'MID GLEAMING SHEAVES.

BY C. M. BARGER.

'Mid gleaming sheaves—rich pillars fair—
In summer's high flood-tide,
Broad chested forms with earnest care
Are swinging heavy arms and bare,
Strong-intangled side by side.

'Mid gleaming sheaves of golden hue
The reapers move in line;
Their clean-cut track lead winding through
Bright glades o'ercarched by cloudless blue,
And vales where waters shine.

The restless clink of flashing steel
Responds in accents bold;
Our hearts a tender pity feel
For plant-lives crushed 'neath ruthless heel,
To gain the wealth they hold.

The nodding block of yellow grain
Is slowly cifseled round;
Behind the toilers stands a train
Of amber towers, a stretching lane
Between of stubble-ground.

The throbbing hours of noonday heat
Are spent where brook-waves play;
The tossing ripples, sparkling sweet,
Seem off'rings poured at Ceres' feet—
Libations crowned with spray.

When lagging afternoon is past,
And robin vespers ring,
And dreaming twilight thickens fast,
The gleamers homeward turn at last,
Through paths where dew-pearls cling.

Do they whose eyes broad hat-brims hide
See nature's beauteous face;
Or do they think of naught beside
The small due at eventide,
As up the slope they pace?

Do firm-winged larks that skyward sail
Sing them a song of joy?
Do they applaud the whistling quail?
Or do these sights and sounds so stale
Their sordid souls annoy?

Far from the rushing world's high-ways
Their peaceful pathway lies;
'Tis strange if comes from them no praise
Of spreading leas and song-birds' lays,
Clear rills and glowing skies.

THE "ISIS" MYSTERY.

The Story of a Missing Ship.

By LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

Her first thought, of course, was of her father, but a quick reflection told her that he was too familiar with the staircase to make such a mis-step as the one in question.

In an instant she was on foot and at her door.

'Perhaps Paxter is here,' she thought.

She listened several minutes, with her ear at the keyhole, and then she heard further sounds of footsteps, and a voice within three feet of her.

'I must open the lantern a little,' said the voice. 'I'm turned completely around. That coming up the back stairs has confused me.'

A faint glimmer of light succeeded.

'Here is the girl's room' added the voice. 'And yonder is Ryell's.'

And the sounds of very faint and cautious footsteps were heard, advancing toward the merchant's apartment.

Very fortunately there was a passage between the rooms occupied by Ildrie and the merchant. Traversing this passage quickly, the girl reached the bed of Mr. Ryell, but found that he had left it.

The next instant she perceived him, and saw that he was warning her back into the passage. He was standing behind his door, with a huge steel fire-poker in his hand, and he made a gesture to signify that he had unlocked his door, so as to give the burglars a suspicion of gross carelessness on his part, and also easy access into his apartment.

Ildrie had scarcely concealed herself in the spot designated when the door of the merchant's room was opened cautiously a few inches, and a few moments of profound listening succeeded.

'It's all right,' then came a whisper. 'Come on, Scraggs. This is the old man's place. We shall have an easy time of it.'

And with this the intruder boldly pushed open the door, and thrust his hand into the apartment.

A couple of resounding thwacks succeeded, and each was followed by a heavy fall—and then by silence!

'I have them!' exclaimed Mr. Ryell. 'Light the gas, please.'

Ildrie hastened to comply, and then advanced to her father's side. A couple of masked burglars lay at his feet, one just outside the door and the other just within.

'Who are they?' murmured Ildrie, in nervous horror.

'Nobody we know,' replied Mr. Ryell, tearing off the black crape by which the faces of the two men had been covered. 'But we'll find out who sent them here. Bring me those travelling straps in my closet!'

The straps in question being brought the merchant applied them to the intruders in such a way as to render them helpless prisoners. By this time they were giving numerous signs of returning animation, and not long thereafter, opened their eyes and consciousness to the terrors of their situation.

'You see that you are caught I suppose?' queried Mr. Ryell, as he looked from one wild startled countenance to the other.

'Yes—curse you!' one of the prisoners finally answered.

'No profanity,' enjoined the merchant. 'I will not give you up to the police, if you answer a few questions correctly and promptly. How came you to select this night of all others for this visit?'

The two men aroused themselves.

'Will you really turn us loose if I tell you?' asked one of them.

'Certainly; you can be free and away in five minutes if you will talk promptly. Why did you come here to-night?'

'Because we were told ther'd be a handsome swag under your pillow—a pile of ready greenbacks—thousands and thousands of dollars!'

'Indeed! Who gave you this good news?'

'Mr. Gazam Paxter.'

'Mr. Paxter was deceiving you. There isn't a dollar in the house beyond the petty change of my daughter and what I may happen to carry!'

A savage anger and disgust speared upon the two dark and ferocious faces.

'Curse never scrawled us in that way before,' one of them muttered.

'And he must have thought you had the money, for he came with us to the very door of this house, saying that he must take charge of it and share it according, and is restraining me in this number of my freedom. In a word, you are virtually a pirate at this moment, sir—a pirate by all the laws and usages of the high seas—the worst of pirates—a pirate who has raised his hand against his commander!'

Jack winced a little in spite of himself at this accusation, for he was too ignorant of all the legal points in the case to have ready a decisive answer. As he was sure, however, in general terms, that any one has a right to interrupt evil-doers in their wickedness, and especially that an inferior officer has always and everywhere the right to arrest his superior when that superior is committing a crime, he was not tempted for an instant to falter in the course upon which he had entered.

'We need not argue the case,' he contented himself with replying, 'the more especially as it will come up in court for trial in due course.'

'You really mean, then, to keep me shut up in this dog-hole indefinitely?' cried Glugg.

'Until we reach New York, most assuredly.'

Notwithstanding the decided tone in which this declaration was made, Glugg entered upon a long and earnest plea for his liberty, begging and threatening by turns, and varying his protestations of innocence with denunciations of Jack's proceedings. But all these threats and entreaties did not avail anything, and the prisoners soon became so abusive that he was obliged to bring them to their senses by a sharp rebuke.

'If you repeat that word,' said he, in response to an offensive epithet, 'or if you address me the least disrespect, I will gag you for twenty-four hours!'

Turning away and proceeding on deck Jack summoned Norgood and several other sailors to his side, as also Mr. Glenning.

'To establish the plot beyond all question,' he said to them, 'it is essential that we should pay a visit to the captain's state-room. It is a serious business upon which I entered, and I cannot strengthen myself too much in it.'

'Especially as there are about as many blackguards in the ship as white men,' suggested Norgood, significantly.

'Two or three of the men have declared to my knowledge, that they will not obey any order, Captain March, you give them.'

'We'll find those men in due course, and make trial of the matter,' observed Jack, with his usual quiet firmness. 'In the meantime we will proceed with our investigation.'

He secured a lamp and led the way to the captain's state-room, of which he had previously taken the key from Glugg's pocket, the chief conspirator, having for several days previous deemed it necessary or wise to keep his private quarters free from all intrusion.

The glances of Jack and his comrades, as they bent their gaze upon the various objects within the room in question, did not at first detect anything unusual or suspicious. There was the usual litter of trunks, boxes, books, charts, and nautical instruments bedding and blankets, and the usual cupboards and drawers. But on looking a little closer—upon a strict examination of several trunks, the space under the berth, and a case of quite spacious drawers—the explorers encountered a quantity of combustibles that left no doubt of the prospective incendiarism of the plotters.

'You see, boys, don't you?' said Jack, carefully guarding his light with his hand. 'Captain Glugg would have had to drop only a small spark here, to get this whole end of the ship ablaze in less than five minutes. And when I tell you that twenty barrels of tar and whiskey are stowed exactly under us, you will see as clearly as I do that the intended fire, when once kindled, was not designed to be extinguished. You all see and make note, I hope, of all these preparations for the ship's destruction?'

A general affirmative having been given him, Jack led the way to the hold. There he found everything as stated by Glugg in his confidences to Shook—a dozen large augur holes in the ship's bottom, and so roughly plugged up that the water was oozing in slowly in several places. The several links in the chain of evidence against the plotters having thus been completed, Jack returned to the cabin, where he drew up a further declaration of the facts, which he caused to be generally signed by the men by whom he had been accompanied.

It did not escape the notice of our hero, in the course of the day, that there was a large party aboard the ship in favor of the criminals, and he accordingly guarded and strengthened his position in every way possible. A great many reports were brought him of the sayings and views of these ill-disposed men, and among these reports one to the effect that some of the more malignant critics of the situation had even proposed to release Glugg and Shook by violence.

In the darkness of the evening that followed, as Jack was hung upon deck, a pistol was fired at him from the forecastle, the ball whizzing within a few inches of his ear. To rush quickly in the direction of the assassin was a matter of course, but he had easily skulked out of sight, losing his identity in the midst of half a dozen comrades on duty in that part of the ship.

This incident exercised Jack's reflections not a little. Until that moment, he had been sustained in his arduous duty by the thought that he was simply taking the measures incumbent upon him. This consciousness did not now desert him, of course; but with all his self-approbation came a perception of many and serious difficulties. This attempt upon his life was a bold announcement to him that the crew were divided in their views of his prompt action in taking command of the ship, and also a hint as to what was to be expected. Within an hour afterwards, he was informed by Norgood that several of the most dangerous men in the ship—men whose natures made them sympathize with the prisoners—were already in a lively state of fermentation over the whole business.

It was not Jack's nature, however, to borrow trouble from the morrow. He contented himself with seeing that a reliable guard was stationed over the prisoners, and that everything concerning the care and progress of the ship was as it should be.

During the second twenty-four hours, everything remained satisfactory to Jack, thanks to the sleepless zeal and ability he brought to the administration of his new duties. There were growlings all around him, of course, various threats and hostile criticisms, and frequent beseechings from the prisoners. But as the weather continued fine, and his newly-appointed officers as firm and steadfast as himself, to say nothing of the hearty support of the better class of men he longing to the crew, the young commander did not greatly fret himself about the inevitable drawbacks of his situation.

With the dawning of the third night of his captaincy, Jack debated with himself whether he should venture to recruit his seriously diminished forces by a few snatches of sleep. The discovery of several little signs of intended mischief finally decided him upon watching. After seeing, as was his custom, that everything was snug and secure for the night, he proceeded to his state-room, where he gave his attention to sundry reckonings connected with the ship's work and whereabouts. In the midst of this occupation, tired nature gave out, and his head gradually sank upon his hands in the soundest of slumber.

The *Isis* at that instant was standing so steadily upon her course that a glass of water might have stood upon the cabin-table without spilling adrop. The breeze was a full south-wester, the night calm and pleasant, although cloudy, and the surface of the sea unusually quiet. Without a change of wind and consequent change of course, there was no reason why Jack should not sleep for hours, in his utter exhaustion, and perhaps until morning.

At least such seemed to be the opinion of a rough-looking man who suddenly stole into the cabin, after a cautious passage along the deck from the forecastle, and advanced in a crouching and watchful attitude toward the state-room in which Glugg and Shook were prisoners. That the intruder had come there in the interest of the guilty couple was apparent in his every glance and movement.

And now, too, it could have been seen that another danger—foreseen by Jack, but which could not be entirely guarded against—had stalked into view. This danger consisted in the prospect—almost the certainty—that the man left on guard over the prisoners would prove a traitor to Jack's interests and wishes. Among so many changes of the guard, it would have been strange indeed if a seaman more or less kindly affected towards Glugg, from one motive or another, had not eventually appeared among the men charged with the prisoners' safe-keeping.

'Ah, there you are,' whispered the guard to the new-comer. 'I began to fear you were not coming. Have you the keys?'

Nodding assent, the intruder gained on tip-toe the door of the state room in which the prisoners were confined.

'Where's the steward?' he asked.

'Abed and asleep.'

'Then he has decided to cast his lot with us, or else he did not know as much as we suspected. In any case, the coast is clear. March is really asleep, as you signalled?'

'Yes,' answered the guard. 'He sleeps like a log. Just hear his breathing! You can hear him plainly this distance, although his door is closed.'

'Then the sooner we make a finish of this business the better.'

The new-comer had cautiously inserted a key in the lock of the state-room door while speaking, and he now turned it, giving himself admittance to Glugg's presence.

'It's I—Bidwell,' announced the new-comer, 'Where are you Cap'n?'

'Here,' was the answer, in a guarded whisper. 'Have you a key for these infernal irons?'

'One that I think will answer.'

The trial was soon made, and a few moments thereafter both Glugg and Shook arose to their feet, in full possession of their freedom.

Their joy was unspeakable.

'Quick! to the forecastle!' enjoined Bidwell, with a freedom warranted by his services. 'I have had all the trouble in the world to get here with these tarpaulins and jackets, but they will prevent Glenning and Scoter, and all that gang from recognising you. Into them quickly, and slip away one after the other.'

Both Glugg and Shook were quick to act upon these directions, and within two minutes thereafter Bidwell and the recreant guard joined them in the forecastle.

'There's not a man here just now who is not friendly to you, Capt. Glugg, and also to your project,' said Bidwell, as emphatically, as hurriedly.

'My project, did you say?'

'Certainly; your project of casting away the ship, for Gazam Paxter's fifty thousand,' returned Bidwell, in a whisper. 'We have one fault to find, however—one cause of complaint. What on earth do you wish to destroy ship and cargo for? Why not save both, and turn them to our general account?'

'Why, I was obliged to proceed on the assumption that the crew would be opposed to the job—'

'Well, that was because you didn't know us,' interrupted Bidwell, looking around and directing Glugg's attention to the approving nods and smiles of all present. 'If you had been a little franker with us, you would have spared yourself considerable trouble and given your project a more attractive character. In a word, instead of plotting to sink the ship or burn her, in a secret manner without our knowledge, you should have taken us into your counsel and planned to steal the entire ship and cargo, and so make about a million for our joint benefit, while earning Paxter's fifty thousand. We are all with you, now and forever, if you will so far modify your plan as to steal the ship and cargo instead of destroying them.'

'Agreed!' cried Glugg, with an exultation that rendered his face livid.

'Everything shall be as you wish, my men. But the first task of all is for all us to seize Jack March and get square with him. Seize any arms you can find and follow me!'

The order was hailed with savage jubilance, and a few moments later, at the head of these ruffians, with murder and vengeance written in legible characters upon his inflamed visage, Glugg walked from the forecastle, and took his way swiftly toward the cabin.

CHAPTER VII.

THE THREE LIFE-PRESERVERS.

The result of the measures taken by Capt. Glugg to regain command of the *Isis* can be readily foreseen. The friends of our hero being nearly all upon duty, and Jack himself being asleep in his state-room—after several nights of constant fatigue and watching—it was the easiest thing in the world for the principal plotters, with Capt. Glugg at their head, to gain the cabin unseen and unheard.

'So far, good,' then breathed Glugg, in the ear of Shook, his executive. 'We'll take March alive, if we can—but let us not fail to take him.'

A similar injunction was whispered in the ears of the three or four men at the heels of Glugg and Shook, and then the whole body moved as noiselessly as possible in the direction of Jack's state-room, every man of them grasping a knife or a revolver.

Alike to the joy and surprise of Glugg as he reached the door of the apartment in question, he found that it was not locked. And no sooner had he turned the knob and pushed the door slightly ajar than sounds of deep and regular breathing fell upon his hearing, and a beam of light from within served to reveal the whole scene there presented.

How the evil face of Capt. Glugg flashed with jubilant malignancy, as his glances took in the helpless situation of our hero, requires neither description nor comment. It was as if all the wickedness of a long life had been crowded into a glance or gesture.

'Let me have the first clutch at him!' whispered Glugg to those nearest him. 'Let it be my open hand that brings him to punishment.'

And with this, pushing the door wide open the triumphant villain leaped into the state-room with a tread like that of a tiger.

What followed hardly requires description.

Surprised in a slumber resembling death—the sound and dreamless slumber of utter exhaustion—Jack could not have failed, in any disposition of affairs, to fall a prey to such a vastly superior force as was hurled against him. Half-a-dozen fierce hands were upon him before he was fully awakened, and prominent among them were the hands of Capt. Glugg, one of them encircling his throat and the other pressing against the very temples of the victim a large navy revolver.

In less time, therefore, than it has taken to portray the event, Jack was a prisoner in the hands of the assailants, ironed, gagged and helpless. And so quickly and entirely had the advantage been gained by his enemies, that the few cries for assistance Jack had managed to articulate had not reached the ears of a single person upon the deck.

[TO BE CONTINUED].

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