

to the port of the center stanchions. When the two trains were aboard, the great vessel—"No. 25," in big white stencil upon her black sides were her distinguishing marks—would thrust out into the ice and gale for the Michigan shore nearly eighty miles away.

Alan thrilled a little at his inspection of the ferry. He had not seen close at hand before one of these great craft which, throughout the winter, brave ice and storm after all—other lake boats are tied up. He had not meant to apply there when he questioned old Burr about a berth on the ferry; he had used that merely as a means of getting into conversation with the old man. But now he meant to apply; for it would enable him to find out more about old Burr.

HE went forward between the tracks upon the deck to the companionway, and ascended and found the skipper and presented his credentials. No berth on the ferry was vacant yet but one soon would be, and Alan was accepted in lieu of the man who was about to leave; his wages would not begin until the other man left, but in the meantime he could remain aboard the ferry if he wished. Alan elected to remain aboard. The skipper called a man to assign quarters to Alan, and Alan, going with the man, questioned him about Burr.

All that was known definitely about old Burr on the ferry, it appeared, was that he had joined the vessel in the early spring. Before that—they did not know; he might be an old lakeman who, after spending years ashore, had returned to the lakes for a livelihood. He had represented himself as experienced and trained upon the lakes, and he had been able to demonstrate his fitness; in spite of his age he was one of the most capable of the crew.

The next morning, Alan approached old Burr in the crew's quarters and tried to draw him into conversation again about himself; but Burr only stared at him with his intent and oddly introspective eyes and would not talk upon this subject. A week passed; Alan, established as a lookout now on No. 25 and carrying on his duties, saw Burr daily and almost every hour; his watch coincided with Burr's watch at the wheel—they went on duty and were relieved together. Yet better acquaintance did not make the old man more communicative; a score of times Alan attempted to get him to tell more about himself, but he evaded Alan's questions and, if Alan persisted, he avoided him. Then, on an evening bitter cold with the coming of winter, clear and filled with stars, Alan, just relieved from watch, stood by the pilothouse as Burr also was relieved. The old man paused beside him, looking to the west.

"Have you ever been in Sturgeon's Bay?" he asked.

"In Wisconsin? No."

"There is a small house there—and a child; born," he seemed figuring the date, "Feb. 12, 1914."

"A relative of yours?"

"Yes."

"One of your brothers' children or grandchildren?"

"I had no brothers," old Burr said quietly.

Alan stared at him, amazed. "But you told me about your brothers and about their being lost in wrecks on

the lake; and about your home in Emmet County!"

"I never lived in Emmet County," old Burr replied. "Some one else must have told you that about me. I come from Canada—of French-Canadian descent. My family were of the Hudson Bay people. I was a guide and hunter until recently. Only a few years ago I came onto the lakes, but my cousin came here before I did. It is his child."

Old Burr moved away and Alan turned to the mate.

"What do you make of old Burr?" he asked.

"He's a romancer. We get 'em that way once in a while—old liars! He'll give you twenty different accounts of himself—twenty different lives. None of them is true. I don't know who he is or where he came from, but it's sure he isn't any of the things he says he is."

Alan turned away, chill with disappointment. It was only that, then—old Burr was a romancer after the manner of some old seamen. He constructed for his own amusement these "lives." He was not only not the Burr of Corvet's list; he was some one not any way connected with the Miwaka or with Corvet. Yet Alan, upon reflection, could not believe that it was only this. Burr, if he had wished to do that, might perhaps merely have simulated agitation when Alan questioned him about the Miwaka; but why should he have wished to simulate it? Alan could conceive of no condition which by any possibility could have suggested such simulation to the old man.

HE ceased now, however, to question Burr since questioning either had no result at all or led the old man to weaving fictions; in response the old man became by degrees more communicative. He told Alan, at different times, a number of other "lives" which he claimed as his own. In only a few of these lives had he been, by his account, a seaman; he had been a multitude of other things—in some a farmer, in others a lumber-jack or a fisherman; he had been born, he told, in a half-dozen different places and came of as many different sorts of people.

On deck, one night, listening while old Burr related his sixth or seventh life, excitement suddenly seized Alan. Burr, in this life which he was telling, claimed to be an Englishman born in Liverpool. He had been, he said, a seaman in the British navy; he had been present at the shelling of Alexandria; later, because of some difficulty which he glossed over, he had deserted and had come to "the States"; he had been first a deck-hand, then the mate of a tramp schooner on the lakes. Alan, gazing at the old man, felt exultation leaping and throbbing within him. He recognized this "life"; he knew in advance its incidents. This life which old Burr was rehearsing to him as his own, was the actual life of Munro Burkhalter, one of the men on Corvet's list regarding whom Alan had been able to obtain full information!

Alan sped below, when he was relieved from watch, and got out the clippings left by Corvet and the notes of what he himself had learned in his visits to the homes of these people. His excitement grew greater as he pored over them; he found that he could account, with their aid, for all

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