modern times, and was built on the Tyne in the early nineties. Seven days, to the minute, was her best time across the Atlantic. A year or two ago, her owners had built two leviathans that corralled all records, and it was one of

these—the *Romania*—that should have carried our gold shipment.

The *Eurania* sailed on Saturday, while her two gigantic relatives handled the mid-week schedule, leaving on Wednesday. The boats plied between New York and Liverpool, via Queenstown. For some time past the *Eurania* had been used as a "filler-in" during the off season in the winter, and this was her last trip. She would next be heard from in the South American fruit-carrying trade.

Angus McTavish had been on the *Eurania* for a dozen years, while Parr had joined her complement about two years ago. But I had known the sentimental and poetic surgeon when he was attached to the *Hibernia*, sister to the *Eurania*—built in the same year and yard—that handled the other half of the Saturday schedule.

Business took me across the Atlantic three or four times a year, regular as clockwork, and thus I came to have a fair knowledge of the passenger-service world.

I don't claim to own an intimate knowledge of nautical matters, and my ability as a sailor is strictly confined to navigating a catboat—when I can get time. I know port from starboard without having to kick memory awake, and a few other little things, but I am not a sailor thoroughly versed in the technicalities of his calling.

Nautical sharps may find mistakes in this narrative, and these, I frankly acknowledge beforehand. I am setting down certain unusual events, just as they occurred, and my viewpoint is that of an ordinary passenger, who participated in those events; who knew the actors; who had seen much of the sea from the bridge deck of a liner.

It was about a quarter past twelve, when, bidding good night to Parr, I entered my stateroom. As I have explained, it was on the bridge deck, port side, and situated about midway of the

long corridor that ran aft from the companionway to a door by which one could gain the outer deck. On the right side of the boat was a similar corridor.

Down the center of the vessel were situated the bathrooms, and by means of these one could gain either corridor. Thus, if I wished to visit a friend who had a starboard stateroom, instead of going around the companionway, I could cut straight through the bathroom, whose red light was opposite my door.

I am not overimaginative, and the fact that I had the room of the murdered Doctor Beech—number thirteen, at that—did not in the least disturb me. Being the off season, I had the place to myself. Curiously enough, what engaged my attention most was—How had Doctor Beech been killed? How had that stolen consignment of uncut diamonds been concealed aboard the vessel? How had Mrs. Van Dam's diamonds been stolen?

I lay down in my bunk, pondering the matter. Problems, puzzles of every description had interested me from childhood, and here were three that had evidently baffled the keenest detectives. Unconsciously I bracketed them. Had one person been responsible for the three?

I must have fallen asleep while thinking, for the next thing I knew, I had awokened with a start, conscious that some one's eyes were upon me. The night cabin steward was standing by my bed. He was a big, placid-faced fellow, neat and orderly as a woman. His name was Spoor, and he hailed from the west coast of England. I had seen him once or twice before.

"It's after two, sir," he said, "and seeing your light, I made so bold as to enter. You were talking dreadful, sir, and Fourteen said as how you were keeping him awake."

"I was having bad dreams," I explained. "Who is Fourteen?" motioning to the stateroom immediately aft.

"Mr. Stark, sir," he replied. "I wouldn't sleep in this room a night, sir, and I'm not what you would call the jumpy kind. We ain't a tenth filled, so why don't you transfer?"

"I'm not the jumpy kind, either," I laughed. "By the way, you were here when Doctor Beech—"

"Ay, sir," he interrupted, nodding soberly. "I had the night shift on this port corridor."

"You heard nothing unusual during that night?"

"No, sir. There's few calls after one, and I generally doze off in the pantry, aft the companionway."

"But you would have seen any one enter this corridor, for they would have had to pass your room?"

"Yes, sir, providing they came from for'ard. But you can reach either corridor by going through the bathrooms."

I nodded. "Who had the rooms on either side of this?"

"Fourteen was vacant, and I don't know who had twelve, sir."

"What room did Mr. Stark have?"

"Thirteen, in the starboard corridor."

This room, bearing the same number as the one I now occupied, was on the other side of the vessel, but its occupant, as I have explained, could easily gain access to my room by simply going through the bathroom.

Spoo's natty white jacket had hardly disappeared through the swinging curtains guarding my door, when a knock sounded, followed by the lank figure of Bildad Stark, wearing a hideous vermillion dressing gown. That color seemed to be his favorite. As indulgence in tobacco is strictly prohibited between decks, he was seeking solace in a "dead man's smoke," the cold calabash inserted in the great gash he called his mouth.

"I'm sorry if my talking kept you awake," I said. "I didn't know you had number fourteen."

"No matter, Mr. Bryce," he replied, squatting, Turk fashion, on the couch, and talking in the queer, disjointed manner he generally affected when not indulging in tobacco. "Off time for a neighborly visit," he added, squinting at my traveling clock. "Overheard your conversation with steward. Interested in strange happenings have occurred on ship?"

"Naturally," I replied.

"Wasted time. Police have gone over ground thoroughly. But mathematical head," eying me. "Wonder can you do anything with it? Problems interest you. See that. Hundred idiots to every brainy person."

"Meaning that idiots handled the Beech murder mystery?" I inquired.

He shrugged. "Pleasure to match brains against worthy opponent," he said enigmatically.

"Mr. Stark," I replied, preparing to undress, "you're a cryptogram, and, therefore, interest me. I find pleasure in solving such things. I guarantee to know you better before the voyage is ended."

"Mutual pleasure. But perhaps we won't live out the voyage."

"Bosh, Mr. Stark! Does the presence of a million and a half prompt your forebodings?"

"Thirteen hundred thousand, Mr. Bryce. Not one million and a half."

I looked him straight in the eyes. "How did you know we carried that gold consignment?"

"How did you?" he coolly returned.

"I heard it in confidence, Mr. Stark."

"So did I, Mr. Bryce," a twinkle in his somber eyes. "Good night to you."

Despite the lateness of the hour, I lay awake, thinking over the visit paid me. I determined to question McTavish and Parr, for I did not believe either had told Mr. Stark of the gold shipment. Yet he knew the exact amount. He had fallen into my trap.

## V.

Owing to the small number of passengers, I could have selected any hour for my morning tub; but, having determined on a post-breakfast promenade throughout the trip, I had put my name on the bath steward's book for seven-thirty.

It had been three o'clock when Stark left me; and, thoroughly tired out, I was in a dreamless sleep when the summons: "Bath ready, sir," aroused me.

Taking advantage of the fact that breakfast was on until ten, I ordered Morgan, the bath steward, to cut me out, turned over on the other side, and promptly fell sound asleep.

I awoke in the middle of a conversation that was taking place just outside my door. I recognized the voices of Stark and McWhirter—the latter the day cabin steward of the port corridor. Evidently, McWhirter was about to enter the other's room when its occupant confronted him. I heard the tinkle of china, and my inference that the steward bore Stark's breakfast was substantiated by the latter's next words.

"I didn't ring, McWhirter," he said sharply. "How did you know I was going to breakfast in bed?"

"I heard you hadn't slept a wink, sir, all the night," replied the steward.

"And who said that?" Stark's voice had become mellow and kindly.

"I had it from Spoor, sir—the night steward. He said you were up, dressed, at four o'clock."

"So I was, McWhirter. So I was. But I'm not the man to make up back sleep in the daytime. Thank you all the same for your thoughtfulness."

The steward departed, and I heard Stark tramp forward.

Presently, McWhirter returned to inquire if I intended arising for breakfast.

"I was up almost as late as Mr. Stark but I'll not breakfast in bed,

either," I said. "By the way, McWhirter, where did Spoor see Mr. Stark?"

"Mr. Stark went out on deck, sir, and then down to the music room."

I dressed hurriedly, scrambled through a hasty breakfast, and reached the dispensary just as Parr finished his morning tour of inspection.

"A fine day after the rain," he greeted cheerily. "And how did number thirteen suit you?"

"Very well, considering its reputation and the fact that Mr. Stark is my neighbor. He has fourteen."

"You don't tell me," said Parr.

"I believe he had number thirteen, starboard side, the trip Doctor Beech was murdered."

"Ay, Mr. Bryce, I know that," said the surgeon, nodding. "But what of it?"

"Parr," I said, "where is this gold shipment kept? It can't be in McTavish's room."

"No; he'd be needing more than the cubby-hole he's got. It's in the cabin next the captain's. He and McTavish have the only keys. Its location is no secret, so I'm not breaking rules in telling you. The cabin boy could show you."

"Captain Stone's quarters are not abaft the bridge?"

"No. They were once, but the quarters were always small, and when our wireless was installed, they were given to the operator for a combination stateroom and office. The captain's quarters are on the promenade deck."

"That's where the music room is?"

"Of course. His rooms are one, two, starboard side. What are you driving at, Mr. Bryce?"

I hesitated. "Well, perhaps I'm doing the man a great injustice," I finally said, "but certain words and actions of Mr. Stark strike me as peculiar. For one thing, he knows the exact amount of the gold shipment. For another, he came into my stateroom at three this morning.

He was undressed, but for a bath robe. Yet, at four, the night steward saw him go out on deck and then go down to the music room. You or McTavish didn't tell him about the gold?"

"No," said Parr, puffing, stolidly at his pipe. "But the thing can't be kept entirely secret. It's even published in the financial section of every paper."

"One may take for granted that such shipments are made continuously, but he knew the exact amount," I replied. "I set a trap—purposely misquoted the amount, and he corrected me."

"Are you after thinking he has a wish for the gold?" asked the surgeon jocosely.

"Well, he's been good enough to define his forebodings. At least, he didn't deny they were prompted by our carrying the gold."

"A man wouldn't warn you he was going to steal it," said Parr, wisely shaking his head.

"It all depends on the man, doctor. Some people find excitement in strange ways. Mr. Stark told me it was a pleasure to match brains against a worthy opponent, and I have every reason to believe he was referring to himself."

"And who's the worthy opponent—yourself?"

"Perhaps society at large." I shrugged. "He inferred that none but idiots handled the Beech case. I'm talking to you frankly, doctor, because I know it won't go farther. I know you well, and I wouldn't open my mind to any other—not even McTavish or Captain Stone, intimate as I am with them. For they believe they can discount anything. Very likely I am all wrong, for I have only vague suspicions. But, for instance, has it not struck you as peculiar that Mr. Stark should have been present on the three occasions when something unpleasant occurred?"

"Ay, I've thought of that before this, Mr. Bryce. Three times is straining the law of chance."

"It is, Parr. It comes under the head of *design*. That's what troubles me more than all else. I cannot believe his presence due to coincidence. It would happen in fiction, but not real life. There are some people," I added, developing a thought that had been germinating in my mind, "who are criminals, not through a desire of gain, but simply to satisfy a peculiar mental twist. They like to propound a problem that defies solution. Or, they find a morbid pleasure in taking unusual chances—like a person who sees how near he can come to the edge of a chasm without falling over.

"The fact of Stark's warning every one—having the signals set against him, as it were, would be just the way of making things more difficult. He considers the average man lacking in acumen; and, to make the game worth while, offers a sporting handicap. He says: 'Mrs. van Dam's diamonds will be stolen'—and then he goes and steals them. I can understand the psychology of the thing. Take, for instance, that fellow Price there's been so much talk about these ten years or so past. I believe he's actuated by some such idea."

"You mean John Armand Price?" asked Parr. "Ay, he's as mysterious and notorious as Jack the Ripper. I think he's more of a fictional character than a reality—though I know there's such a man, for I remember his first big robbery. But I think he's made a scapegoat by the police. Any crime they can't solve they lay to him, as a matter of course."

"Probably," I agreed, "though I know he's a hard case. I'm personally acquainted with the warden of Sing Sing—where Price was sent up, with his tool, Pallister, after robbing the New York National Bank. That was ten years ago. It was his first big crime, and he's never been caught since."

"You may remember the sensational

2SEA

escape he and Pallister made. Once beyond the walls, they stole a rowboat, and Price almost murdered his companion—treacherously and to facilitate his own escape. Pallister was subsequently found in the drifting boat—shot through the lungs. He recovered, I think, and served out his term. The warden told me that Price was the most gifted and cold-blooded scoundrel that he had ever seen behind bars, so I'm inclined to credit all that's been attributed to him during the past ten years or so."

"I remember the Price-Pallister escape," said the surgeon, "for back of it all was one of those pitifully sordid, and yet strangely human, stories that stick in the mind—like all dirt. If I remember rightly, Jim Pallister was a mighty clever young fellow—assistant cashier of the New York National Bank—and it was Price who put him up to help rob it. Although the coup was successful, they were afterward caught and sent up to Sing Sing for six years. I believe the inevitable woman was somewhere in the background—just where, I never knew."

"Well, I'm not saying Mr. Stark is another John Armand Price," I laughed. "I don't mean to accuse him of anything. I've no business to even mentally wrong a fellow passenger, and I'll say no more on the subject. I don't know why my mind should be running in such a queer channel."

"We can't always help our thoughts," said Parr meditatively. "I've had a few queer ones myself. But make your mind easy about the gold. Just remember what you said last night—that there's about three tons of the metal. Even if it could be removed without our knowledge, I'm thinking it would take more hiding than that uncut diamond consignment. It's a brave morning, the day," he added abruptly, as if anxious to change the subject.

"Is it bar gold?" I asked.

"No; eagles and double eagles, I

think. Packed in kegs, any one of which is about all a man can lift." He drew aside the curtain of the port, and gazed eagerly on the bright patch of seascape. A high sea was running—aftermath of yesterday's storm—but the sun shone warm and bright, and the west wind carried a snap and tang that stimulated like some potent drug.

"Do you know the wind carried away our wireless early this morning?" said Parr suddenly. "Ay, so I've been told."

"Funny!" I exclaimed.

He wheeled, and eyed me sharply. "What's funny about it?"

"Why, yesterday Mr. Stark predicted—no, he didn't exactly predict. But he called our wireless the eye of the universe." I related every comment Mr. Stark had made. "He added that it was a menace to criminals," I finished.

"It would almost seem as if the man expected it to be carried away," mused the surgeon, gazing through the port.

Suddenly, as we looked, our vision was obstructed by a great, gray object—a mammoth warship, passing so close that the horizon was blotted out.

Parr and I sought the deck, and went over to the port rail in order to secure a better view. The warship was barely half a mile distant, westward bound, and as I saw the Stars and Stripes break out aboard her, I experienced a thrill of pride and pleasure.

"Mr. Bryce, that's the first of your country's new twenty-five-thousand-ton battleship cruisers," said the third officer, coming up and joining us. He was a tall, slender Frenchman, by the name of Toulon, and he spoke English without accent. I had never crossed with him before.

"Her name is *Arizona*," he added.

"Yes," I replied. "I remember she was sent over to represent us at the Kiel celebrations of the German war lord."

"She's homeward bound now," he

added. "She's a grand sight, with her gray fighting paint. She should pick up Ambrose Channel lightship before morning."

"Is she as fast as all that?" queried Parr.

Toulon nodded. "Yes, if she wishes. Those turbines can make twenty-six knots with ease—"

"She's signaling," I interrupted.

The third officer glanced up at our bridge, and then over the tumbling waters to the huge gray shape, that reminded me of a large factory suddenly set afloat.

"Just saying 'How do you do?'" he commented. "I think—wait."

From under his leveled hand he scrutinized the fluttering flags whose color my unexperienced eyes could easily pick out at that distance. More flags followed, and then Toulon, with a muttered: "I'd need the code book," abruptly left us.

Finally, the flags came down with a run, and the *Arizona*, smoke pouring from her three funnels, was well astern. We gave a parting cheer, which was answered with a will by her bluejackets and marines.

"I'm no great hand with the code book," said Parr, turning from the rail; "but, if I'm not mistaken, she was asking something about our wireless. What else passed I don't know."

"I suppose she tried to send us a message, and found out we couldn't receive it?"

"Ay, mebbe that," he replied absently.

At lunch, I learned the full details of the *Arizona's* message; learned it not from Parr or McTavish, but from Mr. Bildad Stark. I had asked the purser, and he had refused the information, saying: "Now, Mr. Bryce, ye canna expect to ken a' that happens aboard ship. I'm thinking there's been ower muckle talking as it is," glancing at the surgeon.

"Not from you, at any rate," said

Stark, who appeared to find pleasure in baiting McTavish. "If you won't oblige Mr. Bryce, I will."

"Obleege, then," grinned the purser. "Na doot your gr-rand omneescience can deespense wi' th' code book."

"It can," blandly affirmed the other. "Shall I tell all that passed?"

"Ay," said McTavish. "You're bluffing again; that's a."

"Well," began Stark, "Captain Black, of the *Arizona*, wished to know if anything was wrong with our wireless. He said that, early this morning, his operator had picked up repeated calls for *Eurania*. The Continental code was used. They came, so he judged, via the Marconi station at Siasconset. They kept up at intervals until eight o'clock. When he sighted us, and made out our identity, no reply was made to his wireless inquiries, so he altered his course until he came within flag-signaling distance. It is some time since I was last called upon to read the flags, so I may not have got things exactly straight, but that's the gist of the matter."

"And you read a' that from the flags?" said McTavish. "It was just ane o' your premonitions?" He was looking hard at Stark, a peculiar light in his little, burnt-sienna eyes.

"Call it what you like," replied the other indifferently, vigorously attacking the salad.

I noted a significant glance shot past me from the purser to Parr, sitting on my right. Then came silence.

"But," I said, at length, "if our wireless was blown away during the storm it must have been replaced. That funny, wishbone-looking thing is still on the forward mast. I saw it this morning."

"Did ye, noo?" commented McTavish acidly. "Pairhaps Mr. Star-rk's omneescience can tell just what happened."

"It can," promptly replied the other. "I guess the storm had nothing to do

with it. I rather imagine a pair of nippers cut the wires."

"You're richt, sir," said McTavish slowly. "And they were cut about four o'clock this morning, for at half past three the tape recorded a call from the homeward bound *Bretagne*. It means there's a scoundrel aboard this ship. Can your gr-rand omneescience name him, Mr. Star-rk?"

"Perhaps—but what's the use?" asked the other. "You wouldn't believe me. I said there was one great thing you lacked Mr. McTavish; that is, a becoming modesty. Your belief in your ability and intellect is pitiful. There's none so blind as the man who persists in seeing nothing but himself."

For a moment, I thought the purser's characteristically violent temper would carry him across the table on top of Stark. But he controlled himself admirably, perhaps realizing that his antagonism had already caused him to say too much.

"Oh, weel, nane o' us is pairfect, Mr. Star-rk," he replied composedly. "It's unco' guid o' ye to enumerate my deefects."

"Can the wireless be repaired?" I interposed, attempting to smooth over the unpleasantness.

"It will be fixed in time—that is, when we're off the banks," replied the surgeon. "If it's the New York office that's been calling, they may try to connect again through Sable Island, for that's the most northern station."

"And," added McTavish, "I'd just like to see the mon who cut the wires try the dirty trick again. I would, too."

"If they are cut again, I think a better job will be made of it," said Stark blandly.

## VI.

The following are the North Atlantic Marconi stations: Seagate, New York; Sagaponack, Long Island; Siasconset, Massachusetts; Sable Island, Nova

Scotia. The latter is six hundred and forty-eight nautical miles from Ambrose Channel lightship.

As we had been held up in the North River for over three hours—due to a fire on a barge tow, that blocked all right of way—we had not passed the Hook until after five o'clock. Our average day's run was about four hundred and thirty miles, so we would not make Sable Island until that night—Sunday. As our wireless had a radius of a thousand miles or so, we could communicate with land the moment the apparatus was fixed. I understood it was Captain Stone's intention to call Siasconset, and find out who had been calling the *Eurania*.

A rigid inquiry had been set on foot in an effort to place the responsibility for the cut wires, but thus far it had proven futile. The wanton act had been committed either during the last half of the middle watch—midnight to four a. m.—or in the morning watch—four a. m. to eight a. m.

The men and officers comprising the port and starboard divisions of these watches had been rigorously interviewed by the captain himself, but they had denied any knowledge of the matter.

Toward evening I had a talk with Parr. "The wireless has not been fixed yet?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "the beggar who did it cut in two places. The operator is having the devil's own time piecing out and splicing extra lengths. The old man's raging like fury, and he's ready to clap every man of both watches in irons. He claims there must have been collusion. The wires were cut aft."

"Have we not the regular crew?" I asked.

"Not more than half a dozen. The majority are fillers-in. We had to take them, or go short. Hudson-Fulton celebrations are not good for sailor folk—they offer too many inducements for going on the loose, and Jack doesn't

need coaxing. New York is full of sailors from the navies of every nation, and from what I've seen during my fo'c'sle rounds, I'll lay to it we've more than one deserter from a foreign man-o'-war."

"Things are somewhat strained between the purser and Mr. Stark," I said.

"Ay, we were talking of the 'muckle black corbie'—as the purser calls him—and, mentioning no names, I told McTavish what you had in mind. Of course, he poohpoohed and smiled in that way of his, but I noticed, from his attitude at the table, he'd been giving the thing more attention than he pretended."

"Parr," I said, "do you honestly think Mr. Stark had a hand in that wire-cutting business? You know he was up on deck at that hour. Do you think he really read the *Arizona*'s flags, or, having foreknowledge, merely drew a correct inference?"

"He seemed to think it would be cut again, and a better job made of it," commented the surgeon, pulling his whiskers. "That's the conclusion McTavish drew, and his saying he'd like to see the trick repeated was practically a challenge. We hope to catch red-handed whoever is responsible. Mind you, I think it will be tried again. It wasn't any wanton foolery."

"You mean some one aboard this ship wants to put us out of communication with the world?"

"We'll see what we see. I'm talking too much, Mr. Bryce," he replied, turning away. "Perhaps it's merely the black foreboding on me again."

After dinner, Parr informed me that our wireless had just been fixed, and that he supposed Captain Stone would now try to communicate with Siasconset.

Impelled by a lively inquisitiveness, I hurried to the topmost deck—one that could not be gained from the interior of

the vessel. Abaft the rail, guarding the sacred precincts of the bridge, stood the improvised room of the operator. As I drew near, intending to look through the window, a figure stepped from the shadows, and politely but firmly warned me off. It was the third officer, Toulon.

"Sorry, sir, but captain's orders," he said. "No passengers permitted aft the forward funnel."

As I moved away, I discerned a tall figure standing in the shadow of one of the starboard lifeboats. Going over, I was not surprised to find Mr. Bildad Stark calmly pulling at his empty calabash.

"Drawing the dead line, I see," he remarked. "Much good it will do, I'm thinking."

"Do you think an attempt will be made to cut the wires again?" I asked.

"Don't *think*. *Know*," he replied. "My friend, the race is not to the swift, nor to the rolling moss that gathereth the early worm."

I turned, disgusted with his flippancy, but he laid a detaining hand upon my arm.

"Stay, and see the fun," he advised. "It's a grand game of blindman's buff. I tell you, Mr. Bryce, Captain Stone and that red-eyed monkey, McTavish, couldn't see a cow if it was sleeping on them. McTavish won't, because he's pig-headed; and the captain can't, because the Almighty gave him a set of wooden brains to play with. With the exception of myself, there's not a law-abiding person aboard this ship with an ounce of intellect."

"I had some hopes of you," he added, turning upon me, "for you have the mathematician's skull. But even you have been a sore disappointment—following the common rut. It's a weary, lonely world," he finished, with a sigh, "for it's crammed with thundering idiots. Do you know, I've found the most originality and acumen among the criminal class?"

"No doubt you're a good judge," I snapped.

"No doubt," he agreed. Then, with unusual animation: "Listen! There goes the sounder. We're calling Siasconset!"

I could hear from the operating room the sharp staccato "C-r-a-s-h!" of the sparks of our wireless. For perhaps a minute it kept up, sounding like a pack of exploding firecrackers. Then, suddenly, it stopped, the door was flung open, and, backed by the single incandescent light, the boyish-looking operator stood revealed.

"What in thunder's the matter with this ship?" he cried shrilly.

"What's wrong?" demanded Toulon, stepping forward from his post.

"Wrong? The thing's put out of business again!" snapped Brown, the operator. "Left me with a half-finished wire!"

"I came on here with the second dog watch," said Toulon. "No one but you and I have been within six yards of your quarters."

"Well, it's up to the captain," growled Brown. "I must say it's a cursed fine discipline that allows some crook to put a ~~crimp~~ in our juice twice' running!" In a black rage, he threw on his coat, and stalked forward to the bridge.

## VII.

Half an hour later, as I was tramping the promenade deck, and wondering what had happened, Parr sought me out, with the information that Captain Stone wished to see me for a moment.

"In the chartroom, Mr. Bryce. Go up quietly, and I'll join you later."

In the glow from the port windows of the music room, I fancied the surgeon's face looked somewhat strained. But his voice sounded quite natural and composed.

Now, I had known Captain Stone for years, just as I knew McTavish and

Michel Parr. He was a blond giant, owning a tender mouth and hard, fighting eyes. A first-class seaman, but rather slow-witted; stubborn to a degree, and capable of doing and seeing but one thing at a time—but that one thing, whatever it might be, he did well.

He never took kindly to advice, ruled his ship with an iron hand, and considered his authority supreme. He was born with a double-riveted belief that one Englishman can account for two or three men of any other nationality; and, as for imagining that one of his crew would ever dare to be insubordinate, he would have as soon thought of blaspheming.

Although on intimate terms with him, I knew that something must be up when I was asked to invade the sacred precincts of the bridge; and, with lively anticipation, I hurried there.

In the chartroom, grouped about a table, sat Captain Stone, Angus McTavish, and the first and second officers. The former was a beet-faced, squab-shaped Englishman, by the name of Timothy Bull. The second officer, Sidney Lewis, was Welsh. Both had been on the *Eurania* since she was first manned.

Brown, the operator, was absent, but Captain Stone was turning over and over a square of paper, that I recognized as a wireless telegraph form. He nodded familiarly as I entered, motioning me to a seat on his right.

I had hardly filled the revolving chair when the door opened, admitting the surgeon. The silence became tense, electric, as Michel Parr made his way to the table, seating himself opposite me.

Finally, the captain spoke:

"Mr. Bryce," he began, in his heavy, windy way, "your invitation to be a member of this impromptu board of inquiry may seem unusual, but it's necessary. I've supped with you aboard and ashore, and I've every reason to be-

lieve you stand our friend. You've crossed with the five of us present at least a hundred times."

McTavish stirred restlessly at this needless opening, while Timothy Bull and the others received it with fortitude, well knowing the few failings of their superior.

"Anything that's said or done here, I know you'll respect," pursued the captain, "as I believe you've respected the confidences of Doctor Parr. I wish you to read this half-finished message, received a short time ago."

He pushed over the telegraph form. It bore the words:

Arrest on receipt following men: St—

"Our Marconi operator," pursued Captain Stone, "as soon as our wireless was repaired, called Siasconset, asking if they had been calling the *Eurania*. They replied in the affirmative, and sent what you see. Before the message could be completed, our apparatus was wrecked, and this time beyond hope of repair. We cannot communicate with land. I wish to know if you were with Mr. Stark at or near the time this was received. The third officer stated that he ordered you away from the operator's room, and he thinks he saw Mr. Stark standing by one of the starboard life-boats. But he is not positive."

I replied that Mr. Stark had been with me before and during the receipt of the wire.

"Then he has confederates! I kenned it a' alang!" exclaimed McTavish, thumping a freckled fist on the table.

"They why didn't you so report to me?" demanded the captain, impaling the purser on an angry stare.

McTavish wriggled. "Weel, I dinna ken it, richtly," he admitted, with an ill grace. "Like yersel', I a'ways thocht the mon a clashbag, fu' o' vanity."

"Until Doctor Parr confided certain things Mr. Bryce has said concerning Mr. Stark?" suggested the captain.

"Weel—ay," said McTavish. "Aud partly from Mr. Stark's own words and actions."

"Mr. Bryce," pursued Stone, "will you tell me all you know regarding this Mr. Stark? I believe your stateroom is next his, and, therefore, you may know him better than any one else. I have heard from Doctor Parr—"

"Captain Stone," I interrupted, "Doctor Parr has, no doubt, stated the full sum of my knowledge—and that is absolutely nothing. I cannot prove a single derogatory action on the part of Mr. Stark. I foolishly stated certain suspicions, that had no foundation in fact. I am deeply sorry I have wronged a fellow passenger. What I said was in confidence—"

"And if I've broken that confidence, Mr. Bryce," interrupted the surgeon, his usually pale face crimson, "it's because I felt it was for the good of the ship."

"I'm sure of it, Parr," I replied, "but that doesn't let me out. I intended no harm, but it looks as if I'd played a very mean part. I'll go to Mr. Stark, and—"

"Hold on," interrupted Stone. "You haven't been alone in your suspicions, and if Mr. Stark has been wronged in thought, there will be a full and ample apology coming from certain officers of this ship." He glanced around the table, adding: "I've learned to-night, for the first time, the attitude displayed toward Mr. Stark by those present, and I cannot ignore it as idle gossip—"

"I've small time—and less inclination—for gossip, sir," interrupted the first officer, his crimson face assuming a purple hue.

"Am I accusing you?" demanded the captain. "Every man jack of you is as touchy as a jumping tooth. I credit no one with malicious gossip, and believe what has been said and done was prompted by loyalty. But loyalty can make mistakes, and, in justice to Mr.

Stark and ourselves, there is but one thing to do—state the case frankly to him—"

"Wi' all due respect, ye're making a sair mistake," interrupted McTavish, his eyes snapping. "An ounce of preevention's muckle better than a broken heid. I'd clap him in irons wi' the rest o' the fo'c's'le vermin. Do ye expecit he'll own up to his pairidy? The mon's a born liar, an' he'll pu' the wool ower your heid—"

"If I may offer a remark, sir," interrupted the second officer smoothly, as the captain's eyes began to blaze, "I think there is some truth in Mr. McTavish's argument. I think we can safely assume for granted that the last word of that message—'St'—was intended for 'Stark!' No doubt he is the ringleader, and, if we have him safely in irons, there is nothing to fear from the rest."

"Indeed, Mr. Lewis!" said Stone. "Have you ever considered the penalty for falsely imprisoning a passenger? You all seem to forget we can prove nothing against Mr. Stark."

"I don't think we forget, sir," interposed Parr, "but don't you think present conditions warrant our overlooking it? There is so much at stake. Better run the risk of wronging an innocent man than—" A significant shrug completed the sentence.

"Ay, that's my way of thinking, though I'm never one to shirk a fight," said Timothy Bull, the first officer, his prominent, staring, jade-colored eyes offering the surgeon grateful acknowledgment. For Bull was slow of speech, and a ready answer never won past his undershot mouth. Like Captain Stone, but in a greater degree, he was eminently more qualified to detect a flaw in his food or drink than to read the character of his fellow man.

"Well, it's not my way of thinking," said the captain flatly. "Aside from all else, it's cowardly, a disgrace to the

flag and our calling. If I can't tell a man to his face what I think of him, I won't jump on him from behind."

Bull began to swell like a toad, while the second officer said, in his smooth, quiet way: "We were considering the passengers, sir."

And I saw by the look that ran around that this delicate slap at Captain Stone's sublime belief in his office, his nationality, and himself, had been appreciated.

Nor was it lost upon its mark. Captain Stone flushed, and an odd, familiar dour look set and hardened in his eyes. I knew it well. With just such an expression, when advised of a mistake by an incautious partner at bridge whist, I had seen him pursue that mistake until he had ruined the hand.

Even knowing himself to be in the wrong, he would, if angered, pursue his own course, though he himself might be the chief sufferer. I knew that the second officer's remark had fully aroused this dour, stubborn spirit, first awakened by the opposition of the others, and I felt that, even if Captain Stone had hitherto felt justified in considering Mr. Stark an object of suspicion, he would now give the latter more than the benefit of the doubt, even though by so doing he would be acting against his better judgment, and, perhaps, the dictates of conscience.

"Your consideration for the passengers, Mr. Lewis, is to be commended," he said, answering the second officer's remark, "but perhaps consideration for yourself has more to do with it. The lot of you are brimful of superstition and womanish fears."

Wheeling about, he pushed the bell, and, when the white-jacketed steward appeared, said: "Otway, kindly take my compliments to Mr. Stark—saloon—and request the favor of his presence here."

Then, facing about, his eyes happened to meet my own. His expres-

sion changed, and he said, in his old, kindly, bluff manner: "I was forgetting you, Mr. Bryce. Your face is so familiar, I get to thinking you one of us. This matter is between Mr. Stark and the ship's officers; not you—"

"If you don't mind," I interrupted, "I will consider it a favor if I may remain. If injustice has been done Mr. Stark, I am as guilty as any one, and I will welcome this opportunity of apologizing."

"Very good," he replied. "You're a sort of privileged character, Mr. Bryce."

McTavish sniffed. "Ay, weel," he muttered, and so low that I barely caught the words, "sich politeness is fair seeckening. Apologizin' for just ha'in' thochts o' a body! Ay, it's a sair fool wha' will na' ha' ony opeenion but his own." He intended this for the captain. And it had been precisely Mr. Stark's voiced opinion of Mr. Angus McTavish.

Without doubt, there was more reason to suspect Mr. Stark's integrity than I had imagined, and I awaited the other's coming with lively expectancy, while Captain Stone stared at the fragmentary wireless message, and the others evinced by their expressions a unanimous and firm belief that a bad mistake was being made in thus forewarning him whom they believed to be—what? I did not rightly know.

Far below, in the vitals of the ship, the dull, monotonous thud-thud of the engines was the only noise that broke the silence.

Presently, there came another sound from the outside deck—the shuffling, flat-footed step of Mr. Bildad Stark.

## VIII.

"Good evening, gentlemen," greeted Stark. "Quite a pleasant family gathering, I see. Even the worthy Mr. Bryce is present."

"Mr. Stark," said the captain

brusquely, "certain circumstances have placed me in a rather difficult position, and during what may follow I ask you to bear that in mind."

"Duty compels us to do many disagreeable things at times," interposed Stark. "Fire ahead, captain, and don't mind my feelings. I know what you're driving at. It is the opinion of the present estimable board of inquiry that I'm the nigger in the woodpile."

"You've stated the case," replied Stone, "so we can dispense with fencing. Is your knowledge due to a guilty conscience, or merely observation?"

"Merely observation," said Stark, with a smile. "My dear friend, Mr. McTavish, cannot disguise his love for me. And the others own the same admiration for my person. I'm a well-loved man, captain. The overweening affection of society at large has been a nuisance all my life."

"This is no time for flippancy," said Stone caustically. "There are a few things I insist upon knowing. In the first place, how did you become aware of the exact amount of the gold shipment we carry?"

"I heard it from one of your officers," was the cool reply.

"What? Which?" demanded the captain.

"I won't say."

"I insist upon knowing, sir," said Stone sternly. "Every officer has given me his word that he said nothing to you about it."

"Then one of them's lying," said Stark calmly.

"You're leein' yersel'!" cried McTavish, jumping to his feet, and brandishing a freckled fist. "Shame on ye to pit your depravity on an honest mon! Prove your wor-rds."

"I can't, just at present, McTavish," replied Stark. "Sit down, my friend, and calm yourself."

"Did you overhear me talking about it to Mr. Bryce?" demanded Parr.

Stark shook his head. "You're only wasting time by questioning me."

"That's a coward's way," rumbled Timothy Bull, almost apoplectic. "You've insulted every officer of this ship, and you'll prove your charge, or apologize!"

"I hope you'll do the same by me," replied Stark suavely.

"This wrangling won't help matters," said Captain Stone, with severity. "Mr. Stark, I'll put the matter plainly before you. Our wireless has been wrecked twice; the first time the wires were cut aft; the second time, on the forward mast itself. I've placed the lookout under arrest, for no one could have reached the wires without his knowledge; it would have been necessary to pass him——"

"That's obvious," interposed Stark. "Because the wires were first cut above the operator's room, you inferred that, if a second attempt were made, it would likewise be committed there? That's not very acute reasoning, Captain Stone."

"I'm not asking your criticism, sir," snapped the captain. "It was hard for me to believe I had a traitor aboard. Though the lookout won't acknowledge his guilt, I've placed him in irons. Now, I'll pass over what happened on those three other trips with us, for I'm concerned solely with the present. You must explain certain words and actions for which you've been responsible on this voyage. You were on deck when the wires were first cut; you stated that they would be cut again, and your whole attitude has been that of an enemy of this ship. I demand an explanation. Again, here comes a wireless message—interrupted, as you know—ordering me to arrest certain men. And the first man's name begins with 'St.' I wish to do no one an injustice, but I warn you fairly, you'll have to do some explaining of a highly satisfactory

nature to escape the irons, Mr. Stark. I am taking no chances."

"What other evidence has been adduced against me?" asked the other.

"I've seen you talking overmuch with a certain seaman by the name of Schlitz," replied the second officer. "He was the lookout to-night, and is the man we've put in irons. You seemed to have a good deal to say to him on the quiet."

"Guilty. I admit talking to Schlitz," replied Stark.

"And," put in Timothy Bull, "Brown, our Marconi operator, told me that you had very delicately offered to make his fortune, if it so happened that our wireless should become permanently wrecked. He thought you were speaking in fun—but I don't."

"I suppose that is all—with the exception of Mr. Bryce's highly imaginative suspicions?" inquired Stark.

"You'll find it enough, sir," retorted the captain, angered by the man's attitude. "Come, I demand a satisfactory explanation of every charge."

For reply, Stark leaned over, and scanned the fragmentary wireless message. "This punctuation and capitalizing is Mr. Brown's," he said. "If that message had been finished, would a colon be placed after the word 'men,' and would the following word begin with a capital 'S?' Again, why should a passenger be embraced in the term 'men'? Would they not say: 'Arrest saloon passenger So-and-so?' But why arrest any one? No one can leave the boat; and the Queenstown police, notified by cable, would meet us and quietly do their duty, without fuss or disturbance. That's the usual method of procedure. Why needlessly wire us?"

He scanned the circle of faces, his attitude that of a teacher propounding a difficult problem to his class, and hoping against hope for a correct answer.

"I'll tell you why, Mr. Stark," said I, when the silence had lasted some time.

"That wire must have been meant as a warning to us; to put us on our guard. No doubt, by the time we reached Queenstown the damage would have been done. Whoever sent that message learned that certain men were on board who meant mischief to the ship——"

"By gosh!" he cried, thumping a fist on the table, "you *have* got some brains, after all. Shake, Mr. Bryce. You're an agreeable disappointment. I had about lost all hope of finding a gleam of intelligence among the law-abiding element on this ship." He jumped up, and insisted upon shaking hands with me.

"Sit down, sir," roared Captain Stone. "I've had enough of your infernal impudence and nonsense. I'm waiting for those explanations. Sharp, now!"

"Well, then, here goes," replied Stark, no whit abashed. "In the first place, let me state that I am a trouble hunter by inclination. I have referred to myself as a bird of ill omen; I have said that wherever I go there is sure to be unpleasantness. Gentlemen, this is true. You see, I don't bring trouble; it brings me."

"Do you mean you're a detective?" demanded the captain incredulously.

"Not in a professional sense," replied Stark. "I merely hunt the possible trouble zones because it affords me pleasure. What Mr. McTavish has referred to as my prescience is merely the very ordinary ability to put two and two together so as to make four. In my wanderings I have herded with the criminal class of all nations, and their mental agility has afforded me profound enjoyment. Problems of every description are my delight, and I have found the average law-abiding citizen rather lacking in brain matter; hence my association with the predatory class who live by their wits. Gentlemen," he added abruptly, "of course you have heard of the notorious John Armand Price."

"Yes, in a general way," replied the captain, while the rest of us nodded. "I

have always considered him more or less of a myth."

"He is not," said Stark emphatically. "In the underworld of the nations his name is a talisman. He is the most daring, original, unscrupulous, and successful rogue who is at liberty to-day. You are perhaps aware that every unsolved crime, whether committed in Berlin, Paris, Vienna, London, or New York, is attributed to John Armand Price. He is a mystery to the police of every nation; he is known by his crimes alone, for he has been caught but once—but it is unnecessary for me to dilate upon his notorious career.

"Now, since his first crime startled the world, ten years ago—you remember, it was that ingenious robbery of the New York National Bank—I have been most anxious to meet this king of rogues—just to study his mental processes. In the underworld, and above it, I came across his tracks many a time, but did not meet the man himself. However, I have not lost hope, and whenever I find a scene that would fit one of his characteristic coups, I hasten to become one of the audience, in the hope that Price will appear, and perform his act. My two trips with you were prompted by this hope; they were not due to coincidence, but design. Let me explain.

"In the New York underworld—where such matters are discussed in a businesslike way—I had heard that Price admired Mrs. Van Dam's diamond collection. With him, admiration means possession. When I learned that Mrs. Van Dam was booked on the *Eurania*, I also took passage, hoping Price would be on board, with the intention of stealing the jewels. Whether he was or not I do not know, for I could not recognize him on sight. I have seen him once—many years ago. He must have changed greatly since then.

"I gave a friendly warning, but I could not be specific, simply because I

knew nothing specific. Mr. McTavish and you, Captain Stone, told me, as politely as one man may tell another, to go to the devil. Well, as you know, the diamonds were stolen—just how or by whom I did not then know. But subsequently, from criminal acquaintances in the underworld, I learned that on that trip Price had secured a berth as cabin steward aboard this ship, and that Mrs. Van Dam's maid had been in the plot."

"And I suppose this wonderfu' mon was responsible for the theft o' the uncut diamonds?" said McTavish, with open sarcasm, as the other paused.

"He was," replied Stark quietly. "Do you remember the gouty old priest who came aboard at Queenstown, with whom you played chess, and quarreled over religious matters? He was known as Father O'Toole. Well, his real name was John Armand Price. I learned it afterward."

"The de'il!" cried McTavish. "I dinna believe you."

"He put morphia in your lemon squash, Mr. McTavish," quietly pursued Stark. "And he robbed your safe while you slept. By listening, he easily solved the combination. The matter is common history in the underworld."

"But where did he secrete the diamonds?" demanded the captain. "Priest though he appeared to be, his baggage was searched. And, even if the detectives failed, he had yet to pass the customs."

"I suspected he planned the coup with his usual thoroughness and ingenuity," replied Stark, "but it was not until to-day that I discovered how the thing was managed. You may remember, the pseudo Father O'Toole had the state-room I now occupy—number fourteen, bridge deck, port side. I had long suspected the jewels must have been secreted there; and, to-day, making a careful investigation, I discovered that a tile just above the washstand can be removed. Behind this a place has been

carefully hollowed out, and the tile may be replaced so as to defy ordinary detection. Naturally, a priest's stateroom would not be viewed with the same suspicion as that given to a layman's."

"But how could the man pass the customs?" insisted Captain Stone.

"Easily enough," smiled Stark, "for he didn't pass them with the stones on his person. The scheme must have been worked this way: Disembarking at New York, Price left the stones in their hiding place in his stateroom. When the ship again sailed, he engaged the same stateroom—perhaps, but not necessarily, under a different name and disguise. A friend came to see Price off, and he merely gave the jewels to this confederate. So the simple scheme worked admirably. I can show you the removable tile in my room."

"Worthy of a genius!" exclaimed Captain Stone. "Leaving the stones aboard while we were in dock was masterly. I remember Father O'Toole sailed with us on the return trip."

"Ay, and he had the same stateroom, too," added the surgeon. "I remember visiting him there."

McTavish said nothing, but eyed Stark in narrow-lidded fashion.

"But," said I, "the jewels were eventually returned to their owner, weren't they? Is Price that kind of a thief? Does he merely seek excitement, not profit?"

"The jewels were returned by me," said Bildad Stark.

The purser's eyes flickered, while the rest of us leaned forward, hostages to this new interest.

## IX.

"Through friends in the underworld—who think me one of them—I at last succeeded in getting on Price's trail," continued Stark. "I thought I had him, but he gave me the slip. However, I secured the stones, and returned them to their owners."

"Then I owe you my berth, Mr. Star-rk," said McTavish slowly. "If they hadn't been returned, I would ha' been deescharged."

"I wasn't thinking of doing you a service, Mr. McTavish, so you're in no way obligated to me," grimly replied the other.

"But your last trip with us, Mr. Stark?" queried Captain Stone. "You cannot lay the murder of Doctor Beech to this consummate rogue. We carried no valuables."

"That doesn't matter. I suspect Price of the crime," replied Stark. "As there was nothing tempting to steal, I knew Price would not sail with you with the intention of thieving—but there was another reason for his possible presence. My being a passenger was entirely due to my desire to reach Liverpool. I was an ordinary traveler."

"Now, I have earned Price's unfriendly hatred; he considers me a dangerous enemy, much better out of the way, and my recovering those jewels was a blow he will never forgive. It is no secret in the underworld that I am a marked man, so far as he is concerned, for he considers me a traitor or stool pigeon."

"If on that last trip, I hinted that there might possibly be a death aboard, I was thinking of myself, as I imagined Price might be on my trail. I have to be constantly on my guard, for his disguises are so perfect that I cannot penetrate them. One moment I might be chatting with a seemingly inoffensive stranger; the next moment that stranger—in reality John Armand Price—would be burying a foot of steel in my vitals. This is no exaggeration, gentlemen."

"Now, on that last trip, I had originally engaged the stateroom in which Doctor Beech was murdered—number thirteen; the one Mr. Bryce now occupies. But, at the last moment, as a precautionary measure, I transferred to number thirteen, starboard corridor. I believe this abrupt change is all that

saved my life. No doubt, as I had considered possible, Price had trailed me, and, mistaking my room, had killed Doctor Beech, thinking the latter was me. As the crime was committed at night, the room was in darkness, and, for the moment, Price was ignorant of his mistake. I never gave him another chance, for I kept strictly to my room during the rest of the voyage."

"Why didn't you communicate your suspicions to the police?" demanded Captain Stone.

"What was the use? The police have not seen Price for over ten years. They can't even identify him by measurements, for at that time the Bertillon system wasn't in vogue."

"But if, as you say, he was disguised, the passengers could ha' been examined," suggested McTavish dryly.

"Then every man on the boat would have had to be examined," replied the other. "Price might have been a steward—anything. On mere suspicion, the passengers could not have been subjected to such an indignity. Besides—well, I feel this matter is between John Armand Price and myself—not the police. And now," he added quickly, "let me explain those charges brought against me. After what I have said, you may better understand my words and actions on this trip.

"My first knowledge of the gold shipment was gained by reading the announcement in a financial paper. Afterward, in the underworld, I heard vague allusions to it—enough to make me suspect that Price might attempt another of his characteristic coups. Mind you, I have no actual knowledge; merely suspicion.

"Coming aboard, the first thing I noticed was the number of new men in the crew; some of them are not even sailors—in one instance, I pointed this out to Mr. Bryce. Other matters for suspicion cropped out. Take the death of that seaman Jones. Suppose it was design,

not accident? Jones was an old, faithful servant of the company. Suppose the forecastle got rid of him because he wouldn't fall in with their plans? That fellow Bass—whom I believe to be an ex-cowman—was in the crow's-nest last night when the presumed accident happened—"

"Do you mean to suggest that there is a wholesale and concerted plot at mutiny?" demanded the captain incredulously.

"Well, it looks a bit that way to me," replied Stark, "though I'm not asking you to act on my suspicions. I would have come to you before this, but for your attitude toward me. I've no angelic virtues, and I don't forget the way you treated me before, when I wished to give a friendly warning. But I have tried to throw out hints—with the result that I'm considered the nigger in the fence. Last night I told McTavish to look for his Jonah in men's hearts, and I've done all I could to put him on his guard without running the chance of being again told to go to the devil.

"I've tried to make the acquaintance of the crew, simply in an attempt to find if Price, disguised, is among them. That seaman Schlitz, with his big, bushy whiskers, might be Price. I did attempt to bribe Brown, the Marconi operator, simply to find out if he was loyal. He is.

"If there is a plot afoot to steal the gold, I knew our wireless would be put out of business first thing, and my being out on deck at four this morning was merely an attempt to keep an eye on the wireless. But whoever cut it gave me the slip—"

"You said an officer told you about the gold shipment," interrupted the captain.

"No. I said I had *heard* it from an officer," corrected Stark. "So I did, but he wasn't talking to me. When I went to bed last night, I heard some one whispering on the deck outside my port, and

I caught the words: 'Number three is the room, and the thirteen hundred thousand is in kegs—easy to handle—' I slipped over to the port. Two men were standing under it, and the one who was talking wore the brass buttons of an officer.

"It was too dark to see his face or figure, the gleam on the buttons alone showing. So I don't know who he is. His voice was pitched so low that I wouldn't recognize it again. The other fellow was a seaman, perhaps. He wore a slicker and sou'wester. So if I don't tell that officer's name, it's simply because I can't. All the same, I'm justified in stating that you have a traitor aboard—"

"Why?" angrily demanded the second officer, Lewis. "Was there anything traitorous in the words you overheard?"

"Ay, was there?" caught up McTavish. "By sayin' an officer told you, you lied to the captain—"

"Yes, you gave him to understand it had been told to you," interposed Timothy Bull, purpling. "The captain asked if we'd discussed it with you; not with any one else."

"Well, let Captain Stone ask you now!" cried Stark, challenging the circle of angry faces. "Let him find out who that officer was—and I'll guarantee to prove that officer a traitor before the trip is out! Tone, inflection, can proclaim a scoundrel as well as words. Come, let the man own up if he is so all-fired innocent!"

Not a man spoke, though they eyed one another strangely.

"You see, Mr. Stark," said the captain at length, "your man is not among us."

"You accept this unhealthy silence as proof of innocence?" demanded Stark.

"I do; most emphatically."

"A noble example of faith," said Stark, without irony. "Will you question the third and fourth officers?"

"Yes—though I consider it entirely unnecessary."

In due time, Toulon, the third officer, and Dodd, the fourth officer, appeared. Dodd was a black-bearded, bold-eyed man, whom I did not know. These two men emphatically denied that they had discussed the gold shipment with any one.

"I was officer of the watch, sir," added Dodd, "and if any officer talked as you say, he must have been off duty."

"You see!" exclaimed the captain, turning to Stark, when Toulon and his companion had gone. "I knew there could not be a traitor among my officers. Why, sir, the thing is impossible!"

"Do you doubt my word?" inquired Stark, without heat.

"I doubt no one's word, sir. But—well, you must have been mistaken. You see danger where none exists—"

"Perhaps," dryly interrupted the other. "And do you attribute to a hobby of Schlitz's the wrecking of your wireless?"

"At all events, I don't give it your significance," replied Captain Stone. "The idea of mutiny is absurd. I'd like to see the seaman who'd dare to give me even a careless word. You're a landsman, Mr. Stark, and have no conception of the relation between officers and men. Mutiny on the high seas is paid for with too heavy a penalty for one to incur lightly. As for the idea that our gold shipment is the magnet—" He laughed. "How would they manage to take it? And if Schlitz is merely one of an organized band of prospective criminals, why did he meekly submit to the shackles? Why not strike now, instead of waiting?"

"That I don't know," replied Stark. "I have merely given you my suspicions for what they're worth."

"I think your imagination has run away with you," suggested the captain indulgently. "At the first, it even

threatened to influence me. I thought you actually knew something—not mere vagrant suspicions. I have seen you reading much penny-dreadful literature; I wonder, now—eh?" His eyes twinkled, for he was once more his genial, stubborn self.

"I know some senators and other brainy men who have the same taste in reading as my own," replied Stark. "You are not a heavy thinker, captain; otherwise, you would find the most complete mental rest and diversion in what you call penny dreadfuls."

"I have an idea that it requires some thinking to navigate this boat," said the captain good-humoredly. "Perhaps not of your kind, however."

He arose, as a sign that the interview was ended.

"Mr. Stark," he added, "I'm glad this matter has been so frankly discussed, for now there will be no misunderstandings. If hard words have been said on both sides, I know they'll be forgiven. I am convinced that Schlitz alone is responsible for our mishaps—he was reprimanded yesterday, and no doubt got back at us in this underhand manner. As for your interesting account of John Armand Price, you will not find him attempting to steal our gold consignment. Even the most daring and successful rascals have their limitations."

Stark said nothing.

But if Captain Stone was entirely confident he had been investigating a mare's nest, I could see that the others were not. They eyed Stark with open suspicion and disfavor. By charging a ship's officer with being a Judas, he had not increased his popularity. I felt that the trouble was merely shelved; by no means buried.

An hour or so later, when I was preparing for bed, Stark came into my room, ostensibly to ask some trivial question, but in reality, I saw, to discuss the recent meeting in the chart room. I apologized for any unworthy thoughts I

may have held of him, explaining that I intended no injury.

He replied in a strangely bitter way he sometimes employed: "Oh, I'm accustomed to such thoughts from the world. I told you before, that society adored me—simply can't resist me. Besides, the account is square. I was having some hard thoughts of you."

"Of me? In what way?"

"Why," said he coolly, "I thought you might be John Armand Price." He slipped a mammoth hand from his dressing-gown pocket, and disclosed a black, wicked-looking automatic pistol. "That's had its eye on you since we first met, Mr. Bryce," he said slowly.

"Here! Put that thing away! What in thunder's the matter with you?" I cried angrily. "I'll report you to the captain——"

"I have a permit for carrying this," he interrupted. "A permit from the police of four nations. It is granted, if you can prove your life is in danger."

"Well, don't train it on me," I growled. "Nasty, cowardly little killer—that's all it is. Put it away! I'm not John Armand Price."

"I wish I was sure of that," he said, quite seriously, pocketing the gun, but keeping his hand on it. "You've given me some thought—like every man on this boat. This gun secretly covers every one I meet. That shows my veneration for Price. I'm taking no chances, for if he gets me it will be in his own particular dirty way. I know him."

"And do you mean to say you can't recognize him on sight?"

"Although it's ten years since I last saw him, I think I could recognize him if he wasn't disguised. But he's a master at making up—as he's a master at all else. No professional actor can beat him playing a rôle. His 'Father O'Toole' was a little gem—and, mind you, he hadn't a hair on his face; yet I didn't recognize him. I suspect every

man on this ship—from Captain Stone down."

"That's thundering rubbish," I snapped. "For over a dozen years I've known every man who was in that chartroom to-night—excepting Toulon and Dodd."

"But I haven't," he said coolly. "And if I had, it wouldn't matter. You don't know the genius of Price. Why, he faked himself off on a lady as her long-absent brother—and he got off with a fortune. The man's a born mimic. He has the imagination of a Persian poet and the gall of a New York policeman. That beard of yours, Mr. Bryce, has caused me much speculation. I wonder if it's false. I've never had nerve enough to find out."

Crouched on the couch by my side, he looked as malevolent and watchful as a waiting cougar.

A sudden, unnamable fear assailed me. In the past few hours, I had come to implicitly believe in the devilish ingenuity of John Armand Price. From out the more or less nebulous realm of newspaper notoriety, the sinister personality of this master rogue suddenly confronted me. No longer was his identity vague; now it had become terribly real. He was hidden among us; on this very boat. Perhaps I had talked with him. Perhaps he was Parr or McTavish.

Nothing was too wild or impossible to believe. That hidden weapon in Stark's pocket was a greater tribute to Price's ability than the most exhaustive analysis. Stark was no man's rubber stamp; he was no coward—

Suppose Stark was John Armand Price!

I sat up, sweating, at this sudden thought. Subconsciously, it had been developing, and now it hit me fairly between the eyes.

My sudden movement produced unexpected results. For Bildad Stark

suddenly shot out a long arm, and I was borne backward, his lean fingers sunk in my throat.

#### X.

I am a strong man but Stark owned the muscles of a gorilla. My wind was speedily shut off; crushed from me. For seemingly an æon I battled hopelessly with a boundless icy sea, roofed with midnight sable.

When I regained consciousness, water was running from my face, for my late opponent had donated the last drop in the carafe. He was pale, haggard, considerably shaken.

I sat up, and tenderly felt my throat, while he silently eyed me, as might a dog guilty of a heinous crime.

"I'm sorry," he said, at length. "I'm awfully sorry. I never did know my own strength. If you hadn't made so sudden a movement, and put up such a fight, this wouldn't have happened. I only wanted to pull your whiskers."

"What?"

"That's the truth," he said solemnly. "I've been trying to do it for some time. I came in here last night with that intention—and I couldn't toe the scratch. I had a strong idea you were Price—having this room next mine, for one thing. Man, when I scrutinized your features as you lay unconscious, when I discovered your beard was genuine—you don't know my emotions! Now, at least, I'm sure of one man who isn't Price."

"Stark," said I, as he stared at me, "for Heaven's sake, pull yourself together! You're making me as crazy as you. I was thinking you were Price when you sprang on me; and I forgive the assault, for in another minute I would have tried to unmask you. I couldn't have stood the suspense much longer. This thing has got on my nerves, and I'll look for Price—"

"Yes, that's just the way he affects you," he said gravely. "I'm glad you have imagination enough to under-

stand. If I only knew whether or not he is on board."

"Have you no possible means of identifying him?" I insisted. "What was his height? He can't disguise that."

"Oh, but he can and does," replied Stark. "He had his growth when I last saw him. He was about twenty-five years old, and stood at least six feet—one of those sinuous, snakelike figures, whose joints seem soaked in oil. His 'Father O'Toole' was a hunched-up old character of sixty. You see, I know him thoroughly."

"You make me believe, against my better sense," I said. "Perhaps it's merely owing to this night's events and conditions. I don't see why you ever meddled with the man in the first place."

He took a few restless paces about the room, then confronted me, his face white and set.

"Mr. Bryce," he said, his big mouth working strangely, "I've been taught to expect little enough sympathy or understanding from the world. At times it's—it's rather hard to be without a friend. I haven't one. I'm a pariah, you know. Somehow, I feel that I can talk to you as I can to no other—why, I don't know. Something's been bottled up inside me for years—it seems a lifetime. I must be personal. I wonder would you do me the favor to listen? I won't demand anything from you."

His face had softened; in his eyes, in his pathetically clumsy and uncouth figure was a strangely human appeal. I suddenly liked the man.

I said I would be glad to be of any service to him. This to one whom I had but lately distrusted; one who had nearly throttled me. But our emotions are freakish at times—that is human nature. I could not fathom my own. I only knew that, for some cryptic reason, I now liked and pitied Bildad Stark.

He thanked me simply; then said:

"Do you remember the robbery of the National Bank? It happened ten years ago."

"I do, Mr. Stark. And I remember most of the little particulars. Strangely enough, I was discussing it with Doctor Parr only yesterday."

My companion smiled—a twisted sort of smile. "I am Jim Pallister," he said.

I was silent, dumfounded.

Stark—or Pallister—continued in a monotonous voice, as if mechanically repeating a lesson that had been branded into his soul.

"I was innocent of that affair, Mr. Bryce. You're the first person to whom I've said so. What was the use of denying it? They had the evidence, and wouldn't have believed me. Yes, there was one who would have believed me; but to her it was not necessary to deny my guilt. I know all this sounds like an old gag. Do you care to hear any more?"

I nodded, and he continued, while the engines thud-thuddled far beneath us, and the life belts in my cabin complained squeakily. From the distant pantry came the confused murmur of knives and forks and the warm smell of food.

"Ten years or so ago," said my companion, "people said I had a brilliant future. I was assistant cashier in the National, and I was no better or no worse than the average healthy, normal young fellow. I won't go into the time before I met John Armand Price, for that doesn't figure. Price was my roommate at college. He was the most prominent member of the various athletic teams and the dramatic society. Where he came from, who were his antecedents, I don't know. Such things weren't a passport to varsity popularity. I admired him for his all-around brilliance. He seemed as pure and fine a diamond as was ever cut. He had plenty of money—no one had a suspicion then how he got it."

"For four years, Price and I were seemingly the best of chums. We had blocked out our futures. He was to be an actor—and he had the making of as great a one as ever trod the boards. I was to enter the New York National Bank. My father, as you may remember, was one of the directors. These matters Price and I discussed freely.

"In our senior year, The Girl came along. I'll just call her that. No matter who or what she was. That was one thing kept out of the papers; one thing saved from chaos. Price had always a discriminating taste in women, but I thought it a legitimate one. It was not. He doesn't know the meaning of loyalty or fair play toward anything.

"Price and I fell in love with The Girl. Heaven blinded her eyes to my ugliness—to these feet, these hands, this face. I've never been able to figure out what perfection can see in utter imperfection.

"It wasn't until The Girl and I became engaged that Price and I discovered we had been courting the same person. He had been turned down from the first, but had persisted. To all appearances, he accepted his defeat in the right spirit, and seemingly, our friendship was not impaired. We graduated, and I entered the National Bank. I was to be married on becoming assistant cashier. I had ability, and that promotion came within three years.

"During this time I saw Price frequently. I understood he was on the road in a first-class stock company, and making good, hand over fist. This explained his frequent absences from the city. We were still the closest of friends, and he was to be the best man at my wedding.

"Mr. Bryce, you know the National Bank robbery from the public's standpoint. I now swear to you that the whole thing was a successful plot to ruin me—though I merely suspected it

at the time. The evidence found in my rooms and at the bank was placed there. I was a fool to run away, but I lost my nerve. Why, everything had been arranged with such devilish ingenuity that I almost believed I was guilty. You know, even the watchman swore that it was I who blackjacked him.

"The world believed if ever there was a guilty man I was that one. My own father believed it, gave his fortune in making good my supposed robbery, and died of the disgrace and a broken heart. Happily, he was the only relative I had. The Girl alone believed in me—why, I don't know. But I think a true woman has the prescience of the angels. I was sentenced to six years penal servitude in Sing Sing.

"Let me now get back to John Armand Price. At the time of the robbery, I supposed he was on the road with his stock company; and I was glad that he was—as I thought—ignorant of my disgrace. When I had served about six months of my sentence, who should appear one day as a fellow convict but Price.

"I had had no chance to read the papers, and believed him when he explained that, like myself, he was the victim of a trumped-up charge. He said he had almost killed his accuser, and, therefore, his sentence was all the heavier. We sympathized with each other, and Price immediately began making plans to escape. I was desperate, and readily became a party to the scheme.

"The night before our break for liberty, I learned from another convict that Price had been an inveterate and successful thief since boyhood. I could not believe this, and said nothing to my supposed friend.

"After our escape, while we were drifting down the river in the stolen rowboat, Price unmasked himself. It was night, and a thunderstorm was rag-

ing. Price told me that from the first, he had intended to make use of me, knowing I was going into the National Bank. Afterward, when I was favored by The Girl, he came to hate me. He swore he would ruin and kill us both. It was he who had manufactured the evidence against me; he, who, disguised as me, had fixed the watchman.

"The police got him for another crime; a pal split on him about the National affair, and Price confessed, swearing I had been the prime mover. This is how he was sent to Sing Sing and his 'confession' bore out the world's opinion of me.

"All this Price told me as we faced each other in the boat. His hatred of me was demoniac, and he freely expressed it. He told me that his one and only reason for having me escape with him was in order that he could kill me quietly and at leisure. He cursed me and The Girl, and swore he would fix her.

"I sprang at him, and he shot me through the lungs, leaving me for dead. I was sent back to Sing Sing, and served out my sentence, with an additional penalty for escaping. Three years ago, I got my suit of clothes and five dollars with which to start life anew.

"That is my sordid little story, Mr. Bryce. I am Jim Pallister, better known as 'Number Nine-sixty-four.'"

He stopped; then added: "I'm not whining against the police. They would have sent up an angel on the evidence they held against me. And I've no grudge against the prison folks, for they only did their duty; Sing Sing treated me as decently as it could. As for society—well, I'm only bitter against it at times. I was the victim of a mistake; that's all, and they couldn't help it, any more than I could. I'm accustomed to being a pariah. I soon found out that I couldn't get work anywhere, on account of my record.

"My present living I get from the police—'stool pigeon' they call me, and unjustly, for, although it's my business to herd with criminals, I never yet rounded on one. When, in the course of duty, I have to go after my man, I always give him a fair and honest warning beforehand. After that, it's up to him.

"It's not love for the work that keeps me at it. No, it's the hope of meeting Price; and I will meet him—some day. He alone can restore my citizenship papers; he alone can answer for many things. There is much between us. The Girl escaped all his wiles, and is waiting for me. She would marry me to-morrow—but I wouldn't let a dog share the name I now have.

"No; Price must give me back my old name, the right to work, to vote. He must wipe out the prison stripes that have burned into my skin. That's what I'm waiting for; waiting, watching, and working. Some day we'll meet, and then—"

"And then? You'll kill him?" I said, as he did not finish.

"I would like to—very much," he replied simply. "It all depends if I can master myself—and I must. Price dead is no use. He shall first give me back my name and the right to marry. For I must remember The Girl. I must keep my hands clean. Price practically killed my father, and almost finished me. It is rather difficult to be dispassionate over such things. However, I will try."

"You have had far more than your just share of trouble, Mr. Pallister," I said, greatly moved by the story he had told so simply, even colorlessly, without straining for effect. "I hope it is unnecessary to say that I believe all you have said."

"That's kind of you," he said. He arose abruptly, and stared out of the port, in order to hide his sudden emotion.

"Are you quite sure," I asked, at

length, "that exoneration, vindication, can only come from this rascal Price?"

"Mr. Bryce, would I have stood all I did, if there had been any other way? The Girl has been waiting for over ten years. She has sacrificed her first youth."

"But supposing Price denies you justice?"

"Then I'll have to kill him," said Pal-lister quietly.

"You won't tell any one else what you've just told me?" I asked. "I don't think it would be wise, just as present. I can see they're down on you, as it is."

"No, I won't tell them!" He smiled grimly. "If they knew I was Number Nine-sixty-four at Sing Sing, they'd iron me for sure. I told you because—well, because you're human. They think I'm lying when I say one of their number is a traitor. But, Mr. Bryce, I over-heard that conversation as surely as I sit here."

"And you've no idea who the officer is?"

"No."

"Nor have you any proof that this man Price is on board?"

"No proof. As I told Captain Stone, I merely heard the gold shipment discussed by criminals whom I know to be pals of Price. They said nothing specific. I think Captain Stone is making a mistake in attributing my suspicions to a disordered imagination or morbid fancy. I admit Price has got on my nerves, but not to that extent. I'm sure that seaman, Schlitz, did not wreck our wireless for the sake of satisfying a private grudge. And how can Captain Stone explain that interrupted message? That, at least, should show him that something is decidedly wrong. Isn't he ordered to immediately arrest certain men?"

"The captain is very self-opinionated," I said, "and the opposition of the others aroused his antagonism. Still, I don't think he is so contemptuous of

trouble as he professes. To tell you the truth, I think he has his eye on you, and is just lying low to catch you unawares; giving you enough rope, in the hope that you'll hang yourself. He never makes a move until absolutely satisfied he's right. They all believe that the last word of that message was intended for 'Stark.' "

"It might better stand for 'stewards,'" said my companion morosely. "But there's no reasoning with some men. All you and I can do, Mr. Bryce, is to stand by and wait for trouble—I only hope my suspicions won't pan out. We can expect little help from the passengers, if there should be a row. The great majority are women, and the few men are the most colorless lot I ever crossed with. As for the crew—well, they are a hard crowd. The Hudson-Fulton celebration offered a splendid opportunity for getting the old hands drunk, and substituting in their place the scum of the nations. I'll bet we have deserters from every ship in the harbor."

"Doctor Parr said about the same thing, but he attributed it to accident," I replied. "Do you mean that the substitution was a carefully planned scheme?"

"Well, if there is a plot to get away with the gold, and Price is at the bottom of it, he will have organized with his usual thoroughness," said Stark. "The smell of the gold will bring vultures from every quarter. He would have no difficulty in picking as choice a set of rascals as ever stepped. You see, he must have accomplices, for a lone hand couldn't get off with that consignment. It won't be like stealing Mrs. Van Dam's diamonds, or the other shipment of stones. How he'll work it I don't exactly know, but he must have the ship entirely in his power for a certain length of time. Very likely he'll head her for Nova Scotia, or have another boat meet her."

"With a carefully organized crew,

thefeat doesn't offer many difficulties. Our wireless is wrecked; we would be out of the track of travel; our engines may be crippled; and by the time we fell in with another ship, Price would have had plenty of time to cover his tracks. He might even scuttle us. I wouldn't put that past him."

"Thirteen hundred thousand doesn't mean so much when divided over as many men as you say Price may have," I observed.

"Leave that to Price," said Stark grimly. "He'll get his whack, all right, no matter who goes begging. He'll only play fair with his regular pals; the rest can go hang, once he gets the gold."

"Are none of his 'regular pals' on board?"

"No. He daren't ship any, knowing I might recognize them. If, as I suspect, we're to be held up by a boat when off the banks, it will be manned by Price's own set. I think that's why no opposition was made when that seaman, Schlitz, was ironed. There was no use starting the row before they were ready. You know how foggy it always is off the banks. Well, if we're to be held up, I think that will be the place."

"We must be very near the banks now."

"Yes, Mr. Bryce. I should say we're about off them. And just look out of the port. The fog's coming down fast. There goes our whistle, and the engines are at half speed."

I shook off a sense of impending disaster that had settled about me like a wet blanket. "This is all idle suspicion," I said irritably. "We're giving ourselves needless worry when we should be sleeping. Why, to me the Atlantic is as familiar and humdrum as my back yard at home. Nothing can possibly happen. We're merely upset by the night's events. Come, it's almost one o'clock——"

"We've stopped," he said quietly.

"Do you hear anything? I thought I heard a distant whistle."

The sudden cessation of the engines' thud-thudding made the ensuing stillness almost painfully intense. The life belts creaked, the door curtains yawned, and the water slapped against the *Eurania*'s sides as she lay wallowing in the trough of the sea.

Presently, the deep, sonorous voice of her foghorn was heard, and from somewhere afar off in the night it was answered by the falsetto blast of another boat. The whistle of the latter sounded again, this time sensibly louder and more insistent. The *Eurania* responded with a heavy, protesting bellow, like that of an animal at bay. It vibrated the glasses on my washstand.

"I'm going on deck," said Stark abruptly. "Something's up."

"We're signaling for right of way. That's all," I replied. But, without waiting to throw on my overcoat, I mechanically followed Stark into the corridor.

At the forward end, we could see a figure standing in the companionway, backed by the closed doors of the smoking room. At first, I thought it was McTavish; but, as we approached, I saw it was the seaman, Bass, whom Stark—or Pallister, to give him his correct name—held to be an ex-cow-puncher. Bass presented a curious sight, for I saw, with wonder and misgiving, that he had slung a well-worn belt and holster about his lean hips, the former stuffed with copper-shelled cartridges. Surely, a peculiar addition to a sailor's dress.

When we had almost reached the companionway, Bass' hand flashed down; then up. We were contemplating an overgrown revolver.

"I reckon this is about as far as you boys travel," he said smoothly. "Mosey back, now, without any fuss, and don't wake the rest of the outfit. Captain's orders, sir," and he grinned, as with the

soiled fingers of his left hand he respectfully touched the sailor cap which grotesquely surmounted his frankly impudent face.

I started to expostulate, when Stark whirled me about without ceremony. In silence, we obediently retraced our steps.

"The rear door's locked," called Bass quietly, abandoning his painfully assumed nautical lingo. "Keep to the bunk house, or yuh'll get shot up some. Yuh've had your warnin', fair. I'll nail the next skull that shows!"

#### XI.

Jim Pallister—as I will henceforth call him—returned to my stateroom, instead of entering his own.

"For all his suavity, I can see that Bass is as dangerous as dynamite," he said. "If you had offered the least trouble, he would have welcomed the opportunity of finishing us, for he owes me a grudge, anyway. No doubt he's under orders not to shoot unless it's necessary. They don't want the passengers aroused if it can be helped. Bass commands every exit, posted as he is at the head of the companionway. Egress to the lower decks has probably been effectually barred—I noticed that the sliding doors of the promenade deck were closed. This means that Bass must be passed. He can hold the stairs against an army, and the rear doors are locked—"

"But the starboard corridor?" I suggested. "He cannot command both at the same time."

"He could, by backing into the smoking room," replied Pallister. "All he need do is command the companionway. Anyhow, he'll have enough rascals to help him."

"This, then, is the mutiny you feared?"

"It looks like it." He smiled grimly. "We're off the banks. I shouldn't be surprised if that whistle we heard was

Price's gang. They chose midnight as the time to strike. How many traitors there are on board we can only guess. Have you a revolver?"

I nodded, and, opening my steamer trunk, unearthed the old Colt's "army" that I always carried on my travels.

"This seems like a burlesque show, or a dream," I laughed, dumping the box of greasy forty-fours into my coat pocket, and filling the chambers of the weapon. "It doesn't seem real."

"Stick your head out that door, and you'll find it real enough," replied Pallister. "Bass, no doubt, was given that post because he can handle a gun——" He stopped, as an uproar arose from below; a shrill scream, an oath, a shot.

Forgetting the warning we had had, Pallister and I stepped into the corridor. What next happened came before we could blink. Aroused like ourselves by the sudden commotion, the few passengers who berthed in our corridor now surged into the narrow passage. Number eleven stateroom, two doors forward, was occupied by a very fat old man, who had reminded me of *Falstaff*. It was this poor gentleman who now unwittingly saved us from instant death. For we had hardly gained the corridor when the distant companionway began to spit fire. At the same moment, *Falstaff* appeared; the next, he had whirled about, and collapsed, riddled with bullets that, but for his interposition, must have drilled Pallister and me.

I dodged back into my stateroom, feeling sick and faint. Time could never eradicate the memory of that murder. I would always see the look of wonder and surprise on the victim's face as he whirled about and crashed to the floor. Surely, in his wildest imaginings, he had never thought that death would come in such a manner.

I now saw that Jim Pallister was no longer with me. He must have leaped across the corridor into the bathroom.

To his long legs the distance was but a step.

The uproar from below had not abated. Added to it was the hysterical screaming of the few female passengers in my corridor. These cries were soon augmented by those of the passengers in the lower decks. The whole ship had awokened; it pulsed with suppressed horror and outrage. In a breath, the *Eurania* had been transformed into an inferno.

I could only conjecture what horrible deeds were being done, while Bass, impersonal and remorseless as fate, held the companionway, and dealt death right and left with cool impartiality. Where and who was John Armand Price? Surely, his mask must now be off. I wondered, too, what had become of Pallister. Before making our second exit, he had discarded the vermillion dressing gown for my Norfolk jacket, that came above his hips.

The sound of battle from forward redoubled. I thought I could distinguish the shrill, raucous voice of Angus McTavish. Anything was better than womanish inaction, and, barren of all plans, my blood singing with the slogan "Fight!" I once more stepped into the corridor.

It was choked with drifting, acrid smoke. I dropped to my knees, and crawled forward, expecting every moment to feel the hot bite of a bullet; to hear the crash of Bass' gun. And I did hear it—many times. But the red flashes were diagonal; not directed at me.

The ceiling electric light in the companionway looked like the sun seen through a warm mist, and, in the half-shadows, I now discerned that Bass was backed against the smoking room. Two or three sailors were at his side, and I caught the white gleam of stewards' jackets. All were absorbed with the stairs, where, evidently, a hard fight was being waged.

I crawled forward, until I gained the first stateroom. From it I could command the companionway. As I scrambled through the swinging curtains, Bass, from out the tail of his roving eye, caught sight of me. Instantly, his gun crashed, but I sprawled through to safety, though I felt as if a hot needle had seared my leg.

The occupant of the stateroom was a little old maid, in profligate negligee, who sent up a screaming protest, begging me not to kill her. She stuck her head under the pillows of her bunk, while, crouching by the curtains of the doorway, I peered forth, awaiting a chance to shoot.

Suddenly, a great roar came up from below, like the bellow of a maddened bull elephant. It was the voice of Captain Stone, and I could hear his roaring slogan: "Saint George for England!" On top of this came McTavish's staccato yelp. His words were indistinguishable, but they sent my nerves tingling. A wild, weird, bloodthirsty yell it was—the battle cry of some old Highland fighting clan.

One of the sliding doors of the companionway that opened on the deck was now torn apart, and men began to dribble in. They carried every kind of weapon, from belaying pins to revolvers. As they massed themselves by the stairs, I opened fire.

At the same moment, from the starboard corridor, there came the rattling crash of an automatic pistol, and, high above all, Pallister's croaking voice, bellowing "The Star-Spangled Banner," at the top of his lungs. I began to wonder if I was attending a burlesque sham battle.

Nine more bullets came hurtling from the starboard corridor, and I added six. Then I was rushed by a steward, whom I recognized as Spoor—a man whom I had tipped on many an occasion. He came for me with a meat cleaver. With every ounce of power,

I gave him my heavy boot fair in the groin—a nasty trick, but it was his life or mine.

After that, things became decidedly involved, so far as I was concerned. I became a storm center. I remember Bass' cannon crashing in my ears; of my seizing him by the throat, and diligently endeavoring to jam his skull through the railings of the stairway. I remember that I thought I *must* achieve this impossible feat—somehow it seemed we would be saved if I succeeded—and I couldn't understand why his head refused to fit the space.

Then, as in a dream, I saw McTavish below me, fighting up the stairs. He carried an old Scotch claymore, and was opening up foot-long gashes with every whistling slash. Timothy Bull stood with him, shoulder to shoulder, a sharp-edged table leg in his pulpy fist. On the other side of him was Michel Parr, chanting one of Tom Moore's poems, while he slugged an adversary between every other word. I remember to this day how strangely it sounded. Thus: "The harp"—*whack!*—"that once"—*whack!* *whack!*—"through Tara's halls"—*whack!* *whack!* *whack!* His weapon was the butt of a heavy navy revolver. I don't recollect seeing Captain Stone or the second, third, or fourth officers.

Decimated by Pallister's merciless fire, the motley crowd at the head of the stairway fell back, as the purser, surgeon, and first officer made a final desperate rush. We looked to have the upper hand when the battlefield was suddenly flooded by a horde of newcomers—evil-faced, competent rascals, efficiently armed.

For a moment they could not distinguish between friend and foe, and they halted, impotently seeking a place to strike.

The next I knew was hearing Pallister yelling: "This way, McTavish! Now then, all together!" Then a clip

on the head made me oblivious to further proceedings.

I came to in my bunk. McTavish, his clothes torn to shreds, was holding out a bony forearm for Pallister to bandage. Timothy Bull, resembling a bloated toad, was kneeling by the door, revolver in hand. Parr was seated on the couch, humming softly, while he swabbed out a great gash in his left cheek. He smiled, and winked as he caught my eye.

"No bones broken, Bryce, eh?" he said. "Just look how those two old enemies are hobnobbing," nodding to McTavish and Pallister. "I tell you nothing kindles the spark of friendship like a good, old-fashioned mix-up. Save the day, we've had a beauty."

"Ay!" The purser grinned through his mask of dried blood. "But for Mr. Star-rk we would be makin' our peace wi' th' A'michty. My freend, you're a gr-rand laddie wi' the belayin' pin."

The purser then told me that Pallister, taking advantage of the momentary confusion, had piloted us to my state-room, dragging me with one hand, while with the other he battered out a right of way with a belaying pin, snatched from an opponent.

"They won't be after us in a hurry, I'm thinking," added Parr. "If they come down the corridor, we can pick them off as we please; and if they try to rush us through yon bathroom, there's enough of us here to drop the lot of them. This night's work has cost them mortal heavy as it is."

"They won't touch us," said Pallister. "The gold is all they want. That last bunch of beauties was Price's gang. I recognized some of his old pals. They must have boarded us."

"Where is Captain Stone?" I asked.

"Lying at the bottom of the stairs, with his head crushed in," said Bull, crying openly. "The bos'n did it, and I'll have his heart out, if I swing for it. Man and boy, I've earned my salt

aboard ship for over thirty years—from the China Sea to Hudson Bay—and I've never seen such a night's work. A Malay pirate would scorn to have a hand in it. They'll pay for it yet, the murderin', thievin' swabs—every man jack of them, and you can lay to that!"

The first officer, keeping a watchful eye on the corridor, briefly related how the mutiny had happened, McTavish and Parr adding a word of explanation here and there.

It seemed that Captain Stone was not so oblivious to possible impending trouble as he had professed, and an incident that had occurred subsequent to the meeting in the chartroom further awakened his suspicions. This incident was the discovery by Parr that the drinking water in his room had been drugged. It had tasted strangely, and a prompt analysis disclosed the truth. The same state of affairs was discovered in the quarters of every officer.

Captain Stone had promptly called a meeting in his room, after giving strict instructions as to extra watchfulness to Lewis and Dodd, who were officers of the watch. Toulon was on the bridge.

Captain Stone, Parr, Bull, and McTavish were cross-questioning the night cabin steward about the drinking water when the bos'n entered with half a dozen stewards and sailors, all of whom were armed. This entrance was the signal for Bilkins—the night cabin steward under examination—to launch himself at Captain Stone. Then the fight had started.

Parr wrested a revolver from a sailor; Stone floored Bilkins and seized his own revolver from his desk; while McTavish pulled from the wall an old claymore used for decorating purposes. An ancestor of Captain Stone had secured it at Flodden Field. In the scrimmage, the table was wrecked, and thus Timothy Bull secured his terrible walnut weapon that he had wielded with such effect.

"There is no doubt," summed up

Parr, when the first officer had concluded his account, "that, to a certain extent, their plans miscarried. They counted upon doping us all and getting off without a fight, but our finding out about the drinking water forced their hands. When Bilkins was summoned to the captain's room he must have suspected that something was up, and he passed the word along. Then they attacked us, hoping to take us unawares. There was an armed guard at the head of every corridor to cow any passenger that might awaken and become inquisitive. All the rear doors were locked."

"How many are in the plot?" I asked.

"That's hard to tell," replied Bull. "A handful of well-organized, desperate swabs could master the ship. Probably, there appeared more than there really were, though the whole fo'c'sle may be in on it. They'd knife the few loyal ones to silence. A man like Bass in the engine room could have his own way. Dodd, Lewis, and Toulon must have been rushed before they had a chance. Mebbe they're keeping one of 'em at the wheel—a pistol to his head."

"Then Price has not disclosed himself," I inquired.

"No," replied Pallister, reloading his automatic pistol. "But he's been on board from the first, all right. The bos'n is ostensibly the ringleader of the circus, but Price has engineered this—unless the bos'n is Price."

"He canna be," protested McTavish. "He's ane o' our auld hands. The lust o' gowld has made him do this—"

"They're getting the kegs out now," interrupted the surgeon. "There go the for'ard donkey engines. I wonder what size vessel they have."

"The de'il! The de'il!" cried McTavish. "I might forgive all else, but thievin' the good gowld. Man, canna we do naethin'—"

*Bang!* went Bull's revolver.

"That finishes one of the swabs," announced the first officer with some sat-

isfaction. "He was makin' down the passage, and I gave it to him fair in the jowls—"

A sudden crash in the rear caused us to whirl about as one man. Parr staggered from the couch, coughing and knuckling powdered glass from his eyes. A belaying pin had shattered the heavy, plate-glass port. The cold, foggy night air swept into the room while we dashed for a corner, weapons ready, and stared at the ragged opening.

Pallister was the first to thoroughly realize and discount our new predicament. Without coming within range of the port he picked up a pair of my shoes and hurled them at the electric light that projected above the washstand. The first missed, but the second shivered the bulb, and we were in darkness, but for the faint light from the corridor.

The electrics were aglow on the promenade deck, and thus Pallister's timely and quick-witted action gave us the advantage of seeing through the shattered port without being ourselves seen. I think but for our spontaneous dash for the only safe corner in the room and the prompt smashing of our light we would have fallen easy victims to the hidden enemy.

"Bonny wor-rk, laddie!" said McTavish to Pallister. "Noo, we'll just keep an eye on the door, an' I'm thinkin' we'll take some deesplacin'!"

Silence came while the ship rolled sluggishly and the water slapped against her sides. Then we heard some one outside the port. Finally there came a voice—one I vaguely recognized, but could not identify. Its owner was standing on the right of the port, secure from a chance shot.

"Ahoy there, within!" he called.

"Ahoy yersel', ye shark-bellied scum!" roared McTavish. "Stan' oot like a mon an' gi' us a crack at ye!"

The other laughed pleasantly. "Still your old charming self, McTavish, I

wish a word with you all. I am John Armand Price."

"An' I'm Angus McTavish, an' to the de'il with ye!" cried the purser.

## XII.

It was too dark to see faces, but as Price, concealed from our eyes, acknowledged his identity, I heard Jim Pallister take a long, deep breath. There wasn't a man of us who wouldn't have givit much to know how Price was masquerading. Was he Toulon, Dodd, Lewis? Was he Bass, Spoor, Schlitz?

Price, ignoring the purser's words, said: "There are five of you in that room, and I know the identity of each. Listen to what I have to say. The gold has been safely transferred, and we are all ready to leave. But among your number is an old friend of mine whom I wish to take by the hand. He must accept my hospitality, for it is pleasant for good and tried comrades to talk over the dear, old days.

"This gentleman is traveling under the name of Bildad Stark, but he is really James Pallister, who was convicted of looting the New York National Bank. We picked oakum together as fellow convicts, and he subsequently graduated with high honors from Sing Sing. I will overlook the trouble you others have caused—truth to tell, I'm glad you got rid of so many men who aren't really my intimates, and for whom I've now no further use—but Mr. Pallister I must have. Knowing him now for an ex-convict, you will naturally deliver him with much pleasure."

"Mr. Price," I said, as Bull, Parr, and McTavish exclaimed at the information concerning Stark, "your words have been discounted. I, for one, know that Mr. Pallister was not deservedly a convict. I know that you deliberately and successfully sought to ruin him, and that you, and you alone, are guilty of the Na-

tional Bank affair. I know if Mr. Pallister had been listened to, you would now be in irons. I know that you wish to attempt his life as you once attempted it before. I say all this for the benefit of the three gentlemen present who are ignorant of the true facts. But they, and we all, know *your* history, Mr. Price, and so far as I'm concerned, I'll never lift a finger to offer up Mr. Pallister as a sop to your hatred."

"Richt, Mr. Bryce!" cried McTavish. "I'll no' believe onything sich a murderin' rogue says. Come in an' take us, ye white-livered swab!" And McTavish let loose a stream of the choicest profanity I ever heard. Parr and Bull also made it apparent in no diplomatic terms that they would stand by Pallister to the last, no matter what his past might have been.

"When you're through, I'll talk," sneered Price when the verbiage had subsided. "I've no time to waste complimenting you on your profoundly heroic attitude. You're not worth losing a man on, so I won't attempt to rush you, for I know how hard trapped rats die. But this I'll say to you: If the man Pallister does not come out and give himself up, I'll open the sea cocks and let the ship go to the bottom with every soul on board, man, woman, and child. Now, it's up to you, Jim Pallister. If our plans hadn't miscarried, I would have had you, anyway."

"Gentlemen," said Pallister quietly, arising and addressing us in the darkness, "I'm thankful to be of the least service. I will go. I know this criminal, and he will keep his threat to the letter——"

"Ye wilna go!" cried McTavish. "Mon, ye've ficht a bonny ficht th' nicht wi' us, an' we're brithers a'. Live or dee, we'll stan' tagither through——"

"No! No!" interrupted Pallister. "It must be, McTavish. Think of the women and children, if not of yourselves. Gentlemen, your unquestioning

faith in me has come as the greatest thing in my life. I *am* an ex-convict, and I have been a pariah for ten long years. But now, unmasked, your faith has restored my manhood, and I can leave this world happy in that knowledge, even if my work remains unfinished. Before I go, I must say that your faith has not been given in vain, for I swear in the face of eternity that what Mr. Bryce said is the truth. And now, good-by, 'brithers a'.' Your hand, McTavish. And yours, Bryce——"

"Stow that dying-patriot business!" roared Price through the port. "You talk like a matinée idol. Leave all weapons and beat it out the rear door; you'll find it unlocked. Shake yourself, now!"

Before Pallister could obey a couple of shots rang out from somewhere forward, followed instantly by a scattering fusillade. Then we heard some one yelling for Price. The latter muttered an oath and turned from the port. We heard him running forward, shouting orders as he went.

"Don't go," said Bull, laying a detaining hand on Pallister's arm. "Time enough when you must. If I'm not greatly mistaken, they're fighting among themselves. Perhaps Price's men and our swabs have fouled one another."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Pallister. "You heard what Price said about having no further use for them. Trust him to double-cross all whom he can with safety. It will be so many less with whom to divide. What do you say to a sortie? The odds won't be so heavy this time, and they'll be so busy with each other that they can't give us overmuch attention. Perhaps some of our own worthies will help us. Anyway, it's better than being cooped up here."

"Ay," exclaimed McTavish. "If they get awa' wi' that gowld my heart will break in twa. I'm for ha'in' another crack at them. Hang tagither noo, ladies. Lead awa', Pallister."

It was as one man, imbued with but the one idea—to inflict damage on the enemy—that the five of us crept from the stateroom. Pallister, Parr, and myself had revolvers—the first officer having returned my weapon—while McTavish gripped the old claymore, and Bull repossessed himself of the fearful table leg. We had dismissed the idea of attempting to free the passengers, for McTavish held that they would be worse than useless, while Bull added that as an officer of the ship it was his duty to safeguard them to the full extent of his ability.

We reached the companionway without hindrance. It was deserted but for its dead and dying. It looked a veritable shambles. Doubled up in a far corner lay the steward, Spoor, whom I had temporarily knocked out. Since then he had received a more serious injury, for he lay with agonized face upturned to the dim ceiling light while he pressed both hands to his left side, from which a stream of blood was pouring.

To our harsh inquiries, ably abetted by the threatening table leg, he whispered that he and his fellow rascals had become aware of the fact that Price and his men intended leaving the *Eurania*, allowing the others to shift for themselves.

“Blimey, wot a cadger!” he coughed venomously, striving to arise. “Let me get these two ‘ands on ‘im afore I passes out. That’s all I arsk. Leavin’ us to face the music, an’ not even a quid to show for it! Gimme ‘arf a chance an’ I’ll swing for ‘im!”

“Serves you blame well right, you swab!” exclaimed Timothy Bull. “It’ll save a good, honest rope. Who gave you that wound?”

“Bos’n,” said Spoor. Before falling back, exhausted, he told us that the bos’n and Bass were the only men whom Price was going to take; these two had turned against their fellows, hoping to

profit by the double treachery. The order not to permit one of the *Eurania*’s men to remain on the vessel which now bore the gold consignment had aroused the suspicions of our mutineers. Then Spoor had overheard Price’s remark to us, and, under his, Spoor’s leadership, his brother rogues had attempted to board the treasure ship, preferring to find out at once if there were treachery afoot.

The fight had then started, Price calling for his men that were guarding the consignment. Thus the master rogue’s hand had been twice forced, for he had planned to leave the *Eurania*’s mutineers to their fate before they had become aware of his intention.

Spoor added that all passengers were securely locked in their staterooms; that a couple of Price’s men were in charge of the engine room; that Brown, the Marconi operator, was bound and gagged in his bunk; that half a dozen loyal seamen were in a similar condition in the forecastle; that, in short, the entire vessel was in the hands of the enemy until this new quarrel had broken out.

Long as it takes in the writing, the steward’s story was short in the telling, being ejected in short, gasping words that required no elaboration.

Pallister was the first to remember that we could learn Price’s identity from this man, and he put the question, while we waited with hushed breath for the answer. But it never came. Spoor’s red eyes flashed; his lips moved; then his head fell back, and he had gone to face the last great tribunal of all.

During the few minutes consumed by this little by-tragedy, we had heard the sound of battle proceeding from somewhere forward. Actuated as by a common impulse, we now hurriedly sought the promenade deck, port side. The fog had lifted, but a bleak, drizzling rain was falling, making the decks very slippery; this was added to by a thickish mixture I felt underfoot. I knew what

name to give it, for the companionway had been fairly awash with it.

We could now see that a small vessel—perhaps of a thousand tons or so—was lying alongside, a gangplank running from our main deck to her bridge deck. She carried a pilot house, and this was brilliantly aglow. Through one of the open windows a huge bulk of a man lolled, one hand on the wheel at his back.

"On board the *Eurania*!" he belled as, silhouetted by the light from the companion, we hung over the rails and stared down at him. "When's that infernal rumpus goin' to end? We ain't got all night to sit here."

"It's about finished now," replied Pallister quickly. "Price wants to know how many men you've got on board."

"Not a bloomin' soul but the engineer and myself," roared the other. "We've given him all we had."

"Stand by, we're coming on board," said Pallister. "If the swabs took it into their heads to rush you, we'd have our hands full."

"I've thought o' that afore this," growled the other.

Pallister hurried us into the companionway. "Listen," he said. "You see our chance? Price is busy for'ard. Only the engineer and captain are on that boat, and she carries the gold consignment. In the excitement, we've been overlooked. The guard has been drawn into this new fight, and we can board—"

"I can't desert the ship," interrupted Timothy Bull. "It's all right for you and Bryce—"

"And you three officers," interposed Pallister quickly. "Man, don't you see, you'll be saving the passengers? Those villains will be left high and dry on this ship, and, for their own safety, must use her well. But if they get aboard their own vessel, Price may sink the *Eurania*, no matter about his pledge to you. He'd do it in a minute, if it would

help him any. By taking this chance we cannot jeopardize the passengers, but we may save them—"

"Richt!" cried McTavish. "It's no desertin', an' I, for one, must stick by the gowld. We canna ficht that horde o' scurvy—"

"That vessel carries a wireless outfit—I saw the aerials," interrupted Pallister rapidly. "We can call for help. Stay here, I'll free Brown, for we need him."

In an exceedingly short time, Pallister returned, accompanied by the boyish-looking Marconi operator, who was eager to get into the fight. Bull and Parr had agreed to this new undertaking, though reluctantly. From Spoor's lifeless hand Brown wrested the meat cleaver that had so nearly opened my skull. Thus armed in a most effective, if widely dissimilar, manner, we sought the main deck, where the gangway had been run out.

Every step we took into the bowels of the ship disclosed further evidence of the human cyclone that had ravaged her. The strong room was wrecked—chaos was everywhere. To me, it all seemed like a ghastly dream. By the music room lay the body of Captain Stone, and though every moment was precious, we reverently carried the poor mutilated figure to a lounge, closed the staring eyes, and covered the whole with a curtain torn from the door. McTavish essayed a short prayer, but it ended in an oath, while Bull's snuffling sobs irritated me beyond reason.

The ship had quieted down but for the racket forward, the passengers evidently realizing they were not to be molested, and resigning themselves to the inevitable.

Pallister, who had become our leader by right of his keen and ready wit, resourcefulness, and intrepidity, held that our best move was to board the treasure ship with a rush. Parr and Brown were to cow the engineer—ordering full speed

ahead—while Pallister and I attended to the captain. Bull and McTavish were to cast off. Being the only thorough seaman among us, the first officer naturally had the supervising of the last mentioned task.

Until we reached the gangplank all went better than we had dared hope. Not a soul did we meet. But as Pallister was about to step upon the sharp declivity connecting us with the treasure ship, the sound of flying feet came from behind us.

Down the main deck came an officer running at top speed, as if for his life. Behind him came Bass, revolver in hand, and the bos'n, flourishing a capstan bar.

"It's Toulon!" cried McTavish, who was the first to recognize the blood-smeared features of the third officer. "He's broken away, and they're after him!"

We dared not fire, for fear of hitting Toulon; but at sight of the oncoming bos'n, Timothy Bull gave a great roar of savage welcome, and sprang to meet him, the fearful table leg whirled aloft.

### XIII.

Bull's battle with the bos'n was a classic. It so happened that they became the sole combatants, the rest of us being promptly put out of action. For as Toulon drew nigh, his feet suddenly slipped on the wet deck, and, skidding on all fours, he crashed like a projectile into our group, upsetting Brown, Parr, McTavish, and myself. The five of us fetched up by the rail, a tangled mass of flying legs and arms.

As Toulon fell, Bass fired, and Pallister took the bullet through the fleshy part of his left arm. Before the ex-cowman could again fan the hammer, Pallister had turned loose his automatic pistol. Bass fell, fairly riddled with the sleet of lead.

Meanwhile, the first officer and the

bos'n were having it out. I saw the entire affair, for I was jammed to a sitting posture, McTavish and Toulon across my legs.

Pallister kept circling about the two combatants like a cooper about a barrel, but Bull roared to him to keep out of the way, and the other finally obeyed. On engaging, the bos'n had made a desperate swipe with his capstan bar; but Bull, wonderfully nimble for his weight, side-stepped and whacked the table leg over the other's momentarily unprotected rear.

A little higher, and a skull would have been split, then and there; but the blow merely landed on the bos'n's thick shoulders. He turned, flung his weapon straight at Bull; missed cleanly; whipped out a knife, and closed. Then they had it all over the deck; slipping, falling, recovering only to go down again; finally, for good.

At length, one of the writhing figures staggered to its feet, leaving the other prone. The survivor was Timothy Bull. His face was badly gashed, his clothes in shreds. His huge hands were opening and closing spasmodically like the claws of a giant lobster. From the unnatural angle at which the bos'n's head lay, I knew that it had been slowly, relentlessly twisted until the neck had snapped.

"Well, I bet Captain Stone rests a bit easier now," was the sole comment of the survivor.

McTavish and Toulon now succeeded in extricating themselves, and I found that the dead weight across my legs had been principally caused by the latter. His collision with the rail had stunned him. He now arose unsteadily, but with the first deep breath of the sharp air his brain cleared, and he took in the situation at a glance.

"Thank you, gentlemen, for the timely help," he said simply. "That was a narrow squeak. They had me prisoner on the bridge, but when the other fight broke out, I ran for it—those two devils

at my heels," eying the lifeless figures of Bass and the bos'n.

The captain of the treasure ship now hailed us. Rifle in hand, he had awaited the ending of the battle, for we were too far above him for him to see us accurately. Pallister answered his query, saying we had worsted our opponents and that the rest of the men would soon be aboard. We then boarded the treasure ship. As agreed upon, Brown and Parr sought the engine room, while Pallister and I entered the pilot house.

The captain was standing by the wheel, his rifle balanced across the open window.

"Don't move!" commanded Pallister, leveling his weapon. "Bryce, grab that gun!"

"Blow me, if it ain't Jim Pallister, the stool pigeon!" exclaimed the captain, offering no resistance, and evidently overcome with astonishment.

"The same," replied Pallister. "So you're in this game, too? I thought as much. Bryce, let me introduce Captain Solomon Boggs—an old gun-runner, disgraced pilot, smuggler, and all-round sea-scavenger. You got ten years for running in that last cargo of pigtais, didn't you?"

Captain Boggs accepted his capture with much philosophy. "You're a little too personal, Brother Pallister," he said, grinning. He sat on the bench, spewing tobacco juice. He was a fat, unbuttoned man, vile in a liberal, good-natured way. "I thought them pipes o' yourn had a familiar blast," he added plaintively. "Fancy you bein' aboard, Brother Pallister! Price has balled up this beautiful. I was for takin' the other boys with us an' givin' 'em a fair whack. This is what comes o' tryin' to hog the whole puddin'. But, mind, I'd no hand in the game, but to help run the gold ashore, innocentlike. Wacha goin' to do, now you got us, Brother Pallister?"

"You'll see in a minute," replied the other.

"Well, it's all in the game—as the man says when the turkey gobblers swallowed his bank roll," commented the philosopher. "That must ha' been a pretty tough scrap up there; they're goin' some yet."

"Where did you sail from?" inquired Pallister. "You couldn't clear from any American port."

Boggs winked and a stream of tobacco juice hit the distant brass cuspidor with a metallic "Ping!" His eye for distance was wonderfully accurate. "That's tellin', Brother Pallister. But I'll say this: This here craft is the *Peaceful Heart*—bless her ol' hide—what was confiscated when I run that last bunch o' chinks. She an' me has been bosoms for ten years an' more. Price bought her in—"

"Stand by and take the wheel!" roared Pallister, as the engines suddenly began to pound. "Keep her off from the *Eurania*, Boggs! Bryce, douse that light—quick! Now, out with you on deck with that rifle and nail the first man who tries to jump us! I'll attend to our fat friend."

I obeyed, crouching by the now darkened pilot house. We had sheered off from the *Eurania*, and, as distance lent me perspective, she looked like a huge, black mountain towering over us, the light from her port staterooms staining the tumbling waters.

The fight between the rival factions had been wagered about the forecastle, and as it dawned upon them that they were being deserted, they forgot their difference in this common calamity. They rushed to the port rails, screaming out curses and opening an ineffectual and desultory fire. One or two seemed about to jump, but already we had opened up a deterring gap, and one look at the black, bottomless chasm awaiting them was enough. Our coup had succeeded.

Brown, Bull, and McTavish pres-

ently joined me, the third officer taking the operator's place in the engine room.

"Toulon and Parr will be more than enough for that engineer if he gets troublesome," explained Timothy Bull. "We need Brown for the wireless job——"

"The outfit, on these small vessels hasn't much of a radius," put in Brown. "Not more than two hundred odd miles or so."

"That's sufficient," said Bull. "We aren't that distance off Sable Island. What we want is help for the *Eurania*, not ourselves. A British cruiser can put out from Halifax—the nearest naval station."

We entered the pilot house and after some discussion it was decided that we were to keep within sight of the *Eurania* until Brown had made an effort to connect with Sable Island.

Obeying our command, Captain Boggs gave the signal for slowing up, and it was promptly obeyed by the engineer, whom Parr and Toulon were guarding.

Since the beginning of the mutiny, the *Eurania* had been going at reduced speed, her twin screws just revolving fast enough for steerage way, to keep her from drifting with the strong northwest wind. Captain Solomon Boggs at the wheel, we now kept her abeam, but distant about half a mile.

Leaving Pallister in charge of the pilot house, Brown, Bull, McTavish and myself sought the wireless room—a little cubby-hole affair amidships on the bridge deck, where the take-off wire from the aerials came down.

Brown switched on the incandescent light and seated himself by the instrument, the first officer, McTavish and myself silent and interested spectators. I kept an eye on the knobs, watching for the sparks to fly. The poles were rather close together, showing that the spark would be short, and I know that this meant that our apparatus had a small radius.

Then I became aware that Brown,

for the moment, had no idea of sending. His whole attention was devoted to the receiving apparatus, his ears evidently strained to catch sounds within the receptor.

"What's the matter?" I finally ventured to ask.

"I just got something," he jerked over his shoulder.

"A call?" questioned Timothy Bull.

"No-no—merely a flash," snapped Brown. "I can't quite make her out." His ears were strained under the rubber caps.

"Got it yet?" at length inquired McTavish.

Brown shook his head.

Then: "Car-ash! Sh! Sh! Sh!" went the sparks, growing stronger.

"She's coming!" cried Brown. "It's a general call." He reached for the keys; his fingers touched them, and the sparks flew, flashing purple-blue against the dark background of the cabin. Brown was answering the general call.

Evidently the mysterious, unknown agitator of the ether waves far out in the black night—perhaps, like ourselves, on the tumbling waste of waters—was an experienced operator like our own, for his reply came promptly.

"They're calling *Eurania*," said Brown, emotionless as a veteran poker player. He then cut in the automatic tape register in order that we might read. Neither Bull nor McTavish understood the code, but I did.

"Who are you, and what is your location?" came the unknown's query.

"Converted yacht *Peaceful Heart*, Captain Solomon Boggs, port unknown. About twenty miles sout'-sou'east of Sable Island," replied Brown, rapidly working the keys and giving no attention to Bull's whispered information as to our exact latitude and longitude.

"Have you spoken liner *Eurania*, New York to Liverpool? Should be off banks," said the unknown.

"*Eurania* half mile to leeward,"

flashed Brown, his boyish face as expressionless as stone. "C. Q. D! Who are you?"

"U. S. S. *Arizona*; Captain Black," came the reply.

"Bully for you, *Arizona*!" I cried, restraining an insane impulse to turn a back flip. "I guess little old Uncle Sam is sitting into this game some! What?"

McTavish and Bull gave a rousing cheer, but Brown remained cool and impassive, for he had been schooled to danger and emergency. The sparks now flew thick and fast.

"Mutiny on board *Eurania*," flashed our operator. "Plot to steal gold consignment. Held up by yacht, *Peaceful Heart*! Six of us—passengers and officers—captured latter, and are standing by. Gold safe."

"Know all of plot," came the *Arizona*'s answer. "Stand by until we arrive. Are fifty miles sou'-sou'west. Making twenty-six knots per hour. Will be with you by four o'clock. Give exact location."

Under Bull's direction, Brown did so, adding:

"Are making two knots steerageway. Show your searchlight on sky."

"Can't Fog closing down," came the answer. "Have you ironed ringleader, John Armand Price?"

"Price left on *Eurania*," flashed Brown. "Can't escape."

Though I had dabbled considerably with telegraphy and could read with eyes and ears the Marconi code, it seemed to me a wonderful thing, this message of help flashed from out the limitless expanse of night, from out the boundless deep. I offered a mute and glowing tribute to the great brains that had made possible this annihilation of space, and with humble admiration I watched the youthful Brown, as with deft fingers he transformed the cold, insensate keys into a thing sensate; a thing pulsing with life and intellect.

Fifty miles astern of us, afar off in

4SEA

the black night, the *Arizona* was rushing up to the rescue; her turbines, under forced draft, hurling her vast tonnage against the waters at twenty knots per hour. It was now a quarter past two; at four o'clock she would be dealing out law to the lawless.

Meanwhile, Brown chatted with his confrère in the wireless room of the battleship cruiser; chatted as if the other were just across the room. Our operator gave a brief account of what had transpired aboard the *Eurania*, while the *Arizona* man explained how his vessel had come to take up the chase.

After leaving us that morning, the *Arizona*, under half speed, in order to save coal, had continued her westward journey, intending to dock next morning at the New York navy yard. Along toward evening, her operator began picking up repeated calls for *Eurania*.

Finally, he had connected with Siasconset, explaining that they had spoken the *Eurania*, and that her wireless had been damaged by the storm, but would be repaired by night. Siasconset had promised to try and connect with us at that time—that was the interrupted message we had received.

Siasconset then told the *Arizona* that it had just been learned in New York from a drunken sailor, who should have shipped on the *Eurania*, that there was a plot on foot, headed by the notorious Price, to mutiny and steal the gold consignment, and that the *Eurania* must be warned at all hazards. If they—Siasconset—would be unable to connect with us that night, what was to be done?

In the meantime, the officers of the company had evidently communicated with the government, for the *Arizona* then received a message from the war department ordering Captain Black to right-about-face and catch the *Eurania* without delay. This ship was one of the fastest in the navy, and she was nearer to us than any other government

vessel. Price and our prospective mutineers were to be arrested and conveyed back to New York. Their drunken fellow conspirator who had given away the plot had not said anything about Captain Solomon Boggs or the *Peaceful Heart*. We subsequently learned that some of the men had not been confided in fully.

Now, when the *Arizona* received this order—it was at four o'clock—she was about equidistant from us and Ambrose Channel lightship; that is, about one hundred and seventy odd miles, for at that time we were more than one hundred miles sou'-sou'east of Sable Island. Under ordinary conditions, she should have caught us long prior to the breaking out of the mutiny, but the fog had shut down on her, and she had been forced to feel her way. She had been affected by this condition long before the same atmospheric blanket caused us to slow down.

Brown's last communication from the *Arizona* was to the effect that the fog had lifted. "O. K.," he flashed, and then swung about in the chair, slipping the harness from his head. "Well," he exclaimed, with a satisfied sigh, "another hour or so, and Old Glory will be here to adjudicate matters."

"A good early morning's work, lad," commanded Bull, laying a pulpy hand on the other's shoulder. "Is the fog lifting, Mr. Bryce?"

"Yes," I replied. For I was stationed at the one small window the room afforded.

"How's the *Eurania*?" added the first officer. "I hated like sin to leave her, but Mr. Pallister was right. We've done more good here."

"I told ye he was a'ways richt," put in McTavish. "The passengers are safe enough. Those murderin' thieves will let them be."

"But those murdering thieves won't wait to be captured, I'm thinking," said I. "They must know we're only twenty

miles or so off Sable Island. What's to stop them looting the passengers and making off in the lifeboats?"

"Naethin'," said McTavish thoughtfully. "Naethin' at a'—except us, Mr. Bryce. We'll ha' to move up closer an' shoot th' first mon who tries to use the boats."

"Then I'll go and tell Pallister," I said, arising. "He'll be glad to know about the *Arizona*. This experience has turned out far better than it promised. It's all over but for the 'Rogues' March.' It will be a pleasure to watch Mr. John Armand Price head the procession."

"Thank you, Mr. Bryce. Thank you, indeed. But, perhaps you won't be here when that happens. Not a move, gentlemen!"

We had whirled about at the first sound of this new voice—a voice that was familiar to me in two distinct and separate ways.

The third officer, Toulon, was standing in the doorway, covering us with a navy revolver.

Then I realized how we had been tricked; how at last we were face to face with the master rogue, John Armand Price.

#### XIV.

For fully a minute the four of us, paralyzed with astonishment, stared at our captor, while we offered no word or movement. There wasn't a coward in the room, but we knew that flexing a muscle meant instant death. Even McTavish, the fiery and impulsive, kept his head, and realized this truth, and, as if by thought transference, the four of us understood that our only chance—a horribly small one, at that—lay in dissembling; yielding for the moment implicit obedience. We were at the mercy of a wolf; a man who had proved himself, not immoral, but unmoral; who apparently could not distinguish between right and wrong.

"Mr. Pallister is bound and gagged in the pilot house awaiting my eventual disposal of him; Surgeon Parr, rather badly beaten up, is a prisoner in the stokehold," said Price. "The lives of you four depend on how you behave yourselves. Understand, but for Captain Solomon Boggs every man jack of you would be knocked on the head and dumped into the sea. From me you can expect absolutely no mercy, for I'm not built that way. But Boggs has always stopped at murder; not that he has scruples, you understand, but simply because he's a coward, and is afraid to take the chance. Murder eventually means the rope or chair, and the end of life, whereas piracy and other minor crimes don't."

"I need Boggs' help, so I can't afford to quarrel with him. Therefore, it is agreed that you four may live, but if you give the least trouble—impede our chances of escape 'in the slightest—Boggs will concur in your removal, for then you will be endangering his skin. You see the point?"

"Now, gentlemen, I've put it up to you fairly and squarely, and you know just how we stand. The man who wants to oblige *me* will try to make a fight of it; the others will throw all weapons here at my feet. Now then, lively, boys."

There was only one rifle and revolver in the crowd, and these were in my possession. I frankly acknowledge that I promptly obeyed the command, sliding them across the floor to the door where Price stood. The table leg and claymore followed, being joined by Brown's meat cleaver. Price promptly kicked them through the door to the deck, saying:

"You give your word this is all? Remember, this is the first and last call for disarming. After this, I will have to dispose of the first man I see with a weapon."

Each of us gave his word, and Price then turned to our operator, saying: "I know you have been very busy with

the wireless, Mr. Brown. Cut out that automatic tape and bring it here."

Brown hesitated long, his keen, shrewd, gray eyes reading the other's face. Then, slowly, he obeyed.

Price studied the tape. I glanced at the brass clock hanging above the wireless apparatus. It was now three o'clock. Another hour, and the *Arizona* would be with us. Did Price know his danger? Must we be so near salvation only to lose it? Would our coup, after such glorious promise, end in utter failure?

I looked again at Price. The tape was being rapidly jerked through the slim fingers of his left hand; the other held the navy revolver—no doubt wrested from poor Parr. His keen, pale face, smeared with dried blood, was absolutely devoid of expression. The black Vandyke beard that had seemed to me so eminently French—quite in keeping with the name Toulon—must be genuine; otherwise it would not have survived the battle.

His slow, sleepy, leonine eyes apparently saw nothing, yet noted everything. Busy with the tape, they would have instantly detected the slightest move on our part. This I sensed with certainty, just as I would know that a drowsing cougar could strike to kill on the instant, and without warning. And this was not the sole point of similarity between Price and that animal. I remembered now that all his movements had struck me as infinitely feline.

Only that morning, when commenting on the *Arizona*, he had slipped up behind us so noiselessly that, until he spoke, I was unaware of his presence. Skilled as he was in so many pursuits and callings he must understand the Marconi code; must be able to interpret that tape. He could dodge, avoid the *Arizona* in a dozen ways; win safely to the mainland before she arrived.

And realizing this, I cursed myself for renouncing my weapons without a

fight. What mattered it if I had been killed?—as I surely would have been. Unless death had come instantly I might have disabled Price, or, at least, assured his attention long enough for the others to rush him. I alone had possessed both rifle and revolver; to me had been given the chance of saving the gold consignment and the life of Pallister—for I knew, whether or not the rest of us were permitted to live, that Jim Pallister would die; not with merciful celerity, but as the victim of this wolf's vengeance.

To me, all this had been given, and I had failed ignobly. And I can offer no excuses, but merely acknowledge that I was afraid; mortally afraid to sacrifice my life in the hope of saving another's. To recklessly court death in the heat of battle is nothing; to offer it coolly, dispassionately, self-sacrificingly—is everything. This I had discovered. And it seems to me the difference between these two is the difference between real moral courage and mere physical courage; the difference between the true hero and the false.

My thoughts were here interrupted by Price.

"I see you have been communicating with the *Arizona*, whom we spoke this morning," he said critically. "Mr. Brown, tell all that passed between you."

"It's all there on the tape," said our operator coolly.

"So I see," replied Price. "Tell me, just the same. I'll check you up, if you're lying."

Now, I fully expected that Brown would not tell the truth—for I more than suspected that, after all, Price could not read the tape, and that his remark about the *Arizona* was merely a bluff, a chance shot prompted by the fact that she had spoken us that morning. This subsequently proved correct. I could not explain why I should expect Brown, by lying, to risk his life

when I had refused to toe the mark. Perhaps his cool, self-possession, coupled with a certain youthful daring had given me a false impression of his character.

For now he acted as would the average man placed in such a position. He told the truth, as I thought, to save his skin. He recounted all that had passed between himself and the *Arizona's* operator, Price eying his narrowly.

"Where was the *Arizona* when you first received her call?" demanded the master rogue.

"Fifty miles sou'-sou'west," replied Brown sullenly. "That was about three quarters of an hour ago—two-fifteen. She was makin' twenty-six per hour; expected to be here by four."

Price smiled and turned on his heel. "The door will be bolted, gentlemen," he said significantly, "and I point out for your observation that the window is too small for the smallest among you. Again, at the first sign of trouble—well, I've explained just how Captain Boggs and I stand." He left, slamming and bolting the door that locked from the outside.

We heard Price tramping for'ard, and when the last echo of his steps had died away, Brown jumped to his feet, exclaiming: "Fooled him, by cripes!"

We eyed him, as if he had gone insane.

"Fooled him?" said I. "Fooled nothing. You told him every scrap he wanted to know. I'm not kicking, for your life was in danger, and I flunked in the same way."

"You don't get next," said he rapidly, unconsciously dropping into the lingo of the East Side, whence he sprung. "Cripes, d' yeh t'ink I was afraid o' dat big stiff? Guy! He could ha' shot my head off an' I wouldn't ha' squealed. But I sized him up—an' he t'inks he's sized me up. He couldn't read th' code, an' he' knew I was on to

him. An' so, when he tells me to speak th' trut', what's to stop me tellin' him a lie? Why, not'in' at all, for he can't check me. He dopes me out for a squarehead—playin' me to do th' obvious t'ing. But I tells him th' straight-arm trut'; an' he t'inks it's a lie. See?"

"You mean," said I, as the significance of his reasoning dawned upon me, "that he doesn't believe the *Arizona*'s sou'-sou'west of us?"

"He knows she *must* be, for didn't she pass us?" replied Brown. "But," emphatically, "he don't t'ink we was talkin' wit' *her*. Why should I tell him th' trut'? Just see if I ain't right. He don't t'ink the danger's in that quarter, for he'll just go by th' opposite of what I said. I says: 'Help's comin' from the sou'-sou'west.' An' he says to himself. 'He's lyin', knowin' I can't prove it. So help's comin' from the north or west—not the south. I'll run south.'"

"I only hope you're right," said I doubtfully.

"Just wait an' see if I ain't," he reiterated with supreme confidence. "Th' only way to bluff a fall guy is not to bluff him, but hand him th' straight-arm trut'."

"There's logic in that," said Bull. "Mebbe, Price thinks we were speaking with Halifax—as we had intended doing. That would be our most obvious move. He can't stay north of the forty-ninth parallel, so he'll run south."

"Even so, I don't see we'll be any better off," I replied. "If we can't speak the *Arizona* we'll pass each other, and she won't be the wiser."

"But she may ha' her searchlight goin'," put in McTavish. "If it chances to spot us, she'll ha' enough curiosity to stop us, knowin' as she now does that the *Peaceful Heart* is in these waters. I hope the fog will no' close doon again. That's a'."

The engines now began to thud, their vibration shaking the boat. By the rearing of the water against her sides

we knew that full speed had been ordered. But by what point of the compass we were steering, it was impossible to say. Nor did we even know whether or not we had turned in our tracks.

I looked out of the window. The *Eurania* was no longer in sight, and to my profound disgust, I discovered that the fog gave every promise of once more closing down.

"I don't exactly know what we're making, but I should say about eighteen knots," remarked Timothy Bull. "If we're running sou'-sou'west, we should meet up with the *Arizona* in half an hour or so."

For want of something better to do we then discussed John Armand Price.

"I never suspected him," said the first officer. "You know we were short of regular hands this trip, and, to make matters worse, our third officer was taken down with typhoid. Price, giving the name of Toulon, applied for the berth, explaining that he had been a petty officer in the French navy. He showed presumably genuine honorable discharge papers. He said his mother was ill in Liverpool—he was French, solely on his father's side—and that he had jumped at this chance of working his passage across—"

"It's too late to see it all now," I commented bitterly. "Of course, Bass and the bos'n were not chasing him—the three of them were after us. Price remembered we were in that cabin, and, no doubt, suspecting we would attempt to escape, left his men to attend to us. Bass fired at us, not Price, and as the latter fell at that precise moment, and was knocked unconscious, his true identity was not disclosed. Then when he came to, he saw that Bass and the bos'n were dead; that he was at our mercy, though we were unaware that he was Price. He took advantage of the situation and gave us that story about being held prisoner on the bridge. As Dodd

and Lewis had also been captured we had no reason to doubt him. I'll leave it to any one here if it didn't look for all the world as if he was running for his life, with Bass and the bos'n thirsting for his blood."

"Ay," grunted McTavish. "No doot he made up his mind richt then to come peaceably aboard, dependin' on his treachery to see him through. He an' Captain Solomon Boggs will noo ha' th' gowld for themselves."

"Yes," I added. "From what Pallister has said of the man he won't attempt to rescue his followers, but leave them to face the music. The man has extraordinary luck, even profiting by his mistakes."

"And he's made many," commented Bull. "The cleverest of them slip up somewhere. The weak spot in this scheme was in being compelled to trust so many men, though, from the first, he intended to desert the *Eurania's* swabs. It's a wonder to me that that drunken swab in New York happened to be the only one to give the game away."

"Mr. Pallister was richt, after a'," put in McTavish. "There was a traitor amang the officers. Ye'll notice Price played his part to pairfection, even using a different voice—if I may so express it."

"If he thinks Halifax has been warned, his plan must be sadly upset," said I. "No doubt he had arranged to berth somewhere in Nova Scotia."

"Hoots! A mon like that would ha' arranged for three or fower places," exclaimed McTavish.

"I don't see that all this post-mortem business is helping us any," said Brown impatiently, breaking his long silence. "It's now three-fifteen. I guess the question is not how we happened to get into this hole, but how we can get out of it."

"That's a fine determination, lad," said Bull, "but if you'll just show us

how to put it into operation, we'll be obliged. You simply can't get through the window or door. And if you could, Price would nail you before a foot showed. He's tramping the deck—"

"But the wireless!" I breathlessly exclaimed. "Here we've been sitting like a lot of dummies, with salvation at our elbow. Price has gone off, and forgotten all about it. We can warn the *Arizona* of our coming—"

"Aw, bullets!" interrupted Brown, relapsing into his native dialect. "Didn't I try th' keys th' minute Price left? He ain't such a stew as all that. I knew he'd cut th' wires before he come in. You bet he did. Th' thing's out o' business. Th' juice ain't no use to him no more, for o' course his operator must have been one o' them bums we left on th' *Eurania*."

"Well, then, how do you propose to do anything?" I demanded, ruffled by his evident contempt for my lack of perception. "As Bull says, we can't get out of the door or window, and you can hear Price pacing outside—watching us as a cat watches trapped rats."

"We can try th' floor," said Brown briefly. "Just put your peepers on it—rotten ain't it? Surest t'ing you know. It won't take much to rip up them boards. This must be a pretty old craft."

"Captain Boggs said he had her for over ten years," said I, as Bull tested his two-hundred-odd pounds on the floor. It groaned and quivered under his weight.

"A good idea!" exclaimed the first officer. "What's below I don't know, but we can soon find out. Now, then, lend a hand, men. All we've got to do is to start the first plank."

He produced a large jackknife, and without much difficulty succeeded in making an aperture sufficiently large for us to insert a chair leg.

Bull now ordered us to sing, and we managed to strike up a very fair, if

somewhat incongruous, chorus, under cover of which he used the wooden lever with such effect that the first plank was finally removed. "Lucky this old tub hasn't a steel deck," he said, wiping the sweat from his face. "Now, then, two or three more, and we may be able to squeeze through. Peg away at that close-harmony business. It sounds like the devil, but it drowns my racket."

Bull had hardly resumed work when there came a sharp rap at the door, followed by Price's command: "Douse that light and can that philharmonic stuff! Better save up your good spirits, for you may need 'em yet."

Sullenly we obeyed, switching off the light as directed and "canning" our musical efforts.

"Lucky he didn't come in, the swab, growled Timothy Bull. "We don't need the light. I s'pose we're now running with every light doused, and that means something's up. I wonder are we nearing the coast."

As if in answer, the room was suddenly invaded by a ghostly white light—a thing so weak and sickly that it merely served to accentuate the shadows. Another moment, and it was gone.

"That's a searchlight!" cried Bull. "Ten miles off, at least."

## XV.

We crowded to the single window, forgetting for the moment our argument with the floor. Outside, the night was what is aptly termed "dirty." Not a star was showing; the raw northwest wind was laden with the promise of rain, and the fog had by no means lifted.

By thrusting forth our heads, we were able to secure a fairly clean sweep for'ard, although it was too dark to distinguish anything—sea, sky, and ship appearing as one blot. The window was situated on the starboard side, and pres-

ently from out the darkness that hung like a vast black curtain, there shot a faint pencil of light. It came from two points to our right, or starboard, and danced over the water, showing its seemingly black inertia to be writhing, froth-coated, blue-green life. The light coasted over us, hesitated, then vanished as suddenly as it had come.

"We must be running sou'-sou'west!" exclaimed Bull. "Yon's a warship, and she must be the *Arizona*. You were right, Brown. Price thought you were lying."

"If that's the *Arizona*," said I, "she may have sent us another wire, and, not receiving an answer, may suspect something's wrong."

The light came again, this time considerably more to our right.

"That means Price has changed his course, and is running almost due east," said Bull. "He'll duck out there and then run south, passing her well to loo'-ard. If that light just spots us long enough——"

"Aw, come on," interrupted Brown, who had left us. "Lend a mitt here wi' th' floor. I'm not waitin' for that light to spot us. We gotter take no chantses."

We fell to with a will, unmindful of the noise we made. A plank was torn out by the roots; another and another. Then Bull shoved down an arm into the great black gash we had created, only to sit up cursing.

"Just as I expected," he said. "We can't get past. There's steel and pine there. Her skin may be rotten, but her in'ards are sound."

One and all tested this for himself, only to find the first officer's verdict correct.

The planks had been removed from the center of the floor, and as they ran lengthwise of the ship, this left the wide gash just opposite the door. The significance of this fact now occurred to me for the first time.

"Suppose," said I, "we decoy Price in here, and let him fall through the floor?"

I explained in detail while they listened with flattering attention:

"You see, Price daren't show a light and the outside deck is as black as this room. If we raise a rumpus, Price will come and order us to shut up, we'll defy him, or irritate him to such an extent that he'll come in. He won't be able to see that those boards have been removed, and the moment he puts foot over the threshold, down he'll go. Two of us will be waiting either side of the door, and the instant he trips, we'll be on him."

"Suppose we switch on the light," added McTavish. "That will attract his attention quicker than anything, and it may show us to the *Arizona*."

This, we accordingly did, Bull, chair leg in hand, crouching by the door, with McTavish facing him.

"We had not long to wait for the testing of my ruse. The light was hardly aglow before Price came hammering at the door, ordering us to "douse" it.

It was McTavish who told him to go "forget it."

Spitting an oath, Price furiously tore open the door, and at that precise moment Brown switched off the light.

But our trap was not sprung, and the failure was due to the seemingly insignificant fact of the door opening outward instead of inward. Price had time to note the dousing of the light; time to check himself before his impetuosity had carried him over the threshold. He was too wary a fox to trust himself in that black room. On the instant, he suspected some deadly purpose back of our action. Though we could see nothing, we knew he had backed away, and it required no great prescience to understand that his revolver was covering the doorway.

"I'll fix you all for this, later," he said quietly enough. "Let me see that

light flash again, and, noise or no noise, I'll shoot up the room. You——" His oaths were cut short as a brilliant light suddenly illuminated him. The great beam fell athwart the deck and remained there, pinning Price in its merciless, staring gaze. It appeared all the more intense, by contrast with the darkness that enveloped me.

Price had taken a backward step, one hand mechanically raised before his eyes, as if in a futile attempt to ward off that blinding glare that seemed to me to be the long arm of justice reaching out to punish the spirit of lawlessness.

The staccato bark of a six-pounder rang out over the water, its voice appearing to travel down the white path blazed by the searchlight. Instantly, our picture of arrested motion ceased. Price was galvanized into action. He was about to slam the door, when the shadows at his back suddenly assumed life; it looked as if a huge slice of the darkness had become sensate. But as it landed with a crash on Price's shoulders I recognized it as Jim Pallister.

Pallister flung his windmill arms about the master rogue, clamping the revolver with one huge hand, while, with the other, he proceeded to relentlessly choke all fight from him. Then he gave Price the knee in the small of the back, stretching him limp and insensible on the deck. It was all over before I could draw breath; one moment we had been helpless; the next we were free.

Bull and McTavish were out in a trice and assisted in tying Price up beyond hope of possible escape. I joined them, Brown following, and for a long moment we looked down upon the upturned, ghastly face of the man-wolf who was responsible for this ocean tragedy, responsible for the death of Captain Stone; this man-wolf who had almost carried through to completion one of the most daring and hazardous crimes of modern times.

And as I looked, I wondered in a vague and numb manner—for the night's horror had paralyzed my mental processes—what heritage had been given to this supreme criminal to make him such as he was—a human owning nothing human but intellect. He lacked all fear, conscience, sympathy—emotion of any kind. It had been my first meeting with John Armand Price, and I would not be apt to forget it.

"Weel," exclaimed McTavish soberly, tentatively nudging the unconscious figure with his foot, "after a', the de'il pit up a braw ficht! Ay, he did, an' but for the treachery o' his fellows we might have had a hard time o' it. A braw ficht—that's the verra best epitaph he'll ever earn, I'm thinkin'. Well, th' gowld's safe, praise th' guid Lord."

"Nix," said Brown, with unconscious disrespect. "What about Uncle Sam? Look!"

We looked. Less than a quarter of a mile away a huge black shape took definite form against the darkness of the night, the wide swath cut by its searchlight, disclosing where it fell, gray fighting paint and grim turrets. Down the path of light that seemed to connect us with her a swift launch bobbed. It was manned with blue-coated marines.

"What about Captain Solomon Boggs?" I asked, turning to Pallister.

"*Falstaff*, you'll remember, was always a coward, but owning much discretion," he replied. "After creeping into the pilot house and knocking me senseless, Price bound and gagged me. Boggs, when he saw the *Arizona*, released me of his own volition. He had played the game as far as he dared. I've promised to see that he gets off lightly."

The engines had stopped, and, as grouped about Price, we awaited the arrival of the launch, it was curious to see the change slowly working in us all. Common danger had made us "brithers

a'." Csate, and all the little artificial barriers of society, had been forgotten; we had called one another by our surnames, omitting the prefix. Common peril had removed all veneer, and one and all had stood on the primitive basis of stark, raw manhood. We had looked to Jim Pallister for leadership; we had obeyed the commands of Brown.

Things such as these are not easily forgotten, but now, as reaction came, we were putting the memory of them down into the bottom of our hearts, while insensibly we resumed our discarded veneer, and fell into our little, everyday grooves. Brown "Mistered" me, while McTavish forgot his bloodthirsty oaths and fierce love of fight. He only remembered that he was a leader of the "auld kirk" in distant, bonny Dundee. He began to sing the Psalms of David, chanting:

"But a' th' ways o' godly men unto th' Lord  
are known;  
Whereas th' ways o' wicked men shall quite  
be owerthrown."

It was Pallister, who, likewise sensing our relapse, brought us back to the old footing.

"McTavish," he said simply, extending his hand, "I've known you to-night for the first time. Men," he added, addressing us all, "the corner stone of true comradeship between us has been laid to-night. Wherever we six meet—for I'm not forgetting Michel Parr—whether it's in the waste places of the world or amid the roar of the great cities, may we meet as 'brithers a'.' And may I ever prove worthy of the deeds you have done this night."

Then the spell was broken, and like tried comrades we shook hands all around.

When the launch came alongside, I went below to find Michel Parr.

As an aftermath to the looting of the *Eurania*—it has now become a stock

yarn among those who go down to the sea in ships—I must add, with much regret, that John Armand Price did not pay the penalty for his desperate attempt to resuscitate the gentle art of piracy.

He was convicted, and sentenced to death, but once again successfully broke jail, and won safely away. He refused to exonerate James Pallister, but this became unnecessary, for that awful Sunday night off the banks had conclusively shown the real mettle of Number Nine-sixty-four; and by circumstantial evidence—the same deadly abstract that had convicted him—it was conclusively proven that Price had been the sole instigator and participant in the National Bank robbery.

I was able to secure the services of a very prominent New York criminal lawyer, and he proved Pallister's innocence. The bank refunded the fortune given to it by Pallister's father, who believed he was making good his son's theft, and Jim dropped the stool-pigeon business, and married The Girl who had awaited so long the proving of her trust.

Although now and then an especially ingenious and daring crime leads the police and press to believe that Price is still on the warpath against society, he has made no attempt to carry out his long-halked vengeance against Pallister. Perhaps he is merely abiding his time, though for The Girl's sake, I stoutly affirm that the master rogue has long since faced the Heavenly Supreme Court.

The old *Eurania* is now a freighter in

the South American fruit-carrying trade, while McTavish, Bull, and Parr have berths on the finest vessel in the company's fleet. They refused all monetary rewards, as we all did. Brown, more power to him, has been given charge of the most responsible government wireless station.

Price's men and the *Eurania's* "swabs"—as Bull always called them—received handsome sentences, while Captain Solomon Boggs got off with three years "hard." His saddest blow, however, was the reconfiscation of the *Peaceful Heart*.

To satisfy a gnawing inquisitiveness, I inquired at the New York office regarding the interrupted wire we had received that Sunday night. In full it read:

Arrest on receipt, following men: stewards Spoor and Bilkins; seaman Bass; bos'n Williams, and third officer. Latter is notorious criminal, Price. These men backbone of plot, but more suspected. Intend stealing gold consignment. Make rigid inquiry, and wire if trouble. Queenstown notified.

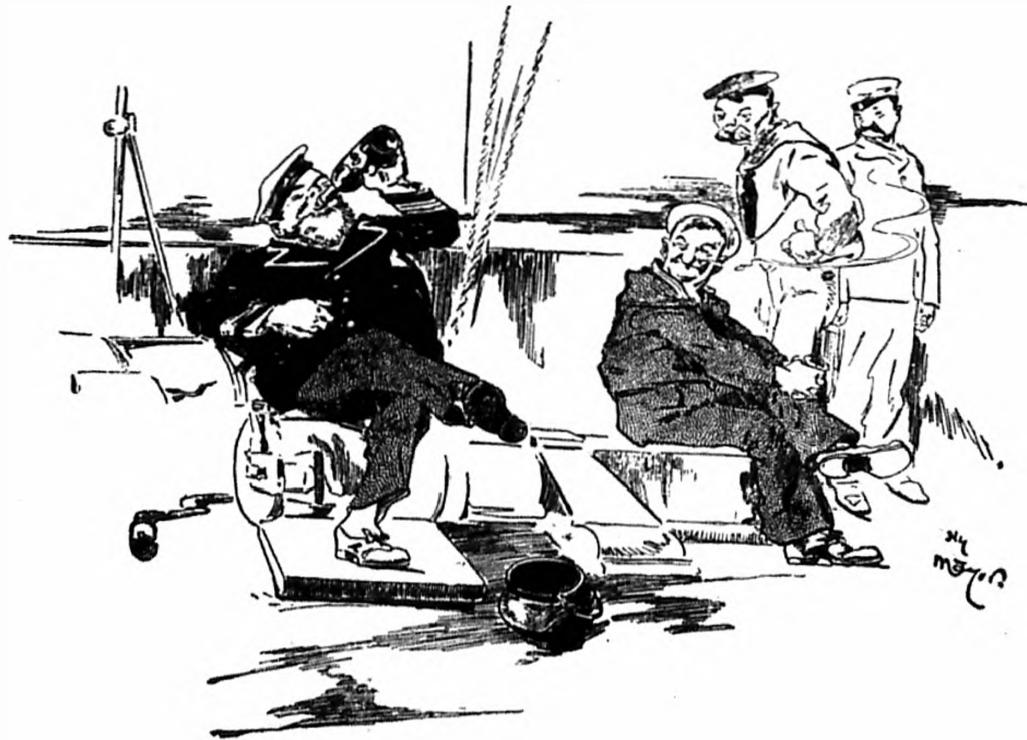
Thus it will be seen that Pallister's conjecture was correct. Had we received that wire in full, the mutiny would have been nipped before it had started, for the other "swabs" would not have risen, and we would have steamed past the *Peaceful Heart*, ignorant of her signals. The cutting of the wire, thus intercepting the message in the hackneyed "nick of time," was one of those accidents that Providence sometimes hands out to saint and sinner alike.



### WE'VE SEEN 'EM IN BOTTLES, TOO

A PATIENT and ingenious Italian, a resident of Rome, has constructed a tiny boat formed of a single pearl.

Its sail is of beaten gold, studded with diamonds, and its headlight, carried at the prow, is a perfect ruby. An emerald serves as its rudder, and its stand is a slab of ivory. It weighs less than half an ounce and its price is said to be five thousand dollars.



## Glory Minus

By Wallace Irwin

ON the U. S. cruiser *Susan*,  
Settin' idly on the throttle,  
Loafed Chief Engineer Van Duzen,  
Drinkin' grape juice from a bottle.

And he says, "If war was handy,  
Guns all limbered for a fight,  
Could we work without our brandy?"  
Quoth the gunner's mate, "We might."

"Would we lust as much for slaughter,  
Shootin' Mexicans and Japs,  
If we wet our souls with water?"  
Quoth the gunner's mate, "Perhaps."

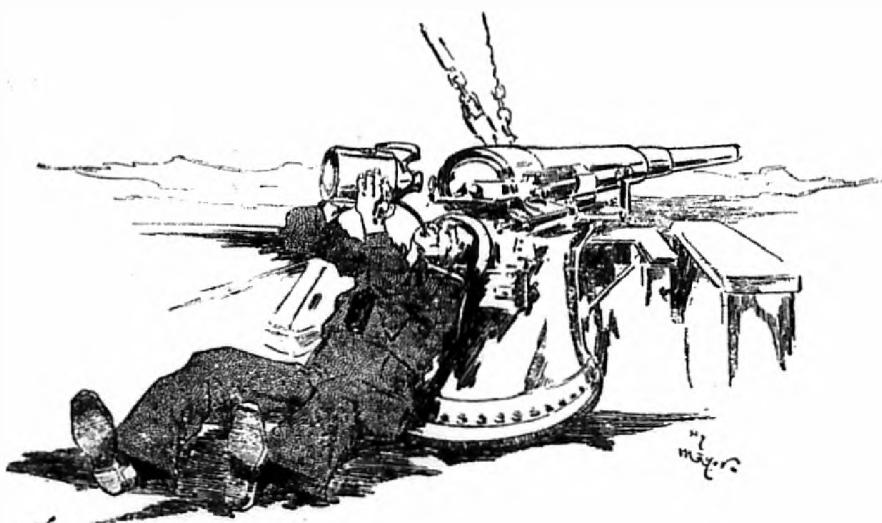
“And suppose we quit victorious—  
If we opened lemonade  
Would our glory seem as glorious?”  
Quoth the gunner, “I’m afraid

“That Catawba unfermented  
Fires nor gun nor heart nor head.  
It is quite un-pre-ce-dent-ed  
To be thus,” the gunner said.

“For a feeling patriotic  
Should be anything but slow.  
War is hell, and hell’s neurotic—  
Can it thrive on H<sub>2</sub>O?

“And the saddest thing I muse on  
And the government accuse:  
If there’s nothing to enthuse on,  
How the deuce can one enthuse?”

After which intense recitals  
Rose the gunner, quite serene,  
And encouraged of his vitals  
With a quart of kerosene.



# A SERVANT of the FIRES

By

PERCEVAL GIBBON



This is a most pathetic story of the life which flows under the surface of the veneer which covers humanity, and which is called civilization—a story that is a little grim, perhaps, but which will make you sympathize and feel for the so-called under dog.

## A COMPLETE STORY

**I**N the bunker, where the wire-caged lamp swung in crazy ellipitics through a haze of coal dust, the harsh roar of the draft was dulled, so that one heard the tearing of the water without and its drum on the plates. The loose coal slid and tinkled over the iron floor to the steamer's roll and heave, for they were pushing the *Lincoln* into a shouting sou'wester, and the stokehole crew were toiling to hold a good head of steam.

Old Conley drove his iron barrow in, hung swaying on his heels while the deck reeled under him, and fell sprawling across it. He swore feebly as he lay for a moment, and then rose, catching his breath with something like a sob, for the edge of the barrow had cut him over the eye and blood was running down his face and trickling to his bare chest. He was old for that desperate trade, and it was not his first fall that day; and as he seized his shovel and thrust it at the coal, he felt cold and dizzy.

Geordie, the Tyneside trimmer, hurled his barrow in while Conley was still

shoveling, followed it with a rush and fell savagely to work.

"Yer takin' yo'r time, Conley," he shouted. "Ye'd best get a move on you, for steam's droppin' an' the chief's watchin' the gages."

"I come a tumble," mumbled Conley dully, as he stooped to wheel his load forth. Geordie barked a laugh.

They were firing from a for'ard bunker, and the old man trundled his barrow down an alleyway between the tall boilers. Here the noise of the stokehole traveled as in a trumpet, and the still and heavy heat pressed on him like a load. The plates under foot were treacherous with grease and water, while they swung and shuddered to the big ship's movement, and the barrow needed strength and skill to keep it in its path. He slowed and braced himself against a roll, and forthwith an urgent voice reached him.

"Coal there!" it shouted. "Are you men asleep in that bunker? D'ye want me to come an' drive you?"

"Aye, aye," answered Conley mechanically, and pushed his barrow in.

Never before had the clamor in the stokehole fallen about him so vehemently. He hardly heard the chief engineer's wrath at his delay as he shot his coal against the engine-room bulkhead and threw up his arms against the blinding glare of the opened furnace door. The great ventilator's hum and whistle hurt his ears; the clang of slices and shovels, the steady growl of the tenacious fires and the ringing throb of the engines—these, the atmosphere of his life, were become a torment.

"Get going, there," shouted the red-bearded chief. "You, Conley, are you dreaming?" The old man turned uncertainly and showed his cut face. "No time to doctor yourself now," said the chief. "Look alive, will you?"

Conley raised his barrow and started back. There was no thought of protest or complaint in his mind, for those who serve the fires may withhold nothing from the service. Something was ticking in his head like a clock, and his limbs had a strange feeling of belonging not to him but to something outside him. But otherwise he was not in pain.

In the alleyway, Geordie brushed past him with a full barrow and shouted some ribaldry, and the old man's face fell, from force of habit, into the shape of a smile. Habit was his life; he was made in a rough mold, of tough clay; and in all his years of hardship and weakness, of rude toil and foolish dissipation, he had not known what it was to pity himself. Now, dizzy and sick with labor and the shock of his falls, there was nothing in his thoughts but to go on carrying coal; all the future offered him nothing else. It was his life-work. Barrow after barrow he filled and trundled from the bunker to the stokehole; but he was shaken to the bone of him, and twice he slipped in the alleyway, overturning his load. Each time as he fell, he swore mechanically; but

the second time, when he returned to the bunker to fill the barrow again, he dashed his shovel at the coal with something like viciousness, and cursed it hardily.

He caught up the refilled barrow with the same energy, and brought it to the stokehole and flung it down. But this rebellion was his downfall, for he stumbled again, and came down once more with a crash across the merciless iron.

He lay so still at first that they thought he was injured; and the chief, cursing at the falling steam, stepped back and pulled him to his feet.

"What the blazes does the likes of you want aboard of a ship?" he cried. "Anything broken, man? Well, take a drink of water and pull yourself together."

Conley sighed and passed a hand over his face. "I'm all right," he said, wearily, and staggered to the tank for a drink.

The chief frowned and looked quickly down the row of furnaces. He was shorthanded both in the engine room and the stokehole, and had already had words with the captain about the steam. In general, he was not a hard man; but he was an efficient engineer, and the engines must of necessity come before anything else.

"Simmonds," he called, "take hold o' that barrow and carry coal. Conley, get at them two fires, and see ye don't lose steam."

"Aye, aye," answered Conley, and took the shovel from Simmonds. He gave a glance at his gages to make sure his boilers had their water, and clashed open a fire door. The keen white glare seemed to leap out at him, and it was painful to face it; he felt the skin tighten on his cut forehead as he peered in under his hand at the long bed of glowing coals whose servant he was.

The work was familiar to him; he, who had no words to make plain to himself his own torment of wounds and

overwork, knew every mood of a fire—could tell by its breath, its color, its voice, how its work was being done. He passed the long shovel in, and drove it to the far end of the furnace, coaxing the fire to its due shape and fit power, while the white flame ran and poured over the surface of the coals and stared their hate in at his pores.

Carefully, deftly, he fed his fires, while every nerve in his body rioted and rebelled. His ankles had turned soft, and he could no longer hear the industrious hum of the ventilator. Three or four times hot coals found their way into his shoes; and as he limped and whimpered the grim, shirtless stokers laughed at their work.

At his elbow, the ash hoist clacked and rattled; over his head, the main-steam oozed boiling water through its packing; and all the while, the *Lincoln* hucked and butted through the strong head sea, and the steam dodged like a human thing. Once a man who had drunk too much water dropped his shovel and doubled up shrieking on the floor with stoker's cramp; they packed him into the ash hoist and ran him up to recover on deck. Then, till he unraveled the knots in himself and came down again, Conley had three fires to feed and nurse.

But, with it all, the old man kept his steam up. The stokehole is not strong on points of honor, but men will die where they stand, stooped to the shovel, to keep the pressure. The chief, dodging busily between the engine room and the stokehole, did not fail to note it.

"Feeling better now?" he even asked, but Conley gave no reply. He threw back a fire door and jerked a shovelful of coal to the exact spot where it would do most good, and stepped back to look at the glass of his water gage. He had not heard the question.

It was just then, as the chief walked away, stepping carefully through the black froth of engine filth underfoot,

that the gage glass burst. There was a bang like a gun going off and a tremendous rushing of steam, through which the boiling water spouted like a fountain. The steam filled the place with a hot fog, and through it the chief sprang to the gage taps and turned them off. It was not a serious matter, though one could come by a nasty scald; he managed it without hurt. As he turned away he was aware of Conley beside him.

The old man had received a jet of water in the neck and had fallen backward. Now he was on his feet again, his shovel in his hand. His lips were parted over his teeth, his brows clenched in a fighting scowl. He came forward to the boiler face with his body crouched forward in the attitude of attack.

"What's the matter with you, man?" cried the engineer, and started away as Conley sprang forward. But Conley never even saw him; with a scream of hate, of wrath, of vengeance, he hove the shovel up in both hands, clear above his head, and hewed at the boiler with it. Once, twice, he struck, swinging the tool like a broad-ax, and then the chief knocked him over.

"Send him up in the ash hoist and put him in his bunk," said the chief. "The poor devil's gone mad."

It was a very brief madness, though, expressing itself only in a silent helplessness. While the watches passed, wearing on through the changeless work unalterably, as cycles expend themselves in the round of creation, Conley lay in his bunk in the wedge-shaped still forecastle, where the electrics shone all day and all night. His fellows of the watch gave him what attention they could, and he accepted it without thanks.

As he had before been without interest in the procession of events, so now he seemed without knowledge of them. Hour after hour he lay upon his shabby bedding, with a blankness in his face and with empty eyes; as the stokers turned

out for work or in for rest, they beheld his still indifference with vague awe.

In due time the *Lincoln* made the port of Cardiff, and a seaman's hospital found a bed for Conley. There was a quiet, orderly room faintly scented with some disinfectant, clean cool linen, and nurses whose main object in life seemed to be to relieve a sick man of all trouble. Conley ate and drank and was silent; but by degrees the quiet and the ease of the place relit the intelligence of his eyes.

"He's coming back," said the doctor to the nurse who waited on Conley. She was new to attending on seamen, and the case had puzzled her. "Nothing wrong with him at all, nurse. Just run down."

"Run down!" repeated the nurse.

"Yes," said the doctor. "These men have to work, you know. Ever seen the stokehole of a steamer at sea? Well, it's hard—it's the hardest place in the world. Some fellows it kills, but some it just wears down. This one was worn; but he's sound, and the rest here will put him on his feet in no time."

The nurse looked at Conley's sharp profile wonderingly.

"Why do men take to such work?" she asked.

"Why? Because they like it, of course," replied the doctor. "They could be more comfortable in jail, but they prefer the stokehole. It's quite true—the mere brutality of it, the labor, the suffering and all the rest of it are what they like. This chap is going to the cottage home in a week; it'll bore him frightfully. You see if I'm not right."

The cottage home stood at the edge of the sea, ten miles from Cardiff; and here the charity of a shipowner enabled half a dozen worn-out seafarers to realize their long-futile dreams of whole nights in bed and plenteous food to punctuate restful days. About the house, the sand hills were bright with long grass, and a

clean beach bordered the sea. Conley had been forty years at sea, but he had never seen the seaside before. It interested him for ten minutes.

"Couldn't take no coal aboard here," was all he said, when a one-legged boatswain took him down to the water's edge. Before night he had quarreled with every patient in the place.

His strength came back to him quickly. He was a short man, great in the chest, and built of steel and leather; a good deal bent by labor, but still a powerful and tenacious animal. His hands were lined with rough horn, and when he stripped the muscles stood out all over him in knots and ridges. All his life he had escaped discontent; that dumb patience of the slave and of the beast of burden which binds men to the stokehole had been his strongest quality. But now he was uneasy; he spoke with a snarl and hated his company. At meals he would sit silent and glaring. If he was addressed he would reply with ferocious hostility.

But one day there came a new patient, a little flaxen man with a watery gray eye that peeped forth from complicated bandages that swathed his head to the likeness of a mummy's. He was a cheery little creature, and praised the place shrilly. At supper he gave an account of himself.

"Fair old smash-up we 'ad," he explained. "The engines just sat down on 'emselves, and the valves all blowed off like so many bloomin' squibs. It was 'ell in the stoke'ole, I tell yer—'ell!"

Conley looked up sharply. "You a fireman?" he demanded.

"Yus," replied the other man. "That's wot I am. An' a lovely passage we 'ad. Coal was just paper; the firebars was burnin' out as if they was wood. Trimmers was workin' double shifts, and ye couldn't 'old the bloomin' steam, not if yer worked yer backbone out. We was droppin' like corpses all over the place.

I got burns all over me, where I come down on hot coals."

"Yah!" snarled Conley, and rose from his place. "Yer don't know a soft job when yer see one!"

He turned his back on all of them and marched forth from the house.

He made no preparations at all, but set his face toward Cardiff and commenced to walk there. He marched with his head down and his arms swinging, almost devoid of thought but fiery with purpose. The night gathered over him,

and the road was gray and clear; by midnight it had brought him clear of the vacant flats and on to the black brick and mortar of Tiger Bay. He found what he was looking for—a fireman's boarding house at the docks—and confronted its proprietor.

"I want a ship," he said, and brought forth his discharges.

"Right," said the brigand who kept the place. "You can have one ter-morer. Have a drink now?"

"I will that," said Conley.



### A WOMAN'S JOB?

FOR a great many years the steamers calling at St. Thomas were coaled by hand, i. e., the coal was carried aboard and deposited in the steamers' bunkers.

There is nothing very strange about this, because vessels are coaled in similar fashion throughout the world, but when we tell you that women as well as men find employment in carrying baskets of coal weighing from eighty-five to one hundred pounds, you may raise your brow in wonder, and right here we vote you the privilege of doing so. Some of these women carry from two hundred to three hundred baskets full during the coaling process, and when they are not engaged in loading they find ready employment in discharging coal from freighters which bring coal to St. Thomas.

We have heard of hard-working women in various sections of the globe, but we think the ladies of St. Thomas head the list.



### GOING ALOFT INSIDE THE MAST

TO go up "inside" a mast to reach the lofty altitude of the crow's nest would strike a deep-water sailor as a proceeding that savored of madness on the part of any one who suggested such a thing, yet that is just what the man on "lookout duty" does on all big liners now that are fitted with steel masts.

Any one who has ever observed one of these bare poles, with the shrouds ending a long distance below the crow's nest, must have wondered if the little perch was simply put there for looks, for there is no outward evidence of any way of reaching the lookout. And no one would expect a sailor to reach it by "skinning up" the mast.

As a matter of fact, the crow's nest is reached by a steel ladder that is fastened inside the hollow tube of the mast, entrance being had to it by a steel door just above the deck on one side of the mast.

# The UNDERWRITER

By  
FRANK L. PACKARD

*Author of*  
"The Loot of Chang-  
Chao," "The Black  
Road," etc.



This is a story about a sea captain who had a very curious twist in his character. He adjusts his conscience to the requirements of his wicked employers—apparently, and fusses Mr. Simpson, the chief officer, mightily. A fine, clean bit of writing.

## A COMPLETE STORY

IT was settling down for as fine a night as ever blessed the luck of seamen, and the *Galway*, degenerate tramp, two hours out from Hongkong for Frisco, with the smoke trailing dead astern, was slipping into the short seas with just enough lift and toss to put everybody in a good humor. Mr. Simpson, the chief officer, as he stood by the chart-room door, whistled buoyantly. Above him, he could hear the tramp of the captain's feet, and occasionally the movements of the second mate, who had the bridge.

Then down the ladder came the captain, and stopped before Mr. Simpson. "Fine night, Mr. Simpson, fine night," he said, rubbing his hands. "Never saw a better. Come into my room, and we'll have a glass to a quick passage."

"I will, an' thanks," replied Mr. Simpson, as he followed the captain aft.

Captain Eckles opened a locker, and produced a bottle and glasses. Mr. Simpson decanted a stiff "four fingers," and waited respectfully.

"Here's luck," said Captain Eckles.

"Here's hopin'," said Mr. Simpson.

"Mr. Simpson," said the captain, setting down his empty glass, and squinting at the mate, "I'm a man of very even temper and wonderful good nature, as you've reason to know.

"That's as it may be," replied Mr. Simpson. "I recall an occasion or two when—"

Captain Eckles cut short his mate's reminiscences with a wave of his hand. "A man's like a ship," said he; "he has his moods. You'll bear that in mind, Mr. Simpson. Likewise, things ain't always what they seem. Slyness I've no use for; but astuteness, Mr. Simpson, mark you, is the keynote of a man's success, whether he follows the sea or has the blooming luck to have a berth ashore."

"Straight from the shoulder every time, that's me," announced Mr. Simpson. "Lay the man out first; you get along better, sir."

"You're wrong, Mr. Simpson; and

the five years you've held a master's certificate proves it."

"You needn't throw that in my face every chance you get," said Mr. Simpson sullenly. "I'm a better man than half the lot that's got ships now; an' some day I'll have mine."

"I don't say you're not, I don't say you're not; and I dare say you will, Mr. Simpson," was the captain's soothing, though somewhat confused, reply.

Mr. Simpson grunted.

"Now, this morning," went on the skipper, "when that young fellow came aboard and wanted to ship, I had my reasons for sending him back. 'Twasn't lack of good nature, nor 'twasn't slyness. I had my suspicions of him, but I didn't want him to know it. So I acted in the astute and diplomatic manner you witnessed."

"Diplomatic manner!" gasped Mr. Simpson. "Diplomatic manner, my eye! You as much as told him he was fishy!"

Captain Eckles sighed. "Mr. Simpson, I'll have you restrain your language; and you'll remember the duty and respect that's due to me as your superior officer."

"I try to, sir," said Mr. Simpson, in innocent tones.

"Well, well I suppose you do, Mr. Simpson," said the captain, accepting the assertion literally. "And I suppose I should remember that all natures ain't alike. As chief officer, you're a good man, none better, as I've said scores of times, and told the owners so into the bargain; but as a companion and confidant, you're a disappointment—a sad disappointment, Mr. Simpson."

Mr. Simpson scratched his head, and assumed a lugubrious expression of countenance.

"Mr. Simpson," said Captain Eckles, after a short pause. "I'll have you know we're on no ordinary voyage, and I'll have you keep your mouth shut about it."

The chief officer's eyes traveled mechanically from the captain's face to the chart that was spread out on the table before him.

"No ordinary voyage, Mr. Simpson," repeated Captain Eckles. "You'll oblige me, Mr. Simpson, by picking up latitude fifteen degrees, ten minutes, north; longitude one hundred and forty-seven degrees, eight minutes, east."

Mr. Simpson bent over the chart, and maneuvered a moment with the dividers. Then he looked up. "It's as bald as the top of your head, sir," said he.

Captain Eckles reddened. "I—I will overlook your remark, Mr. Simpson," said he, with dignity.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Simpson. "And what about the intersection, sir?" his fingers on the chart.

"There's where we're bound for, after touching Guam for cables," announced Captain Eckles.

"Bound for!" ejaculated Mr. Simpson. "Why, there's nothing there, I tell you; not a blazin', blasted thing but water."

Captain Eckles laid his forefinger to the side of his nose. "Mr. Simpson, you'll have heard of the K. and L. Line's *Mastodon*?"

"I have not," replied Mr. Simpson.

"She's their new boat, then, I'll have you know. First trip out. And our owners have word that she's a cripple, d'ye begin to see? Reported in that location, she was, machinery broken down, but refusing aid. Trying to limp into somewhere without salvage charges, you'll take note—which same, from information received, she'll by no manner of means do, Mr. Simpson. So, without waiting to complete our cargo, we slips out on an errand of mercy, so to speak, our people hoping to get the K. and L. on the hip, which would be meat and drink to them, and money in our pockets as well as theirs, salvage being more profitable than freight."

Mr. Simpson stared at his commander.

Captain Eckles waved his hand toward the bottle. "You'll understand now, Mr. Simpson, my diplomacy this morning with that young man calling himself Lyman. We sailing on a mysterious voyage—of which you'll say nothing to the other officers till we've left Guam—and him coming aboard at the last minute. I didn't like the looks of it. There might be a connection between the two. But it wouldn't do to let him think so, if so be that were it, eh?"

"Blimy!" said Mr. Simpson, for, being extremely short-handed, owing to the premature sailing of the *Galway*, he had, in direct disobedience to the captain's orders, bestowed the said Lyman in the forecastle, with the laudatory idea of making a sailor of him. "Blimy!" he repeated, and gulped down his liquor. "Captain Eckles, sir, with your permission, I'll be goin' for'ard for a look round."

"Very good, Mr. Simpson; and I'll ask you to respect the confidence I've reposed in you."

"Ay," mumbled the disturbed Mr. Simpson, as he departed, "you can trust me to keep my mouth shut."

The wind was freshening up a bit, raising a head sea into which the *Galway* was beginning to pitch, with roll enough added to make the decks unsteady. She was just preparing to shoot down an incline, as the chief officer closed the captain's door behind him and shot into the body of a man, at whom he grabbed to steady himself. Then, as he straightened up, he whistled low, under his breath, and his fingers locked into the collar of the other's coat. It was Lyman.

"It's you, you cross-eyed, holystone swine, is it!" he exclaimed. "Didn't I tell you to keep hid below? What you hangin' around the old man's door for?

You come along with me. Me an' you is goin' to have some conversation!"

Along the deck they went, Mr. Simpson retaining his grip, Lyman following passively, without resistance, until they reached the after alleyway and the chief officer's cabin.

"Straight from the shoulder every time, that's me," said Mr. Simpson, pushing the other inside, and shutting the door. "Now, none of your lip, an' answer straight, or it'll be the worse for you. What d'ye mean, anyhow, by shippin' aboard the *Galway*? It'll be the worst day of your life when the skipper claps eyes on you, after him orderin' you ashore."

"Why, you told me to stay," said Lyman.

"That's neither here nor there," replied Mr. Simpson uneasily. "What d'ye want to ship aboard the *Galway* for? That's what I want to know. Now, spit it out, an' if you lie I'll know it."

A smile crossed Lyman's face. His aforetime meek and submissive manner, greatly to Mr. Simpson's amazement, suddenly disappeared. "You're a proper ass!" he remarked contemptuously.

This was too much for Mr. Simpson. With a roar like an enraged bull, he jumped for the other. Somehow, his dexterous left-hand uppercut, for the first time in his experience, failed to land. This came as a shock to him, followed immediately by another. He was staring into the muzzle of an ugly-looking revolver, shoved so close to his nose as to make him cross-eyed.

"Mutiny!" gasped Mr. Simpson.

"You bet!" said Lyman imperturbably. "And it'll be something else, if you ever lift a finger to me again. Don't ever forget that, Mr. Simpson, sir!"

In all of Mr. Simpson's seafaring experiences, and he had had many, he could recall none that in any way approached this. He, the chief officer, bearded in his own cabin, threatened

with a revolver, by this scum of—Mr. Simpson did not know just what, only that he was the scum of something.

"I believe you're honest," said Lyman, after a minute. "Yes, I believe you're honest—otherwise, you wouldn't have shipped me, in spite of the captain, and I'd have had to come as a stowaway—which wouldn't have been so comfortable. The next question is, how much do you know? Where are we bound for?"

"Frisco, of course," said Mr. Simpson, blinking.

Lyman laughed a hard, short laugh. "Frisco! Mr. Simpson, the *Galway* will never see Frisco or any other place again if your precious captain and your scoundrelly owners can help it. *That's* what I'm here for!"

Mr. Simpson stared with a white face. The *Galway* was by no manner of means in her prime; and as for her commander, there had never been much love lost between himself and Captain Eckles. He had his own opinion, a *cordially* poor opinion, of the skipper. MacNeil and Gleeson, the owners, were notorious. He'd heard ugly stories of them before. Yarns that travel the water fronts, that were food for discussion in forecastles and engine rooms, that filled the underwriters with vague uneasiness—only they were yarns, just yarns, and Mr. Simpson's assertiveness returned to him.

"I'll have you know," he roared, "that I don't take any stock in what you say, an' be damned to you! Likewise, that if anything *is* in the wind, it's without my knowledge; an' when I get you without that revolver, I'll bash your face if you insinuate different. I'll not be robbed of my certificate by any slimy son of a sea cook like you!"

"If you'd keep your temper," said Lyman quietly, "you'd remember that I said I didn't believe you had any knowledge of what was going on. There's no sense in you and I quarreling. Be-

tween us we can save the hooker, and, if we do, I think I can promise you that certificate of yours will come in handy."

Lyman calmly appropriated the locker, and sat dangling the revolver in his hand.

"Prove your story," said Mr. Simpson fiercely. "Prove it! Prove it, an' I'll see what's to be done."

"Now you're talking," said Lyman approvingly. "You want proof, eh? What's your cargo?"

"Silk, mostly," replied Mr. Simpson. "Rocks, mostly," corrected Lyman.

"What?" yelled Mr. Simpson.

Lyman nodded. "Cases of rocks, Mr. Simpson. The story is this: Messrs. Hong Lee Kuang and Company, of Hongkong, charter the *Galway* for a pretended shipment of silk to Messrs. Wei Sang Leong and Company, of San Francisco. Everything clean as a whistle; original order from Wei Sang Leong on file in the office of Hong Lee Kuang, correspondence to authenticate it, see? Then Hong Lee Kuang and Company cast their eyes about for some rascally firm of shippers to stand in with them on the deal, and if you've heard of anybody more likely in all the seven seas than your precious owners, Messrs. MacNeil and Gleeson, I'd like to know it."

Mr. Simpson did not take advantage of the other's pause. MacNeil and Gleeson had passed more than one man over his head since he had obtained his certificate—he began to understand why, he thought. He was not ready yet to accept Lyman's astounding statement; but it began to look uncommonly plausible.

"You begin to see, eh?" said Lyman. "Well, then, the *Galway* is worth more at the bottom of the sea than anywhere else; she's been a sore thumb to her owners for some years now, as I've no doubt you know; so MacNeil and Gleeson figure to get the insurance on their

ship, and the chinks figure to get it on their rocks—that's why the *Galway* is on the manifests with her hold full of cases of—rocks!"

"You're a liar!" said Mr. Simpson suddenly. "That's where I've got you. We smashed a case in the tackles when we was loadin', an' it fell to pieces. Rocks, my eye! It was the finest silk ever shipped out of China."

"You're a fool!" retorted Lyman coolly. "You don't by any chance imagine, do you, that that case was *expected* to break, hm? Do you think these people have no brains? A case, in loading, breaks, strews everything around with its contents—silk, as per bills of lading—that would look pretty good in the Admiralty Court, Mr. Simpson, wouldn't you say?"

"Blimy!" said Mr. Simpson.

"Now, Mr. Simpson, you'll admit I'm being pretty frank with you, and you ought to see that our interests lie together, and be equally frank with me. You've sailed ahead of schedule, and not fully loaded. The real reason is that Hong Lee Kuang and Company didn't dare ship *too* much, and your people weren't hankering for too many other consignors to complicate matters when the show-down came. All the bona-fide cargo you've got is a few tiers on the top, that your owners couldn't get out of taking from honest shippers—but underneath it's what I tell you. I heard enough, when I was listening at the captain's door, to know that he was giving you some cock-and-bull story to account for this; but I didn't get the sense of it. Also, that proved to me that you weren't a party to the fraud. What did he say?"

"We was to salvage the *Mastodon*, reported broken down in latitude fifteen degrees, ten minutes, north; longitude one hundred and forty-seven degrees, eight minutes, east," said Mr. Simpson slowly.

"That's east of Guam, and a bit to

the north, isn't it?" demanded Lyman quickly.

"Ay," said Mr. Simpson. "It is."

"And what does this precise spot represent?" Lyman leaned forward, and placed his hand impressively on Mr. Simpson's knee.

"Water," sniffed Mr. Simpson.

"Rocks!" said Lyman. "Rocks again!" And he stared full into Mr. Simpson's eyes.

Mr. Simpson sat down on the edge of his bunk, and his face blanched.

"It's what we suspected," said Lyman, in quiet tones. "And how do you know it's water?"

"Why, I picked it off on the chart for the skipper," replied Mr. Simpson; then, suddenly: "How the blazes do you know it's rocks?"

Lyman smiled. "So the captain took pains to have you corroborate the fact that the chart shows plain sailing, eh? Mr. Simpson, there are some scoundrels in this world despicable beyond belief. It's only a month ago the British warship *Clither* reported the discovery of the most dangerous reef of rocks in the Pacific in that location."

"I remember hearin' about rocks reported up that way," said Mr. Simpson numbly.

"It was there," said Lyman. "They called them the *Clither* Rocks, after the warship. Also, you know that new charts have just been issued. One of which the captain took particular pains to neglect to get; or, if he got one, it wasn't the one he showed to you."

"My God!" whispered Mr. Simpson. "And the yarn about the *Mastodon* is all a fake!"

"Did you ever hear of the *Mastodon* before?" asked Lyman significantly.

"She's a new boat," said Mr. Simpson feebly.

"She's so new Lloyd's don't know anything about her," said Lyman evenly. "Have you got the lay of things, Mr. Simpson? When your gallant captain

gets her out of the regular track, where he can make a sure thing of it, it'll be good-by to the *Galway*!"

Mr. Simpson jumped to his feet, and his great fist crashed down upon his little writing desk, scattering ink, paper, and a miscellaneous collection of articles in all directions. "Pile her up, would he!" he bellowed. "The hog, the man-killing swine, the shark, the cast-off scum of the wharfs, the——"

Lyman cut him short by pushing him back on the bunk. "You'll have the whole crew around here in a minute if you don't keep quiet," he said sternly.

"An' what if I do!" shouted Mr. Simpson. "Let 'em come!"

"Hardly!" replied Lyman quietly. "There's too much at stake to go on this way. We've got to go slow, discuss our plans, and decide carefully what we shall do."

"Do!" roared Mr. Simpson. "Do! Straight from the shoulder every time, that's me, an' I'll have you know it." He was on his feet again, and heading for the cabin door. "Do! Me an' Captain Eckles is goin' to have a little parley, an' when I'm through with him, you'll——"

"You'll make all kinds of a damned fool of yourself," interposed Lyman, blocking the way. "You were harping on mutiny a minute or so ago. Have you forgotten it? What do you think would happen to you if you attacked the skipper, with no proof to back you up? Fine, that certificate of yours would look!"

Mr. Simpson glared—and fell back a step. "No proof!" he gasped. "No proof! D'ye mean to say you've been lyin' to me?"

"No," returned Lyman coolly. "I haven't been lying to you. I say we haven't proof enough yet to tackle the captain. There'd be only my word against his, and the crew would stand by him. If you'd use your head a little,

you'd see that. What we've got to do first is to *prove* what I have said."

"Yes," said Mr. Simpson dazedly. "That's so; but how? H'm? How?"

"By getting to those cases and opening them—you and I. Then we could take the other officers, and as many of the crew as necessary into our confidence, with the actual proof to stare them in the face. After that, you can do as you like. My work would be done—the *Galway* would be saved."

"Say," demanded Mr. Simpson fervently, "who in hell are *you*?"

"I represent the underwriters," Lyman answered grimly. "During the last few years we've paid out too many thousand pounds to Messrs. MacNeil and Gleeson, and their like, in these parts—*far too many*, do you understand? This time we're going to get them dead to rights—and once for all! We're going to do a little housecleaning in these parts, Mr. Simpson."

"Blimy!" said Mr. Simpson. "The hogs, the swine, the crawlin' dogs! Why didn't you stop the thing when we was loadin'?"

"Because," replied Lyman, "we didn't get wind of what was up, in time—not until the last minute. You sailed sooner than we expected, too. We couldn't jock you up and make you unload without proof—and the proof we needed was already below your hatches. There was only one thing to do, and we did it—I came along for that proof."

"S'posin' I hadn't let you stay aboard after the skipper ordered you ashore?"

"I would have been aboard, Mr. Simpson," said Lyman quietly; "don't you doubt that for a minute, if I'd come as a stowaway, as I mentioned before."

Mr. Simpson extended a massive paw, and grasped Lyman's hand in a crushing grip. "I'm with you, so help me!" he said hoarsely. "It's bad enough, the sea, an' the lives we live, without the likes of this! I'm with you, Lyman—to a finish. To a finish, d'ye hear?"

"Right!" said Lyman heartily.

"Right it is!" exclaimed Mr. Simpson. "An' by rights I'll take command of this affair, which is as it should be, seein' as how, once the skipper is in irons, I'll take command of the *Galway*. 'Twon't by no means do for him to know you're aboard. I'll see that you're fitted out with seagoin' togs, an' then the old man'll never notice you, though you needn't be particular to shove your carcass under his nose. That's the plan I had in mind for you, anyway, when I kept you aboard. As for me, 'twill be no easy matter to be civil to the man-drownin' swine in the meantime. It will not! I'm no dissembler. Straight from the shoulder every time, that's me. But what with toddy an' sol'taire, to both of which he's infernal partial, he sticks pretty close to his room, except for a turn on the bridge an' a squint at the sun, an' I'll manage it somehow."

"Good!" said Lyman. "It'll take some time to get at those cases, with just us two, won't it? We'll want to begin as soon as possible."

"We'll begin to-night," said Mr. Simpson. "If the hatches were full it couldn't be done, 'twould be sheer impossible; but with the hold half empty we'll manage. Ay, 'twill take time. I'll think it over, an' I'll fix the plans accordin'. Now, away for'ard with you, an' lay low till you hears from me."

Lyman rose to his feet, and moved to the door. "All right," he agreed. "Mr. Simpson, if we pull this thing through, it will be you that gets the credit—I'll see to that. And I'll see that that certificate doesn't go begging much longer. There are owners who appreciate an honest man. Between us, we'll save the hooker."

"Blimy!" said Mr. Simpson, as the door closed on the other, "here's a rum go, a wicked, rum go. The scaly lot, the scaly, murderin' lot, the scaly, murderin', sailor-drownin' lot! That's what they are, an' when I gets my hands on

'em, they'll know it. Dead to rights we'll get 'em, so help me!"

And then Mr. Simpson set to work. It was no easy task this, and to do it by stealth made it no easier. It was only the rage that seethed and bubbled in his veins, that more than once, kept him from turning back. Night after night, he and Lyman sweated, groaned, panted, heaved, and strained; and, little by little, they worked their way down on the port side against the bare ribs of the vessel by the forward bulkhead.

"I'll have you know," said Mr. Simpson, one night, "that no cargo of mine was ever known to shift—an' no bally typhoon could do it, either."

"I believe you," groaned Lyman.

"Also," said Mr. Simpson, very tired and very much out of sorts, as, through the dim, flickering, and uncertain light of the single lantern, he fixed his eyes on Lyman, "also, I'll have you know that if them rocks don't erventuate, I'll take pleasure in makin' monkey meat of you."

"Do you think I'm *enjoying* this?" snapped Lyman sarcastically. "Try and heave that bale a couple of inches this way. What's our position, Mr. Simpson?"

"We'll be touchin' Guam by noon," grunted Mr. Simpson.

"How long will we stop?"

"Long enough to get some green stuff aboard. A couple of hours, maybe."

"Too bad it isn't a day later," said Lyman. "By to-morrow night we'll be able to see what's in the cases, and then we could have the authorities to help us out."

"There's authority enough right here," growled Mr. Simpson. "I'll take the hooker into Frisco when we've settled with the old man. I'll show 'em what's o'clock, an' whether I'm fit to command, me with a ticket these five years!"

"I didn't think of that, Mr. Simpson," said Lyman. "It'll be better for you, as it is. When the word gets passed

around about what you've done, there won't be a ship owner of the honest sort but will be falling over himself to sign you."

"That's as it may be," said Mr. Simpson modestly.

## II.

It was well along in the evening of the next day. The bustle and confusion incident to the arrival and departure of the *Galway* at and from Guam was a thing of the past, for already the island was but a faint blur on the horizon astern, scarcely discernible. Mr. Simpson was pacing the deck nervously, waiting, with what patience he could muster, the expected dénouement of the night, when he received a summons to present himself in the captain's cabin.

"Huh!" said Mr. Simpson, as the steward delivered the message. Mr. Simpson had found it extremely difficult to restrain himself in his commander's presence, and very hard to keep his tongue in his cheek, as he expressed it; therefore, he had kept out of the old man's way as much as possible. Tonight, of all nights, he was least in the mood for private conversation with the skipper. So it was with no good grace that he sought out Captain Eckles in his room. A bottle and glasses were on the table; but, contrary to his usual custom, the skipper did not extend an invitation to the chief officer to help himself—which was not, Mr. Simpson felt, a propitious beginning.

"Mr. Simpson, sir," began Captain Eckles, "I was ashore this afternoon."

As this information was common property to all aboard, Mr. Simpson simply stared.

"I'll have you know, Mr. Simpson," went on the skipper, "that I received a shock, which perhaps you'll be so good as to explain."

Mr. Simpson stared still harder.

"I saw," said Captain Eckles, leaning forward over the table, "that fellow that

wanted to ship with us at Hongkong. I am not mistaken. I'd know him, with his checkerboard clothes, anywhere. I had no chance to speak to him, for he got out of sight with very suspicious celerity. Now, what I want to know, Mr. Simpson, and which you'll be so kind as to make clear, is how he got there. You'll bear in mind that no other boat from Hongkong, leaving after we did, having touched here ahead of us, he either flew or came on the *Galway*. Me not having overwhelming faith in aerial navigation, I ask you fair and square, Mr. Simpson, was he aboard the *Galway* with your connivance and permission?"

Mr. Simpson was dumb. Not through fear of his commander—he had come to hold him in contemptuous regard, and as little less than a black-hearted criminal—but because he did not know what answer to make. Captain Eckles' discovery was premature and unfortunate; and Lyman was several different and distinct kinds of a blue, blinding ass to have run the chance, just at the last moment, of letting the skipper see him.

Captain Eckles rose to his feet. "Mr. Simpson," said he, with dignity, "I'll have you know I despise a man who bites the hand that trusts him, I do! Your silence is as good as admitting you acted straight and contrary to my orders. And after me reposing the confidence in you that I did! And who am I to repose confidence in, if not my chief officer, I ask you?" Captain Eckles paused, poured himself a stiff tumbler of rum and water, gulped it down, and then his manner changed. Both fists came down together on the table with a crash. "You're a disgrace to the sea!" he roared. "You're a mutinous dog! You'll go to your cabin, and you'll stay there—I put you under arrest! Give me any of your slack jaw, and I'll put the irons on you! I've been easy with you, I have, and treated

you like an equal, and this is what I get! I'm skipper here from first to last, and I'll have you know it, you cross-eyed wallabus! Master's ticket, my eye! You'll see the end of that at the first port we touch!"

Under this tongue lashing, Mr. Simpson's by no means even temper rose until it reached the bursting point—and discretion went to the winds.

"I'll take no more from you," he yelled, shaking his fist under Captain Eckles' nose. "You'll take my ticket at the first port we touch, will you, you sailor-drownin' swine, an' that port'll be the Clither Rocks, eh?"

"The *what* Rocks?" bellowed the skipper. "You're mad! And where and what may the Clither Rocks be? I've sailed these seas, boy and man, for thirty years, and I've never heard of them."

"Hain't you?" choked Mr. Simpson. "An' perhaps you never heard of that K. and L. boat we was to meet, an' perhaps, if you'll look on the *new* chart, you'll find them rocks ain't far from that latitude an' longitude you mentioned. Put *me* in irons! That's where you're goin' yourself in one, two, three! An' you'll be lucky if the crew don't murder you doin' it!"

Captain Eckles edged back to the wall of the cabin, his jaw dropped, and he stared wildly at Mr. Simpson.

"Pile her up, would you, for a filthy bit of cash, to the damnation of decent men's names, an' the risk of their lives, would you!" continued Mr. Simpson. "I'll show you, I will, an' if 'twere not that the thing is to be done shipshape, reg'lar, an' accordin' to law, I'd bash your face to a jelly to begin with!"

"You're mad, Mr. Simpson, you're surely mad!" gasped the skipper.

"I am!" bawled Mr. Simpson; "an' I've only begun. Before I'm through, you'll wish you was dead, you an' your precious MacNeil an' Gleeson!"

"You mean," said Captain Eckles

dazedly, "that I've taken pay from the owners to pile up the *Galway*? My God, man, d'ye know what you're saying? What's wrong with you, I don't know; but I can plainly see there's something in the wind, and I'll overlook your breach of discipline for the purpose of arriving at the bottom of it. According to you, where we was to meet the *Mastodon* we pick up rocks instead. We'll have a look at the chart."

"You can't soft soap me," sneered Mr. Simpson. "I looked at the old one once."

"The new one is in the locker. You can get it yourself."

Mr. Simpson hesitated a moment—and scowled aggressively. Then he procured the chart, examined it to satisfy himself that its issue was in accordance with Captain Eckles' statement, and, spreading it out on the table, bent over it.

"Well?" demanded the skipper, after a moment, during which Mr. Simpson stared intently at the chart.

"Blimy l!" said Mr. Simpson.

"You don't find any rocks, Clither or otherwise, charted there, do you?" inquired Captain Eckles.

Mr. Simpson, perplexed, scratched his head. "I do not," he admitted. "Maybe they were reported too late to get printed."

"Gammon!" grunted the skipper. "There's no such rocks in existence; but, granted there were, it wouldn't make any difference."

"I suppose not—after we'd run over 'em," retorted Mr. Simpson.

Captain Eckles gazed anxiously at his chief officer. "Would it be a touch of fever, do you think, Mr. Simpson?" he inquired solicitously. "There's quinine yonder——"

"Quinine be damned!" snapped Mr. Simpson, glaring at the skipper, as he tried to figure out the nonexistence of the Clither Rocks. "You're a rare deep one," he said, after a moment; "but

you'd best make a clean breast of it. An', first an' last, I tell you now, this hooker shapes no course for anywhere save an' for her direct an' natural course for Frisco."

"Neither she does," agreed Captain Eckles. "I had a cable from the owners at Guam, saying they'd learned the K. and L. boat was picked up and under tow, and therefore we was to proceed direct."

Mr. Simpson leaned far over the table until his face was within an inch of the captain's. "You're the most proficient liar on the Pacific," he announced.

Captain Eckles sighed. "I'm a man of wonderful good nature and forbearance, Mr. Simpson, as I've before told you. I'll have you remember that I've been charitable enough to call it fever. With most skippers, you'd have been strapped in your bunk by now. Here's the cable, and I overlook your language." Captain Eckles fished into his pocket, and, producing the message, handed it to the mate.

Mr. Simpson took it, read it, stared at it; then he dashed to the door, and bawled for the steward. "Pass the word for that slimy son of a sea cook, Lyman! D'ye hear!" And then, as the steward answered, Mr. Simpson returned to the table, sank into a chair, and reached for the bottle. "I'll help myself, Captain Eckles," said he. "Rocks, he said; an' how he was an underwriter. 'Twas something scand'lous the way he talked, mixin' up you, sir, an' the owners, an' that scaly Chinese gang we're loaded for."

"You're coming to your senses, Mr. Simpson," said the skipper. "I'll join you in a glass. Was there more rocks, d'ye say?"

"We're loaded with 'em," said Mr. Simpson, a little uncertainly.

"What!" gasped Captain Eckles, his glass arrested halfway to his lips.

And then the door opened, and the

steward put in his head. "If you please, sir, that fellow Lyman, sir, is not to be found. Some of the 'ands says 'e went ashore this noon, an' 'e didn't come back."

For a moment Mr. Simpson could not speak. He sat and mopped his brow with a handkerchief that he pulled nervously from his pocket. Then a look of relief came into his face. Lyman wasn't such a fool, after all. Of course he knew that the captain had seen him ashore. Mr. Lyman would be safely hidden down in the forehold. Mr. Simpson wished now he had not said so much. He looked at Captain Eckles speculatively. There was still a chance to retrieve the situation. He and Captain Eckles would go to the forehold together, and they'd have it out there. If Lyman was lying, he and the skipper would pound the life out of Lyman; if the skipper was lying, he and Lyman would pound the life out of the skipper. It would work handy and shipshape either way. He dismissed the steward with a wave of his hand.

"So you expected him aboard again, eh?" demanded Captain Eckles. "I'm sadly disappointed in you, Mr. Simpson."

"I did," said Mr. Simpson, ignoring the latter part of the skipper's remark. "I did; an', furthermore, he is aboard. He'll be down in the forehold."

"A stowaway!" ejaculated the captain severely. "Mr. Simpson, sir, that you should connive at that is beyond belief. I was preparing to overlook your disobedience of orders, owing to being short-handed. This is a different matter, Mr. Simpson, sir."

"Stowaway nothin'!" retorted Mr. Simpson. "I said he was in the forehold."

"And what might he be doing there, may I ask?"

Mr. Simpson squinted suggestively at his commander. "I was thinkin',

Captain Eckles, sir, that maybe you an' me would go down an' see."

"Very good," agreed the skipper. "But I'll have you know, Mr. Simpson, that I'm some suspicious of the man. What with rocks, and rocks, and the talk you're full of, which I mistrust you got from him, we'll go armed." And Captain Eckles, suiting the action to the words, slipped a revolver into his pocket, as he started for the door.

"Straight from the shoulder every time, that's me," muttered Mr. Simpson, as he followed. He spat on his hands behind the skipper's back. "Every time," he repeated.

The forehold was pitch dark, full of groanings and queer, creaking noises from the give and take of the miscellany of cargo as the ship rose and fell. Flat on their stomachs, the two men clawed their way forward, Mr. Simpson in the lead, with a ship's lantern, the only effect from whose light was to enhance the ghostliness of their surroundings. Suddenly, Mr. Simpson stopped. "Ahoy, there, Lyman!" he shouted.

There was no reply.

Mr. Simpson rose to a kneeling posture, held the lantern above his head, and peered intently into the blackness. "Ahoy, there, Lyman!" he bawled again. "It's me—Simpson—d'ye hear, ye scum?"

His voice rolled around the air spaces of the hold, and came back to him in hollow, quavering notes—there was no other response.

"I'm thinking, Mr. Simpson," said Captain Eckles, "that, though you've no ordinary power of lungs, you'll do well to yell louder—the man'll be laughing in his sleeve at you this minute back in Guam."

"He'll be asleep, maybe, hereabouts," returned Mr. Simpson, with a desperate effort to infuse the idea of hearty belief into his tones.

"Oh, ay, he'll be asleep—maybe!"

grunted the skipper scornfully. "It's my firm belief, Mr. Simpson, that I've shipped lunatics. What with one thing and another, I'm the most unfortunate commander afloat—thirty years the same run of luck has stuck to me, and be damned to it, and be damned to you, Mr. Simpson!"

Mr. Simpson did not answer. His brain was in a whirling, topsy-turvy condition, that robbed him of his aggressiveness—Mr. Simpson was becoming, for the first time in his life, meek. He crawled farther forward to the scene of the joint labors of himself and Lyman, and swung his lantern down into the hole they had made. And though it did not light quite to the bottom, it was plain to be seen that no Lyman was there.

Captain Eckles edged up beside his chief officer. "What's the meaning of this, Mr. Simpson? D'ye call this stowing a cargo! A hole big enough to grind the stuff to flour with any sea on, and punch an opening in the plates to wind up with that'd suck in, I'll not say all, but half of the Pacific."

"It's braced an' stayed," protested Mr. Simpson meekly. "Twas me an' him did that, an' cruel hard it was. The lower cases he said was filled with rocks."

"Mad!" said Captain Eckles pityingly, half aloud.

"Mad, I may be," retorted Mr. Simpson, firing up a little, "but that's neither here nor there. He said—" Mr. Simpson broke off suddenly, to listen intently. "What's that?" he whispered.

"That'll be rats, likely," replied Captain Eckles, "though I've heard nothing myself. What was it he said?"

"He said," continued Mr. Simpson grudgingly, only half satisfied that his ears had not deceived him, "he said as how there was a conspiracy 'twixt you an' the owners an' the shippers, an' he, bein' an underwriter sent to investigate, 'twas necessary to a clear proof to exam-

ine the contents of some of them cases, so— Listen! What's that?"

"Fair loony!" murmured Captain Eckles. "You'll be hearing the Angel Gabriel blowing for the millennium in a minute! What in tarnation do you *think* you hear?"

Mr. Simpson was leaning far down into the hole. "If you'll stow your facetious remarks, Captain Eckles," he growled irreverently, "you'll hear it, too. It'll be a clock, I'm thinkin'."

"A clock!" ejaculated Captain Eckles.

"You'll be hearin' it if you'll listen," said Mr. Simpson again.

Captain Eckles listened. A faint, regular ticking was barely audible. "You're right, Mr. Simpson," said he, after a moment. "It's a clock. What'll a clock be doing there? You'll oblige me, Mr. Simpson, sir, by investigating."

Mr. Simpson handed the lantern to Captain Eckles, and obediently swung himself into the hole; then, getting foothold-beneath him, he took the lantern again, and bent down to search for the cause of this strange ticking noise that had now grown louder. To his amazement, he found that the case in the lowest tier, and nearest to the skin of the ship, had been burst open, and an armful of its contents pulled out and strewn around—and the contents were not rocks.

"Blimy!" muttered Mr. Simpson, as he stooped and picked up a handful of the stuff. "It's silk, it is, so help me, an' that's a fact!" He held it closer to his lantern, and then a low whistle of astonishment escaped his lips. It was not the same kind of silk, the same extra, high-grade, superfine kind of silk that had been in the case that had broken in the tackles—that was billed on the invoices; instead, it was of the poorest and cheapest quality, and the disparity in value between the two was very great! "An' I know," he mumbled. "Me that's sailed these parts an' han-

dled silk for more years than I likes to remember. Blimy! What's the game?" Again Mr. Simpson whistled—a low, drawn-out tremolo of consternation.

"Your music, Mr. Simpson, sir," said Captain Eckles, from above, "is not inspiring; it's too monotonous. Would there be a clock there now, d'ye suppose?"

"I'd be surprised at nothin', sir," said Mr. Simpson gloomily, "clock or anything else. There's a case stove in, sir."

"Would it be the rocks clicking together that make the tick of the clock, Mr. Simpson?" inquired the skipper, with a chuckle.

"You'll laugh the other side of your face, Captain Eckles, maybe," retorted Mr. Simpson. "This, or rocks, it'll be all one, as you'll find out."

He stooped down again, and listened. The ticking seemed to proceed from the bowels of the broken case. Mr. Simpson shoved his lantern forward, and peered in. A small wooden box, about eight inches square, propped against the side of the case nearest the *Galway's* ribs, met his gaze. He reached in, lifted it out, and held it to his ears. "It's a giddy joke!" he gasped, as the sound of ticking came serenely from inside. The cover was on grooves, and he pulled it open, then he started back in horror, and great beads of sweat sprang to his forehead, as the diabolical malignity of the thing took shape in his consciousness.

In the second, that seemed a year, that his eyes rested on the interior of the box, he got it all—all!—the series of catches and springs, the clockwork, ingeniously attached to the detonator, the guncotton—the hellishness of it! Then, like a flash, there came to him the thought of time. What minute was it set for?—the minute that would be his last, his and the captain's, trapped like rats in the hold! The perspiration poured down his face; he was trembling

like an old man aged beyond the allotted span of life. It might be *now* as he held it, *this instant!* There was but one thing to do—to stop it—if he could! He looked at the mechanism, and, holding it nearer to the light, poked in his finger, hooked it beneath the detonator—and pulled. There was a snap, a prolonged, angry buzz—and then silence. Weak from the reaction, Mr. Simpson staggered and swayed where he stood.

"Would there be anything wrong with you, Mr. Simpson?" It was Captain Eckles' voice.

"Help me up," said Mr. Simpson shakily.

He passed up the lantern, and, hanging grimly to the box with one hand, extended the other to the skipper.

"Man," gasped Captain Eckles, panting from his exertions, for it was the dead weight of a limp and helpless mate that had called forth all his strength to drag up beside him, "man; for God's sake, what's wrong with you?"

"Let's get out of this. I want to get where I can breathe," said Mr. Simpson faintly. "Oh, the swine! The crawlin', whinin' swine!"

Captain Eckles held up the light, and stared into his chief officer's face. "You're fair done, Mr. Simpson," he said, in dismay. "Can you make shift, yourself, while I lead on with the lantern?"

"Ay," said Mr. Simpson. "I'll manage. Lead on."

And, falling, stumbling, bruising ankles, arms, and face, muttering constantly under his breath, Mr. Simpson, behind the captain, gained the deck. Here the fresh air braced him, and by the time they had reached the skipper's cabin, he was somewhat recovered.

Entering last, he closed the door behind him, and, placing the box on the table, whipped off the cover. "There's the clock, Captain Eckles," said he.

Captain Eckles stared at it—the color gradually leaving his cheeks until his ruddy face was gray as death. "A bomb!" he whispered.

"Ay," said Mr. Simpson bitterly, "the underwriter's bomb, an' be damned to him! That was his game. He put it there afore he went ashore at Guam. He wanted it planted where it'd be good-by to the old *Galway*—an' me helpin' him do it! I figured the lay of it all out, crawlin' up from the ghastly hold. Smooth an' slimy he was, I'll say that. Lord knows what time the grisly thing was set to go off—when we was far enough out, as we are at present, so's we wouldn't be able to put back an' beach her. I takes it. An' who's behind the sailor-drownin' swine, I ask you, Captain Eckles?"

Captain Eckles shook his head. Stunned and bewildered, he ran his fingers back and forward through his hair. "It's not the owners, Mr. Simpson," said he at last. "You'll mind the cable was *waiting* for us at Guam. For which reason the skunk did not, as might otherwise be, cable back to tell 'em he had us fixed, and have them cable us to sail on according. To clinch this, the K. and L. story is straight—I heard more than a little talk of it ashore to-day. They towed the *Mastodon* ashore at Seypan, she being too far gone to make Guam. No, Mr. Simpson, sir, it's not the owners."

"No, Captain Eckles, sir, it's not the owners. I'm aware of that—*now!* If you'll cast your mind back the last year or so, sir, you'll recollect the loss of a boat or two, maybe."

"I do," said Captain Eckles. "There was our *Caliope*, and the *Bristol* of the P. and W., likewise the *Kalwin* of the Comet Line—MacNaughton was master of her, I mind; poor devil; him nor one of the crew was ever heard of after. Also, there was others."

"There was!" said Mr. Simpson, with

emphasis. "An' what was they loaded with? Silk! Silk—every last one of 'em, d'ye understand?"

"We're so loaded ourselves," said Captain Eckles, screwing up his eyebrows.

"We are," said Mr. Simpson. "An' I make no doubt with the same kind of silk! Captain Eckles, sir, I saw it down in the hold, a half hour gone. It's cruel discouragin' to think of it. It'll be that slant-eyed heathen gang of devils, that joss-stinkin', swinish firm, that's at the bottom of this, them an' Lyman. The difference between the insurance an' the value of what we're carryin' would fair make a man rich. Silk it is—in case anything went wrong an' we came to port. Oh, ay, the consignees at Frisco are in cahoots—they'll pay the freight an' pass the customs on the goods as per invoice, an' never squeal, for they don't dare do anything else. My God, to think of the men an' ships as have gone to these murderin', cutthroat sharks!"

Captain Eckles was staring into the entrails of the infernal machine. "You'll have to put this affair full speed astern, Mr. Simpson, by diving in with 'your finger, I'm thinking," said he.

"I did," said Mr. Simpson. "I had no choice. God knows what time she was set to go. To take the time to carry it to the deck an' heave it into the sea was provokin' Providence. One minute was as likely as another. Mayhap it'd have gone off on the way up, then again it

might not—the Lord knows! 'Twas no chance to take." Mr. Simpson paused, looked at his commander, and cleared his throat nervously. "Captain Eckles, sir," he confessed, "I've been an ass. Fair an' square, I owns it, I've been an ass, which I hopes you'll see your way clear, sir, to overlook."

"I'll not say you've not," said Captain Eckles slowly. "I'll not say you've not; and, likewise, I'm not saying that certificate won't be handier when we get back than it has been these five years stowed away in your chest. I'll drink to your health, Mr. Simpson, sir. I know a brave man when I see one. And it's a brave man who'll prod his fingers where you did. A brave man, Mr. Simpson."

Mr. Simpson blushed, and in embarrassed silence reached for the bottle, which Captain Eckles pushed toward him.

"I'll drink to your health, Mr. Simpson, sir," repeated Captain Eckles, "and likewise to the confusion and destruction everlasting of those murdering chinks, but more particularly to the damnation of that there Lyman, who some day I hope to have the pleasure of strangling. Here's hoping!"

"Some day," said Mr. Simpson grimly, as he touched glasses with his commander, "some day that there Lyman'll wish he'd never been born!"

And the day was to come when Lyman was to wish just that—that he had never been born—but that has no place here.



#### CARRY YOUR OWN BOAT

A SERVIAN named Mercep has devised what he terms "a boat in a knapsack" for army purposes. The boat is composed of linen, rendered impermeable by a coating of rubber; it is provided with oars, which fold into each other to the size of an ordinary walking stick, and a cork seat, which also serves to keep it taut when open. The model can accommodate one person only, but larger ones may be made on the same plan for the conveyance of troops and baggage when crossing rivers.

# The Devil's Pilgrim



## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Captain Mark Wade and Ned Herapath, chief engineer—who tells the story—are offered berths on the English tramp steamer *Duncannon* by a smooth-talking American, Vincent Halliday, and his friend Davenant. The probable destination of the tramp is Baltimore, but there is some mystery about the cruise—a mystery that appeals to Captain Wade, who is something of a free lance. Arrangements are concluded, and Wade and Herapath board the tramp and put to sea, accompanied by Halliday and several of his friends. On the way out from Southampton they run down a yawl and rescue Jean Carvaux and his niece, Miss Sylvester, who, at their urgent request, are allowed to remain on board. Halliday smoothly informs Wade that he is sailing under sealed orders which Halliday hands him, and which are not to be opened until the following Wednesday. Wade, in conferring with Ned, is told that their destination is not Baltimore, as first announced, whereupon Wade exclaims, "Great Scott! This beats ocean racing!"

## SERIAL STORY. PART TWO

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE THIRD DAY OUT.

HALLIDAY made his appearance next morning, recovered from his sickness, but very pallid and shaky. He distributed politeness, however, like largess, and seemed nervously anxious to be all things to all men. He was certainly not at home on board ship, and his stomach rose in revolt against the situation. His sprightly mind, however, struggled undaunted against all the embarrassments and disabilities of his body. He had presented Wade with sealed orders, and had come out of the

seclusion and protection of his cabin to "face the music."

"You understand, captain, exactly what I mean to convey by that packet?"

Wade turned the packet over. "I'm to open this three days from now?" he said. Halliday nodded. "And, having been led to believe our destination was Baltimore, I shall here find another port indicated?" he continued.

"The advantage of sealed orders, captain," said the American, "is that they talk, not me, and they talk at the right time."

"Of course you know I can put her about and go back," said Wade slowly.

Halliday's long thin fingers worked nervously. "It would be within your legal right," he said. "But I guess you won't."

"You're right, I won't," said Wade, with a laugh. "I see you wanted the sort of man you took me for."

"Precisely, captain," said Halliday, "and I put it to my credit that I took you for the sort of man you are. You've got to take risks all the way in life, and a man who doesn't jump sometimes without looking the other side of the hedge is not going far. No, you fit us to a 't,' and I'm very well satisfied. I hope you are, captain."

"I should be all the better satisfied," said Wade, in another voice, "if there wasn't so much drinking about. See here, Mr. Halliday, there's some of these people I can't interfere with—these owners of mine," he said, with a sneer. "There's Mr. Byrne, and—well, I don't know if Mr. McLeod is or is not ship's doctor, but I assume Mr. Clifford's the storekeeper and under my orders. And I want it clearly understood that I won't have my men drunk or drinking."

"How so, captain?" asked Halliday. "Why, last night there was a merry party in Mr. Byrne's cabin, and some of the stuff has got among the sailors—how, I don't know. But I'm not going to have it. Grog has wrecked many a better ship than this, and I'm not going to have the grog tap on."

"You're right, captain," said Halliday. "You're right all the time."

"In that case what I propose is this," pursued Wade, "I don't like the look of my owner, Mr. Clifford, and I'll trouble him for the key of the wine cellar. That shall remain in your charge, as I signed on to you, and it is to you I look for orders. You're responsible, then, and I can come to you. How's that?"

"A good idea," said Halliday approv-

ingly. "I'll speak to Clifford, and take the key myself."

This, I discovered, was done, much to the dungeon of the storekeeper, whose sharp tongue I overheard. He had realized it was through Wade's action that he had been deprived of his opportunities, and he came as near being insubordinate as ever man that was not clapped in irons. Byrne was a good deal in his company all that day, and I think it was through Byrne's influence that he did not actually break out into an open act of hostility to the captain. But, oddly enough, he was himself again by night, and with the contents of a bottle of whisky conceded by Halliday was the center of his little party as usual. McLeod was of this gang, and Digby at times, but never Davenant, and Marley but seldom.

Now that Marley was at sea and at work he was very businesslike. He was still free and easy, and had little idea of discipline, but he took a thorough interest in his duties, and made a very capable first officer. Davenant was little in evidence; as navigating officer he was a good deal in the chart room, and otherwise held himself aloof. He was of a different class, I guessed, from his fellows; at least of a different training and association. He had almost the air of a schoolmaster or a professor, and his dress was as immaculate as his voice.

The crew was decent enough, but was well sprinkled with foreigners. There were only two of them whom I noticed much at this time. One was the steward, Headon, a heavy-moving fellow, with a face like pink wax, and glassy eyes.

"The chap's been dead a fortnight," said Marley of him. "Gosh! What a face!"

"A deuced fine simulacrum!" laughed Clifford, and seemed to find him attractive as such. For this it was

drew my attention more immediately.

Clifford cultivated the steward, hung about him in a friendly way, and was soon exchanging sallies with him in corners. Clifford had no conception of maintaining his own dignity; he had none. He would hobnob with a chimney-sweep. He hobnobbed with Headon. And once more he began to roll about the passageways, plying his fluent tongue and discharging his caustic vulgarisms. He was once more supplied with liquor, and I ought to have guessed its source. But I did not then, and it was only later that I discovered that the steward had a secret store.

Byrne and Clifford would repair to his cabin, and share the private stock of his pantry, free from interference, indeed free from the knowledge of the captain; and McLeod was in the habit of joining them. But he was in a better frame just then, delighting to dance attendance on Miss Sylvester under the specious excuse that she needed medical supervision.

As a matter of fact, she had completely recovered, and was just a very healthy and happy young girl, with no troubles on her mind, and nothing on her conscience. Her gaze was wayward; her will was wanton. She liked exercising her splendid fascinations, or, at least, I thought so. McLeod's devotion pleased her, lank and ugly as he was; but I cannot say that she favored him more than any other of us. She was like a child, delighting in her own beauty almost without consciousness of it. It was instinctive.

The other member of the crew to whom I have alluded was a tall fellow, with bold eyes that looked insult at you, and with an indifferent, rough voice. He did his work well, but his insolent carriage was an offense, which made me wonder why Headon had taken him into his favor. The two were frequently together forward, the "simulacrum" with his uncanny suggestion of disease and decay singularly contrasted with the

lean bold mark of interrogation that was Crashaw.

But the steward's store was not the widow's curse, and that fact brought about the first crisis of our voyage. Halliday had by now gained his sea legs, and recaptured his assurance. He was never in doubt of himself now, and dealt his favors all round liberally, paying specially courteous attentions to Miss Sylvester, whom he claimed as a compatriot. He had not the air of a suitor, but rather of an obedient henchman, as if in her he did honor to the American woman.

"I guess we raise a fine creature out there," he told me, as we conversed on deck. He had just left Miss Sylvester, who had joined her uncle in a promenade, and he was following her with his eyes. "There's beauty enough knocking about these old islands of yours, Mr. Herapath, but for style I'll back the United States. Not but what a European residence rubs up a bit of extra polish," he added meditatively.

Then he turned to the sea. "Say, we're getting on pretty well," he remarked complacently. "We're getting on like a happy family, eh?"

As he spoke there was a noise behind us, and we turned about, to see McLeod and Clifford emerging tumultuously from the companion ladder. They came out on deck in a sort of scuffle, laughing uproariously.

"Yes, a happy family," I said dryly. Halliday saw my meaning. "Well, they don't get much now," he observed, puckering his brows.

I had begun to suspect the steward by this time, and so I remarked: "Not from the ship's cellars."

He looked at me quickly with his alert eyes. "Do you think they get it somewhere else?"

"Look at them," said I, and he looked. Clifford was making an ineffectual attempt to mash in McLeod's hat—ineffectual because of his short stature. "If

they go on," I added, "they'll have the captain down on them."

"I'll look into this," said Halliday promptly, and wandered off toward the men.

I feared he would get worsted in any encounter with them, but I wished him luck. He joined them, received a facetious dig in the ribs from Clifford, and began to talk. A few minutes later he had taken them round the deck house, and I lost sight of them. I was left wondering if he had succeeded in taming those undisciplined animals. Then I went down to my engines.

I did not come on deck again till it was dusk. A cold wind came off the sea, which was still and dark, and I buttoned my coat closer. It was a change from the warmth of the engine room. In the half light I perceived Miss Sylvester walking to and fro; and when she came near to me she laughingly explained that she was taking a constitutional. I saw no one else on deck at this time. The evening dropped on us quickly, and one of the men climbed up from the lower deck with lights. I heard voices away aft, and suddenly a cry of alarm.

It was a woman's voice, and, of course, Miss Sylvester's.

I ran back as it was repeated, and when I came up with the dark figures I could discern her voice rang with anger and indignation and dismay, all in one.

"How dared you? Oh, you—you beast!"

I took in the scene, and, putting my arm about the man's waist, tore him away from her and threw him against the deck house with a bang. Then I turned my attention to the girl. She was frightened and furious.

"How dared he—the brute!" she panted.

He had had his arm about her, but there was no fight in him now. He lay still where I had thrown him.

"How dared he—the wretch! He—he tried to kiss me!" she cried, tears of mortification and shame in her eyes. She stamped her foot.

I apologized. "The beast was in liquor," I told her. "He didn't know what he was doing."

I led her away, soothed her rumpled feelings, and finally she descended to her cabin, forgetting to thank me.

I went back aft, and found Clifford sitting up.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he said stupidly, and felt his head. He stared at me. "Was that you?" he asked.

"A small installment," I said shortly.

He put out a hand, and, steadying himself by the deck house, got to his feet.

"I'll take a bill at sight for it, please," he said, and laughed uneasily. "Great Caesar! I thought it was the day of judgment."

"This ship is too small for your talents, Mr. Clifford," I said. "If I were you I should quit at Baltimore, or wherever it is we are bound for."

"Oh, sure, sure; I leave the field," he agreed. "I'm not starting. Left at the post, my warrior. Avast! Belay! Ship ahoy! Where's that blamed doctor? Lord! I've got a head. I forgot your sledge-hammers."

He staggered off toward the hatchway with his incredible cheerfulness and indifference, and I stood considering him. He was an unpleasant cad with all the vices, but his insuperable amiability surely redeemed him a little. I could not feel as angry with him as I should have felt with McLeod. And the man was drunk. My thoughts went to Halliday and his hopeless task. He had evidently had no success. I descended into the saloon, and there were Byrne, McLeod, and Digby listening to a blasphemous and lurid account of my onslaught.

"Only one measly kiss! What a lot of fuss over a kiss! It's not worth it.

I don't buy kisses at that price, my masters. McLeod, where's that sticking plaster?"

"Serve you blank well right," growled the angry Scot. "A little cad like you insulting a lady!"

"Steady, Mac, or I'll put the hard hitter onto you," threatened the unabashed Clifford. "Keep your hair on, and get me something to keep mine on. Here, Headon, get out the whisky. Now, fetch the fizz, Byrne, like a good chap."

I heard no more, for I turned out of the saloon, unobserved by them, but I had heard enough to know that the resources of their cellar were not exhausted, and I wondered. I had not been more than five minutes in my cabin, when there was a rap, and Wade's face was poked through the door.

"What's all this I hear about Clifford's insulting Miss Sylvester?" he asked bluntly.

"He was drunk," said I, going on with the adjustment of my tie.

"Drunk!" he echoed. "Why, I thought we'd stopped all that." He paused. "So you came the knight-errant, Ned, eh?"

"I had to get even with you, you see," I said lightly.

A smile shadowed his eyes. "All right. Well, we don't want any more gallant deeds aboard; at least, I hope not. I'm getting sick of that gang."

"They've got a private supply somewhere," I told him.

"I must see Halliday again," he remarked, after a pause. "Come up, now. Here's a young lady looking for you to thank you for your kind offices."

So that was how he knew. I followed him on deck, and he jocularly presented me. "Here's the hero, Miss Sylvester, with all his blushing honors thick upon him."

She put her hand on my arm. "Mr. Herapath, it's just wonderful of you,

and I can't say anything more than that. I can't forgive myself for running off without thanking you." Her hand trembled on my arm, and it was plain she had not got over her agitation.

"I'm glad I was at hand," I said. "And I'm glad it was *my* privilege this time, not Captain Wade's."

She uttered a little laugh. "So am I," she said, with something like her characteristic courage; "and as for the man—"

"I'll clap him in irons," said Wade sharply. "I won't have brutes like that loose, tramp or no tramp."

"Is that you, captain?" called a voice through the darkness.

Halliday came up. "I want to see you, captain," he said, with evident excitement. "Come along, now. Mr. Herapath's a friend of yours, isn't he? Yes, I guess he's all right. I want both of you. Oh, good evening, Miss Sylvester. It's a right down fine evening, isn't it? And there's a good moon on the way up."

He spoke hurriedly, and his address to her was obviously most perfunctory. He was anxious to get us away. Two minutes later we were in the deck cabin, which he used as an office. He waved us to some seats with what remained of his ceremoniousness.

"Sit down, I've got something to tell you," he went on quickly; "something, I dare say, that you'll say you ought to have known before. Well, you can blame me for that, if you like. I've got to tell it now. I made up my mind right away."

He fidgeted with the papers on the table, and was displaying every sign of mental disturbance, but his eyes were bright and eager, as if his spirit still dominated proudly a tottering house. "You've got to know, captain, and I guess Mr. Herapath, here, might as well know, too. I don't know anything about the others. I'm not sure about them. Anyway, they know enough to

go on with, and you don't. I'm figuring out it isn't fair to you."

He glanced at us questioningly, and resumed:

"You got an envelope there, captain, and there's something inside it."

"Sealed orders," said Wade shortly. "To be opened latitude—"

"Well, I guess we won't bother about that, and after what I say, you needn't open it at all. Say, what do you suppose this ship's after?"

"I understood from the principal owner," said Wade dryly, "that she was a tramp, laden for Baltimore."

"Oh, twenty-three!" said Halliday, with a small laugh. "Let's quit that, captain. After getting that sealed packet I reckon you know better."

Wade said nothing; and his expression betrayed nothing of the interest which he must have felt.

"This boat's chartered on a treasure hunt," said Halliday.

I started. Wade stroked his moustache, and waited, as if he had heard the most usual thing in the world.

Halliday seemed disappointed. He had expected a sensation, and it had not come. I think he liked his dramatic curtains, but he continued quickly:

"It's a long story, but I can keep it warm for another time. Anyway, you've got to fix on to these points. There's treasure in an island in the West Indies—treasure that's been there for two hundred years; and there's a map which came into my possession; and there's the *Duncannon* chartered for a cruise."

"And the owners?" asked Wade laconically.

"That's where my new story begins," said Halliday, frowning. "And that's why I come to you. Buried treasure requires big handling, captain, and I'm not in a big way myself—not yet, that is. I came upon the map while on your side, while I was rustling for one of

your insurance companies. But this beats rustling. It's a dead cert, sir."

He struck the table sharply to emphasize his conviction.

"But, anyway, I couldn't run to it as a lone hand," he continued, with a certain sadness, "and I figured out that I could make a joint-stock company of it, or a simple partnership. Blamed if I don't wish I'd floated it right on to the public!" he said. "But there was a lot against it—publicity and the write-me-downs in the financial papers, and so on. And then there was the chance that the scheme would be flooded out with laughter. Anyway, after totting it up, I settled on a partnership"—he paused—"and advertised."

"Hence this galley," said Wade.

"Precisely; as you remark, captain, 'Hence this galley.' They're a mixed crew, assorted to taste, but that taste's not mine. I could have picked a better lot on the East Side in New York in half a day. When you buy a bag, I reckon you must expect to find something in it that don't square with your taste. And that's my case. And it makes me look a fool and feel a fool."

Wade crossed his legs. "If you would get on, Mr. Halliday," he said, "I assume you want assistance or advice in something?"

"I don't know," Halliday mused. "I believe I'm merely relieving my feelings, and my conscience, maybe. I'm pouring this into your ears by way of belated compensation. No; fact is you've got to know it now. But I don't know, anyway, that I can't squeeze out for myself. That advertisement brought me hundreds of offers. I had some little money myself, and I asked for six partners to put up five thousand dollars each. That gave us our charter. And I drew up a deed of sharing profits, by which we shared alike on the score of our money invested, but I came out on top with the map. Say, now, it was like this. There were twelve

shares, and each man took one share, and left me five over—five-twelfths for the purchase price of the scheme, see?"

Wade nodded. "You get half," he said laconically.

Halliday's eyes glowed as he rehearsed the financial arrangements, as I had no doubt they had glowed when he propounded them to his partners. "Well, I fixed it up with the six along there, selecting some by reason of their knowledge of the sea. There's Marley, for instance, a good sailor, eh, captain?"

"Decent," said Wade.

"Then there's Davenant," he added hopefully.

"Tolerable," said Wade.

I thought Halliday was somewhat crestfallen at this damping reception, but he rattled on:

"But I chose some for other properties, same as I chose you, captain. I don't want in this business conventional hymn-singing, top-hat, frock-coat fellows."

"Well, you haven't got 'em, so far as my acquaintance goes," I interjected, with a laugh.

He eyed me. "No; that's so," he said thoughtfully; "I guess I overstepped the limit, and have to stand the racket. I guess I ought to have sifted 'em better. But I'm blamed if I know now where I am!" he ended sadly.

"I wish we knew exactly where we were, Mr. Halliday," said Wade, in his blunt way.

"I guess you will," he smiled back. "The key of the cellar's gone from my bureau."

"That explains it," I said.

Wade whistled.

Halliday watched us, not averse from a certain satisfaction in the dramatic surprise. "And the map," he added.

"The map!" said Wade.

Halliday nodded. "Little Willie's lost the map," he said, "and one of his partners has got it."

"This," said Wade, stirring—"this begins to get interesting."

## CHAPTER V.

### HUNT THE SLIPPER.

"The existence of the map was known to all?" asked Wade.

"The map was shown to all," said Halliday. "It was in evidence to prove the bona-fides of the scheme. But it never left my possession—not till now. All copartners are privy to the history of the map, but I was the only one in possession of it—till now."

"The question is—which? Your half share was presumably the temptation," said Wade.

"I'll lay a dollar to a cent I know who has the key," I said, "and it would be making two bites at a cherry to look elsewhere."

"Meaning Clifford?" said Wade, looking at me thoughtfully. "Yes, I nose Clifford in this somehow. It doesn't appear to me insoluble."

"Well, I don't know," said Halliday slowly. "It isn't quite so simple, maybe, as it seems. There's six of them, and we've got to settle between 'em. Personally, I don't feel like hitching the job on to any one in particular. I don't fancy sorting out their claims. At the same time I'm not saying that Clifford won't pouch his share of the liquor."

"He's already been pouching it," said I. "When did you discover your loss?"

"About half an hour ago, when I was opening my bureau. I kept the map in a locked drawer, and the bureau was locked on the top of that. But that didn't seem to worry the thief any."

He indicated the bureau lock, which had been ruthlessly shattered.

"When last did you notice it was all right?" I asked.

"Just before dusk," he answered.

"Well," said I, "that doesn't somehow look like Clifford. The bureau

must evidently have been rifled during the last two hours. Clifford was drunk then."

"Doesn't it look like the work of a drunken man?" inquired Wade.

"Possibly," I assented, "but I happen to be able to account for the movements of Clifford during part of that time. Still, it's a difficult point."

"Captain, we've got to find out," said Halliday earnestly.

"*You* have," retorted Wade coolly. "I don't know that it interests me. I've got to fetch up at this island, wherever it is. I can do that if the teapot holds together."

"Captain," said Halliday, with a faint smile, "you're reckoning you ought to be in this for something. I'm not saying you shouldn't. But seems to me I want your assistance pretty bad, and I'll pay for it. This is going to look nasty for me, if I don't take care. See, I'm frank. I'm prepared to make you an offer."

"Well, let's see how you figure it out," said Wade. "All I see is that one of your partners purloined the map, but I don't see that it's going to make any material difference to you. You've got the bearings, I presume."

"I know the map by heart; and, what's more, I've got a copy," said Halliday. "But that's not the point. The point is that they have the original."

"You mean——"

"I mean that if they are so disposed they can make trouble for me on the score of that agreement. You see, that's gone with the other things, and rather floors me."

"Oh!" Wade straightened himself. "So that's your pickle? It leaves you on a lee shore." He considered. "You want to be in a position of leverage again? All right, I'm in it for all I'm worth, and here's Herapath, too, a good man at need."

"Thank you, captain. I guess I'm

obliged to you, and it won't be any loss to you."

Wade shrugged his shoulders; he was indifferent to money, but he liked a sporting hazard. He rose.

"Then we've got to run the thief to earth. I'll go bail for Marley."

Halliday nodded, but doubtfully. "I guess he and Davenant are all right."

"That narrows it to four," said Wade. "Oh, come, we're not far off it. Let's begin at once."

He went out on deck, and we followed him. "What are you going to do?" inquired Halliday.

"You forget I have two passengers aboard who, I believe, have paid their fares; and I have the unpleasant duty of explaining to them that they cannot now be landed at Baltimore."

"Yes, I'd clean forgot that," confessed Halliday. "Though it did cross my mind at the time, only a little ready cash was needed, and the old man paid up nobly—offered five hundred dollars!"

"Five hundred!" echoed Wade. "Well, he ought to get a bit more than a desert island for that. Anyway, it's not my funeral."

He stalked away, leaving us together. "Has he got anything in his head?" asked Halliday anxiously.

"I don't know," I replied. "That's his way. Will you acquaint Marley?"

"That's worrying me some," he returned. "Yet if it was Marley, I should not be telling him anything he didn't know. Confound this sea! It's roughing up."

"I'll give you a tip," said I. "Tell each one in secrecy, and let him see you suspect all the others, and not himself."

"Gee whiz! That's a notion," he said. "Say, I'll think over that. Mr. Herapath, you're all right." He walked up and down, and then stopped. "Hear any noise?"

My engines were pounding, but

through that sound emerged a strain of song from below.

"Hitting it up," I commented. "The owners make merry. Whatever's become of the map and the deed, I reckon the key's there."

"And the key might have been a separate theft," he remarked. "It's a puzzle. Well, I give to-night to it. Don't think a ghost walks if you hear footsteps in the small hours. I've got to worry this out."

He called good night, and left us, and I went below for some supper. The saloon was rowdy and hilarious, and Headon, the steward, was seated at a table with the usual gang. I called to him sharply, and gave him my order, and his glassy eyes met mine as he went off.

"Hello, Samson!" cried the irrepressible Clifford from the other end, his head wrapped in a bandage. "Let's bury the hatchet in a pipe of peace. Come along. Great Cæsar, that was a thundering thwack! What's your gargle? Mac, pass that fizz."

I said nothing, but stood staring at them, and Clifford fell into ribaldry, his face flushed purple with his potations.

"Where's the key?" he demanded, feigning to look about him anxiously. "I say, Herapath, come along. It's a game of hunt the slipper. You got it, Mac? No. Hello! Jiggered if I don't have a go at Barney's boots! He's got 'em on. Gosh! how your pockets bulge, old cock! Come and join the fun, old man. We're all in for a game of hunt the slipper."

Byrne sat with his significant and humorous Irish smile on his pasty face, and McLeod scowled. I turned my back on them. It was not I who could execute the plan I had suggested to Halliday. I had too much feeling against the crew. No; Halliday alone could carry it out, and was at that moment, no doubt, turning it round in his ingenious mind.

I visited Wade before I went below, and found him placid.

"It's no affair of ours if they have lost this blessed chart," he said; "but it may be amusing. It's either Clifford or Byrne, and I'll just open accounts to-morrow with them. There's more than one lock in a ship; but only one master. I say, Ned," he added, as he turned, "that's a rum joker, that Frenchman. I told him Baltimore was off, and he looked at me so fiercely I thought he could have knifed me."

"It is outrage," he cried, in his Frenchy way, and he was beginning to carry on so that I hurried to get it over.

"You must settle it with the owners. I obey orders," I told him. "But it appears that they are bent on going to an unknown island for some reason of their own."

"Island?" says he. "Unknown?" And was silent for a bit; after which he said quite calmly: "Very well, Monsieur le Capitaine, I accept my destiny. I see you are not to blame."

"There's fatalism for you! But he probably meant to say destination. I don't know how the girl will like it."

I was wondering myself, for she was bound to know next morning. She had been cheated into making a voyage to Baltimore without adequate preparations; and now even that limit was to be denied her, and she would find herself committed to an expedition the end of which no one could see. Certainly I could not see the end. From all signs we carried a quarrelsome party, in which were the seeds of possible mutiny. Halliday had been robbed by one of his companions; that was bad enough for a start. And his anxiety was not to flourish his loss in public, but to pursue his detective investigations quietly. Wade, however, was of a very different cast. He would truckle to no one, and would stand no nonsense. He was as reckless in deal-

ing with men as with his ship. The chart, he declared, was Halliday's affair, but the key was his, and he tackled it at once.

He had Clifford and McLeod in his cabin by eight bells next day, and gave them the rough side of his tongue.

"Where's that key?" he demanded, after some straight talk.

"What key?" said Clifford, blinking at him foolishly.

"Look you here, my man," said Wade sharply, "I understand you're a sort of owner of this boat, and, as such, I suppose you'll get your reward; but I'll have you know that you're also under me, and that I'll have discipline aboard. Where's that key?"

A grin spread on Clifford's mottled face. "Do you mean the key of the cellar, captain?" he asked.

"Yes," said Wade curtly.

Clifford took something from his pocket, and threw it on the table with a clank. "I'm glad to get rid of it," he said, with a deep sigh. "It's been a bally responsibility. I thought Mr. Halliday was going to take charge of it; and he might have told me he was going to leave it in the door."

"Leave it in the door!" repeated Wade.

"That's where I found it," said innocent Clifford. "I suppose it was Mr. Halliday put it there."

Wade's brow clouded. "The key was stolen, and you know it," he said sternly. "Now in future I'll take charge of this, and I don't think you'll find it an easy matter to fool me." He got up, as if to end the audience, and added, in his most significant voice: "And in the event of any trouble I'm not one to hesitate. I've used irons before now."

"This is very interesting," said Clifford politely, turning to his companion, McLeod; "isn't it, doctor? When was the last time you used irons, captain, and under what fell circumstances?"

Wade flushed slightly, but made no reply. Instead, he pointed to the door, and Clifford civilly gave him good morning, and went out with his companion.

"Butter wouldn't melt in the scoundrel's mouth," Wade told me; "but I didn't like the look of that man McLeod. He's the fellow we've got to keep our eyes on. He's dangerous. I shouldn't be surprised to find him run amuck some fine day. Ugh! what swine!"

The phrase seemed to describe them very well, which made me all the more annoyed to notice the friendly manner Miss Sylvester showed to the doctor. His duties were nominal, and he had all his time on his hands; with the result that he was constantly in attendance upon the girl, whom I frequently overheard laughing and talking with him. He was plain looking, but had a fine figure, yet his appearance, to my mind, was disfigured at the root by the latent passion in his face. Of this, however, I must confess there was no trace when he was in Miss Sylvester's company. She had taken the news of the ship's destination with admirable good nature. I do not think she realized for one moment what it meant or might mean, and she was most probably taken with the romance of the expedition.

"Oh, Mr. Herapath, aren't you excited?" she said once, joining me breathlessly at the side of the steamer. Her face sparkled with beauty, and her eyes with light. "I'm just dying to get to the island," she added ecstatically; "and then uncle and I will take our passages in another boat, and I can get my baggage in Baltimore."

That was the tale, then, that she had received, and in her innocence believed. She imagined that she could tranship from our treasure island when she had exhausted its interest and her own curiosity! I did not undeceive her, for it was no business of mine, and, be-

sides, it would have been ruthless. By this time, you see, it was known through the ship that our destination was not Baltimore. The sealed orders should have been opened by now, and Halliday's copartners, no doubt, believed that this was what had happened. They were not aware that Wade and myself had been taken into Halliday's confidence. But the word "treasure" had gone fore and aft, and had stimulated all hands, as if it had been an extra glass of grog. There was wonderful good temper among the crew; even the dagoes, of whom there were several, showing smiling countenances. We had run into good weather, and were laying our new course, Wade authoritative and inscrutable as ever.

There was no trouble among the partners for some days, and we appeared to have weathered the threatened storm. That, however, was but a delusive interlude, as you shall see. It was not many days before some signs of insubordination were visible among the crew. I noticed louder voices, and less reputable behavior than is consistent with good seamanship and strict discipline. And at last, as I was descending to the lower deck, one of the hands ran into me, obviously drunk.

He didn't wait for my question, but lurched off. I gave Wade the information, and he caused inquiries to be made. Marley, having investigated, came back with a bad report.

"I'm very sorry, old man," he said, seated opposite his captain, whom he thus cavalierly addressed. "But there's some mischief down there. And I can't get at the bottom of it. I found two of the beggars drunk, and several have had quite as much as was good for them. I gave them a call down, but they're a cheeky lot, and I wouldn't trust some of them."

Wade rose. "We'll soon get to the bottom of this," he declared. "Give me the names."

"Atkins and Desprez, drunk," said Marley, consulting his notes; "and a lot of others—Santoni, Millevois, Garsch, Anton, Peters—had been drinking."

"Mr. Marley, be so good as to instruct Mr. Davenant to have the crew piped on deck," said Wade formally.

Marley went out, and presently the boatswain's whistle was heard. I think it was a great occasion for Digby, "part owner." No one knew what was coming, not even I, though I had looked interrogatively at Wade. His face was set like a bulldog's; his jaw stiff.

It was dark, and the men were assembled facing the upper deck, the captain on the bridge.

"My lads," shouted Wade, from above, "there's some bad eggs among you, half-seas over. I want to know where you come by that stuff before I take action."

There was no reply from below, but a sort of deep murmur passed along the ranks.

"Very well. I'll have it sooner or later out of you, if I've got to hammer it out. Best be sensible," said Wade's cool voice. "I'm not going to come down hard on you. Only this has got to end."

Still there was no reply. "I'll give you four minutes," said Wade, and left the bridge. He joined me, breathing heavily.

"You can see it now, Herapath," he said. "It's warming up. We've bit off as much as we can chew. I've seen crews all my life, and I know it."

"What's old Spyglass at?" inquired Clifford, as he brushed past me.

"He's discovered that some of his hands are drunk," I replied deliberately; "and more are fractious."

"Jiminy!" he exclaimed. "Here's a go! I wish I'd not left my mammy. Let's see the fun." He pushed on precipitately, and when I turned, Wade had remounted to the bridge.

"Well?" he shouted.

"There's nothing to say, sir," shouted back several voices.

"Very well," said he. "Atkins, Desprez, Santoni, Garsch, Millevois, Peters, Anten—" he completed the list. "Remain! All others resume duty, or go below."

There was a movement visible among the squad; a movement of disintegration, and then suddenly, and without a further word on any one's part, fierce streams of water from two hoses began to play upon them from the upper deck. There followed at once a stampede and confusion, and savage oaths reached us. But the hoses played on, and the victims bolted in various directions. The batteries sought them in hiding places; the deck was searched, until at last it was empty, untenanted, and dripping in the faint light. Wade descended from the bridge now, and not a muscle of his face moved. He went to his cabin without a remark. It was Clifford who made the comment:

"Gosh! How's that for high? The dook is on his hind legs."

"Idiotic thing to do," growled Marley in my ears. "It wasn't bad fun, and it'll sober them up. But an idiotic thing to do."

Davenant was beside us blinking through his glasses at the scene.

## CHAPTER VI.

M'LEOD.

Halliday was confined to his cabin again, for the wind had swollen to half a gale, and the sea was running heavily. He had stood out against his weakness in a gallant manner, but had been forced to capitulate. Red-eyed, pink-nosed, and pinched of face he had retired, and we did not see him for two days. But during those two days we were not idle. Indeed, things became very lively for us, owing, in the main, to Wade's high-handed action. He had the temper of an autocrat, and he had

the right, but I question if it was wise to take the step he did. And yet, when one thinks of what afterward happened at the island, it is impossible to say whether events would have been affected had he stayed his hand.

The trouble began, as usual, with Clifford, that cheerful, leering scoundrel, who seemed absolutely to delight in disorder and rows out of sheer wantonness. With this news of the crew in his ears, Wade summoned the store-keeper before him again. He did not beat about the bush with useless threats, but went straight to the point. He demanded of Clifford his accounts and books.

"Books?" Clifford stared. "I didn't know you had to keep books!"

"Think they kept themselves?" sneered Wade.

Clifford grinned. Nothing could perturb that shameless bosom.

"Well, if I'd known there was any of that tommyrot, I wouldn't have taken it on," he said. "Anyway, I've got the cash, and I'll hand over."

He reappeared presently with a piece of paper on which were some accounts.

"This isn't the slightest use to me," Wade remarked shortly, when he had inspected it. "This purports to give the amount of stores dispensed; but where is the account of the stores shipped?"

"How the deuce was I to know that was wanted?" asked Clifford, with apparent vexation; but I could see the glint in his eyes that spoke of vicious laughter. "I've got some of the invoices," he added, as if in mitigation of his negligence.

"Including those for wine and rum?" asked Wade, once more with his sneer.

"It's possible—I couldn't say," said Clifford easily. "I'll have a look, if you like."

"Pray do," said Wade politely, and we waited. "That man's very clever," he remarked, in an even voice. "It's a

drew my own inference—namely, that he did not want to be seen visiting me, and hence had waited until the dusk had deepened.

"Well, Carter," I said diplomatically, "sit down, I want to have a talk. Joyce all right?"

"Yes, sir—nicely laid in bed."

Carter was ill at ease and ponderous of manner. The machinery of his brain turned so rustily that he hardly recognized it was in motion.

"About this drinking, Carter?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know it won't do. I'm not going to say anything about Joyce, or what I've seen, but it's got to stop if we want to avoid trouble. I don't even ask where it comes from. All I want to have is an assurance that the men will go slow on it."

"I don't know, sir. Some of them's a bit hard to head off."

"True; but I suppose there's some one in authority over the supplies?"

I spoke as if it was quite a natural thing that they should have their private cellar, and my tone was rather that of one who begs a friend for assistance.

"Oh, Headon's no good," he said thoughtlessly, and then it dawned on him what he had said. I gave no sign of receiving this information with astonishment or satisfaction; but, ignoring the trouble in his eyes, continued in the same tone:

"Well, anyway, Carter, there ought to be some one able to put a stop to this excessive drinking. It's bound to lead to trouble."

"There ought, sir," he urged, looking relieved.

"Understand me," I pursued. "It's for the sake of the ship I say this. I'm not blaming the men for enjoying themselves within reason. I like a drop myself. But there are evidently some of them who can't help making hogs of themselves."

"That's true, sir," said Carter, "and

I could put a name to them, too; but I don't like splitting on pals."

"I wouldn't ask you to," I replied. "Of course we know that Headon distributes the rum; but we don't know where it is."

"Oh, you knew that, sir?" exclaimed Carter, staring.

"Why! do you suppose we're blind?" I asked. "I don't like Headon, and I don't trust him."

Carter glanced about cautiously before speaking. "Well, it isn't for me to say, sir, but I don't like his goings on. Of course, I wouldn't say anything to come between my shipmates and myself; but I don't like Headon, and that's flat."

"Ah, Carter," said I sadly, shaking my head and drawing a bow at a venture. "It's not so much Headon as those who are above him and ought to know better than he. I blame them."

I had to angle him, you see, but the operation repaid me. He leaned forward mysteriously.

"You're right, sir. I don't want to open my mouth about no one, but I wouldn't trust that there doctor, not for anything."

"Ah, you've observed, then?" I said, nodding. "You've a shrewd mind, Carter."

"Observed?" he said. "Why, I seen him."

"That day?" said I vaguely.

He nodded, and went on in a lower voice: "I was swabbin' the deck by the chart house, and it was pretty dark, and I seen him go into Mr. Halliday's cabin. 'Twas him took the key, sir, sure enough."

"Carter," said I, clapping him on the back, "this is important. You're a very important witness."

He looked uncomfortable. "I wouldn't do anything that was unfriendly to my mates," he said, in a crestfallen way.

"You needn't," I said. "I think I

can promise you won't be called upon to do anything. But we must maintain discipline aboard. You know that as well as I, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; of course, sir," he said, cheering up.

"And now, Carter," I went on, "as this is an exceptional occasion, I think I may ask you to join me in a glass."

"Thank ye, sir," he said, now quite at his ease.

I took the information forthwith to Wade, who heard me out, frowned, and rang a bell.

"Headon we'll deal with in due course," he said. "But McLeod is a more important matter. We'll settle that right away."

"I don't want to bring in Carter's name, if possible," I said. "I took advantage of him, and I feel rather mean about it."

"You're so thin-skinned, my son," said he. "But I think I can bluff it, all right, without him." And he broke off to give an order. "Ask Mr. Marley, Mr. Davenant, and Doctor McLeod if they will be good enough to join me here."

Marley arrived before the others, and saw by Wade's face that something was wrong.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"Court of justice," said Wade.

"McLeod," said I.

Marley whistled. "I thought the blighter would tumble into it sooner or later," he said.

There was a noise outside, and the door opened, Davenant slipping in softly, but with rather a flushed face. On his heels came McLeod—tall, wiry, and swaggering. At a glance I saw he had been with his friends.

"What's up?" he asked.

Wade eyed him steadily. "Last week," he said abruptly, "Mr. Halliday's cabin was entered, his bureau was broken into, and a key was ab-

stracted. The thief was seen and identified by witnesses who have only just come forward. He was Doctor McLeod."

Marley called out in surprise. "The devil!"

Davenant looked from one to the other; from the accuser to the accused. McLeod did not break out, as I had expected, but a sneer spread over his face.

"Is that what you've summoned me here to tell me?" he asked, in his brusque Scotch voice.

"I charge you, sir, in the presence of these gentlemen," said Wade sternly, "and give you warning of the proceedings which will follow. You have been guilty of theft."

"Oh," said McLeod, quietly enough, but the anger swelling within him was visible through all. "Is that it? It's verra 'conseederate of you, Captain Mark Wade, as they call ye—verra conseederate, indeed; and I take it friendly like to—"

"There is another matter, also," broke in Wade coldly. "You stole not only a key, but a chart and a document, both the private property of Mr. Halliday, who—"

"Liar!" The Scotchman's fury suddenly overflowing in passion, he lifted his fist and struck Wade over the forehead.

Davenant took hold of the savage, and Wade recovered himself. In that moment I admired his self-control, for his hands were trembling, and his face had whitened. But he remembered even then that he was on the bench, and there was a perceptible pause before any word was said. McLeod, restrained between Davenant and Marley, was unabashed, but he made no attempt to renew his outrage.

"This is a case for irons," said Wade quietly. "Mr. Herapath, will you kindly get a couple of men?"

McLeod strove to throw off the

hands that held him. Davenant remonstrated with him in the struggle that followed, and I caught the words:

"The man called me a thief. I'll let blood out of any man that calls me a thief."

I ended the struggle by putting my arms over his from behind, so that he could make no movement, and meanwhile Wade had rung. It was not a pleasant sight, but it had to be endured, and Wade watched the operation of ironing unperturbed. McLeod, having ceased to resist, had turned sullen, and malevolence kindled in his eye as he was taken away.

## CHAPTER VII.

### CONCERNING THE CHART.

"I don't know, gentlemen," remarked Wade carefully, "if this is going to do us any good. We've got the thief, but I don't quite see what we are going to do with him. It isn't as if we were able to hand him over to port authorities. We're not likely to trouble port authorities much at present, as far as I can make out. Anyways, the gentleman is better where he is for a time."

This was admirably self-restrained, but I think that blow on the head determined a good deal for Wade, and for the rest of us. Up to that point Wade had been a shipmaster beyond reproach, holding his position with exemplary manner. From this incident dates the development of his bravado which was characteristic of one side of his nature. The unusual conditions of this curious expedition had hitherto just failed to divert him from his course; now he fell. And the first sign of his changing demeanor was apparent the very next morning.

News had gone about the ship, and even our passengers were acquainted early with McLeod's disgrace. Something unintelligible in the nature of woman, perverse and irrational, but

sympathetic, stirred Miss Sylvester to a display of agitation, and even indignation. It was horrid; it was unjust; it was cruel. She knew there must be a mistake. And if McLeod had hit the captain, any one with spirit would do the same if he were accused of stealing.

This you might have looked upon as the amiable but embarrassing complaint of a child. It was to me she pleaded thus, distressfully and angrily, and a sense of her vivacious beauty moved me.

"It's the gravest nautical offense," I said. "To overlook it would be to dissolve the whole discipline upon which the safety of crew and passengers depends."

"It was Captain Wade's fault," she repeated vehemently; "and I'll tell him so. And I'll ask him to release Doctor McLeod from his shameful position."

And Wade making his appearance negligently at that moment, she fulfilled her promise by rushing upon him.

"Captain Wade, you must just release Doctor McLeod. It's abominable of you to have put him in irons. He was quite justified in striking you when you told him he was a thief. And he didn't hurt you much, anyway."

Wade's eyes lighted up with amusement. "Not much," he assented. "But it might have been awkward if he had caught me a little lower, say just there, Miss Sylvester"—and he indicated a spot above his ear. "I don't think a week to cool down will harm him."

"A week!" she shrieked, horror-struck.

Wade's eyes admired her. "Oh, my dear Miss Sylvester, he's a lucky man to have enlisted such an advocate. Say six days."

"Six days!" She looked despair at him.

"Five," he relented; and she shook her head decisively.

"Come, then, four," he pursued, smiling.

"I won't consent to four," said the girl, displaying now in her change of voice a recognition of her intervening influence.

"If you are going to be very kind," I heard Wade say, in his most wooing voice, "I'll make it three."

Again she shook her head. The affair had dropped for her straightway, out of the category of tragedy, and was becoming a mere nothing, owing to his treatment of it. She had expected a grim tyrant and an executioner's cell, and here was a pleasant cavalier ready to grant a lady's whim. With that her own portentous emotion vanished, and she returned his smile.

"It was very cruel of you," she said. "You oughtn't to have done it at all. Doctor McLeod——"

I passed out of hearing, and I never heard the end of that haggling, but it represented the new order in Wade. McLeod was not released that day; and even I was disposed to think he had been hardly treated. After all, we had no proof that he had rifled the bureau, and his violent outbreak seemed to indicate his good faith. Carter might have been mistaken. Anyway, we had not tried him, and, though it was for his assault he had been sentenced, he went to jail, so to speak, with the stain of a crime on his reputation which had not been demonstrated.

Wade was about with Miss Sylvester most of the day. He had a very facile gallantry, and took to it naturally. Women were to him objects of flirtation. His sentiments never soared higher than this. And with these ideas he kept himself and, as a rule, the ladies very well amused. As for Miss Sylvester, I thought she exchanged the company of the imprisoned man for the man who had imprisoned him with surprising indifference. To all accounts, and to judge by her laughter on deck, she had wholly forgotten the victim languishing in his cell—an odd contrast

with her emotion in the morning on learning of his fate.

The striking down of McLeod thus promptly had its effect on the boon companions. If I may say so, it sobered Clifford; and Byrne lost his smile. I dare say they had begun to wonder whose turn would come next. They "let up" on the bottle, as Marley phrased it, if they did not alter their general mode of life. They associated together, and were to be seen in conversation much; they did no work; and they lolled on deck in slovenly attire, or slept in their cabins in still easier garments. For the sun was now quite strong in heaven, and the weather was summerlike. Halliday, recovered sufficiently in the smoother water once more took the stage, full of notions which he had elaborated in his seclusion. But first he must learn our news and McLeod's downfall.

"Well, I shouldn't have thought it of him," was his comment. "But he's a cantankerous chap. Anyway, I've thought this out; and see here, I reckon those three are in it together. They've got my agreement and the chart, and I stand to lose a lot unless I can square it up. Oh, I'll get there, all right. I'm not feeling soft over it."

"It don't matter to you more than the sentiment of it," I told him. "You've lost your agreement, but Marley and Davenant and Digby have theirs; and they can be produced in evidence."

"Yes, I thought of that," he answered. "But I guess it ain't so easy. It's all right about those three, but where do the other three come in? They may claim a verbal agreement, defy me to produce mine; and they're three mouths to one. Not but what it's risky for them. But blamed if I can see," he went on, frowning, "what they want that map for! I've been puzzling on that all the while I've been laid out in that bunk there. I guess they think I knew all about it, and have a copy."

"Well, I don't know anything about it," I said. "But I'll go bail that they don't mean the square thing by you—unless, that is, it's mere drunken wantonness and folly. It's possible it's that. One might as well live in bedlam as with some of these folk. If I were you, Mr. Halliday, I would have chosen better."

"That's so," he said. "I'm not going to say if I hadn't to do it over again I wouldn't. But I can't shake 'em now; I've got to make the best of it. And, come to think of it, from my point of view I hadn't much of a chance. I had to hurry."

"Hurry?" said I. "Why, was there any other—"

"It's kind of romantic," said Halliday, crossing his legs as we sat in his comfortable cabin. He had hospitably placed before me a bottle of wine, but took nothing himself; nor did he smoke. He looked pale and languid, but was irrepressibly buoyant. "I don't know but what it's worth putting on record. It's a good newspaper story, anyway. I was doing a line for our company; letting the great British public know that the Union Mutual Insurance Company had come to Europe to stir up things and smooth the path to the grave of the very strongest."

His eyes twinkled, for he had his full share of humor along with his strange intensity. "I guess I've smoothed many paths, and made it easy for them to die. But this one I couldn't exactly see my way to smoothing. One day, when I was in Liverpool, I got track of a big policy 'way up your mountains—Fell Something they called it—and I lit out for it. Settled the contract, and came away pretty content, on a dripping, misty day, with the autumnal flavor hanging around so thick you could cut it. I went bang into the inn on the hillside, when I'd finished with the park, and had something to eat." He broke off. "Say, Herapath, do you care any-

thing for that beer of yours—bitter beer, you call it?"

"We all swear by English beer," I answered.

"That's so," he said, rather sadly and reminiscently. "Well, I'm blamed if I can see the fascination of it! I'd sooner chew gum. Anyway, I had some food and a glass of milk, and then it struck me that I might as well improve the shining hours on the business end of a pen; and so I set about a red-faced farmer at the table, who'd been to market from the look of him, and wasn't going to get home for a long time by the same look of him."

"I rained figures and facts on him, like it was raining outside; trotted up all the arguments; reminded him of his children, which, it seemed, he hadn't got; told him of his duty to his wife, who turned out to be dead; and just about snowed him under with the benefits and advantages and privileges of the Union Mutual. When I was done, or very nearly done, and had to come to a stop for rest and refreshment, he opened his mouth, which he had kept closed like a trap all along, and woke up.

"'Look 'ee, mister,' says he. 'There's nobbut myself depending on me, and I'm not thinking of dying yet. I'll live to drink old October, damme, another forty year. What you young folks ought to do is to save men from dying, lad, not offer to give 'em money when they're dead. It's encouraging dying, I call it,' he says. 'You come along and tell all you said here to a chap upstairs,' said he, 'and he'll insure, he will. I'll bet five pound he'll insure,' he cried.

"Well, upstairs I went into a room of the inn, which turned out to be a bedroom, and on the bed was a man, old and withered and parched, and looking out of lackluster eyes, and signed all over by the undertaker.

"'Jarge' calls out this farmer, 'Jarge, here's a young fellow to insure

'ee.' And off he goes into a fit of laughter.

"I was mighty sick, as you may guess, at the disappointment, but I wasn't going to let the old buffer get it in the neck for a tipsy man's wanton jest. So I took a seat by the bed, and just began to talk in an easy way about the weather and the beautiful scenery, and old Sir Harry up at the park. Never a word said he, but lay looking at me out of his poor, scarecrow face. The farmer had stumped downstairs.

"Now, there's a little proverb, Hera-path—comes in Scripture somewhere, and there's a lot in those biblical proverbs—that talks about casting your bread upon the waters. I had just done a kind, decent action, and I wasn't thinking of my reward. But I guess this boat's floated out of that same bedroom. Old man listens to me, and then puts out a claw.

"'Are you the Diggory's man?' said he.

"'I guess not,' said I.

"'Then you must be my nephew,' says he eagerly.

"Well, I saw how it was with him then, and how all my polite conversation had been thrown away; and just to play up to him, so to speak, I said yes, I was that nephew.

"He half rose on his elbow at that, and began searching under his pillow, and presently brings out in his shaking claw a piece of parchment.

"'That's for you,' he said. 'I kept that for you till ye come. 'Tis what I had from Sawtell of the brig '*Dromeda*'—or some such name. 'The treasure's marked,' says he, rising higher in his excitement, and pointing at the paper.

"'All right, uncle,' said I soothingly. 'It's safe with me. You can bet on your nephew.' And I nodded and patted his hand, and soothed him down, and cheered him up, till he sort of settled down comfortably, and seemed to sleep. And then I went out, but I believe the

old man died just then and there. Anyway, he was dead an hour later when they went to look.

"When I came down the farmer was gone, but I entered into talk with the landlord about the old man, and this was what made me study that paper pretty smartly presently. The old man, he said, came from those parts, but had followed the sea for fifty years, and had come home six months before and taken to his bed. He had money enough, but always talked mysteriously of more, and inquired for his brother, who was dead years back, and then for his brother's children. Well, it seems they were gone, too—only one was heard of; 'way in New Zealand or some place. And the old man wrote to him, but didn't get any answer. Anyway, it hadn't come up till then. The old man talked a lot about money, and of an island, but, says the innkeeper: 'Lord, sir, he's been like a child these three months. There warn't any sense in his poor head, poor Jarge.' Wasn't there? I studied that paper, and came to the conclusion that there was, and I lit out that night for civilization and a deal."

"The paper was the map?" I asked in astonishment.

"Yes, sir; the paper contained the chart and a story. It wasn't an old parchment of the treasure-story tales, with crosses and skulls and that truck, not by long chalks. It was a business-like document, setting forth how it had been drawn up on such a date, and was a plan of Santo Island, where the Caribbean pirates buried their treasure 'way back. And there was the signature of two or three people who had successively come into possession of the chart; old man Glasson last of all, with the dates. It was kept like a book, I tell you. And the first name was Rinaldo Corti."

"Is that all you've gone on?" I burst out in wonder at this amazing faith.

He turned on me the eyes of an enthusiast. "Mr. Herapath, we've all got to take risks, but I reckon this risk was good enough. I lit out at once for fear of that nephew, who might be turning up from New Zealand. I went down the wolds or the falls, or whatever you call them, in a white mist of rain; and I pounded along the track sometimes, I was that pleased with myself. Glasson, by the evidence of the innkeeper, had plenty of money, and there was his indorsement on the paper: 'December, 1861.' I know it by heart. 'Visited island and treasure.' And again this: 'March 5, 1882. Made island sunset, in *Emerald*; was ashore two hours. Treasure all right.' And there was a signature also: 'H. Sawtell.' It was just as the old man said it; and the ship was *Andromeda*. That looked all right, for Sawtell in 1847 'took box ingots treasure;' and there were other scribblings.

"Herapath," he said, his eyes shining, "what was good enough for Mr. Sawtell, of the *Andromeda*, in 1847, and for old man Glasson in 1861 and 1882, was good enough for Vincent Halliday. I know a good thing when I'm on it. I can smell it. It tells like Limburger on the surrounding atmosphere to my nose. And I tell you this is about bursting with goodness."

He ceased. "That's the story. Kind of romantic, ain't it?"

It was more than romantic; it was grotesque.

"It looks to me like a wild-goose chase," I said bluntly.

"You don't size up the proposition," said he earnestly. "It's a fact that the treasure had been tapped. It was there, all right. That's demonstrated by the paper and the old man."

"Why was it not all removed long ago?" I asked.

"Ah, there's a bit of a puzzle," he admitted. "Seems to me that it was not worked systematically; that it was used as a sort of bank on which to draw

checks. Come-and-cut-again sort of game. This document has been handed down one, two, or maybe more generations, and the owner was temporarily owner of that island and that store. It's not a place, I guess, where many ships call, and it might be awkward to put in there. Come to think of it, Herapath, any one of these dead men mightn't have cared to face an expedition like this of ours. There's always a risk. They went in for it in detail."

He merged in a reverie, and I observed him. The story had oddly stimulated me, but had convinced me, also, that we were on a madder cruise than ever. This "proposition" had no ethical side for Halliday, who was a "smart man." He had come into possession of his precious document by a mistake, even by false pretenses; but it troubled him nothing. This was business, and it was his business to get ahead of a possible claimant in the antipodean nephew, who might even now be in chase of us.

He shook off his thoughts. "Anyway, I'm coming out on top," he said.

With the influence of those seas on him he was alive and bright again. Every hour brought his fortune nearer, and he walked the deck with a buoyant tread, as of one who could hardly be contained by narrow confines of shipboard. His soul was aloft, as upon a masthead, in search of his treasure.

The second day saw the release of McLeod, which I could not but attribute to Miss Sylvester. Some bargain had been struck between herself and Wade. The prisoner, his own master, was directed to the captain's cabin, and entered it, sour, sullen, but unresisting.

"Now, Doctor McLeod," said Wade, at whose request I was there, "I want some words with you. As captain of this ship and bound to maintain discipline, I have put you in irons. That's my official appearance in the matter. Well, I reckon that's over. The irons

were official." But, as a man, I've got something more to say. You struck me here, and now I'm going to knock you down."

McLeod lifted his head and stared. He had had no strong liquor for nearly two days, and was all the better for it. His face relaxed.

"Go ahead," he said.

Wade launched forth, but met the Scotchman's bony arm in counter. His left followed like a stone, and was dodged with the head. McLeod's returns went short, and then Wade's short, thick arm slipped past the defenses, and he landed on the doctor's skull. Crack went his head against the cabin.

"Quits!" panted Wade, dropping his hands.

A grin dawned on McLeod's face. "We'll call it that," he assented, and marched out of the cabin without more words.

"I don't know that he's so dangerous, after all, Ned," said Wade.

He was, however, viciously cantankerous, for, having thus buried his feud with Wade, he must needs reopen one with me. Down in the saloon we ran upon each other just after the scene described, and he came up.

"It's about time we squared up, Mr. Herapath," said he, with a provocative air.

"I've no accounts open," I remarked tersely.

"Oh!" His voice took on a higher note and accent. "Then I'll take the liberty to remind ye." He lifted his hand, but I put out mine to stop him.

"Don't be a fool," I urged. "There's been more than enough of this already."

"I'll jog your memory," he said, paying no heed, but doubling his fist.

"Well, I don't want to, but if you will have it——" I drove as I spoke. He was not far away, and I got him on the

tip of the chin. He went down like a sack of wheat, and sat for some moments on the floor, nodding dazedly. Then he got up, and blinked at me, holding on to the table.

"Which hand was that?" he gasped.

"Left," I answered.

"Then I'm not taking any more," he replied; "and I've got a dentist's job on."

He went away in the direction of his surgery, and I saw him no more till the evening. But of that I shall have to tell later. To say the truth, I had no time to think of him, being fully occupied in the engine room.

Davenant late in the afternoon ordered me to slow down, and we were going only some eight knots. Wade was asleep in his cabin, for the day was very hot and the breeze had sunk. The cakls of the *Duncannon* ran liquid, and the stokehole was like hell. Davenant never left the bridge till his watch was over, at eight bells. But before that something happened. Byrne and Clifford, strangely quiet, were on deck, watching the sea, and as the sun went down the latter pulled a flask from his pocket, took a swig at it, and passed it to his companion.

The dusk fell quickly, gathering the steamer in its folds; and then from the lookout arose the cry:

"Land, ho!"

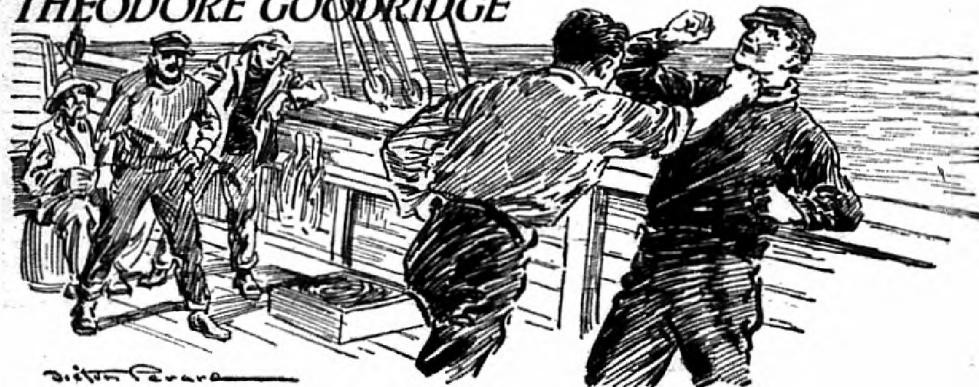
Giving instructions to Collins, I went on deck and strained my eyes through the evening. On our starboard side a long, even shadow was visible against the night. Wade emerged from his cabin to take command. Halliday was visible, a restless shadow among shadows—excited, nervous, confident. And a voice somewhere out of the darkness reached my ears:

"Now the fun begins, dear brethren."

It was Clifford's.

# The FIGHTING TRADER

By  
THEODORE GOODRIDGE



The skipper in this story was a scrapper. He had to fight from his earliest childhood for everything he got. At times he fought hard, and did not get very much, but, as Tim Kelly said, "It's all in the making of a man."

THE trading schooner *Lucky Penny*, owned by West & Bowrigg, of St. John's, lay at anchor in the far northern harbor of Empty Pot Cove. The season of the year was the early winter—a desolate time along the coast. The time of day was about four o'clock of the afternoon. Skiffs and bullies lay crowded around the black sides of the *Lucky Penny*. Mr. Wilkins was doing a brisk business.

"Me good fellers," said Wilkins, "you can't fool me. 'Ow's that, Kelly? Boots ain't the best quality, you s'y? I tell you, me good fellers, I'd not be above wearin' them boots meself."

Tim Kelly smiled quietly behind his whiskers. He had seen many traders come and go. Some talked grandly, like this Mr. Wilkins, and others talked small, but the goods they brought to trade for fish were what mattered, after all. Tim would stand for any sort of trader, but he wouldn't stand a minute for poor boots, poor tobacco, watery molasses, or rotten oilskins.

"An' yer baccy bes fair stinkin'," said Peter Strowed.

Wilkins leaned over the deal counter, and twirled his yellow mustache. His blue eyes flashed.

"I used to be able to do a bit with me fists when I was a lad in London—in a gentlemanly w'y," he said. "I was clever with me hands. But let that pass. I wouldn't 'it one of you fellers—no, not for a five-pound note. Now, get along with the busipess, men. I can't afford to spend me whole life in Empty Pot Cove."

There were eight fishermen in the storeroom of the schooner. They gazed at Wilkins as at some unfamiliar kind of fish, and shuffled their feet on the deck. The hold was lit by a lantern swinging above the little counter. So scanty was the depth between upper and lower decks that the trader and several fishermen were unable to stand upright. The place reeked of bilge, salt fish, sweating oilskins, molasses, woolens, boots, and a dozen other articles of trade

and navigation. To add to this, several of the fishermen were smoking. The heavy, odoriferous silence was broken by Tim Kelly.

"B'y's," said he, "traders bes as like to me as swiles on-th' ice. Devil a rip does I give fer the trader, but I wants value fer my fish. Aye, lads, that's how I figgers it. Ye kin figger to please yourselves, 'but Tim Kelly bain't intendin' to paddle no stinkin' baccy an' rotten boots ashore in his skiff."

The others grunted and nodded, shuffled their feet harder than ever, and puffed harder on their rank pipes. Wilkins leaned far over the low counter.

"What the 'ell do you mean by that?" he asked. "Tell me stright, now. What the 'ell do you mean by it?"

"I *means*," replied Tim, "that here bes yer boots, yer baccy, an' yer blankets, yer sugar, yer hard bread, an' yer tay, an' there bes t'ree skiffloads o' my fish on the hatch. I means that ye kin keep yer rotten, stinkin' trade, an' I kin paddle my fish back to shore."

"Aye, Tim, right ye be," said Peter Strowed.

"Ye tells the *trut'*," said another.

"I bes wid ye, b'y," said a third.

"T'ere be more traders into the harbor afore the shore ice makes," said a fourth.

Wilkins' face went white, then red again.

"No, you don't!" he cried. "The trade is made, I tell you. Every fish aboard the schooner, an' every bloody fish in the boats alongside, is mine now. Tyke your trade, an' git ashore quick. I'll tell the firm what a gang of mutinous, grumblin' rascals you are. Tyke your trade, an' put your fish aboard quick, or the firm will 'ave the law on you."

A rumbling growl went up from the fishermen, but their leader, Tim Kelly, laughed.

"B'y, ye've got into the wrong skiff this time," said he. "We men o' Empty

Pot bain't debted or contracted to nobody. We bes independent folk, wid-out a dollar on the wrong side o' any great merchant's ledger. Sure, b'y, I bes tellin' ye the *trut'*. There bes forty mile o' this coast where the folks don't give a flap o' a swile's tail fer West & Bowrige, or any other merchant o' St. John's or Harbor Grace. We sells our fish, an' we takes our trade where an' when we chooses."

This was a facer for Mr. Henry Wilkins. He swore many oaths peculiar to the east of London, but this afforded him no comfort. He had entertained great hopes of this trip—hopes of promotion in the service of West & Bowrige, but now he saw his chances of success turning inexorably to certain failure. Without trade there could be no chance of success; and, unless these fishermen changed their minds, there could be no trade. He must fill his schooner with fish in exchange for the trade stuff now aboard, or count his trip an utter failure. The season was late, and all the other trading territory on the coast was occupied. To return to St. John's with an empty hold and a full storeroom would mean the end of all his dreams of commercial advancement. More than that, it would mean the loss of his position with West & Bowrige. It would mean hunger again; abject poverty again; rooflessness and the pinch of cold again. He had known all these things, poor devil, in "dear old London," and now the memory of them laid a hand on his heart like the touch of death.

"My God!" he said. "Back to the gutter again!"

The fishermen had been watching him keenly and in silence during his outburst of swearing and after it. At his last bitter cry, they exchanged glances.

"B'y, ye don't seem to like it," remarked Tim Kelly.

The trader groaned, tried to glare, then turned his twitching face swiftly

away from them. Kelly whispered to his followers. Several of the big fellows chuckled.

"Mister Wilkins," said Kelly, "us poor fishermen o' Empty Pot Cove bes willin' to give ye one chance to make yer trade. Aye, one fair, sportin' chance. Will ye take it, or won't ye?"

Wilkins turned again quick as a fish. His long arms shot out, and his lean fingers clutched the front of Tim's jacket.

"Done!" he cried. "I tyke it. Now, give it a nyme."

"Ye said ye was clever wid yer fists," returned Kelly. "Good! I bes a bit o' a fighter myself, b'y, though I bain't what ye'd call scientifical. Now, this bes yer chance o' trade an' freight; if ye puts the comether onto me, yer fists agin' mine all fair, square, an' above deck, then we takes the rotten trade West & Bowrige loaded ye wid, an' ye takes our good, sweet fish."

"Done!" said Wilkins, expanding his somewhat narrow chest. "Come up on deck."

The trader led the way up the ladder to the gray and chilly air above. Willing hands cleared a space on the deck. Two seconds and a referee were chosen, and the elemental rules of civilized boxing were explained.

"I knows all about it," said Tim Kelly. "I has a book about it what a missioner once left wid me. Ye bain't allowed to use yer fut, an' ye bain't allowed to bat t'other lad when he bes down."

"Sure, then, it bes a quare kind o' fightin' entirely," said Corney O'Brian.

"I spelled it out o' the book—an' I fights by the book," returned Kelly. "Fists bes the weapons in this game—hey, Mister Wilkins?"

"Right. Me and you fight like sportsmen," said the trader.

They removed their heavy coats, and Wilkins took off his vest. He was thin and somewhat chicken-breasted, but he

was tall and long in the arms. Kelly was almost as tall, and weighed fully a third as much again. The trader was twenty-six years old, and the fisherman was past forty. The one was pale, and the other tanned and ruddy. Both seemed to be confident and undismayed, but to the spectators it looked a sure thing that the trader would leave Empty Pot Cove without a cargo.

The referee studied his watch importantly. "Now, git t'rough wid yer fancy business an' take to the ice," he said, backing away against the port rail.

Wilkins and Kelly shook hands, the Londoner with a fixed smile, and the Newfoundland with a cheerful grin. Then Wilkins skipped back a step or two, and Kelly, swinging a fist like a ham, rushed at him. The trader sidestepped, and turned quick as a cat in the air. Some color returned to his drawn cheeks, for he saw that his antagonist had not gone very far with the book. Kelly jumped around after him, fanning the chill air with both arms. The trader avoided him by an inch.

"Stand still, till I fetches ye one," cried Kelly.

"Lay alongside him, b'y," cried Tim's supporter. "If ye hits him, ye knocks him all abroad."

Around they went again, Tim on the jump and puffing like a man batting seals on the ice, and Wilkins prancing on his toes like an old-style dancing master. Tim swung his arms in circles, and Wilkins held one of his straight in front, like a jib boom, and the other across his chest.

"The devil fly away wid sich fightin'," exclaimed Corney O'Brian. "They bes a-playin' wid each other. Show us some blood, b'y. What bes ye about, anyhow? Git yer knuckles into it."

"Sure—if I could hit him one paste—I'd show ye some—blood," grunted Kelly.

"I'll show you some," said Wilkins, in a harsh whisper.

It happened quicker than it can be said, quicker than eye could follow, for Wilkins had told the truth when he informed them that he was clever with his hands. Blood appeared under Kelly's nose, quick and bright as magic. It ran down into his mustache. He snorted in astonishment, and the deck was spattered with a few tiny drops of red. On the knuckles of Wilkins' left hand was a smear of red.

"B'y, I didn't so much as feel it," cried Kelly, plunging ahead.

A dangerous light glinted in the Londoner's blue eyes. His mouth took on an ugly slant. In and out and here and there twinkled his feet, and in and out went his hands. Around and around Kelly he skipped. And suddenly, quick as a sledge dog snatches his food, he darted close in and jumped away again—and down went the big fisherman and struck the deck with the back of his head.

Tim Kelly opened his eyes.

"Give Mister Wilkins yer fish, b'ys, an' take his trade," he said.

Wilkins bathed the bump on the back of the fisherman's head, and plastered the slight cut on his chin. Then, charging his sailing master and his assistant to attend to the business, he rowed Tim Kelly ashore. Twilight was deepening swiftly to dark by now. The schooner's lights twinkled in the black water, and a dozen little lights shone from the windows of the humble cabins ashore. Wilkins and Kelly sat in the stern of the skiff, and a lad named Wiley pulled on the oars. Tim sagged against the trader.

"A devil of a crack that ye give me," he mumbled, "an' I could swear ye wasn't in arm's reach o' me, b'y. Aye, ye bes a slick lad wid yer fists, an' no mistake; an' we all pays fer it by takin' yer rotten trade an' givin' ye good, sweet fish fer it."

"I am sorry that the goods on the

schooner aren't as choice quality as what they should be—not as I hadmit it, mind you, but it hain't no fault of mine," replied the trader. "The firm put the goods aboard. If I was tradin' on me own, the goods would be better quality."

"I believes ye," said Tim.

A puff of wind dropped down into the cove from the nor'west, over the black edge of the hill.

"Weather brewin'," said the lad at the oars.

"Like as not ye bes right, but I got that inside my poor head I can't smell the wind for it," replied Kelly.

"You'll be right as wheat in the mornin', Tim," said the trader. "My fist didn't 'urt you—it was the deck. But I 'ad to do it, don't you know, or you'd 'ave knocked the stuffin' out of me."

The trader supported the fisherman up the narrow path which led from the land wash to the rocky ledges above. Kelly was still foggy in the head and wabbly in the legs. Kelly's house proved to be the largest and snuggest in Empty Pot. It had a new roof and a pigpen on one end of it. Its lamplit, seaward window gleamed brighter than any other window in the harbor. Bertha Kelly opened the door. She was nineteen years of age, raven-haired, gray of eye, red of lip, and white of skin.

"Holy saints preserve us! but what's the trouble wid ye, father?" she exclaimed, leaning forward from the narrow doorway, and staring out at the two men. The warm light behind her threw a golden background for her slender, shapely figure.

"It bes nought, girl," answered Tim. "Sure, I run my chin agin' this gentleman an' knocked meself down on the deck o' the fore-an'-after layin' out yonder. This bes Mister Wilkins, a trader from St. John's. Maybe ye've got a bite o' supper handy for us, girl."

Bertha drew back, and glanced down at her scanty skirt and roughshod feet.

Tim reeled into the kitchen, and sat down heavily in the first chair he came to. Wilkins followed with an air of caution, glancing sidewise at the girl. She was a beauty, and no mistake.

"Good evenin', miss," he said, humbled by her wonderful eyes.

"Good evenin', sir," she returned. And then, over her shoulder: "Mother, here bes the trader himself come to supper," she said.

"Aye, an' a smart lad," mumbled Tim. "Give him yer hand, old woman. Mister Wilkins bes his name."

The trader shook hands with Mrs. Kelly, and then said that duty called him back to the schooner. Just then another puff of wind came over the edge of the hill and roared around the house like a tide of water. The walls creaked, the new roof hummed, and the fire in the little stove leaped up like a thing alive and eager to be gone from its cage of iron.

"Hark to that!" said Mrs. Kelly, raising a red hand. "There bes a spell o' dirty weather brewin' this very minute. Saints preserve all poor sailormen abroad on the seas this night!"

Tim staggered to his feet, and stood beside the window.

"Mister Wilkins," he said, "ye'll be wantin' yer extry anchor out this night, even in Empty Pot Cove. An' if I was you, lad, I'd git me trade ashore an' leave me fish ashore, knowin' this wind as I does an' knowin' that old craft, the *Lucky Penny*. Aye, lad, I bes tellin' ye the trut'. That fore-an'-after bes forty year old if a day, an' her gear bes as rotten as her hull, and her hull bes no better nor the trade stuff her owners puts aboard her."

Wilkins sprang up from the table. "And they told me she was sound and well found," he cried. "That's what they said to me—sound and well found, Wilkins, and the best schooner in the out-'arbor trade. An' they told me the

stuff aboard 'er was all first-class stuff."

The wind roared into the cove again, more swiftly and heavily than before, again the flame in the stove leaped like a mad thing, and again the walls creaked and the roof sang. The door flew open, and Corney O'Brian stumbled into the room. The flame of the lamp on the table leaped up from the black wick and vanished.

"Shut the door, condemn ye!" yelled Mrs. Kelly.

Wilkins shut the door against the flowing pressure of the storm, and Tim Kelly relit the lamp.

"The fore-an'-after have blowed across the harbor onto the Cod Head," said O'Brian, blinking in the lamplight. "Her cable busted like a troutin' line, an' the hull bes that rotten she'll be all abroad inside twenty minutes."

The wind lulled for a moment, and in that moment Wilkins opened the door and issued into the sobbing blackness. Corney followed, banging the door at his heels, and again the wind swooped into the harbor, filling it from rim to rocky rim and flowing over to thrash the black waters of the outer bay.

When dawn broke along the east, it showed all that remained of the trading schooner to be a lump of sodden hull and a mass of wreckage. But men had worked all night on the black rocks of the Cod Head, where the spume froze where it struck, and most of the stores and all the fish had been saved. The trader had done all that he could in this work, but he had been of very little use, being about as familiar with wave-swept rocks on a lee shore on a black night as he was with the aitches of his mother tongue. Other toilers had snatched him from death three times, but his hardihood and determination had set a good example. The gale blew out before dawn, and with the first break of light a bitter cold settled down upon the harbor and all along that coast for miles.

The trader, more dead than alive, crawled up to Tim Kelly's cabin, and lay down by the little stove. His clothing was stiff with salt-water ice, but he did not care. He had lost the schooner; he had lost his job; hope was dead in him. He lay down on the naked floor, close to the whistling draft of the stove, and sank into senseless slumber, as a drowning man sinks into deep water. But he did not sleep long. He was roughly awakened by being pulled and rolled about the floor. He opened his eyes, and beheld Tim Kelly at work upon him. Kelly yanked off the frozen boots, rolled the trader over and dragged off the frozen garments, grunting and swearing all the while.

"Where bes yer wits gone to?" he grumbled. "Ye'd have woke up a corp, if Bertha didn't hear ye come in an' lay down. Smart ye may be wid yer hands, but a fool ye bes wid yer head. Swally this hot rum. Over ye goes ag'in, now, till I gets this warm blanket under ye. Now, lay quiet, an' praise the saints we bain't sich fools as ye be yerself."

The trader sank again into sleep like black water.

Wilkins, his assistant, and the skipper of the late *Lucky Penny* sailed away from Empty Pot Cove in a craft called a "bully," with their fish under tarpaulins, leaving the trade stuff of questionable quality behind them, according to agreement.

All winter the people of Empty Pot Cove grumbled at their tobacco and boots, but Wilkins was remembered and spoken of with wonder and respect. The story of the manner in which he had laid Tim Kelly flat on the deck went up and down that ice-bound coast. Tim himself told it more often, and more graphically, than any one else. Spring came at last. The shore ice broke away from the land wash, and the Greenland ice, with its freight of seals, ground its

slow way southward along the coast. No sooner was the ice gone—and the outer bay still dotted with glistening pans of it—than a neat little fore-and-after sailed into the cove and let her anchor go with a splash. The skiffs crowded out to her, full of excited men eager to hear of the outside world, to learn the stranger's business, and to smoke of the stranger's tobacco.

Tim Kelly was in the leading boat. Tim looked to be in the pink of condition, in spite of the weary hours he had spent during the winter in spelling over the contents of the book which the missionary had left with him long ago. Tim sprang from the bow of his skiff to the rail of the schooner, and swung himself to the deck, and Mr. Wilkins grabbed him by the shoulders and clasped his hand.

"Praise the saints!" cried Tim. "It bes yerself, bes it?"

The schooner *Sure Thing* rang with song and laughter all morning, for Wilkins had good tobacco, good tea, and some exceptionally fine rum aboard, and he was as free-handed with it as any Newfoundland could have been. That is saying a good deal for his free-handedness. Later Kelly and the trader talked together. Wilkins explained that he was working for himself now, wanted the trade of that coast, and intended to settle in Empty Pot Cove.

No, West & Bowrigg had not fired him, but he had learned that they had hoped and expected him to lose the old schooner, which was heavily insured. He had gone to another firm in St. John's, told them all that he had learned of this coast and its trade, and asked for credit to enable him to start business as an independent trader. He had arrived at an agreement with this firm. They were to supply him with all his goods and provisions, and he was to let them have all his fish at market prices. So he had chartered the *Sure Thing*,

freighted her with provisions, twine, nets, and traps, and headed north.

"I took the chance," he said, gazing anxiously at Kelly. "If I 'ave the good will and trade of this coast, I'm a made man—and if I 'aven't, I'm a goner. What do you say to that?"

He spoke less like an East End Londoner than he had the year before.

"I likes yer pluck, b'y," returned Tim, "an' this harbor trade's wid ye an' wid nobody else—so long's yer goods be honest an' sweet. An' if Squid Tickle an' Pirate Arm don't give ye their fish, we'll larn the reason why. More nor that I can't promise ye."

"That's plenty," said Wilkins, and they shook hands on it.

The trader built a store and a stage on the south side of the cove, canvassed the small harbors up and down the coast, took a hand in the fishing, and entered generally into the life of the place. More than this, his activities seemed to put new life into Empty Pot Cove. Nature and the rough but kindly people, the outdoor work, and sense of independence and responsibility brought his manliness and other good qualities to the surface, so that they shone in his face. And his face was tanned now and his hands were broad and blistered. The folk of the cove accepted him as one of themselves before the summer was gone, and gave him the time-honored title of "Skipper."

One evening in August, when the trader and Tim Kelly were smoking their pipes in front of the new store, Tim said: "Skipper, I bes t'inkin' as how I knows all the tricks o' that book now."

"What book?" asked Wilkins.

"The little book what tells all about boxin' wid yer fists. Sure, skipper, I bes master o' all the tricks now, from cover to cover, an' has tried every one o' them on a tater sack stuffed wid moss a-hangin' from the pig-house roof."

Wilkins laughed. "You are a queer chap, Tim, botherin' your head with such foolishness as that," he said. "What's the good of it—to grown men?"

"I likes it, skipper—an' I wants to have one more try at ye."

"Not for mine," returned Wilkins. "I stood up to you when I 'ad—but I don't 'ave to now. Fight you, Mister Kelly? Not me. I want you for a father-in-law, I do. Thére! I want Bertha."

A smile lit the fisherman's face for an instant, then vanished like a flash. "I bain't talkin' about the girl," he said. "Will ye have a try at the fists wid me?"

"I don't fight with me friends."

"The devil ye don't! Ye wasn't so particular the time ye hit me on the chin an' laid me onto the deck."

"We weren't friends then—and that was business. But now we are friends, Tim, and can do business without fightin' like dogs—and Bertha has promised to marry me."

"The devil she has! Well, she bain't a-goin' to."

"Who'll stop her? And what do you 'old against me?"

"I'll try to—an' if I bain't man enough, an' she marries ye agin' my word fer it, then ye an' yer trade will get out o' this harbor an' off this coast."

"Do you mean that? I thought you was a sportsman."

Tim changed color at that, looked puzzled, and then pained. "So I be," he said. "Condemn ye! So I be. I'll fight ye; an', if ye puts the comether onto me ag'in, like ye did afore, the girl bes yourn along wid all the trade up an' down the coast for as far as the name o' Tim Kelly bes known."

"And if I won't?"

"Then ye can go widout."

The trader sprang to his feet. "I'll do it," he cried, with an oath. "I'll not give up the girl for all the cod catchers

between 'ere and 'ell—and I'll not run away from the trade. You 'ave treated me dirty, Tim Kelly, after playin' you was my friend; and I'll knock your bloody nose off your face for it, if it takes me from now to next summer."

"Ye bain't takin' it the way I figgered on," said Kelly.

"'Ow did you expect me to take it, you fool?" snarled the trader.

"There bain't nought to git mad about, as I can see," said Tim uneasily.

At the first lift of dawn, Kelly, Wilkins, and the man who had acted once before as referee ascended a twisting path to the brown barrén behind and above the harbor. Wilkins looked sulky, and Kelly somewhat distressed.

"I am fair sick of 'aving to fight for everything I want," said the trader. "I've been at it ever since I was born."

"Sure, skipper, it bes makin' a man o' ye," returned Tim.

The sun came up, and the clean, new day washed in from the sea and flooded over the brown barrens like a crystal tide. The trader and the fisherman, at a nod from the referee, got to their feet, and faced each other. They put up their hands, and Kelly sprang in, delivered a terrific blow, which almost paralyzed the other's guard, side-stepped nimbly as a cat, and swung again.

It was a grim and whirlwind fight. The end of the first round left both men on their knees. The second round showed Kelly master of the situation, though cut and puffed about the face, for he had learned enough from the

sporting missionary's book to enable him to plant his herculean blows now and again, and it showed the trader to be a man of bulldog courage and astonishing endurance.

They faced again, Wilkins pathetically unsteady on his feet.

"Enough, b'y," said Kelly, wiping blood from his lips. "I has larnt the tricks. That bes all I was a-wantin' to know. Ye've had enough, skipper—an' I bain't wantin' much more myself."

"I 'aven't—lost—yet," replied the other, in dazed but vicious tones. "Not beat yet. Come on—damn you!"

Kelly hesitated—and received a glancing but sharply swung blow on his cheek that sent him spinning. But the trader was too utterly hipped and groggy to follow up this advantage. His feet were like lead; his knees shook under him; blood filled his eyes. Half a minute later he lay on the moss, motionless, deaf to the voice of the referee.

As they carried Wilkins down the path to the harbor, he twisted weakly in their arms, groaned and spoke. He could not open his eyes.

"I'll be ready—again—for you—tomorrow," he mumbled.

"Saints alive, skipper!" cried Tim huskily, "don't ye see it yet? All I was wantin' was the fight, to larn my own skill an' prove the book. An' I got it, the devil knows. Take the girl, skipper, an' take the trade—an' ye'll never have to fight Tim Kelly, nor any man i' this harbor, ever ag'in fer anything ye wants."



#### A DOUBLE-DECKED LAKE

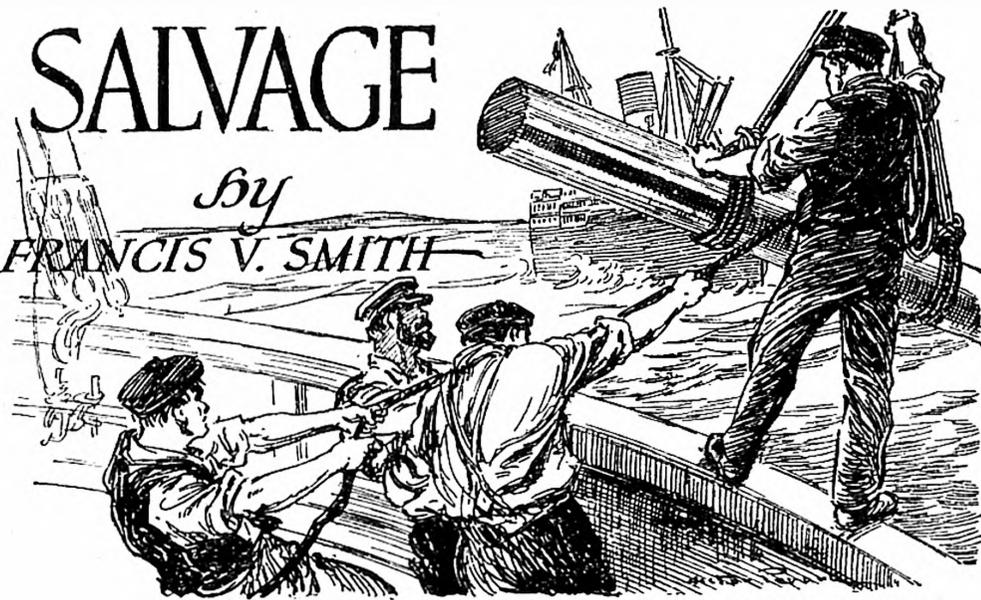
A CURIOUS lake exists in the island of Kildine, in the North Sea. It is separated from the ocean by a narrow strip of land, and contains salt water under the surface, in which sponges, codfish, and other marine animals flourish.

The surface of the water, however, is perfectly fresh, and supports daphnias and other fresh-water creatures.

# SALVAGE

By

FRANCIS V. SMITH



If you have ever been at sea in a fog, you can appreciate, to a certain extent, the feelings of Jardon and Sharpe when they heard whistles all around them from the bridge of the *Amphion*, and could not use their eyes.

WHAT sort of a relief do you call this?" demanded the second mate bitterly, as Jordan came on the bridge buttoning his oilskins. "Am I to stop here half the night while you finish your beauty sleep?"

"Oh, dry up!" said the first mate. "You owe me half an hour from yesterday, anyway. What's it like?"

"Rotten!" said Sharpe. "It's a fair perisher of a night, an' if it ain't goin' to get worse, call me a soldier. She's steerin' like a mud barge, an' I'm dead sick of her. Take her over, Jordan, for the love of Mike—my mustache is froze to my oilskin, an' I ain't felt my feet for an hour. Where's our swine of a skipper?"

"In his bunk," said Jordan. "He's put the best part of a bottle inside him since I turned in at eight bells, an' now he's sleepin' like a hog. If I wasn't an even-tempered man, Sharpe, I could say things about the skipper that'd surprise you."

The *Amphion* was eight days out from Liverpool, and had made poor

progress in the teeth of a smothering southwester, worse, even, than the general run of western ocean gales.

Misfortune had dogged her from the start, for she had scarcely dropped the Tuskar astern when a green sea came in over the bows and mixed the third mate up with a cargo derrick. The mate was a tough customer, but the derrick proved the tougher of the two, and they had sent him ashore at Queenstown for repairs, and put to sea, after hunting vainly for a substitute.

Now the *Amphion* was five thousand tons dead-weight, and if her owners had not believed as they did in scientific management, she would have carried four mates, so it will be understood that Sharpe and Jordan had been grossly overworked ever since they had left soundings. That nothing might be lacking in the tale of their misfortunes, Brooks, their skipper, had attempted to solace himself in his own alcoholic way for the loss of the third mate, and had now been entirely incapable for four days.

Jordan had served her owners faithfully for ten years, hoping always for a command, and hoping vainly, for the firm had a lucrative habit of hiring discredited skippers at rock-bottom prices, and of such the supply seemed inexhaustible. But Jordan was a man who prided himself on his philosophy, and he worked through the arduous days without despair, though Mrs. Jordan in the tiny house at Liverpool was sometimes querulous as to the future.

At eight o'clock the gale was blowing harder than ever, and the wind came out of the ragged sky with a keen nip in it that promised more to come.

The *Amphion* pitched heavily, and at every plunge of her streaming bows the racing engines shook her from stem to stern. Below, in the bowels of her, the sweating oilers shrank from the spinning gear, while Ellison, the third engineer, hung to the throttle, easing the engines every time they raced, and wondered how long she would stand the racket.

And then, just as the ship pitched nose under to a mountainous sea, she lurched to leeward and his foot slipped in a pool of oil.

"Listen to that!" cried Sharpe, on the bridge, and Jordan started as the ship shook to the thunder of the unchecked engines. He guessed what was coming; her stern went down, and the engines slowed with a grunting cough as the whirling screw bit deep; there was a crack like a pistol shot, a mad, thunderous clangor from below, and then silence that was worse than any noise.

"She's done it!" gasped Jordan.

McDougall—the chief engineer—appeared at the engine-room hatch wrapping an oily rag round a scalded wrist. He hoisted himself up to the bridge and delivered sentence.

"We're dune," he said. "Ellison's foot slipped an' he let go the throttle juist as she needed it most. The shaft's parted in the first section aft o' the

thrust. 'Twas an old flaw—ye'll mind I put it in ma indent at oor last over-haul, but thaе wadna listen. An' whaur's the skipper?"

"Drunk in his berth, the swine!" said Sharpe savagely. "Let's come an' rout him out."

He made for the skipper's berth, wrath burning in his eye, but at the door he trod back heavily on Jordan's toes. Captain Curwen Hardy Brooks was lying on the floor, his head in contact with the iron-bound corner of a chest, and it needed no doctor to tell them that he would not move again.

They went back on deck in silence. Jordan was pale and his face was set, for his chance had come at last, and the *Amphion*, of all ships, was his first command.

They rigged a sea anchor—no light task for a ship of such size in such a sea—and for two days the *Amphion* bucked and plunged at the end of a hawser while the whole engine-room staff worked night and day below, patching the broken shaft.

Twice in that time they were spoken by ships, and the ill-fed crew turned longing eyes toward their would-be rescuers and the prospect of a tow, but Jordan met their entreaties with a face of granite, and twice he signaled a refusal and the ship steamed away.

In the evening of the second day McDougall reported all safe, and they raised steam with high hopes. The rough repair held nobly when the engines turned ahead again, and Jordan rang her up to half speed with a sigh of relief.

"I believe she's goin' to stand up to it," he said hopefully.

"I'll believe it when we sight the Tuskar again," replied Sharpe. "That length of shaft is as rotten as punk, Mac says. We ain't goin' to get out o' this so easy—don't you think it?"

And he was right, for next minute the *Amphion* repeated her favorite trick,

butting twistways into a heavy sea, and heaving her screw out of the water. Crack went her shaft in the same place, and she fell off into the trough of the sea, and rolled most disgustingly. Then, since it had done its worst, the gale blew itself out, and night came down on a calming sea, with the *Amphion* a helpless log, halfway between Cape Clear and the Banks of Newfoundland.

"Any chance of patchin' her up again?" said Jordan to the worried McDougall.

"We'd need a new length o' shaftin'," said the engineer. "An' that, thanks to the economies o' Leiter, Leiter & Moss, Leemited, we dinna carry. Ye must e'en stop here an' 'whustle for a tow."

Since she is the sport of all the winds that blow, a steamer with a broken shaft is rather more helpless than a motor car without wheels. Jordan paced the bridge restlessly, gray of face and heavy-hearted that his one chance should be thus snatched from him.

A skipper's billet would have meant prosperity for Mrs. Jordan and a future for the two small Jordans and the new little Jordan who was expected almost hourly when he sailed. And now all was gone beyond hope, for he knew that his owners, smarting under the sting of a heavy bill for towage, would certainly dismiss him when he landed, though theirs, and theirs only, was the blame for this accident.

"A light on the lee bow!" sang the lookout, and Jordan fired a signal rocket that was answered from the west.

"She'll be up in two hours," said Sharpe, watching the light.

"There goes my chance of a command," sighed Jordan. "We'll all get the sack, like as not, for darin' to be towed in."

"Much I care," replied Sharpe. "It's rough luck for you, though."

"Light on the starboard quarter, sir!" came from the lookout.

"Crikey, here's another!" cried

Sharpe. "There'll be competition for the privilege of towin' us home."

They watched the brightening lights for more than an hour while the ship rolled with sullen persistency. Then suddenly the lights dimmed, quivered, and vanished, and a moment later decks, derricks, and the moonlit sea had disappeared from view, and only the glow of the binnacle light remained. All else was wrapped in the clammy folds of an Atlantic fog.

"Hang!" exclaimed Sharpe viciously. "They'll never find us in this, not if they hunt for a week."

He grabbed the whistle lanyard, and the *Amphion* hooted a melancholy warning, which was twice answered. Then the fog—which transmits sound only at its pleasure—shut them off from all communications, and they heard no more for nearly an hour, when suddenly the fog was rent by a piercing roar from near at hand.

"She's right on top of us!" yelled Jordan, jumping to the rail and screaming into vacancy.

"Hoo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!" came a threatening howl from the opposite quarter.

"That's the other!" roared Sharpe, hanging to the whistle lanyard, while the crew rushed from their quarters in a panic and scrambled for the boats.

Now, by all the laws of the sea, those two ships, steering for the same point in a thick fog, should have missed their mark by miles. But in a fog at sea nothing ever happens according to program. The *Amphion*'s men saw only the fog, but they heard the clatter of reversed engines storming past close astern; there were shouts and much futile hooting of sirens, and then a long, grating crash that was eloquent of disaster.

"By the great horn spoon, they've done it!" said Sharpe, dropping the whistle cord, and all on board stood still for one agonizing second and awaited developments.

There was shouting enough for a political meeting, and both ships were blowing off steam, but the fog was as thick as a blanket, and the sounds that reached the *Amphion* might have come from any quarter of the compass. And in a few minutes the fog shut down thicker than ever and they heard no more.

"They've both gone down with all hands," said the pessimistic Sharpe, an hour later, stamping his chilled feet on the bridge. He had been rowing about with an unwilling boat's crew in vain search of survivors. "I thought we'd never find the ship again—'twas like rowin' through cotton wool."

"Worse than ever!" said Jordan next morning, groping his way to the bridge. Standing at the binnacle, he could not see the bridge rail before him.

Out of the fog to starboard came, faintly at first, then clearer, the unmistakable sound of a ship's bell. It was not the sharp, double stroke that announces the hours at sea, but a slow, steady, continuous tolling, unspeakably mournful in its monotony.

"Another bally ship on top of us!" snapped Sharpe, but no whistle answered the *Amphion*'s bellow; only the bell tolled mournfully on.

"This is queer," said Sharpe, when he had shouted himself hoarse. "Even if she was a windjammer, she'd have a hand foghorn. What silly blighter's ringin' the hell that fool way? This is mighty queer!"

Down on the foredeck the watch had already come to that conclusion, and being superstitious, after the manner of sailors, they inclined to the belief of the bos'n, who had a riotous imagination.

"'Tis the ghosts of the ships as sunk last night," said the bos'n, who was a Welshman, with a shake of his head. "That bell iss rung by no mortal hand whatefer. I think we shall nefer see land again." And the crowd shivered

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as that ghostly tolling came out of the fog.

"Oh, stop that Welsh swab croakin', Sharpe!" said Jordan. "Take a boat an' see if you can find anything. Maybe that bell's just floatin' on a bit of wreck, an' some poor chap's clingin' to it."

Sharpe hailed the crowd on the invisible foredeck, but none would stir a foot to the boats; they were under the spell of the boatswain's uncanny imaginings.

Finally the dinghy was lowered with Sharpe at the tiller, and the two junior engineers at the oars, and the fog swallowed them before they hit the water, while both watches leaned on the rail and shivered at the ceaseless tolling of the bell.

"Give 'em a toot of the whistle every minute or so, you Jennings," said Jordan, appearing suddenly among them; "an' if I hear you handin' out any more of that ghost talk, I'll handle you so you'll speak sideways for a month."

After a time the mysterious bell stopped tolling, but the boat was gone so long that Jordan feared that they had lost the ship in the fog, which Jennings was industriously splitting each minute with a raucous howl from the siren. But the fog was thinning now, and at last the dinghy emerged from it and ground against the foot of the ladder.

"Gimme a line!" roared Sharpe, dancing with excitement in the swaying boat. "You, Jordan, throw me a line for the love of Mike. Oh, Jordan, you cross-eyed son of a dog, gimme a line or I'll kill you!"

"What do you want with a line?" said Jordan, from the bridge. "Your language is low, Sharpe, an' if I wasn't an even-tempered man I'd give myself the pleasure of comin' down an' bashin' your head. What have you found out there?"

"Gimme a line, you swab!" reiterated Sharpe in a bull's bellow of a voice. "Oh, you fat-witted blighter, the log

line—anythin'! Make it fast to the rail."

The mystified and angry Jordan fastened one end of a log line to the rail, and hove the coil to Sharpe. The two engineers dug out as if they had been rowing in a race, and the dinghy shot into the fog, with the line paying out astern of her. The *Amphion*'s crew waited, breathless and goggle-eyed from curiosity, for half an hour, and then a faint hail came out of the thinning fog:

"Jordan ahoy! Haul in that line, easy!"

Jordan hauled cautiously, and the line came in, dripping. It pulled heavily, and soon he began to sweat. Also he began faintly to understand.

"Take it for'ard, two of you, an' haul in easy!" he commanded.

A two-inch rope was bent to the log line, and presently that gave place to a thicker rope which came so heavily that the perspiring watch led it to the capstan and sweated it in foot by foot. After a time the dripping end of a nine-inch hawser poked in over the bows.

"Crikey!" said the watch. "'Ave we 'itched onto the *Mauretania*?"

"Jordan ahoy!" came from the fog. "Have you got the hawser?"

"Right!" sang out Jordan. "But where did you get it from, an' what are you doin' out there?"

"Make it fast an' stand by!" cried Sharpe. They did so and waited, yelping with curiosity, until the dinghy bobbed out of the fog again.

"What's at the end of that hawser, Sharpe?" yelled Jordan, and the bursting crew hung breathless over the side.

"Fog's liftin'," said Sharpe from the dinghy. "You'll see in half a minute." And, sure enough, the last of the fog rolled away, giving to their view first the wet hawser sagging down into the sea, then its long, uprising curve, and lastly a big steamer tacked onto it, low in the water and rolling sluggishly, but obviously bigger than the *Amphion*.

"What in thunder——" began Jordan, but words failed him.

"She might have been a fat salvage job for us," said Sharpe, climbing to the bridge, "but we can't do nothin' with a cracked shaft, so the next boat that comes along will get her, but we'll have our share of the pickin's—oh, yes, I think we will. She's the *Coimbra*, of Camper & Hall's line. Barrin' a hole in her side that you could drive a motor bus through, she ain't took a pennorth of harm. The other ship must ha' carried off the crew without our hearin'!"

"Who rang that bell?" inquired Jordan.

"It must ha' been bashed by somethin' fallin' from aloft. Anyway, it was all o' one side, so the clapper hit every time she rolled. Plucky fine ghost to scare a whole crew! Come along an' have a look at her."

They descended to the dinghy and went aboard their prize. Jordan was sad and gloomy as they walked her decks on a tour of exploration. The chance of a lifetime, the chance for which every skipper prays throughout his seafaring life—the salving of a big ship—had come to him, and his ship was helpless with a broken shaft. It was bitter hard luck, and he digested it in silence.

"It beats me that she didn't sink," he said at last, eying the huge, ragged rent in the steamer's port side. The colliding ship had smashed into the *Coimbra*'s boiler room, and the water washed about among the boiler seatings with a most mournful sound.

"That's our luck," said Sharpe. "They screwed the stokehole doors down tight before they skipped, an' she ain't takin' a drop of water now. If a bulkhead goes, though, she'll be scarin' the fishes in half a minute. We must plug that hole good an' tight before it comes on to blow."

"They didn't lose much time clearin' out of her," said Jordan, exploring the

skipper's berth. "Hello, here's a copy of her manifest, though—they must have been pretty well scared to leave that!"

Sharpe took the paper and read it quickly, then turned suddenly on the first mate.

"Jordan," he said meaningly, "what are we goin' to do about this?"

"What can we do, with a broken shaft?" said Jordan bitterly.

Sharpe stared through the port at the *Amphion* rolling at the end of the sagging hawser. His face reddened suddenly with the guilty flush of a man who is ashamed of his own thoughts.

"Jordan, she's six thousand tons dead-weight, an' nearly new. Man, look at this manifest! D'you know what she's carrying? Copper, man, copper an' tin from the Lakes, an' all manner of mixed American cargo, too—motor cars and machine tools an' typewriters an' such. D'you know what copper's worth in the open market now? Seventy pound a ton, an' tin two hundred an' over."

His voice rose to a shout:

"There's half a million an' more under our feet, Jordan. Just think o' salvage on half a million, hull an' cargo!"

"I'm thinkin'," said Jordan dully. "Tis all we can do, I reckon."

"Just think again, Jordan," said Sharpe. "We could patch up the hole in this craft easy, an' like as not she ain't took a mite of harm anywhere else. We'd get her home in a week. An' as for the old *Amphion*—ain't ships never sunk in the Western Ocean before, ships that was a long sight better found than ever she was?"

Jordan winced and threw himself down on the bunk with his head in his hands.

"Oh, it's dirty work, Jordan, an' it's barratry an' the rottenest thing a man can do; but there's a fortune for both of us goin' beggin', an' what do we owe to Leiter & Moss, who've fed us like swine an' driven us like dogs for years?"

They'd get their insurance, anyway, an' we——"

"If we could use her to tow the *Amphion*," suggested Jordan, hoping against his own judgment.

"Can't be done," said Sharpe. "We could never patch that hole good enough to stand the racket of towin' another ship." And Jordan knew that he was right. Everything seemed in conspiracy to drive him to do the thing that he loathed.

"But it's easy work openin' a sea cock," added Sharpe, flushing.

Jordan sprang up with a set face and determined eyes, stung to manhood by the last suggestion.

"Sharpe, if you're a man and a sailor, you'll think no more of it. I won't do it, an' that's flat."

"You're in command, an' you've got the say-so," said Sharpe; "but I think you'll regret it, Jordan."

The arrival of McDougall, who had come over to examine their prize, put an end to their talk for that time, but Jordan was fiercely tempted. He sat on the edge of the skipper's bunk, turning over the problem in his mind.

"Mac, isn't there any way of patching up the *Amphion's* shaft?" he asked at last. But McDougall shook his gray head.

"If we carried a spare length of shafting, now, I'd tell ye a different tale, but we dinna. Man, Jordan, I ken there's a fortune here waitin' for a tow, but it's not within the power o' livin' man to repair that shaft outside a dockyard."

"If we carried a spare length of shaft," mused Jordan, as a new idea began nebulously to form in his brain. Then he sprang up with a shout:

"Mac, what's the size of the *Amphion's* screw shaft?"

"Thirteen inch," said the wondering McDougall.

"Come with me to the engine room,"

snapped Jordan, and the two men disappeared, leaving Sharpe alone.

"Jordan's goin' dotty with the strain of it," muttered the second mate, as he followed them slowly. "What's he up to now?"

They were not in the engine room, but the sound of voices and the glow of a flare lamp came from the shaft tunnel, and there he found them bending over the silent screw shaft with a foot rule.

"I think it could be done," said Jordan, but the engineer shook his head.

"What could be done?" asked Sharpe. Jordan turned on him swiftly, with a new light in his eyes.

"Take a length of shaft out of here an' clap it in the *Amphion*," he cried, in a voice like a trumpet. "Then tow this ship home."

"It's a big order," said the engineer slowly. "D'ye ken what like a length o' shaftin' weighs?"

"I don't care a curse what it weighs," said Jordan. "If you had the shaft aboard the *Amphion*, could you do it?"

"I'll no say for certain," said McDougall. "But this I'll say—this thing has ne'er been dune in a history."

"Then we'll make history," said Jordan grimly, as he led the way to the chart house.

"It's a great idea," agreed Sharpe, when he had heard all the plan. "By gum, though, we'll have to sweat! Thank the Lord that coal was cheap at Cardiff an' we coaled for the double trip."

"I'm thinkin' the job's too big, Jordan," said McDougall. "Yon shaft's half an inch thicker than the *Amphion*'s, an' a clear four inches longer in each section. Forbye we'd ne'er get it across betwixt the twa ships."

But Jordan had already decided on his course of action.

"You can put a handle to my name when you speak to me, Mr. McDougall," he said. "I'm skipper here now, an' I'll

believe the job's impossible when you've proved it so. An' you won't prove it by standin' here an' jawin'. You can just take all the men you want an' get to movin' that shaft."

This put the old man on his dignity, and for a moment he looked rebellious; but Jordan, big, lean, and savage, was clearly in no mood for argument, and McDougall gave in with the best grace he could muster.

Alone in the chart house, the two mates eyed each other keenly, each taking in the other's points, for they knew what was before them. Jordan, tall, spare, and muscular, was a bad man to meet in a row, for all his boasted good temper; and Sharpe, though shorter, was built on bulldog lines, broad-shouldered, heavy-jawed, and as sturdy as the capstan. From Liverpool to the Golden Gate, no two men were more competent to handle an unwilling crew.

"It'll be a joyful job," said Sharpe, after a long silence. "But it's a real bright idea, Jordan, an' I congratulate you on it."

"It's the square thing, Sharpe," said Jordan. "If we'd done what you suggested, an' sunk the old *Amphion*, we'd have wanted to jump overboard when we got home without her."

"Well, I'm with you, old hoss, if it takes a year," said Sharpe. "I hope you're feelin' fit, Jordan, for it occurs to me that the crew'll need some drivin'."

"They'll get it," said Jordan grimly, and the two men descended to the dinghy.

The *Amphion*'s crew had settled themselves to a life of tolerable—if hungry—ease until some ship should tow them home, but their illusions were rudely dispelled. The bos'n received with incredulity Sharpe's brief outline of the work ahead of them, and lost no time in imparting his views to the watch.

They were appointing a deputation

to go aft with a protest, when Sharpe fell upon them with tongue and toe, and set an amazed and smarting boat's crew to carrying a second hawser to the *Coimbra*. Then most of the crew were transferred to that ship, and the work began in earnest.

"Oblige me by lookin' a little more cheerful, Mr. McDougall," said Jordan, finding the engineer engaged in a gloomy survey of the damage. "That hole don't go far below the water line, an' we'll patch it up right now, before it comes on to blow."

But first they had to shift cargo until the ship had a sufficient list to bring the bottom of the ragged hole out of water, and for three strenuous days they toiled in the dark holds, until the *Coimbra* lay far-over to starboard, with her port rail cocked foolishly in the air. They tore up the planking of the bridge deck for material, and stopped the hole with a noble breastwork of timber, shoring it stoutly from within against all the chances of the sea.

Three more toilsome days of cargo shifting brought the ship to an even keel again, and they fired up the donkey boiler—luckily it was above water—and pumped her dry.

"Five o' her furnaces are cracked at the crown," answered McDougall, returning from an exploration of the wet boiler room. "I had a sinfu' thocht that we might leave the auld *Amphion* an' tak' this craft hanie under her ain steam"—the two mates exchanged a guilty glance—"but she canna steam wi' cracked furnaces. We must e'en gang ahead wi' the wark, forbye it's a sair heavy contract for a man o' my years."

Now the worst of the work lay before them. A ship's propeller shaft is made up of long sections of steel shafting bolted together. The *Coimbra*'s sections were some twenty feet long, and each of them weighed over five tons—no light matter to handle when a ship is rolling in a seaway.

But the engineers toiled in the dim light of the shaft tunnel until one huge section was clear, and prized the ponderous thing forward into the engine room, where it lay beside the cold engines, while they removed the engine-room skylight and rigged tackles and timber guides for the fearsome work of lifting.

That occupied the whole crew for one dreadful day, and they were sick and spent when finally they swung the great shaft clear and eased it down on the swaying deck.

"An' how wull we get it to the *Amphion*?" inquired old McDougall, wiping his streaming face.

"There's a matter o' two hundred steel barrels in No. 3 hold," said the resourceful Jordan. "You won't find better buoys between this and the Mersey." And in another day they had lashed the shaft between two derrick booms filched from the foremast, buoying the whole with barrels, until McDougall, figuring in a notebook with a stump of pencil, announced that there were enough to bear the weight.

Two hands were set to stoke the donkey boiler, until it belched flame and cinders at the sky, and two groaning cargo derricks lifted the load from the deck and swung it outward, where it swayed drunkenly with the rolling of the ship, though the whole crew fought at the tackles which they had rigged to steady it.

Macrae and Ellison at the derricks lowered away cautiously, and for a moment it seemed that all would go well. Then a windlass brake squealed shrilly and slipped; the load ran down and stopped with a jerk, and the tackles parted with a splitting crack, followed by a sullen plunge alongside. Then the crew was staring overside at a dozen steel barrels bobbing in the water, and the shaft was on its way to the bottom of the Atlantic.

Jordan swallowed hard and said no

word, but the bos'n sat down on the deck and wept loudly; and Sharpe, swearing, smote him heavily to relieve his feelings.

"We're dune," said McDougall dismaly. "We'll e'en bide here till the next boat happens along."

Jordan turned on him like a tiger.

"We'll stop here just so long as it takes you to get another length of shaft on deck, Mr. McDougall, so you can call your men together and start."

There was an ugly growl from the crew; they had no stomach for further work, and were strung to the pitch of mutiny. Jordan ducked as a hammer sang over his head, and picked a heavy spanner from the deck as the crew rushed in a body. It was a very pretty scuffle for a minute or two, but Sharpe and the engineers had armed themselves after Jordan's example; they had the weight of discipline behind them, and soon they were driving the crew forward like sheep, leaving six insensible on the deck. The officers rounded them up on the foredeck, a cowed and sullen crowd, without an ounce of fight left in any of them.

"If any one's lookin' for trouble, he knows where to find it," said Jordan crisply. "I command here, and if any of you dogs think otherwise he can step out and get it over right now."

He waited, glaring, but not a man of them dared to speak. The brief mutiny was over, and with a few swift orders he set them to work again. Sullenly obedient, they followed the engineers below, while Sharpe and Jordan sat down to a solitary meal in the cabin.

"If I wasn't an even-tempered man," said Jordan, with a sigh, "I could say a few real consolin' things about our luck. Fancy losin' that shaft overside, all along of a lick of oil on a beastly windlass brake."

"Better luck next time, if it don't come on to blow," said Sharpe, with his

mouth full of salt pork. "This *Coimbra*'s stores ain't so worse. I ain't had such a meal since we sailed. But I don't mind admitting, Jordan, that you know how to drive a crew. That crowd ain't got a kick left in 'em, not if you was to set 'em to breakin' stones."

"I never let a crew get away from me yet," said Jordan modestly, "an' I don't propose to begin now. But I'll be mighty glad when it's all over."

The whole ship's company was strongly of that opinion. They had all the arduous work of hoisting out the shaft to do again, and the ship was rolling worse than ever, so that the workers were in constant danger. Two men were carried forward with broken limbs, and none escaped without minor injuries; but at last the second section of shafting lay beside the engine-room hatch, and Jordan gave them a day's rest while the engineers were fixing in position a cargo derrick which they had dragged with infinite labor from the foredeck.

Then it came on to blow heavily from the southwest, and for three days they fought, breathing between the 'seas' to keep that five-ton shaft section from taking charge and following its brother overboard. But the weather gave them peace at last, and with the aid of the three derricks they lowered overside the burden that had cost them so much labor and towed it to the *Amphion*.

A worse trouble faced them now. The *Amphion*'s derricks were old and crazy, and refused to lift the heavy raft from the sea. Plunging in the heavy swell left by the gale, it threatened every moment to roll in and damage the ship's plates, while the straining derricks above were on the point of collapse. Finally the raft was towed aft and left at the end of a hawser for two days until the swell went down; and the crew, spent, aching, and rebellious, lay in the fo'c'sle and hatched a new mutiny, which flamed out when a racing

Cunarder spoke them and Jordan refused assistance.

This time the fight was longer, but it ended when Sharpe dived below and reappeared with revolvers, and again the work went on.

The swell went down at last, and they rigged new tackles over the stern, and with blows and curses the officers drove the worn-out men to the racking work of lifting the raft to the deck.

Somehow it was done, and they dragged that soulless five tons of steel to the engine-room hatch, and when it was secured they dropped where they stood and slept on the wet decks for half a day.

Then bad weather threatened again, and so the weary officers kicked and pummeled the crew to consciousness and set them to the work of lowering the shaft into the engine room.

That cost them two days' toil and the life of a man, and when it was done they could not rest, for Sharpe signaled from the *Coimbra* that the wooden breastwork was leaking, and the whole crew was transhipped against haste to this new task.

It was on the sixteenth day of their labor that they began the work of repairing the *Amphion*. The shaft they had taken from the other ship was half an inch thicker than their own, and four inches too long.

Now, since a ship's shaft has two great flanges at the ends of each length to hold the bolts, this meant that two great slices of steel, each two inches thick and two feet across, must be hacked off the shaft with hammer and chisel, and the bare thought of this work appalled them.

Also, because the *Amphion*'s tunnel bearings would not fit the new shaft, the larger bearings of the *Coimbra* must be ferried across and reduced by sheer labor until they would fit the *Amphion*'s pedestals.

So the hammers swung day and night, and when the engine-room staff could work no longer Jordan, thanking his Maker that he had "passed in steam" in his younger days, stepped over the prostrate bodies of the engineers and drilled wearied deck hands in the proper handling of hammer and chisel.

They had lost all count of time, and even the chronometers had been allowed to run down, but it was on the twenty-third day that the nut of the last bolt was tightened in place, and McDougall fell on his knees on the upper grating of the engine room and prayed aloud when Macrae said the work was done.

They raised steam in the nick of time, for the *Coimbra* had drifted close and was almost on top of them. There were strange sounds when the engines turned slowly ahead, and they could not be said to run sweetly; but still, as Macrae said, they ran, and that was as much as they could expect under circumstances unprecedented at sea. So the hawsers surged and tightened, and the *Coimbra* came round sullenly in the wake of her consort, and the long tow commenced.

The *Amphion*'s officers remember little of that tow except the consuming desire for sleep that racked them unceasingly. The wearied crew, both on deck and below, needed constant driving, and Ellison, promoted to acting first mate, stood watch after weary watch with Jordan, who never seemed to sleep.

Sharpe was aboard their prize with twelve men, and he alone knows what he endured in those endless days of towing. His men were so desperately weary that they were ready to murder him as he slept, so that in ten days he did not sleep as many hours. The wooden breastwork leaked incessantly, and the donkey pumps were never still; there was no steam to spare for the steering engine, so they steered her by hand, and for two days of bad weather the following sea kept four men at the wheel.

A week of this work took them within

a hundred miles of Cape Cleat, and then a hawser parted, and they spent a day in a furious sea trying to pass a spare hawser, and when this was done the boat's crew fell asleep before they had reached the deck.

Then they ran short of oil, for the roughly fitted shaft bearings needed oil by the gallon and bucket, heating as they did on the least provocation. So they stopped again, and Jordan risked his life with a boat's crew to bring more oil from the *Coimbra*.

But the seas which had troubled them calmed at last, and the *Amphion* crept slowly homeward, with her prize towing sullenly astern, nine thousand tons of hull and cargo.

The weather had left its mark on them; the *Amphion* had no boat left but her crazy dinghy, and two of her ventilators were buckled like concertinas, while the *Coimbra* lacked twenty feet of her port rail, and her deck fittings were a sorry sight. But neither vessel had taken serious harm.

At dawn, on the tenth day of their towing, Jordan, bent, haggard, and unkempt, with a thirty-days beard, caught

sight of the Lizard from the upper deck, and greeted it thankfully.

The last of their coal took them into Falmouth, and as soon as the *Amphion*'s anchor had hit the mud Jordan slid to the floor of the chart house and went to sleep. On the *Coimbra* Sharpe let go the anchor himself—his men had gone to sleep as soon as they had made the harbor—and coiled down happily against a bollard.

When the astonished harbor master came aboard, he found the entire crew of both ships sleeping peacefully in various and abandoned attitudes.

"What's the best hotel in Falmouth?" asked Jordan sleepily, when the harbor master woke him.

"Hotel be jiggered!" said that official. "Where's your papers?"

"Find out," said Jordan, rising. "I'm goin' ashore for the finest and most expensive drunk that this measly town can provide."

"Thirty per cent on half a million," said Sharpe dreamily—he had come aboard with the harbor master. "I'm on, Jordan—an' I guess we can afford it."



### THE SEA WOLF

THE ferocious-looking teeth of the sea wolf distinguish this fish from all other members of this family. Both jaws are armed in front with strong, cone-shaped teeth, and on the sides with two series of large molars, while in the middle of the palate is a biserial band of similar molars.

As the sea wolf feeds upon hard-shelled fish, these teeth are very useful, not to say necessary, to it. They have also gained for it, it is believed, a reputation for being more fierce than it is.

Sea wolves inhabit the northern seas of both hemispheres, one species being common on the coasts of Scandinavia and north Britain, and another in the seas around Iceland and Greenland. They are also found in the north Pacific. They attain a length exceeding six feet, and in the North are esteemed as food, both fresh and preserved. From the liver of the fish an oil is extracted which is said to be equal in quality to the best cod-liver oil.

The fisherman of the North seas speak of the sea wolf as the catfish, and have marketed numbers of this fish for some years, after skinning and beheading it, as rock salmon.

# SHORE, of the SHAMEEN

*By Lester Griswold*



*Author of "Guy and Ghost," etc.*

This is the tale of a quick-thinking, hard-hitting young American who took a job with the foreign customs service in China. He protected a girl against unwelcome attentions, and then things began to happen to him.

## A TWO-PART STORY. PART ONE

### CHAPTER I.

#### TROUNCED.

THE *Kai-Ping* came into the harbor of Canton with the growing dusk of evening. Shore, leaning over the rail, saw the vast expanse of the city stretched before him, panoramalike in the rays of the setting sun; and never before had he realized the likening of a multitude of people to so many ants. For here was the greatest swarm he had ever seen in his life. All along the shore of Canton they gathered in multitudes—coolies released from their labor because the hour had grown too late to work; venders of sweetmeats, joss paper, and children's toys; peddlers of cigarettes, who offered them singly for a copper cash;\* peddlers and venders of everything.

On the docks they swarmed, too; hundreds of them, eager for half a chance to assist in the unloading of the

steamer, or perchance to carry a bit of luggage for their more fortunate compatriots in the Chinese passenger cabin. They were alternately hustled and rebuffed by the police and the soldiers; and blue-uniformed customs officials cut their way through them, wielding heavy sticks.

Up the river lay the vast city of boats; a million people living on the water and by its aid. Heavy scows passed, treadmilled along by the feet of naked coolies. Sampans, propelled by slave girls in pajamas, carried passengers. Great side-wheel ferryboats brought down the loads of coolie workmen from the grounds of the Canton-Hankow Railway, in the process of building. There were people everywhere, crowding the land and the water—and he, James Shore, had come to this place looking for employment.

Slowly the *Kai-Ping* drifted upriver; and now, chains let loose, she was an-

\*1-100 of a cent.

chored hard and fast off the French concession of the Shameen. As Shore's eyes fell upon the peaceful little island, a reversion of feeling set in. He saw the familiar edifices of his own land, the streets asphalted and laid out as they were at home; and, floating out on the evening breeze, the flag of his country crowned the American consulate.

He felt a peculiar thrill as of finding an old friend. He was not a particularly patriotic man; but the sight of the flag touched that something deep down in us all which we call love of country. He felt cheered. It was as though a favorable omen had come when most needed.

"That's the European quarter, I suppose?" he said to another passenger who stood near by.

"Yes, that's the Shameen," replied the other, a commercial traveler, who had come up to Canton in the interest of an English chocolate firm. "It's separated from the city, you know. It's quite a little city in itself; might be on the Continent, or in America. Chinese are not allowed to live there, except as house servants, and the bridge across the river is guarded by soldiers. They're pretty careful here since the Boxer trouble."

Shore hardly heard what he said. His eyes were fixed on the American flag. After all, so long as that had room to float, there should be room for him, an American. Shore had not been particularly lucky in the last month or so. He needed encouragement, which, heretofore, he had not received.

Two years ago, he had come to the Philippines, a volunteer in a Kansas regiment. He had gone through the usual trials of one set to the task of compelling peace and order among a people who had none of the elements of civilization. Somehow, the Orient had gripped Shore. He shuddered at the thought of going back to America, of being hustled and shoved about, and

compelled to do work he hated in order to gain a living. He had attained a second lieutenancy, and had been master of men. He could not go back and be a slave to a desk, as he had been before.

And so, when his regiment was mustered out, Shore stayed on. But the trips he had taken to Hongkong had settled within him a feeling that in China was a vaster opportunity for one who would make the Orient his home. Besides, he was tired of contact with Filipinos, and wanted no more of them. So he came out of the Philippines with some money and a determination to make his way in China.

Hongkong could offer him nothing but clerical positions. He stayed there hoping for something to turn up; but nothing did. The American consul there shook his head when Shore outlined his ideas to him.

"I'd advise the Chinese army, if I didn't know the sentiment of the Chinese about this time. They're looking for Japanese officers, and you'd very likely have to take orders from a Jap. I know you wouldn't care for that."

No, Shore most decidedly would not. "Then there's only the customs," said the consul. "There's a good enough chance in that, but one has to start at the bottom of the ladder and take his chances. You know, the customs people are all English-speaking now. The change happened when the indemnity had to be paid the Powers by China, and she turned over her customs to us to pay the debt. I'll give you a letter to the harbor master up there, if you like——"

Shore determined that he had wasted enough time; and, besides, his money was dwindling down to a very small amount. He said he would be glad to have the letter; and the next day found him aboard the steamer bound for Canton—just a day's journey upriver from Hongkong.

Shore had seen enough of the life in

the Orient to desire it. The flavor of the Oriental had possessed him, somehow; and he wanted to be—as many of the exiles out there were—comfortable in his own house, surrounded by the luxuries from home, and living the life of the Celestial—a life placid as the summer cloud, yet as pregnant as that same cloud of lightning flash and thunderbolt. Shore saw that great things would come to China in the next decade, and he wished to be one of those who would have a hand in the making of the empire.

"Hotel, sir—only hotel on the Shameen—only place for Europeans—very fine lodgings, sir—"

Shore turned, to face the runner of the Imperial Hotel, an Armenian with a deeply pitted face, indicative of an attack of smallpox. "Oh, yes," he said carelessly, and passed him his luggage checks. "Get my things up to the hotel. Shore is the name." He scribbled it on the blank that the Armenian held out, and then turned his back on him. The man went off.

The sunset was bathing the Shameen in its red light. Occasionally it glinted on window panes and made resplendent the golden balls of the flagpoles. Shore caught up his hand bag and stopped over to the accommodation ladder, at the foot of which half a score of sampans were gathered, the girls of each shrilly denouncing their rivals and asserting the superiority of their own boats. Shore stepped down the ladder, and shaded his eyes while he looked at the sight of the Shameen in the sunset rays.

He was a fine figure of a man, this Shore. Something over five feet ten, he was not tall enough to be noticeable, so broad were his shoulders and compact his figure. His face was clean-shaven, and his eyes were very clear and honest—brown eyes they were, with large black pupils. His hair was brown, too, and cut close to his well-shaped

head. He was attired in loose tweed clothes whose faulty Filipino cut could not hide the true outlines of his well-set-up form.

The sampan girls bent forward, gesticulating. Shore stepped into the nearest boat and sat down without comment; while the victorious girls, ya-yaing derision at their less fortunate companions, queried his direction. He waved his hand toward the Bund indefinitely; and the two girls went to the long sweep, turning it with an ease that somewhat surprised their passenger.

He was landed at the stone steps near the American consulate, and dropped a ten-sen piece into the girl's outstretched hand. She demanded more, with many protestations; but Shore only laughed good naturally. He had experienced the same request before. The girl, realizing that here was no callow stranger, grinned, too, and did not press her request; and the sampan was shoved off again.

Shore ascended to the Bund, that white-walked boulevard that skirts the entire front of every Chinese city, and seated himself on a bench near the landing place. It was a very pretty scene, this river, in the darkening twilight. There was time enough to get to the hotel.

He suddenly became conscious of the fact that some one was sitting on the bench a few paces from him; and, turning, he saw the last rays of sunset strike the blond hair of a girl, who, absorbed in the pages of a book, saw and heard nothing of the outside world. Shore, smiling cynically, wondered what the book might be to bring the red flush of excitement to the girl's cheek and make her utterly oblivious to the world about her.

As he looked at her, he felt a curious sensation. It was the desire for one of the other sex, one to call his own, one to make a home for him. He had almost forgotten women during his stay

in the Philippines; for the squat, flat-nosed *nisas* of the islands were hardly those to encourage tender sentiments in the breast of a white man. But the sight of this girl, so clean, so trim, so undeniably Anglo-Saxon, set him to remembering that a woman was the most essential part of man's life.

She could not have been more than nineteen. She was slim, and her blue eyes were shaded by long lashes. Her color was white and pink. It was all so satisfying, the sight of her. He wondered if it would not be possible to meet her.

He was aroused from his meditations by a harsh voice. It was followed by a protest couched in pidgin-English. The first voice grated in again, the accents of a man quite angry. Shore looked up.

A sampan had just brought up at the foot of the Bund; and the coolie who rowed it had moored his boat to the post, and was facing a European in a blue uniform and cap. It was plainly the European who was angry.

"You lie, you pig," he said. "I gave you a dollar. You gave me forty sen change. You cheat me—give me the other fifty sen—" He flourished the short swagger stick that he carried, a heavy affair, made of braided leather. "Give me the fifty sen."

"Mlaster he make mistake," argued the coolie. "He give me fifty-sen piece—not dollar. I give him forty sen. All same all light—"

"It's not all right, and you'll give me the other fifty sen or take a thrashing, you yellow rascal! Come, now, give it up, and be quick about it!"

The coolie wrung his hands in despair. "Mlaster, I no have *got*," he wailed. "I am velly poor man—no can give fifty sen. Mlaster no give me dollar—all same make mistake."

"Mistake, eh? Well, I'll get my fifty sen out of your hide, then." The swagger stick came down with a vicious thud on the Chinaman's unprotected neck.

"Mistake, eh? Take that, you lying rascal!"

The cry of pain that came from the coolie was one to melt the stoniest heart. "Mlaster, I have got cut there—got cut, catch him yesterday—hurt velly much—no heal—you no hit, mlaster."

"Give me the fifty sen, then," said the inexorable one.

Shore turned to survey him. The man in the uniform was not tall, but he was broad to a degree surpassing. He looked a veritable mass of bone and sinew, an Anak dwarfed in stature by his enormous breadth. His legs were thick, and their outlines could be seen even in the wide trousers he wore, while the coat cloth closed over his arms and shoulders as a tight-fitting glove might envelop the hand. The man looked as though he were about to burst from his clothes, like an overstuffed sausage from its skin:

The face was not a pleasant one. It was heavy-jowled; the lips were thick, and did not come together, showing a line of teeth somewhat yellowed from want of care; his eyes were small and piglike, and set entirely too close together; the brow was low, its lack of height accentuated by the coarse hair that grew down over it; on the short upper lip the man wore a small black mustache.

"Let me have the fifty sen." The arm was again upraised.

The Chinese dropped on one knee, beseeching.

"Mlaster, no have *got*. Mlaster, no hit me—wound he no heal—you see?"

He pulled the blouse aside, showing a round red contusion at the back of the neck. "You see, mlaster?" he appealed.

"Bah! What do I care for your wound? Give me my money—"

"No have got—oh—mlaster!"

The swagger stick had descended, and the Chinaman had caught it in mid-air.

The European's face grew purplish with rage.

"What, you pig! You hold my stick?" In a moment he had wrenched it away; and it came down with full force on the Chinaman's bare neck. A little feminine shriek followed the blow; and the girl, whom Shore had for the moment forgotten, rushed to the side of the Chinese and stood before him.

"Mr. Malken," she said, "you are a coward—a low coward! I forbid you to touch this man again—I forbid you!"

The man's anger was rising. The veins swelled in his forehead. "Maisie!" he choked. "What—get out of my way. Don't interfere in what doesn't concern you." He caught at her. "Go home."

"Don't call me Maisie, and don't put your hand on my arm," she flashed. She turned to the Chinese. "Get into your boat and—"

"He give me my money first," said Malken...

The girl faced him, her eyes blazing. "I always knew you were low and cowardly and mean; but I didn't think you could be as bad as you are. You are a"—she tried to summon up some adequate word—"a—a—*thing*, that's what you are, Mr. Malken." She pushed the man away from the Chinese.

Malken coolly caught her and swung her off the steps and to the Bund.

"Don't you interfere again," he said hoarsely, and caught at the Chinese's blouse. "Now, that money, or—"

The girl flung out her hands. "Oh, you coward, you coward!" she wailed. "If I were a man, I'd—I'd—thrash you!"

Shore had been watching the affair with some interest, and wondering if he should participate. He, however, did not know the rights and wrongs of the case, while he did know the ability of the Chinese for lying and simulating pain. But the girl's last appeal was not

made in vain. Shore got up from his bench and came forward.

A man of enormous muscles, this Shore—sinews trained down to hardness and lacking a single ounce of superfluous flesh. In his regiment his strength had been proverbial; and it was he who organized the physical-culture class among the regiment, and who had held the championship boxing and wrestling record of the eighth army corps. But he was a man slow to use his strength, and one who weighed every word before uttering it. Therefore, for the purpose of offense, his strength was but seldom used, save in one hand-to-hand contest in the Philippines when, with a clubbed gun, he crashed in head after head of hostile Filipinos. That story is not forgotten by the men of Company K, who declare that their second lieutenant saved the day for them by holding off the attacking party by sheer display of his magnificent strength until reinforcements came to the defenders.

And now Shore was inclined to be angry. He did not care particularly about the Chinaman, but he objected to seeing a girl like this handled roughly, or, in fact, handled at all, by a brute like Malken. He came forward just as Malken had raised the swagger stick for another blow.

"For the last time, will you give me that fifty sen?"

A hand gripped Malken's arm as a steel vise might have held it. Another hand tore the riding crop out of his fingers. "No, he won't give you that fifty sen," said some one quietly, and the swagger stick came down over Malken's shoulders with a sharp thwack; before the man could recover himself, the thing had occurred twice again.

Smarting with rage, Malken shot out his fist. With the greatest of ease, the other man knocked it aside and stepped back.

"Don't fight him—oh, don't fight

him!" came in a wail from the girl. "He is too strong. He will kill you!"

"Oh—will he, though?" asked Shore triumphantly. A good fight was what he needed. He stretched his muscles expectantly. In the half light, Malken rushed on him like a bull. With a swinging right, Shore caught him under the chin. The man stumbled back, but came up bravely, his fist catching Shore in the chest. Shore staggered a little, side-stepped, and, with a left hook, knocked the man from his feet.

"Now, Mr. Malken," said Shore, "you get up and go home." He tossed the swagger stick to him. "And don't beat defenseless people and handle young ladies—." He paused, as though thinking of something. "Oh! by the bye," he said, as he took his fingers from his waistcoat, "there's that fifty sen you were so anxious about."

"You damned Yankee!" Malken breathed the words with difficulty. "I'll jolly well smash in your head for this."

"Go home," advised Shore. "I would."

He turned to the girl and doffed his hat. "I'm sorry to have been forced into a disgusting exhibition before you, madam," said he.

The girl thrust out her hand impulsively. "Oh—don't fear! I liked it—I should like to see it again. He is a brute, that Malken man—a perfect brute. I'm so glad you helped the poor Chinaman."

Malken had stalked away, leaving them together. Now he came back, his eyes glittering. "I'll have something to say to your uncle about your goings-on, Maisie," he grated. "This promiscuous meeting of men won't do. Vagrants are exactly—"

"You'd better go home," warned Shore. "And, oh—there's your fifty sen—why don't you take it?"

Muttering something inarticulate,

Malken started off again. "Shall I see you home?" asked Shore, of the girl.

"Oh, no," she replied. "I live near here. Are you staying in Canton?"

"I hope so."

"Then I shall see you again, shan't I? Good night."

She was off before Shore remembered that he knew neither her name nor her address. He started after her, but she had vanished in the shadows. Something tugged at his coat sleeve. He looked down and noted the Chinese boatman.

"Mlaster, I thlank you—velly much—I ploor man—thlanks you—here you money." And he held up the fifty-sen piece which Shore had tossed to Malken.

"Oh—that's all right," said Shore, without thought. "Keep it, John. That's all right."

"Me like 'member your name—mlaster he kind."

"Mr. Shore."

"Missee Shlo-er—me lember. Goo' night. Velly much thlanks. Goo' night."

"Good night," said Shore, and strode off down the Bund, carrying his hand bag.

"For one night," he speculated, "a meeting with a pretty girl, a fight, and a grateful Chinaman. Not bad—not bad."

But he did not remember that he had also made an enemy.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE NEW WATCHER.

"The salary is small for a man of your type," said the harbor master, and shrugged his shoulders. "But then, you must understand that men of your type generally do not apply for one of these positions."

Shore nodded. "A man has got to start somewhere," he said. "I think you'll find I'm not the sort that stays in

a place of that kind. I'll take it, Mr. Croftonleigh."

Shore had wasted little time in applying to the customs officials. He had slept the night before at the Imperial Hotel, and, early on this particular morning, he had hied himself to the Imperial Maritime Customs, and presented his letter to Mr. Croftonleigh, the harbor master, in charge of the service at Canton. Croftonleigh was an Englishman of some forty years, who had been in the service nearly a score of them. He was a pleasant, affable man, with side-whiskers and keen gray eyes. Shore took an instinctive fancy to him.

"Well," said the harbor master, "I'll make out your appointment as watcher. When do you wish to start in?"

"As soon as you want me," replied Shore.

And so Shore's life in the customs began. He went that very hour to be measured for his blue uniform, taking with him the gilt buttons and insignia of the customs which Croftonleigh had given him. The Chinese tailor, wonderful in the art of turning out clothes at short notice, promised them for the next day. Under the guidance of another watcher named Heron, Shore was taken to the quarters which he was to occupy.

The customs people had built, on the outskirts of the Shazneen and facing the southern end of the island, a row of two-story cottages for the accommodation of the European employees. One of these cottages was allotted to every two men; and each cottage was furnished and ready for occupation. It so chanced that Heron's chum who had shared the cottage with him had been transferred to Whamp the week before; and Shore was given his quarters.

"It's not bad," said Heron, a young Devonshire man with the bloom of his country still on his cheek. "Pretty decent quarters, I think. Don't you?"

Heron had been in the cottage for

some little while; and, having an artistic taste, had made the place seem mighty comfortable and homelike. A fire burned on the hearth; there was a comfortable lounge near by; a large reading table stood in the center of the room littered with books, magazines, and tobacco jars. Framed pictures from the London weekly papers adorned the walls; and Chinese statuary and bamboo work stood on convenient brackets. This was the living room. Shore began to feel at home; and his heart warmed toward young Heron.

"It's first-rate," he said. "How do you like this life, Heron?"

"Oh! it's not bad," said Heron. "Pretty fairly decent set of fellows here. We've got a good *comprador*,\* and a good cook and servant. It was jolly lucky you came when you did, or the expense would have been too much for me. Then, you know, there's the club over the way—the customs people keep that up, and every European in the customs belongs to it—you can get some good fizzie over there if you want, and they have a library, and get all the periodicals. You can get books out of the library at any time. Then we have a cricket team and a baseball team; and we have a gymkhana every now and then. Oh, it's a pretty decent sort of life, all in all."

He paused. "Of course the hours are beastly—one has to get up at half after four, and be on duty an hour later—and we're off at four in the afternoon, if we're lucky. It's a long shift—but we get home to breakfast and to lunch, and that's about two hours and a half out." His face clouded. "Just at present, our lot have got a rotten chief—an inspector whom I'd jolly well like to punch; a perfect beast of a fellow. Hope you've got a good temper."

"Well," said Shore, laughing. "I'm

\*A Chinese merchant who supplies everything for the house, from furniture, clothes, and food, to servants.

not going to butt my head against a stone wall, and I'm not going to get into trouble with my superior officer."

"Hope you won't," said Heron seriously. "But I've been precious near punching him, I can tell you."

Shore moved his effects in from the hotel that day. He had been told by the harbor master that it would be better for him to get settled and report the next morning for his first assignment to duty. Heron had been detailed to make him acquainted with the town and the river, so that he would know something of the locality; and Heron was also to tell him something of his duties.

"These customs are pretty liberal," Heron had said. "But they've certain things on the tabooed list, and those have got to be watched pretty closely."

So Heron told Shore of the law that prohibited the carrying of rice out of China, for the reason that China provided only enough of it to feed the denizens of her own empire, and had no desire to export their staple food.

"They try to smuggle it out right along," he said. "Especially to the Philippines. Those beggars over there are always trying the smuggling-out game. I wish I might have a chance to seize some rice—you know, if you make a seizure, you get half of the value of the goods you seize. One chap the other day, a little cockney named Harper—'Arry 'Arper he calls himself—made a seizure, and collared fifty Haikwan taels—not bad, eh? What? And that was only a small seizure, too."

Heron went on further to tell him of the smuggling of copper cents by the lower classes. The copper cents were minted free at the expense of the Chinese government; and then dishonest folk tried to smuggle them out of the country in great numbers, so that they could be used as coins in the Philippines and Indo-China. "Get half of that sort of seizure, too," Heron said.

After he had listened to Heron for

a while, Shore began to remember the various things for which he must look. His retentive memory took mental notes of everything that the young Devon man said; and he determined that, sooner or later, he would put all his information to good use.

When the two had eaten their dinner, Heron took Shore across the river to the Customs Club. This was on a little island in the center of the great stream, and was approachable only by boat. They passed over a planking and into a narrow court, from which they presently emerged into the club.

The club was fitted up as any good club would be; and Shore saw, to his gratification, a well-stocked library, containing many books that he wished to read. They passed through the reading rooms, billiard rooms, and writing rooms to the bar, where a considerable number of blue-uniformed customs men were drinking and conversing.

When the Chinese government turned over her customs to the allied powers for the purpose of paying the indemnity which they demanded, a rule had been made that only Europeans should be employed in responsible positions; and only those Europeans who were of English extraction, or able to converse in that language. For that reason, the customs men were mostly English, American, and Australians, with a sprinkling of English-speaking Norwegians and Germans. Big, strapping adventurers, the most of them, or smooth-faced boys just out from home on appointment—the flotsam and jetsam of Asia, drifted into the customs service.

One of the men was a cashiered army officer, who had come to China from India; beside him was an ex-constabulary officer from Bombay; a former clerk in the Philippine civil service was conversing with an ex-officer of Philippine scouts; a derelict newspaper man from San Francisco fraternized with

an Australian whose father was one of the wealthiest sheep raisers in the vicinity of Melbourne; and a former R. N. R. man of Bristol talked to Harry Harper, the little cockney who had come to China from God knows where, and with a similarly indefinite purpose.

Harper's shrill voice was raised above those of the others. Some of them turned to him with an amused smile, and others seemed inclined to agree with him. At all events, Harry Harper had the floor.

"I s'y that it's an outrye, that's wot it is," was Harper's comment. "This beggar treats me as if I wasn't 'uman. Ain't I as 'uman as 'e is; ain't I—what? And 'e s'ys, he does: 'Arper, you swine, chuck that smoke aw'y, and don't let me see you smoking on duty agyne.' That's wot 'e s'ys to me—and me just on my lunch hour. 'E s'ys—"

But whatever it was that "he" said was drowned by a sudden movement toward Harper and a "Ssh!" from several people. The reason for the sudden cessation of confidence on the part of Harper was quite evident from what Heron muttered. "Talk about Old Nick, you know. Here's that beastly rotter, now." And a man in the uniform of an inspector entered the room.

"Like to meet him?" asked Heron of Shore. "He's the inspector in charge of us, and a bad lot he is. But you'll have to meet him soon enough." He caught the man's eye a second later, and stepped forward. "Oh, Mr. Malken!"

The man turned. "Well, what do you want?" he asked ungraciously. "A brandy-and-soda, yes"—this to the Chinese bar boy. "Well?" again to Heron.

Heron did not seem disturbed by the man's rudeness. He was used to it. "I want you to meet a new man who came on to-day—he's taking Legg's place." He turned to Shore. "Mr. Malken, let me introduce Mr. Shore."

Malken stepped forward, and so did

Shore. The two men eyed one another without any apparent pleasure. Shore was smitten with an inward misgiving. Of all the bad luck, here was the worst; for this was the very man he had handled so roughly the night before.

Shore, however, was not the one to show fear or to apologize for something he had done from a motive which he considered the right one. Perhaps it would be better to meet this bully on his own ground.

"I think," he said, with equanimity, and in his slow Southern drawl, "that I've met the gentleman before."

The inspector was entirely too much surprised to say anything for the moment; when he did, it was with a portentous scowl. "Yes," he said heavily. "And you'll have reason to remember it, my man, let me tell you that." He said this in a lower tone, and one that did not bode well for Shore. Having said it, he deliberately turned his back on the new watcher, and applied himself to his brandy-and-soda.

When Heron and Shore were out of the club, the latter told the young Englishman of his adventure of the night before. "Who was the girl?" he asked. "He called her Maisie."

"Oh!" Heron started. "Wasn't she a little bit of all right? Yes, that's Miss Kerr. She's the niece of old Lammouch, the tea merchant. Surly, sulky old beggar! She keeps house for him. Has a pretty hard time of it, I fancy. She's not making many acquaintances here." Heron said this regretfully. "I jolly well wish I knew her."

Then Heron suddenly became grave. "You'll have a deuced hard time with this chap Malken, after what you did. He'll be making all sorts of rotten reports about you, and try to get you out of the service, you mark my words. You'd better look sharp."

He reverted to the subject of the girl. "They say that old Lammouch is great

friends with Malken, and that Malken's going to marry Miss Kerr."

"I shouldn't think so, from what Miss Kerr said to him," smiled Shore grimly. "And so you think I'll have trouble with Malken?"

"Not a doubt of it," replied Heron.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE REPRIMAND.

As events were soon to prove, Heron was quite right. Malken did not wait for any length of time to begin his warfare on the man who had worsted him. The first evidence of his ill will came on the following morning.

At half after four the Chinese servant came and awakened Shore, and kindled a fire in the living room. It was still dark, and the moon and stars were shining without. Shore felt that he was desecrating the night as, shivering, he tumbled out of bed and to the bathroom, where Heron was rubbing himself off after a cold bath. Shore, his teeth chattering, followed his example, and massaged himself into a fine glow, after which the Chinese boy brought them some hot chocolate and toast, which they disposed of in short order. Heron was attired in a heavy jersey under his uniform; and when they ventured out into the cold air, Shore turned back.

"These clothes are too thin." He shivered. "I'll get an overcoat."

He fetched the garment in question and put it on. Heron, muffled up in his jersey and heavy uniform, did not feel the cold; and now that Shore had his overcoat on over his thin Philippine clothes, he was a little more comfortable. They struck the Bund and skirted the Shameen. The lights of many lanterns shone—house servants coming from the Chinese city across the way carrying them; for no Chinese is allowed to be in the European city during the dark

hours without a lantern, to show who he may be.

The two men reached the iron gates which barred the Shameen from the Chinese city, and Heron called out the Chinese equivalent for "customs officials." The gates swung open, and they passed the blue-robed, red-lettered soldiers of the viceroy, who lounged on guard, pikes in their hands. Now they were in the narrow, dirty Chinese street which ran along the riverside. Presently, after jostling numerous vendors and early workmen out of their way, Heron stopped before the watchtower; and when the gates had been opened for them by the Chinese porter, they ascended the steps to the assembly room, where the watchers of the customs were gradually assembling.

There Shore saw the same men he had noticed in the club the night before, all muffled up in jerseys, with their blouses buttoned up around their necks. Some were smoking pipes and cigarettes, and the room was a blue haze of smoke. Heron was greeted with some badinage, and several of the men remembered Shore.

They waited for some little while in the fitful yellow light of the great lamp; and presently the inspectors in charge began to arrive. They called the roll of their men; and the watchers went off in batches, until finally there were left only eight men, including Heron and Shore.

"We're the last, as always," whispered Heron. "Malken's the last man to show up—always is."

From the appearance of Malken, when he did arrive, it was evident that he had been drinking heavily the night before. His eyes were inflamed, and his cheeks seemed puffy. He glared at the assembled watchers, and called the roll, Shore's name being the last. As he spoke the name, he looked at Shore, and shoved the paper into his pocket.

"What's that you've got on?" he demanded, pointing to Shore's overcoat.

Shore informed him as to the nature of the garment.

"What are you wearing it for?" asked Malken.

"We always wear these when the air turns chill," replied Shore calmly.

Malken snorted. "Well, it's against regulations. You can't wear it. Take it off."

"I don't intend to get a bad cold," replied Shore. "I've got on thin, tropical clothes. When I get my uniform I'll discard the coat—not before."

Something happened to distract Malken's attention; and no doubt he was glad it did happen, for he had decidedly the worst end of the argument. The eight men followed him to the two ships which had been assigned to him. Four were stationed on each ship to examine passengers, invoices, shipping bills, bills of lading, and so forth. Malken kept general supervision over both vessels.

The ships had just come in, and had been unloaded the night before. They were to sail at noon; and the taking on of cargo and passengers consumed the morning. For these were both Hong-kong boats, and made the trip every other day.

The manner in which Malken contrived to make things miserable for Shore was quite simple. He kept in the vicinity of the new man; and if Shore happened for a moment to sit down or rest upon the bulwark by which he had taken his station, Malken was upon him with the regulations, which provided that there was to be no lounging on the part of customs officials. Twice Shore held up Chinese passengers to search for copper cents; and twice Malken reprimanded him for examining persons who were perfectly reputable. At another time Shore broke open a bundle of cotton goods for suspected articles, and Malken stormed at him for offi-

ciousness. Shore began to wonder if it were a good plan for him to stay in the customs service, after all.

He wondered far more, two days later, when he was summoned into Croftonleigh's presence. The genial harbor master was frowning, and wondering just how he should begin a conversation which was sure to be an unpleasant one; but when he did, it was with a prefatory cough which might be construed into an apology.

"Mr. Shore," said the harbor master, "Mr. Malken, the inspector in charge, tells me that you have been—well, not quite satisfactory—that—"

Now, it so happened that Malken came into the room at that moment to submit a report. He realized at once that he had come at the wrong time; and was about to close the door when Shore spoke.

"Mr. Malken," he said.

Malken hesitated.

"I should like to hear Mr. Malken's reasons for what he has said about me," stated Shore quietly.

Croftonleigh looked from one man to the other.

"Come in, Mr. Malken," he said, at length.

Malken was not at all pleased by the turn affairs had taken, and he had no particular desire to explain to Croftonleigh his allegations against the new man. He felt that he had been cornered, and scowled.

"Mr. Malken," said Croftonleigh, "it has been my painful duty this morning to tell Mr. Shore that you have found his services unsatisfactory. Mr. Shore asks that you state your reasons for believing this."

The inspector twisted at his stubby mustache, and looked out of the window. "Really, Mr. Croftonleigh," he said, "I have no reasons. I can only state general incompetency. Mr. Shore has lounged about, taken little interest in his work, and in a general way

proved his unfitness for his position. I can't see that the service will be benefited by retaining him." Malken was speaking in his official tone, carefully wording his sentences, and with his eyes still gazing out of the window.

"I'd like to say a few words," Shore stated. "Before I entered the service—the night before—Mr. Malken and I had an unfortunate falling out. I saw him beating a Chinese and mishandling a young girl—and I took a hand. Mr. Malken took the offensive, and I was forced to knock him down. When he saw me the first night that I entered the service, he threatened to make the service too hot to hold me—and he's evidently trying it by these underhand methods."

Shore paused. Malken broke in: "Of course, if you choose to listen to this man, Mr. Croftonleigh— But he's lying."

"I can call Miss Kerr as a witness to what I have said. And now, Mr. Croftonleigh, let me say a word about my treatment since I entered the service. I have been hounded and dogged and worried like a youngster who has disobeyed his parents—and I'm tired of it. I hereby tender my resignation in the customs service."

Croftonleigh had jumped to his feet. "No, no, Mr. Shore, we can't hear of that." He wheeled and faced Malken. "I heard of this affair from Miss Kerr, but she did not mention the names of the men. She came to me and told me about it, and she also said that she was afraid the man who had been beaten would try to take out his revenge on the other man through his official position. Mr. Malken, you may go. Mr. Shore, I apologize for what has happened." Croftonleigh paused. "On second thought, I want to speak to you, Mr. Malken, if Mr. Shore will excuse us."

Shore bowed and went out. "Well," he meditated, as he walked toward his ship, "that little Miss Kerr has pulled

me out of a pretty scrape. I won't forget it." He smiled. "I wonder what Croftonleigh's going to say to Malken."

What Croftonleigh said was not particularly pleasant, and the inspector writhed under it. "I shall look to you to remember that your official position and your personal affairs are very widely separated," said the harbor master. "And I shall listen to no further reports about Mr. Shore."

Later in the afternoon, when Shore had been excused from duty and was walking the Bund on his way to his cottage, he saw the girl approaching. For the moment he did not realize what had gone wrong with him. His steps were suddenly arrested, and his mouth went wide open as he stared at vacancy. It was only through the restraint of a modicum of presence of mind that he managed to doff his cap.

She greeted him quite pleasantly, and seemed glad to see him. She did most of the talking. Shore was too busy trying to analyze the peculiar personal feeling he had for the girl, and the pride he took in the fact that she was so pretty, so good to be near.

They talked on subjects that were quite unimportant. And finally Shore managed to thank her for having gone to Croftonleigh with the story of the fight. He told her what Malken had done, and how her story had defeated his ends.

Her eyes blazed with indignation. "Some day I hope to see him paid out for all the mean things he has done," she said. "He is perfectly odious—but uncle has some sort of business with him, and he is at our house every day—and I can't avoid him. I hate him, the brute!"

It was quite plain that Miss Kerr cherished a very profound dislike for Henry Malken. Somehow this fact, apparently trivial, gave Shore a peculiar pleasure.

CHAPTER IV.  
THE SCRIMMAGE.

Several weeks passed in comparative quiet. Malken was still on the aggressive, and managed to give Shore the most disagreeable tasks to perform; but beyond this he could not go, for Malken realized that Croftonleigh had taken a fancy to the American, and that it would be futile to report him further—not only futile, but it might result in another reprimand for Malken.

And, above all things, Malken wished to keep his inspectorship in the customs. It meant much to him, for he was in a position to do certain things which will presently appear, and which brought him in an income which far exceeded his salary. In fact, if he stayed long enough in the customs, he bade fair to be rich.

He grew to hate Shore with a strong, bitter hatred; for he was quite well aware of the fact that Maisie Kerr was seeing the American quite often, and seemed to enjoy being in his presence. Now Malken, rough and rude as he was, had, down in his heart, some sort of an affection for Maisie Kerr—the kind of affection which makes men of his sort hesitate at no means to gain their desired ends.

Shore, on his part, was quite content to let things stay as they were. He was applying himself earnestly to his duties and continuing his study of Chinese, which he had begun when he was in the Philippines. Besides his Chinese books, he had all the customs manuals, and was learning to appraise the value of goods and calculate the income tax upon them. He had entered this service, and he had made up his mind that he would succeed in it.

So, when other watchers were at the club, drinking or reading the papers from home, Shore was buried deep in technical books, manuals, and Chinese lessons. He utilized the servant as a

conversationalist, and, when he learned a phrase, tried it on the boy to get the proper accent.

Most of the men set him down for a rather unsociable fellow, but this was not the case. Shore was the sort of man who is not content to mingle with his fellows until he has reached a position which will demand respect from them. He had been a leader of men too long to be content to associate with others when he held no higher position than that of watcher in the customs.

The first thing to do was to rise, and then he would be a hail-fellow-well-met, or whatever they desired.

It was on one of these study nights of his that the Chinese boatman again came into his life. Shore had pulled his chair up before the blazing fire, and had dropped his books to the floor. It was nearing ten o'clock, and he had been studying for several hours. He was smoking contemplatively, now, and deciding that the Shameen was a place he would willingly make his home if he had some one to help him in the task. The customs work appealed to him—or, rather, its higher branches did. If he could only get himself to one of the higher grades—and marry.

The face of Maisie Kerr looked out of the flames at him. He broke off his meditations, with a quick resolve that he must do no dreaming. It was work, not dreams, that made the ends. Besides, he was getting to think much too much of this blue-eyed, blond-haired Scotch lassie.

His hand reached down and picked up the book again. As he was opening it, some one knocked on the front door.

His servant had long since retired; and Shore got up, went into the narrow hall, and opened the door. A Chinese was without. He kotowed several times.

Shore shivered in the cool night air. "Well, boy?" he demanded impatiently.

"Mlaster, you lember me—no? Me all-same Ah-Let. One time you makee other mlaster stop beatee me? You lember—yes—no?"

"Oh, yes," said Shore. "Come in, Ah-Let." And when he had closed the door he asked, quite kindly: "Well, what can I do for you this time?"

It was quite evident that Ah-Let was consumed wit<sup>h</sup> much importance, for his bearing was that of a man who carried a heavy weight of secret knowledge. He placed one finger to his lips. "Mlaster can talkie me one-time—all lone?"

"Why, yes," replied Shore, somewhat amused; and he led the way to the living room. "Get up to the fire, Ah-Let, and get warm. Sit down on the rug, don't stand up. Make yourself comfortable. Now, what's up?"

Shore stuffed his pipe and lighted it. The Chinese made several false starts, but evidently rejected the words that came as not adequate. Finally he seemed to have the desired words.

"You lember other mlaster, him beat me?" queried Ah-Let.

The customs man's smile was grim. He nodded.

"You all-same me—no likee him?" asked Ah-Let eagerly.

Shore's gesture was noncommittal.

Ah-Let had squatted on the rug by the hearth, and had been warming his thin, yellow hands by the blaze. Now he turned, and his palms were outstretched.

"When him beat me, me say some time my get levenge—I say I some time do him all-same he do me. Makee him hurt all-same me. My have got two small boys all-same—my have take boys tell about this man beat me—show him to boys one day—say you watch that one-piecee man all time—some day bimeby maybe he do something I get levenge—the small boy they watch—you savvy?"

The Chinese paused expectantly.

"Yes," said Shore.

"One day they say he go all time one very bad place gloss liver. Belong Kae-Hong, him much bad man—smuggler—they tell me this place—I go this place one night all-same coolie—that last night."

Ah-Let went on, in his curious pidgin English, to tell his story. He had simulated the guise of a coolie wanting work, and Kae-Hong took him on, employing him to put bags of rice in gunny sacks marked "silver sand." There were, according to Ah-Let, something like fifty coolies working in the sheds, and five thousand bags of rice were to be thus disguised. This purported to be a shipment of silver sand to the Philippines; and certain bags were filled with silver sand, and marked with a little red cross. It appeared further, from Ah-Let's statement, that Malken had been in the Kae-Hong sheds, and had been shown the red mark on the bags.

"He say he always know that piecee mark," concluded Ah-Let. "Now, what mlaster t'ink? Mlaster can catch this-eer man and get money for him and Ah-Let—also levenge for beat—"

Shore had listened to the story with eager ears. It was almost too good to be true. Here was a chance at one swoop to repay Malken for the various indignities to which he had subjected him, and to make a mark as a customs watcher. So good did the statement of Ah-Let sound that Shore distrusted the veracity of the Chinese. He began to question him.

"You say these five thousand bags of rice are to be shipped to the Philippines?" he asked.

Ah-Let nodded. "All same."

"And that the bags that contain silver sand are marked with a little red cross?"

"One piecee little red mark," agreed Ah-Let.

"What steamer takes them."

"You know Loonchow—you savvy

that piecee' boat? Come into liver late last night—go away to-mollow mloining—you savvy him?"

"Yes," said Shore. He remembered that the *Loonchow* bore an evil reputation with the customs people, and that a number of seizures had been made on board her. The *Loonchow* was operated by an unscrupulous firm of Portuguese, with offices in Hongkong and Manila, who were the heads of a firm known as the "Compania Real." It was rumored that they had also agents in Bombay and Calcutta, and that they were entangled in the opium-smuggling frauds which were going on, and which had been, so far, undetected.

"And so this man—this man who beat you—they showed him the red crosses?" queried Shore.

"All same. He bob his head, sayee: 'All light. Me savvy.' What can do, mlaster? Can catchee bags makee money for mlaster and Ah-Let? Makee me get levenge mlaster who beat me—"

Shore was on his feet. "Well, if I can't," he said, "something's gone wrong with me." He turned to the Chinese. "Ah-Let, you're a good boy. You run along home, now, and come here to-morrow night. I'll look after the *Loonchow* and our friend who beat you. Good night."

"Goo'-by," said the Chinese. "I come to-mollow."

And with that, he took himself off, and left Shore staring into the flames again. But the flames looked much brighter now, and when the face of the girl shone out of them again he did not rebuke himself for dreaming; for he saw a chance of compassing his ends, and of making reality of the dreams which he had tried to keep away.

As he was preparing for bed, Heron came in from the club, and Shore listened to what he had to say with regard to the opium smuggling that had been going on in the lower reaches of

the province. "Good Lord!" sighed Heron. "If I could only lay my hands on an opium consignment, it would make me in this blooming service—but no fear of that, I fancy."

"Miles," said Shore suddenly, "I want you to keep as near to me as you can to-morrow. Understand? There's something afoot, and I may need you."

"Hel-lo!" ejaculated Heron. "What's up, old chap?"

"Can't say," replied Shore. "'Tisn't my secret, old man. If it were, I'd let you in in a minute. But take my tip for it—there's a chance of something doing to-morrow, and I want you to watch for my call. Understand?"

"No—hang me if I do!" replied Heron frankly. "But I'll keep a weather eye open and hope for the best."

They tumbled out of bed the next morning at their usual hour, and were soon at the watch tower, waiting for the advent of Malken. He came a trifle earlier this morning, and took his eight men away with him. He had two ships to keep track of, the *Elfrida* and the *Loonchow*. The former was a Norwegian ship bringing in tallow and taking away tea; while the *Loonchow* was a trader, ostensibly bringing in hemp and taking away silver sand.

It seemed the irony of fate that Shore should be assigned to the *Elfrida* instead of the *Loonchow*; but the affair was far too important a one to dally over little matters; and the American promptly made a deal with Linley, an Australian, to change places with him, Linley going to the *Elfrida*, and Shore taking Linley's place on the *Loonchow*.

It seldom mattered which ship the men took, so long as there were four to each; and Shore advanced as his reason for the change his desire to be with Heron, his chum. It was quite a customary thing to do this; for when the inspector was away from the ships, the men got together, swapped yarns,

smoked, and enjoyed themselves; and it was only natural that Shore should wish to have his chum with him.

The change was effected without any notice from Malken, and Shore went aboard the *Loonchow*, taking up his station at the gangplank which ran into the hold and which accommodated the steerage passengers and the cargadores who loaded on from the land slide. By simply turning, Shore had a view of the bay side, where the lighters came up to load their cargo aboard. He was quite sure that the rice consignment would come by lighters.

Nothing happened for some little while. The gray dawn faded in the bright rays of the morning sun, and the sky took on the pink and blue of early sunrise. Presently the smaller boats began to arrive from the water-side, loading on provisions, fresh fish, and other eatables for the voyage. It was amusing to watch the sailors getting the fish into the great tubs of water in the hold, as they were swung aboard in huge nets from the fishing smacks.

The Chinese passengers poured in, carrying their effects tied up in huge pieces of muslin and calico, and lugging along their matting and blankets. Within the hold, they spread the matting, covered themselves with the blankets, and resumed their slumbers, with placidity. Others squatted and smoked the vilest of Chinese tobacco in little acorn pipes. The combination of Chinese, uncleanly coolies, sweating cargadores, and tobacco was not particularly pleasant.

But Shore's reward was coming. Several great lighters were swinging off the *Loonchow*, loaded down to the water line with sacks of something. The man in the stern of the first boat was answering the question of Heron, who sang out something to the effect of their business.

"Silver sand—Kae-Hong," said the man in the stern.

Malken's voice broke into the discussion. "That's the main cargo. I'll look after that." The first lighter threw out grappling hooks and made fast to the side of the *Loonchow*. The other lighters—there were three of them—cast anchor and waited.

Shore paused to see no more. He abandoned his post without the slightest compunction, and slipped up the ladder from the steerage to the saloon. He passed along the carpeted room to the deck, and took up his station very near to Malken.

The pulley swings were in operation, and a dozen sacks of the consignment were swung on board and were piled at Malken's feet. He was looking over the shipping bill and manifest, checking it with assiduity, occasionally pausing to wet his pencil. Finally he shoved his cap back on his head, and handed the manifest and shipping-bill to Heron.

"Look that over and compare my checks," he said. "You can go into the saloon, if you like."

Heron, glad enough to sit down, obeyed without any further question. Turning to watch Heron pass out of sight, Malken saw Shore.

"Now, what the devil are you doing here?" he roared. "Didn't I assign you to the *Elfrida*?"

Shore nodded. "I changed places with another man. I didn't think you'd mind."

"Well, I do mind," replied Malken, in a tone which indicated a desire to get Shore's throat—and twist it. "Get back to the *Elfrida*. I'll report you."

The American gazed over the water, and seemed to be oblivious of the fact that Malken was there at all. He whistled a few bars of a musical-comedy air.

"You either get back to the *Elfrida*, or I'll relieve you from duty right now," almost yelled Malken. "I've had enough of your damn foolishness. Are you going to go?"

Shore whistled a few more bars of the song. Malken strode up to him.

"You're relieved," he shouted. "You're discharged. You can get out. This is gross insubordination. You're no longer in the service. You're discharged!"

The Chinese, who had swung aboard, touched Malken on the shoulder. "Have got many bags on deck," he said. "Me want you make examination—all same silver sand."

"All right," growled Malken sulkily. He turned from Shore with an oath, and kicked at the bags viciously. There were something like thirty bags which had been heaved on deck, and the pulley swing had ceased operations.

The Chinese in charge of the consignment, the agent of Kae-Hong, pointed to the bags. "Have got plenty there for examination?" he asked.

"Yes, that's plenty for one lighter. You needn't swing any more aboard." Malken turned over some of the bags with his foot. Shore advanced a few steps. He saw Malken stoop over one bag and pull it out. It was quite heavy and required some exertion. Looking closely at it, Shore saw that it was marked with a red cross—a tiny mark—hardly more than a couple of dots from a brush. Malken took his jack-knife from his pocket and made a small incision in the bag; sand gushed to the deck.

"That's all right," he said. The Chinese agent stepped forward and sewed up the cut with a few deft stitches of the sailmaker's needle which he produced from somewhere within his voluminous robes. Malken poked about the bags again and hauled out another sack. Shore inspected it, and again the tiny red mark came to view.

The operations were suspended for the moment, as the Chinese looked up quickly and muttered a few words in Malken's ear. Malken started and looked over the taffrail. A launch fly-

ing the ensign of the harbor master was bearing down on the *Loonchow*. Mr. Croftonleigh was making his regular morning tour of inspection.

The launch wheezed and snorted its way to the side of the *Loonchow*, and the sailors aboard threw out their grapping pole and caught the rigging of the accommodation ladder, holding the little cutter steady while Croftonleigh, the harbor master, climbed over the rail and onto the ladder. He ascended the steps and vaulted lightly to the deck of the *Loonchow*.

He was smiling genially, and nodded to Malken in all good will. "What's the *Loonchow* carrying, Mr. Malken? Ah, yes, I remember—silver sand, isn't it? They have quite a consignment—five thousand bags, isn't it?"

Malken nodded. "I'm just making the preliminary examination," he said. "There are three lighters in all. They've just swung aboard this part of the consignment for my examination."

Malken pulled the second bag toward him and made a cut in it with his knife. Again sand gushed out, and Malken nodded. The Chinese used the sailmaker's needle for the second time.

Croftonleigh stood by, his hands folded behind his back, smiling and nodding. He bent over, picked up a few grains of the escaped sand. "Fine grade," he said meditatively. "I understand they make some sort of soap out of it over in Manila."

"Yes," volunteered the Chinese. "Sand soap. Have got here, too. Harbor master like me send him some cakes?"

"Why, yes," said Croftonleigh. "I'd be glad to sample it." He looked ruefully at the tar on his hands. "It might get that off."

Malken had pulled out two more bags and cut them open. In each case they were marked with the red cross, and proved to contain sand. Malken stretched his arms wearisomely.

"Well, that's enough," he said to the Chinese agent. "You can swing that lighter's cargo aboard and get these bags off deck. I'll examine the second lighter's consignment when this one is stowed away."

The Chinese agent murmured gratification, and shouted something to the man in charge of the lighter. The pulley block began to operate, and the bags were swung into the hold from the lighter. Malken made some notes on the slip which the agent gave him, and handed it back.

Croftonleigh, turning, saw Shore, and gave him good morning. Shore responded gravely. At the sound of the American's voice, Malken wheeled.

"Mr. Croftonleigh," said Malken, in his judicial tone, "I have to request the discharge of Mr. Shore. He was assigned by me to the *Elfrida*. He disobeyed my instructions and came aboard this boat. When I requested him to return to the *Elfrida*, he replied in the most insolent manner, whistled, and paid no attention to me. I told him if he did not go he would be discharged. He refused pointblank to do so." Malken threw out his hands imploringly. "I cannot perform my duties with insubordinate assistants; and I am sorry to say that Mr. Shore has taken advantage of the fact that you seemed to have a liking for him, and as much as intimated that what I said about him would have no effect."

Croftonleigh's face clouded, and he regarded Shore with disfavor. "What have you to say about this, Mr. Shore?" he asked.

"I have nothing to say except that Mr. Malken lies when he says I presume upon your kindness to me. For the rest, it's true enough, except that I was not insolent. I refused to go to the *Elfrida*—yes!"

"I am glad you have not the hardihood to deny that," glowered Malken. Crofton was nonplused.

"You realize, of course, Mr. Shore, that you have been insubordinate. I can't uphold you in what you have done. What possible reason could you have for—"

"The best reason in the world, Mr. Croftonleigh," replied Shore. "I came aboard this ship to prevent smuggling." He advanced toward the bags, with his jackknife open. "Look, that's the reason!" With a sudden movement, he slit an unmarked bag from one end to the other, and rice streamed to the deck. "That's a reason—and there's another!" He slit a second bag. "And another!" Again the knife brought the rice forth.

Malken had stepped back, pale and trembling. Croftonleigh looked at him in amazement. "What does this mean?" he asked, his voice unsteady.

"I don't know," stuttered Malken. "All the bags which I cut contained sand."

"Yes," said Shore quietly, "because every bag you cut had a red cross on it—they were marked so that you would know which ones to cut. See here, Mr. Croftonleigh, look at the bags he examined—there's a red cross on every single one of them—and the ones with the red cross contain sand. Here, for instance—"

His knife cut into a marked bag which was untouched. Sand came out.

"What?" The harbor master was dazed. The Chinese agent was sidling toward the rail. Malken trembled violently.

"I'll tell you what it means," said Shore, still very quietly. "Malken was in a scheme to smuggle these five thousand bags of rice—and I, as the discoverer of the smuggling plot, hereby seize the entire consignment."

He moved a step closer to Malken.

"And," continued Shore, "seize also upon the offenders guilty of smuggling." He laid one hand on Malken's shoulder. In that moment, Malken realized his peril. His fist shot out, catch-

ing Shore near the ear. The American staggered, and, like a flash, Malken sprang for the taffrail. But Shore was on him before he could reach the ladder; and the two wrestled on the narrow space outside the rail, in imminent danger of being suddenly thrown into the water.

Malken's grasp relaxed, and his hand fumbled in his blouse pocket. When it came out, it held something that shone in the sunlight. Conscious of his peril, Shore caught at the hand holding the revolver, and the two men struggled for its possession. This time Shore relaxed one hand and struck Malken heavily in the face. The inspector stumbled backward, lost his balance, and toppled over, dragging Shore after him.

The sickly sensation of falling was terminated by contact with the icy water as both men, clutching one another, sank. The revolver had fallen from Malken's hand, and that hand now clutched Shore's throat, while the other strove to bend his head down. The two men shot up to the surface, and Malken's fist came down on Shore's head, forcing him below again; but the inspector went also, unable to keep himself up while both his hands were engaged. On the second coming-up, Shore struggled furiously, and Malken snatched at an outrigger from a sampan bowsprit and clutched it. Again he struck Shore's head.

Shore, however, held up by Malken's grasp, was now sufficiently master of his senses to realize that he must free himself. He heard the confused cries of the spectators in spite of the ringing in his ears, and knew that the struggle was being watched by many. To be conquered by Malken was the part which Shore could not abide. He thought very little of the prospects of death.

With a sudden heave, he twisted his throat free and struck at Malken; but, with Malken's grasp gone, Shore sank

again. When he had struggled to the surface for the third time, Malken had scrambled into the sampan and, running its length, leaped into the launch of the Chinese agent, where that worthy still stood trembling. He shouted to the masters of the lighters; the grappling hooks were released, and the launch shot away down the river.

The lighters carrying the rice had pulled up anchor, and their lateen sails were fluttering in the wind. Shore realized that his work was but half done. Swimming with broad, free strokes, he gained the first lighter and scrambled aboard. He was met by two Chinese with handspikes. He dodged the first blow, and caught the handspike aimed at him. Flourishing this, he jumped back.

"I declare this cargo confiscated," he said. And then, raising his voice, he yelled to his brother watchers on the other side of the *Loonchow*.

"Heron—Heron!" he cried. "Canning! Theobald!"

Heron was already in sight. "Board that lighter! Seize the cargo!" he shouted. "Rice—seize it—Canning—take that second lighter!"

One of the Chinese made a sudden run for him. With a quick swing of the handspike, Shore laid him senseless on the lighter deck, while his fist crashed into the jaw of the second man who had followed the attack. The others of the crew fell back, aghast at this mighty one who had the strength of ten thousand demons.

Meanwhile, Croftonleigh had taken a hand; and his sailors on the launch were tumbling aboard the first lighter, backing up Heron, who, with leveled pistol, threatened the captain of the lighter, an elderly Chinese in a black cap with red button. Canning, the other watcher, was all alone on the second lighter; but it seemed that the crew of this boat were thoroughly cowed by what they had seen happen to their

friends on the other boat by Shore's hand.

Croftonleigh's silver whistle, which had shrilled out loud and clear three times, was not long in bringing results. Watchers and inspectors from the other river boats were quickly scrambling aboard the *Loonchow* and taking their positions on the different lighters. The affair was terminated within a quarter of an hour.

It was Croftonleigh himself who came aboard the third lighter and shook Shore warmly by the hand. "You're drenched to the skin, Mr. Shore," he said; "and you'd better be getting home. You've done splendid work to-day—splendid. I'm to be congratulated on having such a man. I'll take charge here until you've gone home and changed your clothes. Then you can come back and relieve me."

"You are going to put me in charge?" gasped Shore.

"I am," said Croftonleigh. "When a man does the splendid work which you have done, we skip him a few grades. Masken's place is now vacant—and as soon as I can get to my desk, I will have my clerk make out your appointment as an inspector in the service. Well, now, run home and get warm again. We can't take any risks with a man as valuable as you are. You must tell me how you came to discover this plot later."

Shore stammered out some thanks. Croftonleigh waved his hand. "It's only what you deserve, Mr. Shore," he said. "You have demonstrated your ability for the position. You are a man quick to see and quick to act—and you know something about handling yourself in a fight, too, don't you?"

"I don't know about that," said Shore sadly. "My greatest regret about this thing is that the scoundrel got away. If I'd gotten the right kind of grip, I think I might have landed him."

## CHAPTER V.

### ON CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE.

The days that followed were busy ones for Shore. He had won his promotion and skipped two grades in the customs service; but he found that, in order to maintain the position which he had achieved, he was called upon to know much that he did not know. This meant more labor over the manuals, and implicit attention to the work in hand. The study of Chinese progressed rapidly, also, for it was quite necessary that Shore should have a colloquial knowledge of the tongue, in order to fulfill the duties of his new position.

Two months passed rapidly, months of hard work and unremitting attention. The only outside influence that came into the customs man's life was his meetings with Maisie Kerr on the Bund—and these meetings occurred almost every evening, as Shore was returning from his work to his cottage. There was a certain seat on the Bund which he invariably occupied and where he waited, watching the sunset, until Maisie should appear. They were not protracted meetings, lasting hardly half an hour, but they were the sweetest moments of the young Southerner's life.

He learned a good deal about Maisie. She was an orphan, whose father had left her in the guardianship of his half-brother, Lammouch, the tea merchant of Canton. Shore was inclined to think that if Maisie had not been possessed of property Lammouch would have paid but little attention to her; but, as the heiress of a Scottish estate, she might be worth something to the uncle; and he sent for her to come to China. That had been a year before; and before that the girl had seen nothing of the world, outside of the little hamlet of Linchlock, near Perth. Once she had taken a trip to Edinburgh, and for her the world ended there.

But she, perchance, must obey her

guardian's dictates; and so she was alternately hustled, shoved, and led about, until she had made her way to London and embarked on a P. & O. steamer for the Orient. And now she was here, a rather unhappy little bairn, for her uncle was a surly, hard-grained man; and outside of making her take general charge of the house, and holding her responsible for it, he took but little interest in her.

The fact that she was the niece of Lammouch had, to a certain extent, ostracized her in the Shameen; for Lammouch bore a reputation that was none too sweet—a reputation for hard trades and close bargains, for legal chicanery and lack of feeling. So the girl knew no women in the Shameen—and had known no men, save Malken, up to the time when she met Shore.

She was glad that Shore was getting on; and he confided to her the various ways in which he hoped to make himself—well, maybe harbor master, some day. Shore had fully made up his mind to stay in the Shameen, also to have the girl; and he worked at the achievement of both in his customary quiet, unobtrusive way.

Croftonleigh was much pleased with him; and after he had made a second seizure—a consignment of copper cents, this time—the harbor master realized that here was the man for responsible work. It was then only a question of finding the work; and that question was soon settled by a stringent letter to Croftonleigh from Sir Robert Hart, chief of the imperial customs, who held his headquarters in Peking.

The letter, in brief, was a stern adjuration to the chief at Canton to settle the opium smuggling at that port. Sir Robert was full of anger at the reports received from missionaries along the Pearl River, stating that all the opium in Kwangtung province came out of Canton, and was sold by Can-

tonese. In other parts of the empire the opium trade had been, to a certain extent, quashed; but Canton offered vaster opportunities, being the seat of the southern half of the empire and in close proximity to Hongkong, where half the conspirators and smugglers in Asia have their headquarters.

As Hongkong was a British colony, the Chinese customs did not hold good there; for it was an open port, and free of duties. Thus it was that opium might be landed on the island in great quantities, and shipped up the river in trading junks, which might pass the customs without any particular notice, if they ran the river at night. The point of the whole matter was to put a finger on the conspirators in Hongkong who engineered the landing of the forbidden drug. And this was the task that Croftonleigh was set by the chief of the customs.

As all in Asia know, it is opium which is the curse of the Chinese people; and, contrary to the beliefs of those of the Occident, opium is not a native product in China. It was introduced into the Celestial Empire from India, and the habit spread with such alarming rapidity that the Chinese emperor, recognizing its evil effects, forbade the bringing in of any more of it. This led to the semi-war between China and Great Britain in the early half of the nineteenth century, which resulted in the acquisition of Hongkong by the British. For it was the British who brought opium from India; and so profitable had been the trade in the poppy that the "John Company," so-called—the power of those days in Oriental affairs, and officially known as the East India Company—exerted its powerful parliamentary influence and caused Great Britain to insist on opium trading.

But England has changed her attitude in this respect, and is now openly arrayed with China for the extermination of the trade. Yet many millions are in-

vested in poppy fields, and many more millions in vessels to carry the drug; and, although big chances are taken, the profit is correspondingly large, and the traffic in men's souls goes merrily on.

Croftonleigh was quite sure that some big man in Hongkong was at the head of the affair; but the question was—which? The Chinese merchants, no matter what their standing, all looked upon opium trading as quite legitimate, and pursued it whenever they got a chance. In his perplexity, Croftonleigh called in Shore; and from that time on, Shore was a man saddled with one of the biggest contracts that an imperial maritime customs man ever had.

The harbor master willingly acknowledged—although with a certain amount of sadness—that the task of stopping the opium trade was too much for him. "I'm getting old, Shore, and I suppose my mind's not as quick and alert as it used to be—certainly, my body is not. And I'm going off on my long-deferred vacation soon—I've got three years of leave coming to me—so I want to see this thing settled before I go off." He leaned forward and put

one hand over Shore's. "I won't be coming back to Canton after my leave's up," he said. "They're going to make me one of the bureau chiefs on Sir Robert's staff. So when I leave they'll be by way of looking for a new harbor master, Shore. You don't know as much of the customs as many men in the service, but you have indomitable energy and keenness of mind—then you haven't any fear—which is what a man in my position should not have. But I've a family, and I can't take the risks I did once. Shore"—he leaned forward again—"if you can break up this opium trading at this port—" He broke off. "I am requested to name my successor. If you break up this thing, my successor will be—you!"

Shore was startled out of his stolidity. "Me!" he voiced incredulously. "Me! Why, I haven't been in the customs long enough—I don't know enough about the technical part of it—the—"

"You will have plenty of assistants to help you with the technical part." Croftonleigh brought both palms flat on the table. "Upon my word, if you succeed in this thing, you'll have my place when I leave—you'll be harbor master!"

TO BE CONCLUDED.



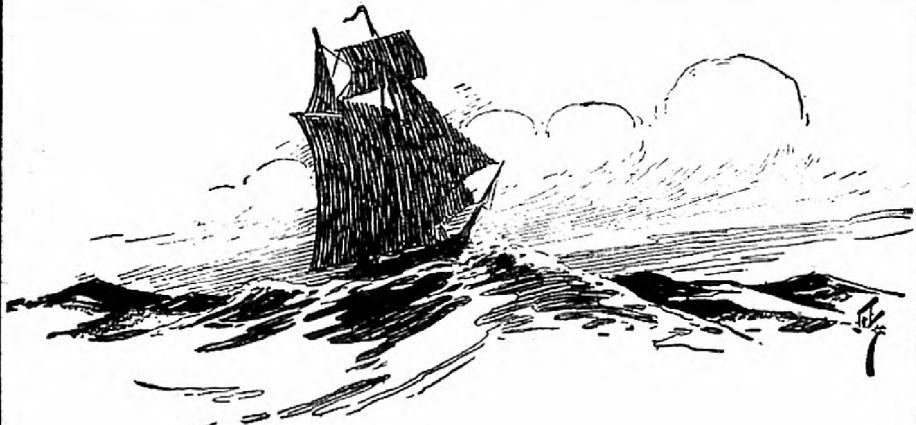
### THE WATERSPOUT

ONE of the dangers that mariners must encounter in the vicinity of trade winds is a whirling wall of water known as the "waterspout."

This phenomenon of the sea is especially frequent in those regions where adjacent winds, usually one above the other, have different directions, and along boundaries of sharp temperature contrasts, such as the northern border of the Gulf Stream. In all such regions this conflict of winds may induce a more or less violent whirl, resulting in a waterspout.

At one time waterspouts were thought to be solid, and seamen believed that a well-directed cannon shot would sever one. But, like the sand column, this upheaval is a hollow, not a solid, wall of water.

Sometimes small whirlwinds start from the surface of lakes or other bodies of water during hot weather. The strongest of these produce columns, due to expansion, which are often called waterspouts, but are of radically different origin from that of the real waterspout.



# Gratitude

We are truly grateful for the reception given the first number of *Sea Stories Magazine* by the reading public.

Just being grateful for a kindness or benefit bestowed upon you is not enough. We believe that man is only a trustee in the case of blessings and kindnesses visited upon him. They are loaned to us, and we must be sufficiently big and generous to pass them along to others. Hence, the reception given to *Sea Stories Magazine* makes it clear that we owe the reading public the only form of gratitude worth while.

The favorable letters in our hands indicate that *Sea Stories Magazine* fills an actual vacancy in periodical ranks. The way, then, that our gratitude is going to find expression will be in making a better magazine.

The publishing business at best is uncertain. There are times when fine ideas fail to meet the success due them. No matter how well informed, publishers are

compelled to work with no positive guide to what the public wants, except experience. There is one thing, however, of which we are sure, and that is that there are millions of readers who read for relaxation—who wish to escape from life temporarily.

What these readers demand is interest. They insist upon reading matter which will lift them out of the diurnal humdrum existence they lead, and carry them, in flights of fancy, to the realms of romance and adventure.

In publishing the *Sea Stories Magazine*, we do not regard the task lightly. The interest demanded by the reader may be either good or bad for him. We refuse to publish anything but the good sort of up-to-the-minute, clean-cut, adventure fiction. We do not wish to make money by pandering to or exciting the passions of readers who can be just as easily given good, clean, wholesome entertainment in what they read.

Each number of *Sea Stories Magazine* will be worth your while, as any magazine is worth your while which is intensely interesting, clean and well-written.

*The Editor*

## **Sea Stories Magazine**

79 Seventh Avenue  
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