

THE ST. JOHN EVENING TIMES, TUESDAY, JANUARY 17 1905.

THE STORY OF A GREAT SECRET. Millions of Mischief.

By HEADON HILL.

Author of "By a Hair's Breadth," "The Duke Decides," "A Race with Rufin," Etc., Etc. "And some that walk have in their hearts, I fear, millions of mischief."—Julius Caesar, Act IV, Scene I.

(Continued.) I could well understand that Sir Gideon Marske would be delighted to hear that there was an end of me, and I quite expected that the "sealed orders" which Captain Belcher would open later in the day would change the ruffian's bullying good-humors to more dangerous mood. That he was utterly unscrupulous, as well as under the thumb of the Marskes, and well paid by them for his present job, was painfully obvious. And when a little later, taking advantage of his permission, I went on deck, I had no doubt that the crew had been selected with an eye to unquestioning subservience to his orders, no matter what they might be. A more handgrip set of cut-throats surely could not have been collected in the purlieus of any seaport in the world. For the credit of my country, I was glad to find that the round dozen of them with the exception of a drunken Scotch engineer and the semi-imbolico Irish mate, were all foreigners—Spaniards, Greeks, and Lascars. The haze that I had noticed earlier in the morning had all rolled away, and the August sun beat fiercely out of a brassy sky as the Nightshade ploughed her way down Channel. Her engines were either not capable of any great speed, or Captain Belcher was in no hurry, for it was noon before we passed Dungeness, and I knew that it would be quite late in the afternoon before we arrived off Brighton. Dinner was served at one o'clock, under the same conditions as breakfast, with the disagreeing difference that the captain had evidently been drinking during the morning. In fact, I had seen Antonio, the steward, paying frequent visits to the bridge with a black bottle and a glass. The effect of Belcher's potations was in one way satisfactory, inasmuch as he was morosely silent, devouring his food greedily and yawning at the reeked-throat, to whom he seemed to have taken a dislike. He only addressed me once, and that was when he was rising from the table. Tapping the breast-pocket of his coat, he looked down at me as though he had been waiting for me to speak. "You're wondering what's in the sealed orders, eh?" he said. "Well, so am I. What'd'you say to opening 'em now? That giddy old Gideon'll never know. Take time by the forelock, eh?" "You must, of course, do as you

"Well, then, here goes for the sealed orders," he continued, producing an envelope from the inside pocket of the tweed coat that made him look more like a country station master than a sailor. "You'll bear me out, next time you see Sir Gideon that I didn't start on it before he was ready. Now for the surprise packet." He tore the envelope open and eagerly perused the closely-written sheet of autograph it contained. As he read his brows puckered, and once or twice he looked up at me with such a sinister expression that I felt inclined to take him at his word and end my troubles by leaping into the sea. Only the thought that on my slender chance of escape depended Arthur's liberty and life deterred me. Having read to the end, the captain emitted a low whistle and replaced the document in his pocket, again glancing strangely at me. "Now you can tell me where you are going to put me ashore," I faltered, for at that moment I failed to preserve a bold front before what I saw in the man's eyes. "Put you ashore?" he repeated, with a diabolical sneer. "You'd best get that out of your mind at once, mister, for there's a long trip—a very long trip—ahead of you. It rests with you, seemingly from what's written here, quite how long it's to be, but you're to settle that with the other passenger that's coming aboard tomorrow. He's to have a say in the business, it appears, and after that I come in."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Death-Warrant—or Worse? Captain Belcher's horrible words left me rooted to the spot, so charged were they with hideous meaning. Who was the other passenger expected to join the ship on the morrow? What was it that I was to "settle" with him? Naturally my fears reverted to Roger Marske, and the prospect of being again at the mercy of the man who had nearly succeeded in burning me to death at the Mill House was appalling. But still more so was Belcher's concluding sentence. "After that I come in." A whole world of terrible possibilities was wrapped up in that simple phrase. I was consumed with an overwhelming desire to know the worst, and that could only be done by somehow obtaining a sight of the

paper in Captain Belcher's pocket. The perusal of it seemed to have created a demand for his favourite stimulant, for Antonio was climbing the bridge ladder with the black bottle and glass. The spectacle inspired me with an idea. If only the captain would get incapably drunk, I might achieve my purpose in time to be prepared for what was coming on the morrow. I was thankful for that brief respite.

For the present, in spite of his potations, Captain Belcher was very far from being incapable. He had taken the wheel himself, and his dirty fingers clutched the spokes and twirled it with no uncertain grasp. Gradually the steamer edged nearer and nearer to the Sussex shore, and, passing close to Selsey Bill, bore round towards Hayling Island and the narrow entrance to the series of lonely creeks that is dignified with the incongruous name of "Shepherd's Harbour." I had once spent a summer holiday sketching at that artist's paradise, Bosham, and knew the locality well.

In the gathering dusk the Nightshade slipped into the opening, and with a man taking soundings every minute, threaded her way through several winding creeks, till the shores on either hand hemmed us in without sign of an outlet. We seemed to be steaming in the middle of a cornfield rippling for the sickle. Occasionally we hugged the land so close that the trees nearly brushed our masts, and then, suddenly, we came to broader water and cast anchor in a sort of isagoon opposite a ruined customhouse, long since disused. I had a picture of it somewhere, painted in happier days.

Save for the Nightshade, that bend of the creek was devoid of craft of any kind. It is very seldom that a steamer enters those land-locked labyrinthine waters, and the few sailing craft that pass through them seek anchorage still further inland, at Bosham or Chichester. A more secluded spot for a vessel bound on a nefarious enterprise to await a mysterious passenger, could not have been found in the British Isles. Out of sight of all ocean traffic, and even invisible from the boats of coastguards, the steamer would have no prying eyes to observe her; for the fishermen of Bosham and Chichester, passing by and the few so-called anglers, were not likely to indulge in more than idle speculation, if they troubled about the matter at all. When the ship had swung to her anchor on the fast ebbing tide, Captain Belcher came down from the deck to the cabin, and his appearance on deck was the signal for me to beat a hasty retreat below. His condition by this time precluded all possibility of my sitting down to another meal with him in the cuddy, and, darting through it into my own cabin, I shut the door and set my foot against it. In a few minutes my heart was set thumping by Belcher's voice outside. "Come out, mister, and have some grub," he shouted.

"Thank you, I do not need anything. I have a bad headache and wish to lie down," I replied. "That be d—d for a yarn. May as well be civil first as last. Come on out, or I'll open the door and fetch you," he yelled the captain. Then I shot a bow at a venture, giving myself the while for involving the aid of that unknown expected passenger, who might be bringing greater terror upon me than this blatant ruffian wielded. "The person mentioned in Sir Gideon Marske's instructions will know how to deal with you if you attempt any such outrage." I made answer, clenching my hands to keep the tremor from my voice. Whether I succeeded in that or not, the hint was effective for the moment, though his manner of yielding added to my apprehensions for the future. "All right, my beauty, have it your own way tonight. I'll tame you when my turn comes," he yelled through the door. (To be continued.)

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THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

Visiting Clergyman Speaks of His Grace's Addresses at the Boston Conference.

Rev. William Augustus Holbrook of Boston, who occupied the pulpit of St. Paul's church on Sunday morning, told a Times representative that he had heard all the addresses delivered by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury during the conference at Boston. "His manner," said Mr. Holbrook, "was eminently simple and devout; his choice of texts and subjects was distinguished by unusual aptness, and fitness to all occasions. He was genial and discreet in all his social intercourse, and in general I think that he lifted up the hearts and minds of all people in the various places where he was heard and seen, into a higher spiritual atmosphere."

"His sermon in Trinity church, Boston, was particularly suited to the needs of the people, who are very like the Athenians to whom St. Paul preached; who did nothing but spend the time in hearing and telling things that were new. He taught them that there was a Faith which was mysterious, and must be accepted only on proper authority."

"In his addresses to popular assemblies, he displayed great tact, by dwelling upon the proper love of liberty." "His calmness and serenity were very impressive, as well as his sympathy. One of the most memorable things was in the sermon he preached in Trinity church, Boston, when he quoted the late Bishop Brooks in his full declaration of faith in the Blessed Trinity." Rev. Mr. Holbrook has several times taken duty in St. John churches during the absence of the rector, and speaks in the highest terms of the integrity and conscientiousness of the people.

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