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# Sea Stories

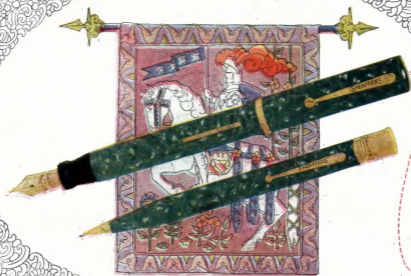


Magazine

SEPT.  
1926

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# Sea Stories Magazine

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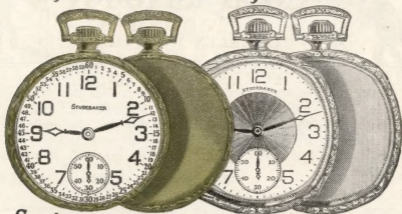
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## GOOD READING

BY

CHARLES HOUSTON



**C**ERTAIN things there are that can never be set down on paper in black and white—the love of a man for a maid, the secret of personality, the whole matter of likes and dislikes.

To be sure, you can catch hints of them and the other elusive things of life from what the writers and scholars tell us, but in the long run, all we can say for sure is to repeat the remark of the old lady who said, "There's no accounting for tastes," what time she kissed the cow.

Just why is it that since the beginning of time the story-teller has been sought after by all manner of men and women? Why is the game of make-believe the one universal game the world over, played by the black man of Africa squatting before his hut to hear the folklore of his tribe, and the sophisticated American picking his favorite fiction magazine from the news stand? Because fiction is so vital a part of the full life that all-around Americans are eager to live, the making of it has become a genuine service.

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can be assured that the romance you love best will come trooping through your door, and that many an hour that would otherwise be empty will be filled with the most colorful adventure.

Here are notes on some of the latest and best Chelsea House offerings, which I heartily recommend to all those who love a good story, well told.



**T**HE TWO REDS OF TRAVOY, by Clay Perry. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price \$2.

A story of the big timber in the wilds of French Canada, one of the least known and most romantic spots on the North American continent, told for all lovers of the out of doors by a writer who knows whereof he writes. Mr. Perry writes of the twins of giant build who were known as "The Two Reds," of how they came to meet city-bred Gwen Harris on her visit to Travoy, and of all the exciting adventures that happened thereafter. This is a book for a man who loves the smell of wood smoke, for a woman who can take care of herself in the open, for all those, in short, who are not city bound, but who can follow a forest trail with zest. For two dollars at your bookseller's, you can have hours of genuine pleasure from this unusual story.



**Q**UICKSANDS, a Love Story, by Victor Thorne. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

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*Continued on 2nd page following*

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**R**ED MOUNTAIN, LIMITED, an Adventure Story, by Eugene A. Clancy. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

What is real adventure, anyhow? There's a girl in this book who, after going through plenty of excitement, comes to the conclusion that adventure is "a curiously human thing; that romantic pyrotechnics and gasps and gurgles were only the high lights; that real adventure means common sense—and courage." It isn't always "looking for trouble." She comes to this conclusion "gliding through New York's night life in a cab, bound for a mid-

night cabaret." What happened after that would satisfy any glutton for adventure. The subsequent proceedings which have their wind-up in the Western cow town of Red Mountain will keep you right on the edge of your chair. This is an adventure story that lives up to its description, with never a dull chapter in it.



**R**ONICKY DOONE, a Western Story, by David Manning. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

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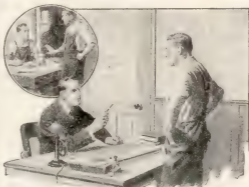
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# Sea Stories Magazine

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

Vol. XIII

September, 1926

No. 1



## *A Brass Pounder in Northern Waters* A Complete Novel By Dex Volney

Afloat with "Iron" Larsen, the merciless shipmaster, who in his cold brutality was more inexorable than the icy winds which blew across the Arctic tundras and over the desolate wastes of the Bering Sea.

### CHAPTER I.

UPON my return from Mexico, I sailed for a year on some of the big Pacific-coast oil tankers. During this year, I did not meet with much adventure of a sort that may be appropriately related in this narrative of my wanderings upon the sea; yet during those twelve brief months, I went through a tragic experience, which so darkened my outlook upon life and which so hardened and embittered me that one might be unable to view sym-

pathetically my attitude toward my subsequent adventures, were I to make no mention of the affair.

For I got married. The girl I married was very young, very beautiful, and very innocent—a golden-haired, laughing child who had been reared among the fir-crested hills that skirt the broad Columbia River between Portland and the sea. She was a river sprite, a forest elf, and a wholesome, happy, rosy-checked human creature all in one.

She was a girl to be loved, and I loved her—but the impracticability of our too-youthful marriage—she was but sixteen and I eighteen—will be realized when I relate that we attempted to set up housekeeping on my radio-operator salary of forty dollars a month. We were sadly unripe, and quite unprepared for the serious responsibilities we faced. What we suffered in our pathetic little play as boy-husband and girl-wife may well be left to the reader's imagination. Suffice it to say that after a few months we both came to the heartbreaking realization that we could not carry on. It might be asked why did we not do this or that, but we were merely two children who learned through bitter experience that we could not live as man and wife on forty dollars a month.

Nor shall I attempt to describe our tragic parting. I gave the golden-haired child all the money I had, save one single five-dollar gold piece, then we kissed each other and went our separate ways—she back to the humble little home of her parents and of her many brothers and sisters on the Columbia River—I, on a three-masted bark bound for the Alaskan salmon canneries.

Every spring there sails from San Francisco a great fleet of sailing ships, old-time clippers—all, bound for the marvelous salmon fisheries of the Bering Sea. They are colorful, adventurous ships, of a sort no longer to be seen anywhere else in all the civilized world. Every March they are towed from their winter haven over on the Oakland mud flats, and for several weeks their tall, golden, bronze-colored masts and their mazes of dark, spidery rigging tower thickly above the piers of the San Francisco water front, where they are berthed to be deep-laden with supplies for the long, northern expedition.

"I want to go away on a long voyage," I told the tall cowboy-hatted

Hueller, a builder and installer of commercial wireless apparatus, who had been getting me ships to sail on. "The longer the better."

Whereupon tall young Hueller laid down on his desk a summons to appear in some bankruptcy court—with which sort of document the sheriff was forever pursuing the eely owner of the Hueller-Blenkenham Radio Co.—and he proceeded to regard me quizzically through the large tortoise-shell glasses that always hooded his supremely honest and studious-looking big blue eyes.

"If you are willing to face a life that is hard and rough, and if you want to get up to your ears in some regular hell-devil action, of the sort that is supposed to exist mostly in books, I can accommodate you this very morning," he replied seriously. "Nothing like that for you, though, eh?"

"It's exactly what I want," I replied promptly. "Lead me to it!"

George Hueller looked at me appraisingly, and hesitated. His big blue eyes took on a deep, sympathetic glimmer that I have since recognized to be a bad sign indeed as to the desirability of any prospective ship.

"It's the *Star of Siberia*—one of the Alaskan salmon fleet," he informed me. "There is no radio set on the vessel. You ride on her as a sort of—well, as a sort of passenger, until you arrive at the Bering Sea cannery where she is bound. Then you go ashore and operate a wireless station in the cannery during the fishing season. The *Star of Siberia* goes up to a place called Ugashik, a small river on the eastern coast of the Bering Sea. There you are absolutely isolated from the outside world. There is not even a mail team. With your cannery wireless station you reach out to a naval radio post in the seal rookeries on St. Paul Island. St. Paul is three hundred miles southwest of Ugashik. From the seal rookeries, by a quite extensive chain of naval

wireless stations, messages are relayed back and forth from the States.

"How long is the voyage?" I inquired.

"More than half a year," replied Hueller. "And sometimes a big clipper never comes back. If you go, remember, now, that I fairly warned you what to expect. The Alaskan salmon ships are no old ladies' homes, in the first place—and this *Star of Siberia*—"

"Good enough," I cut in, rather impatiently. "I'd ship with Iron Larsen, on that infamous schooner *Phantom*."

Hueller's large jaw dropped. He stared at me with his big blue eyes opened wide.

"You would!" he exclaimed, as if he were exceedingly astonished. "Tell me, how in the world did you come to say that?"

I did not answer this enigmatic query.

Hueller took me around to the dingy San Francisco offices of the Silver Salmon Canning Co., down near the water front, where a little old patient-faced, one-armed bookkeeper, with streaked iron-gray hair and stooped shoulders entered my name in his books, and had me sign a complicated legal contract with the fishing company, which had about a million rambling words printed in it.

As the little, old, pallid-faced and watery-eyed man took the salmon-colored document from me with his single hand, he gave me a strangely sympathetic glance that had something positively alarming in it. Then he walked with a slow, stooping gait to a door opening into a dark inner office, and said to some one within:

"Another man for the *Star of Siberia*—cannery wireless operator."

"Launch goes off nine o'clock t'night," came a muffled answering voice, from the other side of the door. "Creeden's Landing."

The little round-shouldered bookkeeper nodded, and came slowly shuffling back to the desk where I stood waiting.

"The *Star of Siberia* is anchored in the stream, off Goat Island, waiting for her crew to be completed," he told me, in a weak, husky voice. "A gasoline launch will put off to her at nine o'clock to-night from Creeden's Landing, down at the foot of Drumm Street. If any questions are asked you at the float, just say 'Ugashik.'"

That night, at the specified hour, I was waiting in the darkness on the launch float, with my baggage. I had been there but a few minutes, when a squat, broad-shouldered fellow appeared above me on the wharf, which was dimly lighted by a distant sputtering arc light. For a few moments he stared down at me. Then he advanced softly along the gangway onto the float, where I stood. He struck a match, which he coolly held up into my face. In the glow of the reddish flame, I caught a glimpse of his features, which were foreign—swarthy, broad, and flat, but keenly intelligent. His black eyes gleamed menacingly, as he surveyed me with his lighted match.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, in a strange, low, threatening tone.

"I don't know that it's any of your business; but I'm waiting for a launch to take me off to a ship," I replied, rather surlily. I resented the man's actions, but I was almost alarmed, for I had no weapon to defend myself with.

I espied the fellow's right hand move stealthily to his coat pocket and then flick swiftly upward, clutching a small, black club-shaped object. Half involuntarily, I attempted to dodge the blow that I saw coming; but I was too late. I felt my attacker's blackjack land violently on the side of my head. All the stars in the windy sky above the city,

seemed instantly to crash down about my ears.

The blow hardly more than stunned me, however, for I can remember lying on my stomach on the old damp float, hearing the water lapping drowsily against its low sides, and feeling my ankles being lashed together, and my wrists being bound tightly behind my back with a piece of wet rope. Then I was rolled over onto my back, and a foul bandanna handkerchief that smelled of tobacco and perspiration was stuffed between my teeth. When I came fully to my senses, I attempted to blow the gag out of my mouth, whereupon the squat, lithe-bodied scoundrel who had blackjacked me leaned swiftly over me and laid the cold sharp edge of a knife against my bare throat.

"Keep still!" he snarled. That was a needless command; for at the touch of the cold steel knife blade on my throat a paralyzing thrill of terror shot through me, and I lay motionless.

Lying on my back on the damp float, I both heard and saw a large motor truck drive up along the pier and come to a stop close by the edge of the open wharf. Its engine was at once shut off.

"Hassan!" came a low-guarded call from the driver's seat.

The fellow standing over me on that float looked up, in the semidarkness.

"Silvers?" he called back questioningly.

"Yeah—six. Whatcha got on th' float?"

"Gumdrop."

"Where's that damn launch?"

"Coming."

This mysterious sibilantly whispered conversation between the ruffian beside me and the driver of the truck up on the wharf abruptly ceased, as a large motor boat came alongside the float with astonishing swiftness and quietness.

I was roughly chucked aboard the

launch, into a large stern cockpit. Then the boat was moved over alongside the wharf, into a position directly underneath the motor truck. In a moment, I saw the descending body of a man swaying weirdly in the darkness above me. He was being lowered into the launch with a rope. When he had been landed beside me, I saw that he was unconscious. The rope was untied from under his shoulders and pulled up, and quickly a second man was lowered with it. In a few minutes, there were six unconscious men lying about me in the cockpit of the jouncing boat, all smelling vilely of filth and rotten whisky.

There was a sudden powerful throbbing of the launch engine, and we shot swiftly out into the bay.

The sky was becoming overcast. A strong west wind was sweeping over the water, pushing up rumpling waves, through which the boat dove sharply, and shipped salt spray that fell over me in drenching, chilly showers. Above the stern gunwale of the launch, I could see the higher part of the city of San Francisco, looking like a twinkling forest of lights in the wind-swept darkness.

There was no sound in the boat save the swift whirring of the engine, and occasionally a low groan or a sigh from the stinking men heaped about me. My head hurt throbbingly from the blow I had been dealt. I felt blood trickling down over my left cheek.

There was a muffled clang of a gong. Instantly, the powerful thrumming of the motor ceased. Overhead suddenly loomed the long, lofty, slanting jib boom and the massive dolphin striker of a big sailing ship. Up above the vessel's bowsprit shrouds a row of yellow letters gleamed under the feeble rays of an anchor lantern. They had a strangely familiar look—then, in a flash, I recognized them—*Star of Siberia!* My astonishment was tremen-

dous, when I discovered that I was being shanghaied aboard my own ship.

I shifted over onto my side, and by a violent effort spat the bandanna gag out of my dry mouth.

"See here!" I called out, in a low voice, to the squat-bodied ruffian who crouched on the starboard gunwale of the launch. "This is my——"

Before I could say anything more, the fellow had sprung upon me and clutched me ferociously by the throat with his strong, dark-brown fingers. "Shut up, damn you!" he snarled in my ear, as I writhed with pain and terror. "I keel you!"

He released me. The boat slid gratefully along the side of the *Star of Siberia*, and a rope thrown from up on the deck of the vessel dropped across the cockpit. Quickly the motor launch was made fast alongside; then the men about me were soundlessly hoisted, one at a time, up the high, black, wooden side of the ship.

I was the last one to be hauled up. A manila rope was passed around my body, under my arms, and hauled taut. I felt a razor-sharp blade sever the lashings on my wrists and ankles. The next moment I was swinging up through the airy darkness. When I was up fifteen feet above the launch, I was jerked roughly inboard and landed on the main deck of the *Star of Siberia*.

Here was a strange and terrifying sight. In the flickering, yellow beams of an oil lantern, swung by a pennant from the ratlines of the main rigging, I saw a tall, spare man with long arms and a ghastly white face of finely chiseled contour, bending over the six unconscious wretches lying on the deck, feeling of their legs and arms, striking their chests, and listening to their breathing. He rolled over one small, red-bearded fellow, from whose frayed and filthy left coat sleeve protruded a horribly mangled hand. It looked as if it had been split lengthwise

through the palm, between the first and second fingers, and spread far apart, forming a hideous V-shaped shriveled stump, on one side of which were three stiff fingers, and on the other a finger and a thumb.

The thin lips of the ghastly-faced examiner tightened, as he lifted up the fellow's mutilated hand, scrutinized it, and coolly dropped it again. He looked steadily into the unconscious man's small, mean, haggard face which was thickly covered with dirty red stubble, and I fancied I saw an evil, exultant gleam momentarily lighting up the shipmaster's cold-gray eyes. He turned and walked toward the rail, where the squat-bodied scoundrel who had kidnaped me came climbing as lithely as a panther up a jacob's ladder that had been slung over the ship's side.

"See here, Hassan, you've brought me a one-handed cripple," announced the ghastly faced shipmaster, as the other landed softly beside him on the deck. He spoke in a low but marvelously clear and cutting voice that sounded like a tinkle of breaking ice, and instantly sent cold chills running up and down my spine.

"But he's been in the China gangs before, Capting Larsen," replied the crimp, in an equally low tone. "He lose the mitt in the knives of an iron chink. He feed the machine better with the other hand than any man you get."

Captain Larsen smiled strangely.

"It was my China gang that Red Strauss was in, Hassan. I set the knives on him to teach him to cut the heads of the salmon shorter—two years ago."

"Double money for him," responded the squat-bodied crimp, swiftly.

The gaunt white-faced master of the *Star of Siberia* glowered a moment at the other man. Then he turned toward me, as I leaned, sick with pain and fear, against the ship's rail.

"What have you brought us here?" he queried, fixing his cold lusterless eyes upon me.

"There's been a mistake made about me!" I now blurted out. "I signed a contract in the offices of the Silver Salmon Company this morning to sail to Alaska on this ship, to operate a wireless station at Ugashik."

The chalky-faced shipmaster and the swarthy crimp both stared at me.

"Didn't you get a password to use at the boat landing?" queried the captain curtly.

"I—yes, I was told to mention Ugashik," I replied. "But this fellow knocked me on the head before I had a chance to open my mouth."

An exceedingly crestfallen look spread over the dark features of the lithe-bodied crimp. From the thin, tight lips of Captain Larsen issued a low metallic laugh.

"Confound you, Hassan, can't you get us a China gang together, without slugging and trussing up our own company men?"

"He looked like a gumdrop to me," replied the crimp, in a surly, sheepish tone. A gumdrop, as I was to learn later, meant any unprotected idler caught in a place where he could be easily seized and shanghaied.

"You get no money for him, Hassan," announced the thin-lipped shipmaster, with a chuckle that was as hard and icy as his voice.

"Double for the one-hooker fellow for the iron chink," returned the crimp, determinedly.

"Oh, yes. You have us at your mercy, anyway, damn you," replied the captain, placing his signature on a greasy slip of paper proffered him by the industrious Hassan.

As the swarthy, pantherlike crimp climbed back over the ship's side into the launch waiting below for him, the chalky-faced shipmaster turned to a figure that was standing silently in the

shadow of the rigging, and snapped sharply:

"Get Chung!"

The figure started, uneasily, and went off forward into the darkness. Now, for the first time, for I was still half-dazed from the blow I had received, I became aware that the big sailing ship was vibrant with life. From long, low deckhouses that seemed to fill the entire waist of the ship, except for the small open space wherein we stood, came muffled voices, harsh and savage in their tones, mingled with snatches of drunken song, and a strumming of guitars. At times, the music was broken off, with a howl or a curse, there were thumps and thuds, then once more arose the strains of a snatch of exotic opera. Everything I saw and heard seemed all unreal, a fantastic dream.

The captain went back to the six men huddled on the deck, and looked down intently at the red-whiskered wretch with the mangled hand. The fellow's bleary and sore-looking eyes slowly opened, and his mute, stupid gaze met that of the master of the *Star of Siberia*. For a long minute, he lay flat on his back on the ship's oaken deck, staring up into the cold, expressionless eyes of the ghastly faced man who was standing over him. Gradually, his own inflamed orbs opened wide, with a look wherein was recognition, fear, and horror.

By a sudden violent effort, he rolled over onto his stomach, lifted himself onto his knees, and again stared upward at the shipmaster, his narrow foxlike jaw hanging slack, his mean face writhing with terror and hate.

"Hell!—Iron Larsen!" he gasped hoarsely. He rose suddenly to his feet, and lunged blindly at the master of the *Star of Siberia*, his small white teeth bared, like the fangs of a cornered mongrel dog.

The shipmaster drove a clenched



white fist into the fellow's writhing mouth, knocking him headlong back onto the deck. I gasped with amazement at the terrific force of the blow, for the gaunt figure of the death-faced captain gave no indication of strength.

Slow, gliding footsteps now sounded forward along the side of the deck house. Into the circle of glaring yellow light cast by the lantern swinging in the rigging overhead shuffled a monstrous Chinese. He was a frightful-looking brute—over six feet high, and of massive proportions. He had the rolling walk of an ape. His powerful arms hung almost to his knees, and, as he moved, his chest muscles bulged and contracted, like those of a wrestler. His cold, fishy, almond-shaped eyes were almost as big as those of an ox, and they were set in a broad, flat, yellow face that was framed in masses of coarse black hair.

He looked neither to the right nor the left, but went straight to the men huddled on the deck. Stooping over, he caught up a man under each monstrous half-naked arm, lifted them with no apparent effort, and then turning about, shuffled silently off with them, out of the circle of light, toward the forward end of the ship.

I slumped against the vessel's high rail, quite weak and sick, and fervently wishing myself safely ashore again. My movement attracted the notice of Iron Larsen, who had been watching the huge Chinese.

"Your face is covered with blood," he said, looking at me. "Come aft into the cabin, and I'll have Casco fix you up a little. You needn't expect much attention here."

"I don't expect any!" I burst out, with a violent shudder. "I've seen enough of this ship—I want to get ashore!"

"Come aft!" commanded Iron Larsen brusquely. "You are one of our élite, but perhaps you don't realize it,

yet. You can thank your lucky star you're not a China-gang recruit—like these rats you were brought aboard with."

At this juncture, the huge, apelike Chinese returned and picked up another couple of the wretches who were sprawled on the deck. As he lifted them up under his arms, like two limp sacks of rags, he looked silently at me with his two enormous, wet, fishlike eyes, and I shudderingly thanked my lucky star, indeed, that I was not in the China gang—whatever that was.

I followed Iron Larsen down into the ship's after cabin, which consisted of a small, dark, mahogany-paneled central room lighted by day from a skylight in the deck overhead, but now illuminated by a large kerosene lamp suspended from one of the varnished deck beams. This cabin was ranged all about with small staterooms. Iron Larsen gave me a key to one of these, and informed me that I would occupy it on the voyage north.

Then he stepped to a small, narrow, mahogany door, which I observed opened into a forward section of the cabin, and called out in his clear, icy voice:

"Casco, come here!"

There was an instant sound of frantic rattling and pattering in the forward cabin, and then in through the doorway burst an absurd-looking, little brown-skinned wisp of a man hardly more than five feet high. His hair was black and his eyes were black, and as beady as a parrot's. His comical, monkey-like appearance was made all the more grotesque by the fact that he was clad in light cream-colored pajamas that were fantastically decorated with little humming birds and nondescript pink flowers. In one pajama leg was stuck a long, narrow, flat object that at first puzzled me. Its outline showed under the cloth like a short lath, but upon following it upward to the little man's

waist, I espied there the gleaming silver hilt of a knife.

"The Casco is here, sir, captain!" he cried out, in a shrilly chattering voice, that seemed to furnish further grounds for suspecting that the fantastic little fellow was more closely related to the monkey tribe than the members of the human race are generally supposed to be.

"Casco, go up onto the main deck and hunt for this young wireless man's baggage," the master of the *Star of Siberia* commanded him. "Then fetch some warm water, and wash and bandage his head, where he has been struck by Hassan. Also go forward and tell Foo Yick I want to see him."

The little wizened devil bobbed his head, and went rattling and pattering off through the forward cabin, in the same turbulent fashion as that in which he had appeared.

At this moment there came a thin, infuriated scream, followed by a chorus of howls and muffled thumps and thuds, in some indeterminate part of the big ship. Without saying anything further to me, the master of the *Star of Siberia* at once disappeared up a companionway leading from the after cabin onto the poop. I was left standing alone in the dark, mahogany-walled room. I began looking about, dully, with a vague intention of trying to find a life preserver and jumping over the ship's side with it—but my head ached throbbingly, and I could neither think nor see very clearly.

Soon I heard the strange little man in the flowery pajamas coming bouncing and pattering back through the forward cabin, slamming my two pasteboard suit cases against doors and bulkheads, with a prodigious noise. Bursting in upon me, he threw my battered baggage violently down onto the middle of the floor, and whipped out the silver-handled knife in his pajamas. Its blade, which flashed brightly in the

lamplight, was almost as long, thin, and deadly looking as that of a rapier.

"Never again call me, the Casco of Tasmania, to carry your trash!" he screamed at me, brandishing his knife in my face.

"I didn't ask you to carry it," I retorted, shrinking from him, uncertain whether to be amused or terrified.

"You say I lie, then!" he spat, his leathery face taking on an expression as grotesque as the humming birds and flowers on his yellow pajamas. "You have made me angry—and when I am angry, I keel!"

Suddenly he made a wicked pass at me with his rapierlike weapon, and sent me leaping sideways across the cabin, gasping with terror.

"I am the Casco of Tasmania!" he screamed, running at me again, his little beady eyes glittering, and his hair abristle. "When I am angry, I keel!"

He paused suddenly, in the act of flourishing his glittering knife. There was a sound of light shuffling footsteps in the forward cabin—then from the doorway through which Casco had entered came a little sly-looking, white-haired Chinese in black Oriental garments, bamboo sandals, and large steel-rimmed glasses.

"Oh, you little old yellow pig, you would slip in behind me!" chattered the outlandish dancing brown-and-black devil in the decorated pajamas. "I am the Casco of Tasmania—when I am angry, I keel——"

With the abruptness of a bunting billy goat, he sprang across the cabin, his gleaming knife thrust before him at arm's length, like a lance, aimed straight at the Oriental's stomach.

"Ong—whoo how!" ejaculated the Chinese. He leaped aside, and the devil in the beflowered pajamas rammed the point of his knife half an inch into the mahogany bulkhead, where the Oriental had been standing. With a loud hiss, like that of an aroused reptile,

the Chinese pulled out from under his black-corded silk jacket a gleaming ivory-handled weapon with a curved blade, and made a chopping swing at his attacker.

The agile Casco fended with a swift, slashing blow, then there began a weird knife duel, silent save for the breathing of the two fighters, the soft shuffling of the sandaled feet of the Chinese and the quick padding of the bare soles of the fantastic beady-eyed little devil in the flowery pajamas—and every moment a thin ring of steel striking against steel, as their flashing blades clashed. Round and round they circled, glaring balefully, hissing and thrusting like striking snakes, while I crouched in a corner, stupefied with fear, dazedly wondering whether I were not, after all, the victim of a nightmare.

"Avaunt, scum—the Arctic Wolf!" screamed a loud raucous voice, directly over my head. It was so shrill and fierce and so startling in its unexpectedness that I jumped, convulsively. Staring upward, I espied a big, brilliant, green parrot swaying on a trapeze suspended from the deck beams up near the oil lamp that lighted the cabin. His sleepy eyes glared beadily down at the two disturbers of his rest.

At the warning scream of the surly looking bird, the Chinese and the weird devil in the decorated pajamas seemed instantly to turn to stone. They stood rigidly with their gleaming knives crossed, as if posing for a flash-light photograph. On the companionway I heard descending steps.

Silently, the two fighters lowered their weapons and reconcealed them. The black, beady-eyed little fiend in the grotesque pajamas covered with humming birds and flowers vanished into the forward cabin, while the Chinese remained standing motionlessly in the middle of the room. Iron Larsen, coming down from the poop, saw the Oriental and walked toward him.

"I have gotten you six more men, Foo Yick," said the ghastly faced master of the *Star of Siberia*. "Hassan promises us another ten at three o'clock in the morning. They are costing us twenty dollars, for we are one of the last ships, and men are scarce."

"Too muchee!" said Foo Yick, with evident irritation.

"Oh, is it!" returned Iron Larsen, in his clear, icy tones. "Then, since you are the China-gang contractor, and not I, why didn't you recruit your outfit yourself? I am going to have the bookkeeper enter those men against you at fifty dollars apiece, which may drive the idea through your purposely obtuse skull that when you contract to have ninety men ready to sail on my ship on the second of April, you *must* have them ready. That will help you to remember next year, Foo Yick."

"Flifty dollahs, no do, me!" announced Foo Yick, his slit eyes narrowing.

Iron Larsen stepped close to the Chinese and looked at him with a sinister, frozen demeanor, before which the Oriental quailed.

"You'll do whatever I say," icily returned the tall, gaunt master of the *Star of Siberia*. "Tell Chung to keep a sharp watch over the rats and dope fiends of Hassan's, in case some of them open their eyes and try to get over the side. We've got 'Red' Strauss again, and he's already coming to; keep him chained if necessary. Shuffle out of here, now—do you hear me!"

Foo Yick heard, and shuffled.

Casco soon came back from the forward cabin, carrying a kettle of steaming water, and leading me to Iron Larsen's private washroom, he helped me to cleanse my blood-clotted left cheek. I was not glad of his aid, however, for his weird knife battle with Foo Yick was still passing before my eyes, and I half expected at every moment to feel the beady-eyed little devil's long, keen

rapierlike blade inserted between my ribs.

"I am the Casco of Tasmania!" he breathed thrice in my ear, in a menacing whisper. "When I am angry, I keel!" With the swift dexterity of a cook stirring soup, he wound a bandage around my throbbing head.

"Casco, go and make us a pot of coffee!" commanded Iron Larsen, in his unchanging, icy voice. "I will finish tying up your patient's head."

Casco promptly threw down the end of the bandage he was manipulating, and went out. The master of the *Star of Siberia* took hold of it, however, and expertly bound it fast.

"I overheard Casco whispering to you about his propensities for killing people," said the gaunt shipmaster. "If he makes any passes at you with his knife knock him down."

I received this piece of advice dubiously.

"Of what race is he?" I inquired.

"That," replied Iron Larsen, with a cold laugh, "is a mystery which I think Casco himself has never been able to solve. Sometimes I fancy him a blend of everything in Asia, from Arab to Afghan, and then again he seems to be a cockney from the London slums, transmogrified by tropical exposure into a South Sea cannibal. He calls himself the rightful emperor of Tasmania, which is probably one of his grotesque fancies. He has been at everything, from knife throwing in a big American circus to juggling in the streets of Calcutta."

As Iron Larsen finished binding up my head, his fingers once or twice touched my cheek, and I shivered, for they were as cold and hard as steel.

I feared the man intensely. His face, as I have said, was finely shaped, his features were thin and aristocratic, but over them was a constant ghastly pallor. It was a whiteness such as might be expected on the face of a man who

was at the point of death. But Iron Larsen appeared to be in no such state. And, at any rate, whatever his physical condition might be, the icy clarity of his voice carried a token of invincible mental strength. His gray eyes, cold, hard, and lusterless, when I had first seen them in the glaring yellow beams of the oil lantern up on the deck, I had observed blaze with power from the iron spirit within him, when he had struck down the red-bearded wretch with the mangled hand. That he had ever been educated inside a university seemed wildly improbable, yet there was apparent refinement and culture in his demeanor. When he spoke, his words came from his lips so perfectly pronounced, so clear-cut, that they seemed graven upon invisible steel.

The weird brown devil in the flowery pajamas now brought in two thick mugs, a bowl of sugar, and a steaming, enameled pot of coffee, all of which he deposited noisily on a small table, covered with a stained red cloth, which stood lashed to the deck at one end of the cabin. Iron Larsen poured out some of the hot black stuff in the coffee-pot and invited me to drink it with him.

"Your entry into the life of the Alaskan salmon fisheries has been both turbulent and bizarre," he remarked, in his clear, icy voice, as I complied, and sat down opposite him at the small table. "Almost as bizarre, indeed, as that of the literary fellow, Hump, who sailed with me in fiction on that fanciful schooner, *Phantom*."

For a moment, I found myself unable to grasp the significance of these steadily-spoken words—then, in a flash, I remembered the astonished stare on the face of the managing owner of the Hueller-Blenkenham Radio Co., when I had told him I was ready to sail with Iron Larsen on the schooner *Phantom*. Instantly, my blood seemed to freeze in my veins.

"Great heavens, are you——" I began, staring with horror at the ghastly faced man who sat opposite me.

"Iron Larsen, the Arctic Wolf." "Ha, ha, ha!" suddenly screamed out the whistling, raucous voice of the big green parrot overhead, so fierce and inhuman in its tone that my heart flew into my mouth. Glancing up at the shimmering, satiny green bird on his trapeze beside the lamp that hung from the dark, varnished deck beams, I found his glittering, beady black eyes fastened menacingly upon me.

"Oh, don't think I'm so ferocious as I've been portrayed in fiction," exclaimed Iron Larsen, with a low metallic laugh, which was meant to reassure me, perhaps, but which only served to terrify me further. My eyes returning fascinatedly to the man's ghastly white face, I mechanically raised my cup of steaming coffee to my lips, gulped a mouthful and burned myself with it, before I realized that it was boiling hot.

"The author of that tale shipped with me as an able seaman twenty years ago," continued Iron Larsen, with a reminiscent gleam in his lusterless eyes, though his voice was as icy as before. "I was master of a pirate sealer for old man Hueller, whose good-for-nothing son runs your Hueller-Blenkenham Radio Co. I nearly killed him, your author, I mean, so he bore me a little grudge, which he probably found pleasure in taking out on me in that unique way. He has interpreted some of my philosophy of life to a T, I admit—but the rest you must make allowances for."

The gaunt, white-faced master of the *Star of Siberia* seemed to try to say this pleasantly, but his laugh sounded horribly hollow in my ears, and his words, a lie—for in my fancy I saw dancing and staggering, mockingly before me, the red-bearded man with the mangled hand.

## CHAPTER II.

I did not sleep much that first night on the *Star of Siberia*. Not only did my head throb painfully from the blow I had been dealt by the water-front crimp, but I was much alarmed at the prospect of going out to sea, even as a passenger, on a ship commanded by such a man as Iron Larsen appeared to be. Besides, the vessel seemed a clamped-down volcano, or a sort of huge boiler, rumbling ominously with pent-up life, which occasionally burst out in the forward deck houses, with yells and curses and thudding blows that came faintly to my ears as I lay in the darkness in my cubby-hole of a stateroom.

A gray streak of daylight at length stole through a small glass port above my bunk, and I felt heavy quivers pass through the ship, which I recognized as the vibrations of a steam donkey heaving up our anchor. I had not removed my clothes, so I now slipped from my berth and went out into the central room of the cabin.

Emerging from my stateroom, I ran into a tall, thin reedlike fellow, who was shabbily clad in an old, worn-out salt-and-pepper suit. He had an angular, mean-looking face, a huge hook nose, and small, black, glittering rat-like eyes. He must have been over six feet high, but he could not have weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, for he was so hideously thin and bony that he appeared to lack little of being a fleshless skeleton. His long, spidery fingers, I observed, were ink-stained; his shoulders were slightly stooped.

"Egbert Parks—eats rubber and ink, and his clothes stink!" suddenly cried out the shrill, mocking voice of Iron Larsen's satiny-green parrot, which I espied now hanging upside down on the trapeze under the cabin skylight.

"Shut oop!" screamed back the long, thin, scrawny fellow standing before

me, and his ratlike eyes blazed with hatred, as he glared up at the screeching parrot. Then he turned toward me.

"The ould mon's squawkin' birrrd—Lord forgi'e me, hoo I hate 'im!" he exclaimed, his harsh angular features twisting with rage. Then, without saying anything more, he abruptly took a couple of long steps into a stateroom opposite my own, and slammed the door shut, leaving me gaping at the dark mahogany panels in bewildered astonishment.

Venturing cautiously up the cabin companionway onto the poop, I saw Iron Larsen pacing silently up and down the deck, along the side of the trunk cabin. Several hundred feet ahead of the ship, a smoky red-stacked tug was dragging us to sea with a long, dripping, black hawser, and the ruffling water lapped lightly about our quarter, as we rode down the bay, abeam of Alcatraz Island.

The deck of the big ship was now swarming with men. They were of every nationality under the sun—shuffling Chinese, screaming Sicilians in red woolen shirts, jabbering Filipinos, broad-chested Scandinavians, woolly-headed negroes, shaking, white-faced dope fiends of the San Francisco underworld who seemed dazedly trying to figure out whether they were still alive or had died and gone to hell, and many scarred and sea-tanned devils of no immediately determinable breed.

As I gazed in amazement about the big vessel, which seemed fairly crawling with life, I reflected that it must indeed require a shipmaster with a will of iron to hold a whip hand over such a crew for the space of a seven-months' voyage.

I looked at Iron Larsen. The ghastly pallor of his thin face seemed intensified by the long black coat he wore tightly buttoned up about his throat, and by the shiny, black sable-skin cap

he had drawn over his head. Warmly clad as he was, he looked as cold and icy as the frost that gleamed whitely on the ship's top work and rigging in the gray morning light. I observed that he had an automatic rifle lying within immediate reach, on the top of the trunk cabin.

"Good morning, young Mr. Dex," he said, espying me on the poop. "I see you are up early to have a farewell view of the beautiful city of St. Francis. It crowns the peninsular sand dunes with a great diadem of magnificent business castles and lofty church spires, which are all aglow in this gray morning light, like a picture of some fairyland—and yet it breeds and harbors the wretched human scum you see crawling over this ship. And look astern, to the eastward! There the sun breaks into a glow above the dewy Berkeley hills, which are covered with homes more beautiful than those in any fairy book.

"In those splendid residences people with polished fingernails sit drinking expensive coffee poured from glittering silver percolators. They gaze over at the great city on the sand hills, across the water, and at the rippling bay, where the tall salmon ships sail out of the Golden Gate, to return after many days deep-laden with the silver treasure of the sea—and also to return with the dope fiends, the drunkards, and the broken human derelicts squirming about our feet!

"These curs, sir, are the gatherers of the treasure of the sea. When they have gathered it and brought it safely in, it will be taken away from them, and they will be kicked back into the stinking dives which some of them have been shanghaied from, but which most of them have voluntarily left, preferring the lesser hell of a Bering-Sea fishing ship!"

These unexpected words left me shocked and speechless. Iron Larsen

had spoken all the while in an unchanging voice of icy clarity, without hesitating or pausing an instant for his words, revealing thereby an immensely powerful and fertile mind. The rays of the early morning sunlight which set the frost on our lofty masts and yards, and on our mazes of lacy rigging to sparkling as if it were an inlay of countless millions of diamonds, struck his ghastly white cheeks, but seemed unable to warm them.

As we dropped below Alcatraz, a big white ferryboat churning on its way from Sausalito to San Francisco, like a great lumbering turtle, passed close abeam, its decks black with commuters.

"Help! Help! I want to get off this ship!" shrieked a quivering, fear-stricken voice, from the top of one of our forward deck houses.

Turning involuntarily toward the sound, I saw the red-bearded wretch with the mangled hand waving his mutilated limb frantically at the ferryboat. The passengers on that craft, which was now hardly a hundred feet away, saw Red Strauss making despairing gestures at them from the top of the deck house, and they came crowding against the white rails of the big boat, in such numbers, to stare at us, that the top-heavy ferry careened, dangerously.

The small, red-bearded man leaped down onto the spar deck and lunged for the ship's starboard side, which was toward the ferryboat. Scrambling up onto the vessel's high rail, he would have jumped overboard, had not a dozen pairs of clutching hands reached up and caught him. Instantly, he threw his arms around a steel stay in the main rigging, and clung to it, like a beetle.

"Chung!"

Iron Larsen's clear, icy voice rang throughout the ship.

Immediately the enormous apelike Chinese that I had seen the night before came up from somewhere for-

ward, in the eyes of the ship. He shuffled aft into the moiling crowd in the vessel's waist, moving through their surging ranks as easily as a serpent glides through a clump of waving grass. In a moment he had made his way to the starboard rail, where the red-bearded wretch with the mangled hand still clung desperately in the main rigging, striving to free himself from the clutches of his fellows.

The throng on the ferryboat craned their necks, and I fancied I could hear women scream with horror, as the big naked, brown arms of the monstrous Chinese wrapped themselves like two sinuous boa constrictors around the small writhing body of Red Strauss. Plucking his victim from the rigging, as if he were a fly, the Oriental bore him forward in his arms, screaming terribly.

"Help, mercy, Iron Larsen's got me!" he shrieked, as the huge apelike Chinese vanished with him down into a square black hole in the deck, ahead of the foremast. I turned to stare again at Iron Larsen, in growing fear. His thin ghastly face and his hard, cold gray eyes remained quite emotionless.

"The people who drink their golden-amber coffee boiled in glittering, solid-silver percolators, as they sit this morning in their beautiful residences over on the forested Berkeley hills, see none of this," he observed, in his unchanging icy voice, again addressing me. "They—many of them our Silver Salmon stockholders—from their expensively curtained French windows, have but a distant bird's-eye view of this tall clipper dropping down to the Golden Gate, her rigging asparkle with the frost, looking like a ship of gold and ebony floating on a sea of platinum."

The cold, steely, ringing clearness of the man's tones, as he spoke these words was like the striking of chimes made of the purest and most flawless of metal.

I said nothing, for I did not know what to think. I reflected, stupidly, that the ghastly faced master of the *Star of Siberia* seemed to have a mania for talking about glittering silver percolators. I was dazed and confused, for I was discovering that I had stepped unawares into a strange and terribly savage little world, inclosed within the oaken timbers of the vessel's hull, of a sort that I had never supposed could exist in real life.

When our tug had gotten us safely out through the tide rips of the Golden Gate, our stentorian-voiced first mate sent the red-shirted Sicilians in our crew, scurrying like a band of screaming monkeys, up into our spidery rigging to begin unfurling our canvas before the fresh north wind that greeted us. It was to me a novel and fascinating sight to see our great rectangular sails relieved of their furling lines and sheeted home to the ends of the long yards, flapping and thundering, like the wings of restrained, gigantic gulls eager to fly, for this was the first big square-rigged ship that I had ever sailed on.

Our tug soon cast us off, and then, with all our canvas set, from ringtail to flying jib, we stood away to the westward, heeled before the roaring north wind.

The sky had now become overcast, as if the day which had broken so fair were to end in a chilly murkiness, and in the cold gray afternoon I watched the California coastline fade into a cloudy haze so gray and pallid that it seemed almost as if it might be the drifting ashes of shattered human hopes.

It perhaps may be well now to describe more in detail the extraordinary crew of the *Star of Siberia*—if crew they could be called—for the two hundred men crowded aboard the old clipper were salmon packers, rather than sailors.

Aft in the cabin, with Iron Larsen,

there were four men, besides myself. One of these was a can-machine expert, a portly, silent little German who never spoke a word to any one, and who probably kept himself out of a lot of trouble by his aloofness. Then there were the ship's two mates, "Grizzly" Hains and "Stork" Petersen.

Grizzly Hains was a heavy-set, broad-shouldered sort of gorilla—and a genuine, old-time, sailing-ship mate, if ever there was one. His voice sounded like the north wind, his fists were hard and knotty, and he evidently had renounced razors in his youth, for his face was covered with thick, wiry brown hair. He abhorred steamboats and lee shores, chased his screaming Sicilian sailors up into the rigging with murderous swipes of an iron belaying pin, and roared and bellowed around the ship like a hoary old bull seal.

Stork Petersen, the second mate, was a quiet, unassuming, long-legged fellow, who seemed to live in mortal fear of the first mate, while Grizzly Hains feared no one at all on the entire hellish ship, save, indeed, Iron Larsen. When he addressed the ghastly-faced master of the *Star of Siberia*, his voice invariably lost something of its bellow.

The fourth man in the cabin was Parks, the gaunt, bony Scotch book-keeper, and sort of general aide to Iron Larsen. The master of the *Star of Siberia*, as I was to learn, would act as superintendent of the Bering Sea cannery at Ugashik, upon our arrival there.

In the after part of a long low house built on the ship's main deck, up against the break of the poop, there was a rude cabin about fourteen feet square and six feet high, lined all around with three tiers of narrow canvas bunks. Herein were crammed twenty-three men, comprising the cannery "black gang"—machinists, enginemen and firemen, a boilermaker, and a night watchman. This crew, under the direction



of the silent little German quartered in the cabin, would operate the intricate can-making machines installed in the Bering Sea cannery; for, owing to their bulk, ready-made cans could not possibly be carried in the ship. Among great quantities of other supplies, the vessel was deep laden with tin plate, solder, and coal, for the making of the cans.

In the forward end of the same deck house that accommodated the black gang, walled off by a stout dividing bulkhead, there was another much larger, long, low room, similarly filled with bunks, into which were crowded another fifty men—the fishermen who would man the cannery boats. These were a pack of half-wild, screaming Sicilians, picturesquely clad in coarse, red woolen homespuns. Most of them could not speak a word of English, though they might have lived in the Italian quarter of San Francisco for half a lifetime. In the fishermen's forecabin there was also a thin sprinkling of scarred and sea-tanned Swedes and Norwegians.

These fishermen acted as the sailors of the *Star of Siberia*. They worked the ship, receiving for this service a lay of one hundred dollars for the voyage, in addition to their fish money. This latter amounted to six cents for each salmon. A boat manned by two good men would deliver thirty thousand fish during the salmon run, bringing a split of eighteen hundred dollars between the two boat partners. The salmon fishermen of the Pacific, who sail to Alaska year after year, often return from their voyages with a thousand-dollar poke apiece.

Forward of the long, low deck house, occupied by the black gang and the fishermen, stood the large galley and a cabin containing the sleeping quarters of the considerable crew of cooks and messmen required on such a ship. The galley of the *Star of Siberia* was a rats' nest of Cape Verde Islanders—

a mongrel breed of half Portuguese and half negro—and they were a greasy, dirty, squalling outfit.

Away forward, down in the forehold, almost in the eyes of the big ship, were packed the most extraordinary lot of all—the China gang. This was a dirty, brawling cosmopolitan mob of ninety men, who would be used to do the unskilled work of the cannery. They would assist the can-machine men, feed the automatic machines, slime the fish, label the cans—in short, they would do all the hard, dirty work in the big plant.

This crew is known as the China gang, because in the earlier days of the Alaskan salmon fisheries all of the unskilled labor was performed by big gangs of Chinese who were carried up on the sailing ships for this purpose. The China gangs are contract labor; that is, the salmon-packing companies let contracts to a certain infamous group of Chinese labor brokers in San Francisco, who, in return for a stipulated number of thousands of dollars, agree to furnish crews of any specified number of men to do all the unskilled work in the northern canneries.

From the lump sum paid him by the salmon-packing company, the Chinese labor contractor pays his crew's wages, and also furnishes them their food. Obviously, the smaller the wages and the more wretched the food, the greater the profit of the contractor. Such frightful slave drivers have the Chinese contractors become, under this system, that for many years they have been unable to get together the big gangs of Orientals they formerly furnished. So they have turned to recruiting the vilest scum of the great city instead, and they have developed an unbelievably efficient system of crimping victims to fill the depleted ranks of their labor crews. This business of shanghaiing men into the Alaskan China gangs is carried on in San Francisco to this day.

The big salmon ships, laden with supplies for the long voyage, and with the black gang and fishermen all aboard, are towed out from the wharves and anchored in the stream—then the crimps and runners-up get busy. They lurk and skulk about the water front, the slums, and all the human rat holes of the big western city, picking up many wretches who have been in the China gangs before, and who elect to return to them again, rather than remain in their foul lodgings. When the voluntary supply of hungry men without jobs or beds, of dope fiends and drunkards, is exhausted, when all the degenerate human wrecks floating about have been scooped up into the runners' nets and put aboard ship, the crimps then become philanthropic and buy liquor heavily charged with knockout drops for those who remain in the city's dives and alleys. When their victims drop unconscious in the dark, or in the back room of a blind tiger, the lurking crimps bundle them into rented motor trucks, carry them, in their comatose condition, to a launch float on the water front, and get them aboard ship in the manner that I had seen at firsthand, and have already depicted.

In hard years, the China gangs in the great Alaskan salmon fleet are easily filled, but in more prosperous times, such as was the year in which I sailed, 1915, it is often exceedingly difficult to get enough victims to fill the ships. Then the resourceful contractors—who are aided hand and glove by the salmon companies—appeal to the guardians of the law, and prisoners in the county jail serving sentences of less than a year are offered a place in the China gangs, as an alternative to imprisonment. In droves, these recruits—pickpockets, thieves, gunmen, gamblers, and murderers, are turned out of the jails and brought out aboard ship, under heavy guard. So, at length, the China

gangs are filled and the tall ships depart.

In our China gang on the *Star of Siberia*, there were fifteen or twenty Chinese of a bad sort. The rest were a rabble of all nations—dope fiends, drunkards, and jailbirds. Our Chinese contractor was aboard with his hellish crew, the sly, little, parchment-faced ancient devil of a Foo Yick, and the monstrous and frightful-looking Chung was his "number-one man"—his henchman and bodyguard.

This was the sort of ship that I had unwittingly gotten aboard of. Wild and savage as she was, I was fervently thankful that I had my quarters in her cabin and had escaped the calamity of being one of the recruits in her China gang, as had so nearly been my fate.

When the gray-hazed coast line, and even the barren gray rocks of the Farallon Islands had vanished below the dark heaving sea, I sat alone on the heeled poop of the big ship and sighed, as bitter memories of what was past in my own life came crowding into my mind. But my unhappy retrospection was soon shattered by the pandemonium that broke loose on the *Star of Siberia* as soon as we had gotten out of sight of land. For it is a long-standing custom on the salmon ships for every man on board to get howling drunk and raise bedlam the moment the royals are sheeted home and the yards braced for the long northwestern run across the Pacific to Unimak Pass.

This was before the days of prohibition, and it soon seemed to me that every man on the ship who had not been shanghaied had come aboard with a sackful of whisky. Even the wretches in the China gang got unlimited supplies of rotgut liquor from the wizened Foo Yick, in return for their signatures scrawled unsteadily in his dirty slop book—whereby he charged it, at exorbitant prices, against their future wages.

The men of the black gang in the after end of the long deck house in the waist of the ship were the most turbulent of the drinkers. They fought and yowled, and bellowed belligerent curses at the Sicilians on the opposite side of their stout forward bulkhead, while the Mediterranean fishermen, who drank great flagons of sour red wine, drawn from big casks stowed in their quarters, screamed and screeched among themselves, like a horde of wild cats. Some of their number thrummed rich strains of operatic music on their deep-toned guitars, and others sang Italian love songs.

The Nordic faction in the fishermen's forecabin gambled, and swore many mouth-filling oaths, and liberally punched one another's heads—but left their Latin brothers pretty much alone, for they feared the Sicilians' knives. In the ship's galley, the greasy, black-skinned Cape Verde Islanders carried on a clamorous squalling war of their own, with much slashing and hacking.

Away forward, below the deck, the quarters of the China gang became a boiling, stinking hell. The dark, cavernlike hole into which this foul crew were packed was lighted by three or four smoking coal-oil lanterns swaying from the massive black deck beams overhead. These cast a feeble, ghastly, yellow glare through the ropy, smoke-filled atmosphere. There was a nauseous stench of crowded, unwashed bodies, and of the profusion of cheap, vile liquor that was being drunk with a continuous cursing, babel-like uproar maintained in a dozen mingled tongues. At a rude table made of three or four rough planks lashed up on top of two whisky barrels, sat a dozen Chinese with their tangled black hair hanging over their gaunt waxen faces, who were carrying on an exceedingly efficient and high-speed fan-tan game with small, clicking, engraved ivory cards. Over in one of the dozens of

narrow coffinlike wooden bunks that lined the ship's walls a thrashing, squirming white man, held down by the huge apelike Chung, was coming out from the influence of the dope he had been living under for months, or perhaps for years, and he was screaming in fearful agony.

After peering down through the open forepeak hatch upon this sickening spectacle, I retreated to the poop, where I found Grizzly Hains, the bellowing hairy-faced mate, stamping up and down along the side of the low trunk cabin, clutching a bottle of whisky in his fist and roaring like a mad tiger. It was properly Stork Petersen's watch, but the second mate must have elected to stand his watch somewhere else other than on the poop, for he was nowhere in sight.

Not a little apprehensive myself, I quietly crept down into the cabin. Though it was but seven o'clock, I caught a glimpse of Iron Larsen already turned into his bunk, where he lay softly, but intensely, cursing Alaska, the *Star of Siberia*, the salmon-fishing business, and life—but he kept one cold, lusterless eye fixed warily on the compass telltale that hung overhead.

I soon got into my own narrow bunk, for it seemed about the safest place I could find. There I lay restfully, feeling the long flying heave of the swiftly sailing vessel, and listening through my small porthole to the deep, steady song of the wind in the taut rigging and the swish of the water below the rail. But I could not sleep, for the yelling and screaming of the drunken devils crammed into the big ship seemed to seep back to me through the vessel's very timbers.

At length, some time after hearing Grizzly Hains come stamping and cursing down from the poop and turn in, I dozed off, only to be suddenly awakened by a loud, burry voice raised in one of the cabin staterooms:

"Oh, gude Lorrd, priserve me soond from avil, awnd forgi'e me thot I am sailt ag'n on this wicket ship wi' this godless de'il, Iron Larsen, but I am but a poor mon awnd I dinna hauc any shift but to earn my daily bread a' best I ken. Oh, gude Lorrd, wilt ye bring me saely back, but droon this de'il, Larssen, awnd all his bannalannas in yon icy northern seas——"

"Damn you, shut your face, Parks!" called out the clear and icy, and dangerously menacing voice of Iron Larsen. "You sniveling, bony hypocrite and liar, you would try to pull the wool over the eyes of the Almighty Himself, telling Him how poor you are, when you have enough postal-savings certificates hid away to keep your stingy spirit and your handful of bodily bone and gristle together for a thousand years!"

"Avast there, ye hawk-beaked kiltie!" chimed in the voice of Grizzly Hains, in a ship-shaking bellow. "If I hear ye doin' any more prayin' around this ship, I'll knock your tea-sippin' teeth clean down your gullet an' heave ye over th' side to th' gooneys!"

There was an utter silence, then suddenly the shrill, indignant voice of Iron Larsen's sleepy parrot split the darkness: "It's a hell of a ship!"

Again there was quiet in the cabin, and finally I fell asleep, fervently agreeing with the surly tempered bird—while to my ears, above the drowsy swishing of the sea and the whine of the wind, came the distant singing of a drunken Sicilian perched somewhere high aloft in the ship's top-hamper.

### CHAPTER III.

Some time after daybreak, on our first morning at sea, I was aroused by a violent pounding on my locked stateroom door. Hastily getting up and opening it, I found Casco beating on its panels.

I stared at him in blinking amazement, for he had now discarded his decorated pajamas and had donned an even more extraordinary garb. He was wearing an old, frayed, topaz-blue silk shirt, and a stained, but brilliant, carmine-hued velvet jacket, which was embellished with fleur-de-lis of tarnished, sea-green gold braid, and secured with a row of huge silver buttons as big as Spanish dollars. He wore a pair of baggy, yellow, Turkish trousers, very greasy and soiled, which were caught up about his waist under a belt made of some kind of a scaly, copper-colored snakeskin. Above that stuck the chased silver handle of his long, thin-bladed knife. On his little black head was a dark-red woolen cap with a tassel, and on his feet were slippers of the gray fur of land otter, decorated with red, blue, and green beads, sewed in geometrical patterns.

The effect of all these totally dissimilar and brilliantly colored garments was as fantastic as anything a human being had ever conceived, for they bespoke as widely varying origins as those from which the weird little devil's own progenitors must have sprung.

"Where do you stay all the time?" he chattered, bobbing up and down like a jumping jack. "Where do you eat, yesterday?"

"In the forward cabin, with the mates," I replied.

"*Pilaf!* You eat here!" he exclaimed, pointing toward the small table in the after cabin, which was set with three heavy China plates, three mugs, spoons, knives and forks. "Come out—it's time for the breakfast—the captain is soon ready. I, the Casco of Tasmania, am the captain's cook, and I will have no cold breakfasts. It makes me angry, and when I am angry, I keel. *Akh!* When I am angry, I keel!"

Espying the weird devil's brown-skinned hand slipping toward the silver hilt of the knife in his scaly, copper-

colored snakeskin belt, I hastily slammed the door shut, and locked it, before proceeding to get on my clothes.

"When I am angry, I keel!" he hissed again through the mahogany door panels at me, in a bloodthirsty voice, then he went pattering and rattling noisily away to bring in the breakfast.

Just as I finished getting into my clothes, I heard a series of wild, bellying screams up on the deck. Heavy running footsteps thudded swiftly on the planks overhead, and then a dark object hurtled past my small porthole and fell, with a loud splash, into the sea.

There arose a yelling clamor. A pistol cracked, sharply; and the cold, icy voice of Iron Larsen rang out in a command:

"Off the poop! Steady helm!"

Flying out of my stateroom, in wild alarm, I ran up the cabin companion-way onto the poop. Here I saw the gaunt master of the *Star of Siberia* standing alone beside the trunk cabin, clad in his long black coat and sable-skin cap, and holding in his hand an automatic pistol, from the black barrel of which curled a pale wisp of smoke.

Forward of the break of the poop, along the side of the house on the main deck, a hundred of our drunken crew, disheveled, bleary-eyed, their coarse features savagely distorted by whisky, crowded thickly along our lee rail. With frantic, slobbering cries, they gazed aft, along the ship's side, or pointed stupidly in that direction.

Following their gestures, I looked astern. In the wake of the swiftly moving ship, I saw a dark, bobbing object which was already several hundred yards behind us. As it rose on the choppy gray seas, I saw that it was a man, and that he was swimming for his life.

I looked swiftly at Iron Larsen. The

death-faced shipmaster was taking no notice of the drowning man astern. His cold gray eyes were upon the fellow at the wheel, who wiped blood onto his coat sleeve from a bullet crease in his black-bearded left cheek, and clung, shivering with terror, to his spokes.

"My gosh, cap'n, ain't yuh goin' to pick pore Chawlie up?" wailed a voice from among the drunken, tousled mob in the waist of the ship.

"Charlie was a good feller, cap'n!" blubbered another tearful wretch, appealingly. "He was on'y drunk an' runnin' away from th' snakes an' pink elephants!"

"Yus, he's a man's bes' frien' in th' worl', cap'l!" pleaded another hoarse voice. "Please don't leave 'im back there in th' water!"

Some of the mob started to climb up onto the poop to continue their blubbering intercessions for the man astern in the sea, whereat Iron Larsen halted them with his black automatic.

"Stay clear of the poop—all of you!" he snapped, in his clear, icy voice. "Any man who jumps over the side of this ship when she is under full sail in a gale of wind is through with her! We'll smash our top-hamper for no drunken curs!"

I stared in speechless horror at the ghastly faced shipmaster, and then I gazed astern at the swimming man, who had become a tiny black speck bobbing up and down in the rumpling seas. In a few moments he was lost among the waves.

"Pore Chawlie!" sobbed the drunken wretch who had first attempted to plead for the life of the man overboard, and then all the rest of the drunken mob burst into a maudlin clamor of weeping and cursing.

The fantastic Casco now came jouncing up onto the poop, a large, greasy, skirtlike brown apron partly concealing his brilliant garments.

"The breakfast is soon cold!" he

chattered, gesticulating before Iron Larsen. "Ahh! I am angry, and when I am angry, I keel!"

A faint glimmer of a smile appeared in Iron Larsen's lusterless gray eyes.

"Oh, then, to save our lives, we'll go down and eat," he replied, in his unchanging, clear, icy voice. "Mr. Dex, you had better come along."

In a cold, trembling sweat, I followed the shipmaster down into the cabin, and seated myself with him at the small table.

"You look quite white, young man," said Iron Larsen, regarding me steadily with his hard gray eyes. "You are almost as chalky as I am, who have a cancer gnawing out my vitals."

This unexpected remark effectually served to divert my thoughts from the man who had been left astern, swimming in the rumpling gray seas.

"Is that the reason your face is so——" I began, and then I abruptly paused, for I had been about to say ghastly.

"Ghastly," finished Iron Larsen, speaking the word for me, in his icy voice.

I remained silent.

"I have cancer of the stomach—have had it for many years," he said, speaking again, in his cold, clear tones. "That is what I got when I was one of the underdogs helping to keep the glittering silver percolators boiling. I have lost my health forever, and I am condemned to suffer a living death with a consuming sore in my stomach—all for lack of a few pennies worth of eatable food when I was a gawky stripling—a weakfish in the jaws of the sharks. I sailed in forecables that were worse than the China-gang quarters of this ship, and I bear bruises from iron belaying pins and cicatrices from whiplashes that seared my body, and could not break my spirit, but made it iron. I have lived for weeks on soup made of bread, boiled in water,

with a pinch of salt, containing no grease or fat—all for the profit of the tigers who sail ships with unfed men.

"They are cannibals who glut themselves upon the sweat and tears, upon the very flesh of men—and there are many like them! Benevolence and kindness are everlastingly prated about, but greed and selfishness are often the main qualities of the praters, as they are of most of mankind. There is in all the world, sir, no man who gives a damn about you, in the long run, but yourself, and, therefore, the inverse of this must also be true, that you should give a damn for no man—but yourself. I see you grow pale with fear and dismay, at these words. No one realizes more acutely than I, sir, that this is a savage and terrible philosophy, but it is the way of life, just as the leap of the panther upon a helpless doe is the way of life. The flimsy beauties of religions are in men's mouths, but the ruthless will to survive is in their hearts.

"Life is an eternal killing, in which only the strongest, the fittest, the most ferocious killers survive. It is an everlasting battle between eaters and eaten, and you have no choice but to be one or the other, or both. You eat, or you are eaten. You deal mercilessly with men, or men will deal mercilessly with you. That is the lesson I have learned through lashings, through starvation, through the loss of the one woman I ever loved. For *she* sold herself for silks and diamonds and other luxuries to one of those very polished and sophisticated cannibals who so nearly devoured me—and now, as a result, I am, to my own perfect knowledge, and by my own approval, as nerveless, as cold, and as hard, as the finest of tempered steel.

"I can be touched by no emotion of sympathy or kindness or love, and I am glad I cannot, for they are pitfalls. I can look upon any spectacle of hu-

man misery and suffering, however terrible, without a single quiver, for I know that this is but the way of life. I am the perfectly finished product of life, as life is manifested in all its real and terrible aspects, and life should be proud of its job in having made me so well."

An utter silence fell in the cabin, when Iron Larsen ended this sudden outburst, if outburst it could be called; for he had spoken all the while as if he were the emotionless piece of steel he called himself.

"This is all terrible!" I gasped, my breakfast forgotten.

Iron Larsen regarded me with his ghastly smile, which now struck cold chills through my very bones.

"You will learn, too," he replied cryptically. "You should learn faster, though, were you forward there in that China gang you came so near being a member of."

I shuddered, and said nothing more.

Iron Larsen now began to eat, delicately and sparingly, of some light foods cooked with amazing perfection by the fantastic Casco, who also waited on us, much to my discomfort.

The two mates of the *Star of Siberia* and the silent German can-machine expert ate at a long table in the forward section of the cabin, at which the canery black gang were also served in relays. Since the table would accommodate but nine men, and there were nearly thirty to be fed at it, four settings were required; and by the time the black messboys had washed up the dishes after the fourth batch had been given breakfast, it was almost time to begin all over again with the noonday meal.

The fishermen were served on rude, narrow tables nailed up in their fore-castle. They mostly ate huge platters of spaghetti, with an occasional change to macaroni, for variety. The Swedes and Norwegians sat on a bench apart, devouring huge chunks of stinking salt

beef and sea biscuits, and liberally cursing the paste-eating dagoes. The deck house stunk of stale whisky, of smoke from the vile, sticky, black tobacco used by the Sicilians, of sour wine, macaroni, and the men's continuously worn garments.

The China gang were dealt with like a tribe of pariahs and outcasts. They were not served at all from the ship's galley, for, as I have already mentioned, the Chinese contractor fed his own men. For this purpose he had his own galley or kitchen. A weather-beaten wooden shanty about six feet square, nailed up alongside the ship's port rail, just aft the break of the fore-castle head, wherein was nothing but a big, copper cooking pot set over a brick furnace, and a couple of old five-gallon, coal-oil cans with their tops cut out, which stood on a small, rusty camp stove.

A shuffling, sandal-shod Chinese cook with a waxen yellow face of unhealthy hue, clad in a filthy striped denim jumper, boiled a huge quantity of cheap cracked rice twice a day in the big copper pot. In one of the tall, square coal-oil cans on the camp stove he stewed a mess of Chinese seaweed, a slimy, dark-green, stringy spinachlike stuff, and in the other rusty, oil can he made a few gallons of weak tea.

This food—rice, seagrass, and tea—comprised the bill of fare of the China gang. The men lined up on the deck, like a prison crew, in single file, each carrying an iron plate and a tin cup. As each man filed by a small square hole cut in the wall of the cook shanty, he stuck his utensils inside, and then withdrew them again, laden by the sickly faced Oriental—the iron plate with a small mountain of grayish rice, its hills green with seaweed, and the cup filled with weak, yellow, luke-warm tea from the big rusty can on the smoky, ill-heated camp stove.

The China gang had no particular

place in which to eat. They stood about the deck, or went down into their stinking black quarters with their wretched food. There was never any variation in the nauseous mess of rice, seaweed, and warm tea without milk or sugar, which was served up by the waxen-faced cook. The Chinese perhaps were accustomed to such fare, but the plight of the white men in Foo Yick's crew was appalling. The hungriest ones clustered thickly about our ship's galley aft the foremast, during meal hours, and they seized upon any cast-off scraps of food, like a flock of starving gulls.

Some who had a little money began bribing our mongrel cooks to give them food, whereupon the hawk-beaked Parks, who was the keeper of our galley stores, descended upon them like a savage eagle and chased them away. I was mystified at the ferocity which the bony bookkeeper displayed toward those of the China gang who dared to tamper with our cooks, and while eating supper with Iron Larsen, the evening of our fourth day out, I remarked to him about it. Parks was not with us at the time; indeed, he had not eaten at our table since we had sailed, though the vacant third place that was always set between Iron Larsen and myself was intended for him.

"Praying Parks begrudges every mouthful of food swallowed on this ship," replied the white-faced master of the *Star of Siberia*, with a cold, hard smile. "His contract stipulates that he receives a cash bonus from the salmon company amounting to five per cent of the cost price of all the surplus galley stores remaining in the vessel when she returns to San Francisco. It consequently brings tears of miserly rage to his eyes to see men eat. He lives himself like a fasting hermit, and he skulks up forward about the galley, like a gaunt-ribbed hyena, watching the cooks and the China gang. He even sneaks into the galley, every time he

can, and steals things he has doled out to the cooks.

"He lugs tins of milk and pieces of bacon back into the lazaret—and then raises damnation, when the messboys are sent to him for fresh supplies. When we were homeward bound from the Bering Sea last year, we ran into an eighteen-day calm. That calm knocked a disastrous hole in our galley stores, for the ship had to be fed that much longer, and Parks knelt on the poop and prayed for wind for four days and nights, until he fell on the planks, exhausted. He is a pious man, Parks is. He is a dependable assistant, too, this Parks, and though he hates me, by his stinginess, he swells my profits more than he does his own, for I am no small stockholder in this outfit. But I despise the sneaking, bony hypocrite; and some day I am going to leave him in that Bering Sea he is so fond of consigning me to, in his prayers. You'll like that, eh, Parks?"

The tall, skeletonlike bookkeeper had come down from the poop into the cabin, his huge thin nose blue with cold, and he had seated himself between us in time to hear the shipmaster's last sentence or two.

"Thou art an avil mon, Larsen," replied Praying Parks, in a loud nasal voice, as he served himself a small cup of tea. "Thou art not of the kingdom of the Lord."

"I know it, Parks, and I'm glad of it," replied Iron Larsen, in his clear, cold voice, like breaking ice. "I am an evil man, but morally evil, instead of evilly moral, as you are. I like to put my foot on your neck, and on the necks of all the other weaklings and hypocrites like you. I could kill you with as little compunction as I might crush a filth-laden fly, for I have no god but Life, and Life is the survival of the strongest."

There followed a strange silence.

Praying Parks solemnly covered his



hook nose with his teacup, as he drained it dry, and I dared say nothing. Then Iron Larsen's parrot, hanging on his trapeze up in the skylight, suddenly relieved the tension by reciting, in a shrill, comical fashion:

"Thirteen fleas on the bookkeeper's chest.  
Yo, ho, ho, and he even watered the ink!"

Praying Parks glanced up with a black scowl at the screaming satiny-green parrot, while the big bird glared back at him, balefully. Iron Larsen laughed icily, and I felt a little like snickering.

"Since you are beginning to take your meals with us, I presume that you have successfully hawked the China-gang buzzards from the galley," the white-faced shipmaster at length observed.

"I haue, sa'e yure red de'il wi' his dead hawnd. He bides fair he'll see us both kilt."

"Oh, yes," returned Iron Larsen, with cold interest. "I have a notion that Red Strauss considers you in a way responsible for the loss of his hand, for it was your piglike eyes that continually espied him cutting the salmon heads too long, until I set the heading knife so close on him that he got his hand into it. That lesson will have made him a fine head cutter this year, but he is a vicious, refractory sort of devil, and he must be broken. You had better keep a gun or a knife handy about you, Parks."

"I haue faith in the Lorrd," replied Praying Parks, piously.

#### CHAPTER IV.

For thirteen days our tall ship sailed swiftly before a strong northeast wind, bearing first to the westward and then curving to the north in a great arc toward Unimak Pass.

Late one bright sunlit afternoon, we sighted the Aleutian Islands, over seventy miles to the north of us, looking

like small snow-white lumps of broken sugar projecting into the blue sky from the rim of the sea. Under the impulse of the dying northeasterly wind on our starboard beam, we sailed up on them during the night. When I came out on deck the next morning, I caught my breath with amazement at the awe-inspiring spectacle that seemed to have risen before the ship like magic in the darkness.

Upon our starboard bow towered the Island of Unimak, ninety miles in length, a chaos of snow-shrouded mountains surmounted by five immense, white, volcanic cones, one of which was smoking, darkly. On our other bow lay the low, flat island of Tigalda, looking like a floating white desert, or an immense snowy cake set on the dark sea. Between these two desolate islands there was a five-mile stretch of heaving, gray water—the forbidding entrance to the Bering Sea.

Unimak Pass, which is thickly strewn with the broken corpses of many good ships, is the door to a mighty lodge room, a chamber of gloom, mystery, and tempest, in which the lights are always burning low; where the master's hat is spun of gleaming frost, while the brethren's aprons are white plains of virgin snow, their insignia are flaming jewels of steel blue ice, and their plumes are the blazing streamers of the aurora borealis. It is a region of terrible storms, of snow-laden blizzards and grievous seas. The needle of the barometer fluctuates insanely as the atmospheric pressures battle eternally over the saw-toothed ranges of the Aleutian chain. Here is the cradle and the birthplace of every shrieking wintry gale that sweeps over the North Pacific, lashing the ocean into white titanic rage.

A cold head wind sprang up from the northwest as we approached the entrance to the Bering Sea, and for three days we beat before Unimak in the

teeth of a whistling icy gale that sternly barred us from the gloomy pass.

Then we were suddenly becalmed close upon the land. The gale died out, and we lay upon glassy, heaving water below the breathless immensity of the white-robed mountains that spread themselves into the sky before us. The setting sun, breaking through lowering clouds, bathed the canvas of our tall ship and the snow-shrouded peaks of Unimak high above us in a blood-red glow, while streamers of smoke and sulphur fumes wound themselves in misty yellow spirals about the cone of Shishaldin, the greatest of the sky-piercing volcanoes on the island.

As we lay with slack, flapping canvas on the glassy sea, our fishermen cast deep cod lines over the ship's rail, the hooks baited with salt pork, and in the short space of time intervening between sunset and nightfall they fairly covered our decks with a layer of whitely gleaming codfish—fine big fellows about three feet long. We ate some of the fish, which were delicious, and even Praying Parks was in such cheerful spirits, at the prospect of so much food obtained without drawing upon his precious stores, that he did not disturb us with his prayers that night.

Another day broke, dark and lowering. A warm wind sprang up from the eastward, and under its steadily rising force we sailed swiftly, with every piece of canvas set, into the dark, gloomy pass. The white-walled and red-roofed buildings of a lighthouse station on Scotch Cap, a lofty promontory on Unimak Island, became visible, looking like a cluster of tiny, little, painted wooden blocks below the mighty volcano, Shishaldin, that towered into the gray skies above our starboard beam. The wind whined weirdly in our sails and rigging, as though weeping at our rashness in venturing upon the northern waters, but we drove steadily on, and soon began dipping our bows into

the sharp, choppy waves of the Bering Sea.

A startling change took place in the weather as we emerged from the northern end of the pass. The air grew bitterly cold, the sky became darker and more lowering, and the lofty mountains of Unimak loomed above us in sinister aspect, as if they would grimly bar us from ever escaping out of the icy domains of Boreas, into which we had so dauntlessly ventured.

A shrieking icy gale burst upon us, enveloping the *Star of Siberia* in a haze of hard, dry, stinging snow, through which our bellowing, hairy-faced mate staggered about with an iron belaying pin in each fist, clubbing the screaming Sicilians up into the whistling rigging to furl our thundering, clewed-up canvas.

Almost with the first moan of the Arctic wind in our weather stays, Iron Larsen appeared on deck, clad in a glossy, black, sableskin coat and a thick, helmetlike hooded cap of the same material. In his black-mittened right hand he gripped an automatic pistol. His ghastly face gleaming whitely in the fog of stinging dry snow that swept across the deck, he paced the poop until our sails were fast, then thrusting a blued-steel Luger pistol similar to his own into my gloved hands, he ordered me to follow him forward.

I obeyed, shivering in the snow-laden wind, though I was clad in a heavy, red-checked Mackinaw. With us came the ship's two mates, who also had guns. Exceedingly mystified and alarmed, I went with the others down along the midship deck houses, past the galley, and forward to the small hatch above the China-gang quarters in the vessel's forehold.

In a hard, ringing, icy voice, Iron Larsen began ordering such members of the China gang as had persisted in remaining about the deck, despite the snow and the biting wind, to get down

into their dark, cavernlike quarters in the hold. In cringing alarm, they obeyed—negroes, Chinese, Americans, and Filipinos crept together down the heavy ladder that stood in the hatch. Soon they were all below—but Iron Larsen evidently was not satisfied.

"Go down and see if Red Strauss is in there," he commanded the mate. The north wind was screaming about our ears, but the voice of the ghastly faced shipmaster rang clear as steel above its whistling uproar.

Grizzly Hains descended into the dark hatch, and climbed back out in a few minutes to report that the man with the mutilated hand was not in the China-gang quarters.

"I didn't think he was," replied Iron Larsen, nodding his black, fur-hooded head ominously. "He never would obey, when we had him here before, without being beaten half to death. Get some sailors to batten the hatch, we'll find Strauss afterward."

Grizzly Hains summoned three or four Swedes from the fishermen's deck house, whom Iron Larsen ordered to seize a heavy, iron-bound wooden cover, about six feet square, lying under the forecastle-head, and throw it down onto the combing of the China-gang hatch.

As the cover was dropped into place over the black hole, with a jarring heavy thud, a muffled, terrified clamor at once arose from the men imprisoned below. I could hear them stampeding to the foot of the hatch ladder and fighting for a chance to climb up. A big, woolly headed negro clambered up the ladder, and lifted the hatch cover on his head and shoulders, as he came, as if it were a newspaper. With a powerful heave, he sent it sliding to one side.

"Get down, you black devil!" commanded Iron Larsen, in his low, steely voice.

The negro's right hand flicked to his waist and came back up with a clasp knife, then a capstan bar swept through

the haze of snow that swirled about our faces, and crashed against the skull of the black. With a sighing groan, he fell down off the ladder upon his yelling companions below. Grizzly Hains dropped the bar in his hands, and, aided by the fishermen, again caught up the hatch cover and hurled it back into place. Quickly it was battened down with stout iron straps and thick oaken wedges.

"A China gang ran riot with me once on a sinking ship, and tried to make away with what few boats we had," Iron Larsen informed me grimly, as he stood, with his blued-steel Luger pistol still in his hand, watching the big, strong-armed Scandinavian fishermen pound the battening wedges home with clubs and bars. "They'll never get a chance to do it again."

Some of the frantic wretches imprisoned below climbed back up the ladder and began thumping futilely on the underside of the hatch cover, screaming with wild fear.

"But, great heavens, what would happen to those poor devils, if we should go down!" I gasped, horrified.

"They could never escape," coldly replied Iron Larsen. "I don't intend for them to. There are not boats enough on the *Star of Siberia* for ourselves—we have only the four new Columbia fishing boats chocked up there on the midship deck house."

I gazed aft through the fog of stinging, wind-swept snow, toward the four gray, round-bottomed fishing boats lashed up over the quarters of the Sicilians, and I realized with a shock that Iron Larsen spoke the truth. Those four fishing boats, even if they were all gotten over the side, could not carry half of us, in the event of a disaster.

"There's a man hidin' out on th' jib boom!" bellowed Grizzly Hains, above the scream of the wind in our swaying top-hammer. He was pointing out across the ship's forecastle-head toward

the great timber that rode slantingly ahead of us into the storm.

Following the mate's mittened forefinger, I espied a small, shivering, brown-skinned Filipino huddled far out on the big boom. He was crouching partly on the furled boardlike gray canvas of our flying jib and partly on the smooth, round, yellow timber, which was fast becoming plated with whitely gleaming ice. Clinging to that perilous perch out fifty feet ahead of the ship and high above the black rising seas, he was exposed to the full force of the freezing wind that was whistling about us, and at times he was hidden completely from our eyes by the snow that flew thickly through the air.

Grizzly Hains started to climb up onto the forecabin head to go out after the shivering Filipino, but Iron Larsen raised his black-mittened hand, in a detaining gesture.

"Let him stay out there, until he gets enough of playing the monkey!" exclaimed the ghastly faced master of the *Star of Siberia*, whose black sable furs were turning white with snow. "After it gets dark, he'll crawl down under the forecabin head—then see to it that he doesn't get inside anywhere. He'll be glad to go below next time, damn his gibbering soul!"

We returned aft, through the wind and snow, to the poop.

"Search the ship for Red Strauss!" Iron Larsen commanded the mate. "Look through the quarters of the black gang, and in the fishermen's forecabin. I think you need not bother the galley, Praying Parks has his eye on that establishment. When you find that fellow, call me!"

Iron Larsen's voice had a sinister, steely note in it that fairly made my blood run cold. I had long since divined that for some mysterious reason, entirely aside from the fact that the man was as refractory as a captive tiger, the ghastly faced master

of the *Star of Siberia* hated the red-bearded wretch with the mutilated hand with an intensity that was absolutely terrible.

When I sat down at the cabin table with the gaunt shipmaster for our evening meal, an hour later, I was not able to eat. I could not banish from my mind a vision of the bit of freezing, brown-skinned humanity clinging out on the end of our big jib boom, which must be swaying like an enormous slanted pendulum in the icy storm-swept darkness, and I thought of the ninety terrified and miserable human beings penned down in the ship's foully stinking hold, doomed to drown like a nest of squeaking, biting, filthy rats, if we should happen to be wrecked.

"Won't they die for lack of air?" I demanded suddenly of Iron Larsen, who sat opposite me, eating delicately, as he always did.

"If you are speaking of the China gang—no," he replied, a little harshly. "There are iron gratings under the forecabin head and small wind chutes in the eyes of the ship to ventilate their quarters—at least sufficiently to keep them from suffocating—"

Iron Larsen paused and looked keenly at me, for my face must have been white.

"Young man, you are out of place here, with your fine attitude!" he exclaimed icily. "You think this is savage, uncivilized, barbarous! Bah! It is only a concrete and realistic illustration of the eternal struggle to survive—of the snarling fight of dog against dog, which is the way of life. Down in the cities we have left, men and women and children are battered down into no less black, stinking hells, figuratively speaking, than is the hold of this sailing ship. There the battens are mortgages, time clocks, and the enforced respect of property rights. The wedges are monopolies and tax gatherers, and the dark hold is the poverty-

stricken tenement where babes cry all night in the stifling heat and grow stunted on chalky milk sold in thimblefuls by dime-snatching ghouls.

"Here you see direct visible action. You hear me telling you, sir, that I am ready to send those ninety men to hell, like a box of squeaking rats, to preserve the safety of my own ship and of my own life. That sounds brutal, doesn't it? But is it half so merciless and inexorable as the civilized way of playing the game—the elaborate game played invisibly through clearing houses and banks and stocks and bucket shops? The game that stunts babes in their cradles and leaves children to grow up hard, vicious little savages in the dirty gashes called streets among the tenements? The players who sit in that game and drink their morning coffee from their glittering silver percolators are worse than we, for they pervert the law that we must destroy to live—they destroy to grow fat and die themselves of apoplexy and vice—and they do it brazenly before their God. I do nothing in the name of any god, I fear none, lie to none, believe in none!

"But, sir, we destroy to live. This China gang is the vilest scum, dope fiends, degenerates, thieves and murderers—all products of the civilized game. But, even were they better men, I could still send them to hell should this ship sink—not because I take a savage delight in the spectacle of death, for I do not, but because to drown them without mercy would be necessary for my own safety—and because I have found that such is the ferocious way of life."

I listened aghast to this terrible philosophy, delivered as it was in the death-faced man's never-changing, clear, icy tones.

"You must value your life rather highly," I remarked bitterly.

Iron Larsen glanced at me keenly.

"And you?" he queried.

"No!" I flamed out, "I don't! The main thing it has taught me so far is the bitter lesson that one can't support a wife on forty dollars a month."

The gaunt master of the *Star of Siberia* looked coldly at me.

"And so you lost her?"

"Yes."

"And have come aboard my ship, not caring so very much whether you live or die?"

"No!" I burst out. "I don't!"

"Then you ought to be forward with the China gang!" rasped Iron Larsen. "You ought to get down there, with the rest of those broken derelicts—men who have lived, struggled, and given up. You are about to let your enemies, who are all men in the world, crowd you out, thrust you aside, trample on you, crush you to death! You are about to give yourself up as a morsel for the cannibals' pot—to become a sacrifice to the glittering silver percolator. Are you going to let your snarling fellow savages about you devour you? Never, never do it! Devour them! Kill, rend, destroy—but be an eater! Live!

"Life, sir is your only real possession. Save when we live, the entire universe simply does not exist, for us. Nothing else is real, nothing else is possible, but this exquisitely fragile consciousness called life. And to live you must be an eater. You must play life's merciless game, whether in the politely terrible fashion of civilization, or in this savagely terrible fashion in which I must play it. While I live, I play the game; I play it without hope, without conscience, and without mercy—and damn those who interfere with me, or blabber their fictions of golden harps and misty angels—"

There was a startling scream, a flapping swish, and then Iron Larsen's big, satiny-green parrot, which had been roosting on its trapeze over our heads, fell with a heavy thud fairly into the

middle of the table, between us, upsetting my cup of coffee and knocking over a sugar bowl. The bird lay where it had fallen, its shimmering, bronze-green wings partly outspread, its long, hooked, pale-yellow beak opening and closing in slow feeble gasps and screams. As I sat staring in startled amazement at the big bird, it expired, its head dropping limply on the figured, red tablecloth.

Iron Larsen, with a strange, low, throaty cry, sprang to his feet. Catching his glossy green pet in his cold white hands, he began tenderly caressing it and turning it over and over, as if vainly striving to revive it. In his lusterless gray eyes appeared a damp film, and I fancied his hands trembled a little as he fondled the dead bird. But these astonishing signs of emotion in the gaunt, white-faced man vanished in an instant. His eyes becoming cold and expressionless again, he scrutinized the parrot closely, and then laid it back on the table.

"It has been poisoned—soldering acid has been put into its food," he said, in his clear, icy voice. "Where is Praying Parks?"

We both glanced at the empty chair between us.

As if in answer to the shipmaster's sternly asked question, there came at this instant to our ears, from somewhere down in the lazaret of the ship, a loud, shrill, fearful scream, followed by a thumping sound of overturning boxes and cases, and a muffled tinkle of smashing glass.

Iron Larsen stepped swiftly across the cabin, and vanished up the companionway that led up to the poop. As I went rushing up the steep, narrow staircase after him, I saw him strike down a man in the stormy darkness, who was emerging from the small lazaret hatch beside the steering windlass—just aft the cabin scuttle. An ax or an iron club fell clattering onto

the deck from the fellow's hands, as Iron Larsen knocked him down.

"Fetch a pair of handcuffs, Dex!" the shipmaster snapped to me, as he throttled the squirming man in the dark, on the ice-coated deck. "They are in my cabin, hanging over my bunk!"

I ran back below to fetch the irons. As I flew across the cabin, the fantastic Casco, clad still in his carmine jacket and his yellow Turkish trousers supported by a coppery snakeskin belt, burst in upon me with a prodigious clatter, his long rapierlike knife flashing in his brown-skinned hand.

"Where! Where! Where!" he chattered excitedly, jabbing and sawing and slashing with his gleaming weapon, in a dozen directions. "When I am angry, I keel! *Vallah!*"

Running back up onto the poop with the handcuffs, I managed to make out Iron Larsen in the snow-filled darkness sitting on the back of his prisoner, who was sprawled on his face on the deck, close beside the lazaret hatch. I saw the shipmaster drawing the arms of the man together behind his back.

"Snap the irons over his wrists!" he commanded me.

I attempted to obey. Fumbling in the roaring darkness with the oily, polished handcuffs, trying to get them over the captive's wrists, I unwittingly grasped a hard, cold, bony, mutilated hand. I recoiled swiftly, an icy chill shooting through the roots of my hair.

"Give them to me!" rasped Iron Larsen. He snatched the handcuffs out of my fingers, and in an instant I heard them click metallically about Red Strauss' thin wrists.

To the handcuffs was riveted a short steel chain, with a padlock at its free end. Throwing his prisoner against the rudder windlass, Iron Larsen passed the clinking chain around one of the iron stanchions of that device and snapped shut the padlock over the links.

Even as he was doing this, I heard

a terrified shout somewhere close beside me. Staring about through the haze of stinging snow that swept across the heaving poop, I discovered a red glow down in the square of the lazaret hatch.

"Fire!" screamed the man at the wheel, in a panic of fear. But his shriek was borne away on the roaring north wind that burst in icy blasts across our dark, deserted decks, and before he could yell again, Iron Larsen had sprung upon him like a tiger, and throttled him.

With a frightened moan, the fisherman let go of the spokes, to struggle in the iron clutch of the shipmaster, while the wheel spun in the darkness. I jumped at it, skinning my knuckles and smashing a thumb-nail, before I succeeded in grasping the flying spokes.

My fingers bleeding, I strove to put the helm down again, for the big ship was bringing up so swiftly that I could already hear her canvas beginning to spill the wind and roar like cannons, far aloft in the darkness. Then a heavy, bellowing object came hurtling along the leeward side of the trunk cabin, resolving itself into the form of Grizzly Hains, who knocked me roughly from the wheel and began putting it rapidly down.

"You keep your tongue in your head—you!" I heard Iron Larsen snarl at the fisherman, whom he had thrown against the after end of the trunk cabin. "I'll kill you, if you let out a whimper! No fire panic on this ship! Now tail onto this hatch cover. Get it over the combing! Dex, take hold here!"

Together, we lifted a heavy wooden cover lying on the deck and lunged with it toward the lazaret hatch, from which was now swirling a hot, fire-illuminated column of black smoke. I became aware, suddenly, that muffled, bloodcurdling shrieks and groans were coming up from somewhere down in the fire-filled lazaret.

"Good heavens—stop—there's a man down there!" I shouted to Iron Larsen, and I caught him by the arm, as he and the fisherman tilted the hatch cover over the combing. In answer, the gaunt shipmaster jabbed me violently in the stomach with his sharp elbow, for both his hands were on the hatch, knocking me breathless against the trunk cabin; whence a sudden heave of the storm-tossed ship sent me sliding across the icy poop to crash into the leeward rail. As I staggered to my feet, gasping for breath, and blood streaming from my left cheek, which had been cut open on the edge of the cabin combing, I saw Iron Larsen drop the heavy wooden hatch cover into place, instantly shutting off the shaft of light that flared up into the snowy darkness, and muffling the frightful screams that were issuing from the lazaret.

"Damn you, you fiend—you are burning a man to death!" I shouted at the merciless shipmaster, and I lunged dizzily at him. But he stopped me with a blow in the mouth that sent blood flying from my broken upper lip, and then he followed with another between my eyes that knocked me headlong across the icy poop.

"Get out the donkey man!" I heard him commanding Grizzly Hains, in his ringing, icy voice. "Stir up the fire in the boiler, and run a steam hose aft here. Get four or five squareheads out of the fishermen's forecabin to give you a hand—no Sicilians, mind! Lash down that hatch, you shivering fool—before it blows off!"

This last was addressed to the man who had been at the helm, and who now squatted, cowering, a vague black blur, on the hatch cover.

"Dex, stand up here and hang onto the wheel! This is no time for heroics. Let Praying Parks stay down there coddling his precious galley stores—perhaps he'll enjoy feeling himself siz-

zling in the sort of hell he's so fond of trying to pray others into!"

Painfully, I got to my feet, and staggered to the wheel, where I stood leaning heavily on the spokes, while Iron Larsen knelt on the lazaret hatch beside me, assisting the helmsman in the task of passing a piece of stiff icy rope over the cover and down through stout iron ring-bolts in the deck, about the combing. As the thick wooden cover was securely lashed down, I thought I heard a muffled, frantic knocking on its underside, but this must have been a fancy of my reeling brain, for the heat below in the lazaret had already become so intense that the ice on the poop was beginning to loosen in patches and go slithering about my feet, as the ship pitched and lunged into the night-obscured seas.

#### CHAPTER V.

Four figures appeared, struggling in the wind-swept darkness, along the leeward side of the vessel's low trunk cabin, dragging a snaky hose. One of them, the ship's carpenter, brought an ax, with which he chopped a small hole into the oaken deck. When his ax went through the hot wood, the flames below glowed like those in a boiler furnace behind an opened damper. Into this hole was thrust the brass nozzle of the steam hose, packed about with a piece of gunny sack. Steam was turned on from the donkey boiler forward. The hose writhed as cold water spurted through it, and then we heard hot steam whistling inside its taut walls and striking with an angry hiss into the fire below.

A heavy sea struck the quarter of the *Star of Siberia*, heeling the ship violently and wrenching the wheel from my numbed, freezing hands. Again the spokes spun about, striking me a shattering blow on the wrist, and I slid staggering on the slanting deck, half-way to the leeward rail. Grizzly Hains

bellowed curses that I scarcely heard in the roar of the icy blizzard, while a fisherman caught the wheel and put it down again, in time to keep the vessel from bringing to. Half unconscious, I got below into the cabin, which stunk of scorched shellac and varnish.

I cannot remember much of the rest of the night. I have a vague idea that I saw Grizzly Hains, with the thick, wiry, brown hair on his face incrustated in a gleaming white mask of ice, lug Red Strauss down into the after cabin, where leg irons were shackled onto the snarling prisoner. His dirty red-bearded face was pinched and frozen, and his mutilated hand, ironed behind his back with his other good one, was a steely blue. He was thrown into the cabin washroom, and the door locked upon him.

Meanwhile, the hissing cloud of steam spurting from the nozzle of the hose up on the poop ate down into the heart of the fire in the lazaret, and quickly smothered it to death.

I tumbled into my narrow bunk, my face bruised and cut, my ribs aching, and my fingers and left wrist smarting as if they were on fire. I passed the night in the semiwakeful state, stifling in the stale air of the tightly closed cabin. I heard in my fancy, above the whistling of the Arctic blizzard, the fearful shrieks that had issued from the blazing lazaret, before the heavy wooden cover had been thrown down onto the hatch combing. I had half-delirious visions, too, of the ninety miserable wretches batted down in our foul black hold, and of the freezing, brown-skinned creature clinging out on the end of the ship's reeling jib boom, risking being cast into the sea or dying of the cold, rather than submit to the possibility of meeting a more fearful death in the dark, in the dungeon below the deck.

Daylight struck at length through my small, thick glass port, which was cov-



ered every few seconds with a surge of green sea water. When I got out into the cabin, aching, sleepless, and stiff, I was scarcely able to stand, so violently was the big ship reeling and pitching into the seas. The cabin was gloomy and cold, but the stink of burned varnish still hung about.

"I am sorry I had to handle you so roughly last night, Mr. Dex," I heard Iron Larsen's cold, steady voice saying, and I looked up, to see him standing before me. His face seemed a little more ghastly than usual, and there were dark rings under his eyes, but his spare, gaunt frame was as haughtily erect as ever.

"Never allow an emotional impulse to run away with your common sense," he continued, in his unchanging icy tones that were as hard as granite. "You would have imperiled this ship and cargo, and the two hundred men aboard, from a sentiment of pity for a beggarly cur who is better dead than alive. Any attempt at rescuing that mean, praying dog, last night, would have been futile, sir. Come with me and let us see if I am not right."

I silently followed Iron Larsen up onto the poop. The blizzard had spent its force, but the cold black seas still ran high, with steep toppling crests, like gnashing angry teeth, and the icy wind blew stiffly on our port beam. We were careening into the northeast, our decks and rigging heavily plated with glittering ice.

Grizzly Hains stood on watch beside the trunk cabin, clad in stiff ice-caked oilskins, his face hidden under a mat of frosty hair, and his eyes gleaming evilly beneath whitened, bushy brows that were studded with tiny icicles.

The steam hose had been removed from the hole chopped in the deck. At risk of having the lazaret flooded by a boarding sea, the hatch cover beside the steering windlass had been taken off, revealing a yawning black hole,

about four feet square, in the ice-matted deck, from which issued a few thin wisps of steamy vapor.

Iron Larsen stepped over the combing and climbed down a stanchion ladder, carrying an ax, while I, gripping a flash light, gingerly followed him down into the dungeonlike lazaret, which had the form of the stern of the ship. An acrid, burned smell almost stifled me as I descended onto the steeply sloping floor.

We were standing on the after end of the ship's keelson, twenty feet below the small lazaret hatch, which now looked like the square mouth of a well, far up above me. I could hear the splash of the seas on the outside of our stout-ribbed hull, while the rudder creaked heavily in the darkness.

Flashing the electric light about, we found that the fire had been confined mostly to the starboard side of the lazaret. Here the boxes of galley supplies that had been stored in the place were quite charred and burned. The ship's timbers gleamed blackly under the rays of the flash light, their surfaces a mass of charcoal that shone in symmetrical checkered patterns. But the timbers were not burned deep, for when Iron Larsen struck into them with his ax, solid white wood gleamed less than an inch under the charred surface. On one of the burned cases of foodstuffs lay the half-melted burner and tank of a smashed coal-oil lamp.

Wondering where we should find Praying Parks, and half not wishing to find him, I turned toward the port side of the lazaret, where a six-foot tier of galley supplies piled against the forward bulkhead of the storeroom were evidently intact, though the wood of most of the boxes had been scorched quite brown.

As I moved cautiously among the piles of burned stores, I stepped upon some gristly thing that crunched, with a soft, sickening sound, under my heel.

My hair instantly rising on my head, I sprang back, thinking that I had stepped on the charred corpse of the bookkeeper. Upon flashing my light down before me, I saw a long, bony-fingered hand, which seemed to be tightly grasping a piece of scorched cheese burlap lying on the blackened floor. For a moment, I stupidly fancied that Praying Parks was buried under an adjacent heap of boxes, then I saw that the hand had no arm attached to it at all. It had been cut off cleanly, well above the wrist, and a piece of ragged bone protruded from the seared, shriveled flesh. The long, leathery fingers were quite black and the nails had curled up from their tips.

Growing cold and sick all over, I turned toward Iron Larsen, who stood silently beside me. I wondered dazedly whether the man's face were any whiter than usual, but he effectively dispelled that speculation from my mind by coolly stooping over and picking up the horrible spidery object at which I had been staring.

"Move along with the flash light, Dex!" he commanded me, in a voice that showed not the slightest variation from its unchanging icy hardness. "We must find what is left of the sniveling, bony hypocrite. We can't have him rotting down here. Dex, you are going to have to be our bookkeeper, now."

Iron Larsen's awful indifference to the blackened human hand, which he held in his own as calmly as if it were a dead rat, chilled and horrified me more than did that gruesome object itself. I felt half ready to faint—green spots twinkled before my eyes as I stepped forward with my flash light. I was able to see, however, that some of the boxes in the tiers of supplies about me were splotched and splattered with blood.

As the circle of white light from the electric lamp in my hand flashed over the irregular mass of stores, it

suddenly revealed that for which we were searching. Upon a big case of hams, stowed over against the port bulkhead of the lazaret, Praying Parks was lying, face downward, his long, bony figure frightfully contorted. His clothes were partly consumed, exposing the hideously blistered red and white skin of his body, his head was a loathesome, leather-colored ball, for the hair was burned to the roots.

The side of the big wooden case over which he was sprawled was open, and from it had rolled out onto the floor a dozen hams, looking like huge brown pears, with big drops of grease on their skins, which had been scorched out of them by the heat. Down over these hung the stump of Praying Parks' long, bony right arm, as if he would, even when dead, keep the hams from getting away from him. Blood from his mangled limb was smeared over some of them, though it no longer flowed from him, for it had coagulated and hung from his stump in a thick black icicle.

I can remember imagining dazedly to myself how Red Strauss must have seized an opportunity to slink down into the open lazaret, under cover of darkness, probably intending to conceal himself there among plentiful supplies of food, rather than be battened down with the China gang in the ship's foul hold—how he must have been discovered by Praying Parks prowling among his precious galley stores, and how Red Strauss must have chopped off the bookkeeper's hand with an ax used for breaking open boxes, when the Scotchman had reached his long, bony arm into some cranny after the crouching, red-bearded stowaway. I wondered what Red Strauss had been intending to do, when he had come squirming up out of the lazaret with his bloody ax gripped under his arm.

As I groped my way toward the stanchion ladder, to get back up onto

the poop, I heard the death-faced master of the *Star of Siberia* saying in his cold, silvery voice:

"Those hams must be washed."

#### CHAPTER VI.

Later in the morning, armed with a Luger pistol, I accompanied Iron Larsen and Grizzly Hains to the forward end of the ice-covered ship, to assist in standing guard over the China-gang hatch, as the thick wooden cover was thrown off, and the waxen-faced cook ordered to come up to prepare the inevitable mess of rice, seaweed, and weak tea for the men below. The China gang, Iron Larsen had told me, would not be again allowed on deck, until we arrived in Ugashik.

The Chinese cook, clad in a greasy black jacket and a pair of thin-striped, blue-and-white-cotton dungarees that flapped about his bare, sockless legs and slovenly unlaced shoes, paused stiffly at the entrance of his cook shanty. His sallow face was blanched with deep fear as he stared forward over the ship's high, white-shrouded weather rail.

Involuntarily following his fear-stricken gaze, I espied far out on the ship's big jib boom, which had immensely increased in diameter during the night with a thick coating of gleaming ice, a human-shaped huddled lump frozen fast onto the timber and furled canvas. It was, as I instantly realized, the unhappy Filipino who had climbed out there the night before, to escape being battened down in the hold. Showers of sea water had congealed over him in a snowy mass, and he looked like a motionless white bug stuck fast out on the end of the great slanting boom which rose and fell rhythmically above the dark seas.

It was a weird and ghastly spectacle—that tiny human figure riding far out there above the lifting waves, like a

rigid, kneeling lookout glued to the boom. Yet I felt little emotion, as I gazed at it. It somehow seemed most fitting that this great ice-covered ship crammed with two hundred savage, fighting men and commanded by death-faced Iron Larsen should sail the seas with a dead Filipino frozen onto her jib boom.

But I found myself amazed and alarmed at my own indifference to this fearful sight, and I began to wonder whether I were unconsciously absorbing the terrible philosophy of the gaunt white-faced master of the *Star of Siberia*.

"That chattering monkey is still hiding out there on the boom," I heard Iron Larsen remarking, in his cold, hard voice. "He can stay there, now, until he melts off. He makes a good scarecrow."

The Chinese cook presumably later told his fellows down in the ship's black, stinking hold of the ghastly thing he had seen up on deck, for the Filipinos wept and wailed and chattered that night, until the rest of the cowed crew imprisoned with them snarlingly cursed them into silence.

The next day, two of our Scandinavian fishermen sewed the charred body of Praying Parks up in a sack of stout canvas, and lashed a bag of coal to his feet. Two or three icy planks from a hatch were laid over the poop rail, their inner ends supported on the top of the trunk cabin, then the body was secured onto the boards with a small rope, and covered with the ship's ensign.

Late in the afternoon, a great crowd gathered on the after part of the big ship to see the burial ceremony. The sky was gray and lowering. The northwest wind and sea had fallen off, and the ship, looking like a gleaming phantom of white ice, barely made steerage-way through the black waves that tumbled her slowly about.

Iron Larsen came up from the cabin, carrying in his hand a brown cardboard folder that contained a few printed sheets. An expectant hush fell over the assembled mob of disheveled, unwashed men who crowded around the rude bier. Even the screaming Sicilians in their red homespun shirts were still. There was hardly a sound above the souging of the chilly wind and the splashing of the sea. Our lofty top-hammer swayed without a creak, for every block and halyard was frozen fast.

"I have here the service that is customarily read, by Christians, when a body is buried at sea," announced Iron Larsen, in his clear, ringing icy tones. "This service, so far as I am concerned, is like all the other religious writings in the world—it is a piece of insulting, superstitious bosh. When I am dead, I should wish myself to be buried in the sea, for the sea is the domain of no priest of any caliber. Here there are no mummeries, no black robes, no kneeling to hear lies and utter lies. I say, with the Persian:

I came like water, and like wind I go.

I should curse the man who should dare to read this yapping religious service that I now hold here in my hands over my body, when I am dead and about to be cast into the sea—nor shall I read it over the body of any man. If any one wishes to read this, let him come up and do so!"

There was a stony, breathless silence. The men crowded about on the poop, on the top of the cabin, and on the deck houses, all listened and stared. No one moved.

A swift hot anger suddenly shot through me. I felt myself flame to my finger tips. I stepped forward.

"I will read the service!" I said, in a clear, firm voice, looking at Iron Larsen and at all the men.

"You may do so," replied the master

of the *Star of Siberia*, handing me the folder which contained the printed text. "I regret, though, to see that you, Dex, who are so new in Parks' position, should so soon develop his praying proclivities." There was a sneer in Iron Larsen's icy voice that brought a flush to my face.

"I don't care much about religion, and I have nothing to say in favor of this dead man," I replied steadily. "He may have been wrong in considering himself a pious Christian, as it seems he did, but I think he would at least like to have a Christian burial."

"He would a damn sight rather have been able to take his bank bonds along with him!" rasped Iron Larsen, cynically. "Now, make it lively, please! We have to get the men aloft with steam hoses, to thaw the running gear."

I made no answer, but opened the folder containing the burial service, and began to read it.

Standing there on the trunk cabin of the *Star of Siberia*, I read slowly through several long, involved, monotonous sentences that spoke vaguely of religious things. Then, abruptly, I paused and looked down upon the sea of silent, savage faces upturned all around me, for the realization had come upon me suddenly that they understood no more of what I was reading than did the tall sailing ship laden with glittering ice upon which we rode, or the huddled little Filipino frozen fast out on our great, slanting, jib boom. I looked at the lowering sky, and at the heaving seas, which appeared quite black against the whiteness of our big ship, and all at once the service sounded like a futile yapping in my own ears. I saw Iron Larsen's steely eyes drilling through me, while on his thin, hard lips came an icy smile, as if he divined my thoughts.

"We therefore commit his body to the deep," I read on, and quickly ended the service.

At a signal from Iron Larsen, one of the Scandinavian fishermen pulled out a sheath knife and cut the rope that held the body in position, another caught back the flag, and the white, coal-weighted bundle on the planks plunged with a shuddering splash into the heaving water below the rail.

"*Akh!*" chattered Casco, the captain's weird little devil of a cook, in his gold-braided, carmine jacket. "When I am angry, I keel! *Akh!*"

And brandishing his long, gleaming, rapierlike knife, as if the entire affair were something of his own doing, he sprang to the rail and peered down over the ship's side at the place where a boiling swarm of bubbles arose from the canvas-shrouded corpse that was sinking into the dark, lonely depths below the waves.

So ended Praying Parks, who had prayed that Iron Larsen and all his crew should be "drowned" in the icy northern seas.

The fishermen were now ordered aloft with steam hose run from the ship's donkey boiler, to thaw loose our frozen running gear and make sail. By nightfall, we were again heeled under a cloud of fully spread canvas—save for our flying jib out at the end of the boom, on which still crouched the dead Filipino. Iron Larsen had ordered that this should be left as it was.

Red Strauss was removed from the after cabin into the dark lazaret, where he was chained to one of the ship's blackened stanchions. He bore his incarceration in truculent fear, and cursed Iron Larsen with a weeping ferocity that made my blood run cold, but the gaunt, white-faced master of the *Star of Siberia* answered him only with a hard, deadly smile.

I now found myself with definite duties to perform on the ship. I took charge of Parks' few books, which so far contained merely a record of articles advanced to men on board from the

ship's slop chest. I also now had to take the Cape Verde messboys down into the fire-blackened lazaret each morning, and issue them the daily rations for the ship's galley, while they stood about me, their white teeth chattering with terror as they stared at Red Strauss in his chains, who was revealed to them by the yellow glare of a lantern swung from a beam overhead.

Without ever indicating it directly, Iron Larsen made me thoroughly aware, through inconceivably artful suggestion, of the terrifying fact that I was now his assistant—that he depended upon me as he did upon his right hand, and that the consequences were certain to be terrible, if I were to fail him. I found it a nerve-racking and sleep-outlawing sort of glory to be the aide of such a man as the ghastly faced master of the *Star of Siberia*, yet I must have been hardening rapidly, for already I could look with equanimity into the ship's dark and noisome forehold, when each day we let the China gang cook come up on deck to prepare his miserable mess and carry it down to the wretched men imprisoned below—and I grew accustomed to the black automatic pistol that was always in my Mackinaw pocket.

We were now encountering many "growlers"—massive sugarylike cakes of lacy-edged ice floating about on the dark surface of the sea. The afternoon of our fourth day from Unimak Pass, when the sun, bursting from the clouds, set our snowy decks and rigging ablaze with flashing fire, and the sea had altered its dark aspect for a gorgeous rippling blue, a fisherman on lookout aloft reported the presence of a great ice field to the northward of us.

Within the next hour, the ice pack became visible from the deck. It looked, at first, like a low, solid, white wall of gleaming snow, beginning at the eastern horizon and running straight as an arrow across the rippling blue sea

to the western sky line on our port quarter. It flashed and glittered in the wintry sunlight, looking as hard and rigid as steel, or the straight edge of a low, white-mantled coast.

The sparkling ice on our top-hamper was loosening under the bright rays of the sun, and it now began falling in thick slabs onto the deck, making it perilous to stand about. Suddenly a great cry arose, down in the waist of the ship, from the Sicilian fishermen who were pumping our bilges. Following their pointing fingers, I looked forward; whereupon I saw that the little white figure that had been crouching out on our big slanting jib boom for three days had vanished.

The next time we let the Chinese cook come up on deck, he observed that the frozen thing on the boom was gone, and he must have reported the fact below, for there was more weeping that night among the Filipinos, and silence on the part of the rest of the imprisoned China gang.

Our course was still to the northeastward. We were holding up toward the mountainous western coast of the Alaskan peninsula. As we sailed on, we soon discovered that we were running into a trap. The peninsular mountains loomed above the sea to the southward, and the ice field flanked us on the north. Between the shore line and the edge of the ice there was a lane of water, which steadily grew narrower. At first, it was eighty miles in width—then it narrowed to fifty, to twenty, and soon, to ten.

We were now in the company of the entire Bering Sea salmon fleet, some thirty tall clipper ships, which were all caught in the V-shaped trap formed by the ice and the land. The wind held freshly and steadily from the southwest, making it impossible for us to turn back. There was no room to beat to advantage, and the narrowing lane of open water was crowded with ships.

The sky again grew dark with an oppressive pall of leaden cloud. Masses of icy gray fog drifted over us, into which we sailed blindly, fleeing alternately from mountainous shores and the inexorably tightening ice pack—and sheering from the other tall ships that came upon us, like great dark specters in the fog, often missing us by hardly more than a few dozen yards, and then vanishing suddenly again into the cold white mist.

Then, after a night of terror, lying hove-to in a freezing vapory blackness, the fog lifted. In the gray morning light, we saw the end of the open water, close ahead. The ice wall had crashed into the land, and was closing along it, as one blade of a pair of mighty shears closes upon the other. Iron Larsen, without further delay, turned the *Star of Siberia* from the coast, and sailed straight toward the relentless ice pack.

As we bore down upon it, I saw several dark, broken-looking niches in its white front, which, when we had slowly drifted up close, with our sails backed, resolved themselves into sinuous lanes of black water winding in among the immense jagged floes that formed the field.

We sailed fairly into one of these narrow, crooked leads. There followed many hours of desperate backing and filling, hauling of yards, bracing and wearing and tacking, as we fought our way into the grinding ice field, escaping a dozen times by a hair's breadth from being crushed between the floes. Many of these were two miles across, and they floated six or eight feet above the water, indicating that they extended to a depth of seventy or eighty feet below the surface. To be caught between the closing faces of such masses of ice would result in the destruction of the ship's stout hull as if it were a fragile eggshell.

About six miles from the edge of the ice field, we battled our way into a

pocket, just big enough to hold the *Star of Siberia* safely, which we found between two immense hornlike projections of a crescent-shaped floe. We had hardly more than gotten in between these two flukes, when the side of another leviathanic floe fully three miles broad closed against our sheltering cove of solid ice. The horns of our concave floe crunched into the oncoming ice masses, and all about us there was a deafening and terrifying thunder. Huge slabs of ice, weighing fifty or a hundred tons split off from the floes, reared up on their ends, and fell with terrific jars into the lagoon of black water about our quivering ship. Never have I heard a sound of such mighty volume as this. It was like a sustained roar of tons of continuously exploding dynamite, and seemed about to shake the *Star of Siberia* into dust, by its very intensity.

But by nightfall the ice field had closed solidly upon the land. The movement of the trillion-ton floes had been checked, and now silence fell. We were wedged tightly by masses of broken ice that had closed in about us, in our little cove. The motionless field looked in the falling night like a vast shell-torn battlefield, its surface of snow, gray with dust and volcanic ash, was covered with ridges resembling the raised fronts of battle trenches, interspersed with great hollows, like shell holes, in some of which were frozen pools of water.

With the darkness, a blizzard came screaming over the ice pack. It wailed and sobbed in our lofty top-hamper. The taut steel stays thrummed in deep, weird banjolike tones. This was an indescribably weird experience that I shall never forget. The normal swaying motion of the big ship was gone, though we were far out upon the high sea, the *Star of Siberia* was as rigid and motionless as a granite pillar. There was no creaking of the rudder, no slamming

of blocks, but just a terrifying motionlessness, as if the ship were frozen fast forever, while over the warm and cheerful cabin wherein I sat with Iron Larsen by a red-hot stove, the snow-laden blizzard howled through the rigging like a pack of ghostly, deep-throated hellhounds ranging over the ice field.

Some time in the early hours of the morning, the wind died out, as suddenly as it had come up, and then, after daybreak, the sun appeared, lighting the newly whitened ice with a dazzling brilliance that the eye could not bear to gaze upon, while our top-hamper blazed as if made of sparkling fire.

All about us in the ice field we saw tall motionless ships, caught fast, like ourselves. The nearest one was three miles away, at the opposite side of one of the great floes against which we were pinned. From our royal yard I counted twenty-one other ships, before my eyes rebelled under the strain of the sunlight flashing upon the ice.

To the south of us loomed the white-shrouded mountains of the Alaskan peninsula. The point of meeting between the land and the shoreward edge of the ice pack was quite indistinguishable. The frozen waste in which the salmon ships stood seemed to run like a great, white unbroken plain to the very bases of the lofty volcanic peaks on the southern horizon. I saw one unfortunate ship over below those mountains, her masts canted over until the ends of her yards seemed to touch the ice. She had been pushed ashore and turned onto her beam ends by the floes.

The presence of an ice field of such vast extent in this part of the Bering Sea so late in the spring—for May was near at hand—was an unprecedented phenomenon. Fields had been seen in other years, indeed, but always far from the land, leaving the salmon ships ample room in which to proceed along the coast. This year, however, it appeared that persistent

northwesterly gales had impeded the usual spring movement of the ice, for the entire eastern part of the Bering Sea was reported later to have been a solid frozen waste.

The pressure of the floes upon our hull increased, day by day, and a ridge of snow and pulverized ice crept up all around the ship. In two weeks, it had risen above the porthole of my cabin stateroom, shutting off the light, and causing the bulkheads to drip with a cold, damp sweat.

Rigid and silent as the *Star of Siberia* lay, it was a time of unceasing terror, for no one on board, save Iron Larsen, had ever had such an experience before. Through the long nights, the ship's stout ribs groaned and gave forth loud bursting snaps, under the terrific pressure exerted upon them by the ice. Were they to break, the ship would be filled with icy water from below and might sink in fifteen minutes.

Iron Larsen released the China gang from imprisonment, in the face of this unforeseen situation, for many of them were becoming ill in the vessel's foul black hold, and there was danger of a plague breaking out among them and exterminating them all. They came up into the light again, looking, if this were possible, ten times more dirty, wretched, and savage, than when they had been driven below, two weeks before. They stared in wide-eyed, stupid fear at the ice in which we were caught, and shivered, in their thin, dirty garments, as the cold wind struck through them and drove them incessantly back into their dark filthy quarters below the deck.

The Sicilian fishermen amidships feared the ice more than did any of the others on board. They lived, day and night, in a state of unceasing, high-pitched alarm. At every creak of the *Star of Siberia*, they would set up a pandemonium of chattering, terrified screams, and would come rushing out of

their forecabin and go tumbling pell-mell over the ship's side onto the ice—often in the middle of the night. Many of them, squatting upon big black trunks, which they had lugged aboard in San Francisco and stowed in their quarters, chanted litanies and prayers in their native patois. Grizzly Hains caught five or six of them living in one of the fishing boats up on top of their deck house, wherein they had moved themselves, with their trunks, bedding, nets, and all. Bellowing with rage, the mate sent them all flying below again into their forecabin, where they sat on their baggage, with their wailing comrades, and called shrilly upon all the Sacramentos and Santa Marias of their sunny native isle to preserve them from the terrors of the Arctic.

Iron Larsen caught cat naps in the daytime, and stayed up during the blizzard nights. Encouraged to do so by the ghastly faced shipmaster, I soon got into the habit of staying up with him. We sat listening to the weird songs of the icy winds in the rigging, and drank strong black coffee or chocolate boiled on the red-hot cabin stove, as we played hard-fought battles of checkers, often without speaking for hours, but always alert, listening intently to the ominous groaning of the strained ship.

On the deck over our head sounded the footsteps of a self-appointed watchman, one of the Sicilian fishermen, who, clad in a heavy, black uniform coat and cap of the Italian navy, had seldom been off the deck since we had put the *Star of Siberia* into the ice. Though he had no business on the poop, Iron Larsen, strangely enough, suffered him to remain there, and often stood staring at the small, black-bearded man with unconcealed curiosity, as he walked nervously about, or paused and leaned, haggard and exhausted, against the trunk cabin.



During our third week in the ice, an extremely fierce snowstorm burst over us and held on without cessation for three days and nights.

"Did you ever see a man die of fear?" queried the master of the *Star of Siberia*, on the third night of this storm, as we sat studying over our checker game.

I looked up with a start.

"That," Iron Larsen continued, "is what that Italian admiral of ours is doing up there on the poop—dying of fear. He hasn't been off the deck for a hundred hours. Do you observe that his footsteps up there are slow and weak, to-night?"

I believed at once that they were.

"Why don't you order him below!" I exclaimed sharply. "Make him go!"

"No, he is better where he is," coolly replied the white-faced shipmaster. "Were I to drive him down into the fishermen's forecabin, he probably would infect the others, who are already scared enough, with his insane fear, and we might have to shoot a dozen of them, while by leaving him alone, we probably shall lose only him. It is your move here, sir. Also, crown my king."

We resumed our game, but I played badly, and soon lost. In my ears was the slow thudding of the feet of the man on the icy, storm-swept deck overhead. Occasionally, he lagged, and then stirred his exhausted energies afresh. Sometimes his footsteps ceased for several minutes, and there would be no sound save the deep harplike strumming of our top-hammer and the roaring of the wind.

"If this blizzard holds on, it will be the admiral's last night," observed Iron Larsen, an hour later, as the bitter wind howled with freshened fury overhead, while chilly drafts flurried through the cabin, setting the lamp to flickering over our red, cloth-covered table. The footsteps sounded very

faint indeed, now, a slow *tap-tap-tap* on the planks. I shuddered and pushed aside the checkers.

"My heavens, I can't bear this!" I burst out angrily, suddenly starting to my feet. "He is dying!"

"Sit down, sir!" commanded Iron Larsen, a menacing ring in his clear, icy voice. "Such an insane coward as that fellow is a peril to the ship. He must be a worthless fisherman."

Helplessly, I slumped back into my chair.

Some time after three o'clock in the morning, I dozed off, sitting there in the cabin, still hearing an occasional *tap-tap* overhead—then I awoke with a start to discover that all had become silent, save for the low moaning in our frozen rigging of the dying wind.

When we broke out of the ice-bound cabin scuttle, soon after daybreak, we found the Sicilian lying as cold and rigid as a lump of stone, half-buried in a bank of drifted snow on the leeward side of the poop, his knees drawn up toward his chest, as if he had knelt to pray, and had then toppled over sideways onto the icy planks, to move no more.

"He died from the fear of death," observed Iron Larsen, in a cold, curious voice, as the body was laid in one of the boats on the fishermen's-deck house, to be buried when we should gain open water, if we ever did. "The immediate causes were cold and fatigue; but it was the fear of death that drove him on. What a comedy—to die from the fear of death!"

## CHAPTER VII.

Late that afternoon, as I lay dozing unrestfully in my bunk, I was roused by an unusual lot of shouting up on deck. Slipping on my Mackinaw, I went up onto the poop, where I found Iron Larsen with a pair of binoculars, gazing off over the knolled and ridged

ice field, while the Sicilians forward in the waist of the ship stared in the same direction, and chattered nervously.

Following their glances I espied two moving, black specks out on the ice. Watching them intently, I soon saw that they were two men, who were coming slowly toward us. Their steps were lagging and wearied. Nearly two hours elapsed before they reached the *Star of Siberia*. They staggered weakly over the ridge of snow and ice that was growing up around the ship, and were helped aboard by the excited fishermen.

Iron Larsen at once called them aft onto the poop. I saw then that they were two hangdog-looking fellows, with dirty, unshaven faces.

"Where are you two men from?" Iron Larsen demanded sternly. "What are you?"

"Fishermen," one of them mumbled between black, cracked lips. "From the *Star of Lapland*."

Iron Larsen turned and gazed steadily to the westward across the ice field with his powerful binoculars, toward the barely distinguishable masts and rigging of one of the many tall salmon ships standing in the vast, frozen white waste about us.

"The *Star of Lapland* has not gone down," he announced, after a moment, lowering his glasses and fixing the two tousled and shiftless-looking men before him with a steely glance. "That is she, lying out there to the westward, over our port bow—I know her long skysail yards."

The two strangers hung their heads.

"She's breakin' up," one of them replied huskily, paling with fear as he eyed the gaunt master of the *Star of Siberia*. "She's liable to sink any minute."

Iron Larsen's ghastly white face grew hard and merciless. Suddenly his black-mitted right fist flashed out and caught the man who had spoken fairly in the mouth, knocking him

roughly against the poop rail, at which he caught dizzily, for support. The other crouched down abjectly beside the trunk cabin and raised his hands shieldingly before his face.

"What do you mean, boarding my ship, you damned deserters!" Iron Larsen snarled. "Get over the rail and mush back where you came from!"

The man who had been struck staggered weakly to his feet, his lips bleeding.

"Let us stay here to-night!" he pleaded thickly.

Without replying, Iron Larsen stepped quickly forward and struck the fellow another blow on the jaw, which sent him reeling into our mizzen rigging.

"I said for you to get over the rail!" the death-faced master of the *Star of Siberia* repeated, in his cold, hard voice. "Stay by your own vessel, until she's done. Do you think I harbor cowards who sneak off their ships and run all over the ice field, like scurrying rats!"

A breathless silence fell over the gaping crew of the *Star of Siberia*, as the two men climbed feebly back over the rail and staggered off on the ice.

"Good heavens!" I burst out, sick with pity and horror. "They're all in!"

"Why, of course they are!" whipped out Iron Larsen, whirling upon me. "This will teach our screaming dagoes and our brawling China gang a lesson, for they'll get the same kind of reception on the other vessels, if they leave us. We have no deserters in these ships!"

We never saw those two men again. Such is the stern and terrible code of the Bering Sea salmon fishers.

The very next evening, I stood on the poop with Iron Larsen and gazed at a ship about ten miles west of us, which had suddenly taken such a list by the head that her jib boom was out of sight in the ice, while her stern hung in mid-air and her masts canted forward.

For twenty minutes, she stood rigidly in that grotesque position, looking as if she were about to lunge bow foremost to the bottom of the sea. Then she tilted still farther, and slowly sank straight down into the ice field, her masts and rigging descending, like a bit of lacy black spiderweb against the sullen red glow of the Alaskan sunset, until she had vanished, as if by magic, into the gray maw of the ice pack.

That night, three refugees from the hapless vessel came across the ice field to us and told how the stout bows of their ship, the *Tacoma*, had suddenly collapsed, like a thin China cup, under the terrific pressure of the ice floes, whereupon the vessel had sunk, drowning all the China gang and over half of the rest of the crew who had been forced at revolver muzzles by the captain and the mates to go down into the hold and get up a quantity of food-stuffs to be landed on the ice. Those who had survived were encamped on the floes, with a little food and bedding, and were scattering to the other ships.

After twenty-six days of immobility, the mighty ice pack in which we were imprisoned again grew restless, under the impulse of strong southeasterly, off-shore winds. Again the massive floes began to swing slowly apart, forming treacherous, crooked lanes of water which looked black as pitch against the white snow that covered the ice cakes.

Early one morning, we were forced out of our cove by the incoming corner of a huge menacing floe. Once more we unfurled our sails sufficiently to start us moving warily among the grinding masses of ice, toward a narrow band of blue water that was again appearing between the coast and the edge of the great, frozen white waste that hid the surface of the Bering Sea. Early in the afternoon we cleared the pack, our crew cheering wildly as we escaped from among the floes, and then

we sailed swiftly northeastward through the lane of rippling open water toward the Ugashik River, which was now but fifty miles away. Arriving off the mouth of the river at nightfall, we dropped anchor, to wait for daylight and a favorable wind to enter.

But we had hardly more than gotten our anchor down than we espied an ice patch descending upon us in the dusk, borne by the powerful tide. Iron Larsen at once ordered our anchor hove up again, but a coupling device between our donkey engine and the anchor heaving gear had been disconnected, and the carpenter was somehow unable to throw it back into position.

The Sicilians were ordered to man a hand capstan on the forecastle head. Heaving had hardly been commenced, however, before the pans began coming down upon us in the gloomy twilight. The ice that swept toward us fortunately was but a mass of broken fragments that fringed the immense floes of the main field. Many of these pans were fifty feet across, and they came up against our anchor chain with grinding crunches, at times pulling the bows of the *Star of Siberia* deep into the water, or they struck us glancing blows below our hawse pipes, with thundering jars that shook the ship violently from stem to stern, and threatened to stave us in.

The China gang, which had been again penned down in the ship's foul, dark hold when we had started to fight our way out of the ice field early that morning, yelled and howled with terror, and began beating frantically on the stout oaken bulkheads that imprisoned them.

The lacy-edged ice cakes battered and tore at the quivering, hollowly booming ship for nearly an hour, then a real floe which was perhaps five hundred feet across and which looked like a small, moving white island in the twilight, came down upon us; hung upon

our heavy anchor chain, and dragged us irresistibly along the flooding tide, pulling our anchor over the bottom with violent jerks and jars. That our cable did not part was a wonder, but it was new, and the links were heavy. It was now impossible to heave in any of the chain by hand.

At length, the steam donkey was successfully rehooked to the anchor windlass, and cautiously the taut chain was hove in, with much screeching of strained gears, until the anchor swung clear of the bottom. Then, with a rattling roar, the relieved donkey engine brought it up to the hawse pipes, where it shone in the dusk like polished silver, from the friction of having been dragged along the bottom.

We set our topsails and beat about for the rest of the night. At daybreak, we stood in again toward the mouth of the Ugashik River, and with a fair southwest wind sailed boldly in over the shallow bar at the entrance, running a perilous gantlet between ranks of immense mud-streaked flocs grounded along the sides of the channel.

The river wound away to the eastward through a vast, low, swampy waste, dark and repelling in aspect, from which most of the winter snow had already gone. On both sides of the broad yellow stream were great mud flats, on which numerous soiled flocs lay stranded, resembling gigantic, keeled-over battleships. Far to the eastward, beyond an immense plain of low-rolling, dark tundra, loomed the snow-mantled ranges of the Alaskan Peninsula, looking much nearer than they really were.

We had hardly more than gotten well into the mouth of the river, which was full of foaming, yellowish tide rips, when the ship, moving slowly under half-furled topsails, abruptly fetched up, with a grinding jar that set her top-hamper vibrating from chain

plates to trucks. The big vessel came to a dead stop and heeled heavily to starboard, whereupon our Sicilian fishermen immediately set up a clamor of ear-splitting screams, which were echoed by muffled howls of terror from the China gang battened down in our hold.

Some of the crew stampeded toward the four boats lashed up on the midship deck house, then seeing that the *Star of Siberia* remained motionless and that nothing further was happening, they ceased their yelling and turned to stare questioningly at Iron Larsen, who was standing silently on the poop.

The shipmaster called for a sounding lead. Lowering it, he found fifty feet of water under our stern, and but nineteen feet amidships. Though we were well in the middle of the river, we had struck on something concealed below the surface of the brownish yellow water that was boiling fiercely around us.

"We've hit a submerged floe," Iron Larsen announced calmly, to Grizzly Hains and myself, while our crew lined the ship's rail and stared excitedly into the swirling water. "Sometimes large masses of ice get piled up in a river jam, and the lower flocs get stuck into the mud on the bottom, where they remain indefinitely—though I never heard of one of them doing so in a channel like this, where the current runs in a foaming flood."

"The tide is coming in," I observed. "Won't it float us off?"

"Perhaps—or shove us farther onto the floe," replied Iron Larsen. "When the water ebbs, we may slide off sideways, if we are near the edge of the sunken mass of ice, otherwise the vessel is liable to hang up and break her back."

The four fishing boats on the midship deck house were hoisted over the rail of the heavily listed ship into the streaming tide. Masts were stepped in them, for they were rigged with leg-of-

mutton sails, and they were laden with stores and bedding. Then sixty of our crew, including myself, put off in these boats, to attempt to sail a distance of thirty miles up the muddy river to our cannery. There the fishermen were to get into the water with all possible haste a small steam tug and three lighters hauled up on marine ways for the winter, and bring these down to the *Star of Siberia* to take off the remainder of the crew and endeavor to lighten the stranded vessel. Iron Larsen, cold and silent, and displaying no anxiety, if he felt any, remained on the ship.

It was late in the evening when we left the *Star of Siberia*. As we sailed up the river, breasting a surging current, darkness fell. Floes lying on the muddy banks loomed in huge ghostly shapes on both sides of us. The stars overhead twinkled like flaming points of steel, and an icy frost bit into our bones, as we sat and shivered in our slowly moving boats.

Some time in the early hours of the morning, the vague dark outlines of several long, rambling buildings and a crazily leaning, black, iron smokestack loomed upon the high, right-hand bank of the river. The wind had now died away, the water was glassy smooth, while the tide, again flooding, carried us slowly along the black, muddy bank. We drifted silently up to the deserted fishery where a pack of big gray wolf dogs, looking like gaunt specters in the gloom, squatted with their muzzles pointed toward the jumping stars, and howled until my blood fairly congealed.

Getting stiffly ashore onto the high, dark fish wharf that jutted out into the river from the cannery, some of us went and aroused the winter watchman, an old, Swedish squaw-man, who hastily clad himself in Alaskan fox-fur garments, and then came out and unlocked the empty bunk houses, and also the low, barnlike cook house where a roar-

ing fire was kindled in a great iron range, and hot coffee boiled. Bread and canned meat from the stores in our boats was set on the long, rude, oilcloth-covered tables and eaten in the gloomy flickering light of wax candles stuck in saucers.

From the old, bearlike winter man, I obtained the key to the wireless station, a small shack hardly more than twelve feet square, which stood out on the tundra among the three-barred crosses of an Aleut cemetery, close by the cannery. Above the station loomed two tall, white, wooden masts, now quite bare, for the aerial had been lowered to the ground during the winter, to keep it from being blown to pieces by the blizzards that sweep over this desolate land eight months of the year.

Shivering, stiff, and sleepy, I tumbled into the wireless station with my baggage. In the feeble light of a piece of candle that I had brought with me from the cook shack I spread my blankets in the rude, unpainted, pine bunk I found nailed along one side of the single room of the little house, and I was soon sound asleep on the hard boards.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Buried, head and all, under my sleeping gear, I was aroused early in the morning by a sound of low, whispering guttural voices, which seemed almost at my elbow. Hastily thrusting my head out from under my blankets, I discovered a square, uncurtained little window in the wall of the shack, immediately above my bunk, and against its glass panes were tightly pressed four, little, flat, brown-skinned, wall-eyed faces which were staring at me in vast curiosity and astonishment.

As I sat up equally astonished, the flat, black-eyed little faces instantly vanished, with a chorus of startled guttural "aaahs!"—and peering out through the small-paned window, I saw

four little Aleut urchins in red foxskins fleeing, like a pack of shaggy little bears, across the dark tundra.

Throwing my legs over the side of my bunk, I sat for some minutes contemplating the tarnished radio equipment that stood at the opposite side of the rude shack. The apparatus was mounted on bare pine shelves. The receiving table was a couple of planks spiked up alongside the transmitter. Everything about the station, from the little, square uncurtained windows to the single, rude homemade chair typified a camplike roughness.

I now heard the clanging of an iron gong, which I decided was a call to breakfast. Getting up and going down to the cook house, I was astonished at the number of big, gray, wolflike dogs that I saw lurking everywhere about the cannery—huge, savage, silent fellows who never barked, but who were continually tangling into ferociously fighting, snarling knots. Some of these, as I later learned, belonged to the Aleuts in a village a third of a mile farther up the river bank. The others were the property of a few scattering sour doughs who lived about the treeless tundra trapping red foxes during the winters and fishing for the salmon company in the summer months.

I encountered three of these sour doughs that first morning in the cook house, whom the old cannery winter man gravely introduced to me as the Three Musketeers, "Tin-pan" Smith, "Drunken" Dan, and "Grumbling" Bowman.

Tin-pan Smith was a long, lean, grizzled old devil, with a wicked gleam in his eye, like that of a bad horse. Drunken Dan looked his name, a seamy, slack-jawed and loose-jointed old reprobate, while Grumbling Bowman was a short, broad-shouldered fellow with fiery red whiskers and a sour face.

They all three appeared to have emerged recently from a disastrous

fight, for each one had numerous bruises, a blackened eye, or a cut lip. Inquiring politely about these disfigurements I was informed that the Three Musketeers had been down on the sea-coast some days before to look at the fleet of salmon ships imprisoned out in the ice, and that a dispute had arisen among them as to which vessel was the *Star of Siberia*. Drunken Dan had stubbornly asserted it was this one, and Tin-pan Smith had hotly declared it was that one, while Grumbling Bowman had mulishly decided it was still another one; whereupon, after they had blackened one another's eyes and blasphemed one another's ancestors by way of friendly argument, they all lost their tempers and fought tooth and nail, until they fell on the ground, exhausted.

When I exclaimed in amused incredulity about this, Tin-pan Smith remarked that it was a matter of no importance. He casually cited the case of a couple of other sour doughs of his acquaintance formerly shacking together in the region, one of whom had been offensively fond of hot cakes for his breakfast, and who had obstinately persisted in frying and eating them monotonously every morning, day in and day out, through the long winter—to the vast anger of his shackmate, who despised hot cakes, and who grew so enraged, after fighting vainly with the hot-cake eater, in futile efforts to make him desist from frying and eating those offensive objects, that he at length seized a rifle and shot the batter addict dead.

After telling me about this, Tin-pan Smith confessed with a sigh that he had himself once grown so exceedingly weary in his soul of the sour-looking face of Grumbling Bowman that he had picked up a fifty-pound chunk of river ice and smashed it over the head of his brother musketeer—with no appreciably beautifying results to the latter's appearance, so far as I could see.

Under the direction of the fishermen boss, the cannery crew lost no time in launching the lighters and the tug boat hauled up on ways above the cannery. Before noon, the tug men had gotten up steam and proceeded down the river to the *Star of Siberia*, towing three empty barges.

The Ugashik salmon cannery, proper, was an immense two-storied, barnlike wooden building, about a hundred feet wide and six hundred feet long, built partly on piling, close upon the bank of the river. Herein was the canning machinery, boilers and engines, and a battery of big, black, iron cooking retorts, which looked like a row of huge cannon. At one end of the big building was a vast wareroom, in which the pack of canned salmon would be stored later as it came from the machines. Overhead, on the second floor, was an immense loft, running the length of the building, wherein were hung thousands of yards of brown gill netting. In another large ell structure adjoining the main building was a can factory filled with complicated machinery.

Grouped about the cannery building were the cook house, storehouse, a company trading store, my radio shack, a superintendent's house which would be occupied by Iron Larsen, and three bunk houses, one for the can-machine men, one for the cooks, and one for the fishermen. Some distance down the river bank, away from the cannery, as if it were a thing unclean and outcast, was the big, rambling, red-painted bunk house of the China gang, with its kitchen attached. Everything was rough and ready. The entire huge cannery looked as if it had been spiked together in a week and might be torn down again in a day.

A short distance farther up the river bank was the Aleut village of Soulima, which, on my first evening ashore, I proceeded to visit. It was a conglomeration of hovels—of holes dug

into the earth, with walls of sod sticking two or three feet above the ground, and roofed over with tundra. Some had a small window or two, and from each sod roof projected a rusty stovepipe, like a frozen black finger. The entrance to each dugout or *barrabarrak* resembled that of the Eskimos' igloo—a low tunnel about eight feet long, built of sod, and fitted with a walrus-skin door. The sticky black bank of the river, below the earthen *barrabarraks*, was littered with bones, rusty tin cans, mud-caked feathers, and bear claws. Upon the roof of one of the sod houses lay the skeleton of a dog.

The village was swarming, too, with live dogs, which slunk back among the miserable mud hovels of the Indians at my approach—gaunt, gray and black, starved-looking brutes whose dirty, shaggy hides were stretched tightly over their sharp, protruding ribs.

Several Aleuts appeared and stared at me silently as I entered the village. They were stolid, brown-skinned, morose creatures, with faces as flat as boards, coarse, straight, black hair, very high cheek bones, and slanting Mongolian eyes that unmistakably bespoke their Asiatic origin. Their language, which I subsequently became able to speak pretty well, contains scarcely four hundred words, all composed of exceedingly harsh sounds that gurgle up from deep in the throat, with a sort of choking noise, as if the unhappy speaker were strangling to death over a whole handful of fishbones. Some of their words were corruptions of English, as *oltuck* for coal-tar, *siuck* for salmon, my appellation, *wirelessuck* for wireless, and *gasolinuck* for a motor launch.

Iron Larsen, I soon learned, was a *tahuck-asheddooden*, or "bad man"—by which unfavorable expression I later found myself also occasionally designated. The highest number in their vocabulary was ten, or *telimin*, which is a Siberian word; but the others, as one,

two, three, *ugh-whunch-lin, mulhook, ko-lung-wayen* must have originated nowhere on earth, but among the Aleuts themselves—while for one of these natives to pronounce a mixed number, as two dollars and a half, required several seconds of choking and gasping over fifteen or twenty horrific sounds.

In accordance with instructions that Iron Larsen had given me when I left the stranded *Star of Siberia*, I at once proceeded to get the cannery wireless station into commission. I pulled the aerial up out of the snow that still lay in patches on the black tundra, and hoisted it to the trucks of my two, lofty white masts. The can-machine men raised steam down in one of the cannery boilers, using a small reserve supply of coal that had been left over from the previous fishing season, and they hooked up the pipe lines to a small engine in the can factory that drove my electric generator.

Early in the morning of our third day ashore, the cannery steam tug, *Mohawk*, returned from the *Star of Siberia*, towing the three barges deeply laden with stores, and with the remainder of the ship's shivering crew, including the wretched China gang.

Captain Larsen now came also. He at once called me into the superintendent's house.

"The *Star of Siberia* is lost," he informed me, speaking in his never-changing, clear, icy tones. "The vessel failed to slide off the floe. Instead, she hung on it, broke her back, and filled with water. This morning we finished taking off the crew, and all the stores we could put on the lighters. We had just pulled clear of the ship, when the floe underneath her broke asunder and came floating up in two great, mud-laden masses, each about a hundred feet long. The vessel at once sank between them. She stands, therefore, on the muddy bottom, with only her trucks and royal yards showing above the tide."

"Now," he continued, in his cold, steady voice, after a pause, "the Silver Salmon Co. in San Francisco must be advised by radio that not only is their proud *Star of Siberia* at the bottom of the Ugashik River but all her cargo. The tin and solder and coal for making cans, the wood for making boxes, everything in the vessel, in short, save a few scorched cook-house stores, is lost in the swirling muddy water.

"My managing owners and partners will fume and chew up their cigars at this. The *Star of Siberia* carries not a cent of insurance, for not an insurance company on earth will write a sailing ship entering the Bering Sea before the first of May. Now they will have to charter a fast steamer, load her quickly with duplicate supplies, and send her north at top speed, if we are to put up any salmon pack this year. There is little time, for this is nearly the end of May, and the fish come in July.

"But it can be done. Thanks to the speed of the wireless, the Silver Salmon Co. in San Francisco will have all the story in their hands to-night, which it would take them two months to receive by any other available means, and to-morrow morning the president will be telephoning the ship brokers and arranging for a steamer, which will load night and day with busy gangs of stevedores and sail before the end of the week.

"This is going to be a great expense, but the war in Europe will double the price of canned salmon, so the packers will perhaps have more profit than ever before. If so, maybe they will offer up thanks to Divine Providence for the slaughter across the Atlantic, which so opportunely enables them to recoup the loss suffered through the stupidity of death-faced Larsen with a sore in his stomach and his dirty, savage crew of all nations, when he and they sent the *Star of Siberia* to the bottom of the swirling Ugashik. Well, start your



spark-splitting wheel, Dex—let us tell them about it!"

That night I established communication with another cannery wireless station at Naknek, a hundred miles to the northeast. A long message containing full details of the disaster that had befallen the *Star of Siberia* was relayed by the Naknek operator to a United States naval radio station in the seal rookeries of St. Paul Island—thence it was relayed a second time to Cordova, and again to Seattle, and so, by wire, to San Francisco.

As Iron Larsen had accurately predicted, we received a reply three days later stating that a fast steamer, the *Port Angeles*, had been chartered to bring up a duplicate load of supplies for the cannery, that this vessel would sail in two days, and would arrive by the middle of June, which would allow the can men about fifteen days to make three million cans for the coming salmon run in July.

While waiting for the *Port Angeles* to arrive, the can-machine men began removing a heavy, protective winter coating of thick, greenish cylinder oil from the elaborate machinery of the great plant. As I saw the marvelous machines emerge, one by one, bright and gleaming in all their intricacy, from the sticky masses of oil and grease that hid their parts, I reflected that the profit of a successful salmon pack must be—as it is—indeed enormous to justify this huge plant which stood silent and deserted on the bleak Alaskan tundra all the year, that it might be available for use during the few brief weeks of the salmon run.

There was never-ceasing action and excitement in this great cannery built on the dark, treeless waste by the swirling Ugashik. It was a common sight to see a red-shirted Sicilian, screeching with rage, pursuing another screaming Latin round and round the fishermen's bunk house, like one squalling, spitting

wild cat after another, while half the China gang seemed occupied most of the time in thrashing the other half, and maintained a yelling, cursing uproar that threatened to blow the bunk-house roof off.

The mongrel Cape Verde cook gang still carried on, about equally in their bunk house and in the cook house, a squealing war of their own, and slashed and hacked one another liberally with knives and meat axes. The big gray wolf dogs who lived with us, as if not to be outdone, squatted about the cannery buildings in the twilight hours of the night and howled and howled in a fearful baying chorus, pausing at times to listen to answering volleys of howls from the starveling brutes up in the Aleut village. They kept up the terrible sound, until my blood fairly ran cold, and it seemed to me as if the very Siwash rotting in the cross-studded cemetery out behind my wireless station must burst from their graves, awakened by the tumult of the howling packs.

Red Strauss had been brought ashore in his irons, and he was now kept in solitary confinement in a rude jail on the second floor of the company trading store, with chains still fastened upon him. The man had grown half mad and frightful. He snapped wolfishly at the black messboy who approached him to feed him, and once, when visited by Iron Larsen, he showed his teeth and snarled like a hyena—until the ghastly-faced ruler of the cannery burst, for the first time, into a terrible rage, and hammered the prisoner's ferocious face, now thickly overgrown with a dirty red beard, into a bruised and bleeding, hairy pulp.

## CHAPTER IX.

At Ugashik, the fantastic Casco in his carmine-hued jacket continued to cook for Iron Larsen and myself. He used the kitchen of the cannery cook

house, in common with the regular cook gang of Cape Verde Islanders, and though he was hardly bigger than a mongoose, he terrified and bullied them all by his weirdness and by his constantly asserted propensities for killing when angered, which propensities he demonstrated daily by making murderous slashes about him with his rapier-like knife.

But, though I believe the fantastic little beady-eyed devil would not have hesitated to lunge at a giant, he had a ludicrous terror of the huge, gray, wolf dogs that hung about the cannery. Perhaps it was because the dogs sullenly stood their ground and bared their cruel fangs at him, when he tried unsuccessfully to cow them by brandishing his gleaming knife at them—yet I think he really lived in an intense fear of all furry animals, for once I saw him snarling and quivering at the sight of a gray tundra mouse.

"Manuel, you lazy peeg!" he chattered wrathfully, one night at one of our sleepy black messboys, as I sat in the cook house eating a late supper. "Manuel, I told you before five o'clock, you go down on the wharf and get the pikefishes there—the pikefishes the bookkeeper bought from the cross-eyed Indian Siwash for the breakfast of the captain. You black nigger, you get them pikefishes, queeck! When I am angry, I keel!"

As the incorrigible Manuel lingered, the fantastic, little, leathery-faced cook suddenly whipped out his long, thin-bladed knife.

"I am the Casco of Tasmania!" he screamed. "When I am angry, I keel! *Ahh!*" He lunged at the startled messboy, and before the lethargic young black could move, he had driven the point of his flashing knife clear through the lobe of the negro's left ear, impaling him on the long, thin blade. In that grotesque fashion, the snarling little cook marched him, bellowing lustily

with pain and terror, to the door and ejected him out into the semidarkness of the Alaskan early summer night.

"You bring them feesh, you black dog!" was the weird Casco's parting injunction, as he jerked back his knife and returned it to its sheath in his coppery snakeskin belt. "When I am angry, I keel!"

But, perhaps before he had gotten halfway to the fish wharf, where lay the pike I had bought that afternoon from one of the Aleuts up in the village, the sleepy Manuel had already forgotten what he had been sent for, and he wandered away to the bunk house of the China gang, to sit and watch at one of the high-speed gaming tables that were running therein all night long.

Now there were bears out on the dark tundra, great brown monsters and smaller black ones, which had come down from their distant-mountain caves to devour the rodents that lived among the niggerheads of the low flat country. Though these bears could often be seen with spyglasses, in the daytime, roaming over the great plain, they rarely came within four or five miles of the cannery, probably because of the packs of wolf dogs lurking about the plant.

But on this night, one hungry black fellow ambled up along the bank of the river, against the north wind, climbed up onto the fish wharf, and appropriated all he could carry of the pike he found lying there. Meanwhile, the fuming Casco, after waiting vainly for an hour, for the black messboy to return with the fish, went trotting down to the wharf with his gleaming knife in his hand and murder in his heart, thoroughly determined to kill the Cape Verde Islander and get the pike himself.

In the dusk, he met the bear, which was lumbering along on its hind legs, carrying its stolen fish in its forepaws, as a man carries an armful of wood. Casco's little beady eyes were full of

rage, and in the dark he mistook the black animal for the shambling mess-boy returning with the fish.

"Ah, you black polecat, where you been going so long!" he fumed chatteringly. "Vallah! I feel like to rip your gizzard open! I am the Casco of Tasmania, and when I am angry——"

"Grrr-r-r-r-o-o-o!" roared the bear, menacingly, weaving and swaying before the little midget of a cook, and tightly clutching his stolen fish.

"Whree-e-e-e-e!" shrieked the terrified Casco, now instantly fancying himself confronted by some sort of gigantic werewolf—and he turned around and went skipping and tumbling back through the night-shrouded cannery, emitting screech upon screech, which echoed with shrill, bloodcurdling intensity through the dark. The packs of prowling wolf dogs, aroused and mystified, set upon him, as he fled through the twilight, coming pattering swiftly about him from all sides and snapping at his Turkish trousers, whereat he tripled his hair-raising screams which were bringing the entire cannery crew out of their various bunk houses armed with clubs and knives, anxious to participate in the murder that seemed to be in progress.

Gaining the cook house, the gasping Casco burst inside and bolted the door, while the big gray dogs ranged themselves all around the place and howled dismally for the rest of the night.

The weird little devil of a cook never entirely recovered from this fright. He made himself a bunk in the storeroom of the cook house, and hardly ever again ventured out of the door—though inside his domicile he fought and chattered with his black and yellow associates quite as savagely as before.

I have mentioned once or twice that the Chinese in our China gang did a great deal of gambling, but what a passion they had for it, I did not realize until after our arrival at Ugashik.

One waxen-faced young Oriental, named See Moo, had lost all his money at fan-tan during the voyage north, and had reëntered many games by borrowing coins here and there, until he had at length quite exhausted his credit. Then one of the ruling gamesters at the fan-tan tables in the China-gang forecastle of the *Star of Siberia* had pointed out to this pale-faced young gambler a possibility of obtaining a fresh stake in a most appalling and gruesome way.

The Chinese have a deep-rooted religious horror of the idea of being buried in any country save their native China, and whenever one of them dies in the Alaskan salmon-fishing fleet, either on the ships or in the canneries, his body is disemboweled and filled with coarse salt. It is then packed into a salmon barrel, in more salt, and the barrel headed up. The salted Chinaman is brought home on the returning ship, to San Francisco, where he is delivered, barrel and all, to the great Chinese tongs or secret orders which exist in that city. These societies ship the pickled Oriental to China, so that he may be laid to rest among the bones of his most remote ancestors.

The disemboweling and salting down of a dead Chinese is a horrible, gruesome task, and the doer of this crude, but effective embalming is rewarded by the tongs with a fee of twenty-five dollars—which sum the tong agent in the China gang pays to the butcher immediately upon the completion of his frightful job.

On the *Star of Siberia* was a sick Chinese, who looked as if he probably were going to die. The ruling gamester at the fan-tan table had informed the waxen-faced young See Moo that should his shipmate die, he could have the task of butchering the dead man and salting him into a barrel, and thereby obtain from the tong agent on board the twenty-five-dollar fee at-

tached to such a job. With this sum, See Moo would be able to get back into the fan-tan game.

From that moment, See Moo began watching closely over his sick shipmate, a big, greasy, old yellow creature, feverishly awaiting his death. If the sick Chinese lying in his narrow bunk in the foul, dark hold of the *Star of Siberia* had previously entertained any hope of recovering, he probably abandoned it, when he saw constantly hovering over him, like a waiting vulture, the waxen-skinned young See Moo, his pale face framed in his tangled black hair and his dark eyes burning with the gaming fever.

Notwithstanding the prayers of See Moo for his death, the sick man clung desperately to life, during the long passage north, but a few days after the China gang had been moved into their bunk house at Ugashik, he breathed his last.

Scarcely had he expired, before the waxen-faced young gambler had dragged his warm body out into the mud on the bank of the swirling yellow river and had begun slitting him open. See Moo filled the belly of the dead Chinese with salt, doubled him up and crammed him into a salmon barrel, packed him with more salt, headed up the barrel, and so completed his task. So eager was See Moo to get back into the fan-tan game that he came to the gaming table clutching a five and a twenty-dollar gold piece in long, talon-like fingers that were wet with human blood, while his close-fitting black jacket was likewise smeared with gore.

The Aleut village of Soulima was fairly crawling with native children, many of whom swarmed about the cannery with the dogs. They were intensely interested in me and my wireless house. Though they at first fled in terror across the tundra at sight of me, they soon became tame enough to come and stand outside my open door, where

they exclaimed in gasping, clucking, wide-eyed amazement at the purple fire that crashed deafeningly in my rotary gap, as I sat operating my radio transmitter. Then, at length, they ventured to creep in and stand all around me, whispering gutturally to one another.

From them I quickly picked up the Aleut vocabulary. As I became able to converse with them, they grew quite friendly. But they were always a shy lot, and I soon discovered that they lived in deadly terror of Iron Larsen. Upon his entering the wireless house unexpectedly one day, they one and all immediately scrambled under my bunk, where they lay peering out at him, like a pack of frightened, wary little puppies, and maintained a breathless silence until he went away.

Early in June, the steamer *Port Angeles* arrived off the mouth of the Ugashik River. As her captain would not enter the surging channel, we were obliged to lighter the steamer's cargo of supplies up the river to the cannery. Tin plate, solder, and coal were landed first, and our can-machine floor at once became a place of tumultuous activity, as the long-delayed making of cans was begun.

The tin plate, shimmering tin-coated sheets of thin iron, was run through slitting machines, which reduced it to rectangular pieces about five by eight inches, the correct size for the body of a can. Stacks of these pieces were heaped into a body maker, a huge, intricate machine with a thousand automatic steel fingers and pincers and cutters, which swiftly bent each piece of tin around a mandrel, with a prodigious clapping racket, and lock-seamed it into the form of a can, under the steady stamp of a moving steel anvil.

The formed cans were carried along the side of a copper roller, turning in a great trough filled with molten solder, which was heated by roaring gasoline furnaces. The metal cylinders were

then carried on moving tracks through another complicated machine called a "double seamer," which automatically put on the bottoms of the cans. From the double seamers, the cans were carried in large wicker baskets to the warerooms of the cannery, where they were stored in immense shining piles.

It was the middle of June when the can making began—but fifteen days before the salmon would come—and every machine was driven at terrific speed from four o'clock in the morning until eight at night.

The continuous daylight of Arctic midsummer had now arrived. The sun wheeled in the heavens in a great circle without setting, save to dip below the tundra on the northern horizon for an hour at midnight, while the sky glowed redly in a combined sunset and dawn.

When the cannery whistle roused the China gang and the can-machine men for their breakfasts at three o'clock, the sun was already mounting into the sky, and when at four I was awakened by the rapid earth-shaking *clamp-stamp, clamp-stamp* of the can machines and the roar of the gasoline furnaces on the can floor, near my wireless house, it was to find the sunlight streaming over the weatherbeaten cannery buildings and the surging yellow river with the warmth and brilliance of midday.

These glorious days of Alaskan summer brought hordes of voracious mosquitoes that bred by the millions in the mud flats skirting the seacoast. Grass-burning smoke pots, tended by specially detailed Aleuts, were kept smoldering about the buildings, maintaining a haze of acrid blue smoke day and night throughout the plant. To venture out onto the tundra beyond the smoke screen, unprotected by netting and heavy garments, was to invite death from the bloodthirsty, poisonous insects. They swarmed about like grains of black sand in a desert storm, and settled like hiving bees upon any exposed skin.

Like the busy can makers, the Sicilian fishermen were now also getting to work. They dragged their large, round-bottomed fishing boats out of the cannery warehouse, with much shrieking and tugging, gave them a coat of gray paint, and launched them into the river. From the net loft, they took the gill nets, steeped them in a great vat of preservative chemical which turned the web a dark brown, and then put the seines in order in their boats.

The steamer *Port Angeles* that had brought up our duplicate cannery supplies had brought also two submarine divers, a battery of powerful gasoline-driven pumps, and much other wrecking equipment—together with a salvage crew of twenty men, who were going to make an effort to raise the sunken *Star of Siberia*. We saw nothing of this crew, for they lived in a barge house moored near the wreck, down in the river mouth. Grizzly Hains and Stork Petersen, the mates of the wrecked ship, stayed with them. In three days, the *Port Angeles* had discharged her cargo and departed.

Day after day, our big can machines hungrily devoured solder and tin plate, like a row of rumbling, clicking monsters with oil dripping from their maws and gasoline-fed fires roaring in their bellies, while their levers, cutters, and pincers twisted and writhed, like a thousand claws. They were afflicted with an insatiable appetite for metal, and excreted cans by the thousands.

The China gang stood by the levers of the machines—trucked tin plate and solder—stacked up the finished cans, and were subject to every beck and call of the morose, little, German can-machine wizard, who drove them on relentlessly, by compelling them to keep pace with the swift, never-ceasing *clamp-stamp, clamp-stamp*, like the heavy tread of a fast-marching army, of his over-speeded mechanical demons of cogs and cutters.

The sixteen-hour days of hurried, pressing labor on the can-machine floor, in a sort of never-ended race with the thundering machines did not improve the temper of the lawless China gang. They grew surly and mutinous, and divided into factions, the whites against the negroes, the negroes against the Filipinos, the Filipinos against the Chinese, and all against one another—for each was convinced that he had the hardest task on the can-machine floor saddled upon himself, and that he was doing nine tenths of all the work.

One day, the smoldering resentment of the various factions flamed into a riot. A negro dropped a stack of tin plate on a Filipino's foot. There was a yell, an exchange of curses and blows, and in a twinkling the entire can-machine floor was in a howling turmoil. Knives flashed, men cursed and kicked and struck and slashed at one another. A midget of a Filipino bit off a finger of a big Chinese, who struck down his catlike attacker with an ingot of solder.

A negro caught up a Malay with a bared dagger and whirled him about his head like a flail, knocking down half a dozen other snarling Orientals. Tin cans flew in jingling silvery showers, and blood spattered on the greasy wooden floor. The riot alarm sounded, a succession of five short blasts on the cannery whistle, rapidly repeated, which caused all the big gray wolf dogs dozing in the midday sun to awaken and set up a chorus of howls, while the Aleuts working around the cannery went galloping away up the river bank to their *barralibarraks*, followed by a long string of their squalling, terrified offspring.

Iron Larsen, thrusting two Luger pistols into my hands, commanded me to follow him onto the can-machine floor, which I did with scant willingness, to say the least. But my reluctance changed to horror as I saw the gaunt, death-faced ruler of the cannery

snatch up a big copper ladle, scoop quarts of molten solder from the great troughs of the body machines, and send it hurtling in liquid, silvery streams through the air into the knots of fighting, slashing men, setting garments afire and burning great red streaks across snarling, passion-distorted faces.

Shrieking with agony, the rioters broke and fled. Many leaped through the open windows of the can factory to the ground, twenty feet below, and ran into the river, or wallowed in the mud on the bank, to assuage their smarting burns. Others rushed with frantic aimlessness out onto the tundra, where they were set upon by hordes of voracious black mosquitoes and driven back to the cannery, beating clouds of buzzing, bloodthirsty insects away from their swollen, welt-covered bodies.

That evening no food was given to the China gang. Iron Larsen locked the Chinese cook shanty adjoining their bunk house, and set over it a guard of Scandinavian fishermen, armed with rifles and iron bars, to keep the hungry men from breaking in. Other detachments of armed fishermen were also put on guard around the cannery cook house, the company store, and the other buildings. I stayed up with Iron Larsen all night, to see whether any more trouble would develop. Most of the China gang, however, probably realizing their helplessness, crept quietly into their bunks, without further disorder.

At half past one in the morning, the sun emerged above the dewy tundra on the northern horizon, glowing redly, to begin again its wheeling course through the bronze-hued sky. An hour later, a long, awakening blast was sounded on the cannery whistle, and Iron Larsen now ordered the wretched, sleepless China gang to assemble in a body out in front of their bunk house. They quickly appeared, their faces and limbs covered with rudely bandaged burns and

cuts and bruises, their clothes torn and disheveled. Some shivered, and seemed weak from hunger and fatigue. All turned famished looks toward the cook shanty, which was still barred and guarded.

"Seven hours were squandered in rioting yesterday afternoon," Iron Larsen informed the dirty, haggard mob gathered before him, in his cold, ringing silvery voice. "Therefore you start work hereafter at three o'clock in the morning, instead of four, until the time you lost has been made up. In twenty minutes, the warning whistle blows. Any man who is not at his post on the can-machine floor when the starting whistle sounds at three o'clock will go without food for the day; the others will get a meal at noon, provided there is no further disturbance.

"The next man who raises his fist or draws a knife, while on duty on the can-machine floor, or starts a fight in this plant, will be driven out upon the tundra a distance of a mile, at the muzzle of a rifle, and will be forced to stay there with the mosquitoes for forty-eight hours. By hell, I'll sweat the dope and the whisky and the hellishness out of every one of you, or I'll leave your worthless carcasses to rot on the ground! We are here to put up a salmon pack, and we'll make that pack, if every can is smeared with blood. Get to your stations!"

There was nothing loud or bristly or wrathful in Iron Larsen's delivery of this terrible riot act. He spoke with the cold, steely clearness that seemed an inseparable characteristic of the gaunt, death-faced man. It was far more appalling and sinister than any amount of storming or bellowing ever could have been. The China gang instinctively realized this. They knew that Iron Larsen would do exactly as he said. There was no way for them to resist him. To attempt to flee away from the cannery over the dark rolling

tundra would mean only starvation, or an agonizing death under the stings of the billions of black mosquitoes that swarmed over the rank swale. Iron Larsen was as absolutely their master here as he had been when they were crowded aboard the *Star of Siberia* careening into the north across the Pacific and through the icy Bering Sea.

When the starting whistle blew at three o'clock, every ragged hungry wretch in the China gang was on the can-machine floor, waiting to begin again the day's back-breaking struggle to keep up the pace set by the silent German's stamping mechanisms.

For my own part, I was fast growing inured to the savagery in which I had been submerged since departing from San Francisco. Though I still hated and feared Iron Larsen, he treated me well—and my increasing responsibilities about the plant caused me unconsciously to side with him in his inexorable determination to get three million cans made before the beginning of the salmon run in July, which was now but seven days away. Brutal words and blows were coming to rouse in me scant emotion. They seemed a part of the natural order of things in this isolated cannery on the Alaskan tundra.

This, I feel sure, writing as I now am from the viewpoint of one who has had many years of adventure upon the sea, suggests one of the sources of the pitiless inhumanity of Iron Larsen, and of many of the other Bering Sea salmon packers: here, within the volcano-studded portals of Unimak Pass, where the sun wheeled in a crazy circle over a mad, half-made world of rolling tundra, deserts of mud, swirling yellow water, and clouds of bloodthirsty, tormenting mosquitoes. Where the hot can machines stamped and roared like rampaging, fire-breathing dinosaurs, their bellies full of molten solder. Where the gray wolf dogs ranged in

howling packs, and the blizzard-blackened walls of the great, barnlike wooden cannery buildings leaned awry, in a perpetual insane leer. Where every man's bed was a coffinlike wooden box spiked to a beam, his dishes were iron, and his food stunk of the saltpeter that burns in all the mythological hells—here, indeed, the qualities men call sympathy and kindness seemed properly as abstract as a vanished dream and savagery the real and natural order of things.

#### CHAPTER X.

When I now look back across the adventure-filled years to those turbulent days in the Ugashik salmon cannery, shudders and cold chills trickle down my spine at the memory of my own ruthlessness, as I aided Iron Larsen in driving his miserable crew to the terrible toil of making that salmon pack. I tremble now at recollections of my own hardness of spirit, as I ruthlessly wielded the power invested in me by the master of the *Star of Siberia*, which was such as that laid by an absolute monarch upon his premier.

I joined Iron Larsen in a brief daily practice with a Luger pistol. He used the crosses in the Aleut cemetery behind the wireless station for targets, while I was barely respectful enough to set up a pine board, instead. I astonished myself at my natural dexterity in aiming a pistol. I almost immediately defeated Iron Larsen in marksmanship, and after some practice I became as swift as lightning and a dead shot.

My quickly acquired skill with a gun shortly afterward saved me from a terrible death. An Aleut hunter known as "Reindeer" Pete, who cared for a great herd of government caribou, a hundred miles up the Ugashik River, brought two of his animals down to the cannery in a large sailboat and sold them to me for use in our cook house. We

tethered the live caribou in a small, earthen-floored outbuilding adjoining the cook shack.

Within an hour, I heard our Cape Verde cook gang setting up a clamor of squalls and shrieks, which was mingled with a terrified bellowing of the caribou. Rushing out of the company trading store, wherein I was occupied at the time, I discovered that about twenty of the big wolf dogs which were constantly roving about the cannery had burrowed under the wall of the outhouse in which the reindeer were confined, and were now tearing the bawling animals to pieces.

Rushing to the outhouse, with my Luger pistol in my hand, I kicked aside the nearest dogs, and started to wrench open the door—then suddenly a lithe and powerful, gray furry body landed heavily on my shoulders from behind and bore me to the ground. It was a big wolf dog that had leaped upon me. I still shudder at the vivid memory of the snarling beast putting his jaws and teeth over my neck and searching for my jugular vein, with a cunningly murderous instinct. So quickly that I could never afterward clearly remember the action, I doubled up my right arm, thrust the muzzle of my automatic pistol against the head of the wolf dog, and pulled the trigger. The powerful weapon roared, deafeningly, the recoil almost breaking my twisted wrist, and the dog's brains, blown out by the explosion, spattered on my cheek.

As I shoved off the convulsively twitching creature, two other big wolfish brutes hurled themselves at me. One I stopped with a bullet in the mouth. The other closed his snarling jaws over my hand just as I fired at him and sent a bullet through his ribs, piercing his stomach. My hand bleeding and torn, I shot down two more snarling gray animals that came hurtling through the air at me before I could



get up, and I sent a sixth one spinning off across the tundra in a crazy, side-wise gallop. I had only one cartridge left in my seven-shot automatic, as I scrambled to my feet, but now the rest of the wolf dogs, seeing me standing up, with my hot, smoking weapon aimed upon them, turned and fled swiftly around the corner of the cook house.

Opening the door of the outhouse, I found the two caribou lying dead on the blood-soaked ground, their throats ripped open and their bodies torn almost to pieces.

As a result of this adventure, I gained the deep enmity of Grumbling Bowman, the sour-dough trapper, for three of the dogs I had shot were his, including a prized leader. I have a notion that Grumbling Bowman was resolved to bring me down at the first convenient moment, with the Colt six-shooter he wore in his belt. But he was too ethical to shoot me in the back, and he never dared to reach for his weapon when he was within the range of my vision, for he had seen my target practicing.

But I did not come to be feared only because I stalked about with a big Luger pistol in my Mackinaw pocket. I grew to use my fists, frequently and unsparingly. The Cape Verde cook gang ceased their fighting and squalling, the moment they saw me approaching from across the cannery yard to issue them their daily stores. The China gang bestowed upon me black, sullen looks, and the Aleuts avoided me, in common with Iron Larsen, as a *tahuck-asheedooden*, or bad man. The day came when even the weird devil of a Casco in his carmine-hued jacket no longer dared threaten me with his rapierlike knife—which was quite a mark of respect, indeed, for Iron Larsen himself was the only other man whom the beady-eyed little cook did not brandish his knife at. Yet, strangely enough, I remained good friends with the cluck-

ing, wall-eyed Aleut children, and that, I sometimes like to think, tells a good deal.

My acquaintance with the natives in the Aleut village up the river had now become quite extensive, for I had charge of the cannery trading store, wherein we sold canned food, clothing, ammunition and rifles, and various other merchandise to the Indians, and purchased from them their winter furs.

Before long, I had gained admittance into the village *barrahbarras*, which I found to be most squalid hovels, indeed. The earthen floor of each one was littered with dry grass and with red-fox furs, upon which the Indians slept. Loose dirt from the sod walls lay everywhere, and the place was full of suffocating, pale-blue smoke that issued from the cracks in a rude stove made of pieces of rusty sheet iron.

While I was in the hovel, the native's wall-eyed, calico-clad wife, who was as ugly and clumsy as a frog, squatted in a corner, with her back to the room and her face stuck close to the sod wall. This is a bit of Aleut etiquette that must be strictly observed by the lady of the house, in the presence of a strange visitor. Else she will summarily receive a cuff on the ear or a stinging blow on the cheek from her husband, to remind her of her immodesty.

The Aleuts treated their wives with no tenderness or respect. They cuffed and slapped them at the slightest provocation, and made them do all the hard work. Later, in the time of the salmon run, they made the squaws wade out into the mud along the river bank and pick fish from webbing hung on posts near the beach. They had to carry the salmon ashore, split them and hang them on rude racks to dry, after which they buried them in the earth, as winter food for their dogs and themselves.

At times, sea gulls would attack the

drying fish, whereupon the Indians cunningly snared some of them with native traps, and then impaled the unfortunate birds upon sharp sticks attached to the fish racks, as a warning to the other gulls, leaving the snow-white, blood-stained creatures to flutter there, screaming in helpless agony for days, until they died.

The *tyhun*, or chief of the village, whose name was Moksi, lived in state in a "white-man house," a rude, low-roofed cabin. He had a quite pretty daughter, the Princess Katrina, as we knew her, who was suspiciously blond.

The most interesting family in the village of Soulima, however, was that of one Emeuk Aliaska, who, like the *tyhun*, lived in a long low wooden cabin, up at the farther end of the settlement. Emeuk was a short, squat, dark-skinned Aleut who lived with a soured outlook upon life. Many years before, in a moment of drunken irresponsibility, he had taken to spouse an ugly wrinkled squaw, the cast-off consort of a white trapper, together with her two infant daughters, children of the white man. These were now grown, and were quite beautiful.

Emeuk, when sober, bore his cross with silent, gloomy introspection, toiling patiently to support the family he had saddled onto himself. But often he got drunk on sour dough, or on rotgut whisky bought from the China gang contractor, whereupon he would club his women out of his cabin, in a murderous rage, and would then give expression to his pent-up feelings by squatting in the middle of the floor with a shotgun and shooting the shingles off the roof over his head, in showers of splinters.

His squaw, who lived with a chronic black eye, either the right or the left, henpecked him unmercifully when he was sober, but fled clucking and squawking to the shelter of the nearest dugout whenever he went on one of his

shooting rampages. It was the universal belief of the village that he would eventually murder her.

The day that Iron Larsen drove the China gang onto the can-machine floor without breakfast at three o'clock in the morning proved a day of tragedy, for an exhausted, white-faced man, one of the shanghai'd dope fiends who was tending the roaring, red-hot solder vat on a stamping body machine, fainted and before aid could prevent fell into the clock'ng mechanism.

A dozen shouting men wrenched the solder tender's mangled corpse from the big hot machine. One reached for the control levers, to halt the mechanism—but the silent, German can-machine foreman stopped him with a surly gesture.

"It iss too late, poys," he said gruffly. "Keep going!" He looked worriedly at the can counter on the machine.

The automatic ejector cast aside half a hundred pieces of crumpled tin covered with blood and rags, but the roaring mechanism did not cease its swift *clamp-stamp, clamp-stamp*, and soon a long new line of gleaming cans was gliding across the hissing soldering roll, while the German foreman shouted instructions into the ear of another haggard man detailed to tend the great trough of molten metal.

The next day the mangled remains of the hapless wretch who had fainted over the body machine were nailed into a rude wooden box, and a grave was dug in the Aleut cemetery out behind my wireless station.

On this day, a stranger appeared in the cannery, a small, unkempt man with thin, weak lips and a weasel-like face. He wore the star of a United States deputy marshal. He had come down the river from the government reindeer herd a hundred miles to the northeastward, where there was a mission school in which he taught. This was the reason for his being in Alaska. He was

the holy man of some society in the States—and the office of deputy marshal was but an incidental appointment.

He had descended upon our cannery, I soon learned, however, not as a minister of the gospel, to save our savage souls, but in his capacity of an officer of the law, to search for whisky—for at this time Alaska was already a dry territory, though prohibition had not yet come to the States.

I believe that some of the China gang appealed to him at once for protection from Iron Larsen, which he promised them if they would reveal the whereabouts of the store of rotgut whisky hidden somewhere around the cannery by Foo Yick, the Chinese contractor. This they did, whereupon the weasel-faced marshal seized the whisky, told his informers to go to a hotter place than Alaska, and then attempted to drink all his captured contraband as speedily as possible.

Then, learning that a dead man was to be buried that evening in the Aleut cemetery, he at once asserted his prerogative, as a minister of the gospel, to read the burial rites over the deceased, and demanded that all the cannery crew be permitted to attend.

With a sardonic smile at the swaying, bleary-eyed missionary, Iron Larsen conferred with the German can-machine wizard, who peered at his can counters and reluctantly nodded his head in assent. The can making was going well.

So that evening all the cannery crew formed a funeral procession from the China gang bunk house to the cemetery. The hiccoughing stranger in his threadbare, brown corduroys staggered along behind the grimy-faced, sweaty-shirted pallbearers, clutching a black, leather-bound book in his left hand—and the corner of the dead man's rude, unpainted, pine coffin with his right, to keep from falling down.

Arriving at the grave, the pallbear-

ers rested their burden on a mound of yellow earth. The cannery crew silently pressed around, in a great banked circle. The weasel-faced missionary stupidly thumbed his black, leather-covered book. He swayed and staggered, hiccoughing loudly, and then fell headlong, book and all, down into the grave. There arose loud snickers from the men crowded around, while Iron Larsen burst into a clear, silvery, icy laugh.

The bleary-eyed missionary, mumbling curses, was hauled up out of the grave, both himself and his book smeared with sticky yellow clay. Again he fumbled at the pages of his volume while two men held him up, then, suddenly espying Iron Larsen, who was regarding him with a cold, cynical smile, he raised both his arms high above his wobbly head, still clutching his book, and burst out, with a loud slobbering oath:

"Aw, doncha see I'm stewed! Why doncha go ahead an' bury the damned son of a gun!"

He threw his book down onto the ground and lunged off, cursing vilely.

There was a startled silence.

"Lower the body!" commanded Iron Larsen tersely, of the pallbearers. As they obeyed, he picked up the clay-smeared book, and with cold solemnity offered it to me.

"Here is another opportunity to read the rites, Dex," he informed me, with a faint mocking smile on his white, ghastly face. "Come, step up, and let us hear you do a little preaching."

"I don't want to read anything!" I replied harshly.

"Good!" said Iron Larsen, in his clear, icy voice, and turning around, he threw the small, black, leather-bound volume in his hand sharply down upon the wooden coffin that had been lowered into the grave. "Let the corpse read his own rites if he desires any. Shovel away now!"

## CHAPTER XI.

On the first day of July, the fishermen were sent out in their salmon boats. They took with them spare clothing, a locker of food, and a camp stove on which they would cook and keep a smoke smudge to drive off the mosquitoes. Hoisting their brown sails, they stood away downstream, their boats looking like a cluster of tan-winged butterflies which finally vanished beyond the mud flats. They were bound toward the mouth of the surging muddy river, to await the coming of the salmon.

The can-machine floor was now deserted and silent. The heavy *clamp-stamp* of the hot body machines and the roar of the solder furnaces had ceased. All the cans were made and were stacked in a vast silvery heap in the cannery net loft.

Iron Larsen surprised the China gang by not only giving them three days of absolute rest, but by instructing me to issue company foodstuff to the Chinese cook house, to eke out the hard fare furnished them by the contractor. But this, as I rightly surmised, was but a policy dictated by the coldest necessity. Just as a mule driver, when about to subject his beasts to prolonged gruelling toil, allows them a certain additional amount of food and rest, else they must drop dead in their traces.

The day after the boats had been sent out, some of the fishermen returned, bringing fifty or sixty silver-scaled salmon apiece—just about enough to enable the silent German cannery foreman to get his batteries of canning machines accurately adjusted for the coming run.

In addition to the thirty boats manned by the Sicilians and Scandinavians in our own crew, we sent out fifteen Aleut boats, for these Indians are exceedingly good fishermen—when they feel like fishing.

"This year come plenty fish," Mocchi, the *tyhun*, predicted, as he stood on the bank of the broad muddy river. "Big west wind and warm sun after the ice bring the *sinck* to the spawn water."

The prediction of the Aleut chief that a big run of salmon was coming was amply fulfilled. On the third day of July, the fishermen lying in wait in their boats at the river mouth saw them coming out in the heaving blue water of the Bering Sea, leaping and cavorting in the waves, the sunlight flashing on their silvery scales.

Swiftly, under the urge of the strong west wind, the homing salmon struck into the Ugashik River, in a leaping, shimmering horde. They set the water aboil with their silvery bodies—they darted and splashed in their gleaming beauty, and rippled through the shallows in their countless multitudes. They gamboled and played, exuberant with the joy of their strange life. They were hard and firm and full of vitality, after their sojourn in the mysterious depths of the sea, and they now returned to swim back up the yellow Ugashik to the cold, clear head waters that poured from the inland mountains into Ilamna Lake—a great crystal bowl in which they had been spawned four years before, and to which they were now returning to spawn in turn and die, and then carpet the brooks and streams with their bones.

The fishermen's nets sizzled and sank, gutted with silver-scaled fish. The boats came plowing home to the cannery, laden so deep that the yellow water of the river lapped against their deck combings. Soon the cannery wharf was piled high with slab-sided salmon.

Iron Larsen now took Red Strauss out of confinement. Around the waist of the long-imprisoned murderer, the gaunt cannery superintendent put a hinged belt forged of strap iron. It was secured with a bronze padlock, and

to it was shackled a piece of strong steel chain about ten feet long. The half-mad wretch thus belted, Iron Larsen drove him through the cannery and out onto the fish wharf, to the heading knife of the iron chink.

The iron chink of the Bering Sea salmon fisheries is a marvelous cylindrical machine which automatically cuts the tails and fins off the fish, removes their entrails, and scales them. It is an inconceivably dangerous contrivance, for it fairly bristles with gleaming steel prongs and knives. The heading knife is a huge, revolving, swordlike blade which cuts off the heads of the big fish as easily as if they were asparagus tips.

To feed the salmon to this knife, whence they are carried into the clashing machine, is a dangerous and nerve-racking task, for the fish, which vary in length, must be slid to varying positions under the revolving blade, in order that the heads may be cut as economically as possible. The cold salmon are slimy, the feeder's hands grow likewise slimy, and they slip about on the fish, like the fingers of a child clutching at a bar of wet soap. A moment's relaxation of vigilance, a careless grasp of a fish, and the inexorably revolving header knife may slice through a finger or a hand.

This had been the misfortune of Red Strauss two years before, on this same iron chink. Strauss had been an incorrigible, tigerish rebel in the China gang, and, when detailed to the iron chink, he had cut the salmon heads at a wasteful length. Whereat Iron Larsen had adjusted the table of the machine in such a way as to compel the mutinous feeder to work very close to the big revolving knife. As a result, his right hand, slipping over the head of a salmon, had been split in two, clear back to the wrist, by the end of the swordlike blade.

I had expected that Red Strauss

would rebel at being again stationed at the heading knife of the iron chink, but he did not. Perhaps the long imprisonment he had suffered, the chains, the iron belt around his waist, warned him that it would be futile to struggle. At any rate, he began sliding the salmon to the keen blade, saying not a word. But I saw that his pinched face was white as death under his matted red beard, and that he quivered as a sentenced murderer might quiver before a guillotine.

Iron Larsen was keenly amazed at the unexpected submissiveness of Red Strauss, and said so.

"But it is just as well for you that you do submit," he added, in his cold, clear voice, as he padlocked the free end of the steel chain fastened to the prisoner's waist to a steam pipe adjoining the iron chink. "For otherwise I should have left you chained here at the machine until you either went to work or died of hunger."

Red Strauss seemed to shudder a little, but he never spoke a word, as with his single hand he clutched the big, silver-scaled fish coming at him along a conveyor and slid them under the turning steel header knife, the keen edge of which now gleamed redly with a film of blood.

From the clashing prongs and blades of the iron chink, the salmon were distributed into a long trough, where a row of slimers in yellow oilskins stood at small wooden tables flooded by jets of icy water, and with their scraping knives finished the rough cleaning done by the big revolving machine.

From the slimers, the salmon passed to a washing tank, where their gleaming silver and blood-red carcasses were bathed in torrents of crystal water, then they went up a long conveyor into the cannery. Here, after being carried under knives that cut them into short pieces, the red fish were delivered to the filling machines. These were rat-

tling and banging mechanisms of rods and plungers, which drove the salmon into the shining tin cans that marched steadily down in an endless row along a steel track from the wareroom overhead—passing on the way through a spicing-machine that put accurately measured amounts of snowy salt, two kinds of pepper, and pinches of odorous spices into each gleaming container.

The filled cans of salmon, after being weighed, next entered a battery of bloated, gray iron monsters laden with pumps and valves and gears, and more marvelous indeed than the now silent body machines up on the can-making floor.

These were the vacuum sealers, which pumped the air from the cans of fish, put on the covers, and sealed them tightly.

The sealed hot cans were then wheeled, in immense truck loads, into the yawning mouths of the steam retorts—huge, black steel cylinders lying on their sides, twenty in a row, and looking like a battery of mighty guns. When a retort became filled with trucks of salmon, a massive steel door was swung shut upon them, to be secured with ponderous iron bars and enormous thumbscrews turned up with crowbars and hammered tight with sledge hammers.

Live steam was shot into the great steel drum. For half an hour the cans of salmon were bathed in its hot, hissing heat, then the thumbscrews were pounded loose, the bars pulled back, and the ponderous iron door thrown open. A great cloudy puff of white vapor shot from the mouth of the retort, like the smoke from the muzzle of a mighty canon, and from the hot, steaming belly of the steel shell the trucks of salmon were hauled out with iron hooks and pikes. Visibly radiating their scorching heat, the trays of shining cans were wheeled away into a wareroom where they were stacked in

growing piles, for future labeling and boxing.

Such, in a few paragraphs, is the steamy, thundering way in which the Alaskan salmon packers imprison safely in thin walls of tinned iron the silver horde of the northern seas. But the human labor that enters into the process cannot be so easily depicted.

To feed tin plate to the stamping and roaring body machines on the can-making floor I had thought killing toil, but that seemed to have been a task for children compared to the labor now demanded of the China gang. They must stand in slimy oilskins at the cleaning trough, their fingers freezing in jets of icy water. They must catch the hot sealed cans discharged from the steaming ports of the huge bottle-shaped vacuum sealers. They must stack them into truck trays, wheel them into the hot, steaming bellies of the cooking retorts, slam the ponderous iron doors and pound them tight with sledges, pound them loose again, dive into the clouds of steam and emerge with sweat streaming from their glistening limbs that showed through wet, dirty rags, as they towed the trucks out again and wheeled them away to the warerooms. There was no loitering, there were no breathing spells, for the plungers of the filling machines drove hard and fast, and never missed a blow.

As when making cans, the machinery began to thunder and the steam to rise in hissing clouds at four o'clock in the sunlit mornings, and did not cease until eight at night—with two grudging half-hour pauses for the China gang to gulp down food that was now served on rough boards set up on sawhorses in the cannery itself.

Even with these long hours of running, the canning machines could not keep up with the heaps of silver-scaled salmon that steadily grew higher and higher out on the fish wharf. The boats were coming in fairly sunken with

their gleaming cargoes, and were swiftly departing for more.

The silent German can-machine wizard divided his time between slipping out onto the wharf to glance at the rising mountain of salmon, and screwing tighter and tighter the governor springs of the whirling engines that drove his machines.

Gradually the clashing mechanisms struck a faster stride, and then still faster. The gleaming header knife on the iron chink slashed off heads at a dangerously high speed, as the slippery salmon were thrust under its blood-dripping edge by the trembling hand of the chained Strauss. The clinking empty cans streamed into the fillers, where the frantically oscillating plungers fairly threatened to knock their bottoms out. The vacuum sealers sucked, gaspingly, and snorted steam from their nostrillike discharge ports. Clouds of hot vapor puffed from the clanging iron doors of the retorts, filling the great rumbling building with a warm, foggy haze, through which sweat-drenched men moved like wan specters.

Still the masses of gleaming salmon increased out on the wharf. They flowed against the retaining boards around the side of the pier, forming a silvery lake covered with shimmering, motionless ripples. The big trough, too, into which the iron chink delivered the brilliant red and silver carcasses had become congested. But the canning machines had reached their utmost speed. Steam and steel could do no more.

Iron Larsen reluctantly put the fishing boats on "short net"—that is, he prohibited them from bringing in more than fifteen hundred salmon apiece during each twenty-four hours.

For days, the avalanche of shimmering fish held on. The run had now worked its way up the river, and when I attempted to row a boat about the fish wharf, my oars were knocked out of my hands by thumping bodies, while

a piece of discarded gill netting hanging in a tangle around the piling under the pier became choked with a ton of fish. The Sicilians now put off but a few thousand yards from the cannery and cautiously paid out a hundred feet or so of web, which instantly became a writhing silvery ribbon of enmeshed salmon.

Iron Larsen went through the cannery regularly every two hours with a two-gallon coffeepot filled with strong whisky of fine quality, and a kettle full of water tumblers into which he poured big drinks and gave them to the ragged sweating devils who toiled in the haze of steam. Iron Larsen did this, as I understood perfectly well, not from the least feeling of mercy toward the exhausted men on the thundering machines and in the steaming retorts, but because it was a means, however unnatural, of sending their blood coursing swiftly through their veins, and keeping them artificially keyed up for sixteen hours to the terrific pitch of the pounding can fillers and the snorting vacuum sealers.

Day after day, Red Strauss fed an unending procession of silvery salmon to the revolving knife of the iron chink. Still he did not rebel. But each day he grew paler, and he developed fits of violent trembling, which set his chain to jingling, though the sound of this was lost in the steely clashing of the knife-studded machine.

At opportune intervals, I myself relieved the unfortunate wretch for half-hour periods, and I soon learned to fear the great, revolving, bloody blade that came slithering down between my hands almost as much as Red Strauss must have feared it. He never thanked me for these breathing spells; but crouched in his filthy rags on a timber beside me, staring with vacant, half-crazed eyes at the turning knife, while his bearded lips and his hairy hands twitched continually.

Thrice I interceded with Iron Larsen on behalf of the tortured man.

"Dex, you will have to keep your oar out of this," he said in his cold, clear voice, the third time I protested at his merciless treatment of the spirit-broken wretch with the mutilated hand. "Red Strauss is heading the fish more economically than any one who has ever been at the knife. I doubt that there is another man in the China gang who could keep up with the machine for any length of time, at its present speed. Strauss is paying for the fish he destroyed here two years ago. He stays at the knife—unless he collapses."

"Until the knife gets him again, you mean!" I burst out. I felt myself grow deliciously hot with fury from head to foot. "The man is a tortured, half-dead wreck, and the iron chink is going to get him—you know it! And, Larsen, when it does, we are going to have a fight. Do you hear me, you damned, iron-hearted hound!"

I stood up very close to the gaunt man, my hands tightly clenched, and my face probably was quite as white as his.

Iron Larsen did not flinch. Not a muscle quivered on his ghastly face.

"I," he said slowly, after a tense moment, "have a reason for hating this red-bearded cur. You, Dex, have improved immeasurably, since I first set eyes on you. The only reason I won't kill you, after such a threat as you have offered me, is that you have become too valuable a man to be done without—until the salmon pack is made. But when the knife gets Red Strauss, I'll either shoot you dead, or chain you in his place!"

## CHAPTER XII.

I think that perhaps owing to the death of Praying Parks, I had indeed become too valuable to Iron Larsen to be conveniently done without—for my duties drove me almost as hard as the

silent German's pounding can machines drove the China gang.

One of many tasks, in addition to operating the wireless station, was to supervise the tallymen who counted the salmon, as these were pewed from the fishing boats onto the wharf conveyor, and who entered the count in the fishermen's tally books. Here was an opportunity for dishonesty. The cunning Sicilians, I soon discovered, had brought bags of gold with them from San Francisco, which now began trickling, coin by coin, into the hands of the tallymen, in recompense for swelled figures in the duplicate tally books.

One shifty-eyed, little gray-haired tallyman, whom I caught redhanded, or rather, gold-handed, at this practice, was cast by Iron Larsen into the steamy inferno wherein toiled the half-dead and half-drunken China gang, and from their ragged, sweating ranks was drawn a man to fill the place of the fellow who had been sentenced to labor in the hot retorts. But the new tallyman at once proving worse than the deposed one, he was hurled back into the steaming, thundering hell whence he had been plucked, and still another one was taken in his stead.

I soon found myself, because of my vigilance over the tallymen, an object of deadly hatred among the balked Sicilians. Also, I enraged them by ordering them to go back out into the river when they came alongside the pier with their salmon still in their nets and attempted to pick their web with their boats moored to the wharf, so as to avoid waiting their turns with the tallymen, when they finally had their fish ready for pewing onto the conveyors. This was strictly against the cannery rules, as it kept other boats away that were ready to be discharged.

Many of the Sicilians repeatedly offended in this manner, and I began slashing their lines with a knife and



sending them a mile up the river on the surging tide before they could get their sails up and fight their way back to a convenient anchorage. Thereat they would fly into a screaming rage. Ripping off their yellow oilskins and sou'westers, they would throw these overboard, together with their cooking pots, their food, and sometimes their stoves. Then they would squat in their boats glaring up at me like black-haired gorillas, and would stick their fingers into their own mouths and bite them, screeching like wild cats and frothing with rage, until they gushed blood.

One half-mad fellow once leaped upon the wharf and lunged at me with his pew—a long-handled fork with a single, gleaming, curved steel prong. I leaped aside, and he rammed the point of his weapon a depth of two inches into one of the solid wharf pilings. I heard a low, icy exclamation behind me, then I saw Iron Larsen, with a pew in his hand, pursue the Sicilian down onto a lighter moored alongside.

The fishermen suddenly stood at bay, and there followed a terrific pew fight. Flashing steel prongs swished through the air, wooden handles crashed together—then Iron Larsen got his pew into the wrist of the Sicilian, who screamed at the top of his lungs, dropped his fish pew, and whipped out a knife. But Iron Larsen stabbed his pew mercilessly into the Sicilian's arms and legs, until the half-crazed fisherman, with a wild shriek, leaped from the lighter into the river.

Clad as he was in heavy woolen garments, his legs encased in hip boots, he sank at once into the swirling yellow flood, and would have drowned, had not Iron Larsen driven his pew through the collar of the fisherman's coat and hung onto him. Coolly, the gaunt cannery superintendent ducked the strangling Sicilian until he had become almost unconscious, while the other fishermen around the wharf looked on in

wild-eyed terror, then he dragged the half-dead wretch out onto the lighter again and left him lying there, spewing muddy water.

"Damn your squealing tantrums!" rasped Iron Larsen at his terrified spectators in the fishing boats moored along the lighter. "We're here to pack salmon!"

For twenty-one days, the pistons of the madly thrashing can-filling machines drove chunks of red fish into the shining cans, from four o'clock in the morning until eight at night. The China gang grew completely exhausted. Some of them dropped unconscious on the shaking floor of the steam-filled cannery, and not even Iron Larsen's whisky could spur them further.

The hardest toil was that in the batteries of cooking retorts, which puffed forth huge clouds of hot steam when their heavy, clanging, iron doors were thrown back to be emptied of their trucks of salmon and quickly reloaded. The retort crews were drafted from among the strongest of the China gang, and were put on in relays which each successive day were changed more frequently, as the exhaustion of the toilers grew more deadly.

I had now begun to believe that the silent, German can-machine wizard was made of harder iron than even the death-faced cannery superintendent, for he never lagged. His hand never grew unsteady as he made fine adjustments on the snorting vacuum sealers. Often he and his assistants were up all night, renewing delicate steel and bronze parts that showed signs of weakening, and so got no sleep, while the China gang lay in their dirty bunks, like dead men, too wearied even to pull off their sweat-soaked rags.

But the most killing task of all was that of Red Strauss at the iron chink—and Red Strauss got no relief, no relaxation by being transferred frequently to some other station. The con-

dition of the man with the mutilated hand had grown indescribably frightful. He would not eat. His thin face under his matted, dirty red beard was as ghastly as Iron Larsen's, and over his eyes there was a deathlike glaze.

He never spoke, neither when led by his jingling steel chain, like a captive beast, to and from his place of imprisonment over the company trading store, nor during his long hours at the clashing machine, where he fed the silver-scaled salmon to the revolving header knife with the uncanny precision of a thin-wristed steel automaton. He would no longer allow me to relieve him for a few minutes at his post, but pushed me away with his spearlike elbows whenever I came around. The man was undoubtedly insane, and very near death.

One gray cloudy afternoon, when the pounding can fillers seemed to thrash with unusual savageness and the iron retort doors clanged gloomily in the foggy steaming haze that filled the cannery, there came to my ears, as I stood on the fish wharf with my tallymen, the most fearful maniacal scream I have ever heard.

It burst from the vicinity of the iron chink, and it was followed by a scrambling racket and a jingling of steel chain, which I could hear above the rumbling of the big machine. Rushing inside the old dilapidated shed on the wharf which sheltered the mechanism, I saw that Red Strauss had leaped up onto the table of the clashing iron chink. Throwing himself down onto the slimy steel surface of the table, like a big salmon, he slid his head under the revolving header knife.

A deathly sick feeling struck me in the stomach and for an instant everything went black before my eyes. I heard a crunch, a harsh short groan, and the snap of a breaking steel chain. Then, when my sight returned, I gazed at the header knife and saw, as I knew

I must see, that it was covered with blood—not with the thick, black blood of the silver-scaled salmon, but with the streaming, bright crimson blood of Red Strauss. As I followed the dripping knife in its returning downward slash, to the steel table, I saw lying there a cleanly severed human head.

Red Strauss seemed to have vanished. Then I saw a thing that looked like a huge fish going around through the ripping knives and prongs of the big iron chink, which clashed with a baying, wolfish note, as if exulting in its prey.

Iron Larsen had not been around the cannery all morning. Indeed, I had seen hardly anything of him for a week. I now went straight to the superintendent house, in search of him, and met him just as he was coming slowly out of the front door. He looked terribly gaunt, and his face seemed more ghastly white than I had ever yet beheld it.

We faced one another in silence, and stood so for some seconds. Iron Larsen must have read in my face what had happened, but he waited for me to speak.

"He's finished!" I suddenly burst out, in a voice that I could hardly believe was my own, because of the hoarse fury and hatred in it. "You and I, Larsen, are going to have a fight—or I'll go mad myself, for I can't stand you any longer!"

Still the ghastly faced man did not say a word, but stood rigidly before me, in his brown sheepskin coat, his long thin arms hanging limply at his side, as if he were waiting to see what I would do. And suddenly my blood seemed to flame like exploding gasoline. The muscles in my arms drew up like steel springs, and almost before I knew what I was doing, I had struck Iron Larsen a terrific blow full in his white face with my fist and knocked him flat on his back, on the pebbly ground.

For a moment, he lay there, motionlessly, then, slowly, he turned over on

his side, got to his knees, and so arose. Again he stood as before, his arms hanging limp, his face overspread with a still more deathly pallor. A small stream of blood trickled down from his thin, aquiline nose.

I stared at him astoundedly, my anger fast cooling again.

"I am very ill, Dex," he said, in a voice that carried but a fraction of its old silvery, icy ring. "My stomach is caving in, I guess."

It was now my turn to stand limply, my clothes damp with sweat, while a vague feeling of disappointment stole over me.

"I cannot fight a sick man," I announced glumly, at a loss for anything better to say.

Iron Larsen continued to stand motionlessly before me on the gravelly path.

"Put some one else on the chink," he said thickly, making no effort to wipe away the blood that ran down over his ghastly white lips. "Keep going!"

He walked away, then stopped and retraced his steps. Again he stood gazing steadily at me, his deathlike face and his dark-ringed, sunken, gray eyes revealing something that looked like triumph.

"Red Strauss was the living image of a man who once did me a great wrong," he said in a stony tone. "To me, he was the man."

He turned around, and walked slowly back into the superintendent house, his shoulders sagging a little, as if his iron spirit were turning into lead.

Returning to the cannery, I found that the silent German had already put a new man on the iron chink and the machines were thundering on, without a pause. The mangled corpse of Red Strauss had been carried away to the China-gang bunk house.

The next day, he was buried.

And now, as suddenly as it had begun, the salmon run ended. The day

Red Strauss killed himself, the fishing boats, no longer on "short-net," brought in nearly two thousand fish apiece—but two days after that the catch was less than four hundred salmon to the boat. The shimmering motionless sea of fish on the cannery wharf now disappeared, and the silent German slowed down his machines, which seemed by this time ready to fall to pieces.

The daily working time was shortened to eight hours, then to five, to three, and finally, on the twenty-ninth day after the beginning of the run, the last of the silver-scaled stragglers had gone up the river. The salmon boats went out no more, and the big cannery stood with cold retorts and silent machines. The salmon pack was made.

It was with a sigh of relief from every man that the run ended, for all were utterly exhausted. A great shipload of salmon, nearly three million cans, stood gleaming in the vast dim warehouse of the cannery—the work of but four weeks—but weeks of terrible toil.

Now, after two days of rest that must have seemed blessed to them, indeed, the weary China gang were turned to the comparatively light labor of labeling the three million cans of fish. About fifteen different fancy brands of salmon were labeled from the one vast pile of cans in the wareroom.

Box-making machines were set into operation, and the labeled cans of salmon were put into wooden cases. The immense pack was lightered down the river and loaded aboard a big clipper ship, the *Shishaldin Prince*, which had sailed over to Ugashik from another cannery to the northward, where the salmon run had failed this year.

While the mad rush of making the salmon pack was on at the cannery, the submarine divers and the crew of salvagers who had been brought up on the steamer *Port Angeles* in the spring, to try to raise the *Star of Siberia*, had

been working steadily on the sunken ship. By securing the vessel's blown-out hatches with heavy wooden planks and timbers, and driving air down into the ship's hold with a big gasoline-engine-driven compressor, thereby forcing out the water through a peculiarly arranged discharge port, they actually succeeded in bringing the vessel up from the bottom of the river.

So water-logged and laden with gray mud was the ship, however, that she would barely float, with her rail and main deck awash in the tide. The salvagers at once broke open her strongly barred hatches and began throwing overboard her swollen, mud-soaked cargo—tin plate, machine stores, box shooks, and a multitude of other supplies.

At length the ship was emptied, save for six hundred tons of coal on the floor of her lower hold, which it was decided to leave in the vessel as ballast. The *Star of Siberia* afloat and safely moored in the channel, in charge of Grizzly Hains, the crew of submarine divers and salvagers boarded the *Shishaldin Prince*, which was loading our salmon pack, for they were all determined to return to the States on that vessel. None of them were willing to risk a passage southward on the floated, but completely wrecked, *Star of Siberia*.

Iron Larsen, since the day I had struck him down, had rarely left the superintendent house. Once in a while, he walked slowly through the cannery, observed the labeling and packing of the salmon, but said nothing. He no longer ate with me in our private mess room in the cook house, but had his food brought to him in the house where he lived. His face was growing more deathlike, his spare frame, more gaunt, than ever before. From the weird Casco, I learned that he ate only the whites of raw eggs beaten to a froth.

When the labeling of the cans of

salmon was about half completed, he sent for me.

"I am leaving you here in charge, to finish getting the salmon pack away to the *Shishaldin Prince*," he told me, in a voice that still carried something of its old icy ring. "To-night, I am going down the river to begin making the *Star of Siberia* ready for sea. The ship, as you know, is in a perilous shape to be sailed back to San Francisco, but the war has sent the value of the vessel up into the stars, and so I must get her home. The China gang, the can men, the Sicilians, the cooks—all but Casco—go down on the *Shishaldin Prince*. The eight Scandinavians among the fishermen must come with me and the two mates, to sail the *Star of Siberia* home. As for yourself"—he paused—"you can choose your own ship."

His cold, gray sunken eyes gazed steadfastly into mine. Something in his deathlike face, in his icy look, seemed to challenge me or plead with me.

"I'll sail on the *Star of Siberia*," I announced, after a moment of silence.

That night, Iron Larsen boarded the steam tug, *Mohawk*, on which boat his black trunk and his heavy oaken sea chest had been placed during the afternoon. It was now the middle of August. The sun was swinging swiftly to the south, as if already wearied of the desolate land, and there was a period of intense darkness each night. As Iron Larsen stood upon the stern of the *Mohawk* in the falling dusk, gaunt and pallid as death, he gazed steadily at the great silent cannery upon the tundra.

"This," he said, in a cold, stony voice, "is the last time I shall set my eyes upon Ugashik—upon this cluster of tumbling, storm-blackened buildings, upon the dark, rolling tundra that swarms with mosquitoes, and upon the surging muddy river. I say farewell to it, without regret."

The cannery machines were again heavily smeared with a coat of thick, green cylinder oil to protect them from rust during the long winter that we could already feel approaching. The boilers were blown down, steam lines were disconnected and drained. All the cannery crew, with their bedding and belongings, were loaded on top of the three last lighters of salmon, and then the little steam tug, *Mohawk*, towed them away—while they all cheered and shrieked with joy, at their departure, and hurled back curses and jeers at the great silent cannery wherein they had toiled, and sweated their very blood.

The next morning was wonderfully clear. Standing on the river bank, above the cannery, I saw, far across the dreary gray waste of mud flats to the westward, the unfurled sails of the *Shishaldin Prince* slowly gliding away to sea, looking like a little cluster of white-and-brown-winged butterflies hovering over the swale. I felt a pang, as I watched the distant ship sink below the tundra, yet I could not really wish to be aboard that vessel, for not only was she laden deep with our immense salmon pack, but she had on board the crews of two canneries, besides the salvagers who had floated the *Star of Siberia*, or more than four hundred men all told—which must have meant fearful crowding indeed.

That night, as I slept in my lonely wireless shack, a feeling of terrible desolation stole over me, for a mighty wind came roaring over the dark tundra from the eastward and screamed about the eaves of the old cannery as if it were the warning voice of the returning Alaskan winter. The packs of wolf dogs prowling around sensed the desolation, too, for they cowered in the lee of the deserted buildings and howled dismally all through the night.

In the morning, the steam tug, *Mohawk*, returned from down the river, now in charge of the winter man and

a couple of Aleuts, towing three empty barges. I saw the big lighters and the tug hauled up on their ways for the winter, then I lowered my wireless aerial, and with all things put in order, embarked in one of the Aleuts' sailboats with my baggage and bedding, to go down the river to the *Star of Siberia*, which lay waiting for me.

Night was falling, as we hoisted our leg-of-mutton sail. The sky was cold and dark, and there was a dead chill in the air. As Iron Larsen had gazed, so I, too, gazed on the dark, silent cannery upon the tundra, at the Aleut cemetery behind it, studded with three-barred crosses, at the mud hovels of the wretched natives along the river bank, and at the swirling muddy flood upon which I floated.

"I, too, say farewell to Ugashik," I murmured—and certainly it was without regret.

### CHAPTER XIII.

As we approached the *Star of Siberia*, which was revealed in the cold, steely light of the early morning, lying hove short in the river mouth, I was struck with a chill of fear at the prospect of embarking on her, for the vessel was in fearful shape. Her mud-laden hull was hogged. Her rail rose in billowing humps where her mijzen, main, and foremast stays were secured to the chain plates in her sides, while in the intervening spaces the rail dropped down again in curving hollows, causing the ship to look as if she were made of limber rubber, and were bent up and down over the crests of three waves. Her lofty top-hamper, too, was in sorry shape. Her long yards hung crookedly in all directions on her tall masts, rigging and running gear was rotted, tangled, and askew. Every rope, stay, and spar was covered with dark gray mud as was also her crazily hogged hull.

When I got aboard, I found that the

big clipper looked still worse at closer view. The large deck house forward the break of the poop which had been the quarters of the fishermen and the can-machine men on the voyage north, had been torn away, exposing a large open after hatch. Both this and the main hatch farther forward were congested with heavy beams and iron suction pipes, all half-buried under masses of gray mud. On the deck, in a litter of muddy ropes and wreckage, were lashed down four powerful gasoline-engine-driven centrifugal pumps. These were protected, in a way, by large canvas tarpaulins, except one, which was thundering noisily and discharging a stream of black water eight inches in diameter over the starboard rail.

Grizzly Hains, the mate, whom I had not seen since leaving the vessel in the spring, I found to be the same hairy-faced, bellowing old sea bull as ever—though he was somewhat muddled in appearance. Almost the first thing I did after getting aboard was to knock him down, because he surlily refused to give me a sailor to haul up my baggage from the Aleut salmon boat alongside.

He sprang to his feet with a bellow that would have frozen my blood with terror a few months before, and his thick bull-like neck swelled with rage. But now I promptly knocked him down again with a rough aggressiveness that astounded me quite as much as it did him. I had lost all fear of the man.

"I say I want a sailor to give me a hand with my stuff," I repeated harshly, as he again lunged to his feet.

For a minute, he dumfoundedly surveyed me from head to foot, looking as startled as a duck in thunder. Then he thoughtfully rubbed his hairy cheek, and a faint twinkle appeared in his hard blue eyes, which were deep set under shaggy brows.

"Aye, of course—ye needn't come aboard layin' about ye, like a howlin'

buccaneer!" he growled, after which he went forward, thundering and bellowing, for a sailor.

At this juncture, I discovered Iron Larsen, gaunt and pale, standing on the poop. He was fixedly regarding me, a strange smile playing over his ghastly features.

A few hours after I had gotten aboard the *Star of Siberia*, the incoming tide swung the ship's stern up the river against the fresh easterly wind, whereupon we hove up anchor and hoisted some of the vessel's larger sails, which had been bent, after a fashion, to the lower yards. The ship's canvas had been stripped off her before she sank in the spring and had been kept up in the cannery, to be retaken aboard on a lighter after she had been floated, so it was in good condition—though nothing *else* was on the big ship.

Under the impulse of the rising east wind that was souging over the mud flats, we sailed slowly out of the mouth of the surging Ugashik River, under a gray cloudy sky, and we were soon pitching heavily into the waves of the Bering Sea. So rotted and slack was our rigging that now, as we labored in the lifting ground swell, our tall masts rocked from side to side several inches, with heavy jars that shook the ship's entire hull and threatened to carry away our stays or chain plates, before enough canvas could be set to hold all the lofty top-hamper steadily to leeward.

I soon found that we had an exceedingly scanty crew: six Scandinavian fishermen, the two mates, Casco the cook, the silent German can-machine wizard, who was in charge of our gasoline-driven pumps, Iron Larsen, and myself—but thirteen men, all told. We were scarcely one third the number of men necessary to handle the big clipper properly.

"There were no more squareheads among the fishermen worth taking—

and I would have no Sicilians," said Iron Larsen. "We shall keep steam in the donkey boiler, to do the heavy pulling with. We can bend only half a dozen sails, anyhow."

The ship's cabin was now a dank dungeon with split and swollen walls, and bunks full of mud. The broken skylight overhead had been nailed up with rough boards, making it necessary to keep a lantern lighted, to relieve the gloom. Everything was cold and damp. There was a pervading pungent odor of gray mud, and a faint, sour smell of dead fish that had been entrapped in the vessel and died there, when she lay at the bottom of the Ugashik River.

For three days, we stood to the southwestward across the Bering Sea, heading toward Unimak Pass, and making fairly good progress, but all the while the skies were lowering, and there was a sharpening chill in the air that presaged a coming gale.

When we were a hundred miles from Unimak, it burst upon us, with a shriek of wind and a flurry of snow—the first storm of the returning Arctic winter. It came whistling out of the northwest, with terrific violence, as if the Master of the North were resolved to halt our escape with the ship he had once had in his clutches. We clewed up our canvas, and staggered along under lower topsails, while as darkness fell the seas swiftly rose high and steep, among which the hogged vessel labored heavily, and began to make a good deal of water.

A stout, wooden cofferdam, or sort of well, had been constructed down in the ship's lower hold, within the after hatch. Its heavy walls, which ran up from the floor of the ship to the between decks, a distance of eight or ten feet, served to keep the coal in the vessel from choking our pump suction which were extended down inside the well. We had six hundred tons

of this coal aboard, which had been kept in the vessel as ballast, and it pressed heavily against the cofferdam, on all sides.

The second day of the storm, the *Star of Siberia* began lunging and careening 'so wildly into the gnashing, white-crested seas that the cofferdam in our lower hold was broken up by masses of shifting coal. The heavy black chunks of fuel instantly closed in around the suction of our pumps, effectually choking them.

All that day, we toiled down in the ship's hull, which had become a roaring watery inferno of sliding coal and mud, striving to rebuild the cofferdam and clear the pump suction. But hurtling tons of coal knocked down beams and timbers and split them into kindling with a thundering uproar, making it impossible for us to get near the strainers of the big pipes, around which small lumps of the hard black fuel clustered as thickly as swarms of hiving bees.

On our between decks, we had three hundred barrels of salt salmon lashed down, for use in trimming the ship, and as the *Star of Siberia* took perilous lists, first to one side and then to the other, owing to the shifting of the coal, we had to roll these barrels back and forth, in an effort to keep the vessel from being turned on her beam ends.

This was back-breaking, dangerous toil. Occasionally a heavy barrel would get away on the heaving muddy floor, and go hurtling like a huge bullet against the ship's side, to be smashed with a squashing deluge of brine and salt salmon. One of the barrels which so escaped and smashed against the ship's ribs did not spurt salt water and fish, however, for it turned out to be the mislabeled container of the dead Chinese who had been salted into it at Ugashik by the waxen-faced young gambler, See Moo.

The water in our lower hold steadily

rose, and as the *Star of Siberia* lunged drunkenly into the seas, it began to roar like Niagara, and hurled uprooted stanchions and beams against the ship's sides with terrific blows that threatened to split her stringers to pieces. Still we struggled desperately with the pump suction, trying to suspend shortened pipes into the black, roaring flood; but the coal would choke every aperture of the intakes, the moment an effort was made to start a pump.

On the third night of the tempest, to add to our discomfort, a fire broke out in the cabin. The pipe of a small cabin stove became unjointed at the point where it passed up through the deck overhead, and the fire inside the flue crept in between the deck planks and the ceiling, setting the entire cabin into a mass of smoldering flame, before the blaze was discovered.

For hours, we had this fire to battle with, in addition to our other perils. We pulled up bucketsful of the black, sirupy water in the ship's hold and splashed it all over the blazing ceiling of the smoke-filled cabin. At length, we extinguished the flames, but the cabin was a wreck of mud and water and ripped-loose boards, in which we were compelled to make shift as best we could.

The leaking vessel steadily settled deeper into the raging seas that threatened soon to founder us. The roaring flood in our hold began striking with jarring impacts under the floor of the between decks. The heavy planks were quickly knocked loose, and tumbled down into the surging masses of water and coal. The interior of our hull became a thundering, grinding chaos, while fountainlike, black, liquid pillars at times spurted up out of the hatches and were blown over the ship in muddy showers by the whistling wind.

We began to go down by the head. Snarling, yeasty-green seas rolled over our starboard bow, flooding our galley

and finally demolishing it—and also smashing up our single boat, which had been lashed on top of that structure—leaving us without any means of cooking hot food or of abandoning the foundering ship.

Iron Larsen, who had at first directed our futile efforts to reconstruct the broken cofferdam in the ship's hold, was now supine in his muddy blankets, so deathly ill that he could not get up. Grizzly Hains cursed and roared over our wet, muddy, wreckage-strewn decks, as if breathing defiance to the polar storm demons, but in his eyes there was a gleam of terror that all his clamorous bellowing could not conceal.

Thinking at the eleventh hour of a plan that might stay the thundering flood in our hold, I got forward and cautiously climbed down into the dark, empty quarters of the China gang. Passing from there into the forepeak of the ship, I found that this compartment, which was isolated from the hold by a bulkhead of massive, uncalked beams, had no coal or wreckage in it, although, like the rest of the ship, it was full of water.

Returning on deck, I summoned all our half-dead muddy crew. We dragged one of our big, gasoline-driven pumps forward, lashed it to beams beside the China-gang hatch, and put a suction pipe down into the sirupy black water in the forepeak. By means of buckets, we filled the big rotary pump full of water, then, for the thousandth time since the storm had burst upon us, our pump man, the silent German, started the powerful motor attached to the pump. It went off with a roar. The pump suction caught, and a six-inch stream of thick, black liquid spurted from the canvas discharge hose hung over our leeward bow.

This was our salvation. The ship settled no deeper, for the flood in her hold streamed into the forepeak through the cracks in her forward bulkhead,



which kept back the coal and wreckage from our pump strainers. The next day we went lunging and yawing through Unimak Pass, in a haze of wind-swept snow, leaving behind us a long black ribbon of muddy water on the heaving, white-crested seas.

We raised the California coast line at sunset, twenty-five days afterward. At eight in the evening we were abeam the Farallons. At this time, the World War was on; and powerful electric searchlights mounted outside the Golden Gate, on Point Bonita and on the Presidio, were sweeping the sea, all night long. A strong northwest wind brought us toward the land with such speed that we resolved to sail on into the bay, rather than to lie out on the bar all night, waiting for a steam tug.

Halfway in, on the ten-mile run from the lightship to the Golden Gate, we sailed into the range of the mighty searchlights high up on the hills, and such an astonishing spectacle did we present, with our yards hanging askew, our rigging in a half-rotted tangle, our decks littered with wreckage, and our black hull listed and hogged, that the great swinging lenses were stopped and held steadily upon us as we approached the mountain-girded entrance to the bay. We must have been a strange sight sailing in over the dark shining sea, our lofty top-hamper partly collapsed, our sails rent and torn and splashed with mud, our long jib boom almost plowing into the rumpling silvery waves—all so brilliantly illuminated by the powerful, violet-white beams of the unblinking lights up in the forts that we seemed bathed in blinding sunlight, and we could easily have read a book of the finest print.

From within the Golden Gate, a long, low, rakish, gray destroyer shot out boldly at us, and ran alongside. A party of mystified naval officers sprang aboard, over our low leeward rail. They stared about our brilliantly

lighted, mud-laden decks, and with their flash lights peered down suspiciously into the black watery chaos that now lay quiescent in our hold.

"This is the *Star of Siberia*," announced a gold-braided young lieutenant in a finely tailored dark-blue overcoat, coming aft to the poop, where I stood with Grizzly Hains, and speaking in a way that made me wonder if he thought he were telling me something that I ought to know. "But, according to our lists of sailing ships due to enter"—here he paused and inspected a gray, cloth-bound book under his arm, which he could read easily in the blinding glare of the batteries of shore lights far above us—"the *Star of Siberia* is a salmon fisher. Where are your crew, and why have you no salmon in your holds? What cargo have you down there?"

"Coal soup, toothpicks, and a thousand tons o' th' finest Alaska mud!" growled Grizzly Hains, through his beard, in a voice so hoarse and terrific that the dapper lieutenant nearly jumped out of his trim overcoat. "An' don't prance around on our decks too violent, young feller, or our timbers'll split an' we'll sink with you like a stone!"

"Wh-what!" stuttered the young naval officer.

"My dear man," I put in impatiently, for we were now close in among the tide rips of the Golden Gate and the ship was requiring all our attention. "If you'll just let us get within swimming distance of the shore, inside the bay, I'll be glad to tell you all about it. The ship has been raised from the bottom of a river, where she lay all summer, and we have sailed her home. Her crew and salmon pack were both put on another ship, the *Shishaldin Prince*, to their very good fortune and ours, for we'd have gone to the bottom of the Bering Sea if we'd had either on board."

"*Shishaldin Prince*," repeated the

naval officer, consulting his book again, and partly reading from it. "*Shishaldin Prince!* Why, that is the big sailing ship that was towed in hardly an hour ago, her decks covered with dead bodies—black smallpox, resulting from congestion of China gang. Only twelve men alive—and she's over at Angel Island for quarantine and fumigation. Sixty thousand cases of salmon on board—largest cargo ever brought in by a salmon ship—"

At this instant, we were all startled by an icy, unearthly laugh, somewhere behind us. Whirling around, I saw Iron Larsen, who had been lying helplessly ill in his muddy blankets down in the cabin ever since we had battled with the tempest in the Bering Sea. He was now leaning on the cabin scuttle, listening, his face indescribably ghastly in the purple glare of the army lights up on the California hills.

"The salmon pack aboard the *Shishaldin Prince* was brought in safely, then?"

"It was, sir," replied the naval officer, staring in amazement at the strange white face he saw.

From Iron Larsen's pallid lips pealed forth again a fearful laugh; and he walked out, unsupported, onto the muddy poop.

"The steam from the silver percolators will rise cheerfully, in the morning," he said to the young naval lieutenant, who looked still more startled and astonished. In Iron Larsen's voice the old icy ring was clearer than I had heard it since midsummer and his poise visibly stronger.

And now the bewildered destroyer had left us, and we were in the bay. The Marina and the north section of San Francisco burst upon our view, ablaze with lights, rising tier upon tier above the black, ruffling, silvery water within the Golden Gate. To the eastward, beyond the dark outlines of Yerba Buena and an anchored ship, lay the Berkeley hills, a very inverted sky of stars twinkling in the darkness.





# Static

By  
Wallace G. West

Charles Markley carried his radio set to darkest Africa, where the natives took it for a god. A native girl learned different, and just as Markley's life was in extreme danger something happened that changed the outlook on things.

**W**ATER slogged heavily against the hull of the Niger packet *Lagarto*. Close at hand the jungle, waving ghostly arms in the moonlight, seemed to be giving a horrid imitation of great beasts floundering and slobbering at the edge of the river. On the deck of the *Lagarto* lounged Captain Angus Todd, who in spite of his name, was ending his far journeying and hard-driving life as the master of a clumsy freight boat. He was tall, and lean, with that Scotch type of leanness which can best be understood by pronouncing the name "Sandy" with the "a" broad. He smoked a foul pipe and occasionally spat into the greasy water below.

"You mind, Mac," he said finally, tapping the dead ash from his pipe on the rail. "You mind that I'm growing a bit older these days, and the more I

think on it, the more I feel that Africa's no the place for any white man."

"Yes," came the answer, evidently emanating from a black bundle slumped in a steamer chair under the awning. "I'm thinking I've heard that idea expressed before—several times in fact. Maybe you're right, but you can't deny that the English make big money here, buying palm oil and rubber for about nothing. And selling geegaws, trade gin and trade cloth for ten times their value—even though the natives are getting wise to traders' tricks—converting the heathen and making the nigger women wear calico dresses. You'll admit that's an accomplishment."

"Aye, but the price, man. Think on that a bit." The captain paused and watched a native canoe with its lonely paddler, drift softly past the ship and

disappear in the moon glow. Then he resumed. "Tell me, Mac, how many men has your company sent out here in the last ten years? I hate to think—twenty, anyway. Great, strappin' youngsters, most of them, pink and white and blond, brought up to play cricket and football. It fair makes my heart bleed to think how they came out for the bonus—to make enough to marry, perhaps, or to lift the mortgage. And they usually got the bonus, too, but have you noted them at the end of their three years. Sallow and racked with fever. Wishing to Heaven they were dead, many of them, and soaked with booze, a lot. Most of them spent that bonus and a great deal more keeping out of the grave after they went home. I'm glad the company's making you agent at Maraban at last, Mac."

"It's the Scots that keep the Empire running," grunted Thomas MacAllister, the man in the deck chair. "And me at Maraban as kernel clerk for more years than I care to think on, doing my work and that of the agent, mostly, and not complainin' overmuch, mind you. Then, when the agent blew up, shipping him down river and holding things together until they sent up another Boy from Home to take his place."

"Aye, I understand, and the home office scratching its head and wondering what is the matter at Maraban," replied the captain. "Gosh, they don't know what this stinkin' hole is. 'The White Man's Graveyard,' 'tis called, but that's merely a name outside. At least those fellows in the Scriptures got out of the fiery furnace after a bit. We never do. So it was Timmy Smith you took out this time?"

"Yes—and Timmy was a nice chap when he first came. Manicured his fingers—dressed for dinner and all of that. Shaved every day, Heaven forbid. Well, you saw him last week. Bleary and smeared, in a bath towel and singlet, with a native huzzy for a

wife, and a sick mind. After two years and a month. Went completely off his nut the day after you were at Maraban. I had to take him out to Forcados. Headquarters down there gave up in despair and appointed me in his place. Todd," the new agent continued savagely, puffing rapidly at his cigarette, which winked brightly in the shadows, "it's only leather bellies like you and me who should be sent up to the lonely stations where all the people one sees are negroes. I tell you, they've got to come to it. I never knew but one youngster who came through decently. That was Charles Markley. 'Member him?"

"Well, rather," chuckled the captain. "I was just reading in the *Times* about his success as a radio wizard back home. Seems he's succeeded in eliminating static, or something." He kicked another deck chair into being and sat down. "Do you remember when he first came out, Mac? I brought him up river while he was nursing the worst grouch I ever saw.

"It was such a night as this, all silver and black, I recall, when I took him up to your hell's hole at Maraban. The jungle was sloshing and squawling over there, and Markley sitting about where you are, staring at the moon with hard eyes, set in a face sour as spoiled milk. He was rather handsome, tall and long-legged as the best of the English are, and I liked him.

"I came up with an idea of giving him some friendly advice, like I do all your slaves, MacAllister, though a fine lot of good it does. Well, after we'd started a conversation, or rather, after I had made some sort of attempt at it, I said: 'Mr. Markley, you want to be verra careful about the amount of whisky you drink in this climate. It's deadly.'

"Maybe that wasn't very tactful, but how can you be tactful with an overgrown, sulky boy. Anyway, he turned

round with a snap and says: 'Mr. Todd,' says he, 'I intend to make a big dent in the liquor supply of Nigeria inside of the next three years.'

"Which gave me a sort of shock, for most of the boys come out maundering of high ideals, clean living and Sir Galahad morality—when they first arrive, that is.

"And you must be careful about mixing up wi' the native girls, at all, at all,' I went on. 'You'll be thinking I'm insulting you now, but men will do strange things when they're lonely, and it always leads to trouble.'

"I'm sorry to disappoint, Mr. Todd,' he snaps, 'but that's just what I want to inquire into immediately. If you should happen to know of any reasonably clean, good-looking negro girl of not over seventeen, I wish you'd buy her for me, or whatever their beastly custom is here, and send her over to Maraban as soon as you can. I'd greatly appreciate it, and pay well.'

"You can imagine that shut me up right quickly and I left Mr. Markley to his own sour thoughts, whatever they were.

"The *Lagarto* tied up at the oil wharf at Maraban next morning, and he got ashore, dressed in an old pair of khaki breeches, a sleeveless jersey and a pair of tennis shoes. He looked a sight, and I half expected the sun to shrivel him up before my eyes. His baggage consisted mostly of two huge boxes which he grudgingly admitted contained radio apparatus, a few books, among which I saw one named 'Studies in Pessimism' by some German author—a few others equally dismal, and ten cases of Scotch whisky. I suppose you discovered this soon enough, but it fair made me stagger when I thought that it was over and above the whisky already at the station. He said good-by decently, and I left him standing there, thinking black thoughts and batting at the flies which buzzed around his head."

"And a fine time I had of it the next few months," grunted MacAllister. "The kid almost pestered me to death trying to discover new short cuts to hell. He started drinking like a fish immediately upon his arrival—cocktails, highballs, rickeys—he had a book of recipes for about two hundred different drinks, and went through it methodically, mixing his own and swilling 'em down in a way which no good Presbyterian—and I am one, even in this hole—could tolerate.

"Mr. MacAllister,' he would say. 'Let's have a drink,' and if I accepted, he would say 'MacAllister, let's have another,' and after that it was 'Mac, another won't hurt us.'

"If we'd continued that way the station would have been a total loss, so I had finally to refuse to drink with him. He didn't appreciate my point of view at all.

"He raided the medicine cabinet and experimented with the little opium I had there, the result being that he was violently ill for some time. The whole thing was laughable, if he hadn't been so damned serious about it, or if he had been content to quit the foolishness after a while. It's bad enough, captain, to see a man disintegrate little by little under the influence of the heat and stink, but cripes, it's positively indecent to see one conscientiously trying to kill himself.

"He kept everlastingly at me to find him a girl, but right there I balked. It was so cold-blooded and morbid. 'But I tell you, old thing,' he'd beam at me, 'really a nigger girl is part of the white man's burthen, if one believes the plays and novels published nowadays. It's quite *de rigueur*, donchaknow,' he would drawl.

"Just as luck would have it, the girl did turn up, a few weeks later. She was black as ebony, and graceful as the devil's wife, if he has one. The tale she told was that she was a cousin of

one of the house boys, and that her family had died of sleeping sickness, or something, so that she had to come to live with her last relative. Well, you can guess what happened after that. Markley simply appropriated her. Not, I sincerely believe, because he particularly wanted her, but because she fitted into some gloomy picture of his final demise which he had built up. 'Mac, my boy,' he grinned at me after he had moved her into the bungalow, over my almost tearful protests. 'She is rather chic, you know. Wouldn't she make a sensation in London with that figure and that hide.' I went out and cursed the day both of us were born, and I'm not usually a blasphemous man, Todd."

"It must have been about a month after he got the girl that I saw Markley for the second time," the captain took up the tale. "I had some stuff for the station and tied up at the wharf. Things looked about as usual. A few natives with loaded canoes, a few Kroo boys busy tidying the compound. In fact I began to think that Markley had got over his fit until I reached the bungalow veranda. He was sitting there, with his bare feet sticking over the rail. It startled me somewhat. Apparently, he had accomplished in two months what even the most soft-willed white man seldom reaches in years. I'll admit I admired his determination.

"He was dressed in a singlet, while about his waist was a bath towel, which automatically defined his state of disintegration. He was in the bath-towel stage, the next step being for him to 'go native' and spend the rest of his days rotting in some nigger village, ashamed to let white men see him.

"'Greetings, cap'n,' he called. 'Come up and refresh yourself. Ruth,' he shouted to some one inside, 'bring a glass for a gentleman, a clean one. Pardon me,' he added, turning back to me, 'I was referring to the glass, not the gentleman, though I suppose it

would be equally appropriate.' During the pause which followed I tried to imagine who this 'Ruth' might be. A white woman could have come up the river, but it was very doubtful that it would have happened without my knowing of it. Then Ruth came out of the bungalow. MacAllister, I'll agree with you. She was remarkable—lithe and clean-cut, with some forgotten Arab strain, I suspect. And she wasn't wearing a stitch of clothes."

From his chair, MacAllister snorted in disgust.

"'Lemme introdush you,' Markley grinned, shambling to his feet and grasping her shoulder to steady himself. 'Ruth meet cap'n, cap'n meet Ruth—all that sort of thing. 'You may,' he continued owlishly, 'marvel at her name. I have bestowed the historic appellation because the original Ruth was also a gleaner. I have insisted on the décolleté for two reasons, first because, dreshed that way, it will be impossible for her to carry off her gleanings when she leaves the bungalow. As a result of this precaution I have lost none of the silver plate or gilded photograph albums. Second, because it's so awful hot that I feel sorry for any one who has to wear clothes.' He unwound the bath towel, swabbed his face, neck and chest and reshipped it around his waist. Then he sank back into his chair and pushed the warm whisky and soda toward me.

"I suppose I should have got his receipts for the shipment and left immediately, for he was certainly beyond the pale of tolerance, but the lad was so plainly lonely and miserable that I sat sipping the whisky, which was really good, and listening to the tale, which, between periods of weeping, he unfolded. I suppose you've heard it all before, haven't you, Mac?"

"He was tight as a clam with me when it came to family history," replied MacAllister. "Besides we didn't

talk any more than necessary after he took that woman in."

"He came from Devonshire, he said," the captain resumed. "Attended Oxford and some technical college——"

"Yes, he used to rub it in a little about being an Oxford man, I remember, after he learned I had attended King's College back in the dark ages," growled MacAllister.

"He said there had always been plenty of money," Todd resumed. "His father paid all bills without much complaint. Some difficulty with his eyes kept him out of the war, so that he finished his courses, specializing in mechanics and electricity. Naturally he became fascinated with the radio. That was back in 1919, you remember, when the whole thing was in its infancy, and commercial broadcasting was hardly thought of. A lot of experimenting was being done, however, and Markley hit upon a great idea—to make a radio receiving amplifier loud enough to fill great auditoriums and provide entertainment for vast congregations. The only trouble was that when music or voices were amplified so many times, the static was amplified along with it, resulting in intense vibrations and awful screeches and yells, so that the program itself would be inaudible. There was also some danger, he declared, if the amplification was great enough, of shaking down the ceiling of the auditorium itself. The boy claimed he had overcome this difficulty.

"'Captain,' he blurted, patting my shoulder tenderly, 'cap'n, you shee before you the one and only, triple-guaranteed eliminator of static in this little world. Gaze upon him well, cap'n. The odds are running three to one it will be your last chance.'

"Was he lying or not, Mac?"

"I almost wish he had been," growled the new agent. "But he was telling you strict truth. Radio was the only thing he was interested in, even at Maraban.

He dug his apparatus out of the packing cases the week he arrived, and rigged it up in a deserted sheet iron shack. There he'd sit, tinkering with it and drinking—straight whisky, too—until almost morning, to the great awe of the niggers and the total abolishment of sleep at the station. A few broadcasting stations were opening up over the world, especially in America. You remember that was the summer every one went crazy over the things. His set was big enough to get them all, too. With the amplifiers cut in, the music would blare through the whole compound at night, until I threatened to sleep in the jungle. When he tuned in on a speech or a bedtime story—he preferred those—the voice sounded like that of a giant, with ten times the volume of ordinary tones, but clearer and more free from noise than the best phonograph. It fair had the natives hypnotized. They used to take little offerings to the door of the shanty to appease the wrath of the juju inside. 'Big mouf' they termed him.

"The only difficulty, as Markley explained to me once, in a moment of friendliness, was that he had to keep eternally balancing the static out of it with special condensers. I remember one morning he went to sleep over the thing. Pandemonium broke loose. The little shack seemed almost to bounce off the ground as the set went out of balance and the static seeped in. The row was deafening. I ran down and jerked all the switches I could find to shut it off, but Markley slept through it all, under the radio table. I had an awful temptation to smash the thing, Todd. Only the fact that I am a good Presbyterian saved me. Lucky it did."

The captain chuckled, refueled his pipe and continued: "The boy told me things began to look pretty bad in England. No one wanted to finance his inventions, least of all his father, who decided his son wasn't as bright as he

had hoped. What broadcasting was being done was purely experimental, so that there seemed little chance of financial success from his idea.

"The upshot was that his father promised to cut off his allowance if he didn't go to work—all the big electrical corporations refused to meddle with the thing, and, as a last straw, the girl in the case—oh, yes, there was one—sided with his father.

"That's about all, except that since no one had confidence in him—since his sweetheart didn't love him for himself alone—he got very tearful at this point—he decided to come to darkest Africa and romantically go to hell in a hurry, principally, of course, so that the girl would realize her mistake too late. He got a position with the African Produce Association—was made an agent, in fact, due perhaps to father's influence, and came out prepared to cut all the corners.

"'You see,' he explained, looking at me owlishly. 'I'd read so much about what the tropics do to a man—how unless he's made of steel they will wreck him within a year or so, no matter how he fights. Well, I just thought it would be interesting to cut out the preliminaries. Go the whole route, as you might say, at once, and have it over with.'

"With that he lapsed from tears into slumber and I departed, feeling a wee bit old and helpless—wishing there were some way of shaking him out of his romantic notions and back into reality. But what can a man do when a boy gets it into his head to kill himself."

"And I thought the same thing during the next few months," groaned MacAllister. "Things went from bad to worse. Oh, the station went along fairly well, with everything running smoothly and the oil coming in regularly. Markley, in the mornings before he had a chance to get too soused, did what little work there was for him to

do, well enough, but the rest of the time he would sit on the veranda, swilling liquor in a manner I never thought possible. What a constitution he must have had! I could have sworn he hated the stuff, but was drinking it on some kind of bet with himself. In a way things got as bad as they did later when Timmy Smith came, and yet again they didn't. Markley wouldn't allow the boys to loaf. He made them keep the bungalow and compound reasonably clean, and he kept all his socks under lock and key because he had read somewhere that the native cooks particularly prize them as coffee strainers. After that woman came—her native name was Eta something or other—he made her keep his quarters spick and span clean, and I'll have to admit she did it well. But he drank day and night. It got so that he was just one jump ahead of D. T.'s, and I can't help feeling that he was betting with himself just how long it would take him to achieve them.

"His only diversion was the radio. He never tired of it. Used to take Eta down to the shack and amuse himself trying to explain the workings of the set to her in a mixture of pidgin and mission English.

"One day he called in all the natives about the place, including a number of canoemen from upriver, and explained that the shack concealed the white man's God, whose voice they heard. No harm, he declared, could come to those under the protection thereof. Blasphemy it was, and myself a good Presbyterian. I remember Markley was especially drunk that day. His eyes were burning and his hands shook. Hanging onto a chair with one hand, gesticulating wildly with the other, he made a speech to the natives in such an amazing mixture of English, Latin and pidgin as must have rivaled the gibberish of their own witch doctors.

"About a week after that a runner from King Tolo appeared at the station



with a message. Now Tolo, as you know, is an imperialist with the idea that he owns a large per cent of the Niger. He has no more love for the English than they have for him, but he just manages to keep inside the deadline. The message was written by some mission-bred negro who had drawn it up in what he conceived to be strictly legal form, with such a sprinkling of "hereinbefore's" and "whereas's" as to make the muggy paper almost unintelligible. After we had deciphered it, it became apparent that King Tolo was greatly hurt and grieved—that one Eta, a cousin of the king—now residing with the agent at Maraban, one Charles Markley—had been married without the knowledge or consent of the aforesaid Tolo, or worse yet, that she had never been married. Now, therefore, the said Tolo demanded as his rightful marriage portion, the following, to wit: A list which included, among other impossible things, a case of whisky and two rifles.

"Markley laughed for the first time since he had been in Maraban when he got the gist of it, and his yellow, dulled eyes seemed to brighten a little. It was his first show of human feelings in about eight months. He immediately translated the message to Eta, getting quite appreciative over the fact that the thirty-second cousin of King Tolo was worth two Mauser rifles.

"How does it happen you never mentioned your high connections before, Ruth,' he demanded.

"No savvy, boss,' she replied, uncomfortably. 'You no ask me, mebbe-so.'

"After the messenger had departed, first being duly kicked by myself—Markley was too shaky—things began to happen. Trade slackened abruptly. A houseboy was found badly cut up just outside the compound and several of the Kroo boys stole a canoe and deserted downriver.

"To cap the climax Markley called

me into his room and, pointing to an entirely imaginary black panther cat which he swore was squatting on his bed, asked me if I wanted to shoot it, or tame it.

"It was a week later, I think, that another messenger arrived. This time he came, not directly from Tolo, but from the chief witch doctor of the realm, one Buhu, I gathered, who had heard of the magic of the god-who-talks.

"The messenger sat circumspectly at a distance and explained his errand. Buhu, it seemed, had conceived some very potent ideas as to the powers of Markley's magic. Now, in effect, he proposed a sort of bout between them.

"As the messenger explained:

"'Chief Tolo he say mak' so-so little-bit palaver, Buhu and Boss Markley upriver. Take 'long juju big mouf. mebbe so. Mebbe so he not come talk juju belong along Buhu, trade not come along company house. Mebbe so he come, Tolo not ask dash for Eta. Palaver set.'

"Which, freely translated, meant that Buhu was becoming anxious about the presence of bigger gods than his own on the Niger, and had persuaded Tolo to put the screws on Markley so that he could get a look-see at this strange spirit. If we came, Tolo would agree to let bygones be bygones, withdraw his request for the marriage price of his thirty-second cousin and allow trade to return to the compound. If not, things would be rather dull at Maraban in the future. Also I rather suspected that Buhu was planning a coup of some kind to get the loud mouf juju into his possession, for there is no more jealous person in the world than a witch doctor when he thinks some one is stealing his thunder. I suppose they live so close to the edge of discovery that they become jumpy.

"Markley had listened to the message from his usual seat on the veranda,

leaning forward and trying to focus his eyes on the messenger. I expected him to roundly curse the black, and slump back in his chair. In that world of whisky haze in which he was living those days, nothing seemed to matter very much. Instead, he wobbled to his feet and replied loudly:

"'Go speak your so-so witch doctor Buhu. Tell him Big Boss Markley come, mebbe so two days. Juju big mouf he come, too, mebbe so, mebbe not. He big juju fo' sure. Eta come 'long big boss. By an' by, my juju he win, Eta stay along me. By an' by, Buhu win, Tolo take Eta and have dash, too. Palaver set.'

"As soon as the messenger had departed Markley set about preparations for the trip. In his half-delirious mind, it became a huge joke, reality being all mixed up with the whisky phantoms which peopled his brain. He wouldn't listen when I told him that there was probably danger in the undertaking, but proceeded to pack all the radio apparatus in a big case. Then calling Eta, he produced a bright crimson shawl, a pair of dancing pumps of the same color and a brilliant bandanna, which he had ordered from Forcados on the last boat, and presented them to her, declaring that she must be decently dressed when visiting a cousin. After that he took a long drink and declared himself ready to start.

"That was a queer trip. I had wanted to stay at the station, but Markley wouldn't hear of it. Said there was no danger at Maraban—that the big show would come at Mobungo, one of Chief Tolo's villages, and he might need me there. We locked the bungalow and store, placed things in charge of the most trusted negroes—a poor policy, but the best I could do, and started upriver in the station's motor launch.

"I steered. Markley sat in the middle where he watched the engine. Eta sat near the bow, staring steadily upriver.

She was a weird creature, that girl. Light on her feet as a shadow and about as quick. She never said a word to anybody except Markley, though even with him she seemed to hold aloof. She was always obedient and met all of his sometimes eccentric demands upon her without complaint, but her sloe-black eyes, slanting here and there in an almost Oriental fashion, sometimes gave me the creeps.

"Strangely enough, Markley brought only a quart of whisky with him, and used that very sparingly. 'Dickie,' he explained to me, 'I fear I must pass up the nectar for a time. But there's plenty of it back at the station, or will be if those damned negroes don't run off with it. When we get back, I'll celebrate. Maybe you'll condescend to take a few, too.' That's the way he rambled on, but I could see a new sparkle in his bloodshot eyes, and began to wonder if maybe there wasn't something in him besides his vicious habits after all. I suppose he was the type who lives on excitement, though why he came to Africa to find it I never could understand.

"We reached Mobungo after a two-day run. The usual gaping crowd met us, but before we were ashore, Tolo himself, with a military escort, plowed through the jam and greeted us. Have you ever seen Tolo, captain?"

"Not since he was the prince charming of the Niger, years ago," Todd chuckled in the darkness.

"He's still about the same. Wears flowers in his wool and all that, but he's getting older and fatter, and dreaming of empire instead of fair women. He'll get into serious trouble sometime soon. However he treated us civilly enough, giving us a hut in which to clean up a bit.

"That evening we met him at the imperial palace, such as it was, for an audience. The room was furnished in Afro-American style, with a phono-

graph, a player piano and a nickel and white barber chair serving as a throne. Tolo was there, trucked out in his royal robes. Beside him squatted Buhu. The latter wasn't all that I expected—just a lean, hungry-looking, rather young and rather shiny individual who did nothing but teeter back and forth on his toes and scowl at us.

"The meeting began in one of those duels of silence—the man who speaks first being considered the weaker character—but Markley wasn't up to the strain of it and almost immediately broke silence by demanding why the devil Tolo had sent him a note like that.

"The old chap hemmed and hawed, but finally explained that there was no threat implied, merely a friendly contest between rival demons.

"Markley was willing to let it go at that, so that without much further parleying, details were arranged for the exhibition next morning, and we turned in for the night, leaving the niggers dancing and prancing in some kind of a ceremonial outside the hut.

"'Mark,'" I asked, as we were undressing in the dark. 'You noticed that phonograph in the throne room. How do you expect to make much of an impression when they're acquainted with such things.'

"'Sound and fury, sound and fury, me lad,' he chuckled. 'I'm not expecting to impress the king of Buhu, much. But one must always consider the mob. Whatever Buhu is up to, he's out to impress the rabble—and so are we. Damn, I wish I had a drink.'

"The next morning we were escorted to the sacred cavern where Buhu did his tricks. It was large, about one hundred feet deep, with a wide, high-arching mouth and appeared to have been caused by erosion at some time when the river bed lay in front of it.

"Here Buhu kept his charms and talismans, most of them in a stinking heap in one corner. There were bones,

both human and animal, strange herbs, and charms, of all varieties. The air was rank with unidentifiable stinks. A fire was kept burning at the entrance, with the result that the place was full of smoke most of the time, which, whirling and eddying inside, caused a really ghostly effect.

"At the invitation of the morose witch doctor Markley here set up the mouthpiece of big mouf, the intruder. We rigged some lights from a storage battery and soon had everything in readiness. At the magician's command the whole population of the village—about three hundred persons—shuffled hesitatingly into the cavern.

"Personally I thought Buhu's show was pretty poor stuff. It wouldn't even have made a hit on the variety stage at home. There were a few parlor magic tricks, a clever attempt at group hypnotism which succeeded fairly well with the natives, but left Markley and myself untouched, and a final tableau where Buhu seemed to vanish in a cloud of red smoke, immediately reëntering the cavern through the audience. That was really deserving of applause, but didn't impress the crowd greatly. Perhaps the trick had grown stale by repetition. It was the climax of the show and Buhu signed for us to begin.

"Markley had placed the apparatus under a dim red light, and with the true showman's instinct had posed Eta, in her crimson shawl and shoes, beside it. After making a somewhat wobbly salaam to the machinery he immediately got busy, tuning in on a London station with very little amplification, so that just a whisper of sound filled the cave. It was an organ recital. The natives shivered and shifted their positions. As he began cutting in amplification the notes swelled and seemed almost to solidify, the sounds shuddering in the great cave like the wings of an imprisoned bird.

"Even I, who had become well ac-

quainted with the possibilities of the thing, felt the spell. Every note was perfect.

"Over the dials, Markley, dressed in a dark-green robe with a cowl, which he had concocted from some trade cloth for this occasion, seemed truly a priest making his invocations.

"As the last notes of the program died away the natives broke into exclamations of wonder, admiration and awe. Their love of music was aroused, and it was easy to see that they had forgotten Buhu and his sorceries.

"Waiting until the excitement had abated somewhat Markley picked up another station, this time at New York. Some one was making an address—strangely enough—upon the wonders of radio, the miraculous advancement it had made in the last year, and so on.

"I had noticed sometime before that Eta had left her place beside the cabinet. Now I saw her in earnest converse with Buhu, across the cave. It gave me quite a shock and I watched closely. Evidently the witchman was in the dumps. His head sagged. His hands quivered. He knew when he was beaten. But Eta actually was shaking his holiness by the shoulder. I could see her lips moving in a vehement exhortation of some kind, although not a word of it could be heard above the voice of the orator.

"'A new era for the world has begun,' thundered the voice to the uncomprehending natives. 'Men are being drawn closer together by this new marvel, and will become one great brotherhood. If only there can be found some way to eliminate static our problem will be solved, and, I wish to add, that great monetary rewards now are available to the man who will step forward to eliminate this great obstruction to radio communication.'

"I glanced at Markley. He was listening, spellbound, forgetful of everything that was transpiring. I glanced back at

Eta. She had risen and was moving slowly toward us. Buhu was whispering vehemently to several of the natives. As I watched, Eta approached, and, without warning, placed her glossy back tight against the loudspeaker's mouth. The spell was broken. The orator's voice died to a murmur, completely blocked by the obstruction.

"Suddenly Eta's voice rang out, speaking in purest native dialect, which I understood fairly well, but which Markley had never cared to learn.

"'Oh, my people,' she cried, lifting her arms high. 'This man is an impostor. He is not the servant of this great voice.'

"'What the hell, Ruth,' broke in Markley sharply, 'get out of the way. You're spoiling the show.' He half rose to push her away, but a huge black who had slipped behind him unnoticed in the excitement, gripped his shoulders and held him to his seat. At the same moment I felt the warning pressure of a knife point on my neck.

"'Oh, my people,' continued Eta, unperturbed, 'ye know that I am the sister of Buhu, master of life and death, and that I was sent by my brother to spy upon this wicked foreigner. You know that I have suffered greatly at his hands. But Eta, the tigress, is patient. Know, all ye, that I have learned that this man is not the priest of the voice. He is a great magician who holds the god in his power, even as the wicked snake which charms the singing bird. Know also that I have discovered by watching closely how to break the spell and release the voice from its prison. It has promised me to make the people of Tolo the greatest on the river. Away with the white witch doctor,' she shrieked. 'I will be its priestess.'

"I realized that Eta must have been using her eyes closely during the last months. She knew how to operate Markley's radio and this whole affair was a plot to take it from us.

"'Kill the white men,' Eta screamed in a frenzy. 'Kill, kill——' But Markley had at last caught the meaning of her harangue, and with a roar, shook himself free from his captor and leaped at the girl. But his coördinations were shaky from his whisky swilling and he fell an easy victim to the dozen or so warriors who sprang forward. He went down, senseless from the blow of a club, lying where he fell, while Eta, tearing his green robe from him, clothed herself in it and took up her position behind the dials. I suppose I should have gone to his rescue, but how could I, with a black devil gripping my neck with one hand and holding a knife as long as my arm in the other.

"The orator in the loudspeaker continued his talk uninterrupted, telling of the great things which might occur in the world due to radio's magic—but, suddenly, his voice was broken by a frightful squawk! My heart jumped. The set was going out of balance without Markley's expert hand on the dials. Confidently Eta bent over the cabinet, but it seemed she had forgotten something essential, for the machine let out a louder shriek, this time a sound like the scraping of a titanic file across glass.

"Suddenly pandemonium broke loose. Somewhere between Africa and New York there must have started a thunderstorm. Such frightful noises I had never believed possible. The cave fairly rocked with them. The loudspeaker seemed to dance about the platform.

"The black holding me let loose his grip and sprinted for the cave mouth. So did all the natives in fact, but unluckily, perhaps, because the vibration had set up a miniature earthquake inside the cavern, great stones and quantities of earth began falling from the roof. I saw more than one negro brained or broken as I crouched close to the wall. I had dragged Markley's body out of the greatest danger and leaned over him, with my hands over my ears.

"Only Eta stuck to her post, twisting the dials back and forth, but only succeeding in making the vibration greater. It sounded as if all the devils in hell were shrieking, and would yell forever. The cave filled with dust. Through it I could see the girl, quiet and tense, working doggedly—hopelessly. But all things have an end. As I watched in the dim red light, a giant boulder, detached after a repose of centuries, tumbled from the ceiling, crushing both Eta and the radio. A last despairing scream and then all the noise ceased. Do you know, Mac, in spite of the fact that I had hated her, I felt damned sorry.

"That's about all," MacAllister concluded softly. "Markley was merely stunned and came round after a while. The natives had fled the village, so that it was an easy matter to return to the boat and start downriver.

"Markley acted like another man. Whether he had realized that he could now go home to a chance of success with his inventions or whether the shock had cleared his half-insane mind, I don't know, but he confessed to me shamefacedly that he had been acting like a damned fool. Said he had wanted to quit the whole game long ago—that he hated the taste of whisky, but his pride wouldn't let him stop halfway on the road to the infernal regions.

"We buried what was left of Eta in the river and Mark was rather cut up about it. That, with the whisky he had been drinking so steadily brought a reaction. He almost winked out with a case of acute alcoholism, but we managed to pull him through at Maraban. I took him downriver a few weeks later, bound for home, looking like a ghost, but on the road to recovery.

"That ends the story, Todd. While it doesn't point a moral exactly, being the exception which maybe proves the rule, let's go down anyway and take a drink to all of us who fight this rotten, fascinating river—and fail."



By  
E S Pladwell

# Sam Sugden's Mutiny

Captain Ruggles had the reputation of being a cruel shipmaster. Sam Sugden had lost confidence in himself. But there came a time when Captain Ruggles was cured of being cruel by picking the wrong man and Sam Sugden gained his self-respect.

**I**N the dark hole where Sam Sugden found himself there was an odor suggesting stale beer, mildewed bedding, soggy food and bilious humanity. All contained in a damp and stuffy room whose deep ceiling rafters nullified the faint gray daylight coming through a distant round window.

Sam's sleepy blue eyes looked puzzled. Plainly this was not his bedroom in Yellow Butte, neither had he fallen asleep in the tiny office where he was known as the stoutest postmaster in California. He had arrived somewhere else. But where? The mystery made him bring his gigantic right hand up to the sparse reddish hair on his bulletlike head, but the stroking evolved no definite information, so he turned his thick neck slowly around.

He looked first upon his thigh. It was covered by dirty-white canvas

trousers which hardly reached the tops of his enormous gray socks. Above the trousers was a ragged blue shirt. In alarm he sat up, noting that the floor was inclined to sway, causing his feet to wobble. The feet were in gunny sacks.

"Robbed!" he quavered.

But what nightmarish place was this, furnished with cheerless wooden bunks along the walls or in the center? What sequence of events had brought him to this grisly place? Stubbornly he tried to piece it together, muttering his findings toward the raftered ceiling:

"I went to the city. Yeh. A big street. Clangs and rattles. Trucks, trucks, trucks. Wooden houses on the right. Cigar signs, beer signs, lunch signs, eatin'-house signs, hot dogs, signs, signs, signs. Saloons. Oh, yes. A saloon. Sawdust floor. Steps leadin'

upstairs. A hotel. Cool. Cool beer. It made me thirsty. A man laughed when I drank it."

A door with a very high steel threshold clanged open behind him, throwing a flare of gray daylight into the dismal hole. A heavy man stamped over the threshold, carrying a bucket of water. He was big and black of mustache. His beady eyes appraised the scene and then without warning he drew back the bucket and slung its icy contents straight into Sam's face.

"Hey!" gibbered Sam.

"Out!" commanded the newcomer. "Get outside!"

For emphasis, he stepped forward and kicked with his right boot. Sam felt a stinging pain on his thigh.

"Quit that!" he gurgled, rubbing his eyes.

It brought him another boot.

"When I talk," roared the newcomer, "jump!"

"Stop that!" snarled Sam, peevishly. "Say, who do you think you are?"

"I'll show you—" kick—"who I am—" kick—"you fat slob! Get up and get aft!"

With a yelp, Sam brought his huge body to a standing position while a fighting glare appeared in his little blue eyes. He was a lazy man and peaceful, but like most stout men he was capable of terrific petulance. His assailant had gone onward and was kicking others, but he should have looked back. Sam's hands landed on his neck.

"You get out of here!" yelled Sam. "Git!"

The man in the heavy boots squirmed away from the hands and swung around as his left fist described a complete circle. *Bang!*

The bridge of Sam's nose was almost flattened. His mouth emitted a startled grunt. His eyes widened with outrage.

And then with incredible swiftness Sam's great arms grasped the mustached man around the waist, lifted him, turned

him upside down, whirled him up by the hips, thumped him against the side of a bunk, slammed him again, knecaded the quivering frame upon the floor, shook the unconscious remnant, and tossed it upon the frowsy cotton quilts of an upper bunk.

It happened in thirty seconds. It was cyclonic. It was like an elephant gone mad. It was so fast, fierce and frantic that eight half-awakened nondescripts jerked out of their stupor and swiftly scurried behind their bunks like frightened rats.

The last crash died away. The room became silent. Sam's vehemence faded as suddenly as it came.

"E's killed 'im!" yelled a shrill cockney voice from the dimness beyond the wooden frame of the next bunk.

"Killed?" echoed Sam. "My gosh, no!"

He stood like a penitent Titan, blotting out much of the light from the doorway. His prodigious arms hung at his sides. Apprehensively he watched a swarthy figure from the nether darkness reach a cautious hand up to the bunk, reporting his findings at last:

"Hee's seek. 'S aw right."

"But it ain't all right!" yelled the cockney. "'E's an orficer!"

"Hee's getta well some day," reassured the swarthy one. "'S aw right!"

"But 'e's an orficer!" insisted the cockney.

"Well, why didn't he let me alone?" demanded Sam, gaining his poise again. "I'm a free white American citizen. I'm no football!"

The cockney made a cautious advance toward the light. His starveling face, with its shrewd mouth and its brown hair, wore an expression of stark incredulity.

"'Oo are you?"

"I'm Sam Sugden. From Yellow Bluff."

"'Ow did you get 'ere?"

Sam was still puzzled about it. Some

of the pathos of his muddled mind registered in his hesitant voice:

"I had troubles. So I came to the city. For a spree. Understand?" He gazed pleadingly from the cockney to the swarthy man and back. The harsh lines about the cockney's mouth twisted into a worldly smile. It made Sam feel helpless. "Can't you understand?" he implored.

"Oh, yes!" snickered the cockney. "Chloral!"

Sam was no expert in knockout drops, so he missed the meaning.

"But where am I?" he wondered. "We're on a boat, ain't we?"

The cockney's grin faded.

"It's a boat. I think she's the old *Calmar Castle*!"

"No!" shrieked the swarthy man, looking around like a wild man, then baring his teeth in a frenzy of fear. "No! Please, no!"

Sam stared at him. The cockney continued his bad news in a singsong voice.

"It's 'er. The *Calmar Castle* o' London. Cap'n Thomas Ruggles. Knock-out Ruggles. Man'ndler Ruggles. 'E cracks their 'eads. 'E eats 'em alive. The crews jump overside every time she touches the docks. 'E saves their pay. It's a business!"

"Gosh!" said Sam, vastly impressed. "Sounds like a circus. Eats 'em alive."

"No," said the cockney. "It's no circus!"

"No more!" exploded the swarthy one, making a gesture of loathing. "No! No! I sheep with Ruggles one time. Tha's all. One time No more!"

"And Ruggles," concluded the cockney, with a shrewd upward glance at Sam, "loves 'is bloody officers, so 'e does. 'E doesn't like to 'ave 'em 'urt!"

Panic made Sam's heart beat fast, but above his fear rose the righteous positiveness of an American citizen who had lived in a sunny western country where freedom was unabashed.

"That's all right," he rasped, "but I

didn't ask to come on his darned boat! If he don't like me, he can send me back!"

The swarthy man tossed up his hands and screeched at them. Loutish persons growled in the darker portion of the room. The cockney's mouth opened with sheer disbelief. He reached forth and grasped Sam's titanic forearm.

"Lay low!" he yelled. "Lay low, for Cripe's sake, or they'll 'ave you up on a yardarm!"

The cockney's insistence advised the titanic postmaster that he was literally getting into deep water. His chubby face wrinkled and his lower lip sagged forward as he made a soft whistling sound which indicated deep thought.

"We-ell, they've gotta be decent," he compromised. "I'm willin' to meet anybody half way, but——"

Heavy boots thumped outside. Shadows fell across the doorway.

Two businesslike men in durable blue clothing came over the high threshold. The leader was short, broad and dark. The one in the rear was tall and blond. In his right hand was a club like the singletree of a farm wagon. Sam's frightened gaze centered upon that club.

"Where's the second mate?" bawled the dark man.

There was a nervous silence in the room. Its stuffy air seemed fraught with electricity.

"He's up there," Sam announced at last, in a hesitant voice, as he pointed to the bunk. "The darned fool started kickin' me!"

To Sam's amazement, the two blue-clad strangers leaped upon him without the slightest parley, swinging ferocious fists which crashed into his face and neck, causing him to reel backward under the momentum of their furious onslaught. The club in the blond's hand whirled upward, waiting for a chance to come down and beat Sam's brains into his toes. His horrified gaze never left it.



"Hey!" he shrieked.

But his swearing, snarling assailants climbed upon him and bent him backward. Savage blows mauled him. The club whizzed down at last. It missed his dodging head by less than an inch. It crashed into the side of a bunk and knocked a plank into splinters.

The thunderous impact gave Sam a fright which crinkled the sparse hair on top of his head and shuddered down his tingling spine. It was so fearful that it alarmed him beyond fear. Sheer frantic desperation gripped him. It changed his panic to frenzy. His muscles developed strength far beyond the limits of sanity and his senses retreated to a wild-eyed Valhalla of their own. Then came chaos.

There were swirling crashes and queer muffled thuds. There were yelps and gasps. There were squeals and moans and the sounds of ripping woodwork, but he didn't notice them. He didn't notice anything. He was busy at some demoniac task—he forgot what it was—and he couldn't cease until the crawling, bawling, squirming nuisances had stopped climbing around his body and dropped away like flies smitten by a swatter.

And then the sunlight in the doorway gradually turned to yellow again, and the red inferno became a dark room full of bad odors. Voices began to be distinguished from the huddled crowd of men at the rear. They were awed voices, subdued voices, alarmed voices, surging together in a mumbling undertone. Through the jargon came the cockney's high-pitched wail:

"Heaven help us! Heaven help us! Heaven help us—"

Sam took a deep breath of air and continued inflating his enormous chest till his head ceased buzzing. Then he spread his mighty legs apart, feeling subtly on the defensive, as if he were standing on a stage where he had to appease a scared audience.

"They're nuts!" he panted. "That's all—nuts!"

He tried to lift his sleeve to mop his hot and sweaty forehead but there was no sleeve. The shirt was gone. Some of its faded rags sagged down from his wet and heaving waist, causing him to lower his gaze. And then consternation made his lower lip sag.

His two recent assailants were on the floor, lying in a litter of wooden splinters and white cotton. Two cheap quilts and a mattress were spread out alongside them like disemboweled entities whose insides had been whirled around lavishly by an active windmill. The nearest bunk was altered in all its main parts. The bottom had tumbled down, the front was awry, the sides were gone and the struts were leaning out of line. Several adjacent bunks showed similar disorganization. As for the men in blue, one of them lay quietly amid the wreckage and the other was groaning.

"My gosh!" sobbed Sam.

The cockney came forth like a scared rat, bending over the two victims on the floor while his hands made a trembling inspection of their hearts and heads.

"'Is ribs is stove in," reported the cockney, pointing at the groaning man. Then, concerning the other: "'E's knocked silly. 'Is face is 'orrible! Come and look at it!"

"No!" pleaded Sam. "I've seen enough of 'em!"

Questioning eyes stared at him. They made him querulous, and his attitude changed.

"Well, what of it?" he demanded. "If these nuts wanted to act like that, that's up to them. I haven't done anything. I didn't ask to come on their darned boat!"

"It means a gallus!" whimpered the terrorized cockney. "They'll 'ang us all!"

The thing failed to impress Sam. It seemed melodramatic, like the swarthy man's recent explosion of fear. Queer

nuts, these fellows. No nerve. Well, he couldn't blame them, at that; not in a place where people tried to knock your head off for no cause at all; but that was no reason why Sam should care.

"A man's got to stand up for himself!" he advised the cockney. "Hang-in'? Rats! They ain't hangin' American citizens for self-defense. No, sir. You saw it was self-defense, didn't you? You fellows are witnesses, ain't you?"

There was a moment of stupefied silence. Then the cockney's voice wailed again:

"I don't know nothin'; so 'elp me!"

"Ow—oo!" moaned the swarthy person. "I'm-a seek! I'm-a seek!"

Sam's face became bleak. He was disgusted beyond words.

"Aw, you make me tired!" he snarled. "To thunder with you!"

He swung his colossal body toward the door but his parting glance observed the butt of a pistol in one of the prone men's pockets, so he strode there and took it out, looking into the other officer's pockets also. Shortly he had three pistols and a blackjack.

"I'll chuck 'em into the water," he announced scornfully. "You babies might hurt yourselves with 'em!"

He ambled to the doorway with his burdens and stepped over the high threshold, but here he halted in dire dismay.

Beyond the ship's high bulwark was a vast and lonesome stretch of tumbling gray-blue water extending to a gray horizon. Northward were the dim outlines of tiny blue islands. Far behind the ship was the dun-colored coast of California with its cliffs and headlands. Exactly behind the ship were some signs of human traffic which he could observe by leaning out over the bulwarks. Nearest was a tug with a red stack, going away from the vessel. Beyond the tug was a large steamship and several smaller craft, all traveling in different

directions. Beyond all these were headlands.

Just south of the headlands, under a red sun whose water glints danced in Sam's face, was the faint outline of a city spread among hills.

Nearest of all things were gulls. There were gulls everywhere, flying around Sam's ship but mostly at the rear. He saw a white one dive toward him. It made him look upward. His shuddering glance discovered a mighty array of ropes, pulleys, poles, and small canvas, all draped around three gigantic super poles which pointed into the skies.

"My gosh!" he groaned.

He tossed his pistols overboard and then wondered what to do next, looking around like a ponderous baby seeking guidance.

His gunny sacked feet—one of the sacks was working loose—were on a flat space which led to a neat one-story house standing across the whole back part of the boat. It had round windows and a door. There were two sets of parallel stairs going up to the flat top of this edifice, leading apparently to a smaller but higher structure further back.

There was nobody in sight up there. There was nobody in sight anywhere, but plainly there must be something better on this boat than the evil smelling dog hole he had just come from, so resolutely he strode over to the nearest flight of stairs and ambled upward.

As his head and naked shoulders came above the top of the stairway he was pleased to notice two persons beyond the small house above him. One was a blowsy, blond man in overalls who stood behind a large wheel. The other was a restless individual, slim but broad of shoulder, who paced up and down between the wheel and the end of the house. He wore good black clothes which matched his black beard. On his head was a black fedora hat with its

front brim turned down over eyes which were slanted and almost Mongolian.

The eyes widened as Sam's immense torso loomed up over the break of the poop. The black-clad figure jerked to quick attention. He had been killing time, waiting for the inevitable muster of the crew which the mates would drive aft. He had heard noises from the fore-castle, of course, but that was routine business. The arrival of Sam caused the eyes under the black hat, to glint balefully.

"Hey!" shouted Sam. "Do you run this boat?"

The bearded man sucked in a sharp breath. His right hand pointed austerely toward the bow.

"Go for'ard!" he ordered.

He said it in a hoarse, restrained voice, for he was impressed by Sam's gigantic size; but nevertheless there was authority in his utterance. It caused Sam to hesitate.

"You mean, that dog hole?" Sam looked insulted. "Why, I wouldn't ask a decent flea to stay there!"

The hand of the bearded man trembled.

"I told you to go for'ard!"

Sam's surprise gave way to petulance.

"I don't care what you told me! I'm gettin' tired of this darned nonsense! Say, are you one of the nuts, too?"

It was too much. It was much too much. Without a word the autocrat in black stepped forward and drove a fist straight at the pudgy jaw. Had the blow landed it would have knocked even ponderous Sam off his feet; but Sam had suffered a morning of savagery which left him strangely alert. The blow spent its fierce momentum on his bruised left cheek, and it hurt.

"You darned fool, quit that!" he roared.

The slanted eyes of the man in black became wicked slits. He saw Sam's powerful hands clamping down upon him and he decided that ordinary

methods wouldn't do, so he reached back with his right hand.

Sam didn't know much about the sea but he knew what this meant. Its ominous threat caused him to leap with the incredible swiftness of an elephant jumping on a cat. His stout left hand grasped the other's wrist and yanked it around, pistol and all. He twisted the arm backward. He shook the pistol loose while his right fist, driven with righteous anger, smashed into the man's curved body and knocked the wind out of it.

The victim collapsed upon the deck, gasping and holding his stomach.

The fellow at the wheel took one dubious step forward but thought better of it. Sam accepted this tacit neutrality and picked up the big pistol, which he stowed into a rear pocket. He was getting nervous about this boat!

"Nuts!" he whimpered. "All nuts!"

The man in black rolled upon his side, recovered his breath, and glared up at Sam with a malevolence which chilled even that bland soul. Peevishly, Sam leaned over him, grasped his shoulders, lifted him, and shook him till his eyes rolled. It was no great task for Sam. The other hadn't recovered his vigor yet.

"You people are drivin' me crazy!" raged Sam. "Why can't you act civilized?"

The dark man's slanted eyes were murderous.

"Go for'ard!"

His attitude was so implacable that Sam felt a growing alarm. He sensed he was going too far but desperately he had to grasp whatever he could, which happened to be the captain's neck. Like a bulldog he hung on. He was committed to his course. But what course? Where was it headed for? The question made him hesitate.

He gazed past the hatless black head to where various nondescripts in dirty clothing were shuffling out of the fore-

castle door and grouping beyond the mainmast, staring up toward the incredible, impossible miracle which was happening before their astounded eyes.

They didn't realize—Sam didn't even suspect—that only a marvelous sequence of events could have produced such a happening. No man can stand against the organized power of trained officers, but Sam had taken them unawares and had beaten them in detail. That was the miracle of it!

But now what?

"Breakfast!" suggested Sam, for want of a better idea. "Where do we eat?"

"Go for'ard!" whispered the man in black.

"Aw, shut up!" retorted Sam, losing his patience again. "That's about enough from you! Here! Swing around! See that door? Yeh? Well, me and you are goin' to look for breakfast. Now, march!"

Sam, thoroughly amazed by his own arrogance, noticed out of the tail of his eye that there were no officers among the scared crew on the deck below. Plainly the officers were still sick, or possibly they were discouraged. That was reassuring but the rest of his progress was not. It led into a white, iron cubby-hole, where a flight of stairs led downward to a large and cozy room furnished with a faded carpet, a red-covered center table, a desk with a high top, a hair sofa, several heavy chairs, an alcove library built into the wall, and various lamps, instruments and porthole rims whose burnished brass reflected all the other colors in the room.

Sam hesitated at the threshold, looking embarrassed. He was in another man's house!

"Aw, listen!" he pleaded, with all the fervor of a baffled soul. "Be reasonable! I'm no burglar. I'm a plain American citizen. All I ask is a square deal. For the love of Mike, be decent!"

Setting the example, he released the

neck of the bearded man, who whirled around and teetered on his toes while his lips trembled with passion and his eyes became tiny flaring pin points. But suddenly he lurched toward a big easy-chair, where he seated himself as if it had a pointed tack.

Sam did not notice this tenseness. His worried eyes had swung toward a white-clad little Filipino cook in an open passageway beyond the table. The Filipino's right arm pointed\* at the closed door leading toward the deck.

"You go forward!" he yelled.

It was impudence; sheer impudence. Sam's eyes began to show a battle light again, yet he restrained himself.

"You mind your business," he suggested. "We're havin' a talk. Get out!"

The little brown man sent one swift, inquiring glance past the mountain of flesh, then scurried away. Apparently the captain's nod had guided his actions, for the Filipino soon reappeared, bearing two bowls of mush with other things on a tray. His mouth was pursed tight.

"That's better!" approved Sam, as the Filipino set the table.

"No!" contradicted the captain, holding up a finger to the cook. "One bowl!"

Sam whirled around.

"What's the idea?"

The captain gripped the arms of his chair. His reply was slow and level:

"Has it entered your mind that this is mutiny?"

There was a long and thoughtful silence until Sam drew up a chair and seated himself. He did it deliberately and defiantly, even though he was in another man's house. The host was plainly trying to bulldoze him. Sam's innocence was so apparent in his own mind that this bullying jarred him. Still, he tried to be fair.

"No," he answered at last, stirring a mass of sugar into the bowl. "I guess there's a mistake. If a sailor disobeyed

your orders, that would be mutiny. But I haven't enlisted in your navy. I didn't ask to come aboard your boat. Some fool loaded me on when I wasn't lookin'. Where's the mutiny?"

The captain's voice trembled.

"Do you realize you have assaulted a master on his own ship?"

Sam pondered.

"Well, you started it," he accused, at last.

The astounding reply made the captain twitch. His voice trembled again:

"Have you got my revolver?"

"Yep."

"Do you realize that this is a hanging matter?"

Shuddering inner warnings advised Sam that he was getting into deep water indeed, but stubbornly he stuck to his guns:

"Not when you start to assault a free American citizen. No, sir."

"You're not free! You're a member of the crew!"

The accusation made Sam swing almost clear around in the chair. He gazed at the other without anger.

"Aw, come out of it," he advised, resuming his attack on the mush.

There were purplish tinges on the captain's face which showed he was close to apoplexy; yet he was not fool enough to attack this giant. Not yet.

"You're a member of the crew," he argued, somewhat hoarsely. "Your name is on the ship's roster."

"Not mine!" demurred Sam. "Somebody's been kidding you!"

The captain dug his knuckles into the arms of his chair while he cocked his head, waiting for the officers to come.

"You'll learn about the customs of the sea shortly!" he promised, almost in a whisper.

Sam was getting hard-boiled now. The subject was working on his nerves. His voice was exasperated:

"What customs? Am I supposed to let you fellows kick me around? Am

I supposed to work against my will? Is that what you're hintin' at?"

The captain forbore to reply. His passions wouldn't let him. He centered his slant-eyed gaze upon the knees of his black trousers as if he feared to look up. Plainly he was puzzled and balked. When he spoke again there was a studied undertone of sympathy in his voice. The voice was almost sirupy: "How did you happen to leave home?"

Sam replied at once. He was pitiously eager—childishly eager—to propitiate this man.

"I've been a coward. I ran away from my troubles. You see, I'm post-master at Yellow Butte. Not much of a town. About nine hundred people and a bank. Well, there was a registered package of bonds came from the bank, and the darned things fell to the floor and my pup chewed 'em in half, and the bank people let out a squawk to Washington and they sent out a whole slew of detectives and the thing got into the town paper. Well, the editor's no friend of mine—I wouldn't let him slip his papers into the rural free delivery till he paid for his postage—and so he let-out a'whoop in his dirty sheet that pretty nigh ran me out of town. Then-my house caught fire, and some crook said I was only tryin' to collect the insurance. The neighbors started jabberin', and my wife got bitter, and bimeby the thing got on my nerves so bad that I took the first train to 'Frisco to forget the whole caboodle. I acted like a baby. Believe me, if I ever get home again, I'll sure be the best——"

The captain had arisen and was wandering around with his hands behind his back. Sam saw it, but there seemed to be no immediate menace in it. But suddenly the corner of his eye caught a silvery flash. He jumped up and whirled around.

The captain's hand had dived with

lightning swiftness to a long Cuban machete lying among other trophies on the high top of his desk. Sam should have noticed that machete; it stuck out behind various books and cigar boxes and nautical instruments on the top shelf; but Sam had overlooked it entirely. Now he noticed it with horror.

It was whirling upward like a saber preparing to whiz down. Holding it was a leaping, snarling figure in black whose fierce eyes flared with the light of murder. At the same instant, as if it were a signal, the little Filipino at Sam's right leaped across the room like a streak of white.

Sam might have reached for his pistol but the attack came too quickly. It materialized before his startled eyes like a photograph of two persons in the air, one holding a machete and the other diving with arms extended. That one clear picture was all that ever registered on the camera of his brain. The rest was a blurred movie.

With a gasp of terror, he did the only thing possible. Desperately his mighty hands pulled the table off its moorings and shoved it over like a shield to meet the oncoming horror.

*Crash!*

Machete, dishes, mush, spoons, table top and the captain met in a head-on collision whose shattering impact sent ruined fragments spinning in every direction. Sam's violent right arm swung out to meet the attack from the flank. It caught the Filipino a back-handed blow which knocked him out of the doorway as if he had met a whirling propeller blade.

"You treacherous crook!" sobbed Sam, lifting the table and charging at the captain with it. "You Judas, you sneak——"

Again red flecks danced in front of his eyes. For an instant he saw the captain's vulpine face above the barrier, and then the heavy boards smashed into the captain's midriff and sent him spin-

ning backward. He bounced into the wall at the foot of the companionway. For an instant he recovered his balance. He tried to swing his machete again. Sam butted the table at him, making him double over to wrest it away, just as Sam leaped above the obstacle and came down upon him.

There was no mercy in Sam now. His wrist happened to rub against the machete's keen edge and he realized the murderous intentions of the weapon. With a snarl he tore the thing out of the captain's hands, and then his left arm held the doomed officer in position against the wall while the ponderous right fist worked back and forth with the measured momentum of a steam piston.

"You'll kill me, will yuh?" sobbed Sam. "Huh!"

Shortly the captain showed signs of apathy, and he tumbled over when Sam let go of him; but the little Filipino returned to life and was racing across the room, holding a knife in his hand. Sam grabbed the ruins of the table again. He whirled it around. Crash! It caught the Filipino squarely and bounced him back. Then Sam leaped at him, bawling fiercely and whirling both fists. One of them landed——

The tumult ceased. Sam found himself panting, gulping great breaths of air while his naked feet stood in a welter of dishes, books, instruments, cigars, broken woodwork and ruined lamps. The captain lay writhing amid the wreckage near the wall. The Filipino was crawling on hands and knees toward the passageway beyond the cabin.

"I can't stand this!" wailed Sam. "I can't stand it!"

His massive body was greasy with perspiration. His brain groped for sanity which he couldn't achieve in this demonic environment, so he opened the front door. Cool, salty air rushed in upon his huge chest.

He found himself looking dazedly

upon many men grouped on the sunny yellow deck, with the big mainmast beyond them. The sunlight made him blink as he reeled against the side of the doorway, yet his new defensive instincts advised him that more trouble might be brewing, so stubbornly he clenched his fists while he faced the crowd; a truculent giant ready to resume the war again.

The crowd stepped back a-pace.

"Oh!" howled the cockney. "'E's done it! 'E's done it! Gawd help us all!"

Sam ignored it. His attention fixed upon two men alongside the cockney who were holding up the blue-clad blond officer. His head was bound with a red towel but his cold left eye regarded Sam balefully. His voice was deadly:

"What does this mean, my man?"

Sam advanced over the high threshold. There was something grim about it. By a miracle he had whipped all the officers but now he had to keep them whipped. That was something else. It was a stately task. It was so monumental that it caused him desperately to assume an outward bravado which made the awed crew draw back in a great circle as he lumbered up to the officer.

"Don't you call me your man!" roared Sam. "Turn the boat around! I want to go home!"

Sheer incredulity made the officer's one eye come stark wide. In all the annals of the sea he had heard of nothing like this! It was preposterous!

"I'm not taking orders from you!" raved the officer. Then he turned toward the crew and rasped, "Take that man for'ard!"

To Sam's amazement some of the crowd huddled toward him, though their attitude was dubious and their steps were very hesitant. They were so extremely laggard that Sam felt encouraged to draw his pistol.

The crew had taken two steps for-

ward but now they took five steps backward.

"We'll hang you for that!" shouted the officer.

"They'll 'ang us all!" wailed the cockney.

"Aw, shut up!" rasped Sam. "You've got me beat, the whole crowd of you! I never saw such cry babies! Here!" Sam wagged his pistol toward the cockney and the swarthy man. "Tie this bird up! I've got to find some way to turn the boat around!"

"No!" gibbered the cockney. "It's mutiny!"

Sam eyed him somberly. The cockney's sincere fright told Sam that he was in a situation like that of a man holding a bear's tail around a stump. Sam couldn't win and he couldn't let go. The thing became more apparent every minute.

"Well," he decided, after cold deliberation, "it's mutiny, then! Bring that fellow into the house back here. Come on! Move forward, you!"

Soon Sam herded his sorry crowd into the cabin, where they stood peering around as if wondering where they would get the ax. The captain was crawling weakly after his machete. The blond officer moved to join him, but a wave of Sam's revolver warned him back. The captain suspended his quest and strove to arise, mumbling through his clenched teeth. His slanted eyes resembled those of a mad wolf. There was no spirit of concession, of compromise, of peace. There was something so indomitable about these officers that Sam wondered what on earth to do about it. So he stood thinking, with his great bare feet spread apart and his big revolver gripped in his right hand.

Suddenly a dark figure slipped toward his left. His attention centered upon the swarthy man, whose eyes were glaring with some strange fervor. Sam tried to dodge him, but the swarthy fel-

low's strong fingers grasped his left wrist and pulled it upward.

To Sam's horror, the man was kissing his hand!

"You gooda man!" quavered the swarthy one. "You sava me! Boss, boss, I go where you like! Theesa sheep, she's whip, keep, punch, busta the man alla time—we go home! Come!"

There was a murmur of approval in the crowd; a mumbling which grew and swelled until the cockney's high yelp broke it:

"They'll 'ang us! It's mutiny!"

Somebody slapped the cockney.

The swarthy man embraced Sam as if he were salvation. "We taka the boats!" implored the swarthy man, looking up with shining eyes as he squeezed Sam's hands. "We go home!"

"But," argued a Teuton with hair all over his face, "der offizers turns der shib around und unto der vater we get cut down!"

"No!" yelped the cockney, who had seen a sudden light. "Lissen! We ties up the ofricers, see? We chains the wheel, see? We takes down all sail and lets 'em h'ist the bloody things if they can!"

"Yow!" yelled the swarthy one, in wild approval.

"'Rah!" shouted the crew.

They had caught fire! In one second the gorgeous possibilities of the thing took their fancy and the startled Sam witnessed a yelling, cheering gang of tattered creatures dancing around the cabin and giving yelps of joy.

The captain swayed to his feet.

"Go for'ard!" he sobbed. "For'ard!"

But his power was gone. The startled Sam—who had begun the whole business—stood open mouthed as the frowsy, blowsy mob jumped on the captain, tied him in the chair, lashed the other officer, and then danced out like a crowd of children on a vacation, saluting Sam with joyous whoops as they rushed into the sunshine.

Sam's soul was aghast. He felt like a person who had lighted a match in a celluloid factory. He didn't like the result. There was something frightfully wrong about it, and yet he couldn't do anything because he wasn't sure of anything himself.

"Nuts!" he groaned. "All nuts! It's an asylum, that's all. There's no other way to explain it!"

So Sam became an innocent bystander while various things were done to the ship; and soon thereafter he became a passenger, lying in the bottom of a longboat and watching the *Caluar Castle* wobble with bare poles toward the far-away western horizon.

"It's a lesson!" nodded Sam, as he saw greenish waters tumbling close to the sides of his frail craft. "After this, I'll face my troubles like a man!"

Now that's all the story. Sam returned to Yellow Bluff and shortly resumed his place as an honored citizen. Captain Ruggles suffered terribly and saw the error of his ways and thereafter treated his crews with great humanity. Sam Sugden and Captain Ruggles thus improved each other vastly during their short acquaintance. Each should cherish the memory of the other, yet they think of each other only in nightmares.

Funny, isn't it?







# Captain's Watch

By L Paul

Dake's hatred for Tim Brady was greater than his dumb heart could ever express. Yet when he had Brady at his mercy, when the time he had long planned for had arrived, then a great change came over him.

CAPTAIN TIM BRADY came swinging down Common Street, Montreal, making for his ship, the *Cor-morant*.

The harbor was comparatively empty. Since Tim had brought his craft to port hard on the heels of the ice breakers, thus opening the navigation season, only two or three other craft had come in.

It was April—a cold, miserable day. Sleet was driving down from the North, and the wind cut like a knife.

Captain Tim turned the collar of his overcoat up and drew down his battered blue cap. Thus protected against the elements he swung on—and bumped into another wayfarer.

Tim Brady thrust cap and collar back. "I'll be begging your pardon," he began, then stopped. His long, right arm went rigid. His left hand clenched and rose as if to guard his face.

For he was staring at a remembered

face—a low, sullen brow above smoldering, black eyes, a loose mouth, and a square, bony chin. Across one cheek of this other man ran a white scar.

There could be no manner of doubt. It was Dake.

Dake was, inch for inch, the better man. Dake had hatred to spur him on. But Dake just stood there, leering.

"Four year', Tim Brady," said Dake at last. "A long time, when a man's waitin' for his revenge. Four year' since you kicked me off your blasted tugboat like a dog—and I said I'd get you."

"I'm here—and you're here, Dake," Tim Brady said softly. "I trimmed you then, when you got ugly. If so be 'tis a licking you need, it's yours for the asking. I fired ye, and licked ye, for a dirty, lying, foul-spoken bum. I told ye what ye were then, and I fought ye, as was but right. And if 'tis to do again—well, there's a vacant cargo shed

yonder, and we'll just step over and then——"

Dake hesitated. "I been waitin' for this, Tim Brady." He spoke slowly, bitterly. "I'm only a poor able seaman. I ain't grand and great, like you was then, owner of a fleet. So I waited for my chance. And it's working, Tim Brady, it's working. You come down in the world. You're only captain of a stinkin' tramp now. You're nigh down where a poor man can take his crack at ye."

"I'm here, and you're here, Dake—but I'm sailin' within the hour," Tim Brady said steadily.

"Aye, you're here, and I'm here." Dake licked his lips, which had gone suddenly dry. "It's fair tempting. I'm as good a man as you, Brady—captain or no captain. And——" He broke off into a stream of curses.

Dake finished. "I been hatin' you till it fair hurts, Brady. I'll chance squaring things now."

Tim Brady stepped off the curb, and side by side the two men, sailorman and captain, crossed the street, the waterfront trackage, the strip of wharf between, and entered the dim depths of that empty cargo shed.

"Fair fight?" Tim Brady asked, as they shed coats.

Dake nodded, but his eye swept the shed carefully, as if seeking any advantage that might offer.

They faced each other, in shirt sleeves—two fine, upstanding figures: Tim Brady, long and lithe, in the pink of condition; Dake, heavier, thicker set, more ponderous in his movements, yet for all his bulk possessed of muscles that could strike swiftly.

"Fair fight it is, boots barred. 'Tis no deck scrimmage we'll have, Dake. I owe ye that much. I owe ye white man's treatment, for ye hate like a man, even if ye don't behave like one other ways. So go to it, Dake, and may the best one of us win."

Dake swung a ponderous blow. It came up, seemingly, from his knees, and crashed against Tim Brady's guard, driving his crooked, right arm back on his body.

"I'd forgot," thought big Tim. "Four year's a long time. 'Tis a pile driver he is, this Dake."

Nevertheless he wasted no time. He struck out from the shoulder, blow after blow, blows that cracked against solid skull or glanced from Dake's taut jaw muscles. And Dake, fighting clumsily, striking again and again with that single sledge-hammer movement of his great hamlike fist, got home his blows, too, blows that hurt, that staggered big Tim.

But he gave no ground. As best he could he took those blows, bending swiftly, ducking, using his natural nimbleness to offset the other's strength.

A harbor policeman, hidden behind a pile of battered stevedore's kit, watched admiringly.

"Faith, 'tis me dooty to bruk it up," said he, "if so be 'tis a fight. But, on the other hand, maybe 'tis but exercisin' they are, and so"—he paused—"begorra, 'tis clean against dirty. I know yonder Dake, the scut. A boozin', hell-raisin' lad, he is, but he'll get his medicine this day. Aye, his old iron'll be worked up proper."

And it seemed as if he was right. For the two combatants no longer stood toe to toe, slugging. Tim Brady, feeling his strength wane as those sledge-hammer blows took toll, had given ground. He was using his footwork, leading Dake on, avoiding further punishment, cutting the sailor's face to ribbons with light, sudden jabs, winding him—twisting Dake up in his own giant strength and the wild blows it launched. And Dake was showing this—showing it in his labored breathing, in the sudden flush that came and went over his face, in the hoarse sobs that broke from his lips as again and again he tried to get one of those blows home.

"'Tis a matter o' minutes. The skipper'll drop him, or I'm a Hottentot," said the harbor policeman. In his excitement he had drawn his club and was pounding with it on a near-by trestle. But neither of the combatants heard him.

Tim Brady knew now that things were coming his way. "Too bad," thought he. "If so be this Dake had a clean heart, now—I could use him. As it is, I'll best drop the scut and end it. And so——" He side-stepped suddenly as Dake came rushing on, limbs staggering and arms flailing. "'Tis my time," said Tim Brady to himself, pivoting on his toes, dropping his right fist, and preparing to pick his spot of attack.

But it was not his time. His feet struck a patch of oil on the concrete floor. He slipped, and fell. Dake, whirling about, saw, and jumped, great boots thudding down on Tim's prostrate body.

Tim sought to roll aside, but in vain. Dake's boots had got home, had winded him.

It was then that the harbor policeman came running up.

"Stop it, ye dirty rogue." He swung his locust-wood club against Dake's thick skull. "Would ye murder your betters?"

Dake, balked, staggered back, cursing foully.

"Leave him be. Leave him be. 'Tis my business, this." Tim Brady scrambled unsteadily to his knees, lifted himself to his feet, stood weaving about there. His face was white and his stomach was turning over, but his eyes were steady and stern. "'Tis my affair, this——"

"And what about me and the public peace, skipper?" asked the harbor policeman. "No, no. Ye are nigh dead on your feet. Heart is heart, but it don't beat boots in the gut. 'Tis the cooler for this wan. He's best handled

by them that's used to his kind—in the jail."

"Ye are an interferin' man." Tim Brady took a sudden resolve as he looked at Dake, standing there sullenly. At the interference of the law Dake's anger had dropped from him—unless, indeed, it burned like a banked fire, concealed from view.

The law? The law was no way to handle men. The law could break, but it could not make.

No, Tim Brady would ask no favors from jail or jury. He had inherited a problem. Here was Dake as he was now—low down, what finer metal there was in him rusted by hatred, a foul speaker, a fouler fighter. Yet with the courage left to fight.

Here was Dake. Four years ago their lives had crossed, and they had parted. Now they had come together again.

Tim Brady made up his mind. His voice softened.

"Sure, ye would not take me sailor away from me, constable?" he asked. "Would ye see me short-handed on sailin' day, and the port bare o' sailormen?"

Dake started. Then the brute face became as if masked, inert, lifeless.

"Ye are crazy. Want him, is it?" The policeman hesitated. "Well, it takes all sorts to make a world. I'll give ye your way. The case won't be made. But when ye gentle him at sea, skipper, take an extry crack at him for me. For well I know there's no limit to his presumption. A man that'd kick his skipper in the slats, now—there's no tellin' but he'd even put the boots to a policeman."

They left the harbor master's office together. Tim Brady walked half a pace ahead. Dake followed, silent as he had been since the abrupt ending of their battle.

Dake carried a small bundle of

papers. For Tim had cleared his ship, had signed Duke on, and was now ready to snake in his lines and take the old *Cormorant* to sea.

They walked in silence for a block. Then Duke spoke.

"This don't change nothin', sir," said he.

"Ye have slipped into your berth." Tim Brady noticed the reluctant "sir." "Do ye mean——"

"I ain't forgot, Captain Brady," Duke spoke solemnly, explaining nothing, justifying himself not at all, merely describing stark fact. "I ain't forgot. Times I know you had right on your side. Then I remember you ha' beat me. The only man that ever has. When them times comes, Captain Brady, hell nor heaven'll hold me. I'll get you yet—somehow, some place. I'll——"

"Forget it, Duke. You've signed articles. Here's the ship. Just one thing. I'm skipper. I don't take no talk at sea from my sailormen. I took you to see what's inside you, an' if there's anything worth savin' from the booze and the jails, to save it. I'm sparin' you none in my search, Duke. I'll be makin' your life a hell aboard here, if so be I figure that's the way to gentle ye. Now's your chance. If ye'd slip your cable, there's the city, yonder. Once aboard this gangplank and——"

Duke stopped, stared at him. Those black eyes seemed to give forth a cold spark of light, a pinpoint of smoldering fire from their depths.

"Hell nor heaven'll part us, Captain Brady," said he somberly.

"Faith, ye are a fine hater, Duke. Well, get ye aboard. Mr. Bent, we sail as soon as them useless sailormen can get the lines aboard," he bawled to his first officer, a short, sturdy Scotia man.

Then he followed Duke up the gangway.

On board the *Cormorant* the bustle of sailing time arose. Lines snaked in.

The telegraph jingled round to "stand by." The two mates barked hoarse orders, and the six sailors at bow and stern sprang to obey. The tugboat nosed alongside, and from the stringer of the pier a few harbor officials, down to see the first sailing of the season, shouted good wishes.

"A peaceful voyage, captain."

"Good luck and no troubles."

As the *Cormorant* swung round and headed downstream Captain Tim Brady, those farewells still ringing in his ears, looked down from her narrow bridge upon a sullen figure squatting on the forward hatch. Duke!

"A peaceful voyage," thought he. "Good luck and no troubles? Sure, them lads ashore is optimists. Howsomever——" He turned to his first officer, Bent.

"How many watches aboard this packet, mister?" he asked, with a grin.

"Why, sir—is it a joke, sir—two, sir. Mine and the second officer's."

"'Tis no joke. And ye are wrong," said Tim Brady. "There's three watches from now on."

"How is that, sir?" Mr. Bent prepared to listen to some wise crack picked up ashore. Funny how shoregoing folk could always make fool blunders. "Three watches, indeed, sir," prompted Mr. Bent. "I never heard the like. There's mine, and Mr. Jacobs', and also——"

"There's mine, Captain's watch. 'Tis an invention of me own," Tim Brady explained.

"And who's in your watch, sir?" persisted Mr. Bent, patiently exploring to find the humor of this word play.

"Duke." Tim Brady bit the word off sharply. Mr. Bent realized that there, at least, was no joke. "Duke," repeated Big Tim. "Duke for the dirty work. A scut I'd gentle, Mr. Bent. Gentle personal, as ye might say. Captain's watch, he is, and ye can count on one

thing. Whatever dirty work is to be done this voyage, captain's watch will do it. And now, will ye clean this ship? 'Tis no sweet-smellin' geranium at the moment."

Mr. Bent bawled an order to the bos'n as Captain Tim dropped down from the bridge. The three sailormen of his watch sprang into activity.

From the gangway aft came Captain Brady's voice: "Captain's watch aft here, if ye please, Mr. Bent."

Mr. Bent smiled as he instructed the bos'n. "There's a joke hid in it somewhere," said he, unbending a bit from rigid discipline. "There's a joke, for the skipper's eyes was twinkling when he told me. But who it's on and what it is——"

"'Tis on Dake," said the bos'n. "On Dake, sir. An' ye may not see it and I may not see it, but Dake'll see it afore we drop hook at HelmsHAVEN."

And he went forward to send the "captain's watch" aft.

Dake came, shamblingly. He found the captain of the *Cormorant* standing beside the pile of ashes that had accumulated during their stay in port.

"Put 'em overside," said Captain Tim Brady.

"With the hose, sir?" Dake was playing able seaman to the king's taste now.

"With a shovel." Tim Brady waited for no response. He turned on his heel and walked away.

Dake stared after him.

"Ridin' me. A hose'd wash 'em overside quick and easy." He glared at that ash pile—two hours hard shoveling. "Ridin' me," said Dake softly. "Never you mind, you bit o' tin god on your own deck. I ain't sailin' with you for my health. My day will come."

Then went to find a shovel.

The captain's watch—the sailorman, Dake—certainly got his share of the dirty work. When the ship came to

tidewater and the night mist of early spring closed down, and they must anchor—when, in the damp, cutting wind a man had to slip down over the hawse to clear the fouled anchor cable—it was the captain's watch, hauled unceremoniously out of his bunk, who did the trick, and did it ably, with never a grumble.

When, two hours later, the mist lifting, the man at the wheel got off his course a hair, it was the captain's watch who came stumbling up the iron ladder, to stand by, as Captain Brady told the seaman off, and sent him to the deck. It was Dake who took the wheel for the next five hours.

When, at Quebec, an hour after he had again sought his bunk, worn out now—when, sinking into dreamless slumber his big body began to recover from the hard day and harder night—it was Dake, the captain's watch, who was called for to handle the ladder and stand by while the river pilot slid down and the gulf pilot clambered up.

So it went for two days. Captain's watch—the jest of his fellows—the big man took it all dumbly. For his moment had not yet come. On this craft, with the officers against him, with his comrades, for the most part, devoted to their commanding officer, Dake knew his part. The waiting game—that was it. So he took it all in silence, never giving his resentment outlet, cloaking the burning hatred that grew in his heart behind his sober demeanor. But he was waiting, and he believed in his luck. Four years he had waited, before, to even their account. And his chance had almost come—to be snatched away at the moment of triumph. Some time he would square things with that policeman for interfering.

"A hard case," Tim Brady decided, looking down on him as he holystoned the planking on the fo'c's'le head. "But there's good stuff hid in him somewhere. And I'll find it. By glory, I'll find it!"

And he stared off across blue water

at the Gaspé shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Those dim hills there, they were rugged and hard—yet between them, in small coves and bays, men found a living. You'd never guess that anything good could come out of yonder rocks, and yet—well, maybe Dake was like that.

"B-r-r-r-r." Tim Brady shivered as a puff of cold wind swept over the water and penetrated warm, woolen clothing as if it had been paper. "B-r-r-r-r." Tim Brady leaned over the bridge weather cloth. "Ice somewhere, lads. A lookout on the fo'c's'le head, an' let him keep his eyes peeled."

"Ice!" The word ran round the ship. They knew what April in the gulf could mean: days lost while they bucked heavy floes—or lay there, inert, with white fetters fast about them. Ice—and they were working on a bonus basis. Speedy voyages meant money for all hands.

Or worse still. Night, and the old *Cormorant* butting into packed cakes. Rending plates, bursting bulkheads. She was no ice breaker, that ancient tramp. Ice! In the engine room the black gang got the word, and "Wattie" MacTavish, the chief engineer, thrust a junior away from before the telegraph dials. He'd take no chance on bungling here.

Ice it was. First a long, white line across the horizon; then, as they crept closer, as the April day waned, a jagged field of it, as far as the eye could see, closing in to port and starboard, touching the rim of the world ahead. Thick, and yet pliable, grinding and roaring as it closed in.

The engines stopped. On the bridge captain and two mates scanned the white expanse ahead.

Tim Brady it was who saw it first—a tiny fleck of black.

"The damn fools! What'd ye make 'em out to be?" he asked.

"Golet—one o' them little schooners

these gulf folks makes at home durin' the long winter evenin's," Mr. Bent replied.

"Yon one won't see its home port no more—fast in the ice. If it opens she'll sink like a stone." Mr. Jacobs, the second mate, sighed. "Well, though they ain't in steam, they're seagoin' folks. Pity we ain't bigger. Might cut through if we was—all of four mile."

But Tim Brady was already at the telegraph.

"Cut through?" he asked. "Is it just talking of it ye are? And lives in danger?"

"Our lives," Jacobs retorted. "Our lives, sir. Some twenty-odd souls—an' me a family man. Our lives."

Tim Brady choked back his hot retort. After all, there was grave risk. Should he chance the battle with the ice? Was he justified in risking the lives of his own crew to save those of a few poor gulf folks snared by the ice through their own carelessness?

It was Mr. Bent, the first officer, staring through his binoculars, who settled the thing.

"There's a woman aboard her, sir, I'm guessin'. I can't see plain, but—I'm a family man, sir, myself. If a woman's there—" He spoke haltingly. "Oh, hell, sir," he finished with a rush. "If ye can't chance the ship, give me a boat's crew, and I'll try it over the ice—the gig now—"

"Half speed ahead. We're goin' through," said Tim Brady.

The telegraph jingled. Below, Wattie MacTavish signaled his response. Then turned to an oiler. "Lad," said he, "there's foolhardy work forward, I'm thinkin'. I been savin' a plug o' good American eatin' 'baccy for an emairgency. Get ye to my locker and bring it down. I'll be needin' it before night-fall."

They drove her—they backed her out, the old *Cormorant*. They used what

power she had, splitting their way into an open lead here, cutting their way through broad pans of thinner ice there. They crashed and twisted their way on as occasion offered, as the sun dropped lower and lower. One mile—and below "Wee Wattie" MacTavish was praying most profanely as he harkened to the rasp of ice along her rusty plates. One hour—and the sailormen on the fo'c's'le head were whispering stories of ships with crumpled bows and burst bulkheads and old shipmates never heard of again after the icy waters rushed in. One hour, one mile, and luck on their side, and the officers on the bridge knowing that but for a miracle their effort was in vain.

And what of Dake? Dake sat on the forward hatch, the captain's watch, for once taking it easy. Did Dake ponder their chances of success? Never a bit. Dake saw in this his luck. Dake had a premonition that now, after all this waiting, his chance might come.

Again and again the old *Cormorant* pressed her bows against the ice. And then, when hope was dying, when the little schooner—a mere battered hulk ahead—seemed utterly beyond their reach, it happened. A sudden shift of wind, a grinding of ice on ice, and a fair wide lead opened ahead, like a straight road to their goal—or almost to their goal.

"'Tis the break in the luck." Tim Brady rang for full speed.

"We'll make it. We'll make it." Mr. Bent, glasses clamped to weary eyes, examined the hulk ahead and the lane of water leading toward it. "That's a woman, right enough—and she is alone, too!"

Mr. Jacobs, the "family man," his family for the moment forgotten, grinned happily.

But they were not destined to make it so easily. On they drove, sometimes brushing against ice on either side, sometimes surging through wider spaces

where their coming washed tinkling fragments of ice about like bottles in a tub.

"She's closing, she's closing," Tim Brady groaned. "And half a mile to go."

"More steam! Give us more steam." Below, Wee Wattie MacTavish exhorted his black gang with a profanity equal to that of his previous praying.

"More luck! More luck!" the bos'n pleaded, hands on a stanchion, pressing forward as if to urge the old *Cormorant* on.

And ahead the hulk of the schooner, splintering as the ice pressed it in and up.

Then the lead closed. The *Cormorant* rammed ice three feet thick—and stopped with a jar, her bow tilted upward.

With a muttered curse Tim Brady rang for the reverse. And the old boat, shuddering, backed off. Up the speaking tube came Wattie's voice: "I'm thinkin' we're makin' water a bit. If ye intend rammin' her again, I'll send maist o' my gang on deck. They de-sairve a fightin' chance."

"No use," Tim decided. "'Tis boat business from now on." He turned to face his mates.

"Me, sir?" Mr. Bent spoke first. But Mr. Jacobs, the family man, was already getting his watch up to the boat deck.

"Neither o' ye," Tim Brady decided. "'Tis my job. An easy one—just a quarter o' a mile over yonder ice—smooth goin'. No, not the lifeboat, Mr. Jacobs. All creation'd never drag her over them pans."

Mr. Jacobs nodded agreement. Then he looked at that quarter mile of ice, Tim Brady's "smooth going."

It was rough. Cakes of ice on edge, cakes piled one upon the other. And a quarter of a mile away, the little schooner's hulk, and a human being standing there, arms held out appeal-

ingly toward them—a woman, and alone.

"What boat'll I take, sir?" asked Mr. Jacobs.

"None," Tim Brady replied. "I'll take any boat that goes—the wee dinghy. Two men can drag her over the ice. There's chances of wee bits o' open water. She'll swim where a bigger one won't. Get her overside, Mr. Jacobs. And muster all hands forward."

"Captain's watch again, sir?" Bent asked.

"Not this time," Tim said soberly. "'Tis not a job any man's signed on for, Mr. Bent. 'Tis for a volunteer."

Then he made for his cabin, pulled on a sweater, dug out heavy mitts and a winter cap. In his pocket he thrust a flask of brandy. Then back to the bridge.

The men were waiting there, below.

"There's a job of work," said Tim Brady. "I'm takin' the dinghy across yonder. No married men need apply for a billet aboard her. I need one o' your gay bachelors for a wee junket. Which'll it be?"

Four men stepped forward.

"Get back, bos'n. You've a wife and three kids." Tim Brady grinned.

One of the other volunteers piped up: "London Joe' here, sir—he's got a jane back in the Big Smoke. They're gettin' spliced—"

"Step back, London Joe," Tim Brady ordered.

"If you don't git back I'll bash the livin' daylight out o' ye," whispered the fourth volunteer to the man who had snatched on London Joe.

The man looked up at a vast bulk of body, at black eyes, still sullen, and hesitated.

"I'll pick Dake," said Tim Brady. "You come o' your own free will, Dake?"

Dake, the fourth volunteer, nodded.

"I knew ye had the makin's of a man," Tim rejoiced.

It was then that Dake hated him more than ever. For there was a hint of triumph in Tim Brady's tone. But there was no time for hatred now. The dinghy was dangling overside. They slid down icy falls, thrust her away from the *Cormorant* with stubby oars, headed her across the narrow band of water that lay between them and the ice floe.

The men on the *Cormorant* raised a gruff cheer.

Mr. Bent, in command, took the bridge, jockeyed the old craft back a bit into wider waters, lest the ice close and pinch her, and then waited.

They watched those two men in the dinghy as they reached the ice barrier—Captain Brady and the new sailorman called Dake, the captain and the captain's watch. They saw them heave the dinghy high and dry, and they followed them with their eyes as they dragged her, slowly, painfully, across jagged, piled-up ice, as they launched her again in a tiny open pool.

Mr. Jacobs dropped his binoculars for a moment.

"Funny thing—neither o' them's said a word. I can see their lips as plain as plain."

"Savin' their breath. Hell ahead o' them," Mr. Bent replied. "What's wrong with that woman?"

He pointed toward the hulk. The woman, rescue almost at hand, had sunk down, and was lying there, a pitiful huddle on the deck of the little schooner.

The two men with the dinghy had seen this, too. For they had thrown caution to the winds—were straining and tugging at their light craft, now running her over a patch of smooth ice at a sharp trot, now painfully heaving her over heavier going. Tim Brady spoke for the first time.

"We'll make it. Good man. Keep at it, Dake."

Dake made no reply.

A hundred yards left to cover. And that hundred the hardest of all.



"Can't go afoot. Open water between." Tim Brady climbed an upturned cake of ice and scanned that intervening space. "Dinghy's got to go through."

"Goin'," Dake grunted, and heaved.

One of the oars, rolling across the thwarts, came over the gunwale at his sudden effort, crashed down on Tim Brady's right wrist.

Tim felt something give. His grip on the gunwale slipped. His fingers were numb, dead.

He heaved the harder with his left hand.

The schooner began to lift at the bow as the field of ice closed in.

Tim Brady groaned. "We can't be beat."

Dake scowled at him, at the schooner—but wasted no breath on prayer.

One last effort, and between them and their goal was but one tiny lead of water—and then smooth ice over which the ripples lapped.

They launched the dinghy and crossed the lead. They hauled her out and, slipping and stumbling, went on afoot. They reached the schooner's side and clambered aboard.

The woman lay there. She was alone—and dead.

Tim Brady was slow to lose hope. For an hour he worked over her, chafing her wrists, striving to pour the strong brandy down her stiffened throat. In vain. Dake aided, dumbly, like a man playing a game according to rule, waiting till the rule should change.

A word, and that change had come.

Tim Brady rose. It was dusk now, and across the ice they could see the *Cormorant's* lights twinkling dimly.

Tim Brady let the woman's dead body sag back to the deck.

"Dead. Eposure done it. Or starvation."

"You failed," Dake sneered.

"We done our best." Tim Brady disregarded the accusation.

"I played the game out, Tim Brady." Dake became rudely eloquent. For his moment had come. "I done what I had to do. But you failed. You think you're the Almighty, that you ain't the sort to fail. But you did, this time. Know what that means to me?"

"What're ye drivin' at?" Tim asked, puzzled. "I said you done your best. I ain't blamin' you."

"You been bulldoggin' me around," Dake went on. "You been rubbin' the dirt into me. You been tryin' to reform me. Know why I took it? Know why I played meek an' swallered it all? Cos' you *ain't* the Almighty, after all. Cos' I knowed my chance would come. Cos' I figured on waitin' till I could pick the place. Well, you give me the chance. There ain't no police here to butt in. Just you an' me—an' a stretch of ice 'tween us an' your gang o' lick-spittles. An', Tim Brady, havin' failed in one thing you're goin' to fail in another."

"What's wrong, man? What's come over you?" Tim asked, puzzled.

"Put up your hands and you'll find out. We fought twice before—third time. Well, I'm pickin' the place. Put up your hands, Tim Brady. I got you where I want you! And I'm out for real business!"

Tim Brady stiffened. The man was all bad, then. The latent spark of courage he had found in Dake was to be his worst fault, in the end, and not a virtue.

"So be it," said Tim Brady, bringing his hands up.

And there, in the dusk of the gulf evening, on the deck of a tiny, crushed and splintered schooner, they fought, fought for the third time, with a dead woman for witness.

Dake wasted no time on preliminaries. This was to be no stand-off battle. He had had his fill of such. So he strove to close. But Tim, wise in such encounters, played for distance, jabbing

with his left, using what footwork the clutter of wreckage would permit, waiting his chance to land a punishing blow with his right.

That chance came. His arm lashed out—and a sharp pain darted up his wrist as his clenched hand thudded against Dake's jaw.

That wrist—the oar had cracked it badly. He remembered now, did Tim Brady.

He went back to his jabbing game—hopelessly, for the single blow had told him. From now on he must fight one-handed. And Dake, whether he knew this or not, was wasting no time. He was still rushing, still seeking to evade that jabbing left of Tim's, and close.

Up and down the deck they fought. Dake was getting his blows home now. No punishing right flashed up to keep him off. Now one great arm was circling Tim's shoulders. And Dake was shaking those feeble left jabs off like drops of water.

Tim Brady twisted free, and Dake caught him full in the stomach with a terrific right.

Tim slumped, bent double, to the deck.

Dake, dazed by his sudden success, stood there for a second, staring down. Then his eyes widened.

Tim Brady, inert, every fiber of his body in revolt against his struggling will, was crouched on battered planks. Beside him, her feet against the low bulwarks, lay the dead woman.

The wind sweeping the hulk lifted her long cloak, twitched it about, and one fluttering corner dragged across Tim Brady's bowed shoulders. Her outstretched hand was touching his fingers as they groped about on the planking.

It was as if she made a gesture of protection, as if she had come back from another world at this crisis to intervene.

Dake saw—and paused. His hands,

scarred, gnarled knuckles bleeding, came up over his eyes. He backed away, shuddering.

It was then that Tim Brady, all unconscious of this sudden change, found strength to rise.

He swayed there a second, eyes probing the seeming darkness for his enemy. Those eyes were blinded by fatigue. They found nothing in the dusk but vague shadows.

"Come on," whispered Tim Brady. "Come on, ye scut. I ain't beat yet."

Then, with his left fist held stiffly in front of him, he groped his way along the deck.

Dake dropped his hands from his eyes, stared at him—at the woman lying there dead.

Dake sank down on the bulwark.

"I can't! I can't! I been waitin' over four year', an' now—he's cheated me again." He groaned. "I had him at my mercy—an' a woman—"

Tim Brady heard. Tim Brady's stiff left arm went limp. With his fingers he rubbed his eyes. Then he stared at Dake.

"What—what's come over ye?" he murmured, comprehending nothing, sensing only some vague miracle.

"I'm beat—but not by you." Dake rose, stood there, hands at his side.

The ice cracked ominously about them.

"The dinghy! The dinghy!" Tim, more alert than the sailor, perceived the danger first. "She's slidin' off that pan. It's tilting. If she goes—"

The schooner shivered beneath their feet. The deck buckled as the ice pressed in. The bulwarks broke free from their pinning. The body of the woman slid slowly overside, and the ice hid it from them.

No time now for anything but a mad rush for life. The schooner was flattening out, and would drop through the ice at any moment.

They leaped overside together. To-

gether, staggering, weary of limb, they reached the dinghy, crossed the open water to the firmer ice beyond.

Ahead was the *Cormorant*, just a cluster of welcome lights in the dusk. Ahead, twenty-odd men awaited apprehensively the return of the captain and the captain's watch.

They dragged the dinghy closer and closer. Now, after an eternity of effort, they could see the reflection of her cargo flare on the ice over which they toiled. Mr. Bent had thought of that, Tim Brady decided, as with his left hand he dragged at the gunwale of the little dinghy.

The flare picked them out like a searchlight as the *Cormorant* crept in to the border of the ice.

Dake turned as they were traversing the last narrow strip.

He saw Tim Brady, left hand clenched on the gunwale, right hand hanging limp at his side.

Dake saw—and guessed.

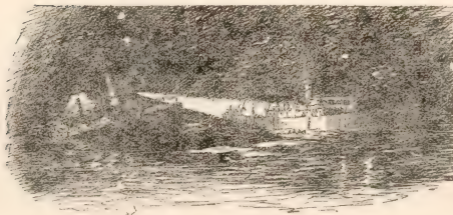
"Hurt yer arm?" he asked.

"Oar—when we come in—bust it," Tim gasped.

Dake stared. Then something stirred in him—some emotion hitherto foreign to his personality. This captain with the broken wrist had kept on, had reached his goal. What if the woman he came to save was dead? What if he had come too late? This man fail? Dake saw things in a new light, saw for the first time what sort of a man this, his enemy, had been.

And then the fight—this captain with the broken wrist facing him, fighting him, when all along the odds were so hopelessly against him. Fail? Dake came to a decision on that point as they launched the dinghy, as he paddled her across the little strip of water to the *Cormorant*, as the welcome voices of the crew sounded in their ears. Fail?

"You licked me proper," said Dake. "You got me beat final, at the last, sir. I guess I'm your man from now on."





# *The Unattainable*

By Carrington Phelps

## SERIAL—PART I

Peter Bidwell began life as an aimless weakling and coward, but then came adventures, storms, shipwreck, bloodshed, and the threat of death, and Ammons, the arch hypocrite and murderer, found in him a terrible enemy.

### CHAPTER I.

I NEVER knew old Jonathan Bidwell, the second, but I knew his son, that queer combination of egotism and unselfishness, courage and optimism, timidity and evasiveness, carelessness and exactness. Knew him first when we were cubs together on the *Minneapolis Times*, in those fine, free days of thoughtless youth when we were both learning a little something about life and absorbing it each in our own way, without much thought of to-morrow or the future and with no thought at all of the odd fashion in which our lives would be later thrown together.

Peter wasn't then the hard-shelled, tight-fisted plugger he is to-day. He was soft, eager, pliable and he had the most extraordinary naïvete I ever encountered. He had, too, if one had been intuitively observant enough to have discovered it, the makings of the man he is now, but the clews to this were too vague and intangible to be grasped by any of us, except perhaps old Busbee of the copy desk who, I remember, once said Peter would go far before he finished unless he got himself killed first. Busbee wasn't much of a hand for explicitness, preferring to cloak his opinions under a heavy mask

of innuendo and portentous gravity, but I remembered his prophecy later on when Peter went far, as he'd said, and when he came in time to head the firm of Bidwell & Son, though he has never had a son, and though his father has long since departed this life, for let us hope a better one. Not that Jonathan, the second, was a bad man. He was merely remarkably shrewd, with few friends, and with a reputation for exacting the last penny due him. His reputation lives after him, as does that of his father, Jonathan, the first, who established the shipping firm in San Francisco and made its name known to the four corners of the earth.

Peter gave me a brief outline of his family one night when he had enough liquor to loosen his tongue more than usual. His grandfather, it seems, had come West in '49, out of Connecticut, where the Bidwells had settled half a dozen generations back and dealt steadily in farm produce and in such commodities as rum and molasses and hides and salt and dry goods and the like. Trading ran in the blood as well as a hidden vein of adventure, witnessed by the unexpected departure from the family fold of Jonathan, the first, to journey across a continent in search of gold. Jonathan hadn't found any gold but had promptly turned his talents, as of old, to trading. Had set up a general store and rumor was he had dabbled a bit on the side with faro, secretly backing certain gentlemen of shady reputation, and sharing in the profits of the saloon and gambling house which was one of the myriad flourishing in those halcyon days.

He soon dropped the gambling, however, and devoted himself entirely to trade. He had brought with him a considerable sum of money, and instead of spending it on gold-mine stocks, he invested in real estate. This, of course, in addition to what he had already expended for his trading stuff. So far as

I could see he did little for a time except to sit tight and wait for the enormous development his astute judgment had informed him was bound to follow all this turmoil of discovery and immigration. He sat tight, then, and he prospered exceedingly. And it was not so long after that he got hold of a vessel and put her into the trade between California and the East. Long trips but satisfactorily profitable, so that in short order he had founded a company and added two more vessels to the first. The *Golden Star* was the name of the first, and Peter told me she was still in commission, albeit somewhat reduced from her former estate, being employed at the time as a coal barge. She had an excellent story attached to her which Peter had got from some old salt who had been a seaman on her in the old days. The story of a mutiny, replete with murder and bristling with other stirring events and which I was destined to hear for myself one day from that same old salt.

Jonathan, the first, Peter said, had eventually frozen out the rest of the stockholders until he had acquired complete control of the company. Then he went back East and married his boyhood sweetheart and fetched her out with him again to settle in this wild country where the vigilantes still upheld the law and where the ubiquitous rope continued in evidence even in the most populous settlements. Eventually Jonathan, the second, was born and Jonathan, the first, promptly announced the firm of Bidwell & Son, scornful of precedent and proudly determined already on the profession the young squaller should enter. Apparently there were few obstacles to his decision, or if they presented themselves they were promptly smashed flat, for Jonathan, the second, when scarcely out of his adolescence, became the "and Son," and with the same shrewd success which had marked the activities of his father.

Peter, of course, could not remember very much about his earliest days, but from what he told me and from my own observation of his complex characteristics, I was able to vaguely reconstruct them. He had been brought up, an only child, with every luxury. Every whim had been gratified by a doting mother, despite his father's objections, because Jonathan, the second, wanted the old sign to remain precisely as it was, without any change. Jonathan, the first, having died, his son saw no reason why Peter should not become the "& Son," as he himself had. But Peter's mother had spoiled all that.

"Mother always said I could do or be whatever I wanted," said Peter, "from the very first, and as far back as I can remember. I don't know why she stood out against father so in this, because she always gives way to him in everything else. I suspect it's because she knew Grandfather Jonathan and didn't like him. She couldn't abide him. She said he was a bigoted, stubborn, cold-hearted old skinflint. Said he'd bludgeoned father into the business and no son of hers was going to have it done to him while she lived to prevent it."

Well, she had prevented it. And she and her husband had almost come to the point of a separation over it. To me her point of view seemed reasonable. Especially since Peter had not the slightest desire to enter the shipping business. Peter had, for that matter, no desire to go into any business. Not at the time I first knew him. All he wanted was a carefree, adventurous, irresponsible young existence which offered somewhat heroic deeds, and honest, straightforward codes, and now and then a beautiful young heroine at whose white feet one might lay rose wreaths. Oh, yes, and a chance to produce verses. Poetry of an execrable sentimentality and totally devoid of what one calls a spark. Peter showed me some of it one night and I had to perjure my soul

to prevent his seeing how awful it seemed to me.

Peter, I take it, had been considerable of a trial to his father, who had laid out a solid, conservative, successful career for his son. Peter would have nothing of ledgers, of profits and losses and percentages and the like. Peter wanted life. And Peter's mother, who had some money of her own, decided his wish, like all the others preceding it, should be gratified. So Peter traveled, worked not at all and proceeded to enjoy himself to the limit. It was purely incidental to a feebly wriggling ambition to become an author that he got himself a job on the *Times* with the idea of a bit of practical experience before embarking on a career of *belles-lettres*, as he called it. Yes. *Belles-lettres*, when he couldn't write a stick story without fumbling it in a dozen places.

I remember perfectly, as if it were yesterday, that interview. Sitting in the back room of the old Merchants Saloon, eating the free lunch of baked beans which had made the place famous, and drinking champagne. Peter just a trifle tight, choosing his words with care and embellishing his ideas with mechanically colorful touches. Eating baked beans between sips of champagne! Listening with an appreciative ear to his own words and employing me largely as a lay figure on which to drape his conversation. I remember, too, the picture which bobbed into my mind and the dialogue which accompanied it as I reconstructed a scene from Peter's childhood. Thanks to the champagne, I suppose. I saw Peter as a crawler, his father reading a newspaper near a table, his mother dotting on the baby sprawling on the carpet. Little Peter wanted something. Say candy. His father had taken it from him. The baby sat up on his hunkers and uttered a loud and wailing cry of protest. His father continued reading his paper. Peter, noting this

callous indifference, raised his head and the squall became a roar. Peter's father lowered his paper and peered over it at him with curiosity and amusement. Then Peter, deaf to his mother's soothing voice and with one eye cocked on his father, constricted his throat and gave vent to a piercing note of battle, of defiance, of outraged manhood and murderous desire. I think, then, if I remember right, his father laughed, and this was the last straw. Peter was picked up by his indignant mother and carried off to the obscurity of a bedroom and comforted.

I remember I chuckled at the picture and that Peter stared at me over his forkful of beans until I apologized and, mollified, he went on with his somewhat rambling discourse. He had exhausted the family history and he was now fully embarked on his plans for the future. He was going to that Mecca of his dreams, New York. Here he would study and work, and here he would eventually become great. An author. A poet. One of the greatest of the world. Of course he would travel abroad, since he had never crossed as yet and perhaps some day he would settle down in Paris for the rest of his life. Or on the Riviera. Beautiful women, he said, were on the Riviera. It was the most gorgeous spot on earth. Ideal for a creative artist. Inspiring, provocative of all that was finest and best in a man. He might some day marry. Never, however, in America. American girls were too *gauche*. Too commonplace, like the English. He thought he'd like the Spanish, or the French, perhaps.

"You understand, Tommy," he said, "one yearns for the unattainable in life. And one never or rarely attains it. But I've determined I am going to attain it. The golden stuff dreams are made of is going to materialize for me because I have the determination of my father in my veins. And I feel I have more,

though I don't know where I get it, unless it is just born in me, as genius is born in some people. I feel I've a flair, a touch. For something now beyond me, of course, but for something which will make a mark for me in this world of toiling, gray shades whose lives are so rarely illumined by color, by beauty, by inspiration, by grandeur."

Or words to that effect. From which you may perceive the depths, or the heights Peter Bidwell had reached. It wasn't entirely the champagne. To this day, I think, it was the man himself speaking, for all he kept it so dark in sober daylight working hours. Well, he never went to Paris or the Riviera and he never, except once, exhibited anything indicative of a flair, and he never illumined the lives of the shades with beauty or inspiration or grandeur, at least to my knowledge. He did manage a stroke of genius, but he never knew it. That was when he poured himself out on what was to be one of the world's masterpieces. A novel, in brief. In later years he gave it to me as casually as one might give away an old telephone directory, and I have it still. It is a curious piece of literature, for it is literature, of a sort. It is awkward, clumsy, totally devoid of what is called technique, amateurish to the core. It has but one saving grace, sincerity. Running through the dog-eared, sea-stained, furiously sprawling long-hand one can read the story of a man whose ideals were smashed and trodden out until nothing remained of them but a memory. One can see ideals of honor, purity, justice and piety slowly going through this ordeal of destruction. One can see all the secret thoughts and emotions which most men artfully conceal exposed with a naïve shamelessness Peter could not have been conscious of at the time, else he'd never have written as he did. All his badness, all his sins and omissions, without concealment, without even a pretense of self-con-

sciousness. The whole carelessly unstudied *gauche*, as he himself might have expressed it, but nevertheless, the naked, bleeding soul of a man flung down upon paper and fairly screaming with truth.

Nothing artless about Peter Bidwell when he wrote those old pages. Partly because they were done while he was in the very midst of his tempestuous experiences. Partly because he was too passionately impatient with life to do anything but say what he thought about it. Partly, too, because the fallibility of humanity had soured him, its myriad protective subterfuges had brought him to the point of a shouting revolt, its treacheries had embittered and hardened him. His philosophy had broken down, never very enduring at best, his religion, pedantic and lifeless in its rigidity, had not proved very sustaining and he had junked it along with the rest of his somewhat mechanically acquired formulæ of life.

Of course he came out of it. I suspect it helped him to pour himself out on paper as he did, to purge his soul of the burden weighing it down, to "express" himself so unhesitatingly and utterly. He came out of it, thanks to the Bidwell blood in him perhaps, and he is to-day a solid, unimaginative, rather simple and extremely hard-headed, valuable citizen not unlike the rest of us ninety or so millions which go to make up the composite and mass mind of the nation. Got it out of himself and, on the graves of all those fine hopes and beautiful illusions and vain young ideals, reincarnated another Peter Bidwell. Peter, the present, is a far greater asset to the race than Peter, the past, but all the same I often think of him as he was and regret that he had to change, or that he couldn't have had a bit more of the things he wanted so and never got before the shifting tides of life caught him and made a man of him.

## CHAPTER II.

I saw a good deal of Peter, off and on, during his stay with the *Times* and I came to know him perhaps better than any of the rest because I was always willing to listen to him. Afterward I visited him in his home in San Francisco, and here I met his father and mother. It was interesting to check up Peter's character with those of his parents, especially that of Jonathan, the second. Peter was then about twenty, of medium height, with a well-built body and features so delicate as to be almost feminine. These he inherited from his mother, as well as that dreamy look in his eyes when he was building castles on the Riviera.

Peter had a masterful jaw, and this he got from his father. A good head, broad between the eyes, also from Jonathan. Delicate hands, from his mother as well as a drawling habit of speech. There was nothing drawling about Jonathan when he talked. Sparing of words, they snapped forth when he spoke, clipped and incisive. Nothing dreamy about Jonathan's eyes. They fixed you like spear points until they had finished and then they dropped you and you felt as if you were a part of the furniture.

But Annie May's eyes lingered on yours long after you had finished, with a touch of the affection, I imagine, she never had from Jonathan. Lingered wistfully, somehow tragically even when her mood was the lightest.

Peter, with his father, was guarded, watchful, faintly defiant. Nothing particularly in common there—as I had, of course, expected. Peter, with his mother, was carelessly convivial, as if she were one of his pals, and a trifle thoughtless, as one who receives with the indifference of custom the assiduous attentions of a courtier. She doted on him, did Annie May. Hung on his words, anticipated his wishes, bustled



about in a hundred little ways to please him. Spoiling him, hour by hour, while his father, precisely as I had pictured it that night in the old Merchants Saloon, sat and read his paper and made gruff replies when addressed which was not too often.

A queer little domestic triangle, it seemed to me, all askew and irremediable. Here was sturdy old Jonathan, the second, plugging determinedly ahead as if such a thing as fine hopes of his son, joining and succeeding him in the business, had never existed. Here was Annie May, worshiping her son, sacrificing herself in a thousand ways for his imperial nod; and finally here was Peter himself, spoiled and soft and purposeless. Jonathan, on the one hand, stern, inflexible, determined and silent. On the other, Annie May, still pretty in a faded fashion, weak, pliable and sentimental. Between them Peter, a curious mixture of the two. Jonathan, to my mind, was the real character of the three. He had power and he had will, and he'd proved it. Thus far the only thing he'd been unable to conquer was the sweetly static position of Annie May that her son should do exactly as he pleased.

And there was the business itself, an up-and-coming concern, with assets variously estimated at from one to three millions. And I wondered what, in the end, would be the outcome of this deadlock. Annie May would never give in and even if she did she would have already accomplished her ambition in having included in Peter irremediable traits which would never in a thousand years adapt themselves to the stern requirements of Jonathan's business. So far as I could see, Peter was going to continue in his aimless lily-of-the-field career so long as he lived. He might, I thought, some day get to Paris and the Riviera, but he would never make his mark in letters, or anything else for that matter, because of the simple rea-

son that he was too completely lazy to get down and sweat the necessary blood. He was a good man spoiled, and there was no use crying about it more than necessary. Jonathan would eventually die and leave the most of his fortune either to charity or to some of the family back East, and Annie May and Peter would be cut off with a pittance and that would be the end of it. And Peter would get vindictive and hate the memory of his father and have to go to work and revolt against it and flop from one job to another, and finally end, perhaps, as a beach comber or a drunkard or a dope fiend or some other equally unimportant bit of driftwood.

It seemed my dismal anticipations were to prove utterly wrong. But at the time I felt them rather heavily and I labored with Peter more than once to bring about a possible reconciliation of opposing viewpoints. It was one of these times that I hit on what I believed was a strongly influencing factor in Peter's fiery opposition to having to do with his father's business.

We had been discussing that business and I said I thought it would be interesting because it was associated so directly with the sea. And the sea, I said, had always exercised a queer fascination for me partly because some of my forbears had been seafaring folk. Peter heard me out with that quiet, humorous smile of his, and then he said that with him it was quite the opposite. He hated the sea. It stank, for one thing, and it was treacherous, flat, forbidding. Of course, he went on, it had color, drama, conflict, all the factors which go to make life interesting. But it was not for him. He thought he got his aversion to it from Annie May, as I got my affection for it from my people.

This struck me as a little far-fetched despite the fact that it was my own argument he was advancing and I questioned him further. By dint of patience

and persistent exploration I finally managed to get a clew to the cause of Peter's aversion. He confessed he had heard many and strange tales of the sea when he was a little chap, especially from an old salt, named Bob, who had kept a small store down near wharves where Peter used to buy candy. There was one story in particular he never tired of hearing. The story of a mutiny in the old days of '49. Peter had told it to me when we were on the *Times*, but he had forgotten most of the incidents and so keen was I to see if my theory might prove correct that I asked him if he thought Bob was still alive.

"Certainly," he said. "I saw him only the other day and had a chat with him. He's as spry as ever, in spite of the fact that he must be over ninety." He went on to say that he had tried to have Bob repeat the mutiny story, but the old chap had been too busy. He then suggested we take the car and drive over to see him. It was, he said, a cracking good yarn, and he wanted me to hear it from the original source. "After that you'll not wonder why I hate the sea," he added.

It was, I thought, curious Peter should be so keenly interested in what was doubtless nothing more than a sailor's yarn, but at the same time it served to confirm what was rapidly achieving the importance of a conviction that Peter Bidwell had been the victim of a childhood complex and that it might even be possible to remove it by careful handling. It might be possible to remove it, to reconcile him to entering old Jonathan's business as a partner, and to smooth out this situation which had practically turned a house against itself. Such were my optimistic thoughts as we journeyed down to the little shop of Bob, the ex-sailor.

We found him ensconced in a chair beside a smoldering fire. A lean, shriveled old man, with a long, white beard, stained by tobacco juice. With weak

eyes and trembling hands but a sprightly manner of talking. At first he didn't know Peter until he shuffled out into the light which came dimly through the dusty windows; but when he put on his glasses and screwed up his face within an inch of Peter's, he burst into a cackle of delight and motioned us to chairs. Peter wasted little time in preliminaries and old Bob, bribed by the bill Peter thrust into his mechanically closing fingers, relaxed, thrust a fresh quid into his cheek, and began to reminisce, with tremendous deliberation.

At first he pretended to have forgotten the yarn we were after, but Peter's persuasive suggestions thawed him and he was presently conveying it to us in a hoarse voice and with the manner of an oracular owl. There was no trouble now with his memory and to this day I do not know whether he was telling the truth when he declared he had taken part in that violent adventure or whether he had heard it from an eyewitness and had committed it to memory. Certainly he had dates and incidents correct, for I afterward took the pains to verify them. And certainly he might have participated in the affair because he was, as he explained, at the time less than twenty. He might have been a colossal liar, but he had his facts. The story in itself has no especial bearing on Peter Bidwell's life save that it served, as I believe, to turn him against the sea. At any rate I give it for what it is worth.

Old Bob was saying it never paid to ship landsmen because it always led to trouble sooner or later and Heaven help the captain who had the bad luck to find himself with a crew of landlubbers on his hands. Back in '49, he said, everybody wanted to come to the Pacific coast. Those who had the money were lucky, but those who hadn't, and there were plenty of them, had to get there as best they could. And that's how it was so many shipped before the mast

who didn't know an anchor from the equator, but who were bound to get out here if they died for it because of the gold which they figured could be picked up in dipperfuls anywhere you wanted.

He himself had been to sea since he was fourteen when he'd run away and shipped as cabin boy. "I was mate on the v'yage, of the four-master schooner *Angela*. And a fine ship she was if ever there was. The captain was one Amos Fletcher. A rough man but honest and afraid of nothing, and the best skipper who ever stepped on a deck. There were seven old seamen in the crew and that was all right, but when the rest came aboard I knew we would be in for trouble. Talk about landlubbers! Sixteen of 'em which was too many, for I could foretell as how we'd be stepping on each other when we got to sea, besides having to show 'em around the ship like a lot of lady visitors before ever they'd know how to do their work and all that. And I spoke my mind in plain terms to the skipper, but he caught me up short and told me to go ashore if I didn't like it, and I said no more. That day, at least.

"We had the devil's own time getting out of New York harbor with that crowd of blunderin' landsmen. But finally we got her under way and on her course, and I said to myself we'd manage somehow if nothing ontoward happened like bad weather or the like. We kept the landlubbers on the jump every minute to keep 'em from mischief and that didn't please 'em. The long and short of it was they began to grumble before ever we'd passed Hatteras. They didn't like the salt pork and they didn't like the coffee, and they didn't like the fo'c's'le to sleep in, and Heaven knows what else they didn't like. And the skipper told 'em they could sleep on deck and then they kicked because there wasn't a roof over 'em. Besides which there was the discipline and none of

'em were used to it and it hurt 'em sore to have to jump when they got an order. I'm speakin' of the landlubbers, mind. Because the old seamen minded their business and did as told.

"It got so I was almost afeared to give 'em an order at all, what with their grumbling and their cursing at me when they thought I didn't hear and their sulking among themselves. And it was one night I was walking forward in the dog watch near the forepeak I heard two of 'em talking. Oh, just growling and cursing to each other about the way they were being treated and what a dominatin' old devil the skipper was, and how they'd get even with him afore they was done. And then one of our seamen speaks up and says if he was them he wouldn't ever cross the skipper because he was hell once you got him started. The other man, who'd been doin' most of the threatening, said he didn't fear any skipper that lived and that he'd show 'em all pretty soon.

"I walked away, for I wasn't yet ready to mix into it, and, besides, I wanted to talk to the skipper first. Well, next night there was signs of weather comin' and we began getting ready for it with the seamen doing most of the work and the others soldiering and standing around. I walks up to one of the lubbers, which was a man named Morton, and the same I'd heard talking so big the night afore, and I says to him to run up and help make fast the foretops'l and he starts to come back at me with some smart talk and I steps up to him, boilin' and mad with what I'd heard the night afore. But the skipper was ahead of me because he'd seen the thing between us, and he comes up close and tells Morton to step lively and be quick about it. And Morton gives him a slow look and says he's damned if he will.

"Well, the skipper said nothing but just hit him and Morton went down with a clout on the jaw. Skipper, he

turns to go aft, but Morton jumps up and I yells and the skipper turns and they come together. It was a grand fight and the skipper would have no interference. The lubbers they got in a bunch on one side and the seaman on the other and just watched. Morton was the strongest and the dirtiest fighter. The skipper floored him twice, but Morton came back. The ship was heeling over and the skipper got above where he was more of an equal height with Morton, and when Morton came at him again the skipper caught him just as he was jumping. The ship heeled and Morton seemed to go up into the air. Then he went back and his head hit the rail and the sea came overside and carried him away.

"Our seamen ran to the davits to lower a boat and the helmsman fetched her up into the wind, but the captain he'd gone over after Morton, and we lost sight of him in the smother of water. We got the boat over and picked them up. Morton was senseless and the skipper was about done for, but we got 'em around with brandy before the storm struck us. Well, that was the beginning of the trouble. There was no more back talk, but the lubbers were ugly and we knew we were in for something pretty bad afore ever we got to port. And it was one night the skipper and me we were working over the chart that we got the first news of what was stewing up in the fo'c's'le. We'd figured we were about fifty degrees south and sixty-five west and the winds were pretty favorable and we were hopeful we'd be hittin' the straits pretty soon. We'd finished and I got up and rubbed my eyes from the strain. It was darkish in the cabin and I saw somebody standin' in the doorway. Standin' there quiet and not sayin' a word. And then I see it was Morton, and I moved for'ard a bit so as to be ready for him. I asked him what he wanted and the skipper he got to his feet at this.

"Morton didn't say anything but went past me and straight up to the skipper.

"'I ain't any use for you,' says he. 'And I never will have because you licked me. You're a damned tyrant, but I got this to say to you because you saved my life and I never forget a favor or a injury. The men they're a-goin' to do for you.'

"Skipper, he asks what he means by this, and Morton tells him.

"'I came to warn ye,' says Morton. 'They'd kill me if they knew it, but I'm peachin' on 'em, but I'm doin' it because you saved my life. I'm on your side because of it, and you can take or leave it, and go to hell; either way you want to look at it.'

"Skipper says for him to sit down and tell him about it. And Morton sits down deliberate and tells him. The men, he says, have stood the skipper's bully-raggin' all they're a-goin' to. During the first watch to-night all but one of the men on deck will be in the plot. That one he is to be thrown overside. The hatches will be battened down and the skipper and mate they're to be done for and thrown overboard. After that the regular seamen will be glad enough to do what they're told without argument or else they'll be done for, too. Boltwood and Jamison were to do the navigatin'.

"When I heard Morton say their names I could ha' dropped, for these were two of our regular seamen, and I'd thought we could trust 'em to the last drop. The captain asks him to name off the men who are against us and checks 'em off in the log book. It seems Boltwood and Jamison are the only ones of the seamen against us. Then there's two of the lubbers won't join against us, but who have said they'd stand by and do nothing one way or the other. That makes it eight men for us, counting Morton, and fifteen men against us. Figuring it again and counting me and the skipper it makes ten on our side and

fifteen against us. None of the other old seamen knew of the mutiny, and it looked a bit better than we thought after we'd counted noses that way.

"'Mr. Swem,' says the skipper to me, 'you know how to dispose of the men. Put a man you can trust at the helm. The chart shows we're about due east of Cape San Francisco de Paula. It's a barren stretch of desert. Make for the cape, figuring to strike it at fifty degrees twelve minutes south latitude. You'll attend to the navigating of the ship. I will be busy at something else. Keep lookouts for land. Keep one of the mutinous men in the tops all the time where he'll be out of trouble.'

"Then the skipper turns to Morton. 'The men believe you are one of them, I suppose? One of the mutineers?'

"'Yes, sir,' says Morton. 'I'm peachin' on 'em, but you saved my life.'

"'Very good,' says the skipper. 'Go back to the fo'c's'le and report the water has gone bad. Make it out there are only a couple of good casks left and that we're goin' ashore at a point I know of to store up fresh water. Work it around some way to get the men to postpone the mutiny till after we get the water. They're all green hands and they'll be glad to get water before they throw me overboard, I guess.'

"And with that Morton went away. Next morning at daybreak we sighted land, and a few hours after we hove to off a little cove, and the skipper he had empty water casks fetched up and put into the whaleboat we carried. Then he ordered eleven of the lubbers into her and the two seamen who had turned against us. I got into the smaller boat, and I had with me Morton, the two lubbers who had refused to join the mutiny, and four of the seamen who didn't know anything about the trouble. And that left the skipper on board with two mutineers and the fifth seaman. Soon as we pulled away the skipper he has all the hatches but one battened down. Then

he tells the three men to go below and shift the cargo to make room for the water casks. The two mutineers go below and the skipper catches the seaman by the arm and nods for him to wait. When the two had got their heads below the deck, the skipper claps on the cover and fastens it down with the clamps. Then he puts his gun on the seaman who can't make out what this is about and tells him what the trouble is and asks him how he stands. The man says he will stand by the skipper.

"It wasn't so easy for me. The lubbers in the whaleboat were green and we made better time, and I had to keep telling my men to pull slow so as not to pass the others. All the time I was watching the skipper to make me a signal. Finally he waves to me and I say to the men the skipper is signaling us to come back for something. The whaleboat was about fifty yards ahead now, and I yelled to them what I'd told my men and told them to keep right on, and that we'd be in in a few minutes. The seaman in charge seemed doubtful, but finally he gave the word and the whaleboat went on. We came back to the ship and the skipper says there's trouble of some kind below decks, and for us to come aboard. And from the racket those two were making down there it was easy to see there was trouble all right. My men went aboard and Morton and me we followed and went right to the skipper and stood alongside him with our pistols drawn.

"'You men stand where you are,' says the skipper. 'If you come a step we'll blow you to hell where you belong. You two landlubbers step over there to one side,' says the skipper, and they minded him lively. 'You other four should know there's a mutiny on this ship. I don't think you know anything about it. But let's know where we stand on this matter. If you want to join with the mutineers, why, just step overside and into the boat and be

off with you. Not a man in that whale-boat but what's a mutineer, and he won't be allowed to come aboard again. Take your choice.' And the four men says they'll stand by him and the other two lubbers what had refused to join the mutineers they say they'll stand by, too, and that part of it is settled right smart. And what's more one of our seamen calls for a cheer for the skipper, and they give it.

"I'd kept my eye peeled on the whaler. Two or three times they'd come to a stop and waited, and the cocks'n had stood up in the stern and looked at us, tryin' to figure what was going on. When they heard the cheer they put about in a hurry and came back again. Pulling for all that was in 'em till they got a few yards away, and then the skipper jumps up on the rail and orders 'em to stand off before he puts a few bullets into 'em. They lay on their oars and he reads the law to 'em.

"'You men are forbidden to board this ship,' says he. 'You're guilty of mutiny, every mother's son of you, and if you try to come aboard you're guilty of piracy and we'll shoot you like the dirty scum you are.' And he levels his pistol, and Morton and me we get up beside him and do likewise.

"And all that gang in the whaler could do was curse him for all the rotten things they could lay tongue to, which was considerable. The skipper orders 'em to clear out or he'll fire on 'em, and they pull away slow, and still cursing. The skipper tells 'em he'll lay by for just one day, and if they want to return and work under his orders, why, well and good, otherwise they'll be left high and dry and he'll go on without 'em.

"That night the skipper and me laid our plans. We'd stay until the next night, and then if the mutineers hadn't come to their senses we'd up anchor and leave 'em. It was late when we finished, and I was just comin' up the

companionway when I heard a splash as if something had fell overboard, and I jumped up on deck. There was the sound of footsteps for'ard, and I could see white forms comin' at me. I didn't wait but gave 'em all the bullets I had in my pistol and got my knife loose, and then hell broke loose. I had no time to see what had happened to the others below. I had all I could do to take care of myself. I got to one man with the knife and then to another and broke loose from them and ran aft. I came on a bunch of men all tied in a knot and I heard Morton yelling for help. I jumped into it and put another man out of the fight. But I was weakening by now from the cuts they'd give me.

"Then I heard the skipper's pistol for'ard and I knew he'd got into it. I managed to reload and I shot one of the men who had Morton down and the rest scattered, and I went for'ard to the skipper. He was alone with his back against the rail and he was in a bad way. I shot another man and then our seamen came running from the fo'c's'le, and the fight was over. The mutineers jumped overboard, some of 'em, and the rest cried for mercy. We fetched lanterns and counted up the losses.

"First off we couldn't find the for'ard watch, and it seemed they'd got him first of all. They'd swum out to the ship mother naked and swarmed up the anchor chain and knifed the watch and dropped him over. It was the sound of his body I heard falling into the sea. They'd come with their knives in their teeth, they told me afterward, and ready to die if need be to take the ship. Well, we found one of our men dead on deck and two of the mutineers. Two of our men were so badly hurt they couldn't stand, and so were three of the mutineers. Two were cut about the arms and neck, and one of 'em died next day. The rest had gone over the side and one of 'em had drowned because he was too weak to swim to shore

from loss of blood. So we patched up the wounded and set a double watch the rest of the night, and in the morning we could see what was left of the mutineers, moving about ashore and lighting a fire and foraging for clams and ferries and suchlike. That afternoon they put off in the whaleboat and begged for mercy. The skipper told 'em he'd take 'em aboard if they'd agree to terms, which was to work like honest men till they reached port when they'd be turned loose. I allus disagreed with the skipper there, but he thought it better to be sure of working the ship than of getting vengeance; besides we'd pretty well evened up the scores anyhow. So the men came aboard and we set sail, and we got to Frisco without any more trouble."

### CHAPTER III.

Old Bob finished his tale with a grunt and a shake of his head as he deplored the good old days now gone forever. I glanced at Peter and I was astonished to see him shaken with what was obviously strong emotion. He was trembling and pale, and he stared out the window without speaking. The conversation rambled on between me and old Bob until finally Peter arose and walked out and I after him. In the street he burst forth. There you were! he proclaimed. That was the kind of bloody, beastly, horrible business his father wanted him to get into! That was the sort of business the firm had made its money from. The business the Bidwell family lived on, like a lot of bloodsuckers.

He fell suddenly silent while I readjusted my startled mind to this unexpected and, to my view, totally unjustified tirade. I mildly expostulated with him. After all, I said, there had been nothing about Bob's story to excite one like this. It had been an interesting enough story, but it was like many others I had heard of the sea—

I did not finish my sentence. "Not like this one," Peter cried. "You don't know the inside of it. You don't know the inside of the Bidwell business as I do. It's rotten. Rotten to the core. The *Angela* was a Bidwell boat and her master was a fiend, if there ever was one. He was known from here to Boston as the hardest man with his crews that ever took out a ship. It was no wonder the men mutinied, and what's more, that mutiny wasn't the first or the second he'd had. Old Bob didn't half tell it. I got it from outsiders, disinterested, too. They fed the crew rotten food for one thing. They treated 'em like dogs for another. You don't know the conditions in those days as far as seamen were concerned. And old grandfather Bidwell was worse than any of his skippers. Did you ever hear he was crooked? Naturally not, because you wouldn't in this place unless you had the inside track of things."

"Grandfather Bidwell was a crook, and he was a fiend on his crews, and he gave them rotten provisions, and when they got to port he cheated them out of their money if he got half a chance. He was known far and wide as a miser and skinflint. Mother knows about him. That's why she wouldn't stand for me going into such a business. What's more, I've always suspected that father isn't as holy and upright as he should be. And you couldn't blame him much having old grandfather for a teacher as he did."

All very illuminating to me. And I seized my opportunity to draw out Peter still further, though it needed little effort because he was fairly seething with indignation. He told me repeated instances of Grandfather Bidwell's devilments and of how he had more than once barely escaped going to jail for one thing or another and he managed to make of him an extraordinary capable villain before he finished. I recall one incident connected with a ship

which old Jonathan, the first, was supposed to have had scuttled in order to get the insurance on her. And that he was privy to wholesale shanghaiing seemed fairly certain when one took into account the sources of Peter's information.

But back in my head kept running that theory of mine, and I led him into a closer analysis of his antipathies. Gradually I began to find my belief strengthened and justified. Peter, in those early days of susceptible childhood, had heard dozens of gruesome sea tales from old Bob and others. It assumed to his sensitive young mind the proportions of a gigantic and consuming monster which it behooved him to avoid. He hated even to cross on the ferry, so fearsome had it become to him. Later on, when he had begun investigating with insatiable curiosity the trail of his grandfather's activities, the sea had taken on certain Bidwell characteristics. It was the sea and it was Grandfather Bidwell. It was Grandfather Bidwell and it was the business of Bidwell & Son, hopelessly mixed up but presenting a united and loathsome front with which Peter found it impossible to reconcile himself as a partner.

This thing had come to taint even his affection and respect for his own father and Annie May's stand had not served to weaken what had now become a thoroughly rooted repulsion. It lay deep in Peter's secondary mind now, that layer which is naive, childlike, uncivilized and primitive. Peter himself didn't realize the hold it had got on him. All he knew was that he hated the sea and all its business.

I tried to talk to him along these lines, but I made no progress. He thought I was a trifle touched on what was probably a hobby of mine. He listened to me and then he laughed at me quietly and suggested we go for a long ride in the country as far as possible

from the sea. And the origin of character and the derivation of motive, for such are the phrases which are employed to denote the evasive and mysterious operations I was trying to trace in Peter's mind, went glimmering and were never again referred to between us.

I lost track of Peter Bidwell soon after that because I came East and settled in New York. Peter remained unstable, traveling here and there, restless and unsatisfied, dabbling a little in painting, in writing, in more verse, as I gathered from his infrequent letters which after a time ceased altogether. Years passed and during those years Peter Bidwell went through his crucifixion and emerged a man.

It always struck me as being one of those twists of blind and inscrutable fate that he should have achieved his final and highly respectable position in life through the workings of that sea he detested so. That thought and the memory of his face when old Bob had finished his recital concerning the ancient mutiny, unfailingly present themselves to me whenever I think of Peter Bidwell. And I would never have known the nature of his curious transformation or its causes or the experiences which effected it had he not one day dropped in to see me at the studio I was then occupying in Gramercy Park.

I never would have known him. Of course some twenty-odd years had passed since we had last met, but the years alone were not enough to have wrought the change in him. His features had not materially altered but the planes in his face had shifted. He seemed to me thinner, prematurely older, with deep lines across his forehead and around his mouth and beneath his eyes. He was solemn as a judge, and he did not once smile during that interview, and his hair was snow white. He continued to carry himself erect and he evidenced a seemingly invulnerable poise which I strove repeatedly to up-



set. Not that he appeared to be worried or carrying a secret burden. Merely that he was grim, rather quiet and inexpressibly detached. He talked with an amused contempt of the child he used to be when we had known each other in the old days. "I was a baby then," he said. "A mere baby."

It seemed he had come on to New York to interest capital in some sort of merger he was contemplating, and this opened the subject of his present activities. He was, he said, the sole owner of Bidwell & Son. I stared at this because I had thought him occupied perhaps with real estate or insurance or possibly mining.

"Bidwell & Son?" I exclaimed. "But——" and a flood of recollections poured into my mind. "But the sea!"

He waved his hand in a casual gesture. "Oh, the sea and I get along all right now. I was a baby in those days."

He went on, rather sketchily, to say that his father had died years ago. His mother had married again, and the business had got into the hands of her second husband. Complications had arisen which had caught up Peter in their far-reaching tentacles. Eventually he had triumphed over a good many obstacles, had regained control of the business and ousted his stepfather and the latter's son. His mother had died in the meanwhile. He was pretty much alone, except for his business to which he was devoted body and soul.

I rebelled at this hasty survey. And the upshot of it was I finally got Peter Bidwell talking. A difficult task because before he had finished I realized this was the first time he had ever expressed himself so freely and so exhaustively. He had become taciturn and volubility was obviously not one of his failings. He was persuaded to remain with me at my diggings for the three days he had allotted himself in town, and during that time I was with him every moment except when he was

engaged in the completion of his business. I made no notes of what he told me because the stuff was too engrossingly vital to be easily forgotten.

After a time he became accustomed to the many questions I hurled at him during the course of his necessarily interrupted narrative, and before he left he promised to send me something he had written concerning his reactions to the extraordinary experiences he had been through. He was true to his word and some weeks following his departure I received a bulky package through the mails. It proved to be that manuscript of which I have already spoken. The sort of thing reporters love to call "a human document." I opened it and I did not arise until I had read it through to the end of its seven hundred pages.

It gave me what I had been trying so hard to get from Peter. Which was his inner self. His inner self during the progress of that series of events which almost destroyed him. It gave me his "reactions," as he termed them, not only to the characters playing so important a part in his tragedy, for so I prefer to consider it, but to situation after situation as it arose and passed and was succeeded by a fresh and more complex one. Much of the stuff was duplication, most of it was impossible from a literary viewpoint, but all of it, as I have said, rang with truth. I was obsessed with it for days afterward, so much so that finally I wired Peter if he would object to my taking the facts and trying to make some sort of a story from them, omitting, of course, actual names and certain other details which might embarrass him if published. He answered at once, giving me *carte blanche*, and I began the thing immediately.

I have always had a sort of hesitancy at writing in the first person. For one thing it is done to death and for another it is, in a way, a confession of weakness no one likes to admit, since

its form is perhaps the easiest of all methods. I have, therefore, elected to remove myself from the picture and to recount the thing in the third person. I have not even put the story into Peter's mouth since the third person permits a wider latitude of description and of characterization than the purely subjective. Of one thing I am sure. The story is true, to the last hairbreadth. I didn't spend three days catechising Peter Bidwell and Peter Bidwell's soul for nothing. And what I missed, and I missed a great deal, I found in that strange manuscript, stained with sea water and with blood.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Peter Bidwell was barely seven when he received his first impression of the sea. He had been taken down among the wharves by his mother as a great treat and especially to see the newest addition to his father's fleet, a steel-built English boat which had just arrived on her maiden voyage. Peter was not greatly interested in the boat, but the sluggish rise and fall of the water about the piles fascinated him. Its surface bore a multitude of things. Chips and bits of timber and what looked like an old coat and bottles and fruit peelings and masses of seaweed and, absorbing to contemplate, a dead rat.

The water rose and fell, swelling almost imperceptibly and without a ripple to mar its greasy surface. The floating things arose with it and moved a little as if endowed with life. There was something awe inspiring about that water, something frightening. It was not always silent. Sometimes it made a sucking noise as if it were licking with a tongue at the piles, and again Peter would hear a sudden slap as if it were smacking its lips. So he clung tightly to his mother's hand and wished he were away from this place, and wanted to cry, but dared not, lacking privacy for grief, because there were so many men about.

His mother called his attention to the pretty boats which were passing back and forth in the bay, but Peter continued disinterested. He was greatly relieved when finally they left the wharf and returned home.

Later on when Peter had attained the dignity of lollipops and the like and was given pennies of his own to spend as he wished he encountered near his father's offices a great teller of marvelous tales in old Bob, who kept a shop full of sailors' slop chests and clothing and old guns and curios from every place under the sun and sweets for the grown-up and little children, who were his steady patrons. Bob's stock of stories never seemed to be exhausted. But there was one which Peter never tired of hearing. One about a mutiny 'way back when Bob had been a sailor himself. A tale of bloodshed, terrifying to the wide-eyed child. A tale which served still further to impress him with the sinister character of the sea whose smacking mouth he had heard among the piles.

Later still Peter heard other tales, tales the first inkling of which came to him in an odd manner when he was in his middle teens. Peter was in high school by now, long legged, uncertain of his vocal cords and extremely shy in the presence of girls. Peter's father had suggested that he employ his vacation to greater advantage by coming down to the office and doing some work in order to become familiar with the duties he would some day have to take up as a member of the firm of Bidwell & Son. Peter had been turned out by his mother in his Sunday best and had dutifully appeared next morning and been greeted with the respect due a future member of the big firm, and ushered into a small anteroom adjoining his father's office, and told to seat himself until his father had finished with a gentleman who had called on business.

Peter had been in that anteroom be-

fore on several occasions. It was a bleak, barren room, with old-fashioned, horsehair-covered chairs, and a big mahogany table in its center, and pictures of full-rigged ships under sail upon its walls. Its windows gave on the bay, and through them Peter could see the traffic of a great port and hear whistles blowing and smell the salt air from the water which was tossing under a brisk wind. Presently the murmur of voices behind the door of his father's private office arose to a hoarse growl and then to a sharp interchange. The gentleman was evidently angry at something, for Peter caught parts of what he was saying.

"I won't stand it—everybody knows you're a crook, Bidwell—you made your money sinking ships—rotten food—robbing sailors——"

The interview terminated with a suddenness appalling to Peter. The door was flung back until it crashed against the black walnut wainscot and Peter's father appeared, pointing through it and glaring at the gentleman who had lost his temper. "Get out!" said Peter's father, and the gentleman, with a shrug and a parting, "To hell with you!" obeyed. A gentleman, who was of the seafaring sort, Peter thought, and with a face crimsoned by passion. He passed out with deliberation, shoulders squared and hands clenched at his sides and without looking at Peter.

Peter's father did not look at him, either, but slammed the door. Peter waited for perhaps half an hour before he dared approach and timidly knock. His father barked at him to enter. Peter opened the door and his father said, "Oh! It's you, is it? Go out and tell Matthews to set you to work." Then he turned back to his desk.

Peter went out and Matthews, who was the head clerk, showed him how to clip letters from the long roll of tissue paper which had been run through a sort of press and which he said were

copies of the originals. With this and similarly banal jobs Peter was kept busy the rest of the day and the rest of the week. How much longer he would have remained is uncertain, since a violent episode occurred at this time whose effects made Peter unpresentable for many days either at the office or, for that matter, at any other place.

There had been ill feeling between Peter and one Helmer, the bully of the class, for months. Thus far they had never come to blows, mainly because Peter believed that in such event he would be soundly thrashed, and he had a reluctance to being hurt which worried him at times with the suspicion he was not so brave as he imagined. He had endured for a year the petty tyranny all bullies exert over their physical inferiors, and the sum of those were accumulating in Peter a murderous resentment he felt one day might prove explosive.

He had pictured this possibility and he knew if it ever happened he would hurl himself into the struggle with the determination either to destroy or be destroyed. There could be no compromise, no draw. The fight would be without quarter on either side. Helmer would, of course, have more to lose in his reputation, but Peter knew intuitively he could never again contemplate himself with any degree of self-respect if defeated. And it was in anticipation of an impending climax that Peter had of late been taking long walks for his wind and exercises with heavy dumbbells, and secret shadow-sparring when alone in his room, with Helmer as his imagined opponent.

There was a curiously maddening quality in Helmer's persecutions. He was forever coming up behind Peter and slapping him between the shoulder blades with all his might, and when Peter would turn in anguish Helmer would grin with the lower half of his face and laugh uproariously and pass it

off as a huge joke and say, "That's the time I got you." And Peter—although he knew from the animosity in Helmer's close-set eyes that the blow had been intended as a vicious demonstration of Helmer's hatred—would force himself to also grin and then despise himself for it and for not picking up the nearest chair and braining the hulking brute.

It was the sneaking duplicity of the thing which so enraged Peter, although he did not know it. All he knew was that he hated Helmer and would have liked to kill him if he could have done it without unpleasant consequences. Of course there was always a sneering comment from Helmer when Peter passed him, accompanied by that hypocritical grin. These did not greatly annoy Peter. They were, after all, only words and he soothed his hesitation in resenting them by reflecting that he was superior to such and that Helmer was beneath his contempt. Which would have been quite correct, except that Peter was not entirely sincere in it.

Walking home from his father's office that night Peter saw approaching the detestable figure of the bully, accompanied by two of his allies and sycophants. And Peter knew he was in for it and felt a flush of shame and resentment creep into his cheeks and would have turned down a side street only it was then too late. Helmer spied him from a distance, and Peter saw him turn to one of the others and make some remark which elicited laughter. They came near, and as they passed Helmer, grinning, said out of the side of his mouth: "Well, if it ain't young Bidwell, learning the shanghai business in his old man's office!"

Peter heard the applauding laughter of Helmer's companions, heard Helmer's jeering note and paused in his tracks. The memory of what the seafaring gentleman had said to his father came back to him. He turned. Helmer and his allies were continuing, with a

half-turned, shambling shuffle, their faces convulsed with derision. Peter held up his hand and they stopped and waited for him to overtake them.

There was a tumult in Peter Bidwell's heart such as he had never known before. The blood had rushed into his brain and it seemed thundering with a fiery madness. He vaguely knew he was trembling, but not with fear, and he knew the moment had come when he and Helmer were about to settle a long account. Outwardly he was calm except for his crimson face, and they doubtless thought this merely a symptom of the chagrin and fear their victim usually exhibited at receiving such gibes.

Peter said no word, made no untoward motion until he stood directly before Helmer. Then, "You'll take that back, Helmer," he said softly.

Helmer threw up his head and brayed his amusement and the others echoed him.

"All right, then," said Peter. "This is no place to settle it. Will you come somewhere where there won't be a crowd, or a cop, or anything like that?"

Helmer, hands akimbo on his hips, feet braced apart, looked down on this slender and presumptuous figure which had dared take issue with him. Looked him up and down and up again to Peter's now white face. "Why, you poor little shrimp!" he pronounced with pitying contempt. "*You ain't big enough to take me on.*"

"I'll take you on right now if you don't come to some other place," said Peter, and stepped back a pace and measured the distance to Helmer's jaw.

Helmer, with a quick glance about him, considered this a moment and, evidently esteeming it prudent to avoid the possibility of police interference, nodded. "Oh, I'll take you on, if *that's* all you want, and ten like you. I'll teach you a thing or two, and your own mother won't know you when I've got finished with you. Come on, softy."

And he led the way back through a side street to where an alley debouched from the middle of the block. Peter strode at his side, the henchmen following. The alley was cluttered with wagons, wooden boxes and junk, and Helmer came to a pause behind the protecting mass and threw off his coat. Peter did likewise, and hitched up his belt another notch.

"How d'you want to fight, baby?" asked Helmer. "Stand up or rough-and-tumble?"

Peter thought rapidly. He would have liked to say, haughtily, he would fight stand up, but he realized he might be at a disadvantage because of the other's acknowledged science. Furthermore he was in a mood for primitive fighting, for which the rough-and-tumble would provide him ample opportunity. "Rough-and-tumble," said Peter. "And another thing." He nodded toward the other two who had acquired positions of ocular advantage on a wagon box. "Are these two going to fight me, too, or is it to be a fair fight between just you and me?"

Helmer paused to expectorate with a gesture of supreme contempt before he replied. "I don't need anybody to help fight *my* battles, especially one as easy as this is going to be, kid." And he rolled up his right shirt sleeve, deliberate and assured.

Peter wondered if he should follow suit, but another thought struck him. A necktie was dangerous in a rough-and-tumble if the other man got hold of it and managed to strangle one. And he swiftly pulled his off and threw it behind him.

Helmer hitched up his trousers, spat again, crouched and circled toward Peter. Peter stood erect, watching him. Helmer threw himself forward, clutched at Peter's shoulder and swung heavily at his face. Peter ducked, squirmed loose and stood free again. But he had experienced a taste of the other's brute

strength in that slight preliminary and the blow had whistled past his ear with the effect of a warning. He must avoid blows if he could, must keep from being thrown beneath Helmer's body.

Helmer paused, insultingly deliberate, grinned hatefully, and crouched again. As he rushed Peter braced himself on his right foot and struck with all his force. It was a blow of lightninglike rapidity and it had weight behind it. To which was added the momentum of Helmer's approach. It was also quite unexpected and it landed squarely on Helmer's nose. His head jogged back on the vertebræ and Helmer stopped. He laughed wolfishly and blew from his nostrils the spouting blood, and ran forward, cursing in a berserk rage. This time Peter leaped to one side and Helmer went careening against the wagon. The two satellites encouraged their champion with foul oaths and profane exhortations to kick the guts out of Peter Bidwell. Peter stepped back and wondered how he would meet the next onslaught.

Helmer wiped his nose and advanced with more leisure. He had learned his lesson from that impressive right, and this time he proposed taking no chances. He raised his fists and came in on guard. He fainted and Peter threw up his right to catch the blow and Helmer swung with his right and caught Peter on the side of the head, and he went down as if hit with a maul and lay there, wondering where he was and what had happened. He saw the ground before him and Helmer's legs, and then Helmer putting on his coat and sneeringly accepting the congratulations of the audience.

Peter got to his knees and felt of his head. He had experienced no pain. Nothing but the dull shock of the blow. He arose unsteadily, and the mists cleared before his eyes, and he heaved a deep breath. He was himself again. He asked Helmer if he was going to

quit already. Helmer turned away with a gesture of dismissal.

"Take off your coat," said Peter, "because I'm going to lick you yet."

Helmer eyed him. Dropped the coat with the air of one who has before him a dull task, and advanced once more, breathing sardonic commentary on Peter's audacity and informing him impudently of the catastrophe about to be visited upon him.

Peter once more evaded with swiftly shifting feet that plunging onrush, and Helmer, without pausing save to wheel in his tracks, renewed it. Peter, desperate, struck out, missed, was lost in a fumbling struggle of arms and heads and bodies. They went down together, and Peter hugged close and shut his eyes against the rain of blows, and went searching for Helmer's throat. Twice he found it and had his hand struck away, but the third time his fingers closed about Helmer's windpipe and he snatched with his other hand and hung. He was aware that Helmer's heavy breathing had become a strangled gasping when he felt something jabbed into his eye and he let loose under the anguish of it and staggered back to his feet again. Helmer was not yet up, but was on his knees, striving to catch his breath. Peter stepped close and struck him between the eyes and Helmer went backward. Peter paused, blowing hard and wiping the blood from the eye Helmer had vainly tried to gouge out with his thumb.

Helmer had got his breath now and his voice, and he made the error of wasting the former in another vocal attack on Peter and Peter's antecedents. Helmer was standing when Peter leaped at him and struck again. Helmer clinched and this time he whirled Peter beneath him and Peter, with the desperate apprehension that the worst had happened, fought furiously with hands and feet like a cat on its back. Helmer was having difficulty in reaching him

through this defensive barrage, but he succeeded in placing half a dozen flail-like blows on Peter's face. Several struck Peter's eyes and he saw stars, but, as before, he felt no pain but only a lust for killing. Even in this complicated and purely primitive struggle he was using his mind. He had, he knew, to get Helmer away if he did not want to be slowly beaten into unconsciousness. And with this he began more carefully, aiming his heels at Helmer's middle, maintaining mechanically as good a defense as possible against the twin hammers of Helmer's fists.

Finally he had the tremendous satisfaction of planting his foot squarely in Helmer's stomach. Helmer went flying away and landed in a sitting position, obviously with the breath knocked completely out of him. Peter arose and contemplated him. He had got his second wind in the scrimmage, and he now deliberated coolly whether or not he should kick Helmer's head off or let him recover and lick him stand up.

Helmer continued immovable, holding both hands at his abdomen and gasping furiously. His eyes were bulging, and he presented the appearance of one in abject terror of imminent dissolution. His gasps presently became less spasmodic and he appeared to be inhaling with more success. Peter wiped his eye again because it was blinded from the blood filling it, and shot a glance at the two henchmen. They were staring at their leader, obviously appalled and speechlessly unable to cope with this unheard-of catastrophe.

"Have you got enough?" asked Peter grimly.

Helmer, his mouth agape, made no reply. Slowly he drew himself erect. He kept his eyes on Peter as if fearing another rush. He inhaled deeply and his torso swelled as he lowered his head and embarked on a frowning, cautious advance upon his adversary. Peter gave ground much as one might before the

threatening charge of a bull. Until he felt at his back the presence of the wagon. He understood now that cautious advance. Helmer was cornering him. Would bear him down again, and this time would keep his throat out of harm's way.

Peter essayed a flanking movement, but was overwhelmed by that swift approach and once more the two went to the ground. It was Helmer who sought a throat hold now, and Peter had to fight for his life. Helmer's movements were leisurely, terrifyingly calculating. This, Peter knew, was to be the decisive struggle.

Again and again Peter strove to wriggle free and get to his feet only to be caught and pulled down beneath the crushing weight of the other's body. His breath was knocked from him by blows from Helmer's knees, his eyes were blinded by blows from Helmer's fists. A horrid constriction seemed clutching at his lungs and he whined as he fought for air. He caught one of Helmer's arms and clung to it, and Helmer heaved to get loose and drew Peter upward. Peter snatched at the opportunity and struck out with the other hand and, to his amazement, Helmer went limp and collapsed at his feet and lay motionless.

The three of them continued to stare at this phenomenon for an instant and then the two others ran and lifted their fallen idol and set him in a sitting position. His head lolled on his shoulders and his eyes were glazed. Peter had an awful premonition he had killed him, and he came and felt at his heart. It continued to beat and Peter was relieved. But he did not yet understand what had happened to thus summarily dispose of his enemy. They laid Helmer on his back and mopped his head with handkerchiefs and discussed the wisdom of calling a doctor. Helmer continued to remain senseless. Peter felt of his pulse, was reassured, and or-

dered one of the others to fetch some water. The boy ran off at once while Peter waited anxiously for signs of returning consciousness.

Helmer did not revive when they poured water on his face and throat, so the other boy went off furiously for a doctor. He returned in the course of half an hour with a ponderous old gentleman who eyed the group shrewdly as he leaned over the prostrate figure. He, too, felt at Helmer's heart and his wrist. Peeled back his eyelids and examined his nose. Then he asked questions. He wanted to know if they had used weapons of any kind, such as a knife, say. Ignoring their protests, he pulled out Helmer's shirt and explored his body for a wound. He asked more questions. He wanted to know exactly what had happened. All three protested there had merely been a blow struck. Peter didn't know where he had hit Helmer, but the other two said they thought it was in the throat. The doctor frowned, felt at Helmer's throat, shook his head and Peter's heart went into his boots.

"Bad blow," said the gentleman distinctly. "Thyroid cartilage of the larynx," he pronounced cryptically. Then, to Peter, "Where did you learn it?"

Peter shook his head. He had no idea what the other was talking about. "I don't know, sir."

"Well, you'll take my advice if you know what's best for you and never use it again. It's lucky you didn't kill him. He'll come around all right this time. Tell him to go home and keep quiet a few days on general principles." He leaned over Helmer, who was opening his eyes. "He'll be all right presently." He arose, pointed a warning finger at Peter. "Mind what I tell you now. The next time you use that blow you may kill a man." Went stumping away again.

The two turned as one and looked at

Peter with reverence. One of them asked what the blow was. Peter shrugged. "Oh, it's just one I got from a prize-fighter friend of mine," he answered loftily.

They managed to get the fallen bully on his legs, and with an ally supporting him at either side, Peter again asked Helmer if he had had enough. Helmer, dazed, and pawing aimlessly at his throat, gazed stupidly at Peter without reply. "Because if you haven't," continued Peter, "I'll give you some more of it."

Helmer shook his head, and with that slight gesture of defeat, his star became eclipsed forever. He was taken away, and Peter, the cynosure of all who passed, went home. He had no idea of what his appearance might be until his mother encountered him in the lower hallway and screamed. Convinced he was not fatally injured she led him to a mirror wherein Peter saw a disheveled, ragged tramp, covered with dirt and blood and altogether unrecognizable as that spruce young gentleman, Peter Bidwell. His mother took him upstairs, and while he rendered an account of himself, she washed his wounds and applied court plaster and arnica. She was appalled when she learned he had whipped the redoubtable Helmer whose reputation was known among the parents of his victims, and she told Peter's father about it proudly when he came home that night. Peter's father wanted to know how the fight started and Peter told him. Jonathan Bidwell's face grew black when he heard what Helmer had said. "It's a good thing you licked him," said Jonathan, "because if you hadn't I'd ha' strapped you till you couldn't stand." He gazed with scowling approval at his son. "Seems as if there might be stuff in you after all. How the devil did you manage it? He's 'most twice your heft, ain't he? And twice your strength."

Peter said he had struck a blow

taught him by a prize-fighter friend. "It's a queer blow," said Peter. "I can't describe it exactly, but some day I'll show you," and retreated hastily before being asked further disconcerting questions.

He kept indoors for a week because both his eyes were blackened and because his face was swelled until it seemed it would fairly crack. Peter didn't mind, however. Every pang of pain was balm to his triumphant soul. He had licked Helmer. True, he had not yet the faintest suspicion how he had licked him. That revealing morsel of information was to be gained somewhat later when he took the matter up with the family physician, under pledge of strictest secrecy. And what the physician told him stood him in good stead on one of those occasions when Peter's life hung in the balance and he had all but given himself up for lost.

## CHAPTER V.

The Helmer incident bore other fruit, for Peter remembered what the bully had said and added to what the seafaring gentleman had told his father that day while Peter waited in the ante-room, it set him to thinking. It roused his curiosity to know what if anything lay behind these dark insinuations and he seized the first opportunity to probe them to the bottom. His mother's attitude when he approached her was suspicious. She tried to laugh away his questions, but he cornered her and eventually persuaded her to tell him what she herself had already discovered, motivated by like fears and like insinuations. She told him that what people said about his grandfather was only too true. Old Jonathan, the first, had been a villain. A money-grubbing shark who hesitated at nothing to make a dollar honestly or otherwise. He *had* starved his crews, had beaten his seamen out of their wages whenever he could, and



had narrowly escaped going to jail for shanghaiing.

Once the ice was broken on the subject, Annie May spoke her mind, bitterly and without restraint. She had never had any use for the business and less for the money which had been so sinfully earned and which to this day continued to keep the firm in the position it was. It was a dirty business, she said, and one she had never wanted her husband to follow, but he had laughed at her and gone his way. She was glad to see her son thought differently of it. Glad he hated the sea and all its traffic. And she would stand by him in his determination to have nothing to do with it. Already she had opposed Jonathan in his wish to have Peter enter the firm and he had been bitter and unforgiving and never the same since. Indeed they might as well almost be strangers to each other, for all he cared. It was nothing but ships, ships, day and night with him. For her part she never wished to hear the word again so long as she lived.

They talked for the better part of two hours and with the result that from that time on they were joined together in what was nothing less than a conspiracy against Jonathan. Their opposition was not open because Annie May was too astute to suffer any breach, but their determination was in nowise weakened by its secrecy. Peter returned to school, and eventually was graduated, and went away with his mother, for what she said was a change of air. She had been in ill health that winter and had hinted broadly to her physician it would be as well for all concerned if he were to advise a trip to the East, or, perhaps, abroad. He compromised by suggesting Canada, and Jonathan thus found himself alone in the big house with only the servants to keep him company during the greater part of the summer.

The trip was merely a part of the con-

spiracy. Annie May knew if Peter remained at home his father would force the issue of his entering the business at once and she seized the first pretext she could think of in order to postpone for so long a time as possible what she knew would be a crisis in the family affairs. She had plenty of time to think out whatever steps might be necessary to foil her husband's expectations, and in all this she had the cooperation of Peter. The two of them decided that, if necessary, they would leave behind them the Bidwell lares and penates, and, with what money Annie May had in her own right, go East and, eventually, abroad. Peter wanted to be an artist, he thought, and his mother lovingly approved this laudable ambition. She always maintained he was more of the artistic than the business type of man. And his hands were so artistic.

But no such drastic a step as leaving the old Bidwell home proved necessary, although there was a stormy and unforgettable scene before the family had once again settled down to its former accustomed routine.

That scene occurred one evening shortly after the return of the travelers. Jonathan had retired to his study on the top floor of the big house and the other two were in the sitting room, and secretly somewhat relieved, as always, by the absence of that presence so minatory to their happiness. They were presently startled by Jonathan's abrupt return. He came marching into the room and seated himself with an air of decision in the chair he had just vacated and pulled off his glasses and stuffed them into the pocket of his smoking jacket. He said gruffly he had something on his mind and had decided to speak it out and have done with it.

Annie May moved uneasily and laid down her book. Peter calmly continued smoking his cigarette, but his intuitive mind told him this was to be the settlement of the great question.

"I've put it off and put it off," continued Jonathan irritably, "and all of a sudden I realized the foolishness of it and so I'm going to speak it out." He paused an instant, pursing his lips and rubbing his chin as if gathering his arguments. "What I want to know is how soon you are going to stop wasting your precious time and get down to business." He had not spoken his name, but his gimlet gaze left no doubt as to whom he was addressing.

Peter cleared his throat leisurely. This would take tact, he reflected.

"To tell the truth, father, I've not given it very much thought. We've been pretty much occupied traveling, you know. Mother and I." And he cast an inclusive glance toward Annie May, who was now sitting rigidly on the edge of her chair, regarding her husband with alert eyes.

Jonathan settled back in his chair as if aware he had to deal with procrastination. "That's all very well. But now you've got through your traveling, suppose you put your mind on what I've asked you. I've been pretty patient in this matter, I think, and I've had a lot of dillydallying and I've said nothing. I've told myself when you were through school and maybe had a little rest, why, then you'd be ready to step into harness like you should."

Peter cast another look at his mother, but she was evidently leaving the argument entirely in his hands, at least for the present. He puffed at his cigarette, uncomfortably aware of his father's eye, and wished himself well out of it. Jonathan Bidwell was never one to set a man at his ease in an argument.

"It's like this, father." Peter raised his head and contemplated the ceiling with what was calculated to be an expression of profound thought. "I've never, somehow, been very much interested in shipping. I don't know why it is, exactly, but, well, you see——"

Jonathan's voice cut short his floun-

dering. Sharply and without compromise. With two words. "Why not?"

"Well, somehow I don't seem to take to it. Business never seemed to appeal to me very much." Peter felt his confidence return now he had got his stride. "Some men take to business, father, like a duck to water, while others—well, they never seem to get the hang of it no matter how much they try."

"So *that's* it," said Jonathan. "Maybe you'll tell me this. Maybe you'll tell me just how much you've tried." And was silent, waiting.

Peter's confidence was oozing away again. "Well, I can't say I've tried very much, now I think of it."

"I can't, either. Suppose you try for a change and stop talking about something you don't know anything about."

Again Peter turned for aid to his mother, but she was still intent on her husband. Miserably he glanced at his father, miserably he glanced away. "But I don't *want* to try," he confessed hopelessly.

"You don't *want* to try?" echoed his father, and sat up. "Why not? Haven't you got any ambition? Haven't you got any sand? Or what? Here I've been waitin' patiently for you to get some sort of an education, and a damned sight better one than I ever had, too, and here you tell me you don't even want to *try* to make something of yourself. What the devil *ails* you anyways?"

"Nothing," said Peter mechanically. "Only I don't like business."

"Well, then, maybe in the name of hell you'll tell me what you *do* want to do." He settled back in his chair again grimly.

"I don't exactly know. I've been thinking, and I thought perhaps I'd like to be an author or an artist, or something like that. I'm sure I could make a success of something like that."

Said Jonathan Bidwell softly, "Well, I will be damned." And folded his arms and stared at his son as if he had been metamorphosed into a strange and alien shape before his very eyes. "He wants to be an artist. Wants to be an author. One o' those crazy idiots who wear velvet coats and tam o' shanters, I suppose, and long hair. Wants to starve in a garret. When there's fortunes to be made by simply turning over his hand. Fortunes, I'm tellin' you. The business hasn't been touched yet. And here I'm getting on in years and maybe you'll tell me what's to become of it when I'm through. You will like fun. When you don't know an invoice from a balloon. Look here. Where'd you get this artist idea of yours?"

"I've always had it," lied Peter. "Even since I can remember."

"Didn't you ever want to be a conductor on a railroad and wear brass buttons or a policeman or a clown in a circus, too? Nonsense! You didn't always want to be an artist, and you know it. Who has been putting this idea into your head, anyways?"

"Nobody. I just had it myself." He glanced guiltily at his mother and back again. "Nobody. It's my own idea."

Jonathan Bidwell hitched himself forward, turned slowly, and faced his wife. "So! It's *you*, is it? It's you've been putting this artist junk into his head. When you should ha' been helpin' me groom him for the business like any other sensible mother would. Well, what d'you think is going to be the end of it? Where d'you think he's going to find himself before he's through? Answer me, *will* you?"

Annie May blinked, folded and unfolded her hands, caught her breath hastily. "I—I think he will make a success of it, or anything else he tries to do," she said. "And I don't think it's junk at all."

Jonathan glared, snorted through his nose, sank back in his chair. "I'm be-

ginnin' to see where the wind blows now," he said. "The two of you set in this crazy idea and against me." He closed his eyes, scowling in thought. Then, "What's this about not liking business? If he wants to go into some other business I'll set him up in it and back him to a finish. I don't care *what* it is. I've got the money and I've got the pull. Blood is thicker than water, after all. A Bidwell is a Bidwell. What d'you say, Peter?"

This touched him, but he could not retreat now. "It's any business, father. I mean I wouldn't like any business." He vaguely felt that in this moment he held the advantage and the unprecedented sensation swept him on. "I hate all business. But most of all I hate anything that has to do with the sea." And at the look of stupid astonishment which filled his father's face he could have kicked himself.

At last, "Where did you get that from, what you said then? About hating the sea?" asked his father.

Peter could not say. Could not explain. "I don't know. Perhaps I don't hate it, but I don't like it," he qualified. "I never liked it. I suppose it's foolish, but I can't help it."

"What next?" whispered Jonathan. "What next?" He whirled on Annie May. "Is *this* some of your work, too? I expect so. You never wanted me to go into the old business, did you? Tried your best to get me out of it, didn't you? Said it was founded on dirty blood money. Shanghaing! Said my father earned it by being crooked, didn't you? Don't deny it. I've got a good memory if I've got nothing else. Well, let me tell you this. The dirty blood money was good enough for you to live on and spend for clothes and a carriage and servants, wasn't it?"

"It's good enough to use and spend and all that, but when it comes to him taking off his coat and doing some share of the work, why, that makes it differ-

ent, don't it? Oh, yes. It's dirty blood money, then, but's pretty damned easy money otherwise. Well, what have you got to say for yourself, now you've succeeded in spoiling the end of every little plan and every thought I've had in the business ever since the boy was born? Go ahead."

To the credit of Annie May be it said she did not flinch under this scathing arraignment. She got to her feet and leaned across the table, which was between them, and spoke her mind. She hadn't plotted behind his back. Peter had always hated the sea and she could see no reason why he should be forced into anything that was detestable to him. "It isn't as if we didn't have the money for him to do as he pleases. Because we have, Jonathan Bidwell, and you know it."

"You mean *I* have," said Jonathan meaningly.

"Very well. *You* have. But I've also money, don't forget, and I'm willing to spend it to make the boy happy if you are not."

"Make him happy!" sneered Jonathan. "Make an ass of him, you mean."

"He hates the sea," she continued, "and I don't blame him. I hate it myself. And *you* talk about wanting to do so much for him in the business. Let me tell you, Jonathan Bidwell, all you think of is that horrid business. All you want Peter in it for is so as to be sure it comes down in the family and isn't lost or harmed in any way. If you want him to be contented, why don't you do something to help him be what he wants the way I am going to? And you've said I tried to get you out of the business, too. Certainly I did. You know what everybody says about your father, or if you don't know you ought to. Why, it's a scandal the way they talk. It's a——"

"Be still!" shouted Jonathan and smote with clenched fist the table ledge. "I won't have you belittling my father

if you are my wife. All that is nothing but malicious gossip. Gossip from folk envious of me and hating to see me get on. Don't I know? Don't I meet 'em every day with their smirks and their smiles and their knives in my back when they think I'm not watchin'? Don't be a fool. Don't put yourself on their level. I meet enough of 'em outside without findin' 'em in my own house. Sit down and keep quiet a minute if you can." He waved her back. "Sit down, I tell you, and hold your tongue. This matter lies between the men of this house anyways and not the wimmin."

Annie May, outtalked and a little shaken by the tempestuousness the situation had achieved, slowly drew back and seated herself. Jonathan leaned forward in his chair, elbows on its arms, hands hanging limp. Nothing limp about Jonathan's expression or attitude, however. "You hate the sea and you want to be an artist. That's it, isn't it? Well, let us not waste time parleying. Most men would say they'd give you a night to think it over. That's not my way. Strike now is how I like to do things, now and quick, while the iron is hot. All I want to know is this: Are you clear in your mind on what you say? Are you fixed in your mind about what you want to do? Mind now. No dillydallying. No procrastinatin'."

Peter raised his head and looked his father in the eyes. "I'm not going into business and I'm going to be an artist, or something."

Jonathan's head snapped down in a nod of finality. "That settles it. Once and for all that settles it, and I'm glad you know your own mind in this if you don't in much else. And now listen to me, the both of you. You are to go ahead as you will, in business or out of it. Being an artist or a circus clown or anything you want. But you needn't expect me to underwrite you. Annie May, here, she can give you all the

money she wants, and that's her business. So long as you're under my roof you'll be welcome and it won't cost you a penny. That means the both of you. But when you step out from under it you're to pay your own expenses. And I think that's just and reasonable, considering the situation I'm finding myself in to-night. Understand, I'm taking my medicine. I've never squealed yet and I'm not beginnin' now. Though what's to become of Bidwell & Son I don't know."

He got to his feet, walked to the door

and paused, a shadow of grim and sardonic humor about his square-cut mouth. "Maybe it'll be left for the benefit of poor and shanghaied seamen." He went out and they heard him sigh to himself and make a deprecating, clicking sound with his tongue as he ascended the stairway with slow and weary steps.

They looked at each other and then away, and it was some moments before they had shamefacedly pulled themselves together and begun to talk in low whispers.

TO BE CONTINUED.





# A Female Crusoe

By CAPTAIN R. F. COFFIN

An exciting yarn taken from the "Book of the Ocean," published in 1857, which relates the adventures of some hardy mariners on a tropical isle, and tells how they formed a gastronomic acquaintance with a well-known quadruped.

**D**ID you ever eat rat, sir? No, I suppose not, and I don't mean for to say they are as good as birds; but if you was hard up, and couldn't get no birds nor nothin', you'd find rats were perticlerly good scoff."

Thus much the old sailor, by way of introduction, and he thus continued:

"I told you about my bein' picked up by that there whale-ship, and of my shippin' into her for to go the v'yage. Well, 'tain't no wonder, sir, that whalers is such good-for-nothin' trash aboard a merchant ship, 'cause their v'yages is so long that if a chap know'd anythin' afore he started he'd forgit it all afore he got back, and no matter how smart he was to begin with he'd git lazy afore the v'yage was ended, and I won't deny that I did myself, neither.

"You see, for almost the whole time from the start they have fine weather. They may git a little blow a-goin' off the coast, though that ain't likely, as they don't generally start until there's a good promise of fine weather for a day or two, and by that time they are out across the gulf, and from there down to the line is all plain sailin' and fine weather. Three or four days' calm in the Horse latitudes, perhaps, which gives 'em time for to practice the crews—which are almost all green hands—to the boats, and then they strike the trades, and away they go, scarcely touchin' a brace or a bit of runnin' gear except for to tauten it.

"Well, then they have the doldrums 'twixt the trades, and if they weather St. Roque, which they almost always do, these whalers, 'cause they go well

to the east'ard afore strikin' the trades, so if so be as they may take a whale a-goin' off they may put in to Fayal and send their ile home and git a good outfit of greens for to begin the v'yage with. Sometimes, too, they put in to the Cape de Verdes, but mostly to Fayal; or, as these whalers call it, the 'Isle de Dabney,' 'cause ever since the world was created the American consul into that place has been named Dabney, and has kind of been the king pin there, ownin' pretty nearly all the water front, and bein' consul and ship chandler and merchant, all combined together. Leastwise that was so when I was there, which is a many years ago. He'd buy the ile from these whale ships and send it home to Boston in an old brig, what he had called the *Harbinger*, or he'd ship their ile on freight, and he'd sell 'em vegetables or whatever else they wanted, and always had a keg of real French brandy for to give the skipper when he went to sea.

"He'd tell 'em it formed part of the cargo of a brig from Bordeaux to Boston as come in there in distress in his great-grandfather's time, when he was consul, and had to be condemned and the cargo sold for the benefit of whom it might consarn; and his great-grandfather bought ten casks of this brandy, which was then twenty-five years old, and this here keg was a part of it, he'd tell the skipper. But old Manuel, his major-domo, as they called him, used to allow that this here was all a yarn, and that the brandy was made over onto the Island of Pico, right opposite to Fayal, where old Dabney had extensive vineyards. But, bless you, sir, these here whalin' skippers from New Bedford and Nantucket didn't know no better than for to take it all in, and the grog done 'em as much good as if the yarn of old Dabney's great-grandfather had all been true as this here I'm a-tellin' you on. It sent the skippers away good-natured, anyhow, with

the addition of a big basket of oranges, and made 'em look more pleasantly on old Dabney's bills, which I've heerd 'em say was rayther steep.

"Well, there you are—arter gittin' across the line and into the southeast trades then there was another spell of as bright, fine weather as a man would wish for to see, and away they went rap full till they got through 'em and into the heavy weather of the South Atlantic. Then, in course, I don't say but what they might have some pretty bad weather till arter they had passed the Horn, but what of it? They wasn't a-makin' a passage with ships of other lines a-racin' with 'em. They wasn't a-hopin' for to hear the news-boys a-cryin' out, 'Here's the arrival of the so-and-so with two days' later news from Europe;' not a bit of it, and so, bless you, they jist took things easy.

"When they was about a-comin' up with the River 'Plate,' where they was likely for to git a *pomparò*, they'd jist send down their t'gallan'masts, and there they was snug, and in anythin' that was at all like a blow with the big crews they carried they could down and reef all three topsails to once, and most generally did it in the daytime, too. No goin' aloft in dark nights aboard of them ships, I can tell you. They know'd a trick worth two or three of that. Well, then, on the other side, when they got onto whalin' ground they were under snug canvas all the time, and so, you see, if a man didn't git lazy under sich circumstances he ought to have been ashamed of hisself.

"Mind you, I'm speaking of the whalin' of many years ago, when ships went arter sparm whales in the Pacific, and long afore they got so scarce there that they had to go to the Arctic arter right whales. I don't know nothin' about that business, 'cause I never went there, only from what I hear tell there ain't much laziness about that trade, but in my time whalin' was a fine-weather

business, and sometimes for months together there wouldn't be a whale seen, and so 'twasn't any wonder if the chaps got a'most too lazy for to wash themselves.

"Well, sir, this here ship what I was in, she stuck along to the eastward arter pickin' me up, but didn't stop nowhere, and we never see no whales till we got on to the coast of Brazil. The Old Man he took a fancy to me, 'cause he seen right off I was a good sailorman and right handy with an oar, and so he made me his boat steerer in place of a chap what had shipped boat steerer and had been took sick; and the Old Man he showed me how I was for to do to strike a whale, and he was very feared that I might be galleyed or skeered when first I come on one. But I told him he needn't be afear'd of me, and that all he had for to do was to put me nigh enough and I'd put the irons into him. You see, sir, the chap what's called the boat steerer don't steer the boat till arter the whale is struck. He pulls the bow oar and the captain of the boat steers. But when they pulls up onto the whale for to kill him, then the captain he comes forward with the lance, and the boat steerer takes the steerin' oar.

"Whalin' chaps may be lazy enough most times, but they wake up when they're arter a whale, I can tell you, and I reckon it's jist about the greatest sport that there is. Our Old Man seemed as if he'd jist go crazy when he got down arter a whale. You ought to hear the way he'd talk to us chaps in the boat for to make us pull. He'd begin quite easy, like. 'Now, my chaps,' he'd say, 'now, my beauties, make her talk; give away, my hearties, only pull. I'll give you all the terbacker in the ship. I'll give you my house to home. Bend your backs and stretch your breeches—pull you—you ain't pullin' a pound. Pull, or I'll break your heads—that's my loves—that's my beauties.

There she walks. Thar he blows, only three lengths off. One more good stroke and we have him. Pull, blast you, pull, and don't let that other boat beat you,' and so the old fellow would go on, coaxin' us one minute, and then cursin' us up hill and down the next. Now tellin' us we was all his brothers, and then swearin' he'd never put his foot in a boat with one of us ag'in; but, bless you, he didn't know what he was sayin', and we didn't mind it, 'cause we was a-pullin' of course as hard as we could, and we couldn't do no more.

"I won't say I wasn't a trifle flurried the first whale I struck, 'cause it wouldn't be true. But there wasn't much time to be skeered. The Old Man he sings out, 'Peak the bow! stand up!' and I shoved my oar in the cleet and jumped up and grabbed my iron. There was the whale, a-layin' quite still on the water about a boat's length ahead of me, and in a second or two the stem of the boat was right on to him. It was a splendid chance, and I hove the one iron into him, and grabbing the other as quick as lightning I gave him that one too, jist as the Old Man sung out, 'Starn all!'

"Well, when he come up arter soundin' we pulled up onto him, and the Old Man lanced him, and we soon had him spoutin' blood. The mate and second mate was jist as lucky as we was, and we had three whales alongside at one time, which made us all good-humored, 'cause it was a good beginnin' of the v'yage. We cruised about on the Brazil banks for about six months, and then went 'round into the Pacific. We had tolerable good luck for the first year, and were gittin' anxious for to go in somewhere to recruit, and the old man he told us that arter we had took another whale he'd go to Honolulu and refit. Of course, under such circumstances, it was an awful long time afore we did see any whales, and we was jist on the p'int of givin' up and goin' in



anyhow, when one arternoon, about four bells in the dogwatch, the masthead sung out, 'Thar she blows! thar she breaches!'

"'Whar away?' says the Old Man.

"'Two p'int on the lee bow,' says the masthead.

"'Keep her a p'int off and round in the topsail yards a bit,' says the Old Man, 'and stand by for to lower.'

"'It weren't long afore we made 'em from the deck—a large school of whales, a-puffin' and a-blowin' in all directions. We run till within about a half a mile of 'em, and then lowered. Bein' to windward of 'em, we was able to use the sails in the boats, which is the best way of gittin' on to a whale, 'cause you don't skeer him with the oars. Git right to windward of him, and then sail right down on top of and right over him as he sounds, givin' him the two irons as you go, and that was the way we done then. As the boat shot over him I let him have both irons, and down he went. We thought he never was goin' to stop soundin', and that we should lose our line.

"'We snubbed him all we could, and carried the boat's nose clean down to the level of the water, with all the crew chock aft, but still he went down. All the other boats had fastened, and of course they couldn't give us any line. At last, jist as we only had one fake left in the tub, he begin to come up, and we commenced to haul in. He come up about a hundred yards from the boat, and took a look round, scared like, and then he made a bee line dead to windward. Well, we made all fast and let him run, and I don't think I was ever behind a fish that went so fast afore. The boat run clean out of the water for more'n half her length, like what you'll see when a small boat is a-towin' astern of a steamboat. The water piled up on both sides a couple of feet above the gunwales of the boat, and was all of a white foam. I don't think I'd be a-

stretchin' of it if I said that that fish run us at the rate of ten or fifteen miles an hour.

"'Well, we thought he'd stop runnin' arter a bit, and so we jist hung onto him. But hour arter hour went on, and he didn't seem any more tired than when he started. It was jist dusk when we struck him, and of course we soon lost sight of the ship's lights, but that we didn't mind, 'cause we always carried a couple of days' provisions and water in the boat, and were frequently away for twenty-four hours.

"'The day was jist breakin' when the critter begin to be tired out, and arter slackenin' up his pace gradually, he at last became stock-still. We wasn't long haulin' up onto him, and the old man soon sent him into his flurry with the lance, and we backed off out of his way and waited to see him die. In about ten minutes he turned up his flukes and lay on the water a dead whale, and then to our great disgust down he sunk.

"'You know, sir, they will do that sometimes, and then we lose 'em, 'cause the boat can't support their great weight, and so we have to cut and let 'em go. And so 'twas in this case arter all our trouble and bein' towed about one hundred and fifty miles from the ship, all our work went for nothin', and we lost our fish. Bein' a seafarin' man for many years, of course I've heard a deal of swearin', but I never heard any swearin' equal to that Old Man, when he see that whale sink.

"'Well, sir, the whale bein' lost, there wasn't any use a-cryin' over it, and all we had for to do was to git back aboard of the ship as soon as possible. There was a nice little breeze, and we set the sail and run down afore the wind. We had beef and pork and bread in the boat as well as water and arter breakfast all hands except me laid down and went to sleep. I steered her till noon, and then, arter dinner, the Old Man relieved me, and I got a nap. We didn't go over

five miles a hour, and so at dark we hadn't gone much over sixty miles, and were still nearly a hundred miles from the ship. We know'd if the other boats had killed their fish, that all hands would be busy cuttin' in, and they wouldn't bother to look for us, so all we had to do was to keep on a-runnin' afore it, and we'd pick her up by the next mornin'.

"We missed the ship somehow. Arter runnin' till noon of the next day, and seein' nothin' of her, the Old Man made up his mind that we had run by her—that she was a-workin' up to windward to look for us, and had reached so far over our track as to be out of our sight when we passed her. 'So,' says he, 'tain't no use to run off any further, and 'tain't no use pullin' back to windward, and the best thing we can do is jist to lay still, and she'll cruise about till she finds us.'

"Well, we laid still for twenty-four hours longer, and then our grub was very near all used up, and things was a-lookin' bad for us. So we set the sail and concluded we'd reach back and forth on a wind, and we done so, reachin' along about southeast till six o'clock, when jist as we was a-goin' round one of the chaps who had stood up for to git a good look sings out 'Land Ho!' Up we all jumped in a jiffy, and there, sure enough, about two points on the lee bow, was a small island.

"'There ain't nothin' of the kind hereaway on the charts,' says the Old Man; 'but, anyhow, we'll edge down toward it, and at daylight to-morrow mornin' we'll git round to leeward of it and make a landin'.' 'Twill be better than stoppin' out here, at all events.'

"These here islands, sir, away out into the Pacific, is jist as like one another as two peas, and when you have seen one on 'em you've seen 'em all. In course there's a difference in the size of 'em, but not much. I mean the low, coral islands, and not the high, moun-

tainous ones. They are anywhere from one to twelve miles long, and are ginerally very narrow, and a'most always they extends from southeast to northwest, that is, south of the line in the southeast trades, and northeast and southwest in the northeast trades. When you first see one of these islands you'd a'most be fit to swear it was a fleet of vessels at anchor, 'cause you only see the tops of the trees. Then as you git nearer you see the white, sandy beach and the surf a-breakin' over the reef, which extends all round the island. That's the funniest part of it, sir, that there reef is always sure to be there, and there never ain't no passage through it, except on the lee side. You might think that as the wind changed sometimes one side would be lee and sometimes the other, but bless you, sir, the wind don't never change out there, or leastwise it don't do it often, and when it does, then look out for squalls.

"My eye, how I've seen it blow out there when what they call the trades was interrupted. But that ain't often, and mostly the wind blows steady and strong from about east-southeast or east-northeast, accordin' as you might be to the north'ard or south'ard of the line. These here islands don't have much growin' onto 'em—jist a little kind of a wiry beach grass and a few cocnut trees. Sometimes there's fresh water onto 'em, but mostly there ain't any at all—that is, on them that ain't inhabited, and there's plenty of 'em yet scattered all over the ocean that nobody has ever seen, and maybe with folks livin' onto 'em what's been shipwrecked or lost from whalers, like them chaps from the *Bounty*, that lived for years and years and raised up children and grandchildren afore anybody hearn tell on 'em.

"You see once you git onto one of these islands you are all right. 'Cause most of 'em is swarmin' with life, though there mayn't be any natives onto

'em. The worst thing is lack of water, and you can mostly git that by diggin', or you can rig somethin' to catch the rain water, and though they don't have no regular rainy days, there ain't a day passes scarcely when there ain't some rain squalls for a few minutes, in which a chap what was a-lookin' out could catch enough for to wet his whistle with, at all events. Then there's the coconuts, and the milk of them ain't to be sneezed at, I can tell you. These here coconuts what they sell down yonder by Fulton Market ain't nothin' like them out there. You see, you can git 'em off the trees when they are green and when they are all milk afore the shells harden or the meat forms inside, and they're jist good then, you may bet your life.

"Well, then there's birds no end, if there ain't no natives onto the island. Frigate birds and gannets and terns and tropic birds, and I don't know how many others, and jist as tame as barn-yard fowls. You can jist go and lift the she bird off of the nest if you want for to git the eggs from under her. There's always what they call a lagoon inside of the reef, and 'twixt that and the island, and this is always full of fish of a many different kinds, and eels—the biggest I ever seen—I've seen round these islands. There's another thing, too, that ain't so pleasant, and that is sharks, and big ones at that, forty or fifty feet long, and regular man-eaters.

"They say these here islands is many-factered by little bits of insects, but that's all a yarn, you know, 'cause I've been there, and I never see no insects a-manyfacterin', and of course I would 'a' seen 'em if they'd 'a' been there. If they made the island, I suppose they'd tell us that they made the trees onto it, and the birds and the fish and the sharks, and p'raps they'll say they made the reef outside of the island too. They might as well tell a tough one while they

was about it. It is really astonishin', sir, to think of the way people would be bamboozled, if it weren't for us sailormen, as goes to these places, and then brings home the truth about 'em. Talk about little insects a-makin' them islands—why, to show you how ridiculous that there is, the reefs come right up out of deep water. Why, at a ship's length from the reef you'll have ninety fathoms of water, and when ships want to anchor there they had to run their jib boom right over the breakers afore they lets go their anchor.

"I mind a funny thing happened in the Californy times to a ship as touched at Honolulu on the way across to Calcutta. The captain of her he was a young chap as hadn't never been around there afore, and he got frightened at the looks of the surf a-breakin' onto the reef, and didn't let her shoot up far enough afore he sung out for to let go the anchor. Well, whether it ever touched bottom or not I don't know, but it didn't bring her up, and she got starn-way onto her, and off she went. Well, then, he lets go the other anchor, and runs out the whole ninety fathoms onto each cable, but bless you, I suppose there was three hundred fathoms under her by this time.

"The old native pilot had' come aboard with his Kanakas to help get the ship through the reef, and so they turned to for to heave up the anchors. But you see, sir, it's no joke when you have the weight of ninety fathoms of chain besides the anchor, and so arter heavin' a while they broke the windlass purchase. You see, it was one of these patent windlasses without ends, and so it was good for nothin' arter the purchase was broke. Well, then they got out their purchase blocks, and rove off tackles, and clapped on to the chain luff upon luff, and the fall to the capsten. And arter gittin' a few fathoms of the chain the blocks all broke to pieces with the strain, and they was jammed ag'in.

"The ship all this while was a-driftin' off shore, and the night was a-comin' on, and the native pilot he got frightened and wanted for to slip the chains and let the anchors go. But the skipper of that there ship, he wasn't a-goin' for to lose his anchors, and so he wouldn't do no such a thing, and so the pilot took one look at the island a fast fadin' away into the distance, and, callin' his Kanakas, he got into his boat and away he went for the shore. The Old Man, he sent a note ashore by him to the American consul, if so be as how he couldn't send him some assistance. Well, there was a French man-of-war there at that time, and as soon as the captain of her heard of it, he sends two boats out to her assistance, and they carried out a set of big blocks what they use to put masts in, and they turned to with them, when they got aboard, and rove off heavy tackles, and went at the anchors one at a time. It was slow work, you may be sure, and it took 'em twelve hours steady heavin' afore they got the anchors to the hawse. Then they went to work and put the canvas onto her and beat her up, and the French midshipman he piloted her in.

"Now, you see no insects could ever build them reefs in sich deep water as that I know, but there's lot of people to this day that believes they do. In course they ain't sailors, and so don't know much. Do you suppose that a insect what had never been to sea would a-known enough to have left the openin' through the reef jist to leeward of the island, so that ships could make a harbor? Stands to reason he couldn't any more'n he could make the men and women what you'll find onto some of 'em—reg'lar fine specimens, and no mistake—but then, there's a reason for that, 'cause they kills off all the unlikely children, and as for the old men there ain't any of them, 'cause when a man begins for to grow old, he jist makes a

grand party, and he tells his friends that he reckons he ain't any more good in this world, and they'd better put him out of it as soon as possible, and so his oldest son or else his nighest relation knocks him on the head, and there's an end of him.

"You wouldn't think they had grog on these here islands, would you? But they have, though, for all that. 'Tain't like the whisky or gin or brandy we have here, but it'll make a drunk come as quick as any chain-locker poison I ever drank, and the way they make it is the funniest part of it. If you'll believe me, sir, the way they do it is to git some of the young women for to chew up a root they have there called the kava root, and then spit it out into a bowl same as we would into a spittoon with our 'bacca juice, and then they jist pours water onto this and let it stand a little while, and then they strains it through a sieve of leaves and there you are—a grog that will make your eyes snap about as quick as anything you can scare up.

"But I sot out for to tell you of our coming athwart that there island that time when we missed our ship, and here I've been a-yarnin' about all the islands into the Pacific. This here island what we saw when we was into the boat our Old Man said wasn't down onto his chart, and he'd made the position of the ship that arternoon afore we'd left her to be about 16 degrees south and 145 degrees west. Well, we laid by all night, and at daylight we set our sail and run down to leeward of it, and there we found the water smooth on the reef, although there wasn't any openin' through it as there is most generally. Hows'ever, we didn't have no trouble in crossin' it and makin' a landin' onto the beach.

"It appeared to be a little bit of an island, not more than a mile across and nearly round in its form, and with plenty of coconut trees onto it. What

we wanted jist then more than anythin' else was somethin' for to drink. We hadn't had no water for nearly twenty-four hours. You may jist imagine, then, how glad we was when one of the party by the name of Tom Bunker—he belonged to Nantucket—sung out, 'Here's a spring!' You see, sir, there was six of us, all told, and the Old Man had made us separate as far apart as we could and yet be within hail, and so go across the island for to survey it like and try for to find wood and water afore we got to the grove of coconut trees, which was about the center of the island.

"At Tom's hail, hows'ever, we all come to at once and ranged up to him, and sure enough here was a little spring of beautiful clear water. If you want to know what first-class tiddle is, you must try spring water arter you've been in a boat twenty-four hours without any. Tom told us that afore he come up with the spring he seen the whole ground alive with some kind of creepin' animal, but what they was he couldn't tell. Well, we didn't h'ist that in exactly, but we thought that maybe Tom being so long on the water without anything for to drink had made him kind of loony, and so he had imagined he seen animals when he hadn't. 'What's funny about this here island,' says the Old Man, 'is that there ain't no birds onto it. I've landed on plenty of islands afore which didn't have no natives onto 'em, and there was always thousands of birds, and here, except some gulls a-flying, we ain't seen a bird.'

"'Talking about inhabitants,' says one of the chaps just then, 'what do you call that thing yonder?' We looked where he p'inted, and there, sure enough, was a native. He appeared for to be kind of frightened at us, and kept at a respectful distance, and as we advanced he retreated. So the Old Man he says, 'You stay here, my lads, and I'll go for'ard alone, and then maybe it won't

be so much afeer'd.' So we sit down, and the Old Man he goes on ahead, puttin' his hands onto his breast and a-makin' all sort of motions, for to show that he didn't mean no harm, and finally the savage seemed to understand, and stopped still for to let our Old Man come up.

"But it seemed, as he told us arterward, when he got within about hailin' distance, all of a sudden the native, as we had took it to be, runned toward him, and with a kind of a yell like jist tumbled down all into a bunch at his feet. Well, we heer'd the yell the critter gave, and we rushed up to where the Old Man was, and if I ever see a man flabbergasted completely it was that Old Man. 'Boys,' says he, 'that ain't no native, it's a woman, and a white woman at that, and however on 'arth she got here beats me entirely.'

"Well, she soon comed around to herself, and if ever you see a critter delighted for to see us! And the first words she said when she come to was:

"'It ain't no dream—you are real? Thank Heaven, I am saved!'

"'Well, as to that, marm,' says our Old Man, 'of course we'll do anythin' for you that is in our power, but whether you be saved or not there's different opinions about, but there ain't no doubt of the fact that we are lost. You see, marm, we went arter a whale and lost him, and missed our ship, which is somewhere around here at this blessed minit, marm, for my mate, Jabez Robinson, if so be as how he got on board all right, won't leave this here locality not for six months without findin' us, and if so be as my ship comes along this way and you want for to be took off, all I can say is that my cabin is at your sarvice. And now, marm, as we're complete strangers onto this here island, and are perticlerly hungry, if you could direct us to any place where we can find somethin' for to eat I'll be extremely obliged to you.'

"The yarn she spun us arter we'd had somethin' to eat and had had a nap and been made comfortable, was that she come to that island in the bark *Sarah Louisa*, of Nantucket, of which her husband, Jedediah Starbuck, was the skipper. That she left Nantucket above seven years afore we fell in with her, and when she was about two years out the bark fetched up onto this reef one night. She didn't know much about how it come about, whether the craft was under way or jist hove to a-driftin', but I suppose it's likely the latter, and that all hands was asleep, jist as they usually is in whalers in the night-time, and so she fetched up on this reef without no way onto her, and jist swung round side on and bilged.

"Bein' to windward of the reef, she had no show to git off, and probably arter about three thumps she would be hard on and full of water. That's about the English of it, though of course this here woman didn't know much about it. All she could tell was that she was woke up with a tremendous thump, and that she went on deck with her husband, and found the sea breakin' all over the ship. That her husband put her into the port-quarter boat, which shows that the bark's head was to the north'ard, and that she hadn't no more'n got there afore there came a sea over all, and took her and boat and all away, and the next minit she found herself in the deep water, away inside of the reef, and clear of the breakers altogether.

"Of course, belongin' to Nantucket she could swim like a fish—babies all swim natural there, same as they do at the Sandwich Islands—and so she struck out jist as any one would do, and in due time she reached the shore all right. How upon 'arth she escaped the sharks I don't know, for they're jist as thick as flies in summer inside of them reefs. But maybe as she hadn't nothin' onto her but her nightdress the white-

ness of that in the water scared Mr. Shark, for he's a mighty skeery fish afore he gits blood, or it might be he was attracted toward the reef by the blood already there from some of the rest of the crew. However it might be, she come ashore all right, and she were the only one of all the lot that done so.

"Well, it weren't very pleasant for her next mornin' when the sun got up, to find herself stranded all alone in that way, but she were a Nantucket gal, and they ain't easily daunted, and then she had been to sea with her husband a whole v'yage afore this last one, and so had got to be somethin' of a sailor, and of course could look out for herself a heap sight better than one of these shore gals could, and so she determined for to make the best of it, anyway. She thought that most likely the men folks had got off in the boats, and that in the arfternoon they would be landin' onto the lee side of the island, and so she jist stirred herself round for to git some grub and water.

"At that time the whole island was alive with birds, and as tame as could be, and there was eggs jist as many as she wanted, and durin' the day, a-roamin' round, she come to a spring of water—not the one Bunker had found, but another one—and so she was all right for drink.

"About four o'clock that first arternoon that she was onto the island, as near as she could tell by the sun, the old hulk come ashore. You see, it had beat over the reef and into deep water, and the oil casks what was into it had kept it from sinkin'. As the beach was bold, the old hulk come within a cable's length afore she grounded, and, as is always the case where a ship goes ashore on a sandy surf beach, as soon as she grounded the sand begins to make up inside of her, and in three days this here woman was able to walk off aboard of her almost dry-footed. That was a good thing for her, 'cause she was able

for to git her dunnage, which she needed, havin' nothin' onto her but her nightgown. Not that it was cold there at all, or that there was anybody for to look at her to see which way she dressed, but still a woman, you know, ain't like a man, and they likes to have their riggin' onto 'em, no matter whether they're alone or not.

"Well, then, there was lots of provisions that weren't much hurt by the salt water. The biscuits in them ships is always packed in tight casks, and so they weren't hurt. The only job was how for to git at 'em, 'cause they was under water at the first, but as the sand kept makin' up around her more and more the water receded, and the casks of biscuits and many other things come into reach. The flour, also, in them ships, and the rice, and, in fact, all articles that are perishable if exposed to the air, are always packed in air-tight barrels, 'cause, you know they are expected for to keep for years. But for all that I've seen biscuit so lively that you had to stick a knife through 'em and pin 'em to the chest or they'd walk off in spite of you. But that was when they'd be a matter of three years old.

"Well, then, this here woman was able for to git lots of things of use to her by this old hulk's washin' ashore, although no doubt she could have lived without 'em, since the island was swarmin' with birds and the lagoon with fish. But it was good to have 'em. It was good to git flint and steel and tinder box. It was good for to git cookin' utensils. It was good for to git some tools and some boards and light stuff for to build herself a hut, 'cause by havin' all these things she was kept busy, and didn't get so homesick as she would if she hadn't a had somethin' for to do. You see, there was a matter of a month went by afore she got everythin' fixed shipshape and Bristol fashion, her house done and moved into, and a store

of grub, and other things lugged up from the wreck to the high ground.

"You see, she knew, that at any time there might come up a storm or an upheaving of the tidal wave, and cover all over the wreck, and so she know'd it was judgment to git a good stock of provisions up as high as she could. You see, she didn't give up, but all along thought that by and by some ship comin' along that way would take her off. Probably plenty did come pretty near, but, you see, these here islands ain't visible more than ten or fifteen miles, and ships ain't so plenty, or weren't then, as to make it likely they'd see it, except by accident, and so there she'd been all that five years all alone by her own self onto that island.

"Well it was a good job for us, anyway. When we got to her hut she says to our Old Man, 'Now you and your men set down here behind the house, and I'll go to work for to cook you a breakfast. Of course I didn't expect company, and so I haven't got none ready at present, but there's plenty here, and I won't be long a-gittin' of it.' Well, she takes a stick that looked somethin' like a boat's tiller, and away she went into the grove of coconuts, and we seen her a-runnin' back and forth a-strikin' at somethin' on the ground, but whatever it was we didn't know, and to tell the truth we didn't care. Fact was, we was pretty well tuckered out, and gittin' where all was comfortable and a good breakfast promised, we jist stretched down and went to sleep.

"The Old Man he sot the example, and I heerd him a-borin' pump-log afore I dropped off. I was woke up by one of the finest smells of cookin' I ever smelt, and it fetched me right up onto my feet to onct, and I went along to where the woman had her fire—jist some stones with a fire build onto 'em—and found that what I smelt come from a big sasspan which she had over the fire. 'Wait a few minits,' says she,

'it's a'most done, and if you don't say it's a good stew, then call me a bad cook.' The nice smell had waked up the rest of the chaps by this time, and we was all ready for our meal when she dished it up. Well, sir, I never eat anythin' like that stew in all my born days. I s'pose it was 'cause I was hungry partly, but then it really was extremely nice as she made it, for we had it often after that, when we wasn't so sharp set.

"The woman she looked on quite delighted for to see us eat, and a-fillin' each chap's dish as fast as it was empty, but arter she had helped us all round for the sixth time, she said that there weren't no more left, and we'd have for to wait till dinner time. Says she: 'I'll bet you don't any of you know what you've been eatin'.'

"'Well, marm,' said our skipper, 'that 'ere is jist the question I was a-goin' for to ask you. This here's a powerful good stew, and shows that you're a fust-class cook but that of course would be, comin' from Nantucket—but I hain't seen no birds onto the island, and I can't jist judge from the taste what sort of an animal you've made it of.'

"'Well,' says she, 'that there was a rat stew, and rats is now about the only livin' thing there is upon the island except ourselves, and I begun to think that if they increase much more they'd eat me as they have everythin' else. You see when the ship come ashore there was lots of rats aboard of her, and they jist left her by the hundred and took up their quarters on shore, the numerous eggs in the birds' nests provin' a great temptation to them. Well, you all know how fast they breed, and the island now is literally overrun with 'em. There's millions of 'em here now if there's a single rat. Arter eatin' the eggs they turned to and eat all the young birds they could find, and they either eat the old ones or else they flew away to some other island where they were

no so much molested, for there hasn't been a bird here for the past two years.

"'I had been livin' on birds and birds' eggs, and when they began to grow so scarce, and the rats so plenty, it struck me I might as well try rat, and I knocked a couple over and skinned 'em, and the flesh looked nice, and I cooked it and found it very good. Since then, so far as meat was concerned, I've lived on rat. But, bless you, where I've eat one, there's a hundred been born, and they're increasin' every day. I've found 'em useful about one thing—they climb up the coconut trees and eat off the green coconuts so that they fall down, and only in this way could I get any, 'cause, of course, I couldn't climb up arter 'em, but, you see, if this had to go on all the coconuts would be gone, and then I don't know what we should do. Hows'ever, now that there's so many of you to feed, we shall use plenty of these critters.'

"'Well, sir, 'tain't no use makin' a long story of this here thing. Of course you know the way we lived there with plenty for to eat and drink and nothin' to do all the blessed day long. You might think, sir, that this was all very pleasant, but 'tain't no use, sir. Coop a man up on a little island and tell him that he sha'n't go off of it, and you may jist give him all the grub you like, he won't be contented, nohow. We had rat to eat all ways—roast rat, broiled rat, fried rat, rat fricassee, and rat stew—and I can jist tell you what it is, sir, rat ain't bad, especially if you can git a Nantucket woman to cook it for you. Of course we had fish, as many as we wanted, for there was plenty of them in the lagoon, and we had hooks in our boat, and the woman had a plenty what she had got from the old wreck, and what with the coconuts and the nice cookin' we jist lived like fightin' cocks. But still we wasn't satisfied, 'cause, you see, we wanted for to git off.

"'The old man he stuck to it that the



mate would never leave till he found him, and he was sartain that the old ship was a-cruisin' around somewhere near us. One of the chaps managed for to shin up to the top of the tallest of the coconut trees, and there he fastened a big shawl what belonged to the woman, so that if by chance our ship or any other should happen for to sight the island their attention might be called to this signal, and then we know'd they'd send in a boat.

"Well, I think we was there in all twenty-seven days, when one mornin' one of the chaps what was up in a tree lookin' out—we all took our lookouts regular, jist as if we'd been aboard lookin' for whales—sung out, 'Sail ho!' That started the whole of us, you may be sure, and we went to work and fetched pieces of the old wreck to the highest part of the island and made a rousin' big fire, pilin' onto it arter it got a-goin' well a lot of leaves and beach grass for to make a big smoke, and then we watched for to see if the sail what we saw came nearer. By noon there was no doubt about it at all, for we could make out her topsails from the ground, and we kept up our fire, you may well believe, the smoke risin' high in the air above the island. By one o'clock we was sure she had seen our signal, for she was a-headin' right down towards us, and in another hour she had rounded to leeward of the island, and lowered away her boat.

"They didn't have for to come across the reef, hows'ever, for we had launched our own boat and put the woman and her dunnage into it and pulled out for to meet 'em. We hadn't exactly been able for to make out whether it was our ship or not, as comin' head on as she did all ships look alike. But as soon as she rounded to and the Old Man got

a look at her he know'd her at once, and you may just believe he was delighted. The poor woman was in a dreadful way when she found she was to be took off, and she laughed and cried all at once. When the chaps in the other boat made out who we was they jist peaked their oars and stood up and give three cheers, and we jist jumped right up and returned it, and that made Mr. Robinson, the mate, know who it was, and he jist called all hands to the gangway for to give us another salute as we come alongside.

"The appearance of the woman in the boat with us was a matter of surprise to the mate; but the Old Man soon told him who she was and how much she had done for us, and as soon as the boats had been h'isted up we squared away to the westward for Tahiti, that bein' the nighest spot where we could go in for to refit and land the woman, where she could be put in charge of an American consul. You see this island what we had been on was jist to the north'ard of the Paumatu Island, and the Society Islands, that Tahiti belongs to, is away to the south'ard and west'ard of 'em.

"There ain't much more for to tell. The wind was light, and it took us about a week for to reach Tahiti, and there we put the woman on shore, and the consul took charge of her, and, I suppose, the first chance he got he sent her home. Leastwise I never heerd tell of her arterward. We stayed in port a month and refitted and recruited regularly but from that day to this I never see a rat that I don't think of them stews that we used to have onto that island. And if ever you're hard up, sir, and can't git nothin' else in the way of meat you'll find that rat ain't to be sneezed at."

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By Warren Elliot Carleton

## Rockets Offshore

Captain Swanson of the coast guard was neglectful in catching smugglers and was unfair to his men. But one night an unusual thing happened which caused him to pay very dearly.

**DISAPPOINTMENT**—that's all I've ever found in the coast guard," grumbled Frank Bishop, the No. 1 surferman of Goose Point station on the back side of Cape Cod. "If I'd got the promotions I've been entitled to first and last, I'd be a warrant officer to-day, instead of Cap Swanson's right bower. Take my advice, Alec, and don't waste the best part o' your life in it."

Alec Rogers, the No. 2 surferman, listened tolerantly to Bishop's daily tirade against the United States Treasury Department. Alec was a big fellow, broad-shouldered, blond-haired and blue-eyed, pink-cheeked and healthy and twenty-nine.

"The way you've been treated ain't much inducement f'r us younger fellers to hang on," he agreed. "We all thought sure you'd git the cap'n's job when Shiras was transferred. Not but what Cap Swanson's all right—but the superintendent didn't have to send an outsider here. You qualified f'r the place, an' by rights it was yourn."

"You bet 'twas!" Bishop acquiesced with a vigorous nod of his slightly gray-haired head. "And the way Cap Swanson acted when you asked him if you could move your wife and baby into that three-room tenement in the cottage back of the station—that was damn small of him! He's a hog—that's what he is! The idea o' him occupyin' them three rooms all alone, when if you had it you could have your fam'ly here with you instead of in Fleetsville village! That's what that cottage was built for—the married man o' highest rank."

"Yeah—that was kinder small o' cap to keep me an' my fam'ly out o' that tenement," admitted Alec. "But, then, he's in charge. If you'd only been promoted to cap'n, Frank—"

"If I had, you bet I'd install you in that tenement!" vowed Bishop. "But as 'tis, there's nothing left for me to do but quit the service, seein'g's the service has quit me in matters of principle. But when I do quit the service, there'll be another smuggler on Cape Cod—you

wait and see! There's only one helpful thing I've learned from the service, and that's the graft there is in this smuggling game."

Alec rose from the bench on the front piazza of the station where he and Bishop had spent nearly an hour basking in the warm May afternoon sunshine. He agreed with the No. 1 surferman, and believed he had a grievance that would almost warrant his taking up running rum or any other contraband after the bad deal he had received from the government. But mulling it over day after day wasn't getting Bishop anywhere. And besides, his attitude would not help his cause, especially if his unguarded utterances reached the ears of Cap Swanson.

Around the corner of the station Alec met Cap strutting pompously about, hands clasped behind his back, eyes riveted on the closely trimmed grass of the wide lawn surrounding the colonial-roofed, two-story building wherein the Goose Point crew and its life-saving apparatus were housed. He jerked his head back, saw it was Alec, and beckoned to him with his forefinger. Alec walked over to him.

"Was Bishop harpin' on his troubles again?" the short, thick-set, middle-aged commander of Goose Point asked in a lowered voice.

"He mentioned some of 'em."

"F'r instance?"

"Well—just hinted that he might be quittin' Goose Point some day," the No. 2 surferman evaded.

"I'm thinkin' he'll bear watchin' before he quits," Cap remarked. "I've warned Sever to keep an eye on him—an' I want you to do the same, Alec, 'specially when you spell him on patrol. He's just the kind, in his frame o' mind, who'd be only to glad to lend a hand to a rum runner now an' then, if his palm was greased."

"I don't think so," Alec demurred. "I never saw anything dishonest in him."

"Well, keep your eyes open, an' you may! If I've got that kind of a cuss in my crew, the sooner we weed him out, the better. It's f'r your good as well as mine to do that."

"I agree with you there, cap. Count on me f'r one to expose him if I ever see anything shady about him—besides his growlin'. But I agree with him in one thing—he didn't git a square deal from Uncle Sam—with all respect to you, sir."

"Well, what the sup'rintendent does ain't none of our fun'ral, is it? I can't help it 'cause they put me in command over him, can I?"

"Of course not, cap. I'm not blamin' you. But——"

"There's another thing," cap interrupted. "That three master that shows up off our territory ev'ry now an' then—the *Sarah Mahon*. Ev'ry time she's reported, I expect she's goin' to bump on Devil-tail Reef, close as she sails to it. That's why I've been keepin' up the surfboat an' breeches buoy drills regular—I expect we'll have a rescue to perform 'fore the year's over."

"When she's shown up in my patrol," explained Alec, "she's got past the worst strip o' the coast, headin' f'r open water. An' since you've had us discontinue patrolin' the inlet, she's under the patrolman's eyes all the time."

"Yeah—but a foggy night— F'r Heaven's sakes, Alec, don't be sparin' of your Coston signals if the weather's thick an' she's in this locality! We've never had a wreck since I've been in command here. Lord knows I never want one! Keepin' track o' smugglers keeps us busy enough without havin' a grounded vessel on our hands."

Cap seemed to have a horror of the very mention of shipwreck. Never since the enactment of the eighteenth amendment had the Goose Point crew been so thoroughly prepared to save life as it was now. Each member of the crew was familiar with his individual

duties through drill after drill with surf-boat and breeches buoy.

In consequence, Goose Point station had fallen considerably below the average of the Cape Cod cordon of coast-guard units in the capture of the various types of smugglers who infested that locality. There was a possibility, of course, that smugglers were giving that particular strip of coast a wide berth. But the inlet, which cap had eliminated from the patrolman's post from Goose Point station to the halfway house on the border of the Sandy Hollow territory, was an ideal little natural harbor for running in contraband.

Not that the inlet was entirely overlooked by the Goose Point coast guard on post. The mouth of the inlet was narrow, and the patrolman crossed it in a dory, for it was always sheltered regardless of the weather, owing to the protective twist of Devil-tail Reef which curved at varying distances from shore a half mile along the coast.

"No vessel could ever git through the Devil-tail, anyhow," declared cap when he eliminated the inlet from the post.

But although Alec always maintained alert vigil over the outer coast to comply with cap's desire to avert shipwreck, he always paused at the inlet mouth before he crossed in the dory, and surveyed the little harbor carefully. Never had he detected anything amiss, however, on its quiet, beach and plum bushed shores. What a chance, he often thought, the smugglers were missing! Strange that they had never fathomed the weak link which cap's fear of shipwreck had established in the coast-guard chain that was stretched the length of the cape.

That night Alec's was the eight o'clock patrol. There was a full moon and the air was clear but cool. A moderate surf was rolling in, its white crests shattering in a thousand different colors in the blue moonlight.

How different it was from the patrols he had made along that coast during the winter! For there had been nights on that beach when Alec would have gladly welcomed death to relieve his suffering. Bitter-cold nights when the wind blew a living gale from the arctic, and the sand was whirling in stinging myriad spirals, grinding his flesh, gouging at his eyes, working in under his oilskins and thick woolen clothing—torturing, relentless sand! Hell—that's what it was—hell! And when, after four hours of it, he returned to the warmth of the station—chilblains.

But a night like this—May—the contrast almost made up for the sufferings of February. But not when a surfman had treatment such as Bishop had received to look forward to. No—Bishop was right—now was the time for him to quit, while he was young and had energy enough to change.

While he patrolled he brooded over the unhappy lot that was his and considering more and more seriously the prospect of applying his experience along profitable but lawless lines as Bishop planned to do when he shook the dust of Goose Point Station from his feet. Alec paddled across the unruffled mouth of the inlet in the dory, and continued his way to the rough board shack on the border of the Sandy Hollow territory.

There he left his metal check in the little iron safe, collected the similar check left by the Sandy Hollow patrolman of the four-o'clock post, and started on his three-mile return trip to Goose Point.

He paused on the bluff overlooking the endless expanse of the Atlantic. Yes—there she was! With topsails, four jibs, and fore, main, and mizzen sails up, the three-master *Sarah Mahon* bore gracefully up the coast, sailing in closer than most windjammers were wont to do, but allowing ample leeway to clear the Devil-tail.

"Gracious—but she's a beauty!" rapturously exclaimed Alec.

"Yeah, Alec—she shore is!"

He turned quickly, his hand instinctively reaching toward the automatic pistol in the holster of his belt. But he smiled, relieved, and his hand withdrew from the weapon. The newcomer was Surfman Gray of Sandy Hollow—the eight-o'clock patrolman from that station.

"Early, though, ain't she?" asked Alec. "I usually sight her just when I'm starting back when I'm on the midnight post."

"'Tis early for her," agreed Gray. "What's her cargo—you know, Alec?"

"Lumber—nothin' but lumber," Alec quoted Cap Swanson's report from his authentic sources of information.

"Mebbe 'tis," commented Gray. "But us folks at Sandy Holler are keepin' a sharp eye on her jist the same."

"So're we," Alec declared, defending his fellow patrolmen of Goose Point, but somewhat skeptical as to the sharpness of their vigil. "We keep close track of ev'ry vessel that makes along our coast."

"H'm!" grunted Gray—turned, and retraced his steps to the half way house.

Alec started back to Goose Point station. Like other Cape Cod coast guards, no doubt, Gray deduced from the poor showing Goose Point had made in the rounding up of smugglers that Cap Swanson and his men were either asleep on the job or accepting bribes to keep hands off. Gray's "H'm!" affected the Goose Point surfman like a male yellow-tailed hornet whose nest has been broken open.

At the inlet, after he had crossed its mouth in the dory, he seated himself on the sand behind a clump of bayberry bushes, and waited. A flock of migrating, winter yellowlegs flew overhead, their plaintive whistles mingled with the monotonous, slow drumbeats of the surf. Now and then a stifled groan

came from the whistling buoy which marked the outer reach of Devil-tail Reef.

Into view came the *Sarah Mahon*. She was swinging wider off the reef now, tacking, with fair seaway, into the onshore breeze. The inlet was quiet as death. Slowly she progressed up the coast while Alec watched her, fascinated at the inspiring picture she made in the moonlight.

"What would I give to be on her!" regretfully exclaimed the surfman.

"That three-master," replied Alec, my father did, an' my gran'father!"

She was well past the inlet and rounding the tip of Devil-tail Reef now. Alec got up, stretched his cramped legs and arms, and resumed his journey to the station.

A mile up the beach he met Sever, the four-o'clock patrolman.

"Where've you been?" the No. 4 surfman of Goose Point asked Alec. "You're near a half hour past due back at the station. Thought you'd got into trouble or somethin'. What kep' you?"

"That three master," replied Alec, pointing to the *Sarah Mahon*, now a blob of gray on the blue background of sea and sky to the northeast.

"Watchin' her—a clear an' smooth night like this?" ridiculed Sever with a snicker. "What did you expect her to do—run some rum ashore in the moonlight, or send up distress rockets?"

"Oh, no! Jist admirin' her," Alec evaded—a little piqued that he had selected just about the worst sort of night for observing a suspected smuggler.

"Ha ha! Admirin' her!" guffawed Sever. "If you want somethin' worthwhile to admire, why don't you wait f'r the summer girls to git here? Say, Alec, they's a pippin I met last summer——"

But Alec trudged on to the station. Regardless of Cap Swanson's whims, he made up his mind that the next foggy night when he was on patrol he'd in-

clude the shores of the inlet—especially when the *Sarah Mahon* was in that vicinity.

The village of Fleetsville, five miles from Goose Point, had something to talk about the following week besides the Cape Cod land boom and the prospects of the cranberry crop. No. 1 Surfman Bishop had kicked over the traces and forsaken the coast guard. Not only had he carried out his threat of quitting the service, but he had bitterly denounced it—the Treasury Department, the superintendent, Cap Swanson, and everything connected with it but the Stars and Stripes. And judging by the temper he was in, he wouldn't have stopped there if he hadn't fully realized that his auditors, whatever their views of national issues, were quick to resent insults to the national emblem.

"Bishop'll bear watchin'," commented old Leavitt Churchill, proprietor of the general store and postmaster. "He'll be a bad egg if he gits to playin' 'round with rum runners."

Alec, who had automatically moved up a notch to temporary No. 1 surfman, with his official designation of boat-swain's mate pending, was fully aware of that. When he was on post he kept the inlet under close observation, and in view of Bishop's numerous threats, he suggested to cap that the other patrolmen do the same on their watches, especially in thick weather.

"I've been thinkin' about that myself," cap welcomed the new No. 1 surfman's suggestion. "There's nothin' I'd like to do better'n to bring Bishop up short, 'specially after the rakin' over the coals he gave me at Churchill's store. I never harmed him. An' 'twill help you an' me both if he's ketched, Alec. Because I'm in line f'r promotion to the customs division o' the secret service. An' if I git the app'intment, you'll move up to cap'n o' Goose P'int, likely. Ketchin' Bishop in his deviltry would give us

both a powerful big boost, Alec, so it's up to us to work together to nail him."

Judging by Bishop's experience, Alec was skeptical about the boost he would receive if he were responsible for the ex-surfman's exposure. For Bishop, too, had thrice attracted public notice by his capture of smugglers single-handed. But Alec had taken an oath to do his duty, and that included the capture of Bishop or any one else who was violating the customs laws. And the honor of Goose Point, which Gray and other coast guards of neighboring stations questioned, meant more to him than the friendship of one who would violate that oath.

"You c'n count on me to do my damndest to nail Bishop, if I c'n git the goods on him," Alec promised the Goose Point commander. "If I didn't, I'd be as bad as he was."

So the inlet received the attention thereafter of the Goose Point men on post. Their suspicion that Bishop was operating somewhere on the Cape Cod coast was strengthened by his hasty departure from Fleetsville and the frequent rumors that he had been seen in different coast towns between Provincetown and Wareham.

Cap, however, took most of those rumors with a grain of salt.

"If Bishop's in the smugglin' business," he declared, "'twill be in Goose P'int territory, an' nowhere else. Even a fox always comes back to his old burrow."

The *Sarah Mahon*, meanwhile, caused cap as much consternation as she had earlier that spring.

"Between keepin' her hare-brained skipper from groundin' on the Devil-tail, an' layin' f'r Bishop," he told Alec, "you an' me an' the rest of us will be run ragged. I wish we'd git that damn' Bishop an' have at least one of our troubles over with."

But the failure of the Goose Point crew to catch Bishop or any other smug-

gler was not due to lack of vigil on the part of Alec. He made a complete circuit of the inlet when he was on post, and the other patrolmen reported that they did, too. Alec also kept a sharp eye on the reef when Sandy Hollow telephoned that the *Sarah Mahon* and other ships were sighted coming up the coast. But the *Sarah Mahon* never reached the inlet during his patrols. Sometimes he sighted her in the distance, but it was usually Sever who reported seeing her safely past the inlet and the treacherous, outflung Devil-tail. One foggy night he had warned her of her danger by burning two Coston signals.

"I thought she was a goner that time f'r sure!" he said, after he returned from post early that morning.

"I'n'r goin' to carry that matter to the sup'rintendent," stormed cap, "an' warn her owners that unless they put a new skipper on her, they'll be liable to suspicion o' tryin' to wreck her deliberately f'r her insurance."

Alec would have dismissed his suspicion that smuggling was going on in that locality had not a rustling in the bayberry bushes one night drawn him off the beaten path in his circuit of the inlet. It was such a sharp rustle in the still night that he thought it was caused by a man sneaking away through the dead vegetation. But when he followed it to the sandy beach road, he discovered that it was only a prowling skunk.

He was not interested in the skunk, but the distinct tracks of an automobile received his earnest attention. It was a road used only by summer folks on beach parties—and it would be a month before the summer visitors arrived. But judging from the imprint of the tires, the car that had made those tracks was only a small one—a Ford—not the heavy tracks which rum rammers were wont to employ for removing their contraband. Nor were the tracks very

deep—a good sign that the loads carried were not heavy ones.

Excitedly he reported his discovery to cap. But cap was only mildly interested.

"It must be some one from Fleetsville—some courtin' couple, likely," he reasoned, "who drive down in their romantic moments to try to dope out what the wild waves are sayin'. If that was our friend Bishop, or his cronies, the tracks would be deep—almighty deep."

But Alec was by no means satisfied with cap's explanation. And in his suspicious frame of mind, he also wondered at the *Sarah Mahon's* always showing up in Sever's patrol. Posts at Goose Point, like other coast-guard stations, were divided so that the seven surfmen were on different patrols each night in the four watches of four hours each between four o'clock in the afternoon and eight the following morning. There were some times special watches during the day if the weather was stormy or thick, although on pleasant days the man on duty in the station tower kept the coast to Sandy Hollow in the south and Quanset in the north under surveillance.

And the more Alec thought about it, the more he doubted whether mere coincidence was an adequate explanation of the three master's always showing up in Sever's patrol. He knew Sever was a favorite of cap's—that he had joined the Goose Point crew at the same time cap did. However, he mentioned the matter to cap at the risk of incurring the ill will of both Sever and the station commander.

"What you s'pose—the skipper o' the *Sarah Mahon* has the weather made to order so's he c'n fetch up off the Devil-tail when Sever's on post?" cap flared up. "What you need most, Alec, is plain common sense. You devote your attention to ketchin' that damn' Bishop, an' let Sever an' a peaceful lumber schooner be. I'm sick o' you comin' to

me with all your whims an' tomfool suspicions—'specially them concernin' the best man I've got in my crew."

Alec was on the point of asking cap how he got that way—what Sever had even done to merit cap's praise. For Sever was the clumsiest oarsman and the weakest man physically at Goose Point station. Alec had never liked him, but got on peaceably with him because he ignored Sever's freshness. Yet there were times when Alec was sorely tempted to punch him and close his insolent mouth.

"That puts a new complexion on things," Alec mused after cap had walked off in a huff. "Looks like I'm in f'r the same treatment Bishop got—or will git it if cap has anything to say about it."

Up to the first week of June, there had been little foggy weather at Goose Point. But Memorial Day brought a southeasterly wind, and the wind brought several days of that thick, smoky, drizzling vapor characterized by the Cape Codders from time immemorial as a "Buzzards Bay fog." And a Buzzards Bay fog is a certain fore-runner of a southerly gale.

Alec decided that for his own education he would find out for himself just what Sever did when he was on post. So the night the storm seemed destined to break, conditions were highly favorable for him to carry out his plan of doing a little detective work. Sever's was the midnight patrol, Alec's was the four a. m.

After wakeful hours, while the wind blew an increasing gale and the automatic fog warning droned from the rear of the station, Alec heard seven bells strike—the warning to Sever that his post would begin in a half hour.

Sever and Hutchins—the patrolman of that watch to Quanset—got out of their cots in the common sleeping room, dressed, and went to the mess room to

warm up their coffee and beans for their snack before setting forth on their six-mile march in the storm.

After they had gone and Wilde and Coville had returned from their eight-o'clock post and were snoring in their cots, Alec crept out of bed. Quietly he stole with his clothes to the mess room, dressed there, slipped a few crackers into his coat pocket, donned oilskins and sea boots, and slipped out the station door.

The thick fog was like a gauzy fabric shaken in the strong wind. A heavy surf beat the length of the shore line, booming its frothy cannonade and shaking the very sand under the surfman's feet. The storm had landed with all its fury—the gale that had been making up for several days, its stored-up violence let lose all at once.

Bucking the wind, Alec rapidly strode down the path which the men on post always followed to Sandy Hollow. It zigzagged through the grassy upland, then down to the high-water mark of the flood tide, then to the upland again. And there it curved back to the beach, winding through the most treacherous section for the patrolman in the whole Goose Point territory—the half mile of sand dunes, beyond which the path again wound over the upland to the inlet.

In the sand dunes Alec found boot tracks—fresh tracks, otherwise they would have been obliterated by the wind long ago. But Alec did not follow them, for it was evident, by the circles and angles they made, that Sever, confused by the fog, had lost his bearings and wandered.

Alec smiled. So that was cap's idea of efficiency in the coast guard! Lost among the dunes—Sever, who had walked that patrol long enough to know the path by heart, even in the fog.

Alec emerged from the dunes, and there he found Sever's tracks again. He followed them into the upland, and



battled the gale toward the inlet. The sand was whirling furiously in the wind. It stung his cheeks like the bites of insects, and, mixed with the moisture in the atmosphere, adhered to his skin like a fine layer of clay. Again and again he brushed it from his eyes, dug it from his ears.

On the reef the surf boomed, and the spray from the wild breakers, blown inshore by the gale, drenched him like rain. His oilskins glistened as they shed the downpour—his cheeks burned as if acid had been showered on them.

The mouth of the inlet was calm, considering the force of the storm and the fury of the breakers on the Devil-tail. But smooth as the sheltered inlet was, it would be impossible for a vessel to pass through the opening in the reef and follow the channel to its entrance. That was one night smugglers would not operate. Favorable as the fog was for them to ply their trade, the onshore gale prevented it. If a vessel anchored off the reef, she would quickly be blown on to it. If she attempted to come up the channel to the inlet, she would in all probability meet the same fate. And no small boat could live in that surf.

Even the mouth of the inlet was rough for a dory, but Alec hauled the small craft to the water's edge, and started to ferry himself across. No need of making the circuit of the inlet. It would be a waste of time—

Out of the fog popped another figure in oilskins, and a hand grasped the shoulder of the coast guard before he had time to draw his pistol.

"You're a coast guard, ain't you?" a whining tenor voice from a gaunt, aquiline face demanded.

Without answering, Alec struggled to throw off the strong hand and get out his automatic. But the hand withdrew, and the rangy stranger backed water:

"Excuse me, mister. I see you are one. I've got a job for you. There's an automobile on t'other side o' the in-

let—people on the shore landin' some-thin' from a skiff—"

"Who are you, any how?" demanded Alec, suspecting a plot—convinced of it, in fact, considering the impossibility of landing anything from offshore in such a storm.

"Never mind who I be," the stranger replied. "I may be double-crossin' my pals, eh? You're supposed to ketch smugglers, ain't you? Well, here's your chance—if you work fast enough!"

Alec thought of cap's desire to trap Bishop—the possibility that one of Bishop's men was betraying him, as a smuggler at Santuck betrayed his chief into the hands of the coast guard there, through which the Santuck crew won glory and some of them promotion. And he also recalled that smugglers took chances—even seemingly impossible ones—without regard for their lives or the lives of their vessels.

"If this is a trick o' yours—" began Alec, tightly gripping his pistol.

"It ain't—I swear to Heaven, 'tain't!" vowed the stranger. "But if you don't hurry, you'll lose 'em! Come on—foller me! We'll talk about my reasons f'r double crossin' Bishop afterwards!"

Bishop! The mention of that name banished all doubts from Alec's mind.

"Go ahead—I'm on!" he consented, a new note of enthusiasm in his voice.

Up the sand hill into the more substantial footing of the bayberry and beachplum bushes the renegade led him at a brisk pace. They climbed to the pinnacle of Mole Hill, from which, on pleasant nights, a broad view of the inlet and the entire coast was afforded the coast guard on post. But Mole Hill now, like its surroundings, was veiled in the blowing fog.

The stranger paused—turned to Alec. The coast guard half raised his pistol. Up came the long arm of the guide, pointing offshore.

"Look!" he ejaculated. "Rockets!" But Alec did not look. Instead, he

fixed his eyes on Bishop's supposed betrayer.

"No funny business," the surfman warned him evenly. "You show me Bishop, or by gosh, you'll be the one I'll arrest!"

"I'm not foolin'!" the other whined, his pointing arm trembling. "I tell you they're rockets—I wouldn't deceive you! It's a vessel—on my word it is—a vessel on the reef!"

Alec stepped back so that he could look toward the reef and at the same time keep his informant under surveillance. Through the fog in a thin, pink streak an indistinct jet of flame pricked skyward! And above the roar of the gale reverberated the intonation of a small cannon.

"Good heavens—it is a wreck!" Alec's knees, for a moment, sagged under him. Cap Swanson's worst fears had come true. Sever had passed on to the halfway house without warning shipping that might be passing of its danger by burning a Coston signal at the inlet, as was the custom of the patrolman on thick nights. For if Sever had burned one, Alec would have seen the red fire even in the fog, as he had seen the rocket. One Coston signal burned was a sign that a vessel was being warned, two signified that the patrolman needed help from the coast guard on post from Sandy Hollow.

"Never mind Bishop now," hoarsely spoke Alec. "Come with me—do what I tell you! There's human life out there—a rescue to be made!"

Down the hill he raced, the stranger following him. Headlong he ran, heedless of the roots and sand holes in the unlighted path. His toe struck one of those obstructions—and down he went, flat on his face! The pistol flew out of his hand.

He picked himself up—looked for his pistol.

"Alec—help me!"

He turned. There in the path—the

obstruction he had fallen over—lay Sever! His legs were tied together at the ankles with a half-inch rope, and so were his wrists.

Alec fumbled in his trousers pocket under the oilskins, found his pocket knife, and cut his fellow surfman loose.

"He knocked me out while I was startin'—to burn my signal—to warn the *Sarah Mahon*!" whimpered Sever. "Tied me up—set me behind the bushes—and I hobbled to the path—"

"Never mind—tell it later!" cut in Alec. "If that's the *Sarah*, she's ashore on the Devil-tail! Go to the halfway house—call out the crew! While you're telephonin' 'em, I'll go to the station an' meet 'em. Don't lose a minute!"

Without searching for his pistol or the stranger—who had disappeared—Alec started at a dog trot back to the station while Sever, apparently none the worse for his ordeal, crossed the mouth of the inlet in the dory. The gale aided Alec in his flight, for its force was now on his back, whisking him along the sand like a blown leaf, his clothes whipped about him.

But when he reached the sand dunes, lights appeared in the upland. Alec plodded wearily toward them, his breath shortened, his boots dragging like lead weights. And there he met Cap Swanson and the crew, Coville leading old Moll, the elder station nag, who was hauling the beach cart with its breeches-buoy apparatus, and Bailey close behind guiding old Moll's daughter, Susan, who hauled the wagon on which rested the surfboat.

"Where the hell'd you come from?" bawled cap, recognizing Alec. "We missed you—thought you'd—"

"It's a bad mess," interrupted Alec, disregarding cap's question. "It's the *Sarah Mahon*—dunno's we c'n reach her with the breeches buoy!"

"Oh, hell!" groaned cap. "I was afraid of it—knew she'd fetch up on

the Devil-tail sooner or later. Where's Sever?" he asked Alec.

"At the halfway house. Wasn't it him who telephoned?"

"Sever? Hell, no! It was some one else!" Cap brought the back of his hand down on Moll's rump. "Git along—git along!" he nervously urged the old mare. "If we're bound to visit Davy Jones in the surfboat with this sea on, we may's well git it over with. Git along—git along!"

When the procession reached the inlet, several figures in mackinaws and oilskins stood on the beach. Alec recognized two as citizens of Fleetsville, Sam Doane and Wallace Ritter, both employees of the local garage during the busy summer season, but loafers during the less prosperous months for Cape Codders.

The lights of the wreck glimmered wanly through the fog. The three master, striking on the outer edge of the reef, had washed closer to shore, as most vessels do that are unfortunate enough to ground on that twisting underwater menace to navigation that has been a graveyard for ships since the days of the Pilgrims. The *Sarah* had struck slightly north of the break in the reef where the channel opened to the inlet.

"The breeches buoy'll reach her!" bawled cap. "Stations!"

Each man, trained to perform his individual part in the breeches buoy rescue, jumped to his place at the beach cart. The crew was short two of its number, for Sever had not met them yet, and Hutchins was on the midnight post to Quanset. But cap had drilled them thoroughly to offset such absences. The little ring of spectators looked on wonderingly while the Goose Point crew snapped into action.

And an inspiring sight it was! A revelation to those who give the coast guard credit for being only an obnoxious lot bent on enforcing a constitu-

tional amendment which deprives the populace of its choice of beverages.

On the sand Coville laid the faking box, around the pegs of which the shotline was evenly coiled to prevent it from fouling. Near it Alec and cap set up the Lyle gun, a small cannon, into the muzzle of which cap rammed a charge of powder, following it with the bulbous-tipped metal shot, to which was attached the shotline.

With the shot projecting from the muzzle of the gun, cap moved it into position for firing it at the mizzenmast of the wreck, in the rigging of which, above the tattered sails, a black, huddled mass could be dimly discerned—the crew of the *Sarah Mahon* expectantly waiting to be rescued.

By the light of the torches which Wilde had lighted on various parts of the beach, the crew eagerly watched cap making his preparations for firing the gun. *Boom!* The shot curved in an arc toward the wreck. But cap's aim had been faulty. The metal "bass drumstick" missed the mizzenmast, and fell into the water astern.

Three shots cap fired. The third, while the coast guards watched anxiously, looped over the crosstree whereon the shipwrecked sailors were huddled, and the line paying out informed the relieved men on the beach that it had been retrieved—the first and perhaps the most important step in the whole process of rescue.

To the shore end of the shotline the "tail block" had been made fast. Through its sheave ran the endless line of the "whip." The men on the wreck hauled off the tail block, and from the drum of the beach cart the double length of the whip unwound. Finally it stopped, and after a short wait, a tug on the whip announced to the men on the beach that the tail block had been made fast to the mast, according to instructions tagged to it.

Next the three-inch hawser was bent

on the whip, and the coast guards hauled it off. More tugs on the whip soon announced that the big cable was also attached to the mast below the tail block, and that the rest of the rescue was entirely up to the Goose Point crew.

While the shotline had been speeding to the wreck, Bailey and Wilde had buried the sand anchor deep in the beach. To the sand anchor was attached the shore end of the hawser. So now that the hawser had been received aboard the wreck, the sand anchor played its important rôle.

Setting up the X-shaped wooden crotch, the coast-guard crew drew the hawser taut in the upper V of its cross-pieces. Tighter and tighter they stretched it by shortening it at the sand anchor until it could be tightened no more, even though the hawser sagged between the mast and the shore. Thus a bridge of rope extended between the shore and the wreck.

On the hawser was placed the traveler block, from which dangled the chair of the breeches buoy itself. The weather whip was in turn made fast to the traveler block. Then, hauling the lee whip, the Goose Point crew began the actual rescue.

Hauling the first man ashore was by no means an easy task. The men from Fleetsville lent a hand, and by their combined efforts the man in the breeches skimmed the crests of the breakers and landed safely on the sandy beach.

"The hawser's saggin' like hell!" bawled cap excitedly. "We've got to work fast! The wreck's washin' closer to shore. She'll be breakin' up fast!"

The rescued man was assisted from the breeches—a short, black-bearded mariner of the old school, about cap's build. But instead of expressing his gratitude, he addressed cap vehemently:

"I know it ain't customary f'r a skipper to come ashore first. But I did to give you fellers a piece o' my mind.

The hell of a note this is! Where was your patrolman, not to signal us——"

"Shut up! Give us a hand with the lee whip!" Cap cut short the tirade of the *Sarah's* skipper. "You c'n register your complaints after we've got your shipmates ashore!"

One by one the Goose Point crew hauled to the beach the shipwrecked sailors. They were none the worse for their exposure, for the weather was not cold and little time had been lost in effecting their rescue. They all lent a hand to hauling the whip, and without their assistance the rescue would have been a doubtful affair, indeed. For the *Sarah* had washed much closer to shore, as the increasingly sagging hawser attested. And the lower the hawser sagged, the more balky became the resisting traveler block, weighted as it was by its human cargo in the breeches buoy.

The crew of the *Sarah* was a cosmopolitan lot. Many of them were foreigners, but most of them were square-jawed, salt-water men of Scandinavian and Irish ancestry. The foreigners jabbered to one another in their native tongue—it sounded like Italian to Alec—and they were all too bewildered and terrified by their experience to be of much value at the whip. But the others snapped into their task with a vengeance, rendering valuable assistance to the Goose Point crew.

After another Italian had been laboriously hauled ashore, the bearded captain of the *Sarah* left the whip and hurriedly conversed with one of the group of panic-stricken foreigners huddled in the lee of the beach cart. Suddenly the whole company of them started to walk up the beach.

Alec jumped away from the whip, and confronted them with outstretched arms.

"Git back, there! Back in the lee o' that beach cart!" he commanded them. "There's none o' you needin' medical treatment. The wind an' fog won't hurt

you. Git back there—then we'll take you to the station an' go through the formalities o' the law!"

The foreigner to whom the skipper of the *Sarah* had talked addressed them in their native tongue. As one man, they took to their heels and vanished in the upland!

Alec started to follow, but cap seized his arm.

"Never mind 'em!" cap bawled. "It's more important to git this bird in the breeches ashore. Come on—give us a hand!"

"But those dagos!" objected Alec. "We're supposed to hold 'em so's you c'n make your full report."

"Don't worry—they won't git fur," cap reassured him. "It's more important f'r us to save human life than 'tis to bother about red tape now. Come on—give us a hand with the weather whip. All right, boys—haul!"

But the traveler block stuck, nor could the efforts of the Goose Point crew and the *Sarah's* hard-faced and powerful-muscle complement budge it.

"Heave—give it to her! Pull your guts out!" screeched cap, digging his heels into the sand like the others. "Give her a rest!" They slacked off, puffing and grunting. "Now—one—two—three—give it to her ag'in!"

But the traveler block would not budge. The breeches buoy with its human occupant dipped into the breakers, imprisoned in their very teeth, battered about like a squirrel in a cage which a naughty child has set spinning.

"We've got to git that man!" screamed cap. "Slack off! It's a job f'r the surf boat—if he ain't drowned 'fore we git there!"

He led the way to the surfboat wagon, the weary Goose Point coast guards, exhausted after their sustained efforts with the breeches buoy, following him.

They backed Susan to the mouth of the inlet. Into it they lowered the surfboat.

"I've got to have another man!" shouted cap to the *Sarah's* rescued men. "Which one o' you's handy with an oar? Who'll go?"

Alec surveyed the onlookers. The men from Fleetsville were not among them!

"I'm yer man," spoke up one of the square-jawed sailors, stepping forward.

"Good!" cap turned toward the surf boat. "All right, Alec! In bow!" he shouted, and Coville took his place in the boat at bow oar.

The others waited for cap to order them to shove the boat off.

"Hold on—wait!" cried the *Sarah's* skipper. "Look—off to the breeches!"

All gazed offshore. Along the hawser a human form hauled itself hand over hand! The man in the breeches had lifted himself out, raised himself to the hawser, and had taken his own rescue into his own hands.

Fascinated by the unusual sight, the Goose Point crew and the *Sarah's* sailors watched the slow but steady progress of the man toward the beach.

"My heavens! I never'd 'a' believed it could be done!" gasped cap.

"I've seen it done, but it takes some guy to do it!" declared the lifeboat volunteer.

The man from the breeches buoy had already passed the worst of the outer breakers, and was now nearing the smaller surf that had spent its fury on the barrier of the reef. But he was weakening. His journey was now mostly uphill along the shoreward reach of the drooping hawser.

"All hands git aboard the surfboat—shove off!" cap excitedly gave his conflicting orders. But the Goose Point men and the volunteer knew what was expected of them. They shoved off the surfboat and jumped into their places, Alec stroke, cap steering.

The man from the breeches buoy was no longer moving toward the beach. Clinging to the hawser, he swung back

and forth over the small breakers. It was evident that his strength, after his almost superhuman extrication from the breeches buoy, had given out, and that he might drop, utterly exhausted, into the water any moment.

In the sheltered channel to the inlet the surfboat's passage was beset with none of the danger it would have encountered on the seaward side of the reef. Quickly the strong stroke which Alec set carried it to the imperiled sailor who still clung gamely to the hawser about two hundred yards offshore.

"Give way, starb'ard!" shouted cap, leaning heavily on the steering oar. "Ease off, all!"

In the water ahead of the surfboat the sailor dropped from the hawser. But Coville had already taken his place in the bow, and was facing the man from the breeches buoy when he fell. The surfboat eased up beside him as he fought to remain on the surface, encumbered by his weighty sea boots and water-filled oilskins.

Coville reached over the gunwale—gripped his arm. And into the surfboat he hauled him.

"Give way, port!" yelled cap. The surfboat returned to the beach at the mouth of the inlet.

The rescued crew assisted their shipmate ashore from the surfboat while the Goose Point men returned their craft to its wagon. Cap was in great spirits, and so was the jubilant skipper of the *Sarah*.

"Ev'ry one o' my men's off!" he declared. "Even if your gang were asleep when we was watchin' f'r signals, your work after that makes up f'r that! Look at her!"—pointing offshore. "Mercy—suppose we was out there now!"

The mizzen and mainmasts of the *Sarah Mahon* had dropped. On the beach the crotch had fallen, and the hawser lay limp.

"I'm proud o' you boys!" cap applauded the Goose Point crew. "But I

wonder where the Sandy Hollow crew is—why they didn't show up after we got here? They knowed there was a vessel ashore. An' Sever—why ain't he come back? Wilde—you run to the halfway house an' find out what's happened to him." Wilde started to cross the mouth of the inlet. "An' you, Coville," cap ordered the bow oarsman of the surf boat, "you arrest Alec on suspicion o' havin' a hand in to-night's doin's. I'm goin' to keep you guarded, Alec, till this mystery about Sever's cleared up!"

Coville took a step toward Alec, hesitated, and faced cap.

"I'll not be the man to arrest Alec!" he refused. "Why ain't you roundin' up this bunch we've rescued, holdin' 'em till we find out who they are, what their cargo is? There'll be time enough to look up Sever after they're corraled."

"By Heaven!" bellowed cap, "this is insubordination o' the worst sort! Now I know that you, Coville, an' Alec are linked with Bishop—that Alec sneaked out o' the station to lend him a hand in his deviltry. An' now you're tryin' to pin the blame on an innocent skipper an' his men."

"Innocent! How do you git that way, cap—" began Coville.

"Shut up! You're gittin' yourself in hot water deeper an' deeper," Alec rebuked the mutinous surfman. "You are insubordinate. It's our duty to obey cap without questionin' him, whether he's right or wrong. Come on, Coville—take me to the station an' obey orders. All right, cap—we'll go!"

For Alec realized that the cards were stacked against him. The hasty withdrawal of the Fleetsville garage helpers from the beach—the strange voice on the telephone warning cap of the wreck—it did look as though Bishop or some other master mind was directing smuggling operations with Alec as an accomplice.

Pistol shots barked in the upland.

Coville and Bailey relinquished their hold on Alec's shoulders and drew their pistols.

"Well, ain't you goin' to do somethin'?" Alec suggested.

"It's a smugglers' war—hijackers, most likely," huskily replied the Goose Point commander.

"An' you not even takin' a list o' the names o' the rescued folks? Nice mess you've made o' this!" taunted Alec.

But cap's effort at neutrality was suddenly flouted by a score or more of fleeing humans retreating in precipitate disorder from the upland to the mouth of the inlet. Disregarding cap, with drawn pistols the Goose Point crew advanced to meet them. Alec armed himself with an ax from the beach cart, and joined his fellow surfmen in the battle.

Coville fired his pistol—and finding themselves cornered between the Goose Point crew and their pursuers from the upland, the trapped mob threw up their hands in token of surrender.

From the pursuers hemming in the prisoners advanced Cap Shaw of Sandy Hollow station.

"Hello, Swanson!" he saluted the Goose Point captain. "Nice party we've got here, eh? Guess Goose P'int an' Sandy Holler'll be on the map ter-morrer! We'd better march 'em to Goose P'int station, hadn't we? It's nigher'n Sandy Holler."

"There's some mistake about this, Shaw!" protested Cap Swanson. "My man Sever's disappeared; Alec Rogers sneaked out before his post commenced—was here when the *Sarah* run—"

"I can straighten you out on that, Swanson."

A tall, rangy figure stepped from the Sandy Hollow surfmen, and advanced into the flare of the fresh torches which Bailey was lighting. It was the stranger who had guided Alec to the summit of Mole Hill in the search for Bishop!

"Sever's at Sandy Hollow station,

under arrest," explained the lanky individual, "because I think he can enlighten the superintendent on the grounding of the *Sarah Mahon*. For if I hadn't prevented him from lighting his signal, I'm under the impression that the *Sarah* would have trimmed her sails, depended on her powerful auxiliary engine, found the entrance through the reef to the inlet, landed her cargo, and got away, as she's been in the habit of doing in clearer weather. Isn't that right, sir?" he questioned the skipper of the ill-fated three master.

But the bearded mariner in the center of the captives only grunted.

"But—but who the hell are you?" stammered cap Swanson.

"Me?" The lanky one laughed. "Oh, I'm only one of the superintendent's men—Inspector Lothrop," he modestly answered. "I was sent here to catch the *Sarah* in the act of smuggling."

"But you wa'n't sent here to deliberately wreck a vessel by preventin' my surfman from warnin' her by a Coston signal," declared cap. "I c'n see where they'll be one inspector less tomorrow, by gosh! What evidence have you got that the *Sarah* was smugglin'? She didn't land any cargo, did she? No booze—no dope?"

"No—these." The inspector pointed at the huddled prisoners. "The Italians, I mean. These poor, deluded peasants who paid their hard-earned money on promise of a passage to America that wouldn't require the usual immigration formalities. Brought across the ocean in one ship, transferred to the *Sarah* somewhere off on the high seas, then smuggled ashore here, in the inlet, and taken off in automobiles."

"But what'll become o' them poor wops?" asked Cap Shaw sympathetically. "Will they have to serve time f'r it?"

"Oh, no," replied the inspector. "They're to be held until the immigration machinery gets to work, then they'll

be shipped back to Italy. The only ones we've got enough evidence against to receive sentences are the skipper of the *Sarah*, Sever, and Cap Swanson!"

"Me?" cap screeched, his face purple, his eyes bulging—a maniac at the top tension of his madness. "Where's your evidence ag'inst me, I'd like to know? You'll pay dear f'r that insult, my brave inspector man! When the super hears——"

"The super's already heard, cap!"

From the prisoners stepped Frank Bishop—Bishop with a heavy crop of whiskers. A wave of ejaculations of amazement swept from one Goose Point man to another—all but Coville, who smiled, and shouted against a fresh puff of wind from offshore:

"You didn't reco'nize him, eh, cap? Why, cap—Frank Bishop was the man we saved from the breeches buoy! If you'd only listened to me and give me time to——"

"I suppose you've gathered all the evidence the super wanted, eh, Bishop?" the inspector hailed the ex-surfman. "Do you think I overstepped my authority when I accused Cap Swanson with the other offenders?"

"Not the least bit!" Bishop reassured him. "In fact, I have enough evidence to prove that Cap Swanson's the ring-leader—the head of the whole swindle those poor Italians have suffered. Cap," he turned to the bewildered and panic-stricken Goose Point commander, "my dope as to why Goose Point wasn't catching smugglers wasn't so bad at that, eh? The *Sarah* always showing up in Sever's patrol—the inlet neglected on our posts——"

"You damn' double-dealin' hound!"

whined the skipper of the *Sarah*, advancing on Bishop with fury such as cap Swanson had manifested when he confronted the inspector. "An' 'twas you come to me with that yarn o' how you wanted above all to fox the coast guard—an' I fell f'r your guff—signed you on as one o' my crew——"

Surfman Battles of Sandy Hollow held the near maniac's hands behind his back to prevent him from inflicting bodily damage on the ex-surfman of Goose Point. The inspector advanced to Bishop and shook hands with him.

"My congratulations, Bishop!" he applauded. "You've done this job up brown—far beyond the superintendent's expectations when he promised you that if you made good proving your suspicions about cap Swanson and his gang, you'd be appointed a customs inspector. You'll probably get your appointment within a few days." He turned to the Goose Point men, who had disarmed cap Swanson and herded him with the other prisoners. "Will the fellow I met here and promised to show some smugglers to please step forward?" he sang out.

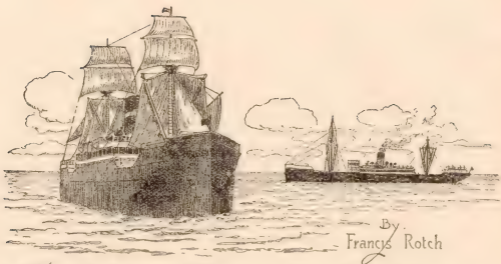
"I guess that's me, sir," said Alec, advancing with the ax still clutched in his hand.

"Oh, yes—you're the one," the inspector recognized him. "Well, sir, I guess you'll be remembered by the super, too, after he hears my report on you," he assured the No. 1 surfman.

"And mine, too—if what I know about his past record will count," contributed Bishop. "Alec, I think 'twill be safe for you to plan to move your fam'ly into that tenement at Goose Point station right away!"







By  
Francis Rotch

## The Mess Boy of the Aukitan

Old Ben was only the mess boy. They made fun of him and his tales of bygone days, but when the storm raged and the terror of pestilence came upon them they saw him in a different light.

EVERY hair of my head is a rope yarn, my fingers are marlinespikes—I was born wearing seaboots and oil-skins—I was nursed on Stockholm tar," screamed a shrill, cracked voice from forward.

Bower, the second mate, leaned over the weather cloth on the bridge, grinning to himself as he listened to the voices that came from the forecandle scuttle. Not a breath of air was stirring. The sea was a flat, dead body, like molten silver, the sky overhead like a dull, brassy, inverted bowl. Bad weather was portended in every sign. The heavy, hot atmosphere clung to one's body as if it would force it into the deck, and rivulets of perspiration ran from every pore.

From the fireroom ventilators came the clang of shovels dropped on the red-hot floor plates, the rasp of a slice bar as the half-dead firemen strove to keep steam in a room only a few degrees cooler than that of the furnaces themselves. There came the rusty screech of a turning ventilator being

trimmed by some optimistic fireman endeavoring to catch a vagrant breeze that was nonexistent.

It was hot—as hot as the hottest days on the Indian Ocean in monsoon season can be. A sailor started aft to relieve the man at the wheel, as four bells struck. He hopped along the steel decks, picking out spots of shade thrown by the mast, cargo booms, and winches, looking for a spot on the hot metal to place his burning feet.

"That bird would make a fortune as a nature dancer," remarked the captain from the door of the wheel house, as he watched the man's erratic progress toward the bridge. "What's that row forward?" he questioned, as once more the cracked voice rose from the scuttle.

"Oh, just the gang for'ard picking on old Ben," answered Bower.

"Ain't it hot enough without getting up more steam by picking on a man old enough to be their granddad?" growled the skipper.

"Ben is such a liar the fellows just have to poke fun at him," replied Bower.

"Don't know about that. I checked up on one or two of his stories, and they are all right," the captain answered.

"Oh, bunk! Why, he'd have to be a hundred years old to have been in all the ships he talks about!" exploded Bower. "Why, the old joker, I don't think he ever saw a sailing ship, to say nothing of being mate on a hundred or two of those old-time windjammers he is always talking about."

"Don't worry about a twenty-five-dollar-a-month mess boy," growled Captain Brace. "We've got a darn sight more on our minds the way the weather looks. Take the bos'n and a couple of men and take a look around—see to the hatches and put extra lashings on everything, especially on the booms, for we are going to have a regular old he-wind before morning."

The *Aukitan* had just delivered a cargo of lumber and railroad ties, loaded on Puget Sound, to Port Louis, on the Island of Mauritius. She was five days out of Port Louis, bound for Manila to load hemp, then back to Seattle. She was a typical lake-type freighter turned out on the Great Lakes during the war by the hundred. Many were sold by the shipping board to West coast lumber companies, who found them ideal ships for the lumber trade. Like most ships of this type they were very poor sea boats when light, and not being equipped with ballast tanks, were forced to take on ballast when light.

While at Port Louis, Captain Brace had arranged for five hundred tons of sand for ballast, and having no 'tween decks, this sand was dumped into the holds right on the tank tops. All this dead weight low down did not help her seaworthiness any, and caused her to roll deeply in a very moderate sea. With the prospects of an Indian Ocean monsoon coming up, the outlook was far from satisfactory to Captain Brace.

While Bower with the bos'n and two men were going about the decks, wedg-

ing down the hatch battens and securing anything that might work loose, Mr. Long, the mate, and a couple more men, were putting extra guys on the smokestack and tightening up the others.

Down in the sailors' forecabin under the high forecabin head, old Ben Morgan, the mess boy, was getting ready for the noon meal. On the *Aukitan* the sailors were berthed forward and the firemen aft in the poop. Ben was forced to carry the sailors' food from the galley in the after part of the amidship house to the forecabin. To do so he had to carry the heavy pans along the midship alley, down an iron ladder to the forward well deck, and forward to the forecabin—quite a trip for an old man who boasted of seventy-six summers.

Ben was a wizened wisp of a man, his face scarred and furrowed by the hands of time and the buffets of a hard world. His back was bent with age and work, and his hands, huge for so small a man, with the twisted and broken fingers, told of a life that was far from a bed of roses. Only his eyes gave any indication of the soul that inhabited the sorry husk—they were of the brightest blue, cheerful and smiling—eyes that time, hard work, and the cruel years of drudgery could not dim.

He fussed about the table that he had let down from the deck beams above, and piling up his mess pans, started for the galley for the noonday meal. Before the *Aukitan* had been changed into a lumber drogher, her mess room had been off of the galley, but during alterations most of the midship house had been cut down, forcing the sailors to eat where they slept—old style. This had caused a lot of grumbling on the part of the crew as they were shipped, for, as Ben had told them, they were paint scrubbers, not sailors. By the time he returned to the forecabin the crew of eight men were gathered about the table.

"Come on! Hurry up, you old hump-

backed porpoise," growled big Sanderson, the boss and bully of the forecabin. "Suppose you have been yarning to the cook about how you never had your grub carried to you on the old *Glory of the Seas*."

"Nor did I," snapped Ben. "We went to the galley and got our own cracker hash and salt horse. Fresh meat and pertaters! Beans, soft bread, pie, pickles, and milk for yer coffee! Who ever heard of sech," he grumbled as he set his mess kits down on the table. "Ye call yerselves sailors! Humph! Paint scrubbers—that's all ye are. Sailors! Why, they ain't one of ye can splice a four-strand rope, t' say nothing of wire."

"Lay off that, old man," growled Sanderson. "When did you see the *Glory of the Seas*? In Seattle, when she was a cannery tender, cut down and towed north by a tug?"

"No, dang ye," screamed Ben, "when she was a three skys'il yarder—when she made the passage from New York to Frisco in forty-one days—when Archie McKay druv her till her lee rail was under, when her topm'st and her royal m'st bent like a bow, when *men* were in her fo'c's'le, not a bunch of heavy-handed, pie-eating paint scrubbers!"

"Where were you?" grinned young Page. "On the dock in Frisco, watching her warp in?"

"Warp in—warp in!" yelled Ben, beside himself with fury. "Warp in! What the h—— do you know of warping in? What storybook did ye read that in? Why, ye young numskull, ye don't know even now what that means! Consarn ye—I was *on* her! Bos'n, I were, bos'n of the port watch, and handling them warps."

"Whose wheel?" growled Sanderson.

"Mine," young Page answered, as he left the forecabin to relieve the watch.

Old Ben cleaned up the table, growling and muttering to himself, while the

balance of the crew chaffed him unmercifully.

"Wonder if the old coot ever was on a square rigger?" asked Cox of his crony and watch mate, Rogers.

"Search me," Rogers answered. "I never was. He's got the patter down all right, and for all I know or care, he might have been the admiral of the *Great Mogul*. I am going to turn in and try to forget this heat."

By evening a long, heavy swell started to set in from the westward, causing the low-ballasted *Aukitan* to roll heavily. From the direction of the ground swell a low-hung bank of greasy, greenish-gray clouds were forming. The air, if such a thing were possible in that damp, heavy atmosphere, grew still more oppressive. All three officers were on the bridge watching that ominous, fast-approaching cloud bank.

"How's the glass, Mr. Long?" asked Captain Brace.

"Twenty-nine forty-two and still falling, sir," replied the mate.

"Too low," muttered Brace, casting an anxious eye to windward. "Everything snug and secure?" he asked as he reached for the speaking tube to the engine room. "Hello, Mr. Talbot. Better look out down there—all hell is going to pop in a couple of hours. Nothing loose, is there, that might come adrift?"

"Everything O. K., captain," came the voice of the chief from the speaking tube.

"Well, there is nothing more we can do," said Captain Brace. "Hold her as she is. I think the worst of the storm will pass astern of us and curve away. Just the same, we are going to catch some dirty weather, and I sure wish we had a couple of hundred tons of ballast higher up, for this old sampan is going to roll like a pig with all that dead weight down below. I am going to try to catch a couple of hours' sleep. Call

me when she hits. Better turn in, Bower and let Mr. Long keep the watch," he ordered, as he entered the chart house to write up the night order book.

In the fore-castle the watch below were getting ready for the short sleep until they were called at midnight. Old Ben was puttering about, more intent on keeping away from the men than the idea of doing any work, for during the long voyage, the gibes and jeers of the crew had wounded the natural vanity of the old man. As the *Aukitan* carried no quartermasters, the eight men of the crew were divided into three watches of two men each, leaving two extra men for deck work during the day.

She had carried a third mate, but he had fallen sick at Port Louis and had been left behind in the hospital. The boatswain, while not being a licensed man, had taken the third's watch, that left the deck work in charge of the mate on watch. Old Ben had grumbled at this and on the morning after leaving Port Louis had approached the captain, asking to be made bos'n. The skipper merely laughed at the old fellow and walked off. From then on the crew had name Old Ben "Bos'n," much to his annoyance.

"Going to turn us to in the morning to chip decks, Bos'n?" Case, one of the two day men, spoke up from the depths of his bunk.

"Wish I had ye on a square rigger," growled Ben. "I'd make ye both chip and overhaul every link of chain, and do it in your watch below."

"My! What a hard-boiled bucco our bos'n is," smiled Wright, the other man with Case.

"Aw—leave the old guy alone and let a fellow sleep," muttered a drowsy voice. "You birds got all night in and ye don't care how long ye keep a working man up."

"Old guy!" screamed Ben, his hair-trigger temper bursting out at the in-

sults of the fo'c's'le. "Say you—listen. When I was bos'n of the *Glory of the Seas*—"

"Oh! gosh," murmured a drowsy voice, "he's off again."

"Yes," answered Cox, "what happened when you were bos'n of the *Glory of the Seas*?"

"None of your damn business!" snapped Ben, as he stamped out of the fore-castle and out on deck.

By midnight the storm struck and struck heavily. The stout *Aukitan* quivered under the impact, as thousands of tons of the Indian Ocean were being hurled at her frail hull. The wind shrieked through the rigging and tore the smoke from the funnel, laying it low on the water to leeward. In an hour the decks were a surge of water—spray and solid seas were thrown high over the bridge and the rain beat down in a deluge.

"Slow her down and bring her up into the wind," ordered Captain Brace. "That will stop her infernal rolling. Almighty! How she can roll," he muttered to himself, holding onto the bridge rail with a viselike grip to keep himself from shooting off into space. Everything was a smother of broken water; the crash of broken crockery came from the saloon, heard even above the roar and smashing of the gale. She rode easier now, hove down and heading into the wind, though her plunging was terrific, at times completely burying her fore-castle head under tons of solid water.

"Hope they have that fo'c's'le scuttle closed," Captain Brace said to himself. "How in Sam Hill are they going to get out of there."

"Don't think there are more than two men in the fo'c's'le," replied the bos'n, who had the watch. "The four-to-eight watch turned in on the fiddley and the midnight watch are still on deck. I think only the two day men are in there."

"Have some coffee, sir?"

The skipper turned. There stood old

Ben, balancing to the plunging of the ship, holding a pot of smoking-hot coffee and a couple of cups.

"Steward is out, sir," he remarked as he handed a cup to the captain. "Dunno what's the matter, sir, but he looks like he's got something bad."

"Guess he's got a slight touch of mal de mer," grinned Brace, as he sipped the scalding-hot coffee, brewed to the strength of lye.

"No, sir," seriously replied Ben. "Looks like yaller jack to me."

"What's that?" snapped Brace. "Yellow jack'—what are you talking about? Don't go to throwing any scare like that—things are bad enough as they are without any half-baked imbecile talking of 'yellow jack.'"

"Just the same, sir, I know yaller jack," replied Ben. "Once when I was bos'n of the *Glory* of—"

"Oh—to the devil with you," thundered Brace. "Get below, and not another word out of you."

As Ben left the bridge, Captain Brace's eyes grew thoughtful; if Ben's diagnosis was right, and it might be at that, as Carter, the third mate, had been taken sick just before leaving Port Louis, and while the port doctor had given him a clean bill of health, yet—A monsoon, and a crew coming down with yellow fever! Brace dismissed the idea from his mind as preposterous, but, like the good seaman he was, he decided that at the first opportunity he would look at the steward himself. After Ben had left the bridge the captain took another look at the glass. To his delight he found that it had stopped its plummetlike descent and was now slowly rising.

"She'll clear soon, mister," he greeted the mate, who had just relieved the second. "Glass going up, and she is breaking to windward. That's one good thing with these Indian Ocean storms, they sure are bad while they last, but, thank the Almighty, they don't last long."

"I'm glad of that," Long replied. "If I hadn't gone to sea for nigh on to twenty years I'd say I was seasick. Damn, but I feel green!"

"What's the trouble?" queried Brace, Ben's diagnosis of the steward's illness flashing through his mind.

"Hanged if I know, sir," the mate answered. "Just feel foggy. Reckon this darned blow has kind o' gotten on my nerves. What's that?" he yelled, as he peered over the weather cloth into the darkness ahead.

"Where?"

"Dead ahead, sir. Port—hard aport," he shouted, as a black, soggy mass rose over the bows and the *Aukitan's* bow dipped deep in one of the mountainous seas, and at the same time he rang the engines full speed astern. Slowly the *Aukitan's* head fell off from the effect of both the backing engines and the rudder. "Steady," he called to the man at the wheel, and shoved the engine-room telegraph to slow ahead. This maneuver brought her stern clear of a mass of tangled wreckage floating alongside to windward. Slowly the ship again forged ahead, Brace in the far end of the bridge, leaning over the rail anxiously watching the wreckage—would she clear or would she drift broadside into that tangled mess of spars and yards now only a scant ten feet away? "Full ahead," he shouted to Long, hoping to shoot the ship ahead of the wreck.

Just as Long grasped the handle of the telegraph a monstrous sea came charging down from off the weather bow and surged over the decks; her bow rose to meet the monster, and halfway up the dizzy climb her bow was thrown to port, her stern meeting the tangled wreckage now just astern. There was a crash from the engine room, the ship trembled like a thing alive as the engines freed from the thrust of the propeller, broken off against the wreckage, raced madly, while the steam leaped shrieking through pipes and valves into

the cylinders of her engines, forcing the pistons up and down wildly. The engineer on watch gave a leap to the throttle, jamming it down hard.

Then came silence, that shuddering silence harder on the ears and nerves for an instant than the voice of a thousand battlefields. The steam, finding its passage stopped by the gates of the throttle, ran from valve to valve, from pipe to pipe, until with a reverberating roar it escaped to freedom through the safety valve into the air.

On the bridge Brace gave one agonized look at Long. "Wheel's gone!" he shouted. "Rouse out the crew—get the sea anchor up, and get it overboard. Better start some oil—it will help some."

Long ran down off the bridge, calling to the bos'n who had come on deck. "Sea anchor, boss!" he yelled. "Break it out."

All headway lost, the *Aukitan's* head quickly fell off and she lay in the trough, rolling heavily. Having lost her propeller, there was no drag aft, or she would have come up into the wind stern first and ridden fairly easily. The bos'n with the mate started forward, followed by three or four men.

"Where's the rest of the gang?" Brace shouted.

"Down sick," answered the bos'n, "and I ain't feeling any too well myself."

"Mc neither," murmured one of the crew, as he made a dash for a hand hold.

The new position of the *Aukitan*, while she was rolling like a fiend, kept the heavy seas from breaking over her, though the air was filled with flying spume and spray. The sea anchor, that clumsy, awkward contrivance resembling a huge parachute, was dragged on deck. A new coil of seven-inch manila was opened and cleared.

"Get five or six sacks, fill them with waste, then pour storm oil over them,

fasten the sacks to the sea anchor," commanded Long. "That will keep the seas down some."

Slowly the anchor was raised over the rail and shoved overboard—the line led to the forward bitts. As the *Aukitan* drifted to leeward she slowly tightened on the anchor line; little by little her head came around, and soon she was pointing into the wind, riding safely in the slick of the oil thrown out by the sea anchor. Long returned to the bridge, where Captain Brace was in earnest conversation with the second mate and old Ben Morgan.

"Come here, Mr. Long. Seems like troubles never come singly," said Captain Brace. "It's not only the gale and the losing of our wheel, but now it looks like Sparks is down with something that looks like yellow fever. I sent Mr. Bower to roust him out so that he—Sparks—could broadcast an S O S with our last position. But Bower found Sparks out of his head and in a raging fever."

"That's bad!" agreed Mr. Long with a whistle of astonishment. "Bet you that was the trouble with the third. We sure were lucky to get clear of Port Louis." Long was interrupted by a shrill blast from the engine-room speaking tube. He strode over to the board and grasped the tube. "Hello," he answered.

"Chief speaking," came a voice from the engine room. "First assistant and three firemen down with some kind of a fever."

"Four down in the black gang," he reported to Brace. "Clear every one out of the firemen's forecastle—throw every darned thing in them overboard, everything that is loose, then fumigate it with sulphur. We'll turn it into a hospital," commanded Brace. "Shake a leg now. You Ben! You are chief nurse—take charge aft. Mr. Long, you personally keep an eye on the line to our sea anchor. This wind will be down

before noon, though the sea will hold for quite a while."

"Huh," grunted old Ben. "Head nurse, humph! Well, might as well be that as anything else." So growling to himself, Ben went forward to shift the sick from the well. On entering the sailors' forecandle he found three men down; these he had moved to a spare room midship—no small job on that plunging, bucking ship. Mr. Bower had taken four firemen, and they were clearing up their forecandle, throwing overboard blankets, mattresses, and clothing. While the men were doing this, an oiler was connecting a steam hose to the winch line, and soon the forecandle was filled with the hissing and roaring of live steam.

"Guess that will do with the steam," remarked Bower, as two men came up with a sack of sulphur. "Get this going and seal up everything tight. That'll kill all the bugs."

After the fumes of the burning sulphur had cleared from the firemen's forecandle, all the sick—now numbering nine—were moved in. The wireless operator was the worst off, and to even Ben's unpracticed eye the tide of life was fast ebbing.

Morning broke fine and clear. There was considerable sea running, but the wind had fallen away to a gentle breeze. During the night the wireless operator, a fireman, and the first assistant had died. As Ben walked forward to report to the captain, his shrewd eyes were sizing up the *Aukitan's* stumpy masts. Mounting to the bridge, he was surprised to find it deserted, as either one of the mates or the boatswain were keeping regular sea watches. Looking in the wheel house, he spied the form of Mr. Long crumpled up on a settee.

"Hell," muttered Ben, "the mate's down!"

He ran to the bridge and called to two sailors who were on deck.

"Take him to his room," Ben com-

manded, his shrill voice snapping out with force so that the two men looked in surprise at their former mess boy. "I said to his room," he reiterated, and without further ado they carried the unconscious form below.

"Reckon the Old Man is in his room," thought Ben as he knocked on the captain's door. A muffled groan reached his ears. Throwing open the door, he stepped inside.

"This is getting too thick," grumbled Ben, as he leaned over Brace's unconscious form. "Skipper down, mate down. Now where in heck is the second?"

Swiftly he undressed the captain and covered him up—then he ran down the alley to the second mate's room. The same sight met his gaze.

"Now I am sunk," groaned Ben. "Oh, well, might as well make the best of it," he muttered as he left the room and ran down the ladder to the deck below, where he plumped into the arms of the boatswain.

"Say, bose, are ye a navigator?" questioned Ben.

"Not me," denied bose.

"Well then, old cocky, looks like I am going to have to act as chaperon to this bunch of mud sloggers."

"What d'you mean?" asked bose.

"Nothing, only the skipper and both mates are down, and seeing I am the only navigator aboard, looks like I'll have to take charge."

"You—a navigator——" spat bose in disgust. "Y' shrimp! Ye couldn't navigate a dish of spuds from the galley to the mess room."

"Can't, hey?" snapped Ben. "Just happens I can, and you take your orders from me from now on, compree?"

"Huh—orders from you," sputtered the boatswain.

"I ask ye again, are you a navigator?" shouted Ben.

"No, I told you once I was no navigator," replied bose, "but if you want to try your hand at it, go ahead."

"Going to back me up?" asked Ben.

"Well, if you look at it that way," growled Bose, as he shifted from one foot to the other, undecided whether or not to believe Ben's statements. But the age-long difference between the man used to giving orders and the man who receives them came to the fore. "All right. Guess we got to make the best of things, and if you kin navigate—well, I presume we gotta take orders from you," conceded the boatswain.

"Bos'n," ordered Ben, the years shedding from him like the scales from a cleaned fish, "tell the second assistant to come to the chart house; tell him to put an oiler in charge of the hospital, then let young Cox take charge of the skipper and both mates. Take every man you can get hold of and rouse out every piece of canvas you can find—strip the hatch covers—leave only one tarpaulin on each hatch—get up a coil of that twelve-thread stuff, and cut about two hundred two-foot lengths from it.

The bos'n turned without a word and went forward like a man in a daze, to rout out what men he could find. He entered the forecabin and found the four well men that were left of his gang.

"Cox," he ordered, "you are nurse. Go to the officers' quarters and look out for the skipper and the two mates."

"Me, nurse!" growled Cox. "Like hell I'm nurse. What's the matter with old *Glory of the Seas*?"

"I said go aft," thundered the bos'n. "Damn you, now go."

"Say, are you the captain of the ship?" asked Cox, rising and confronting the burly boatswain.

"No, but I have my orders from the captain—Captain Ben Morgan," he answered. "Now you git." And Cox got—a look of wonder in his eyes.

McDonald, the second assistant, found Ben in the chart room, bending over a chart of the Indian Ocean. He raised up as McDonald came into the room. He spoke to him slowly.

"Mr. McDonald, you are the senior officer on this ship now, seeing every one else is sick. I am a navigator—the gang forward don't think so—they think I'm nothing but a broken-down old wind bag, but I *am* a navigator, and long ago I had a deck watch on the old *Glory of the Seas*."

"So I've heard," grinned McDonald.

"Never mind that. To come down to cases, being the only well man aboard who knows the least rudiments of navigation, I am going to take command. Take only enough men of the engine-room gang to keep steam for your auxiliaries and send the balance to me."

The boatswain and his men had by this time stripped the hatches and brought up from the storeroom all the canvas they could find, which made quite a respectable pile. As Ben went aft he found two men rigging a boatswain's chair over the stern. He climbed in and ordered the men to lower away. When clear of the bulge of the stern, he could see that the rudder was intact, and as the *Aukitan* buried her nose in a roller the hub of the propeller could be seen. Evidently the spinning wheel had struck a spar from the wreck and had stripped the blades clean.

"The rudder is clear," he told that worthy. "Now we are going to rig a set of sails on this old hat box and sail her into some port. What have we as regular sails?"

"Well," answered the bos'n, "she has two staysails and that is all."

"Set them. Then wing out both booms on number one and three hatch and use the tarps for sails; that will give us the fore staysail for a head sail and two fair sails on each mast. As soon as you have them rigged, we will start cutting down some of the other tarps and see what we can do for a tops'l."

Three weeks after a stately P. & O. liner a day out from Colombo sighted a strange sight. What appeared to be a small tramp steamer dressed in a most



wondrous garb, was seen ahead, slowly surging through the water. Canvas flew from every possible vantage place—from her signal halyards fluttered the yellow "Q" of pestilence and disease. Two huge triangular sails were rigged on her cargo booms, above them was set a travesty of a tops'l; boat covers were even lashed to the guys of her funnel.

The liner's passengers crowded her rails, watching this marine monstrosity slowly making her way, aided by a sparkling breeze. The liner's radio operator was unsuccessfully calling to the stranger, while the liner's spick-and-span officers watched from the bridge.

"She's broken down and making her way as best she can," the grizzled captain said to the junior by his side. "Head for her."

Slowly the liner approached the smaller vessel and drew close. "Hello!" shouted her commander. "In trouble?"

A small, dried-up figure, his face drawn with suffering and lack of sleep, answered through a megaphone: "American steamer *Aukitan* twenty-eight days out of Port Louis for Manila. Master and most of the men down with yellow fever. Lost wheel. Can you spare a doctor?"

"Keep on your course," the liner's master shouted. "I'll see what I can do."

"I am a physician, captain," a tall, bronzed man spoke up from a group of passengers crowded below the bridge. "Put me aboard and I will see what I can do. I like that little old man's nerve," he insisted as a friend remonstrated with him for leaving a comfortable liner for a dirty, dingy, plague-stricken tramp. Soon a small boat was dancing over the waves toward the *Aukitan*, a sea ladder was thrown over, and the doctor climbed over her rail. Hollow-eyed men were there to receive him, while on the bridge he spied the small figure that had been speaking to the liner.

"Report me to Coudray & Co.," he shouted to the liner, "and tell them to send a tug out and pick us up." With a salute from her whistle, amid the cheers and waving of her passengers, the beautiful vessel sped away.

Wearily old Ben climbed down from the bridge and advanced to meet the doctor. "Thanks for helping us, sir," he said as he extended his hand, which the man of medicine wrung warmly. "You are just in time—the second mate, two engineers, and four men are gone—ten more are down, and the captain and mate are very low."

"Who are you?" gasped the doctor.

"Just the mess boy of the *Aukitan*," replied Ben with a grin as he staggered back to the bridge.

"Well, I'll be damned!" exclaimed the doctor as he picked up his bags and started on his errands of mercy.

In a room in a cool, white hospital at Colombo, Captain Brace sat propped up in bed reading several telegrams just brought to him by Ben Morgan. "You say the ship is in dry dock, having a new wheel fitted?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Ben. "She will be out in a week. Mr. Long is all right now and is aboard. We'll be ready to sail just about the time you are ready to get out of here."

"Morgan," began the captain. "You have done a very wonderful thing in bringing the old *Aukitan* in. You are now her second mate. And I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart, not only in my name and that of the crew, for if it had not been for you we would have all died, but in the name of the owners as well. Mr. Morgan, you are a man, and if it will help you any I'll rig a skys'l yard on the old bucket just for you to play with."

"Oh, that was nothing, sir—all in the day's work," began Ben. "Why, once when I was mate on the *Glory of the Seas*—" And Captain Brace listened to the whole of the story.



# Jake's Suggestion

A Story of the Black Gang By Bob DuSoe

Though a stowaway, Jake was given inhuman treatment by the assistant engineer. A storm gave Jake's persecutor the chance to damage the ship and throw the blame on the chief engineer. Jake made a suggestion that greatly changed things.

**J**AKE felt the vibration of the engines and crouched a little lower in his hiding place in the forepeak. He knew by the slow, steady throb, that the cylinders were being warmed up and that in half an hour or so, the rust-streaked old freighter would be on her way.

The words of the fat Hawaiian judge, still rankled in his brain. "Five days to get out of town, or thirty days in the workhouse." Five days to catch a ship out of Honolulu—Jake clenched his fists at the thought. Also it hurt his pride to be cringing where he was, but anything was better than thirty days of abuse, in a Kanaka workhouse.

The vibration ceased after a while and then began again. He knew from the way the *Valdorn* had laid at the dock, that she was backing out into the

turning basin. When the throbbing stopped and then started again, he knew that she was straightening away and would soon be gliding past Sand Island for the open sea.

It was the next morning before he emerged from his cramped quarters and joined the seamen at breakfast. They were a bit surprised but greeted him civilly enough and enjoyed the account of his recent experiences. When he had quenched his thirst with black coffee and topped it off with a smoke, he was ready to face the captain.

Jake had done his best to join the *Valdorn* in a respectable manner but the first-assistant engineer had turned him down with an indifferent grunt at his story and refused him permission to see the chief. Consequently, Jake was

already quite decided in his opinions of this particular officer and wondered how that gentleman would react to his sudden appearance.

Captain Nichols was a mild-mannered old fellow, content to drift from one end of the earth to the other in his dingy tramp, interfering with no one, as long as things ran smoothly. When they didn't, he usually found some one to blame, other than himself, and let it go at that. He attempted an attitude of gruffness when the mate presented Jake and eyed him sternly.

"What in the name of common sense made you stow on this ship?" he demanded. "I suppose I'm to consider myself flattered."

Jake thought of a good retort but he did not use it. Instead, he explained his difficulties and willingness to work.

"Willing to work, are you?" the old man snorted. "Well, don't fret, young man, you'll work whether you are willing or not. What can you do?"

"Anything from passer to first assistant," Jake assured him.

The old man was a little surprised at this and decidedly doubtful but he sent for the chief.

The chief engineer was a good deal like the captain—not so red of face or so fat, but usually just as mild of temper.

"McCann," the captain addressed him, "this man has just made his presence known and says he can run the black gang if necessary. I suggest you put him to work."

The two laughed at Jake's expense and he smiled back. He knew enough of chief engineers and captains to know when he was well off. His papers were safe beneath his shirt and he might have proven his claim but with San Francisco only eight or nine days off, he decided it was not worth while.

"Says he can run the engine room, does he?" the chief returned. "Well, I guess I can tend to that for a while yet

but there's an all-fired lot of coal to be moved. How does that sound to you, young fellow?"

"Suits me fine, chief," Jake answered.

"Come on then; I know Mr. Simms will be glad to see you."

Jake followed the chief along the passage to the engine-room door and across the grating to the ladder. The tail rod rose and fell in the light from the transom and far below, a man in dungarees and undershirt, stood beneath the ventilator. To Jake it was a welcome sight and his spirits rose until he reached the foot of the last ladder and the first assistant met them.

"Stowaway, Mr. Simms," he heard the chief shout. "Put him to work."

Simms nodded curtly and his lips moved. Jake did not hear what he said but he had a fairly accurate idea and instead of waiting to make sure, removed his coat and shirt and went in search of a rag.

When the chief had gone, Simms turned on the new member of his watch with cruel delight. He was a big fellow, hairy as an ape, and Jake knew better than to expect any mercy.

"Wouldn't take my word for it, would you?" he shouted. "Well, you'll need a sweat rag all right where you're going. Up in the bunkers with you and if you don't keep 'em trimmed, s'help me I'll do some trimmin' myself."

There was nothing to do but obey. Jake made his way to the bunkers, glad to have escaped so easily. He found a passer already at work there but the poor fellow was making sad work of it. There was barely enough coal to carry the steamer on to San Francisco and most of that was at the farthest corner of the bunkers.

"Where did you come from?" the man asked with surprise.

"Just came out of the forepeak," Jake answered. "Stowed on at Honolulu."

"Good heavens!" the passer ex-

claimed, "you must have been crazy to pick out this old tramp."

"No, I just figured a week here would be better than thirty days in the work-house."

"I see," the man nodded. "I figured about the same way, only I signed on at Manila. No more of this for me, I'd rather go back in the army."

"Well, you can't blame the ship, man, just because you're not used to the work."

"No, it's my own fault, I've got no kick coming that way. There's another thing that gets me though, and that's the dirty work that's goin' on. You see the chief's been pretty decent to me and I hate to see these devils fram'in' on him the way they are. They're all in on it and there isn't anything I can do——"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," Jake interrupted. "Let me get some of this straight—I don't follow you."

"Well, that bird Simms, is workin' to get the chief's job and he's got the second and the juniors all with him. He's promised to step 'em all up when he gets the job. I told one of the oilers what I thought about it and he must have blabbed it to Simms, 'cause they've run me ragged ever since."

"That's an old trick, buddy, and sometimes it works, but as long as you are through at Frişco, why worry?"

"I guess you're right, only the chief was on the square with me and I kind of hated to see it."

At the end of the watch, Jake put away his scoop and attempted to leave the fire room with the rest, but the second, an ugly little cockney, had evidently received his instructions. He ordered Jake back to the bunkers with a flow of language that tempted Jake to punch him.

It was not so bad in the second watch. The passer was a big Italian and knew his business, but a gruff greeting was the only sound that escaped his lips during the whole four hours. The next

watch was like the first—the Filipino who relieved the Italian, had never seen a fire room before in his life. Jake had attempted to knock off as before, but the cockney second had passed the word along and the engineer in charge, sent him back.

The twelve hours had not bothered him, he had loafed all during the watch with the Italian but Jake knew that if Simms suspected the truth, he would keep him below till he dropped. It was therefore, a very dejected stowaway that staggered out when the first came on duty again and thinking his punishment had been severe enough for one day, Simms allowed him to continue on out with the gang.

It was dark when Jake made his way aft to the quarter occupied by the black gang and he knew by the southerly wind that mean weather was brewing. The *Valdorn*, riding high with her empty holds, rolled heavily. After a wash up and a good meal, he found a spare bunk and turned in, considerably pleased with himself for having put it over on Simms.

When Jake awoke a few hours later, he was half out of the bunk and half in, and the rumble and vibration beneath him, nearly finished what sense of balance he did have. No one seemed disturbed in the other bunks, however, so he climbed back to continue his sleep. Before he dozed off the whole stern of the *Valdorn* shook again, unmercifully but a racing propeller was nothing in the life of a coal passer, so he was soon snoring.

To Simms, however, it meant an opportunity and each time the engines raced, he allowed them to thrash about, a little longer. A broken shaft or a propeller blade would do the trick—nicely—he hoped it would be the propeller. They had shipped a new one recently and against his advice, the chief had selected a more expensive type with four detachable blades. It would take

a nice bit of explaining to the owners on McCann's part when the bill came in for repairs and maybe a tow bill besides. Simms had watched the coal disappear with satisfaction, and smiled to himself when he thought of the padded estimate he had given McCann at Honolulu.

The big crank raced ahead again and he stood with a hand on the throttle fully half a minute before slowing it down. The oiler reported a hot bearing in the tunnel but Simms was not particularly interested so the oiler went over to the engine again, being careful to keep well clear.

The next time the engine began its wild speeding, Simms grasped the throttle as before but instead of allowing it to race, he slowed it down. Some one had appeared on the grating above and was hurrying down the ladder. It was Chief McCann and he eyed his first assistant, plainly worried.

"She's racing pretty bad!" he shouted.

Simms shrugged his shoulders. "Can't help it, sir, shut her down as soon as I could."

The chief said nothing but he stood by until the end of the watch. The propeller rose clear more than once and whirled madly but Simms was quicker to throttle it down, though he made hard work of it. The second, not wise to the scheme, did better, so McCann bid him good night, and returned to his cabin.

Outside, the storm increased. The wind drove against the rising seas and hurled their crests against the plunging steamer until even Captain Nichols was shaken from his usual calm. Such weather was unusual at that time of the year or he would have seen to it that they carried more ballast. As it was, the vessel rose high on each huge wave, invariably exposing her bow or stern.

In the meantime, Jake slept peacefully through the night in spite of the whirling beneath him. At eight bells in the

morning, he watched his chance and raced across the open deck to the passageway and reported to Simms as he came on watch. The engineer seemed a little surprised but ordered him back to the bunkers with a motion of the hand. There was too much on his mind to be bothered with stowaways.

The regular passer was on the job but the plunging ship had proven too much for the good of his stomach and Jake found him stretched out on the pile of coal. The night watches must have been agony for him, so instead of bothering him with sympathy, Jake pitched in with the big scoop.

The racing engines were not so noticeable from the fire room but Jake could still hear them as he went about his work. Gradually he noticed that each time they speeded up, it was a little longer before they were throttled down. It was deliberate negligence on the part of the man at the throttle and each prolonged rumble and roar increased his anger. He remembered what the seasick man had said the day before and the truth of the whole thing dawned on him. Why wasn't the chief on the job, he wondered, or even the captain. He surely must know there was no excuse for the abuse the ship was receiving.

Unmindful of his own position, Jake shook the sick man to life and thrust the scoop into his hand. Then, assuming an attitude of indifference, he moved out into the fireroom and ducked into the passage leading aft to the engine room. From the other end of the passage, he had a view of Simms, standing near the throttle. Crouching low in the shadow, he watched him.

The vessel lurched a little heavier than usual and Simms opened and closed his fists as if on the verge of striking some one. The engines started their mad race and Jake held his breath, for the chief, far above, had moved out onto the grating and was looking down. Simms' hand was on the throttle and the power-

ful pistons continued to pound but still he did not move. McCann sprang for the ladder and raced down, but before he made the second landing, there was a sickening rumble far aft and Simms slammed the throttle over.

When the old chief reached the engine-room floor, he was in a rage but Simms only laughed at him. "That's what comes of your fancy wheels," he sneered.

"Why damn you, Simms!" the old man shouted. "You deliberately stood there and let it tear itself to pieces."

"I slowed her down as soon as I could. The valve must have stuck."

McCann stood for a minute, torn between rage and the anxiety to know what had happened, and then swung on his heel and ducked into the shaft alley. In spite of the reduced speed of the engines, the *Galdorn* threatened to shear her rivets with the racking vibration.

Jake made his way back to the bunkers. He knew the wheel had at least thrown a blade and probably a bearing had gone with it but McCann had seen the cause, so it was up to him.

It was no longer necessary to force the fires in order to keep up the steam pressure and the stokers gathered in a little group to offer opinions as to what had happened. Jake made the sick passer lie down and take it easy.

Toward the late afternoon the gale blew itself out and the sea gradually subsided but the lopsided propeller continued to pound at the least attempt to increase its speed. Jake learned that his estimate of the damage was correct, with the exception of the bearing. Fortunately they had withstood the strain.

When he learned that their only difficulty would be reduced speed, Captain Nichols retired to his cabin unworried, but McCann took it more seriously. Above all, he could not fathom the actions of his first assistant. The valve had not stuck. He resented Simms' in-

sinuation that he was fool enough to believe such a thing and all through the night he fretted and fumed while the ship made little better than steerageway.

In the morning, the sea had quieted down to a low, easy swell and when Jake came out from under the poop, he caught sight of the chief leaning over the rail, studying the wake. Jake, himself, had been doing some thinking while listening to the thump, thump of the wheel and seeing the chief was alone, ran up the ladder and joined him. "Have you any objections to me making a suggestion?" he asked.

The old chief glared at him. "Suggestion about what?"

"About that broken wheel. I've an idea that will help speed up, I think."

"What is it?"

Jake was not so sure of himself, but still he couldn't see how he was wrong. "It's got four detachable blades, hasn't it?" he asked.

"Yeh," McCann grunted. "It did have; it's only got three now."

"Well, if one of the blades is gone rail to look at him. "It may do that, will steady her so's you can speed up. You won't get the miles you did before, but she'll do a lot better than this, without shaking to pieces."

The old chief turned away from the rail to look at him. "It may do that, but how the hell are you going to take off the other blade out here at sea?"

"We can do it, sir," Jake insisted earnestly. "The propeller is blame near breaking water as it is, we're running so light. If we put her down by the head, she'll come up aft enough to throw the wheel half out. That's all we'll need to get at the screws."

McCann pulled his mustache and his expression changed as he thought over the suggestion. "Damn it, boy!" he exclaimed. "I believe it can be done."

"Sure it can!" Jake grew encouraged.

The worried look returned to the chief's face and he shook his head.

Jake read his thoughts. "I'll do the job for you, chief, if those pikers lay down on you."

"You will?" the old man asked.

For answer, Jake shoved out his hand.

The old man grabbed it and motioning for Jake to follow, hurried off.

When Simms heard of his orders to empty the tanks aft and fill the ones forward, he winked at the second—confident that the chief was crazy. When "Chips" and the bo'son went aft with planks and gear, however, he sent one of the juniors to find out what it was all about. The junior could learn nothing to report, other than the stowaway's presence on deck following the chief around like a shadow. Simms had not missed Jake and he immediately sent the junior after him but the engineer returned with word that the chief was using him.

Gradually, as the weight was shifted in the *Valdorn's* tanks, her bow sank and the stern rose. The three blades broke water with an uneven splash and finally McCann ordered the engines stopped and the fire banked in one of the boilers. When he gave instructions to the two juniors to help Jake and explained what he intended to do, they stood bewildered. They could not very well refuse and yet they knew that Simms would blame them, if they helped to spoil his scheme.

Jake lowered himself over the stern when the weight had all been shifted and signaled the chief. In turn, the old man sent word to the engine room until the propeller blade, opposite the broken one, had been worked around to a vertical position. It stood high out of the water but the big screws that held it to the hub, were still a few inches below the surface. It made the job more difficult but the sea was calm and Jake was determined to waste no more time.

Before he went below to begin work, he called the chief to one side for a word of warning. "A man that would de-

liberately race his engine," he said, "might accidentally bump against the throttle and then there wouldn't be much left of me."

"You're right, boy," the chief declared. "Don't go over until I come back." And selecting a big Swede from among the seamen, he led him all the way to the engine room, where he showed him the throttle and left instructions to kill any man who dared touch it, until he himself gave the order.

The deck gang swung the cargo boom from the after mast far over the quarter and when Jake let himself over the stern again, he carried the hook at the end of the fall.

He made it fast to a wire sling about the blade and called above for them to take in the slack. Next a big wrench with a pipe driven over the handle for added leverage was lowered and he slipped it over the head of the screw. The crude raft of planks that he worked on, slewed about and added to his difficulties.

The screw refused to budge. He had expected this and called for a small chain block. With a clamp, he fastened one end of it to the rudder and the other end to the handle of the wrench and started the chain running through the block. It tightened slowly and Jake felt his heart pound. The next pull on the chain, the handle moved toward him and the big screw loosened.

Three times more he lengthened out the chain block and pulled the handle around, before he could swing it with his own weight. But at length he worked it free and sent it up on the end of a small line for the chief to gloat over.

The others Jake managed the same way but it was a long, man-killing job. When it came to the screws on the other side of the blade, he was forced to use a sledge to start them and one of the juniors came down to help. Whether intentionally or not, Jake could not tell but the junior let the sledge slip out of

his hand after the first few blows and the chief was a long time finding another.

The sun dropped beyond the horizon while there were still two screws to remove and the fin of a shark broke the water but he called for a light and kept at it.

Toward eight bells the last screw broke free from the hub and he shouted for the man at the winch, to heave away on the fall. He warned the junior and backed away to the far end of the raft, but the heavy blade, as it swung away from the hub, knocked the raft from under, like so much kindling.

The rattle of the winch was distinct on the quiet sea and Jake listened with satisfaction until it ceased to clatter and the heavy blade bumped on deck.

The chief himself, helped Jake over the rail and sent him below to dry his clothes but he did not remain there long. The theory of the two blades still remained to be proven. When the pumps began their work of distributing the water in the tanks again and taking on the ballast that had been discharged, Jake grew anxious.

He found McCann on deck aft, studying the list of the vessel and waiting patiently for it to settle back to an even keel. "What did the captain mean when he said you wanted to take over the engine room for me?" he asked.

"I didn't say that at all," Jake laughed. "He asked me what I could do and I told him my papers were good for anything from passer to first assistant."

"Were you guying him or not?"

"No, I wasn't guyin' him. I've got them right here," and Jake indicated the front of his shirt.

"What was your last ship?"

"The *Steel King*, Captain Johnson. A fellow named McDuffy, was chief.

"Right you are," McCann agreed. "They were putting in at Manila when we pulled out."

They talked for some time and then judging the *Valdorn* had about righted herself, the chief led the way to the engine room. The big Swede still stood by the throttle, guarding it as instructed and when he had gone, McCann chuckled. "Damme, I'd plumb forgotten him."

McCann took the throttle and moved it slowly over and for the second time that day, Jake felt his heart begin to pound. The pistons moved slowly at first and then gained speed as the old chief opened the throttle a little wider. "Tell 'em to get steam up in that other boiler," he spoke calmly and Jake delivered the message to the fireroom.

"Now whistle up the tube to the bridge," he ordered, when Jake returned, "and tell 'em we're turning over."

Jake obeyed and remained by the chief with his eye on the throttle. The old chief glanced at the gauges occasionally and when they finally registered fifty, he swung the throttle to Half Speed Ahead. The pistons increased their motion and the crank revolved accordingly, but the jar and pounding from aft had ceased. He moved it to Full Speed Ahead and the engine responded with its customary rumble. Still the bedlam of the night before did not develop and Jake knew his theory was right.

He mopped the sweat from his brow and grinned, and the chief grinned back. "Who's watch is this, by rights?" he asked.

Jake glanced at the clock. "Mr. Simms," he answered.

"I thought so—well, it's yours now. Better keep an eye on those bearings in the tunnel; they must have had an awful time of it last night."

"It's mine?" Jake gasped, ignoring the reference to the tunnel. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. Put your ticket up in the frame when you get a chance. I've told Mr. Simms, to take his down."



# Man on the Water

No. XV

By  
Don  
Waters



In this fifteenth article by a man who is familiar with the history and present facts of the sea, the disgraceful tale of the slave period of maritime commerce is set forth.

## THE SLAVERS

THE ugliest pages of maritime history are those that tell the tales of the slave ships. While the whalers of New England were encircling the world, discovering new islands, charting the ocean currents, and adding to the wealth and knowledge of mankind, and while the swift clipper ships were making their proud records that to this day we read of with pride, another class of ships were carrying the Stars and Stripes engaged in the secret, inhuman trade of the slaver.

The log books of the clippers and the deeds and voyages of the whalers are open pages preserved with care, but the slave ships' records are few and those a series of horrors that to-day seem unreal and unbelievable. While the original settlers looked with envy on the sturdy native inhabitants and tried to force them to do their work, the Indian was too much of a stark fighter to be any man's slave. Kill him they might, but enslave him—never.

Beginning in 1619 when a Dutchman landed twenty African natives at Jamestown, Virginia, and not really being entirely suppressed until the Southern ports were blockaded during the Civil War, the slavers continued their disreputable and inhuman trade in black cargoes. And, curious as it seems, the fishing industry was responsible for the beginning of the American slave traffic.

The first American slavers were New England fishing vessels that carried the salt and dried cod and mackerel across to Madeira and the Canaries as well as south to the West Indies. As the populations of these places were largely of Roman Catholic faith, fish found ready markets at good prices. The fish were sold in Madeira, the voyage was continued to the coast of Africa where the native chiefs traded their subjects—prisoners taken during the intertribal wars or undesirable citizens—for watered rum and cheap calico.

These unfortunate blacks were transported to the West Indies where labor

for the sugar plantations was in great demand. Here the survivors of the voyage were sold, part of their purchase price being taken out in molasses which was converted into rum at the home ports in New England. This continuous voyage with a ship always loaded meant triple profits and enormous gains.

In the early days of the slave trade no discredit was attached to men engaging in the business, for the preachers of those times proved to the satisfaction of all concerned that an African black was not a human nor did he have a soul. And he was entirely outside the pale of humane considerations, according to their preaching.

They also justified the practice of slavery by claiming that bringing the benighted heathen to a Christian country "out of the arms of the devil" where he could acquire the benefits of religion was a work "good in the sight of Heaven." The chain shackles of the slaver, the auction block, the lash of the overseer seems to our modern minds ghastly instruments of religion. As a Frenchman aptly put it, "Devotion was at that time the great occupation of Europe, and it was believed that Christians and sugar might easily be made at the same time."

Curious indeed it is to read the pious words and the prayers for divine assistance when a vessel started in these days on her voyage to the coast of Africa. There was no compunction shown for the native, either at taking him from his home to slave his life away under the whip of a merciless driver in the cane fields in the West Indies, nor was any consideration or pity shown for his suffering on the way there. The Quakers alone of all the early settlers, with unflinching courage and in the face of public opinion, denounced and outlawed the traffic in or ownership of slaves.

In 1645 the Boston ship, *Rain-*

*bowe*, the first American slaver, got into bad graces with the authorities, and her captain was prosecuted not because he transported slaves but because he had broken the Sabbath in order to acquire by force a few slaves on the African coast. Captain Smith of the *Rainbowe*, went unpunished, as his defense was not that he was innocent of the charges but that the court had "No jurisdiction over crimes committed in Africa."

So it is no wonder when we understand the state of the public mind in the seventeenth century that the records of this horrible trade are almost without exception tales of cruelty and suffering, of lingering death and disease, of torture and misery, beyond words to picture. A negro was but a piece of goods. Imagine the sufferings of a half hundred black children packed in a small open boat, twenty-four feet in length by seven in beam on the middle passage from Africa to Brazil!

Thirty per cent of these died, but that was considered but an average loss for the voyage. During the early days of the eighteenth century all the vessels engaged in the slave trade were small—forty to fifty tons burden being a good-sized vessel while the smallest of them would rate about ten tons. The conditions on board these craft were unspeakable when the slave trade was legal. In 1807 it was outlawed by Great Britain, and, consequently, they became far worse since the profits from a slaver depended entirely on the number of slaves that could be packed aboard.

Then began the practice of increasing the carrying capacity of the ships by building shelves and platforms across the hold between decks from either side, leaving a narrow passageway down the center. These slave decks were but a little more than three feet apart, not allowing sufficient room for the slaves to sit up in. The slaves were generally shackled together in pairs through ring

bolts in the slave decks, entirely naked. The decks were so filthy that the slightest bit of clothing would breed disease.

The shackled blacks were fastened "spoon fashion," chest to back. Not content with wedging them in like sardines, they were further crowded by lapping them, row on row, the head of one between the legs of another. Witnesses stated to the English House of Commons that "A man in his coffin has more room than one of these blacks."

In fine weather the slaves were taken out in batches each day, washed down with salt water from the pumps and fed, but in bad weather even this little exercise was not allowed them. Of course, overcrowded as they were, their naked bodies sliding back and forth on the rough boards with the motion of the vessel, confined in their foul, hot prisons, disease and death were constantly thinning down their ranks. It was stated that a slaver could often be detected by her foul stench before her sails were above the horizon. A school of sharks always followed a slaver, feeding on the bodies that each morning were dumped over. Needless to state the sharks seldom went hungry.

But if the laws of men were not sufficient, nature took its revenge often on the slaver. The risk of capture was but one of the dangers the slaver constantly had to guard against. Scurvy, yellow fever, small pox and typhoid, bred rapidly on the slave deck. Of course it was impossible to check a malignant epidemic on an unsanitary slaver. Disease knows no bounds nor color, and the white officers and crews in the fore-castle forward and the cabin aft, often died as miserably as did the pitiful blacks below.

A gruesome story that is without parallel in sea history is told in almost every book treating on the slave trade. The *Rodeur*, a French slaver with one

hundred and sixty-five slaves aboard, was making the passage from Africa to Guadalupe in 1819 when the slaves below deck developed a virulent eye disease. The captain, in hopes of checking its course, heaved thirty-six of the worse infected slaves overboard to drown in the sea.

This had no effect. The disease continued to spread and in a short time, not only every one on the slave deck below, but the entire crew save one man above went totally blind. Of all the men aboard, slave and free, but one sailor was immune. With sightless eyes wrapped up in everlasting darkness, the crew groped their way up the deck, feeling for the sheets and halyards and trying to work the vessel. Day after day passed while the one man who could see to steer, clung wearily to the wheel. A blind, foul-smelling hulk of horror, the *Rodeur* groped her way across the limitless sea. Weary day followed fearsome night. With sightless, staring eyes, the ship's company went their gloomy and blindly stumbling rounds.

There came a day when the helmsman sighted a sail with a glad shout, he headed toward the other ship. Perhaps there was medicine aboard—perhaps a doctor to alleviate the sufferings of his mates. The *Rodeur* slowly overhauled the other. Then the helmsman noted with a sinking feeling an uncanny air about the other. As it drew closer he saw her idly slatting sails and noticed her yawing and veering across the face of the sea with no one at her helm. She, too, was a slaver. The stench to leeward of her was unmistakable. At the helmsman's shout, a voice aboard the other vessel tells the tale.

She is the Spanish slaver, *Leon*, and every one on board her is blind from ophthalmia, contracted from the slaves. Frenchman and Spaniard drift apart. The stern hand of retributive justice

had fallen heavily on the two luckless slavers, and had dealt a far worse punishment to them than men could ever devise. The one man who kept his eyesight piloted the *Rodeur* into port. Then he, too, went blind.

But the very cruelty and greed of the slavers was responsible for the suppression of the traffic, and to the everlasting credit of England, she was the first of civilized nations to set her face against slavery. British warships patrolled the seas, confiscating and destroying every slave vessel of every nationality save American.

In 1820, congress, after years of bickering, tried to frame a law that would satisfy the slave trader, the Southern slave owners, and the Northern abolitionist, declaring slave trade piracy and punishable with death. However, to the shame of America, the last of the nations to stamp out the trade in human lives, the American flag served as a protection to many a slaver for years. The law was but laxly enforced and but served to increase the price of slaves delivered on the Southern seaboard to five hundred dollars, and decreased the cost on the coast of Africa.

The American government refused to allow British warships to search vessels flying the Stars and Stripes abroad, and at home the state of public opinion allowed the slavers to go unpunished. There are even stories on record of a United States attorney dining in a New York restaurant with a slave captain he was supposed to be prosecuting. And if, inadvertently, a slaver was captured by an American warship, he had no trouble in getting out on bail. Men of the highest commercial standing in their communities were ready and willing to serve as bondsmen. And if he were adjudged guilty, the fine imposed was but a tithe of his profits from one successful voyage.

In 1834 Great Britain abolished slavery forever from British posses-

sions and appropriated a hundred million dollars to suppress the traffic. For thirty years after that, the English spent over two and a half million a year to keep her cruisers on the slave coast, even paying two million dollars to Spain as an inducement to the Spanish to abolish the slave trade after May 30, 1820. Although Spain accepted the money from Great Britain and agreed to cooperate with British cruisers in the suppression of the slave traffic, she deliberately violated her contract for years afterward.

Not till 1842 did America cooperate, for in that year she joined in the treaty with England to abolish the slave trade and the Stars and Stripes no longer became the protection to a slaver. But even then America's part was but a farce, and the brunt of the sea patrolling fell on Great Britain.

A slaver could only be adjudged guilty if slaves were actually found on board. All the unmistakable evidences of slaves: the leg irons, the neck collars, the handcuffs might be seen tumbled about the decks; the big kettles forward might be filled with rice and yams, the food for the cargo might be still boiling, the decks below, slimy, streaked with blood and over all the sickening stench left by close-herded human cattle, would tell the story beyond a chance of evasion, yet the cruiser could do nothing but curse the arrant brutes who trod the decks and departing, hear their curses returned in bitter full.

If the slavers succeeded in dumping his shackled load overboard before he was boarded, there could be no action taken, for he had no contraband aboard. A slaver on being overhauled by a cruiser would dump a few slaves overboard in the hopes that the following vessel would pick them up and the delay occasioned would give the pursued a chance to escape. If the cruiser still held on, the slaves were cast overboard

in larger batches and finally, if capture seemed certain, the last of the blacks would be heaved over the side.

Thousands of slaves met their end in this fashion, which, cruel as it seems, was probably far more merciful than a life on the plantations. The overseers of the cane fields had found it more profitable to work a slave to death while in his prime than to keep him to old age when he would have to be fed without working.

The middle passage has aptly been described as "every wave a mound over a dead negro." Not only were the dead cast to the sharks, but often the living. The cargo of slaves was insured, and all lost at sea could be claimed for the insurance. When a slave captain neared his destination he often sorted the slaves, picked out the feeble and diseased who would not sell, and, noting the number in the log to later present his claim, would callously heave them over the side.

A notorious slaver was the brig *Brillante* which was commanded by Homans, an Englishman, who seemed to be about as cold-blooded an individual as ever sailed the seas. The *Brillante* was well armed, carried ten guns and a crew of sixty men. She outfought one British cruiser which, after the engagement, was so badly cut up that she had to be abandoned. Another time when the boats from a sloop of war attempted to board the *Brillante*, Homans drove them off with great slaughter. In ten trips to Cuba he had carried over five thousand slaves.

But once Homans was surely trapped. Four British cruisers converged on him. He could not run, and the odds were too great to resist. Night and a calm overtook the men-of-war before they came close enough to board. While the boats of the cruisers approached under oars, the captain of the *Brillante* was carrying out a diabolical

plan that for sheer fiendishness is without an equal.

He swung his anchor overboard, lashed to the cathead with a piece of rope, and ranged his anchor chain outside the bulwarks held up with bits of old cordage. Then, driving the six hundred shackled slaves on deck, the crew tied them, pair to pair, to the anchor chain. The fastening was cut. A frenzied bedlam of shrieks and hideous cries followed the splash when the anchor with its living load, plunged swiftly to the sea bottom. The captain had drowned his entire cargo of slaves in order to save a rotten, foul-smelling old hulk of a slave ship.

As the warships restricted the traffic the increased profits in the slave trade induced adventurous, daring men into the business, who would as soon fight a cruiser as run from her. Shot for shot was the order of that day. In 1845 a slaver massacred the entire crew of the cruiser *Wasp* on the coast of Africa. This victory meant defeat to the slavers. The British government immediately issued an order to show no quarter to a slaver that returned her fire. So after that, the slavers sought safety in their speed. The narrow, swift Baltimore clippers were in demand as slavers and showed their stern to many a pursuing avenger.

All these terrible deeds finally led to the suppression of the slave trade, for their cruelties became too great to bear, even to the men who were making the profits from them. In 1862, when Nathaniel Gordon, a slaver of Portland, Maine, was actually hanged in New York as a pirate, the end of the American slave trade was near. And, of course, the Civil War forever stopped the foul practice that was a blot on our record as a nation.

Even when the slaver was captured and the slaves were returned to Africa, they were little better off than if they had been sold in the slave marts of the

West Indies and the South. The slaves that formed the cargo of the slavers were not the fierce warlike coast negroes, but the milder-mannered savages from the interior.

When a cruiser liberated the captured savages on a strange coast, the barbaric inhabitants either killed them off or made prisoners of them to sell to the next slaver that came that way. And often a negro liberated from the slave deck of one vessel, would be recaptured, held prisoner and find himself shackled and chained on another slaver inside a week.

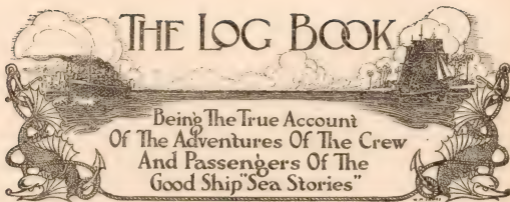
This state of affairs finally led to the establishment of a free negro State in Liberia in 1821, on the west, or gold coast of Africa. England had established a free negro colony at Sierra Leone over thirty years before this time. American citizens financed the movement for the negro republic at Liberia and even to-day, the United States supervises and American officials oversee the native affairs. After the establishment of Liberia, the freed slaves were not entirely safe. Groups

of men catchers prowled around the borders of Liberia and often made slave raids far inland.

There was only one way to end the career of the slavers. In blood and misery it existed, and by blood and suffering it was wiped out. Little did the Yankee skipper who sailed his little fishing smack across the Atlantic and carried the slaves back, think of the terrible price in lives and money the business he started would cost. Then came the Civil War. For four long years the best young manhood of New England died from Southern bullets or swamp disease and forever terminated the business of the slaver that their grandfathers had started years before.

When the final shot was fired, the last refuge of the slaver was gone, and on all the wide oceans of the world there was not the length of the measure of his keel where he might be safe. And if America was tardy in the repression of the traffic, the civilized world was forced to admit that she paid the price in full for her procrastination.





# THE LOG BOOK

Being The True Account  
Of The Adventures Of The Crew  
And Passengers Of The  
Good Ship "Sea Stories"

ONE of the most interesting marine events of the present time is the approaching completion of the largest and finest passenger steamer that has ever been constructed in the Western Hemisphere. This is another milestone passed in the progress toward an efficient American merchant marine. It is the first step in the direction of the rounded and well-balanced fleet that every maritime nation must have as an auxiliary to the military navy and an economic necessity in these days of keen competition and struggle for supremacy in the world's carrying trade.

It is now a matter of history that the World War laid the foundation for the rehabilitation of a mercantile marine suitable to the needs of this country as a world power. With a great part of America's titanic steel and iron industry concentrated on the construction of ocean freight steamers, a cargo fleet, second to none in size and quality, was produced almost overnight. But this did not suffice; as one swallow does not make a summer, so a fleet of freight vessels, no matter how large or efficient, does not make a complete merchant marine.

Our great lack since the war has been in passenger vessels. True, some vessels that had been laid down as troop transports and finished as passenger ships, have established a very excellent reputation for the flag in the first-class

passenger service all over the world. But this is not enough; the rest of our passenger and mail fleet consists of ships that had been commandeered and placed in service under the American flag after extensive reconditioning in domestic yards. Excellent service that these vessels have rendered—and are rendering—it still is not sufficient.

The fault lies not so much in the ships themselves as the assorted numbers of them and their odd sizes and types.

To operate an efficient passenger-and-mail-carrying service over the principal routes of the world's commerce, it is necessary to have a sufficient number of vessels of each type and size, so that they can run opposite one another on schedule, and so that one ship may be laid up for refit or repair without disorganizing the particular service in which they are engaged.

Hence the great need of our new merchant navy is for a better-proportioned high-speed passenger-and-mail fleet, a fleet that is the last word in efficiency and service, and that can compete in any trade with the best that the world can produce. But first of all it must be a fleet that is the product of home yards and designed to meet the requirements of the most discriminating traveling public.

While a certain number of passenger steamers have always been built in home yards, the number of liners constructed

here has always been limited to a few ships of moderate size. Most of the ships of this class have been coasting steamers. However, by the time this magazine appears before you, this country will have an ocean liner constructed in an American yard that is a monument to our shipbuilders and naval architects, and will be second to none in the perfection of her appointments and efficiency.

This ship is the *Malolo*, built by William Cramp & Sons, of Philadelphia, for the Matson Line's Pacific trade. She is five hundred and eighty-two feet in length, with a beam of eighty-three, and a draft of twenty-eight feet six inches, on which she will displace twenty-two thousand tons. The propelling machinery will be of the geared turbine type, and is designed to drive her at twenty-one knots sea speed.

While she is designed to meet the highest class of passenger-carrying service, provision has been made in her construction so that she can with very slight alterations be fitted out as an auxiliary cruiser, thus making her a valuable asset to the navy. It is to be hoped that she will be the first of many such vessels to be constructed in American shipyards.

Shipmate Harry Tolzer, of Los Angeles, has sent us a clipping concerning the coming retirement of the coast-guard cutter *Bear* from the Alaskan service. There is not sufficient space in these pages to reprint the clipping in its entirety, but we are delighted to have the opportunity of paying a slight tribute to this grand old ship that has served her country so faithfully and well for so many years.

It is perhaps safe to say that, with the exception of the U. S. S. *Constitution*, there is no more distinguished vessel in this country to-day, and certainly there is no vessel afloat that has seen harder or more useful service over a

longer period of time than this sea-scarred ex-Dundee whaler—truly a heart of oak!

She was built in 1874 by the well-known firm of Scott's at Greenock. It might be well to remark in passing that this firm has been building ships for two centuries, and has always been in the hands of the Scott family. Built as an arctic whaler, the *Bear* was peculiarly fitted for the service in which she spent the majority of her years.

Her frames are of oak, twelve inches square, and she is planked with six inches of oak, which in turn is protected by an ironbark sheathing two and one half inches thick. Her forepeak is solid oak for about nine feet after the cutwater. When new, she had a three-furnace Scotch boiler and a compound engine of three hundred and fifty horse power. She has used up three boilers since that time, but the same engine is driving her to-day that drove her on her trial trip on the Clyde so many years ago.

In 1880 Lieutenant Adolphus Greeley, an American officer, headed a polar expedition which reached what was then "farthest north." On his return he was to have met his relief ship at a predetermined point, but the plan went astray as the ship was crushed in the ice, with the result that Greeley and his companions were marooned in the arctic with nothing they could do but wait for the help that was almost two years in coming.

The United States navy department, on learning of the disaster that had befallen the relief ship, immediately set about organizing a rescue expedition. In order to leave nothing to chance, they decided to buy what were then the two finest ships afloat for the purposes of arctic work. These ships were the *Bear* and her sister ship, the *Thetis*. Winfield Scott Schley, later the hero of Santiago, commanded the *Thetis* on this expedition.

After fitting the ships out with every-



thing that skill and experience could suggest, they set out on their seemingly hopeless quest. It was one of the most dramatic events of the century, for, as it was necessary that the expedition enter the arctic by way of the Bering Sea, it meant sailing around two continents before the actual search could begin. Sagging slowly south down the long Atlantic zigzag under steam and sail, desperately beating to windward in trying to weather Old Stiff at the worst season of the year, the two unlovely old ex-whalers were set far to leeward into the antarctic ice before they ever got around into the Pacific. Then came the weary grind from the Horn of Bering Sea, and so into the arctic. Such was the Odyssey of these ice-scarred, bluff-bowed whalers from the banks of the Clyde. Nor was it an utter failure, for they succeeded in rescuing Greeley and six of his companions.

Impartial judges would concede that by this feat alone she had earned her American citizenship, but, in the light of later years, she has earned it time and again.

Since that time, 1884, the *Bear* has made forty voyages to the arctic, and each of them has had some of the elements of an errand of mercy. For her principal occupation, aside from upholding the laws of the United States in the frozen north, has been to help the inhabitants of our most northern possessions. And white settler or Eskimo, it makes no difference to the *Bear* or her crew as long as they are in need of assistance.

Transporting natives from island to island, suppressing epidemics of disease, medical and sanitary work among the native tribes, relieving famine-stricken areas, rescuing shipwrecked crews, and administering justice—these are but a few of the duties performed by the crew of this interesting ship. They have proved that "the laws of God and man do run north of fifty-three."

The *Bear* cannot be called handsome by any standard of naval beauty except by that which finds beauty in utility. Originally rigged as a bark, her present barkentine rig may have something to do with it. In living quarters she is woefully below what is considered good practice to-day. For she is so braced and stayed with huge masses of timber that accommodations are decidedly cramped, to say the least. Some of her berths are almost bisected by enormous hanging knees.

But in spite of these shortcomings it is safe to say that there are hundreds of people alive to-day to whom this grim old warrior of the arctic, with her unlovely outlines and her air of stark utility, is a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

However, the old ship has not quite outlived her usefulness, even though she will no longer journey to the north with the coming of spring. It has been decided to use her as a training ship for boys and a base for the boats of the rum-chaser fleet in the harbor of Los Angeles.

Here she can laze away the golden days of California sunlight and her every plank and fastening must whisper to the young men of fire, tempest, pestilence, and shipwreck in the arctic—an old warrior broken in the wars, helping to build a new race to carry on traditions that were old when Columbus discovered America, and that will last till there is no more sea.

In answer to Shipmate Rhoman Nelson's inquiry concerning the *John Ena*, which appeared in the June issue, we are glad to be able to furnish a couple of letters about this ship, and also some additional information about her. Two newspaper clippings also came with these letters, but as they are rather lengthy, it would be unwise to insert them here. Suffice it to say that they are in substance the same as L. A.

Water's letter in the June number, namely, that while towing around from Norfolk, the ship got into trouble on account of bad weather off Hatteras.

The *John Ena* was built in Glasgow in 1892 as a four-masted bark. She was two thousand eight hundred and forty-two tons gross and two thousand seven hundred and six tons net. Her length is three hundred and twelve feet and beam is forty-eight, with twenty-five feet depth of hold. She was listed as carrying a crew of twenty-nine men. She was built for Hawaiian owners, and was rigged double topgallant and royal. From the foregoing, it will be seen that she was a big ship as windbags go. We cannot determine exactly when she was cut down into a barge, but you can be sure that it was comparatively recently, as the "List of American Shipping" gives her rig as a ship as late as 1921. The first letter is from Mrs. Oscar Kustel, whose husband commanded a ship belonging to the same company.

In answer to the inquiry of Rhoman Nelson regarding the ship *John Ena*, we are inclosing two clippings from the Los Angeles *Times* of recent date. Am very much interested in your magazine, having gone to sea for a number of years on the ship *Hawaiian Isles* with my husband, the late Captain Oscar Kustel. The two vessels were built on the Clyde, and launched about two months apart. Captain Kustel supervised the building of the *Hawaiian Isles*, and Captain C. Schnauer that of the *John Ena*. The *Hawaiian Isles* has been renamed the *Star of Greenland*, and is owned by the Alaska Packing Company of San Francisco, and is now on her way to Loring, Alaska. MRS. OSCAR KUSTEL.

Shipmate Green, in his letter that follows, has seen the ship in question rigged as a schooner. Perhaps some other reader saw her that way also, or can enlighten us when and where she was rigged in this fashion, and how long she had it. Of course, it may not have been the same ship, for, from the dimensions that appear earlier in these pages, she was a very large ship, hence,

rigged as a four-masted schooner she must have been a brute indeed. Because when a square-rigger is converted to the fore-and-aft rig, she generally carries at least one more mast in her new dress.

I have been an ardent reader of your wonderful magazine and enjoy it very much, but this is the first time that I have come aft to chew the rag. In your last issue of SEA STORIES, Shipmate Rhoman Nelson, of 512 Thirty-seventh Avenue, East, Superior, Wisconsin, asked for some information regarding the *John Ena*. In this same issue L. A. Waters stated that this ship had been cut down to a barge. Now please explain this: I saw a four-masted schooner by the name of *John Ena* in Tietjen & Lang's dry dock in Hoboken, New Jersey, about two years ago. She had been picked up off the Jersey coast by a tramp steamer. Her sails were carried away, the bulwarks smashed, the fore-topmast gone along with the jib boom, and the wheel was smashed. One of the crew of the rescuing ship told me that when she was picked up she was leaking like a sieve.

HAROLD N. GREEN.

One by one the old Bath-built down-Easters are passing away, and some get more publicity out of their passing than others. This is not due to greater merit, but largely to local influences. The following letter and clipping is from Shipmate R. D. Ingram of Astoria, Oregon, and if he had not remembered us, we would have been in ignorance of the passing of this fine old ship. Hence the publicity a ship receives at her end may be largely due to geographical location.

However, there is one item in the clipping, which is from the *Oregon Sunday Journal*, that some of you may be able to throw some light on. It will be noted that the ship *Abner Coburn* is spoken of as having been crushed in the ice in 1918. The latest shipping list that we have with us is the "List of Merchant Vessels of the United States," and dated 1921. The *Abner Coburn* is still on this list, and, furthermore, is rated as being equipped with wireless. As the clipping from the *Oregon Journal* shows a photo-

graph of the *Coburn's* crew leaving her for the *Saint Nicholas*, it is very evident that she had no wireless then. So it must be that she was but temporarily abandoned, or that she was not seriously damaged, and was salvaged when released from the grip of the ice.

Please find inclosed clipping about one of the past old windjammers from the Pacific coast, and I hope it will find a place on some of the pages of your good magazine SEA STORIES.

I have been reading this magazine for a number of years, and think it is the best on the market, and I would not be without it for anything, so you see how much I think of it.

Hoping the clipping will be of some service to your book, and wishing you well, I am,

R. D. INGRAM.

*Saint Nicholas*, J. H. D. G.—there it is, painted in her flag locker; and there are the empty pigeonholes, all neatly lettered, where her signal flags were kept. Musty and old, but fifty-seven years ago, when some shipwright back in Bath completed this joiner work and painted this brief legend, it was probably one of the finishing touches to this noblest of all man's creations—the full-rigged ship.

Built in Bath in sixty-nine, the *Saint Nicholas* represented man's crowning achievement in building wooden sailing ships. She had the fine lines and lofty rig of the clipper, yet she was a large cargo carrier, a real three-decker. In building and rigging the *Saint Nicholas* men were drawing on the accumulated seafaring wisdom of thirty or forty centuries.

The *Saint Nicholas* was built in the same year as the *Glory of the Seas*. But now, in the fifty-seven years since she first sheeted home her topsails, we have moved into another age. Who knows now where the topsail halyards lead, and who knows the pins where the braces coil?

"Gimme the ax, Bill, let's cut away them damn ropes. We got to burn off these old lines along the rail." That is what I heard when I went to visit the old *Saint Nicholas* at the wrecker's yard in South Portland.

Seeking the quarter-deck, where their work had not yet begun, I stood where three generations of skippers and mates had paced fore and aft. The day was stormy and blustering, and, standing in the lee of the wheelhouse, I could almost feel I was again at sea. Never had I sailed in the *Saint Nicholas*, but in the Bering Sea salmon trade I had seen her often

and knew her well, for in those days we had six fine square-riggers sailing out of the Columbia River to the North.

There was the *Saint Nicholas*, with three skysail yards, and the little bark *W. B. Flint*, of only eight hundred tons. The *Saint Nicholas* had as a fleet mate the *Reuce*, a full-rigger, lost three years ago in Japan. I sailed in the *Berlin*, another full-rigger, later altered to a bark. The *Berlin* was lost in the Bering Sea, but her old fleet mate the *Leti G. Burgess*, is wearing out her anchor chains in the lower river near Globe.

For the last score of her nearly threescore years, the *Saint Nicholas* has been a familiar sight at Astoria. I remember her sailing day fourteen years ago in April, 1912. The *Berlin* and the *Saint Nicholas* got away on the same tide, and found it rather rough outside, though it was sunny as we towed past Astoria.

Our first landfall in Alaska was Mt. Shisaldin, the nine-thousand-foot volcano that stands guard over Unimak Pass and guides the sailor with a pillar of smoke by day and a beacon of fire by night. In the good old days when *Saint Nicholas* first crossed the equator, it was the deep-sea custom to have Father Neptune come aboard and initiate all who had never been that far south. This custom still survived in her later days, but had been transplanted to Unimak Pass. The unfortunate candidate who desired to enter Bering Sea, and who could not produce a quart of whisky for Father Neptune and his aids, was turned over to Neptune's court, consisting mainly of bartenders and barbers, and of the two, the bartenders were far the busier.

In Bering Sea we got a taste of real arctic weather; snow squalls, freezing winds, and the sea ice. *Saint Nicholas*, *Saint Francis* and *Berlin* all fared well in the ice in 1912, the *Saint Francis* being the first to work clear and reach Nushagak. In 1918, however, all the ships had a dreadful time in the ice, and the *Abner Coburn* was crushed in the pack. Though the pressure was terrific the *Saint Nicholas'* stout oak frames and ironbark sheathing stood the strain, and she brought off most of the *Coburn's* crew, while the remainder reached the beach in safety.

Finally came the day when we were homeward bound. How many times and from what obscure corners of the earth must the old *Saint Nicholas* have started her homeward bound voyages. I can still hear "English Ben" singing "Rolling Home," as we towed down the Nushagak that August afternoon.

When we reached the Pass, we ran into a roaring gale, sweeping through from the Pacific, and shortened down our canvas to lower topsails. How the old ship lay over to the blast and what a thunder in the sails as the upper topsails came down! The tightening buntlines soon reduced the thrashing canvas to several balloons of bellying canvas along the yard. "Aloft and furl!" came the order, and up we went to lay out on the buckling spar. "Johnnie the Lump" and "Black Fred," two bold devils whose nicknames were tabloid descriptions, had the weather yard arm, and how they struggled to pass the gaskets! Wild yells from the yard for the helmsman to "Shake her!" brought a change in the ship's heading, and as the bellying canvas began to flap, the gaskets were secured—the sail was fast.

The *Berlin* lost ground in that gale, and the *Saint Nicholas* gained. Next day a wind that compelled us to claw off a dangerous lee shore and head back into Bering Sea proved favorable for her, and we saw her go foaming through the Pass with her royals set. A few days later we caught a favorable slant and dodged through the islands into the broad Pacific.

Then came the day the lookout man shouted, "Hurray, boys, we're on soundings! Look at the water!" And sure enough the blue of the deep sea had turned to that greenish longshore tint, and we knew we were within fifty miles of the coast. English Ben sang "One More Day," and that night the tug picked us up.

The *Saint Nicholas* must have been a lucky ship to have lived so long, but in 1912 she was nearly lost on the Columbia River bar. As she was towing in the tug's hawser carried away, and before sail could be set she was out of the channel and pounding in the breakers. Though every one expected the masts to come out of her, the topsails were set and sheeted home, and the ship worked clear. The breeze, being strong and fair, she sailed right into the river, and was only escorted to her berth by the tow-boat.

In the June issue of this magazine, we published a letter from Charles W. Wood, who advocated more elasticity to the Plimsoll mark. Such a comment would be sure to bring forth an answer from any man who is immediately concerned with this little symbol on the sides of most ocean-going steamers. We fully agree with the remarks made by our present correspondent on this

subject, but in all fairness we feel sure that by "elasticity" Mr. Wood meant that the mark should be lowered in all cases, thereby increasing the ship's free-board.

Because, as "Nauta" points out, the Plimsoll mark is put on a ship for that very purpose—that she may not be loaded as deeply in the winter as she is in the summer in certain trades.

There has already been too much tampering with this symbol of safety for seamen's lives. For, while it was placed in effect in 1876, those of you who have kept in touch with seafaring activities for the last couple of decades know that it was lifted on or about 1906, to the great detriment of the shipbuilding industry—in Britain—and the safety of ships generally.

I have several times felt like criticizing some remarks of letters from shipmates, but as I am sea a great portion of the time, I do not obtain every issue of your magazine, and therefore have not had the opportunity to grasp all the facts mentioned, or the criticisms.

Charles W. Wood's letter in the June issue struck me very forcibly, and I cannot agree with him in his remark that there should be more elasticity to the Plimsoll mark. From a seaman's point of view that elasticity would mean stretching it—in other words, load the ship below the Plimsoll mark. This, no doubt, is the opposite to what Mr. Wood advocates.

May I say a few words about the Plimsoll mark? During the year 1876, the efforts of Samuel Plimsoll, M. P. for Derby, England, procured the passing of the British Merchant Shipping Act, defining the line above which no ship must sink in the water when loaded, or if that line be submerged, she is overloaded, and Board of Trade officials and surveyors can prevent that ship from proceeding to sea.

The deepest draft to which a ship can be laden is in fresh water, then Indian summer, summer; salt water, winter and winte North Atlantic. As far as British ships are concerned, they are not allowed to proceed to sea, particularly from a British port, unless they conform strictly to the rules governing the Plimsoll mark. In some exceptional cases, a very little is allowed for river or inland waterway navigation.

In a five-thousand-ton dead-weight ship, the difference between summer and winter-loaded draft is around four to five inches, less in win-

ter than in summer. Therefore, any ship sailing in the winter, will have less dead-weight and more buoyancy than during the summer months, particularly if she sails from an American or Canadian port north of Cape Hatteras.

NAUTA.

More about the cover-design controversy. Shipmate Ernest M. Wilson, who is himself an artist, most heartily agrees with Shipmate McConnell in the June, 1925, issue. And in strict impartiality to all concerned, we are inclined to agree with these two gentlemen. As witness: "They are on the main yard making a buntline block fast to the ear-ring in a bolt rope." Be it understood that we have spent but a dogwatch in deep water, and, making due allowance for any difference in nomenclature that may arise in British and American ships, there are certain details of rigging that do not change.

Take the buntlines. The hauling part passes through a block slung under the rim of the top—in the case of a course—and the fore part passes through a block that is seized to the jacksstay out on the yard, thence passing down through the bull's-eyes on the sail. Ear-rings are used for stretching out the head of the sail on the yard, and for reefing, and cannot properly be spoken of as being in the bolt rope, the latter being the rope that forms an edging around the sail, and really forms part of it.

We also would like to state that, while native-born American, part of our dog-watch in sail was spent in British ships, but we never heard the expressions "degallant sail" and "Jacob's ladder" as applied to the futtock shrouds. We do know of one big three-skysail-yard "herrin' choker" that had light ladders up the after side of her skysail poles, and these were spoken of as a "Jacob's ladder," which is the only time we ever heard the term used on a sailing ship.

Having been an interested but silent passenger on the good ship SEA STORIES for nigh onto

two years, I feel that it is about time I came aft and shook hands with the Old Man. Sure glad to meet you!

Now that I am aft, I want to take the opportunity to back up one of your shipmates. I refer to W. McConnell who, I believe, gives a fairly good criticism of your June, 1925, cover, "Aloft," by H. L. Yates. When I first saw the picture I rather liked it. There is probably good reason for this, as I am earning my daily lobsouse and hard-tack by pushing a brush, so I naturally took the artistic viewpoint, and heartily approved of the composition as well as the general execution and technique of the picture. But, after my first outburst of artistic enthusiasm, I attempted to view it from the sailor's angle, and felt somewhat the same emotions Mr. McConnell seems to have experienced. I couldn't figure why the lad in the blue shirt was holding onto the block with all his might, while red shirt is evidently overhauling a buntline which seems to have fouled somewhere. And he is using all his strength to clear it.

Just what the third man is doing I have no idea whatever, unless he is merely grinning at the useless efforts of the other two hands on the yard. Just where the third chap is perched, I cannot figure out either. But we must remember that an artist is always permitted a certain number of liberties; how many, however, I would not venture to say.

Mr. Moore's explanation does not quite satisfy me. However, his terms of "Jacob's ladder" and "degallant" crosstree would lead me to believe that his sailing experience is limited to British ships. They used to refer to the futtock shrouds as "Jacob's ladders" and to topgallant sails as degallant sails. Hence his use of the term "degallant crosstrees." I believe my memory serves me right when I make that statement, but it is over twenty years since I sailed around the Horn from Antwerp to Frisco in the three-masted steel ship *Whitticburn*, hailing from Glasgow. During that trip I found considerable difference in various names and usages in British ships as compared with American ships. However, during my very limited experience as a sailor, a total of about five years, I have never seen nor heard speak of a main yard slung above the lower crosstrees, nor could the man have been above the lower crosstrees and below the "degallant crosstrees," as the main topmast crosstrees would be next above the lower or main crosstrees.

I suggest that the artist of "Aloft," Mr. H. L. Yates, be called upon to give an explanation as to the activities of his brain children. I would like to hear from any shipmate or

fellow passenger who has photos or other pictures depicting sailing ships or the life upon them, and who would be willing to sell such pictures or know where I may be able to purchase them.

Your Log Book is great—I enjoy it immensely, more than many of the good stories. "Salvage," by Leonard A. Waters, appealed to me very much. It is a short story far above the average, so full of real life and human interest. It is full of interest and holds the reader's attention to the very end. Lloyd Kay's work also is above par, and last but not least are Don Waters' articles.

ERNEST M. WILSON.

As most of our readers seem to favor the sailing side of seafaring life, the Old Man feels sure that the following excerpts from the *Nautical Magazine* of May, 1926, will be of great interest to all of you. It is noted with a great deal of pride that our own country boasts more deep-water sailing ships than any other nation.

Another significant feature is the fact that Germany and Finland can afford to operate more of such ships on deep water voyages. As the article points out, most of their ships are manned by cadets. This not only makes them pay, but it builds up the nucleus of a trained personnel for their merchant service that is beyond price. Now that this country is beginning to take its rightful place among the mercantile nations, it is a pity that we cannot use at least a portion of our vast sailing fleet for a similar purpose.

For with the growth of our merchant navy there must be some systematic scheme for producing properly trained officers. At least more than there is at present, when all the training ships in commission consist of a few State-owned craft, which, admirable though they may be, are not sufficiently large to fill the requirements of a merchant service adequate to the size of a country such as ours.

Those ships which still survive are distributed among twenty-one countries. First of all

comes the United States with fifty-nine ships, followed by France with thirty-six, Finland thirty-three, Germany twenty-five, Norway twenty, United Kingdom and Colonies nineteen, and Italy eighteen. The South American countries account for another thirty-three ships, and the remaining thirty-four are owned in ones and twos by other countries. It should be understood that only square-rigged sailing ships are referred to throughout this article; there are, of course, hundreds of schooners and other smaller craft still afloat, the United States particularly owning a large number of schooners, mostly four and five-masted vessels.

Germany still has quite a number of fine windjammers, as in prewar days, mostly large modern vessels, which seem to be very successful. The firms of Laeisz & Vinnen have the biggest fleets. Owned by Laeisz are the four-mast barks *Pamir*—ex-British *Arrow*—*Passat*, *Peking*, and *Priwall*, also the full-rigged ships *Pellwoorm* and *Pinnas*—ex-*Fitzjames*. They still trade exclusively between Europe and the West Coast, the passage out or home being usually accomplished in under ninety days. To show that this firm still pin their faith in sail, it may be mentioned that they have just ordered a new four-mast bark, which will have no auxiliary engine, but will rely on sail only.

Vinnen & Company have one large four-mast bark of three thousand four hundred and fifty-seven tons, with auxiliary engines, the *Magdalene Vinnen*, and also four five-masted auxiliary schooners, or whatever is the correct designation for these peculiar-looking craft. Then owned by Vinnen Brothers are the bark *Elfride*—ex-*Saxon*—ship *Greif*—ex-*Wiscombe Park*—and four-mast bark *Gustav*—ex-*Austrasia*—all old Liverpool ships built in the early nineties. All these of Vinnen's are cargo training ships, and the cadets under the guidance of the officers work them entirely. Other German sailers are four ex-French full-riggers owned by the firm of H. H. Schmidt, also cargo training vessels. An old German ship with a reputation for fast passages is still carrying on and doing quite well; this is the *Lisbeth*—ex-*Pendragon Castle*—formerly one of Chambers' "Castles" of Liverpool.

Of the French ships little can be said. Nearly all are laid up in the Canal de la Martinie, near the Loire, below Nantes. Seen from the distance when coming up the river, they present the appearance of a typical row of tall French poplars, as each ship is moored separately and they stretch for several miles. It was during the slump after the war that

they arrived, and at one time there were over one hundred vessels laid up there—now the number is down to about twenty-four—all of which are owned by a Nantes firm; kept in good condition they could, if necessary, proceed to sea in a few days. The French Nitrate Company—or A. D. Bordes, as the firm was formerly known—still have five big four-mast barks left out of their huge fleet—the largest in the world in 1913—but all are now laid up in French ports. There are a few vessels owned in Havre, which are trading mostly out to the West Indies.

Finland, a country which has attracted some attention recently by the number of sailing ships they have purchased, has twenty-three large vessels trading foreign. Most of them are owned by Captain Gustaf Eriksson of Mariehamn; he has the last three of Hardic of Glasgow's ships: viz., *Archibald Russel*, *Hougomont*, and *Killoran*, which were purchased a couple of years ago. Other interesting units of the fleet are *Lawhill*, *Olivebank*, *Pommern—ex-Mueme—Herzogin Cecille*—all big four masters—*Penang* and *Winterhude*—ex-Rickmers ships—*Woodburn* and *Loch Linnhe*. These are run mainly by cadets, and are running to all parts of the world, making quite fair passages, the *Lawhill* and *Herzogin Cecille* in particular.

In connection with the stories anent the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*, Shipmate McConnell sends us the following interesting letter with a clipping from a British paper dated 1866. The Old Man would like to add that the song requested by Mr. McConnell appeared in these pages about eighteen months ago. It was called "Limejuice and Vinegar According to the Act," and was written to commemorate the passing of the Merchant Seaman's Act in that country. If any reader has a copy of the Log Book in which the song appears, he might send it to Mr. McConnell who is a valued contributor to these pages.

I was very much interested in the stories of the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*, and the *Alabama* also, as I was a boy during the Civil War, and events of that time were impressed on my memory. I well remember Captain Worden, and I can clearly recall seeing him after his famous battle with the *Merrimac*. He was wearing goggles and his face was filled with gunpowder specks.

Mr. Sinclair mentions Doctor Llewellyn, the assistant surgeon of the *Alabama*, but he does not mention the fact that he went down with his ship. I inclose a clipping from the Marlborough, England, *Times* of July 21, 1866, giving an account of a memorial to the memory of Doctor Llewellyn. I thought this was worth preserving in The Log Book, for taking it by and large, there is more detailed information in regard to marine affairs, especially those of sailing-ship days, in its pages than in any other publication I have seen.

Do any of the old-timers know anything about the fate of the ship *M. J. Roper*? She was in San Francisco in the early seventies, and an old shipmate of mine, Dan Barron, now of Santa Barbara, was in her at the time. Some time ago I wrote The Log Book about the ships *Flying Cloud* and *American Union* being in Pensacola, both bark rigged and flying the British flag. Since then a friend wrote me that the *Union* sailed from that port with a cargo of lumber for London, and has never again been heard of.

There are two lines of a song running through my head that I have heard on British ships; if any one knows the complete song, I wish he would send it to The Log Book. The lines which I remember are as follows:

What's the use of growling, you know it for a fact?

Your limejuice and vinegar, according to the Act.

Well, a prosperous voyage, fine weather, and a fair wind to the good ship SEA STORIES, her captain and crew. Soft tommy every day for dinner, plum duff on Sunday and all the benevolence the cook can hand out.

H. MCCONNELL.

Here is an interesting note from the wife of a gob:

I notice Miss Hastings asks, in the April number, why a member of the United States navy is called a "gob." As far as I have ever heard, it is used to tell the difference between an officer and an enlisted man. I know quite a few gobs—being married to one—and that is all they know about it.

Could you possibly tell me when the "cat-o'-nine-tails" was abolished from the United States navy?

Let's have some stories of gobs. They are a good crowd. My husband had an officer on his ship similar to Markham in "Dungarees;" they nicknamed him "Glassback."

Good luck to The Log Book! That's my husband's job, writing up the log on his ship. He's the ship's writer. My baby was christened next to a gig gum on the U. S. S. *Arkansas*.

RUTH G. DURNELL.

Newark, N. J.

Miss Cristel Hastings of Mill Valley, California, reminds us that February 8, 1854, one of the finest and speediest clipper ships of that day, the *San Francisco*, was wrecked at the entrance of the Golden Gate. She was just completing her first trip from New York, and carried a four-hundred-thousand-dollar cargo, to which plundering hordes helped themselves as soon as word reached them of the disaster. The crew guarding the cargo was overpowered. But a storm came up, and the plunderers' boats were scattered. About twenty of the pillagers were drowned. What was left of her cargo was subsequently sold in San Francisco for twelve thousand dollars.

In answer to an inquiry I made about the ship *I. F. Chapman*, which was published in the March issue of *The Log Book*, I received several interesting letters from old-timers. Would like to suggest, if agreeable to our Old Man, that we have an exchange column. No doubt some of the boys have photos of various old ships. We might exchange pictures. *The Log Book* is bringing out so much interesting stuff that it could be enlarged. It is a fine thing for all hands to air their views.

Let's hear from the other fellows.

Sincerely yours, R. V. SCHLUTER.

305 Broadway, New York.

Here's the chanteyman, with a query and an old-time song:

Could you advise me where a complete tattooing outfit can be purchased in the United States.

Your kind attention will greatly oblige.

Yours truly, G. A. LAMONTAGNE.

14 Hamilton Road, Glen Ridge, N. J.

In *The Log Book* of your March issue, Mr. Alex. McD. Jones, of St. Paul, Minnesota, asked for the words of "Paddy West's House," which I am pleased to supply from a copy which I have.

### PADDY WEST'S HOUSE

As I strolled down thro' Great Howard Street I went into Paddy West's house,  
He gave me a feed of American Hash, but he called it a Lime Juice Scouse;  
He said: "Cheer up, my hearty! You've just got here in time,  
For you've only to put your name in the book and you will quickly sign."

#### Chorus

Pat on your dungaree jacket,  
And give yourself a rest,  
For you'll think of the cold northwesterners  
That you had in Paddy West's.

When I arrived in Paddy West's house the gale it began to blow.

He sent me up in the garret the main royal for to stow.

When I got up in the garret no main royal could I find,

So I walked across to the window and furled the window blind.

#### Chorus

Now, when Paddy pipes all hands on deck each station to be manned,

His wife stands by in the doorway with a bucket in each hand.

Paddy gives the word, "Let go." The water flies its way.

Singing: "Clew up your fore t'gallant sail, boys! She's taking in the spray."

#### Chorus

Now, if there's any young man standing round wishes to go to sea,

Let him go down to Paddy West's house. He'll sign you right away,

He will swear that you were a sailor from the hour you were born.

And if they ask you if you've been to sea, tell 'em: "Four times round the Horn."

#### Chorus

FRED A. PARKER.

2444 Pioneer Road, Evanston, Ill.

The chanteyman is on the job again! With the assistance of Shipmate McGinnis and other members of the crew, he has dug up some real old-timers, which will furnish entertainment to the sprouts of the younger generations aboard ship and rekindle memory in the



hearts of the older shipmates who have sung them:

Will any of our shipmates who happen to know a fragment of the words or all of the following three songs send them into The Log before they are lost to posterity?

The first song and also the second one are reminiscent of happy days spent on the Erie Canal when the mule whacker could get his growler from the fo'c's'le and step across to the saloon and get it filled with the foaming stuff while the "schooner" was locking up or down, as the case might be.

I do not know the title of this song and only one line of verse: "Oh, the cook she's red headed, and dead stuck on me." Here are two verses of "The Ragin' Eric Canawl":

Come, sai-li-ors, landsmen, one an' all,  
And I'll sing to you the dan-g-iers of the  
ra-gin' ca-nawl.  
For I've been at the mer-ci-es of th' wind an'  
wave,  
An' I'm one of the merry fellahs as 'spects  
a watery grave.

We left Al-ban-ee a-bout th' break of day,  
As near as I can re-member 'twas th' sec-  
ond day of May.  
We depend-ed on our driver, though he wus  
ve-ry small,  
Although we knew th' dan-g-iers of th' ragin'  
Eric Ca-nawl.

The next one is very old. "The Bold Privateer."

Fare you well, lovely Ellen, and it's now we  
must part,  
I must leave you behind me, the love of my  
heart.

And this is an old-timer. Complete version.

#### THE SAILOR'S SWEETHEART

A sailor's life is a roving life,  
It robbed me of my heart's delight  
And caused me to lament and mourn,  
And sadly wait for his return.

Go build me up a little boat,  
That I may on the ocean float,  
And every ship that I do pass by,  
I will inquire for my sailor boy.

I had not sailed far o'er the deep  
Before a large ship I chanced to meet;  
I said: "Good captain, oh, tell me true,  
Does my sweet William sail with you?"

"A dark-blue jacket he used to wear,  
With rosy cheeks, and coal-black hair;  
His lips were of a velvet fine,  
And oft-times used to meet with mine."

"Oh, no, fair maid, he sails not here,  
He's drowned down in the deep, I fear;  
Near that lone island which you passed by  
We chanced to lose your sailor boy."

She wrung her hands, she tore her hair,  
Like some fair maiden in despair;  
Her boat against the rocks she run,  
Crying: "Alas, I am undone!"

Now I'll go home and write a song,  
I'll write it true, I'll write it long;  
On every line I'll shed a tear,  
On every verse, "Fare you well, my dear."

Go dig my grave, both wide and deep,  
Place a marble stone at my head and feet;  
And on my breast a turtle dove,  
To show the world I died for love.

Regards to "The Crew."

JOSEPH F. MCGINNIS.

339 Fifth Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

"The Whale" is a variant of the beginning of the chantey contributed by Shipmate Hill in the February, 1926, Log Book. Evidently the same chantey was adapted to the cruises of various whalers, substituting the names of characters and localities to conform to those concerned with the voyage:

#### THE WHALE

'Twas in eighteen hundred and fifty-six,  
And of June the thirteenth day,  
That our gallant ship her anchor weighed  
And for Greenland bore away.  
Brave boys!  
And for Greenland bore away.

The lookout in the crosstrees stood  
With his spyglass in his hand.  
"There's a whale—there's a whale—there's a  
whale fish!" he cried,  
"And she blows at every span!  
Brave boys!  
And she blows at every span!"

The captain stood on the quarter-deck,  
And a fine little man was he.  
"Overhaul! Overhaul! Let your davit tackles  
fall,  
And launch your boats for sea!  
Brave boys!  
And launch your boats for sea!"

Now the boats were launched and the men  
aboard,

And the whale was in full view.  
Resolv-ed was each seaman bold  
To steer where the whale fish blew.  
    Brave boys!  
To steer where the whale fish blew.

We struck that whale, the line paid out,  
But a flourish she gave with her tail.  
The boat capsized and four men were drowned,  
And we never caught that whale.  
    Brave boys!  
And we never caught that whale.

"To lose the boat," the captain said,  
"It grieves my heart full sore.  
But, oh—to lose four gallant men,  
It grieves me ten times more.  
    Brave boys!  
It grieves me ten times more.

"The winter star doth now appear,  
So, boys, we'll anchor weigh.  
It's time to leave this cold country,  
And homeward bear away.  
    Brave boys!  
And homeward bear away."

Oh, Greenland is an awful place,  
A land that's never green,  
Where there's ice and snow, and the whale  
fishes blow,  
And the daylight's seldom seen.  
    Brave boys!  
And the daylight's seldom seen.

I wish to tell you how much I enjoyed the story "With Dugan's Aid," by Bob Du Soe, in April SEA STORIES.

It so happens that I was stationed at Block Island from August, 1917, to September, 1918, and for a good part of that time was in command of the U. S. S. *Eaglet* (S. P. 909). One of our regular patrols was from Point Judith to Block Island, and to Montauk buoy. Sometimes we patrolled around Watch Hill and again out toward Gay Head.

Many and many are the tows I have watched round Point Judith, and one night we stood by for seven hours while a tug with three barges made the breakwater. It was snowing and the spray formed solid ice. For a while I was sure the barges were gone, but they made it.

It is now eight bells and "she is all yours."  
P. B. TRUSLOW.  
Ex-ensign, U. S. N.

Houston, Texas.

## The Next Voyage

Some one spoke the Old Man the other day and learned that he had a full hold for the October number of the good ship SEA STORIES. During a brief exchange he let it be known that he intended to come into port with the following goods:

Gustaf Olander is with us again. His story this time is called "On the Indian Ocean." Our readers will remember him as the author of several good yarns about the wandering salt, whom he knows as a brother. Captain Olander can always be counted on to speak the language of the sea with a true, in-the-blood accent.

The second part of Carrington Phelps' serial, "The Unattainable," will need no mention for those who have read the first part of it.

Warren Elliot Carleton, whose stories of the men who face the fury of human nature and the sea for the sake of supplying food to the man on shore have won so many enthusiastic followers, will again appear in SEA STORIES with a yarn called "The Fog Eater."

Eugene Cunningham will give us "High Pressure," and you can take our word for it that this is real stuff with a smack of salt in it. The same holds true for "Lion, Loon, and Louse," by Charles Victor Fischer. Those of you who believe there is nothing left of romance in the "modern" sailor will have your minds changed by a reading of this story.

Captain Leonidas Tripp sticks his beak into the picture with George Allan England's yarn, "Safe." Then there will be a yarn by Bob Du Soe and one by Arthur Mason, as well as an article by Don Waters. Of course, the Old Man will have his regular loosening of the jaw tackle in The Log Book.

Be sure to be on hand when the hatches are unsealed.

**W**hen vacation time  
has come again—and you're off in your car  
for the land of carefree outdoors  
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NOT too much Turkish, not too little Turkish;  
neither over-rich nor commonplace . . . But  
*just enough Turkish* . . . there, in three words, is  
the secret of Fatima's extraordinary delicacy



*What a whale of a difference just a few cents make*

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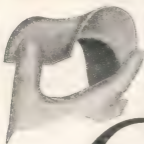


His friends called him  
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-until he used  
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He had tried them all—the stiff, hard metal supports that hurt his feet, cut his shoes, but gave him no relief.

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Made in all sizes and styles for men and women. Write us for more details.

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Just Wear this FREE Cap

We give you this Cap Free. Every man you know will want one like it. It's guaranteed RAIN-PROOF, moisture can't soak in! Choice of finest materials and latest styles. Far superior to store caps. \$10 a day extra in spare time is easy. No experience is needed. Write at once for our FREE Sizing Outfit. TAYLOR CAP MANUFACTURERS, Dept. M-152, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Well, there is a book about two castaways on a Pacific Island and the strange adventures that befell them, that in one way isn't a bit like "Robinson Crusoe" but in another, creates the same glamorous spell over its readers. It is

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# Matches, muscles and switches



WHEN night came on, twenty years ago, motorists turned on the gas, struck a match and lighted their lamps. Then they "cranked" the engine and proceeded on their bumpy way with dependable Prest-O-Lite Gas making safe the rough, gloomy road.

Today the motorist turns a switch and presses a button and the giant power of a sturdy Prest-O-Lite Battery starts the engine and floods the road with light.

While at home another equally dependable, long-lived Prest-O-Lite Battery brings the wonder of radio.

Twenty years of service to motorists, twenty years of manufacturing experience. That is what is back of Prest-O-Lite. That is why Prest-O-Lite Batteries are standard equipment today on an ever-increasing list of America's finest cars. That is why the Prest-O-Lite sign on a service station means something.

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INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

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In Canada: Prest-O-Lite Company of  
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*Whether you are buying a battery for your car or for your radio set, it is no longer necessary to take a chance with an unknown make. Prest-O-Lite Automobile Batteries can be bought from \$15.50 up—and Radio Batteries from \$4.75 up.*



The oldest service to motorists

## Prest-O-Lite

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MOTOR-CARS AND RADIO





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# DANDRUFF?



*Bottle Bacilli, the cause of Dandruff. Illustration Reproduced from Hazen's "Diseases of the Skin." C. V. Mosby, Publisher.*

Dandruff is a disease difficult to cure, but easy to check.

Unless checked and properly treated it has a persistent tendency to reappear, and often in more virulent form, with possible loss of hair or even total baldness.

The treatment to check dandruff requires constant cleanliness and the use of a suitable antiseptic solution to combat the disease and to heal the scalp.

## Listerine does the trick

Dandruff is not only an unsightly nuisance but it is a danger signal of more serious scalp trouble—loss of hair, sometimes actual baldness.

It is a germ disease that no intelligent person will neglect.

The ideal treatment to combat dandruff is the systematic use of Listerine, the safe antiseptic.

The use of Listerine for dandruff is not complicated. You simply douse it on your scalp, full strength, and massage thoroughly. The ef-

fect is antiseptic, cleansing and healing. And you will be amazed to see how this treatment, followed systematically, does the trick.

Moreover, Listerine will not discolor the hair nor will it stain fabrics.

Try Listerine some evening when your scalp feels tired and itchy. Dandruff is probably causing the trouble. You will be delighted with the results. *Lambert Pharmaceutical Co., St. Louis, U. S. A.*

# LISTERINE

—and dandruff simply do not get along together