

Stirring Stories of the Sea

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The Trade Wind

The Strange Tale of a Helpless Ship and a Blind Crew

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The orgy was finished. The last sea song had resounded over the smooth waters of the bay, the last drunken shout, oath and challenge were voiced; the last light ended in helplessness and manly amity; and the red shirted men were sprawled around on the moonlit deck, snoring.

Though the barrel of rum broached on the main hatch was but slightly lowered, their sleep was heavy. Scoury tainted men at the end of a Cape Horn passage may not drink long or deeply. Some lay as they fell, face upward; others on their sides for awhile, then to roll over on their backs and so remain until the sleep was done, for in no other position may the human body rest easy on a hard bed with no pillow. And as they slept through the tropic night the full moon in the east rose higher and higher, passed overhead and disappeared behind a thickening haze in the western sky, but before it had crossed the meridian its cold, chemical rays had worked disastrously on the eyes of the sleeping men.

Captain Swarth, dominator of the lawless crew, prone upon the poop deck, was the first to awaken. There was pain in his head, pain in his eyes, which were swollen, and a whistling hum of sound in his ears coming from the Phontian darkness, surrounding him, while a jarring vibration of the deck beneath him appraised his awakening brain that the anchor was dragging. As he gazed towards a violent pressure of wind buried him against the wheel, to which he clung.

"All hands, there!" he roared. "Up with you all! Go forward and pay out on the chain!"

Shouts, oaths and growls answered him, and he heard the nasal voice of his mate repeating his order. "Angel," he called, "get the other anchor over and give her all of both chains."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the mate. "Send a lantern forward, Bill. Can't see our noses."

"Steward," yelled the captain, "where are you? Light up a deck lantern and the binnacle!"

He heard the steward's voice close to him and the sound of the binnacle lights being removed from their places. Then the opening and closing of the cabin companionway. He could see nothing, but knew that the steward had gone below to his storeroom. In a minute more a shriek came from the chain. It rang out again and again



Here's some blind, cap'n!" they wailed.

and seen sounded from the companionway: "I'm blind, I'm blind, cap'n. I can't see. I lit the lantern and burnt off my fingers, but I can't see the light. I'm blind." The steward's voice came in a howl.

"What up, you blasted fool!"

"Capt. Swarth. "Get down there and light up."

"Where's that light? came the mate's voice in a yell from amidships. "Black painter's jammed, Bill. Can't see a thing without a light."

"Come aft here and get it," Swarth's shout. "Shows came from forward, hove on the gale, as the mate sprang aft and climbed the poop steps.

"We're done blind, cap'n!" they wailed. "We're in the dark, cap'n, as if we were blind, cap'n!"

"Come down here, Bill," called the mate from below.

As Captain Swarth felt his way down the stairs a sudden shock struck the vibrations caused by the dragging anchor, and he knew that the chain had parted.

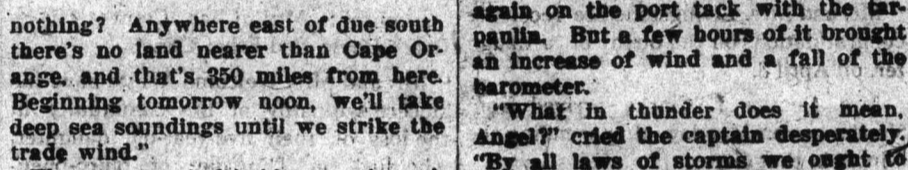
like it on earth—and the smell of the Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, Slave Coast and the Kameruns. And I'll say odds we can feel the heat of the sun in the east, and west enough to make a fair success at the course. But it won't come to that. Some of us'll be able to see pretty soon."

It was wild talk, but the demoralized mate needed encouraging. He answered with a steady voice, "Lucky we got in grub and water yesterday."

"Right you are, Angel. Now, in case this holds on to us, why, we'll find some of our friends over in the Right, and they'll know by our rig that something's wrong. Flanders is somewhere on the track—you know he went back to the bigger business—and Chiny put a slave deck in his hold down Rio way last spring. And old man Slack—I did him a service when I crippled the corvette that was after him, and he's grateful. Hope we'll meet him. I'd rather meet Chink than Flanders in the dark, and I'd trust a Javanese trader before either."

"S'pose we run foul of a bulldog?"

"Well, have to chance it. This coast's full o' them too. Great guns, man! Would you drift around and do



Blind Men Climbed Aloft and Felt For Foot Ropes and Gaskets.

nothing? Anywhere east of due south there's no land nearer than Cape Orange, and that's 350 miles from here. Beginning tomorrow noon, we'll take deep sea soundings until we strike the trade wind."

The negro cook felt his way through the preparing of meals and served them on time. The watches were set, and sail was put on the brig as fast as the men became accustomed to the new way of steering. Before nightfall on that first day they were edging under topmast, topmast and topmast, the speaker furled an ensign and the big adding its aid to the foremast staysail in keeping the brig before the quartering seas which occasionally climbed aboard.

The men, with the exception of a few, dropped into a querulous, whining discontent. Yank Tate, the carpenter, maintained through it all a patient faith in the captain and, in so far as his influence could be felt, acted as a foil to the irascible, faultfinding Tom Plate, the forecable lawyer, the man who had been at the lead line at Barbados.

Tom marked himself for future attention by insolent and disapproving comments on the orders of his superiors and a habit of moving swiftly to another part of the deck directly he had spoken, which prevented the angry captain from finding him.

Time as might have been the light of day through the pelting rain and storm cloud, it caused increased pain in their eyes, and they found them, with their neckerchiefs, applying makeshift remedies as forecastle lore could suggest. The captain decided these remedies, but frankly confessed his ignorance of anything but time as a means of cure. And so they existed and suffered through a three days' damp gale and a fourth day's dead calm, when the brig rolled scuppern down with all sail set, ready for the next breeze. It came, cool, dry and faint at first, then broke—the unmistakable trade wind.

They boxed the brig about and braced sharp on the starboard tack, steering again by the feel of the wind and the rattling of shaking leechees aloft.

They took occasional deep sea soundings with the brig shaking in the wind, but found no bottom; and at the end of fifteen days a longer heave to the ground swell was evidence to Captain Swarth's mind that he was passing Cape St. Roque, and the soundings were discontinued.

"No use, bothering about St. Paul rocks or the Rocas, Angel," said he. "They rise out of the deep sea, and if we're to hit, soundings won't warn us in time."

One day Yank Tate appeared at the captain's elbow and suggested in a low voice that he examine the treasure chests in the 'tween deck. "I was down stowing away some oakum," he said, "and I was sure I heard the lid close, but nobody answered me, and I couldn't see anybody."

Captain Swarth descended to his cabin and found his keys missing; then he and the carpenter visited the chests. They were locked tight and as heavy as ever.

"Some one has the keys, Yank, and has very likely raided the diamonds. We can't do anything but wait. He can't get away. Keep still about it. The air became cooler as they sailed on, and, judging that the trade wind was blowing more from the south than he had allowed for, the captain brought the wind squarely abeam, and the brig

sailed faster. Still, it was too cool for the latitude, and it puzzled him until a man came aft and groaned that he'd lifted his hand to bathe his eyes and had unmistakably seen the sun four points of the port quarter, but his eyes were worse now, and he could not do it again.

"Four points off!" exclaimed Swarth. "Four o'clock in the afternoon! That's just about where the sun ought to be heading due east and far enough south of the line to bring this cool weather. We're not far from Ascension. Never knew the sea past trade to act like this before. Must have been blowing out of the south-west half the time."

A week later they were hove to on the port tack, with a cold gale of wind screaming through the rigging. It was the first break in the friendly trade wind, and Swarth confessed to himself that he was out of his reckoning, but one thing he was sure of—that this was a cyclone with a dangerous center.

The brig labored heavily during the lulls as the seas rose. Captain Swarth went below and smashed the glass of an aneroid barometer, which might tell him roughly of the air density. Feeling of the indicator and judging by the angle it made with the center, marked by a ring at the top, he found a measurement which startled him.

Setting the adjustable hand over the indicator for future reference, he returned to the deck, ill at ease. A further lowering of the barometer indicated him to furl topsails and foretopmast staysail and allow the brig to ride under a storm spanker.

"Angel," said the captain, shouting into the mate's ear, "there's only one thing to account for this. We're on the right tack for the southern ocean, but the storm center is overtaking us faster than we can drift away from it. We must scud out of its way."

With the best two helmmen at the wheel they sped before the tempest for four hours.

"Keep the wind as much on the port quarter as you dare," ordered Swarth. "We're simply sailing around the center and perhaps in with the vortex."

In a few hours more there was less fury in the blast and a slight rise in the barometer.

"It was right," said the captain. "The center will pass us now. We're out of its way."

They brought the brig around amid a crashing of seas and pluned her again, on the port tack with the tarpaulin. But a few hours of it brought an increase of wind and a fall of the barometer.

"What in thunder does it mean, Angel?" cried the captain desperately. "By all laws of storms we ought to drift away from the center."

A voice out of the night above the shrieking wind answered him.

"You all fired fast, don't you know any more than to heave to in the gulf stream?"

Then there was the faintest disturbance in the sounds of the sea, indicating the rushing by of a large craft.

"What?" roared Swarth. "The gulf stream? I've lost my reckoning. Where am I? Ship ahoy! Where am I? There was no answer.

"Draw a bucket of water, one of you," he ordered.

This was done, and he immersed his hand. "The water was warm."

"Gulf stream!" he yelled frantically. "Gulf stream! How did we get up here? We ought to be down near St. Helena."

"We were blown out of the north entrance of the bay, Angel. Instead of the south, as we thought, I was fooled by the soundings. This is a West India cyclone, and we're somewhere around Hatteras."

The crew now put the brig on the starboard tack and took hourly soundings with the deep sea lead. As they hauled it in for the fourth time the mate called that the water was cold, and on the next sounding the lead reached bottom at ninety fathoms.

"We're inside the stream and the hundred fathom curve, Angel. The storm center's leaving us," said the captain. "I know pretty well where I am. These storms follow an invariable track, and I judge the center to be to the east of us, moving north. We'll square away with the wind on the starboard quarter now, and if we pick up the stream and the glass don't rise I'll be satisfied to turn in."

"It's too much for me, Bill," answered Mr. Todd wearily. "I can navigate, but this ain't navigation. This is blind man's bluff."

It was nearly breakfast time now, and the men would soon be eating. With his pistols in his coat pockets the captain stationed himself beside the entrance to the forecastle and listened to comments on his folly and bad seamanship which ascended from below until the harsh voice of Tom Plate on the stairs indicated his coming up. He reached toward Tom with one hand, holding a cocked pistol with the other, but Tom slid easily out of his warring grasp and fled along the deck. He followed his footsteps until he lost them and picked up instead the angry plaint of the negro cook in the galley amidships.

"I do know who you are, but you want to get right out of my galley now. You hear me? I've had enough of his comin' inter my galley. Gwan, now! Is you de man dat's all time stealin' my coffee? I'll git you coffee, you trash!" he bawled.

Captain Swarth reached the galley door in time to receive on the left side of his face a generous squirt of a pot of scalding coffee. It brought an involuntary shriek of agony from him.

"All that day and the night following he chose to lie in his darkened state room with his face bandaged in oily cloths. In the morning he removed the bandages and took in the sight of his stateroom fittings and his clothing hanging on the hooks. It was a joy

ous sight. He could not see with his right eye and but faintly with his left, but a scrutiny of his face in a mirror disclosed deep lines that had not been there, distorted eyelids, and the left side where the coffee had scalded puffing out a large, angry blister. He went on deck.

Three miles off on the port bow was a large, square bowled, square yarded ship, hove to and heading away from them, which might be a frigate or a subsidized Englishman with painted ports.

Angel Todd stood near, his chin resting in his hand and his elbow on the companionway. Forward the watch sat about in coils of rope and sheltered nooks or walked the deck unsteadily, and a glance aloft showed the captain his rigging hanging in bights and yards pointed every way. The same glance apprised him of an English ensign, standing down, at the end of the standing spanker gaff, with the halcyons made fast high above the reach of bungling blind fingers. Tom Plate was coming aft with none of the hesitancy of the blind and squinting aloft at the damaged distress signal.

He secured another ensign—American—from the flag locker in the booby hatch and hoisted it, union down, in place of the other. Then he dropped to the deck and looked into the pistol of Captain Swarth.

"Hands up, Tom Plate, over your head, quick!"

"White in the face, Tom obeyed. "Mr. Todd," called the captain. The mate came quickly.

"What soundings did you get at the lead when we were blowing out?" asked the captain of Tom Plate. "What water did you have when you sank out a quarter six and a quarter less six?"

"N-one, cap'n. There wasn't any bottom. I Jess wanted to get you to drop the other anchor and hold her off the reef."

"How long have you been flying signals of distress, Tom Plate?"

"Ever since I could see—second day out, sir."

"What's your idea in keeping still about it? What could you gain by being taken aboard a man-of-war?"

"I didn't want to have all the work piled on me Jess, 'cause I could see, cap'n. I slept partly under No. 2 gun that night and didn't get it so bad."

"You sneaked into my room, got my keys and raided the treasure chest. You know what the rules say about that? Death without trial." A search brought to light a tobacco pouch in which were about fifty unset diamonds and a few well jeweled solid gold ornaments, which the captain pocketed.

"Not much of a haul, considering what you left behind," he said calmly. "I only took my share, sir. I did no harm. I didn't want to be drilled round with blind men. How'd I know anybody could ever see any more?"

"That's mistake, Tom. All we wanted, it seems, was a good scalding with hot coffee. There must be some medical virtue in hot coffee which the doctors haven't learned and well—Tom, you've earned your finish."

"Cap'n, you can't do it. The men are with me," stammered the man.

"Possibly they are. I heard you all growling yesterday morning. You're a pack of cows. I'll get another crew. Mr. Todd, he said, "steward told me he was out of coffee, so we'll break a bag out o' the lazarette. It's a heavy

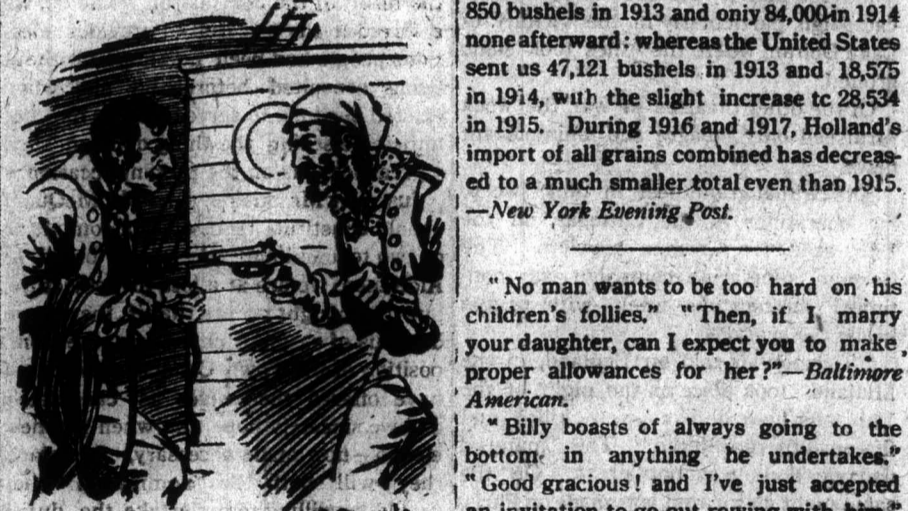
bag out o' the lazarette!" sang out the captain. They found the loose rope, tumbled it, hooked the light into an open scave in the stanchion and hastily walked forward with it. When they had hoisted the unconscious Tom to the gaff Swarth ordered, "Belay, coil up the fall and go forward."

They obeyed, listlessly as ever.

Captain Swarth looked at the square rigged ship, now on the port quarter, an ill defined blur to his imperfect vision. "Fine chance we'd have had," he muttered, "if that happened to be a bulldog. Angel," he said to the mate drew near, "hot coffee is good for moon blindness, taken externally, as a blistering agent, a counter irritant. We have no fly blisters in the medicine chest, but smoking hot grease must be just as good, if not better than either. Have the cook heat up a potful, and you get me out a nice small paint brush."

Forty-eight hours later, when the last wakening vision among the twenty men had taken cognizance of the grisly object aloft, the body of Tom Plate was dropped into the sea.

Then when Captain Swarth's eyes permitted, he took an observation or two, and shaped his course for Barbados island to take up the burden of his battle with fate, to scheme and plan, to dare and to do, to war and to destroy, against the inevitable coming of the time when fate should prove the stronger, when he would lose in a game where one must always win or die.



Make a hangman's noose in the end of the rope."

here, so we'll hoist it up. Let Tom, he'll rig a whip to the sparker gaff. He can see."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered the mate. "Get a single block and a strap and a gant line out of the bow's locker, Tom!"

Tom secured the gear and climbing aloft and out of the gaff, fastened the block directly over the lazarette hatch, just forward of the binnacle. Then he overhauled the rope until it reached the deck and descended.

"Come up here on the poop," called the captain, and he came.

"Shall I go down and hook on, sir?" he asked zealously.

"Make a hangman's noose in the end of the rope," said Swarth.

"Eh—what—a ruman's bowline—a timber hitch? No, no," he yelled as he read the captain's face; "you can't do it. The men!"

"Make a hangman's knot in the end of the rope!" thundered the captain, his pistol at Tom's ear. "Treaching, he did the knot. I'll git you."

"Fam it round your neck and draw it tight."

Hoarse, inarticulate screams burst from the throat of the man, ended by a blow on the side of his face by the captain's iron hand fist. He fell and lay insensible, while Swarth himself adjusted the noose. The men forward, appalled by the screams, heard Swarth's roar, "Lay aft here, the watch!"

They came, feeling their way.

"Clap on to that gant line at the main life rail and lift this bag of col-

HOW THE TROUBLE STARTS

If more people knew how Rheumatism and kindred ills started there would be infinitely less suffering.

It should be a matter of popular knowledge that the blood stream completes the circulation of the body in approximately three minutes, gathering up waste matters. It is the function of the Kidneys to remove these impurities or poisons from the blood and eliminate them from the body. Should there be any derangement of the Kidney action the poisons are not eliminated but are carried around again in the blood stream, to accumulate slowly and occasion sickness and distress. Then follow pains in the back, in the region of the Kidneys, Rheumatism, constant headaches, and the many complaints arising from derangements of the Kidneys or Bladder. First, the Kidneys must be put in order and until these organs are healed and regulated no real health is possible. Gin Pills contain the medicinal and tonic properties that the Kidneys require.

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