

Gordon Craig SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

By RANDALL PARRISH
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There was a long, painful silence, during which I stared out into the dark, mechanically guiding the boat, although every thought centered on her motionless figure. What should I say? How was I to approach her now? Those were long minutes I sat there, speechless, gazing straight ahead, my brain inert, my hand hard on the tiller. Suddenly, with a swift thrill which sent my blood leaping, I felt the soft touch of her fingers.

"Are you afraid to speak to me?" she asked pleadingly. "Surely I have said nothing to anger you."
"No, it is not that," I returned in confusion, not knowing how to express the cause of my hesitancy.
"I am sorry—yes," very slowly, "but perhaps not as you suppose. It is hard to think of him as dead—killed so suddenly, without opportunity to think or make any preparation. He—he was my husband under the law. That was all. He was no more. I do not believe I ever loved him. My marriage was but the adventure of a romantic girl, but if I once did his subsequent abuse of me, his life of dissipation, obliterated long since every recollection of that love. He is to me scarcely more than a name, an unhappy memory. I told you that frankly when I believed him still alive. We were friends then, you and I, and I cannot conceive why his death should sever our friendship."

"Don't," I burst forth impetuously. "You talk of friendship when all my hope centers about another term. Surely you understand. I am a man sorely tempted and dare not yield to temptation."
She drew her hand away from my clasp, yet the very movement seemed to express regret.

"And we are to be friends no longer? Is that your meaning?"
"You must answer that question," I replied gravely, "for it is beyond my power to decide."

Her head was again uplifted, and I knew she was endeavoring to see my face through the gloom.

"I am a woman," she said, "and we like to pretend to misunderstand, but I am not going to yield to that inclination. I do understand and will answer frankly. We can never be friends as we were before."

My heart sank, and I felt a choke in my voice difficult to overcome.
"I was afraid it would be so."
"Yes," and both her hands were upon mine, "in our position we cannot afford to play at cross purposes. You have been loyal to me even when every inducement was offered elsewhere. I permitted myself to come south with you, knowing your purpose to be an illegal one. I placed myself in a false position. In doing this I was actuated by two purposes. One was to save this property which had been willed to my husband by his father. Do you guess the other?"

"No," I said, impressed by the earnestness with which she was speaking.

"You will tell me?"
"I mean to; the time has come when I should. It was that I might save you from a crime. You had been kind to me, sympathetic. I—I liked you very much, and I knew you did not understand; that you were being misled. I could not determine then where the fraud was, but I knew there was fraud and that you would eventually become its victim."

"You cared that much for me?"
"Yes," she confessed frankly, "I did. I would never have told you so under ordinary conditions. But I can now, here, where we are—alone together in this boat." She paused, as though endeavoring to choose the proper words.

"We both realize the changed relations between us."
I drew a quick, startled breath.

"That—that I love you!" the exclamation left my lips before I was aware.

"Yes," she said calmly. "I could not help that. At first I never deemed such a result of our friendship possible. I was Philip Henley's wife, and I gave this possible danger scarcely a thought. Indeed, it did not seem a danger. While it is true he was husband in name only, yet I was wife forever. That is my religion. Now the conditions are all changed, instantly changed, by his death."

"You believe, then, he is dead?"
"I am sure of it as though I had seen his body. I feel it to be true. Do you understand now why because of the fact we can no longer remain friends?"

"Yes," I burst forth, "because you know how I have grown to feel toward you. You—you resent?"

"Have I said so?"
"No, not in words. That was not necessary, but I understand."

"Do you, indeed?"
I stared toward her, puzzled, bewildered, yet conscious that the hot blood was surging through my veins.

"You cannot mean the other?" I questioned. "That—that you love me?"

"And why not? Am I so different from other women?"

I held the tiller still with one hand, but the other arm was free, and I reached out and drew her toward me. There was no resistance, no effort to break away. I could see her face uplifted, the wide open eyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Revenue Cutter.

It could not have been long, not to exceed a moment or two, when a sudden leaping of the boat brought us back to a realization of our position. As soon as I had regained control of the craft I reached out again and touched her hand.

"This is all so strange, so unexpected, I can scarcely comprehend what has occurred."

"Strange, yes, in the way it has happened," she coincided. "But we cannot afford to dwell upon that now. We are in peril. Do you really know where we are—for what you are steering?"

"It is largely a guess. There is nothing to give me guidance except as I unscrew the face of this compass and feel the needle."

"Then we may still be within view from the deck of the Sea Gull at daybreak?"

"Yes. That will depend entirely upon luck."

"Why, look there!" she exclaimed quickly. "See—to the right! Merciful heavens! It is a ship!"

It was hard to determine the nature of the vessel, the sides looming close above us, but it was not the Sea Gull. I was certain of that from the height of the rail and the outline of a square foremast showing dimly against the sky. I called out:

"Aho! there! Take us aboard!"
I shouted twice before a head popped over the rail and stared down in apparent amazement.

"Hullo, the boat! Who are you? What do you want?"

"Small boat adrift; two passengers. Throw us a rope!"

"All right! Stand by!"
I could hear his voice up above shouting orders. There was a rush of feet, and a rope's end fell within reach. The head bobbed over the rail again, and a moment later I had helped her up a swaying boarding ladder and felt the solid deck under my feet.

The intense darkness puzzled me, not a gleam of light showing anywhere. Suddenly a hand touched my arm.

"This way, sir. Help the lady aft. The deck is clear."

"What kind of a boat is this?" she whispered.

"I'm sure I don't know. Not big enough for a passenger liner."

We were at the head of the companion stairs and descended carefully, clinging to the rail. The officer, groping in the darkness, opened a door at the bottom and hurried us into the lighted cabin. Facing us, one hand resting on the table, stood a short, sturdy man in uniform. He began questioning.

"Who are you? How did you come to be adrift in these waters? Answer up, sir. You're no fisherman."

"We escaped from a vessel last evening, sir."

"What do you mean by escaped—run away?"

"Yes, sir. And I stepped aside so he could see her more clearly. 'We were being held as prisoners.'"

His eyes flashed to her face, rested an instant, and then his cap was in his hand.

"This is the revenue cutter Saline, which I have the honor to command. Mr. Smith, assist the lady to a chair and have the steward bring a glass of wine. Now, sir, are you ready to answer?"

"I am. We were prisoners on board the Sea Gull. It is a long story, involving a will, in which the master of that vessel was interested. We escaped in a small boat last evening and have been floating about since."

"The Sea Gull? Do you remember the name, Mr. Smith?"

"No, sir. Perhaps a description?"

"A schooner rigged steam yacht," I explained briefly, "clearing from New Orleans for Santiago. She is en route to Spanish Honduras, with munitions of war."

"Exactly, under command of a man named Henley. Smith, this sounds too good to be true."

He walked across the cabin twice, thinking, not even glancing up as he passed us. Suddenly he stopped, facing me.

"Where did he get you two?"

"In a bayou off the Alabama coast."

"And you got away last evening—how?"

He walked back and forth as I reviewed the events swiftly. I hardly think he asked so much as a single question, his eyes upon my face and then upon the face of the girl.

"A rather strange tale," he commented when I had concluded, "and perhaps the whole is not told. However, that is none of my affair. Now, listen. This is a revenue cutter. Four days ago I intercepted this boat on which you two were prisoners. We haven't even sighted the vessel, and if we did would be perfectly helpless, as she can steam three knots to our one. Only some streak of wonderfully good luck would ever enable us to capture her. I half believe you are the good luck, if you do what I suggest."

"What?" I asked. "I will be willing. Would you need Mrs. Henley also?"

"Yes," and he turned to the officer.

"It is not a very complicated plan, but we will try it. I don't think Henley will leave these waters without an effort to recover his boat and prisoners. He will want those papers and revenge on Craig here. He has no warning that we are after him. I believe the fellow will cruise about in the same neighborhood until daylight. All we have to do is lay a trap—the boat's trap."

"You mean conceal a squad of men in the bottom and send it adrift again?"

"Exactly; lower the mast, as though

Craig here had been unable to step it, or better still, leave it overboard. The loss of weight will give room for another man. Then cover the lads over with the canvas. They will never suspect the ruse on the Sea Gull or study it out through glasses. They'll simply recognize their boat and steer for it."

"The fighting odds will be pretty heavy, sir," said Smith soberly.

"We must trust to surprise and get the crew below fastened down before an alarm is sounded on board. A dozen armed men ought to clear the decks. How do you look at the affair, Craig? Will the plan work?"

"I am not sure I understand exactly what is proposed, sir."

"My thought is that this man Henley will be sufficiently anxious to get hold of you two again and regain those papers, so that he will steam about slowly all night, hoping to get sight of the missing boat at daylight. He has no means of knowing that the revenue officers are after him. If he lights us at daybreak he'll make a run and show us a clean pair of heels. He'd be hull down in five hours, for this is a slow old tub. Now, what I propose is this, and the captain counted off the points on his fingers. 'There is about an hour of darkness left—sufficient to enable me to run this cutter in behind Cosmos Island safely out of sight. In the meanwhile we'll dismantle that small boat a bit, slip a dozen good men under the canvas and turn her adrift.'"

"And you wish me to go also?"

"Yes; if you will."

"And Mrs. Henley?"

"That would be the only way to allay suspicion on the Sea Gull."

I hesitated, half turning so as to look at her.

"You wish to say yes?" she asked quietly. "You believe the plan will succeed?"

"It sounds feasible."

She glanced toward the waiting captain and then back into my face.

"Then I will go, of course," she said smilingly. "Let us not discuss it any more."

The captain stepped forward, bowing, bare headed.

"Most bravely spoken," he said soberly. "I owe you a debt, madam. Mr. Smith, have the boat prepared at once to carry out my idea."

"To leave the impression that an incompetent seaman had been in charge of it through the night, sir?"

"Exactly. The mast overboard and the canvas stowed badly."

"Yes, sir; a big sheet."

"Bunch it so as to leave all the space possible; leave the jib set; it will help conceal the men. Send Lieutenant Hutton here."

"He will have command of the party?"

"Yes; let him pick his own men and then report to me; arm them with a revolver apiece. Be lively about it."

The dawn broke gray and desolate. I sat at the tiller, grasping one of her hands in mine and staring anxiously about the broadening circle. The boat in which we rode, while buoyant enough, still bore the outward appearance of a wreck, the broken stump of a mast barely showing sufficiently high to support the flapping jib, and the wet canvas of the mainsail completely concealing everything forward. The men were lying low, so completely hidden as to be invisible even to us, but the lieutenant sat upright, with head above the mass of sail, and was scanning the sea with glasses.

"Hadin't seen you before," he said to me. "Dark when we came over the side, you know. Bad morning."

"The fog is lifting. What is that black mass out there?"

"Cosmos Island." And he turned his lenses the other way. "The next ten minutes will give us a clear view."

I looked at her, noting how tired her eyes appeared in the gray light, although they smiled courageously.

"You are so tired?"

"No more than you, I am sure. Why I have done nothing except to stay awake. You have had all the work and worry. It will not be long now."

"No; we shall know in a few minutes if the Sea Gull is standing by hunting us. If she shows up, you must do exactly as I say. You promise that?"

"Of course," and the clasp of her hand tightened. "You have no reason to doubt me."

The lieutenant's eyes were on the widening sea line and I bent down and pressed my lips to her bare arm. I glanced up again into flushed cheeks.

"Craig," exclaimed the lieutenant suddenly, "that must be the fellow off there to port! Here, try the glasses—just where the cloud is lifting a bit."

I recognized her instantly.

"That's the Sea Gull, and by heavens, they are keeping a sharp lookout on board. See! She is swinging on her head already; they've sighted us!"

He grasped the glass and stared out through it in silence for several minutes. Then he thrust it into a pocket and settled back out of sight behind the canvas screen.

"You have called the turn," he said quietly, "and the dance is about to begin. Unshy your rudder and let it go. Let them think you are wrecked, helpless to escape, and they will be more careless. You men there, loosen your guns and be ready to scale a ship's side in a jiffy, but lie perfectly still until I give the word." He turned his head.

"You understand what you are to do, Craig, you and the lady?"

"I think so. We are to obey Henley's orders and go on board."

"Yes, but do something as soon as you reach the deck to attract attention and get them away from the rail. Try and get the lady as far astern as possible, for there is likely to be some fighting. Are you frightened, miss?"

"No," although her voice trembled from excitement. "You need not worry about me."

"All right, then. I shall not wait for any signal. Now, listen, men; these are my last orders. When I say go get up any way you can and hit the first man you see. Hit hard, but no shooting unless they use firearms. But fight like devils and do it quick. They outnumber us three to one. Marton, you and Simms take the stoke hold and the forecastle. Keep those fellows below down with your revolvers. Shoot if you need to. The rest of you stick close to me. All clear, ladies?"

"Aye, aye, sir," returned the muffled voices from beneath the canvas.

I unshipped the rudder, letting it disappear noiselessly beneath the waves, and the boat's head swung slowly around, and we drifted helplessly, the jib flapping. In low monotone, without turning my head, I managed to convey my observations to the motionless officer.

"She's heading straight toward us under low pressure. There are two men on the bridge and a lookout on the bow. Now she's swinging to port to bring up close. There's a group at the rail near the starboard gangway; about ten, I should say. Can you see, Viola?"

"Twelve," she answered quietly, "and three forward. The third man at the rail is the captain, and he has a glass."

"By George, you are right! I recognize the fellow now. Broussard is on the bridge. They expect no trouble, lieutenant, and only have the regular watch on deck. They are getting too close for me to talk any more."

It was quite evident that Henley perceived nothing to arouse suspicion, for with a swing like a hawk the Sea Gull bore down upon us, the engines slowing and then reversed. We were staring up into the faces that looked curiously down at us.

"Hard down!" yelled the captain, motioning with one arm. "Plug her, man! Now, you army bound," he called to me, "catch that rope and make fast."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

FIRST SILVER WEDDING.

It Was Arranged by Hugues Capet, King of France, in 987.

The fashion of silver weddings dates back to the reign of Hugues Capet, king of France, in 987. Once as Hugues was arranging his uncle's affairs, he found on one of the estates a servant who had grown gray in the service of his relative. On the farm with this old man was also a serving woman, who was as old as he and also unmarried, who had been the most devoted and hardworking of the women servants of the king's uncle. When the king heard these praises of the two he ordered them to be brought before him and said to the woman:

"Your service is great, greater than this man's, whose services were great enough, for the woman always finds work and obedience harder than a man, and therefore I will give you a reward. At your age I know of none better than a dowry and a husband. The dowry is here—this farm from this time forth belongs to you. If this man who has worked with you five and twenty years is willing to marry you then the husband is ready."

"Your majesty," stuttered the old peasant confusedly, "how is it possible that we should marry, having already silver hairs?"

"Then it shall be a silver wedding," answered the king, "and here I give you a wedding ring," drawing a costly ring from his finger and placing the hands of the thankful old people together.

This soon became known all over France and raised such enthusiasm that it became a fashion after twenty-five years of married life to celebrate a silver wedding.

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—Mrs. ROBT. STORIE, Moore Avenue, Washington Park, Illinois.

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If you have any symptom about which you would like to know write to the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass., for helpful advice given free of charge.

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A KNOCKOUT BLOW.

Curious Experience of a Boxer Who Got One, Yet Fought On.

Many and varied stories are told of boxing, but few are better than that describing the nauseating effect of a knockout blow. Some blows deprive the victim of all sense of surroundings, but leave him power to continue the contest. He boxes in a mechanical way and is oblivious of all things taking place around him.

A queer freak of this nature happened in Apollo hall, Chicago, more than fifteen years ago. Andy Daly, a Boston lightweight, was boxing Joe Galligan, an Italian boxer of Chicago, the decision to be given at the end of six rounds. Daly was a clever boxer with a good punch, while Galligan, although he could not boast of the cleverness of his opponent, had a dangerous right hand blow. For four rounds Daly had the better of the contest. Early in the fifth session the Boston lightweight became careless, and Galligan, taking advantage of an opening, sent over his right to Daly's jaw. The clever boxer took the count of eight, sat up, rubbed his eyes, regained his feet and finished the round. He continued the sixth session, displaying no ill effects as a result of the blow. Galligan made a strong finish, but Daly gave blow for blow and won a draw.

Daly went to his dressing room and put on his street clothes. Emil Thiry, who managed Packey McFarland, was manager of Daly then and was with him after the contest. Just before they left the room Daly called Thiry to him and said:

"Now, Emil, I'm going to ask you a question, and I don't want you to laugh at me. It's no laughing matter with me at all. You'll think it strange, I suppose; but this is what I want to know: Who won the fight?"

"Which fight?" Thiry asked in surprise.

"My fight, of course," Daly retorted. "Why, it was a draw and you did well after that bad fifth round." Thiry answered. "Didn't you hear the decision?"

"I don't remember a thing after the fourth round," Daly answered. "The reason I went into that other room just now was to overhear something about the bout without having to ask any questions. Nobody said anything, and that is why I had to ask you. I was afraid I had been knocked out."

New York Times.

All His Fortune.

One day before his marriage the Rev. Sydney Smith ran into the room where his fiancée was, flung into her lap six small teaspoons which "from much wear had become the ghosts of their former selves" and said, "There, Kate, you lucky girl, I give you all my fortune." He gave her, however, what he did not mention, his fine character and great talent and in every way proved himself an excellent husband.

A Woman Rat Catcher.

At least once a woman has held the position of rat catcher to the king of England. A warrant issued in 1672 by the master of the ordinance states that "whereas Elizabeth Wickley is employed in killing of Rattes and other Vermin, in and about His Ma'te's stores and Houses in ye Tower of London, I have therefore thought fit to allow her ye sum of Eight Pounds per annum."

Knowledge Gained by Experience.

During the last school year a teacher in the Indianapolis schools asked her pupils to tell her which was most important, to keep the face or the teeth clean and why. One of her small boys replied without a moment's hesitation: "Your teeth, 'cause they'll rot off, and your face won't."—Indianapolis News.

Why the Admiral Was Better.

It was of her uncle, Admiral Rous, the famous racing man, of whom Lady Cardigan told the following story. Mrs. Rous, it appears, was very dictatorial. "And I remember," said Lady Cardigan, "one day after her death calling to inquire how my uncle was. Indeed, my lady," said the servant, "I may say the admiral is a deal better since Mrs. Rous' death."—London Globe.

His Handicap.

"One of the penalties of approaching age is clumsiness," confessed Merion Morse, on whose head the frosts of time have been sitting down for quite a spell. "When I move carefully about a room I knock over five things on an average, and when I am especially careful I knock over ten."—Judge.

And So It Is.

"What do you consider the greatest human paradox?"
"A secret session of a woman's club."—Philadelphia Ledger.

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