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Copyrighted and Published by Special Arrangement. The Adventures of Captain Kettle By CUTCLIFFE HYNE



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homey needs of the mercantile marine; and in the Mediterranean, the Australian seas and China waters, there are many of this breed of craft making a humble living for the owner. A couple of weeks' neglect will make any network look unattractive, and a little withholding of the paint brush soon makes all small traders wretchedly ill.

Re-christening of course is but a clumsy device, and one which is the gentlest, notwithstanding most seldom used. A ship at her birth is given name, and endowed with any custom houses, and papers. Without her papers she cannot enter a civilized port; she could not "clear" at all if there was nothing to do. Capt. Kettle himself finished letters in his brush and shook his head. "I never did such a thing before," he said. "You don't see it?"

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one's business to meddle with a nobody. If you're a somebody, only the proper people can interfere. "The Vestris is well known at home, and I'm well known too, and we've got to see this business through one way or another, like the Governor."

"Now observe the result," said Carnforth with his relish, "of being told that the ship was not to be cleared, and he was sent down in the diving suit, and he was sent down in the diving suit, and he was sent down in the diving suit."

"And you're already a rich man," said Kettle. "You could find a position in the country, and a seat in parliament. Some people never do know when they're rich."

"I didn't know about the steamer," said Kettle. "Well, I'm telling you now, captain, and if you don't believe me, you'll see it when you go to the office."

"I'm sick of this smug, orderly, frock-coated life here. Nature intended me for a pirate, and fate has made me a successful manufacturer. I've tasted the wild, unregulated life of the open air once under your auspices and rubbed against men who were men and I want to be there again."

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drill jacket. His sewing tackle stood in a picture tin biscuit box on the deck beside him. He unrolled the old stitches with a pocket knife and re-sewed the sleeves with exquisite accuracy and neatness. His fierce eyes were intent on the work. To look at his nimble fingers one would think that they had never held anything more deadly than the ordinary utensils of tailoring. Carnforth broke off his walk and stood for a moment beside him. "Skipper," he said, "you're a queer mixture. You've lived one of the most exciting lives any man's ever gone through, and yet you seem to turn your more peaceful moments to tailoring."

"I'm not a tailor," said the little sailor. "I guess we're all disoriented animals. We always like most what we get least."

"Well, I suppose that's intended to sum up your character as well as your own," said Carnforth, and sat down on the deck. "I don't know what you mean by that."

"The mate on the yacht's upper bridge picked up the reef with his glasses that evening a couple of hours after sundown. The night was velvet black with only a few stars shining. Humph, said Kettle, "an unlucky number."

"Thirteen," said Kettle. "I don't know what you mean by that."

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of still, smooth water, slowed to half-gait, and with hand held going dully, gently steamed up to an anchorage in sixteen fathoms off one of the sandy islets. A white whaleboat put off from the lugger, rowed by three kanakas, and by the time the yacht's cable was fitted, a man from her had stepped on the accommodation ladder, and was looking about him on the deck.

"It was a big man in striped pajamas, barefooted, roughly-bearded, and wearing a crumpled pith helmet. His face was burnt to a fine mahogany color by the sun, and glancing over his chest at the end of a piece of plain seamm, was a gold-rimmed eye-glass, which glittered like a diamond when he caught the sun. He touched his helmet to Kettle."

"You've brought a fine day with you, captain," he said. "I don't know what you mean by that."

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guar for the fierce toll. He was unshaven, sunburned, blood-smeared from the scratches of the shell, filthy with rank sea mud. But withal he was entirely happy.

"Kettle tolled with equal vigor, working violently in and out of the water, exhorting the others. Neither his arms nor his tongue were ever tired. But dirt seemed to have an antipathy for the man, and against his dishevelled hair he looked like a park dandy beside a ragpicker."

"At the other side of the lagoon the white man from Cambridge, and a white friend, and their crew of ten, were waiting with similar industry. The ring of the lagoon was some half mile in diameter, with lanes of deep water running through its floor where divers could not work. There was no clearing of the two pines. One of these water lanes seemed to set out a natural boundary, and neither transgressed it on each side. The territory there was enough shell to work on for the present, and each party tolled with the same frantic energy, and spread out the shell on the sunbaked sandbanks, and poison that I admit. You may even see the out of the lagoon. But what then? I guess the account would not be closed; and when a full choicer of pearls is gathered, the yachts party neither knew nor cared. Theirs was a race against time for wealth, and not one striver among them had a leisure to be curious about his neighbors."

"In a nicer life, the smells of the place would have offended them monstrous, yet here they were a matter of congratulation. The more the profit they reaped the shells from the sea and spread them upon the beach, the more roasting sun beat upon the spread out shells, and melted away their soft tissues in horrible decay."

"The value was all a gamble. There might be merely so much mother-of-pearl, or larger pearls, or seed pearls, or opalescent spheres worth its measure half-crown, or the great pearl-shaped pink pearl worth a great ransom. It was all a gamble, for that, and none the less fascinating for that. Carnforth was mad over the work; Kettle, with all his nonchalant gait, was nearly as bad."

"But the process of realizing their dream was a very different matter. Every filled shell, with its latest possible treasure lying out there, stood upon the sand, was so much capital left in a perilously insecure investment. The dark shadow of Japan was always before them, and the night might come at the first moment of realization. They had tolled a month, and presently they were to be the fruits of their first day's labor. The mother-of-pearl shell was packed in the hold, the little cork of wax stood in a basin on the cabin table, and they gazed over them as they indulged."

"Carnforth stirred them lovingly with the butt of his pipe. 'Pretty little shells, aren't they?' he said. 'For those they amuse, though I like to see a bit more color in our men's ornaments myself.'"

"Matter of taste and matter of fashion. Pearls are all the rage just now, but women will spend their money on diamonds and so the price of pearls is up."

"So much the better for us, sir. It's a pity though, when you've got a bit of color, like that big gray chap for instance."

"Gray man! Why that's a black pearl, and probably worth any ten of the rest, put together. I don't see for being a pearl merchant. Poaching them's trouble enough for me."

"The biscuit, will you?" said Carnforth, yawning. "I suppose that little lot's worth—worth anything over a thousand pounds, and wither that he dropped back dead asleep in his chair. Captain Kettle finished his meal, but he, too, man of wire though he was, suddenly tumbled forward and went to sleep with his head on the table. It was no new thing for them to be unconscious more than once during that month. For they had a smaller crew ready to clean a bare five hundred pounds worth in fact. They would be an enormous quantity ready for the morning."

"That further realization of their wealth, however, never came. During the night another lugger sailed into the lagoon and upset all their plans. She was the consort of the lugger commanded by the Cambridge man, and she had taken away a safe place their first crop of pearls. Further she was forward and fourteen whites all armed and all quite ready to defend what they had won. It was their possessors' monopoly. As a consequence they pulled across to the yacht some two hours before day, and were quite ready to use them if pressed."

"The little sailor was not easily cowed. 'By James!' he cried, 'this is piracy!' 'I'll be a funeral,' said the man with the eyeglass, 'if you don't bring your hand out from under the pillow and skip it out empty. Now don't brag it myself. I'm a good snapper shot myself, and this is only a two-pound trigger.'"

"Capt. Kettle did not chuck his life away uselessly. He let go his revolver and drew out his hand. 'Well, he said, 'what are you grimey grimey going to do next? By the look of you, you've come here to steal our soap and handkerchiefs.'"

"Carnforth," shouted the man with the eyeglass, 'come in here and be told what's going to happen. I say, you fellows, bring Carnforth into the skipper's room.'"

"Then began a period of frantic toll and shouting. Every man on board was 'on shares,' for it had pleased Carnforth's whim to make a business of his neighbor's incentive. Half of the profits went to the ship, and the rest to the crew. Each man had so many shares, according to his rating. Carnforth himself, in addition to his share as owner, was also an ordinary seaman, and swabbed, and strained like any day-laborer. From an hour after sunrise he was away in the boats, under the dew of morn'g and eve, and the blazing torrent of midday sunshine. Every night he tumbled into his bed, place, dog-tired, and exulting in his peacefulness. Every morning he woke

all of us; at any rate, we don't intend to share."

"Mr. Carnforth," said Kettle, "I told you we'd better bottled that dirty man with the window-pane eye who's been talking."