

## "The Salving of a Derelict"

A British Sea Story

By MAURICE DRAKE

### CHAPTER EIGHT

His crazy resolution once formed nothing could deter Laurence from putting it into effect. He would have gone at once, but reflecting that if he remained on the Westray until forced by Harper to leave her, he would possess a cogent argument for his re-employment on his return, he decided to stay till June. Besides the London season would only then be commencing.

He gave himself over to anticipation of a royal carnival of unlicense, and his work and surroundings at sea at once naturally re-assured the effect they had upon him at first acquaintance. Coming pleasures in view, his last two voyages were, if possible, more distasteful than his first, and added to the hatred of his environment came a new fear—the dread that some accident would come between him and his contemplated folly.

Such an accident, terrible in its swift tragedy of young Clitheroe's death, occurred towards the end of May, but the horror and shock of it, whilst, subduing the spirits of the other men of the crew, had no effect on him beyond a redoubled eagerness to quit, if only for a short case and forgetfulness, the risks and toil of the fishing fleet.

The Westray was returning from the shallow waters to the westward of Reykjavik in the fourth week of the voyage. In the ordinary course of things the trawler would have made an earlier return to port, but Laurence had encountered one of Harper's steamers a week before and had transferred the contents of his full hold to hers. As he argued to himself, the longer the voyage the more money to spend, and the men under him were only too glad to echo the seaman's saw of "More days, more dollars." Laurence, being on the extreme northward of the ground he knew, argued rightly that if he could send home a full cargo from Iceland he could amass another on his way homewards, thus drawing double pay for the single voyage.

It was a lovely morning bright and clear, with pure northern sunlight and a gentle breeze that brought from the land some chill hint of opening springtime. Iceland lay low on the port beam, the bare towering bastions of Portland—the first view the traveller obtains of the Island—shouldering themselves like a separate islet high above the sands to east and westward. Laurence had given orders for the trawl to be raised, and had gone aft to stand by the taffrail to watch it come aboard. A deck hand stood amidst his hand on the starting lever of the steam winch, and Clitheroe stood facing him, his back to Laurence, taking the slack of the tow rope into his hands as the winch unwound it to coil on the deck at his side.

Suddenly the winding ceased, the little steamer checking and dragging heavily at the tow and yawing awkwardly from side to side. Laurence swore, "Curse this foul rocky bottom. Vast hearing, you. Revers! the winch. Davy, keep her a couple of points south." "Aye, ay," came from the little bridge, and the wheel spun in the helmsman's hands as the stumpy bows swung away to the right. The reversing lever of the winch came over smartly, the revolving iron cylinder rewinding. Clitheroe's neat coils of rope and throwing them again on the deck in an untidy tangle that dragged towards the bulwarks and overside.

"That'll do," Laurence shouted. "Heave again. She should come now." Again the lever grated and the clacking winch resumed its work. A frightened shout from the deck hand made Laurence turn his head, and, unable to help, saw the whole of the ghastly business from first to last.

Just as the tow rope straightened Clitheroe stepped backward into the last of its coils, the rope tightening with a jerk, gripped his ankle like a vice, and, pulling it from under him, threw him face downward across the losing, chattering winch. Flinging out his arms to save his head, the

now tight rope caught and held his left hand firmly, the revolving drum, jerking the body tense as a harpstring from wrist to heel in a swifter and more awful rack than ever medieval torturer devised. The wretched lad never screamed. A little "Ah!" of surprise, an "Ah!" that ended in a groan—and Averil's shout of "Reverse winch. Engines hard astern," set him free and dropped his limp body in a long tumbled heap upon the deck.

Laurence ran forward. "Stop engines," he called, and stooped over the victim drawn face lying with its cheek on the deck plates. The little steamer, her engines silenced, rose and fell on the easy sea, the shadows of bulwarks and the white drawn face lying with its cheek on the deck plates. The little steamer, her engines silenced, rose and fell on the easy sea, the shadows of bulwarks and the white drawn face lying with its cheek on the deck plates. The little steamer, her engines silenced, rose and fell on the easy sea, the shadows of bulwarks and the white drawn face lying with its cheek on the deck plates.

The eyes were opened, and in them was bright pain.

"Aye, a bit, Averil." His speech was slow and deliberate. "I'll be right in a minute. Put me by the bulwarks there an' get t' trawl up. Ye can tend me then."

He never groaned or complained whilst Laurence and the deck hand, clumsily for all their care, carried him to the steamer's side and laid him down. The ship's boy was set to his work of coiling away the tow, and the winch began to grate again and to clack as the great trawl swung slowly inboard.

Cutting the tie of the bag, Laurence walked around the pile of fish and went to the wounded lad's side.

"Where are you hurt?" he asked. "I'm done, Averil," the boy answered low, his brow beaded with pain and his breath broken with gasps. "Nay, ye neednae touch me, I'm past helping. See here." He glanced downwards at a red trickle that pooled and ran from his waist, mixing with the moisture on the wet deck. "That—winch tore me right open. I'll go home nae mair."

Laurence stared, stunned, only curious and surprised for all the horror of it. The boy had never spoken a word to complain.

Clitheroe saw the wonder in his eyes. "Oh, ay, it's so," he passed, and bled me ashore. Pouches at sea. "See ye here, Averil, put in yonder, a' my life—leave me rest under green grass. Besides, I fear they—fish. I've caught them, a' my life—dinnae let them go me." He jerked his pain-twisted lips into some semblance of a smile, then swore aloud at his agony, using oaths he had often heard from Laurence's own mouth.

"There's my brother—on the Bonaventure, he is! Stole his backer pouch last time ashore. Ge'e back to him, will ye? Nay, I've nae ther folks. Averil, say me one thing. Ye're a man, ye are, by—?" He broke out again into poor blasphemy, muttering with the wild eyes and tortured brow. "Tell me did I die like a man? I never squeaked, did I?—not when that—winch tore me. Did I?"

His voice faded, and for all the measureless sadness of it, all Laurence could feel was dull astonishment that so torn a shape could hold any desires, ambitions, whatever. Yet this broken heap could die like a man. Clitheroe could endure agony in silence in the same spirit in which the boy had aped his own reckless manners, copied his oaths and dress—had even announced amid the laughter of the other men that he would never shave: he'd grow "a beard like oor Averil's."

He looked over his shoulder at the men behind him. They were sorting the catch, flinging the smaller drag-

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giving the larger fish into separate heaps, as they worked kicking off behind them with their sea-boots. Though they made acknowledgement of the situation by working in unusual silence, never a one of them much as looked at him or the figure lying at his feet, and when he himself looked down gain the boy was dead.

Two of the men carried the body aft and laid it upon his cabin table, placing some old sail canvas under it to keep those red stains from the wood. They went forward about their work again, and Laurence sat by the table, his eyes hot and dry, and some half-formed emotion—was it regret—mingling with the brute nature now ingrained in him.

So low had he fallen that he readily made the tiny effort it required to still it, and to steady his nerves took a bottle of brandy from the cupboard at his elbow and drank a couple of glasses, noting in some grim spirit of callousness that the still burden on the table yet left space for the tumbler beside its head. He would allow himself no feeling but annoyance at the loss of a hand just as he sat at the fishing grounds with empty holds.

And the boy's preposterous demand to be buried ashore—he refused to entertain the idea for a moment, merely saying that the body overboard, decently weighted, so as to lose no time in getting back to his work.

With the motion of the vessel an end of the dead boy's handkerchief, which he had used as a towel upon the table, Laurence snatched at his tumbler, and so doing, noted that the brightly colored fabric was exactly like one of his own. For the moment he thought of Clitheroe as wearing a stolen article, until he found his own in his pocket. The boy must have bought it, highly priced as it was—Laurence's one trait that remained to him of olden days was a fondness for personal wear—must have bought it in imitation of his skipper's. A hundred memories of the manner in which Clitheroe had copied him, had copied the way in which he dressed, even to the angle at which his cap was worn: had sworn his pet oaths, had spat and idled, and walked with a little careless swagger—in all following as best he could, Laurence's worst examples. He pictured the slight figure in his blue guernsey and sea-boots—nearly always worn by himself, though seldom by the harbor men—often ashore leaning against the street corners or walking down the narrow ways of Leith. And his death—silent endurance of torture—dying as he conceived Laurence himself would die. His last words had been to demand whether he had died like a man—this stunted boy of scarce eighteen.

Laurence drank again—raw spirit this time—and looked at the dead thin face, still lined with the pain of death. Something like admiration rose in him. The boy had died like a man, and since he had demanded it, buried ashore he should be.

He went on deck and hailed the bridge. "Change your course to north-east," he said. "When Portland's abeam again, give me a call."

"Ay, ay. North-east it is," came the answer and the little steamer's bows were sweeping to the left as Laurence dashed again into his cabin to consult the chart.

Covering so large an area of sea, its scale was small, and it was more over, marked and scrawled all over with his own notes and observations. Placing it on his knees, he ran his finger along the coast line to the eastward, searching among the names of villages, headlands and bays for some inlet that should give him a harbor room. The nearest—Seithsfjord—was on the eastern coast, two days' steaming; so, resolving to anchor offshore, to convey the body ashore in the dinghy, and then to leave it to the care of the inhabitants of the nearest village or farm, his finger ranged back along the chart to the nearest point on the coast line.

Just to the eastward of Portland a broad, shallow stream of glacier water, the Kirthadot, ran over wide beaches to the sea, and close to it two hamlets bore the names of Asaa and

Langholt. Some half-lost train of memory stirred in his brain. Asaa and Langholt—Langholt and Asaa—where had he heard those names before? Langholt and Asaa—what was the other word that had occurred in conjunction with them?—a word that surely must link up the chain of memory. Asaa? Langholt? Puzzled, his finger ran down the coastline and there in fine letters beneath "C. Portland," was its native name, "Dyrholacy!"

Of course! Asaa and Langholt—by Dyrholacy! that was it. The names of the villages where lay the valueless lands with which his father had swindled the old sea-captain. Laurence swore more oaths softly, undeterred by the presence of his silent companion stretched upon the cabin table.

He poured himself another glass of spirits and drank, frowning as he tried to recover the chart. Dyrholacy, he tried idly to guess at its meaning. Door-hole-ise, likely enough, he thought, having many times seen the great ocean-worn archway in the headland.

Strange that fate should send him here, just as he was about to leave for a while the hated labors to which his father's sin had bound him. Door-hole-ise—just as the ocean had worn the great arch in the volcanic cliffs, so had usage of the sea torn and rent that structure of breeding and education that once he had thought part of himself. And now, hardened and defiled rather than cleansed and purified by the fire through which he had passed, he was going lower yet, to ostentatiously fling away his savings in debauchery more attractive than the vice of the seaports.

Why should fate serve him so? What harm had he done that he himself should be debarrd from the best in life—that best he had tasted in youth? More keenly than deprivation of good to himself came the remembrance of the last words of the dead now lying so still before him. Oaths and blasphemy—his own teaching. Such a death was worse than the perishing of the beasts of the field. Devoid of religion, and with no belief in a future existence, some fragment of his early training yet gave him a momentary distaste of himself, almost a half-felt shame at the memory of his own vile words from those lips, now stiffening in death.

He drank again, until the spirits flushed his face and puffed his hot cheeks. Dyrholacy—ay, Dyrholacy Island. Portland—the latter of the port. The same name in two tongues. And he himself was going to stoop—yes, stoop—to a portal that should take him, a half-bred, to the lonely seas wastes, into a land of milk and honey, a realm of pleasant words and smells and tastes, of soft voices and well-bred, delicate, sweet sin.

And what after? To come back to sea—and perhaps some day to be winch-trapped even as this poor devil had been, or to fall overside and drown, weighted down by heavy sea clothing, as many a better man had done before him. Memory and imagination supplied a hundred details of that last passing, suggested its occurrence in a score of different ways, and the terror of a lonely death at sea struck cold to his very inmost soul.

Strange that his work on this boy should end here, of all places: that the dead whose dead should be so much to him, should be the victim of the killing of the body—only the soul. His father, too, had never laid hands on his victim—only robbed him with cunning and greed. He laughed softly but brutally and tried to think of the Northern Boulevard in June sunlight, but somehow the thoughts refused to flow as easily as before.

It was not his fault, or his father's. "Clitheroe, my boy," he said aloud, with an oath, and then, "By G—d! I'm getting morbid or night. I'll give the whelp his burial ashore, and then hey for southern sun and health."

He sawed Clitheroe's body in a blanket that but half a dozen hours

(To be continued)

### NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Of Albert White, of Yarmouth, Deceased

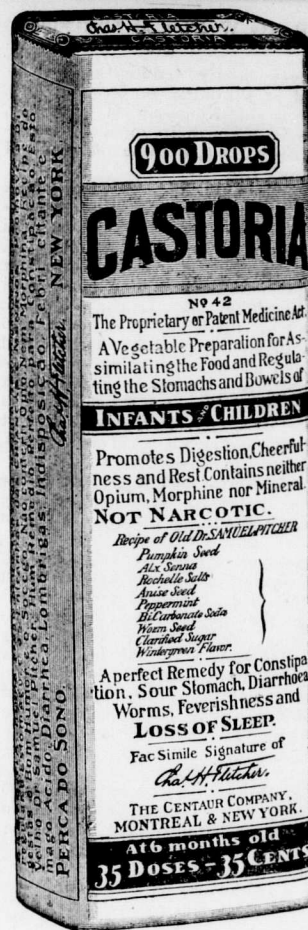
Pursuant to Sec. 56 of Chapter 121, R. S. O. 1914, notice is hereby given that all creditors and others having claims against the estate of Albert White, late of the township of Yarmouth, in the county of Elgin, yeoman, who died on or about the Seventh day of March, A. D. 1917, are, on or before the 25th day of July, A. D. 1917, to send by post pre-paid, to Miller & Backus, solicitors for the Executors of the said deceased their christian names and surnames, addresses and descriptions, the full particulars of their claims, a statement of their accounts and the nature of the securities (if any) held by them, and that after the day last aforesaid the said executors will proceed to distribute the assets of the said deceased among the parties entitled thereto having regard only to such claims of which notice shall have been given as above required, and that said executors will not be liable for the said assets or any thereof, to any person or persons of whose claim or claims notice shall not have been received by them at the time of such distribution.

Dated at A-mer this 5th day of June, A. D. 1917.

MILLER & BACKUS, Solicitors for the Executors.

PHEBE URSULA WHITE, Aylmer, Ont.

JUNIOR BRADLEY, Aylmer, Ont., Executors.



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