

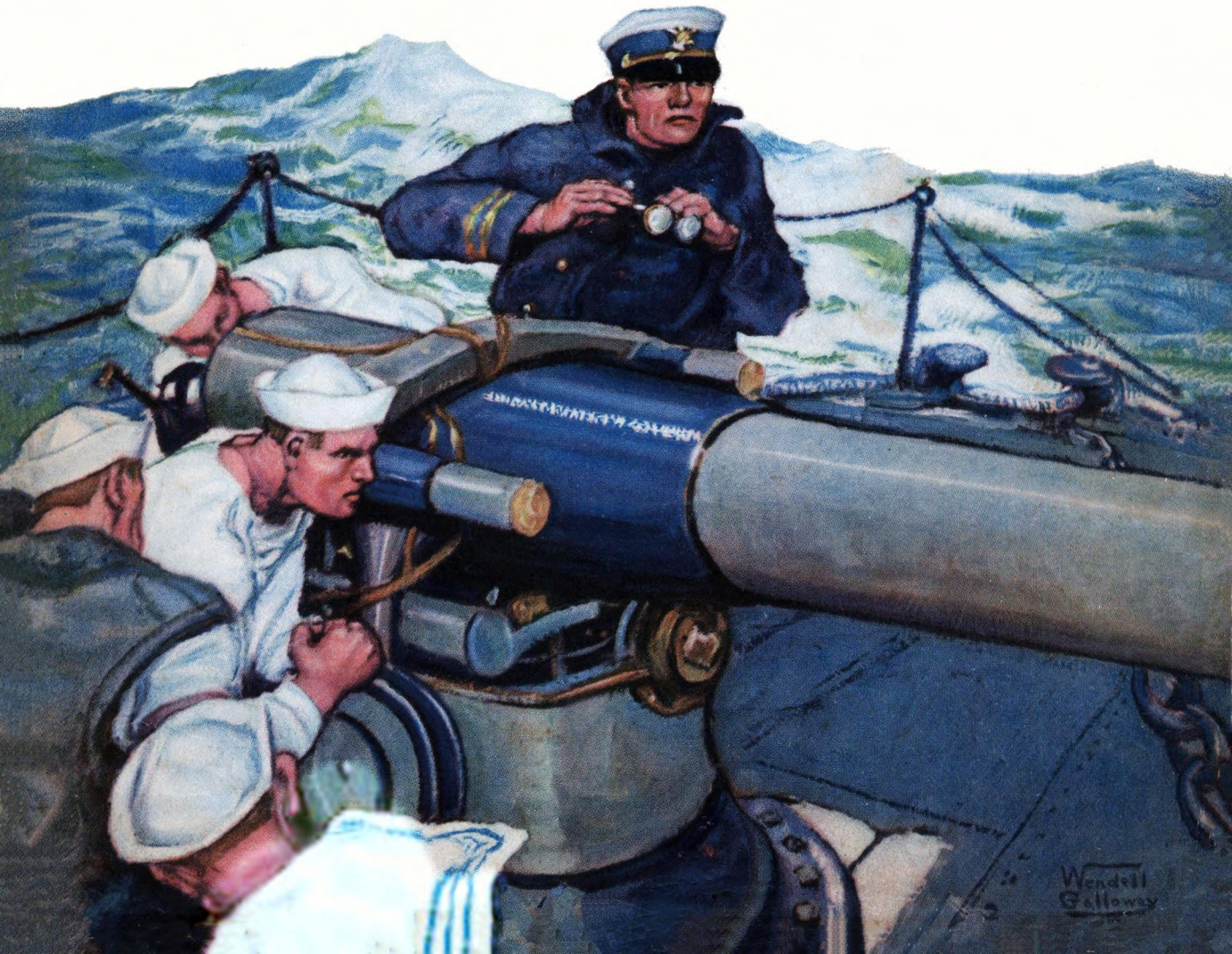
# Sea Stories

DECEMBER 1929

25¢

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Admiral Togo's Remark  
*By* THOMAS H. RADDALL





This is the new matched Three-piece Balanced Set, including Golf and Hanager Pencil. For Men, \$18.00; for Ladies, \$16.50. Others lower.

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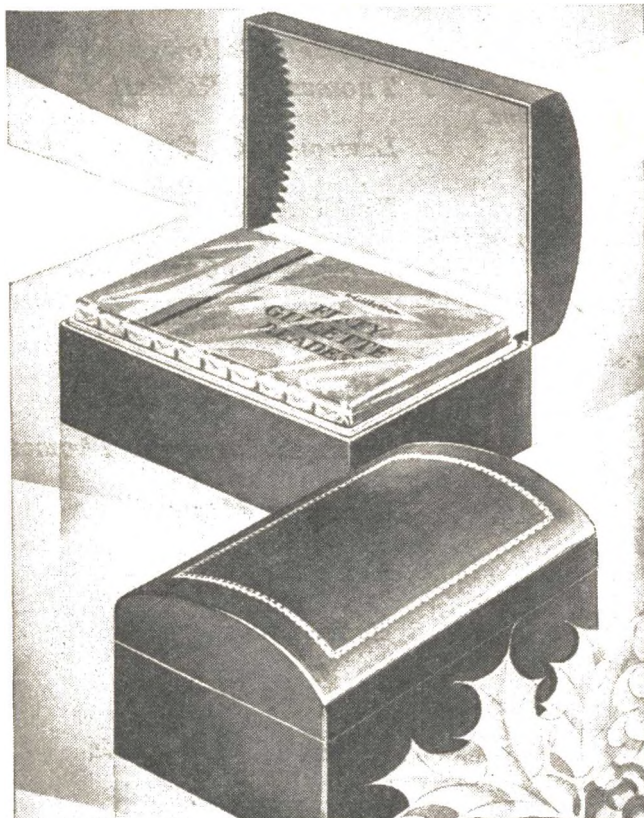
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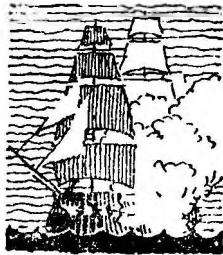


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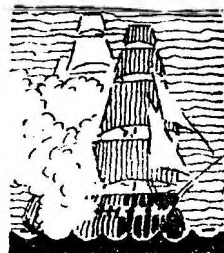
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# Sea Stories

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Volume XIX

DECEMBER, 1929

Number 4

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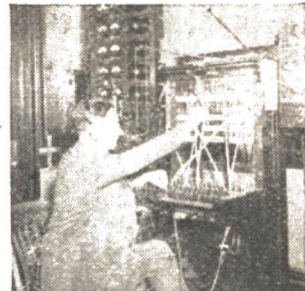
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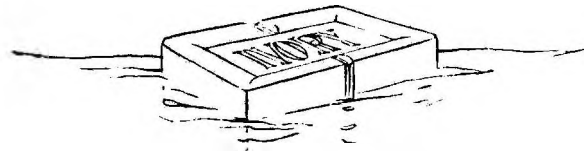
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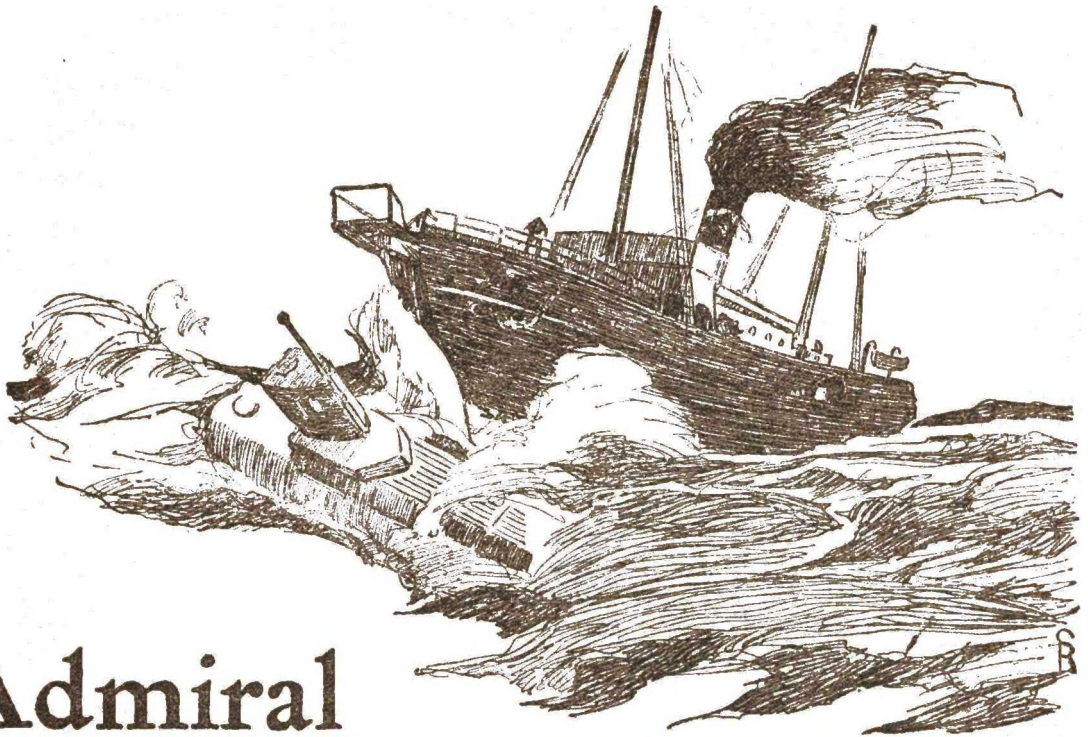


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# Admiral Togo's Remark

By Thomas H. Raddall

"Old sailors never die—they simply fades away."

**O**LD ships and old men. The War brought them forth—the old men from the trim little cottages of their retirement, the old ships from shadowy anchorages in the marine Styx of their abandonment, and gave them both a brief glimpse of glory to lighten the end of their days. Many of the old ships vanished from the face of the waters in the stress of the struggle, and not a few of the old men, for the War was no respecter of ships or persons and there were so many kinds of sudden death lurking in the sea. The rest carried valiantly on. Let it always be remembered that the young men and the strong ships faced only the common enemy—but the old brigade battled with rust and rheumatics as well. The bugle notes of peace formed the last lingering cadence of their swan song.

The old men went quietly back to their  
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cottages on the shores of the seven seas, conscious of good work well done, and were seen on the sea lanes no more. The old ships, less fortunate, were dropped like so many worn-out muskets at the cry of peace. In 1919, you saw them moored side by side, rusty and decrepit, in the forgotten backwaters of a hundred ports. And then they disappeared. The ship breakers got the sorry best of them: the rest, stripped of everything salable, were towed out to sea and given a grave in the deep water. They had served their ends, and the fierce competition of the peace trade was not for such as they. So passes, we are told, the glory of the world.

The incident of the *Salvador*, which blazed across the enemy newspapers in the stirring spring of 1917, arose from the association of an old man, an old ship and an old gun—three veterans that came from

three wide-flung corners of the earth to make a brief momentous voyage together. Of the three only the old man saw the armistice. The old ship went down off Finisterre, the bottom blown out of her, and she took the old gun with her. But that was after the incident of which I write.

The old man was one Captain Malcolm Christie, who had followed the trade of his Scottish ancestors for forty years, sail and steam, and finally had come to rest in the Nova Scotia home town of his wife. A wise woman, she had turned his somewhat restless attention to the cultivation of a garden, and the old man soon became something of an expert, exhibiting his flowers every year at the local horticulture show. Summer visitors to Rivermouth were wont to drive their shining cars out to the captain's of an evening, partly for the seaward view, but mostly for a glimpse of his magnificent flower beds. The War found him there in his snug little house at the harbor mouth, where the sound and smell of the sea were near and strong.

He was deep-rooted there. It is doubtful if even the War call could have moved him back to the sea life over the fierce opposition of his wife. But the death of his only son with the Canadians in France made a difference that neither his wife nor his flowers could offset. Within a month the old man sailed for South America at the request of a Halifax shipping firm to take over their latest purchase.

The purchase lay in a backwater of Rio harbor where she had been forgotten for years, a wheezy old cable-repair ship, worn out in the service of Brazil and laid aside. Her lines were not bad, for she had been built for general patrol work as well as cable repair, and she had a pair of tall, raked masts that hinted somehow of speed. She had two big tanks for holds, where miles of cable had been coiled in times past, and a huge sheave over her clipper bow that betrayed her former business. Accommodations had been princely, for the forecastle had housed a crew of forty, and there were ornate mahogany-trimmed officers' quarters down aft under the poop. The midships cabins had been occupied by the engine-room staff, with two testing rooms for the cable electricians.

Outwardly, once Christie had holystoned the oak decks to a glistening salty whiteness and covered her rusty shell with a heavy coat of warship gray, she was not

bad to look upon. But inwardly she was a ship-chandler's attic, filled with worn-out machinery and fittings of a bygone day, not to mention cockroaches and rats, and other denizens not on the inventory. Rust and the penetrating rot of the tropics were deep in her bones. Her engine room was a mechanical morgue. Her cylinders were worn and scored beyond belief, and the less said about the boilers the better. The thrust was out of line like a snake's back and operated, Christie's chief engineer declared, like the crank shaft of an eight-cylinder gas engine. The ship generally was so decrepit that the Brazilian port authorities told each other she would come apart like the one-horse shay before she had gone a mile. Her name, seen dimly on the counter, was *Salvador*.

The chief engineer, a man named John Bunn, from the Tyneside, looked her engine over carefully under questioning gaze of the old man.

"Well," said Christie at last, "what'll you need?"

"A new engine," said Bunn, and blinked.

"Tosh!" said the old man. "Have ye never heard what comes o' puttin' new wine in old bottles? New engine indeed!"

"There's a sight o' difference," Bunn pointed out, "atween auld wine an' auld machinery. Wine improvin' wi' the years an' machinery——"

"Spoken like the damn Geordie tinker ye are!"

Bunn grinned under his flowing red mustache. "Weel, seein' there's no new engine to be had anyhow, I think I can make 'er go."

"If you can make her go," the old man said, "I'll keep her afloat." And they shook hands upon as dubious a bargain as the port of Rio ever saw.

The *Salvador* lurched forth on a hot morning in the spring of 1917. Her machinery shuddered and complained in a way that was little short of alarming, but under the nursing of a profane Tyneside wizard it nudged the ship along at a strained six knots. There were troubles aplenty en route, but she arrived safe in Halifax harbor by the grace of Heaven and a miracle of seamanship and the wit of a "damn Geordie tinker."

Her new owners, with one eye on the junk price they had paid for her, and the other on the ever-soaring freight rates, fairly chortled with glee. Old Christie

had barely made fast when the junior partner, a young man with ideas, came bustling aboard to look her over.

"Now, in view of this submarine business," he told the old man, "we've got to do one of two things. Either put her under neutral registry or get after the admiralty to give us a gun for self-defense."

Christie fixed the young man with a cold blue eye. "Neutral registry? That means bargain' about the ocean wi' the national flag painted all over her, gaudy as a street woman, an' lit up at night like a church—as if she ain't target enough as she is. D'ye read the papers, mister? They're sinkin' neutral ships these days. An' besides, what self-respectin' submarine would waste a torpedo on the like o' her? All her cargo space is in those two tanks an' she eats coal like a blast furnace when she's doin' a bare six knots. Why, the War'll be over afore she's made two trips across."

The junior partner waved protesting fingers. "Oh, now, captain, not so bad as all that. You must remember freights are up in the clouds, and the War barely under-way. Take for example the freight on coal from Tyne to Genoa. Before the War it was——"

"Five shillin' a ton, an' lucky to get it!"

"And now, captain, it's five quid! Five pounds sterling a ton!"

"The world," old Christie said solemnly, "is ravin' mad."

"And besides, captain, the ship looks rather good, you know. Which reminds me that we ought to change her name. *Salvador* may be all right for a Brazilian cable-repair boat, but it doesn't mean a thing up here. Do you know, I thought of naming her *Effie May Spurgeon* after my wife?"

"Good Lord," said Captain Christie solemnly.

The junior partner was slightly annoyed and looked it. "You have a better suggestion perhaps?" "The doddering old fossil!" he thought.

"Young man," said the skipper impressively, "if you're goin' to change her name call her the *Whited Sepulcher*, for she the whitedest damn sepulcher that ever sailed the seas. But remember this—garlic by any other name'd smell as sweet."

"Well"—the junior partner was nettled but still politic—"we'll compromise and leave the name and registry the way they are. But"—he tapped the mahogany table

impressively—"we've got to have a gun." "You've got to know how to handle these old shellbacks," he thought; "give and take, that's the system."

The old man gave a sardonic grin. "Gun? Where from? I know they're armin' merchant ships as fast as they can, but I also happen to know that guns are mighty scarce—on this side o' the water, anyway. An' we're due to sail in seven days."

The junior partner smiled a sweet triumphant smile. "I've been making a few inquiries of the naval authorities here, though, and I think they can fix us up. The government's bought a lot of artillery lately from the Japanese, for the arming of merchant ships. Some of it arrived here recently across country via Vancouver. And they'll provide us with a crew or we can ship some ratings who've taken the gunnery course for merchant seamen at London. They've turned the Crystal Palace into a big gunnery school for merchant marine crews, did you know? We'll have a gun all right." And that was that.

**I**N the course of negotiations with the Halifax authorities the old man found himself cooling his heels in the navy yard for two successive afternoons. The trim gardens around the living quarters interested him for a while, but he found that no one there knew or cared a hoot about the more difficult kinds of roses, and he took himself thence in high dudgeon. "They're a tripin' lot o' nasturtium farmers," he told himself bitterly.

Down on the quay he captured a young naval officer by the simple process of hooking a bony finger in the young man's buttonhole. "Show me a submarine," he said abruptly.

The young man looked his astonishment. "Your outfit," went on the old man patiently, "is fittin' me up with a gun, an' I'd like to see what manner o' target I'm goin' to have."

The youngster protested business elsewhere, but the old man was not to be balked and so he spent an amusing afternoon showing the ancient mariner over an old submarine belonging to the harbor defense. Christie asked a steady stream of questions which the young man answered patiently and simply, as to a child.

As they were recrossing the gangplank to the quay the old man put his chin up

and said bluntly, "I think these things are verra much overrated."

"How so?" asked the young man in great surprise.

Old Christie counted the points off on the horny fingers of his hand. "Well, to begin with, they're verra nigh blind. Imagine sittin' down about sea level with a good chop on the water, tryin' to see some-thing through that overgrown telescope affair! Then, s'posin' you see a target; you've got to creep along under water at a speed no greater than the old *Salvador's*. an' aim the whole damn submarine afore you can fire a torpedo. An' afore you can aim you've got to figger the other fella's course an' speed pretty fine, so your torpedo will fetch up with him at the given point. An' what'll the other fella be doin' while you're goin' through this fandango? If you're near enough to see him he's near enough to see your telescope shearin' through the water like a harpooned swordfish." He closed his stiff upstanding fingers into a knotty fist and shook it at the submarine.

The young man shook his head indulgently. "You're way off, sir. And besides, you're forgetting the sub can come to the top and shell you."

"Tosh!" said the old man. "You can't sink a steel ship with a shell or two. But one shot in the hull of that tin fish would make a lobster pot of her. I tell you, there's too many fellas sailin' the seas in a blue funk, ready to 'bandon ship at the first scare. That's what causes the shippin' losses. I'm verra glad I came down here, young man. I've lost a lot o' unwholesome respect for the damn things."

"And, damn it," the young officer related later in the mess, "the old boy wasn't kidding, either!"

**T**HE old man returned to the *Salvador* and turned his attention to something nearer his heart. The saloon skylight had taken his eye. It was an immense hatch that split the poop fore-and-aft and literally formed a glass roof for the mahogany-trimmed magnificence of the saloon. The like of it had never been seen in the port of Halifax, and longshoremen were already referring to the *Salvador* as "the boat with the hothouse on her stern." It is possible that old Christie got his notion from the unconscious wit of the stevedores, though the skylight had fas-

cinated him all the way up from Rio. At any rate, he announced to all and sundry that it was just the place for a few flowers and the like, and proceeded forthwith to install shelves and potted plants, mostly geraniums, which he purchased inexpensively from a florist ashore.

He had racks fitted about the pots so they would not come adrift when the *Salvador* rolled, and he instructed the steward in a series of exhaustive lectures how to water and generally take care of the plants. The crew watched all this with open mouths, and the chief officer, a young and impetuous man by the name of Slattery, wagged his head wisely. He had maintained all along that the old man was "a little nutty"—an opinion that was shared generally aboard the *Salvador*. There was one outstanding exception. Nobody ever said anything questionable of Captain Christie within the sharp hearing of John Bunn. There had been a misguided fireman who thumbed his nose at Christie's back within sight and reach of the "damn Geordie tinker," and what happened to that miserable person is history still on the Rio water front. John Bunn loved the old man with a love that is passing woman's, and he had a disposition for War that matched his loyalty and his red mustache.

Two days before the *Salvador* sailed the gun arrived on the wharf, an old four point seven affair with the laundry marks of the Japanese government painted all over it, and ponderous enough for twice the caliber. The old man and Bunn walked around it and surveyed it. "Auld," said Bunn: "auld as the bluidy 'ills."

"Some Port Arthur junk the little yeller boys ha' fished out o' their museums," suggested Christie.

"This 'ere," said Bunn, "was auld when Admiral Togo was a pup. Look at the riflin'—wore to the bone. If the Jappies 'ad used stuff like this at Port Arthur, why, the Rooshians would be there yet."

Mr. Bunn disfigured one of the laundry marks with a big splodge of tobacco juice, and the skipper grunted, "Well, they can shove it aboard. It may scare the submarines off if size means anything."

The question of situation for the gun proved a weighty one. There were indications on the fore-castle head that a light gun had been mounted there at some time or other. "Thirty year an' more in the

sarvice of a spiggotty republic, wi' revolutions twice a year, it's a damn wonder she ain't plastered wi' gun platforms," said Mr. Bunn. But the Japanese colossus needed a lot of room. On the poop, between the after end of the saloon skylight and the stern, was just sufficient space for a platform of the size required, and there "Admiral Togo" was finally installed. The gun barrel stuck out over the stern like a boom, and, as an English quartermaster observed, "If a bloke 'appened to step back a bit 'e'd find 'isself doin' a 'igh dive through the 'Old Man's' flower show."

The young gunnery lieutenant sent from the Halifax navy yard to supervise the installation made an inspection of the deck beams, but what he found there he chose to keep to himself, though he remarked cryptically to the gun crew that they must let "Watch an' pray" be their motto from henceforth.

**T**HE *Salvador* sailed for the seat of War—Browhead for orders—on the appointed day, and people taking their evening stroll across the slopes of Citadel Hill nudged each other and said, "See, there's another ship with a gun. Those submarines won't have things all their own way now." As the junior partner had said, the old *Salvador* looked pretty good at a distance.

The port convoy officers had pulled glum faces when Christie told them his speed, and so they were much relieved when the old man put up his chin and said he was going alone. "It's safer," he said. "This convoy business o' huddlin' together wi' doused lights at night is more dangerous by a damn sight than any o' the submarines."

As Chebucto Head slid astern the old man left the bridge and walked down to the engine-room hatch, where John Bunn stood absorbed. "An' what," asked Christie, "are the wild waves sayin'?"

"That," Bunn said, "is up to you. I'm listenin' to what the engines are sayin'. Did ye know all good steam engines say 'I know I'm on my way, I know I'm on my way'?"

The ghost of a smile stole across the old man's face. "Well, go on. What's this one sayin'?"

John Bunn thrust out his lower lip and blew fiercely into the flowing red mustache. "Listen to 'er, yerself, *tunk-a-tunk-a-tunk!*

'Ow long, oh, Lord, 'ow long, 'ow long, oh, Lord, 'ow long?"

Captain Christie leaned against the hatch and shook with laughter. "Spoken," he gasped, "like — a — damn — Geordie — tinker!"

**T**HE voyage of the *Salvador* was uneventful, with the exception of some minor engine trouble, until she crossed the fiftieth parallel, when she ran into a great white wall of fog that came rolling up from nowhere like a moving cliff in the bright sunshine. For forty-eight hours she wallowed through it, an ant in a world of cotton wool. There was something ominous about the fog. Christie in all his years had never seen the like of it for thickness or continuity, and the forecastle pessimist, a shallow man who claimed to be fey, swore that something dire was about to happen. To more than one of them this fleecy blanket that crept over the war-ridden sea and shut out the sun by day and the stars by night was the very shadow of death. At last the vapor began to lift here and there, and finally the *Salvador* steamed out into the light of a broad afternoon like a train from a tunnel. And into her great adventure.

Plain in the sunshine a scant quarter mile away were two large submarines of the cruiser type, lying alongside each other with crews on deck. They were so much larger than the undersea boat Christie had inspected that the old man fairly gasped. The surprise at this unexpected meeting was mutual. The enemy at once became amazingly active, men seemed to be cutting away lines between the two submarines, and there sounded a confused medley of guttural orders over the water. The *Salvador's* gun crew dropped their several tasks and hustled aft to the four point seven, where they broke out some of the ancient Japanese ammunition that had come with the gun. The paint on the shells was flaking from ten years in a Far Eastern magazine.

Old Christie slammed his helm hard over with the double object of bringing his gun to bear and getting back under cover of the fog. The *Salvador* turned slowly and began to creep away, but the fog was lifting everywhere like a great curtain and Christie's plan of vanishing into it went a-glimmering.

Slattery, who had encountered sub-

marines twice in his wartime career, was for throwing up the sponge, pointing out that the enemy carried two guns apiece, each probably more powerful than "Admiral Togo," and that they could "blow the ol' packet outa the water anyway with a torpedo."

"They've got to submerge afore they can torpedo," snapped the old man with his jaw stuck out six inches, "and even these Crystal Palace gunners of ours can't miss at that range."

The gun crew of the *Salvador* lost no time. The cook and the quartermaster inserted firing charge and shell, the mess-room steward closed the breech with a smart *snick*, and the third engineer glued his eye to the sight and plied the old brass adjusting wheels. One of the submarines was underway by this time, but the other remained strangely motionless, though her gun crews seemed busy enough.

"There's some hellery afoot," muttered the old man, "but damned if I see what it is." At this moment the third engineer pulled the lanyard.

There was a spout of orange flame, followed by an immense cloud of black smoke, and there was a concussion like the crack of doom. Dimly in the murk the entire gun platform seemed to rise bodily off the poop, and the gun itself toppled slowly and awfully backward, like an acrobat doing a backward loop. Under the horrified eyes of Captain Malcolm Christie it fell as fairly on that wonderful skylight as anything could fall, and disappeared into the saloon amid a crash of framework and a tinkle of shattered glass. The long mahogany table, pride of the skipper's heart, went down in ruin under the weight, and the gun fetched up with a crash that shook the *Salvador* from stern to stem. Smoke eddied in black and greasy wreaths about the poop, and, as a minor sound in the general catastrophe, there came the *plop-plop-plop* of falling flowerpots crashing on the cabin floor.

To the gaping watchers on the bridge it seemed like some malign sorcery. At one moment the gun was there, large and ominous; and then it was gone completely, with only a wrecked deck plank or two to tell the tale. The cook, quartermaster and mess-room steward were strewn about the poop like so many ninepins, breathless but unhurt. The third engineer, bowled end over end, went overboard and dropped

away astern of the slowly moving *Salvador*.

Old Christie was first to come out of the trance. He leaped to the engine-room telegraph and shoved the handle in a wild half circle from full ahead to full astern in one fell swoop. A jangle of bells drifted up from the engine-room hatch like the peals of judgment day. John Bunn, blowing fiercely into his bristling mustache, came bellowing along the deck. "Hi! T' second's overboard! Boat away!"

At his urging a motley crew began wrestling with blocks and falls on one of the ancient lifeboats. The boat went down to the water in jerks, first one end and then the other, and finally splashed into the water in an alarming way, but right side up. Somebody unhooked the after fall first, which did not improve matters, since the *Salvador* was now making sternway, and the long oily swells threatened every minute to smash them against the side of the ship. At last they were clear, and they pulled away wildly, oars plashing and fouling each other or waving in air like the back hairs of a caterpillar. They forgot to ship their rudder and went around in two drunken circles before some genius shoved an oar over the stern and brought the boat to some sort of course.

When at long last they overhauled the unfortunate engineer he was still swimming lustily, and they hove him into the boat by the collar of his jacket and the slack of his trousers. His injuries consisted solely of a fast-blackening eye and a badly ruined temper. His temper, it may be of interest to note, recovered fairly well, but he carried the mark of the Japanese gunsight on his eye for many months. The boat crew decided that they were safer there than aboard the ship, and they lay on their oars to watch the course of events. They did not know it, but they had played their unconscious part in the drama of the *Salvador*.

In the meantime, the moving submarine, after a hasty shot that drilled the *Salvador's* funnel neatly, submerged. The periscope made a feather of white spray in an easterly direction for some time and then was lost to sight. The other submarine remained as they had first seen her, gently heaving in the swell, with all her crew on deck. Old Christie said, "Now I know what's up. This feller saw what happened our gun an' ain't even goin' to



move. The other's gone off to square away for a torpedo. I reckon"—reluctantly—"we better 'bandon ship while we've got the chance."

There was a flutter of white aboard the submarine. The second officer, with a glass at his eye, said excitedly, "Say! They're wavin' a shirt on a boat hook!" At the same time two small flags showed on the halyards of a short mast that had suddenly appeared amidships.

"What's that signal he's flyin'?" snapped Christie.

"A checkerboard an' a white fish," replied the second.

"N. C.," said Slattery, "The international distress signal."

They stared at each other in amazement. "Distress?" muttered the old man. "What devil's business is this?"

The shirt began waving vigorously again. Old Christie squared his shoulders. "Lower another boat, mister. An' see that they're more handy wi' this one. I don't want those fellers to think we're a lot o' farmers altogether."

It was on the tip of Slattery's tongue to say something about the geranium plantation down aft, but he swallowed it and went about his business. A boat went down to the water with the smartness known as "man-o'-war fashion."

As the old man swung a leg overside and hooked his foot in the boat ladder he said in a quiet voice to Slattery, "They're playin' cat an' mouse with us, mister. I reckon they plan to do us all in, in some pet fashion o' their own. Now, I dunno what's goin' to happen when I get over there. Maybe they'll lug me off with 'em—that's been done afore. But you keep steam up, d'ye see? An' be ready to get underway. If they plan to murder the lot of us you can give 'em a chase for it."

"At six knots?" said Slattery in a strangled voice.

"Keep stern to him, mister, an' you'll be a poor target. Wait till we get alongside him an' then get underway. I'll signal wi' somethin' if I want you to stop."

As Christie's boat arrived alongside the submarine he was hailed in excellent English by a tall young man with a peculiar high-domed skull that was entirely bald, and a long face covered with a stubble of yellow beard. He wore the jacket of an officer in the enemy navy, with the ribbon of a decoration upon the breast.

"Good afternoon, captain," he said pleasantly.

"Afternoon," acknowledged Christie bluntly, looking over the faces of the submarine's crew and thinking of his dead son. "What d'ye want?"

"I would like you to come aboard," said the young man, not quite so pleasantly. "We can better talk in my wardroom, not so?"

The old man swung himself aboard. Two enemy sailors were holding the boat with short boat hooks and another was rigging a mat fender to protect it against the steel hull of the submarine.

"This way, please," said the enemy commander, leading the way down through the conning tower to the main control room. They paused there a moment while the old man stared round-eyed at the wheels, dials, and valves that surrounded him. "This boat," said the young man with a proud sigh, "is just three months old. She is a beauty, not so?"

"Beauty," said the old man grimly, "is a word, sir, intended for the peaceful things o' nature, such as flowers an' the like. There's no beauty in an instrument o' death."

"Flowers?" the young man sighed. "Are there flowers any more?"

They passed into the wardroom, a sumptuous little place, with leather-lined settees and shaded lights. The commander produced cigars from a receptacle in the wall, which the old man declined frigidly.

"A liqueur, perhaps?"

"I don't drink."

"With the enemy?" The young man shrugged and lit a cigar.

They sat and eyed each other narrowly, each man trying to guess what lay behind the other's eyes. Several minutes passed in silence. "Well," grunted Christie, "get on with it, mister. What d'ye want?"

The submarine's commander whiffed a blue cloud toward the low ceiling. "Captain, I wish to make terms with you."

The old man snorted. "Mister, I don't know what you're talkin' about."

The submarine commander waved the cigar in a protesting manner. "Oh, come now. You must realize how things stand, captain. That one shot you fired, you know. It gave away the game."

"I know that," grunted Christie, "which is more'n I can say for this palaver o' yours."

The young man put his elbows on the little table and leaned forward earnestly. "Let us put our cards on the table, yes?"

The old man sat up straight and stiff-backed on the cushioned settee. "Your cards, mister, are already on the table, I reckon. Your engines are broken down; ain't that right?"

"Of course! How did you guess?"

Old Christie stroked his chin reflectively. "Well, in the first place, mister, it looked verra peculiar, you layin' here without a move while I'm runnin' away an' trainin' a gun on you. Then I wondered why your friend the other submarine was layin' alongside you, tied up that way, when I first popped out o' the fog. So when I came over here I kept my eyes open, and the first thing I saw was those electric wires still hangin' overside where your friend had cut 'em. I knew, then, that he'd been chargin' your batteries—I know a thing or two about submarines, mister—and so it followed that your Diesels were out o' commission an' your battery was low. The only question was, how much charge did the other feller put into your battery? You didn't move, so I reckon there wasn't much."

The commander made a wry face. "Captain, he had not been charging five minutes when you came along. Of course, your deduction that my Diesels were down because I could not charge batteries is all wrong. The trouble may have been with my dynamo, not so? But I will confess to you that you have guessed right. I have been broken down two days, and I have got this far with the assistance of my friend the other submarine, who abandoned me so hastily. The trouble? The blockade, my friend, which forces us to use bad lubricants. Even my beautiful Diesels cannot run on such stuff."

He seemed so anxious about the fair reputation of his beautiful Diesels that Christie could not forbear a grim smile.

"And so, captain, here I am. And here also, are you. But you must not smile, for I still can fight. I have two six-inch guns, and my crew took first prize at our navy practice not a month ago. Also I am a small target compared with you, no?"

The old man's face was a mask. No one, certainly not the anxious young man with the sweat-beaded bald head, could have guessed the bewilderment that seethed behind his eyes.

"What's your proposition?" he asked calmly.

The submarine commander took a long pull at the cigar. "Just this. That you surrender your ship to me at once, without further unpleasantness. I intend to sink my boat and run the blockade back to Germany in your steamer. I, in return, guarantee to drop you and your crew in the lifeboats, somewhere off the Norwegian or Danish coast."

The old man scratched his gray beard with slow fingers. "Humph. How do I know you'll do all this? How do I know you won't take my ship an' go to raisin' hell about the Atlantic?"

The commander stiffened. "I give you my word, captain. The word of an officer of his imperial majesty's navy."

"An' then," pursued the grim old man, "s'posin' you fall foul o' the blockade? You'll be blowed outa the water afore you can say 'boo,' an' us with you."

The submarine commander shook his head so violently that the neglected ash of the cigar shattered unheeded down the front of his trim jacket. "If we meet one of your warships, captain, we will surrender. We will be flying a neutral flag—Norwegian, Spanish, anything—your warships will not fire on a neutral flag without inquiries first."

"Which is more'n you can say for your navy," said the old man bluntly.

The commander flushed. The crimson spread far up over the shining dome of his head. "Pah!" he snapped. "We waste words—and time. Do you accept my word and my terms? Or shall I blow your ship to pieces? You have one gun, a six-inch by the size and sound of it, of the disappearing type—an innovation on merchant ships, not so? But how long will it last against my battery?"

"Disappearing what?" asked Christie in a round, round voice.

The commander shot a glance full of amused contempt at the old man. "Are you trying to fool me? If so you are a fool yourself. Do you not know that your fool gun crew fired one shot before the disappearing apparatus was operated? We have seen your teeth, my friend. Or perhaps I should say, tooth?"

There was a commotion of running feet on the steel deck overhead, and a voice tube on the wardroom wall bellowed surprisingly. "Heavens!" shouted the young man.

and dashed out through the control room and up into the conning tower with Christie at his heels.

Slattery was carrying out his skipper's instructions. The *Salvador* was steaming away to the southward at her best gait. The submarine commander barked a string of orders that jerked his gun crews into station like so many puppets on a string. An unholy light was shining in Christie's eyes.

"Hold hard!" he bellowed and seized the commander's arm. "D'ye want to be blown out o' the water?" He picked up the boat hook which still bore the useful white shirt and waved it vigorously. There was an answering flutter from the *Salvador* and she came slowly about.

The commander's eyes by this time were, as Christie related afterward, "stickin' out like shoe buttons." Assuredly this terrible old man was mad, and yet—

"Take another look at that ship, mister," said Christie boldly. "A good look this time. An' just think back on all that's taken place since we first popped out o' the fog."

The young man glared long and hard at the now approaching *Salvador*. A monstrous thought simmered into his consciousness. He looked back suspiciously at the fiery-eyed old man and again at the ship.

"Lord! Is it so? Those tall masts—too tall for any merchant steamer—for a powerful wireless, of course. And her lines. And high in the water—no cargo, or very little."

"Never heard of the mystery ships?" asked the old man softly.

The young man rapped himself sharply on the bald skull with his knuckles. "Ah! I see it all now. So that was why my friend run away. I might have known! He spent a bad half hour with one of these ships off Urshant a few weeks ago. How lucky for him that your gun crew—how do you say—let out of the bag the cat?"

"Lucky for him all right," growled the old man. "If it hadn't been for those ninnies at the No. 4 gun I'd ha' bagged the pair o' ye."

The commander stared with interest at the *Salvador*. "So that is a, let me see—a Q ship?"

"Then you have heard of us," said the old man blandly.

"Ah, yes. We have been warned about

them even since the *Baralong* affair. But they cruise mostly in the war area. We did not even suspect one so far west. Well, captain, there is nothing for it but surrender, that is obvious. I am lucky, I suppose, to be alive. Most of your ships fire on a submarine without asking questions. But I suppose your desire to lure my friend back again is the reason why I am still here."

They watched the *Salvador* moving slowly nearer.

"It is a wonderful disguise, in a way," admired the commander, "although the general appearance of your ship is suspicious, now that I think of it. Who ever saw a merchant ship, a tramp steamer, look like that?"

"Who indeed?" agreed Christie heartily.

"Heavens! She creeps along at six knots, when you can tell by her lines she can do fifteen or twenty. Marvelous! And not a trace of a gun. All of the disappearing type, without a doubt. And a torpedo tube or two, no? Not to mention depth charges and all the other hellish things you have invented to fight us. And, ah, I see the—what you call them—panic party, returning to the ship. They were perfect, captain. I congratulate you and them. How you must have drilled them! Never did I see such magnificent panic. Superb!"

"Doubtless," said the old man with irony, "you've seen plenty in your line o' business. Well, I'm goin' back to my ship, now that I've seen your boat. I want you all to stay here on deck an' no monkey business. I want this submarine for a souvenir. I warn you if you open your sea cocks I'll leave you to drown like rats."

The commander's face fell so swiftly as to reveal that Christie had guessed a cherished idea. "You leave me no choice," he said stiffly.

"On second thought," added the imperturbable old man. "I reckon I'll take you aboard with me for security. You're a smart young feller, an' I want you where I can keep an eye on you. Your crew will stay here on deck while I consult my superiors by wireless. The *Salvador's* a hush-hush affair, d'ye see, an' I'm not altogether sure I ought to let even you come aboard. But I'll take a chance on that."

As the young officer swung a leg over the *Salvador's* rail and viewed the nondescript group of bewildered men on deck he exclaimed again. "Marvelous! Really

marvelous, captain. Not a gun, not a trace of armament visible. And all your fighting crew below decks, yes? What discipline! And the disguises of these men here, and—you will pardon me, sir—even yourself. Perfect!"

"Just sit down on the hatch there, mister," said the skipper of the *Salvador*, "while I do some talking on the wireless."

Inside the little wireless shack there was a lot of explaining to do. Slattery did not share the skipper's triumph. "Looks to me," he said morosely, "as if we're still in the soup. There's enough enemies over yonder to swamp the bunch of us, and we ain't got so much as a pea shooter. An' here this officer aboard here, liable to see through your bluff any minute."

"The trouble with you, mister," said the old man, "is that you can't see any farther'n the end o' your nose. S'posin' this commander does find out, what can he do? His crew is over there on the sub, an' the sub can't move."

"Then," Slattery told him earnestly, "let's get outa here a-kinin'."

"Not at all," declared the old man stubbornly.

"Why not?" demanded his chief officer. "We can move an' she can't."

"Oh, aye. But she can shoot an' we can't. There's the joker, mister. She could paste the daylight out of us afore we got out o' range. An' besides, I want to turn that sub over to a warship."

He turned to the wireless operator. "Sparks, get busy with this key o' yours, an' bring a warship here in a hurry."

The company exchanged skeptical glances at this, and Slattery muttered, "You'd think there was a warship every hundred yards, to hear him talk."

Even John Bunn shook his head and said, "It's a nice 'ow-d'ye-do, so it is. We've got a bear by the tail, we 'ave, an' we can't 'old on, an' we're afeared to let go."

Now there is no reasonable explanation of the next surprising action of Captain Malcolm Christie. Perhaps he was a little mad, after all, or else you must accept his subsequent confession that he merely wanted to see the submarine commander's face drop.

The fact remains that he deliberately ushered the submarine commander down aft to view the "disappearing" gun. At the head of the short companionway the

old man stepped politely aside and motioned the commander to go ahead. As the young man entered the saloon doorway his mouth fell open foolishly at the sight before his eyes. The sun was pouring through the demolished skylight upon the lone gun of the *Salvador* as a theater spotlight falls upon the chief actor on the stage. It wallowed amid the ruins on the saloon floor, festooned with a riot of green creepers and gay geraniums, like a great nightmare reptile in a prehistoric swamp.

The commander's glance was wild but all-embracing. Particularly he noted the gun base, to which some fragments of the wrecked platform still firmly clung, and the sheared bolts that had held it all too briefly to the poop. He uttered an exclamation in so explosive a voice that he fairly spat the words, and he sprang squarely around facing Christie like a wild cat, all teeth and claws. "Young man," said the skipper softly, "belay that. You've lost out in a big game o' bluff, m'son."

The commander hitched his shoulders and opened his hands resignedly. "You win, captain. After all, I did my best. And I was bound to be caught some time, limping along that way. And there will be no disgrace, yes! My friend will report that I was captured or sunk by a mystery ship."

"Right," said the old man, whimsically. "an' that's no lie. The mystery bein' what keeps her from fallin' apart."

They returned to the deck, a picture of victor and vanquished, dejection and jubilation. Christie went to the wireless room. "What luck, Sparks?"

The wireless man hitched his phones off his hot ears and said wearily. "I sent out S O S, an' A L L O—that's the new war-time distress signal—an' the general call to any Allied warship."

"Any answer?" jerked Christie. "That's the main thing."

Sparks shook his head. "Warships never answer anybody. Never talk except among themselves if they can help it. The subs may have direction finders, see? But if there's one within reach she's well on her way by this time. I told the wide world we'd blundered into a submarine rendezvous, and that one sub was lying on the surface with engine trouble. But, I'm wondering, sir, about the sub. What if they picked up my stuff, eh? The fat'll be in the fire."

The old man stared from Sparks to Slattery and to John Bunn. "That's right, laddie. I didn't think o' that."

"They've got an aerial loop," said Bunn.

"That," Slattery said positively, "is the net defense gear."

"Net nothing!" shouted Christie, snapping his fingers in vexation, "I remember seein' the insulators, now that I think of it."

As if to end the argument there was a puff of smoke from the submarine and a shell whined fearfully overhead. It must have cleared the funnel top by a good fifty feet, but everybody—the commander included—flung themselves flat on the deck. The enemy gunners warmed to their work. The third shot blew a forward winch to smithereens, the fourth drilled a lifeboat without exploding, and the fifth burst on the poop, driving murderous oak splinters right and left. One gun then began firing at the *Salvador's* water line, leaving the other to pepper the upper works.

"We've got to do something quick," bellowed Christie. He turned to Bunn and thrust him toward the deck. "Get below, ye damn tinker, an' give me all the steam you've got! I'm goin' to ram the blighter!"

"You'll sink us," snapped Bunn. "The hull won't stand it."

The old man shook a bony fist under the engineer's nose. "That's none o' your business. Remember our bargain, you maunderin' Tyneside donkeyman! Give me the steam an' I'll keep her on her feet!"

The *Salvador* swept slowly around and headed grimly for the blazing guns. Slattery went down, badly gashed with a shell splinter, and was dragged into the fore-castle. Christie ordered all hands to lie down on the main deck, and he mounted the bridge and took the deserted wheel himself. The quartermaster lay dead in a corner. Down in the fireroom John Bunn drove his crew with oaths and blows.

"Will the boilers stand any more?" shouted his second.

"The scale on 'em will hold 'em together," bellowed Bunn, and blew into the red mustache.

A shell penetrated the ancient plates not three feet above the water line and exploded in the hold with a boom that threw the hatch covers high in the air. Another went into the galley with a whoop and drove the pots and pans in all directions. Another wrecked the starboard side of the

bridge and drove a piece of hot steel against the binnacle by Christie's foot with a dull clang. For the grim old viking on the bridge nothing existed but that spitting target and the wheel in his hands. An old rhyme was going through his head.

"The boy—*wham!*—stood on the burnin' deck—*wham!*

"Whence—*wham! wham!*—all but he—*wham!*—had fled."

And what came next? His seething brain puzzled over it. There were so many variations.

"A sea gull—*wham!*—dropped a hard-boiled—*wham!*—egg, and hit him—*wham!*—on the head."

No. That wasn't right. Start again.

"The boy stood on—*wham! wham!*—the burnin' deck.

"Whence all but he—"

The *Salvador* was on top of her prey at last. There came a wild yell from the submarine, men diving hastily overboard and clawing frantically at the water to get away from under. Under the first impact the submarine heeled until it seemed her conning tower must go under water. The *Salvador* brought up all standing with a jar that shook her fore-and-aft, and there was a tremendous sound of steel on steel. Then the submarine seemed to roll upright and sank so quickly that very few on the *Salvador* saw her go. The old man rang stop, walked three steps away from the wheel, and collapsed.

**S**UCH was the episode of the *Salvador*. The Allied press made no note of it, mostly because it was Allied policy to surround the sinking of submarines with a cloak of mystery. It was a policy which bore fruit in 1918, when submarine crews at the enemy base were first to join the revolt and cry for peace. To the enemy view their submarines simply vanished into the jaws of dim gray ships that waited, waited, waited on the great sea wastes. It was the enemy press, lashed to fury by the imaginative story a submarine captain told, that screamed wildly and loudly for old Christie's blood.

I am an indifferent reader of the enemy tongue, but I often amuse myself with the clippings. One paper announced that merchant ships were being armed with special devices to entrap submarines contrary to the rules of warfare. The rules of warfare! Another declared that under

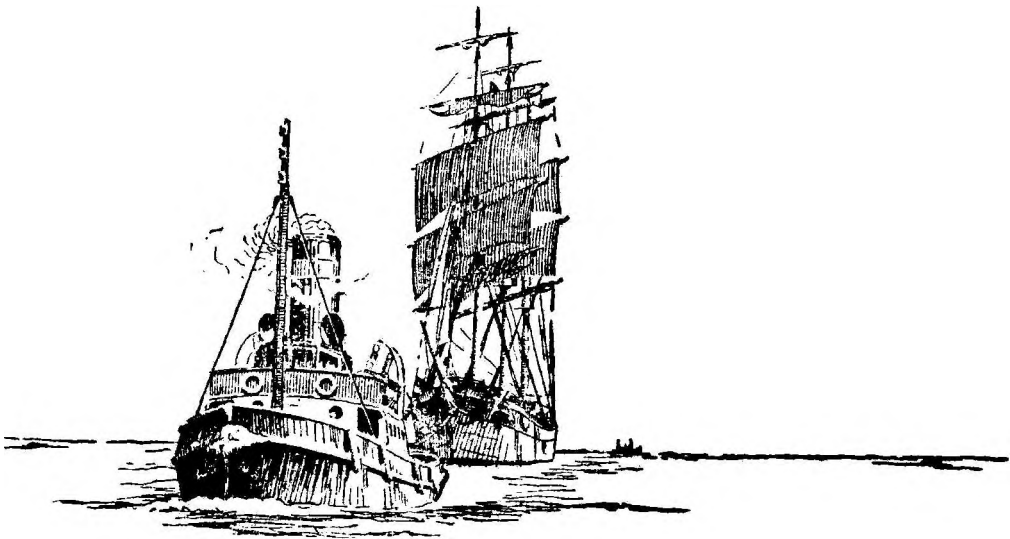
no circumstances could these mystery ships be called combatants. They were guerrillas, franc-tireurs, and the men who served aboard them could be shot as such if captured. The example of Captain Fryatt of the steamer *Brussels* was quoted in a dozen enemy papers. One of them found room among its pictures of kilted English for a cartoon showing the enemy David aiming a sling at the great brutal merchant mariner, who did not resemble Christie in the least.

The enemy submarine service was more practical. A description of the *Salvador* was circulated and special plans were laid. When Christie left Bordeaux on his return voyage he struck across the Bay and cannily followed the neutral Spanish coastal waters around Finisterre. But neutral waters didn't mean much to enemy submarines in the summer of 1917. They slammed two torpedoes into Christie's ship under the very nose of a Spanish patrol,

and the old *Salvador* went to the bottom like the rusty can she was. Christie did not get back to his wife and flowerbeds until the Christmas following the armistice, when he walked out of hospital and shattered the predictions of the Spanish doctors, who had said that no man of his years could survive such wounds.

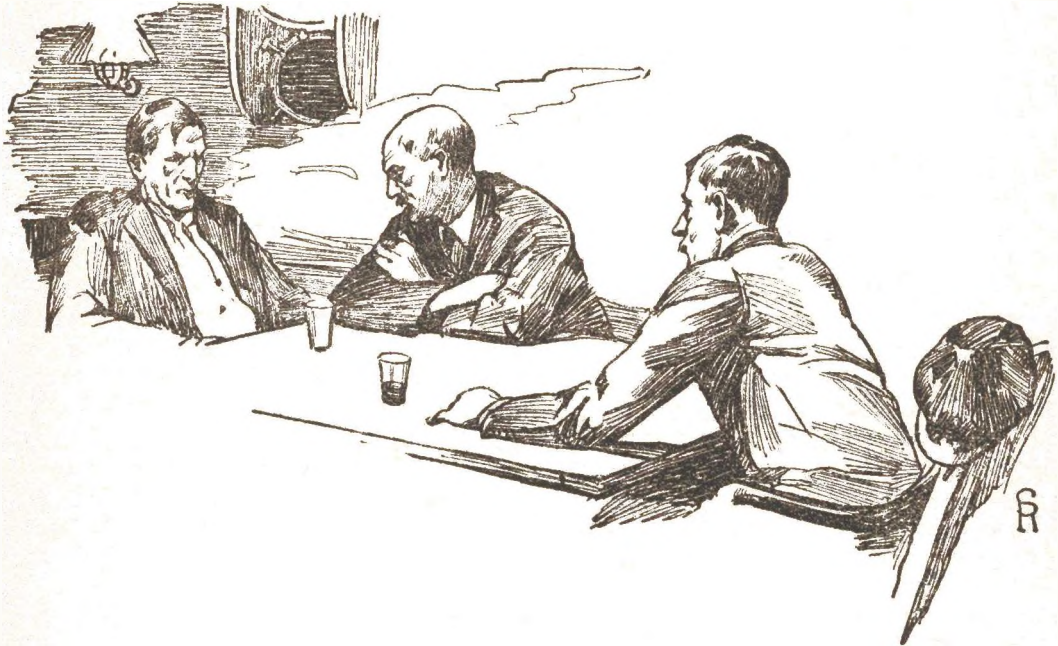
The incident of the *Salvador* had been forgotten in the general maelstrom of the War, and so there was no flourish of trumpets when the old man came home. Which suited him very well. His one subsequent gleam of publicity I have culled from the pages of the *Pine County Record and Farmers' Advocate*. It sets forth in dull fashion the doings of the Pine County Horticultural Society, and near the end it says:

Two new roses were awarded special prizes by the exhibition committee. These were the rather strangely named "Salvador" and the "Admiral Togo," both exhibited by M. Christie, well-known retired master mariner of Rivermouth.



# The Ghost Drink

By Lawrence G. Green



White men in the West African fever ports.

**W**HEN night comes to Port Brazza there remains, usually, only the club—and the bottles. The day is for trading. Cloth and cooking pots, guns and gin for ivory and coco, mahogany and palm oil.

In the evening, tired white men try to forget the infernal bargaining that makes up their lives in a black world. But they cannot escape. From the native town comes the booming of drums. Mosquitoes whine their sinister promise of malaria against the netted windows of the club. Hot darkness settles down over everything.

Then comes a night when the exiles of Port Brazza may live again for a few hours in the smooth world they have left. This was the night of that marvelous relief. John Marston, trader, allowed himself one sundowner more than his strict ration, and lifted his glass with a cheerful sense of anticipation. Glancing seaward, he saw at last the smoke of the French mail steamer.

The club bar emptied. On the veranda

Frenchman jostled Dane, Swiss clapped American on the back, Englishman joked with Portuguese. They had waited six weeks for this night, and they would wait six weeks before another mail steamer dropped anchor off Port Brazza.

"You'll learn to appreciate this break in the monotony," remarked Marston to a young store clerk, fresh from Liverpool, at his table. "This one night away from canned food and Negro faces makes it just possible to hang on in Port Brazza until the blessed day when you go on leave. Are you coming on board the *Lac Chad* for dinner to-night?"

"It seems the thing to do," replied the clerk. "I suppose every one goes?"

"There won't be a white man in Port Brazza at dinner time to-night," answered Marston. "Well—hardly one. Old Somers, of the *Equatorial*, never goes now; but he is a queer fish, anyway. I used to call for him and try to persuade him to come along. In West Africa you must mix with your fellow humans sometimes. A hermit lives dangerously. When you

mind feeds only on itself you are finished. But Somers would never listen to me. He has kept to himself for months now. There must be some reason; but I am sorry."

"That's Somers, isn't it?" asked the clerk, pointing to a thin man striding past the club toward the wharf; a man whose face was gray with weariness, whose hunched shoulders suggested a melancholy which contrasted strangely with the gayety of the drinkers on the club veranda.

Marston started out of his long cane chair in surprise. "Yes—that is Somers: dressed for dinner and going out to the *Lac Chad*. There are his boys, paddling his boat up to the wharf. Somers! Come and have an appetizer. You're too early."

Somers shook his head gravely. "No, thanks, old man. I want to get on board early. I'll look out for you there." No one but Marston would have invited him into the club, for he gave hospitality to no man; and there was a note of gratitude in his voice. He passed on—this lonely man with his air of sad mystery.

The traders drifted away to change into the starched white clothes of tropical formality. Out in the bay the porthole lights of the *Lac Chad* gleamed brightly, offering luxuries seldom enjoyed in West Africa—ice and French cooking, an orchestra, and the still rarer music of a woman's laugh. Marston went down to the beach thoughtfully that night.

**B**OAT after boat swung alongside the gangway of the *Lac Chad*. Exile after exile hurried to the lighted decks, to the bright drawing-rooms and lounges that had come like an alluring corner of civilization into this forgotten backwater of Africa.

In Port Brazza there were not a dozen white women; hardly an unmarried girl. Even these few brave wives had paid the toll of the tropics with their beauty. Here, in the *Lac Chad*, were complexions that the heat had not blanched, eyes unwrinkled by the sun, hair that had not lost its luster. Farther south there were larger towns than Port Brazza, where the climate was more merciful. To such places would the *Lac Chad* carry these wives and daughters of officials, these women who seemed so exquisite and adorable to the traders of Port Brazza.

So the men, with hungry eyes, feasted and forgot for a few hours what life de-

nied them ashore. This was their night of dreams. A bugle sounded. They passed down the staircase to the glittering saloon. White stewards served caviar, champagne, and dishes refreshing to palates long weary of the rough cookery of savages. A night of forgetfulness and illusion.

Marston had chosen to sit at the table of the only man who seemed unable to forget. Wine and music had not raised the gloom which seemed to have become part of Somers. There had been a time, Marston remembered, when Somers had been one of the humorists of the club, ready to raid a friend's house at midnight or take part in any of the violent jokes that men carry out desperately when the grimness of West Africa stretches their nerves to breaking point. But for a year Somers had not entered the club—and in Port Brazza a year means more than just the summer sun and winter snow of healthier lands. Especially when your house boys carry the empty whisky bottles to their huts with fatal regularity. One a night, two a night—

The traders of Port Brazza shunned Somers. On board the *Lac Chad* that night only Marston and Doctor Dubois, the wise old surgeon of the liner, spoke to this man who lived within himself. At dinner, when a man should warm to his companions, they tried to bring him out of his unchanging mood of sad reserve. The doctor, with his long experience of the mentality that West Africa develops in the human mind, asked questions careless and searching. He had known Somers in the days when life went well; and he wanted to find out. Marston joked and probed cautiously.

It was Dubois who sensed the trouble first. Somers went up to the smoking room before the others, and as he walked away, Dubois caught Marston by the arm. "Your man has been bewitched," he declared. "He broods over something that drink cannot wipe from his mind—not for one evening. I have seen men weakened by fever and sunstroke and every pestilence of this black country. But with Somers the ill is not so much in his body. He reminds me of a man who sailed with us a few voyages ago and disappeared at sea. He has the symptoms. He thinks of hideous things."

"Conscience?" asked Marston. "He



lives straight enough as far as I know—except for the drink. It must be something that happened here in Port Brazza, for he was all right when he arrived. If he would only speak——”

“A little patience,” suggested Doctor Dubois. “To-night we will continue to force our company on the inscrutable Somers. What is on the mind must come out. To-night he has broken his habit of remaining alone at his store. It is possible that he will also decide to relate his troubles to willing listeners.”

They drank black coffee in the smoking room with Somers. A cool breeze was coming in from the sea, dance music drifted through the portholes, little glasses of red and green and aged-brown liquid gave a final superb touch to a dinner that might have been served in a Paris restaurant. On this night of illusion Africa receded, thousands of miles.

**Y**OU have not visited us for a long time, Monsieur Somers,” remarked Doctor Dubois, offering his cigar case. “Is Port Brazza so entertaining that you scorn the *Lac Chad*?”

“For a year,” said Somers deliberately—and they knew at once that the secret nightmare was to be revealed—“for a year I have hardly spoken to a white man in Port Brazza. Would you believe me if I told you why?”

Doctor Dubois leaned forward. “There is only one safe thing for you to do now, Somers. You must open your mind, pour out every memory that is distasteful to you. We are your friends.”

“We know that you will tell us the truth, Somers,” added Marston. “The doctor is right.”

Somers told.

**T**HERE had been trouble among the throng of natives in the tin-roofed store of the Equatorial Trading Company that day. Somers and his half-educated black assistants were dealing with the incessant demand for cheap alarm clocks, bright cloths, alcohol and tobacco. The canoes had come down the river with all manner of “trade,” and the natives had money.

Out of the corner of his watchful eye Somers had seen a thief—a wizened, cunning man with the tribal cuts of the Conakra people on his forehead. Not many

of them reached Port Brazza, for their country lies far up the river, almost beyond the influence of French officials and collectors of taxes. This man showed none of that honesty which is sometimes a pleasing mark of the primitive native of the interior. His neck sagged like the scrawny neck of a fowl. Somers suspected that certain property of the Equatorial Trading Company was disappearing into the pouch which the thief had cultivated in his throat. An old African trick, but an exasperating one. Somers caught the man at the door and forced him roughly to disgorge. All trading stopped instantly, and before an admiring horde the thief coughed up a cheap nickel watch. There was a whip of rhinoceros hide in the store for such occasions. Somers used it. Black faces split into yells of amusement.

A native wrongdoer fears ridicule more than the pain of punishment; and this Conakra man limped away with his eyes full of shame and hatred. Somers returned to the drudgery of the store, cursing a task that kept him sweating without a moment of peace in a reeking atmosphere of black humanity. Mind and body ached. The only comfort was the expectation of a complete break with African monotony that night, when the French liner was due at Port Brazza.

The last chattering customers streamed out of the compound at sundown. Somers left the store thankfully. “Boy! Bring whisky!” he ordered as he reached his veranda; and the servant hurried out with the reviving drink. Somers dozed for a few minutes. When he awoke the bottle and the siphon were at his side. Through half-closed eyes he watched the native fishermen passing in single file with their basket traps along the beach in front of his bungalow. One man, walking away with them, seemed familiar. It was the Conakra thief. Well, he had been punished. Somers turned to his drink, trying to wipe out all the feverish impressions of the day’s work.

He dressed slowly, his mind still running steadily on the line of thought that he wished to banish. The scent of the tropical forest lay heavy in the breathless night. Somers walked limply down the pathway. As he paused to open the gate something brushed against his face, clung horribly to his skin. He stepped back quickly. The sweat broke out again as

he stared at the dark thing hanging from the high gatepost. It was a little octopus. The feel of the thing had sickened him, and he swore bitterly to himself. The natives looked upon a young octopus as a delicacy; but he would see that they did not hang their food to his gatepost again. Damn Port Brazza, anyway. When he had made his pile he would get out of Africa—for good.

But that, he realized, would not be so easy. Africa clung to a man—like an octopus. Sometimes the exile escaped; more often he waited too long and paid the toll of the tropics.

**I**T was in this mood of deepest depression that Somers went out to the *Lac Chad* that night a year ago—to forget Africa and enjoy himself. But with such thoughts irritating his nerves, it was impossible to find relaxation in anything. The luxury of the liner, in which others reveled, seemed unreal to Somers—an unsubstantial glimpse of a happy world which would be snatched away before he could grasp what it offered. It would be foolish to live in a dream that would dissipate before morning into the cruel fact of life in Port Brazza.

Somers, having drunk liberally at dinner, dodged his friends and went out on deck alone. The after end of the ship was quiet. It suited his mood, and he strolled along into the gloom of the lower deck, smoking a cigarette. Africa moved beside him—that intangible presence which refused to be shaken off. As he reached the stern of the ship a figure in white clothing came round a deck house. A man of his own height, also smoking.

"I am going in for a swim," announced the man without a word of introduction. "Coming along?"

Somers, well knowing the madness of swimming in dark waters full of unseen dangers, weakly assented. They undressed in the stern, found a rope ladder, which the stevedores had been using, hanging over the bulwarks, and climbed down into the warm waters of the bay. The phosphorus glistened as they swam into the moonlight, away from the side of the ship.

"Dive under the keel and come up on the other side," suggested the man who had led Somers into this adventure. "I'll go first."

"All right," said Somers again. He

doubted very much whether he could follow his companion; but he felt incapable of disobeying.

The moonlight struck down through the clear green water. Somers sucked in a great breath, saw the man disappear and swim steadily down beneath the liner's hull. In a moment he was following, his eyes wide open, forcing himself farther and farther down. And the strange thing about his action was that he did not want to dive at all. Yet, there ahead of him was a vague white shape in the water. It might have been his own reflection, he thought, seen in a misty mirror, taking charge of him and luring him into an insane pursuit.

Then came that nauseating space of a few seconds that had haunted him for a year. He saw faintly, with terrified eyes, another shape in the dark water. A great pouch of a head, a parrot beak, and tentacles that writhed and lashed. Tentacles with suckers. They struck out greedily, seeking the body of the other man. Somers saw this ghastly living mass grip his companion round the neck, round the waist, round the legs. He saw a tentacle spread upward toward himself. His back scraped painfully against the rough plates of the steamer's hull, and the contact shocked him into fierce movement. He shot up to the surface, found the ladder, dragged himself to the deck, and lay trembling beside his clothes.

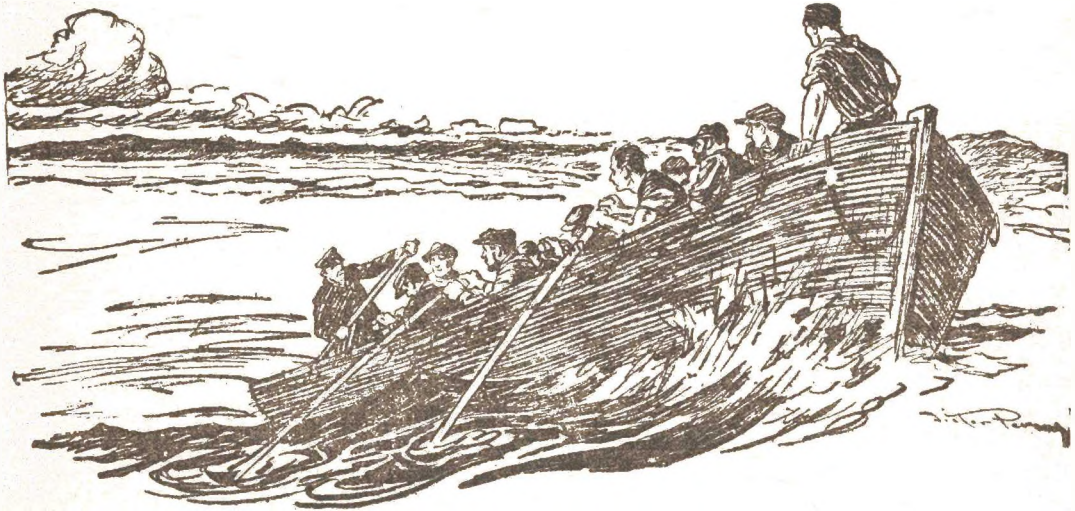
**M**ARSTON crushed out his cigarette, nodding his head as though some inward suspicion had just been confirmed. "You never saw the other man again, of course?"

"I left him down there with the giant octopus," muttered Somers. "What could I do? The thing was a nightmare to me then, it is a vivid nightmare still. I was stiff with panic. It seemed so incredible that I was afraid to tell any one what had happened. In the morning I thought it was too late. The ship sailed at daybreak. Somehow I made up my mind that no one would believe my story. I might have persuaded myself that the thing never happened; but I looked at my wrist watch next day. It had stopped at ten o'clock, and it was rusty with sea water. My heavens! The thing was real, gentlemen, and I have lived in agony ever since." Somers covered his worn face with his hands.

Marston poured out more whisky. "Brace up, old man. Stranger things have happened in West Africa. To me it is all clear enough. Once, when I was trading up the river, I, too, had a nightmare. I had thrashed one of my paddlers for insolence. Next morning there was a baby alligator in my tent—and a drug which the natives call 'Ingoza' in my food. The drug fixed the alligator in my mind, just as the drug that was in your whisky fixed the octopus in your mind. Later that day I found myself swimming alone in the river—the sort of insane thing that a drugged man would do. And I saw the

image of myself taken by an alligator, seized and pulled down into a hole below the surface of the river. I went back to my camp in the same terror that you felt on board the liner that night. But my head carrier, who had seen everything, explained the effect of 'Ingoza'—the ghost drink of native fetish. He saved my peace of mind, just as you have saved yours by telling me everything. And since then I have not worried."

Doctor Dubois nodded. "I know that is true," he said, "because I saw you go into the water that night—alone, and speaking to yourself."



# Luck At Twenty

By Neil



**F**ROM the deck of the *Twin Sister* Fred Cleburne focused his glasses upon the distant schooner, watching intently as the strange vessel hung for an instant against the somber background of the Australian coast, her sails gleaming like slivers of pearl shell in the brilliant sunshine. Then she went about and vanished suddenly as a puff of smoke in a gale.

For a moment Cleburne stared at the spot where the vessel had disappeared, a slow realization dawning upon him as the glasses gradually picked out a break in the coast line that was almost hidden by a small, hilly island which lay about a mile off shore.

"There's a hole in the wall behind that island," he declared finally, turning to his skipper and partner, Bill Turley. "I can see the tops of that other fellow's masts sticking up."

"If that 'ole's good enough for 'im to dodge this blow in, it's good enough for us," Turley growled, reaching for the glasses. "Seemed like 'e was tryin' to dodge us, though," he added.

Cleburne threw a quick glance to wind-

ward, where an ominous-looking bank of cloud was climbing toward the zenith.

"We'd better crowd in after him, too," he suggested. "It's a good hour's run from here to that inlet. And we'd best look slippy about it, if we don't want that blow to catch us."

"Right-o!" Turley nodded. "Stan' by to go about!" he barked.

The helm was put down. The Filipino crew tailed on the mainsheet and walked the *Twin Sister* around on her heel. Then, as the jib sheet was hauled to windward, and the little pearly schooner filled away on the other tack, bearing up for the channel between the mainland and the island, Cleburne took the wheel and held her on a narrow cleft that opened in the rocky coast line.

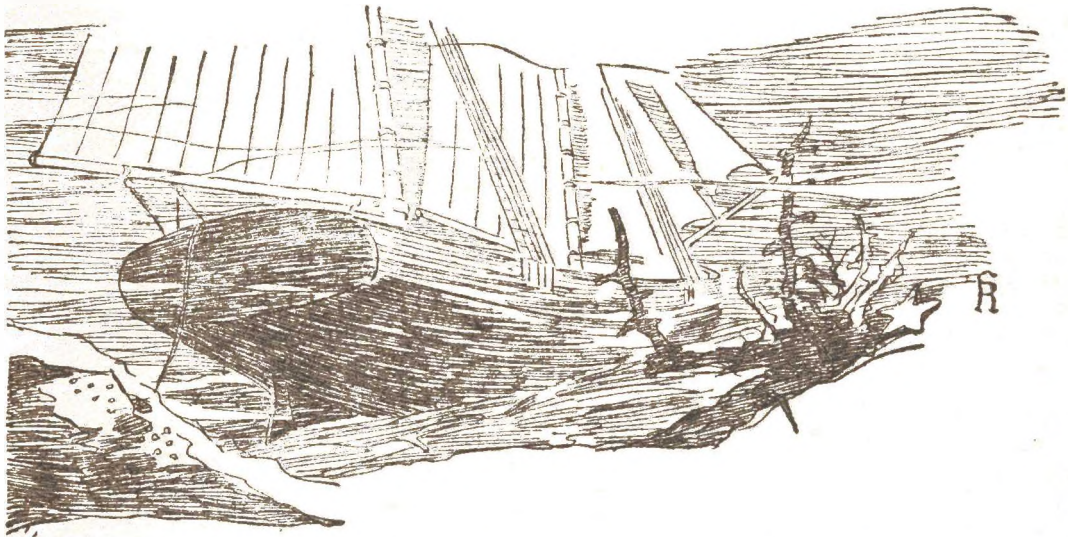
"Channel all clear?" Cleburne inquired.

"Clear as an empty street, 'Yank.'" Turley nodded, without removing the glasses from his eyes. "Just 'old 'er as she lies."

In outward appearance the two men were direct opposites. Cleburne was tall, lithe, blond, and thirty, with steely blue eyes set well apart in his lean, angular face, the severity of which was relieved

# Fathoms

## Martin



"Luck at twenty fathom," said Turley, "ain't no luck at all."

by a wide, humorous mouth. Turley, on the other hand, was squat, brunette, and middle-aged—slow moving as the other was alert, and with the frank, open stare of a child in his mild brown eyes.

"I can't quite figure where we're at," Turley spoke at length, as the schooner swept up through the channel. "If I was sure o' that bein' Cape Bouganville"—he lowered his glasses and pointed to a bold projection in the coast line far ahead—"I'd run around it to the Cambridge Gulf and tie up in Roe for a spell."

"It seems to me that we're doing all right," the American said. "If we try to round the cape we'll have the blow on our tail before we can get halfway to Roe."

"I suppose you're right," Turley agreed, as the schooner came abreast of the narrow cleft in the coast line and was brought into the wind. "'Ere we are," he went on. "Better let 'Lario take the wheel while you shin aloft an' see if the passage is all clear."

The schooner was put about and headed in toward the opening. Cleburne went forward and climbed the foremast to the spreader. Clinging to a backstay, he stared

alertly ahead as the schooner moved slowly through the narrow passage.

Suddenly he stiffened as he caught a glimmer of white beneath the green of the water half a cable's length ahead of the vessel.

"Starboard—all you got!" he shouted to the deck.

The little vessel swerved abruptly from her course, barely missing the coral patch that lurked a foot or two below the surface.

"Steady!" Cleburne sang out. "All clear ahead!"

He drew a breath of relief when the schooner had moved past the danger and straightened out on her course. Ahead a lagoon opened far inland, widening from the bottlelike entrance to about ten miles across. It was a desolate-looking spot, encircled by a belt of mangrove swamps, beyond which an expanse of tropical bush stretched back to the slopes of the frowning hills that surrounded it on all sides. There was no sign of the vessel which had preceded the *Twin Sister* into the lagoon.

"That's queer," Cleburne mused, a puzzled frown wrinkling his forehead as he

swept his gaze about the gloomy shores of the lagoon. "I could have sworn that other fellow came in here ahead of us."

And then all thoughts of the other vessel were driven from his mind as a shout of elation rose from the deck, while the lead line was dropped, sounding for depth. Cleburne felt a thrill of satisfaction as he realized that in running in out of the blow they had blundered into a pearl lagoon. The surface was covered with a multitude of patches that looked like pink seaweed, but he knew they were countless thousands of sinuous creatures that resembled animated threads of red woolen yarn, varying in length from one foot to three. Sea snakes, the pearling fraternity called them, and their presence was a sure indication of pearl oysters lying on the bottom.

Scrambling to the deck, Cleburne went aft.

"Thought that other fellow came in here," he began. "But now I'm tickled to death that he didn't."

"Must be another lagoon t'other side o' them hills," Turley answered gloomily.

"Anyway," Cleburne grinned, "our luck seems to be turning at last."

Turley shook his head. "Ilario says the shell's lyin' from eighteen to twenty fathom down," he declared. "An' luck at twenty fathom ain't no luck at all. Cripes! I feel like a 'ungry beggar outside the winder of a cookshop."

Cleburne stared at his skipper in dismay. At twenty fathoms the shell was practically inaccessible. Below sixteen fathoms, he knew that no sensible diver would venture.

"I'll go down, then," he declared impulsively. "If Ilario can stand sixteen, I ought to be good for a couple of fathoms more."

"Mind yer eye, me lad," Turley growled warningly. "Divin' ain't no job for a white man. An' all the blinkin' shell from 'ell to Bungaree ain't worth riskin' the bends for."

"I savvy that, all right," Cleburne answered. "Still, after all the rotten luck we've been having for the past three months, I'd feel like a chump if we were to leave here without at least making a try. It's a cinch all of it isn't below the sixteen-fathom line."

"'Ave it yer own way, Yank," Turley shrugged. "I don't ask no man to go

where I ain't willin' to go meself. If I was a bit younger——"

"Never mind," Cleburne interrupted, "if you'll take charge of things while I'm down, and see that they don't yank me to the surface too suddenly, I'll take a chance. Break out the gear, Ilario," he ordered the Manilaman.

The diving gear was brought on deck and overhauled. Cleburne slipped into the rubber suit, then sat on the hatch and pulled on the heavy, leaden-soled shoes. His chest weights were adjusted, and the copper helmet set in place. Then, before the face port was screwed in, he issued his final instructions.

"Don't lower away too suddenly. Let me down to the ten-fathom line, then stop for a few minutes. When I signal, lower away gently until I hit bottom. Keep check on 'em, Bill," he warned Turley. "If I hit a good patch we'll anchor immediately."

The face port was screwed in, and the pumps set going. Lumbering to the rail, Cleburne descended the ladder until his helmet was submerged. Adjusting the intake and the exhaust valves, he gave the signal to lower away.

He dropped like a stone for the first ten fathoms, the water slipping upward past the glass of his face port in a blurred mass of seething green that turned gradually to a purplish hue as the sun-shot waters of the surface were passed. At ten fathoms he stopped with a jerk and hung suspended by his life line. Adjusting the air valves again, he waited. Presently he signaled to lower away, and felt himself dropping slowly toward the floor of the lagoon.

When his feet touched bottom he signaled all clear, and once more adjusted his air valves. Save for a confused buzzing in his head, he felt no discomfort. That, he knew, would come later.

He looked about him in the purplish gloom, peering among the palms and branches of the forest of coral that lifted its fantastic growths toward the surface, its every limb clustered thickly with giant bivalves, which clung to the growths like barnacles to a ship's bottom. Tearing an oyster from a coral palm with a quick, sidewise wrench, he drew his heavy-bladed diver's knife and inserted the point of the blade between the lips of the shell. And even in that half light he recognized it

as a specimen of the rare gold-lipped *Pinctada Maxima*.

He drew the net toward him as it was lowered from above and filled it with shell. Then, working with feverish haste, he sent netful after netful to the surface before he was pulled away from the spot by the drift of the schooner. He was lifted off his feet and swung through the water like a fish on the end of a line as the vessel drifted across a crevice in the floor of the lagoon. And when his feet touched bottom again he knew that he had been carried down a slope, and that he was now more deeply submerged than before.

He gripped his signal line, about to order himself drawn up, then paused, a queer feeling rippling along his spine, while he peered through the purple gloom toward the apparition that glimmered through the intervening veil of water like a picture out of focus.

Resting upright on the bottom, less than a dozen feet from where he stood, with every sail set, and with every halyard belayed, looking as natural as if she were drifting on the surface instead of lying twenty fathoms beneath, was a small schooner.

He stared at the vessel in astonishment, the realization slowly dawning in his mind that this was the schooner which had preceded the *Twin Sister* into the lagoon. Stepping toward the wreck, he paused beneath the stern to read her name and port of registry lettered in white across her transom, "*Stingaree*—Broome."

"'Bully' Grosert's vessel, by Christopher!" he ejaculated. "Hit that coral patch near the entrance and took a header out from under their feet."

Bending far backward, he looked upward and saw that the *Twin Sister* was swinging directly above the wreck. He signaled for the anchor to be let go, and stood clear until the hook had been dropped a few yards astern of the sunken vessel. Then, climbing on board, he explored fore-castle and cabin, half expecting to find them tenanted by dead men. But both compartments were empty.

He paused beside the coaming and looked into the hold. The hatches were off, and every corner of the space below was open to his view. But instead of the heap of pearl shell which he had expected to find, there was a tier of small wooden

boxes, each of which was bound on the ends with metal strapping.

Dropping into the hold, he lifted one of the boxes. Its weight surprised him, for although it was but a foot long by six inches wide and four inches deep, it weighed all of fifty pounds. He carried the box on deck and procured an ax from the rack beside the cabin companionway. With a few sharp blows of the implement he broke the strapping, after which he inserted the blade of the ax in the joint and pried off the lid. He shook out the contents of the box, then started back in surprise as an ingot of shining yellow metal dropped on the deck.

"Gold!" The exclamation burst involuntarily from his lips as he stared down at the shining ingot, while at the same time his surprise was tempered by a flash of suspicion. Pearl-ers, he realized, were not accustomed to carrying boxed gold ingots in their holds. Besides, he knew Bully Grosert, whose reputation around Broome was such that the man was often suspected of certain activities not covered by a pearler's license.

"Might just as well give him the benefit of the doubt," Cleburne finally decided, "and suppose that he found a wreck with this on board."

He drew the net toward him and dropped in the bar of gold, grinning as he watched it start toward the surface.

"Old Bill's sure going to get an awful jolt when that lands on the deck," he chuckled, as he drew a second net toward the hatch and dropped into the hold.

Suddenly he realized that he was beginning to suffer from the pressure. His head was ringing, and his hearing had become so acute that the rhythmic clank of the pump sounded like hammer strokes, while the rubber-tainted air that was being pumped to him tasted like chloroform. Nevertheless he worked on, sending ingot after ingot to the surface, as fast as the men at the raising gear could lift them. At last but five remained. But he was perspiring freely, while his stomach was racked by a deadly nausea. Knowing that these symptoms were a warning that must not be ignored, he jerked his signal line for the ascent.

It seemed like an hour before he was finally drawn to the deck of the *Twin Sister*, where his diving gear was removed, and he was dosed liberally with salt wa-

ter, after which his body was subjected to a vigorous rubbing. Presently he sat up and grinned cheerfully at Turley, who had stood by in silence, chewing the ends of his mustache in his impatience.

"Where the blinkin' 'ell did all that gold come from?" the skipper exploded.

"Bully Grosert's *Stingaree's* down under, loaded with the stuff," Cleburne declared. "I gave out before I could send all of it topside. There's still five more ingots in her."

Turley glanced nervously ashore. "If Bully Grosert's mixed up in anything," he growled, "I don't want to 'ave nothin' to do with it. Damn sight better if we'd 'eave them ingots overboard an' content ourselves with the shell."

"But," Cleburne objected, "Bully may have located him a wreck with this stuff aboard. If so, it's strictly legitimate. If the rightful owners can be found, Bully and ourselves will have a nice bit of salvage to split between us. If there are no owners, it's ours."

"I've got a notion that Bully ain't agoin' to make 'imself cross-eyed a-lookin' for the owners," Turley said. "I've known that bloke these ten years. Somethin' fishy about it."

"He'll have to declare it to the authorities," Cleburne pointed out. "A fellow can't go around trying to peddle bar gold as if it was so much cabbage. Somebody's bound to want to know where it came from."

"No," Turley shook his head, "but 'e could make camp ashore 'ere, an' melt up all the gold an' drop it in little chunks in the sand, which would make nuggets. 'E could then report as 'ow 'e'd made a gold strike up this way. Prospector feller in Broome told me there's lots o' gold up 'ere."

"That'd be one way of getting away with it," Cleburne nodded. "But then, we've got it, so whichever way the cat jumps, we've got a nice little dab of salvage money coming to us."

"If we can prove we didn't steal it," Turley gloomed.

"That ought to be easy enough," Cleburne assured him, seating himself on the hatch. He made a rapid count of the ingots stacked on the deck, then went on, "There's forty-five here, and five still below. Fifty ingots at fifty pounds each make twenty-five hundred pounds.

"Bringing that down to ounces, we have forty thousand ounces of gold which, at twenty dollars an ounce, amounts to eight hundred thousand dollars. Twenty-five per cent of that, which is about the way the salvage award would be, would be two hundred thousand dollars—which beats shell glomming all to blazes."

"To 'ell with yer salvage award!" Turley snapped impatiently. "What about the shell?"

"Thick—thousands of tons of it," Cleburne told him. "It lies all the way from the twenty-fathom line toward the beach. Some of it'll be in skin-diving depths."

"That's where our luck lies," Turley favored the stack of ingots with a frown of annoyance, "an' not in this blinkin' swag. There's a fortune in shell 'ere if we can keep the knowledge to ourselves. Look 'ere!"

He opened a cigar box and showed Cleburne a handful of pearls that graded all the way from slugs to perfect spheres, two of which were worth a small fortune in themselves.

"Got these out o' the first netful o' shell you sent up," Turley went on. "If she runs even a tenth as good as this all over, we can afford to dump that blasted gold back where it come from an' forget about it."

"Maybe," Cleburne smiled. "However, I'm not for dumping any gold. I'm going down after the other five ingots first thing in the morning. After that we'll work the schooner over shallower ground and let Ilario do his stuff."

"If it wasn't that Bully an' his gang is somewhere ashore in the bush I wouldn't worry," Turley said. "Workin' this 'ere lagoon ain't agoin' to be all lavender, for there's bad natives up in these parts. They'd be enough to worry about. But knowin' that Grosert an' his chinks are around 'ere makes it worse. Bully ain't the kind o' bloke what'll let a ton o' gold get away from 'im without puttin' up a scrap. My bloody oath, 'e ain't!"

**C**LEBURNE turned in early, for he was very tired, and ached in every muscle of his body. The pressure to which he had been subjected that afternoon was taking its toll, and he knew that the morning would find him stiff and sore in every joint.

He lay awake for hours. The storm



that was raging outside the lagoon had cooled the air, and the little cabin was fairly comfortable. Stretched in his berth, beneath his mosquito net, he let his mind run on the phenomenal luck that had fallen to himself and his partner. Aside from possible salvage on the gold, the returns on their harvest of shell would be enormous, for prime gold-lip was then raging on the Singapore market at around a thousand dollars a ton. And there were thousands of tons of it on the bottom of the lagoon. But how to keep secret the location of their find was a problem. If they brought the gold into Broome they would have to make a declaration before the authorities, telling where they had found it, which would make public the position of the lagoon. Once that were known, the master pearlers of Broome, with their great fleets of luggers, would get on the job. They would strip the lagoon of shell in a week.

"There's only one thing to do, me lad," Turley declared when Cleburne spoke of his problem. "If Bully Grosert don't show up an' tell us where he got that swag we'll 'ave to bury it somewhere ashore until we can make our clean-up. That may take months, for we'll have to go canny to keep them big fellers down in Broome from gettin' onto our lay. After we've cleaned up we'll bring in the gold. If there's a salvage award it'll be just that much velvet."

"I guess that's about all we can do," Cleburne agreed.

"An' we're a-goin' to do it—if I 'ave to order it dumped over the side an' left there till we're ready to leave 'ere for good. I ain't goin' to lose out on this 'ere lagoon for no blinkin' salvage award—takin' a chance o' losin' millions for the sake o' thirty or forty thousand quid. My bloody oath, I ain't!"

The cabin clock chimed four bells. Turley went on deck for a final look around, came below again, and turned in. Cleburne lay awake a while longer, then dropped off to sleep.

Hours later he was rudely awakened by some one jerking his mosquito netting aside and pressing something cold and hard against the side of his neck. It felt urgent.

"Rise an' shine—shake a leg!" a voice commanded in a bellow that seemed to fill the little cabin. "Roll out o' them cootie

traps—an' be damn sure yer come with yer 'ands empty!"

Cleburne jerked to a sitting posture in his bunk and blinked dazedly up at the speaker, who was an enormous, blond man with tousled yellow hair that stood out from his head like the rays of a rising sun. He grinned down at the American, displaying two rows of long yellow teeth which vaguely reminded Cleburne of the teeth of a horse.

"Out!" the fellow roared, flourishing an automatic of heavy caliber. "Out an' be made inter sausage meat!"

Flinging his legs over the edge of his bunk, Cleburne stared about the dimly lighted cabin. Across from him Turley was sitting up in his berth, blinking fearfully into the muzzle of an automatic in the hands of a second man, while behind the intruders stood a dozen Chinamen with knives gripped in their hands, apparently eager for an excuse to use the weapons.

"I say, Bully Grosert," Turley found his voice at last. "What in 'ell's the meanin' o' this blood-an'-thunder business?"

"Yer'll blinkin' soon find out, yer blasted ole sneak," the giant roared. "Thought yer was bein' cute—sneakin' in 'ere t' steal the swag after the *Stingaree* 'ad sunk!"

"Now, Bully," Turley remonstrated, "you know that ain't true. My mate, Yank, there, found the wreck an' sent the gold up. What would you 'ave 'ad us do—leave it below?"

"Yer a bloody liar, Bill Turley!" Grosert snarled. "'Owever, the thing that matters is that I've got the swag back—an' a ship ter carry it in."

"You can't do anything like that, Bully," Turley objected mildly. "That'd be piracy."

"A little thing like that ain't goin' ter trouble me," Grosert laughed.

"There ain't goin' to be no necessity for you to go an' steal my ship, Bully," Turley spoke placatingly. "I'll carry you an' yer crowd to Broome. Yank an' me will be satisfied with the usual cut out o' the salvage award."

"Ain't yer the generous-'earted soul," Grosert jeered. "Wot d'yer think o' that, 'Chink'?"

The man beside Turley grinned. "Very generous, indeed," he drawled sarcastically, speaking in the soft voice of the Eurasian. "Too bad we can't take him up on it."

Cleburne stared at the speaker with interest. He had often heard of Chink Burton, who bore rather a sinister reputation among the brotherhood of the inner seas, but this was the first time he ever had seen the man. Burton called himself an Englishman; and for that, many Englishmen had called him a liar, often adding a few stronger terms by way of emphasis. For Burton's Chinese mother had bequeathed to him certain facial characteristics which tended to make his Anglo-Saxon pretensions seem rather far-fetched to others.

"It was splendid of you fellows to bring that gold to the top for us," the half-caste went on. "Working at twenty fathoms would be rather trying on me. My word, yes!"

"You 'aven't answered my question about that passage to Broome, Bully," Turley persisted.

"I 'aven't, Bill," Grosert's big teeth flashed in the lamplight, "because it so 'appens that we ain't goin' back ter Broome. In fact, we only came in 'ere ter change the name o' the *Stingaree* ter something else."

"Thought you blokes 'ad bin up to something fishy," Turley accused.

Grosert laughed. "We swiped that gold outer the strong room o' the *Gloucurry*," he confessed brazenly, "after she'd struck the outer edge o' Scott's Reef an' gone down in twelve fathom. We were workin' north along the coast, lookin' for a lay, w'en we sighted 'er boats runnin' in for Port Darwin. We got all the news from one o' them, an' 'eads west for the reef, thinkin' ter get some pickin's before the salvage tug could get there from Freemantle. But it showed up before we could get out all the gold, an' we 'ad ter cut stick an' run for it, with the blasted tinpot crowdin' our 'eels. There was a bit o' shootin'——"

"Aha!" Turley interrupted. "That's piracy, me lad."

"Call it anything yer blinkin' well wanter," Grosert shrugged. "Anyway, we showed them blighters some fancy shootin' an' a clean pair o' 'eels. They was damn glad ter sheer off. But I know that they couldn't 'elp recognizin' the *Stingaree* from the name on 'er stern. That was why we came in 'ere ter change it, an' afterward make a try for the China coast. We know blinkin' well it ain't goin' ter pay

either o' us ter show our mugs in Broome after this—or anywhere else in Australia."

"An' you're stealin' our ship—all that Yank an' I 'ave got in the world?" Turley pleaded. "You 'aven't stopped to ask yerself what way we're goin' to feel about it, Bully?"

"Not arf, Bill, ole top," Grosert chuckled. "When we takes this scow an' clears outer 'ere, yer won't know nothin' about it. Don't worry."

At this moment one of the Chinamen stepped to Burton's side and spoke to him in singsong Cantonese. The half-caste spat out an oath.

"Soo Chen says there are only forty-five of the ingots aboard," he told Grosert. "There should be fifty, you know."

"Where's the rest o' them pigs?" Grosert inquired, turning to Cleburne.

"Still down below," the American grinned.

"Then," the big fellow looked across the cabin at Burton, "it's up ter you, Chink."

"Not at all," the half-caste grinned. "Our Yankee friend's a good diver. We'll let him get them for us."

"Like hell, he will!" Cleburne growled. "You'll get 'em yourself if you want 'em. I'm through."

"Yer'll be through a damn sight quicker if yer go ter gettin' narsty," Grosert snarled. "If we says yer goin' down after them, yer goin'. Savvy?"

"You'll probably blow me down with all the hot air you're spilling," Cleburne grunted contemptuously.

"You won't think it hot air if we start mopping up on your crowd," the half-caste threatened. "If you refuse, we'll start with the fo'c's'le boys and finish up with old Turley."

"You'll kill us, anyway," Turley put in when Cleburne refused to answer. "Didn't Bully just say that——"

"We won't if this Yankee blighter does as he's told," Grosert interrupted hastily. "I was only kiddin' a while ago. But if 'e 'olds out an' refuses ter get them other five pigs, I'll scrag the blinkin' lot o' yer. S'welp me!"

"Your promise doesn't amount to a fistful of damns with me," Cleburne declared.

"Yer wrong, Yank," Grosert said appealingly. "Jest because I joked with ole Bill a while ago don't think I can't keep me word. We've got ter get the rest o'

that gold. If yer get it for us we'll set you an' yer crowd ashore an' let yer take yer chances with the black fellers."

"Let me make a proposition," Burton offered. "We will allow Turley and most of his men to leave, all but yourself and four men to help you. Turley makes for the north shore of the lagoon, while we make for the south. When we get ashore, you go down and send up the swag. When the last of it comes topside, we'll send our boat with two men to carry you and your helpers after Turley. Then, after our men get back with our boat, we'll haul out of here for the China coast."

He paused and regarded Cleburne through slitlike eyelids.

"We'll do that, Yank," Grosert promised. "Once we got the rest o' the swag, yer can go ter 'ell for all we care."

Which, Cleburne told himself, was a lie. Grosert could not afford to let them escape, later to reach a telegraph station and set the law after him. On the other hand, Grosert might imagine that in setting them ashore in this inhospitable spot he would be dooming them to death. And in that, the American reflected, the fellow might not be far wrong. Beyond those hills lay leagues of trackless bush and waterless desert, while in the hills themselves were tribes of fierce aborigines who still held high corroboree when the moon was full.

He saw, however, a flaw in Burton's reasoning which looked to him like a loop-hole. Left alone on the schooner, Cleburne asked himself, what would prevent him and his four helpers from slipping the cable, then setting sail and clearing out of the lagoon, picking up Turley and his boat's crew on the way? If he could succeed in doing this, the tables would be turned on Grosert and his crowd. But, apparently, the possibility of this had not occurred to either Grosert or his half-caste mate.

"Well?" the latter demanded. "What's the answer?"

"As I see it," Cleburne drawled, "it's a case of damned if I do and damned if I don't. Reckon I'll have to get the stuff up for you. But I'll be good and sure that you'll let Bill and his boys go before I even touch any of the diving gear."

"Don't worry," Burton sneered. "You'll learn that we can keep our word."

"Right-o!" Grosert rumbled. "But until the time comes to go down, I gotter

make sure that yer don't try no monkey tricks." He beckoned two of the Chinamen forward. "Put lashin's on these blokes," he ordered.

A length of heaving line was procured. Cleburne and Turley were bound hand and foot, then laid back in their bunks. Grosert and the half-caste next made a search of the cabin for weapons, appropriating Cleburne's automatic and Turley's ancient Webley revolver, which they kept themselves, seemingly unwilling to trust any of their crew with firearms. Finally, leaving two of the Chinamen on guard, the pair went on deck, followed by the rest of their crew.

**T**HE little clock in the cabin chimed three bells—five thirty—when Grosert came below and released the prisoners. The sun was shining through the grimy glass of the skylight, showing that the cloud wrack of the typhoon had been dispelled, and that the weather was clearing.

"Get on deck ahead o' me," Grosert ordered. Then he added, "If either o' yer makes a funny move I'll make a lot o' little round 'oles in 'im."

Cleburne and Turley preceded him on deck, where the crew of the *Twin Sister* were lined along the starboard rail.

"Pick out the men yer want," Grosert directed. "Then Turley can take the others an' get ter 'ell ashore."

Looking over the men, Cleburne singled out Ilario, the diver, another Filipino called Juan, and two Moros, Ali and Ibrahim, the last a squat, monstrously muscled fellow with a lowering, savage face.

"The rest of you go with Cap'n Bill," the American dismissed the others. "Get going!" he ordered, with a covert wink at Turley.

The skipper shook his head gloomily and followed the men into the boat. Waiting until it was shoved clear of the schooner's side and was headed toward the north shore of the lagoon, Cleburne turned to Grosert standing by him.

"All right," he suggested. "I want to see you birds ashore before I dress."

"Good enough," the big fellow said, and grinned, waving his men toward their boat.

Burton was nowhere in sight. But as the Chinamen took their places at the oars the half-caste emerged from the cabin and

swung over the rail. Grosert followed, and gave the order to shove off.

Sitting on the hatch, Cleburne studied the situation, the conviction growing in his mind that Grosert and his mate had not been so easy after all. The schooner lay at anchor less than a mile from the south shore of the lagoon, toward which Grosert's boat was now being pulled, while the north shore, Turley's destination, was all of eight miles distant. He now could see the joker in Burton's proposal. While the possibility of Cleburne and his helpers seizing the ship seemingly had not occurred to the half-caste, still the American realized that the fellow had been too deeply absorbed in his own scheme to notice the loophole. Now Cleburne perceived that the pair planned to return to the schooner, once the last ingot was aboard, murder himself and his helpers, then put sail on the vessel and run down Turley's boat.

"Listen, Ilario," Cleburne directed in a whisper, "tell Ali and that other boy to slip forward and knock the shackle out of the anchor chain. When she begins to drift, we'll set the jibs and mains'l and run after Cap'n Bill."

Ilario spoke to the two men. Dropping on hands and knees, the pair crept forward toward the forecastle head.

Cleburne picked up his air hose and passed it through his hands, as if looking for leaks, while he watched the progress of the two boats. It would take but a few minutes for Grosert's craft to reach the belt of mangrove swamp that bordered the south shore, while it would take Turley an hour or more to reach his destination.

Then, from forward, there came a clink of iron. Suddenly, with a screeching rattle, the shot of chain ran out through the hawse pipe and splashed into the water.

Grosert's bellow of rage rumbled across the lagoon as he flung himself against the steering oar, swung the boat around, and headed it back toward the schooner. The denim-clad backs of the rowers rose and fell in swift rhythm, and they bent their oar looms like whip stocks as they sent their craft shooting over the intervening water, while Grosert towered above them in the stern, lashing them to greater efforts with torrents of invective.

"Set the jib!" Cleburne barked.

Ilario and Juan raced for the jib hal-yards. Suddenly the whiplike crack of a

pistol sounded from the poop. The pair whirled about, stood for a moment in indecision, then fled to the shelter of the forecastle. Turning his head, Cleburne saw Burton standing beside the cabin companionway.

At last the joker in the half-caste's proposal was revealed to the American. Burton had hidden himself in the cabin, to murder Cleburne and his four helpers as soon as the last of the gold was on board, while one of the Chinamen, dressed in the half-caste's coat and hat, had taken his place in the boat with Grosert to cover up.

Stepping off the poop, Burton came slowly forward, the pistol in his hand pointed warily at the American, who continued to pass the air hose through his hands, apparently dazed by the sudden turn of events.

"It seems," Burton sneered, "that the promises of certain other people aren't worth much, either." He paused, glaring down at Cleburne, stepped to within six feet of the American, and pointed the pistol at his head. "Get into that diving suit!" he hissed.

Like a striking snake, a bight of the hose flashed through the air and crashed down on Burton's wrist, knocking the pistol from his hand. A yelp of sudden fear burst from his lips as Cleburne's body hurtled across the intervening space. The American's right arm swung upward from the waist, gathering force as it rose. Then his fist crashed against the half-caste's jaw, knocking the latter in a limp heap to the deck.

The interruption, short as it was, had been sufficient for Grosert's boat to gain the schooner's side. Snatching the half-caste's pistol from the deck, Cleburne backed against the starboard rail as Grosert and his crew swarmed over the port side. Flinging up the weapon, the American met them with a blast of lead. Four of the Chinamen dropped to the deck. The others tumbled back into their boat, leaving Grosert alone.

The big fellow sprang for the cover of the mainmast and fired wildly at Cleburne. With bullets whistling all about him, the American held his fire, for he knew that but one cartridge remained in the automatic, and he wanted to make sure that it would not be wasted. Suddenly a dull click told him that Grosert's weapon was empty. Springing across the deck, Cle-

burne took hurried aim and pressed the trigger of his automatic, as Grosert sprang toward him from the cover of the mainmast. The giant whirled half around from the impact of the bullet that tore through his left shoulder. Then, with a snarl of mingled rage and pain, he hurled the empty weapon at Cleburne and jerked another pistol from his belt.

Cleburne sprang aside as the empty pistol whirled past his head. Throwing up his own weapon, instinctively, he pressed the trigger. Grosert's big teeth showed in a grin of triumph as he realized the plight of the American.

"The war's over, me bucko," the big fellow leered. "Yer ain't got a chance. Look be'ind yer."

Flashing a quick look to the rear, Cleburne saw Burton struggling to his knees on the the other side of the deck. A grin of savage anticipation contorted the half-caste's face as he dragged Turley's old Webley revolver from the waistband of his trousers and leveled it at the American. The latter cursed his carelessness in overlooking the old weapon.

"Now will yer be good?" Grosert leered.

Clubbing his empty weapon, Cleburne backed slowly away. He saw that Grosert wanted him alive. If he could keep Grosert and the half-caste engaged until Turley and his boat's crew had reached the north shore of the lagoon, he would go down feeling that he had contributed something to the defeat of the pirates.

And then, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Ibrahim creep from beneath the fore-castle head and swoop upon the leaden-soled diving shoes lying on the forward end of the hatch. Straightening up, the squat Moro whirled one of the shoes about his head by the strap, handling it as easily as if it weighed but an ounce, then launched it.

Straight toward the crouching half-caste the fourteen-pound missile came hurtling. There was a dull thud, mingling with a soft crackle of splintering bone as it found its billet. Burton toppled sidewise to the deck with the back of his head crushed in.

Cleburne swooped upon the twitching

body of the half-caste and tore the revolver from his hand. Grosert's pistol barked twice. The American felt the searing course of a bullet along his left side as he rose, confronting the giant, who towered above him, less than six feet away.

Leveling the ancient revolver, Cleburne pulled the trigger. The ponderous weapon almost leaped from his hand as the bullet sped from its muzzle. Grosert halted in mid-stride. Then his knees gave way, and he slumped to the deck like an empty sack.

The Chinamen already had shoved off, and were driving their boat shoreward in panic. Cleburne fired a shot over their heads to speed them on their way, then sank on the hatch and stared dazedly over the corpse-littered deck. The whole affair had occurred so suddenly as to seem unreal to him, as a dream is unreal. Less than five minutes had passed since Grosert had come over the side at the head of his yelling crew. Now he was dead, his mate was dead, and the surviving members of his crew were in frenzied flight. Save in a fist fight, Cleburne had never hurt any one before, and he had a shuddery feeling at the thought that the deaths of all but one of those men on the deck had come at his hands. At the same time, he realized that only for a lucky chance, he and Turley would have been the losers surely.

Ibrahim stepped to the rail and signaled Turley's boat. As the craft was turned about and headed back toward the schooner the Moro came aft and stood before Cleburne.

"Cap'n Bill come back," the man grunted.

Cleburne started, like a man suddenly awakened from a dream. For a second or two he stared uncomprehendingly at Ibrahim. Then he took the Moro's hand and shook it gratefully.

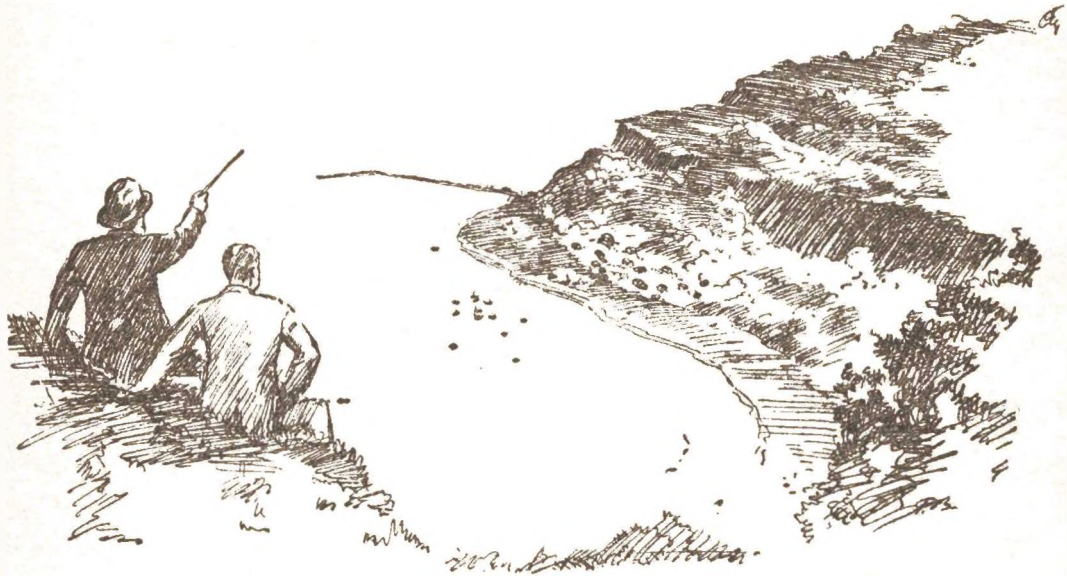
"Good man, Ibrahim!" the American applauded. "You saved the situation. Good man!"

"Sure, me good man," the Moro grinned. "Me good man, you good man. What the hell!"



# Last of the Wreckers

By J. Barry McCarthy



The sea brings strange rewards to some of its followers.

**S**EAN BROPHY told me this story as we lay sunning ourselves on the small strand of the Connaught fishing village of Ennisfallen. Sean was the local schoolmaster, a large, gentle creature whose culture and talents would have taken him to any position in his profession, but he had come to Ennisfallen twenty-five years before for his health, and the place had woven a spell round him. There was little doubt that he would finish what remained of his life in this wild spot.

He was not the only person who had felt the subtle attraction; I had been there as a schoolboy on holiday, and every year since, for fifteen years, had contrived to pay at least an annual visit. It was a picturesque, wild spot; a small strand set in an indentation of the coast line, on each side of which were huge, towering, frightening cliffs, extending out in the sea. There was no harbor, but a rough stone combination of pier and breakwater running at an angle some fifty yards into the water formed a measure of protection for the boats.

There was possibly a hundred houses.

if the rough mud huts of the poorer fishermen were included in the number, dotted about in higgledy-piggledy fashion behind the strand. Then some stretches of rough pasture and bogland, from where the villagers got their supply of peat, and behind that a mass of angry-looking hills that gave Ennisfallen the impression of being completely cut off from the world.

But all this did not account for its peculiar fascination. Sean and I had once attempted to analyze it. Sean's theory was, and I am inclined to agree to it, that it was the strange quality of the sea there that made the attraction. "It's only for those who understand the sea," he would say; "more than that, love it, almost worship it, understand its moods." I agreed with him because in no other place have I really felt the fascination of the ocean. It has come to me that those who really love the sea hate a flat calm, because their god loses its character, ceases to speak to them, becomes torpid, uninteresting, and at Ennisfallen a flat calm was unknown. It must have been some queer alignment of the coast that gave the sea at this place a peculiar land swell even on the most

windless, peaceful days, and turned the Atlantic into a series of long rollers as far as eye could see.

Even on the day that Sean told me the story of the last of the wreckers, a warm, sleepy July day with a gentle heat mist, still as the solid earth itself, the sea was vibrant, alive. Outside the small bay the waves were licking hungrily around some clumps of ugly rocks; rocks that had caused the death of many a good ship, and beside which light buoys rocked and bobbed. Farther outside the bay, almost reaching to the horizon, were the crazy fishing boats of the village. They rose and fell, almost disappearing from view at times, and the rising and falling dots had a kind of hypnotic effect that almost seemed to force the eyes to close and sleep to come, but I was held awake by the magic of Sean's voice, a musical, wonderfully modulated monotone, and the eerie nature of the story he was telling.

The story had started this way: Lazily staring out to sea, my eye had fallen on the teethlike rocks, and a train of thought had started. In the old days this village had been notorious along even a notorious coast for the daring and activity of its wreckers; men who removed the lamps from the buoys warning ships of the deadly rocks, and by setting them on the shore, drew their quarry to an awful doom for the sake of the loot from the broken-up ships. They had been a wild, savage, uncivilized folk in those days, but time and the coming of the railroad had brought civilization with it and replaced the savagery by something almost mystic, though the savagery still lay not far beneath the surface.

I had remarked to Sean as I watched the rocks: "I suppose it's thirty years at least since there was any wrecking along this coast?"

He was silent for so long that I thought he had not heard the question, when he suddenly replied: "Three months would be nearer the mark."

I started. Was he joking? But it was not like him to joke on such a subject.

He went on, "Have you seen Peter Mahoney since you arrived?"

I had been in the place less than four hours, and I answered with a negative shake of the head.

"You will not see him any more in this world," said Sean softly. "He's lying

above," indicating the small graveyard at the end of the village.

"What?" I almost shouted; "Peter dead!" My mind visualized a picture of the departed man. The most virile, living Viking of a man of my acquaintance; as boys together we had daily risked our lives climbing the gaunt cliffs; a sport at which he had always been a step and a half ahead of every one. We had been partners once as fourteen-year-olds in the craziest fishing boat among an almost unique collection of crazy boats. Pictures of him by the dozen flashed through my brain, his wonderful form performing his daily task with an easy grace that made the strongest of his fellows appear weak and awkward in comparison. Peter, the most living of living things, lying cold, silent in a grave. It seemed impossible.

"How did it happen? Was it an accident?" I demanded.

There was another longish silence, which I knew there was no use in trying to break. Sean would tell his own story in his own way when he wanted to. My eyes fixed themselves again on the appearing and disappearing boats far away, and in spite of the shock I had just received, I found my eyes closing in relentless sleep when Sean started to tell me all about it.

"Do you remember," he asked; "did you hear of the wreck of a large cargo boat called the *Mavis*, during the April gales?"

I nodded.

"It was wrecked on those rocks out there," he went on, "and it was Peter who went out there in a small boat on a night when ye would say he would not have kept afloat a minute, and masked the lights on the buoys and let the ship crash to its fate."

It all seemed so impossible that I lay half wondering whether I was asleep and dreaming. Could I be on the sands at Ennisfallen, listening to Sean Brophy? I surreptitiously pinched myself hard. Yes, I was awake and not dreaming. Could Sean be joking after all? But he was incapable of making a jest of such a topic, for he had loved Peter, too.

Sean's voice broke the silence: "It was a queer thing altogether," he said. "I had thought I knew the sea in all its moods, but the way this storm came and went away was something new to me. It had been a quiet day, a bit of a wind, perhaps, but nothing to remark about. I remember it was nearly eight o'clock, and I was sit-

ting reading in the house above when there was a crash. A gale of wind—and it was a gale—had sprung up from the northwest as suddenly as you'd say "knife." I sat thinking how strange it was, listening to the crashing of the waves on the shore. I must have sat an hour. You know the noise was so great that you could not even think much. My mind just seemed to go over and over the same ground in a kind of maze—what kind of a storm is this at all? It's new, it's different; there's something wrong somewhere."

I felt rather than heard Sean give a kind of shuddering sigh.

His voice started again: "After perhaps an hour and a half it stopped as suddenly as it had come, and I heard the neighbors moving about, and presently there was a knock, and somebody came in and said a ship had gone ashore. I felt something wrong about the whole thing. My limbs were trembling, and I waited for the neighbor to go before I attempted to get up. Then I made my way to the strand. If a ship had gone ashore in that gale, then by all the laws of the sea, it should have broken up and the unfortunate crew been dashed to pieces, but this ship had struck almost as the storm ceased, and when we got the crew ashore we found only one man was missing, the ship's carpenter, evidently washed overboard. The captain swore there had been no lights to be seen on the buoys, and though they were supposed to be proof against any sea, it was allowed by the people here and the ship's crew that the exceptional nature of the gale had been too much for them. It must have been two o'clock before we got to bed, but I couldn't sleep. I felt there was something wrong about the whole thing. Six o'clock in the morning, before anybody was stirring, I got up, dressed, and went down to the strand. Something bigger than myself forced me to go.

"The sea was calm, and I took a boat and rowed out to the rocks. On the way I saw an overturned boat. A glance told me it was one of ours. I pulled toward it and immediately recognized it. Peter Mahoney's boat—what was it doing there? That was a riddle that could wait, and I pulled on toward the rocks. The ship had settled down, and it was obviously only a question of hours before it finally broke up. I rounded the first buoy. Around the lamp was a cunningly con-

structed black shade that completely cut off all the light. I went to the other buoy—the same thing there."

Sean was silent for a minute, then he went on almost as though asking himself a question: "I don't know what power made me, but again the force that had held me awake all night and sent me out to the rocks made me take those masks off and destroy them. I pulled back to shore, put the boat in its place, went to the house above, and threw myself on the bed and slept for several hours. Somebody came in and woke me with the news that the body of Peter Mahoney had been discovered washed up on the strand, and lying almost alongside it was the body of the ship's carpenter, who had been washed overboard, and the same ship's carpenter was no other than Tommy Flaherty, son of the grocer, and born and raised in this very place."

There was another silence, and I had wit enough to know that the story was just starting and there was an explanation to all this.

Sean restarted the story hardly in the way I had expected. "You are not a Gaelic scholar," he remarked almost pityingly; then, before I had even time to murmur an apology for my lack of knowledge, he continued: "There is an old Gaelic saying that is very hard to translate into English, but it goes something like this: 'To those who love the sea, the sea is kind.' That is hardly strong enough; love means here a mixture of love in the largest meaning of the word and worship, veneration; and kind, perhaps, in the second part of the quotation—well, it means watches over, avenges, even."

Sean's voice dropped to a whisper: "Peter believed in that always, but lately it had become almost a religion to him." His voice regained its former cadence. "It must be over a year since you were here last, so you would not be knowing anything that's happened since you went away. Ye knew little Anne Murphy, of course?"

I did remember her, the daughter of a small, rather superior kind of farmer. A perfect example of Connaught peasant girls at their best. Simple, unaffected, beautiful, a picture one did not forget. I closed my eyes and saw a vision of her laughing face, and remembered with almost a blush that at unsophisticated fifteen, and she two years younger, I had been one



of her devoted slaves. How long ago it all seemed!

I had lost a couple of Sean's sentences evidently, but I picked up "Never heard of the tragedy that took place?" I had read nothing but London newspapers for many a month, so I shook my head and waited for elucidation.

"Ye knew, of course," he continued, "that Peter and she had been sweethearts since they were children together, and it was fixed up for them to marry this summer. What a pair they made! Do you remember the festival at Clonrane, where they won the gold medals for dancing?" Sean stopped and drew in his breath with a long sigh of reminiscence, and the scene came back to me: a raised platform in the middle of a big field, the huge, excited, swaying crowd, drawn from every town and village in the province, the applause that greeted the conclusion of the effort of each pair of dancers, and then the strained silence that held for at least half a minute when our representatives had stopped. Then the mad, almost frantic burst of applause, and the storm of hats flying in the air that forecast beyond a doubt the destination of the prize. Then, later, their blushing modesty as they stepped up to receive their medals.

Sean's voice once more broke the trend of my thoughts, and I felt a vague irritation. I sensed there was some terrible tragedy coming, and I somehow wanted to remember those two as I had last seen them, full of the joy of living, but I listened, almost against my will.

"It was the beginning of last October when the trouble started," went on Sean; "when Tommy Flaherty came back home. He ran away to sea as a fourteen-year-old boy, and there'd been never a sight or a line of him till he suddenly appeared last October, fifteen years later. He'd done pretty well for himself, become a ship's carpenter, and saved a bit of money, and of course he created quite a sensaiaon here. There was not a port in the world he had not been in, and you'd know his stories didn't lose anything in the telling. He was a good-looking fellow in a bold kind of way, and had a kind of devil-may-care way with him that always catches the women. So I need not be telling you that before a month was up, every marriageable girl in the place, with one exception, was madly in love with him. The

one exception was our little Anne, who wouldn't look at another man while Peter was in the offing. She liked to listen to his stories, of course, that was natural. My schoolroom being the handiest place in the village, they used to come there to listen to his yarns, and I'm not denying that he knew how to tell them and make the most of them.

"I used to sit there and listen myself, and it may be that I was the only person who noticed what was going forward. The devil of perversity that was in men must needs make Tommy fall in love with the one girl in the place who would not have welcomed his attentions. I didn't worry much about it at first, though I could see Tommy was badly hit. You would have thought that it was obvious to a blind man that he was telling his stories for Anne, and Anne alone, but even the girls that were most in love with him never seemed to notice anything. Worldly sophistication you'd hardly call the strong point in the people here. Of course, Peter and Anne never saw a thing; they were much too wrapped up in each other.

"At last Tommy picked up the habit of going over to her place, and talking to her while she was milking or churning, and sometimes walking up with her to deliver the milk to Father Hennessy's on the cliff; but he could never have shown his hand, else he would have been sent away with a bee in his ear.

"I noticed a change come over Tommy. He started to drink, and the only effect the drink would have on him would be to make him moody and depressed, and less likely to tell his stories. I did talk the matter over with Father Hennessy; but like me, he couldn't see any good in saying anything, though he did say that if he got a good opportunity he'd speak a word to Tommy. He never got a chance to say any kind of word, for that week the tragedy happened.

"It was the tenth of January, and Tommy had been over for the afternoon milking, and walked up the hill with her to deliver the father's milk. When she didn't come straight home, nobody worried much. Her folks thought she had stopped in at Peter's, or come over to my place to hear Tommy spin a yarn, and it wasn't till half past nine that they started to worry at all. Then Mr. Murphy stepped over to Peter's place to see if she was

there, and when he found she wasn't, they both came over to see me and made a round of the village. Not a sign of her or Tommy. Every man, and most of the women in the place, made themselves into search parties to look for them; but not a sign was there till next morning, when we discovered Anne at the bottom of the cliff, just below the father's house, with her neck broken and signs of a struggle on the path above. What had happened there we shall never know, but we presumed that Tommy tried to assault her, and in the struggle she went over the cliff. There was a hue and cry for Tommy, but he'd had too long a start. The next time we saw him was his dead body lying on the strand near to Peter."

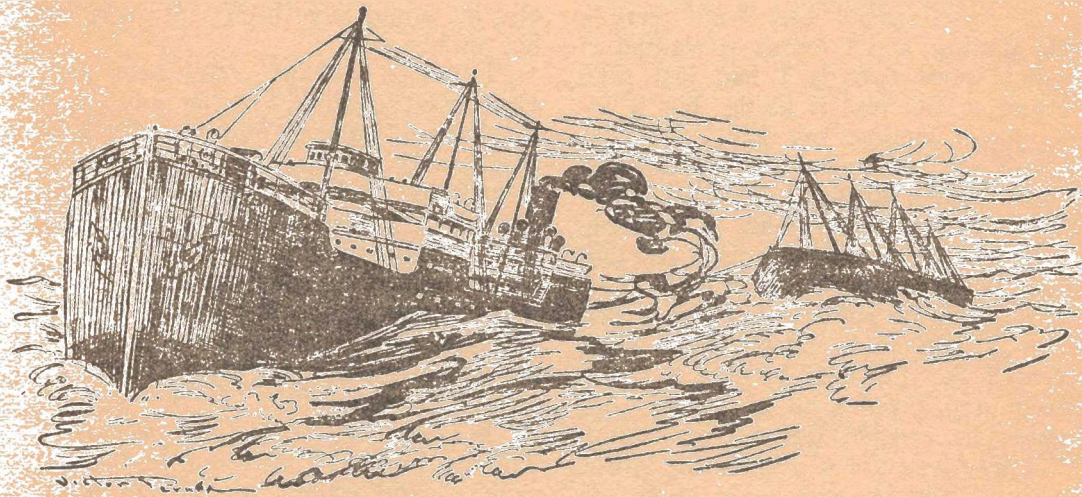
Sean drew a long breath. "It was queer how Peter took it. He never said much to anybody, and seemed to go on with things almost as though nothing had happened; but I used to see him sometimes on the strand, watching the sea and the sky as though he was expecting something. He used to be in a kind of trance, never noticing if anybody was near him or not, and I used to hear him muttering to him-

self in Gaelic, that old saying that I told you. He was always there, watching, waiting, and I'd hear him say in Gaelic: 'The sea will bring him back and take me to her.' Father Hennessy tried talking to him, and so did I, but it made no difference. He'd listen with a kind of smile, and then go back to his watching."

But I could restrain my excitement no longer. "You really think that the Gaelic legend is true? And that——" I could think of no way to complete my sentence.

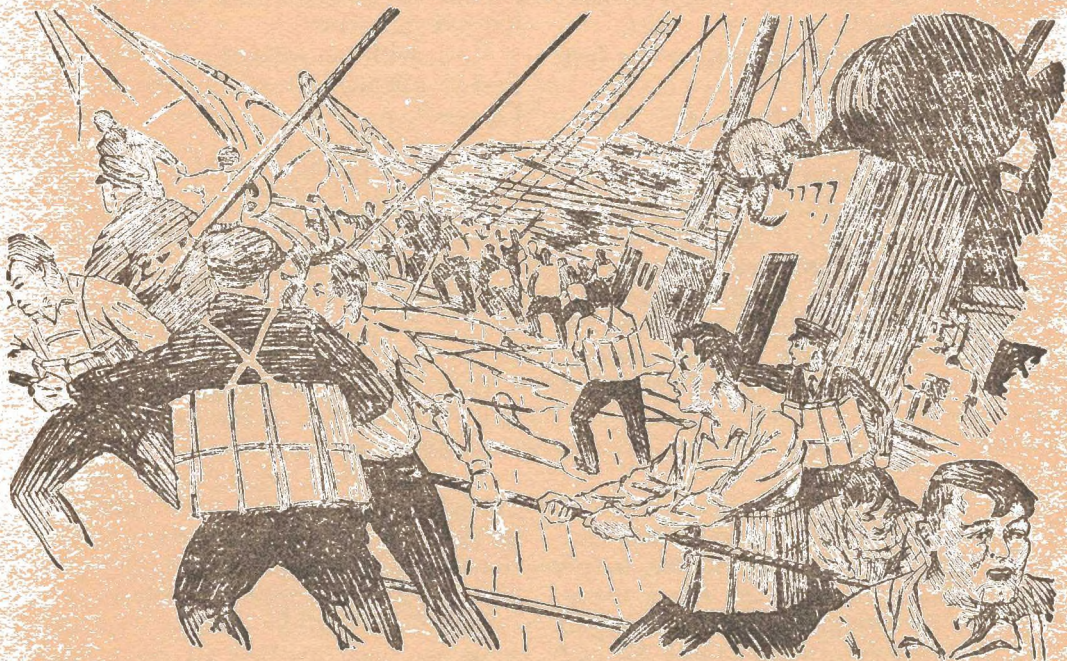
Sean got to his feet. "I don't know," he said. "I can neither believe or disbelieve, but how would you account for it all?"

I gazed desperately out to sea, searching for a solution. None came. I looked round wildly for Sean, but he had walked away toward his house. Thoughts in a turmoil, I looked desperately at the sea as though I might get inspiration from it. The legend was preposterous, absurd, but how? My eyes wandered to the rising and falling boats. But how? But how? I felt my eyes growing heavy and let myself lapse back into forgetfulness and deep sleep.



# The "Xantippe" Case

By Charles Johnson Post



Ancient salvage laws applied to modern ships.

**S**QUATTING on the deck Dawson hammered away at some wooden wedges that he was driving into the great staples on the coaming of No. 1 hatch. And it was no desultory hammering.

For he was at work under the eagle eyes on the bridge that, from high above, could be seen peering down over the canvas dodger of its lofty outlook. It is in this forward section that a boatswain can build for himself a reputation as a driver.

But Dawson needed no driving. He was uplifted with an idea. It was love. He had his wedges home on the starboard coaming and the heavy iron bar pinned tight over the tarpaulin, against the day of storm when the seas would come in green and solid, before a sailor on the port coaming had his first set home.

"Hey, Jack—wot th' hell's your hurry!" called that party softly across the stretch of grimy canvas.

SEA—3

Dawson trotted nimbly across the hatch. "What's eatin' you?" he demanded cheerfully. "Hey, lemme give a hand!"

From behind the canvas dodger the first officer looked down.

"Easy to see that guy never sailed on this run before," he commented cynically. "Where's the 'Old Man'?" A white-jacketed steward had pattered across the bridge.

"Captain's compliments, sir," replied the steward; "'an as you'll know 'e's in the smokin' room if 'e's needed, sir."

The first officer nodded, morosely.

"The old lallygagger," he half-murmured. "Already has a gang of women and dudes hanging around and him telling of how he used to raise hell in a wind-jammer."

He plodded up the slope to port against the list of the ship.

"Damn these engineers anyway!" he remarked irritably, "if this ship ever left port on an even keel I'd kiss the cook! Any-

body but a bloody engineer could keep her trimmed long enough to get past Sandy Hook anyway!"

Far off to starboard a thin lavender line showed raggedly against the early sunset haze. Here and there a strip of the board-walk lights twinkled like a whisp of floating necklace—it was the Jersey coast, winking its farewell.

Dawson finished his last tap on the last wedge.

"Finished number one, bos'n, sir. Number two next?" he asked.

The boatswain, who was bossing the lowering and stowage of the foremast cargo tackles, nodded. "An extra 'sir' never hurt no one," reflected Dawson.

Together the wedges were driven home in the coaming staples of No. 2. Again Dawson was conspicuous for his energy. He did his own job and half of the other chap's.

Dawson, it might be explained, was in love.

He had never heard of knights jousting for their ladies, but his instinct ran true to form. He was jousting for his lady's favor, jousting with a sledge for a mace, and driving as though he smote a pagan Saracen with every stroke. Only he had never heard of Saracens; they do not get that far in the grammar schools of the East Side. And the uplift and the ideal was a certificate ultimately—as a master fully entitled to command any tonnage for any ocean! At present he had an A. B. discharge wrapped in oilskin and buttoned up in his ditty box—his inner shirt. "A. B." did not mean bachelor of arts but able-bodied sailor, and he was a certificated life-boatman. And he thought of himself, secretly, as Mister Dawson—he was no longer "Red" to himself no matter what he was to others. It was not a bad idea, either, that "Mister" in front of the Dawson. He could picture it—"All clear, Mister Dawson——?" Then he'd kick that damn white-jacketed steward so far he'd foul the patent log. Dawson chuckled, his dreams never went further—even a mate's ticket seemed far away, yet.

Far aft he heard a bugle blow; then, a moment later, its silver notes crackled forth just aft the bridge. Dinner, for the passengers. The chuckle subsided. Here was cause for sober envy. Potatoes—potatoes—potatoes—and greasy slum. When they reached the tropic belt it would be bananas

—bananas—bananas—more slum or maybe less—and coffee, when it wasn't tea—and there wasn't enough difference between the two worth kicking about. He never spent less than a dollar for his first meal ashore in that grubby little restaurant on Bowling Green. It was a rotten line—skinpy food, underpaid officers, and shaving every corner.

But, with an officer's ticket—yeah, or just a quartermaster's berth as a starter I'll——"

"There's a rainbow 'round my shoulders,  
The skies are blue above,  
The world's all right,  
The sun shines bright,  
And  
I'm  
In  
Love!"

Gee that was a great song, wasn't it? They'd danced to it, too, night before last, and sung it as they danced! Great!

From the deck above there came a little handclap and a girl's face laughed down at him. A scarlet collar flared up against her cap as the breeze tossed the hair across her eyes and wrapped the soft white flannel suit against her like a veil. Gee, she was most as swell as Bee all right, all right. A young chap stood beside her with one arm around her waist.

"Isn't it great?" called the girl.

"Go on, young fellow, I'm that way myself!" grinned the young chap.

Dawson grinned back and shuffled from one leg to the other with embarrassment.

"Git on yu vork, young faller," ordered the boatswain gruffly in a low voice as he passed and saw Dawson staring up at a couple of passengers. "On wit you vork!"

Dawson changed to a whistle, but softly.

"You're a gay guy," remarked his partner. "Wot's up Red?"

"Mother-in-law's on board," he responded breezily.

"Yeah—dead, eh?" he asked and looked at Red critically. "You're in luck, bo!"

"If she is she don't know it—no more than she knows she's my mother-in-law." Red shuffled a dance step. "Can't do a dance till them damn engineers get this boat trimmed level enough to keep from slidin' out o' th' starboard scupper if your foot slips."

"This ain't nothing, Red—sometimes its one side an' then the other. What's that about your mother-in-law?"

"She ain't yet—but she's a-goin' to be," said Red, and then he added; "whether she likes it or not."

"Yeah, like 'ell—when?" retorted the other skeptically.

"When I get my first ticket," said Red soberly.

Later, when Dawson was sent aft to take in the flag that evening, he noted a stewardess standing just inside the after companionway. His mouth looped itself to one side as, without turning his head, he sung softly, "Hello, mother-in-law!"

The lady addressed started, then she quivered and her eyes followed in a glare as the sailor hauled in the flapping colors and made the halyards fast again.

As he returned he passed by the stewardess—a little nearer. He was whistling very softly the chorus of "Rainbow Round My Shoulder" song.

"Here, you!" called the stewardess softly, but with a softness that lost none of the curt tenseness that quivered below its control.

Dawson sidled over, grinning. "Ain't allowed to talk with the stewardesses, ma'am," he said.

"What you doing on this ship?"

"Oh, this ship?" He looked vaguely up to the slowly purpling sky overhead as if to get inspiration and answer, perhaps, from the curling haze of green vapors from the funnels. "They signed me on. How's Bee?" He smiled cheerfully.

"None of your business," responded the stewardess tartly. "What are you doing here?"

"Giving you a chance to see what a nice, steady son-in-law you're going to get," said Red.

"Yeah!" Its sarcasm was writ plain.

"Sure," Red grinned again.

"Yeah! Well, I don't think much of a common sailor in my family!" The stewardess turned to disappear below.

"That's all right, ma'am," called Red in an undertone. "My pop doesn't think much of steward—"

He caught himself. He had pledged himself to be very diplomatic. In fact, this whole trip had been a mission of secret diplomacy as planned out between himself and Beatrice.

"What's that?" asked the stewardess sharply. But Dawson had diplomatically and rapidly faded forward.

"Maybe," he thought to himself in his bunk that night, "maybe it would help if

I'd tell the old girl that my pop was a captain once." He thought again drowsily. "Yeah, that'd be good if she wouldn't ask questions—it ain't such a much to be a captain of a canal boat."

When he had gone off watch there had been the making of a slight sea, hardly noticeable in the darkness except for the slightly increased pressure against the feet with the rhythm of the roll and the long slow pitch. The stars were dimming and dark masses of broken flying clouds made ragged holes of an even greater darkness in the night overhead. Red passed the third officer on his way from the engine room and making for the bridge with his oilskins over his arm, as he went below. "Damn those engineers," he heard the officer mutter. "Those lousy——" The rising wind carried the rest of it away.

The list to starboard was greater than when they left port. "Wind abeam," thought Red as he noticed the heavier slope and walked aft like a farmer plowing on a side hill as he balanced sidewise on the tilted decks.

**B**Y dawn the next day, the *Xantippe* was plunging heavily, with her bow in a smother of spray that fell in sheets and swept in thin transparent cascades rippling against the capstan and broke in a scalloped foam against the anchor chains. Now and again the *Xantippe's* nose dipped or a quartering sea rose and crashed solidly over the forward decks in a whirling mass of broken water that could be felt in a quiver that ran the whole length of the ship.

"I'll bet those wedge's hold—but why don't they trim her bunkers!" thought Red as he looked down from the promenade deck, where he was working stretching the storm canvas, and noted the increased starboard list over the night before and the sluggish recovery from each starboard roll. "But if I was the Old Man I'd give them—those"—he corrected himself—"engineers hell and makes 'em straighten the old ship up." He braced himself against the starboard list as he hauled a lashing taught on the storm canvas of the promenade deck.

"Cheese it—the Old Man!" said the sailor next to him who had caught a glimpse of blue coat and brass buttons that descended the companion that led from the bridge above.

Heavily the captain came near the little group of sailors, including Red, at work on the storm canvas. The captain had to keep one hand on the rail that ran along the white sides of the cabin to hold his balance against the list of the decks and their one-way roll. Before he reached them he turned back. Then, with a change of mind, he turned again. The sharp list to starboard made walking difficult, even for his seagoing feet.

"Where's the bos'n?" he asked.

The nearest man pulled at his woolly forelock. "Him thar, sar," he said and pointed to windward and started off. "I get 'eem, sar."

"Hey, never mind, you!" the captain spoke sharply. "Here—you men—you're not to talk to any passengers, understand? No matter what they ask you, understand!" He waved a hand to include the group. The men nodded. The boatswain popped around the corner.

"Ay un'erstan', captain," the boatswain nodded and pulled at the peak of his cap. "Ay tal other fallers, too." He pointed understandingly at the sloping deck, "She got damn bad list!"

"And you keep your head shut, too," said the captain sharply as he turned away. They saw him going aft; beyond him a door opened and a couple of passengers—the young chap and his bride who had waved at Red the afternoon before—stepped out briskly. Red saw the girl wave her hand gayly at the captain and laugh as they tried to keep their footing and walk the slippery, tilted deck, as they both started toward him. He saw the captain bow and then turn back again and disappear up the companion ladder that led to the boat deck and on up to the bridge above.

The captain's warning was needless. With the exception of the bride and groom and three brisk-looking men passengers—the type that never miss their ice bath o' mornings, and who can stand any hardship except that of missing out on the daily handball, or daily dozen, or daily constitutional—who tried to take their morning walking exercise around the decks and then gave it up. A ship's officer passed the trio.

"What's up?" they asked. "How long will this list last—is the wind blowing her over?"

The officer stopped abruptly.

"Easy to see you gentlemen never been to sea before," he said, and laughed nervously. "It's just the coal going out of the port bunkers. When the chief starts on the starboard bunkers it'll even her up. No danger, gentlemen; and," he added sharply, "such talk only alarms folks. Best keep quiet, gentlemen!" He went on to disappear below.

The trio looked at one another.

"When he's so quick to stop alarm—it looks funny," commented the one in baggy trousers.

"Never been to sea—well, I'll be——" and the one with the brown cap exploded. "By Godfrey," said the second, "we've got a right to know why we're listing like this! We've paid our passage!" The older of the trio smiled a trifle.

"Let's smoke," he said cheerfully, "we're so used to everything going our way that we get morbid easily." And they disappeared.

**O**FF watch below Red dozed a bit and then got out his secondhand Bow-witch. It was mostly Greek to him—yet. Then he put it away again. If the old ship would only roll even—so far to port and so far to starboard; but she never swung over to port—much. Down, down to starboard, and then back like a pendulum only working halfway. He drifted out in the alleys where the stewards were passing occasionally and where the men hung around when off watch until some officer came along and broke it up if it got too thick. The talk, in undertones was all of the list. The old *Xantippe* had listed before—but not so steadily or as much as this.

And yet, with all the talk, there was no persistence of curiosity, and, to a certain degree, no impressive interest. It was a part of the sea and a part of ships. The landsman's fear that a list meant turning over was never in their minds, ships listed more or less and rolled and wallowed and got through. It was all natural. It was more like a group of men in a country store idly speculating on a thunderstorm that happened to be raging; people did get killed and property was destroyed by thunderstorms, but, as some particularly heavy blast of thunder crashed forth some old farmer—or young one—would be sure to say, "By cracky, that's a good one—betcha that got something." It was all im-

personal, nothing is imminent to the unimaginative.

And there they would mark the roll down to starboard—down, down, down, and then the slow, wallowing, half-drowned recovery that never swung back enough to port; and that meant, they knew, something seriously wrong below. Then they, too, talked of other ships and other wrecks and the last hours of strangling ships with an utter impersonality.

A steward passed, carrying a tray for the captain on the bridge. He slipped and fell and the tray and napkins scattered. The men laughed and salvaged a titbit here and there covertly. They laughed at the cockney steward's swearing. A squad of Negroes pushed through coming off watch from the stokehole.

"Hey, wot th' ell you smokes doin' down there?" a voice called.

A ship's deck officer pushed through and there was no answer.

The officer was a minor one and Red stepped up. "What's the trouble, sir?" he asked.

"It's those blank, blank, blankety-blank engineers. By George, if we ran the deck the way they run below, by Heaven——!" he raised his fists in the hopelessness of description.

"Why don't they use outa the starboard bunkers?" asked a voice. This officer seemed to be chatty; he wasn't much more than a boy anyhow.

"Empty the starboard bunkers? The damn fools don't know what they're doing. There's Lord knows how much water sloshin' around somewhere down below, and the chief puts his pumps emptying number three tank instead of pumpin' out the bilges!"

A voice came sharply over the heads of the little audience as it was brushed aside by a pair of hairy arms pushing their way through. One of the assistant engineers confronted the deck officer.

"The hell you say—yeah!" he growled. The oil and grime made the contrast of his white eyeballs stick out as if he had been badly mounted by a cheap taxidermist. "The hell you——!"

Suddenly the ship was as still as a tomb. The splash of water and whipping slap of spray stood out in echoing relief. That indefinable quiver that becomes second nature to a ship at sea and that drums and throbs with a soundless vibration that,

when it ceases, creates an instant silence that comes almost like a crash—the engines had stopped. The sentence was never finished. The hairy-armed engineer made a dash, and the bang of his feet down the alley mingled with the clatter from the galley and main pantry as he flung open the narrow door in the dim passage and was for an instant silhouetted in its lighted brightness as he swung down the iron emergency ladder to the engine room.

"An' I'm just off watch," the deck officer growled. He slipped an arm through his oilskins. "Here you chaps, both watches, better get on deck!"

"Yeah—I'm off watch an' I'm stayin' off." Red heard a man say sullenly as the group broke up and Red trotted off down the alley after the officer. Here and there a scared white-faced white-jacketed steward popped out from a cross alley. "Is it bad, sir?" they would ask. But they got no answer.

There wasn't a man on board who knew the *Xantippe* who did not know that the list with which they left port was nothing—nothing more than they always had. But now, twenty-four hours out, with the list increasing, and a moderately stiff gale, together with this sudden stoppage of the engines—the *Xantippe* had never listed as bad as this before—well?

On through the after companion followed Red, hard behind the officer; out on deck, then up a companion ladder cutting into the promenade deck—not a passenger in sight—and hurrying onto the bridge forward and up yet another deck. A stewardess was leaning out of the upper half of an open door. She saw Red; it was the mother-in-law he had selected. Red lagged a little.

"It's all right," he said from the corner of his mouth, "It's——"

"It's never been as bad as this, Red," she said. "Is it bad, Red—do you know?"

"Now, that's all right, Mrs. Enderby," Red said. "Don't you worry none——"

"It's Bee I'm thinking of, Red—my Heaven, nothing must happen!"

"Don't you worry, Mrs. Enderby. I'll be a-lookin' after you—and Bee!" he added with a grin, and he broke into a trot to catch up. He was curious himself to know what was the matter.

Forward he saw a blue-uniformed figure emerging slowly through a deck companion and making its way to the next. It

was the chief engineer, his blue trousers clinging wetly to his legs below the knee and dripping dirty water. What the chief was doing upon the bridge meant something under these circumstances. Red snatched a bucket and a mop from a rack and followed. A sailor with a mop and a bucket can go anywhere these days.

"Well?" asked the captain. The white stubble of his ruddy jowls stood out unshaven. He had been nervously pacing the bridge and the lee of the chart house all night.

"Well—well?" the captain spoke irritably. "What's the matter you can't keep enough steam for the engines?"

"Can't, and keep the pumps running, with all the steam they're using—I can't fire but half the boilers now," said the chief coldly; "and only get eight pound out o' them."

"Did you empty the number three?" demanded the captain. He looked old and drawn, even a little dazed. He had been lucky—never an accident before of any consequence. He was a great favorite in the smoking room and at the head of the table, and here was a routine of a voyage being broken the first day out. It *was* irritating—and at his age.

"Let me say, captain, that if you'd come down and——"

"I'll do the saying," retorted the captain; "and I'm running this ship. "Did you empty number three?"

"Number three bottom tank emptied, sir."

"Well, damnit, and she's five degrees more over than when you started."

"Your orders, captain—you're running this boat, not me."

"If you will permit me, sir"—it was an officer beside the captain in the little group on the bridge who spoke—"I would suggest——"

"You mind your own business, sir! When I want your opinion I'll ask it!" The old eyes flashed querulously a moment and then went tired. The white, unshaven jowls rippled with irritation. He was of the generation of a boyhood and training on the windjammers, and he scorned these modern squirts that came up from schoolships and Lord knew what, a-crawling in by the cabin windows instead of through the hawse pipes in the only way a sailor man could be made.

"It's your ship, captain; you're boss,"

the chief engineer spoke. "I'll do what you say—you'll have to talk to the owners, not me, thank Heaven."

"What's the matter down there?" asked the captain; and the irritation in his voice was a tired irritation.

"She's making water faster than ever—its coming down from overhead. Lord knows where—it's flooding the bunkers and slopping above the bilges. I've pumped out the tank you said." He caught at the rail to steady himself as the *Xantippe* wallowed heavily. "Why don't you come below yourself for a look-see?"

The captain clenched a fist; it was a tremulous fist, had any one studied it closely.

"By George, it's a nice state if the captain of a ship has to leave his bridge to go trotting around to hell an' gone over his own ship because no one can do it for him." He turned to the chief officer at his side, irritably. "Is there anything below that you can't report?"

"No, sir." It was his first trip under this skipper. "But it might be well——"

"Now, chief," the captain interrupted and turned to the engineer as if with a note of triumph in his voice. "let's get right down to brass tacks—can you hold that leak down? Can't you pump her out?"

The chief engineer looked the captain squarely in the eye.

"You're the boss," he said, "and you give orders. I can keep the pumps going as long as I can keep a gang in the boiler room. But——" and he paused a second—"better have Sparks send out a stand-by."

Through the unshaven white stubble the captain bared his teeth in a sneer. He glared contemptuously. He started to speak, then he checked himself and stamped his way to the chart-room door and beckoned to his chief officer as he disappeared within.

As the chief officer entered the captain was already seated with his head in his hands and the hair rippling out between his fingers like little white flames. A lifetime at sea—sailor, he was—a sailor, and now dependent on a bloody bunch of plumbers—couldn't have pumps or headway, shuttin' down the engines so as to run the pumps—Lord! Send out a stand-by call—and then what? Salvage—*salvage* that would steal the ship, and he on the carpet before a rotten lot of boiled shirts,



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although, he admitted as he sidled along the steeply listed deck, it didn't look any too good for either of them getting that relationship established.

She nodded back and beckoned. "What do you hear, Red?" she asked.

"Nothing," he answered. "We're just waiting, I guess."

"The chief steward was by an hour ago and he said to get the people out on the deck, but not to scare them. And, Red," she added a little nervously, "if you can sort of stick by me, do it, will you?"

"Bet your life!" he responded.

Slowly the deck chairs began to fill up with pale women who still carried all the signs of seasickness that a tense excitement had not cured. All the deck chairs were moved to the upper sides of the sloping decks. Many of the passengers were already in them, some had not had their clothes off all night or had slept half dressed in their tilted bunks; some had slept in the saloon or smoking room, fearful to go to their staterooms—and those who had found that they could only stay in their berths by being wedged in with pillows. The passengers knew less than the crew; they felt danger, but they reassured each other. The trio of the morning before drifted along the line of deck chairs with cheerful words, assuring everybody that this was a regular part of the sea, just a little nuisance, isn't it, that's all? Here and there clumsy cork life preservers were carried or dropped alongside the owner's deck chair. Some few even had them on.

In the daylight Mr. Malaker's face looked drawn. Back and forth between the engine room and the bridge his sodden shoes and soaked trousers made little grimy smudges on the white decks. Here and there a passenger nodded with a hopeful friendliness as he passed. A man in baggy trousers—one of the trio of yesterday morning spoke as he stepped up alongside. "How is it, chief? Bad?"

Mr. Malaker gave a little laugh. Oil and grime and weariness made it a grimace.

"Just a little shift in cargo, sir—and bunks not used up yet. We'll fix her!"

"Don't jolly me—what's the low-down?" He looked Mr. Malaker in the eye.

The chief officer looked him in the eye. He was a substantial man, a little gray on the temples—no chicken. There was no

fear, only a straightforward inquiry and courage.

"Keep on deck—no scare, mind you—but keep 'em on deck. It's best," he said in a low tone and hurried on.

He passed the companion that led to the bridge. He turned the corner that marked the break in the deck and where the storm canvas made a little alley by which the promenaders passed from port to starboard, or vice versa, on their daily walk around. Mr. Battersea, Mr. Solvert, and the several other officers from deck and engine room were there, including the chief. The chief nodded to Mr. Malaker. "We're all here," he said, "we'll back you." The others nodded.

"Any call gone out?" asked Mr. Malaker jerking his head up to the bridge above them.

"Sparks tells me nothing except the *Xenophon* trying to get in touch and the Old Man told 'em again 'nothing to report.'" said Mr. Battersea.

"Well," said Mr. Malaker heavily, "come on—let's get it done. My ticket'll get a black mark either way, but it looks like the only way. Stand by, that's all."

The group nodded silently and followed Mr. Malaker as he climbed up to the bridge. The captain pushed his way up from the starboard end of the bridge, helping himself against the heavy list by one hand on the bridge rail. A couple of the junior officers remained aloof in the port overhang of the bridge, busily scrutinizing the decks and the horizon.

"Can we talk in the chart house, captain?" said Mr. Malaker leading the way. The captain's face rose slowly to an irritated red and the white stubble of his throat and jaw quivered with a frosty anger.

The chart-room door closed and the captain squared himself as he faced the little group. The captain alone seated himself his eyelids narrowed. The others stood, braced against the slope of the chart-house floor and the slow heave of the ship.

"Well, sir," the captain spoke first and he looked his chief officer in the eye, "you have a report to make?"

Unconsciously Mr. Malaker took off his cap and tossed it against the corner of the chart desk. It was as if he was stopping for action—for he had the right to remain covered. He leaned forward with his hand resting on the edge of the desk.

"I am reporting that the ship is sinking," he said evenly; "I am reporting this before witnesses. You know the steps to take. We ask that they be taken."

The captain half rose, and one hand half shoved his cap on the back of his head as the other swept in the group with a gesture.

"By George, I'm the captain of this ship," he shot back hoarsely. "Not you! I give orders—I don't take them. I'm responsible—not you! I send you below to see that orders are carried out—not to run the ship for me! You tell me number one's empty—then they can put the pumps on the leak—we'll beat it now!"

The chief officer looked at him steadily, and then spoke again in the same even, monotonous voice.

"The ship is sinking! The leak—Lord knows where it is—has gained. We've got fifteen degrees more list since midnight, the stokers are better than knee-deep in the fireroom now! We've got passengers—women and children——!"

He threw out his arms in a gesture that carried both threat and appeal. The other officers nodded silently and unobtrusively. The captain was full on his feet in a second.

"Mutiny! By the eternal—mutiny!" he tried to roar, but his hoarseness only ended in an angry whispering squeak. He shook his finger under the nose of his chief officer. "You—you—you sniveling rat—a little list and a little water and you tell me to cut and run. I've had more sea than any of you white-livered deck wallopers and you'll take orders from me, by George, not give 'em!"

He paused. In his mind was an angry tornado. They'd see him sold out—fifty years at sea—and sold out to the first slaving salvage shark that come along to save their own skins! Bah! Sink—sinking! Bah! He'd never had a sinking ship before, and there wouldn't be one now! What would the owners say? Good-by, here's your hat, what's your hurry; sorry. Sink—hell! Those things didn't happen to him! No mate's berth on a tramp for him—or, worse, on the beach.

Mr. Walker had paused also. He spoke now, and in the same even tone. "Captain, this ship can't float—she's sinking now, slowly maybe, but she's going. Will you send the call?"

"No! There no danger!" The cap-

tain looked obstinately at the little group standing before him.

"If you do not," said the chief officer, "radio for a stand-by"—he picked up the running log on which each detailed jotting is made of wind, weather, course or any incident that comes under eye of the bridge—"I shall enter the facts of my report that the ship is sinking and that you have refused to radio for help or to give any other radio information as to our sinking condition. And I shall be obliged to take command and enter you as"—he paused for a word—"unfit physically to command." The men nodded again.

The captain clenched his fists, jumped for the running log. The chief officer put out his hand and held him off as a couple of the others took a step forward.

"Listen, captain——"

"By George, I'll have you broke!" shouted the captain in a hoarse scream. "Every one of you—I'll bust your tickets! I'll—why—why, it's mutiny!" he ended weakly as his voice died down and he dropped back on the leather-cushioned bunk.

"Captain, my ticket will be busted if I don't do this—and maybe," he added, "it'll be busted because I do. But we're sinking."

"Think of the women and kids aboard, captain—suppose they were yours!" one of the group spoke up. The captain only glared at him.

"Listen, captain," went on the chief officer, "you're in command all right. Send out the S O S—here!" He pushed over the pad of the ship's radio forms.

The angry light was fading in the captain's eyes—dully they looked at his chief officer as he took the pad. His hands trembled. "Don't send the S O S—send out a stand-by," he suggested hoarsely. "It'll look bad to send an S O S with nothing in front of it. Send S O S next after that."

The chief officer looked up. "That's right," said one. Mr. Walker nodded. "How long do you think we've got as a margin, chief?" he turned to the engineer.

"Make your own guess," the chief engineer answered. "Pump intakes clog as fast as they're cleaned—only two boilers working, and they're keeping up the juice for radio." Mr. Walker tapped a pencil against his teeth, then he nodded his head and picked up his cap. He pressed a

button and one of the radio men responded. The captain held out the radio message.

"Now then, captain," said Mr. Malker, "you're the skipper—don't forget that—and in one hour Sparks sends out the S O S. We're under your orders, are, carrying them out the same as before we come in—this isn't any mutiny, don't forget that."

The captain nodded dully. Almost gently they closed the chart-house door behind them as they filed out. The captain's eyes followed them with no sign of interest. "Salvage! By George, salvage!" he muttered thickly. "Me—salvage!"

**T**HE sun far up and a blue sky overhead made even bluer by the little patches of fluffy clouds that floated lazily along. The angry sea of the afternoon before seemed impossible as the long swells lifted and sank with not much more than a ripple as the *Xantippe* wallowed sluggishly as she rose and dropped to the gentle slopes. The S O S had gone out long since. Somewhere, beyond that vast circle of horizon, ships with increasing steam pressures were climbing the tranquil arc of the earth to the rescue. A perfect day!

"It's heavenly," said the little bride who had waved to Red. "Perfectly heavenly—and won't it be the grandest adventure to tell about when we get back?"

"Right-o!" laughed the man to whom Mr. Malker had spoken in the low tone early that morning. "Stupid things, ships—we'll have half a dozen here like a line of taxicabs in no time now!" He winked a trifle at the bridegroom.

"Thanks, old chap," returned the bridegroom. He knew the bluff and it was hard carrying it alone.

"It's awfully thrilling—I never had an adventure before!" laughed the little bride gayly, as the man in the baggy trousers passed on.

Above, on the boat deck, sailors were pulling and hauling. There was the clatter of feet overhead, orders, more orders, the creak of blocks and grunting of men as they worked to get the port lifeboats over. Red was there mixed in with a gang, most of whom he had never seen before—the other watch. From the bridge had come the order to lower the port lifeboats—the lifeboats on the high side! Against the slope of the ship's deck they got the davits,

the lifeboat lifted and swung slightly—there was no "Ease away" because the lifeboat still swung not clear enough for lowering. It bumped on the ship's side. The slope of the ship was against them. Another gang was working on another lifeboat and, beyond, Red could see still another where the davits swung out to port, but not enough to clear the ship's sides for lowering away.

From the boat deck the figure of the captain could be seen on the bridge, head down, sometimes climbing up the steep slope from starboard, but, now, more steadily, leaning out and apparently bawling orders aft to the lifeboat gangs. But his voice would not carry, he could hardly be heard ten feet away. His collar was turned up, though the air was balmy. Down went an officer to help clear the boats by the captain's orders; and another would follow him to order the first back, and then carry an order that would bring the boatswain up on the bridge.

Up and down from below went Mr. Malker. He was driving men down to the fireroom; knee-deep in oily coal-black water he waded with the engineers, then back to the bridge. Men were oozing out from here and there and gathering in little groups. Discipline was fading, only energy remained. And yet there was no panic. All of the passengers had on life belts—although no order had been given.

Steadily the radio room was working now. It was searching the air for ships and their messages. In the chart room the ships in contact were pricked off—but oh so far away!

The grunting confusion of lowering the lifeboats went on. Down from the bridge came the captain himself, swarming over the sailors, pulling on a rope here, shouting a hoarse order there from a throat that was hoarse and by now almost soundless. The boats stuck. With oars from out of the boats to use as crowbars they pried them down the high slope of the ship. A bump, and a thud, and one lifeboat responded with the crack of breaking wood.

Somebody called for the carpenter—he was not in that gang. Some sailor ran for a sheet of metal, some nails and the crushed place was strengthened. An oar broke—to lever a ton of lifeboat with a slender oar is out of its line. Another—what difference, there were plenty more? The passengers looked on, white-faced, and

silent, mostly, though here and there some of the women were crying silently. The children on board clung tightly to the mothers and the mothers held them tightly.

At last! Two boats almost to the water line.

The captain beckoned. "Women and children first!" he whispered hoarsely.

The word passed. Silently the women and the children, awkward and clumsy in the archaic cork-slab life belts, were helped down to the boats. A husband tried to step over the rail as he helped his wife. The captain's dulled eyes blazed a little. "Women and children first!" he yelled and grabbed the man by the shoulder and flung him back. The woman screamed.

"Women and children first!" he muttered and flung out his arm in an order. Two sailors pushed the women onward down to the boats.

Women and children first! It was the order of the sea—most of the landsmen had heard of it, and here it was. The captain's dulled mind could only think of it literally, and literally he applied it. The little bride tried to cling to her husband as she started down the ship's side to the lifeboats. The young bridegroom who had helped his bride over the rail was thrust back. With set teeth he waved encouragingly at her white face as the little figure in the white sport suit and scarlet collar was handed down to the boats by the barefooted sailors.

"The damn fool!" said the man in the baggy trousers to a ship's officer.

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "Passengers mind their own business—he's the captain!" he said.

The women and children were loaded. The captain wiped his brow. His hot dull eyes were even duller. Only the habit of command remained—and the folly of supine discipline under him. He started on more lifeboats, but he was doing a petty officer's job—launch them, get them overboard, was his only thought. The two lifeboats, already filled with the women and children passengers, were resting uneasily on the steep plating of the port side of the ship. They rolled against the red water line with the slow heave of the ship to the lightly rippled swells. They waved to the men, the husbands and fathers, high above them; and the men waved back from above, encouragingly.

"Why don't you lower those boats with

women and children into the water?" cried the baggy-trousered man as he passed Red. Red was running aft—he had not seen the stewardess on deck. "I'm looking for a woman now," he cried and ran on. He had missed the stewardess from the deck.

The man hunted up the captain at an other lifeboat that he was bossing, swearing and bellowing in his hoarse and all but soundless voice. "Why don't you get those boats in the water?" demanded the passenger pointing to the lowered boats still hanging from their falls and, five feet above the water, gently clinking against the side of the *Xantippe*.

"Mind your own damn business!" gasped the captain, his dull eyes staring at the questioner. "I'm captain here! No mutiny from a passenger—put him in irons down below!" He motioned to a sailor to carry out the order.

"Better go away, sir," said the sailor. And the man in the baggy trousers climbed back with the view of finding the chief officer. But the captain had already forgotten him and was howling another order in a whisper.

It was difficult to hold one's footing on the sloping decks. The list was now such that it was all but impossible to climb from starboard up to port, and, if a foot slipped, one would automatically slide down till brought up against the rail of a deck house. Red had missed the stewardess; the last he saw of her she had something on a tray from a pantry and was handing it to a woman passenger with a little baby and patting the blankets in place around the baby's unseen head. He ran aft, one hand clutching at the port rail, past the confusion of abandoned rugs and valises and deck chairs. She would not be below, that he knew, and there was no sign of any one in either the lounge or the smoking saloon. Had she gone to the boat deck above? It was in the last alley he found her, attempting to crawl back to the deck. She was crving and tugging her way desperately with the aid of the rail. "Hey—Mrs. Enderby!" called Red.

"Lord bless you, Red—my leg's broke!" she cried. "Oh, Lord,—oh, Lord!" and she commenced to sob.

"Hey, there—wait—I'm coming!" called Red as he half slipped, half ran down the heavy list. One leg was dragged out behind, useless.

"It ain't broke," she sobbed; "it's



sprained—but that's as bad. Oh, my Lord, Bee—Red be good——"

"Hey, Mrs. Enderby," said Red, "this is all right—here, slip down!" He eased her down to the port rail. He half carried her along the deck to an after companion that led to the boat deck above. "Buck up," he ordered, "we're all O. K. yet! Hey, Jack, give us a hand with the lady!"

A sailor had stuck his head over the companion opening above and Red had called to him. Then the head disappeared. Here and there along this lower side of the steeply sloping deck little figures would dart out from the doors or alleys and, generally scorning the companions fore and aft, where officers might be, would swarm up over onto the boat deck above as over the futtock shrouds on a square rigger. A black head and half-covered chocolate torso came out through the smoking room smoking a fat black cigar, newly lit, and with a pocketful bulging in a trousers pocket.

"Hey, Mike," called Red, "lend me a hand!"

The darky looked startled a second and then grinned.

"Sure t'ing, bahs," he said in soft, broad West Indian. "Is th' lady hurted bahd?"

"Here," said Red, and lifted her; "Mike, you just steady me behind so I don't fall!" And, with feet spread to get a brace on each step the full width of the companion Red emerged a moment later on the boat deck. High above them to port they could see beyond the funnel stays and through the gaps between ventilators and the various obstructions of the boat deck, the little gangs of sailors working to free the lifeboats and to lower them, and the blue uniform of the captain with his waving arms driving them like a boatswain on an old windjammer. Here, on this side, not ten feet above the water, was the keel of each lifeboat; gangs were working confusedly and without order in lowering the lifeboats. But they were getting them in. There was neither order nor discipline. The davits almost swung outboard of themselves, so heavy was the list of the ship, and the gear paid out easily till the lifeboats floated lazily till the slackened falls were unhooked. But the lifeboats were few that had been lowered. Suddenly, from the saloon below there came a tearing sound, and then a ripping crash just below their feet.

"It's the piano fetched loose in the saloon," a steward yelled. "Hurry up, boys, she's a-goin' fast!"

White jackets, black men, petty officers, oilers, cooks, bakers, and sailors in dungarees and bare feet worked feverishly to free the lifeboats. Red was working with the rest. "Here, put the lady in here!" he ordered, as he and black Mike cast off the canvas cover and dashings of a lifeboat. Men were crawling up from everywhere—twenty men worked with the two an instant later. Nobody questioned as to where was the command. The stewardess was lifted in and then, with a man at each end of the lifeboat, it was eased off the few feet till it met the water. A passenger slipped down from the high side. "Got room for a passenger?" he called to a boat already cast loose and twenty feet from the *Xantippe's* side.

"Sure thing!" a man called. "Swim for it!"

Overboard the passenger went, clad as he was. It was the man in the baggy trousers, the plus fours. Half a dozen hands reached out and hauled him in.

From somewhere down the starboard deck a voice called out, "Cut 'em loose—cut 'em loose—don't wait, they'll float if you cut 'em loose!"

Six boats were already paddling along off the side and here and there people were diving and swimming toward them. A queer, subtle, little shiver seemed to pass along the decks underfoot. There was the feel as of the movement of a living thing—or a dying thing—passing in its last moments of anguish. "Cut 'em loose—cut 'em loose!" a voice screamed, and it was drowned out as its owner plunged overboard.

"She's a-goin' boys, she's a-goin'!"

There came a crash of bottles and glass from the smoking room that mingled with the splash of men as they struck the water. There was a movement as the vessel listed heavily to starboard, then a heavy recovery as she wallowed to port, and the last that Red saw as he dived was black Mike jumping for a boat with a hatchet and striking at the lashings of the yet unlaunched lifeboats.

He was hauled aboard the last boat launched. Oars were out and unskilled men were clumsily trying to paddle away from the dreaded vortex that would follow her as she went under. "Keep off—keep

off—keep off!" a man in the boat was screaming.

Slowly the *Xantippe* seemed to be righting herself, but her starboard rail was deeper under water, it was up to the boat deck. Here and there little figures came slipping down to starboard and plunged in. Here and there little figures and others seemed to be running about as in a daze. The bow was under, the break in the deck forward and aft followed it now, and the roar of water pouring into the open after hatch where they had been jettisoning cargo was like the roar of a waterfall. The rest of the forward deck dipped slowly under and, as if sliding down deliberately into a pipe, the whole ship began to move forward, and turning back again on its starboard side. Bridge, chart house, ventilators, slowly they disappeared, leaving behind a slow, swirling greasy slick that eddied with trivial débris and that all rose and fell with the lazy swell of the impassive blue seas. Red now could see across the swirl that was closing above the boat deck the two boatloads of women and children lazily floating on the farther side of the funnels—the boat deck was like a raft slowly being drawn down an invisible but inexorable suction pipe.

In the bow of each lifeboat, and at the stern, could be seen the sailors originally placed there—frantically they seemed wrestling with something. They were trying to cast off the falls by which they were still fast to the foundering *Xantippe*.

"Good Lord!" the passenger in the next boat screamed.

At the same instant the struggling sailors jumped overboard. A woman stood up—and another. Red could see the ropes of the lifeboat falls floating on the coiling slick of the sinking boat and leading down to the just disappearing davits where they had been made fast! They had never been cast loose!

As the *Xantippe* sank the floating ropes dragged under. Red could see the line of floating rope disappearing, and the ripple of its disappearance fairly running up to the helpless boats. The passenger who had first sensed it covered his eyes, Red looked on.

There was a twitch at the bow of the first boat, a sudden jerk at the stern of the second and, the next instant together with the roar of water as the funnels went under and a cataract poured in, the two

lifeboats were snapped sidewise and overturned. The women and children—their sole occupants now—were tumbled into the deadly slick of the foundered *Xantippe*. Both lifeboats were dragged under to go on down with the ship.

Red could never even remember if there had been a sound. It did not seem real—they were not real people—it was as if a great grocer had dumped some vegetables into a bag.

The house flag disappeared as the foremast went down, and the foremast went down as if it were slipping back into a socket. And little heads, like black beads, were slowly swept about among the débris in the eddying, coiling slick where the *Xantippe* had been, but a short moment before.

Red saw the man in the plus fours wave his hands and point to the slick. He saw a man in the stern—a ship's officer—unship the tiller and face the men at the oars. They were in terror and clumsily trying to paddle away from the slick with its whirlpools and débris and the little bobbing heads. He saw the officer raise the tiller and swing it and one of the paddling oarsmen crumpled up in the bottom of the lifeboat. Another oarsman rose viciously and then sank back. Quite as clumsily they were turning and paddling back, headed for the slick, and the plus fours was pulling at the oar.

Red had his oar out. There were not a dozen men in his boat, but little heads were swimming toward them and splashing heavily in the clumsy life preserver band of heavy cork slabs. A couple of the black firemen, a steward in his white jacket, and without a life preserver, and three sailors were fumbling with the oars and rowlocks, a smoking-room bartender was trying to untangle the mystery of the tiller and rudder. Two others were crouching low against the thwarts, dripping, and, forward a couple were helping into the boat one of the *Xantippe's* officers; a trivial cut over the eye was bleeding liberally. It was Mr. Battersea. He slipped out of the cork life preserver and flung it into the bottom of the boat.

"Any officer here?" he called out. The men looked curiously at each other as if to certify that they were not officers. Mr. Battersea climbed aft over the thwarts. "Get busy—ship the cars!" he ordered as

he passed. He deftly shipped the rudder and slipped the tiller in place.

"Pull!" he ordered. He swung the tiller over and sluggishly the lifeboat swung slowly around and headed into the slick. Even then it had taken time—too much time.

The oily, greasy, treacherous smoothness of coiling eddies and little whirlpools was a mess of floating bits of wreckage—deck chairs, bits of timber, cases, sodden bits of cloth that had been fleecy steamer rugs, valises, sailors' bags, boxes and crates interspersed with vegetables and patches of oil. Now and again some heavy case would raise from below and break the surface with enough to stun a man or stove in a boat; and once a spar shot upward out of the sea to fall back with a splash. The other boat was already in, Red could see them trying to force their way in. Even now there were not as many heads as there had been, short as the time had been. Red saw one just slip out of sight and stay under. A flat, spreading eddy drifted lazily over to another, and a pair of arms shot up and the sudden scream of a woman was cut short. The man at the oar beside Red spoke.

"You ain't goin' in there, sir?" he jerked a thumb over his shoulder to the slick. Another spar of heavy timber had just shot out of the water and fell with a smacking splash. A Negro stopped rowing, in a panic he began to back water.

"Give way! Give way!" shouted Mr. Battersea. A greasy swirl threw the boat's head around.

Sullenly they started pulling again. A bundle of clothes floated by all but submerged. At a nod from Mr. Battersea Red grabbed it—a little baby, limp and unbreathing. A man, clinging to a crate of cabbages was hauled in and sank, exhausted, to the bottom of the lifeboat. Steadily the boat filled with dripping men, sailors and members of the crew, mostly. There were but few heads now in the slow-riding swells. Here and there a body, face down, and beyond aid was passed. "Only the living!" ordered Mr. Battersea. A white patch floated at oar's length, the hair floating like silken seaweed. It turned as a keg drifted against it, and one arm opened out as if in farewell; it was the red cuffs and red collar of the white sport suit that had called down to him from the

break in the deck above. A queer clutch caught at Red's throat. "Lord!" he said. "I knew *her!*"

Farther apart drifted the wreckage. There were no more bobbing heads. Here and there a band of cork slabs floating sideways, or here and there a hand, perhaps, tossed clear of the surface by a trick of the rippling waves on the long, slow swells. And, now and again, a great bubble of oil that burst up from far below and that spread itself in great black patches that ironed the little waves to a flat, smooth surface. Already the other lifeboats were separating—the farthest only visible as little silhouettes that lifted into view on the crest of a swell and then disappeared below the crest again.

"We'll hang around here," said Mr. Battersea, "the S O S went out and we'll be picked up—not before dark though."

Methodically he had the occupants of the boat counted. Fifty-three! Rather crowded.

"Anybody see anything of the skipper?" asked Mr. Battersea. There was no rowing—there was nothing to row for except to keep the boat's head up.

A sailor spoke. "I see him headin' for the bridge on the run when she started to go."

Mr. Battersea nodded, whitely—that might be his job some day. "Went down with the ship—he would," he remarked.

"Afore he went," volunteered a steward, "I saw him send Mr. Walker down to the engine room—wanted to know how much time was left," he said.

A black man from Barbadoes shook his head in affirmation as he laid on his oar.

"He arsked me to go wiv him, bahs—he's down there now, him an' the chief engineer. Ah parsed 'im a-comin' up."

"Why dinjah go down—like 'e told ye?" a sailor beyond asked.

"Ah tole 'im to go to hell, bahs," explained the Barbadian stoker gravely. "Ah knowed she was a-sinkin'. I was comin' up—nobody tell a black man when it's time fo' that." He chuckled. "Fo' de Lord, bahs, I was up to ma belly in watah."

There was a pause. The sailors and stokers were searching themselves for some tobacco, dry enough to smoke, a couple of them chewed on a water-soaked cigar from the smoking saloon.

"What happened?" asked a passenger of Mr. Battersea.

"Lord knows—enough," replied that officer simply. "Skipper went nutty saving salvage money for the owners. If he didn't go down he'll wish he had."

There was silence.

Slowly they waited for the hours to pass. With every lift of the swell they scanned the horizon for a smudge of smoke. They talked and wondered and shivered in their wet clothes, as some crouched against the bottom to get shelter from the light breeze. Darkness came and with it the hours grew longer.

**B**RISKLY the tugful of reporters swarmed up the gangway of the *Iroquois King* at quarantine in upper New York Bay. They swarmed over the ship hunting for the survivors and backing them into corners for their stories of the foundering of the *Xantippe*. Only twelve women, all told, passengers and crew had survived; and every child was lost. A sailor pointed out a woman in a sea-stained skirt who was hobbling along painfully toward the newspaper men.

"She was one," said a sailor to a re-

porter. "Maybe you can help her, she's always asking about some guy on board—wants to know."

"What's become of the others?" asked the woman. "Have they found out yet—if it hadn't been for *him* I'd a-gone down too?"

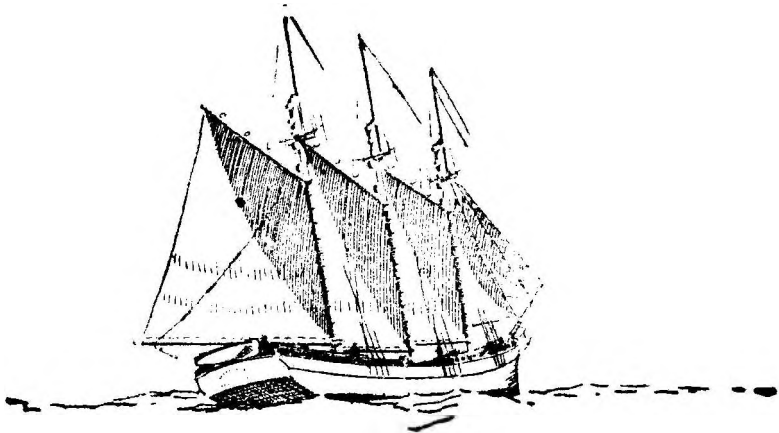
"Who is it?" asked the reporter. He fished a newspaper out of his pocket and folded it back so that list of known survivors was uppermost.

Slowly the woman's eyes ran down the list. Rapid reading is not an accomplishment for all. Then her eye lighted. "James A Dawson, able seaman!" she read.

"Who's he?" asked the reporter wonderingly.

"He's nothing—yet. But he's going to be my son," said the stewardess. "Why"—and her eyes lighted with pride—"d'you know what he did?"

And the reporter got the story the city editor was hoping for. But he missed the story of the little bride, for the bridegroom had been in a weather-cracked lifeboat that had foundered during the night before rescue and had joined her.



# Sea Law

By John T. Rowland



Crossing the Gulf Stream in heavy weather.

"We'll rant and we'll roar like true British sail-  
ors;  
We'll rant and we'll roar all across the broad  
seas  
Until we strike soundings in the Channel of Old  
England—  
From Ushant to Scillies is thirty-eight leagues."

**T**HUS bellowed "Wild Bill" Moran, like the rip-roaring sailorman the song proclaimed him to be.

"Aw, go to sleep. Why for you must make da noise?" complained "Portagee Tony" from an upper bunk.

"Pipe down, you men," a deep voice boomed in through the forecabin door. "Moran, shut up and turn in. The others want their watch below if you don't."

"Then let 'em take it—if they're men enough," said Wild Bill.

"Do you know who you're talking to?" the deep voice inquired as a tall figure in a black slicker, glistening and wet, appeared in the darkness outside the door. "Are you a sailor or just a wharf-side bum, to talk back to me?"

"Sailor enough to know what's what, cap'n," came Wild Bill's caustic reply. "No Old Man I ever sailed with butted in on fo'c's'le scraps. The men was supposed to settle those themselves."

"You *don't* say?" inquired the voice from without very softly. "Then maybe you'll kindly come on deck and help me handle ship, since you know so much, *Mister Moran?*"

Wild Bill glared. Then he laughed—but the laugh failed quite to ring true.

"Jump into it! Put your boots on and come out here, you useless dock rat, before I go in after you and break every bone in your good-for-nothing carcass." The deep voice spoke quietly, yet with an earnestness that made prickles rise on the back of Mr. Moran's tough neck.

"I've been gentle with you as long as I can," it went on. "*A-r-re* you coming, or—"

"Coming, cap'n. Yes, sir," Moran hastily declared, the protest that it was his rightful watch below dying in his throat.

Something about that voice gave him the creeps.

Hasty as was his exit he could nevertheless hear a chorus of snickers from the place he left. They did not improve Wild Bill's temper.

"Cap'n, it's agin' the law," he began as soon as he was on deck, thrusting out his under jaw and assuming a bellicose pose.

The tall black slicker stopped and wheeled about.

"Yes, Moran, I know. A shipmaster has no authority any more. You boys can raise all the hell you've a-mind, and yet I'm supposed not to interfere with you in your watch below. That's sacred under the law.

"But there's one exception, Moran," the tall figure continued in the softest pur. "In cases of emergency I can break you out. And there is one now, though you might not believe it—so I've called you to lend a hand. The other lads in your watch need their sleep."

Again a strange quality in that soft, deep voice made ripples of goose flesh run up and down Bill's beamy back. Like a cat's velvet paw or a stick of dynamite in a bunch of roses. Though far from imaginative he thought of both figures to describe its effect. It had another element, too—derision. Not the blatant sort, but very subtle—as though the speaker quietly enjoyed a secret joke. Moran could not be sure if the skipper was kidding him or not.

It enraged him, but also it baffled him and confused his rather primitive reactions, which had their origin in the subconscious levels of his brain. Cursing inwardly he followed the black slicker aft.

On the quarter-deck the Old Man paused. "Stand over there on the lee side, Moran. Keep your eyes peeled and be ready to jump when I tell you."

The night was black and squally, with bursts of warm rain and a wind that jumped about between southeast and south. Now and then blazes of silent lightning lit the heaped-up clouds.

Every moment Wild Bill expected something to happen. Being first of all a sailor and only secondary a bully, he maintained that attitude of mind known to sailors as attention and to sailormen as standing-by all taut. As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he noted a confused cross sea that gave the helmsman all he could do to steer. In fact the big schooner yawed wildly, sliding off her course a whole point,

first to starboard and then to port, and there seemed no telling which way she would go next. Carlson sweated and grunted at the wheel and swore deep Norse oaths under his breath. He was a powerful Norwegian and the best helmsman on the ship.

The Old Man stood by the spanker rigging as was his wont. The whole length of the quarter-deck lay between him and the two men by the wheel. The wind could be relied upon to drown anything they might say.

"Want a hand, Swede?" Moran inquired, edging in.

"Na, I bane steer." Carlson grunted shortly.

"You're a good steerer," said Wild Bill generously. "She'd be all over the Western Ocean to-night, with *me*." He knew where lay the big Norwegian's weakness. "Say, Swede," he added quickly, "what's up? What for did the Old Man break me out?"

"Ain't you bane raise hell?" the literal Norse replied. "I hear ham tell de mate you make trouble if he leave you below."

So that was the skipper's little joke. Wild Bill was the "emergency," himself! He clenched his fists and cursed, but he was careful not to let Carlson know he gave a hang.

"I'll get square with the old bloke," he responded in an indifferent tone.

"Damn fine Old Man," the other replied. "Shut up now; I haf odder work dan talk."

In spite of his rage Wild Bill did not move from his post. On deck at night with the wind blowing half a gale and the vessel seemingly on the verge of taking command, the habit of discipline held him to the spot. But his mind seethed. Had the Old Man come within earshot there is no telling what Moran might not have said. But he, too, stood like a statue at the weather rigging, his long black slicker glowing wetly in the intermittent flashes from on high.

He was generally a prudent Old Man and it seemed strange to Moran that he had not doused the spanker. That would have eased her steering. Yet there he was, cracking on sail like a yacht, driving the big four-masted schooner till her high bows buried in the crashing ferment of crazy Gulf Stream seas. The waist was a swimming pool and even the quarter-deck came in for a washing down now and then.

There was no sense in it—that was extremely plain.

As Moran thought about it his mind dwelt more and more upon the skipper's eccentric behavior—his butting into the fore-castle and the pent-up fury of his steel-and-velvet speech. Wild Bill had seen skippers crack before—it was the price they paid for having minds—and this one had been under a more than usual strain. But if he was going crazy, Moran wished he would do it quickly while there was still time for sane men to save the ship. The mate was an old dummy who would be sure to lose his head. But there were others—Wild Bill chuckled and expanded his deep chest. Who better than himself could drive this half-baked crew. Carlsen was the only sailorman in the crowd, and Carlsen had no ambition. He would fall in line. And *Mister* Moran would be written up in the papers and given a fat purse by the owners. He knew without half thinking where most of that money would go.

"Lights are burnin' bright, sir," sang out the lookout halfway through the watch.

"Very well," boomed a deep voice in reply.

The wheel was relieved, one Johansen coming aft from lookout to take Carlsen's place. He made a sad mess of it and Wild Bill sprang to give him a hand. Between them they ground the wheel hard up and just save a gybe. Had they not done so the vessel might have lost her masts.

"If I was you I'd let her come up a point," panted Wild Bill gruffly. "To hell wit' de course!"

The Old Man had come aft and stood looking on. "That's a good idea, Moran," he said calmly. "Johansen, steer north a half west."

"Nort' half west, sir," the helmsman repeated, marveling at this unexampled mildness of the Old Man's.

But Wild Bill turned and gave him a truculent stare.

"That what you broke me out for, when I should of been in me bunk below?"

The skipper chuckled. "Well, Moran, I said it was an emergency, you know."

An oath leaped to Wild Bill's lips. "You've got the watch on deck. I'm turnin' in."

The mate was still dotty and the men were worn out—all but Moran. Perhaps Carlsen also, but one never knew when a squarehead was going to break. The Old

Man smiled wanly as he continued to stare at the moon. Wild Bill was the only man he felt sure of, *his* breed was one that nothing but drowning could kill. But Wild Bill had been growing harder to handle every day. That was the effect suffering had on *him*.

The Old Man shivered as the fever in his blood turned to ice. A good bluff he had been running and he had almost won. *Almost!* He had hoped to cross the Stream and run away from this cursed storm. Its course *ought* to have recurved and carried it out to sea.

"Go forward, Moran—and call all hands to shorten sail."

He staggered to the wheel and thrust the helmsman aside. "Johansen, stand by to lower the spanker. Moran, send a man aft to give us a hand. Take charge for'ard and let everything go on the run. Look alive, man!" The skipper's teeth chattered so he could scarcely speak. "Can't you see we're going to have the wind back out of the nor'west?"

Wild Bill shoved his hands into his pockets and laughed aloud. The wind was slackening and moonlight flooded the surface of the sea. It looked as pretty a night as one could wish. He roared out his mirth and gave the quaking captain a slap on the back.

"I seen it comin'—there's bats in your belfry, old bird. Go below, me an' the Swede here will run your ship."

Something hard pressed into the Old Man's hip as he leaned against the wheel. He reached for it and yanked out his revolver.

Wild Bill stopped laughing and sidled toward him.

"Stand where you are!" said the skipper between chattering teeth.

"Just let me look at it, cap'n," pleaded Wild Bill coyly. "I don't mean no harm, sir. Honest I don't."

With an explosive oath the Old Man hurled the pistol from him and it disappeared in the darkness over the lee rail. Ten years ago the sight of a weapon in the hands of a master would have brought the boldest fore-castle bully into line. But now, since one could shoot only in self-defense like any fool of a private citizen on shore, it was impossible to intimidate a man any more. And the Old Man did not want to shoot Wild Bill.

"Moran, you fool," he gasped, "come

here and take the wheel. I'm about played out."

His hands fell from the spoke and he stepped aside. A sea lifted the ship's stern and she took a wild yaw. Her wheel spun like a whirring motor fan.

With a yell Moran leaped on it and clawed the spoke up.

"There now," said the skipper grimly, "hang onto it and stay put. If you let go of it the ship's done for and so are you. Get that through your thick skull and tell me if I've gone cuckoo or not!" He ran forward to turn out all hands himself.

They came up sleepy-eyed and half clothed, to find the schooner nearly becalmed upon a turbulent sea. Waves rushed at her from all directions, without rhythm or rule. She reeled drunkenly and her great sails thrashed and jerked at their booms.

The skipper's head was pounding and he felt as though a million imps were driving needles into his backbone. But he had to keep his face before the men.

"Lower down everything, boys," he sang out. "One hand aft to help Johansen on the spanker, the rest of you throw the other halyards off the pins. Stand clear and let 'em come on the run. Carlsen, you forward there? Let go the jib halyards. Get everything off her, boys!"

There were only eight sailors on the big four-master, but the cook and donkey-engine man turned out in response to the call for all hands. Between them the sails were lowered somehow. Men swarmed up on the gaffs to pass stops round the great bundles of canvas and spars.

The Old Man had backed up against the mizen rigging where he could support himself and see what was going on. In the northwest he saw an inky cloud bank with frayed edges coming up rapidly against the moon. Moran, at the wheel, turned his head and watched it also, and he called himself seven kinds of a misbegotten fool.

The huge spanker hung in a bight along the deck. Johansen and two others who seemed numb with sleep or fear struggled futilely to get the sail tied up.

"Here, dummy," growled Wild Bill, "come hang onto this wheel while I show you how to stow a sail."

Cursing, driving and doing the work of three men, he managed to get the spanker snugly furled. The torn front of the clouds had reached the zenith by the time

he was through, and a distant roaring, which every moment grew louder, came to his ears from the northwest.

"Which one next, cap'n, the mizzen?" Wild Bill shouted as he leaped down into the waist.

"No, Moran; you and Carlsen get the headsails secured. The boys here can manage these sails."

"Aye, aye, sir," was Wild Bill's hearty response. "And if you farmers don't have these fore-an'-afters tied up snug by the time I get back," he roared in a voice all could hear, "I'll make you wish you was sleepin' with Davy Jones, down below."

He raced forward and ran out on the footropes of the long jib boom. Near its end he found Carlsen. The methodical Norwegian had let all the headsails run down and had already furled the jib-top-sail and the outer jib. For want of beef on their downhauls the other sails were still riding up on the stays, and the stiff canvas defied all efforts to make a proper furl.

"Here, Swede," hollered Wild Bill; "lay in on the fo'c's'le and take a heave on the downhaul while I climb the old jib an' ride her down."

"Ya," mumbled Carlsen as he shambled in.

He laid hold of the downhaul to the inner jib and gave a mighty heave. Nothing budged.

"De hanks is jammed on de stay."

"Sure," said Wild Bill from his dizzy perch on the bowsprit. "Throw a bight o' line round the forestaysail while you're waitin' fer me to clear this one." And he scrambled up the stay like an ape.

Clouds had covered the entire sky and it was black as pitch. Only the restless waves, breaking all about with flashes of spume, relieved the utter darkness of the night. Carlsen heard Johansen sing out to report that the foresail was tied up.

"Very well," came the Old Man's voice. "One hand to the wheel. Lay aft every one, here she comes!"

Though not a breath stirred, the ominous roaring had risen to a scream.

"Come in, man," shouted Carlsen, shifting from foot to foot. "You can't do nodding dere."

"She's clear," yelled Wild Bill in triumph from a dozen feet up on the stay. "Heave away on yer downhaul—but wait till I get down."



Drops of rain splashed upon the deck. A hot breeze blew in Carlsen's face. Looking to windward he saw a foaming cataract that rushed at the ship.

The big jib flopped like a wounded bird. There came a grating sound of jib hanks sliding on the stay. Then a curse out of the darkness, followed by a scream. The jib filled with wind and started to climb aloft. Carlsen let the downhaul drop from his nerveless hands. A yell came from the sea under the ship's forefoot.

"Man overboard!" hollered the Norwegian with the full force of his lungs. "Man overboard, off de yib boom!"

Next moment he was flat on his face, digging finger nails into the deck. From stem to stern the big four-master lay buried in a maelstrom of wind-driven spray.

Buoyed up by the air in his clothing—the oilskin jacket was buttoned tight round his throat—Wild Bill drifted aft along her lee side. The rough planks offered nothing of which he could lay hold. Rather idly he wondered what would become of her. He heard the jib blow away with the report of a six-inch gun. "Curse the —!" he muttered. "Ten seconds more and I'd 'a' had her down."

The water seemed pleasantly warm, and here, close under the ship's lee, there was no wind. But she was passing him. Soon he would be alone.

"Oh, well," thought Wild Bill, "maybe there'll be a bit of wreckage I can grab." If not, it didn't greatly matter—sailors were born to drown at sea.

He came abreast of the main chains, but being a schooner-rigged vessel there was no projection from her side. Only the rough planks that offered him no finger hold at all.

She was moving faster. The hurricane pushing her bare masts. The mizzen rigging was beside him, with the lee water-

ways almost within his reach. But not quite. Soon her sheer would sweep up.

"It's all over," thought Bill. "I may as well call it a day."

He was pleased to note that she gave every sign of being under command.

"I did *my work*," said Wild Bill aloud. "Good-by, old packet! here's where you and me part."

Something struck his head, something heavy that drove it under the waves. Instinctively he clutched, and his hands laid hold of a rope.

Kicking violently he shoved his face above the sea. Figures leaned over the bulwarks and stared down at him. One, in a black slicker, had hold of the rope.

"Hang on!" it bellowed in a deep voice he knew very well. "How are you Moran? Can you hold on?"

"Me? Sure I can hold on. Haul away!"

They dragged him up over the side—with his boots full of water and the rope cutting into his bare wrists.

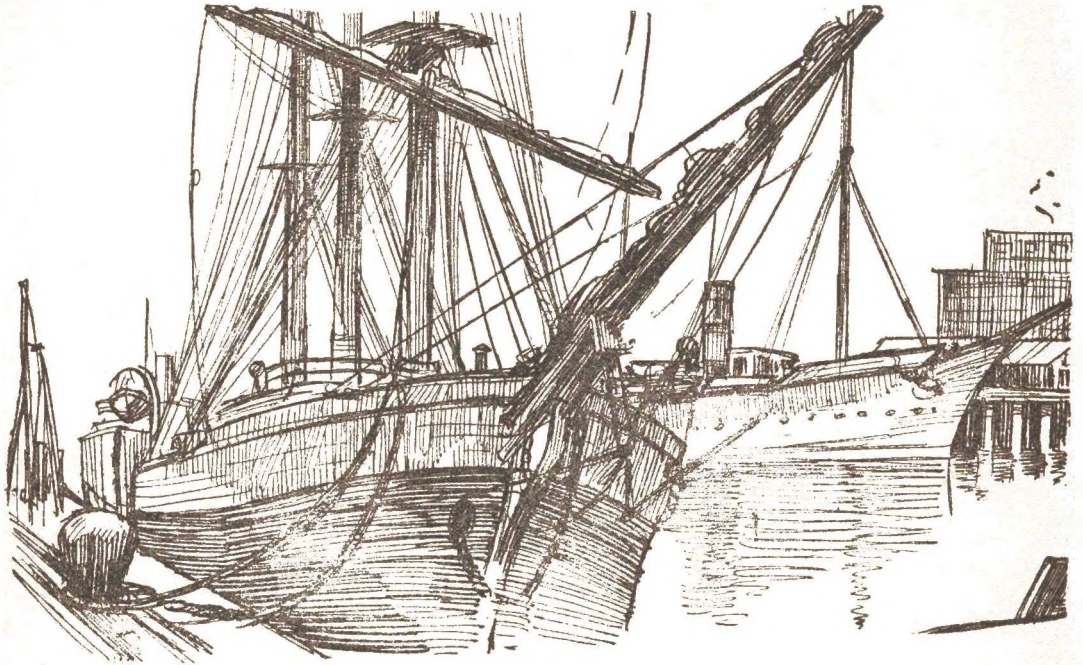
The Old Man seized his shoulders and hauled him in over the rail, seeming loth to let him go. Moran shook himself free and leaned against the bulwarks to pull off his boots. He was surprised at the violence of the wind. It had ironed the sea out flat and laid the lee waterways nearly level with the surface. But the ship was taking it well, driving before it with everything secured. Nary a sail had blown adrift.

"That's a bit of all right!" shouted Wild Bill against the gale. "Can you spare me, cap'n, while I go down to change me duds?"

"Aye, Moran; go down and change. I'll be needing you soon. Not to the fo'c's'le," he added as Wild Bill started off. "Go down in the cabin, and help yourself to anything you want. You're mate here now, *Mister Moran*."



# The Ironic Star



**O**LD age found Captain John Thorne living in the doubtful company of fragile and fading memory. In outward aspect, he presented to friendly townsmen the demeanor of a man who supported happily the burden of threescore years and ten, secure in the ownership of a modest competence, a little red brick cottage, a gray shepherd dog, also grown old, and a record of honor that followed unbroken day for day the life of its writer. This and a physical appearance rather striking in its suggestion of undimmed spirit: face thin and weathered, hair thick and snow white, shadowing eyes distantly focused, body spare and erect, masked effectively the cold emptiness of John Thorne's recent years.

For to himself he did admit with bitter helplessness that these years, these days and hours, yes, even these minutes were hollow and purposeless. He recalled now with a sort of wonder the feeling of pride in long years of honorably and profitably completed work, a feeling that had shed warm color over the day he had for the last time stepped off the gangplank of the old tramp steamer to take up the thread of a new life—a retired shipmaster. And now, at moments of startling irrelevance, perhaps when he would be stirring a bowl

of soup on his stove for his simple solitary meal, perhaps at the critical moment of selecting a scarf at Towner's shop, or late in the evening, on the brick porch, as he smoked the night's final pipe, his hand arrested on the smooth head of the feeble *Sea Lad*, would come clear vision of a sea captain pausing at the street end of a dock, to stare at the almost vanished fabric of his last command.

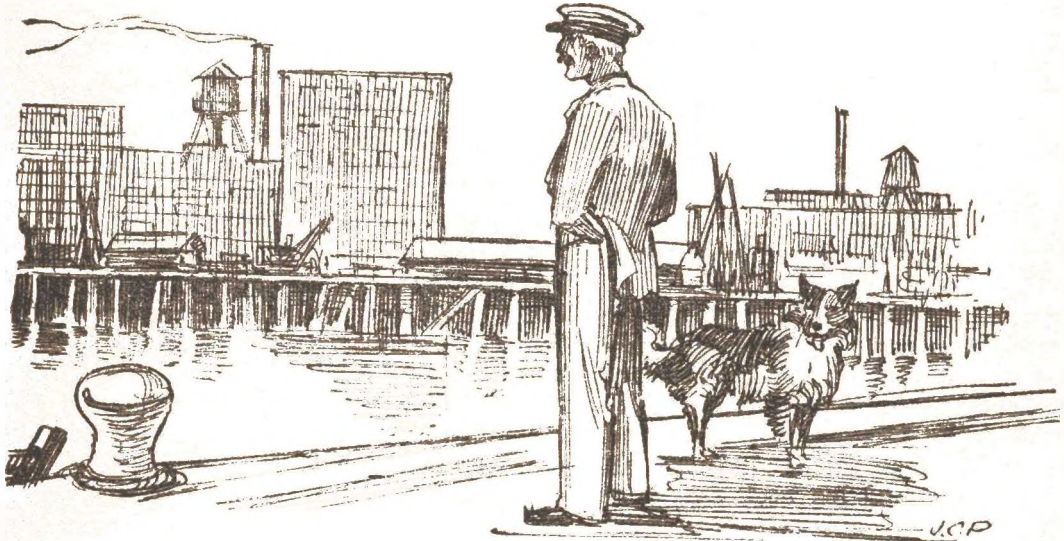
There she rested, the old *Shanghai*, humble, empty of cargo, dark. Her high bridge fronted the master obliquely, her long black sides were somber, solid slabs, joined imperceptibly to the solid waters of the dock. She was commonplace, battered, worn, lowly, and in her lowliness, John Thorne knew the measure of her nobility. He saw in that shadowed ship, faith, obedience, loyalty, dimly blended with service and patience—the old *Shanghai*, his wandering home, his partner, his care. As though from a great distance, he saw himself, standing motionless in the dark and silent dock, looking, just looking back at his ship. And it seemed that the ship was looking at him.

*Sea Lad*, young then, had tugged at the chain, then checked with unwonted sharpness, had crouched silently at his feet.

The street lamps, John Thorne remem-

# By Kenneth Champion Thomas

Captain John Thorne's sea change.



bered, had been thickly blurred, on his slow course to the hotel.

**M**ARCH, 1922, was bullying those who could be bullied with the bluster that he could marshal from the bleak fringe of dead winter. But it was something more sinister than raw weather that caused Captain Thorne to frown so blackly as he worked lather into his face before the little shaving mirror in his bathroom.

"Damn it!" he exploded suddenly. "I'm going on with a silly trick—like a—a morbid schoolgirl," he concluded with unfair partiality. "And yet, I *am* going to do it, and keep on doing it." Rather liking this bit of defiance, the captain repeated it mentally. The thought lingered with him during the preparation and consumption of coffee and rolls and eggs. He scanned the morning paper hurriedly, and a half hour later, left the placid *Sea Lad* sleeping in the sitting room.

All the way down Main Street Captain Thorne received and returned gravely, the morning greetings of Holmdell. At the depot he bought a return ticket to a distant city. And there, in the late afternoon, at the gate of a ship-breaker's yard, ensued his monthly plunge into what he was beginning to fear held a taint of morbidity.

His habitual dignified mien was consciously maintained as he strode past the gate-keeper. An abashed appearance, he told himself, would be most distressing. At the dingy little office he lingered for a moment in conversation with Black, the yard manager, whose liking for the old seaman had from the first meeting been unconcealed.

"Two new corpses in, captain," said the breaker. "One's a coal barge in horrible shape. Too long in the water," he added with heavy jocularity. "The other's a tramp."

"I shan't look at those to-day, Mr. Black," said Captain Thorne. "If the *Arundel* is still together, I think I can put in a few hours on board. You know, I appreciate more and more your letting me have the run of this yard. Especially, allowing me to come after closing hours and stay until night. It's really very kind. I can say without exaggeration, that the twelve months past have been brightened much by your kindness."

The breaker looked at him soberly. "You are always welcome, Captain Thorne. I'm going home now. Watch your step on that *Arundel*. There's a lotta loose decking on her."

The slight figure stepped over the planks

and barriers strewing the alleys and trestled paths of the breaker's yard. Yes, the *Arundel* was practically untouched. It was really a shame, to scrap such a sound old ship. What was the modern shipping world coming to? Why, by Heaven, there were years of service to be got from the ship!

He made his way to the gaunt, stripped bridge and stepped into the wheelhouse. No wheel, no telegraph, no marine fittings of any sort. Even the wooden toggle of the whistle had been removed. And yet, in the melancholy desolation of it all, there came into the heart of John Thorne, a peculiar sense of peace.

"It's my element," he muttered once. "Here I belong—with broken ships."

He roused himself and walked out to the wing of the bridge. A streak of blood-red cloud in the west, like a bright scarf flung carelessly across a palely tinted fabric, enhanced the bleakness of the dying dusk. The old man shivered, drew his muffler tighter around his neck and gave a prolonged glance, out and downward across the realm of his dying ships.

Sadness stole over him there in the twilight, but it was a soft, veiled sadness that seemed like a refuge—of peace—without sharpness, without poignancy. In the breadth of his memories, in the power of imagination, these disintegrating hulks there in the deepening shadows of advancing night assumed once more the outlines of their former selves. The knowledge that they were stripped and empty, hollow tombs of days but faintly echoed as one felt his way along the deserted passages and decks, was lost in the larger feeling that here perhaps, at rest, they still were covered with the indestructible glory of their records. This one had helped in the transportation of an army—that swift cutter had saved countless lives at sea—this sharp-nosed steamer had carried treasure—and over there, just beyond those broken barges, her rakish lines barely visible, lay, tilted over on her side, a yachtlike craft that in her smuggling had lifted the fringed mantle of romance.

He knew them all.

On the flimsy ladder stretching from the *Arundel* to the dock, Captain Thorne paused in uncertainty. Was it worth while to look over perhaps one more ship?

"No," he muttered. "I've seen enough to-night. It will tide me over till next

month. Curiously now, I feel wishful to sing—in a low voice."

The darkness was intensified for a moment as the orange flame of a match shone through cupped hands at the bowl of his pipe. There was the glow of tobacco, and then, in low tones, deep and harsh and untuneful, an old chanty stole down the lanes of silent ships—"Away, Rio."

And as he sang, his steps, without conscious guidance, led him farther and farther from the direction of the gate. He was walking now alongside a great dark hulk that he realized vaguely must be one of Black's "new corpses." John Thorne shook his head in mild disapproval of the harsh metaphor. So he would perhaps be called one day, and with as little intentional lack of justice. He cleared his throat impatiently at the weak gust of self-pity that was stealing through him. He shivered, too, as a blast of wind, March night wind, swept across the dock, beating into his face a sudden flick of rain. It threatened a squall. The dock shed was of ramshackle construction, almost roofless, a wind break at most; this ship, lately come to the yard, would afford more generous shelter.

He hurried across a gangplank stretching steeply over an abyss, cold looking, ink-like, that led him to the main deck. John Thorne felt his way carefully forward, up to the bridge. And with the moment of its inception unnoted, somewhere along that slow progression, there came to the old sea captain a sense of promise, of good, of propitious uncertainty, resembling somewhat the reasonless excitement of a slum child contemplating Christmas, foreshadowed in some familiar incidental—perhaps the increased activity in city streets, the displayed methods of organized charities—some suggestion of yuletide happiness. John Thorne was aware of unmistakable but baffling familiarity that mounted in his senses with each step forward. His footfalls were confusedly repeated and blurred in the reverberation of heavy soles beating on iron. His hands, extended blindly before him, and to either side, steered him through long passageways. And not even when he stood at last in the chart room did he seem to realize that he had come the last few turnings of his course almost mechanically, without groping.

From consideration unasked, not even suggested by his friend Black, John Thorne

had always pursued these hours without artificial light of any sort, beyond the occasional striking of a match, almost instantly extinguished. It would be highly ungrateful to risk prying and perhaps hostile eyes attracting attention to the irregularity. Moreover, long dusks of summer and short winter twilights and even the cold light of stars had been all that he had needed. But now, in the chart room, closed off from the bridge and the wheelhouse, he could, Captain Thorne thought, light a candle without fear of detection from any one ashore.

The tiny glow for an instant ineffectually battled against the solid blackness of the compartment, then its flickering ceased, and the shadows receded. John Thorne stared about him, blindly, stunned, overborne by the wonder of what he slowly realized. It was, he told himself, beyond the wildest possibility, and yet, as he moved with lighted candle toward a settee built into the bulkhead, he recognized a piece of ship's furniture that had been designed in Liverpool under his own plan and direction. By Heaven! was this thing true, or was it cruel hallucination, bred in latent longing and desire? What was that pale patch standing out against the gray wall? His hand trembled as he raised the candle for the answer.

It was an oblong sheet of paper, jaggedly torn, with faint printing on its face, for the most part, discolored and defaced, but word for word the sentences could have been pronounced by Captain Thorne. Ship's articles to be posted about the ship in prominent places! And in letters of faded print that flashed, transmuted into gold, before his eyes, the captain read dazedly the name of the ship. There it was—calling out to him, welcoming—pleading—S. S. *Shanghai*! The old *Shanghai*! His own command—his last command.

From somewhere close by a door, loose on its hinges, swung open before the rush of wind, and then crashed fast again. The flame of the candle dipped and swayed, and suddenly went out with a faint hiss, leaving, wine-red in the smothering blackness, the charring wick. There was the creaking of the settee beneath a weight, and then that ceased, and the only sound beside the whine of the wind without was the breathing of a man—long hard laboring breaths that came with difficulty.

**H**OLMDELL, in contrast to its customary and admittedly more pleasant lethargy, seemed to quiver with the excitement induced by the almost epochal challenge flung into its sleepy face by one of its most highly regarded among the humbler citizens. *The Weekly Courier*, feverishly grasping unexpected terrestrial opportunity for increased circulation, printed coupons of application for shares in the wondrous plan. These were set at the bottoms of columns affording in installments a biography of Captain John Thorne. Headlines had proclaimed the day on which the captain had received the final funds from the sale of his house, which sum had followed the rest of his savings into the refitting of the recently purchased tramp steamer *Shanghai*.

And in the fog of it all, John Thorne was barely visible, appearing suddenly one evening, to be instantly drawn into the whirl of local enthusiasm and personal popularity, and leaving somewhat mysteriously the following morning, more or less exhausted, to seek and to find soothing labor at the shipyard far from Holmdell where the old tramp was once again preparing for the sea. Even on the decks of that refuge he had been joyously assailed by a dozen eager pilgrims from the town, come to see with their own eyes the definite instrument of the captain's plan. And the inspection had been triumphant, and its direct result, a fresh application for further share in the projected risks and profits to be overcome and produced by the master of the *Shanghai* and his ancient steamer in their joint labor of cargo carrying through West Indian and Central American waters.

More surprising than any other feature of his leap into public view was the bewildering subscription of money literally thrust, without demand of accounting beyond the simple allotment of future gain, into his hands. At first he had been gratified, as at a definite compliment, but misgiving had followed. After all, the idea of proclaiming his former command had burst in his thought like a grenade. Was it a dream or a practical plan? Fiercely the old man thundered into his own and others' ears, his mounting confidence—confidence first in the ship herself, the ship he knew plate by plate, almost rivet by rivet, in the entity of the whole living tramp steamer with her earned reputation

of seaworthiness, and lastly, his justified confidence in the ability and courage and honor of John Thorne.

And all this, stated with modesty, with telling firmness, convinced others, convinced himself, banishing for the time at least, the whispering of doubt. With the lever of money in his grasp, surely the scheme was feasible. Here was a qualified master mariner, here was a ship that for all her age would leave the shipyard fit for sea, and far to the south, in tropic seas, lay fruit rotting on the docks of West Indian islands, just too small to attract the fleets of regular fruit vessels. With his old-time knack of mixing, developed through years of ocean tramping in and out of island seas, it would not be long before the *Shanghai*, by her regular service, would build up a trade that would pay profits to her owner and the backers of the venture. This, at least, was the gist of his claims, and the favor of its reception was instantaneous.

But daily, as the work progressed, Captain Thorne was growing faintly conscious that his thoughts were centered more on the splendor of his return to the sea, the happiness of it that at times seemed to grip him by the hand, like an old friend miraculously restored, than upon the chances for and against the economic soundness of a plan that he knew could, with some justice, be called a bit desperate. Then, too, the wisdom of registering under the Mexican flag had unpleasant possibilities far beyond the plain fact that he would miss terribly the Stars and Stripes at the stern of his ship. But these were minor matters, and except for their fleeting shadows, became gradually ignored. That Mexican registry was wise he was assured by experience.

"You see," he told the interested Black one evening, "the *Shanghai* is old; too old for American inspectors to swallow easily; last week I was refused insurance—and I, too, am old, and the boilers and engines are old. That won't worry the Mexican merchant service."

His thin hand dropped gently to the head of Sea Lad.

**S**MOOTHLY, slowly, the *Shanghai* moved out from her Brooklyn pier. Two hooting tugboats officiously headed her downstream, consigned her to the channel, and with farewell steamy

hoots, callously cast off. In deep tones the old tramp blared out her demand for right of way, and under her own power, began the first leg of her voyage to Vera Cruz, via the Virgin Islands, where already a small cargo was waiting. On the gaunt, lofty bridge, far out on the starboard wing, Captain Thorne talked in Spanish to the swarthy third mate, from time to time stepping into the wheelhouse, to stand for a moment beside the pilot and the helmsman. The megaphoned remarks of the first mate, busy with the lines on the forecastle head, rumbled up to the bridge in the bitter November air.

John Thorne cast a backward glance at the turreted New York sky line, and in the glance was the gloating of a boy and the grim defiance of age. A fugitive grin parted the lips and vanished as again the shipmaster stared ahead into the thickening murk of the lower bay. Sandy Hook was passed, a low, gray smudge blending with the sea off the starboard quarter. The pilot was dropped, and with a final blare of her whistle the *Shanghai* swung in a wide arc on to her southeasterly course. Almost immediately her foghorn began its interminable muttering blasts. Captain Thorne thumped a mittened hand against the rail; he drew deep into his lungs great gulping breaths of icy Atlantic air. This was good—this was reality—life. Holmdell seemed a far-distant mirage. He turned from the sea, glanced sharply at the second mate up for the twelve-to-four watch, and, with head erect, went down for lunch.

There was an interval of pronounced quiet as the captain took his place at the head of the long table. Swarthy faces were slanted over the dishes; the table implements were manipulated swiftly but with care. A delicate moment, this, when the captain for the first time joins the ship's officers at table. Just outside the doorway, on a mat, wheezing, his body intermittently shaken with the jerks of decrepitude, lay Sea Lad, his eyes fastened upon the master in steadfast absorption. Then, with a quiet word here, a word there, a questioning smile, John Thorne fell at once into the routine civility of the sea life with its nice balance of reserve and proper consideration.

After lunch, with the weather clearing, he studied his ship from the bridge, as the old tramp wallowed along, burying her

heavy bow in gray-green masses of Atlantic seas, quivering and protesting, only to shake loose in a shower of spray, for the lumbering ascent of the following wave. Fifteen miles off to starboard, in the gray opacity, stretched the treacherous sandy beaches of the New Jersey coast, the invisible edge of an invisible continent. Invisible, intangible, utterly unreal. All that mattered, everything that was actual and living, was framed and inclosed in the gray-and-black fabric of this little old tramp, a tiny thing of rivets and plates, whose worn engines were driving her now at their greatest capacity of speed, eight knots, against the senseless dead weight of an ocean. He began to walk thwartship against the cold, at his heels, the dog with lowered head, panting heavily. The old man listened doubtfully to the difficult breaths; once he stopped. Sea Lad stumbled against his knee.

"Eh, Lad?" said the master, and stooped to the dark head.

It came to him without warning that the dog was disturbingly feeble, and the deep-set eyes, stared into for a full minute, told with no hope, their story. How hopeless, Captain Thorne realized, and faced that night when he sat on his cabin settee with Sea Lad in blankets, lying quietly, except for his jerky breath, through the quiet hours, his head on the blanketed knees of his friend. The silence of the ship was intensified by the subdued and patient creaking of its aged timbers and bulkheads. An occasional clatter flung up from the fireroom became harshly audible.

The dog seemed already much too far away to hear it. He would take no food, and John Thorne did not force him. Twice he left him to go to the bridge for a look over the lightening sea, and each time swiftly returned. The pantry man, announcing breakfast, was dismissed with a single gesture. Sea Lad had long since stopped laboring for breath, life was almost imperceptible.

Later his head stirred weakly beneath the captain's hand, and so he died.

**J**OHN THORNE opened the door to the wheelhouse. The second mate came quickly to him. The old man cleared his throat.

"My dog is dead," he announced briefly. "send the bos'n for'ard."

After a short wait the thick-set boat-swain came into the chart room.

"You send for me, captain?"

The captain pointed to the dead dog. "Sew him up."

A heavy flush mounted to the Mexican's clouding face. But sullen protest gave way before the instant response of rage that flamed from the gray eyes of the ship-master.

"Sew him up!"

And ten minutes later. "Take him aft for burial—a plank and weights—I'll tend to it there—alone."

The captain of the *Shanghai* rummaged uncertainly in a locker and at length found the little parcel he sought. In the gloom of the darkening room floated a patch of bunting. Muffled in heavy pea-coat, John Thorne went aft. The *Shanghai* was steaming steadily across a gray expanse of water that on the horizon seemed in jagged waves to touch the sky, as gray, as cold. John Thorne shivered and looked aft where the wake was being unreeled, a dirty gray tape against the darker fabric of the sea. The sun, through smoky masses of piled clouds, faintly lit the eastern sky. The *Shanghai*, at the changing shift of the firemen, was pouring out from her tall funnel thick masses of smoke and imperfectly consumed coal, which, directly above the steamer, formed in revolving spirals and then, in the grasp of the freshening wind, spread itself out, a thin, black veil across the northern reach.

At the opening in the ship's rail John Thorne found Sea Lad, incased, weighted. The captain's hand mechanically touched the stiff, cold canvas. There was no warmth in that. He placed the flag for an instant over Sea Lad, and muttering thickly, tilted the plank. The body slid over the side. Walking forward with the flag crumpled in his hand, the old man stumbled as though traversing an unknown way. He drank a brimming glass of cognac, and in his bunk fell almost at once into a dreamless sleep. He awoke at noon and stretched out his hand over the edge of the bed to meet the rough nose of Sea Lad. Queer—no answering thrust. Half asleep still, he muttered, "Come, Lad, wake up." Where was Sea Lad's never-failing courtesy? Then swiftly he knew. There would be no more the friend at his heels. Somewhere aft in the water, alone, as he, John Thorne, was alone. And in that

moment of bleakness the seaman turned at once to his ship. The dog with his simple virtues was gone. The ship remained with its demands and responsibility.

And these helped enormously to weaken the blow that ashore, idle, John Thorne would have mourned beneath. The loss of a dog to a young boy or an old man carries peculiar bitterness. But each day now drifting by brought new perplexities, new problems to be met, and the master of the *Shanghai* came quickly to realize that he had spread a rose-colored veil of remembered virtue over the weaknesses and flaws in the old tramp steamer. She was heavy, clumsy, hard to handle, but he watched her sharply, took much of the routine duty of the Mexican mates into his own hands, and spent long hours of thought in his cabin. The books on the curtained shelf, tried friends of many years, for once seemed a bit empty of interest. There were few pictures in the little room, and those snapshots; several of former commands, one of his wife buried at sea some thirty-five years before—buried at sea—also flag-covered—also with muttered words of parting. And in these hours of thoughtful solitude, there gradually stole over the old seaman a sense, almost of fear, before the thing that he was doing.

The ship's company, officers and men, were about as he had estimated them; featureless for the most part, fairly efficient, fairly willing, a mongrel crew; Mexicans, West Indians, a few Greeks in the fire-room. Not the kind, he decided grimly, to have at one's throat in any sort of trouble.

"There I am again," he grumbled impatiently, "thinking up things; why, I'll operate down here ten years without running into trouble. Meanwhile, the ship is getting along in fine shape."

She was—for a ship of her age, and at her wharf in St. Thomas harbor she brought a sense of refreshed pride to her commander. In the leisurely activity of these West Indian islands, so recently acquired from Denmark, the *Shanghai* resembled a gaunt bird driven before northern storms into the warm shelter of a tropical bay. She lay there, silent, given over to the lazy exertions of native stevedores, chattering in their queer mixture of Danish and broken English. Bumboat men and women swarmed over her decks in frank, good-natured curiosity, selling

everything from bay rum to coral necklaces.

Captain Thorne, immaculate in white drill, chatted on the bridge with American officials of the port, who appeared rather interested in this dignified old seaman of their own country, so meticulously concentrated on the proper observance of necessary formalities. Perhaps they thought him attractively old-fashioned in contrast to the bustling business type of the day. He sat with them in the cool of a long twilight, manifestly proud of the dingy old tramp which, in the brilliant color of the sunset, had lost for the moment her somber gray. The surface of the bay was without a ripple, glassy, rose tinted beneath the clouds, still reflecting the last upflung rays of a vanished sun. One by one, and then in clusters, the stars appeared, like a silvered pattern, a veil across the purple of the dark night sky. From somewhere, high on the plateau back of the town, sounded the tinkle of a bell, blending its mellow tone with the beauty of the tropic night. The hours passed; the officials took courteous leave, and still the shipmaster sat on, motionless on the shadowed bridge.

**T**HE second day following, the *Shanghai's* blunt nose was pointed seaward, and the heavy hull lazily climbed and slid over and down the insweeping slope of ground swell. The glittering, coraled beach, the purple cliffs, became masked in gray distance, and once more the little floating world came into the greatness born of its own isolation. Charts of the Mexican Gulf replaced the others; the placid island seas grew restless, merging into the wide expanse of the Gulf, and the next leg of the voyage was begun. Each evening the captain saw his ship steering straight into the red glare of the setting sun, floating low in the western heavens, its flaming surface a succession of shifting disks. Except for an occasional oil tanker or a passenger ship of the Ward line, the *Shanghai* spoke no ships on her course to the Mexican coast.

The fine weather held, until one afternoon two days out of Vera Cruz, wisps of vapor, thin gray filaments, began a ghostly drift across the greenish sheen of a sea already in plaided design beneath the alternate play of lights and shadows. By nightfall the foghorn was, at regular inter-



vals, sounding its muttered and melancholy blast. Men appeared for their watches, dripping apparitions on the decks of a haunted ship. The yellow lights of the binnacle in the wheelhouse flung a copper mask over the countenance of the helmsman as he slowly played the spokes of the wheel, sending grotesque shadows across the partition at his back. Now and again the low voice of the captain came from the open bridge window, carrying command as though from some mysterious, unknown being of authority. Occasionally his thin face would for an instant appear in the dim yellow light, bodyless, suspended in space, and then, as swiftly, withdraw into obscurity. The *Shanghai* was steaming at half speed.

At two in the morning the second mate was drinking coffee with Captain Thorne. They talked briefly in the muffled, whispered tones so often induced at sea by fog. Once they listened for a long time for the repetition of a sound that might have been the faint whistle of a distant ship. But the stillness remained unbroken except for the sibilant hiss of the sea at the bows, and its quiet murmuring drift past the high sides of the steamer.

"It will lift soon, I think, Mr. Alvarez," observed Captain Thorne.

"Perhaps, captain. Bot eet is all right, the sheep is alon' on de sea."

It could not have been a minute after he had finished speaking that the *Shanghai's* foghorn blared out and its call was duplicated in a sustained roar hard by on the starboard beam. And immediately, without warning, the gray curtain was split by the forward part of a great onrushing steamer. There was not even time to swing the wheel—to give an order—to sound the engine-room telegraph. The sharp, towering bow of the stranger crashed sickeningly, at full speed, into the *Shanghai's* side, and there was blind panic on a ship that was almost broken in two. Hoarse yells in the darkness, the sound of men desperately scrambling into smashed and blocked boats, were impressed on the stunned mind of the master of the *Shanghai*. From the other ship, which had backed off, vanishing as mysteriously into the fog as it had come, he caught sharp orders in a language he vaguely sensed to be French. His thoughts cleared at once in the light of a lifetime spent at sea, but even as he bellowed out an order, he saw

its futility. The *Shanghai's* bridge was already awash on the starboard wing—the ship was virtually under water.

He said aloud, "Too sudden—there is no time——"

He tried and failed to wrench a life belt from the tilted rail and a moment later felt the bridge settling beneath his feet. He saw the gaunt superstructure shrouded in fog, like a stricken bird, sweep downward into the sea. He began at once to swim. In the fog around him he heard the cries and oaths of frightened men. From a higher level he heard the calmer directions of officers on the bridge of the steamer that had rammed the *Shanghai*. Again he took an impression that they were French. He was vaguely surprised to find the *Shanghai*, even as she sank, caused little suction. He was swimming easily now, mechanically, his thought fantastically focused on the old tramp. How far down was she? His little stateroom—what of that? The photographs? The vision of his wife was in his eyes—buried at sea—Sea Lad—cast into the sea—and now the *Shanghai*, perhaps while he was thinking, already at rest in still waters.

And he, John Thorne? Why not? He belonged to the composite treasure of his life, and lo, each part, wife—friend—ship—had gone into the sea that had ever claimed him. Had claimed him? Was claiming him now—and there he belonged. Across his strained, feverish mind, one by one he saw shadowed forth—his wife, his dog, his ship.

"I'm coming," he muttered once. A low wave broke over his head. Close to him, so close that twice he saw the blur of her side, floated a circling boat from the Frenchman. Chattering Mexican survivors were being harshly ordered to silence. John Thorne was treading water now, his arms feebly moving on the surface of the water. For one clear moment he thought of the people at home and their savings intrusted to his care. It would be the honorable part to go back to them. He almost cried out for rescue at the thought.

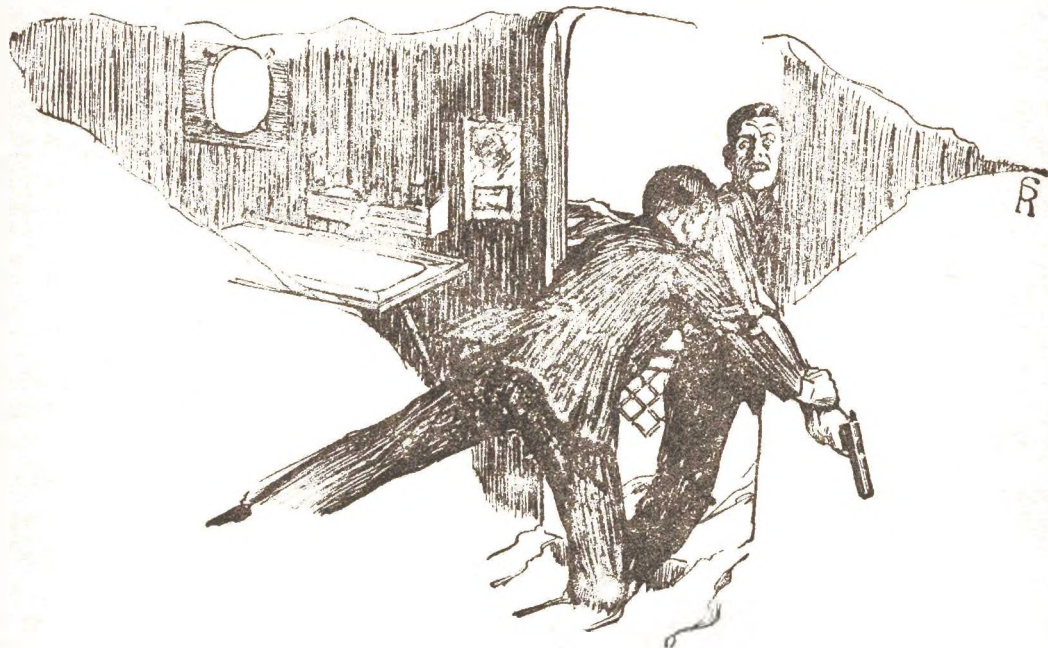
It would be but a gesture—spectacular—without value.

Another wave broke in a smother of foam over the wet mass of white hair.

John Thorne ceased treading, and as he sank, far off, through a break in the lifting fog, he saw for an instant, the crystal light of a star.

# Bullion

## By Kingsley Moses



### A SERIAL—PART III

**D**OCTOR OGDEN and daughter Ursula sailed from New York for Italy in the Italian steamer *Azizia*. On board the ship they make the acquaintance of a young American, Richard Rush. He and Doctor Ogden become involved in a card game with four suspicious characters, McDuffy, Goss, Miller, and Hopkins.

The ship is carrying a large shipment of specie for the Italian government. Judge Barnaby, the consignee of the gold, is a passenger in the ship also. Richard Rush has insured it. Before they call in at the Azores a mysterious explosion wrecks the cabin of Miller and Hopkins. Eventually the ship reaches Lisbon, where the four suspicious characters are observed to be in close communication with several men of a shady nature.

That night, after the ship has sailed, a mysterious explosion sinks her while she is still in shallow water off an uninhabited portion of the coast. Doctor Ogden, his daughter, Judge Barnaby, Rush, and several members of the crew get away in a lifeboat in the darkness and are amazed to find a wrecking tug standing by, with divers already going down. They are picked up by this vessel, whose captain tried to get rid of them by sending them ashore on a false course.

This failing, they are picked up by the tug again.

### CHAPTER XVI.

**R**ICHARD'S acknowledgment that, so far as he knew, no such firm as Carinhos & Company existed was no surprise to me. He had had to do something. That he had been able to do anything at all to stave off summary sentence was a marvel. It was, in cold blood, entirely to the criminal's advantage to see to it that we played the unenviable rôle of those who tell no tales.

And at present, at least, they could not be perfectly sure that a letter had not been deposited in Lisbon. We had a good chance, therefore, of remaining unmolested for a time.

Anyhow, the tug *Ndondo* was under way. Through the salt-rimed ports I could see the ghostly fog and the gray water slipping by. The beat of the engine had run up to a smooth and regular rhythm. I estimated our speed at about twelve knots.

Again the four of us were cooped in that cabin, a room square and compact. The captain's sleeping room gave off of it forward, a narrow cubicle containing only a bunk, a chest of drawers, and a

shallow locker. We gave old Lombard the settee now; he was utterly prostrated. We three sat at the table, Ursula in the captain's armchair. The raw cognac and dirty glasses were still before us. The place was stuffily hot, heavy with the mingled scents of liquor, wet rubber, tar, and steam. No air came through the two ports.

I climbed onto the settee and stuck my head out of one of the open ports. Two unshaven toughs in dungarees squatted below on a balk of timber. Neither had guns openly displayed, but both gripped clubs like policemen's billies. Our skulls, then—if we tried to escape—were to be merely dented, not split.

They looked up and spoke in unison, and though I could not understand their words, their meaning was as unmistakable as the snarl of a savage dog. We were to be filed, it seemed, for further reference.

"What's the next move, Richard?" I asked, edging to the bulk of Lombard.

Richard had lighted his pipe again. "Wish I knew, doctor."

The wind was freshening rapidly, and the *Ndondo* was slicing through the water, rolling over and corkscrewing forward rhythmically before the push of the rising sea on her starboard quarter. But though the mist was quickly whipped away and the ocean now stretched to a far horizon, no land was anywhere visible. The sea itself, under a low and dirty ceiling of clouded sky, was pale green, streaked with white, curling breakers. There was no way of even estimating compass points; so that we had no inkling of how the tug was headed.

The stretch of after deck we could see was deserted, save for the two bullies who lounged on guard. There was nothing to look at except the foamy furrow of our wake as it ran away from us straight for a short distance, then was twisted to a crazy serpentine trail by the wind and waves. The creak and rattle of the steering chains and the throb of the screws were the only sounds. The crew and voluntary guests of the *Ndondo* slept, I surmised, after a night of labor.

Ursula, with the buoyancy of youth, was the first to shake off the burden of helplessness which oppressed us; and, with feminine distaste for soiled garments, set about remedying that condition. She blithely ransacked the tug captain's chest

of drawers and reappeared presently in a clean linen shirt, a pair of the captain's duck trousers, turned up to huge cuffs at the bottom, gray wool socks, and a pair of enormous straw slippers.

As if she hadn't a care in the world, she shuffle-danced back to the cabin, hands on her hips, and singing.

"Wish you wouldn't disturb me—disturb me!" growled old Lombard, rousing from his torpor and jacking himself up on one elbow.

"Oh, shush," said Richard. "You're the best man of the bunch, honey."

The ship's bell, muted all night, was being struck punctually again now. On the clang of eight the cabin door was unlocked, and a cook, or steward, in a dirty undershirt and dirtier apron brought in a tin tray full of food. It was the toughest sort of beef stew, with a scum of globules of grease all over the surface. But we all—even Lombard—went to it with forks and spoons without any hesitation. We'd had a long and empty sixteen hours since we had even smelled food.

And, once the meal was finished, we all felt better. Certainly the stomach is the seat of courage—fill that organ with food and fear is crowded out.

Lombard immediately went back to sleep, but Ursula and I kept very wide awake as Richard slowly began to tell us of some of his own experiences.

He'd had plenty, from the time he left the naval academy. Nosing round in submarines through mine-infested French harbors, smashing log jams and fighting lumberjacks in the Canadian wilderness; a year as American consul in Cyrenaica on the edge of the Sahara Desert, where he had revived the export to America of that tough grass called *esparto*, which is so well adapted to the manufacture of wrapping papers. Then, after resignation from the consular service, wanderings through Central America in quest of other big tracts of timber his family's manufactories might be able to utilize in their business. "And though all that may be very picturesque," he added, "the real battle comes when you try to buck a bunch of smart business men—whether in New York, Montreal, London, or Rome—and try to pry an honest fortune out of them. Talk about your roulette, race-track betting, the stock exchange—why, you can win and lose faster in some of the world's most

reputable business concerns than—than—even in a crap game.”

“You’re getting your taste of that now,” said I.

“Well”—he puffed out three perfect smoke rings—“it’s all in a lifetime. There’s just one consolation—my own life’s insured for about enough to cover my loss on this deal. Dad and the cousins won’t suffer if I’m taken home horizontal.”

The key grated in the lock, and Hopkins stood in the doorway.

He was neat and unruffled as ever. But he didn’t bother any more even to feign civility. His clammy eye ran over us as if we had been so much upholstery. And when he spoke it was only to the old banker.

“A word with you, Mr. Lombard. Suppose you accompany me forward.”

The poor old boy retained something of his own arrogant belligerence, however. “Say what you have to say here, sir—here, sir!” he snorted.

“No. Come forward.” As if in answer to an invisible gesture the two thugs at the man’s shoulder moved as if to enter the cabin. Lombard chose to go rather than be taken. Painfully he managed to get to his feet and stamp out to the deck. The door was closed and locked behind him.

“Now what?” Dick wondered.

It was an hour before old Lombard returned. In the meantime, though, he had been much approved in appearance. He had been shaved—by Cosmolene, I suppose—and fitted out with somebody’s suit of clothes, pretty new and a fairly good fit.

“What’s the news?” I asked, when Hopkins had again locked him in with us.

“Sorry I can’t tell you,” was his answer, as he relapsed onto the settee again. “But I think—maybe—we’re going to get out of this all right, after all.”

And to Richard’s attempt to cross-examination he was also utterly unresponsive. I guessed that they had plied him pretty well with liquor, which, in his condition, only made him loggier. He was off to sleep again very shortly, with us none the wiser.

Afternoon dragged on, with the wind still rising, until the tug ducked and bounced like a fisherman’s bob in a riffle. And we had either altered our course, or the wind had shifted, as we were getting

the force of the blow now on our port quarter.

Richard hazarded the guess that it was we who had swung round. “They may be heading for the Mediterranean—Gibraltar possibly, though I doubt it, considering how nosey the British naval authorities are. We should be making round Cape St. Vincent, I suppose; somewhere near the Gulf of Cadiz.”

**D**ARK came, and another meal—this time nothing but canned salmon and ship’s biscuit—the tug continued at top speed through the darkness. If we showed a light, I couldn’t—from either port or starboard portholes—discern it. But Richard took it upon himself to light the kerosene lamp which swung in its gimbals above the settee and the table, and we dozed and talked lazily until we all went to sleep where we sat. At ten o’clock Ursula, at our insistence, stretched out on the captain’s bed in his nook of a sleeping cabin. Richard, like a faithful dog, lay across her threshold, while I—since Lombard still monopolized the settee—made myself comfortable as possible with some chair cushions under the table.

I was roused—as the cabin clock showed three—not by noise, but by its cessation. The engine had stopped. Immediately I heard the thunder of anchor chains through the hawse pipe. We had obviously come to some holding ground, though observation through all the ports showed me not a single glimmer.

I admit I shivered as I sat there on the cabin floor, waiting for what I thought must be the inevitable footsteps. I am not so habituated to murder that I may be said to expect it. But neither am I used to being a central figure in a three-million-dollar robbery. From the point of view of the thieves I could not see how they could well do anything but get rid of us—and that permanently.

No one did come, however. Shifting slightly, I could see that Ursula slept perfectly peacefully, while Richard lay flat on his chest, his head pillowed on one crooked arm, with the other bare arm thrown straight out across the floor’s dirty oil-cloth.

I didn’t disturb them, but passed the time, instead, smoking one of the captain’s raw cigars and watching the minute hand of the clock move, jerk by jerk, to the

six numeral. Just at seven bells the engine started, and we were off once more. This shoal, wherever it was, was not to be our last berth, therefore.

## CHAPTER XVII.

**D**AWN showed no change in the weather or the emptiness of the scene, though we were running into a head wind now, and the tug's motion was almost straight up and down like a horse's galloping. The heavy, dark clouds still hung low, but the aspect of the sea had changed from green to a pale, steamy gray, broken everywhere by little peaked waves, from the crest of which foam went flying.

But at noon, just after the scullion had brought the usual tray of stew, Richard, staring through the window to port, exclaimed: "There's land yonder!"

For a landsman it was hard enough to identify. I could discern but a slightly darker tinge where the dark clouds met the pale sea. But to the seafarer I suppose it was plain enough.

"We're either sliding down the coast of Africa or have come through the straits into the Mediterranean," Richard said. "The latter, probably, unless the wind has gone clear around—which isn't likely. Yep, that's probably Spain. Malaga or Almeria—since you say we stopped in the night. Which would likely be Gibraltar."

"Seems as if they'd be running into trouble," suggested Ursula, washed and spruced and amazingly pretty.

"We're the only trouble they've got to fuss about," Dick reminded her. "Every one else in the world still thinks that the *Asizia* went down by accident, taking the gold with her."

"They'd have rescue boats out there by now, wouldn't they? The mast stuck up to mark the spot, you remember."

"These lads wouldn't leave a signpost like that. Simple enough to saw off the mast before they quit the wreck, honey. Then—even with your latitude and longitude checked to seconds, which no one, on a dark night, can do, by the way—try to find a sunken wreck in the open ocean. The Atlantic's not like the Caribbean, you know; you can see precious little below the surface."

That day dragged endlessly. I envied Lombard's age—and Ursula's youth—which permitted them both to spend most

of their time sleeping. It was while Ursula was fast asleep on the captain's cot that Richard outlined to me his inferences.

"Not to look on the gloomy side, but just—sort of—to face things, doctor"—he talked slowly as he puffed at his pipe—"I figure the thing out this way. The gang has got to get rid of us. That bluff of mine about the letter to my agents at Lisbon has got them stopped for a while. But they've obviously got accomplices in Lisbon." He laughed grimly. "Real ones."

"Now, suppose Hopkins or Miller went ashore last night—wherever we stopped—and sent a wire to Lisbon? Well, at our next port they'll get an answer. 'No such firm as Carinhos.' Then what?"

"You've a happy disposition, Richard!"

"Well, we're grown men. We've got to figure it."

"And do something." I had already ransacked every drawer and nook in both the cabin and the captain's cubicle to try to find any sort of a weapon. There wasn't even so much as a wrench. We hadn't the chance of a fly in a bottle. "We've got to do something!" I glanced at the sleeping figure of my daughter and went hot with anger and desperation.

But "Yeah!" was all Rush said—confound him—and kept on smoking.

**I** SLEPT very badly that night, smoked at intervals till my tongue was raw and my eyes smarted. But at dawn even I descried land again off the port bow. An island, apparently.

Land, I recalled, though, meant a port—and a telegram from Lisbon, likely.

Naturally, I ate little of the unappetizing breakfast of canned peaches and oatmeal.

The greasy swab who took the breakfast tray away had scarcely gone when Hopkins entered abruptly. He stepped over the high sill, one hand in his right coat pocket.

"Lombard," he said without ceremony. "Want you again."

The tug took a dive into a trough at that moment, and the cabin door was swung to behind Hopkins.

Richard moved amazingly fast. He didn't raise his hands at all. But, so quickly you couldn't truly see it, he kicked one leg sidewise. Hopkins' feet were cut right out from under him. He sat down with a bone-shaking thump.

Instantly Richard was all over him. His hands on the fallen man's throat and mouth smothered any outcry. Dick's left knee nailed Hopkins' right forearm to the floor. Then Dick's right knee shifted up to hold the other's neck and head, and the .45 automatic was ripped from the fallen man's pocket.

"Now lie there, and keep your damn trap shut 'fore I trample your face in," Rush growled with unsuspected ferocity. "If it must be you—or us—fella—you're elected."

The abruptness of the attack, the savage manhandling he had suffered, held the prostrate man in a daze for a minute. There was no master criminal in him just then; he was just a badly beaten wretch—harmless.

"See if they heard outside." Dick ordered me smartly.

I jumped on the settee for a look and saw that apparently both the ruffians had heard something suspicious, for they were moving slowly toward the slammed door. They saw plenty, then, as with a rising plunge of the tug the door swung open. They leaped for the cabin.

Nothing was to my hand more deadly than a heavy volume on navigation. I grabbed that from the shelf as the first of the attackers plunged by just below me, and banged it down on his head as hard as I could.

He stumbled and sprawled on his hands and knees right out in the middle of the cabin floor. The other man hesitated an instant, one foot over the high sill of the door. I saw that he was pulling at a revolver stuck in the waistband of his breeches. Happily I was at just the right height, standing there on the settee. I kicked the gun out of his hand before he could get finger to trigger.

Providentially the door slammed again just then, knocking him into the cabin. Where, a few seconds before, we had had only one prisoner, we now had three. For the man on his hands and knees made no move to draw a weapon as he stared up into the muzzle of Dick's menacing automatic.

Ursula, startled from her sleep, was with us now, and she retrieved the gun I had booted from the second man's hand. The fellow who had lost the revolver was simply standing there, staring dumbly.

"Get over there against the forward wall

of the cabin—all of you," Richard snapped. "I'll drill the first one that yaps." Whether they understood English or not, they followed his directions. Driven by the menace of his tone, the two who had been posted as guards lurched over to the forward wall of the cabin while Richard, grabbing Hopkins unceremoniously by his collar, yanked the master thief to his feet and set him upright between his unarmed allies.

"Now go over 'em, doctor," was the order, "and see if they've any more hardware hidden about them."

No weapon was discovered, but in Hopkins' capacious wallet there was, beside a quantity of Portuguese money, a sheaf of eight American bank notes, crisp and clean.

"Imagine you've seen these before, Dick." I showed him the money. "Look to me like souvenirs of your poker misfortunes. Odd, isn't it, that though Goss won the money, Hopkins should have it."

"Not so odd," Dick said grimly. "Let 'er lie. We're drawing to a hand that ought to win more than a few hundreds now."

"What can we do about it, Dick?" Ursula put in, fingering the revolver she had grabbed from the floor.

"Dunno. We'll see, though." He stepped to the cabin door, swung it back, and latched it open. "Doctor, take care of these birds, will you—while I try a little diplomacy?"

I heard him hail outside, "Ho, forward there!"

From the neighborhood of the wheelhouse came a hoarse answer, then a chorus of shouts. Then Dick's pistol spoke. "Go back," he warned. "And stop the vessel while I talk to you."

The jangle of the telegraph came immediately, the pulse of the screw faded shortly to silence. We were drifting.

Then, "Doctor! Come here! Tell Ursula to hold those birds!" called Dick. And instantly fired twice. When I got out with him, where he crouched behind the protection of the deck house, a quick glimpse forward showed me one of the crew sitting squirming on that narrow path of deck which ran along beside cabin, engine room and wheelhouse.

"Nipped him," Richard nodded. "Only in the leg. But they can only come down here one at a time; or on the other side.

You watch the other side, will you. But keep your head down. Once they get organized——”

“Not more than two at once, one on either side,” I assured him. One roof served for both cabin and engine room, but luckily it was now so cluttered with all manner of diving gear and what not, that progress over it would be slow and impeded.

“Yeah,” he said as he pressed thumb to his pistol butt and slipped the magazine out quickly. “But I’ve got only three slugs left. How’s your revolver?”

“Five,” I said, examining the cylinder.

“Ursula’s likely got five bullets, too. Not enough, if they’ve guts enough to rush us.”

“You—there!” It was the gruff roar of the boss diver, Stemm.

“Talk quick.” Dick started to poke his head up when a ball zinged by. “And lay off your target practice till you get done talking,” he added.

“We’ll come down there and fix the whole lot o’ yuh—including the girl!” threatened Stemm.

“You’ll find Hopkins and your two roughnecks dead, then,” countered Richard.

I risked a quick peep forward. The huge bulk of Stemm was in the open, but close to the pilot house, and I saw Miller’s plaid golf cap behind the diver’s shoulder. Two other heads peered round the opposite side of the superstructure.

No one took a pot shot at me. Under the circumstances it seemed wise for them to hold a conference. We drifted there idle in the open sea, though the peak of land was now plain enough to northward.

“Don’t shoot—unless they come right down your alley,” was all Dick said. Not facetiously, either—for “alley” just described that narrow strip of deck between gunwale and superstructure.

But before they arrived at any decision up forward, Ursula called: “Dad, Mr. Hopkins wants to speak to you.”

I moved to the open-latched cabin door. Hopkins had regained his composure, though my plucky daughter had him still standing there with his hands up between his two thugs.

“This seems to be an—er—a stalemate, doctor,” he began, with a return to his usual precise, rather mincing, diction. “I imagine that the sensible thing to do is

to put your party ashore on the nearest land, the islet of the Balearic group which we can now see distinctly.”

“And let you make off with young——” I stopped myself. Perhaps they did not know of Richard’s substantial interest in their loot. And, not knowing of it, they would be likely to be far more lenient. “——let you make off with the gold bullion?” I finished.

“You overlook the fact that that is ours, in any event. You have—doctor—everything to gain and nothing to lose by allowing us to land you forthwith.”

His logic was indisputable, of course. Though his own person was in our power, his gang controlled us absolutely. We could kill him and all get killed ourselves. That was the layout. He knew it, and I knew it.

“I’ll talk to Rush,” I temporized. “Watch him, Ursula.”

Outside, I repeated the man’s offer. “You lose your bullion, of course——”

“I’ve lost it already,” Dick interrupted. “So why moan about it? But I wouldn’t trust that Stemm or Hopkins as far as I could throw them both at once. They’re both weasels. Tell you—you inform Brother Hopkins that if his mob will loose one dinghy and let it drift back to us here that we will all embark—including Pottle and the dinge—and take Friend Hopkins and his two bruisers into shore with us. Then they can row themselves back, you see.”

“Capital. That would remove the temptation to try out their marksmanship on us if we rowed in alone.”

“Precisely,” Dick nodded. “Get back, you!” A head had bobbed up from one of the wooden diving stagings which littered the engine-room roof. But Dick didn’t waste a shot at it.

I delivered the message to Hopkins, still under the surveillance of my truculent daughter. I think she had never used firearms, but she would have now had she needed to.

The sleek rascal thought over our suggestion for no more than thirty seconds. He readily perceived that there was no catch in our offer. Nor did I doubt that he would ultimately comply. He knew, of course, on which one of the scattered Balearic islets we should land; one that had no cable connection, most likely. Sure enough, presently he nodded.

"I'll tell your plan to my—er—colleagues myself."

"You'll yell it to them, from the after deck, Hopkins."

"As you say—as you say, doctor."

"Don't try anything phony," I warned, poking him in the small of the back with my gun muzzle.

Stemm emerged, upon our assurance that an armistice existed. He had no comment to offer apparently. Promptly the starboard lifeboat was freed of its gripes, swung out, and lowered. The wind drifted it slowly back to us. Pottle and Cosmolene Jones appeared from the forepeak, and, with uneasy backward glances, picked their way down the narrow lane of the deck.

Richard, with his usual forethought, had planned out our order of seating. Hopkins he put alone in the stern, then, facing him, and each equipped with an oar, were the two captured crew. Ursula and I, each of us armed, were to sit directly behind them. Back of us in the waist of the boat we stowed poor old Lombard. The colored boy and the steward would row on the thwart next, with Richard in the bow seat. A sound scheme, for our hostages would serve as a screen while we pulled away from the tugboat.

Ursula had the impudence to wave farewell with one of the captain's bandanna handkerchiefs.

So, once more, we headed for land.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**R**ICHARD and I were both on the alert for some trick on the part of the man Hopkins—"jiggery-pokery," as Pottle had aptly expressed it. But Hopkins made no move at all, and the *Ndondo* behind us stayed where she lay.

The land we approached was not all I should have chosen; a bleak and rocky islet, with only patches of scrubby greenery here and there, and no sign of human habitation. Suppose, the thought occurred to me, it really was a desert island, unpeopled? Why, after Hopkins and his two henchmen had returned to the tug, couldn't they all come in and hunt us down at their leisure? I scrambled back over Pottle to whisper my misgivings to Richard.

"No chance," he reassured me. "I don't know which of the Balearics this is, but I've been on Minorca—Port Mahon—and

know that all these islands are full of caves and old Moorish fortresses. They'll not come after us here for the same reason they didn't rush us on the boat. Six—more likely four of them, as I figure it—have any share in the loot. Hopkins, Miller, Stemm and the tug captain—possibly not even the captain, probably not McDuffy and Goss. All hired men. And you can't get any hired men—barring regular soldiers—to risk their lives for ordinary day wages."

"Water and food?" I suggested.

"Enough emergency stuff under here," he thumped the locker thwart on which he sat, "to carry us a few days. As for water, it's the rainy season. Lucky, too, for there's generally little enough here."

"Regular Robinson Crusoe." I laughed, for though we still obviously had plenty of trouble ahead, my heart was surprisingly lightened. "Even to 'Man Friday,'" I nodded at Cosmolene.

Dick laughed, too. "And I'm the goat," he grinned. "Too bad Pottle lost his parrot."

The boat ran up on the pebbly beach of a cove. We piled out positively gayly, half carrying old Lombard. Then Richard obligingly gave our involuntary guests a good shove off. "Bon voyage!" he actually grinned at them.

"Toodle-oo," replied that consummate rascal, Hopkins, with perfect gravity. Taking their own sweet time, they pulled away.

"First water, then a good place to signal from and keep a beacon at night, in case, as I guess, this island is not inhabited," Dick reminded us after a while. "If the sun ever comes out maybe we will get oriented."

The water proposition solved itself very shortly. Centuries ago the marauding and conquering Moors had provided for this first of all human necessities. A big stone cistern, broken down on one side, but still holding a foot of sweet—if characteristically flattish—rain water, was built on the shoulder of the first hill we ascended. Only a few paces beyond was the mouth of a cavern. Richard evidently knew his geography. Not wanting to waste matches, we didn't explore the cave just then, but the four of us—for we had left the tottering Lombard by the cistern with Cosmolene—pressed on toward a bold summit which rose perhaps a thousand feet ahead



of us. From there we might take our bearings.

We were not halfway up before we saw the trailing smoke of the distant *Ndondo*. She was not long in getting over the horizon. "There goes the gold," was all Richard grunted. "Well, it's all in a lifetime!"

Whatever expectation we may have had of discovering where we were was doomed to disappointment, however. It was pretty evident that we were on an isolated and apparently uninhabited island, though the gray sky closed down about such a limited horizon that nothing at a distance of more than six or seven miles could have been descried even from that elevation.

But in looking back toward the broken cistern, on the little hill where we had left old Lombard with his Negro servant, we saw that beyond, and farther inland, was a ruined village of considerable extent.

"A lot of Napoleon's soldiers were captured and sent here—somewhere in the Balearics," Richard reflected. "Had a pretty rough time of it, too, so the story goes. And, of course, this part of the world's been scrapped over since the time of the Carthaginians." He chuckled, hooking his thumbs into the belt loops of his deplorable trousers. "Well, Ursula, reckon we'd better sashay on down yonder and see can we fix us up a home of some kind."

We tramped back gayly enough. We were free once more, and safe enough from any danger except possible starvation.

Nor was that eventuality particularly threatening. I called Dick's attention to a thick grove of grotesquely twisted trees not far distant. I had never seen anything like them before; their trunks were a pale, ghostly gray, their foliage of a tint only slightly darker. The whole atmosphere beneath them was shadowy, spectral. Such a grove—I let my imagination run—would be a fit concourse for trolls or gnomes or hobgoblins.

"Olives," said Dick unromantically. "And they'll be ripe right now. Not a bad diet." Then he let go with the automatic he'd pilfered from Hopkins.

I jumped at the suddenness of the shot and fumbled for my revolver.

"Some animal in the bushes," Dick explained, running forward. Then, "Pig, by jingo! Now, if we had some eggs and coffee, we'd have coffee and eggs and bacon for breakfast. I wonder how this

razorback got here—great-great-grandson of some of the shoats the Spaniards sent over for their precious prisoners, maybe." He slung the half-grown hog over his shoulder.

Cleaning and dressing wild pigs hardly comes under the head of surgery, but my medical training now served me well; and, with the aid of Pottle and Cosmolene, I soon had a good fire started and our dinner on an improvised spit of an almond pole slung across two Y-shaped pine uprights.

Ursula and Dick had gone off to explore "Main Street," as my daughter flip-pantly labeled the deserted ruins. And before the barbecue was quite ready they returned with the news that one of the stone huts had most of its four walls standing. "Though there isn't a roof in the place," said Ursula.

"Well, we'll go gathering pine boughs to-morrow and make some kind of a thatch," said Richard.

It was getting toward dark when we finished the pig, which turned out to be delicious. Richard then saw us all safely disposed in the three-walled house he had discovered, saying that he would stand the first watch by the bonfire he would light on the high hill we had ascended earlier in the day.

For all my weariness, however, I had some difficulty in dropping off to sleep. Lombard and Ursula were on pine branches spread like a mattress along the short wall of the ruined hut. Pottle, the colored boy, and I, disposed ourselves against the two longer walls as comfortably as we might, with a glowing fire outside the opening where the fourth wall had fallen. When I did drop off, it seemed that I had been asleep no more than a minute before Dick was back from his self-imposed watch and was working over the heavily slumbering Cosmolene.

When he finally got the boy awake, however, his command that he take up the watch on the lonely hill developed our first and only mutiny.

"Me—go out in the dark?" Cosmolene wailed. "With the ghos's of all 'em French sojers stalkin' hither an' yon? No, sir! I wouldn't do it for a million o' money!"

In the end we had to rouse Pottle, too, and send the two off together. I was to go up and relieve them when I thought re-

lief was due, for of course there wasn't a timepiece among us.

But again I slept fitfully. The strain of the past few days had stirred my mind with horrors, I suppose. So when I saw a human head staring down from the wall above me I was mercifully not so terribly alarmed as I should have been had not all my dreams been filled with such gruesome figments.

I was not even sure that I was fully awake until I saw the whites of the staring thing's eyes roll palely, distinct in the firelight. The creature was there, however—every detail of his hideous visage, from drawn-back lips and yellow teeth to the tangle of matted hair which hung down on either side of his seamed and riddled cheeks. Happily Dick was right beside me. I reached out carefully and pressed his hand.

A sleeping man may generally be awakened without a start in that manner. Dick, however, sat up abruptly—wide awake on the instant.

The horrid mask vanished. But the footsteps which went padding away into the night were entirely human.

We agreed to say nothing of the matter to the rest of our party. In whispers we came to the conclusion that this must be some poor wild idiot, descended perhaps from vanished settlers. Nothing to be afraid of, however alarming.

But we had real cause for alarm next day in poor old Lombard's condition. His pulse had become so extravagantly fast I couldn't count it. His blood pressure must have been somewhere around two hundred and fifty, I suppose. I was dubious, as he lay gasping for breath all the day long, if he would last till another sunrise.

He seemed, too, to know that he had about come to the end of his tether. That evening, as I sat beside him, I expected any minute to see his eyes roll back, then fix themselves motionless. Cosmolene and Pottle we had sent away to stand the first watch.

"I'm only—sorry," the sick banker's words came stertorously. "Sorry—I—I wrote them that letter."

"You wrote them a letter?" I asked. He referred to Hopkins, I supposed.

"To what effect?" Dick rasped.

The man was completely broken. His physical resistance was gone. Now he bartered even his self-respect. And when

one loses self-respect, it's better far to be dead.

"I'm sorry. I couldn't help it," he groaned now. "Though I had no idea you were involved financially, Rush. I give you my word of honor on it. They told me it was my only chance of being set ashore alive. When a man gets as old as I am he's afraid to die—afraid to die——" He was gasping, sobbing. It was a rather horrible sight.

"Yes. But what did you write in the letter?" Dick's voice was gentle, as if he were trying to soothe the broken old fellow. But his eyes were grim enough.

"I wrote"—Lombard forced himself to go on, though his voice was so low we had to lean close to hear it—"that the tug *Ndondo*, which had come to our rescue, had been unable to locate the wreck, and had picked us up in the open——"

"Jupiter!" exclaimed Richard. "That's sweet. Never even mentioned the fact that they'd recovered the gold."

"They wouldn't let me mention it."

Ursula and I exchanged glances. So this was why the rogue Hopkins had been so complacent about putting us ashore. He would doubtless mail that letter from the first port. Barcelona, Port Mahon, Marseilles—wherever they touched soonest.

"Go on," urged Dick.

"That's all," the feeble banker confessed. "Except to say that the tugboat people had treated us all most kindly."

Dick whistled softly. "You certainly fixed things pretty for yourself. Judge Lombard—and for me!"

Sarcasm was wasted in that moment, however. The sick man's eyes suddenly bulged horribly. He was in the grip, I guessed, of one of those diabolical angina attacks. What little color he had was so quickly drained from his face that his complexion was the color of dirty paper.

"They're after me—they're——" He tried to raise his arm, pointing to the dark behind us.

Instinctively we all three swung round. We saw nothing, but over the flinty rocks padding feet retreated. The poor, witless, wild fellow, of course. Little enough for us to be afraid of, armed as we were, and forewarned of his presence on the island.

Old Lombard knew nothing of the creature, though. I had forgotten that.

And when we turned back to the poor old wretch I saw instantly that Judge

Barnaby Lombard was forever released from his sufferings.

## CHAPTER XIX.

**W**E had no implements for an interment. The best we could do at dawn, therefore, was to carry the stiffening corpse to a pleasant, shaded spot on the hill near where our beacon burned, and there cover it with the loose stones which lay scattered so lavishly.

Leaving Pottle and the colored boy to watch, we made our way silently enough back to our refuge. What was in my mind must also have been in Richard's—with Lombard dead, Dick had a mighty slim chance of getting the *Ndondo* gang apprehended.

Their obvious defense would be that he, as the underwriter, was merely trying to escape his just debt. Lombard's letter would be on file with his bank officers, and Dick's assertion that that letter was written under duress would be laughed out of court.

There was my testimony and Ursula's. A lot of good that would be, considering the two young people's relation. Neither my daughter nor I could conceivably qualify as disinterested witnesses.

Pottle and the colored boy, Cosmolene, could offer no very impressive depositions. Neither of them knew from any source but ourselves of the ownership of the gold, and the matter of Dick's interest in it had, I recalled, not even been discussed in their presence.

"The devil of it is," Dick put the situation plainly, "that the whole affair is so fantastic. Try to get the ordinary sober-minded stay-at-home magistrate even to issue a warrant on the basis of the tale we can tell him!

"Who says that the *Azizia* was sunk by a bomb concealed in a trunk in the hold of the vessel? That a salvage tug appeared from nowhere in the black night and sent down divers to the deserted hulk to resurrect the bullion? That, thereafter, six of us were kidnaped and threatened with death—to-day—in this sea which is the center of civilization?"

"Fine yarn—yeah! And the man who manufactures it is the man who's legally obligated to make good the loss. He and the girl who's going to be his wife, and the girl-who's-going-to-be-his-wife's father!"

"How did we get stuck on this forsaken place?" I suggested, trying to find a plausible solution for the problem.

"Most any old story'll do for that," Dick grunted, but his eyes glinted humorously. "So long as I'm condemned to be labeled a liar for the rest of my life, I might as well get started concocting fiction. Well—lemme see—sure, here it is, 'Rush gets ugly and tries to rob the poor, innocent *Ndondo* lads of—well, something or other—so he has to be put ashore, and his girl friend and her pa go with him.' How's that?"

"Not so hot," objected Ursula. "You don't give Mr. Hopkins credit. Let me try. Ah, yes, 'The noble Rush didn't consider a young thing like me safe on board such a disreputable lugger as the *Ndondo*—'"

"Movie stuff," I intervened. "Women are incurably romantic, Richard—"

"Glad of it," said that incorrigible, and put his arm round Ursula.

"—as you will discover," I continued, paying no attention to such frivolity. "No, Hopkins' story will probably be that I, as a doctor, ordered Lombard put ashore instantly—no matter where. And, to prove that I was right—well—there's old Lombard conveniently dead."

"All of which," observed Dick comfortably, "merely goes the further to prove that I'm a liar and a welcher."

There was apparently no useful answer to offer to that. The best we could all do for the next hour was to sit and survey the empty sea.

Which suddenly was no longer empty.

Almost beneath our noses, so near it seemed possible for us to drop a stone on it, slid a squatty, bluff-nosed schooner, sails flapping idly as her laboring auxiliary pushed her round the point. Even if I hadn't spotted her instantly as a Newfoundland down from the banks with dried codfish, the odor which now swept up to us would have identified her cargo. We all three rose, shouting.

They couldn't help but hear us. Their wind-reddened faces stared up in surprise. Promptly they gybed and swung round, coasting up easily into shoal water. With their characteristic skill in handling boats, they had a dory into the water almost immediately.

We dashed down to meet them while Potter and the colored boy came catapulting from above.

"Odd place for a picnic." was the greeting of the big bony man who was evidently the master; though from his costume of blue shirt and overalls he might just have dropped the plow—as indeed he had, not many weeks before, since the Newfoundland year is divided pretty evenly between fishing and farming.

They listened with interest to Richard's story. And their demeanor was polite enough, though from the glances they exchanged one with another occasionally I conjectured that they thought we were romancing more than a little. That was the real difficulty we and Richard had to face. To the ordinary, stay-at-home landsman—the fellow whose idea of excitement is to sit behind a steel screen at a baseball game and yell "Kill the umpire!"—our tale would be utterly implausible. Even old seadogs like these were doubtful.

The tangible fact was, though, that here we were—four men and a girl—marooned on a practically uninhabited island—not even the most eccentric tourist's idea of a good time.

Our clothing, too, denied the suggestion of a mere pleasure excursion. I had but one shoe, Richard was ill protected against the cold in his sleeveless undershirt and trousers, and the tug captain's shirt which Ursula still wore billowed out like a preposterous smock, while the enormous trousers, turned up a dozen times as they were, kept dragging under her heels. Pottle and Cosmolene were plastered with dirt, and the perfect steward looked singularly disreputable with his growth of grizzled whiskers all over his face, and his once sleek black hair gray at the roots for want of the dye he must have employed so assiduously.

"Well, where would you wish to go?" inquired the schooner captain at length. "We're bound for Genoa—is that as good as any place?"

"Anywhere but here, captain," I laughed. "This is no Riviera."

"By jinks!" exclaimed Richard. "Riviera—now——" He broke off there, however. "Yes, anywhere but here, captain," he agreed. "And the sooner the better."

"You'll not be waiting for your luggage, then," the captain smiled. "Well, all aboard the lugger!"

We all piled into the dory and were quickly aboard the sturdy *Annie Mac*.

And never did I know that dried cod-

fish and ship's biscuit washed down with bitter ale could taste so good. At the square-set table in the schooner's cabin—lined with eight bunks, which served as sleeping quarters for men as well as master—we wolfed enormous heaps of food with the most avid enjoyment. It was certainly good to be back with rugged, straightforward white men again—though the captain corrected Ursula emphatically when she made the social error of referring to them as Canadians. "New-fund-lenders! ma'am, New-fund-lenders," the captain insisted, with characteristic pride of independence and seniority of establishment.

When night came we were well on our course, northeast by east, toward Genoa. A pleasant southeasterly breeze promised a speedy termination to our leg of some four hundred miles.

Pottle and the still-shivering Negro had accepted the master's invitation to roll up in spare blankets on the floor of the cabin. But it had been Ursula's choice, as well as Richard's and mine, to sleep on the open after deck.

The captain grinned, comprehending. "It do take a while to get used to the smell o' this baccala," he agreed. I thought, also, of the atmosphere of ten husky men, sleeping in their underwear in a kerosene-lighted cabin, with no ventilation save from the after companionway. But I didn't mention it.

But before we were ready to stretch out in the open the captain himself joined us. "It's a strange yarn you spin, Mr. Rush," he said. "But you've the stamp of an honest man on you. Was there some other port—Marseilles or Toulon, or maybe Savona—you'd rather be dropped at?"

"I was thinking of that, captain, thank you," was Richard's prompt answer. "Now that I've told you our story—however incredible—you'll understand what I think to be my best move. You know, doubtless, of the under-water exploration work of the Prince of Monaco. Maybe you've been in his famous museum—*oceanographique*, he calls it?"

"I have that," the captain nursed his pipe in the starlight. "And in his casino, too—for all I'm a church elder."

"Well—casino or not—no one else has ever done so much for deep-sea science. And in the prince's museum are the best

bathymetric charts in the world—measurement of depths of the sea, you know.”

“I remember ’em—under the great nets and trawls and dredges hangin’ from the ceiling.”

“Exactly. Well, it seems to me that the only way I can prove that the bullion I’ve insured really has been stolen is to locate the wreck of the *Azizia* and show the owners that the stuff has been purloined.”

“Looks that way. But you’ll have a rare job to locate her; not havin’ any real idea of her position.”

“That’s the point. I don’t know her position. But I do know her approximate depth. On these bathymetric maps the various depth zones are charted. *Littoral laminarian*, *coralline*, deep sea and *abyssal* the zones are called—to get technical. *Laminarian* is what we’re interested in—from low-tide line to about fifteen fathoms. And a *laminarian* zone quite a way out from shore, moreover.”

“Yeah,” was the agreement. “a patch like that would be kind of unusual. Prince might have some o’ those new-fangled pressure gauges and current meters, too. Dunno but I’d like to mog along with you, Mr. Rush; if I only didn’t have this damn fish to deliver—well, we’ll see.”

“Then we’ll drop off at Monaco and see what help we can get,” Richard affirmed, obviously much pleased.

“Hope to tell you!” The captain rose. “Now I got to spell the wheel a while. We all do a little of everything on this hooker.”

Safe, warm, quite reasonably comfortable even on that hard and slanting deck, we all felt as if we had at last reached a happy haven. Immediate and present peril, at least, was past. Tranquilly, while the little waves lapped and gurgled along the vessel’s strakes, we slept beneath the kind starlight.

## CHAPTER XX.

**T**HE scene off the entrance to the toy port of the little principality of Monaco is extraordinarily beautiful. Along the shore the tropical foliage forms a base of rich, deep green below the pale-gray mountains which tower behind and rise to snow-hooded peaks. The harbor itself lies in a crescent, the horns of which are the two bluffs where stand the two towns: Monaco and Monte Carlo.

The casino and its environs are, for all the world, like a handsomely kept up Coney Island. The enormous gambling house on the sea was certainly the inspiration for Luna Park—minarets and flutings and pinnacles and scrollwork and innumerable plaster statues.

On our port bow, though, as we approached that beautiful afternoon, the prince’s yellow-stone palace and the great gray keep of the ancient Grimaldis which seemed an appropriate setting for the home of one who—with the exception of our own famous Captain Maury—has done more than any one else for deep-sea science. Overhanging the bright-blue sea, and set so steeply on the precipitous cliff of rock that one wondered it did not slide directly into the water, was the oceanographical museum for which we were headed.

The harbor itself, a half moon of placid bay, is cut off from the open Mediterranean by two neat little moles, as white and shining as the hulls of the yachts which lie within at anchorage. No fish-mongering craft would be permitted to desecrate that proper little roadstead, we knew. We five, with the captain, were rowed to the quay; I feeling considerable trepidation as to our reception.

Richard, however, had the worldly gift of always seeming to know just the right person to refer to. And at the name of some one who sounded like “Monsieur Bon,” the magnificent cop in blue uniform festooned with red and white cords and a bright-blue steel helmet, bowed obsequiously to even our scarecrow appearance.

A couple of horse-drawn hacks whirled us away to the *Crédit Lyonnaise*, into which Richard strolled. When he reissued in ten minutes he had a whole fistful of those huge, pink, thousand-franc bank notes.

“A good man to know—Mister Bon. Now, let’s go first on a shopping orgy.”

Soon amazingly transformed—and with *Cosmolene* tucked away in a local pension—we took Pottle along to valet us, and were presently in a luxurious suite of rooms in the *Hotel de Paris*. The sun was gone behind the enormous jutting rock so aptly called the *Tête du Chien*; and, as far as we could see, long garlands of lights looped along the dark shore line and cast a million reflections back from the still surface of the bay.

**N**OT accustomed to the luxury of personal valeting, I was agreeably surprised to find the evening clothes I had ordered not only already arrived in my bedroom, but all perfectly laid out. They made a rather startling contrast to existence on a buccaneering tugboat, a desert island, and a codfish schooner.

The elaborate dinner, every course of which was served in such a manner as to be a delight to the eye as well as an ecstasy to the palate, was over at last. And, after we had had our coffee and cigars in the lounge, Dick suggested that, of course, we wanted to see the great casino.

"But rather the sporting club," Bon corrected.

"Later on. The casino's not so much for any one who has seen it once, but it's one of the world's greatest spectacles for a first visit."

Richard knew what he was talking about. We stepped across the street under the brilliant illumination of the arc lights, which outlined every leaf and flower of the gorgeous gardens; and were bowed into the great foyer by a cordon of officials.

"Have a whirl, honey?" Richard grinned. "But not here. Over at the sporting club—you'll like that better."

Bon seconded the motion, and out on the steps we looked at the starry night and decided to walk the distance of less than three hundred yards, round the terrace that looked out upon the brilliant little harbor and the sea. A riding light well out beyond the red-and-green beacons of the mole showed where the good *Annie Mac* still rode at her anchor.

"So you've persuaded Bingham to stay over?" I hadn't wanted to part with the stout old captain without the most hearty thanks.

"Yes. Says he wants to go over the museum with me to-morrow. Chances are he's somewhere in that mob back yonder." Dick waved back at the scintillating casino. "Church elder or no."

We went in at the street entrance of the sporting club; and the line of concierges

in velvet, white-silk stockings and clanking silver chains, bobbed and bowed in unison as they immediately recognized our conductor.

Richard showed us how to buy chips from the cashiers at their high desks behind their little cages. Modestly we took only five hundred francs' worth apiece—twenty blue, louis chips, worth eighty cents apiece in our money.

There was but a single chair vacant at the louis table, for the minimum at the sporting club is a red hundred-franc chip at almost all the tables. I stood behind Ursula, therefore, and rather timidly tried my fortune.

For several minutes I confess I was quite lost. The play was fast, the table eighteen or twenty feet long, so that no player was able to place his bet by hand, but had to toss his chip to the croupier with the direction as to where the little rake should shove the wager. But Ursula—thanks to her excellent finishing-school education—knew the proper terms, and I began to catch on presently.

With feminine caution my daughter chose to play mostly the red or the black, but my middle-aged blood yearned for action. Most of my blue chips vanished quickly, playing on a single number in an attempt to win thirty-five for one. Then I compromised, and bet on two numbers at once, placing my chip on the line between eleven and twelve.

The white ball was in the black eleven pocket. I had won seventeen times my bet. The croupier amiably shoved a tall pile of blue chips toward me.

As I reached out to scoop them in, Ursula jogged my arm so violently that the stack toppled and the chips went rolling.

"By the cashier's window, daddy—quick!"

The lean man in evening clothes who had just cashed in his plaques at the cashier's window, and, stuffing pink *mille* notes into his pocket, was strolling toward the bar, was—Hopkins!

To be continued in the next issue of SEA STORIES.



# Through Keeweenaw

By Keith Henney



## Fresh-water superstition.

**E**VEN before the new skipper came aboard the *Chippewa* in the flour-covered pier in Superior, I knew that this trip was not going to be like other trips. During all the seasons that I had been a radio operator on the Great Lakes I had been hearing a strange tale about him. Rumors, like Lake Erie squalls, are stirred up in a hurry, and usually die down as quickly, but this one was different. It didn't die. It drifted about with the wind from one end of the Lakes to the other, and windlike, it came first from one direction, then another.

The first time I heard it was one fine day near the beginning of my first summer on the Lakes. We had been coasting down Lake Huron ahead of a stiff breeze and were about to enter the river at Port Huron. My eyes were on the tall, straight spruce poles of the Canadian radio station at Sarnia, but, as we came near the lightship which guards the entrance of the river, I noticed a marker and, as we passed it, I thought I could see the masts of a ship a foot or two under water.

I could not be sure—I was young and

romantic, and thought maybe I was imagining things—and so the next time I had a chance I asked the chief about it.

"Oh, yes," he said. "That's the *Herman Masterson* that sank in that big November blizzard last year. The oldest captain in the line lost his grandson then. He had shipped as a cabin boy. He lost his wife in pretty much the same way about twenty years ago."

"Not in the same place, I hope." I couldn't help saying.

"No, she was lost at the west entrance to the Portage Lake Canal through Keeweenaw. They say that's why old man Trinder never became skipper of one of the company's passenger boats—he didn't want to go near the canal again, and our package carriers don't make that passage. Trinder and his wife were sailing the old *Betsy B.* They had been married about ten years, but this was their first voyage together. The old *Betsy* went ashore in a fog while Trinder was hunting the west entrance to the canal. I reckon he's had enough to make him queer."

I asked him what he meant by queer,

but that was all the satisfaction I could get, and no one else I asked ever said anything more definite. It seemed almost as if they didn't want to betray the old man's weakness, whatever it was. They did agree that if ever a man had had enough to make him queer, it was old Captain Trinder. To lose a wife in Lake Superior on his own schooner on their first trip together, and to lose his grandson in Huron, and both of them so close to land they could have swum ashore if the weather had been clear, was enough to unhinge any man.

In spite of it his men liked him. He was a straightforward sailor. He knew his lights from Port Colborne to Two Harbors. He did not drive his men, and his company trusted him. Long ago, if he had cared for it, he might have been given one of the passenger runs. And now he was about to do the thing he had dreaded for many years, the thing that was the ambition of all the other company skippers. He was to take charge of their crack passenger boat for the trip from Superior and Duluth down to Buffalo. Once more he was to go through the river where his wife was lost. Once more he was to pass within a heavin' line's length of the spot where his grandson followed the plunging *Masterson* to the bottom when she turned turtle.

**C**APTAIN TRINDER certainly did not look queer as he came aboard that day in Superior while we were taking on the last few bags of flour. He was a typical Great Lakes skipper, tall and straight in spite of his sixty years. He looked like an old dog who had held the bones of all Great Lakes waters in his teeth many times, and who knew what the St. Mary's was like in a blizzard.

We had arrived in Duluth the day before on our usual schedule, had dumped ashore the passengers, some of whom were on their way to the Yellowstone Park. Others were on a round trip on the "greatest inland water voyage of the world," as it was put in the advertisements sent to the big eastern magazines. As soon as we got rid of the passengers we crossed to Superior to take on our cargo for the trip down. Three hours before sailing, the skipper had been carried back across into a hospital in Duluth.

We had to have a new master. Fortunately Trinder's carrier was in port. No

one else was within a day's steam of us, and so Trinder brought himself aboard.

By the time the last passenger had come on and the black gang had hoisted their allotment of ice up the after decks and into the galley ice boxes for iced water and tea and other stuff the fancy passengers might need, the wind had chased the last of the high, white cumulus clouds away and had brought up black ones in their place. The wind came off the lake at such an angle that the narrow entrance to the harbor was a most difficult opening to hit, and the waves broke on the long spit that connects Duluth and Superior with vicious snaps that seemed to punctuate the more sustained and higher notes of the wind. The sun went down in a black and angry west, the whistle blew its departure blast, the none-too-good orchestra struck up a brave air, and we backed out into the harbor waters.

It was a mean night, and I knew that the steward's boys would be busy answering bells from the passengers before an hour was over. I stood below the bridge deck, glorying in the coolness of the day after roasting in our smelly Superior slip, and did not get the full thrust of the wind until the captain had backed out into the harbor and turned the *Chippewa's* nose toward the tiny traveling bridge that carries pedestrians across the cut. Then I knew in an idle manner—wireless operators don't take much responsibility for such things—that the old man might have trouble in poking the ship's nose out into the black night beyond.

Just as we were about to make the opening, a blunt-nosed ore carrier, far down in the water, hove in sight, coming up swiftly with the wind on her back. She headed for the opening to get out of the dusk into quieter waters, just in time to prevent Trinder from making it.

He rang down the engines and then called for reverse so that we would be out of the way of the "tin stack." When she got through in her lubberly manner, the *Chippewa* was again aimed at the opening, but this time the wind carried her so far off we threatened to pile up on the breakwater.

The skipper again rang for reverse, and we backed out and tried again. I remember him facing the wind and trying, I suppose, to get the feel of his ship. He was used to heavier vessels, and his first trip



out with a boatload of passengers was not starting auspiciously. He heaved over the anchor, reversed the engines slowly, pulling against the hook until the nose of the *Chippewa* was pointed straight at the center of the cut. At the proper moment he called for half speed ahead, the deck gang turned steam into the anchor winch, and as the chain came slowly aboard, the *Chippewa* eased out into the open Superior waters which the wind had by this time lashed into fury.

It was a neat maneuver, but there was nothing queer about it. It was straight seamanship, and a nasty problem had been solved as another skipper in the same position might have solved it. The passengers laughed and marveled, thinking this a part of every trip out. The pitching of the ship in the long Superior rollers soon drove most of them below, and after a whirl or two around the boat deck, I went to the radio cabin to fill out what remained of the six-to-twelve watch.

When we got away from the shallower waters near the western end of the lake the surface rollers quieted down into those long swells that mark deep water. The ship steadied herself and assumed a comfortable heave and fall that was pleasant rather than otherwise.

I sent the second operator to bed to wait his twelve-to-six watch, and settled myself into the chair with the earphones on my head. There was the usual amount of July static rolling in, and the usual lack of radio traffic to bother my ears. I heard the Duluth station ask some one what the weather was like near the Apostles. Two Canadians on their way to Port Arthur passed the time of day, and that was about all.

It was around ten o'clock that there was a tap on the door. Expecting some curious passenger I answered without much enthusiasm.

"Do you mind if I come in?" It was Captain Trinder.

"Not at all, sir, please do," and I scrambled to my feet.

It was unusual, I thought, for a captain to be so polite.

He sat down in the dilapidated chair that had once had arms and looked curiously about. I realized that he had never seen a radio before. The package freighters were not compelled to carry wireless equipment—the few dollars a month the

operator got plus the rental of the apparatus was enough to prevent the company from furnishing their skippers with them.

The old man did not seem comfortable. I guessed that the clothes he wore now were not those in which he commanded the package boats. He wasn't quite at home. But he was a kind old man, I thought, and I could talk to him without any feeling of self-consciousness because I was in the presence of a superior officer.

"Well, sir, it's a bad night out, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said slowly, steadying himself against the heave of the ship. "But it will quiet down before morning. Have you any weather reports?"

The junior had hauled something out of the ether, and I gave it to him. It was the usual "moderate to strong southeast winds, overcast," which, of course, was confirmed by the weather we were going through. There was nothing exciting or disturbing about it.

I explained that if the static wasn't too bad I would get further reports on the Upper Lakes from Arlington before I went off watch.

"Static?" he asked. He was very much interested in the radio, and the thought occurred to me that he was leading up to something he wanted to know about it.

When I let him listen to the intermittent crashes and rasps of summer static, he was greatly impressed, and wanted to know if we ever heard any one talk.

"You mean the human voice?" I asked.

"Yes," he nodded. "I—I have heard that voices sometimes come in. Voices of dead people."

There it was. Out like a bolt from the blue! I froze to my chair, and could think of nothing to say. This was what he wanted to know. He looked very strange. The men had been right. He was queer.

I tried to laugh it off with a remark that I didn't see how dead people could talk, but more and more it seemed to him that the radio might be the place where old friends could get together.

"Well, sir," and I laughed out of nervousness, "if you have any one in particular you would like to talk to, say, Napoleon or Julius Cæsar, I'll give them a buzz."

This was too much for the old gentleman.

"Young man," he said as he rose to leave me, "I don't think you have the proper respect for ship's officers. When

you are as old as I am you may think differently."

I was honestly sorry I had made light of his remark, and said so.

"It was somewhat startling to have such a question put to you right off the bat, sir."

"Yes, yes," he said, "I know. I—I had hoped you might help me. I've never been on board ship with wireless before," and then his manner became that of the captain of a vessel with several hundred passengers aboard. "Let me know what the weather report says when it comes in."

With that he was off. My emotions were somewhat mixed. I wished I had not been alone with him, and wished I had not made light of his remark. Now that he was gone, I wished that some one else were with me in that stuffy, careening radio cabin on the aft end of the *Chippewa*.

After a while the nervousness wore off, and I made an entry or two in the log book to show that I had not been asleep. It was soon time for Arlington's weather reports and time signals, and when the first dots and dashes came through I knew that I would have no trouble in taking down what he was sending. There was, as usual, a lot of stuff about the weather in the Gulf and up and down from Hatteras and other places that we didn't care anything about, and finally came the report for the Upper and Lower Lakes. There was nothing to indicate bad weather. In fact, the report mentioned only moderate winds for the following day. I rang the wheelhouse with the report and found the captain still up. When I offered to read him the report, he said he would come and get it himself. I had a feeling that he wanted to resume the conversation about the dead and the radio, and wished that he would choose some bright, sunshiny afternoon instead of the middle of the night.

He soon came in, however, and after perusing the report, asked the meaning of upper and lower lakes. Like most operators, I had never thought of it, and told him so, suggesting Upper Lakes meant Superior and the upper parts of Michigan and Huron.

"I don't like the sound of 'Lower Lakes,'" he said, smiling not a bit.

There didn't seem to be any answer to that, so I suggested that he listen in for Arlington's signals calling shipping board vessels with orders. He jumped at the

suggestion, and I plugged in another pair of phones for him. To keep him interested until midnight, when the junior came on watch, I started to put down what Arlington was saying. He was immensely interested, and after Arlington signed off I dug up some complicated weather reports he had sent in code and translated them for the "Old Man." I showed him how Arlington had sent out the wind velocity, the barometer readings, the direction of wind, the precipitation at many Great Lakes points such as Alpena, Marquette, and others. This impressed him a lot, but he was a man of the old school, and didn't see how fellows in Washington could dope out what the weather of Keeweenaw was going to be on the following day. He could tell more by a sniff of the air and a look at the sky than a dozen barometric charts of the United States would tell him.

He wanted to know how the radio signals got to our cabin, whether they went through the air or the water, what happened if two ships listened in at the same time, and a lot of other questions. When I tuned in the station at the Canadian Soo he was struck by the difference in pitch.

"It's just like a person," he said, as though making a discovery. "These different stations have different kinds of voices."

Of course this was true, and I told him how we could tell one ship from another by the tone of its signals, and how, sometimes, we could tell which operator was at the key by the "fist" he had.

Finally he wanted to know why the weather report had not mentioned fog, and I had to admit that I didn't know.

"I never remember hearing a radio report mention fog," I told him. "Maybe it's because fog is such a local affair and rather unpredictable."

"Maybe so," he replied, "but I think we will run into fog before morning. At the entrance to the Portage River Canal we'll get it."

"That's a bad place for fog," I said without thinking.

"Yes, I lost my wife there in a fog." And then he told me the story of how he had run on shore during a fog twenty years before, and how his wife had been drowned. It was not a long story, but it cost him considerable effort to tell it.

"That's why I have never been near Houghton and Hancock since," he said, and I could agree that it was sufficient reason.

With that he was gone, and as it was near midnight, I went to the bunk room and woke the junior operator.

**S**OME time after daylight I became aware of the intermittent three blasts of the fog whistle. When the junior woke me at the end of his watch he said we had been going through fog for about an hour, and that it seemed to be getting thicker each minute. He remarked that the captain was looking for a message from some one. The first mate came into the mess room as I was downing a stack of flapjacks, and seemed rather the worse for wear. The Old Man had had him up all night, he said, either looking for fog or trying to get out of it.

We were due at the entrance to the channel at about eleven o'clock. This meant several hours of running through the fog. The skipper might have anchored and waited until it lifted, but he naturally enough chose to go ahead, hoping that as he neared the end of the five-hour run the fog would have thinned enough to enable him to find the breakwater and thence the entrance to the river. Above all things, he would want to be on time on this, his first trip as captain of a passenger ship. If we ran into anything in the fog—well, we'd better not. There was little chance of our meeting anything except a tug or some other small boat. Ore carriers went outside. No other passenger vessel of any size was scheduled to be coming out of the Portage Lake Canal, and the small twin towns which straddled it would be as somnolent under the sticky, warm fog as two cats in the sun.

At eight o'clock the wheelhouse phone rang, and the skipper wanted to know what the weather was in the canal. Of course, I could not tell him, for there was no radio station there, but I told him I would try to find out.

Starting up the old transmitter, I jerked out a few calls for any one in the vicinity of the mouth of the canal, but no one answered. It was as I thought, no ship large enough to carry wireless was anywhere near the point toward which we were heading. The *Jenkins*, out in the

lake, reported no fog, and after a call or two, Duluth answered sleepily and said no fog. So we were in for it. It might last an hour and it might last the rest of the day.

As I was about to phone up this information the mate blustered in.

"Well, bud, what's the news?" he roared at me. He was that way, roaring at every one and everything. I suspected that he was some way miffed because a new man had come aboard over his head and kept him from taking the *Chippewa* down on his own ticket.

"No news is good news," I answered glibly enough. The fog didn't bother me. I was in no hurry. Houghton was a warm place in July, and since we usually stayed there long enough for the passengers to go down a copper mine but not long enough for the officers to have a spree on shore, I saw no reason why an hour's delay would prove anything but a gift.

"Never mind the bright remarks, bud. The Old Man wants a report on this damn fog. What have you got?"

"Not a thing. The *Jenkins* off Keeweenaw is in fair weather, and Duluth reports sun and moderate breezes from the northwest."

"All right. If that breeze gets us we'll be O. K. And say, bud, keep an ear out for some ship the old man thinks he's going to get a message from, will you?"

"I reckon it's a message from the dead." I said cryptically, but the mate was gone.

Within an hour Captain Trinder came down. He looked rather bleary about the eyes because of his long night's vigil. If he had turned in when leaving Duluth he would have at least got some sleep, because we didn't run into the fog until about five o'clock. But the watchman told me he had gone all over the ship—he had never been on her before—from the chain locker forward to the fan tail aft.

"Any news?" he said at once, just as though he fully expected me to hand him a nice printed radiogram from the bottom of the lake.

"No, sir. Do you think the fog will hold on, sir?"

He didn't answer my foolish question. How could any one tell how long a fog would last?

"How near are we, captain?"

"Oh, we've got plenty of time yet. I've been keeping up speed, and we ought to

be within range of the foghorn in about an hour. But I'd like to have word, though."

With that he tore out, and I could hear him thumping across the deck above as he went back to his point of vantage over the wheelhouse.

We slid along at our regular speed of between twelve and fifteen knots. The fog clung almost to the water's edge, and the small waves seemed trying to dissolve it by lapping it up. There was not a breath of wind except what went past us due to the steamer's motion. This was wet and warm, as though the weather were perspiring. I kept very close watch on the radio signals that came along. They were few and far between. In those days the range of a ship's signals was not very great, and when we neared the copper-laden hills around Calumet what signals there were seemed to be swallowed up and reached us only as little, disconnected blurbs of noise. There was no static, and if it had not been for the fog, the day would have been perfect. The sun rose higher and higher, and seemed trying its best to break through. At ten o'clock I picked up a Canadian report indicating "fine weather, moderate variable winds."

I was sorry for the skipper. For twenty years he had avoided this passage, and now here he was near the spot where the end of his first voyage with his wife had so tragically come. He was in a fog, and he had the responsibility of three hundred passengers on his shoulders in addition to other worries.

Suddenly the decreased throb of the engines told me that we were slowing down. We must be near the entrance. I rushed to the deck above to see what, if anything, had happened, in time to hear the gong below stop the engines completely. We slowly came to rest, and the only sound was the gentle lapping of the fog-laden waves against the sides of the vessel, and the rhythmic push-push of the water pouring from the engine-room vent into the lake. I could see the Old Man with his quartermaster up on the canvas-covered deck above the wheelhouse. Trinder's hair was standing on end. He had taken off his white collar, put on for the benefit of passenger traffic, and now looked like the skipper of any ore or freight carrier. His attitude was one of excitement. He was listening for something, and I thought it

was for the foghorn at the entrance to the river.

Within a minute or two the lazy rasp of the horn floated in on the fog from a point or two off the starboard bow. It seemed to me that once we had heard the horn we ought to know where we were, but still the *Chippewa* did not move. Then the horn's rasp came again, this time from a wider angle to the starboard, and the next rasp came from astern. Clearly the fog was varying the direction from which the sound came to us. We could not rely on it. It was a fact, however, that we were within a few thousand feet of the shore. The Old Man did not care to risk the second ship he had taken to the mouth of the Portage Lake Canal, let alone the three hundred pleasure seekers who lined the rail and commented idly on the situation. They were mildly amused at the disheveled appearance of the man who held their lives and a million dollars' worth of ship and cargo in his hand.

Finally he signalled the engine room, and we pushed ahead slowly. Almost immediately, however, the engine-room gong clanged for stop, and then reverse. Dead ahead I could see the lighthouse at the channel end of the south breakwater slowly come into view and approach us as the steamer pressed forward. But as I watched, the lighthouse receded from us as quietly and stealthily as though it had come up to take a look at us, the intruders.

For a few minutes we lay motionless outside in the fog. Then I heard the horn again, now from our port quarter. It was eerie how that foghorn followed us around. Then I heard the bell in the radio room jangle, and I hurried below.

It was the skipper calling.

"Keep sharp lookout for word now," he said.

"Who from, sir?" I asked.

"From her," he answered curtly, and hung up. I hoped fervently that he would either find the entrance by himself without dashing us all on the breakwater to follow his wife to the bottom, or that the fog would suddenly lift and reveal to us the heavily wooded shores paralleling the narrow, sandy beach. There was nothing I could do but listen in, but I got nothing. Then I sneaked out for another look into the fog.

We were going ahead again, and I could feel that our nose was turned so that we

would land farther out along the point. Suddenly the engine-room bell clanged again. Again I saw the breakwater approach us and recede, this time coming much closer than before, too close for the comfort of some of the passengers near me. They were asking me about the advisability of protesting to the skipper when he looked aft and caught sight of me.

"Go below," he roared at me, "and get that message. She's calling."

I knew there was no one calling, but there was nothing to do but go down again. And then the unexpected happened. There was some one calling!

"SSE, SSE, SSE," it said over and over again in dots and dashes. It was a strange signal, and the tone was unlike any I had ever heard on the Lakes. Perhaps in my amazement the unfamiliarity of it was exaggerated, but it was a queer signal.

"SSE, SSE, SSE," it went on, and finally, after a whining crescendo, it said, "SSE, Anna." And that was all.

I wrote it out on a piece of paper and took it up on the bridge. The captain looked at it, and a strange light came into his eyes. He dashed into the wheelhouse, and pushing aside the quartermaster, slowly swung the ship until her nose pointed south southeast. Then he rang for more speed ahead. Once again the shore line came into view. We could see both sides of the breakwater this time. We were aimed directly at the center of the opening.

As we passed the crib at the end of the north breakwater I noticed a small

craft tied to it. Dimly I could see that on the stern was painted the one word "Anna."

This explained the strange signals and the bearing we had secured. I suppose that from her position near the breakwater the *Anna* could see our masts sticking up in the air. This explanation was not so satisfactory later on when I called the *Anna* again but got no word from her.

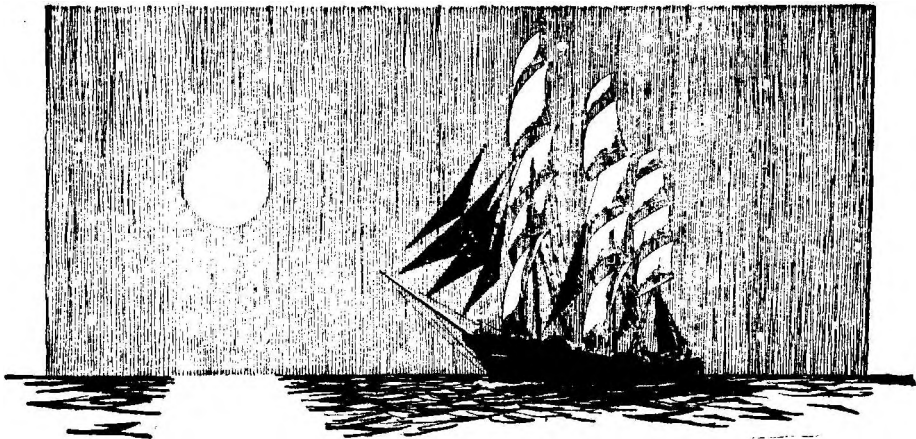
Within five minutes we were steaming toward Houghton, where we arrived not over half an hour late and with plenty of time for the passengers to buy copper doodads and for me to learn through one of the men at the railroad station that the *Anna* was a Swedish boat that some foolhardy youth from Stockholm had crossed the Atlantic in. He had relatives in Minnesota. There was nothing strange about this—Swedish youths are always doing foolish things—except the fact that Swedish vessels have radio call letters beginning with S, so that the call "SSE" which I heard was probably the call signal of the craft. It was apparently just coincidence that the letters I had picked up gave us the bearing we needed.

At six that night I went on watch, and later the skipper came in.

"Well, young man, I must thank you for getting that message this morning. I always thought that if I ever got into trouble with fog I would get a message from *Anna*."

"*Anna*?" I asked.

"Yes," he said simply. "My wife sent the message. Her name was *Anna*."



# The Hard-luck Harts

By B. E. Cook



More than luck in taking a cargo of coal out of Norfolk.

**T**HE first mate leaned heavily against a piling at the end of the coal pier. With unfocused eyes he gazed upon the foul tide that moved along the water line of his ship. There was a droop to his square young shoulders, and the expression on his wind-tanned face was melancholic. Kent Hart, first officer of the *Matotem* was in the dumps.

"'Hard-luck' Hart, and not a chance to break the moniker," said he, shifting his weight to the other foot. "Leastwise, father and grandpa were masters of their own ships when they did their flops." He relighted his pipe. "Well," he concluded, "'bout the only thing to do is quit this seagoing 'fore it's too late to, and get into something ashore. That's me."

So absorbed was the man in his own affairs that he did not hear the footfalls on the wharf behind him.

"Well, well, Mr. Hart," said Captain Berry, back from a visit home, "so she's out, eh? Stores aboard yet?"

The mate faced about with, "Yes, sir; stores and that new line, too. We're ready for sea." Then, in a more personal vein, "Have a good visit down home, sir?"

"Yes—yes, it's always good to get home; but I'm—there's something wrong about my back, Hart. Wife wanted I should see a doctor, but Lord sake, I've had a touch o' this same thing before, and it always passes off of itself. Womenfolks run too much to the doctors, anyway."

A silence followed this opinion. Captain Berry reached for his traveling bag at his feet.

"Captain Berry," said Hart.

"Yes, Kent." Mr. Berry was genial by nature, and he frequently dropped the "misters" when alone with his mate.

"Heard about the *Selma Spurling*?"

"What now?" asked Captain Berry.

Kent stared moodily out over Boston harbor. A flush suffused his healthy tan. "Well," said he with obvious effort, "the talk is that they're going to give her to Joe Macomber; he's first on the old *Cormorant* now, you know."

"Oh, yes—yes, recollect I did hear something like that. But it's only office gossip, far's I know, and gossiping seems to be the biggest job some of 'em do round the office."

"'Tisn't right," interrupted Kent bitterly. "Here I've had my master's ticket for three years, and 'twasn't more'n a year ago that Macomber went up for his!"

"Humph! That's a fact, too. Hadn't thought o' that. Don't s'pose Macomber's got an inside track, do you?"

"No inside, no. He's worked up from the deck, all in Spurling ships, same as I've done. 'Tisn't pull; the trouble's on my side, I guess. You've heard about 'Hard-luck Harts' in shipping circles for years now, haven't you?"

Captain Berry had to admit the truth of this statement.

"And I'm the latest edition. So when it comes to handing out masters' berths the office over in Boston can't forget that my father piled up a new collier on Picket Hill Bar, and his father lost his vessel years ago off Turk's Island in salt. Long as they go on remembering such nice things about our family they'll never trust a ship—specially a new one—to me; never in this world."

"Why, I'm not so certain but——"

"Remember last January?" Kent persisted. "When Captain Gordon died aboard the *Cobene*? By rights, I had that ship coming to me, Captain Berry. More'n two years I'd been going mate for this company on a master's ticket; and what did they do up in the office? Why, they went outside the company and got Captain Grayson."

Captain Berry laid a fatherly hand on his mate's shoulder. "Too bad, Kent; I'm sorry. You've been a good first, as good as any that's ever sailed under me. This thing ain't right, and I've told 'em so, too."

"Thanks, captain; thanks a lot—that should 'ave helped." Kent clenched his rocky fist. "Only give me the chance! That's all I'm asking. I'm as good for it as Macomber." Then, dejectedly, "But

they'll never do it. I'm fed up on it, captain, so when we come north this trip I'm going ashore."

"What? Kent, my boy, you can't quit the water! Why, half the blood in your veins is salt water. What would you do ashore?"

"I'll have to find something, sir, and—there's a girl down home. She's been waiting three years now; we planned to get married as soon as I got my own ship. We'd hoped—well, this new *Selma Spurling*——" The young man turned away and tunked his pipe against a piling, then silently climbed the ladder up to the *Matotem's* rail.

"Shame, damn shame!" sympathized the skipper in an undertone. "When a boy like him sets his dunnage ashore he just plain fizzles out." He followed his mate aboard ship.

**R**IDING high and light, the *Matotem* loomed up over the pier end on the high-water slack. She was a Lake ship, this *Matotem*; the kind you'll find in any kid's geography on that page where they show pictures of the tall grain elevators and Buffalo's water front. In the dearth of bottoms during the World War, she'd been brought out to the Atlantic for the coastwise coal trade. She had been designed to run always in cargo and in short seas, but here she was, running south in water ballast on the longer ocean seas and coming up the coast to New England ports deep in coal. And laden, she stood deep in, with the ocean almost flush to her long, open deck, so that every sea that came on abeam boomed unimpeded across the waist of her in a mad snarl of green water.

But troubles always come like bananas, and the sky line of Boston hadn't sunk astern before the *Matotem's* young mate found another difficulty to deal with. This time it was his bos'n.

Matthew Carmen, bos'n, hailed from Kent's home town of Bluehull. To him, the tale of the Hard-luck Harts had moss on it long ago, yet he never lost a chance to keep it fresh in his mate's mind by sly innuendos and wisecrack smiles not quite behind Kent's back. Time and again Kent had contemplated firing the man, not solely for this, but for his dilatoriousness in carrying out orders. However, nothing serious had ever resulted from the insolence—

and Kent hesitated to set a Bluehull fellow ashore anyway.

On this particular occasion the mate was aft in a lifeboat, checking up its equipment, when he heard a commotion down on deck where Carmen had the watch at work covering hatches. He came out of the lifeboat with a jump. Looking forward, he saw Larsen manning a winch at an open hatch. At the rail on either side stood two other sailors with guy lines from the peak of a cargo boom above. Amidships, across the hatch from Larsen, stood Carmen, flaying his arms and raining upon the three sailors a torrent of words that were supposed to be orders. All the while a huge iron strongback swung perilously abeam like a pendulum from the boom over the open hatch.

Kent ran, while the strongback, still aloft, swung dangerously with every roll of the ship. A full turn ran off the winch drum, and down it came, swiping wide and low athwartships. Kent yelled while he ran, but before he could be taken into account the mass of iron whanged end-on against the port rail, bounded off, then lurched across deck on a bee line for the sailor holding a guy line—and the sailor was all eyes for the running mate!

The mate got there; with all his strength—and he had aplenty—he put everything into one powerful heave against the sailor to shove him aside. He was a second late, and the sailor crumpled to the deck, stunned.

They bore Fogarty to his bunk and called the steward—luckily for him it had been a glancing blow. When they got back to their job the strongback was down on the deck, so, with Kent at the winch, it was settled shipshape into its sockets athwart the yawning hatchway.

"Now what's the big idea, anyway?" Kent had asked as he started aft to the lifeboat with the chagrined, angry bos'n barkin' at his heels. "Tryin' to make a fool o' me in front o' the sailors, that's what you——"

The mate wheeled in his tracks.

"We'd 'a' got that damn thing down all right if you'd 'a' kept out of it," blustered Carmen.

"And knocked out how many more men?" asked Kent in an even voice.

"Say, whose fault is it anyway if that sailor's dumb?" asked the bos'n.

"Carmen," said the mate sharply, "we

use the handle when we talk to officers aboard here!"

"Yes—sir," replied the bos'n.

"That's better. Now, about dumb sailors and strongbacks—you're hired to do the thinking, not them. And you've got to get them to do what you tell 'em to do. When a job goes flop the way that one did, you're the one that's to blame. Get that into your head before you have more trouble with them."

"Haw, ha-a-aw!" laughed Carmen sarcastically. "How these Hard-luck Harts do talk once they get away from Bluehull! I s'pose you thought nobody here would know——"

"Get for'ard, bos'n! Snappy!" said Kent angrily.

**F**OUR days at sea—four days of July skies and gentle, undulating swells; then the Capes. When the low, sandy shores and isolated lighthouses that distinguished Capes Charles and Henry came into sight, Kent Hart was standing his watch up above. He was leaning out of a window in the wheelhouse when in came a sailor who said, "Captain Berry wants Mr. Hart to come to his room."

Opening the skipper's door, the first officer saw that something was wrong with his chief.

"Mr. Hart," said Captain Berry, turning painfully in his bed to face the man he'd sent for, "I've got to get to a doctor as soon as we come to anchor off Newport News. My back"—he laid a hand gingerly against the small of his back—"guess the wife got it right this time."

Kent wondered what he could do for the man.

"As first officer here," Berry went on in an effort to be businesslike, "you must take over the command of the ship while I'm ashore there. Get the agent's orders. Dock ship yourself—no tug. When the coal's in her, haul out into the stream and anchor if I'm not back yet."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, yes—there's a seamen's strike on, you know: most of the sailors have drawn their regulation half pay already, so they'll be quitting the minute she docks under the spouts. That means you've got to hustle up to Norfolk and get a crew." Captain Berry rose to an elbow his fists clenched in his earnestness. "Get those men," he fairly shouted, "get 'em! Hart, this ship's



got to sail—got to! We're starting on a new charter, and orders is to deliver this first load right on the dot, strike or no strike, so dig in and get 'em."

Kent Hart went out of that room a master of a ship, a skipper for the moment, at least, and he took the *Matotem* into the Roads to her anchorage off Newport News.

**W**HEN the hook went down the skipper left his bed. A boat was lowered to set him ashore, and when it returned, an envelope containing orders from the agent came with it. Kent read the message and sent for Mr. Lee, second officer.

"Mr. Lee," said he crisply, "we're loading gas coal at once over at Lambert's Point for Providence."

"Which berth at the Point?" asked Lee.

"Third one in on the lower side," said the captain.

The *Matotem* got under way almost as soon as the cable was up and down.

Little did the men around him realize the thrill, the sense of responsibility, that hummed through her young master's veins when he poked her black nose in by the *North Wind* that was engulfed already in the dingy cloud of black dust that poured from clanking spouts.

Berths two and three were both vacant, so Kent eased the *Matotem* closer in at No. 2 to get lines ashore. From there he could ease her along to her assigned berth, No. 3. The tide was on the ebb, and therefore against him, but he got his lines onto the pier, both forward and aft. Suddenly, from the fore-castle head came a loud *twang*, and the bow line flung apart in two pieces.

"Damned thickhead!" groaned Hart in rage—and he was justified.

Carmen had taken several turns around a bitt on the line forward. The tide put a great strain upon the line, so he tried to pay out on it, but when he did, he found that it was bound upon itself. Before he could slack away it had parted—and of course, the *Matotem's* bow started across the dock.

"Leggo stern line!" shouted Kent. Astern lay the *North Wind*, so he couldn't go astern. He signaled slow ahead to the engine room and spun the helm hard astarboard. But his ship's bow still persisted on its way across the narrow strip of open

water toward a naval barge that was loading there. Her headway amounted to very little, so she was slow in answering the wheel. Then came a scraping and a grinding along the barge's side in spite of the rope fenders hastily thrown there by the sailors. Kent held his breath.

"Oh, Lord," he breathed. He looked to Mr. Lee, but—well, he was the skipper, now, and he must carry the responsibility alone. It was the isolation of command. Slowly the *Matotem* gained headway and swung back. "Now that the damage's done," grumbled Kent.

Around to the barge he went, to deal with a gold-braided Farragut-some day. "Damages?" that worthy said superciliously. "Your owners will receive a report in due time if anything serious develops." Then the young mate who aspired to a master's berth returned to his ship, there to enter the incident against himself in the log—not that he had bungled, but the ship was under his hand at the time; he was responsible.

"Oh, well," he sighed. Then, for no reason, apparently, he broke into a laugh so noisy that it rang in his own ears. "Tin sailor—gold braid—whew-ey!" he muttered, and away he went in another fit of sheer good nature. Somehow that naval upstart got to his funny bone, and Kent Hart was his old self once more.

*Bang!* came a fist on his door, and the door burst open. "Crew's gone!" said Mr. Lee. He was all fussed up over the situation.

"Firemen an' coal passers gone ashore!" shouted Chief Melcher over Lee's shoulder. "Sh-shtrike's on."

Kent looked the chief up and down suspiciously, but said nothing.

"You deaf?" demanded Melcher. "The black gang's gone ashore!" he repeated excitedly.

"Gone, eh? And what did you and your first assistant there—Blastow—what did you two do about it?"

The chief's eyes bulged, he thrust out his drink-reddened face menacingly. "None o' your damn business what we do, young feller!" He waited for that one to take effect. "An' I don't give a hoot if they are gone, the lousy lobs-couse—now, then!"

Kent felt stifled in the engineer's whiskered breath; Melcher had sacrificed a good deal in his life to the bottle.

"Chief," said the skipper pro tem while Lee looked on in amusement, "use a mouth wash; you seem to be afflicted with—er—halitosis." Then, more seriously, "And how about Blastow? What's he done about all this?"

"Shay, boy; he—he's a shocialisht, an' it's agin' his prinshiples to block shtrikesh." With this speech off his chest, the chief swung a haymaker of a gesture that swiped a neat little roll of white paper off the desk beside Kent. He hastened to recover it; it was his master's certificate.

"Mr. Lee," said he officially, ignoring the chief, "you're in charge here. I've got to go up to Norfolk for a crew."

**N**ORFOLK was dead as a derelict. Sailors there were in plenty; good deep-water men, with the unmistakable mustiness of the fo'c's'le about them, tattooed firemen with sweat-whitened skin, lots of sailors, but not one who would sign up. Kent forsook union headquarters for other sailor haunts. Banging pianos and raucous songs filled his ears in them all, but every sailor, but he soused or sober, told the same tale. "It was a big strike this time. Gonna git our four on and eight off and more money; that's us."

As a last resort he looked up one of the old-time crimps of former days who still plied a semblance of his dubious trade.

"Men?" asked the old-timer. "Why, yes; I can git yer men."

"Well—get them—get them here quick," Kent urged and settled down to wait.

Within an hour, and mysteriously withal, old "Tops'l Dan" had a motley swarm of male beings collected around the acting captain of the *Matotem*. To Kent's experienced eyes they would hardly pass as fo'c's'le hounds, but he herded them into a trolley car on a personally conducted tour that landed them aboard the collier. Here, and at once, Mr. Lee told them off—so many firemen, so many coal passers, the rest on deck; and so a crew was finally signed on.

"That," gloated Kent, "is one good job to our credit to-day. Every blasted ship in the Roads is stripped of her crew. It's a big strike."

Late that afternoon the usual stores came aboard, and before they were all stored, Captain Berry came down the pier looking more like himself. Before sunset the *Matotem* was on her way to Providence

with her hatches brim to the coamings, and her deck nearly down to the water.

In the darkness, off Winter Quarter Lightship, that first night out, the engineers began to sense something. Off Fenwick Island, hours later, the mate on watch suspected that all was not well out aft. By the time the *Matotem* reached Five Fathom Lightship, everybody on board knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that she was lagging on her course. Out on the broad Atlantic, the only coastwise ship under way, she was rolling in a long fog swell without a real fireman aboard of her! Soda-fountain clerks bent on adventure, soft-handed and dapper—such were the creatures she carried on her articles as "firemen."

Steering had become impossible; the ship had no headway. Kent wondered why Captain Berry didn't do something about it, Chief Melcher being what he was. At length he could contain himself no longer. He knocked on the skipper's door and entered.

"You'll have to take command, Hart. I'm sick. That doctor's pills worked for a while, but they—I'm worse than ever."

"Sorry, captain, I thought you must be aillin' again." Kent hesitated. He disliked adding to the man's worries.

"Captain Berry," he managed, "that lot of men I got, they're landlubbers, the whole pack of them. Right now we're just moving—no steerage way. Something's wrong with the works aft, I'd sav."

"How's the weather look?" inquired the captain anxiously.

"That's it, sir. There's a southeaster making up. Shall I go aft—"

"Aft, sir?" The captain's eyes burned feverishly. "Aft? Mr. Hart, you're in command. Get this cargo into Providence. No matter how you do it, get there. That's our orders."

Command at sea! Kent felt his shoulders stiffen. Trouble aft? He gloried in the prospect. It was a chance to show Spurling & Company; maybe his big opportunity.

"Courses, sir? Shall we run across from Five Fathom to Montauk?"

"No. This storm'll be nothing but one o' those summer southerlies probably. But you'd better make the shorter leg to Fire Island Lightship, and run on from there to the channel beyond Montauk—same courses we always run in foul weather."

So saying, Captain Berry turned over in the bed to face the wall and his suffering. Kent closed the door on the outside and lost no time in getting aft.

He poked his head into the engine room. The pistons were scarcely moving, and there, beside them, sat bewhiskered Blastow. Beneath his flat nose a pipe protruded from the forest of hair. Grease smeared his bare, folded arms, and when he turned his head, Kent looked into the pale, peculiar eyes of a crack-brain. "Chief?" said Blastow in choppy English. "Oh, out on the fantail, I guess, with his new crop o' scabs." Kent hurried aft.

One look was enough. Lagging ship, lack of speed enough to steer her, creeping pistons—all the ills to which the ship had become heir lay before her acting skipper when he stepped out on the stern of his command.

On the deck, draped over coils of rope in every conceivable posture of exhaustion, lay the firemen he had gotten from Tops'l Dan. And, to top off the situation, their drunken chief stood in their midst waving and raving in a senseless attempt to bully them into going back into the fireroom. Before Kent could prevent him, Melcher kicked the man nearest him, and the limp figure rolled out of reach. Highly pleased with himself, Melcher was going the rounds with his ready boot. But he never finished, for Kent caught him by the arm and, amid protests and ineffectual resistance, the chief was locked securely in his own quarters to sober off.

"Now, you fellows," began Kent when he got back to the stokers; "listen here, all of you. This is the only coastwise ship on the coast. She's all alone. There's no other ship around to call on, and"—he measured his words—"a big storm is coming up."

"Holy mackerel!" ejaculated one. Kent noted that every one of them was scarce out of his teens.

"Damn it, mate, what'll we do?" demanded another in frank fear.

"Fire. You're going to get up steam: every one of you—and keep it up," replied Kent.

Every man rose to a sitting position and cast anxious looks out over the ocean.

"Get for'ard," ordered Kent crisply, though pleasantly. "Find buckets and wash each other down like real stokers do. Then turn in. When you're called out,

every man of you run below to that boiler room and fire. Fire like hell."

Stiff and weary, the eight novices—both shifts had been dropped when the gauge fell—limped forward with Kent behind them. At the stairway beneath the wheelhouse he left them to go on, and climbed the stairs impatiently.

"Mr. Lee," said he as soon as he got inside, "Captain Berry's out of it for the rest of this trip, anyway; I'm in command. The chief's still drunk, and that black gang has gone to their bunks, all in. Not a stoker in the fireroom."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You got me right. Now, you'll have to look after this end. When you get Northeast End abeam, head her up for Fire Island Lightship and get the course carefully, for the storm'll hit us pretty quick. Sea's rising already."

"Yes, sir."

"I'm going aft with a couple of men to get steam on her," said Kent, and out he went, to round up his men for the job.

Accompanied by Carmen and big Larsen, the mate descended upon a huge pile of ashes right in front of the fires they had to force. Kent went above and got the oiler off watch at the time. Not yet satisfied, he located another scoop and went after the first assistant. He accosted the engineer astride a comfortable camp seat beside his slowing engines.

"Mr. Blastow," said he breathlessly, and proffering the scoop, "we need another hand below there; come on quick."

"No, sir; ye're a lot o' scabs; tamn scabs! Here's de boor sylers dryin' ter gid decent——"

A hundred and forty pounds of Blastow came off that stool. It flayed arms and legs in protest, but it went to the doorway to the fireroom in muscular young arms. "Heads up on the ash pile!" yelled Kent, and the skinny bones of the socialist engineer went sailing down. Blastow landed a-sprawl on the pile, and Kent reached for the shovel behind him. When he faced about to throw it after his lastet recruit, that gentleman was making for the ladder. He would not work. Kent shouted a warning again and let go the shovel. Unable to dodge it, Blastow caught it. "Larsen," hollered Kent, "see that he uses it!" And Larsen did so with alacrity.

The *Matotem* was wallowing now in the trough of a treacherous sea. Realiz-

ing the fact all too well, but assured of hands enough at the fires, Captain Hart left the oiler on watch to tend the engines, along with his oiling, and raced forward for a look-see. There stood Northeast End Lightship, heaving and pitching in smashing, turbulent seas. Sheets of spray were sousing her stack. Kent made certain that the course taken was the best they could get in such weather, and cast a dubious eye out over wind-swept crests in a sunless dusk. The storm was upon them, and they were headed for Fire Island.

Nightfall in a gale off the perilous stretch that lies between the havenless Jersey shores and equally dangerous south side of Long Island. Not another ship had been sighted since they left the Virginia capes; others had heeded the warnings of this gale.

Green water curled and towered above the collier's weather rail, to break and slam in tons upon tons over her battered hatches. In all reason, she should have been headed into New York. There was yet time before the peak of the hurricane got to her. Her young skipper realized it, too; but there were his orders, "Get to Providence on the dot." He resolved to see the old girl straight through, come what might.

"Relieve the watch!" he yelled into the forecabin, and out crawled his untutored black gang. Some of them had undressed for bed—imagine sailors stripping off for the watch below in a gale!

In the galley they balked at the oleo and hard-tack, but he induced some of them to stuff something into their pockets on their way, and he herded them to the fires.

"Give 'er the coal—and the slice bars," he coached them. "Drive 'er or you'll all go down in her like rats!"

Evening wore on—ten o'clock, four bells. At the first tinkle of the bell in the wheelhouse the *Matotem's* first officer stole a peek at his sleeping captain, and went on aft to read the log. It wasn't holding up; five knots, even in this weather, wouldn't offset the force of this wind—she might be blown inshore to leeward of Fire Island Lightship, where it was all breaking now in shoal water! He ordered the course altered a full point to windward.

And now those firemen. In the doorway, between engine room and boilers, he studied every one of them. They were surely wilting on the job just as they had

before. The lurch and roll of the deck beneath their unaccustomed feet, their utter unfitness for grueling toil—it was more than they could endure for long; their puny strength was waning. Nevertheless he left them there to stick it out to the bitter end; he'd have to relieve them all too soon as it was.

Midnight fell upon the collier in a drenching downpour—and no lightship! The log and the clock both gave dead reckoning that should have raised Fire Island. Where was the *Matotem* anyway? Inshore? Binoculars in hand, Kent searched the darkness to leeward for a red flash; he tried it ahead—finally and with misgiving, he peered into the wind. To starboard—there it was! Rearing aloft, rooting under mountainous seas, slatting viciously—there she stood, and her masthead clusters to him were scarlet, ominous heralds of danger. He knew now where the collier was; she stood inshore and alee!

"Haul 'er up to the lightship, Lee—quick! We'll ground here!" And as though to prove it, spray from a sea that was already sharpening over shoal, sandy bottom, drove like shingle nails against the weather panes. Crashing seas were booming down the long, open deck just beyond, and the viking song of the gale went screaming through the shrouds and stays aloft, vying with the yeasty hiss of water torn off hundreds of cresting waves below them. Never had the *Matotem* trembled so. Now she lay over almost on her beam ends; she shivered up—up, hung there uncertainly, then down she swept to the bottom of another trough, only to take aboard the next one completely before her sluggish hull had time to rise. Her first officer had seen her weather many a gale, but never the likes of this one. "Lord deliver us!" was all he could find to say for the struggling freighter in her plight.

He went inside just in time to hear the *che-ee-e* in the speaking tube.

"Hello," he shouted above the storm. "Yes, speaking. . . Done? What do you mean, done? All in, eh? Be right there."

So he assembled his makeshift firing crew a second time, and this time it was revolutions of the propeller or shipwreck on a low, sandy shore.

And that stokehole! Scattered over the iron plates between the furnaces lay his Baltimore crowd wherever exhaustion had taken them. Scoops grated among the

open spaces between them; one fire door slatted a-swing, spewing hot coals from a dying fire upon smoking dungarees.

The new crew tore into their job with a vengeance. Limp bodies were thrust aside, doors clanged, hot slice bars smoked the holders applied to them! Coal in, ashes out—slice, heave, shovel, *bang!*—and the steam gauges were already on the upward kick. Only Kent Hart realized, among them, how slim the odds stood. Power, fierce power in a driving propeller was the only hope for the ship. The more he thought of it the harder it became to stay below, so the instant he knew that steam was assured he muffled himself into a pea-jacket and got outside to see for himself how the struggle was going.

Before he could open the door forward, Lee was upon him.

"Look!" shouted Lee. "My heavens! We're gonna—Brailey, the second, wants you, sir," he suddenly remembered. "Having trouble."

Kent whistled into the tube. "Brailey? This Brailey? Clamp down the safety valve. . . . Yes—throttle wide open! Wide, man—wide open. We've gotta get out o' this shoal water and clear the light! What?" A whiff of wind and rain through the outflung door again, and Kent was gone.

A brief pause at the after rail on the bridge deck, above surging whirlpools on the long, open stretch below him, then a quick run between onrushing seas. Up the half dozen steps aft and, "What the devil's goin' on up there!" He was looking up to where stood the black, swaying funnel and lifeboats. He made the climb in two leaps. "What's this?" he demanded. He counted six or more heads bustling about the port lifeboat. They had the canvas off her, and one end was swinging out-board under their efforts. What crazy brain was behind so foolhardy a move in this sea? That boat would be stove to kindling the instant it struck water! The red masthead lights of the lightship, nearer than ever, swayed toward the collier on the top of a big sea, and Kent saw. Straight through the dripping, straining men he strode to Carmen.

"Now, out goes the——" Before Carmen could finish, the mate was upon him savagely.

"By Judas! You fool!" growled Kent, and reaching out his long arm, he clamped

sturdy knuckles onto the end of the bos'n's blunt nose.

"Get below—fireroom!" He roared to the men. Carmen wriggled, but to no avail, for the grip on his nose rendered him helpless.

The useless firemen went on down the ladder to the boilers, but not so Carmen. Kent unlocked the chief's door and hove him inside before he could put up a fight. Chief Melcher was back to normal by now, and rarin' to do something. "Tie him up, chief," said Kent. "He's been up on deck with your fire gang, trying to lower away a lifeboat!" Melcher wrestled the prisoner into his bunk, and Kent knew from past experiences anent the chief that Carmen would do no more mutinous deeds on this trip. Kent went back on deck.

With the lightship closer and closer on his bow, he headed the *Matotem* sou'west. Careening, plunging on her new course, she took the grief a-quartering. When her bows dove under, her wheel came out and raced clean out of the water—if that propeller shaft should break under the sudden strains! But no, it settled deep in and the ship moved on with redoubled force.

Presently the lightship rose to a crest. She was so near that Kent read "Fire Island" in letters so large that they seemed within reach. Now the *Matotem's* bow was abreast the beacon's stern. Her screw bit in; she crept ahead—that drove her bow abreast her helpless victim. Seconds later, the hoarse siren at the lightship's stack let go its periodic moan. The boats stood bow to bow. Some one was waving a frantic signal flare over the big word "Island." It looked bad for the lightship's crew. The *Matotem's* propeller slashed down into deep water again; she churned ahead. The two craft were so close that it seemed inevitable that they suck together. No, the collier's stern was abreast the other's bow. Kent never knew how he negotiated that boiling maelstrom on the well deck, but out onto the stern he lumbered, soaked from head to foot.

"Lord! If a big sea swings us onto those anchor chains——" He didn't finish—the propeller would be stripped of its blades, and he knew it. In swung the stern. High in the air it eased over—over—the whole fantail bounding up and down with the vibration of the racing iron blades beneath it. For seconds that were hours to Kent, she hung there atop that

sea. Then down, down she settled off the sea, almost upon the chains—down still farther, till he swore he heard them grate along the sides. He held his breath. The screw hummed beneath a smother of foam. The lightship fell off and astern. The old collier was clear!

"Clear of 'er! Clear!" shouted Kent, and away he bolted to the wheelhouse. Hardly had he made the distance when jagged flashes of lightning away off in the east gave assurance that the wind was hauling, and the most violent storm on the Atlantic seaboard in ten summers was nearly over.

**N**EXT day, the *Matotem* wound her way up Narragansett Bay to Providence. As soon as she docked, an ambulance took Captain Berry to a hospital uptown. Kent attended to the details of entering his ship and returned to the dock, numb with exhaustion. Wearily he dragged himself to his bunk and dropped off instantly.

Years later—seemingly—Kent became conscious of violent shakings.

"Mr. Hart; come on. You've got to wake up. Lord, how can a man sleep so! Mr. Hart! Wake up."

Kent raised leaden lids. "Um-yes, steward."

"Wake up, sir. Mr. Spurling's out here, waiting to see you. He's in the captain's room. Old J. D. himself."

Instantly Kent was awake. "Tell him in just a minute. As soon as I can dress."

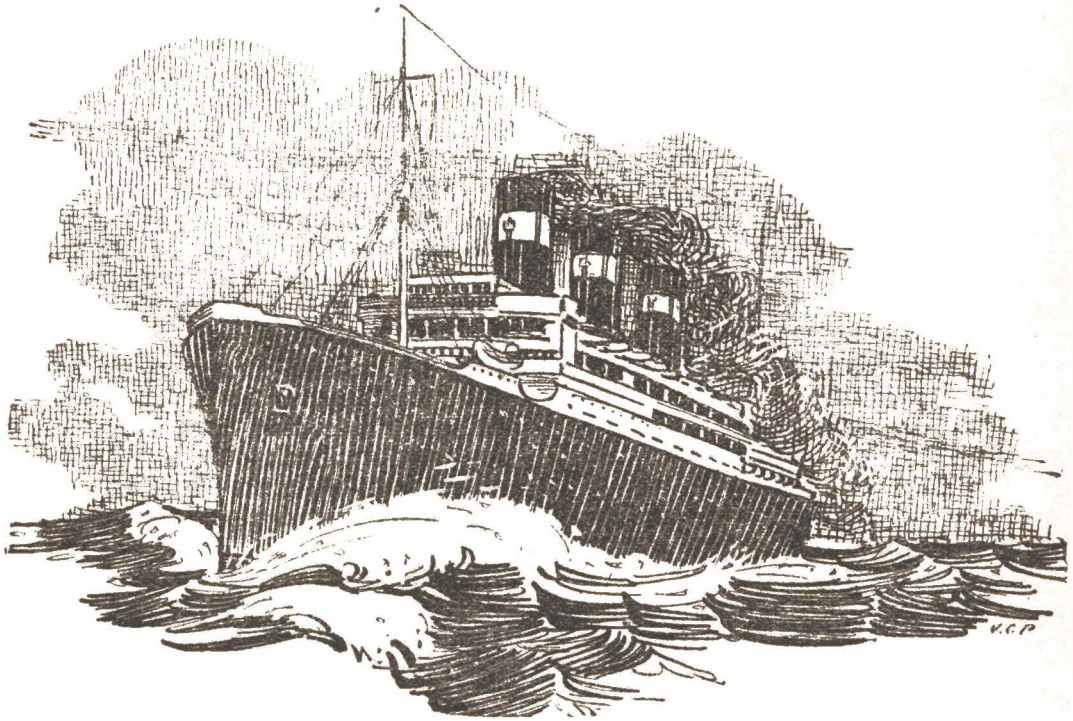
The interview was short, but before old J. D. had stepped ashore, the news had reached every part of the ship.

"The *Selma Spurling*," relayed a sailor to the second mate. "I heard him say so. Just as soon as she is ready. Was he tickled? Well, you oughter heard 'im. But he sez to Mr. Spurling, sez he, 'Mr. Spurling, ain't you takin' quite a chance. You're forgettin' I'm a Hard-luck Hart.' But Mr. Spurling, he laughs and sez, sez he, 'Dammit, Captain Hart'—mind ye, he sez 'captain'—'dammit, I never believe in luck!'"



# The Moderns

By Frank H. Shaw



New days and new ways on the North Atlantic ferry.

**O**LD Captain Mainsail grunted sourly at the news. "If it'd been a craft like the *Belle o' Boston* now," he mentioned, with a prideful wave of the hand toward the dainty model of that once-famous clipper ship, "yes; there'd have been cause. As it is——"

Young Captain Mainsail laughed, still swollen with pride. "There were other ships than the *Belle*," he said. "There *are* other ships—the *Guinevere* is one."

"Bosh—a liner isn't a ship, not to say a *ship!*"

"Not so bad, grandad, as packets go these days, though. Come down and see her and you'll alter your opinion. She's the queen of the roaring forties—that's what a poetical Johnny's called her in the papers."

"Queen of my grandmother's foot! What d'you know about the roaring forties? Only seen 'em from a steamer,

haven't you? And then you haven't rightly *seen 'em.*"

"I'm not so sure about that." Young Captain Mainsail's honest face grew a bit stern and pinched as memory took him back through fighting years. "They roared above a bit that time I was mate of the *Wellington*, and we lost our tail shaft. Captain Grant admitted he'd never seen worse weather, and he was windjammer-trained, too."

Old Captain Mainsail laid a rheumatism-gnarled forefinger across the horny palm of his left hand. "Argue as you like," he dictated, "you'll never tell me there's any *weather* in a steamer. Now, when I was master of the old *Belle*——" It was an old and inexhaustible argument. It was conservative hard-headed age entering the lists against progressive enthusiastic youth. "Ships were ships and men were *sailors* in those days," declared the veteran. "They had to fight for their lives once at least

every passage—oftener, as like as not. Hard men they were—you couldn't cow them—they were too tough to scare."

"They *had* to fight to keep your rotten old windjammers afloat—they knew if they chucked up the sponge they'd go to the locker," protested the youngster. "Kipling calls that sort of thing the ties of common funk—and he knows what he's talking about."

"So far as steam's concerned—perhaps. When it comes to sail—no. Look at you, yourself—you don't *sail* a ship these days. Look at us—that went off into the blue—dependent on every wind that chanced; with our chronometers playing hob with themselves—so that after a four months' passage we didn't know whether they were ten minutes fast or ten minutes slow. Half the crew down with scurvy, and the other half shouting blue murder——"

"Thought they were *men*?"

"We made 'em men—when they wouldn't go they were driven."

"Led men do better than driven men, grandad—but what's the good of arguing? I stand by steam every time."

"Gilt-edged collar-and-cuff railway trains, no better!" puffed the veteran.

"And they get there—that's what a ship's for—to get there, with her cargo and passengers. Dipping your hands over elbow in a tar bucket doesn't help you to navigate a crack liner any the better. And if you get your deck planks planed in port it is as good as a month's holystoning. Come down aboard the *Guinevere* and I bet a hat you fall in love with her—come down to-morrow and lunch with me."

"We called it dinner—and salt pork was what we ate."

"You'll probably get a salmi of game and trimmings."

"It's a thousand pities your father didn't put you through the windjammer mill, John Three. Then you'd have learned respect for your elders—that made it their business to know everything there was to know about white water."

"You don't teach a man how to handle a bow and arrow before you make him a rifleman, grandad."

"Meaning to sneer at my old *Belle*?" The old man's eye softened as they caressed the beautiful model on the bureau.

"Not I—she's a picture of a ship. But she wouldn't take a thousand passengers across the ferry in under six days, no

matter what weather you got—snow, storm, or shine, and that's what the *Guinevere's* scheduled to do, old-timer. And the pay is about three times what you got, I'll wager."

"We didn't go seafaring for pay."

"What did you go for, then? Honor and glory; or just so you could shout about being salted to the core?" The argument waxed hot along accustomed lines, and old Captain Mainsail—"John One" as he was called in the family—sent down royal yards to his heart's content with the model of the *Belle* to illustrate his points. When he touched the beautiful thing his hands were caressing, when he spoke of her triumphs his voice quavered and moisture showed in his eyes. There was the occasion when the *Belle* was dismasted off the Agulhas, losing her rudder at the same time, and taking fire in her cargo below. He worked her safely into port under jury rig and jury rudder, fighting the fire in between whiles, and holding a mutinous crew and panic-stricken passengers in order at the pistol point.

"Catch any of your fancy steamboat men doing that!" he snorted. "Sailors nowadays are painters and engineers—they can't even turn in a long splice."

"All that sort of thing's done in the rigging loft ashore. Well done, too, by experts. All the same, grandad, I'd like you to come down and see the *Guinevere*."

John One saw himself in the position of an informed oracle—to visit the liner would give him an opportunity of preaching to a wider audience on the spacious days of sail.

"Well, I might as well waste a day there as anywhere else," he said.

And aboard the *Guinevere* he got everything off his chest that he felt about steam. There wasn't a thing he didn't make light of—from the electric radiators to the refrigerator, and the crash of parting topsails was in his voice as he roared out his derision.

"It isn't seafaring, it's hotel keeping!" he bellowed in the main saloon where the deck officers lunched, tended by dexterous stewards, off exotic dishes. "I've seen the time when we've gone a fortnight at a stretch without cooked food——"

"But you'd have eaten it fast enough if it'd been there," commented John Three. "So have a second helping, grandad—the more we eat here the more wages we get."



"And if she takes fire you screw a nozzle on to a pipe and the fire's put out by itself!"

"Quite right; a fire's a fire, to be handled according to circumstances, but to be put out. They don't use manual engines ashore nowadays. And when we heave to we ring the telegraph and it's done."

"And you call yourselves sailors!"

John One went ashore fuming. He considered the outward appearance of the *Guinevere* from every possible angle and then turned a disgusted back on the beautiful fabric. He summoned a decrepit four-wheeler to drive him home, although there were taxicabs aplenty on hand—but he was of the old school and he had always gone ashore to enter a four-wheeler, and old habits are not easily changed. The *Guinevere* was due to sail on the Saturday. On the Friday John One received a cablegram from his only and much-loved daughter Mary out in Chicago. Mary was very ill and desired to see her father before she died. The message was urgent.

"Lucky for you the *Guinevere* sails tomorrow, grandad," said John Three. "There isn't a berth vacant; but I'll let you have my bunk, and make it right with the superintendent. If the *Guinevere* had been a windjammer now—well, we'll have you across inside the week."

"I'd a sight liefer she'd been my old *Belle of Boston*, boy."

"Westerly gales are the forecast—she'd have taken a month to get you across."

Old Captain Mainsail made the best of a bad job and, matters having been arranged, transported himself aboard the *Guinevere* some hours before sailing time. He wanted to see how the youngster did his job. The liner moved from her dock to the passenger pier without a voice being raised. Occasionally a whistle blew, but there was no suggestion of the raucous bawling that, in John One's mind, was associated with putting to sea. Nor was there any hazing of drunken disgruntled men who had blown in their month's advance on a final spree. The people of the *Guinevere* were steady men, with money in the bank, who signed on with the intention of keeping a good job indefinitely. Old Captain Mainsail was permitted on the high bridge as a special favor, on consideration that he remained a spectator. He saw his grandson, kid-gloved and frock-coated, speak crisp words almost in

an undertone; he saw smart young officers repeat those orders into telephones, and he grunted disdain. But the *Guinevere* didn't so much as scratch her paint in passing between the pierheads, not so much as a cork fender was brought into play. The passengers embarked at the landing stage with simple precision—a long stream of humanity that was taken in hand and conducted by suave menials.

Then, completed, the *Guinevere's* telegraphs rang and she slid toward the open sea, pulsing eagerly.

"'Tisn't seafaring—'tisn't!" said old Captain Mainsail. "You could do this job in carpet slippers and a boiled shirt." He reminisced at garrulous length about the hardships of sailing day in his younger manhood—when they chanteyed the anchors up by the back-breaking hour, and the mates used belaying pins like confetti at a wedding. Those were the times—and you could feel the reek of Stockholm tar in every pungent word he uttered. For the scuttering rusty tramps that trudged seaward down the wide estuary he had nothing but scorn; and when a natty steward brought chicken broth in cups to the bridge—the *Guinevere* sailed on the morning's tide—the old-timer openly jeered. When young Mainsail made to leave the bridge—the tideway as crowded as a London street in the rush-hour—he said, "Meaning to say you'd leave a junior in charge of your ship in these waters?"

"Why not? He's as highly certificated as I am, and accustomed to responsibility, too—a good man, well-tested. Older than I am, but less seniority. Coming below?"

John One shook his head—the old itch to interfere was with him, the old pride of command that bade a man keep watchful, always intolerant of easy-going youth. "I'll stop up here a bit," he said, and John Three went to his cabin. There were letters for him on his table. "Brought aboard just as we cast off, sir," said his steward. John Three singled out one with an American stamp, and, notwithstanding his steadiness, felt his pulses begin to hammer. He grinned—reading the opening words he scowled.

"Well, of all the luck! She might have waited—not her fault, of course. But—damn it! Why, at that rate I'll not see her again until. In the *Stavordale*, too. Why didn't she choose a *ship*? Jumped for the first one, of course—sailing Satur-

day—that's to-day. We'll pass her in mid-Atlantic—small satisfaction." He'd counted an enormous lot on showing Mary Wentworth over the *Guinevere*, himself her master. Fair cause for pride here, himself master of a crack liner at thirty—when there were men half again as old waiting with their tongues hung out for similar chances. And his project was scuppered until the *Guinevere* completed the round trip—and by that time the novelty would be worn off to some extent. None the less there was a chance for a leg-pull in the situation over his grandfather. John Three was a confirmed optimist. He glanced through his other letters, they were unimportant, and carried Mary's to the bridge. He found John One growlingly telling the watch keeper what seafaring was really like in his younger days.

"Now, if this sort of thing'd happened in your day, grandad—well? You'd have had to wait a year, maybe, perhaps more. As it is three week'll set this little business right."

John One looked at him inquiringly.

"Heard me tell of Mary Wentworth? Nice girl—proper sort of girl. Girl a man'd like to marry. Matter-of-fact, I was going to put the question this time over."

John One nodded wisely at that. "You'd ought to have married years since, boy," he growled. "Got to keep the breed going—even in steamers. Been a Mainsail seafaring most centuries since Queen Bess's day."

"Had to make myself a position first," John Three replied. "Likely enough she wouldn't have me if I asked—master of a liner seems a whale of a lot at sea; but ashore it cuts little enough ice. But I was going to ask her—and here I get a letter from her, just come, saying she's sailing east by the *Stavordale*. Her grandmother's sick—wants her. So she's crossing and we'll meet midocean. Then the rest will follow."

"In my day, boy, I'd have wed the lass and got her in my ship and made love to her afterward."

"And here I'd been counting on—well, never mind. And Clements of the *Stavordale's* an old dodderer, so she needn't be scared of him. But did you ever hear of such luck? If that late post hadn't come aboard I'd never have known anything——"

"Brought by a ramping steamboat, o' course," gibed John One.

"Well, I know where I am, anyhow. And it's only three weeks till we're back home again. Coming to take a look round?"

Reluctantly John One tore himself from the bridge. Secretly it thrilled him somewhat to see how his grandson carried himself—sought out as he was by smart men and women, just as he himself had been sought out in the old *Belle's* spacious days. But he'd been popular because of his sterling seamanship rather than his social graces—he'd been known as a rough-and-tough don't-care-a-damn sort of hard-case seafarer who took his ship through or under, but made passages. Whereas here was John Three talking like a landlubber about this, that, and the other, that properly had nothing whatever to do with seafaring. There was actually a bustling individual organizing sports and entertainments already and trying to persuade John Three to give them a song—a chanty—at the concert to be arranged for sailing night! John Three laughed at that request.

"Here's my grandfather," he said; "he'll sing you as many as you like. He was born with a halyard in his hands, and if I started to sing chanteys with him on board he'd count it sacrilege." So John One was enrolled, and he resolved that he'd show these dandy-fine trippers what a flavor of white water really was. And a pretty girl was approached, and she made eyes at John Three, who wasn't at all a bad-looker in the frock-coat he hadn't yet discarded. She said she adored sailors because she thought blue and gold was so fascinating. But a messenger came from the bridge with a request, and John Three said, "If you like sailors so much, talk to grandfather. He's a proper sailor—I'm only a steamboat man."

John One was ready enough to talk, for, aged as he was, he had an eye for a pretty face; but the girl didn't show a flattering attention.

"Isn't there *anything* worth while these days, then?" she asked presently. "And why do they give Captain Mainsail command of such a splendid ship as this if he isn't really a sailor?"

"Oh, I expect he's fair to middling as sailors go nowadays, miss; but what I mean is——"

"I've got a brother in the air force," she retorted. "They didn't make him learn crawling before he started to fly!" She left the veteran to think that over.

**N**ONE the less, during the immediate following days, John One found very little to give him pleasure. Always a hearty trencherman, the liner's rich feeding gave him acute dyspepsia; and the lack of activity bored him. John Three seemed far more intent on making friends with passengers than on handling his ship, the bridge was the least often visited place in the whole craft. And when John One discovered his grandson dancing in the saloon the second night out, with quite a fair breeze blowing and a considerable sea, the old-timer couldn't find words sufficiently biting to adequately express his opinion on the matter.

"You ought to be out on deck watching the weather!" he said when opportunity offered.

"They'll send down and let me know if it worsens, and I can be on the bridge in ten seconds, grandad."

"A *proper* master, now—I've seen the times when I've kept the deck for sixty hours at a stretch——"

"And been fagged out when the emergency came? What did you do in fine weather?"

"Took it easy to get ready for bad weather, boy—built up reserves."

"Well, it's always fine weather in steamers of this size. And we don't lie and wait for bad times to come, we go to meet 'em and get 'em done with."

A steward came toward John Three and handed him a flimsy. John Three passed it to John One with his usual sly laugh.

"That couldn't have happened in your day," he said. "Aunt Mary's taken a turn for the better, so you can settle down in comfort. I wirelessly yesterday and today here's the answer."

"Well, if she'd have died——" demurred the old man.

"Isn't certainty better than uncertainty, then, grandad?" Presently John Three went on deck for an exercise turn before retiring. He found his grandfather in the weather corner of the promenade deck, his face uplifted to windward.

"There's weather coming—real white-water weather," he exulted. "I know, I

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can feel it in my bones. Look at the scud flying?"

"Nothing that'll trouble us, grandad—we're built to stand all the weather the Lord can send us; but the passengers'll complain, they always do."

"In my day when they complained I sent 'em to the pumps—tired men don't growl to speak of."

"We fill 'em with food here—comes to the same thing in the long run."

"Bad weather meant bad weather in my day, boy—the passengers could think themselves lucky if their cabins weren't flooded and their food was cooked. I've seen them on their knees through a whole night, with the canvas ripping itself out of the boltropes like guns firing——"

"Oh, they sometimes panic with us—a thousand at a time."

"Might as well panic in a—a—cathedral!" That was the only word sufficiently indicative of placid security. "I've seen 'em with whole water drowning out their cabins, and the fear of death in their shivering souls—and me threshing the old hooker through it with my tongue in my cheek——"

"Gallery play?"

"What d'ye mean—gallery play?"

"Posing as being a cock angel when there wasn't anything to be scared of! Eyewash, we call it nowadays."

The old man exploded. He was beginning to find that his grandson was one man in the snug parlor that held the lovely model of the *Belle of Boston* and quite another man on the deck of his own ship where a couple of million sterling existed by his own skill and courage alone and the lives of close on two thousand people depended on his resourcefulness. John One said everything he had ever said derogatory to steamers all over again, with firework trimmings. He shouted anathema to the roaring wind, which seemed unaffected, since it had a task ahead. That task the harassing of the *Guinevere*, which some trifling fools named the *Queen of the Western Ocean*.

"That to me," he raged; "that's gone a month without a dry shirt!"

John Three let him get away with it. Shifting the topic he said, "This time tomorrow night, with any sort of luck, we'll be passing the *Stavordale*," he said.

"Your grandmother," snorted Old Captain Mainsail, "could hand, reef, and steer

like an able seaman. What's this lass you're keen on able to do on shipboard?"

"Look pretty," said John Three dreamily; "and that's something. What need has she to do anything aboard ship—I shan't be able to take her voyaging with me?"

"Yes, and I've seen your grandmother take spell and spell at the pumps, what's more!" With this Parthian shot the old man stumped away. He turned in, into a snug dry bunk in a nickel-plated cabin, with the strong pulsing of the *Guinevere's* engines to lull him to sleep. The whitecaps slapped the lean flank of the liner boisterously as she thrust her razor bow through their snarling ugliness. There was enough of a scream underrunning the booming drone of the wind to promise hard weather and the old man fell asleep dreaming of his beloved *Belle*—the ship a man could trust, come fine or foul.

Since he made it his boast that he could sleep through anything the sea could send, though able to waken in a trice, he did not stir until breakfast sounded on the *Guinevere's* bugles. The liner was throwing herself about in lively fashion notwithstanding her size; and, stumping the spray-wetted promenade, the old man chuckled. This was the sort of weather he delighted in—man's weather. He boomed an old-time chantey as the spindrift whirled up, towered, and slashed him gaily in the face—as if it were a challenge to the fighting blood in his veins. It was the same chantey that had evoked applause in the saloon on sailing night—a song that spoke of deep-water hazards, redolent of salt and the unchained winds.

"High aloft among the rigging,

Sings the loud, exultant gale;

Fresh as blossoms in the springtime,

Filling out each swelling sail!

Rolling home, rolling home, rolling home kind  
friends to see;

Rolling home to merry England, rolling home  
across the sea!"

Why shouldn't he exult? Mary was improving—she'd live at least until he reached her side. He'd proved it by the Lord's brimstone and completely to his own satisfaction that the deep-water men of to-day were a paper-backed spineless breed; a kid-gloved dirt-fearing soft-lying pack of work shirkers, who hadn't learned to fear the sea and so treated her contemptuously. That white water had a surprise always

waiting up her sleeve didn't matter one hoot to these decadents—the scientific brains of the whole world had been focused to a point in order to devise means of outwitting the worst the sea could do. He met his grandson coming on deck, with a light coat thrown over his neat uniform.

"Going to blow a bit, boy. You'll need sea boots and oilskins before this day's done."

"It's blowing a bit now, and the weather reports say it's all-out farther west, granddad. Your old *Belle'd* be just about burying herself in this, eh? Under short canvas, and chasing her own tail! And the passengers filling their pockets with scrap-iron in case they went overboard! Mine are grouching because the fiddles are on the tables—they're enduring hardships! I'll have to ease her down a bit if this sea grows any bigger."

"We weren't scared of seas, boy."

"Weren't you? Why did you shorten down and heave to, then? We're not stopped, even this can't hurt us to speak of. We're carrying on, running to schedule in spite of hell's bells."

"Behind glass windows in steam-heated pilot houses!"

"Why shouldn't we—if we can keep a better lookout?"

During most part of that day they thrashed out the old battle—and evening found them at odds.

"Come into my cabin, granddad, for a smoke before the dressing bugle goes," John Three invited.

"Not going to dress—in this breeze, are you boy?"

"Why not? It's fine weather below."

They sat down in a room that might have been the hall of an old manor—a room constructed to look as little like a sea cabin as possible. The old man took a fat and black cigar, his grandson contented himself with a cigarette—a Turkish, of excellent brand. It was another sign of the spunklessness of such as earned their bread on deep waters, argued the veteran—the men of to-day couldn't even stomach real tobacco. The junior operator interrupted their arguments by laying a flimsy before young Captain Mainsail's laughing eyes. Old Captain Mainsail grinned—then drew in his breath. Young Captain Mainsail's face had lost its laughter as a slate loses its writing to the urge of a wetted sponge. All he said was, "All right,

Sparks—reply that we're coming full speed!"

The wireless operator fled, and John Three whistled to the bridge.

"Drive her like hell," he said curtly. Replacing the whistle in the tube he made a run across the opulent cabin.

"In mercy's name, boy—what's wrong?"

"Read it!"

Old Captain Mainsail hadn't his glasses and said so.

"*Stavordale's* plained her bottom out on a derelict—sinking, in *this*. Two hundred miles away!" He was into his coat and out at the door like a rocket. A waft of hard-driven spray blew into the cabin, rattling like grapeshot. Another bathed John One as he hopped out on deck where he saw the foredeck a-foam with broken water, and heard the scream of the gale as a solid-seeming thing. Real Atlantic weather—with the sprays congealing as they fell, to make the lifeboats hummocks and the tracery of the rails like solid walls! Wave after piling wave towered up ahead, poised and smashed down—whole water cascaded everywhere. The greedy hands of the wind tore at John One as he clutched the life rail and hove himself, inch by painful inch, to the bridge ladder. For perhaps the first time in his life he recognized his powerlessness—here were forces beyond his comprehension.

"He'll sink his ship—he'll sink her!" he thought, his teeth chattering in his head like castanets. "'Tisn't safe to charge through this this way!" He blew on to the riotous bridge, where the rivets were chattering a wilder song than ever the *Belle's* reefpoints had chattered off the pitch of the Horn. He went up where big sprays hurtled and crashed and so to the chart room, where showed a shaded light. John Three bent over the opened chart, dividers in hand, the keen face of his navigator at his shoulder.

"A hundred and ninety. I make it!" said John Three.

"She's down to twenty now, sir—that's nine hours and a half."

"Ask him how long he can float." The navigator spoke to the wireless room; there was a brief pause, filled by the deep drone of the sending.

"Might hold out nine hours, sir. He's got no other answers," came the report.

"Tell them down below to drive her—through or over, she's got to go!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Tell 'em below that my girl's aboard the *Stavordale*."

"What's one among so many?" asked John One. Inside him something was bubbling—not only a curdle of awe, something exultant that sight of John Three's face had caused.

"Some of them here—aboard happen to like me, since I've given them no cause to hate me particularly," snapped John Three. "Even firemen can be sentimentalists."

He remeasured the chart distance, trying to make it less than it really was. Lord knows what visions tortured him, but his face betrayed nothing. It was that of a keen, calculating man, pitting his wits and his ship against the worst Atlantic storm that had been known for a dozen years. Undazed by driving wind he was thinking hard, accepting here and discarding there—aware of the potentialities of the mighty power he commanded—aware, too, of its limitations. He was prepared to hurl the *Guinevere* like a shell through the riotous void of the Atlantic night, but he intended to do it knowledgeably—and not ruin his working tools by too much hot-headed zeal. There were close on two hundred miles to be crossed—ahead was a sinking ship—and the race was against time. If impulsiveness overwrought the *Guinevere* their stoutest efforts would fail. You can't make mileage in a broken ship. Impulse must be tempered by common sense and a recognition of facts.

John Three went out on deck past his grandfather as if the old man did not exist. He stood in the open beside the pilot house, because the fling of spindrift obscured the glass, and stared ahead at the curled whiteness which creamed and crashed over the *Guinevere's* knifelike bows. Monotonously, at every seventh wave, the liner shook and shivered, and seemed to cringe from the murderous assaults. Through the boom and crashing splashes came metallic sounds; and when whole water galloped aft along the bare deck the bridge shook.

"Those ventilators properly plugged?" John Three asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Good enough! There'll be a few minor repairs needed after this. What's she logging?"

The watch keeper came back to report—twenty knots and a half. John Three

sensed the pulsing of the decks beneath his feet. "She's steaming twenty-five—lot of slip to-night. It's the pitching, of course——"

John One warped himself to the bridge front and peered over the rim into a weight of wind that literally flung him backward. He would have fallen but that his grandson's hand shot out to steady him.

"Boy—you'll break your ship up!" he said, astounded by that fleeting glance.

"She's built to stand weather—not to dodge it. Wait a bit!" He slipped into the wheelhouse and lifted down a telephone receiver, he spoke to the pulsating engine room remotely below. "I want Mr. Macphree," he said. Then presently, "Oh, chief, give us a bit more speed if you can without bursting things, we'll humor her up here. Aye, aye—thanks!" If possible the tumult seemed to increase after that—the scream of wind grew more strident, the batter of water more felling. The scanty funnel guys harped a high shrill note—a higher note than John One had ever heard in all his seafaring days, for the wind screaming past them was traveling at a hundred and thirty miles an hour.

"She's standing it," said John Three presently. "But she won't stand much more without breaking things up." He drifted to the chart room, drawing John One with him into the calm. In a drawer he found cigarettes, and, after wiping his hands, lit one, passing them to his grandfather, who shook his head.

"You ought to be out there, boy, watching her!"

"Watching her won't help her—only make me fret. She's doing all she can now."

With the *Guinevere* topping giddy summits prior to swooping down into tremendously bottomless voids John Three puffed at his cigarette—its rapid dwindling telling of his fret, but not his face. He didn't speak much. Once he got up from the settee and studied the chart, as if hoping against hope that the distance had diminished; he stepped out on deck, walked to the bridge front—returned. "Nine hours," he said. "A long time!"

The wireless man brought him a fresh report from the stricken *Stavordale*. Her signals had been picked up by the *Grafstein*, she reported herself as two hundred and fifty miles away, hurrying to the scene.

"Twenty-knotter at the outside; west

bound, too—she'll be down to fifteen, like as not," said John Three. "Not much hope there. A good ship, though—got a good man in her."

"A German?" At the Briton's intolerance for a squarehead sounded in John One's voice.

"Good man, though—one of the best. He salvaged the *Pocahontas*. Best bit of work on the Atlantic last year. There are other sailors besides ourselves. Those fellows in the submarines weren't cowards!"

John One snorted. He'd played devil's tattoos on German skulls in his enterprising days, driving men to hazardous toil.

"Going to be up to us—our job, grandad!"

The *Guinevere* crashed down a slope, rattling and grinding; and to John One the whole fabric seemed to scream an agonized protest against this pitiless treatment. He thought he knew the voice of a ship over-taxed.

"You can't keep up this clip, boy," he said, itching to take a hand. "You'll smash her up—you've two thousand lives——"

"We're going to try, grandad!" Then he said, "Dinner bugle must have gone long since, going below?"

"In this?"

"Why not? Food sustains a man, and fasting won't help; we're in no particular danger. If I find she's trying too much I can always ease her. I'm going down myself."

He was actually going down to reassure any alarmed passenger, although he didn't say so. He had a feeling that until Mary Wentworth was either in his arms or known to be dead his throat would never swallow food.

"I never left my deck in hard weather," remonstrated John One.

"Then you got many a wet shirt for nothing. Couldn't you trust your officers out of your sight?"

"They needed me to lean on."

"Mine can have me on deck in a brace of shakes. Coming?"

John One wanted to stay up on top of things where he would be useless enough—having no official standing—but he was anxious to see how the gilt-edged passengers were taking this. He accompanied John Three below after a halt at the captain's cabin to sleek up a bit, and in the saloon he found dinner proceeding with a certain amount of discomfort. And

curiously, he felt proud of the lad as they walked down the filled saloon. Every pair of eyes were focused on John Three, and all the faces showed keen approval. Word of what was transpiring had got below.

"I bet three to one we make it," said a man in evening dress, of a sporting type. "Best ship afloat—good skipper—I'll make it five to one!"

"Why, we've *got* to do it!" said a pretty girl near him.

"How're we doing—what's the chance, captain?" Half a dozen voices were asking questions. A crash of breaking plates sounded from a pantry—the ship lurched savagely. John One remembered occasions when, amid less stress and clamor, the passengers had gathered round the saloon piano to sing heartfully "Eternal Father, strong to save!" Some one laughed, a crisp voice said, "There she rips—no wonder liner fares are high!" There was a roar of laughter. John Three's immediate neighbor draped a champagne bottle over the captain's glass. John Three placed his hand guardingly, shaking his head.

"Afterward, perhaps, sir," he smiled; but his other hand was beating a quick staccato tattoo on the tablecloth. He got to his feet and silence fell, interrupted only by the beat of water against the shell, the creaking of timbers and the noisy chattering of rivets.

"There's discomfort," he said clearly; "but no danger. There's a shipful of people sinking to-night—if we drive her we might get there in time. You aren't asked to endure discomforts—we pride ourselves on making you all comfortable. But by putting up with present evils you're all helping to win a race for life. If any lady or gentleman asks me to slow——"

"Hit her up, skipper!" "Want any hands below?" "Keep going—keep going!" Public opinion was unanimous, soup slopped onto shining shirt fronts, sauced fish slid into silken laps—what were these? Cause for mirth, no more. The breed was stout, and natural tremors were controlled. There was laughter—much laughter, strained in patches, but growing freer. Men, women, too, cracked jokes with such as showed suggestion of strain and apprehension. Some one voiced a suggestion for a surprise fancy-dress dance. If John One thought this savored of fiddling while Rome burned he admitted

that it was a better spirit to show than to whine in corners fearfully. Not anything these passengers could do could help—save to do what they suggested—encourage the actual toilers. Of what avail to stare bleakly through the bleakness? Not all the timid outcry could add one extra turn to the racing propellers.

"The purser will make announcement from time to time," said John Three in a lull; "telling you how we are getting on." That was all he said before he went back to the bridge, in front of a growing cheer.

"Good man, the skipper!" "Heart of oak, if you like!" "Got his girl aboard this *Stavordale*, some one said, didn't they?"

John One heard these things on his way to the deck. He, too, was helped by a cheer—it was his blood that flowed in John Three's veins. An ancient man—a world-famous shipowner—buttonholed John One in the doorway.

"Where'd we have been in this emergency, eh? You and I are out-of-daters, Captain Mainsail. Why, we'd never even have heard of anything. You've got a fine lad! Confident and quiet, eh? That's the stuff—knows his job!"

The blood began to warm up in John One's veins. He started to realize that his grandson might be modern and decadent according to his ideas—but he was doing something that deserved admiration. He had to save his own ship and another—and he wasn't weakening. What he lacked in old-time sailorly knowledge he made up in quiet purpose and scientific quality. He understood his ship, and, too, he understood the sea—scientifically; not just as a thing—an overwhelming tyrant to be feared. He'd clipped the sea's wings! Or at least others had triumphed in their various ways, and John Three was profiting by their teachings—applying their theories. John One realized that half his trouble in windjamming days had been caused by ignorance—he was never sure of his ship, never sure of the possibilities of wind and sea. He'd feared the unknown and distorted its menace. He was always expecting the worst—in ship, sea and men, instead of discovering the best and profiting by it.

Instead of mounting immediately to the bridge as fiddles sounded in the big social hall, he made his way to the sacred alleyways reserved for the engine-room crowd. He discovered the chief engineer chatting

with a passenger at the engine room door—with an eye for the whirling monsters below, too.

He heard Macphee say, "If it can be done these engines'll do it—she's a proper job!"

He passed on to the stokehole—and, looking down through the gratings, saw the firemen shoveling hard, and singing as they shoveled. Here was no driving—voluntary impulse was urging them on to do their damndest. Two watches were at work down there—and the remaining watch draped themselves about the gratings, shouting rough encouragement. The old-time spirit of the sea existed—in men John One had been accustomed to despise. People faced death ahead—get at it then! You couldn't haul frantically at a rope—but you could ply a wicked shovel! You needn't sing a halyard chantey; but you could roar out the newest jazz tune to accompany the clanging shovels. Times were changed but the idea was there—the sea must be licked at any price. You didn't wait cowering to see what white water would do to you, you drove into it, defying it—following the Napoleonic theory that the best defense was a vigorous attack. John One mounted to the rocking bridge where the cascading seas roared.

"She's flattened everything that can flatten," said John Three; "but she's logging twenty-one. We might do it yet—the *Stavordale* is holding out."

"Boy," said John One, shaking a gnarled fist at the terrible night; "we're going to do it—we've got to."

**H**OUR after stressful hour—with no abatement. A pitiless stunning drive into the vociferous blackness, with the grey-bearded Atlantic combers snarling and leaping and striking, only to burst asunder in impotent foam. With the *Guinevere* twisting like an electric corkscrew, and sinister crashes repeating themselves monotonously; but the ship kept going, and the purser's announcements below were still hopeful. The passengers paused in their pleasure making to listen, they cheered. Then they went on dancing since nothing was to be gained by mournful brooding. Humanity and humanity's tools were doing all that was possible.

"You'd better go below and get a sleep, grandad—sticking up here isn't going to do you any good at your time of life."

"Boy, there isn't weather bred that can harm me. If we failed to make it I'd never forgive myself."

"No use grouching—that won't help. Curse the weather if you like—it won't lessen it—it's there, got to be accepted. Go below and get a pretty girl to hold hands with you in a corner."

John One snorted again. He was perfectly useless up there, but he had to be on the spot—feeling that the boy was young. Though, had he suddenly been placed in command of this hurtling levin bolt of unleashed power through a miraculous chance, he would not have known what to do with it. Hazing dapper officers wouldn't help any. Cursing the crew wouldn't help—breaking up the ship herself wouldn't serve a purpose.

"Considering the girl you love might be drowning at this minute, boy——" John Three's face set. Until he knew Mary Wentworth's danger he had never properly realized all she meant to him. He had assumed her a pretty girl, desirable; a playmate for leisure hours, something to share the soft cushions of life. But he wasn't one to brag and bounce about his feelings.

"Fretting won't keep her head above water," he said. "What'd you like me to do—jump overboard and swim ahead?" He made no mention of those messages he was flashing through the ether from time to time to the distressed *Stavordale*, reporting his progress, elaborating it a bit with the idea of putting heart into such as might be tasting despair. "Hold on, *Stavordale*, we're coming!" Time after time that message went. Time after time came back the reply, "Hurry, *Guinevere*—hurry!" John Three's stern young face betrayed nothing of the surging emotions in his soul, as the suspense increased with the passing of time. Stricken ships behaved queerly—they floated for a long time and then quite suddenly shot down to the greedy locker almost without warning. His brain filled with sickening visions of Mary—Mary fighting for life in the grip of hungry seas.

"One thing—it'll be quick!" he thought. Poor comfort for a man who was tasting the racking agonies of helpless love! What he said aloud was, "Best see about getting the sea boats cleared ready, we don't want any hitch when we get there." And he and his chief officer entered into a staccato discussion, making a campaign plan in ad-



vance; gauging the sea's temper and estimating its possibilities, countering them—preparing, so as not to be taken by surprise.

"And call for volunteers, Bryce—have 'em ready; let 'em see what they've to do. We may need a dozen boats!"

"There'll be volunteers enough, sir," the chief officer said quietly. "Most of the men have sailed with us before." He went away to supervise and hearten, if heartening were needed.

"Good thing we train our officers in boat work," said John Three. "Old-timers have told me they hardly ever got a chance to handle a boat in any sort of hard weather. I've always made a point of training 'em—when you want boats it's generally with a rush in bad weather. We may be steamboat men, grandad, but we take time to learn our job."

And John One remembered an occasion when a ship of his knowledge, foundering within sight of the *Belle*, had taken all hands with her just because his two officers couldn't handle a boat in a seaway! Good officers on a poop or a topsail yard—oh, yes, but inexperienced in boats.

Slashed by spindrift, hanging by teeth and eyelids, the men worked at the boats. And the *Stavordale* still remaining afloat and the *Guinevere* maintaining her speed. John Three began to hold discourse with people who blew up to the bridge and took shelter in the chart-house. Engineers, carpenters—men of that type, these newcomers were.

"Your engines won't serve you when it comes to boat work, boy," grumbled John One. "Supposing it comes to boat work!"

"No, but oil will——" Once again science was to be intelligently applied. "There are a thousand folks in the *Stavordale*—picking them all up isn't a five minutes' job. I don't intend to lose my men if I can help it—not for want of a bit of precaution. We've got the oil, we shall use it."

**M**ORE bleak hours of boring through the elemental uproar, what time the world seemed to go out in a frantic upheaval. Things were happening aboard the *Guinevere*—her rails were being flattened as her spare anchors were being shifted in their lashings. But men went forward and wedged the anchors home—with whole water snatching at them. Other men worked with picks to free the

boats of their loads of ice. The *Stavordale* still floated, the wireless messages said; but she was listing and settling, too. Two o'clock came, with the gale reaching its climax—it seemed impossible that anything constructed by human hands could endure the agonies; but the *Guinevere* foamed on, none the less. In a succeeding lull John Three asked for more speed and got it—for an hour the ship logged twenty-three knots. And the eastward set of the Gulf Stream was helping a little, too—swinging the *Stavordale* toward the oncoming salvation.

"We might do it; we *might!*" said John Three at six bells. The wind and sea massed together in a frenzied onslaught, as though determined to claim their wounded prey. And the *Guinevere* seemed to stop in her stride—seemed, indeed, to be lifted bodily and set back whence she had come. But that was only an impression, and when the Gargantuan flurry passed the steady heart of the great ship was still throbbing nobly, the screaming seas were still parting before her triumphant bow.

"Boy," said John One; "it's all a living miracle!" But John Three did not heed the praise. He was staring ahead, into blackness.

"That's a rocket, isn't it?" he asked. "Answer it!" They were in time.

Presently, across an electrically-illuminated stretch of curdled water, oil-sleeked, the boats began to ply. As Bryce had said, there was no lack of volunteers—the old sea-fighting spirit endured. Athletic passengers came forward to offer their services in replacement of wearied seamen—the seamen laughed, and, spitting on their hands, continued. Boatload after boatload they came—people with the look in their faces of those who have stared into death's grim eyes; they were hauled on board and hurried below to warmth and light and comfort. John One could find no fault in the rescue work—it was not overly spectacular, but it was eminently practical. He was occasionally aghast at the way John Three handled the *Guinevere* in the seaway—the veteran whose main fear had been land or the risk of collision, held his breath as the liner was jockeyed into new and more effective positions. And presently, feeling upon him a need to praise good work he left the bridge, where practical men worked practically, and descended to the cumbered saloons. Here

he listened to stories of suffering and terror and endurance—listened to praise, too—not only praise of the *Guinevere*. Some of this praise caused him to single out a tawny-haired shingled girl, who, notwithstanding her own dishevelment, was tending a puling infant.

"You're Mary Wentworth?" he asked, his eyes twinkling.

She nodded, without looking up.

"I'm young John Mainsail's grandad. He'll be glad to see you on the bridge—glad to know you're safe. Shall I——?" She presently surrendered the infant and stood up—young and lance-straight, slim as a reed—a modern girl, not equipped to haul on halyards or hand, reef, or steer. John One led her to the bridge.

"Now, boy," he said; "now, boy—here's your girl."

"Hello, Mary," said John Three casually, and turned to supervise the nearing of a laden boat. "You all right?" he asked over his shoulder.

"Hello, John—yes, thanks!"

"Boy, they say she's a heroine—when they panicked there aboard she quieted 'em—singing—singing; stopped a rush!"

"Good for you, Mary," said John Three.

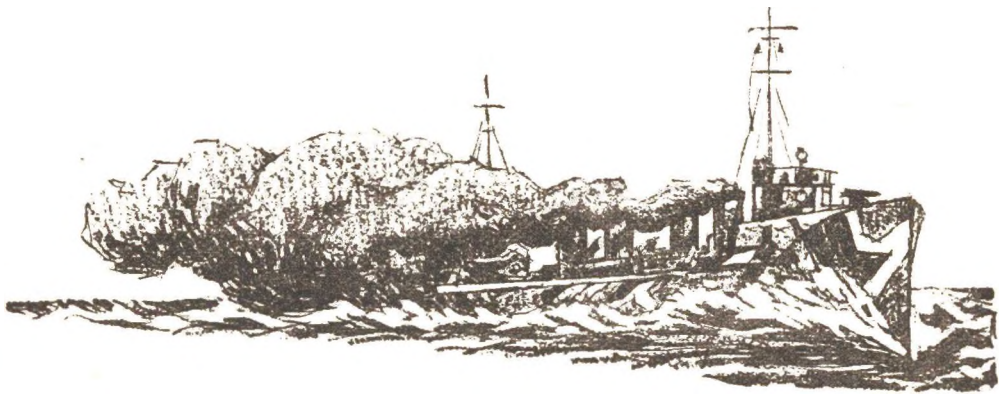
"Oh, that's nothing—I told them a good man was doing his damndest to get to us in time, old thing." But under their assumed indifference ran a throb of real feeling. They were moderns—disposed to veil their emotions until they were alone. Mary reached out a hand and patted John Three's oilskinned arm.

"Good egg, John!" she praised.

"Same to you, Mary! Get below, though—don't interrupt a man at his job."

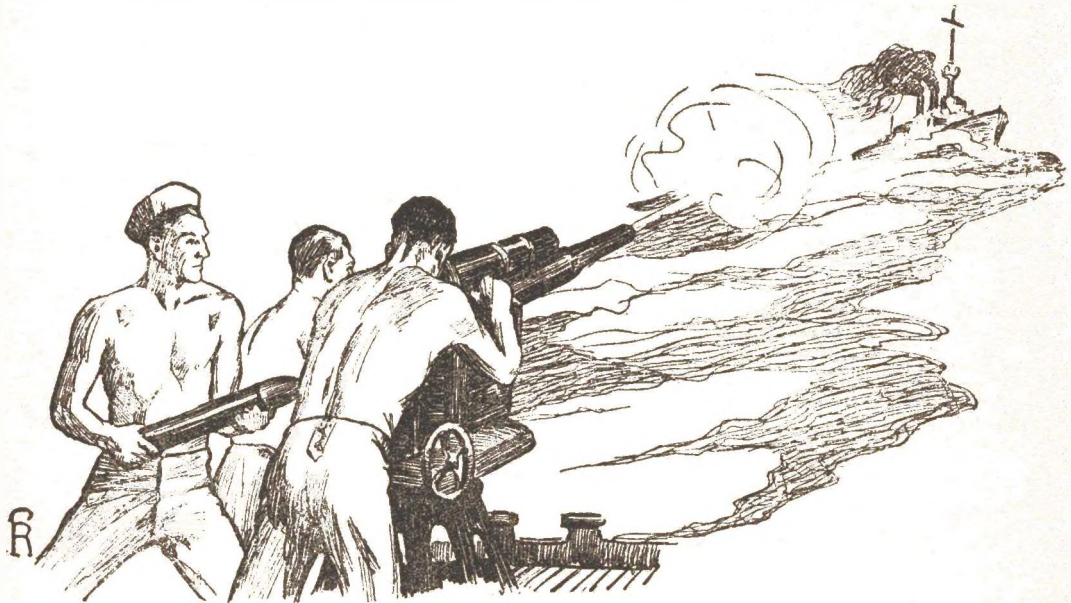
When the *Guinevere* resumed her passage—after the *Stavordale* had taken her final plunge, carrying not one single man to the locker with her—John One descended to his grandson's cabin. He found the captain of the *Guinevere* toweling himself vigorously, a cigarette between his lips. There were many things he wanted to say, but it was not in his nature to eat humble pie too humbly.

"Boy, John boy," he said, "where might I get a model of this ship? Reckon I'll take the poker to that model of the old *Belle* when I get back!" And, having made the amende honorable, he helped himself to one of his grandson's cigarettes.



# Suicide Ships

By Robert H. H. Nichols



Mine planting under difficulties in the North Sea.

**W**ATCHING vigilantly for periscopes, the training pointer on No. 3, "Semaphore Pete," was aware of the great operation that swept continuously past his gun. The mine tracks on the starboard side ran just behind the breech, and on aft to the ship's stern. Out of the forward hold an elevator roared every few seconds. *Clink, clank, sque-e-cow!* The wheels of the mine anchor complained as they spun on a turntable and then grated into the main-deck track. A constant bickering ensued as the group of seamen waiting its appearance grabbed the mine and mothered it along aft.

"C'mon, sailor, a little beef behind this egg. Want me to do it all? Blankety-blank! She's stuck again. All together, now—keep her moving. Get outa the way, you swabs, until I set the plummet for depth. Yes, sir! Eighty-one set f'r twenty-eight fathoms. Washers now, kid. Where did you put that box of sal ammoniac washers, hey? Gimme 'em quick, you rubber boot. What I been telling you about keepin' awake, huh? All ready, eighty-one, sir. Push him up, sailors! Come on here, eighty-two, till I doll you up."

Amid the laborious grunts were plenty of snatches of personal conversation. "Yeah, the one in that purple dress wasn't so hard to look at. I got a date with her, anyways. I got a letter from my girl. She's double-crossin' me. She's runnin' around with a gyrene. Ain't that a insult? I give her the air. Then the dog-gone censor made me cut out all the cuss words. How c'n a man express hisself without 'em, hey? Yes, sir. I am pushing, sir. Push a little harder, sir? Yes, sir. Aye, aye, sir."

Back at the fantail an officer stared at a stop watch. At intervals counted in seconds, the trap was sprung and another coffin nail for subs was placed where it would do the most good. Staring across the long row of ships, observers were impressed with the phenomena of a black object shooting twenty feet out of the stern of each ship now and again to splash into the water and disappear. This was the Yankee submarine-bottling machine at work with a vengeance.

The mist became a light drizzle, drenching the men at the guns slowly but surely. The seamen and gunners' mates engaged

in the more arduous tasks of mine planting were equally unfortunate. Shortly it was barely possible to make out the next two ships in the row. The planting never slackened for all of it. Pete and Johnny Corbin, the firing pointer, now became acutely aware of a low moaning among the gun crew. As they looked around inquiringly, "Bing" Mason, the gun captain, pitched forward in a dead faint.

"Crackey!" gasped "Greasy" Warschuf, a cook detailed for loading duties, "I'll bet his appendix has done busted. It ain't my fault if he can't digest navy chow. I only cook what that cheesy paymaster furnishes me."

Johnny Corbin and Semaphore Pete both turned pale. This had gone a lot further than they had ever intended it should. "Pills," a hospital apprentice, now stepped over to the unconscious bluejacket.

"It's just a faint," he muttered hopefully. "It can't be anything else, can it? See, he's comin' to again. He'll be all right in a minute, maybe."

The dizzy young battery officer showed up just then, full of businesslike chatter.

"Carry him down to the sick bay, men. Get the doctor on the job at once." This last was directed curtly at Pills.

For the moment torpedo defense at No. 3 gun was ignored, due to the urgent necessity of caring for a fellow citizen afflicted with bellyache of such sizable proportions as to cause him to faint at battle stations. Every one had long ago helpfully agreed that it must be Bing's appendix, also that in due time it would certainly burst. No one had dreamed of doing anything about it in advance, of course, least of all, the young doctor. That isn't according to naval practice, and the doctor was anxious to be a good navy man.

Shortly the unfortunate Bing was deposited on the operating table in the sick bay. Pills and the doctor got ready to do their duty as the doctor saw it. Johnny and Pete went shivering nervously back to their gun. Each had a suddenly grim load on his conscience. A guess or so was hazarded as to Bing Mason's chances of living through the young doctor's attentions.

"Suppose they find us out?" whispered Johnny to Pete. "Will they accuse us of murder?"

"Gosh, they can't prove nothin' on us, can they? They don't know we been dop-

in' his chow. Maybe this dick really knows what he is doin', after all? Maybe he ain't as dumb as he looks, hey?"

Pete's tone wasn't very hopeful, however.

"Serves him right, beatin' three of us up in one day. If he had only beaten us up each on a separate day that wouldn't 'a' been so bad. Are you sure nobody ever saw you slippin' that into his hash every day, Johnny?"

"Sure I am. I was careful. He never knew it from the grease these cooks fry everything in." Johnny was the mess cook at Bing Mason's mess. He and Pete knew too much already about Bing's stomach ache, as did Pills, the hospital apprentice, who had conceived their noble experiment.

"Gee!" grunted Greasy Warschuf as they returned to their gun stations. Greasy wasn't in on their organized sabotage of Bing's stomach ache. "Maybe he will kick off, hey? I don't wish him no bad luck, of course, but I sure would be tickled to death to shed tears over his dead body."

"He's too tough for even that hick doctor to kill," insisted "Ruff" Snyder, the only seaman on the gun crew. He had now taken Bing's place as gun captain.

"Honest? Do you really think he's that tough? That ain't much of a doctor, you know?" Pete and Johnny quavered that view with renewed hope.

"These appendix operations are all standardized, like everything else," Ruff informed sagely. "You can even learn to take 'em out by correspondence. But then, too, you know what kind of luck I always have, don't you? Could I be lucky enough to have Bing die so's I could be permanent gun captain, hey? I guess not."

"That's right," agreed Johnny and Pete, remembering Ruff's proverbial bad luck. "We forgot that. Yeah, I guess you're right."

They felt a little better, but not much. Meanwhile, the mines planted by the *San Francisco* crept up slowly to one hundred and fifty-eight. Her total cargo was one hundred and eighty. Shortly she would be empty, and every one was glad of it. There is a lot of difference between being torpedoed before and after mine planting: a radical difference in the size of the big bang. It was raining harder, only the next ship over on the port side could now be seen. From where Pete and Johnny

stood, on the starboard gun deck, nothing but rain-swept water appeared abeam. All escorting ships had been lost to view, and due to the low visibility, had taken station far over to south'ard in a long extended line, the better to intercept any enemy ship that might happen along.

Down in the sick bay Pills carefully stripped Bing Mason and bathed the vicinity of what would soon be a nice wound. Another hospital apprentice appeared, also the hospital steward. The ether cone was ready, the doctor's surgical instruments came to a satisfactory boil. Bing, now wide awake, was increasingly conscious of the fact that a man can die but once. He regretted exceedingly the fainting spell that was causing him an immediate opportunity. He wasn't at all certain but that this doctor could kill him lots more quickly than any pesky stomach ache could. But—ah, um! The ether cone was slipped unconcernedly over his nose. He took a deep breath as directed.

At that very moment Semaphore Pete was startled to see a wraith of a ship appear out of the rain to the north of them. It was a scout cruiser, that much was at once evident. No doubt it was lost. But somehow its sudden, unlooked-for appearance made his scalp creep. The standing order was to fire only at periscopes without first receiving a command. But, anyway, this ship couldn't be—but it was.

The enemy had laid his trap well. With weather reports at hand indicating thick weather, two of his cruisers had slipped out along the northern side of the barrier to lie in wait for the inevitable opportunity. All day the enemy's battle fleet and advance cruisers had been sucking the mine squadron's support farther and farther to the south'ard, hoping for a general engagement.

Seven flashes of pale-green flame spit from the enemy cruiser as Pete stared at it. The distance was barely a thousand yards. The very concussion of the enemy's guns at this short range nearly knocked Pete off the trainer's stand. The next instant seven wild blasts struck the old American cruiser. Spars, boats, steel splinters flew all about the astonished crew. Men cried out here and there in pain, while others were smashed with a grim, merciless grotesqueness. Through the terrific bedlam of the bursting shells a wild cry arose from the crew.

"The mines! Get them overboard! Get the mines overboard!"

Then, from the bridge, cool, curt commands took charge of the situation.

"Mines overboard at once! Starboard battery, salvo control! Commence firing!"

The commodore of the Yankee squadron had made a swift and a momentary decision. Every other ship in his division still contained a half cargo or more of mines with the exception of the old cruiser, *Baltimore*, far over on the port wing of the long row. The *San Francisco* was almost empty. She must stand between the enemy and her volatile comrades until the support could come up. Another command came to the batteries, curt, but all significant.

"Fight your guns to the water's edge!"

Semaphore Pete heard the sight setter snap shut. "Range eleven hundred, deflection, five two! Set!" Pete had already swung his gun to bear on the raging enemy cruiser. Snyder, the gun captain, shouted huskily, "Ready, three!" The gun roared defiantly, lunged backward from the hissing recoil. A terrific hail of explosions struck that fast-speeding enemy ship. For a moment she seemed to reel heavily in her tracks, then her guns roared back again. The battle was on.

Pete's task was comparatively easy at this short range, due to the fact that he merely trained the gun right and left. It gave him time to be aware of all the sounds and shouting that now went on aboard the mine squadron's flagship. Johnny Corbin, who trained the gun vertically, actually fired the gun. Johnny therefore had no time to worry about what would occur when an enemy shell struck one of those deadly mines full and square. Certainly one direct hit would be sufficient.

Hoarse cries came from the fantail as a terrible burst shook the poop deck above it to a shambles. A dozen mines still lurked beneath that deck. For a wonder not one of them was struck. Through the haze of sound, Pete heard a grim report on the demise of the poop-deck guns.

"Numbers seven and eight disabled, sir!"

"Very well," called the gunnery officer. "Have their crews stand by in reserve at numbers five and six."

"There were no survivors, sir!"

A second enemy cruiser had appeared. Pete began to get some idea of the enemy's contemplated maneuver. They in-

tended to outspeed and circle ahead of the *San Francisco*. Once accomplished, they could engage the balance of the dynamite ships which were now slanting off to the southwest, still planting. Obviously the enemy could not cut in astern of the American cruiser. That area was thoroughly sowed with mines.

Below decks an inspired black gang also fought a gallant, one-sided battle. They imparted to this thirty-year-old veteran of the Spanish War a speed no one ever dreamed she possessed. Free flame poured from both her stacks under the terrific urging of forced draft. She roared and throbbed up to twenty-two knots, twenty-three, and still climbed. Pasty-faced, trembling in mortal fear at their own temerity, her engineers deliberately strained her more and more.

She shook and shuddered like a sobbing thing, below with the tremendous racing of her own engines, above with the hideous blasts of bursting shells. Still the enemy could not circle ahead of her. Like some ancient bulldog, she matched knot for knot and shell for shell. The punishment she took was terrific, the enemy shells barely missed the mines under the poop deck time after time, yet miss them they did.

As the minutes ticked by, Pete heard the heartening cry of "Only six more mines to plant, sir!" Still they roared down the chute in the flagship's stern. The enemy fire was cannily concentrated on the poop of the desperate ship. Again Pete heard the wild howl of the crew as every man on No. 5 gun was killed by three successive shells. The seamen who had been working on the mines were now replacing on the guns as rapidly as the present gunners were shot down. Some of these replacements were killed where they huddled in reserve before ever they had a chance to relieve at the guns. The only armor protection this old veteran carried was a broad belt above her engines.

Thundering cheers rocked the waters of the North Sea. Out of the southwest another American cruiser ranged into battle line. Quickly she took station ahead of the *San Francisco*, attempting savagely to turn the tide of victory. It was that old hero of Manila Bay, the cruiser *Baltimore*. Her broadside of four six-inch guns merged into the rumble of the battle. The *Baltimore's* mines were overboard, that was her

ace card. She arrived in the nick of time. The leading enemy cruiser had at last accomplished the attempted sweep ahead of the *San Francisco*. Now the *Baltimore* stood squarely across her path.

A blast of titanic proportions left a trail of ruin at the stern of the *San Francisco*. An enemy shell had struck a mine full and square at last. It had been the very last mine, just shot down the chute and into the water twenty feet astern when the enemy shell found it as it floated a bare moment. The cruiser's stern rose high in the air on the crest of a giant wave. Men were knocked flat like so many pins before a spinning ball. They arose quickly to give voice to an exultant cheer. That spawn of the devil, the fearsome cargo which is ever a mine planter's worst enemy, was overboard at last. The cheering subsided into an angry, staccato buzzing.

"Fight! Fight! Fight!" The loading crew chanted it with a mixture of curses for the enemy. The whole crew hissed it, from the lowest coal passer to the commodore, who mumbled it subconsciously under his breath. Even after a screaming burst caused Johnny Corbin to pitch drunkenly from the firing step, Semaphore Pete still hummed it. Obedient to the routine law of the guns, he shifted to Johnny's position while a seaman in reserve stepped into his own. The rotation on the guns is like a game of old cat. When a man is put out, every one moves up a notch.

"Suicide ships," the old cruisers had been dubbed by the Atlantic fleet. Suicide ships they were in truth, standing here between their companions who were still loaded to the gills with TNT, and this powerful enemy squadron. Dying in their tracks, they fought to hold the enemy until the support could arrive. Now a mast crashed down. It smashed through the *San Francisco's* bridge like so much cardboard. The fire control suffered momentary interruption, but Pete continued to fire the gun nevertheless. The two old cruisers were handing the enemy punishment that was becoming noticeable at last. The Yankee gunners were living up to their best traditions for accuracy and speed of fire. Only four guns now winked at Pete from that second enemy cruiser, and the *San Francisco* could still broadside three.

Pete wondered what had become of Bing Mason. He was glad that the battery

officer hadn't been pestering them at his gun. Young and ambitious, he was up on the fo'c's'le, personally praying for No. 1 gun to knock a hole in the enemy's boilers. He was earnestly explaining to the pointers just where those boilers must lie. The enemy, now discovering that the mines were all overboard, was concentrating on the *San Francisco's* bridge. Pete was more keenly aware of the cries of the wounded and dying, as his locality became a holocaust of smashing, flying débris.

Beams fell all about him. It was evident that the bridge was nearly carried away. A great light burst before his very eyes. He was flung violently backward as though by a giant hand. The five-inch gun was wrenched bodily from its mount.

Meanwhile, the doctor tentatively fingered his instruments, calmly and happily awaiting the moment when Bing approached that state of coma necessary before the surgeon could safely embark upon his first appendix operation. From the decks above there arose an alarming din. The bugle chattered, whistles trilled, gongs and buzzers rang. Hoarse shouts of bos'n's mates drifted down to the sick bay.

"All hands—clear ship for action!"

In the next breath the ship heeled over from the concerted blasts of her own salvo. Above the thundering of the ship's battery the listening surgeon could plainly hear the bursting of shells close aboard. Forgotten was Bing Mason's appendix. Battle stations carry precedence over even a man's life. Within ninety seconds the young surgeon was busily engaged with more blood and drastic operating than he had seen in all his interneship.

One compartment on the lower berth deck was filled with groaning men when a shell struck it and made all the doctor's previous work of absolutely no avail. He began all over again in the next compartment. Laboring like a stevedore, cursing like a pirate, he accomplished all the miracles of a saint. Meanwhile, naked, completely forgotten, a huge, hairy seaman reposed upon the operating table of the sick bay. The ether cone had been tossed aside as Pills flew to his battle station. The seaman stirred and blinked about him.

Bing Mason was not heavyweight champion of the mine division by request. He had all of the physique of a Hercules and the stamina of the renowned Missouri mule. Shortly he became aware of the

noises and the sounds on the decks above him. He puzzled over them. He could hear men shouting in excitement or screaming in sudden pain. Shortly he knew that his own ship was being struck by shells. The noise of it all was deafening. A terrific explosion knocked him off the operating table onto the floor. When he could turn his head again he saw a great, gaping hole in the side of the hull. The sick bay was a ruin. Even while he observed this fact, another shell whisked in the same hole and completed the wild ruin. The hole was so much larger now that he could easily see the enemy ships steaming parallel in the steady, driving rain.

He was aware of the thundering cheers as the *Baltimore* took station ahead. Gamely he tried to fight off the effects of the ether. If this was battle, he ought to be some place, but he couldn't remember just where. He got slowly to his knees, essayed to rise, then fell back heavily. Blood was streaming from his left wrist. A flying splinter had struck him during that last blast. Again he tried to think, struggling through a haze that, due to his experience as a boxer, wasn't entirely foreign to him. And shortly, just as he had often done in the ring when down for the count of nine, he got to his feet and staggered from the sick bay. There was some place where he should be this very moment, if he could only remember.

At last, reeling giddily, he attained the foot of the companionway leading from the berth deck to the gun deck just under the bridge. As he reached the ladder the bursting explosions above him seemed to redouble in fury. They left him appalled. Bing felt that surely the bridge itself had been flung overboard by its very roots.

Like a man leaning into the teeth of a blizzard, he moved slowly up the ladder. The smell of smokeless powder now mixed with the odor of ether that hung about him, causing him nausea. Bing made a mental note that his opponent had surely fouled him. You felt like this when you were hit low. Again he realized that he wasn't in the ring. That fact stumped him for a moment, for it was evident that he was stripped for the ring. How had he lost his tights? Well, it didn't matter in a jam like this, anyway.

He stepped out of the hatchway, naked as the day he was born, and looked about. Two men pushed him roughly aside and

went below with a stretcher. Here and there along the deck were quiet, still heaps of humanity. They had been allowed to remain where they had fallen. There was no time for those beyond relief.

Now as he stared ahead of him he made out the smoking outline of a five-inch gun. Men were stripped to the waist serving it. Shells were chucked into its hissing breech as though it were a hungry mouth. The men grouped about it were as black as coal passers from the grime of powder smoke. There was a pool of blood just under the firing pointer's platform. A sudden holocaust of explosions again rocked the vicinity. When it eased a moment, Bing noted that a number of men who had been vertical were now lying all about. Some of them were horrible to look at. It was then that Bing realized just what it was he had been trying to remember. This was No. 3 gun ahead of him. It was his battle station, and a battle was evidently in progress.

He lurched toward it. The fires of hell were loosed all about him. Some giant struck the ship with a sledge, shivering the rest of the bridge to pieces. A stabbing pain gripped his right side. The gun before him was literally torn off its mount as though it were a weed in some human cornfield. The crew went down like so many pins in a bowling alley. The huge breech leaped at Bing and smashed into the deck at his feet. This new pain in his side was making him feel weak again. Suddenly he slumped across the long, low rifle. His hand closed on something that had a familiar feel. Yes, at last Bing was at his proper battle station. He had grasped the handle of the breech plug on what was left of No. 3 gun. The shades of unconsciousness wrapped a mantle about him.

**W**HEN the support came up, the elusive enemy scout cruisers had discreetly disappeared into the haze of the north. The *San Francisco* had but one gun still going, the *Baltimore* had only two. Just how the support eventually cornered the two enemy cruisers far up the Norwegian coast and drove them ashore in neutral waters is not pertinent to this story. The Yankee mine squadron had been saved from annihilation by the gunfire of its veteran cruisers. What is pertinent and also of interest is a naval scene of a few months later.

The *San Francisco* was lying at Inverness, making ready for the tenth mine-planting excursion. She would sail that night, therefore the usual liberty had been granted the night before. And late this afternoon of sailing day, three badly battered individuals who had been in that liberty party were lounging about very disconsolately on the lower signal bridge. Due to many facial discolorations and badly darkened optics, these three blue-jackets were rather hard to recognize as the remains mortal and otherwise of Johnny Corbin, Pills, and Semaphore Pete. A kind friend was offering them consolation and fatherly advice. Expressions of disgust on each victim's face indicated that they proposed to ignore the offering.

"Yeah," the chief signal quartermaster remarked sunnily. "Ain't it funny, hey? Some guys just gotta celebrate rather boisterously, you might say, when they gets handed a Distinguished Service Cross. Ain't it the truth, though? Too bad Bing Mason is so enthusiastic about beating people up that way; just because he happens to find them rumming it up in some grog shop, trying to keep out of his sight, or something. But then, Bing was always like that."

He paused, as though expecting confirmation of these honest opinions, but none was forthcoming from his three victims. Despite the complete silence, he continued as though he was very fond of listening to his own voice.

"Yes, somebody went and told old Bing an awful story about you boys, I guess. Some one went and told the poor swab that you guys had been slipping him half teaspoons of castor oil into every ration he ate for several weeks before he come down with that final big stomach ache. And the only excuse you got for doing such a nasty thing is that Bing beat all three of you guys up, and you didn't know he was only trying to be kind to dumb animals or something. Yep, and I guess there ain't anything else gives a body as grand a belly-ache without no equivalent relief as that underdose of castor oil. Anyways, Bing is willing to believe almost anything about you three birds, so you can't blame him none for beatin' you up, anyway, just to be sure, hey?"

Again the chief paused to observe the effect of these pearls of wisdom. Three heads bowed still lower in miserable dejection.



tion. The chief had plunged a knife into each heavy heart. He calmly proceeded to twist said knives about until the owners of the hearts writhed.

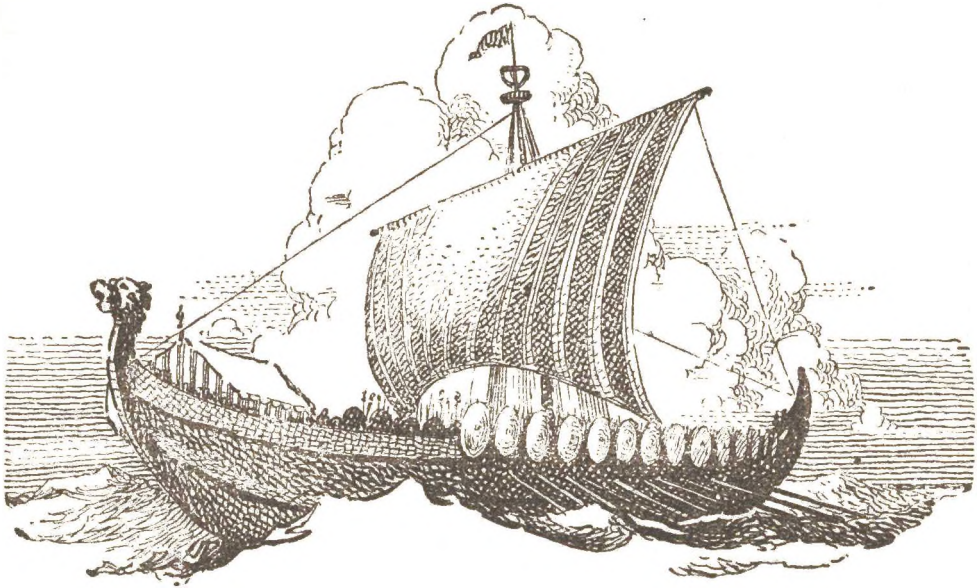
"Of course, I realize that ain't the true story. That's merely an axiom or hypothesis, as them jometry books say. But facts is facts. Bing gets so disgusted with the cannptions of his inner man, he gets himself all laid out in the sick bay for to have an appendix or two removed when—oh, yes. Then came the war. You boys was up there topside, fightin' your guns to the water's edge. At one fell swoop, all you boys are killed and wounded, and your gun is busted clean to hell and gone. But

just then Bing Mason shows up, recognizes Lady Opportunity, poses with her remains, and grabs all the credit."

The chief discreetly left that place in a great hurry. Two water buckets, four hand swabs, one holystone, and a ditty box with wings helped him to gather speed as he decided to do so. He disappeared just a hair ahead of a major accident. The outraged victims sat down again sadly. In time, one of them gave vent to a deep sigh.

"There ain't no justice nowhere," he decided aloud.

"Yeah," agreed his companions in unison. "Yeah!"





I WAS the boy, Jim Hawkins,  
 Who sailed on the treasure quest  
 With Morgan and "Long John" Silver,  
 O'Brien, Hands, and the rest.  
 I was the luckless Crusoe,  
 Wrecked on a lonely shore,  
 I was stern Captain Nemo,  
 Traversing the ocean's floor.



I sailed on the *Hispaniola*  
 On a perfect day in June,  
 While the boatswain's pipe of the robin  
 Overhead played a liquid tune.  
 And, oh, the delightful terror,  
 That made my blood run cold,  
 As I heard the pirates plotting,  
 From my apple barrel in the hold!



With Defoe's quaint book before me  
 On the attic floor I lay,  
 And sailed for the coast of Guinea,  
 On a rainy holiday,  
 Till, tossed by the tempest's fury,  
 Storm driven for many a mile,  
 I, alone, of all my shipmates,  
 Was cast upon Selkirk's isle.





My favorite port of clearing  
 Was a sheltered mossy nook,  
 Where an apple tree's low branches  
 O'erhung a murm'ring brook.  
 There, in my root-formed armchair,  
 On a drowsy summer's day,  
 With a sea tale as my log book,  
 I'd sail for the far-away.



And the tiny stream beside me  
 In magnitude would gain,  
 Till it compassed the South Sea Islands,  
 And merged with the Spanish Main.  
 And a potent pen's weird magic  
 Would change the gnarled old trees  
 To the palms of the coral atolls  
 That sway in the tropic breeze.



But life was not all adventure.  
 There were many humdrum days  
 Wasted in work and study,  
 And similar useless ways.  
 For the hours that with sweet enchantment,  
 Those authors could thus beguile,  
 In the halcyon days of childhood  
 Seemed the only hours worth while.

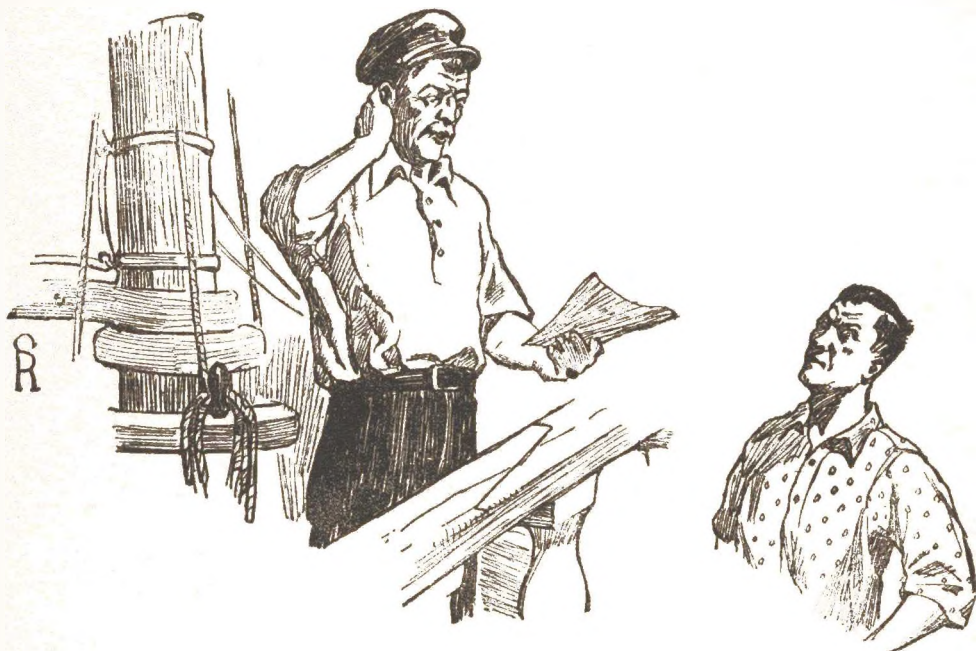


Then bless'd be the kindly jinni  
 That gave me those golden hours,  
 Who wove the threads of their stories  
 Into carpets of magic powers.  
 For thrice bless'd are their readers,  
 Though they've grown to be gray-haired men,  
 Who can close their eyes for a moment  
 And live in those dreams again.



# The Cape Horners

By Captain George H. Grant



## A shipmaster's joke on Paddy West.

**P**ADDY WEST loved sailormen. Although he was a little runt of a man with a turn in his eyes it was said that his heart was as big as a pumpkin, and as mushy when sailormen were around the water front in abundance. It was a queer love for a man to have, but sailormen to him meant wealth. At so many pounds per head they were bargained for in his boarding house before being shipped on board the square-riggers that lay to their anchors in the Mersey, sheering to the tide in an eagerness to be on their way.

To-night sailormen were anathema to him because they were scarce and the port was filled with shipmasters demanding men. He sat in the back parlor of the Angel, in Dale Street, sipping from a glass of hot rum and butter. The dark amber fluid warmed his innards if not his heart. Never had he seen so much wealth vanish before his eyes. It was whispered that the shipmasters had sent to London and Cardiff for crews.

The door of the back parlor opened quickly and a slouching individual entered. He was all dressed up like a salt-beef inspector, long black coat, hard hat and rings on his fingers. Paddy West looked up scurvily, but gesticulated a welcome when he perceived that it was "Dago" John, the master crimp in his house of crimps. "Got any men rounded up?" he demanded with acerbity.

Dago John shook his head and grimaced wryly. "There ain't a bloomin' drunkard in this 'ere town to-night, Paddy, that we c'n be a-knockin' on th' head. It be simply terrible the way religion be gettin' a 'old o' the people. This 'ere country is fast a-goin' to the dogs."

"Shut your mouth," thundered the other, pounding the table with his fist. "What the hell d'you think I'm keeping you in luxury and ease for? To preach about the condition of the country? It's men you've got to get. Listen here! To-night the skipper o' the bark Saynay is coming lookin' f'r a crew. I've promised him ten

men—all Cape Horners—and you have got to get them. D'you understand? If the men aren't forthcoming I'll knock you on the bloody head and ship you on the next vessel."

Dago John, who got his name from the color of his skin and not his nationality, laughed nervously. Like the wharf rat he was, the prospect of toiling on a swaying yard on a dirty night did not quite appeal to him.

"'Arf a mo," he exclaimed. "Wot's a bitin' you, Paddy? Ain't I always got men when you was wantin' 'em? By to-morrow I'll 'ave so many bleedin' men ye'll be a-needin' another 'ouse to be keepin' 'em in."

"To-morrow will be too late. It's to-night the skipper is coming. He should be here now." Paddy West turned and looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. It was eight thirty.

"Give 'im the six 'ands you has in the 'ouse now." Dago John suggested.

"Then we'd be in a fine pickle," Paddy West shouted. "They're real Cape Horners, every one o' them."

The words were still on his lips when the door flung open and two men entered.

"What's that you were saying, West?" one of them asked. "Got some real Cape Horners?"

"That I have, captain," Paddy West shouted cheerfully. "All the men you'll need and more. Sit down and moisten your gizzard. Hey! Wench! Some buttered rum, and make it piping hot!"

In the noise and commotion of the greeting he kicked Dago John on the shin, winked an eye suggestively at him, and bade him good night.

"A drink or two, gentlemen," he shouted loudly so that the departing crimp could hear what was said. "And then we shall repair to my boarding house an' look them over."

**I**T was a miserable room, a baleful room; the kind of room in which one expected to find sullen, unshaven men lounging on dirty wooden benches while a haze of plug tobacco smoke pervaded the air. One, in this instance, was not at all disappointed. It was the sitting room, waiting room, or smoke room of Paddy West's boarding house for sailormen in Dennison Street, off Paradise Road in Liverpool. There was only one

door, the windows were heavily barred like those of a jail, a crude oaken table stood in the center, on which rested a partially filled demijohn of cheap rum and some dirty glasses. A few rickety chairs were scattered about while wooden benches ran around the walls. The fireplace had been boarded up, possibly to prevent the deeply indebted sailormen from making their escape up the chimney should that desire come to them. Before it stood an iron stove in which there was no fire. Fragments of paper and rubbish made a futuristic pattern on the sawdust which lay profusely on the floor. It was a cheerless place in which one would not spend the night if one had any choice in the matter.

But sailormen, deadbeats, hardups, and wharf rats had no choice once their money had been filched by the ingratiating crimps who thronged the water front. Here was a roof over their heads when the nights were cold, here a bellyful of hash when the skin of their stomachs was chafing on their backbones, here a gutful of liquor and a whack on the head with a sandbag when a vessel lay surging to her anchor while waiting for some pierhead jumps to fill the vacancies in her crew.

To-night six men lounged within these charitable walls. Two played cribbage on the table, two lay on the benches and smoked, one sprawled on the floor in a drunken stupor, one sat in a chair with a glass in his gnarled fist and was headed, under a whisky wind, in a similar direction. In the light from the hanging oil lamps they all appeared serene and contented.

Into this room came Dago John with a high turn of speed as if he had sped all the way from the back parlor of the Angel. He doffed his coat and hat and threw them into a corner on the floor.

"Oh, my lads!" he shouted, pounding the floor with his heel to attract attention. "Captain 'Bully' Jackson o' the *Saynay* be a-comin' lookin' fer a crew. 'Ow about signin'?"

No one answered. From the quiescence of the men it seemed that they had not heard. Yet they must have heard that raucous voice.

The question was repeated.

The man sprawled on the floor looked up with bleary eyes and mumbled, "Go t' hell an' lemme sleep!"

Dago John uttered an oath. "Y' lousy swine! I'll smash yer bleedin' face in!"

He stalked truculently across the room toward the speaker, but before he could reach him one of the men sitting at the table grasped him by the coat sleeve and held him up.

"Cripes, Dago," he said, "let 'im be. Ye're so sociable an' kind in this 'ere 'ouse that it be indeed a pleasure to be a-stayin' wid yer instead o' shippin' wi' that 'ere bloody murderer, Bully Jackson."

Dago John was about to retort when the door opened and a dirty urchin peered in.

"E's 'ere, Dago," he sniveled.

"Who's 'ere?"

"The skipper wots a-lookin' fer men."

The door banged shut and Dago John sprang to activity. He went quickly from one man to the other, shaking life into them.

"Show a leg, m' lads," he shouted, almost pleadingly. "An' be fillin' yer glasses f'r it be live ones 'e wants to be seen'."

The men sat up and, oddly enough, took the glasses which had been filled with rum reluctantly. They were bleary-eyed and indifferent to the enthusiasm or exhortations of Dago John who sat on the edge of the table swinging his legs and, with a bluff smirk on his face, eyed them one after another.

"Be repayin' the man wot 'as befriended ye wid a song," he bawled.

The men drained their glasses, looked across at him, but remained mute. The liquor had not yet had time to warm the cockles of their hearts. Dago John swore, called upon the Lord to visit His wrath upon the ungrateful swine, then strutted across the room to the stove, leaned against it and began in a loud voice:

"As I w's a-walkin' down Dennison Street,  
Way-ay, blow th' man down!

A charmin' young ga-al I 'appened ter meet,

Oh, give us some time ter blow th' man down!"

He stopped abruptly and looked around truculently. There was as yet no response to his encouragement. An oath left his lips when he spied the men grinning sheepishly at him.

"'Ere," he shouted, "lend yer wind! Open yer bleedin' mouths or I'll be tamin' ye wid a belayin' pin when the captain is gone. It ain't ev'ry day yer 'as Dago John singin' wid yer."

He took a swig of liquor from the demi-john and continued:

"I fired m' bow chaser, the signal she knew,  
Way-ay, blow the man down!

She backed 'er main yard an' fer me she 'ove to,

Oh, give us a chance ter blow th' man down!"

The men were now entering into the spirit of the song. They refilled their glasses, drank deeply and quickly, stamped their feet, and shouted:

"I chucked 'er m' 'awser, I took 'er in tow,  
Way-ay, blow the man down.

An' inter a grog shop we both——"

The door opened and three men looked in. The smallest was Paddy West himself, smirking until the turn in his eyes appeared to do a back somersault. It was difficult to tell whether he was looking into the room or into the black heart which lay hidden in his body. He was a wily devil, although to see his genial grin and perceive his suave manner one would gather the impression that he was the impersonation of benevolence itself. Not a whit less of a rogue was Captain Bully Jackson of a Yankee bark who stood by his side. Although its name was the *Saynay* it was known throughout the seven seas as the *Bean-pot*, for the sailormen received only beans and knuckles. The beans were beans, but the knuckles were brass! It was whispered that Captain Jackson swindled the wages from all the sailormen who signed with him. The third man in the party was the vessel's agent, oily and smooth like a snake, who accepted gratuities from both parties.

"It's ten men you want, captain," Paddy West was heard saying. "I can give you ten o' the best, all Cape Horners, at five pounds a head."

"Say, West! What in hell d'you think I'm buyin'? The Queen o' England? It's too much money—too much money!" Captain Bully Jackson replied. "I've never had to lay out that much money for human flesh before. Cut the price and I'll talk business."

"They're scarce these days," the agent muttered. "Scarcer than hens' teeth they are."

"It's too much money, I tell you," as-

served Captain Bully Jackson, stalking into the room the more closely to appraise the sailormen who had stopped singing and were gazing curiously at him. "Only the best o' them get that price—toughened Cape Horners."

"What's the matter with them?" demanded Paddy West swinging his arm in a wide arc before the men. "Merry hearts, they have, an' merry hearts make willing arms. eh, captain? At five pounds a head—every man has been around the Horn more'n a dozen times. What do you say?"

He did not explain that the horn he meant was not Cape Horn, but that of a bullock which he kept lashed to a clothes pole in the back yard. He was a stickler for the truth, was Paddy West! In the garret of his house he had a yard, or at any rate he said he had, on which the green sailormen learned the art of setting and clewing up the sails. But the only yard was that of the window blind. It was so much simpler to let the embryo sailormen practice on that. It gave them a much more roseate view of the work which lay ahead of them.

For a while Captain Bully Jackson was silent. He stood peering through the smoke-laden atmosphere at the men lounging within the room. To his experienced eye they did not seem worth the money demanded. They were sailormen all right, but would they be the men shipped on board by Paddy West? That was the rub! Fifty pounds for men! His Yankee gorge tightened at the thought. There would be little money left for him, especially if they skinned out at the first port of call. And his slop chest was well stocked with cheap, worthless articles. A shipmaster had to make an honest penny to defray the cost of his entertainment in port. But the vessel had to sail on the turn of the tide next evening. Another day held to her anchor and the owners would be sending some one down to relieve him. He was in a devil of a stew, with only the fire left to jump into.

"Say, West! What about three pound a head?" he demanded.

"Every man owes me more'n I'm askin' you, captain," Paddy West stated, squinting at the cigar he had taken from his mouth. "It's a favor I'm doin' you if you only knew it. I like the look o' yer Yankee jib. Five pounds a head it is. No more, no less an' every one a Cape Horner."

"Good," returned Captain Bully Jackson. "Shake and make it a bargain."

"Shake nothing," the other said emphatically. "Ten pounds to-night an' the remainder when I bring the men on board to-morrow evening are the terms that close the deal."

There was nothing else for it. Captain Bully Jackson agreed with a wry face and passed the money over with ill grace. It enraged him to find himself in the clutches of a crimp like Paddy West. There must be a way to even the score. He never did have any luck when dealing with a man with a turn in his eyes.

**O**UT in Dennison Street Captain Bully Jackson and the agent walked with slow, heavy tread, like that of men weary unto death. It was raining, which intensified the depression of the former and added to the discomfiture of the latter. The minds of both were focused on a similar objective, a pecuniary though elusive one, that was blurred by their eagerness to segregate it so that a means could be quickly found for its gratification.

At the junction of Dennison and Paradise Streets Captain Bully Jackson stepped into a puddle which loosened the lashings that made fast his wrath to his black soul. He growled and he swore and he heaped vile imprecations on the head of the meek little man who trudged complacently by his side.

"Why in hell don't you see that there are men in the port before you order a vessel into it?" he bawled. "Too bloody fat-headed to see beyond your nose. Like all limeys! I've a damn good mind to shanghai you. Need a white-livered rat in the galley."

"Captain! captain!" the agent protested meekly and halted under the spluttering light of a street lantern as if to gain protection from it. For two pins he would hold the vessel up indefinitely. A word from him to the Board of Trade officials and Captain Bully Jackson would change his tune. But what would he gain by that? Nothing! And there was just a chance that—

He reached out and caught Captain Bully Jackson by the arm as he was about to cross the street toward the pierhead where his small boat lay.

"Your vessel is to an anchor, is she not?" he asked ingratiatingly.

"Yes! But in what way does that concern you?"

"I have been thinking"—the agent paused for a moment as if weighing his thoughts—"I have been thinking that the price you are paying for men is much too high."

"I know damn well it is," the other shouted with heat.

"Well! Couldn't you and I do a little business. I have been thinking——"

"You've been doing a mighty heap o' thinking, it seems to me," Captain Bully Jackson growled. "Do a little talking for a change—if it's about the men."

"It is about the men. But there will have to be a little—er—something in it for me. A new hat! I can get a nice one for a couple of pounds. It'll be worth it to you. You will save money and get the men," the agent said with suavity. "Times are very hard."

Captain Bully Jackson cocked his head to one side and looked quizzically at the agent. There might be something in what he had to say. Money would be saved—for him.

"All right! Spill it out. Two pounds if the idea is good. Nothing at all if otherwise."

"It is good, captain. To-morrow evening——" The agent spoke slowly and, when he had finished, Captain Bully Jackson chuckled with glee and thumped him on the back until his teeth chattered. Without an argument, without even the slightest hesitation, which was indeed strange for him, he put his hand into a pocket, fished out two pounds and handed them over.

"Bully for you," he shouted. "Good night."

He was still chuckling when he boarded his boat at the pierhead to be rowed out to his vessel. But if he had seen the agent making a bee line for Paddy West's boarding house or heard the conversation that ensued between him and the proprietor his chuckle would have changed to ripsnorting blasphemy. Not that the agent informed Paddy West of that which he had told Captain Bully Jackson. He never even dropped as much as a hint of what had passed between them. But when the agent left the boarding house there were four pounds in his pocket instead of two and a sleek grin on his face. A profitable night's work had been put in!

**L**ATE the following afternoon the anchor cable of the Yankee bark *Saynay* grated and clattered in the hawse pipe as it was hove short by the runners who had been standing by attending to the vessel in the stream. The tow-line was brought on deck, passed over the fore-castle head, lowered over the bow and made fast to the tugboat that lay alongside forward awaiting orders to get under way on the turn of the tide. The topsails were loosed, and the runners left as dusk was giving way to darkness, leaving the skeleton crew of mates, bos'n, sailmaker, cook and a couple of boys to get the anchor home when the crew, under the influence of rum and sandbags, would be heaved on board.

When the supper dishes had been cleared away from the saloon Captain Bully Jackson sent for the mate and gave him concise and definite orders. He was in fine fettle, for he poured out for his subordinate, and also for himself, a stiff snifter of rum.

"Get out on deck now, mister," he shouted lustily when the liquor had been downed, "and keep your eyes lifting and your wits about you."

Shortly after two bells in the dogwatch a boat, heavily laden, bumped alongside.

"*Saynay*, ahoy!" yelled the voice of Paddy West. "Are you all sleepin' aboard? Throw us a line!"

The mate who had been standing in the lee of the after deck house whispered orders to the men beside him, then walked to the bulwark rail and peered down into the darkness.

"Not so much bloody noise down there," he said in a hushed voice. "The Old Man is lyin' down. Hurt himself this afternoon. If you're Paddy West I'll put the pilot ladder over for you. You can go aft an' see the Old Man while I am hauling the crew on board."

A mumble of words, ending in a loud guffaw, came from the darkness that shrouded the boat as the pilot ladder clattered on the vessel's side. Paddy West clambered quickly on board and stood by on the deck, watching the mate and the steward haul the men up one by one with a heaving line. Dago John disturbed the silence of the night with frequent epithets which he addressed to the men as he slipped the line around them. They were all drunk, or drugged, and fell limp as they



were yanked over the bulwark like shoulders of beef. The mate and the steward piled them up abaft the mainmast, out of the way, until they would be fit for duty or bundled into the forecastle when the seas came across the deck.

The light from the poop lantern flickered fitfully on the features of Paddy West so that he seemed like a diminutive devil lurking in the shade of the tall spars that towered toward the stars. When the last sailorman was heaved on the pile he took the cigar from his mouth and jammed it between the lips of the totally unconscious man.

"He'll be a great help to you, mate, when he comes to," he shouted and laughed and, turning on his heel, walked aft into the cabin.

The light from the lamp swinging on its gimbals blinded him so that he could not see, for a second, Captain Bully Jackson lying on the settee which ranged along the bulkhead behind the table. Then his eyes became accustomed to the glare.

"Hullo, captain," he shouted boisterously. "Has one o' the boys been handin' you a clout wi' a brass knuckle?"

"No, no! I slipped on the poop this afternoon and fell against the scuttle. Accidents will happen." Captain Bully Jackson said weakly and grimaced as if in pain when he turned to greet his visitor. "Take the bottle out o' the locker and have a hooker."

"I'll take one with yer—no more, for the night's young an' two more vessels to get crews. You've got the pick o' the men, captain—an' ev'ry one a Cape Horner. One it'll be for I wouldn't be holdin' you up. Pass over the money—forty pounds we made it—an' I'll be on m' way."

"There's no hurry, West! I've sent for the doctor to take a look at my back before we sail."

"Well! If that be the case, captain, I'll take a snifter o' yer liquor an' stick around a while. Never will it be said that Paddy West deserted a friend in his need."

Two drinks were poured and downed. Two more were poured, and Captain Bully Jackson had risen very carefully to his feet with the intention of getting the money, or at any rate of making a show of getting the money, from a drawer in the desk across the cabin when a loud hubbub came from outside.

"'Ere wot's the bleedin' game? Cut m'

painter 'e 'as!" came from the voice of Dago John. "Paddy! Paddy!"

Distance swallowed the outcry. Paddy West jumped to his feet and looked suspiciously around as a knock sounded on the door. It opened and the mate entered.

"We're under way, sir! Paddy West's boat has been cut adrift!" he reported.

"Good!" said Captain Bully Jackson laughing uproariously. "Tell the pilot to keep an eye on her. I'll be on deck in a few minutes."

The mate went and banged the door behind him. Paddy West swung round on the other.

"What're you up to?" he demanded.

"Just having a little joke, West!" Captain Bully Jackson began. "To prove to you that there isn't a crimp living in bloody England who can put it over on me. D'ye get that!"

He paused to light his pipe, then scoffed. "Five pounds apiece for men? Huh! I told you it was too much money. I could buy the best f'r that. It's two pounds ten you're going to get and not a penny more. If you don't like it I'll take you along on the voyage to train the bunch o' hoodoos you've most probably put on board."

Paddy West shifted his feet uneasily. Through the open porthole he could see the lights on the river bank and knew that the vessel was under way. A voyage to sea was the last thing he had anticipated.

"But a bargain's a bargain," he protested weakly.

"It may be on shore, Paddy West, but you're now on the high seas where I alone make terms. Take what I offer and get into the tugboat when we cast off before I change my mind and give you nothing. There's a fair wind blowing and we must be on our way!"

Paddy West perceived the futility of further argument. It was expedient that he get off the vessel while the getting off was possible. At any moment there might be another reckoning which would not be to his liking. He took the money and went out on deck. Sail was being made, for the wind was brisk and the bark was overhauling the tugboat which was dragging on the towline a little forward of the beam on the port side.

Captain Bully Jackson took the megaphone, put it to his mouth and shouted, "Tug ahoy! Cast off and come alongside!" He turned around and continued,

"How about a drop o' liquor, Paddy West, to drown your sorrow?"

Paddy West did not reply immediately. A sly smirk played about his features and turned to a self-satisfied grin when he had swung from the pilot ladder onto the deck of the tugboat. He waited until the distance between the two vessels had appreciably widened, then he cupped his hands about his mouth and yelled, "Good-by, Captain Bully Jackson! I hopes yer has a happy time wi' the crew I've given ye!"

There was a derisive note in the voice that riled Captain Bully Jackson.

"Good-by, Paddy West," he shouted through the megaphone. "I'll always think of you as the benevolent crimp who shipped Cape Horners at the low price of two pounds ten apiece. Good-by!"

A taunting laugh was the only reply that came through the night.

**D**AWN came slowly, held back by a veil of driving fracto-cumulus that covered the sky. The sunrise was a smear of violent red like a bloody gash above the eastern horizon. Wind was in the offing like a wolfhound waiting to be unleashed.

All night long the bark *Saynay* had been speeding through the Irish Sea under light canvas. The wind had been fair and strong.

With the coming of daylight Captain Bully Jackson strode up the scuttle to the deck where he stood by the weather taffrail and cast a wary eye around. All he could see was dirt—and plenty of it. Dirt in the guise of boisterous gales, with land perhaps close under the lee. Already a light mist softened the horizon ahead. He sent for the mate.

"There's an ugly glint in the morning,

mister. Rouse out the men an' clap sail on her! They've soaked their bloody heads long enough. Get them aloft! It'll blow the cobwebs from their brains."

He stood at the break of the poop, following the mate with his eye as he went along the deck and into the forecabin. He laughed mirthlessly as the thud of blows, the mumble of curses emanated therefrom. Sailormen stumbled out on deck, dazed by the light, and nursing their heads. A spatter of blood showed on a sea-seamed face. A man lurched drunkenly and fell into the scuppers, there to lie groaning as if on the point of death. Suddenly the mate sprang through the forecabin door to the deck and raced aft toward him with a wild look on his face.

"What in hell's the matter with you?" Captain Bully Jackson thundered. "Are you scared o' a handful of men?"

The mate came to a halt at the poop ladder, stammered, and fidgeted nervously with a piece of paper he held in his right hand. "It's not—it's not that, sir," he muttered in a frightened voice. "Live ones are all right, sir; but there's three o' them deader than nails—deader than bloody nails, sir. I found this paper on one o' them."

Captain Bully Jackson uttered an oath, reached forward and took the paper from the trembling hand of the mate. He spread it on the taffrail, smoothed it carefully and read:

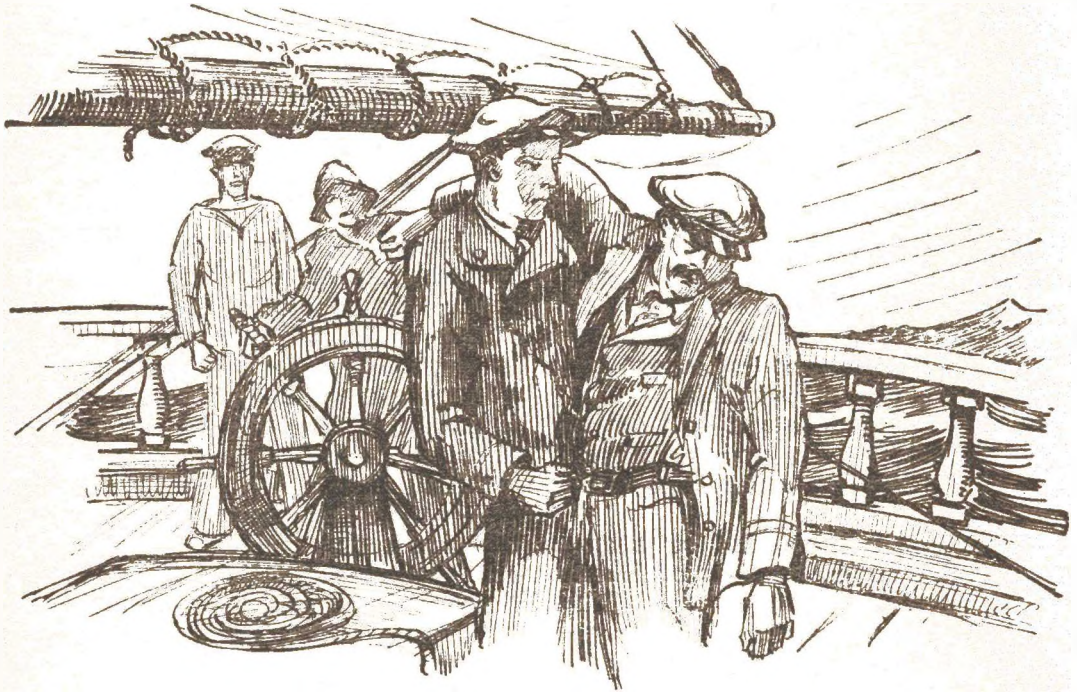
"I am shipping you three Cape Horners who made their last passage in a drunken brawl to-day. I volunteered to give them burial. Then I thought that you might do me the favor of burying them at sea. You were always kind to Cape Horners."

Captain Bully Jackson heard again the taunting laugh that had come through the night.



# Smoke Below

By George Gardner



Loading a damp cargo at Manila.

**I**T was hot in Manila, and David Owen shifted into the shade of the awning that covered the poop of the *Evening Star*. From the skylight of the crew's quarters came the snore of sleeping men, for it was Sunday morning, and he was the only seaman astir. Weather-beaten face and gray-flecked hair, Owen mused over the past, wondered as to the future.

The chance and change of a sailor's life—want and plenty, rest and strife! Yes, Longfellow was right. Chance and change, Turned down a first mate's job to ship before the mast, but after all, what did it matter now *she* was gone? All life was a school, experience. This was the first American vessel he'd sailed in, and Owen found himself wondering if they were all alike. Skipper—old Captain Miller—"Dusty" Miller was all right, but that third mate—

A shadow fell on the deck beside him,

and he wheeled. The white-haired captain of whom he had been thinking stood there, looking him over with keen, appraising eyes.

"Owen, the pilot in San Francisco told me you've a license. Don't know how he knew, but—"

The tall, lean seaman glanced round almost furtively, and nodded, for the master's words were a query. Captain Miller scanned the man with bewildered expression on his ruddy face and asked slowly, "Let me see it, will you, please?"

Without a word, Owen turned and disappeared down the ladder. He reappeared after a moment with a leather wallet and drew from it a document which he handed to the master. Miller glanced at it quickly, then stared over the tops of his steel-rimmed glasses.

"Got an American license? This is British," he said in tones of surprise.

"Sorry—gave you the wrong one, sir."

Owen confusedly unfolded another parchment and handed it to the captain.

"What are you doin' with these—in the fore-castle? Are these papers yours?" sternly demanded the master, and he eyed the man with suspicion.

The very tone of the question brought the blood to Owen's face; he bristled indignantly as he stared back at Miller and said, "Of course they're mine. D'you s'pose I stole 'em?"

"Excuse me, captain," he apologized next moment, "guess it does look a bit fishy. Perhaps some explanation is necessary.

"I was sailin' the Western Ocean durin' the war—mate o' th' *Homer* when she was sunk. Remember her bein' torpedoed, captain? I was chief officer of her then, an' when I got back to London I found my wife down with pneumonia—exposure durin' one o' those infernal air raids.

"Well, I managed to get her out to California, quit the sea, and put all my money into a chicken ranch, but—after she——"

The man's voice broke and he paused, glancing across at the *Empress of Russia* lying at the next pier, while Captain Miller himself was silent himself in subtle appreciation of the emotion he saw on the other's face.

"After I got my naturalization papers," Owen continued, "the steamboat inspector in San Francisco let me sit for a master's license when I showed him my British ticket. I've got this United States license, but—what's the use of it to me?"

"Bellamy, the superintendent o' this company, the Stellar line, offered me first mate's job in the *Aldebaran*, under the British flag—hundred an' fifteen dollars a month. But when I reminded him I had a United States license and that American ships pay a hundred an' ninety dollars to their chief officers, he told me coolly that the company engages no officers for their American vessels who are over forty years of age."

Captain Miller saw something of regret, or it might have even been remorse, he fancied, in the blue eyes that flitted from the *Empress* boat back to meet his own gaze.

"Well—what then?" he prompted.

"Oh, I tried one or two other concerns, loafed around a while, an' shipped here. And the first day I came aboard," Owen

added bitterly, "I had a row with the third mate—little whelp."

"I heard him," said the captain smiling. "I heard him ask you if you could steer."

Then he grew serious again as he glanced from the document he held, up into the face of its owner. Then, with the air of one making a decision, Miller cleared his throat noisily.

"Our chief officer, Mr. Gibson, was killed last night," he said. "Heard about it, I s'pose? No? Yes, he was run down by an electric street car on th' Escolta. an' I'm goin' to offer you the billet."

"An' what's the matter with the second officer? Can't he——"

"Rogers has only his second's license." the master broke in quickly, his gray eyes alight with approval of the man's sense of fairness. As Owen seemed to hesitate, he continued in sarcastic tones, "I s'pose I'll be able to get his license raised for him if you don't want the job—or fancy you can't handle it."

"Can't handle it? See here, captain——" The tall, spare figure stiffened as the man spoke, and his face flushed angrily before he realized the meaning of the bantering words.

"Captain Miller, I'm goin' to hang this license up in the chart room," Owen said then. "But what about Bellamy?"

"He's six thousand miles away, sir. I'm master o' this ship, an' the agents ashore will act on my say-so."

When the captain took the middle-aged man into the cabin to breakfast and introduced him as the new chief officer, the other officers and engineers stared in surprise. Subdued though they were by the tragedy of Gibson's death, all greeted Owen cordially except Arnold, the third mate. Mr. Rogers rose and gripped hands with Owen, his honest, ugly face creased in a rueful smile as he declared "Just my luck not to have had my license raised last time in Frisco, wasn't it, sir? But we'll get on fine together."

Owen grinned back at the man, admiring the spirit that underlay his brave words, the pride that concealed the chagrin. The third mate, on the contrary, did not pretend to hide his spite and jealousy for the newly promoted man. He had been expecting a rise to second mate when Rogers took over the chief's billet, and his bulging, pale-blue eyes were full of ill nature as he stared across at Owen.

"Huh! Deck hand, with first mate's papers?"

The high-pitched voice vibrated with suspicion and malice, and Captain Miller looked up angrily, but Owen spoke while every one else was yet breathless at the insult. In tones that admirably imitated Arnold's falsetto voice, he asked, "Can you steer, my man?"

"Ha-ha-ha! Why—why, that's just what the third officer asked you, isn't it, Mr. Owen? Ha-ha-ha!"

Miller laughed, enjoying Arnold's confusion while he told the other men the joke.

"It's your turn now, sir. Ask him to box the compass for you. Ha-ha-ha!"

The master glanced along the table from the homely face of the second mate to the crimson-cheeked third officer, and Miller's voice was stern again as he said, "Mr. Owen has a United States license as master—any ocean, any tonnage, gentlemen. He has also a British extra master's certificate, Arnold, if you know what that means. Needless for me to remind you that I expect you to cooperate with——"

The captain paused abruptly, for the look on Owen's face assured him that the chief officer was quite capable of exacting the necessary support.

Directly after breakfast, the mate took over the duties and responsibilities of his new position and had his effects quickly transferred to his cabin under the bridge. He found that the news of his promotion had preceded him, for the quartermaster on watch had seen the framed license in the chart room and roused out his shipmates excitedly.

"Say—what d'ye think? 'Taffy'—Taffy's a bloomin' skipper. 'Is license is 'anging up in the chart room 'longside the 'Ol' Man's,' where Mr. Gibson's was."

"That's why he was so quiet an' stan'-offishlike," broke in another man.

"Oh, Taffy's all right. Good shipmate." Snell declared warmly.

"Sure he is. Took your wheel for you, didn't he, Snell? When the Frisco pilot chased you away," muttered a third man.

"All I can say is—look out for yourselves, boys." The man who considered Owen unsociable was determined on pessimism, and he began telling of mates he had known, lifted suddenly from the forecastle, who had turned out to be regular terrors. Snell grinned.

"I'm just wonderin'," he murmured, "im an' the third'll 'it it."

The entrance of the chief officer himself checked any further discussion for the time being, yet the seamen quickly discovered that Owen gave them all a square deal and played no favorites, so their distrust and jealousy soon faded.

**M**OST of the outward cargo discharged, the *Evening Star* had begun loading at No. 2 hold the previous afternoon. The agents had permits for Sunday work, so the chief officer was busy with the general supervision of the stowage. On cargo vessels the second mate usually handles the after hatches, and the third mate acts as deputy for the chief at the forward holes. Owen had not considered it necessary to remind Arnold of his duty in this respect, but he noticed the third mate idling around the foredeck, sulky of face and morose, and he called sharply to him.

"Carry on with what you were doin' yesterday, mister. Down number two, weren't you?"

Arnold nodded silently and turned to glance carelessly at the slings of jute that swung up from the lighter alongside and dropped swiftly into the lower hold, while the chief officer, after one keen look, disappeared down the scuttle that led to the 'tween-deck.

The next sling came back up again, and Owen stepped nimbly from the bales as they landed on deck.

"See here, Arnold," he said sternly, "if you can't see which bales are damp, you'd best go down into the lighter. Half that bottom tier's wet."

"Taken in last night," Arnold declared with assumed indifference. "Anyhow, what does it matter if they are damp? Be dry enough before we reach Frisco, won't they?"

The chief officer stared at his junior with undisguised scorn. He eyed him so long, so contemptuously, that at last the third mate looked up and met his gaze defiantly. For a long minute their wills clashed, Arnold coloring as he realized the strength of the mate's character.

He moved uneasily under that steady scrutiny, and wheeled, meditating retreat, but Owen gripped him by one wrist and held him so, despite his effort to wrench himself free.

"D'you know, young-fellow-me-lad, I've

a good mind to knock your block off? Yes, I could do it—though I am fifteen years older than you are.

"No. Stand still, sir," the tall, sinewy mate emphasized his words with a twist that brought a low moan from the third officer. "Stand still, I say, while I tell you somethin' for the good o' your soul, you conceited little pup."

Owen caught sight of some one—a quartermaster, he fancied—lurking round on the fore part of the bridge, and lowered his voice, yet the contempt remained. It was intensified, if anything.

"You're makin' your first voyage on your license, an' there are a few things you don't know yet—several things you've got to learn by experience. It's one thing to snarl at a helmsman an' another thing altogether to use your wits an' see the freight's in good condition, as we have to deliver it."

He paused, and noticed that the cowardly little fellow had lost all his insolence, had turned almost livid in his shame.

"The usual procedure," Owen continued scathingly, "would be for me to send you to your room and report you to the captain, but I'll assume it was just ignorance on your part an' I'll put you wise.

"Jute heats in dryin', mister. Spontaneous combustion. Many a ship with a full cargo has burned to the water's edge through just such carelessness. All have to live an' learn, but don't be too uppish while you're acquirin' your experience, sir."

He released Arnold's wrist, then braced himself, half hoping for, half expecting a tussle, for he fancied he detected a strange gleam in the third mate's pale-blue eyes. For a moment the stout young fellow stared back at him with open mouth, gulping like a newly caught fish, it occurred to Owen, and when he spoke at last, it was in voice he vainly tried to steady.

"I—I was not—not aware of the danger, sir. I'll go down into the lighter immediately," he said.

**F**OR the remainder of their stay in Manila, the third mate was so zealous in his duties, so respectful to the chief officer's orders, that Owen's distrust gradually vanished, though he was still vaguely conscious of dislike for the man.

Snell stopped him one morning on the foredeck and began a rambling account of

having come aboard late the previous night, but Owen choked him off impatiently after a moment or two. He was busy; besides, he couldn't see just what the man was driving at, but scented an appeal for an advance of money.

"Coolin' your coppers off with San Miguel beer again, Snell?" he asked dryly. "Spent all you drew, an' want another sub—eh? Well, you'll not get it. That's flat." The mate left the quartermaster staring after him with an injured look.

At last the vessel left for San Francisco. Once up on the great circle track, everybody felt the change of temperature after the heat of the Islands, and Captain Miller began to cough. With the careless arrogance of a healthy man, he neglected the cold and grew irritable when the chief officer advised him to stay inside for a day or two. Perhaps the recollection of the wreck of his own home, the bereavement he had suffered, made the mate more insistent, for he urged the captain repeatedly to take to his bed and nurse the cold.

"What the deuce d'you mean, sir? I'm not a sick man," the white-haired old captain declared angrily, on the bridge one evening. They were a fortnight out, and Miller had difficulty in saying a dozen words without a spasm of coughing.

"Just a cold, that's all, sir," he said, staring up at the mate with a shrewd expression on his face. "What's worryin' you besides the state o' my health, Owen? I can see somethin's wrong. What is it?"

"Well, captain, I didn't mean to let you know, but the temperature at number two hold's goin' up."

"What you got down there?"

"Bric-a-brac in the 'tween-decks, jute an' sisal in th' lower hold. Thank Heaven, I put all the fiber down there; we haven't got to worry about any o' the other holds."

"Jute on fire? That's hell!" Miller paced the bridge moodily a while, too oppressed by the news to think of his cough.

"It's not on fire yet, captain. It's heatin', but I'm hopin' to be able to stifle it. Got all the ventilators plugged, an' double tarpaulins on th' hatch, yet. That's why I want you to take care o' yourself, sir. I have 'nough to do without havin' a sick man to nurse."

Captain Miller leaned back against a stanchion and coughed until the whole framework of the bridge vibrated. When he got his breath again, he said quietly,

"Better ask one or two o' the nearest ships to keep in touch with us, Mr. Owen. Quartermaster, tell 'Sparks' I——"

"Captain," interrupted the mate, "I was hopin' you'd let me keep it quiet for a day or two. If we can keep it under by negative action, choke it out for lack of air, there may be nothing said about it when we get to San Francisco."

"Not report by radio, you mean?"

"An' tell nobody aboard here yet, sir, either. You can understand how I——"

Owen broke off, turned away for a moment, and the captain saw his strong, thin face tense and drawn with feeling as he swung back again.

"When you've given me this opportunity, captain—when fate, destiny put me aboard this ship right in the middle of the scheme o' things, surely you'll give me a chance to make good, sir?"

Dusty Miller studied his mate's words thoughtfully. He stared hard at that stern face, rubbing his own chin, and breathing in short, wheezy grunts.

"Realize what you're up against, Owen? I'm goin' to give you a chance, but I'll get hell from Bellamy for engagin' you as mate if that jute flares up. But hell's a dish of ice cream to what we'll have in that hold if it does. Curious an' bric-a-brac. Well, I'll give you a free hand, sir."

**A**LL through the night the chief officer watched the marks on the thermometer he drew up from the casing in that hold, and the captain's heart fell as he saw the disappointment on Owen's face, for at four o'clock next morning the mate was forced to own that it seemed impossible to stifle the fire.

"Have to break a joint at the winch an' steam it out," the master declared. "Mighty sorry, Owen, it'll——"

"I've been thinkin' captain, steam'll not put it out. Steam'll only rise an' ruin the cargo in the 'tween-deck, but it'll not put any——"

"We may have to flood the lower hold," Miller pondered. "An' Lord only knows how the ship'll steer down by the head."

Next moment he stared astonished, for the mate wheeled with a laugh, slapped his hand on his thigh, and began to chuckle. "I've got it, sir. Idiot that I am—ought to have thought of it and remembered it before. A scheme that was tried out on a windjammer years ago."

Owen spoke earnestly, yet so softly that the captain heard him with difficulty, and at last the chief officer drew Miller aside on the wing of the bridge. "Give me leave to try it out, captain," Owen concluded. "Be plenty o' time for floodin' the hold after—if this fails, I mean."

The captain nodded silently.

Stripped to the waist, the men were sweating, yet they shivered as they worked, for here and there tiny tendrils of smoke oozed from between the bales.

As they burrowed deeper and farther into the bowels of the hold, the pungent odor of smoldering fiber grew more powerful. The men glanced nervously over their shoulders, expecting to see the red demon break through behind them, beside them, while memories of fore-castle yarns came back to their minds. Tales of holocausts—of vessels that had drifted ablaze over the ocean for days, weeks, until gutted and deserted by their crews. Yet the tall chief officer who labored with them seemed cheerful as ever, no longer quiet and stand-offish.

When the third officer appeared on the bridge at eight o'clock that morning he saw nothing of the mate. The captain was there, coughing and groaning, and even while the puzzled Arnold stared around, Miller turned and said simply, "Steerin' ninety-seven, mister. Mate's busy with a job of his own."

**E**IGHTEEN days out from Manila, Arnold went up to the bridge a trifle earlier than usual, and the chief officer ascended the ladder the other side almost at the same moment.

"We've got it licked, captain," Owen declared exultantly. "We have it under control."

"Sure?" croaked the master. "Isn't it libble to break out on you again?"

"No, sir. She's down to normal," the mate asserted positively. "I'd give somethin' to know how it—— All right, Snell, ninety-four." He broke off to acknowledge the course reported by the quartermaster, and became aware of the presence of the third officer.

Miller turned to Arnold and told him sternly:

"You an' Rogers'll take the watches to-night, mister. Ugh—this pain'll rip me in two. Have the second mate called at two

o'clock, an'—he can carry on till eight. Give the chief officer a—rest."

"You get to your bed, captain," Owen interrupted. "Have you down with pluri-sy—pneumonia, first thing I know. If you need any help, Arnold, call me, remember! Don't disturb the captain. Understand?"

The third mate nodded sulkily, aggrieved at having a six-hour watch thrust upon him, but the mate took no notice of the man's surly face, intent on seeing the master comfortable for the night.

"Snell, help the captain down," Arnold heard the mate call.

Creature of habit that he was, Owen roused after seven hours of dreamless slumber and stared blankly at the time-piece that ticked away on the bureau beside his bunk.

Just on four! That quartermaster hadn't given him much of a call, but— He remembered suddenly he'd got a watch off, but he turned out just the same. He'd have another look at that thermometer, get a cup of coffee, have a wash, an' see how the skipper was gettin' on. Then he'd relieve the second mate for a spell. Decent skate, Rogers.

The temperature of the hold remained down, and the mate was returning to his room when he heard a call from above. The second officer was hailing him from the bridge.

"Have you seen the third mate, sir?"

"Arnold? Why—no. Didn't you relieve him at two——"

By the dim light reflected from the binnacle, Owen saw the surprise on Rogers' face as he interrupted quickly.

"Two? Why, I came on watch at midnight, of course. But the third mate wasn't here then, an' th' quartermaster who called me said he hadn't seen him for quite a while, sir."

"Not in his room? Had a look round for him?"

"Yes—I took the wheel myself, an' sent the both o' the quartermasters huntin' for him. Log isn't written up since ten."

Leaving the lookout man on the bridge, the two officers made a hurried search of the vessel, but nowhere could they find a trace of Arnold. His room was undisturbed; the bunk had not been occupied. They stared at each other uneasily in the growing daylight, puzzled, yet aware of the suspicion that must attach to each.

Be an inquiry when the vessel reached San Francisco—they'd be quizzed and put through the third degree, and after all, how impossible it would be for either to prove an alibi. But what could have happened to Arnold?

"Reminds me of one o' those fairy tales." Rogers said with a shudder, "where a big bird swooped down out o' th' sky and took a man away with it."

"Aye, Sinbad and the roc, and this is well-nigh as strange, just about as mysterious. I don't know that Arnold had any enemies aboard here, but anyhow, there's no sign of a scrap or a struggle."

"Don't think he had guts enough to commit suicide, sir?"

"Why the deuce should he? Tell me that," Owen said quickly. "And yet, that seems the only way to explain it."

"Well, Rogers, you an' I'll have to take the bridge between us now. Thank the Lord, it'll be only a matter of a couple o' days. What'll it be, six-hour watches, or four?"

"I prefer six hours, sir. Give us a chance for a sleep in between whiles."

"All right. Go below now, then—and say, send Sparks along, will you? I want to call up the Marine Hospital at San Francisco for advice. Old Man's pretty sick. Don't let him know—about Arnold, I mean. Only worry him an' do no good, anyhow."

**T**HE *Evening Star* ran into fog that afternoon. The mist that usually shrouds the coast had blown away offshore, as if to welcome her and add to the anxiety of the chief officer.

"Welcome to our mist," Owen chuckled, yet Rogers felt the strain that underlaid the cheerful tones, and saw the tense, drawn lines about Owen's mouth.

Much of his time off watch was spent by the captain's beside, for Miller had been so weakened by exposure that his system did not at first respond to the treatment prescribed by radio, and the chief officer grew very anxious despite his cheerful face.

At last they docked at San Francisco. Captain Miller had just been removed in an ambulance to the hospital when Captain Bellamy, marine superintendent of the Stellar line, came aboard to glance around. Efficient to his finger tips, the port captain stared with swift, approving eyes at the



smart condition of the ship, the clean paint work and white decks.

"Vessel's nice and clean. Reflects credit on her officer's and crew, sir." His glance lifted to the half-masted flag, and he went on in subdued tones. "Sorry to hear about Mr. Gibson. Very sad, very sad; but I don't think I remember you, sir," he added, turning with curious look to Owen. "Yet your face is familiar, somehow."

"I guess you'll know me when I've had a shave an' a wash," the weary mate replied with a sorry attempt at a smile. "Name's Owen—*Aldebaran*."

"*Aldebaran*? Oh, you're that Owen, are you? Strange I didn't associate the names. Captain Miller cabled me he'd engaged you, but he gave no details. Went away before the mast? Well, you're in the company, and I may have to send you away in command, for Captain Miller seems pretty sick. How long's he been laid up? And what's this about the third mate disappearing?"

Bellamy rattled out his questions without giving pause for replies, while Owen led the way along to the cabin.

"When did you first miss the third officer? Arnold, wasn't it?"

"Why, the night after I'd got the fire under control, sir."

"What! Mean to say the ship was on fire, too? It was never reported, sir. A reg'lar hoodoo of a voyage you've had. Chief officer killed, captain down with lung trouble, third mate vanished, and fire aboard. Well, well!"

"No, sir; not really a fire. Jute began to heat. That's all."

"All? Plenty, too! Why, the *Sirius* had thousands of dollars damage last trip from jute burnin'. I s'pose you've ruined half your cargo?"

"How'd you keep it under? Steam? Who's to blame? Damp when it was loaded, I'll bet. Who handled it? Gibson?"

"No. It was not Mr. Gibson's fault. Don't blame a dead man, sir. I discharged the whole bottom tier when I found one or two wet bales down there," Owen said firmly. "I don't think there's much damaged freight, sir. Have a couple of carboys of acid to pay for, deck cargo—shipper's risk."

Bellamy stared in astonishment at what the chief officer told him.

"You see, sir, I jammed a barrel o' chalk

down into the lower hold at each end, as far as I could get 'em, an' lashed a carboy of muriatic acid atop of each barrel, with the acid just seepin' down onto the chalk.

"Generates carbonic-acid gas, you'll mind, an' I fitted a small rubber hose to the bung-hole of each barrel to carry it away. It was heavier than air, an' it dropped to the bottom o' th' hold with its own weight and put the fire out."

"Where'd you get the idea?" the superintendent asked curiously, his keen gray eyes on the officer's face.

"Just happened to recall a case. It was the *Elmbank*, limo windjammer, that used it, way back in the nineties, with a full cargo o' jute afire. An' that reminds me, sir," the mate said, rising wearily, "I must get a man down from the fire department. a man with an oxygen helmet to take those barrels out."

"Sit you down, mister—go to your cabin and have a rest. I'll have all that attended to. Rig fans, I guess, to blow the gas out." The port captain beckoned to a quartermaster and gave him a slip of paper.

Though his mind was relieved by the knowledge that there was little fear of claims for damaged cargo, Bellamy was not satisfied, for as he joined the officer again he said, "Jute must have been damp. Mr. Owen. Admire your resourcefulness, but there must have been carelessness somewhere. How d'you account for it being wet?"

"I know 'ow it got wet, sir," came a voice at the door. Snell, returning from his errand to report, spoke excitedly.

"How?" cried Bellamy and Owen as one.

"Why, sir, a night or two after Taff—Mr. Owen took on th' mate's job," the quartermaster said, "me an' another fellow come aboard together. Late it was, an' we went along to see was there any night lunch left out for us in the cabin pantry. Very nigh run into the third mate, we did, an' he never seen us, for he was carryin' a big can o' water. An' then we watched 'im turn back the cover o' number two hold an' teen the water down in 'tween the hatches."

"An' why didn't you tell the captain or the chief officer?"

"I did start to warn the chief officer nex' day about it," Snell declared—adding in an aside to the officer—"seein' as you'd 'ad words with the third mate, sir."

"Oh, that's what you were getting at! I thought you were touchin' me for a loan of some money."

"D'you expect me to believe your fairy tale?" Bellamy asked, scowling incredulously. "Who was the other man? Send along for him, Mr. Owen, an' I'll hear his story separately."

The other seaman confirmed Snell's account in every detail, but Captain Bellamy demanded suspiciously: "And didn't you wonder to see the officer pourin' water down the hold?"

"I wondered why the freight needed dampenin'," the seaman admitted, scratching his head thoughtfully, "but he was my superior, an' I figured he knew what he was doin'."

The superintendent sat silent a while after the seamen had returned to their duties. Then he called abruptly to the quartermaster, gave him an order in low, quick tones, and Snell nodded as he returned to the gangway.

"Had words with Arnold, did you, Mr. Owen?"

The mate looked swiftly up, with a sudden recollection of that gleam he had surprised in the third officer's eyes when telling him of the peril of damp jute, and in a few words he told Bellamy all.

"Well, sir, I expect he figured you'd have to flood the hold to keep the fire under—you'd be discharged for incompetency then. He may have heard Snell talking to you and committed suicide to leave you under suspicion. So you'd best say nothing about your difference with him—if there should be an inquiry, I mean."

"If there should be?" queried Owen, startled.

"I've an idea—just a fancy, that Arnold will turn up," the port captain said quietly.

**L**ATE in the afternoon it was deemed safe to inspect the hold, and the surveyors and insurance officials went down the scuttle, Owen leading the way, with Captain Pierpoint of the American Bureau.

"Any time you think of quitting the sea, captain, I can place you," Pierpoint was saying while Owen hesitated, about to tell the portly official he was not yet master of the ship.

"Captain Bellamy! Mr. Owen," came a shout at the open hatch. "I've got him. Come up an' see him, Captain Bellamy."

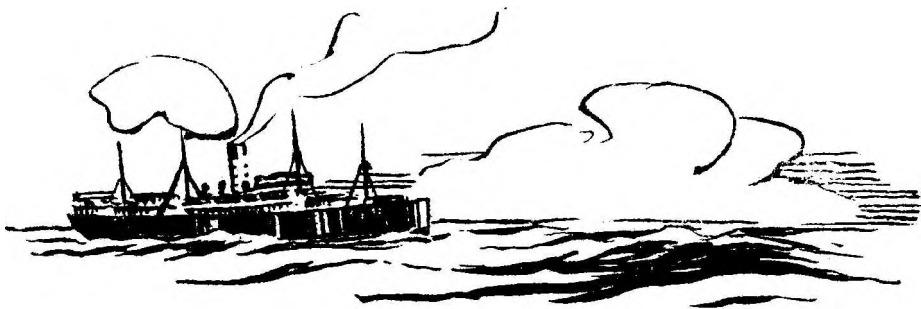
"It's Rogers, but who's he got?" Owen cried while the port captain turned and raced back up the scuttle again.

Abreast of the gangway was a milling group of men, but as the party arrived from the hold, Snell stepped clear of the crowd. He held by the collar a miserable-looking, disheveled man—Arnold. Guilt and terror were inscribed on the dirty, wretched face, and the third mate could scarce stand erect.

"Stowed away after all? Where was he?" Bellamy asked.

"I seen 'im crawlin' out o' number two lifeboat, after you told me to watch out for 'im, sir," said the quartermaster.

"Waiting for darkness to slip ashore and leave Captain Owen forever under suspicion," the port captain agreed.



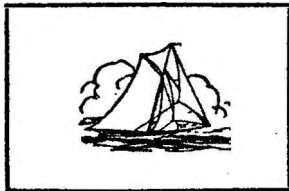


## Tilbury Docks

By DOROTHY VAN VLECK

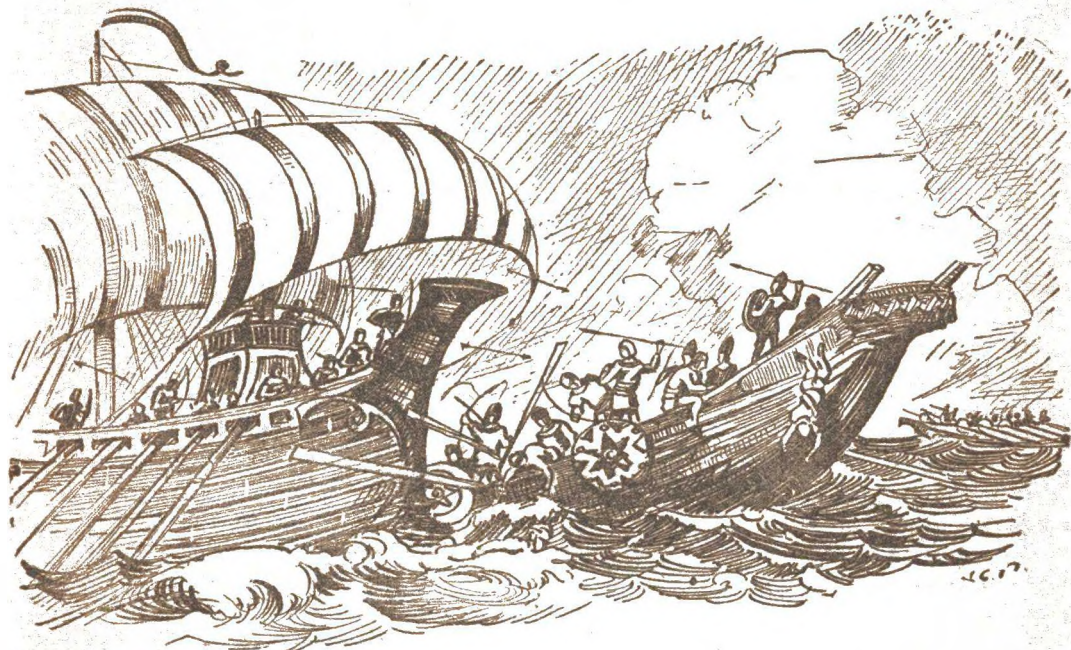
**L**AZY lascars basking in the sun's warm rays,  
Pungent smell of spices from the East,  
Cargo-laden packets from Oriental ways,  
Stately captains stalking 'mid the least.

Precious contents pouring from a musty hold—  
Stalwart bos'ns lord it over all—  
Sulky sailors struggling for a bit of gold,  
Idle ships' boys meddling in a brawl.



# The Rule Of Minos

By John Murray Reynolds



How the narrow seas were first cleared for such as used them on their lawful occasions.

**I**T was the day of the Ram, in the month of the Heron in the year 2500 B. C. There was storm on the inland waters.

The sky was dark and ominous with the clouds of a sudden squall. Sullen, angry waves were lashed to a fury by the gusty wind and hurled themselves in smothers of spray against the rocky coast of a group of islets. A black galley caught by the squall struggled fiercely to move offshore and away from the threat of the rocks. For a while she seemed to hold her own, and then the yard broke from the masthead and fell among the rowers. The galley swung broadside on to the waves and was half filled with a lather of foam as the next comber poured in a torrent over the shield rail. Then came a splintering crash as she struck the rocks. Timbers were shattered and broken and the galley went to pieces. By the time the squall was over and the Mediterranean was returning to its normal smiling condition, only one man survived. He clung to one of the broken timbers of

the bow and drifted with the set of the current.

Little more than a boy he looked, when hauled half conscious from the water some hours later and laid on the deck of the *Amenophis*. That Egyptian merchant ship herself had felt the force of the gale, for she was salt crusted and battered, and with half a score of slaves released from the oars and still baling. But the blunt-bowed Nile craft had been lucky in finding a lee and had survived.

A ring of dark-skinned Egyptian seamen surrounded the castaway who was breathing in great choking gasps. Though of olive hue his skin was lighter in color than that of the men of the Nile. His black hair was long, and his only garment was a bright-colored loin cloth. He was young—but an exceptionally long sword with a slender blade incased in a leather sheath hung from his girdle. The heavy-set Khufu, merchant mariner and owner of the *Amenophis*, nodded slowly to himself.

“He is one of the Keftiu, the men from

beyond. Minoans, they call themselves, or children of Minos, and rule the islands with their swift ships. We are near their waters."

A seaman lifted the youth's head from the deck and poured half a flask of wine down his throat. He coughed and sat up. Shortly after he was on his feet again, little the worse for what he had been through.

"How are you called, young sir?" asked Khufu kindly.

The youth touched his hilt with one hand in a gesture of salute.

"I am Milor of—of Knossus City. The patrol galley *Gull* went on the rocks in the squall. My thanks, Sir Merchant, for the saving of my life."

Khufu shrugged.

"Any would do the same, if Osiris brought opportunity."

"Aye," said the young Minoan, "it is true. We who roam the face of Father Ocean have a comradeship unknown on land. But gratitude is a law with us."

Khufu nodded.

"I have heard somewhat of your laws—the rules of Minos. We of Egypt obey our masters because we must, heed the priests because we fear them, and follow the rules of commerce that make trade possible. For the rest each gets what he can. It is difficult to understand any other conduct."

"And your ships are rowed by slaves," responded Milor; "while every man who pulls an oar in each of our galleys is a free-born Minoan. Therein lies part of the difference."

For an hour they stood talking, while the *Amenophis* plunged sluggishly over the long swells. They were drenched with spray as the blunt bow slapped the waves. Khufu spoke of his voyage to the Punt, and of how far he had now been blown from his course. Milor had just begun to talk of his own land when there came a sudden cry of alarm from the masthead.

Silhouetted against the sky that was again clear with the blueness of late afternoon, a seaman pointed astern with fear in every line of his tense body. All eyes followed the gesture of his extended arm. Khufu swore as he faced around, while the young Minoan leaped up to stand on the bulwarks.

Out from a hidden cove on a rocky islet the *Amenophis* had just passed came two ships. They were small but swift, smeared

with pitch and with upcurving bows crudely carved to represent animal heads. Long ships from the Euxine they were, northern pirates. Sea wolves who preyed on peaceful shipping. Round shields lay along their rails, and the oars were manned by a horde of big-thewed men in sheepskins who shouted as they came.

Aboard the Egyptian craft all was confusion. Rowers took their seats and unlashd the oars. Seamen hoisted the single sail to its full extent. Soldiers sought bows and spears from the lockers. Whips cracked as the slaves bent to the oars, and the boatswain shouted and began to beat time on a bronze shield with the blade of his short sword. Milor turned to face Khufu.

"By the bull, these sea wolves grow overbold," he said, shouting to make his voice carry above the din and confusion. "We are on the very edge of Minoan waters."

"I know naught of that," retorted the burly Egyptian, "but I do know that our voyage is at an end. They will lay us aboard within the hour."

A merchant first of all, and a mariner only from necessity, Khufu was by nature a man of peace. He posted the few fighting men the *Amenophis* carried, and he drove his rowers to their highest speed. Then, with the fatalism of his race, he awaited the approach of the two long ships which were steadily gaining. Though he buckled on the sword the slave brought him, though prepared to fight to the last, he was obviously without hope.

It was different with the young Minoan. Milor shook his head as he surveyed the scanty preparations for defense. Then he stood by the men at the steering oar and peered through the sun wash at the two pursuing ships. On a sudden thought he ran forward and looked closely at the vessel's bow. Then he approached Khufu.

"Have you any particular plan, Sir Merchant?"

For all his worry, the Egyptian smiled at the eager young figure facing him.

"No, young sir. What is in your mind?"

"We—we of Crete are more used to the ways of ships. If you will trust me there may yet be a chance."

Khufu shrugged wearily.

"Do as you please, islander. I see no hope. Try what you will."

"Then send all your archers forward."

"Even though the pirates come up from astern?"

"Even so."

Khufu stared, puzzlement written large on his broad face. But he gave the order and the bowmen all moved up to the bow. An instant later Milor commanded, "Cease rowing!"

The boatswain shouted, and the slaves stopped though keeping the oar blades extended. There was silence on board the *Amenophis* save for the creaking of the cordage, the hiss of water along her strakes, and the low thunder of the bow as she drove into the waves under the power of sail alone. From astern they could hear the sea wolves chanting some wild song of the Euxine as the long ships rapidly closed up with their quarry. Then Milor turned to Khufu, and in a few hasty sentences outlined his plan. For an instant the Egyptian looked startled, then he laughed aloud.

"You are a true whelp of the sea, islander. The plan is good."

The pirates could not understand why the Egyptian craft had stopped rowing, but they redoubled their efforts at this opportunity for more quickly catching up. One of the long ships was a little faster than her fellow and had drawn ahead. In this spurt she now increased her lead. Aboard the *Amenophis* was an atmosphere of tense readiness, while the panting rowers—strengthened by the rest—gripped their oars and awaited the signal.

The pirate vessel came on, her wild crew chanting and waving their battle-axes, and as she drew abreast there came an irregular volley of arrows from such bowmen as she possessed. The shafts hissed venomously through the air. For the most part they went wild, but two of the Egyptian spearmen were down, and a rower of the starboard bank fell back with a strangled cry. Then Milor nodded to Khufu.

The boatswain swung his sword in both hands and brought the flat of it crashing against the bronze shield a slave was holding. At this signal the seamen swiftly lowered the yard, hauling in the sail as it came down. The steersmen simultaneously flung all their weight against the steering oar. The rowers in the port bank dipped their oars and pulled in a sudden desperate fury. In the starboard bank they dipped blades and backed water, snarling through clenched teeth at the oar

butts that leaped like wild things while the water was lashed into a smother of foam. The *Amenophis* swung around sharply and headed straight for the long ship that had been creeping up abeam.

The sea wolves saw the maneuver, but had no time to avoid it. The Minoan youth had waited until the exact moment, and the ponderous Egyptian craft headed squarely and unavoidably for the northerner. There was a fleeting instant while the long overhanging of the bow seemed suspended motionless over the lower bulwarks of the northerner, and then came a mighty crash that threw to the deck all men who had been standing on both vessels.

Ramming was almost unknown in that long-ago day and neither vessel was built for it, but the Egyptian craft had the advantage of striking the other broadside. Also, being bronze riveted, she stood the impact better than the thong-bound northerner whose planks were held together by tight-drawn strips of rawhide. The bow of the *Amenophis* crushed in the pirate's shield rail and bore the lighter vessel down. There was an instant's hideous turmoil, while the water poured into the shattered long ship in a lather of foam, and the Egyptian bowmen leaped to their feet and loosed shaft after shaft at point-blank range. Then, with a lift and a heave, the *Amenophis* passed on and there was nothing left of her foe but shattered planks and floating bodies and the heads of swimming men.

Khufu turned to Milor and grasped his hand. "By the death of Osiris, young sir, the thing was well done. You islanders have a magic of the sea."

The young Minoan smiled, but before he could reply there came a new development that drove all else from their minds.

The sudden maneuver of the *Amenophis* had disposed of the first of the pursuing vessels, but it had brought her within easy reach of the other. The second long ship was abreast before the Egyptian craft could resume her previous course, and the sea wolves were thirsty for vengeance. They still outnumbered Khufu's effective fighting men by almost two to one.

With the oars thudding against the tholepins in a last desperate spurt, with the sea wolves waving their bronze battle-axes and screaming threats and imprecations, the long ship drew up on the quarter of the

*Amenophis* even as she passed beyond the wreck of the other vessel. There was not even time for the Nile bowmen to turn back from the bow to meet this new peril before bronze grappling hooks were thrown aboard and the two vessels were locked together. Then a horde of big-thewed men in salt-incrusted sheepskins swarmed up and over the bulwarks, snatching the round shields from their own rail as they came.

The Egyptian fighting men turned aft to repel the boarders and Milor the islander whipped out his long slender blade and leaped after them. Khufu caught him by the arm. "You are without shield or helm, young sir."

The Minoan smiled and touched the inlaid bronze blade of his sword. "This will serve for both."

For a moment there was a pause. The sea wolves on the stern had drawn together and locked shields, a grim and menacing company. Facing them were the men of the Nile, archers and spearmen intermingled. For a fleeting instant there was dead silence. It was as though both sides drew breath for the death struggle that was coming. Milor could hear the slap of the waves on the strakes and the creaking of the timbers as the locked hulls ground together, and somewhere far-off the cry of the sea birds. Then, with a deep shout, the sea wolves moved forward and the battle was on.

There followed a fierce and sullen fight—one of a thousand nameless battles unknown to the pages of history, where forgotten men have fought in forgotten places, that the seas might be safe for their fellows. Merchant and freebooter, they have warred since men first sailed the waters.

The northerners moved slowly forward, a fringe of battle-axes tossing above the line of their locked shields. The men of the Nile met them with a shout and a flurry of stabbing spear points, while archers climbed on the bulwarks and released their remaining arrows in a venomous, stinging swarm. The two forces met with a crash, recoiled, and then met again as the Euxine axes came into play and the short Egyptian swords sought to dart under the guarding shields.

Once the shield wall was formed it was the northern custom to keep it intact and present an unbroken front to the foe. Fortunately for the men of the *Amenophis*,

the cluttered decks made this impossible. The Nile bowmen broke the first rush of the sea wolves, and after that both groups became intermingled and broken up into a series of minor combats. Over all sounded a steady ringing clangor of bronze as blade met blade.

Milor of Knossus fought in the front ranks of the Egyptians, wielding his long sword with practiced ease. The Minoans were the first to introduce science into sword play, and the Egyptians who had never seen one in action marveled at the swift movement of that slender blade. Khufu, stepping back from the fight for an instant to wipe the salt sweat from his eyes, glanced at the young Minoan. He saw Milor engage a giant northerner twice his size, and suddenly leap aside with cat-like speed to avoid the bone-crushing down stroke of the Euxine ax. Then the islander's long blade darted forward in an extended lunge. In one swift movement the keen point circled the guarding pommel and passed through the pirate's throat to stand a hand's breadth out behind. So swift were the young Minoan's movement that he had withdrawn the blade and engaged another antagonist before the first had crumpled to the deck.

Khufu began to understand how this race of islanders, small in stature and not particularly warlike in disposition, had come to the founding of so widespread an empire. It was not only that they had brought to the world stout ships, good seamanship, and the art of navigation. They had also brought skill and cleverness into the waging of war—a quick eye, a strong wrist, and a well-balanced sword. They had brought finesse and science, rather than merely courage combined with brute strength alone.

Though hopelessly outnumbered the Egyptians fought on without thought of surrender. The stubborn, sullen courage of their race, that had wrought civilization from an arid waste and dominated the known world for a score of centuries, held them to the fray. Their dark faces somber and sweat-streaked, their panting breath hissing between their teeth, they fought the hopeless battle and were pushed back step by step toward the bow.

Milor the islander was cast in a different mold. He laughed as he fought, smiling at the snarling, skin-clad men who ringed him in and mocking them with

barbed phrases as keen and swift as the blade of his sword. Sometimes he giped at them in the hybrid Minoan that was *lingua franca* along the inland sea. At others he flung epithets in their own barbarous northern tongue. They cursed him, and pressed him close, but could not pass the menace of that keen point. Once he slipped in a pool of blood and fell to the deck. A pirate leaped forward with upraised axe, but Milor writhed aside so that the heavy blade just grazed his shoulder. He spitted his antagonist with a swift upward thrust and a moment later was back on his feet.

Khufu's broad chest had been laid open from shoulder to waist by the raking slash of a sword. For an instant he stepped back and leaned against the timbers of the bow. His weary glance strayed over the peaceful waters, and then he suddenly stiffened. He rubbed his eyes, fearing that what he saw might be a mirage born of the sunset and weariness. Then, with a sudden hope rising in his breast, he leaped forward to seize the young Minoan by the arm. "What ship is that?"

Gliding swiftly out from the lee of the islet toward which the grappled ships had drifted came a long black galley with a high vermilion prow. No merchant ship was this, nor thong-bound northerner, but a swift war galley of the Minoan empire. With half-naked sailors lying along the yard and clewing up the great sail, with many oars beating the waves in perfect time, with the rays of the setting sun twinkling on ruddy bronze above her bulwarks, she sped swiftly toward the two locked ships where the battle still raged unheeding.

Milor swung his long blade upward in a sudden return of energy. "It is the *Dolphin*, one of our patrol galleys," he cried with a great relief in his voice. "Now woe to these terrible wolves of the north!"

One of the pirates saw the war galley and shouted a sudden alarm. Others took up the cry, and there came the flat note of a northern horn as some one blew the recall. There was stark panic among the pirates as the sea wolves saw their danger. The men of the Euxine knew of old the swift Minoan justice, and knew their only possible chance lay in instant flight. Abandoning the Egyptian vessel they returned aboard their own craft in

a confused horde and slashed the grappling cables as soon as the last man was aboard. The surviving Egyptians were too few and too weary to press their advantage and were content to lean panting on their weapons and raise a ragged cheer.

Rowing a hasty and uneven beat, and with every available man at the oars, the long ship sped away in desperate flight. A short man in a scarlet-plumed helmet standing on the galley poop flung up his hand, and a trumpet sounded a single peremptory note. At once the throb of the *Dolphin's* drum increased its cadence. The oars perceptibly advanced their steady beat and the war galley moved swiftly in pursuit. Archers were taking their places along the fore-and-aft bridge, stringing bows and loosening arrows in quivers.

With a weary sigh Khufu sheathed his sword and turned to the young Minoan at his side. "Your countrymen come in good time, islander. Without them we would soon have all descended to that dark Amenti where Osiris sits in judgment over us."

"I am glad they have paid a little of my debt to you."

"What debt?"

"Gratitude, Sir Merchant. For saving me from the depths of Father Ocean."

Khufu laughed.

"That debt is more than discharged, young sir. But I would our men of the Nile and the Delta were more to your way of thinking."

Both ships were clearly within sight of the watchers of the *Amenophis* as the Minoan galley drew up abreast of her prey within easy bowshot. The few bowmen among the pirates loosed hastily and for the most part ineffectually, hampered by the galley's higher sides. Then the captain again flung up his hand and the trumpeter blew another blast. All the galley's archers loosed together, each man shooting five arrows as fast as he could fit shaft to string. So swift were they that they seemed to be a continuous cloud of arrows. From the advantage of the *Dolphin's* higher sides the swift shafts took a fearful toll from the sea wolves clustered at their oars. Then they ceased, and the well-disciplined bowmen again stood with arrow on string.

The *Dolphin* nosed up till her tall bow loomed over the pirates' low shield rail and a swarm of Minoan marines dropped down



to finish the task. The handful of survivors met them with ax and sword, but the disciplined soldiers hemmed them in with a wall of ox-hide shields bristling with spears. There was no thought of quarter. Honest seamen met with little mercy at the hands of victorious foemen in that long-ago day. What chance was there for outlawed pirates caught red-handed? The long swords of the islanders raged victorious from stem to stern, and then the ship was set afire and left to drift away toward the sunset. Red flames crackled and spread along her pitch-smearred planking, and a column of black smoke poured upward on the still evening air.

**T**HE day was nearly done when some officers of the Minoan war galley boarded the *Amenophis*. A few early stars were gleaming in the east and the "Very Green" had taken on the translucent hue it bears of a still evening. The leader was a gray-haired man who wore the typical Minoan garment and a plumed bronze helmet. He dropped over the bulwarks and saluted Khufu with a graceful gesture of an open hand.

"I am Harran of Palaikastro, master of the patrol ship *Dolphin*. What ship is this?"

"The *Amenophis* of Memphis, bound for the Punt. You came just in time. You have our thanks."

Harran's weather-beaten face creased in a smile and his sea-blue eyes twinkled. "Nay, Egyptian, it is but our duty to patrol the sea lanes. But your ship is in a bad way."

"I will return to the Nile mouths for refitting."

"It is well. But who is this?" The mariner's eyes widened and he stared in amazement as Milor stepped smilingly forward.

"Greetings, oh Harran."

"Lord Milor! How came you here?"

"The *Gull* went down in a squall," the youth explained; "and I owe my life to this merchant who fished me from the waters."

"We are bound for Knossos. Will you not return with us?"

Milor shook his head and glanced at Khufu. "I owe this merchant a debt for the saving of my life. I must stay with him till it is paid."

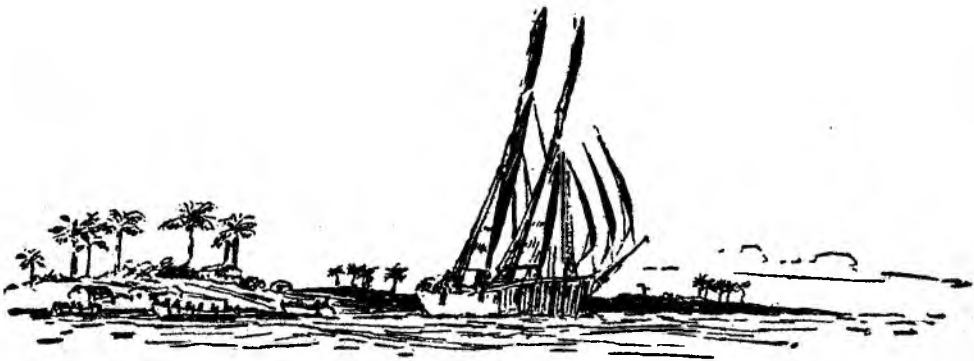
Khufu laughed and dropped a friendly hand on the young Minoan's shoulder. "Nay, young sir, that debt was discharged in good measure when you sank the first long ship. But for you we would all have passed to Amenti before the *Dolphin* ever came. We of Egypt have sometimes long memories, and I will ever be your friend."

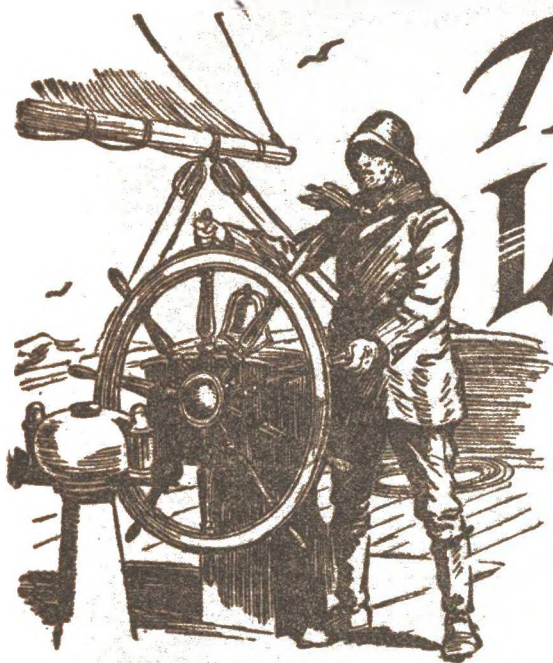
When Milor had boarded the Minoan galley Khufu turned to Harran, the captain, who still stood at his side. "A gallant youth, Sir Mariner. "Who is he?"

Harran smiled broadly. "That is Milor, youngest son of our emperor himself. A prince of the blood royal."

"And yet he was willing to remain with me a while longer if I wished him because I had saved his life?"

"Even so. Honor, courage, and gratitude—it is the rule of Minos. Farewell, Egyptian. May the winds favor your voyage."





# The Log Book

This department is a meeting place for all readers of this magazine. It is free to all for the purpose of open discussion on topics concerning the sea.

**W**HENEVER a reader of this magazine criticizes an author whose writings appear in these pages we always give the author a hearing. It is obviously unfair to condemn any one after listening only to his accusers. For the first letter this month we take pleasure in giving you—or rather permitting Shipmate T. Jenkins Hains to give his version of the points in his story which Shipmate Brown criticized in a recent number of this magazine.

The criticisms advanced by Mr. Brown involve a very fine distinction. And as the controversy seems to be strictly between Mr. Brown and Mr. Hains, we feel that it would be better for us to keep out of it, only advancing the well-known old sailors' proverb about "different ships, different long splices."

Oh, Sailor Brown; oh, Sailor Brown!

You knock me down, you knock me down—  
When you speak of that dinghy sea-washed  
and only overboard a few days.

That was my mistake, but it was the result of the very thing you find fault with. I had in mind a dinghy which lay on the deck of a ship I was in, and it lay there seven years without ever being out of the gripes. Do you know that often a dinghy lies in gripes from the time it is put aboard ship until the vessel is sunk or sold for junk? I should have said so; I should have said what made that little boat look so worn and old. But I didn't, and you called me. But you must forgive me, and remember that I sure appreciate a feller that reads his stuff carefully and thinks. You do, and I thank you.

But you are wrong on that capsize thing. Boats don't capsize; they turn over. No American sailor ever capsizes a small boat—except in the navy. There "The metacentric height having been foreshortened to a dangerous degree, the boat turned radially upon its axis, and so forth." I say *turn over*—I, Thornton Jenkins Hains.

And I dare any one to say that he has had more experience in small boats than I—what? Or I might say listened to conversation concerning them. Yeah, I am an authority on small boats. I say so, and that makes it so. If you should say to a real deep-water sailor that a boat capsized, he would probably think you meant that it was being measured for a suit of dreadnaught. It upsets; that is shorter, and means just that. Sailors use short words; they are seldom given to long ones.

I won't argue with you, but I do thank you. We owe this to our good editor, and when a feller takes the trouble to show up a mistake, I know he takes interest. Thanks again. But don't make me laugh about not having been to sea in sailing ships. My lips are chapped.

T. JENKINS HAINS.

**H**ERE is some more information about that mysterious *Pass of Balmaha*. Shipmate Cairney writes us to straighten out her name, as well as tell us something about the system of dogwatch bells used in British vessels. You may remember that there was a question about these in a recent number of this magazine. Mr. Cairney also points out a slight error in one of our late stories. And, since he asks the question of us directly, we have to admit that he is correct in his remarks.

In his last letter Shipmate Weaver men-

tioned the *Brander* and *Brandon*, which Mr. Cairney mentions in his letter. How the names of the ships that he mentions bring up memories! They make us think of John Masefield's fine poem:

Though I tell many, there must still be others,  
McVikar Marshall's ships and Fernie Brothers',  
*Lochs, Counties, Shires, Drums*, the countless  
lines

Whose house flags all were once familiar signs  
At high main trucks on Mersey's windy ways.

The ships are all gone now or carrying on under foreign names and registry, although one of Hardie's ships is still sailing under her original name. But her registry is now Finnish. This firm, in contradistinction to the lines mentioned by Mr. Cairney, named all their vessels after Wellington's battles. The ship in question is the *Hougomont*. Others of that fleet were the *Talavera* and *Vimiera*.

The entries in the Log Book of the July issue were, as usual, quite interesting. There were several inquirers whom I may, in some small measure, be able to help out.

Shipmate Johnson inquires as to the bells struck in the second dogwatch in British ships. From my experience in the British navy and merchant service I may say that the bells struck were as follows: At six p. m., four bells; six thirty p. m., one bell; seven p. m., two bells; seven thirty p. m., three bells; eight p. m., eight bells.

With reference to the *Pass of Balmaha*, I will first of all state my reasons for my answer. The various lines of British ships enjoyed what one might call a sort of unnamed copyright in the naming of their vessels, and, as a general rule, this right was very rarely infringed upon. There was only one line of ships bearing the names of the Scottish lochs—*Loch Garry, Loch Etive, Loch Tay*, and so forth; the Shire line, *Cromartyshire, Nairnshire*, and so forth; the Pass line, *Pass of Balmaha, Pass of Killiecrankie*, and so forth; the Bay line, *Rothesay Bay, Algoa Bay*.

Coming then to the steamship lines, we have the Clan line, *Clan MacDonald, Clan Robertson*. The City line, *City of Bombay, City of Calcutta, City of Benares*. The Castle line, *Dunvegan Castle, Tantallon Castle, Dunotter Castle*. The old Union line, now merged with the Castle line, took their names from the various races of people, namely, *Goth, Gaul, Ghurka, Saxon, Spartan, Scot*. The Cunard line took theirs from provinces in Europe and Africa, *Campania, Lucania, Etruria, Umbria, Mauretania*. The White Star line has a mixed class of names, but they all end with the letters "ic," *Majestic, Britannic, Teutonic, Suevic, Delphic, Doric, Bovic*. The British and African—Elder Dempster's—took theirs from places on the west coast of Africa, *Benguella, Ibadan, Ilorin, Bonny, Brass, Volta, Dahomey*.

I could continue for some time quoting the names and the origin of them of the various

lines. But my idea in enumerating them as above is to properly convey the impression that there was little likelihood of two ships bearing the same name as the *Pass of Balmaha*, for in actual shipping circles a vessel had to be lost or otherwise out of existence, or sold and her name changed, before the name was used again. It would then only be used by the original owners of a vessel of that name. I hope I have made myself clear, as this was the general practice.

To the best of my knowledge Shipmate Jones was right when he says that the *Pass of Balmaha* was captured and became the German raider *Seeadler*.

Shipmate Rankin, in his letter, suggests that Shipmate Weaver may have meant that the *Bengairn* was originally the *Pass of Brandon*, instead of the *Pass of Branda*. Well, both would be wrong, for the ship's name was the *Pass of Branda*. It is the name of another pass in Scotland. That's what comes of being a Scot and knowing Scotland, with its bens, lochs, shires, and passes.

Now we come to Shipmate Kendall, of Ottawa, and his inquiry about the seven-masted schooner *Thomas W. Lawson*. It is rather curious that I happened to be speaking of her in the morning, and I received my copy of the July SEA STORIES that night, with this shipmate's inquiry in it.

If my memory serves me right, she was named after Thomas W. Lawson, the writer, who wrote the book entitled "Friday, the 13th," and it was a strange coincidence that the vessel was wrecked and a total loss on the Scillys on Friday, the 13th, with a loss of twenty-eight men. This may not be what Shipmate Kendall wants, but it is part of her career which I remember, and which, as the skipper says, was a short one.

Before I close I would like to mention a sea story which I read last week, and which hardly records what would be the actual facts. In this story it happened to be sailing day, and in all my experience sailing day has been announced by flying the blue peter at the fore. However, the story says that, "The fog was so thick you couldn't see the blue peter sagging from the mizzen topmast." But I am afraid that the fog was so thick that you couldn't tell one end of the vessel from the other. I may also say that an accompanying illustration showed a steamer with but two masts, so it would be a hard job to fly any kind of bunting at her mizzen. How's that, skipper?  
JAMES D. CAIRNEY.

**O**UR next letter is from Shipmate Brown, of Eustis, Florida. As he expresses it, he comes like a cat's-paw, so his complaint is a gentle one. If our memory serves us correctly, Mr. Brown, you were aft not long ago with a complaint about the grub. If you're not satisfied with what we serve you, we'll put you on your strict whack. How would you like to go on a "pound-and-pint" diet for a while?

But, anyway, your kick shows that you are a sailor. For no good sailor ever sits

by quietly and takes things as they come. He never seems to have learned the old adage about "for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." No, if he isn't kicking about the grub, he's kicking about the weather, the mates, the captain's seamanship, or the ship herself.

So if you ever hear a sailor growling, it's a pretty sure thing that he is only expressing his contentment. So we'll let you walk off the poop, Shipmate Brown, if you'll promise to set a good example to the new hands forward. And we think you'll agree with us that there is a steady improvement in the diet that we're feeding you fellows forward. Dismiss.

Here I come again, like a cat's-paw. Only I'm a friendly one—trying to express myself to thy understanding.

Captain, I am glad that the story "Adventures of an African Slaver" is going to wind up shortly, because it was very tedious to me. In fact, too much of it isn't about the sea at all.

You have several nice stories in the last number of SEA STORIES. "Pounding Brass," "Hauling the Trawl," and several others were good. Now if you can get a regular yarn about navigation—a regular sea story, without so much of it on shore—that will be fine. For what do we care for sea stories with so much of the plot on the land?

Say, captain, I have to grin when I think of what we started in that brigantine argument. And some of the fellows that answered it got kind of personal, didn't they?

And that is what made me grin, I guess, because they must have taken the matter to heart. Maybe they would say a barkentine was something else if we didn't like 'em calling it a bark.

Well, captain, I have folks living in Gloucester, Massachusetts, also in New York—where I was born and raised. And I happen to know Hell Gate and to the eastward, where I had lots of pleasure years ago when it was all beautiful country.

Don't be surprised if some time in the future another little cat's-paw drifts up that way. It's eight bells now, for noon hash. Well, fair weather to you, captain. E. H. D. BROWN.

**H**ERE is a letter from a modern seaman who wants to see more stories about the kind of seafaring he has experienced. Well, Shipmate Taylor, you will have to admit—if you are an old member of the crew—that we have always stoutly defended the modern seafarer in these pages. It has long been a firmly fixed opinion of ours that the present-day sailormen are the equal of the old-time sailing-ship hands. Of course, there are some things that an old Sou' Spainer could do which you modern sailors couldn't. But that's not the fault of the modern man.

There is no call for him to cut a full suit of sails, mast a ship, or set up a set of hemp rigging.

There are lots of things done on a ship to-day that would leave the sailing-ship man like a fish out of water if he had to do them. No, men have not changed—it is only ships and gear that have changed. And we even know of a few old-timers who have hung onto the sea in the face of modern conditions who believe that things have changed for the better. They are quite frank about it and do not hesitate to tell you so.

And, as Shipmate Taylor says, sailing-ship hands were shanghaied for a long while. That is quite true, but it was hardly the fault of the hands themselves. It was simply part of the pernicious system by which seamen were handicapped for a long while. And shanghaiing was not the worst of the system, either. There was the old "advance" idea, by which a sailor was advanced anywhere from one to three months of his pay. Not in cash, mind you, but in credit to the boarding-house keepers and their satellites.

But even in the days of crimping and shanghaiing, every boarding-house keeper was not crooked. Some of you may remember the reminiscences that appeared in these pages lately. They were written by several of our old-time readers, and, according to these men, who were familiar with the worst of the old-time conditions, some of the boarding-house masters were more than fair to their patrons.

Those were the days when there were no sailors' unions, and such a thing as overtime for seamen was unheard of. In some of the smarter ships of those times the crew—consisting of the two watches—were not allowed a daytime watch below. All the rest they got was during their watch and watch at night. Four hours of sleep one night and eight hours of sleep the next. And then when the occasion demanded it they were liable to be called out on deck for an all-hands job—such as wearing or tacking ship or making fast some of the heavier sails. No, the sailor of to-day is decidedly better off than those of fifty years ago. We don't believe that any one would want to change present living conditions at sea back to the way they used to be.

I am a constant reader of SEA STORIES and I enjoy the magazine very much. "Under Way

for Honolulu" was a very good story, and I hope to see more like it.

But I am off on the wrong tack. I am writing this letter in defense of present-day seamen. Shipmate Fred Elvin and a few more of our friends express desires to read more of the seamen of yesterday and less of the present-day sailor.

Well, I agree with them there, but that does not give him permission to put us on the pan. For the last five years I have made my living on the high seas. And two of those five years were spent in the American Diamond line ships, running to Holland.

Now, any seaman who has sailed to Rotterdam and carried that deck cargo of acid knows what that means. It doesn't only mean pulling out at all hours of the morning to lash cargo, but it also means burns and plenty of them.

So, you see, present-day sailors must be as able as any old salt. And, furthermore, half of your clipper-ship crews were shanghai'd dock rats, and you know this is true.

GORDON TAYLOR.

**H**ARDSHIPS, poor food, living conditions, and British versus American ships, is the note struck by Shipmate Gold in the following letter which he sent us. We agree with Shipmate Gold in his remarks about the food in American vessels. But from our own personal experiences with British vessels we feel inclined to take exception to some of his remarks about their food. True, it was bad, and there was very little variety about it. But the hands in the forecabin—a wide range of nationalities—were a pretty average husky lot.

Now, the ships we speak of were those of a later day than the ones Mr. Gold knew. It may be that at one time they starved sailors to the point of weakness. At any rate, our own experience dates since the day of the merchant-shipping act and was confined to what was known as "full-and-plenty ships." As the scale of provisions called for by the board of trade is rather more than a man needs, there was a tacit agreement between shipmasters and crews that the board-of-trade scale be ignored so long as the men were furnished with enough food—hence the name "full-and-plenty ships."

Now we remember one such vessel in which some of the forecabin hands considered that they were not getting enough to eat. Well, they got all hands to go aft with them and complain about the food. They kicked for and got their strict board-of-trade whack of everything, and, while some of them thought they were getting enough to eat before, we all agreed that

after we went on our whack we lived like fighting cocks.

But it just goes to show that you can get used to anything. In that ship we were not unanimous about a scarcity of food. There were several sea lawyers in the forecabin, and they simply persuaded every one that they were not getting enough. At any rate, there were no evidences of starvation among the hands.

And scurvy has not been confined to British ships—it has been known in the ships of every nationality that ever went deep water. Well, Shipmate Gold, we hope that you'll take these few remarks in the spirit in which they are given—one of a friendly desire to see both sides of every question. We know that you have had many long years at sea over and above our own dogwatch in sail and steam, so we hope you'll try to see our side of the question.

In your issue of October, in the Log Book, I read the letter of Shipmate Hope's, of Hull, in which he agrees with me that Yankee ships of that period were far superior to the limejuicers in the matter of feeding their men. I have reference to the '70s and '80s. And, of course, as he says, every old shellback knows that.

The *H. B. Hyde* that he mentioned had the reputation of being a hot ship, but she was an exception to the general rule in Yankee deep-water ships. If a man knew his work in those vessels he was not bothered, as a rule.

Now about deep-water Nova Scotia ships. During that period of the '70s and '80s they sailed under the British flag, and I can assure you that most of them were warm babies. But the food in them was much better than in the deep-water limejuicers, or, as we used to call them, "pound-and-pint ships."

I sailed in a limejuicer outward bound to Bombay in 1883. She hailed from Liverpool. There was watch and watch, but hunger and ease. How could a man work on an empty stomach? Some of the men had scurvy from eating rotten salt pork that was yellow with age. Of course, they were not able to do much work, and no wonder they had watch and watch. I was an American sailor once and proud of it. I hope you will kindly publish this in the Log Book.

ALFRED GOLD.

**S**HIPMATE H. G. HOPE, of Hull, England, sends us the following note as a correction to his letter which appeared in the October issue of this magazine. This letter is particularly appropriate, inasmuch as Shipmate Gold speaks of Mr. Hope's letter in this issue.

I beg to thank you for your courteous letter of the 14th inst. If not too late for press, I should like to make one small correction to a

statement made in my previous letter. I mentioned having been in company with the *Jane L. Stanford* in Honolulu in the early part of 1898 and spoke of her as a five-masted schooner. I find I was mistaken. She is a five-masted barkentine, and is, I believe, still doing good duty.

As I have not been able to pick up any odd copies of *SEA STORIES* magazine during the last few months, I am placing an order with a news agent to procure same regularly for me, if possible.

H. G. HOPE.

**S**HIPMATE SOUTHALL, whose interesting articles on later sailing-ship days have appeared recently in this magazine, has sent us the following interesting bit of anecdote. Ghost stories, as a rule, are not within the province of this magazine, but as this is an exceptional one—and true—we feel justified in passing it on to you. We have no doubt that there must be hundreds of similar experiences on the part of seafaring men of all ages. Perhaps some of the ancient superstitions of sailors originally started in a manner as described in this little article.

As a child I was dreamy and imaginative and rather inclined to attach importance to dreams. But going to sea at an early age knocked a good bit of that nonsense out of me.

For instance, a dream which occurred several times during my first voyage made rather an impression on me. I dreamed that I was in a rather old-fashioned type of ship, much different from the one in which I was serving at the time of the dreams.

Some horrible things always happened. Sometimes it was plain and understandable disaster—such as capsizing or dismasting. But more often it was a ghostly, indefinable evil, which would envelop me with dread.

In my dreams I would always recognize the ship in which the disaster was to happen. The principal details of her made her stand out from other ships. They were a low quarter-deck or half deck, abaft which was a full-sized poop.

The dream itself might not, indeed, have made such an impression on me but for the fact that I also dreamed that the ship I was in at the time was to be wrecked. As she actually wrecked during my third voyage in her, my forebodings were strengthened and my faith in dreams bolstered up.

Years passed, until all memories of the dreams had passed away, and nothing occurred to bring them to mind until I shipped in a vessel named *Latimer*. The crew were all put on board at night, so that I noticed nothing unusual about her. I turned in that night with an easy mind.

In the morning we were turned to and set to washing decks, and the gang went along with buckets and brooms in the usual manner. When we reached amidships on our way aft I recognized, to my horror, the ship of my dreams! There was the low quarter-deck, with the poop rising above it as per the dream. And, what

made it worse, I had never been shipmates with or seen that style of poop before.

Honestly, I was scared. My first impulse was to jump overboard and swim ashore, as we were lying in Pensacola Bay. Reflection calmed me somewhat and a fantastic mood prevailed. "What will be will be," thought I. "Even if this ship is doomed, I may come through all right." And very glad I am that I did see it through, as the sequel will show.

A day or so afterward the wind blew fair, so we hove up the anchor, set all sail, and started on the voyage to Rio de Janeiro. The time passed smoothly enough, we had fine weather, and the ship was comfortable. Nothing unusual occurred, and my fears gradually died away until I had forgotten all about them.

One night, however, after we had been at sea about two months, I had the dream again, and all my old fears returned. "Here is where I get it," I thought, as I turned out at midnight to take the twelve-to-two trick at the wheel.

On going on deck I found it was raining, and the moon, though full, was obscured by heavy clouds. Still the wind was light and the sea smooth and there was nothing alarming to be seen. Cursing myself for a fool, I threw an oilskin coat over my head and shoulders, and at eight bells I went aft and relieved the wheel and carried on steering.

After a while the rain ceased, the moon came out, and all looked calm and peaceful. The weather was indeed very fine, and a night less inducive to fear would be hard to find. The ship was practically steering herself and needed very little attention, so that I had leisure enough in which to ponder. My thoughts, of course, dwelt on my dream. I was obsessed by it, and, in spite of the fine weather, an indefinable dread assailed me. I strove in vain to shake it off.

I grew more and more depressed, until I was verily in the throes of panic. Some ghostly presence was close behind me, weighing down on my spirits heavier and heavier, and ever drawing nearer. I did not dare turn around, but I could sense behind me a glimmering circle—a moonlike sheen, ever growing larger and larger. I thought of Vaughn's poem, in which he saw eternity as a circle, and I was afraid.

I could stand it no longer; my overwrought senses gave up and I collapsed in a heap on the gratings.

The second mate, who was on watch, rushed up and shook me. "What's the matter? What's the matter? What ails you? Speak up, man!" he cried as he dragged me to my feet.

"The ghost! The ghost!" I gasped.

"Ghost, ghost, what ghost?" he returned. "Where? What the hell is the matter with you? Are you mad or only shamming?" yelled the second mate as he shook me again.

"Aft, aft," I moaned. "On the wheel box. I daren't look!"

He glared aft over my shoulder, then he gave a yell of understanding and rage and patted me encouragingly on the jaw with a hard and knotted fist. I collapsed again from physical effect this time, and again he stooped and lifted me to my feet and twisted me around.

"Look, look!" he howled. "There's your ghost. You moonstruck, half-baked idiot!"

I looked and beheld a newly painted lifebuoy

dangling from the spanker boom. The rain-drops glistened on its fresh, white surface, and indeed it looked very innocent.

Next day I was, of course, the laughingstock of the ship and sneaked about with my tail between my legs. I was heartily ashamed of myself and felt very downcast. "If this is all there is in dreams," thought I, "what an utter fool I must be!"

For years I had been hag-ridden by my own imagination, only to be made a fool of by a little white paint and moonshine. Yet the other dream came to mind, wherein I had dreamed that a ship was to be lost and it happened so. I was puzzled and still am.

Every one considered it a good joke and kidded me considerably. All that is, except one old seaman who, though illiterate, was serious minded. He listened patiently to my story and then warned me solemnly to guard against the reaction.

"It was quite evident," said he, "that the dreams had been sent for a purpose. Apparently, your imagination needed a check, and this was it.

"It was more than a coincidence," he insisted, "that a persistent series of dreams should have such a ridiculous sequence. However, the dream has achieved its object, and you must not let the pendulum of thought swing to the other extreme and say there was naught, neither in visions nor in anything else."

It was very good advice, and I took it to heart. Nevertheless, ever since that time, I have had more respect for Houdini than for Palladino.

G. F. SOUTHALL.

**O**UR next letter is one of criticism about one of our recent stories. The story in question, "No Bottom," while not strictly a sea story, was worthy of a place in these pages, especially since it was a steamboat story. Mr. Allen, who wrote the yarn, has had actual experience as engineer in Southern river steamers, and we feel that he knew his details. We ran the story as an experiment, to see what the readers thought of material of this kind. So we are pleased to see that the only complaint is one about details and not the story itself.

In the first place, the story is laid on the river as it was in the '70s. In spite of the fact that rivermen, as a class, are the most conservative people in the country, there have been many changes in river practice since that time. Now "Chips," as our correspondent styles himself, says that no steamer carried "bucket boards." They were, he says, called "bucket planks."

He says that they are not bolted on, but are secured by stirrups. Well enough, but stirrups are secured by nuts, and it might quite easily be spoken of as "bolting."

Now you will notice that he says the engineers would not be working on the

wheel—the carpenter would have objected. In this case we feel that the river boats are like their ocean-going sisters, they might easily have been without a carpenter.

Now as to the drinking. Mr. Allen states that "a keg of whisky was broached and set at the roaring furnaces." And as to the boiler deck, "Confident betters invited friends to the bar, while on the boiler deck the bottle and jug freely passed among the deck passengers and roustabouts."

There is nothing in the last sentence to show that Mr. Allen has confused the names of the decks of his steamer, and as to drinking, it was an exceptional case, the vessel was racing and every one was worked up to a feverish pitch. We are not trying to evade the obligation of any errors on our part; we are not familiar with river practice in many details, and it may be that our author has also forgotten some minor points of that trade. In any event, he may be pardoned.

I have been a reader of SEA STORIES ever since its first publication. That fact in itself will tell you that I like it very much. Occasionally, like Shipmate Brown, I find something that goes all over me, making the flesh crawl. The farmer should know his onions, and the writer of sea stories should know the sea—and the writer of steamboating on the rivers should know his subject.

In the story "No Bottom" the engineers had no business on the wheel; the carpenter would raise hell if the engineers attempted to do his work. There are no "bucket boards" in a steamboat wheel, but there are "bucket planks." The buckets are not "bolted on"; they are fastened to the wheel arms with "stirrups." A roustabout is not employed as such in the engine room, but he might be making a trip as a greaser.

As for the roustabouts and the deck passengers passing around the bottle on the boiler deck, it isn't done. The writer appears to imagine the boiler deck is the deck where the boilers are located. But the deck above the boilers, which forms the cabin floor, is the boiler deck. The only business that would allow a roustabout on the boiler deck in the good old times was when he went to the "nigger window" at the bar—starboard side forward—to get a drink.

In low water the pilot taps the bell for soundings. The captain or the mate is on the roof (hurricane deck), to pass the word to the pilot. "Six feet starboard; six and a half port. No-o-o bott'm starboard; no-o-o bott'm port." *Bam* goes the bell, and the soundings are done.

Another thing, the pilot does not ring a gong and jingle to go ahead on the engines, even in this day. The old Mississippi River boat signals are used on that type of craft. I was carpenter on river boats forty-four years ago, and I have been in deep-water boats on the seven seas since then.

"OLD CHIPS."

**S**HIPMATE WEBB, of Cornwall, England, would like some information that we feel sure can easily be furnished through the pages of this magazine. He asks about two vessels of the famous *Star* fleet, once owned by James Corry, of Belfast, Ireland. Many of these ships were latterly owned by the Alaska packers. We can give Mr. Webb some information about the *Stars*, and we hope that the readers who can do so will come forward—or aft—with additional information about this once-fine fleet.

James Corry organized his ships for the Calcutta jute trade, and the first of them to carry the name *Star* was built in 1860. She was the *Star of Erin*, an iron ship. All these vessels were renowned for smartness in appearance as well as sailing—Shipmate Webb only mentions the latter quality in his letter. They were painted black on topsides and had spar-colored masts and yards.

An early vessel of this fleet, the *Star of Greece*, made the fastest round trip on record between London and Calcutta. She did it in a trifle under six months. To the best of our knowledge this record still stands. A later vessel of the *Star* fleet acquired a very unsavory reputation. She was a sister ship to the *Star of Bengal* that Mr. Webb asks about. One night, in bad weather, she lost the mate and the entire port watch overboard, the only survivor of the watch being the man at the wheel. No one knows to this day just how the accident happened, although the unfortunate watch must have been hauling down one of the jibs, for that sail was found adrift—or rather the rags of it—when the starboard watch finally came on deck.

The *Star of Russia* was one of the original *Stars* taken over for the Alaska salmon trade and was operated until comparatively recently. We do not know what eventually became of the *Star of Bengal*, but the *Star of Italy* was operated by the Alaska packers until after the War, and the last we heard of her she was cut down into a barge on the Pacific coast.

Please sign me on as a humble member of your crew. My first contact with SEA STORIES was about a year ago, and since then, when my wanderings have permitted me to do so, I have secured a copy and read it from cover to cover.

Since 1920 I have had to live ashore, a real punishment in my case. But the War knocked me out. I was in command when the War broke

out, and I ended up by doing one year and eight months in special staff camps as a prisoner of war in Germany. And now my health is gone from a seaman's point of view, and I write about the sea in an effort to make both ends meet.

Recently I sent you a short story, and I am sending you another. Can any member of the crew tell me the ultimate fate of two ships I served my time in—*Star of Bengal* and *Star of Italy*? Both were full-rigged ships and fast sailers. They were owned by James Corry, of Belfast—who also owned the *Star of Russia*, *Star of Greece*, and other ships the names of which all began with *Star*. I was also in their first steamers—which were brigantine-rigged—the *Star of England* and *Star of Victoria*. These vessels were employed in the Australian trade.

EDWARD L. L. WEBB.

**W**E are passing on to you another letter asking about several old ships.

These vessels were never the famous cracks that some of the regular liners were, but we have no doubt they possessed many estimable qualities to endear themselves to one who knew them so long ago. We are not sure, but we feel that the two ships asked about by Shipmate Johnston were better known in the Quebec timber trade than in the other employs. There were many vessels employed in this trade that never became famous and yet were smart, homely little vessels. Many of the famous American wooden clippers ended their days carrying lumber out of the St. Lawrence ports in summer, and, when they became old, carrying esparto grass in the winter.

Regarding the *Thomas W. Lawson*, I wish to say that Mr. Dolbow's answer to Mr. Kendall's request is absolutely complete and correct. It only lacks the date of the loss of that vessel. This was December 13, 1907. Her gross tonnage was five thousand two hundred and eighty-eight, and her net tonnage was four thousand nine hundred and fourteen. She hailed from Boston, according to Lloyd's register.

Can some of the shipmates give me the date of the loss of the ship *Lumberman's Lassie*, one thousand and twenty tons, of Aberdeen? And the ship *Windsor Castle*, built by Duthie, of Aberdeen, in 1869? I think, at the time of her loss she was bound out of Pensacola, in 1895 or 1896.

The Log Book is most interesting, and I wish there was more of it. I have completed many of my records through it.

J. C. JOHNSTON.

**S**HIPMATE PULIS wants to know something about the old schoolship *St. Mary's*. We do not believe that this vessel was ever a prison ship, as Mr. Pulis has heard. To the best of our knowledge she was originally a sloop-of-



war, and was built without engines. She was a wooden vessel, and may have had auxiliary machinery installed some time after her launching, but we do not believe so.

She was built at the time—somewhere around 1840—when Great Britain and America made their joint effort to suppress the slave trade from Africa. Great Britain used a number of ten-gun brigs for this purpose, and the United States built a number of sloops, of which the *St. Mary's* was one. This is the extent of our knowledge of this ship; it is very sketchy, but perhaps some of the readers can supply more.

There's an old slogan which says, "Take your troubles to the Old Man." So here goes. I have never missed a copy of your he-man's, red-blooded, clean-minded publication. Neither have I ever asked a favor of the powers that be.

Twenty-five years ago I was a cadet or cabin boy in the old American liner *New York*. Out of a host of friends there was one who, after all these years, stands out in my memory. He was a graduate of the old *St. Mary's*, school-ship. I attended a dance given aboard her successor, the *Newport*, just before her initial sailing as a training ship.

Now here is what I'd like to know. I have heard some rumors—but I have forgotten most of them—about the origin of the old *St. Mary's*. I would like to know where she was built and launched, her age, and any other data about her. Was she ever a prison ship? I remember she was a square rigger, with auxiliary engines that were installed when she became a training ship.

Also, wasn't the *Newport* a gunboat that saw service originally in 1898? Please, skipper, give me any information on the above subjects obtainable. Possibly this inquiry may be of interest to some of the other shipmates who smoke their cutty pipes on terra firma, dreaming of what might have been. H. F. PULIS.

**S**HIPMATE R. B. ENSWORTH, a shipmaster of New London, Connecticut, sends us the following letter, which is both a knock and a boost. We are inclined to plead guilty to most of Captain Ensworth's criticisms. They are phrases that we see used every day in describing sea subjects, and so we let them get by. It is a case of familiarity breeding contempt.

Reading over this letter makes us feel that those who write on sea subjects at the present day certainly need to have their vocabularies overhauled. As a mat-

## THE NEXT VOYAGE

In "Sea Stories" for January

## SANDALWOOD

By CLAYTON R. SLAWTER

Friendship with his employer's daughter lifted Toby Scruggs out of the humdrum routine of coopering and took him to strange seas in trading with the northwest coast.

## RIVER DAYS

By ROBERT L. ALLEN

A story of life as it was on the western rivers in the days of the stern-wheelers, with their races and overloaded safety valves.

## OX-EYE JONES

By W. TOWNEND

A hard case was Ox-eye, the toughest mate in the Cape Horn grain fleet; but he met his match in a water-front brawl that lost a world's championship on the Barbary Coast.

**AND—**

Short stories, articles, poems, and the current serial; with an unusually complete lot of entries in the Log Book.

ter of fact it is not only the sea writers who offend in this fashion; we feel that all other authors are guilty, also. It must be the result of our present-day craze for standardization in all things and the desire for speed—perhaps a little laziness, also. For, when we are writing under pressure, we never stop to give thought to the use and meaning of words, simply jotting down the first descriptive phrase that pops into mind.

A letter such as this one is one of the things that does real work in improving anything—writing or whatever else it may be. So, on the behalf of all the shipmates, we extend our thanks to Captain Ensworth.

Thank you for "Force Twelve." It was written by a sailor, and it was very good. The author was sparing of adjectives. But I wish to protest about the silly way many writers scatter adjectives and phrases over the sheet.

First they say, "They that go down to the sea in ships and that do business on the great waters."

Men go down to the sea in river steamers, trains, or in autos. All their business is done ashore. Because that phrase was written many hundreds of years ago does not make it suitable for daily use now.

Second, "the seven seas." I never heard the expression in shipping circles or at sea. It is only used by poets and weaklings who want to pose as sailors.

Third, "limping into port." A vessel may come slowly into port; but, having no legs, it cannot limp.

Fourth, "the weary vessels." A vessel, not being an animate thing, cannot be weary.

Fifth, "crazy vessel." A vessel may have lost some of her spars and gear, or she may be old and dilapidated, or may be rigged in a way with which the author is not familiar. But that does not make an inanimate thing crazy.

Sixth, "The captain rang full speed, and the vessel sprang ahead with a bone in her teeth."

The momentum of a vessel is so great that, with the amount of power in an ordinary ship, the acceleration will be so small that it would be impossible for one to detect the difference in speed for some time. And at sea, in the ordinary course of things, the vessel would be going full speed and there would be no result. If the master wanted to get ahead of another vessel he might telephone or speak down the tube and ask the engineer on watch if he could open up a little, which could easily be done by changing the position of the link or cutting off on high.

Seventh, "bone in her teeth." A ship is not a she-dog, so why not say "with broken water under her bow"?

Eighth, "beating up the river against the strong current, with the air scarcely lifting the sails." Cannot be done.

I wish you would eliminate some of these expressions, and when a vessel is described as large or immense, why not give the approximate dimensions? I realize the difficulty you have in getting real sea stories, as differentiated from love or adventure tales with a ship for background. R. B. ENSWORTH.

**Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of SEA STORIES, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1929.**

State of New York, County of New York (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Vice President of the Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of SEA STORIES, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publishers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *editor*, Lawrence Lee, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *managing editors*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *business managers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., a corporation composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C.

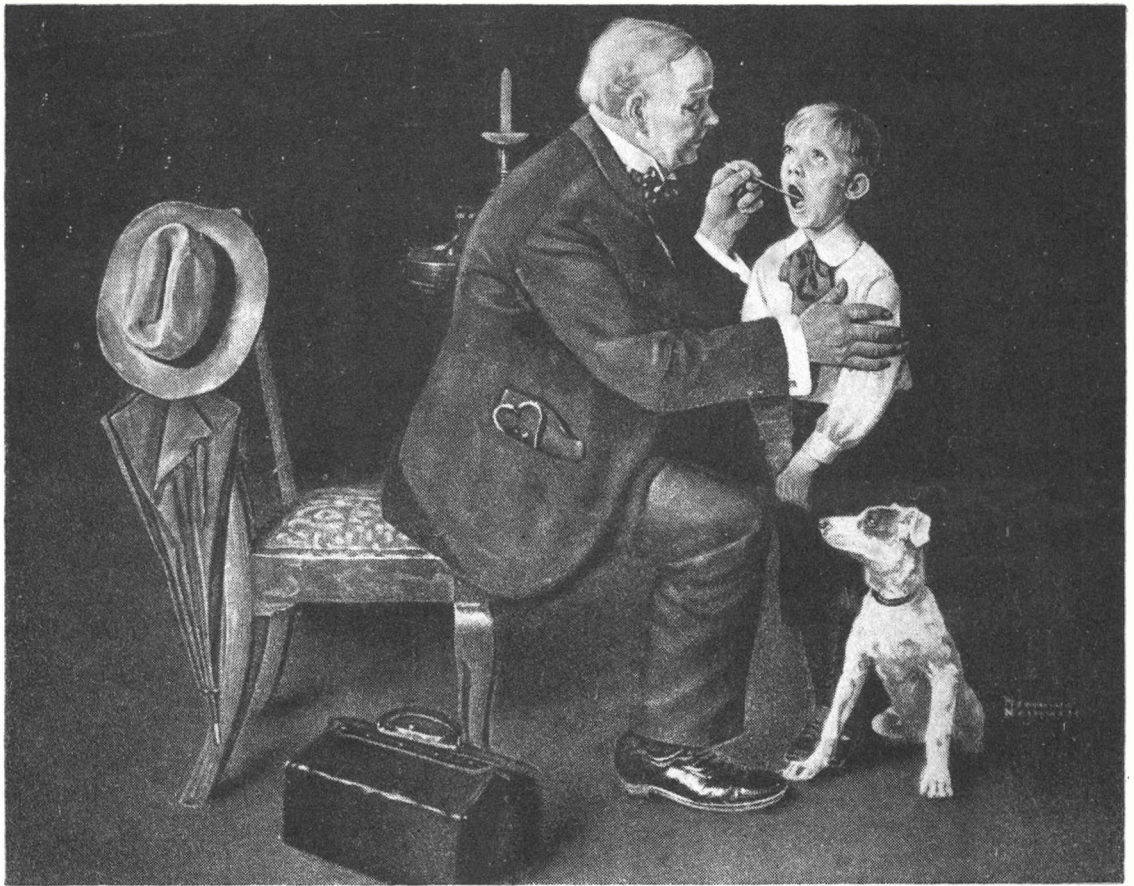
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3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

GEORGE C. SMITH, Vice President,  
Of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1929. De Witt C. Van Valkenburgh, Notary Public No. 74, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1930.)



*"The same advice I gave your Dad . . . Listerine, often"*

Do you remember—

When the good old family doctor came into the house, how your heart began to thump? You didn't know but what you had cholera morbus or something equally dreadful. You saw yourself dying in no time.

Then his firm gentle hands poked you here and there. His bright kind eyes looked down your gullet. And, oh, what a load left your mind when you learned that your trouble was only a badly inflamed throat and that Listerine would take care of it?

The basic things of life seldom change: Listerine, today, is the same tireless enemy of sore throat and colds that it was half a century ago.

It is regularly prescribed by the bright, busy young physicians of this day, just as it was by those old timers—bless their souls—who mixed friendship and wisdom with their medicines.

Used full strength, Listerine kills in 15 sec-

onds even the virulent *Staphylococcus Aureus* (pus) and *Bacillus Typhosus* (typhoid) germs in counts ranging to 200,000,000. We could not make this statement unless we were prepared to prove it to the entire satisfaction of the medical profession and the U. S. Government. Three well-known bacteriological laboratories have demonstrated this amazing germ-killing power of Listerine. Yet it is so safe it may be used full strength in any body cavity.

Make a habit of gargling systematically with full strength Listerine during nasty weather. It aids in preventing the outbreak of colds and sore throat. And often remedies them when they have developed. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

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**SORE THROAT**

**KILLS 200,000,000 GERMS IN 15 SECONDS**

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Their judgment has made Camels the most popular cigarette in the United States.

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