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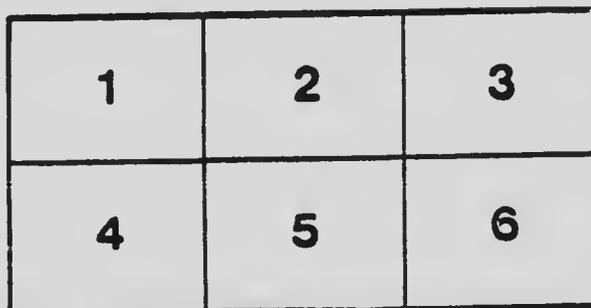
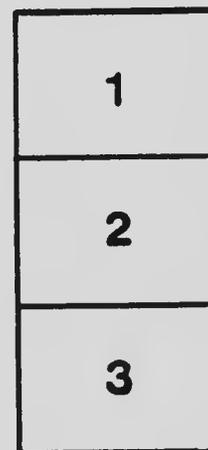
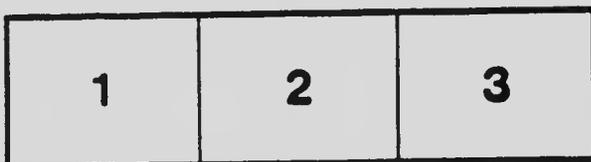
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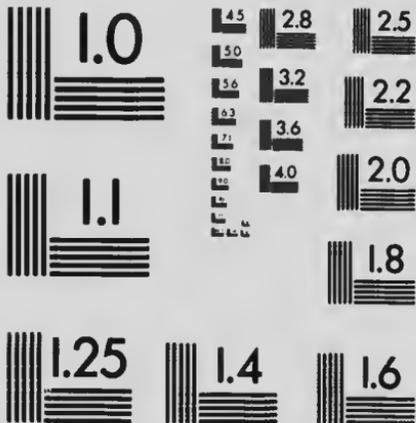
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BY

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

AUTHOR OF

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1-10-17

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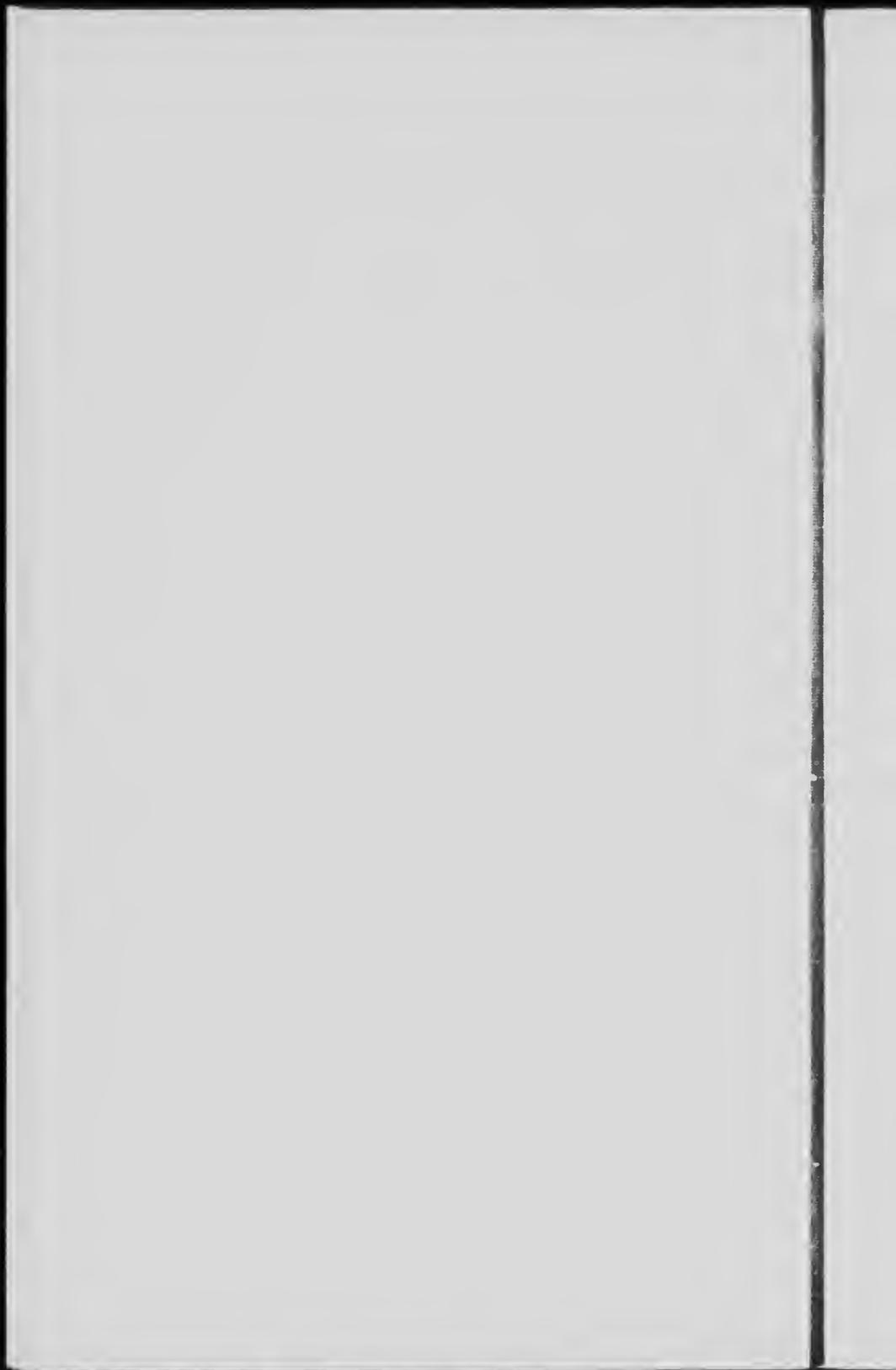
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PART I
THE BUCCANEERS

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THE BUCCANEERS

I

THE CAPTAIN

CAPTAIN BLOOD used to come down to McGinnis' wharf every afternoon to have a look round. The Captain was an Irishman of the black-haired, grey-eyed type from the west coast—a relic of the wreck of the Spanish Armada.

The Spanish strain in the Celtic nature makes for volcanic developments; and the Captain, from what we knew of him, formed no exception to this rule. He was known as "The Captain" *tout court* all along the front at San Francisco, from the China docks to Meiggs' Wharf. He was a character. Scarcely forty years of age, he had done most things that a man could possibly do in the way of sea-and-land adventure. He had run guns

in the Spanish-American War, dug for gold at Klondike with the first batch of diggers, lost two fingers of his left hand in a dust-up on the Chile coast, and two ships in a manner considered dubious by the Board of Trade. But he never had lost a friend, nor an enemy. Unlike most of his class, he had nothing of the amphibian about him. Straight and well set up, he always managed to keep a clean, well-groomed appearance even in the teeth of adversity.

The Captain was seated to-day on a mooring bitt, watching the freighters loading with grain and the tugs and Italian whitehalls passing on the blue water of the bay. He was down on his luck, had been for the last month, and was in a condition of humour with the world that would have lent him to any job from piracy to the captaining of a hay barge.

Owners had fought shy of him ever since his last deep-sea adventure. Capable and sober enough, he had earned a reputation for recklessness that was a bar to employment as fatal as a reputation for drink. There were

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no more Klondikes to be exploited, perfect peace reigned on the west American seaboard from Vancouver to Wellington Island, piracy was out of date, and every hay barge had its captain.

There seemed no prospect before him but either to go into the fo'c'sle or go on tramp, and as he sat on the mooring bitt, kicking his heels and watching the shipping, he was trying to decide which of these two prospects was the more hateful.

He had arrived at no decision on this point when he saw a figure approaching him. It was Billy Harman.

"Why, there you are!" said Billy. "Just the man I wanted to see. I looked into Sam Brown's, and you weren't there, and Sam said: 'Try down on the wharves; the Captain is sure to be down on the wharves on the lookout for his ship.'"

"I'll teach him to talk about me and my affairs," said Blood. "Well, now you've found me, what have you got for me?"

"A ship," replied Harman.

"Have you got it in your pocket?" said the Captain. "If so, produce it. A ship! And since what day have you turned owner?"

Mr. Harman produced a pipe and began to load it carefully and meditatively. His manner could not have been more detached had the Captain not been present.

Then, having lit the pipe and taken a draw, he seemed to remember the presence of the other.

"Yes," said he, "it's a sure-enough job if you wish to take it. I'd have had it myself, only I'm no hand at the deep-sea-cable business; but when the thing was spoken of to me I said: 'I've got the man you want who can do any job in that way better'n any man in Frisco.' You see, I knew you'd served two years on the *Groper*."

"The *Grobnel*, you mean."

"It's all the same; she were a cable ship, weren't she? And I said: 'If he'll go, I'll go meself as second off'cer. I can do the navigatin'.'"

"When the whisky bottle is out of sight,"
put in Blood.

" 'And what's more,' said I, 'I'll get you a crew that's up to snuff and won't make no bother nor tell no yarns. You leave the job to me,' said I, 'and if I can get the Captain to come along it's fixed,' I says."

"Now look here, Bill Harman," said Blood, shifting his position on the mooring bitt so as to get his informant face to face, "what are you driving at? What do you mean, anyhow? Who's the owner of the cable boat that's willing to ship you as first mate and me as skipper? Is this a guy you are letting off on me, or is it delirium tremens? A cable boat! Why, what cable company is going to fish round promiscuous and pick up its officers from sweepings like you and me?"

"This is no company," replied Harman.
"It's a private venture."

"To lay or to mend?"

"Well, if you ask me," said Harman, "I'd say it was more like a breaking job. If you ask me, I wouldn't swear to it being an upside

business, but it's a hundred dollars a month for the skipper and a bonus of two thousand dollars if the job's pulled off, and half that for the mate."

The Captain whistled.

The darkness in this business revealed by Billy Harman jumped up at him; so did the two thousand dollars bonus and the hundred a month pay.

"Who asked you to come into this?" said he.

"A chap named Shiner," replied Harman.

"A Jew?"

"A German. I don't know whether he is a Jew or not, but he's got the splosh."

"Look here," said the Captain, half resuming his place on the mooring bitt with one leg dangling, "let's come to common sense. To begin with, you can't run a cable boat with a skipper and a mate and even a couple of engineers alone. You want an electrician. Where's your electrician to come from?"

"You don't want no electricians to cut cables with," said Harman.

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"That's true," said the Captain, falling into meditation.

"Yet, all the same," went on Harman, "this chap Shiner said we would want an electrician, and that he'd come as electrician himself. Says he has a good knowledge of the work."

"Oh, he said that, did he?"

"Yes, and I guess he told no lie. This chap Shiner is no bar bummer by a long chalk. I reckon he's all there."

The Captain made no reply. He was thinking. At first he had fancied this to be a simple business; some rascal person or syndicate wishing to cut a deep-sea cable and so interrupt communication between the business centres. There were only two or three Pacific cables where this piece of rascality could bring any fruitful results. That is to say, there were only two or three cables the cutting of which could not have been negatived by collateral cables or wireless, and the simple cutting of those cables could not conceivably produce a

financial result worth the risk and the cost of an expedition.

But this was evidently more than a simple cutting job, since the presence of an electrician was required.

"Look here," said he, "where is this man Shiner to be seen?"

"Why," said Harman, "he's to be seen easily enough in his office on Market Street."

"Well, let's go and have a look at him," said the Captain, detaching himself from the mooring bitt. "He's worth investigating. Would he be in now, think you?"

"He might," replied Harman. "Anyhow we can try."

They walked away together.

Harman, unlike Blood, was a typical sailor of the tramp school, a man who knew more about steam winches and cargo handling than masts and yards. He was all right to look at a stocky man with a not unpleasant face, a daring eye, and a fresh colour, but his certificates were not to match. Drink had been this gentleman's ruin. Had he been a lesser man

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rink would have crushed him down into the
o'sle. As it was, he managed to get along
somehow by his wits. He had not made a voy-
age for two years now, but he had managed
to make a living; he had been endowed by na-
ture with a mind active as a squirrel. He was
in with a number of men: ward politicians
knew him as a useful man, and used him oc-
asionally. Crimps knew him, and tavern
keepers. Had he been more of a scamp and
less of a dreamer, he might have risen high in
life. His dream was of a big fortune to be
"got sudden and easy," and this dream, stimu-
lated at times by alcohol, managed somehow
to keep him poor.

The public life of Frisco, like a rotten
cheese, supports all sorts of mites and mag-
gots, and the wharf edge is of all cheese the
most rotten part.

Harman could put his hand on men to vote
at a city election, or men to man a whaler; he
was under political protection, he was in with
the port officers and the customs, and he could
have been a very considerable person despite

his lack of education but for the drink. Drink is fatal to successful scoundrelism, and the form in which it afflicted Harman is the most fatal of all, for he was not a consistent toper. He would go sober for months on end, and then, having made some money and some success, he would "fly out."

Having reached Market Street, Harman led his companion into a big building where an elevator whisked them up to the fifth floor.

Here, at the end of a concrete passage, Harman pushed open a door inscribed with the legend "The Wolff Syndicate," and, entering an outer office, inquired for Mr. Shiner. They were shown into a comfortably furnished room where at a roll-top desk a young man was seated busily at work with a stenographer at his side. He asked them to be seated, finished the few words he had to dictate, and then, having dismissed the stenographer, turned to Harman.

Shiner, for it was he, was a very glossy individual, immaculately dressed in a frock

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coat, broad-striped trousers, spats, and patent-leather shoes.

He did not look more than thirty—if that—he was good looking, and yet a frankly ugly man would have produced a more pleasing impression on the mind than Mr. Shiner. Despite his good looks, his youth, and his manner, which was intended to please, there was something inexpressibly hard and negative about this individual.

The Captain felt it at once. "Now, there's a chap that would do you in and sit on your corpse and eat sandwiches," said he to himself, "and smile—wonder how Harman got a hold of a chap like that? But there's money here; the place smells of it, and the chap, too. Well, we'll see."

"This is the Captain," said Harman. "Captain Blood I spoke of to you. I happened to meet him, and he's come in to see you."

"Very glad to see you, Captain," said Shiner, getting up and standing with his back to the stove. "Has our friend Harman men-

tioned to you anything of the business I spoke of to him?"

"He told me it was cable work," replied Blood cautiously.

"Just so," said Shiner. "I want a skipper for some work in connection with deep-sea cables. You have experience, I suppose?"

"Two years in the *Grapnel*," replied Blood.

"You were skipper?"

"No; first officer."

"Had you much to do with the cable work?"

"Everything, as far as handling the cable. You see, in some companies and some boats they have a regular cable engineer, a chap who doesn't touch any work but cable work; in others, the chief officer does his work and the cable work as well."

"I know," replied Shiner, nodding his head as though he were well acquainted with all the ins and outs of the business. "Well, in this affair of ours the skipper would be skipper and cable engineer as well. That would not interfere with his proper business, since once

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he cable engineer is in charge, he is the virtual captain of the ship."

Blood nodded, wondering how this up-to-date-looking young business man had gained so much knowledge about this special branch of seamanship.

"Of course you have certificates," went on Shiner. "You can show a clean sheet for character and ability?"

"Curse his impudence!" thought the Captain to himself; then, aloud: "A clean sheet? No, can you?"

Shiner, who had been standing on his toes and letting himself down on his heels, puffing out his chest, shooting his cuffs, and otherwise conducting himself like a man in power and on a pedestal, collapsed at this dig. He flung his right elbow into the palm of his left hand, pinched in his cheeks with his right thumb and forefinger, coughed, frowned, and then said:

"I can excuse a sailor for being short in his temper before a question that would seem to imply incapacity. We will say no more on that point. I take your word that you are an

efficient navigator and a capable cable engineer."

"You needn't take anything of the sort," said Blood. "I'm a bad navigator, and, as for cable engineering, I can find a cable if I have a chart of it and howk her out of the mud if I have a grapnel. I don't say that doesn't want doing; still that's my limit as a cable man. And as to navigation, I can just carry on. I've lost two ships."

"The *Averna* and the *Trojan*," said Shiner.

"Now, how in the nation did you know that?" cried the outraged Blood.

"I know most things about most men in Frisco," replied the subtle Shiner.

"Well, then, you'll know my back," replied Blood, rising from his chair, "and you may think yourself lucky if you don't know my boot!" He turned to the door.

"Captain! Captain!" cried Harman, springing up. "Don't take on so for nothing. The gentleman didn't mean nothing. Don't you, now, be a fool, for it's me you'll put out of a job as well as yourself."

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"What made him ask me those questions, men, and he knowing my record all the time?" cried Blood, around whose body Harman had hung an arm.

"He didn't mean no *harm*; he didn't mean no *harm*. Don't you be carrying on so for nothing; the gentleman didn't mean no harm. Here, now, sit you down; he didn't mean no harm."

Harman was not an orator, but his profound common sense prevented him from enlarging on the subject and trying to suggest innocent things that Shiner might have meant. Blood was in a condition of mind to snap at anything, but he sat down.

Shiner had said not one word.

"That's right," said Harman, in a soothing voice. "And now, Mr. Shiner, if I'm not wrong, it was a hundred dollars a month you were offering the Captain, with a bonus of a thousand when the job's through. Maybe I'm not mistaken in what I say."

"Not a bit," said Shiner, speaking as calmly as though no unpleasant incident had oc-

curred. "Those are the terms, with an advance of a hundred dollars should the Captain engage himself to us."

"What about the victuals," said the Captain, seeming to forget his late emotion, "and the drinks?"

"The food will be good," replied Shiner, "and the best guarantee of that will be the fact that I go with you myself as electrician. I'm not the man to condemn myself to bad food for the sake of a few dollars. The food will be the best you have ever had on board ship, I suspect; but there will be no drinks."

"No drinks?"

"Not till we are paid off. This business wants cool hands. Tea, coffee, mineral waters you will have as much as you want of; but not one drop of alcohol. I am condemning myself as well as you, so there is no room for grumbling."

Harman heaved a sigh like the sigh of a porpoise. Blood was silent for a moment. Then he said: "Well, I don't mind. I'm not set on alcohol. If it's to be a teetotal ship,

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Maybe it's all the better; but I reckon you'll pay wind money all the same."

"What's this they allow?" asked Shiner, as though he had forgotten this point.

"A shilling a day on the English ships," said the Captain, "for the officers. Eighteen pence, some of the companies make it. I don't know what the skipper gets. I reckon double. I'll take half a dollar a day. That's about fair."

"Very well," said Shiner. "I meet you. Anything more?"

"No," said the Captain. "I guess that's all."

"When can you start?" asked Shiner.

"When you're ready."

"Well, that will be about this day week."

"And the advance?"

"I will pay you that to-morrow, when you have seen over the ship. It's just as well you should have a look at her first. Can you be here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, I can be here."

"Very well, then. You had better come,

too, Mr. Harman. I will expect you both at ten o'clock sharp. Good day to you."

They went out.

Going down in the elevator, they said nothing.

It will have been noticed that not one of the three men had made any remark on the real nature of the forthcoming expedition. It was admittedly dark. The amount of pay and the bonus were quite enough to throw light on the edges of the affair. Blood did not want to explore farther. It wasn't the first dark job he'd been on, and the less he knew the more easily could he swear to innocence in case of capture.

Harman seemed of this way of thinking also, for, when they turned into the street, all he said was:

"Well, come and have a drink."

"I don't mind," said Blood. "I'm not a drinking man, as a rule; but that chap has made me feel dry somehow or another."

He had taken a black dislike to Shiner.

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II

THE "PENGUIN"

NEAR the docks where the China boats come in, there lies an old wharf gone pretty much to decay. Rafferty's Wharf is the name it goes by. It bears about the same relationship to the modern sea front that Monterey bears to San Francisco, for its rotten piles, bored by sea weevils and waving their weeds languidly to the green water that washes them, were young in the days when grain went aboard ship by the sackful and the tank ships of the Standard Oil Company were floating only in the undreamed-of future.

If you hunt for it, you will find it very difficult to discover; and if you discover it, you will gain little by your discovery but melancholy.

The great grain elevators pouring their rivers of wheat into the holds of the great grain

freighters overshadow it with their majesty, and go as often as you will, there is never a decent, live ship moored to its bitts.

The cripples of the sea are brought here for a rest, or for sale, before starting with a last kick of their propellers for the breaking-up yards; and here, on this bright morning, when Mr. Shiner and his two seafaring companions appeared on the scene, this veritable cripple home only showed two inmates—a brig and a grey-painted, single-funnelled steamship with rust runnings staining her paint, verdigris on her brasswork, no boats at her davits, and a general air of neglect, slovenliness, and disreputability begging description.

The *Penguin* had never been a beauty to look at, and she had always been a beast to roll; even rolling plates, though they had improved her a bit, had not cured her. She had only one good point—speed—and that was an accident; she had not been built for speed; she had been built to carry cable and to lay it and mend it; speed had come to her by that law which rules that to every ship built comes some quality or

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Shiner & Co., having hailed the watchmen, crossed the gangplank to the desolate deck, the Captain with frank disapproval on his face, Harman sniffing and trying to look cheerful at the same time, like a salesman keeping a fair face above the rotten game he is offering for sale.

"Great Neptune!" said the Captain, glancing around him.

"She is a bit gone to neglect," said Shiner, "but it's all on the surface. She's as sound as a bell where it really matters."

"Them funnel guys," said Harman.

"Yes, they want tightening, and the want of boats doesn't make her look any better; but boats will be supplied according to regulation. You won't know her when I've had half a dozen fellows at her for a couple of days. All that brasswork wants doing, and a lick of paint will liven her up; but she's not a yacht, anyhow, and a sound deck under one's feet is a long way better than a good appearance."

He followed the Captain, who had walked forward to the bow, where the picking-up gear cumbered the deck.

This consisted of a huge drum moved by cogwheels and worked through the picking-up engine by steam from the main boilers. On it would be wound the grapnel rope used for grappling for cable over the wheel let into the bow just at the point where in ordinary ships the heel of the bowsprit is grasped by the knightheads.

The Captain inspected this machine with attention, pressing on the cogs of the driving wheel with his thumb as though they were soft and he wished to discover how much they would dent; then, standing off a bit, he looked at it with his head on one side, as a knowing purchaser might look at a horse.

"Wants a drop of lubricating oil," said Shiner tentatively.

"Gallons," replied the Captain. He turned to the picking-up engine and pulled the lever over. This he did several times, releasing it

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and then pulling it over again as if for the gloomy pleasure of feeling its defects.

"Well," said Shiner, "what do you think of the gear and engine?"

"Oh, they'll work," said the Captain, "but it will be a good job if they don't work off their bedplates."

"They'll hold tight enough," said Harman, pressing his foot on the brake of the engine. "There's nothing wrong with them on the inside. Let's have a look at the main."

They came aft past the electrical testing room, and passed down the companionway to the engine room.

Here things were brighter, the weather having worked no effect.

"I have had them examined by an expert," said Shiner. "He gave them an A-1 certificate. And the boilers are sound; they have been scaled and cleaned. Let's go and look at the saloon."

They came on deck, and Shiner led the way down the companionway to the saloon.

It was a big place, with a table running

down the middle capable of seating twenty or thirty at a crush. Cabin doors opened on either side of it; at the stern end it bayed out into a lounge and a couch upholstered in red velvet; and at the end, by the door leading to the companionway, was fixed a huge sideboard with a mirror backing.

A faint air of old festivity and an odour of must and mildew lent their melancholy to the dim, irreligious light streaming down through the dirty skylight.

The Captain sniffed. Then he peeped into the cabins on either side, noticed the cockroaches that made hussar rushes for shelter, the fact that the doors stuck in their jambs, that the bunks were destitute of bedding, and the scuttles of the portholes sealed tight with verdigris.

"You can have the starboard cabin by the door," said Shiner. "I'll take the port. Or you can take the chart room; there's a bunk there. Harman can have any of the other cabins he likes. We'll all mess here, and we won't grumble at being tightly packed."

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"You'll have decent bedding put in?" said the Captain.

"That will be done, all right," replied Shiner. "You need have no fear at all that the appointments won't be up to date. There won't be frills on the sheets, but there will be comfort."

"Well, comfort is all I ask," replied the Captain. "And you propose to put out this day week?"

"This day week. May I take it, now, that everything is settled?"

The Captain scratched his head for a moment, as if dislodging a last objection. Then he said:

"I'll come."

III

THE TOP SEAT AT THE TABLE

It was on a Tuesday morning that they started. Blood came on board at six, and found the majority of the crew already assembled under Harman. They had come on board the night before, and, to use his own expression, they were the roughest, toughest crowd he had ever seen collected on one deck.

He was just the man to handle them, and his first act was to boot a fellow off the bridge steps where he had taken his perch, pipe in mouth, and send him flying down the alleyway forward. Then, following him, he began to talk to the hands, sending them flying this way and that, some to clean brasswork and others to clear the raffle off the decks.

Down below, the boilers were beginning to rumble, and now appeared at the engine-room hatch a new figure, with the air of a Scotch ter-

ier poking up its head to have a look round.

It was MacBean, the chief, second, third, and fourth engineer in one.

MacBean had the honest look of a Dandie Dinmont, and something of the facial expression. He was an efficient engineer; he was on board the *Penguin* because he could not get another job, and that fact was not a certificate of character. There was scarcely a soul on board the *Penguin*, indeed, with the exception of Shiner, who would not have been somewhere else but for circumstances over which they had no control.

The Captain gave MacBean good morning, had a moment's talk with him, and then went aft to see how things were going there.

He found that a steward had been installed, and that he was in the act of laying breakfast things at one end of the breakfast table.

The Captain sent him up for his gear which was on deck, ordered him to place it in the cabin which he had selected, and then proceeded to change from the serge suit which he

wore into an old uniform dating from his last command in the Black Bird line.

As he was finishing his toilet, he heard Shiner's voice, and when he came out of his cabin he found Shiner and Harman seated at table and the steward serving breakfast.

Shiner had gotten himself up for the sea. He looked as though he were off for some cheap trip with a brass band in attendance. Very few people can bear yachting rig, especially when it is brand-new; and brass buttons with anchors on them are as trying to a man's gentility as mauve to a woman's complexion.

The Captain gave the others good morning. Two things gratified him: the sight of the good breakfast spread upon the table, and the fact that the chair at the head of the table was vacant and evidently reserved for him.

He was about to take his seat when Shiner stopped him.

"Excuse me," said he, "but that is Mr. Wolff's place."

"Mr. Wolff's place?" said Blood. "And who the deuce is Mr. Wolff?"

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"Our senior partner," said Shiner. "I'm expecting him every minute."

Then it was that the Captain noticed a cover laid beside Harman and evidently intended for him.

The temper of the man was not intended by nature to take calmly an incident like this.

The steward was listening, too.

"I'll give you to understand right away and here, now," said he, "that I'm the skipper of this tub, and that this is my place at the table. As well to begin as we intend to go on. Steward, look alive there with the coffee."

He took his seat at the head of the table, helped himself to eggs and bacon, and turned the conversation on Harman. Shiner flushed, was agitated, lost his balance, and subsided into his coffee cup. The Captain at a stroke had taken his position among the after guard. Harman might own the ship, and Shiner, too, it would not matter in the least. The Captain was the boss, and would remain so.

In a moment, when he had finished saying

what he had to say to Harman, he turned to the other.

"Of course," said he, "I can't stop you bringing all the supercargoes you like on board——" He stopped, told the steward to clear out of the saloon, and then, when the man had disappeared, went on: "Considering I've let myself in for this thing with my eyes shut, I've no right to complain if you brought bears on board, to say nothing of wolves; but I'd have taken it kinder if you had let me know right off at the beginning that the whole firm was going on the cruise."

"Look here, Captain," said Shiner, "you have spoken truth without knowing it. Wolff is the whole firm practically. He's the boss of this business, to all intents and purposes; he's the money behind it all, and the brain, and he did not want to advertise the fact that he was coming on board, I suppose, for he is a man pretty well known in the States. Anyhow, there are the facts. Wolff is a man that I don't mind playing second fiddle to; and if I don't mind, I don't see why you should."

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"Oh, don't you?" said the Captain. "Well, do. I'm captain of this tub, and captain I'll remain. I'm risking enough for a hundred dollars a month and a bonus of a thousand if this piracy, whatever it is, of yours, comes off, without losing my status quo as well."

"What's that?" asked the illiterate Harman, who had laid down the knife with which he had been eating so as to attend better to the dispute.

"It's what you'll never have—the position of a master mariner and the top seat at the table."

"What do you mean by that word 'piracy'?" asked Shiner, with the air of a woman whose reputation is attacked. "There is no such thing in this business, and it would be a lot better for you to be more careful with your words. Words are dangerous weapons when swung about like that."

"Well," said the Captain, "call it what you like. I don't know what it is, but I've signed it, and I'm not the man to go back on my word; but, as I just said, I don't know what we

are after, and I don't much care, as long as we steer clear of the gallows."

"Don't be talking like that," said Harman. "Mr. Shiner, here, ain't such a fool as to go within smellin' distance of any hanging matter. What we are after may be a bit off colour, but it's a business venture in the main. I've asked no questions, but Mr. Shiner has given me to understand that it was business he was after, not anything that would lay us by the heels, so to speak, in any killing matter."

"What we are after is perfectly plain," said Shiner. "Killing! Who talked of killing? This is, just as you say, a business matter, and it's no worse than what's being done in Frisco every day, only it's a bit more adventurous."

The precious trio finished their breakfast without any more words, and then went on deck. They had scarcely reached it when across the gangplank came a stout, black-bearded individual followed by a couple of wharf rats, one bearing luggage, the other two big cases.

This was Wolff.

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Shiner introduced him to the Captain, and then Wolff, followed by the luggage and the cases, disappeared below.

"He's not a good sailor," said Shiner, "but he'll be all right after a day or two. Ah, here come the port authorities. I'll have a talk with them. You are all right for starting, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the Captain. "I'm ready to cast off when you are."

"Right!" said Shiner.

He took the port officers down to the saloon, and when they came up again they were all smoking half-dollar perfectos and the traces of conviviality and good-fellowship were evident.

"They've been having drinks," said Harman to himself. "Wouldn't wonder if there was lush in those cases Wolff brought aboard. No tellin'."

IV

THE SAILING OF THE "PENGUIN"

It was noon when the hawsers were cast off and Captain Blood, in all the glory of command, standing on the bridge, rang up the engines and put the telegraph to half speed ahead.

It was a glorious day, not a cloud in the sky, and scarcely a ripple of breeze on the water. The breeze, just sufficient to shake the trade flags of the shipping, brought with it the whistling of ferryboats, the hammering of boiler iron from the shipyards, and a thousand voices from the multitude of ships.

They nearly scraped the stern wheel off a Stockton river boat, and then, as if sheering off from the blasphemy of the Stocktonites, nosed round and passed the buoy that marks the shoal water west of Hennessy's Wharf. Then down the bay they went with the sun-

light on Alcatraz and the Contre Costa shore, and away ahead the Golden Gate and a vision of the blue Pacific.

They passed Sime Point and took the middle channel, where the first heave of the outer sea striding over the bar met them with a keener touch of wind to back it. The Cliff House and Point Bonita fell astern, and now, right ahead, the Farallons sketched themselves away across the lonely blue of the sea.

The *Penguin*, bow on to the swell, was behaving admirably, so well, indeed, that Wolff, with a cigar in his mouth, had appeared on deck and climbed onto the bridge. But now, clear of the land and with a shift of helm, the beam sea produced its effect, and her rolling capacities became evident.

Wolff descended, leaving the bridge to its lawful occupants, and even Shiner, who had taken his place on the after gratings with an account book and stylograph pen, retired after a very little while.

The *Penguin* was built to hold a thousand miles of cable in her fore end and after tanks,

and, loaded like that, the effect of her top-hamper in the way of picking-up gear, picking-up engine, derricks, and buoys would be corrected. But she had no cable in her now, only water ballast, and she rolled after her natural bent, and rolled and rolled till cries of "Steward!" came faintly through the saloon hatch, followed by other sounds and the clinking of basins.

Blood walked the bridge with Harman, casting now and then an eye at the compass card and the fellow at the wheel, and now and then an eye at the forward deck lumbered with the gear and four or five new-painted buoys, each numbered and each with a lamp socket.

"They haven't spared expense in fitting her out," said Harman.

"No, they haven't," replied the Captain. "And why? Simply because I've been at Shiner all the past week with a rope's end, so to say. I'm blessed if the blighter didn't want to economise on buoys! 'Two will be enough,' says he; 'it's only a short job we are on, and they are three hundred dollars apiece.' He

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said that right to my face. 'Well,' said I, 'it's none o' my business, but if you want to drop the job, whatever it is, in the middle, and run a thousand miles to the nearest port for a ten-cent buoy, you'll find your economy has been misplaced. You will that.' So he caved in on the buoys. Then we had an argument over the grapnel rope. He wanted to take two miles of all hemp. I wanted five miles of wire wove. I got it, but only after a mighty tough struggle. The grapnels are good, but they went with the ship, and they'd been properly laid up in paraffin; not a speck on them. Then the Kelvin sounder was out of order. Yes, they'd have sailed with it like that only for me, and it cost them something to have it put right."

"What I'm thinking," said Harman, "is that this expedition is costing a good deal of money."

"It's costing all of five hundred dollars a day."

"What I'm thinking," went on Harman, "is that the profits to come out of whatever

they are going to do must be huge, big profits to cover the expenses, and I've taken notice that when chaps are ketched going on the crooked where money is concerned, they always gets a bigger doing from the law the bigger the money is. It's this way: if a chap nails a suit of clothes, or a ham, he don't get as much as a chap that nicks a motor boat, shall we say, and the chap that nicks a motor boat don't——"

"Oh, shut up!" said the Captain. "We're in for it, whatever it is, and our only hope's our innocence if we're caught. We don't know anything; we are only obeying the orders of the owners. Not that that will have much weight if we are caught, but we're not going to be. I've a firm belief in that slippery eel of a Shiner, much as I dislike him; and this chap Wolff doesn't seem a fool, either. They're not the sort of fellows to run their skins into much danger."

"What do you think it is?" asked Harman.

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"Well, I'll tell you what I think. I think they are going to pick up a cable, cut it, and tap it."

"Whatcha mean by tapping it?"

"Sucking the news out of it. Or maybe they're going to use it for sending some lying message that'll upset the stock markets, or grain markets, or railway people. Lord bless you, there's a hundred things to be done if one has the business end of a real deep-sea cable with a big city like Frisco or maybe Sydney at the other end."

"Well, maybe there is," said Harman. "There's a good many things to be done in Frisco off the square, without a cable, and there's no sayin' what mightn't be done with one."

"I reckon you're a judge of that," laughed the Captain.

"Oh, I'm pretty well up to the tricks of Frisco," said the other complacently. "But this is a new traverse, fooling folk from the middle of the ocean, one might say. I reckon Wolff is a German, ain't he?"

"Yes, he's a Dutchman, all right; so's Shiner, I reckon. German Jew. It lands me how those sort of chaps get on and make money, and the likes of us has to take their orders and their leavings. I'd like to get even with them once."

"Well, maybe you will," said Harman.

The Captain grunted.

There was a fellow on board named Bowers. He had been given the post of bos'n, and he knew something of navigation and could keep a watch on the bridge.

The Captain called for him now and gave the bridge over to him, as all was plain sailing with the California coast away on the port quarter, the Farallons on the starboard bow, and the whole blue Pacific Ocean right ahead.

He and Harman, leaving the bridge, sought the chart room and went in there for a smoke. It was a pleasant place, full of light, and with a couch running along one side. By the door stood a rack of rifles, eight in number, and for every rifle a cutlass.

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when they leave port to do a job, what new job may not suddenly call them to the Patagonian beaches or the fogs of the Yellow Sea. The rifles and cutlasses were part of the fixtures belonging to the *Penguin* and taken over by the new owners, just as fixtures are taken over with a house. To use them for their proper purpose could never have occurred to the minds of Shiner, Wolff & Co. They were not men of violence. The strange thing, indeed, about this expedition, organised and manned for lawless work on the deep sea, was the fact that the chiefs were, to use Harman's phrase, "sure-enough city men," and that they were even now down below dead sick with the Pacific's first fringe of swell.

Harman took a rifle down and examined it, while Blood, extending his leg on the couch, lit a pipe.

"Say," said Harman, "are you any good as a shot?"

"Not with a thing like that," replied the Captain. "I can hit a man with a revolver at ten paces, and that's all the good shooting I

want. Put that thing down and don't be fooling with it."

"It's not loaded," replied Harman, who had opened the breech.

"And it's not likely to be," replied the other, "for there's no ammunition on board and no need for it. If we're caught, there must be no fighting."

"Why, I thought you was a fighting man," said Harman, putting the rifle back. "You have the name for it."

"And so I am, when fighting is to be had on the square; but there's fighting and fighting. Can't you see, if we were caught tinkering at some cable we had no right to be meddling with, and if we were chased by some gunboat, and if we were to fight and draw blood—can't you see we'd be hanged without benefit of clergy? No, I never fight against the law. Never have and never will."

"Suppose a cruiser overhauled her when we was at work?" said Harman.

"Well, what's easier to say than that we were sent to mend? We are a sure-enough

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cable ship, and how's a cruiser to know whether the cable we are fishing for or tinkering with isn't broken? Oh, no; you may make your mind easy on that. Our position is sound and safe, on the outside. Inside it's as rotten as punk."

V

THE CABLE MESSAGE

THE *Penguin*, steering a sou-sou'westerly course, slipped day by day into warmer and bluer seas. Wolff, recovering from his first unpleasantness, appeared on deck, cigar in mouth; and Shiner, with nothing better to do, would be seen lounging on the after gratings with a novel in his hand.

The Captain and Harman worked the ship, and had little to do with the others, meeting them chiefly at table, where, needless to say, the Captain took the head. Wolff had given him a chart of the Pacific whereon was laid down the exact position of the cable they were going to attend to.

"This is the chart," Wolff had said. "You will see, there is the cable. It is plainly marked. I wish you to bring us to it about here." He made a pencil mark on the cable

line. "And when you have brought us to that point, then I will explain to you the object of this expedition."

"Right!" said the Captain.

They were steering now for the cable line through days of sapphire and nights wonderful with stars. Now and then they would raise an island, a peak with a turban of clouds, or an atoll, just a green ring of palms and breadfruits surrounded by a white ring of foam, and peak and atoll would heave in sight and sink from sight with nothing to tell of the legerdemain at work but the pounding of the screw and the throb of the engines.

Sometimes a sail would heave in sight, or the far-off smoke of a steamer hold the imagination for an hour or two, and then be painted out, leaving nothing but the sea, the sky, and the pearl-white trace of cloud draping the skirts of the warm trade wind.

There is no place in the world where grievances sprout so well and grow so rapidly as on board ship. The Captain had a grievance. It had come to his knowledge that Wolff had a

private stock of Pilsener. Some had come in the cases that the wharf rat had carried after him on board, and there was more stowed away in some hole known only to Wolff and Shiner.

Those two worthies would forgather of a morning in Wolff's cabin and drink Pilsener and then heave the bottles out of the porthole. The Captain had seen a Pilsener bottle going aft, bobbing and bowing to him in the wake, and his fury was excessive and ill contained.

Leaving aside the meanness of proclaiming the ship teetotal and then smuggling drink aboard for private consumption, there was something of cold-blooded inhospitality about the business that struck at the Irish heart.

He was very explicit about the matter to Harman:

"Swine—they and their lager beer! You wait! I'll pay them out."

"To think of them sitting there drinking, and we dry!" said the simple-minded Harman. "That's what gets me. We dry and them chaps drinking. It makes me thirsty.

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I don't care a dash about their sitting there and drinking, but when I think of it it makes me thirsty. That's what gets me."

"Well, you'll have to think of something else," said the Captain. "There's no use in dwelling on things like that, and the voyage is not for long."

"It's long enough to be without a drink in," said Harman.

Harman, despite his up-to-dateness on San Francisco roguery, was a most extraordinary child for all his manhood. The man part of him had grown up and grown crooked; the child part of him had remained virginal. The moment was everything to him. He could just read and write his name, and sometimes, when he was off duty, you would see him spelling over a San Francisco paper. Houses to let, governess wanted—it was all the same to him. He only read the advertisement columns. They satisfied his craving for literature, and he could understand them. The rest of the paper, from the poetry corner to

the foreign-news column, was arid ground for him.

Yet this same man had made money out of ward politics and in twenty other ways in which one would have fancied education necessary to success.

They left Fanning and Christmas Island three hundred miles to starboard, passed the equator, and, entering the great, empty space of sea bounded by the Phœnix Islands on the north and the Penrhyns on the southeast, headed toward the Navigators.

One sweltering morning, the Captain, coming up to Wolff, who was seated in his pajamas under the double awning that had been rigged up, said:

"We're just on the cable line."

Wolff rose up, called for the steward, and, having sent for his panama, put it on and came up on the bridge.

The sea was smooth, surface smooth, but underrun by the long, endless swell of the Pacific.

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had been poring over the cable chart which he had brought up on the bridge. "And it's pretty deep. All a mile."

"Good!" said Wolff. "With this calm sea, we ought to work well and quickly. We are in luck; and now, if you will come into the chart house, we will talk for one moment."

They went into the chart house, and Wolff shut the door.

"This is a purely business proposition," began Wolff, "and I must tell you, to begin with, that it is not a business which a man of a certain type of mind would call on the square. But, my dear Captain, can you show me any business proposition that is truly on the square? Not one. I want the use of a cable, and I am going to take it for business purposes. That is all there is to it, you understand."

"Look here," said Blood, "this is all I know of the business. You want me to fish this cable up?"

"Precisely."

"Cut it?"

"Just so."

"Connect both ends with the electrical testing room, and let you talk through it and send messages through it from both or one of the cut ends?"

"That is exactly the position."

"Well, after that?"

"After I have had my use of the cable, you can drop both ends overboard. We will sail away, and no one the wiser. Of course, the cable company will recognise that their cable is broken, and send a ship to mend it; but we will be far away by that time."

"I see," went on the Captain, "that it runs from the American coast here to the Australian coast here, but I don't know the name of the company it belongs to; I don't know what in the nation your game is. I am as innocent as a baa lamb on the whole affair, and I simply obey your orders, not knowing that you yourself may not own the cable and that this mayn't be a repairing job. If we are caught, will you bear me out in that statement?"

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—not that your evidence will be much good, I expect, but, still, it's better than nothing.”

“If you obey our instructions,” said Wolff, “I will do as you say; and, to prove that I am playing fair with you, I will even now give you a detail of the commercial speculation that is behind all this business.”

“I don't want to hear it,” said the Captain. “I'd much sooner remain innocent. I'm just an ordinary sailor signed on to do an ordinary job. I'll work freer in mind if I know nothing about the inside of the affair; it's black enough on the out.”

“Well, we will leave it at that,” said Wolff, “and we will now set to work, if you please.”

They came on to the bridge, and the Captain gave orders for the main engines to be stopped and the Kelvin sounder to be set to work. The donkey man had been allotted to this job, and presently the furious, sewing-machine whir of the sounder hauling up the lead came through the silence that had supervened on the stopping of the engines, and the

result was shouted forward: "Eight hundred fathoms, coral rock."

Blood, on this result being given to him, left the bridge and came down to the bow bunks to superintend the lowering of the first buoy. He had not only to act as cable engineer, but he had also to instruct the hands in the details of this work absolutely new to them. A big, red-painted buoy was swung up against the burning blue of the sky, a rope with a mushroom anchor attached to it was fastened to the buoy; then the anchor was cast overboard, taking the rope with it, and the buoy, swung outboard, was dropped. It rode off, bobbing and ducking on the swell, and the *Penguin* steamed on to a point a mile ahead, where another buoy was dropped in a precisely similar manner.

The Captain had now his position and his marks laid down. Somewhere between those two buoys lay the cable, like a black snake on the floor of the sea, waiting to be grappled for.

The grapnel rope was now lowered over the clanking drum of the picking-up gear and

the wheel in the bow. This business took half an hour, and then the *Penguin*, going dead slow, began to steam back to the first-mark buoy, dragging the grapnel after her across the floor of the sea.

Wolff and Shiner took a great deal of interest in this part of the business. They stood at the bow watching the pointer of the dynamometer, which gave the pull on the rope in hundredweights; every lump of coral, every tuft of weed travelled over by the grapnel made the pointer of the dynamometer jump and joggle; and at every jump the idea "Cable!" would leap into the minds of the speculators and show itself in their eyes.

But the *Penguin* passed from one mark buoy to the other without a show of the real thing; and then she turned and steamed back on an equally fruitless course.

She was making ready for a third grapple when the bell went for dinner, and Wolff, Shiner, and the Captain turned aft and went below to the saloon.

The Wolff gang were in a bad temper, and

the meal had scarcely begun when a discussion broke out.

"It's a funny thing," said Shiner, "that we have not hit the thing yet."

"We have been twice over the ground," said Wolff.

"Sure you haven't made a mistake in the spot, Captain?" said Shiner.

The Captain put down the glass of mineral water he was raising to his lips.

"Why can't you say what you mean?" said he. "Why can't you ask me right out if I haven't muddled the navigation and missed the job? Well, I haven't. Is that plain? Some men may doubt their own work, and there are some men who would be put off by suspicions flung at them and would say, 'Maybe I *am* wrong,' and pick up his buoys and move off to another ground and make fools of themselves. I'm not that sort. Can't you see that a cable may be passed over by a grapnel half a dozen times without the grapnel catching? It may be glued down with coral."

"Just so, just so!" said Shiner, anxious to pacify. "We never doubted your capacity, Captain."

"Never, I'm sure," said Wolff.

The Captain, somewhat mollified, went on with his meal, and he was raising the glass of mineral water for the second time to his lips when the dead, slow tramp of the engines ceased.

Immediately on their cessation, through the open skylight came the clanking sound of the picking-up gear, and right on that came Harman's voice, roaring down the saloon companionway: "Below, there! We've got the cable!"

In a minute or less, Wolff, Shiner, and the Captain were in the bows; the Captain on the bow balks, Shiner and Wolff on the deck.

The great drum, rotating slowly, was hauling in the grapnel rope, dripping and taut; the dynamometer registered a strain of seven tons, and the strain was slowly increasing.

Nothing else could give this result but cable.

"Are you sure we have got it, Captain?" asked Wolff.

The Captain looked down at him.

"If that rope was to break under this strain," said he, "it would mushroom out like an open umbrella and cut you to pieces. Better get up on the bridge. You're safe there. Yes, I'm sure we've got cable, unless we've grappled a dead whale."

Wolff and Shiner went up the ladder to the bridge, and the Captain, relieved of their presence, continued his work.

It was worth watching.

He was a true-born cable man, and they are as rare as good violinists. Knowing the depth, and the length of rope out, and its weight in sea water, and the weight of the grapnel, he could tell approximately what was going on down below; he knew that he was lifting heavier stuff than ordinary cable, and the weight could only come from coral incrustations on it. He knew that the cable must be glued down here and there, and that haste would mean a break. Sometimes he stopped

the picking-gear altogether and trusted to the rise and fall of the ship on the swell to break the thing gently up from its attachments. And still the grapnel rope came in, dripping and endless, till at last the grapnel itself appeared with what seemed the bight of a sea serpent gripped in its unholy claws.

The thing was crusted here and there with coral, it is true, but it was comparatively new and sound, and a genuine, straight-going cable man would have shuddered at the sacrilege that was going on. Even the Captain felt qualms. To cut this thing was like murder; it would mean a dead loss of ten or fifteen thousand dollars to the company that owned it. An expedition would have to be fitted out to repair it, and if bad weather were to come on, it might be three months before the repairs were effected.

The Captain thought of all this even as he was ordering the stoppers to be got ready and the sling for the man who would do the cutting. He drowned remorse in the recollection that the injury would be done to a com-

pany, not to an individual. He would not have injured an individual of his own free will for worlds, but he did not mind much injuring a company. A company was a many-headed beast, and, in his experience, it always dealt hardly with its employés.

The cable was high out of the water now, in the form of an inverted V, with the grapnel at the apex. He ordered each limb of the bight to be secured with a stopper, and then, unable to trust any one else with the delicate business, he himself descended in a sling to do the cutting. Shouting his directions to the fellows who were lowering him, he came just level with the grapnel and began the business with a file. Halfway through, he ordered the grapnel to be eased away, finished the business, and left the two cable ends hanging by the stoppers.

Then he came aboard, and the starboard end of the cable was hauled in. It did not take long to connect it up with the electrical testing room, where Shiner was already installed before the mirror galvanometer.

The end they had hauled on board was the American end; the testing-room door was shut, the blinds of the windows drawn, for a subdued light is necessary to the proper working of the mirror galvanometer; and Shiner and Wolff were left alone with the American continent to work their dark schemes.

Said Harman, as he paced the deck with the Captain:

"I wonder what those two guys are doin' now? Carryin' out some of their malpraxises, no doubt. I ain't a particular man, but this thing's beginnin' to get on my spine. It didn't seem much at the start, just foolin' with a cable; but now it seems somehow a durned sight worse, now that the thing's cut. I tell you, Cap, it went to my heart to see it cut. I couldn't 'a' felt worse if it'd squealed and blood run out of it. I guess I wouldn't have joined the expedition if I hadn't been tempted. I remember my old mother warning me that if sinners tempted me, not to consent."

"Confound you and your warnings!" said the Captain. "Who tempted me? You, and

no one else. But I'm not the man to go back on you and talk about warnings. We're in for it, and there's no going back, and we can't do anything but pray that a cruiser doesn't heave in sight before we get away."

"Amen to that!" said Harman.

They continued pacing the deck in silence, till suddenly the testing-room opened and Wolff appeared.

The black-bearded Wolff was ghastly white. He had the look of a man who had received a blow in the stomach. He held up a finger to the Captain, who came toward him.

"Come in here," said Wolff.

Shiner was off his stool and sitting on the couch that ran along the port side of the room. His hands were in his hair, and the dot of the mirror galvanometer was spilling from side to side of the scale unnoticed. Disaster was in the air.

"What's up?" asked the Captain.

"Up!" cried Shiner, coming out of his lair as one might fancy a cockatrice coming out of

its hole. "Everything is up! Our speculation is done for! War has been declared."

"War been declared? What war?"

"England and Germany and France," replied Shiner.

"How did you hear it?"

"How did I hear it? Why, the first message I tapped was a Press Association special to Sydney. They began cursing me for having been held up for half an hour while we were cutting the cable. They thought we were Sydney. They don't know the cable is cut yet. They're still jabbering. Anyhow, there it is—war! And war spells ruin to the business we were on."

"We must cut losses," said Wolff, who was walking up and down. "The expedition is off. We must get to a Chile port at once—Valparaiso for choice."

"And my bonus?" said the Captain.

"I guess you may whistle for your bonus," said Shiner. "Can't you see we are bust—B-U-S-T?"

"But we can do one thing," said Wolff.

"We can hit the cursed English; we can haul in twenty, forty miles of the cable and cut. The thing is cut, in any case; but a long break like that will make it the worse for them; then Sydney will have one cable the less to talk to her mother with. Yes, we can do that."

"Curse them!" said Shiner. "Yes, we can do that."

"So my bonus is gone?" said the Captain. "Well, may I ask one question of you: Who's fighting who? Is it France and England against Germany?"

"It is Germany against France and England," said Wolff.

"And you are Germans, and this is a German-owned vessel?"

"Precisely," said Wolff. "You have touched the matter on the head."

The Captain ruminated.

Then, said he: "Well, gentlemen, this is a serious matter for me. I lose my bonus, and I lose my pay, I expect; for if you are as badly broke as you say, when you land at Valparaiso or some southern port—and you daren't go

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back to Frisco—there'll be precious few dibs to go round unless you manage to sell the old *Penguin*, which isn't very likely in war time. Well, gentlemen, I've thought of a plan by which I may get my bonus, and my pay, too; and if you'll come down to the saloon with me, I'll show you it."

"Why not tell us here?" said Shiner.

"I cannot explain it here. Come down, gentlemen. When all's said and done, it won't take a minute, and there's a lot of importance attaching to what I have to explain to you. It's worth a minute."

He left the testing-room, and they followed him to the saloon. He led the way into his cabin, and they followed him like lambs. He asked them to be seated on the couch opposite the bunk; then he took the key from the inside of the door and inserted it in the lock on the outside.

"What are you doing that for?" said Shiner.

"I'll show you in one minute," replied the Captain.

He stepped swiftly out into the saloon, banged the door to, and locked it.

It was Shiner who woke to the situation first, and it was Shiner's voice that came now as he clung to the handle of the door and punctuated his remarks with kicks on the paneling.

The Captain waited a moment till the other gave pause. Then he said:

"There's no use in kicking and squealing. You're prisoners of war, that's how you stand. The ship's mine now, a lawful prize. What's that you say? An Irishman? Of course I'm an Irishman. What's that you say? I'm a traitor to my country? B'gosh, if you say that again, I'll open the door and give you a taste of my quality. Say it again, will you! Say it again, will you!"

He shook the door handle at each invitation, but Shiner was dumb. He evidently had no desire to taste the Captain's quality. It was Wolff's voice that came instead, muted and murmurous:

"Make terms, make terms; there is no use in arguing. Make terms!"

"You won't make any terms with me," said the Captain, "but you'll be treated well and transhipped as quick as possible."

"But, see here, Captain!" came Shiner's voice.

The Captain did not hear him; he had left the saloon, and next moment was on deck. He was a man of swift decision, and he had fixed in his mind that the first thing to be done was to make the crew his own, and the next to dump the cable and be gone. He could not mend it. They had no skilled artificer on board. To mend it, he would have to bring both ends on board and connect them. If you have ever examined a deep-sea cable, with its water coat of wire, its inner coat of rubber, and its core, you will quite understand the complexity of the task.

It was impossible, and he recognized the fact as he walked forward.

Harman was standing by the dynamometer, waiting for orders, and the bos'n near Har-

man. The Captain ordered the bos'n to pipe the whole crew on deck, and presently, like a kicked beehive, the fo'c'sle gave up its contents, the stokers off duty appeared, and even MacBean himself rose like a seal from the engine-room hatch.

"Boys," said the Captain, addressing the dingy crowd, "is there ever a German among you?"

Dead silence for a moment, as though the hands were consulting their own hearts, and then a voice from back near the starboard alleyway: "No, there ain't no Germans here."

"Sam's a Dutchman," came another voice, and then the voice of Sam, protesting: "You lie! I vas a New Yorker."

"Shut your mouths!" said Blood. "I'm an Englishman, or pretty near the same thing, and I'm captain of this hooker, which is owned by a German firm. In other words, it is owned by Mr. Wolff and Mr. Shiner, who are Germans. Well, my lads, news has just come over that cable we have picked up that war has been declared between England and

Germany, so I have taken possession of the ship in the name of England, d'ye see? Which means that there's lots of prize money for all of us if we can bring her safe into an English port."

He waited for a moment after this announcement, but not a sound came from the crowd in front of them. It was filtering down through the thickness of their intelligences. It was an entirely new proposition that he had laid before them, and required time to find a response. They knew—God help them!—as little as he did of the horrible problems of international and maritime law that the *Penguin* was about to wind round herself as the silkworm winds a cocoon; but they knew the meaning of the word "money," and it didn't matter to them a rap whether it was prize money or not, as long as it could be changed for whisky and tobacco.

A little, wiry Nova Scotian was the first to respond.

"Go to it!" cried he. "Here's to England and a pocketful of money!" He flung up his

cap, and the action touched the rest off. They cheered—Anglo-Saxons, Celts, Latins, and Slavs—for such was their mixture. All joined in the shout.

MacBean alone, cautious and cool, made any question.

“Are you sure,” said he, when the shouting had ceased, “are you sure we’re in the right of this? I’m as willin’ as any man to fight for England, but I’m no so sure about our possession as regards the ship.”

“Well, you will be soon,” said Blood. “This is my position: I’m not only going to take the ship, but I’m going to take anything German I come across on the high seas. Away back in the American Spanish War, I put out in a mud dredger from the Florida coast and took a mail steamer. We pretended we were a dynamite boat. There were seven thousand dollars in gold coin on board her, and we took it. Never mind where it went to——” A wild yell from the crowd. “We took it just as we are going to take any German money we come across. A chance like this doesn’t

come in most lifetimes, and I'm not going to lose it." Applause.

MacBean went back to his engine room.

"May I ax, Captain," said one of the fellows, "what's to become of the owners?"

"Meaning Mr. Wolff and Mr. Shiner?" replied the Captain. "Why, they are prisoners of war, and they will be treated as such, without a hair of their heads being touched. But we can't keep them on board. We'll hold them somewhere, or put them on a German ship, if we find one. Now, then, look lively and get the cable away. Mr. Harman, get it aft from the testing-room, and then cast loose the stoppers; dump both ends."

He went on the bridge while Harman cast the cable loose; then he rang up the engines, and, giving the fellow at the wheel a sou'-westerly course to steer by, put the engine telegraph to full speed ahead.

He wanted to get away from that spot in a hurry. He had not yet fixed on any point to make for—north, south, east, or west did not matter for the moment to him. He wanted to

be somewhere else and to put as many long leagues as possible between the *Penguin* and the scene of her crime.

Harman presently joined him on the bridge.

Said Harman: "Well, this is a rum joke, ain't it, Captain? 'Pears to me it's the rummest joke ever I seen. We've took the ship, and we've took the owners—and how about our bonuses and pay?"

"We'll have to take the bonuses out of the first Dutchman we can lay hands on," said the Captain. "We'll never get a cent from Wolff and Shiner. Their game is up. If I can lay alongside of a German trader—and there are plenty in these waters—I'll take all she's got."

"And suppose they show fight?" said Harman.

"Traders don't fight—we have eight rifles—without ammunition, but that doesn't matter, for we'd only be spoofing. The sight of the rifles is enough. Still, I wouldn't mind fighting if we have to."

"I heard a chap yarning once," said Har-

man. "It was at a meetin' a fellow give me a ticket for, and this chap was sayin' there was no use in war; he was sayin' no one was any the better off for war, and all suchlike. Well, it 'pears to me it's a durned good thing, for you can go and rob the chaps that's against you, and it's all on the square. I've all my life been wantin' to rob people open," continued Mr. Harman, "not poor people, you understand, for there wouldn't be no fun in that, and, besides, they have nothing worth takin'—but rich folk. Them's the chaps. My idea would be to be goin' round Nob Hill with a hand barrow and collecting jewelry, or callin' at the Bank of California with a cart and a shovel. I never expected in my life I'd have a chance like this."

"It's not all too rosy," said the Captain. "I'm not clear what a German cruiser could do to us if they found us skinning a German ship. I've heard that privateering is going to be allowed in the next war—which is this—but then we haven't a letter of marque."

"What's that?"

"A license to rob. But, license or no license, we can't pick and choose. We have to make good. We're done out of our bonuses and our salary. D'ye think I'm going back to Frisco as poor as I left it, and maybe poorer? For I'll tell you one thing, Billy Harman: What we've done to that cable is a penitentiary job to start with, and if it tricks America any over this war, supposing she takes a hand in it, it may mean a hanging job."

"I wish you'd not go on talkin' like that," said Harman. "What on earth's the use of going on talkin' like that? Who's to catch us?"

"I don't know," replied the Captain. "The only one thing I do know is the bedrock fact that our position couldn't be worse than it is, and that we may as well play for as big a figure as possible. Between you and me, it's just this—piracy pure and simple; that's our game, under shelter of the pretence that we're English and doing all in our power to help our native land; then if we are caught by an English ship with our holds full of boodle and our

scuppers full of gold all we have to say is: 'Please, sir, we have been fighting the Germans for the good of our native land.' "

"And suppose we are caught by a German ship?"

"Then it will be all the worse for us; but come along into the chart room, for I have an idea, and I want your opinion on it."

They left the bridge, and went into the chart room, where the Captain, having closed the door, brought out a chart of the Pacific, placed it on the table, and sat down before it.

"Here we are," said he, making a pencil mark on the spot. "And here," making another mark, "lies Christobal."

"Why, Christoval Island lies in the Solomons," said Harman. "I've been there."

"I said Christobal, not Christoval. This is a German island, and a pretty rich one, too. I know it, and cause I have to know it, for a chap there named Sprengel let me down badly once over a deal. I hope he's there still. It's a rich island, lots of copra and trade. I'm going there."

"And what are you going to do there?" asked Harman.

"Well, you see," said the Captain, "the place is only just a trading station; it's not armed; there are only half a dozen whites, and—I'm going to take it."

"Take it?"

"Hoist the Union Jack there, scoop all the boodle I can find, up anchor, and bunk for Valparaiso. That's my idea."

"Lord, that would be lovely!" said Harman. "But suppose they show any sort of fight?"

"Not they. We'll rig up a dummy gun, and we can arm a landing party with these blessed old rifles and cutlasses there. But the dummy guns will do them. You see, they won't know what to make of the cut of the *Penguin*. They'll never have seen a cable ship, most likely. We'll tell them we are a volunteer cruiser. Good name, that."

A knock came to the door, and the bos'n appeared.

"Please, Captain," said that individual. "them guys you've locked up in the after cabin

are tryin' to beat the door down and threat'nin' to fire the ship."

"I'll come and attend to them," said the Captain grimly. But first he went on the bridge and gave the helmsman the course for Christobal.

VI

THE CREW'S SHARE OF THE SPOILS

NEXT day they sighted a bark. She was English, and, to make up for his disappointment, the Captain had the pleasure of giving her news of war, and scaring her nearly to death with the false news of German cruisers in the vicinity.

The latter trick was played out of spite, owing to her refusal to relieve him of Wolff Shiner—still in durance vile.

He had brought the *Penguin* to within range of the distance of the bark—her name was the *Anne Page*—and when he made his request the answer came roaring back, quite definite:

“I won’t take no German prisoners. I’m full up with pigs and copra; there ain’t standin’ room scarcely as it is, and we’re short of water and grub.”

"I'll supply you," cried the *Penguin*. "Lower a boat and you'll have what you want."

The *Anne Page* seemed to meditate a moment, and then again came the response like that of a deaf man who has failed to catch the meaning of what is said to him:

"I won't take no German prisoners. There ain't no room for them. Why don't you keep 'em yourself—you're big enough?"

On that the Captain gave his news of the German cruisers, and the *Anne Page* picked up her skirts and scuttled.

But next day they had better luck. They picked up a real German schooner, captained by a real Simon-pure German skipper, and eight of the scallawags of the *Penguin* had their first exercise under arms.

The *Penguin* carried a whaleboat for beach work—Wolff had strongly resented the purchase of this boat, but the Captain had stood firm—and into it were bundled Wolff and Shiner, eight malefactors armed with cutlasses and rifles, followed by Blood himself.

The schooner—the *Spreewald* was her name—would have escaped, but there was only a five-knot breeze blowing, and the *Penguin* could make ten. There was also the threat of ramming. She let herself be boarded, received the declaration of war, and then submitted to be robbed.

The whole thing was shameful, and painfully like robbing a child of the milk it is carrying home. She was but a little ship, and the booty was trifling, some five hundred dollars, some barrels of Bismarck herrings, a dozen boxes of cigars, and a gold watch and chain. That is what Blood took from her. But she relieved him of the presence of Wolff and Shiner, and he reckoned that equal to a lot of plunder.

When they steered off they got five miles away before the *Spreewald* had fully recovered her senses from the outrage and pulled herself together. Then they saw her spreading her canvas and altering her course.

“She was bound for one of the English islands, I expect,” said Blood, “and now she’s

nosing off for some German port of call. Well, I guess this is the first blood the English have drawn in these seas. I deserve a bonus on that."

The money he had in his pocket, also the gold watch and chain; the Bismarck herrings had gone to the lazaret, and the cigars to the saloon.

He was turning with Harman to go down and enjoy one when a little man with a red head came aft, touching his cap.

"Please, sir," said this individual, "I was sent by the crew to ax what their share in the liftin' is to be."

"Oh, you were, were you?" said the Captain. "And a very natural question, too. I'll go forward and have a talk with them."

He found the men clustered round the pick-up gear.

"You sent to ask me what your share in the findings would be," said he, "so I thought I'd come and tell you by word of mouth. To begin with, what do you think yourselves on board of—a pirate? You'll just understand

one thing: this ship is acting on the square; it's under command of a Britisher—that's me—and whatever we take rightfully belongs to the British government. But I can promise you this: Your money you signed on for will be paid when we reach Valparaiso, one-third of all pickings will be divided among you, leaving two-thirds for Mr. Harman and me; and, after we coal at Valparaiso, I intend taking the hooker down to a port I know of and selling her. Half the money she brings will be divided among her crew, the other half between Mr. Harman and me."

"And the British government?" asked the bos'n.

"I'll settle with the British government," replied the Captain, with a wink.

A roar of laughter went up.

The idea of doing the Germans and the British government at the same time appealed so much to these gentlemen that they forgot to consider over the terms for the division of the spoil or dispute them.

"And may I ax are we heading for Valparaiso now?" asked the red-headed man.

"No, we are not; we are heading for a little German island named Christobal."

"And what are we goin' to do there?" asked another of the crowd.

"We are going to collect all the money we can find for the British government."

Another howl of laughter.

"And suppose, when we're landed at this here island, a German ship comes along and asks us what we are doing?" spoke up a grumbler. "What'll us say to that?"

"Why, we'll say we're picking mushrooms," replied the Captain. "Any more inquiries? Well, then, you can get to work. See here! I want half a dozen chaps to help me rig up a dummy gun on the bow balks. A stovepipe is good, but we haven't got one, so we must just use a big spar sawed down. There's a spare yard will do. I'll go and speak to Mr. Harman about it."

He turned off, and in the alleyway he met MacBean looking more serious and like a



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Scotch terrier than ever—an Aberdeen. He had been listening to every word.

“Mon, mon,” said MacBean, “this is an awfu’ business. Fiddlin’ with the cable was bad, but this is shoockin’, rank piracy, call it what names you will, and that I did not sign for.”

“What made you sign on at all?” cried the Captain, flashing out.

“Drink,” replied Mac. “The same that made Harman and half the crew sign on. Mon, this is an unholy ship, a drunk ship that has to keep sober, goin’ about the ocean with hell in her heart; cable smashin’ and pirating under the cover of a devastating war—and sober all the time.”

“Jolly good job for you all you have to keep sober.”

“I was not thinkin’ of the goodness or the badness of the job,” said Mac. “It’s the hee-pocrisy gets me.”

“Well, if the Germans don’t get you as well you’ll be lucky,” replied the other, going aft.

He found Harman in the saloon sampling

the cigars, and he gave him a sketch of what he had done and said to the crew.

"A lick of grey paint and an artificial bore, which you can burn out with a hot iron, and you can't tell a spar end from the nose of a four-inch gun," said he in conclusion.

"From the shore?" said Harman.

"Just so," replied the Captain. "You didn't fancy I was going to invite the blighters aboard to inspect our armaments, did you?"

VII

CHRISTOBAL

CHRISTOBAL ISLAND lay two days' steaming away. It was a tiny place set all alone in the wastes of the sea.

There was only one trading station there, and it was run by a German on behalf of a German firm. This person's name was Sprengel, and, to use the words that Blood applied to him some years before the date of this story, he had everything of the Red Indian about him except the gentleman.

Sprengel was a Prussian, close-clipped, clever, hard, and persistent as the east wind that blows over East Prussia in the spring. He had managed to keep other traders away from Christobal Island. Trade was his god; he had one ideal only—money, and, with the Teutonic passion for alien slang, he declared that in

Christobal he was the only pebble on the beach.

The place, though German, was free to all men, absolutely free, yet Sprengel kept it absolutely German. No one could compete with him. Other traders had tried, but their business had wilted; antagonistic influences had worked mysteriously against them.

Blood had brought a cargo of trade here once for a friend. The friend, Samson by name, had put his all into a little schooner and a cargo of all sorts of "notions"—canned salmon, gin, tobacco, prints, knives, et cetera. He had taken Blood along as skipper. Bad luck had followed them to several islands, and here at Christobal had finished them. Blood rightly had put down their failure to Sprengel, and the glorious idea of getting even with Sprengel now haunted him so that he could not sleep.

His one dread was that Sprengel, having made his pile, might have gone back to Bromberg to enjoy it.

They had finished the "gun" next day, and

mounted it on the bow, with a tarpaulin over the breech as if to protect it from the weather, when the Captain, who had been superintending the operations, coming aft, discovered Harman emerging from the saloon companionway in a high state of excitement.

"I've found it," said Harman. "I knew it was there. I guessed the swine couldn't have finished the lot, so I set up a hunt for it. Come you down and see."

The Captain followed him below, and there, on the saloon table, he saw standing three bottles of Pilsener.

"Where did you get those?" said he.

"Get them! I got them out of the locker in Wolff's cabin; hid away they were behind some old newspapers. I guessed the pair of those chaps hadn't finished all the lush, and I hunted and hunted—first in Shiner's locker, then under the mattress in his lower bunk. I looked into Wolff's locker twiced, and saw nothin' but newspapers, and still I kep' on. I reckon I must have smelled the stuff to make me so persistent. Anyhow, I lit on the idea

that the stuff might be hid behind the newspapers, and I went again, and there they were."

"Fetch some glasses," said the Captain.

Harman darted off, and returned with two glasses and a corkscrew.

The Captain took the corkscrew, placed a bottle between his knees, and was on the point of inserting the screw into the cork, when he paused, stood up, and replaced the bottle and corkscrew on the table.

"What's the matter now?" asked Harman.

"An idea has struck me," replied the Captain.

"What's your idea?"

"We mustn't drink this stuff."

"Not drink it!" cried the outraged Harman. "And what on earth do you want it for if we ain't to drink it?"

"Bait," replied the other.

"Bait?"

"To catch Sprengel with. This is Lion brew Pilsener, and it's a hundred to one, if he's still on the island, he hasn't any of this

stuff with him. There's no German born could withstand the temptation. It beats sausages."

"Well," said Harman, flying out like a child, "if I'd known you was going to collar the stuff like that I'd have drunk it before I called you. It ain't fair. Here am I with my tongue hangin' down to my heels for a drink, and there's the stuff and the glasses and all. I'm not given to complain, but it's too much. I'm speakin' my mind now. It's too much!"

"Can't you understand that with this stuff I may be able to get the blighter on board," said the Captain, "and if I once get him on board and down to this saloon the whole of the rest of the thing will be easy. If we try to rush the place with him on shore there may be blood spilled. With him a prisoner here there won't be any resistance.

"I'll take him those three bottles as a present, and then invite him on board with the promise of a case of it—d'ye see?"

"I'll tell you what," said Harman. "I'll split the difference with you. Take him two bottles as a present, and we'll drink the other."

The Captain considered on this for a moment, and then, fearing mutiny as well as having a thirst, he gave in.

It was his first drink for a long time, and it was excellent beer; the only drawback was the quantity.

"What I can't see," said Harman, finishing his portion of the liquid, "is what in the nation you want treatin' the perisher to two bottles of this stuff; two bottles is too little to take ashore with you as a present, and it's one too many if you're just going to offer him a drink after he's caught."

The Captain joined issue, and the argument went on till thirst joined with Harman, and the Captain gave in. The second bottle was opened.

And now a strange thing happened. No sooner had the contents of the second bottle vanished than the Captain himself prepared to finish the business.

It was the Irishman coming out.

"There's no use in one bottle," said he, "and, for the matter of that, I can get him aboard on

the promise of beer. How's he to know there is none?"

Harman actually protested—feebly enough, it is true—yet he protested, holding out his glass at the same time. There was a Scotch strain in Harman.

When they had finished, they filled the bottles with water and recorked them.

"They're just as good like that," said the Captain, "for Sprengel."

VIII

SPRENGEL

AT seven o'clock next morning Christobal showed up on the far horizon, and by ten o'clock the *Penguin* was heading for the anchorage, with the Captain on the bridge and Harman beside him.

It was a lovely island.

A broken reef protected the beach from the full force of the sea, and the cliffs showed green with foliage and flecked at one point by the eternal smoke of a torrent. Beyond the beach a white frame house with a veranda showed, and on either side native houses nestled among the cocoanut trees and breadfruits. The faint wind blowing from landward brought the perfume of vanilla and flowers, coloured birds flew in the blue sky above the trees, while the tune of the blue sea

beating on the reef came like the song of sleep and summer.

A sulphur-tinted butterfly flittered across the water on the wind, as if to inspect the ship, and flittered away again. On the beach could be seen several natives standing and watching their approach, motionless and seemingly incurious.

"It's all deep water through the break and beyond," said the Captain. "We don't want any pilot."

"There's a chap come out on the veranda of the house," said Harman.

The Captain picked up the glass he had been using, and turned it on the figure in the veranda.

"That's him," said he. "That's the chap right enough. Take a look."

Harman put the glass to his eye, and the veranda and the man leaped within ten feet of him.

The man was short, stout, bull-necked, bullet-headed, wearing a close, clipped beard and with his hair cut to the bone.

"He ain't a beauty," said Harman. "Look, he's going into the house, and here he comes out again."

Sprengel had brought out a pair of marine glasses and was observing the ship through them.

"Wonder if he recognises me," said the Captain.

Then he stood silent, whistling now and then, and now and then giving an order to the fellow at the wheel.

One of the hands was heaving the lead; his hard, thin voice came up to the bridge in a snarl:

"Mark four! Mark four! Quarter less four!"

The Captain rang the engines to half speed, then to dead slow. The *Penguin* passed the opening in the reef. The water she rode on was like blue satin billowed under by wind; then, in the glassy smooth beyond, Harman, who was forward attending to the anchor, glancing over the side, saw the coral floor be-

neath them clearly as though he were looking at it through air.

The Captain rang the engines off, the wheel flew to starboard, and the rumble-tumble of the anchor chain through the hawse pipe came back in moist echoes from the woods and cliffs.

Then, the ship safely berthed, the Captain had time to turn his attention to the shore.

Sprengel had vanished into the house, and the few natives on the shore were still standing about in attitudes of indifference. One had taken his seat on the sand, and though there were several canoes on the beach there was no evidence of any thought of launching them.

"It's a good job we scooped that Pilsener," said Harman, who had come up on the bridge. "It wouldn't have been no use for this chap. You won't get this chap on board without a windlass and a derrick. No, sir! He's one of the retirin' kind. He won't trade, and he won't be civil. I reckon you'd better get that spar gun trained on the beach and some of our chaps ready for a landin' with the rifles, scoop

all the money and valuables we can find, and cut stick."

"I've been thinking so myself," said the Captain. "There's no use wasting time enticing this chap on board. Train the gun and get the landing party ready with rifles and cutlasses."

He came down from the bridge, and went aft to his cabin to put on his best coat. When he came up again the whaleboat was lowered and the landing party getting into her.

They certainly were a most terrific-looking lot, and when the boat's nose touched the sand and they scrambled out and lined up under the direction of Harman, the natives looking on lost their look of indifference, turned, and bolted for the woods.

"They don't like the look of us," said the Captain. "Now then, you chaps, no chasing them. You follow after me, and do what Mr. Harman bids you. Let one man of you disobey orders and he'll have to settle with me."

He produced a navy revolver from his pocket. It was the only serviceable weapon

of the expedition, barring the cutlasses; they knew it, and they knew him, and they followed like lambs as he walked toward the house on whose veranda Sprengel had reappeared.

Ten yards away he ordered the others to halt, and advanced alone, putting the revolver back in his pocket.

Sprengel was in pajamas, and he had been perspiring with the heat; he was also in a bad temper and a bit frightened, all of which conditions did not add to the beauty of his appearance.

"Mr. Sprengel, I believe," said the Captain, opening the business.

"That is my name," replied the other. "And who are you, may I ask, and what is your ship doing here and these men?"

"We will go into the house and talk," said the Captain, "if you will kindly lead the way. I am the Captain of a British auxiliary cruiser come to have a few words with you."

He followed on the heels of Sprengel, who evidently had not recognised him in the least, into a large, airy room floored with native

matting and furnished with American rockers, a bamboo couch, a table, and island head-dresses and spears for wall decorations.

"You did not recognise me outside," said the Captain. "Perhaps because I had my hat on. Do you not recognise me now?"

"Not from Adam," replied Sprengel in a violent tone. "I only know that you have landed on my beach with armed men and that you had but till just now a pistol in your hand. Also, I recognise that your ship has a gun trained on my house. Are you aware that this is a German island?"

"That's just the point, my dear man," said the Captain, taking a seat unasked. "Are you aware that England is at war with Germany?"

"Eh, what!" said Sprengel, turning more fully on the other. "What you say? England at war with Germany!"

"England at war with Germany. Yes. That is what I said, and I have come to take your island in the name of the British government."

Sprengel sat down in a chair and mopped

himself. Sprengel had been practically monarch of Christobal for a long time.

And now the English had come.

It was an eventuality he had always feared, always reckoned with. He knew that war was in the air. He also knew international law, and he was not so much put out as might have been expected.

Indeed, he was frankly impudent.

"Well, I did not make the war," said he. "I am an honest trader going about my business. If Christobal is English—well, it cannot be helped—till we take it back from England. I claim the rights of international law. My property is sacred."

"International law, what is that?" asked Blood.

"Something you would not understand, but which your peddling government fears *and* respects. Something which they would like to put to one side, *but* which they cannot."

"Oh, can't they? Do you mean to imply that your property can't be touched because of international law?"

"Ab-so-lutely."

"We'll soon see about that," said Blood, "for I've come to take away every rag you've got and every penny. I'll leave you, for you ain't very good, and you can keep the house and the good will of the business, but I want your money."

He stood up.

So did Sprengel. Say what we may about the Prussians, they are certainly plucky enough.

Threatened with spoliation, all the latent fury of the man flamed out and centred on Blood. He stood for a moment visibly swelling; then he charged.

Had that charge gone home it would have been the worse for the Captain. Instead of meeting it, however, he stepped aside; Sprengel met the wall, nearly bringing the house down, and Harman, who had been listening on the veranda, rushed in.

He had brought some signal halyard line with an eye for eventualities, and they bound the enemy without much trouble.

"Listen to him!" said Harman. "Listen to him chatterin' about outrages to noncombatants. What are ye yourself but an outrage, you fat Proosian! Capt'in, lend me your wibe."

The Captain handed over his handkerchief, and Harman, with suspicious dexterity, rolled it into a gag. "That'll stop your tongue," said he. "And now for the plunder."

They found the safe where the unfortunate Sprengel kept his money. There were five thousand dollars there in silver and American gold coin, and a bank book showing a huge balance at a Berlin bank. Also securities for large amounts. They respected these, as they were useless, and took only the coin.

Then they went over the house and grounds adjoining, and the total loot tabulated roughly ran to:

The amount of coin already specified.

Five thousand cigars.

A suit of new pajamas and a safety razor in case.

A case of Florida water, six bottles of eau

de Cologne, all the native headdresses adorning the sitting room.

A live parrot in a cage, half a dozen chickens, and half a boatload of vegetables.

It was not much, but it was all that they could lay hands on. Harman wanted to include a native girl who had come out from among the trees with a basket of fruit on her head, not knowing what was going on, but the Captain vetoed him. He only took the fruit.

Then they pushed off, having first ungagged their victim, unbound him, and locked him in the house.

"And the funny thing is," said the Captain when they had gained the deck and the boat was being winched on board, "he never remembered me, and he doesn't know yet who I am."

"Why didn't you tell him?" said Harman.

"I thought of it, and then I held my tongue. There might be a chance of him making mischief when the war is over if he knew my name."

"But how in the nation could he make mis-

chief?" said the simple-minded Harman. "Germany bust or England bust, it's all the same. What you done was in war time, and so doesn't count."

"I'm not so sure of that," said the Captain. "I am not at all too sure of that. All that blab of Sprengel's about the property of nonbelligerents may have something in it. I'm not sure that it mayn't. It seems to me I've heard something about it before. Blast all nonbelligerents; there's always some thorn in the rose.

"Then, leaving the question of nonbelligerents aside, we have to think of our own position. We haven't a letter of marque, we have no more right to go hoofing about the seas gobbling German property than you have to go down Broadway lifting folk's watches."

"Well, what right have we to anything at all?" cut in the exasperated Harman. "Accordin' to you, we haven't the right to breathe nor live."

"Well, it's this way," said Blood. "We have

a perfect right to breathe and live as long as we can keep our necks out of the noose."

"D'ye mean to say they'd hang us?"

"It's highly probable. The Germans would, anyhow."

Harman had been attending to the unloading of the boat all through this talk. He now went and spat over the side, and then came back to his companion.

"That's cheerful," said he.

"They might give you the choice of shooting instead of hanging," went on the Captain. "For myself, I prefer hanging, I think, if it's properly done."

"Oh, Lord, no!" said Harman. "I've seen three fellows hanged, and I've sworn I would never get hanged if I could help it. Give me shootin', but shootin' or hangin' there's one thing fixed."

"And what's that?"

"We've got the boodle. I ain't one of your clever chaps, and I've no education to speak of, but I've noticed in life that the chaps who

get on are the chaps who get a thing fixed and stand on it, same as a chap stands on a scaffolding and builds from it, same as a chap builds a house and doesn't care a durn for the future.

"Now we've got the boodle fixed," Mr. Harman went on, "there's no use in bothering whether we're to be shot or die natural in our bunks. We've gone a certain distance, and what I says is, now we've gone so far let's go the whole hog. Let's rob every one we can lay hands on. That's my idea."

"Germans, you mean?"

"I ain't particular about Germans," said Mr. Harman. "Anything with money to it is good enough for me, but if it eases your mind we'll call 'em Germans."

The Captain whistled for a moment over this broad plan. Then he went to superintend the fellows who were making ready to get the anchor in.

There were no capstan bars on board the *Penguin*; a steam winch did the business. He

gave the signal for steam to be turned on, and then went up on the bridge.

The rattle and rasp of the winch pawls and the links of the anchor chain as it was hauled through the hawse pipe roused echoes from the shore. The gulls fishing on the little harbour made by the protecting reef rose, clamouring and beating their wings, and, as though the sound of the anchor chain had managed to free Sprengel, he appeared, having managed to work his way out of a window.

He came running down to the beach, shaking his fist and shouting till the Captain, more for the fun of the thing than any other reason, picked up a rifle and aimed it at him.

Then he turned and vanished into the woods.

The slack of the anchor chain was now in, and now the anchor itself left the water and was hoisted, dripping, to the catheads. The Captain rang on the engines, and the *Penguin* began to back out. She could have turned, but it was easier to back her out, especially as the sea was so smooth.

Outside the reef, as she slued round, she let go her siren.

Three times its echoes returned from the moist-throated woods and cliffs; then, full speed ahead, she went toward the east.

IX

THE "MINERVA"

NEXT morning early, Harman, standing on the bridge by the Captain, pointed to a smudge on the eastern horizon. The smoke of a steamer.

The Captain glanced at the spot indicated, shading his eyes with his hand; then he took the glass from its sling.

"I can't make her clearly out," said he. "The wind is covering her with her own smoke."

"She's maybe the mail boat that runs to Samoa," said Harman, "or maybe she's just a tramp. What are you goin' to do?"

"How d'you mean?"

"Well, I mean just that. Are we goin' to let her slip through our hands?"

"Harman," said the Captain, "when I signed on for this cruise I knew I was going

in for a shady job; still, there didn't seem much to it, anyway. I knew Shiner was going to tinker up a cable, and I judged he was clever enough to pull the business through safely and give us all a big profit. Well, that scheme is all gone, and now I'm a bloody pirate, it seems. The war with Germany started me on the road, and there's no use in crying out and saying, or pretending, we're privateers. We aren't; we're pirates. That's the long and the short of it. We aren't making war on Germany; we are just collecting dibbs for ourselves. I'm not proud of it, not by a long way; but we're in for it now and may as well make the most of it. You ask me what I am going to do with this vessel? Well, I'm going to go through her."

"Good!" said Harman. "I'm not one for runnin' extra risks, but we've risked so much already it's a pity not to risk a bit more when we have the chanct. For it's not once in a lifetime a chanct comes to sailormen like this."

"I don't suppose it is," said Blood. "It's not every day that chaps like Shiner and Wolff

fit out a cable-cutting party and get information of war right first thing through the cut cable. Ah, the smoke's clearing and her hull's coming out; let's see what she's like."

He put the glass to his eye and examined the distant ship; then as he looked he began to whistle.

"Well," said he, taking the glass from his eye, "I reckon we won't go through her—she's a man-o'-war."

"Whatcha say!" cried Harman, seizing the glass. He looked. Then he said:

"I reckon you're right; she's a fightin' ship sure enough. I guess we'll let her go this time, our armaments bein' so unequal; she's headin' right for us, and if you ask for my advice I'd advise a shift of helm."

"Yes," said Blood, "and don't you know that the first thing she'd do if we shifted our helm without a reason would be to come smelling round us? Don't you know that a man-o'-war has no business to do at all but to look after other folk's businesses? She's not due to time anywhere; she's got no cargo to deliver, no

owners to grumble at her if she's a day late. No, her business is to keep her eye out on the watch for shady people like you and me, and of course for the enemy if it's war time. No, I reckon we'll keep straight on, but there's one thing we'll do, and that is dismantle the spar gun. I reckon a dummy gun would be a difficult thing to explain away, and that, backed by the faces of our chaps and the fact that we haven't a yard of cable in our tanks and no log except the one I faked up and forgot to keep to date more'n a week ago. Might get us into very serious trouble."

"Is she a Britisher, do you think?" asked Harman, still ogling the approaching vessel through the glass.

"We'll soon see," replied the Captain.

He came down from the bridge, and hustled the fellows round, making them remove the dummy gun and place it down below on the cable deck.

Then he came back on to the bridge.

The stranger had ceased firing up, and had cleared herself of smoke. She was a cruiser

right enough, one of the modern, swift, small-tonnage cruisers that can yet sink you with a broadside or cripple you most effectually with a bow chaser and from the distance of four miles.

Blood laughed as he looked at her.

"I expect she can do her twenty-five knots," said he. "Piracy! Who could do anything with piracy these days between wireless and things like that. Harman, I guess I'm sick of this business and the uncertainty of it. I guess if this chap passes us and leaves us alone I'll make tracks for home—which means Frisco. We can get rid of the *Penguin* somehow or 'nother and crawl up home through Central America. Crawl up home, those are my sentiments now, for I've got a feeling down my spine that this chap is going to stop and speak to us."

"Why should she do that?" said Harman. "Wish you wouldn't be *drawin'* bad luck by prophesying it. Why in the nation should she stop a harmless cable ship?"

"Well, if she's a German she'd stop us to

see if we are English, and then sink us, and if she's a Britisher she'd stop us to see if we were German. I wouldn't mind in either case only for the *Spreewald* and Christobal Island and Wolff and Shiner. If the Germans were to take us, and Wolff and Shiner were to get news of our capture they'd make things pretty warm for us."

"Let's hope she's a Britisher," said Harman.

A mile off the stranger, who had obviously slackened speed, ported her helm slightly to give the *Penguin* a view of what she was saying.

She was saying, in the language of coloured flags:

"Lay to till I board you——"

"She doesn't ask to be invited," said Blood. "Run up the Stars and Stripes—thank God she's English!—but then we're German; at least we're owned by Wolff and Shiner, and *they're* German as sausages. Of course, they may have become naturalised Americans, but a British ship is not likely to go into the family history of Shiner or Wolff. Down with

you, Harman, anyway, and get the ship's papers together and have a box of cigars on the table for the chap that is sure to come aboard. And mind, you know nothing; pretend to be a bit silly, though that doesn't need much pretence. Keep your mouth closed and refer everything to me. I guess this situation will require some fancy work in the way of lying."

"I'll be mum," said Harman.

He slid down the bridge steps, and scuttered along the deck to the saloon companionway, while Blood, alone in his glory on the bridge, and trying to assume the dignity that he did not feel, gave his orders to the crew.

He rang the engines to half speed, and then to dead slow; then he rang them off, and the *Penguin*, whose heart had stopped beating, one might have fancied through fright, lay moving slightly to the swell and waiting for the attentions of the *Minerva*, for that was the stranger's name.

She formed a pretty picture across the blue water despite her ugly colouring and her singular lines. One knows it to be bad taste to

praise enthusiastically the new engines of warfare on land or sea. All the same, a twenty-five-knot cruiser, with her teeth showing, gives one a picture of power and speed combined hard to beat in the present, and perfectly unbeaten by the past.

Blood was not thinking things like this. He was taking the measure of the six-inch guns that seemed straining their long necks to get at him; also of the little guns that showed their fangs at all sorts of loopholes and unexpected places. He had never been so close up to the business side of a warship in all his sea experience, and he noticed everything with the freshness and the vividness and the deep, deep interest that objects assume for us when they suddenly become bound up with our most vital interests and our lives.

I can fancy Charles the First quite disregarding Bishop Juxon, the crowd, and all the great considerations that must have crowded about the scaffold erected in Whitehall; disregarding all these while he fixed his eyes on the axe with its handle of good English beach-

wood and its blade of British iron. That axe spoke to him if anything ever spoke to him, and it said, in words as well as deed: I am the symbol of the British people.

To Blood the *Minerva* was saying the same thing.

Blood was a Nationalist—when he had any politics at all—and maintained a sentimental dislike for Britannia. He really did not dislike her, but he fancied he did. In reality, he admired her. He admired her as a lady whom, to use his own language, you may belt about the head as much as you like, but who is sure to give you the knock-out blow in the long, long end.

The *Minerva* was one of the things she hit people with, and the weapon impressed him. The incongruity of the fact that he had been robbing Germans in the name of England did not strike him at all.

There are all sorts of subtleties in the Irish character that no foreigner, be he Englishman or German or Frenchman or Scot or Welshman, can understand.

Blood, then, though he had been out of Ireland long enough to lose his brogue almost entirely, though England had "betrayed his country in the past," and had never done much for him in the present would, had he seen an English and a German ship in action, have joined in on the side of England. He had often abused England, yet at a pinch he would have fought for her.

That is the Irish attitude, and it is unalterable. Ireland is, as a matter of fact, bound to England in wedlock. John Bull married her forcibly a great many years ago, and treated her cruelly bad after the marriage. She is always flinging the fact at his head, and she will go on doing so till doomsday, but she is his wife, and no matter what she says she is always ready, at a pinch, to go for any stranger that interferes with him.

When Blood declared war against the Germans he did so in all good faith as an ally of England. Cold reflection, however, told him that England would certainly not recognise that alliance, nor would she recognise the *Pen-*

guin as one of her fighting ships, official or unofficial, that with her peculiar ideas as to the rights of belligerents and nonbelligerents she might be as bad a party to be captured by as Germany.

He knew quite well now that between the *Spreewald* affair and the Sprengel business, to say nothing of the original cable-cutting adventure, he would have an exceedingly bad time were this cruiser to clap the shackles on him.

He watched her now as she dropped a boat; then he leaned over and shouted to Harman, who had come on deck again, to have the companionway lowered.

Then, as the boat came alongside, he came down from the bridge to meet his fate.

A young, fresh-looking individual came up the steps—a full lieutenant by his stripes—saluted the quarter-deck in a perfunctory manner, recognised Blood at once as the skipper, and addressed him without ceremony.

“What’s the name of your ship?” asked the lieutenant.

"The *Penguin*," replied Blood.

"The deuce it is! Are you sure it's not the *Sea Horse*?"

"The which horse?" inquired Blood, whose temper was beginning to rise.

It was his first experience of British navy ways with merchantmen, ways which are usually decided and heralded by language which is usually abrupt.

"*Sea Horse—Sea Horse—ah!*" His eye had fallen on a life buoy stamped with the word "*Penguin*." "*You are the Penguin. You will excuse me, but we were looking after something like you—a fifteen-hundred-ton grey-painted boat. The Sea Horse. Tramp steamer gone off her head and turned pirate, looted a German vessel under pretence that war had broken out between England and Germany.*"

"Well, it wasn't us," laughed the Captain. "Couldn't you see we were a cable ship by the gear on deck?"

"Yes, but the message came to us by wireless with bare details. What was your last port?"

"Christobal Island, quite close here—we have only left it a few hours, and by the same token there was news there that war had broken out between Germany and England."

"How did they get it?"

"Well, the fellow there—Sprengel is his name—has a wireless installation, and he picked up a message some days ago."

"He picked up a lie. It has been all over the Pacific, seems to me. There's been a sort of dust-up over a place called Agadir, but there's no small chance of war, worse luck. The business has been settled. We had the news only yesterday."

No news could have been more dumfounding to the unfortunate Blood than this. The cable message that had so upset Shiner and Wolff had been some lying news-agency rumour. On the strength of it he had done all he had done. More than that was the mystery of the *Sea Horse*. What on earth did it mean? Had another ship gone pirating on the same rumour?

He managed, however, to keep a cheerful countenance and even to speak.

"Well," said he, "I'm right glad to hear that. War may be all right for you, but it's no good to our business."

"No, I don't suppose it is," said the lieutenant. "Well, I suppose you are all right, but just as a matter of form I'll have a glance at your log."

"Of course," said Blood, with death in his heart. "If you'll come down to the saloon I'll have the greatest pleasure in showing it to you."

The lieutenant followed him below.

Harman had put out the log and the cigar box on the saloon table. The lieutenant refused a cigar, but showed interest at the sight of the log. He sat down and opened it.

"Why, good heavens," said he, "you haven't been writing it up for days and weeks! Where's your first officer's log?"

"Harman doesn't keep one," said Blood, whose anger was beginning to rise against the situation and his visitor.

"Who's Harman?" inquired the other, his eyes running over the entries.

"My first officer."

"Oh, doesn't he? H'm—h'm! Most extraordinary—what's this? 'Reached the Spot.' What spot?"

"The spot on the cable we were due to work on."

"What cable?"

"You must ask the owners that. It's private business."

"Who are the owners?"

"Shiner & Wolff."

"Where are they?"

Blood did not know where the precious pair might be at that moment, but he answered:

"Frisco."

"Are they a cable company or simple cable repairers?"

"Repairers, I think."

"Where are the rest of the ship's papers?"

Blood tramped off to his cabin, and returned with a bundle of all sorts of documents.

"Well," said the lieutenant, "I can't go

through them now. I must get back and report. I'll take these with me for reference." He bundled log and papers together and put them under his arm.

"Look here!" said Blood. "Are you taking those off the ship?"

"Only for reference," replied the other. "They will be quite safe, and you can have them back when I have reported."

"Very well," said Blood.

"And now I'd just like to have a look round. Follow me, please."

This was a new departure. A command. Blood followed, sick at heart, but cigar still in mouth.

The lieutenant evidently knew all about cable ships.

He stopped at the after-cable tank.

"Cable tank—how much have you on board?"

"Not an inch," replied Blood.

"H'm! But you want some spare cable for mending purposes."

"We used it all."

The officer passed on through the square where the forward cable tank was situated, then down to the cable deck.

Here the first thing he spotted was the infernal spar gun.

He smelled round it, and inquired its use.

"I don't know," said Blood. "It was on the ship when I joined—some truck left over from the last voyage, I believe."

This suddenly recalled the inquisitor to something he had forgotten—Blood's Board of Trade certificates.

Blood produced them, having to go back to his own cabin for them. They told their tale of long unemployment.

The lieutenant was a gentleman, and having glanced them over returned them without comment. Then he left the ship with the log and the papers under his arm, and was rowed back to the *Minerva*.

"What's up?" asked Harman.

"We are," said Blood. "There's no war; the whole thing was a lying rumour those two guys sucked in over the cable. There was a

good chance of war, but it was patched up, and it's now peace, perfect peace, with us perched on top of it like a pair of blame fools." He told the whole tale that we know. Then suddenly light broke upon him.

"The *Sea Horse*," said he. "I see the whole thing now—when we fired those two blighters off the ship and shoved them on the *Spreewald* it was their interest not to give the show away. We were nose on to the *Spreewald*, so she couldn't see our name. Shiner and Wolff would be the last men to give their own names, considering what they'd been doing and the latitude they were found in. They'd be sure to pose as innocents taken off some other ship by us. They'd fake up a yarn, and they'd fake up a new name for the old *Penguin*."

They had gone on to the bridge again and they were talking like this with an eye always upon the *Minerva*, that arbiter of their destinies.

"That's easy enough to understand," said Harman. "What gets me is how to understand our position. What the deuce did that

scuffy want, cartin' off the log and the ship's papers for? Ain't there no law to protect an innocent vessel bein' manhandled by a durned British cruiser in times of peace? What's to become of peaceful tradin' if such things is allowed? Where's the rights of neutrals if a monkey on a stick like that blue-an'-gold outrage on the name of a sailor can walk on board you an' walk off with the log book in his pocket? That's what I want to know. I'm not a man that wants much in this here world. I only wants justice."

"Faith, and I think you are going to get it," said the Captain. "Bare justice, as the little boy's mother said when she let down his pants. I'm not saying I didn't do most of the inciting to the piracy and plundering, but whether or no we are all in the soup, and the chap with the ladle is fishing for us, and there's no use in bothering or laying blame—we'd have shared equally in the profits."

"Oh, I'm makin' no remarks," said Harman. "I'm not the man to fling back at a pal, and I guess I can take the kicks just the same as the

ha'pence, but you've a better headpiece than me, and what I say is, be on the lookout to get the weather gauge of these jokers so be it's possible. You can do it if any man can—get out of the soup and be a pineapple."

"Give us a chance," said the Captain. "I'm not going to haul my colours down without a fight for it."

They stood watching the *Minerva*. Men were cleaning brasswork on board of her, a squad of sailors were doing Swedish exercises; the ship's work was going on as unconcernedly as though she were lying in harbour, and this vision of cold method and absolute indifference to all things but duty and routine did not uplift the hearts of the gazers.

"They're stuffed with pride, those chaps," said the single-minded Harman. "They potter about and potter about the seas with their noses in the air, lockin' down at the likes of us who do all the work's to be done in the world. And what do they do? Nothin'! They never carry an ounce of grain or a hoof or hide, or mend a cable or fetch a letter, and

they looks down on us that do as dirt. *You* saw that josser in the brass-bound coat and the way he come aboard—they're all alike."

"She's moving up to us," said the Captain, suddenly changing his position. "She's going to speak us."

The *Minerva*, with a few languid flaps of her propeller, was indeed moving up to them. When she came ranging alongside, within megaphone distance, a thing—a midshipman, Blood said—speaking through a megaphone nearly as big as itself addressed the *Penguin*.

"Ship ahoy! You are to follow us down to Christobal Island."

"Good Lord!" said Harman. The Captain said nothing, merely raising his hand to signify that he had understood.

"What's your speed?" came again the voice through the megaphone.

The Captain seized the bridge megaphone.

"Ten knots," he answered.

"Right!" came the reply. "Follow us at full speed."

The blue water creamed at the *Minerva's*

forefoot as her speed developed. She drew away rapidly, and the *Penguin* slowly and sulkily began to move, making a huge circle to starboard.

When she got into line the *Minerva* was a good two miles ahead.

Said Harman, for the Captain was speechless:

"I call this playing it pretty low down. *Jumping* Jeehoshophat, but we'll be had before Sprengel! He won't rub his hands—oh, no! I guess he won't rub his hands! And the old *Penguin* is going as if she liked it. Ain't there no gunpowder aboard to blow a hole in her skin an' sink her? And that durned British cruiser as tight fixed to us as though she was towing us with a forty-foot hawser. I reckon if I had some poison I'd pour it out and drink it. I would that! I feel that way low down I'd pour it out and drink it."

"Oh, *shut* your head!" said the Captain. "You carry on like an old woman with the stomach ache. We're caugnt and we're being lugged along by the police officer, and there's

no use in clutching at the railings or making a disturbance. The one good thing is that we haven't any of those chaps on board us, sitting with fixed bayonets on the saloon hatch and we in the saloon. 'The first thing to be done is to steal as much distance out of her as we can without her kicking.'

He went to the engine-room speaking tube:

"Below there, heave any muck you think likely to make smoke in the furnaces; there's a lot of old rubber and canvas waste on the cable deck. I'll tell Mr. Harman to have it sent down to you. I want to 'pear as if we were doin' more than our best—yes, we're caught and bein' led to port, and we mean to have a try to get loose; keep a good head of steam, and keep your eye on the engine-room telegraph. I'll be altering the speed now and then."

He sent Harman to do what he said; then he stood watching the distant *Minerva*. She was now about two and a quarter miles ahead. The two vessels were going at about equal speed, with the balance perhaps in favour of

the *Minerva*. He ordered the engines to half speed, and kept them so for a couple of minutes, then put them on to full speed again. The result of this proceeding was an almost imperceptible gain on the part of the cruiser.

In the next two hours, by the skilful use of this device, the distance between the two ships was increased to at least three and a half miles. Blood was content with that; so gradually had the increase been made that the *Minerva*, suspecting nothing, stood it, but Blood instinctively felt that she would not stand any more. The man had a keen psychological sense.

He was reckoning on a change of weather.

The wind had fallen absolutely dead, and the heat was terrific, simply because the air was charged with moisture. The captain knew these latitudes.

"I don't see what you're after," said Harman, coming up on the bridge. "What's the good of stealin' a few cable len'ths out of her? We can't get rid of her by day, for her guns can hit us at six miles, and if we made a show

to bolt she'd turn and be on us like a cat pouncin'. She can do twenty-five knots to our twelve. Then at sundown she's sure to close with us and keep us tied tight to her tail."

"Maybe," said the Captain.

He said nothing more.

An hour later he had his reward.

The horizon to westward and beyond the *Minerva* had become slightly indistinct; the horizon to eastward and behind them was still brilliant and hard.

He knew what was happening. A slight change of temperature was stealing from the west, precipitating the moisture as it came in the form of haze.

He put his hand on the lever of the telegraph and rang the engines off.

Harman said nothing. He went to the side and spat into the sea. Then he came back and stood watching.

"There's nothing like haze to knock gun firing on the head," said the Captain.

Harman said nothing, but moistened his lips. A minute passed, and then the *Minerva*,

all at once, like a person showing the faintest sign of indecision, showed the faintest change in definition. The faint haze had touched her.

At the same moment the Captain rang up the engines, and ordered the helm to be put hard astarboard. The *Penguin* forged ahead, and began to turn.

"They're so busy cleaning brasswork and saluting each other that they haven't noticed Mr. Haze," said the Captain. "They're new to this station and don't know that Mr. Fog is sure coming on her heels. Ah, she's seen us, and she's turning."

The *Minerva*, in fact, had also put her helm hard astarboard.

She was making a half circle, and as small a half circle as she possibly could, but the *Penguin* had got a quarter circle start on her, and while the *Minerva* was still going about the *Penguin* was off.

If hares ever chased ducks this business might be compared to a lame duck being chased by a hare. The *Minerva* could steam ten miles to the *Penguin's* five and over; her

guns even now could have sunk the *Penguin* with ease, though they might not have made very good shooting, owing to the haze; that elusive, delusive haze.

"Below there," cried the Captain through the engine-room speaking tube. "Shake yourself up, MacBean! Whack the engines up—give us fifteen or burst! What's the matter? We're being chased by that British cruiser, and it's the penitentiary for the lot of us if we're caught—that's all."

He turned, and at that moment the *Minerva* spoke.

A plume of smoke showed at her bow, there came a shrill, long-drawn "whoo-oooo" like a hysterical woman "going off" somewhere in the sky, then a jet of spume and a lather of foam in the sea two cable lengths to port.

It was a practice shell, and it left the water and made another plume a mile and a half ahead and yet another a mile beyond that.

It was her first and last useful word, for now the haze had her, destroying her for

war purposes as efficiently as a bursting shell in her magazine.

The haze had also taken the *Penguin*; everything seemed clear all around, but all distant things had nearly vanished.

Another shell came whooping and whining from the spectred *Minerva* before the white Pacific fog blotted her out.

A faint wind was bringing it, less a wind than a travelling chillness, a fall of temperature, moving from east to west.

The Captain, having given his instructions to the helmsman, left the bridge, and went down below.

X

THE LAST OF THE "PENGUIN"

SOUTH of Chiloe Island, on the Chile coast, there lies a little harbour which shall be nameless.

Here, six days later, the *Penguin* was hurriedly coaling—on the *Spreewald's* dollars.

It was at eight o'clock on a glorious and summerlike morning that she put out of this place with her bunkers only half full, her stores just rushed aboard cumbering the deck, and a man swung over the stern on a board, painting her name out above the thunder and pow-wow of the screw.

Blood would never have wasted paint and time in the attempt to alter the name of his ship had it been the English he dreaded now. As a matter of fact, word had come to the chief official at the little nameless port above indicated that the Germans were out looking for

a fifteen-hundred-ton cable boat named the *Penguin*, grey-painted and captained by a master mariner named Michael Blood.

The bleating of the infernal *Spreewald* had been heard all over the Pacific. Sprengel's bad language was following it. The *Minerva* had communicated by wireless with the German gunboat *Blitz*, lying at the German island of Savaii, in the Navigators. The *Blitz* had spoken to the cruiser Homburg, lying at Tongatabu; from Tongatabu it had been flashed to Fiji, and from there to Sydney. From Sydney it went to San Francisco, reaching the City of the Golden Gate in time for the morning newspapers; from there it passed in dots and dashes down the west American seaboard to Valparaiso and Valdivia.

Added to all the turmoil, the cable company whose cable had been broken smelled the truth and were howling for the *Penguin's* blood.

Marconi waves from Valparaiso had found the German cruiser squadron far at sea, and they had started on the hunt.

This was the news that had come to the chief

official at the little Chilean port, and which, being friendly toward Blood and unfriendly toward Germany, he communicated to the former. There was also the matter of a tip, which left the coffers of the *Penguin* completely empty after the account for coal, provisions, and harbour dues had also been settled.

"What's the course?" asked Harman as the coast line faded behind them.

"Straight out to sea," replied Blood. "Due west till we cut the track from Taliti to the Horn; then southeast for the Straits of Magellan. Ramirez is going to fake them with the news that we have gone north."

"Why not go straight for the Straits down the coast instead of puttin' out like this?"

"They'll be hunting the coast; sure to send a ship south. They'll never think of us going west; the last thing they'd think of."

"Are you sure Ramirez is safe?"

"Oh, he's safe enough. He hates the Germans, and he has taken my money. He'll stick to his bargain. I wish we were as safe. Good

Lord, every cent gone and nothing to show for it but this old hooker which we can't sell, and the sure and certain prospect of the penitentiary if we don't work a miracle—and even then we are lost dogs. Frisco is closed to us. We never can show our noses in Frisco again."

"I wouldn't have come on this cruise if I'd known things was goin' to pan out like this," said the ingenuous Harman. "No, indeedy! I'd have stuck to somethin' more honest. What I want to know is this: What's the use of war, anyway? When it has a chanct of doin' a man a good turn the blighted thing holds off, whereas if you and me had been runnin' a peace concern it's chances that it'd have come on. No, blamed if I don't turn a Methodis' passon if I ever get out o' this benighted job. It's crool hard to be choused like this by a cus't underhand trick served on one just as a chance turns up to make a bit. Why couldn't they have fought and been done with it? What's the good of all them guns and cannons, and all them ships? What in the nation's the good of them ships? Seems to me the only good of

them is to go snuffin' and smellin' round the seas, pokin' their guns into other folk's affairs and spoilin' their jobs. Well, there's an end of it. I'm a peace party man now and forever more. Blest if it ain't enough to make a man turn a Bible Christian!"

"You'd better go and see to the stowing of the stores," said the Captain. "There's no use in carrying on like that. I didn't make war, or else I guess I'd have made it more limber on its legs. Come! Hurry up!"

They stood two days to the west, and then they turned to the south coast and made their dash for the Straits.

The weather had changed. It was steadily blowing up from the westward. The sea, under a dull sky, had turned to the colour of lead, and the heavy swell told of what was coming.

They had not sighted a ship since leaving the Chilean coast, but three days after altering their course the smoke of a steamer appeared, blown high by the wind and far to westward. The wind had scarcely increased in force, but

the sea was tremendous and spoke of what was coming.

The Captain, on the bridge, stood with a glass to his eye, trying to make out the stranger. He succeeded, and then, without comment, handed the glass to Harman.

Harman, steadying himself against the rolling and pitching of the ship, looked.

A waste of tempestuous water leaped at him through the glass, and then, bursting a wave top to foam with her bows, grey as the seas she rode came a ship of war.

A cruiser, with guns nosing at the sky as if sniffing after the traces of the *Penguin*. She was coming bow on, and now, falling off a point or two, her fore funnel seemed to broaden out and break up. It was the three funnels showing, now *en masse* and now individually. Then, as she came to again, the three funnels became one.

"She's a three-funnel German," said Harman, "and she has spotted us."

Even as he spoke the wind suddenly increased in violence.

"I'm not bothering about her much," said the Captain. "I'm bothering about what's in front of us."

"Whacher mean?"

"Mean! Look at the sea and the stuff that's coming. Could we put the ship about in this sea? No, we couldn't. You know very well the old rolling log would turn turtle. Well, what's before us? A lee shore. If we don't reach the opening of the Straits of Magellan before sundown we're dead men all. Germans! I wish I were safe in the hold of a good German ship."

The truth of his words burst upon Harman. There are no lights at the entrance of the Magellan Straits; the entrance is not broad; to hit it in the darkness would be next door to impossible, and not to hit it would be certain death.

It was impossible to put the ship about. Harman's extraordinary mind did not seem much upset at the discovery.

"D'ye think we'll do it?" asked he.

"I don't know," said the Captain. "We may

and we mayn't. You see, we haven't a patent log. I haven't had a sight of the sun for two days. I can't figure things to a nicety. But if I had ten patent logs I wouldn't use them now. I'd be afraid to—what would be the good? Mac is whacking up the engines for all they're worth."

"Well, maybe we'll do it," said Harman, applying his eye again to the glass. Then: "She's going about."

The Captain took the glass.

The cruiser was turning from her prey before it was too late. It was a terrific spectacle, and once the Captain thought she was gone. The foam was bursting as high as her fighting tops and the grey water pouring in tons over her decks.

Yet she did it, and the last Blood saw of her was the kick of her propellers through sheets of foam.

At four o'clock that day they knew that they could not do it. There was no grog on board, so they were having a cup of tea in the saloon. The Captain sat at the head of the table, be-

fore the tin teapot and a plate of fancy biscuits.

The Captain and Harman were the only two men on board with a knowledge of what was coming.

"Another lump of sugar in mine," said Harman. "I don't hold with tea; I never did hold with tea. The only thing that can be said for it is it's a drink. And how some of them blighters ashore lives suckin' it day and night gets me."

He was drinking out of his saucer.

"Oh, tea's all right. I reckon tea's all right," said the Captain in an absent-minded manner.

"Maybe it is, but give me a hot whisky and you may take your tea to them that like it," replied Harman.

He lit his pipe and went on deck. The Captain followed. They could not keep away from the fascination up above.

The bos'n was on the bridge, and they relieved him.

Not a sign of land was in sight, and the sea was running higher than ever.

"You see," said the Captain, "we can't make it. It'll be sundown in an hour. We'll strike the coast some time after dark, and God have mercy on our souls."

"You ain't tellin' the hands?" said Harman.

"No use tellin' them. I told Mac, so that he might get the best out of the engines."

"And there's no bit of use gettin' out life belts," said Harman. "I know this coast; rocks as big as churches an' cliffs that nuthin' but flies could crawl up; and b'sides which if a chap found himself ashore he'd either starve or be et by niggers. They're the curiosest chaps, those blighters down here. I guess the A'mighty spoiled them in the bakin' and shoved them down here by the Horn to hide them from sight. Wonder what Wolff and Shiner is doin' by this?"

"God knows!" said the Captain.

The darkness fell without a sight of the land, and, leaving the bos'n on the bridge, they came down for a while to the engineroom for a warm. Mac just inquired if there was any sight of land, and said nothing more.

The engines were no longer being pressed, and they smoked and watched the projection and retraction of the piston rods, the revolution of the cranks, and all the labours of this mighty organism so soon to be pounded and ground to death on the hard rocks ahead.

It was toward midnight that the coast spoke, so that all men could hear on board the *Penguin*.

Its voice came through the yelling blackness of the night like the roar of a railway train in the distance.

The crew were gathered aft and in the alleyways, for all forward of the bridge the decks were swept. Harman and the Captain were on the bridge.

Mac had the word to give her every ounce of steam he could get out of the boilers, in the desperate idea that the harder she was pressed the higher she might be driven on the rocks, and the tighter she might stick.

The roaring of the breakers seemed now all around them, and the Captain and Harman were clinging to the bridge rails, bracing

themselves for the coming shock, when—just as a curtain is drawn aside in a theatre—the rushing clouds drew away from the moon.

The white, placid full moon whose light showed the foam-dashed coast to either side of them, and right ahead clear water.

They had struck the Magellan Straits by some miracle, just as the bullet strikes the bull's-eye of a target, and right to port they saw a great white ghost rising in the moonlight and falling again to the sea.

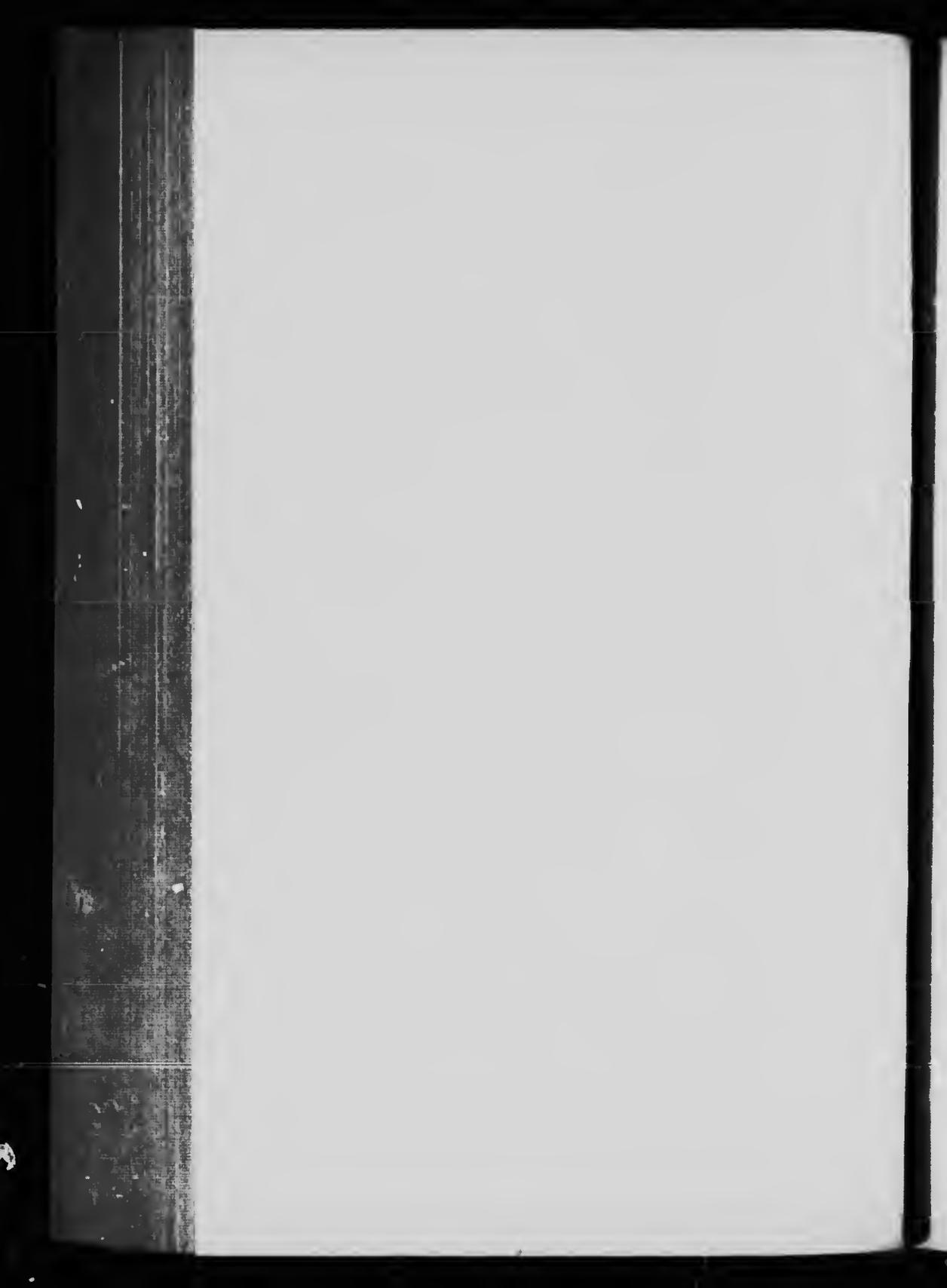
It was the foam breaking on the Westminster Hall.

It was breaking three hundred feet high, and Harman, as he was hurled along to the safety of the Straits, caught a glimpse of the great rock itself after a wave had fallen from it, glistening in the moonlight desolately, as slated roofs glisten after rain.

That was a sight which no man, having once seen, could ever forget.

I met Blood last year. He was exceedingly prosperous, or seemed so. He told me this

story, and I have so mixed names and places that he himself would scarcely recognise the chief actor, much less his enemies. As to the fate of the *Penguin*, I could only get him to say that she "went down" somewhere south of Rio, but that all hands were saved. Harman, he said, had turned religious.



PART II
THE "HEART OF IRELAND"

THE "HEART OF IRELAND"

I

THE CAPTAIN GETS A SHIP

AFTER the *Penguin* job, Captain Blood and Billy Harman, that simple sailorman, had come back to Frisco, the very port of all others one might fancy they would have avoided, but Billy had been a power in Frisco, and, reckoning on his power, he had taken the Captain back with him.

"There's no call to be afraid," said Billy; "there was more in that job than the likes of us. Why, they'd pay us money to tuck us away. 'Whatser use freezin' round N' York or Boston? There's nothin' to be done on the Eastern side. Frisco's warm."

"Damn warm!" put in the Captain.

"Maybe; but there's ropes there I can pull an' make bells ring. Clancy and Rafferty and

all that crowd are with me, and we've done nothin'. Why, we're plaster saints to the chaps that are walkin' round in Frisco with cable watch chains across their weskits."

They came back, and Billy Harman proved to be right. No one molested them. San Francisco was heaving in the throes of an election, and people had no time to bother about such small fry as the Captain and his companion, while, owing to the good offices of the Clancys and Raffertys, Billy managed to pick up a little money here and there and to assist his friend in doing likewise.

Then things began to get slack, and to-day, as bright a morning as ever broke on the Pacific coast, the Captain, down on his luck and without even the price of a drink, was hanging about a wharf near the China docks waiting for his companion.

He took his seat on a mooring bitt, and, lighting a pipe, began to review the situation. Gulls were flitting across the blue water, whipped by the westerly wind blowing in from the Golden Gate, a Chinese shrimp boat

with huge lugsail bellying to the breeze was blundering along for the upper bay, crossing the bows of a Stockton river boat and threatening it with destruction; pleasure yachts, burly tugs, and a great four-master just coming in with the salt of Cape Horn on her sun-blistered sides—all these made a picture bright and moving as the morning.

It depressed the Captain.

Business and pleasure have little appeal to a man who has no business and no money for pleasure. We all have our haunting terrors, and the Captain, who feared nothing in an ordinary way, had his. When in extremely low water, he was always haunted by the dread of dying without a penny in his pocket. To be found dead with empty pockets was the last indignity. His Irish pride revolted at the thought, and he was turning it over in his mind now as he sat watching the shipping.

Then he caught a glimpse of a figure advancing toward him along the quay side.

It was Mr. Harman.

"So there you are," said he, as he drew up to the Captain. "I been lookin' for you all along the wharf."

"Any news?" asked the Captain.

Mr. Harman took a pipe from his pocket, and explored the empty bowl with his little finger; then, leaning against the mooring bitt, he cut some tobacco up, filled the pipe, and lit it. Only when the pipe was alight did he seem to hear the Captain's question.

"That depends," said he. "I don't know how you're feelin', but my feelin' is to get out of here, and get out quick."

"There's not much news in that," said Blood. "I've had it in my head for days. What's the use of talking? There's only one way out of Frisco for you or me, and that's by way of a fo'c's'le, and that's a way I'm not going to take."

"Maybe," said Harman, "you'll let me say my say before putting your hoof in my mouth. News—I should think I had news. Now, by any chance did you ever sight the Channel Islands down the coast there lying off Santa

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Barbara? First you come to the San Lucas Islands, then you come to Santa Catalina, a big brute of an island she is, same longitude as Los Angeles; then away out from Santa Catalina you have San Nicolas."

"No, I've never struck them," replied Blood. "What's the matter with them?"

"The Chinese go there huntin' for abalone shells," went on Harman, disregarding the question. "I'm aimin' at a teeny yellow bit of an island away to the north of the San Lucas, a place you could cover with your hat, a place no one ever goes to."

"Well?"

"Well, there's twenty thousand dollars in gold coin lyin' there ready to be took away. Only this morning news came in that one of the See-Yup-See liners—you know them rotten old tubs, China owned, out of Canton, in the chow an' coffin trade—well, one of them things is gone ashore on San Juan, that's the name of the island. Swept clean, she was, and hove on the rocks, and every man drowned but two Chinee who got away on a raf'. I had

the news from Clancy. The wreck's to be sold, and Clancy says the opinion is she's not worth two dollars, seein' the chances are the sea's broke her up by this. Well, now look here, I know San Juan, intimate, and I know a vessel, once ashore there, won't break up to the sea in a hurry by the nature of the coast. There's some coasts will spew a wreck off in ten minutes, and some'll stick to their goods till there's nuthin' left but the starnpost and the ribs. It's shelvin' water there and rocks that hold like shark's teeth. The *Yan-Shan*—that's her name—will hold till the last trumpet if she's hove up proper, which, by all accounts, she is, and there's twenty thousand dollars aboard her."

"Well?" said Blood.

"Well, if we could crawl down there—you an' me—we'd put our claws on that twenty thousand."

"How in the nation are you going to rig out a wrecking expedition on two cents, and suppose you could buy the wreck for two dollars—where's your two dollars?"

"I'm not goin' to buy no wrecks," replied Harman, "nor fit out no wreckin' expeditions. What I want is something small and easy handled—no steam, get her out and blow down on the northwest trades, raise San Juan and the *Yan-Shan*, lift the dollars, and blow off with them. Why, it's as easy as walkin' about in your slippers!"

The Captain sighed.

"As easy as getting into the penitentiary," said he. "First of all, you'd have to steal a boat, and Frisco is no port to steal boats in; second, there's such things as telegraphs and cables. *You* ought to know that after the *Penguin* job. Then if we were caught, as we would be, you'd have the old *Penguin* rising like a hurricane on us. She's forgotten now, I know, but once a chap gets in trouble every-thing that's forgotten wakes up and shouts."

"Maybe," said Harman, "and maybe I'd be such a fool as to go stealin' boats. I'm not goin' to steal no boats. But I'm goin' to do this thing *somehow*, and once I set my mind on a job I does it. You mark me. I'm fair

drove crazy to get out of here and be after somethin' with money on the end of it, and once I'm like that and sets my think tank boilin', there's fish to fry. You leave it to me. I ain't no fool to be gettin' into penitentiaries. Well, let's get a move on; there's nothin' like movin' about to keep one's ideas jumpin'."

They walked along the wharf, stepping over mooring hawsers, and pausing now and then to inspect the shipping. There is no port in the world to equal San Francisco in variety and charm. Here, above all other places, the truth is borne in on one that trade, that much abused and seemingly prosaic word, is in reality another name for romance. Here at Frisco all the winds of the world blow in ships whose voyages are stories. Freighters with China mud still clinging to their anchor flukes, junks calling up the lights and gongs of the Canton River, schooners from the islands, whalers from the sulphur-bottom grounds, grain ships from half the world away, the spirit of trade hauls them all in through the Golden Gate, and, over and beyond these, the

bay itself has its romance in the ships that never leave it—junks and shrimp boats, the boats of Greek fishermen, yachts, and all sorts of steam craft engaged on a hundred businesses from Suisun Bay to the Guadeloupe River.

Wandering along, Blood and his companion came to Rafferty's Wharf. Rafferty's Wharf is a bit of the past, a mooring place for old ships condemned and waiting the breaking yards. It has escaped harbour boards and fires and earthquakes, healthy trade never comes there, and very strange deals have been completed in its dubious precincts over ships passed as seaworthy yet held together, as Harman was explaining now to Blood, "by the pitch in their seams mostly."

As they came along a man who was crossing the gangway from the tank saw Harman and hailed him.

"It's Jack Bone," said Harman to Blood. "Walk along and I'll meet you in a minute."

Blood did as he was directed, and Harman halted at the gangway.

"You're the man I want," said Bone.
"Who's your friend?"

"Oh, just a chap," replied Harman.
"What's up now?"

Bone took him by the arm, and led him along in an opposite direction to that in which Blood was going. Bone was the landlord of the Fore and Aft Tavern, half tavern, half sailors' boarding house, situated right on Rafterty's Wharf and with a stairway down to the water from the back premises. His face, to use Harman's description of it, was one grog blossom, and what he did not know of wicked wharfside ways could scarcely be called knowledge.

"Ginnell is layin' about, lookin' for two hands," said Bone. "He's due out this evenin', and it's five dollars apiece for you if you can lay your claws on what he wants. Whites, they must be whites; you know Ginnell."

Harman did.

Ginnell owned a fifty-foot schooner engaged sometimes in the shark-fishing trade, sometimes in other businesses of a more shady de-

scription. He had a Chinese crew, and, though the customhouse laws of San Francisco demanded only one white officer on a Chinese-manned boat, Ginnell always made a point of carrying two men of his own colour with him.

Being known as a hard man all along the wharveside, he sometimes found a difficulty in supplying himself with hands.

"Yes, I know Ginnell," replied Harman. "Him and his old shark boat by reputation. I've stood near the chap in bars now and again, but I don't call to mind speakin' to him. His reputation is pretty noisy."

"Well, I can't help that," said Bone. "I didn't make the chap nor his reputation; if he had a better one, I guess ten dollars wouldn't be lyin' your way."

"Nor twenty dollars yours," laughed Harman.

"That's my business," said Bone. "The question is, do you take on the job? I'd do it all myself only there's such a want of sailormen on the front. It's those durned Bands of Hope and Sailors' Rests that sucks 'em in, fills

'em with bilge in the way of tracks and ginger beer, and turns 'em out onfit for any job onless it's got a silver-plated handle to it. Mouth organs an' the New Jerusalem is all they cares for onct them wharf missionaries gets a holt on them. I tell you, Billy Harman, if they don't get up some by-law to stop these chaps propogatin' their gospels and spoilin' trade, the likes of me and you will be ruined—that's a fac'. Well, what do you say?"

All the time Mr. Bone was holding forth, Harman, who had struck an idea, was deep in meditation. The question roused him.

"If Ginnell wants two chaps," said he, "I believe I can fit him with them. Anyhow, where's he to be found?"

"He'll be at my place at three o'clock," said Bone, "and I've promised to find the goods for him by that."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Harman, "I'll find the chaps and have them at your place haff past three or so; you can leave it safe in my hands."

"You speak as if you was certain."

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"And certain I am. I've got the chaps you want."

"Now look here," said Bone, "don't you take on the job unless you're more than sure. Ginnell isn't no boob to play up and down with; he'd set in, mostlike, to wreck the bar if he thought I was playin' cross with him."

"Don't fret," said Harman. "I'll be there and now fork out a dollar advance, for I'll have some treatin' to do."

Bone produced the money. It changed hands, and he departed, while Harman pursued his way along the wharf toward his friend.

Blood was sitting on an empty crate.

"Well," said he, as the other drew up, "what business?"

Harman told every word of his conversation with Bone, and, without any addition to it, waited for the other to speak.

"Well, you've got the dollar," said Blood at last, "and there's some satisfaction in that. I'm not the chap to take five cents off a chap by false pretenses same's you've done with

Bone, but Bone's not a man by all accounts; he's a crimp in man's clothes, and if all the old whalemens he's filled with balloon juice and sent to perdition could rise up and shout, I reckon his name'd be known in two hemispheres."

"I beg your pardon," said Harman. "What was that you were saying about false pretenses? I haven't used no false pretenses. They ain't things I'm in the habit of usin' between man and man."

"Well, what have you been using? You told me a moment ago you'd agreed to furnish two hands to this chap's order for five dollars apiece and a dollar advance."

"So I have."

"And where's your hands?"

"I've got them."

"In your pocket?"

"Oh, close up!" said Harman. "I never did see such a chap as you for wearin' blinkers; can't you see the end of your nose in front of you? Well, if you can't, I can. However, I'll tell you the whole of the business later when

I've turned it round some more in my head. What I'm after now is grub. Here's a dollar, and I'm off to Billy Sheehan's; you come along with me—a dollar's enough for two—and you can raise your objections after you've got a beefsteak inside of you. Maybe you'll see clearer then."

The Captain said no more, but followed Harman. Far better educated than the latter, he had come to recognise that Harman, despite his real and childlike simplicity in various ways, had a mind quicker than most men's. He would often have gone without a meal during that wandering partnership which had lasted for nearly a year but for Harman's ingenuity and power of resource.

At Sheehan's they had good beefsteak and real coffee.

"Now," said Harman, when they had finished, "if you're ready to listen to reason, I'll tell you the lay I'm on. Ginnell wants two hands. I'm goin' to offer myself for one, and you are goin' to be the other."

"I beg your pardon," said Blood. "You

mean to say I'm to sign on in that chap's shark boat. Is that your meaning?"

"I said nuthin' about signin' on in shark boats. I said we two has got to get out of here in Ginnell's tub. Once outside the Gate we're all right."

"I see," said Blood. "We're to scupper Ginnell and take the boat—and how about the penitentiary?"

"I'm blest if you haven't got penitentiaries on the brain," said Harman. "If you leave this thing to me, I'll fix it so that there'll be no penitentiaries in the business. Of course if we were to go into such a fool's job as you're thinkin' about, we'd lay ourselves under the law right smart. No, the game I'm after is deeper than that, and it's Ginnell I'm goin' to lay under the law. Now I've got to run about and do things an' see people. I'll leave you here, and here's a quarter, and don't you spend it till the time comes. Now you listen to me. Wait about till haff past three, and at haff past three punctual you turn into the Fore and Aft and walk up to the bar and lay your quarter

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down and call for a drink. You'll see me there, and if I nod to you, you just nod to me. Then I'll have a word in private with you."

"Is that all?" said the Captain.

"That's all for the present," said Harman, rising up. "You'll be there?"

"Yes, I'll be there," said Blood, "though I'm blest if I can see your meaning."

"You will soon," replied the other, and, paying the score, off he went.

He turned from the wharves up an alley, and then into a fairly respectable street of small houses. Pausing before one of these, he knocked at the door, which was opened almost immediately by a big, blue-eyed, sun-burned, good-natured-looking man some thirty years of age and attired as to the upper part of him in a blue woollen jersey.

This was Captain Mike, of the Fish Patrol.

"Billy Harman!" said Captain Mike.

"Come in."

"No time," said Harman. "I've just called to say a word. I wants you to do me a favour."

"And what's the favour?" asked the Captain.

"Oh, nothin' much. D'you know Ginnell?"

"Pat Ginnell?"

"That's him."

"Well, I should think I did know the swab. Why, he's in with all the Greeks, and there's not a dog's trick played in the bay he hasn't his thumb in. Him and his old shark boat. Whatcher want me to do with him?"

"Nothin'," replied Harman, "and maybe a lot. I want you just to drop into the Fore and Aft and sit and smoke your pipe at haff past three. Then when I give you the wink you'll pretend to fall asleep. I just wants you as a witness."

"What's the game?" asked Captain Mike.

Harman told.

Had you been watching the two men from a distance, you might have fancied that there was a great joke between them from the laughter of Captain Mike and the way in which Harman was slapping his thigh. Then the door closed, and Harman went off, steering north through a maze of streets till he reached his lodgings.

Here he packed a few things in a bundle and

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had an interview with his landlady, a motherly woman whose income was derived from a washtub and two furnished bedrooms.

Among the other belongings which he took with him was a box of quinine tabloids. These he placed in the pocket of his coat, and, with the bundle under his arm, departed.

It was five minutes past three when he entered the dirty doggery misnamed the Fore and Aft, and there before the bar behind which Bone was serving drinks stood Ginnell.

Pat Ginnell, to give him his full name, was an Irishman of the sure-fwhat type, who might have been a bricklayer but for his decent clothes and sea air and the big blue anchor tattooed on the back of his left hand. There was no one else in the bar.

"Here's the gentleman," said Bone, when he sighted Harman. "Up to time and with the goods to deliver, I dare say. Harman, this is the Captain; where's the hands?"

"Well," said Harman, leaning his elbows on the bar, "I believe I've got them. One of them's meself."

"D'you mean to say you're up to sign on with me?" asked Ginnell.

"That's my meanin'," said Harman.

Ginnell looked at Bone. Then he spoke.

"It won't do," said he. "I know you be name, Mr. Harman; you're in with Clancy and that crowd, and my boat's too rough for the likes of you."

"You needn't fear about that," said Harman. "I've done with Clancy. What I've got to do is get out of Frisco and get out quick. The cops are after me; there you have it. I've got to get out of here before night—do you take me—and I'm so pressed to get out sudden I'll take your word for ten dollars a month without any signin'."

Ginnell's brow cleared.

"What are you havin'?" said he.

"I'll take a drink of whisky," replied Harman.

The bargain was concluded.

"And now," said Ginnell, "what about the other chap?"

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Harman wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"I've made an arrangement with a chap to meet me here," said he. "He'll be in in a minute."

"What's he like?" asked Ginnell.

"Like? Why, I'll tell you what he's like; he wouldn't sign on in your tub for a hundred dollars a month."

"Faith and you're a nice sort of chap," said Ginnell. "Is it playin' the fool with me you are?"

By way of reply Harman took the box of quinine tabloids from his pocket, opened it, showed the contents, and winked.

Bone and Ginnell understood at once.

"One of those in his drink will lay him out for an hour," said Harman, "without hurtin' him. Put one in your weskit pocket, Bone—and how about your boat?"

"She's down below at the stairs," replied the landlord, putting the tabloid in his waistcoat pocket. "I'll go and call Jim to get her ready—a moment, gentlemen." He vanished

into a back room, and they heard him shouting orders to Jim; then he returned, and as he passed behind the bar who should enter but Captain Mike!

The Captain walked to the bar, called for a drink, and without as much as a glance at the others took it to a seat in a far corner, where he lit a pipe. Several wharf habitués loafed in, and soon the place became hazy with tobacco smoke and horrible with the smell of rank cigars.

"Well," said Ginnell, "where's your man? I'm thinkin' he's given you the slip, and be the powers, Mr. Harman, if he has, it'll be the worst for you."

The brute in Ginnell spoke in his growl, and Harman was turning over in his mind the fate of any unfortunate who had Ginnell for boss when the swing door opened and Blood appeared.

"That's him," said Harman. "You leave him to me."

Blood was not the sort of man to frequent a hole like the Fore and Aft, and he frankly

spat when he came in. He was in a temper, or rather the beginning of a temper, and Harman seemed to have some difficulty in soothing him. They had a confabulation together near the corner where Captain Mike, his glass and pipe on the table before him, was sitting, evidently asleep, and then Blood, seeming to agree with some matter under discussion, allowed himself to be led to the bar.

"This is me friend, Captain Ginnell," said Harman. "Captain, this is me friend, Michael Blood. Looking for a ship he is."

"I can't offer him a ship," said Ginnell, "but I can offer him a drink. What are you takin', sir?"

Blood called for a whisky.

The quinine tabloid popped into the bottom of the glass by Bone dissolved almost immediately, nor did Blood show that he detected the presence in his drink. He loathed quinine, and this forced dose added to the flood of his steadily rising temper without, however, interfering with his powers of self-control.

He was a good actor, and the way he clutched at the bar ledge shortly after he had finished his drink left nothing to be desired.

"Let him lay down," said Harman.

"I can't leave the bar," said Bone, "but if the gentleman cares to lay down in my back room he's welcome."

Blood, allowing himself to be conducted to this resting place, Ginnell followed without drawing the attention of the others in the bar.

Arrived in the back room, Blood collapsed on an old couch by the window, and, lying there with his eyes shut, he heard the rest.

He heard the whispered consultation between Harman and the other, the trapdoor being opened, Jim, the boatman, being called. And then he felt a hand on his shoulder and Ginnell's voice adjuring him to rouse up a bit and come along for a sail.

Helped on either side by the conspirators, he allowed himself to be led to the trapdoor.

"We'll never get him down them steps," said Harman, alluding to the stairs leading down to where the boat was swaying on the green

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water that was swishing and swashing against the rotten piles of the wharf.

"This is the way it's done," said Ginnell, and, twitching Blood's feet from under him, he sent him down the stairway like a bag of meal to where Jim was waiting to receive him.

At half past six o'clock that day the *Heart of Ireland*—that was the name of Ginnell's boat—passed the tumble of the bar and took the swell of the Pacific like a duck.

Ginnell, giving the wheel over to one of the Chinese crew, glanced to windward, glanced back at the coast, where Tamalpais stood cloud-wrapped and gilded by the evening sun, and then turned to the companionway leading down to the hole of a cabin where they had deposited their shanghaied man.

"I'm goin' to rouse that swab up," he said; "he ought to be recovered by this."

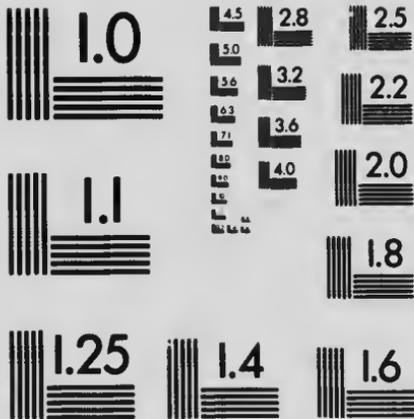
"Go easy with him," said Harman.

"I'll be as gentle with him as a mother," replied the skipper of the *Heart of Ireland*, with a ferocious grin.



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Harman watched the unfortunate man descending. He had got shoulder deep down the ladder when he suddenly vanished as if snatched below, and his shout of astonishment and the crash of his fall came up simultaneously to the listener at the hatch.

Then came the sounds of the fight. Harman had seen Blood fighting once, and he had no fear at all for him. If he feared for any one, it was Ginnell, who was crying now for mercy and apparently receiving none. Then of a sudden came silence, and Harman slipped down the ladder.

Blood, during his incarceration, had ransacked the cabin and secured the Captain's revolver. He was seated now, revolver in hand, on Ginnell's chest, and Ginnell was lying on the cabin floor without a kick or an ounce of fight in him.

"You haven't killed him?" asked Harman.

"I don't know," replied Blood. "Speak up, you swab, and answer! Are you dead or not?"

"Faith, I don't know," groaned the unfortunate. "I'm near done. What are you up to?"

What game is this you're playin' on me? Is it murder or what?"

"Let me talk to him," said Harman. "Pat Ginneil, you've doped and shanghaied a man—meanin' my friend, Captain Blood—and I've got all the evidence and witnesses. Captain Mike, of the Fish Patrol, is one; he came to the Fore and Aft be request and saw the whole game. That means the penitentiary for you if we split. You'll say I provided the dope. Who's to prove it? When I told you the cops were after me I told a lie. Who's to prove it? I wanted you and your old tub, and I've got 'em. Say a word against me and see what Clancy will do to you. You shanghaied me friend, and now you're shanghaied yourself in your own ship, and you'll never dare to have the law on us because, d'you see, we've got the law on you. The Captain there has got your revolver, the coolies on deck don't care, they never even turned a hair when they heard you shoutin'. Now my question is, do you intend to take it quiet, or would you sooner be hove overboard?"

"Faith and there's no use in kicking," replied the owner of the *Heart of Ireland*. "I gives in."

"Then up on your feet!" said Blood, rising and putting the revolver in his pocket. "And up on deck with you! You're one of the hands now, and if you ever want to see Frisco again, you'll take any orders and take them smart. You'll berth aft with us, but your rating is cabin boy, and your pay. Up with you!"

Ginnell went up the ladder, and the others followed.

Ginnell showed to the light of day two black eyes and the marks on his chin of the frightful uppercut that had closed the fight.

He looked like a beaten dog as Blood called the crew, in order to pick watches with Harman.

"I take the chap that's steering," said Blood.

"And I takes Pat Ginnell," said Harman.

They finished the business, and dismissed the hands, who seemed to see nothing strange in the recent occurrence among the whites, and who were thronging now to the fo'c's'le

for their supper, their faces all wearing the same Chinese expression, the expression of men who know everything, of men who know nothing.

Then, having set a course for the San Lucas Islands, and while Ginnell was washing himself below, Blood, with his companion, leaned on the rail and looked at the far-away coast dying out in the dusk.

"Seems strange it was only this mornin' I projected gettin' out like this," said Harman, "and here we are out, with twenty thousand dollars ahead of us, if the *Yan-Shan* hasn't broke up, which she hasn't. 'Pears to me it was worth a dose of quinine to do the job so neat with no bones broke and no fear of the law at the end of it."

"Maybe," said the Captain.

He whistled softly to the accompaniment of the slashing of the bow wash, looking over toward the almost vanished coast, above which, in the pansy blue of the evening sky, stars were now showing like points of silver.

II

THE "YAN-SHAN"

I

THE *Heart of Ireland* was spreading her wings to the northwest trades, making a good seven knots with the coast of California a vague line on the horizon to port and all the blue Pacific before her.

Captain Blood was aft with his mate, leaning on the rail and watching the foam boosting away from the stern and flowing off in Parian-Marbaline lines on the swirl of the wake. Ginnell was forward on the lookout, and one of the coolie crew was at the wheel.

"I'm not given to meeting trouble halfway," said Blood, shifting his position and leaning with his left arm on the rail, "but it 'pears to me Pat Ginnell is taking his set-down a mighty sight too easy. He's got something up his sleeve."

"So've we," replied Harman. "What can he do? He laid out to shanghai you, and, by gum, he did it. I don't say I didn't let him down crool, playin' into his hands and pretendin' to help and gettin' Captain Mike as a witness, but the fac' remains he got you aboard this hooker by foul play, shanghai'd you were, and then you turns the tables on him, knocks the stuffin' out of him, and turns him into a deck hand. How's he to complain? I'd start back to Frisco now and dare him to come ashore with his complaints. We've got his ship—well, that's his fault. He's no legs to stand on, that's truth.

"Leavin' aside this little bisness, he's known as a crook from Benicia right to San José. The bay reeks with him and his doin's; settin' Chinese sturgeon lines, Captain Mike said he was, and all but cocht, smugglin' and playin' up to the Greeks, and worse. The bay side's hungry to catch him an' stuff him in the penitentiary, and he hasn't no friends. I'm no saint, I owns it, but I'm a plaster Madonna to Gin-

nell, and I've got friends, so have you. Well, what are you bothering about?"

"Oh, I'm not bothering about the law," said Blood; "only about him. I'm going to keep my eye open and not be put asleep by his quiet ways—and I'd advise you to do the same."

"Trust me," said Harman, "and more especial when we come to 'longsides with the *Yan-Shan*."

Now the *Yan-Shan* had started in life somewhere early in the nineties as a twelve-hundred-ton cargo boat in the Bullmer line; she had been christened the *Robert Bullmer*, and her first act when the dogshores had been knocked away was a bull charge down the launching slip, resulting in the bursting of a hawser, the washing over of a boat, and the drowning of two innocent spectators; her next was an attempt to butt the Eddystone over in a fog, and, being unbreakable, she might have succeeded only that she was going dead slow. She drifted out of the Bullmer line on the wash of a lawsuit owing to the ramming by her of a Cape boat in Las Palmas harbour; engaged herself

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in the fruit trade in the service of the Corona Capuella Syndicate, and got on to the Swimmer Rocks with a cargo of Jamaica oranges, a broken screw shaft, and a blown-off cylinder cover. The ruined cargo, salvage, and tow ruined the syndicate, and the *Robert Bullmer* found new occupations till the See-Yup-See Company, of Canton, picked her up, and, rechristening, used her for conveying coffins and coolies to the American seaboard. They had sent her to Valdivia on some business, and on the return from the southern port to Frisco she had, true to her instincts and helped by a gale, run on San Juan, a scrap of an island north of the Channel Islands off the California coast. Every soul had been lost with the exception of two Chinese coolies, who, drifting on a raft, had been picked up and brought to San Francisco.

She had a general cargo and twenty thousand dollars in gold coin on board, but the coolies had declared her to be a total wreck; said when they had last sighted her she was going to pieces.

That was the yarn Harman heard through Clancy, with the intimation that the wreck was not worth two dollars, let alone the expenses of a salvage ship.

The story had eaten into Harman's mind; he knew San Juan better than any man in Frisco, and he considered that a ship once ashore there would stick; then Ginnell turned up, and the luminous idea of inducing Ginnell to shanghai Blood so that Blood might, with his—Harman's—assistance, shanghai Ginnell and use the *Heart of Ireland* for the picking of the *Yan-Shan's* pocket entered his mind.

"It's just when we come alongside the *Yan-Shan* we may find our worse bother," said Blood.

"Which way?" asked Harman.

"Well, they're pretty sure to send some sort of a wrecking expedition to try and salve some of the cargo, let alone those dollars."

"See here," said Harman, "I had the news from Clancy that morning, and it had only just come to Frisco; it wasn't an hour old. We put the cap on Ginnell, and were out of the

Golden Gate before sundown same day. A wrecking ship would take all of two days to get her legs under her, supposing any one bought the wreck, so we have two days' start. We've been makin' seven knots and maybe a bit over; they won't make more. So we have two days to our good when we get there."

"They may start a steamer out on the job," said Blood.

"Well, now, there's where my knowledge comes in," said Harman. "There's only two salvage ships at present in Frisco, and rotten tubs they are. One's the *Maryland*. She's most a divin' and dredgin' ship; ain't no good for this sort of work; sea-bottom scrapin' is all she's good for, and little she makes at it. The other's the *Port of Amsterdam*, owned by Gunderman. She's the ship they'd use. She's got steam winches and derricks 'nough to discharge the Ark, and stowage room to hold the cargo down to the last flea, *but* she's no good for more than eight knots; she steams like as if she's a drogue behind her, because why? She's got beam engines—she's that old, she's

got beam engines in her. I'm not denyin' there's somethin' to be said for them, but there you are—there's no speed in them."

"Well, beam engines or no beam engines, we'll have a pretty rough time if she comes down and catches us within a cable's length of the *Yan-Shan*," said Blood. "However, there's no use in fetching trouble. Let's go and have a look at the lazaret; I want to see how we stand for grub."

Chopstick Charlie was the name Blood had christened the coolie who acted as steward and cabin hand. He called him now, and out of the opium-tinctured gloom of the fo'c's'le Charlie appeared, received his orders, and led them to the lazaret.

None of the crew had shown the slightest emotion on seeing Blood take over command of the schooner and Ginnell swabbing decks. The fight that had made Blood master of the *Heart of Ireland* and Ginnell's revolver had occurred in the cabin and out of sight of the coolies, but even had it been conducted in full view of them it is doubtful whether they would

have shown any feeling or lifted a hand in the matter.

As long as their little privileges were regarded, as long as opium bubbled in the evening pipe, and pork, rice, and potatoes were served out one white skipper was the same as another to them.

The overhaul of the stores took half an hour, and was fairly satisfactory. When they came on deck, Blood, telling Charlie to take Ginnell's place as look-out, called the latter down into the cabin.

"We want to have a word with you," said Blood, as Harman took his seat on a bunk edge opposite him. "It's time you knew our minds and what we intend doing with the schooner and yourself."

"Faith," said Ginnell, "I think it is."

"I'm glad you agree. Well, when you shanghaied me on board this old shark boat of yours, there's little doubt as to what you intended doing with *me*. Harman will tell you, for we've talked on the matter."

"He'd 'a' worked you crool hard, fed you

crool bad, and landed you, after a six months' cruise, doped or drunk, with two cents in your pocket and an affidavit up his sleeve that you'd tried to fire his ship," said Harman. "I know the swab."

Ginnell said nothing for a moment in answer to this soft impeachment; he was cutting himself a chew of tobacco. Then at last he spoke.

"I don't want no certifikit of character from either the pair of you," said he. "You've boned me ship, and you've blacked me eye, and you've near stove me ribs in sittin' on me chest and wavin' me revolver in me face. What I wants to know is your game. Where's your profits to come from on this job?"

"I'll tell you," replied Blood. "There's a hooker called the *Yan-Shan* piled on the rocks down the coast, and we're going to leave our cards on her—savvy?"

"O Lord!" said Ginnell.

"What's the matter now?" asked Harman.

"What's the matter, d'you say?" cried Gin-

nell. "Why, it's the *Yan-Shan* I was after myself."

Blood stared at the owner of the *Heart of Ireland* for a moment, then he broke into a roar of laughter.

"You don't mean to say you bought the wreck?" he asked.

"Not me," replied Ginnell. "Sure, where d'you think I'd be findin' the money to buy wrecks with? I had news that mornin' she was lyin' there derelick, and I was just slippin' down the coast to have a look at her when you two spoiled me lay by takin' me ship."

It was now that Harman began to laugh.

"Well, if that don't beat all!" said he. "And maybe, since you were so keen on havin' a look at her, you've brought wreckin' tools with you in case they might come in handy?"

"That's as may be," replied Ginnell. "What you have got to worry about isn't wreckin' tools, but how to get rid of the boodle if it's there. Twenty thousand dollars, that's the figure."

"So you know of the dollars," said Blood.

"Sure, what do you take me for?" asked Ginnell. "D'you think I'd have bothered about the job only for the dollars? What's the use of general cargo to the like of me? Now what I'm thinkin' is this, you want a fence to help you to get rid of the stuff. Supposin' you find it, how are you to cart this stuff ashore and bank it? You'll be had, sure, but not if I'm at your back. Now, gents, I'm willin' to wipe out all differences and help in the salvin' on shares, and I'll make it easy for you. You'll each take seven thousand, and I'll take the balance, and I won't charge nuthin' for the loan you've took of the *Heart of Ireland*. It's a losin' game for me, but it's better than bein' done out entirely."

Blood looked at Harman, and Harman looked at Blood. Then telling Ginnell that they would consider the matter, they went on deck to talk it over.

There was truth in what Ginnell said. They would want help in getting the coin ashore in safety, and, unless they marooned or murdered Ginnell, he, if left out, would always be a wit-

ness to make trouble. Besides, though engaged on a somewhat shady business, neither Blood nor Harman was a scoundrel. Ginnell up to this had been paid out in his own coin, the slate was clean, and it pleased neither of them to take profit from this blackguard beyond what they considered their due.

It was just this touch of finer feeling that excluded them from the category of rogues and made their persons worth considering and their doings worth recounting.

"We'll give him what he asks," said Blood, when the consultation was over, "and, mind you, I don't like giving it him one little bit, not on account of the money, but because it seems to make us partners with that swab. I tell you this, Billy Harman, I'd give half as much again if an honest man was dealing with us in this matter instead of Pat Ginnell."

"And what honest man would deal with us?" asked the ingenuous Harman. "Lord! One might think the job we was on was tryin' to sell a laundry. It's *safe* enough, for who can say we didn't hit the wreck cruisin' round

promiscuous, but it won't hold no frills in the way of honesty and such. Down with you, and close the bargain with that chap and tip him the wink that, though we're mugs enough to give him six thousand dollars for the loan of his old shark boat, we're men enough to put a pistol bullet in his gizzard if he tries any games with us. Down you go."

Blood went.

II

Next morning, an hour after sunrise, through the blaze of light striking the Pacific across the far-off Californian coast, San Juan showed like a flake of spar on the horizon to southward.

The sea there was all of an impossible blueness, the Pacific blue deepened by the Kuro Shiwo current, that mysterious river of the sea which floods up the coast of Japan, crosses the Pacific toward Alaska, and sweeps down the West American seaboard to fan out and lose itself away down somewhere off Chile.

Harman judged the island to be twenty

miles away, and as they were making six and a half knots, he reckoned to hit it in three hours if the wind held.

They went down and had breakfast, and after the meal Ginnell, going to the locker where he had stowed the wrecking tools, fetched them out and laid them on deck. There were two crowbars and a jimmy, not to mention a flogging hammer, a rip saw, some monstrous big chisels, and a shipwright's mallet. They looked like a collection of burglar's implements from the land of Brobdignag.

"There you are," said Ginnell. "You never know what you may want on a job like this, with bulkheads maybe to be cut through and chests broke open. Get a spare sail, Mither Harman, and rowl the lot up in it so's they'll be aisier for thtransport."

He was excited, and the Irish in him came out when he was like that; also, as the most knowledgable man in the business, he was taking the lead. You never could have fancied, from his cheerful manner and his appearance of boss, that Blood was the real master of the

situation, or that Blood, only a few days ago, had nearly pounded the life out of him, captured his revolver, and taken possession of the *Heart of Ireland*.

The schooner carried a whaleboat, and this was now got in readiness for lowering, with provisions and water for the landing party, and, when that was done, the island, now only four miles distant, showed up fine, a sheer splinter of volcanic rock standing up from the sea and creamed about with foam.

Not a sign of a wreck was to be seen, though Ginnell's glasses were powerful enough to show up every detail from the rock fissures to the roosting gulls.

Gloom fell upon the party, with the exception of Harman.

"It'll be on the other side if it's there at all," said he. "She'd have been coming up from the s'uth'ard, and if the gale was behind her, it would have taken her right on to the rocks; she couldn't be on this side, anyhow, because why? There's nuthin' to hold her. It's a mile-deep water off them cliffs, but on the other side

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it shoals gradual from tide marks to ten-fathom water, which holds for a quarter of a mile. Keep her as she is; you could scrape them cliffs with a battleship without danger of groundin'."

After a minute or two, he took the wheel himself, and steered her, while the fellows stood by the halyards, ready to let go at a moment's notice.

It was an impressive place, this north side of the island of San Juan. The heavy swell came up, smacking right on to the sheer cliff wall, jetting green water and foam yards high to the snore and boom of caves and cut-outs in the rock. Gulls haunted the place. The black petrel, the Western gull, and the black-footed albatross all were to be found here. Long lines of white gulls marked the cliff edges, and, far above, in the dazzling azure of the sky, a Farallon cormorant circled like the spirit of the place, challenging the newcomers with its cry.

Harman shifted his helm, and the *Heart of Ireland*, with main boom swinging to port,

came gliding past the western rocks and opening the sea to southward, where, far on the horizon, lovely in the morning light like vast ships under press of sail, the San Lucas Islands lay remote in the morning splendour.

Away to port the line of the Californian coast showed beyond the heave of the sea from Point Arguello to Point Concepcion, and to starboard and west of the San Lucas a dot in the sun dazzle marked the peaks of the island of San Nicolas.

Then, as the *Heart of Ireland* came round and the full view of the south of San Juan burst upon them, the wreck piled on the rocks came in sight, and anchored quarter of a mile off the shore—a Chinese junk!

Harman swore.

Ginnell, seizing his glasses, rushed forward and looked through them at the wreck.

“It’s swarmin’ with chows,” cried he, coming aft. “They seem to have only just landed be the look of them. Keep her as she goes, and be ready with the anchor there forrard; we’ll scupper them yet. Mr. Harman, be plazed to

fetch up that lin'th of lead pipe you'll find on the cabin flure be the door. Capt'in, will you see with Charlie here to the boat while I get the anchor ready for droppin'? Them coolies is all thumbs."

He went forward, and the *Heart of Ireland*, with the wind spilling out of her mainsail, came along over the heaving blue swell, satin-smooth here in the shelter of the island.

Truly the *Yun-Shan*, late *Robert Bullmer*, had made a masterpiece of her last business. She had come stem on, lifted by the piling sea, and had hit the rocks, smashing every bow plate from the keel to within a yard or two of the gunwale, then a wave had taken her under the stern and lifted her and flung her broadside on, just as she now lay, pinned to her position by the rock horns that had gored her side, and showing a space of her rust-red bottom to the sun.

The water was squattering among the rocks right up to her, the phosphor-bronze propeller showed a single blade cocked crookedly at the end of the broken screw shaft; rudder there

was none, the funnel was gone, spar deck and bridge were in wreck and ruin, while the cowl of a bent ventilator turned seaward seemed contemplating with a languid air the beauty of the morning and the view of the far-distant San Lucas Islands.

The *Heart of Ireland* picked up a berth inside the junk, and as the rasp and rattle of the anchor chain came back in faint echoes from the cliff, a gong on the junk woke to life and began to snarl and roar its warning to the fellows on the wreck.

"Down with the boat!" cried Ginnell. With the "lin'th of lead pipe," a most formidable weapon, sticking from his pocket, he ran to help with the falls. The whaleboat smacked the water, the crew tumbled in, and with Ginnell in the bow, it started for the shore.

The gong had done its work. The fellows who had been crawling like ants over the dead body of the *Yan-Shan* came slithering down on ropes, appeared running and stumbling over the rocks abaft the stern, some hauling

along sacks of loot, others brandishing sticks or bits of timber, and all shouting and clamouring with a noise like gulls whose nests are being raided.

There was a small scrap of shingly beach off which the Chinamen's scow was lying anchored with a stone and with a China boy for anchor watch. The whaleboat passed the scow, dashed nose end up the shelving beach, and the next moment Ginneil and his lin'th of lead pipe was among the Chinamen, while Blood, following him, was firing his revolver over their heads. Harman, with a crowbar carried at the level, was aiming straight at the belly of the biggest of the foe when they parted right and left, dropping everything, beaten before they were touched, and making for the water over the rocks.

Swimming like rats, they made for the scow, scrambled on board her, howked up the anchor stone, and shot out the oars.

"They're off for the junk," cried Ginnell. "Faith, that was a clane bit of work! Look at thim rowin' as if the divil was after thim."

They were literally, and now on board the junk they were hauling the boat in, shaking out the lateen sail, and dragging up the anchor as though a hundred pair of hands were at work instead of twenty.

Then as the huge sail bellied gently to the wind, and the junk broke the violet breeze shadow beyond the calm of the sheltered water, a voice came over the sea, a voice like the clamour of a hundred gulls, thin, ringing, fierce as the sound of tearing calico.

"Shout away, me boys!" said Ginnell. "You've got the shout and we've got the boodle, and good day to ye!"

III

He turned with the others to examine the contents of the sacks dropped by the vanquished ones and lying among the rocks. They were old gunny bags, and they were stuffed with all sorts of rubbish and valuables—musical instruments, bits of old metal, cabin curtains, and even cans of bully beef; there was no sign of dollars.

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"The fools were so busy picking up everything they could find lying about they hadn't time to search for the real stuff," said Blood. "Didn't know of it."

"Well," said Ginnell, "stick the ould truck back in the bags with the instruments; we'll sort it out when we get aboard, and fling the rubbish over and keep what's worth keepin'."

Helped by the coolies, they refilled the bags, and left them in position for carrying off, and then, led by Ginnell, they made round the stern of the wreck to the port side.

Now on the sea side the *Yan-Shan* presented a bad enough picture of desolation and destruction, but here on the land side the sight was terrific.

The great yellow funnel had crashed over onto the rocks, and lay with lengths of the guys still adhering to it; a quarter boat, with bottom half out, had gone the way of the funnel; crabs were crawling over all sorts of raffle—broken spars, canvas from the bridge screen, and woodwork of the cha. house, while all forward of amidships, the plates,

beaten and twisted and ripped apart, showed cargo, held, or in the act of escaping. One big packing case, free of the ship, had resolved itself into staves round its once contents, a piano that appeared perfectly uninjured.

A rope ladder hung from the bulwarks amidships, and up it Ginnell went followed by the others, reaching a roofless passage that had once been the port alleyway.

Here on the slanting deck one got a full picture of the ruin that had come on the ship. The masts were gone as well as the funnel, boats, ventilators—with the exception of the twisted cowl looking seaward—bridge, chart house, all had vanished wholly or in part, a picture made more impressive by the calm blue sky overhead and the brilliancy of the sunlight.

The locking bars had been removed from the cover of the fore hatch, and the hatch opened evidently by the Chinese in search of plunder. Ginnell scarcely turned an eye on it before he made aft, followed by the others,

reached the saloon companionway, and dived down it.

If the confusion on deck was bad, it was worse below. The cabin doors on either side were either open or off their hinges, bunk bedding, mattresses, an open and rifled valise, some women's clothes, an empty cigar box, and a cage with a dead canary in it lay on the floor.

The place looked as if an army of pillagers had been at work for days, and the sight struck a chill to the hearts of the beholders.

"We're dished," said Ginnell. "Quick, boys, if the stuff's anywhere, it'll be in the old man's cabin; there's no mail room in a packet like this. If it's not there, we're done."

They found the Captain's cabin; they found his papers tossed about, his cash box open and empty, and a strong box clamped to the deck by the bunk in the same condition. They found, to complete the business, an English sovereign on the floor in a corner.

Ginnell sat down on the edge of the bunk.

"They've got the dollars," said he. "That's

why they legged it so quick, and—we let them go. Twenty thousand dollars in gold coin, and we let them go. Tear an ages! Afther them!” He sprang from the bunk, and dashed through the saloon, followed by the others. On deck, they strained their eyes seaward, toward a brown spot on the blue far, far away to the sou’west. It was the junk making a soldier’s wind of it, every inch of sail spread. Judging by the distance she had covered, she must have been making at least eight knots, and the *Heart of Ireland* under similar wind conditions was incapable of more than seven.

“No good chasing her,” said Blood.

“Not a happorth,” replied Ginnell. Then the quarrel began.

“If you hadn’t held us pokin’ over them old sacks on the rocks there, we’d maybe have had a chance of overhaulin’ her,” said Ginnell.

“Sacks!” cried Blood. “What are you talking about? It was you who let them go, shouting good day to them and telling them we’d got the boodle!”

“Boodle!” cried Ginnell. “You’re a nice

chap to talk about boodle. You did me up an' collared me boat, and now you're let down proper, and serve you right."

Blood was about to reply in kind, when the dispute was cut short by a loud yell from the engine-room hatch.

Harman, having satisfied himself with a glance that all was up with the junk, had gone poking about, and entered the engine-room hatchway. He now appeared, shouting like a maniac.

"The dollars! he cried. "Two dead chinkies an' the dollars!"

He vanished again with a shout. They rushed to the hatch, and there, on the steel grating leading to the ladder, curled together like two cats that had died in battle, lay the Chinamen. Harman, kneeling beside them, his hands at work on the neck of a tied sack that clinked as he shook it with the glorious, rich, mellow sound that gold in bulk and gold in specie alone can give.

The lanyard came away, and Harman,

plunging his big hand in, produced it filled with British sovereigns.

Not one of them moved or said a word for a moment; then Ginnell suddenly squatted down on the grating beside Harman, and, taking a sovereign between finger and thumb gingerly, as though he feared it might burn him, examined it with a laugh. Then he bit it, spun it in the air, caught it in his left hand, and brought his great right palm down on it with a bang.

"Hids or tails!" cried Ginnell. "Hids I win, tails you lose!" He gave a coarse laugh as he opened his palm where the coin lay tail up.

"Hids it is," he cried; then he tossed it back into the bag and rose to his feet.

"Come on, boys," said he, "let's bring the stuff down to the saloon and count it."

"Better get it aboard," said Blood.

Harman looked up. The grin on his face stamped by the finding of the gold was still there, and in the light coming through the hatch his forehead showed, beaded with sweat.

"I'm with Ginnell," said he. "Let's get down to the saloon for an overhaul. I can't wait whiles we row off to the schooner. I wants to feel the stuff, and I wants to divide it right off and now. Boys, we're rich; we sure are. It's the stroke of my life, and I can't wait for no rowin' on board no schooners before we divide up."

"Come on, then," said Blood.

The sack was much bigger than its contents, so there was plenty of grip for him as he seized one corner. Then, Harman grasping it by the neck, they lugged it out and along the deck and down the saloon companionway, Ginnell following.

The Chinese had opened nearly all the cabin portholes for the sake of light to assist them in their plundering, and now, as Blood and Harman placed the sack on the slanting saloon table, the crying of gulls came clearly and derisively from the cliffs outside, mixed with the hush of the sea and the boost of the swell as it broke, creaming and squattering amid the rocks. The lackadaisical ventilator

cowl, which took an occasional movement from stray puffs of air, added its voice now and then, whining and complaining like some lost yet inconsiderable soul.

No other sound could be heard as the three men ranged themselves, Ginnell on the starboard, and Blood and Harman on the port side of the table.

The swivel seats, though all aslant, were practicable, and Harman was in the act of taking his place in the seat he had chosen when Ginnell interposed.

"One moment, Mr. Harman," said the owner of the *Heart of Ireland*, "I've a word to say to you and Mr. Blood—sure, I beg your pardon—I mane Capt'in Blood."

"Well," said Blood, grasping a chair back, "what have you to say?"

"Only this," replied Ginnell, with a grin. "I've got back me revolver."

Blood clapped his hand to his pocket. It was empty.

"I picked your pocket of it," said Ginnell, producing the weapon, "two minits back.

You fired three shots over the heads of them chows, and there's three ca'tridges left in her. I can hit a dollar at twinty long paces. Move an inch, either the one or other of you, and I'll lay your brains on the table forenint you."

They did not move, for they knew that he was in earnest. They knew that if they moved he would begin to shoot, and if he began to shoot, he would finish the job, leave their corpses on the floor, and sail off with the dollars and his Chinese crew in perfect safety. There were no witnesses.

"Now," said Ginnell, "what the pair of you has to do is this: Mither Harman, you'll go into that cabin behind you, climb on the upper bunk, stick your head through the porthole, and shout to the coolies down below there with the boat to come up. It'll take two men to get them dollars on deck and down to the wather side. When you've done that, the pair of you will walk into the ould man's cabin an' say your prayers, thanking the saints you've got off so easy, whiles I puts the bolt on you tiil the dollars are away. And remimber this, one

word or kick from you and I shoot; the Chinamen will never tell."

"See here!" said Harman.

"One word!" shouted Ginnell, suddenly dropping the mask of urbanity and leveling the pistol.

It was as though the tiger cat in his grimy soul had suddenly burst bonds and mastered him. His finger pressed on the trigger, and the next moment Harman's brains, or what he had of them, might have been literally "fore-nint" him on the table, when suddenly, tremendous as the last trumpet, paralyzing as the inrush of a body of armed men, booing and bellowing back from the cliffs in a hundred echoes came a voice—the blast of a ship's siren:

"Huroop! Hirrip! Hurop! Haar—haar—haar!"

Ginnell's arm fell. Harman, forgetting everything, turned, dashed into the cabin behind him, climbed on the upper bunk, and stuck his head through the porthole.

Then he dashed back into the saloon.

"It's the *Port of Amsterdam*," cried Harman. "It's the salvage ship; she's there drop-pin' her anchor. We're done, we're dished—and we foolin' like this and they crawlin' up on us."

"And you said she'd only do eight knots!" cried Blood.

Ginnell flung the revolver on the floor. Every trace of the recent occurrence had vanished, and the three men thought no more of one another than a man thinks of petty matters in the face of dissolution. Gunderman was outside; that was enough for them.

"Boys," said Ginnell, "ain't there no way out with them dollars? S'pose we howk them ashore?"

"Cliffs two hundred foot high!" said Harman. "Not a chanst. We're dished."

Said Blood: "There's only one thing left. We'll walk the dollars down to the boat and row off with them. Of course we'll be stopped, still there's the chance that Gunderman may be drunk or something. It's one chance in a hundred billion; it's the only one."

But Gunderman was not drunk, nor were his boat party, and the court-martial he held on the beach in broken English and with the sack of coin beside him as chief witness would form a bright page of literature had one time to record it.

Ginnell, as owner of the *Heart of Ireland*, received the whole brunt of the storm—there was no hearing for him when, true to himself, he tried to cast the onus of the business on Blood and Harman. He was told to get out and be thankful he was not brought back to Frisco in irons, and he obeyed instructions, rowing off to the schooner, he and Harman and Blood, a melancholy party with the exception of Blood, who was talking to Harman with extreme animation on the subject of beam engines.

On deck, it was Blood who gave orders for hauling up the anchor and setting sail. He had recaptured the revolver.

III

A CARGO OF CHAMPAGNE

I

BILLY MEERSAM, an old sailor friend in Frisco, told me this story as I was sitting one day on Rafferty's wharf, contemplating the green water, and smoking. Billy chewed and spat between paragraphs. We were discussing Captain Pat Ginnell and his ways; and Billy, who had served his time on hard ships, and, as a young man, on the *Three Brothers*, that tragedy of the sea which now lies a coal hulk in Gibraltar harbour, had quite a lot to say on hazing captains in general and Captain Pat Ginnell in particular.

"I had one trip with him," said Billy, "shark catchin' down the coast in that old dough dish of his, the *Heart of Ireland*. Treated me crool bad, he did; crool bad he treated me from first to last; his beef was as hard as his fist, and bud

barley he served out for coffee. He was known all along the shore side, but he got his gruel at last, and got it good. Now, by any chance did you ever hear of a Captain Mike Blood and his mate, Billy Harman? Knew the parties, did you? Well, now, I'll tell you. Blood it were put the hood on Ginnell. Ginnell laid out to get the better of Blood, and Blood, he got the better of Ginnell. He and Harman signed on for a cruise in the *Heart of Ireland*; then they rose on Ginnell, and took the ship and made him deck hand. They did that. They made a line for a wreck they knew of on a rock be name of San Juan, off the San Lucas Islands, and the three of them were peeling that wreck, and they were just gettin' twenty thousand dollars in gold coin off her, when the party who'd bought the wreck, and his name was Gunderman, lit down on them and colared the boodle and kicked them back into their schooner, givin' them the choice of makin' an offing or takin' a free voyage back to Frisco, with a front seat in the penitentiary thrown in.

"It was a crool setback for them, the dollars hot in their hands one minit and took away the next, you may say, but they didn't quarrel over it; they set out on a new lay, and this is what happened with Cap' Ginnell."

But, with Mr. Meersam's leave, I will take the story from his mouth and tell it in my own way, with additions gathered from the chief protagonists and from other sources.

When the three adventurers, dismissed with a caution by Gunderman, got sail on the *Heart of Ireland*, they steered a sou'westerly course, till San Juan was a speck to northward and the San Lucas Islands were riding high on the sea on the port quarter.

Then Blood hove the schooner to for a council of war, and Ginnell, though reduced again to deck hand, was called into it.

"Well," said Blood, "that's over and done with, and there's no use calling names. Question is what we're to do now. We've missed twenty thousand dollars through fooling and delaying, and we've got to make good somehow, even on something small. If I had ten

cents in my pocket, Pat Ginnell, I'd leave you and your old shark boat for the nearest point of land and hoof it back to Frisco; but I haven't—worse luck."

"There's no use in carryin' on like that," said Harman. "Frisco's no use to you or me, and your boots would be pretty well wore out before you got there. What I say is this: We've got a schooner that's rigged out for shark fishin'. Well, let's go on that lay; we'll give Ginnell a third share, and he'll share with us in payin' the coolies. Shark oil's tetchin' big prices now in Frisco. It's not twenty thousand dollars, but it's somethin'."

Ginnell, leaning against the after rail and cutting himself a fill of tobacco, laughed in a mirthless way. Then he spoke: "Shark fishin', begob; well, there's a word to be said be me on that. You two thought yourselves mighty clever, collarin' me boat and makin' yourselves masters of it. I don't say you didn't thrump me acc, I don't say you didn't work it so that I can't have the law on you, but I'll say this, Mистер Harman, if you want

to go shark fishin', you can work the business yourself, and a nice hand you'll make of it. Why, you don't know the grounds, let alone the work. A third share, and me the rightful owner of this tub! I'll see you ham-strung before I put a hand to it.

"Then get forrard," said Harman. "Don't know the grounds? Maybe I don't know the grounds you used to work farther north, but I know every foot of the grounds here-a-way, right from the big kelp beds to the coast. Why, I been on the fish-commission ship and worked with 'em all through this part, takin' soundin's and specimens—rock, weed, an' fish. Know the bottom here as well as I know the pa'm of me hand."

"Well, if you know it so well, you've no need of me. Lay her on the grounds yourself," said Ginnell.

He went forward.

"Black sullen," said Harman, looking after him. "He ain't no use to lead or drive. Well, let's get her before the wind an' crowd down closer to Santa Catalina. I'm not sayin' this

is a good shark ground, the sea's too much of a blame' fish circus just here—but it's better than nothin'."

They got the *Heart* before the wind, which had died down to a three-knot breeze, Blood steering and Harman forward, on the lookout.

Harman was right, the sea round these coasts is a fish circus, to give it no better name.

The San Lucas Islands and Santa Catalina seem the rendezvous of most of the big fish inhabiting the Pacific. Beginning with San Miguel, the islands run almost parallel to the California coast in a sou'westerly direction, and, seen now from the schooner's deck, they might have been likened to vast ships under press of sail, so tall were they above the sea shimmer and so white in the sunshine their fog-filled cañons.

Away south, miles and miles away across the blue water, the peaks of Santa Catalina Island showed a dream of vague rose and gold.

It was for Santa Catalina that Harman was making now.

To tell the whole truth, bravely as he had

talked of his knowledge of these waters, he was not at all sure in his mind as to their shark-bearing capacity. He did not know that for a boat whose business was shark-liver oil, this bit of sea was not the happiest hunting ground.

Nothing is more mysterious than the way fish make streets in the sea and keep to them; make cities, so to say, and inhabit them at certain seasons; make playgrounds, and play in them.

Off the north of Santa Catalina Island you will find Yellow Fin. Cruise down on the seaward side and you will find a spot where the Yellow Fin vanish and the Yellow Tail take their place; farther south you strike the street of the White Sea Bass, which opens on to Halibut Square, which, in turn, gives upon a vast area, where the Black Sea Bass, the Swordfish, the Albacore, and the Whitefish are at home.

Steer round the south of the island and you hit the suburbs of the great fish city of the Santa Catalina Channel. The Grouper Banks

are its purlieus, and the Sunfish keeps guard of its southern gate. You pass Barracuda Street and Bonito Street, till the roar of the Sea Lions from their rocks tells you that you are approaching the Washington Square of undersea things—the great Tuna grounds.

Skirting the Tuna grounds, and right down the Santa Catalina Channel, runs a Broadway which is also a Wall Street, where much business is done in the way of locomotion and destruction. Here are the Killer Whales and the Sulphur-bottom Whales and the Grey Whales, and the Porpoises, Dolphins, Skipjacks, and Sand Dabs.

Sharks you will find nearly everywhere, *but*, and this was a fact unknown to Harman, the sharks, as compared to the other big fish, are few and far between.

It was getting toward sundown, when the schooner, under a freshening wind, came along the seaward side of Santa Catalina Island. The island on this side shows two large bays, separated by a rounded promontory. In the

northernmost of these bays they dropped anchor close in shore, in fifteen-fathom water.

II

At dawn next morning they got the gear ready. The Chinese crew, during the night, had caught a plentiful supply of fish for bait, and, as the sun was looking over the coast hills, they hauled up the anchor and put out for the kelp beds.

There are two great kelp beds off the seaward coast of Santa Catalina, an inner and an outer. Two great submarine forests more thickly populated than any forest on land. This is the haunt of the Black Sea Bass that run in weight up to four hundred pounds, the Ribbon Fish, the Frogfish, and the Kelpfish, that builds its nest just as a bird builds, crabs innumerable, and sea creatures that have never yet been classified or counted.

They tied up to the kelp, and the fishing began, while the sun blazed stronger upon the water and the morning mists died out of the cañons of the island.

The shark hooks baited and lowered were relieved of their bait, but not by sharks; all sorts of bait snatchers inhabit these waters, and they were now simply chewing the fish off the big shark hooks.

Getting on for eleven o'clock, Blood, who had been keeping a restless eye seaward, left his line and went forward with Ginnell's glass, which he levelled at the horizon.

A sail on the sea line to the northwest had attracted his attention an hour ago, and the fact that it had scarcely altered its position, although there was a six-knot breeze blowing, had roused his curiosity.

"What is it?" asked Harman.

"Schooner hove to," said Blood. "No, b'gosh, she's not; she's abandoned."

At the word "abandoned," Ginnell, who had been fishing for want of something better to do, raised his head like a bird of prey.

He also left his line, and came forward. Blood handed him the glass.

"Faith, you're right," said Ginnell; "she's a

derelick. Boys, up with them tomfool shark lines; here's a chanst of somethin' decent."

For once Blood and Harman were completely with him; the lines were hauled in, the kelp connections broken, mainsail and jib set, and in a moment, as it were, the *Heart of Ireland* was bounding on the swell, topsail and foresail shaking out now and bellying against the blue till she heeled almost gunwale under to the merry wind, boosting the green water from her bow, and sending the foam flooding in sheets to starboard.

It was as though the thought of plunder had put new heart and life into her, as it certainly had into her owner, Pat Ginnell.

As they drew nearer, they saw the condition of the schooner more clearly. Derelict and deserted, yet with mainsail set, she hung there, clawing at the wind and thrashing about in the mad manner of a vessel commanded only by her tiller.

Now the mainsail would fill and burst out, the boom swaying over to the rattle of block and cordage. For a moment she would give

an exhibition of just how a ship ought to sail herself, and then, with a shudder, the air would spill from the sail, and, like a daft woman in a blowing wind, she would reel about with swinging gaff and boom to the tune of the straining rigging, the pitter-patter of the reef points, and the whine of the rudder nearly torn from its pintles.

A couple of cable lengths away the *Heart of Ireland* hove to, the whaleboat was lowered, and Blood, Ginnell, and Harman, leaving Chopstick Charlie in charge of the *Heart*, started for the derelict. They came round the stern of the stranger, and read her name, *Tamalpais*, done in letters that had been white, but were now a dingy yellow.

Then they came along the port side and hooked on to the fore channels, while Blood and the others scrambled on deck.

The deck was clean as a ballroom floor and sparkling with salt from the dried spray; there was no raffle or disorder of any sort. Every boat was gone, and the falls, swinging at full length from the davits, proclaimed the

fact that the crew had left the vessel in an orderly manner, though hurriedly enough, no doubt; had abandoned her, leaving the falls swinging and the rudder playing loose and the winds to do what they willed with her.

There was no sign of fire, no disorder that spoke of mutiny, though in cargo and with a low freeboard, she rode free of water, one could tell that by the movement of her underfoot. Fire, leak, mutiny, those are the three reasons for the abandonment of a ship at sea, and there was no sign of any one of them.

Blood led the way aft, the saloon hatch was open, and they came down into the tiny saloon. The sunlight through the starboard portholes was spilling about in water shimmers on the pitch-pine panelling; everything was in order, and a meal was set out on the table, which showed a Maconochie jam tin, some boiled pork, and a basket of bread; plates were laid for two, and the plates had been used.

"Beats all," said Harman, looking round. "Boys, this is a find as good as the dollars. Derelict and not a cat on board, and she's all

of ninety tons. Then there's the cargo. B' Jiminy, but we're in luck!"

"Let's roust out the cabins," said Ginnell.

They found the Captain's cabin, easily marked by its size and its furniture.

Some oilskins and old clothes were hanging up by the bunk, a sea chest stood open. It had evidently been rifled of its most precious contents; there was nothing much left in it but some clothes, a pair of sea boots, and some worthless odds and ends. In a locker they found the ship's papers. Blood plunged into these, and announced his discoveries to the others, crowding behind him and peeping over his shoulders.

"Captain Keene, master—bound from Frisco to Sydney with cargo of champagne— And what in thunder is she doing down here? Never mind—we're the finders." He tossed the papers back in the locker and turned to the others. "No sign of the log. Most likely he's taken it off with him. What I want to see now is the cargo. If it's cham-

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pagne, and not bottled bilge water, we're made. Come along, boys."

He led the way on deck, and between them they got the tarpaulin cover off the cargo hatch, undid the locking bars, and opened the hatch.

The cargo was perfectly stowed, the cases of California champagne ranged side by side, within touching distance of the hatch opening, and the brands on the boxes answering to the wording of the manifest.

Before doing anything more, Blood got the sail off the schooner, and then, having cast an eye round the horizon, more for weather than shipping, he came to the hatch edge and took his seat, with his feet dangling and his toes touching the cases. The others stood while he talked to them.

"There's some chaps," said Blood, "who'd be for running crooked on this game, taking the schooner off to some easy port and selling her and the cargo, but I'm not going to go in for any such mug's business as that. Frisco and salvage money is my idea."

"And what about the *Yan-Shan*?" asked Ginnell. "Frisco will be reckon' with the story of how Gunderman found us pickin' her bones and how he caught us with the dollars in our hands. Don't you think the underwriters will put that up against us? Maybe they won't say we've murdered the crew of this hooker for the sake of the salvage! Our characters are none too bright to be goin' about with schooners and cargoes of fizz, askin' for salvage money."

"*Your* character ain't," said Harman. "Speak for yourself when you're talkin' of characters, and leave us out. I'm with Blood. I've had enough of this shady business, and I ain't goin' to run crooked no more. Frisco and salvage moneys—my game, b'sides, you needn't come into Frisco harbour. Lend us a couple of your hands to take her in, and we'll do the business and share equal with you in the takin's. I ain't a man to go back on a pal for a few dirty dollars, and my word's as good as my bond all along the water side with pals. I ain't sayin' nothin' about owners or compan-

ies; I say with pals, and you'll find your share banked for you in the Bank of California, safe as if you'd put it there yourself."

Ginnell for a moment seemed about to dissent violently from this proposition; then, of a sudden, he fell calm.

"Well," said he, "maybe I'm wrong and maybe you're right, but I ain't goin' to hang behind. If you've fixed on taking her into Frisco, I'll follow you in and help in the swearin'. You two chaps can navigate her with a couple of the coolies I'll lend you, and, mind you, it's equal shares I'm askin'."

"Right," said Harman. "What do you say, Blood?"

"I'm agreeable," said Blood; "though it's more than he deserves, considering all things."

"Well, I'm not goin' to put up no arguments," said Ginnell. "I states me terms, and, now that's fixed, I proposes we takes stock of the cargo. Rig a tackle and get one of them cases on deck and let's see if the manifest holds when the wrappin's is off."

The others agreed. With the help of a

couple of the Chinamen from the boat alongside, they rigged a tackle and got out a case. Harman, poking about, produced a chisel and mallet from the hole where the schooner's carpenter had kept his tools, a strip of boarding was removed from the top of the case, and next moment a champagne bottle, in its straw jacket, was in the hands of Ginnell.

"Packed careful," said he.

He removed the jacket and the pink tissue paper from the bottle, whose gold capsule glittered delightfully in the sunlight.

Then he knocked the bottle's head off, and the amber wine creamed out over his hands and onto the deck.

Harman ran to the galley and fetched a panikin, and they sampled the stuff, and then Blood, taking the half-empty bottle, threw it overboard.

"We don't want any drinking," said he; "and we'll have to account for every bottle. Now, then, get the lid fixed again and the case back in the hold, and let's see what's in the lazaret in the way of provisions."

They got the case back, closed the hatch, and then started on an inspection of the stores, finding plenty of stuff in the way of pork and rice and flour, but no delicacies. There was not an ounce of tea or coffee, no sugar, no tobacco.

"They must have took it all with them when they made off," said Harman.

"That's easy mended," replied Ginnell. "We can get some stores from the *Heart*; s'pose I go off to her and fetch what's wanted and leave you two chaps here?"

"Not on your life," said Blood; "we all stick together, Pat Ginnell, and so there'll be no monkey tricks played. That's straight. Get your fellers into the boat and let's shove off, then Harman and I can come back with the stores and the hands you can lend us to work her."

"Faith, you're all suspicious," said Ginnell, with a grin. "Well, over with you, and we'll all go back together. I'm gettin' to feel as if I was married to you two chaps. However, there's no use in grumbiin'."

"Not a bit," said Blood.

He followed Ginnell into the whaleboat and, leaving the *Tamalpais* to rock alone on the swell, they made back for the *Heart of Ireland*.

Now, Ginnell, although he had agreed to go back to Frisco, had no inclination to do so, the fact of the matter being that the place had become too hot for him.

He had played with smuggling, and had been friendly with the Greeks of the Upper Bay and the Chinese of Petaluma. He had fished with Chinese sturgeon lines, foul inventions of Satan, as all Chinese sporting, hunting, and fishing contraptions are, and had fallen foul of the patrol men; he had lit his path with blazing drunks as with bonfires, mishandled his fellow creatures, robbed them, cheated them, and lied to them. He had talked big in bars, and the wharf side of San Francisco was sick of him; so, if you understand the strength of the wharf-side stomach, you can form some estimate of the character of Captain Ginnell. He knew quite well the feeling

of the harbour side against him, and he knew quite well how that feeling would be inflated at the sight of him coming back triumphant, with a salved schooner in tow. Then there was Gunderman. He feared Gunderman more than he feared the devil, and he feared the story that Gunderman would have to tell even more than he feared Gunderman.

No, he had done with Frisco; he never would go back there again; he had done with the *Heart of Ireland*. He would strike out again in life with a new name and a new schooner and a cargo of champagne, sell schooner and cargo, and make another start with still another name.

Revolving this decision in his mind, he winked at the backs of Blood and Harman as they went up the little companion ladder before him and gained the deck of the *Heart of Ireland*.

Blood led the way down to the cabin. The lazaret was situated under the cabin floor, and, while Harman opened it, Blood, with a pencil

and a bit of paper, figured out their requirements.

"We want a couple of tins of coffee," said he, "and half a dozen of condensed milk—sugar, biscuits—tobacco—beef."

"It's sorry I am I haven't any cigars to offer you," said Ginnell, with a half laugh, "but there's some tins of sardines; be sure an' take the sardines, Mr, Harman, for me heart wouldn't be aisy if i didn't think you were well supplied with comforts."

"I can't find any sardines," said the delving Harman, "but here's baccy enough, and eight tins of beef will be more than enough to get us to Frisco."

"Take a dozen," said Ginnell; "there ain't more than a dozen all told; but, sure, I'll manage to do without, and never grumble so long as you're well supplied."

Blood glanced at him with an angry spark in his eye.

"We've no wish to crowd you, Pat Ginnell," said he, "and what we take we pay for, or we will pay for it when we get to port. You'll

please remember you're talking to an Irishman."

"Irishman!" cried Ginnell. "You'll be plazed to remember I'm an Irishman, too."

"Well I know it," replied the other.

This remark, for some unaccountable reason, seemed to incense Ginnell. He clenched his fists, stuck out his jaw, glanced Blood up and down, and then, as if remembering something, brought himself under control with a mighty effort.

"There's no use in talk," said he; "we'd better be gettin' on with our business. You'll want somethin' in the way of a sack to cart all that stuff off to the schooner. I'll fetch you one."

He turned to the companion ladder and climbed it in a leisurely fashion. On deck he took a deep breath and stood for a moment scanning the horizon from north to south. Then he turned and cast his eyes over Santa Catalina and the distant coast line.

Not a sail was visible, nor the faintest indication of smoke in all that stainless blue,

sweeping in a great arc from the northern to the southern limits of visibility.

No one was present to watch Ginnell and what he was about to do. No one save God and the sea gulls—for Chinese don't count.

He stepped to the cabin hatch.

"Misther Harman!" cried he.

"Hello!" answered Harman, from below. "Whacher want?"

"It's about the Bank of California I want to speak to you," replied Ginnell.

Harman's round and astonished face appeared at the foot of the ladder.

"Bank of California?" said he. "What the blazes do you mean, Pat Ginnell?"

"Why, you said you'd put me share of the salvage in the Bank of California, didn't you?" replied Ginnell. "Well, I just want to say I'm agreeable to your proposal—and will you be plazed to give the manager me love when you see him?"

With that he shut the hatch, fastening it securely and prisoning the two men below, whose voices came now bearing indications of

language enough, one might fancy, to lift the deck. He knew it would take them a day's hard work to break out, and maybe two. Bad as Ginnell might be, he was not a murderer, and he reckoned their chances were excellent considering the provisions and water they had, their own energies, and the drift of the current, which would take them close up to Santa Catalina.

He also reckoned that they would give him no trouble in the way of pursuit, for he had literally made them a present of the *Heart of Ireland*.

Having satisfied himself that they were well and securely held, he sent the whaleboat off to the *Tamalpais*, laden with the crew's belongings, consisting of all sorts of quaint boxes and mats. This was managed in one journey; the boat came back for him, and, in less than an hour from the start of the business, he found himself standing on the deck of the *Tamalpais*, all the crew transferred, the fellows hauling on the halyards, Chopstick Charlie at the helm, and a good schooner, with

a cargo worth many thousands of dollars, underfoot.

He turned to have a look at the compass and a word with the steersman before going below.

Down below he had a complete turnout of the Captain's cabin, and found the log for which Harman had hunted in vain; it had got down between the bunk bedding and the panneling, and he brought it into the main cabin, and there, seated at the table, he pored over it, breathing hard and following the passages with his horny thumb.

The thing had been faked most obviously, and the faking had begun two days out from Frisco. A gale that had never blown had driven the *Tamalpais* out of her course, et cetera; and Ginnell, with the eye of a sailor and with his knowledge of the condition of the *Tamalpais* when found, saw at once that there was something here darker even than the darkness that Blood and Harman had perceived. Why had the log been faked? Why had the schooner been abandoned? If it were a ques-

tion of insurance, Captain Keene would have scuttled her or fired her.

Then, again, everything spoke of haste amounting to panic. Why should a vessel, in perfect condition and in good weather, be deserted as though some visible plague had suddenly appeared on board of her?

Ginnell closed the book and tossed it back in the bunk.

"What's the meaning of it?"

Unhappy man, he was soon to find out.

At eight o'clock next morning, in perfect weather, Ginnell, standing by the steersman and casting his eyes around, saw across the heaving blueness of the sea a smudge of smoke on the western horizon. A few minutes later, as the smoke cleared, he made out the form of the vessel that had been firing up.

Captain Keene had left an old pair of binoculars among the other trunks in his cabin. Ginnell went down and fetched them on deck, then he looked.

The stranger was a torpedo boat; she was

making due south, and, like all torpedo boats, she seemed in a hurry.

Then, all at once, and even as he looked, her form began to alter, she shortened mysteriously, and her two funnels became gradually one.

She had altered her course; she had evidently sighted, and was making direct for, the *Tamalpais*. Not exactly direct, perhaps, but directly enough to make Ginnell's lips dry as sandstone.

"Bad cess to her," said Ginnell to himself; "there's no use in doin' anythin' but pretendin' to be deaf and dumb. And, sure, aren't I an honest trader, with all me credentials, Capt'in Keene, of Frisco, blown out of me course, me mate washed overboard? Let her come."

She came without any letting. Shearing along through the water, across which the hubbub of her engines could be distinctly heard, and within signalling distance, now, she let fly a string of bunting to the breeze, an order to heave to, which the *Tamalpais*, that honest trader, disregarded.

Then came a puff of white smoke, the boom of a gun, and a practice shell that raised a plume of spray a cable length in front of the schooner, and went off, making ducks and drakes for miles across the blue sea.

Ginnell rushed to the halyards himself. Chopstick Charlie, at the wheel, required no orders, and the *Tamalpais* came round, with all her canvas spilling the wind and slatting, while the warship, stealing along now with just a ripple at her stern, came gliding past the stem of the schooner.

They were taking her name, just as a policeman takes the number of a motor car.

It was a ghastly business. No cheery voice, with the inquiry: "What's your name and where are you bound for?" Just a silent inspection, and then a dropped boat.

Next moment a lieutenant of the American navy was coming over the side of the *Tamalpais*, to be received by Ginnell.

"Captain Keene?" asked the lieutenant.

"That's me name," answered the unfortunate, who had determined on the rôle of the

blustering innocent; "and who are you, to be boardin' me like this and firing guns at me?"

"Well, of all the —— cheek!" said the other, with a laugh. "A nice dance you've led us since we lost you in that fog."

"Which fog?" asked the astonished Ginnell. "Fog! It's some other ship you're after, for I haven't sighted a fog since leavin' port."

"Oh, close up!" said the other.

His men, who had come on board, were busy with the covering of the main hatch, and he walked forward, to superintend.

The hatch cover off, they rigged a tackle and hauled out a case of champagne; four cases of champagne they brought on deck, and then, attacking the next layer, they brought out a case of a different description. It contained a machine gun.

Under the champagne layer, the *Tamalpais* was crammed right down to the garboard strakes with contraband of war in the form of arms and ammunition for the small South American republic that was just then kicking up a dust around its murdered president.

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Ginnell saw his own position at a glance. The *Heart of Ireland* given away to Blood and Harman for the captaincy of a gun runner, and a seized gun runner at that.

He saw now why Keene and his crew had deserted in a hurry. Chased by the warship, and running into a fog, they had slipped away in the boats, making for the coast, while the pursuer had made a dead-west run of it to clear herself of the dangerous coast waters and their rocks and shoals.

That was plain enough to Ginnell, but the prospect ahead of him was not clear at all.

He could never confess the truth about the *Heart of Ireland*, and, when they took him back to Frisco, it would at once be discovered that he was not Keene, but Ginnell. What would happen to him?

What did happen to him? I don't know. Billy Meersam could throw no light on the matter. He said that he believed the thing was "hushed up somehow or 'nother," finishing with the opinion that a good many things are hushed up somehow or 'nother in Frisco.

IV

AVALON BAY

I

AVALON BAY, on the east of Santa Catalina Island, clips between its two horns a little seaside town unique of its kind. Billy Harman had described it to Captain Blood as a place where you saw girls bathing in Paris hats. However that may be, you see stranger things than this at Avalon.

It is the head centre of the big-game fisheries of the California coast. Men come here from all parts of America and Europe to kill tarpon and yellow-tail and black sea bass, to say nothing of shark, which is reckoned now as a game fish. Trippers come from Los Angeles to go round in glass-bottomed boats and inspect the sea gardens, and bank presidents, Steel Trust men, and millionaires of every brand come for their health.

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You will see monstrous shark gallowised on the beach and three-hundred-pound bass being photographed side by side with their captors, and you will have the fact borne in on you that the biggest fish that haunt the sea can be caught and held and brought to gaff with a rod weighing only a few ounces and a twenty-strand line that a child could snap.

Every one talks fish at Avalon, from the boatmen who run the gasoline launches to the latest-arrived man with a nerve breakdown who has come from the wheat pit or Wall Street to rest himself by killing sharks or fighting tuna, every one. Here you are estimated not by the size of your bank balance, but by the size of your catch. Not by your social position, but by your position in sport, and here the magic blue or red button of the Tuna Club is a decoration more prized than any foreign order done in diamonds.

Colonel Culpepper and his daughter, Rose, were staying at Avalon just at the time the *Yan-Shan* business occurred on San Juan. The colonel hailed from the Middle West and

had a wide reputation on account of his luck and his millions. Rose had a reputation of her own; she was reckoned the prettiest girl wherever she went, and just now she was the prettiest girl in Avalon.

This morning, just after dawn, Miss Culpepper was standing on the veranda of the Metropole Hotel, where the darkies were dusting mats and putting the cane chairs in order. Avalon was still half in shadows, but a gorgeous morning hinted of itself in the blue sky overhead and the touch of dusk-blue sea visible from the veranda. The girl had come down undecided as to whether she would go on the water or for a ramble inland, but the peep of blue sea decided her. It was irresistible, and, leaving the hotel, she came toward the beach.

No one was out yet. In half an hour or less the place would be alive with boatmen, but in this moment of enchantment not a soul was to be seen either on the premises of the Tuna Club or on the little *plage* or on the shingle,

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where the small waves were breaking, crystal clear, in the first rays of the sun.

She came to a balk of timber lying close to the water's edge, stood by it for a moment, and then sat down, nursing her knees and contemplating the scene before her—the sun-smitten sea looking fresh, as though this were the first morning that had ever shone on the world, the white gulls flying against the blue of the sky, the gasoline launches and sailing boats anchored out from the shore and only waiting the boatmen, the gaffers, the men with rods, and the resumption of the eternal business—Fish.

The sight of them raised no desire in the mind of the gazer; she was tired of fish. A lover of the sea, a fearless sailor and able to handle a boat as well as a man, she was still weary of the eternal subject of weights and measures; she had lived in an atmosphere of fish for a month, and, not being much of a fisherwoman, she was beginning to want a change, or, at all events, some new excitement. She was to get it.

A crunching of the shingle behind her made her turn. It was Aransas Joe, the first boat man out that morning, moving like a seal to the sea and laden with a huge can of bait, a spare spar, two sculls, and a gaff.

Anything more unlovely than Aransas Joe in contrast with the fair morning and the fresh figure of the girl, it would be hard to imagine. Wall-eyed, weather-stained, fish-scaled, and moving like a plantigrade, he was a living epitome of longshore life and an object lesson in what it can do for a man.

Joe never went fishing; the beach was his home, and sculling fishermen to their yawls his business. The Culpeppers were well known to him.

"Joe," said the girl, "you're just the person I want. Come and row me out to our yawl."

"Where's your gaffer an' your engine man?" asked Joe.

"I don't want them. I can look after the engine myself. I'm not going fishing."

"Not goin' fishin'," said Joe, putting down his can of bait and shifting the spar to his left

shoulder; "not goin' fishin'! Then what d'you want doin' with the yawl?"

"I want to go for a sail—I mean a spin. Go on, hurry up and get the dinghy down."

Joe relieved himself of the spar, dropped the gaff by the bait tin, and scratched his head. It was his method of thinking.

Unable to scratch up any formulable objection to the idea of a person taking a fishing yawl out for pleasure and not for fish, yet realising the absurdity of it, he was dumb. Then, with the sculls under his arm, he made for a dinghy beached near the water edge, threw the sculls in, and dragged the little boat down till she was half afloat. The girl got in, and he pushed off.

The *Sunfish* was the name of the Culpepers' yawl, a handy little craft rigged with a Buffalo engine so fixed that one could attend to it and steer at the same time.

"Mind you, and keep clear of the kelp," said Joe, as the girl stepped from the dinghy to the larger craft, "if you don't want your propeller tangled up." He helped her to haul

the anchor in, got into the dinghy, and shoved off.

"I'll be back about eight or nine," she called after him.

"I'll be on the lookout for you," replied he.

Then Miss Culpepper found herself in the delightful position of being absolutely alone and her own mistress, captain and crew of a craft that moved at the turning of a lever, and able to go where she pleased. She had often been out with her father, but never alone like this, and the responsible-irresponsible sensation was a new delight in life which, until now, she had never even imagined.

She started the engine, and the *Sunfish* began to glide ahead, clearing the fleet of little boats anchored out and rocking them with her wash; then, in a grand curve, she came round the south horn of the bay opening the coast of the island and the southern sea blue as lazulite and speckless to the far horizon.

"This is good," said Miss Culpepper to herself; "almost as good as being a sea gull."

Sea gulls raced her, jeered at her, showed

themselves to her, now honey yellow against the sun, now snowflake white with the sun against them, and then left her, quarrelling away down the wind in search of something more profitable.

She passed little bays where the sea sang on beaches of pebble, and deep-cut cañons rose-tinted and showing the green of fern and the ash green of snake cactus and prickly pear. Sea lions sunning themselves on a rock held her eye for a moment, and then, rounding the south end of the island, a puff of westerly wind all the way from China blew in her face, and the vision of the great Pacific opened before her, with the peaks of San Clemente showing on the horizon twenty-four miles away to the southwest.

Not a ship was to be seen, with the exception of a little schooner to southward. She showed bare sticks, and Miss Culpepper, not knowing the depth of the water just there, judged her to be at anchor.

Here, clear of the island barrier, the vast and endless swell of the Pacific made itself

felt, lifting the *Sunfish* with a buoyant and balloonlike motion. Steering the swift-running boat across these gentle vales and meadows of ocean was yet another delight, and the flying fish, bright like frosted silver, with black, sightless eyes, chased her now, flittering into the water ahead of the boat like shaftless arrowheads shot after her by some invisible marksman.

The great kelp beds oiled the sea to the northward, and, remembering Joe's advice, but not wishing to return yet a while, the girl shifted the helm slightly, heading more for the southward and making a beam sea of the swell. This brought the schooner in sight.

It was now a little after seven, and the appetite that waits upon good digestion, youth, and perfect health began to remind Miss Culpepper of the breakfast room at the Metro-pole, the snow-white tables, the attentive waiters. She glanced at her gold wrist watch, glanced round at Santa Catalina, that seemed a tremendous distance away, and put the helm hard astarboard.

She had not noticed during the last half minute or so that the engine seemed tired and irritable. The sudden shift of helm seemed to upset its temper still more, and then, all of a sudden, its noise stopped and the propeller ceased to revolve.

Miss Culpepper, perhaps for the first time in her life, knew the meaning of the word "silence." The silence that spreads from the Horn to the Yukon, from Mexico to Hongkong, held off up to this by the beat of the propeller and the pur of the engine, closed in on her, broken only by the faint ripple of the bow wash as the way fell off the boat.

She guessed at once what was the matter, and confirmed her suspicions by examining the gasoline gauge. The tank was empty. Aransas Joe, whose duty it was, had forgotten to fill it up the night before.

Of all breakdowns this was the worst, but she did not grumble; the spirit that had raised Million Dollar Culpepper from nothing to affluence was not wanting in his daughter.

She said, "Bother!" glanced at Santa Cata-

lina, glanced at the schooner, and then, stepping the mast of the yawl, shook out her sail to the wind. She was steering for the schooner. It was near, the island was far, and she reckoned on getting something to eat to stay her on the long sail back; also, somehow, the sudden longing for the sight of a human face and the sound of a human voice in that awful loneliness on whose fringe she had intruded had fallen upon her. There were sure to be sailormen of some sort upon the schooner, and where there were sailormen there was sure to be food of some sort.

But there was no one to be seen upon the deck, and, as she drew closer, the atmosphere of forsakenness around the little craft became ever apparent. As she drew closer still she let go the sheet and furled the sail. So cleverly had she judged the distance that the boat had just way enough on to bring it rubbing against the schooner's starboard side. She had cast out the port fenders, and, standing at the bow with the boat hook, she clutched onto the after channels, tied up, and then, standing on

the yawl's gunwale, and, with an agility none the less marked because nobody was looking, scrambled on board. She had not time to more than glance at the empty and desolate deck, for scarcely had her foot touched the planking when noises came from below. There were people evidently in the cabin and they were shouting.

Then she saw that the cabin hatch was closed, and, not pausing to consider what she might be letting out, the girl mastered the working of the hatch fastening, undid it, and stepped aside.

The fore end of a sailorman emerged, a broad-faced, blue-eyed individual blinking against the sunlight. He scrambled on deck, and was followed by another, dark, better looking, and younger.

Not a word did these people utter as they stood taking in everything round them from the horizon to the girl.

Then the first described brought his eyes to rest on the girl.

"Well, I'm darned!" said he.

II

Let me interpolate now Mr. Harman's part of the story in his own words.

"When Cap Ginnell bottled me and Blood in the cabin of the *Heart of Ireland*," said he, "we did a bit of shoutin' and then fell quiet. There ain't no use in shoutin' against a two-inch thick cabin hatch overlaid with iron platin'. He'd made that hatch on purpose for the bottling of parties; must have, by the way it worked and by the armaments on it.

"You may say we were mugs to let ourselves be bottled like that. We were. Y' see, we hadn't thought it over. We hadn't thought it would pay Ginnell to abandon the *Heart* for a derelick schooner better found and up to her hatches with a cargo of champagne, or we wouldn't have let him fool us down into the cabin like we did and then clap the hatch on us. Leavin' alone the better exchange, we hadn't thought it would be nuts to him to do us in the eye. Mugs we were, and mugs we found ourselves, sittin' on the cabin table and

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listenin' to the blighter clearin' the crew off. There weren't no chance of any help from them. Chows they were, carin' for nothin' s'long as their chests an' opium pipes was safe.

"The skylight overhead was no use for me 'n a cat to crawl through, if it'd been open, which it wasn't, more'n an inch, and fastened from the deck side. Portholes! God bless 'em, their scuttles wasn't big enough for me a'fore to fit in.

I says to BLOOD: 'Listen to the blighters! Oh say, can we do nuthin', sittin' here on our beam ends? Ain't you got nuthin' in your head? Ain't you got a match in your pocket to fire the tub and be done with it?'

"'It'll be lucky for us,' says Blood, 'if Cap Ginnell doesn't fire her before he leaves her.' With that, I didn't think anythin' more about matches. No, sir! For ha'f an hour after the last boatload of Chows and their dunnage was off the ship and away I was sniffin' like a dog at the hatch cover for the smell of smoke, and prayin' to the A'mighty between sniffs.

"After that we roused round to see how we

were fixed up for provisions and water. We found grub enough for a month, and in one of the bunks a breaker ha'f filled with water. Now that breaker must have been put there for us by Ginnell before we left the *Heart* to 'xamine the derelick schooner. He must have fixed in his mind to do us in and change ship right from the first. I remarks on this to Blood, and then we starts a hunt for tools to cut our way out of there, findin' nuthin' serviceable but cutlery ware an' a corkscrew. Two prong forks and knives wore thin with usin' weren't what we were searchin' for; a burglar's jimmy, blastin' powder, and a drill was more in our line, but there weren't any, so we just set to with the knives, cuttin' and scrubbin' at the tender parts of the hatch, more like tryin' to tickle a girl with iron stays on her than any useful work, for the plates on that hatch would 'a' given sniff to the plates on a battleship, till I give over and just sat down on the floor cursin' Schwab and the Steel Trusts and Carnegie and Ginnell and the chap that had forged them plates from the tip of his

hammer to the toe of his boots. 'Oh, why the blazes,' says I, 'weren't we born rats! There's some sense in rats; rats would be out and on deck, while here's two chaps with five fingers on each fist and men's brains in their heads bottled and done for, scratchin' like blind kittens shet up in a box, and all along of puttin' their trust in a swab they ought to have scragged when they had the chanst.'

"'Oh, shet your head!' says Blood.

"'Shet yours,' says I. 'I'm speakin' for both of us; it's joining in with that skrimshanker's done us. Bad comp'ny, neither more nor neither less, and I'm blowed if I don't quit such and their likes and turn Baptis' minister if I ever lay leg ashore again.' Yes, that's what I says to Cap Blood; I was that het up I laid for everythin' in sight. Then I goes on at him for the little we'd done, forgettin' it was the tools we're at fault. 'What's the use,' says I, 'tinkerin' away at that hatch? You might as well be puttin' a blister on a bald head, hopin' to raise hair. Here we are, and here we stick,' I says, 'till Providence lets us out.'

"The words were scarce out of my head when he whips out Ginneil's gun, which he was carryin' in his pocket and hadn't remembered till then. I thought he was goin' to lay for me, till he points the mouth of it at the hatch and lets blaze. There were three ca'tridges in the thing, and he fires the three, and when I'd got back my hearing and the smoke had cleared a bit there was the hatch starin' at us unrattled, with three spelters of lead markin' it like beauty spots over the three dimples left by the bullets.

"All the same, the firin' done us good—sort of cleared the air like a thunder-storm—and I began to remember I'd got a mouth on me and a pipe in my pocket. We lit up and sat down, him on the last step of the companion-way and me on the table side, and then we began to figure on what hand Providence was like to take in the business.

"I says to him: 'There's nothin' *but* Providence left, barrin' them old knives and that corkscrew, and they're out of count. We're driftin' on the *Kuro Shiwo* current, aimin'

right for the Horn, you may say, but there's the kelp beds, and they're pretty sure to hold us a bit. They're south of us, and Santa Catalina's east of them, with lots of fishin' boats sure to be out, and it's on the cards that some of them jays will spot us. "Derelick" is writ all over us—bare sticks and nothin' on deck, and sluin' about to the current like a drunk goin' home in the mornin'.

"The Cap he cocks his eye up at the telltale compass fixed on the beam overhead of him. It cheered him up a bit with its deviations, and he allowed there might be somethin' in the Providence business if the kelp beds only held good.

"'Failin' them,' he says, 'it's the Horn and a clear sea all the way to it, with the chance of bein' passed be day or rammed at night by some rotten freighter. I don't know much about Providence,' he says, 'but if you give me the choice between the two, I'll take the kelp beds.'

"Blood hadn't no more feelin's for religion in him than a turkey. He was a book-read

man, and I've took notice that nothin' shakes a sailorman in his foundations s' much as messin' with books.

"I don't say my own religious feelin's run equal, but they gets me by the scruff after a jag and rubs me nose in it, and they lays for me when I'm lonely, times, with no money or the chanst of it in sight; times, they've near caught me and made good on the clutch, so's that if I'm not bangin' a drum in the Sa'vation Army at this present minit it's only be the mercy of Providence. I've had close shaves, bein' a man of natural feelin's, of all the traps laid for such, but Blood he held his own course, and not bein' able to see that the kelp beds might have been put there by Providence to hold us a bit—which they were—and give us a chanst of bein' overhauled before makin' a long board for the Horn and sure damnation, I didn't set out to 'lighten him.

"Well, folks, that day passed somehow or nuther, us takin' spells at the hatch to put in the time. Blood he found a spare ca'tridge of Ginnell's, and the thought came to him to

scrape a hole at the foot of the hatch cover and use the ca'tridge for a blastin' charge. The corkscrew came in handy for this, and toward night he'd got the thing fixed. 'Now,' says he, 'you'll see somethin'!' And he up with the revolver and hit the ca'tridge a belt with the butt end, and the durned thing back-fires and near blew his head off.

"After that we lit the cabin lamp and had supper and went asleep, and early next mornin' I was woke by the noise of a boat comin' alongside. I sat up and shook Blood, and we listened.

"Then we began to shout and bang on the hatch, and all at once the fastenin's went, and all at once the sun blazed on us, and next minit I was on deck, with Blood after me. Now what d'you think had let us out? I'll give you twenty shots and lay you a dollar you don't hit the bull's-eye. A girl! That's what had let us out. Dressed in white, she were, with a panama on her head and a gold watch on her wrist and white shoes on her feet and a smiile on her face like the sun dazzie on water. And

pretty! Well, I guess I'm no beauty-show judge, and my eyes had lit on nothin' prettier than Ginnell since leavin' Frisco, so I may have been out of my reckonin' on points of beauty, but she were pretty. Lord love me, I never want to see nothin' prettier! I let out an oath, I was that shook up at the sight of her, and Blood he hit me a drive in the back that nigh sent me into her arms, and then we settled down and explained matters.

"She was out from Avalon in a motor boat, and she'd run short of spirit and sailed up to us, thinkin' we were at anchor. Providence! I should think so! Providence and the kelp beds, for only for them we'd have been twenty miles to the s'uth'ard, driftin' to Hades like hatched badgers on a mill stream. We told her how Ginnell had fixed us, and she told us how the gasoline had fixed her. 'And now,' says she, 'will you give me a biskit, for I'm hungry and I wants to get back to Avalon, where my poppa is waitin' for me, and he'll be gettin' narvous,' she says.

"'Lord love you,' says I, 'and how do you propose to get back?'"

"For the wind had fallen a dead ca'm, and right to Catalina and over to San Clemente the sea lay like plate glass, with the *Kuro Shiwo* flowin' under like a blue satin snake.

"She bit on her lip, but she was all sand, that girl—Culpepper were her name—and not a word did she say for a minit. Then she says, aimin' to be cheerful: 'Well, I suppose,' says she, 'we'll just have to stay at anchor here till they fetch me or the wind comes.'"

"'Anchor!' said I. 'Why, Lord bless you, there's a mile-deep water under us! We're driftin'.'"

"'Driftin'!' she cries. 'And where are we driftin' to?'"

"That fetched me, and I was hangin' in irons when Blood chipped in and cheered her up with lies and told me to stay with her whiles he went down below and got some breakfast ready, and then I was left alone with her, trustin' in Providence she wouldn't ask no more questions as to where we were driftin' to.

"She sat on the cargo hatch whiles I filled a pipe, lookin' round about her like a cat in a new house, and then she got mighty chummy. I don't know how she worked it, but in ten minits she'd got all about myself out of me and all about Ginnell and Blood and the *Yan-Shan* and the dollars we'd missed; she'd learned that I never was married and who was me father and why I went to sea at first start. Right down to the colour of me first pair of pants she had it all out of me. She was a sure-enough lady, but I reckon she missed her vocation in not bein' a bilge pump. Then she heaves a sigh at the sound of ham frying down below, and hoped that breakfast was near ready, and right on her words Blood hailed us from below.

"He'd opened the skylight wide and knocked the stuffiness out of the cabin, and down we sat at the table with fried ham and ship's bread and coffee before us.

"I'd never set at table with the likes of her before, but if every real lady's cut on her bias, I wouldn't mind settin' at table with one

every day in me life. There was only two knives left whole after our practice on the hatch with them. Blood and she had the whole ones, and I made out with a stump, but she didn't mind nor take notice. She was talkin' away all the time she was stuffin' herself, pitchin' into Cap Ginnell just like one of us. Oh, I guess if she'd been a man she'd have swore worth listenin' to; she had the turn of the tongue for the work, and what she said about Ginnell might have been said in chapel without makin' parties raise a hair, but I reckon it'd have raised blisters on the soul of Pat Ginnell if he'd been by to hear and if he'd a soul to blister, which he hasn't."

Mr. Harman relit his pipe, and seemed for a moment absorbed in contemplation of Miss Culpepper and her possibilities as a plain speaker; then he resumed:

"She made us tell her all over again about the *Yan-Shan* business and the dollars, and she allowed we were down on our luck, and she put her finger on the spot. Said she: 'You fell through by not goin' on treatin' Ginnell

as you begun treatin' him. If he was bad enough to be used that way, he wasn't even good enough for you to make friends with.' Them wasn't her words, but it was her meanin'.

"Then we left her to make her t'ilet with Blood's comb and brush, tellin' her she could have the cabin to herself as long as she was aboard, and, ten minutes after, she was on deck again, bright as a new pin, and scarce had she stuck her head into the sun than Blood, who was aft, dealin' with some old truck, shouts: 'Here's the wind!'

"It was coming up from s'uth'ard like a field of blue barley, and I took the wheel, and Blood and her ran to the halyards. She hauled like a good un, and the old *Heart* sniffed and shook at the breeze, and I tell you it livened me up again to feel the kick of the wheel. We'd got the motor boat streamed astern on a line, and then I gave the old *Heart* the helm, and round she came, so that in a minit we were headin' for Santa Catalina hull down on the horizon and only her spars

showin', so to speak. I thought that girl would 'a' gone mad. Not at the chanst of gettin' back, but just from the pleasure of feelin' herself on a live ship and helpin' to handle her. I let her have the wheel, and she steered good, and all the time Santa Catalina was liftin', and now we could see with the glass that the water all round the south end was thick with boats.

"'They're huntin' for me,' said she. 'I guess poppa is in one of them boats,' she says, 'and won't he be surprised when he finds I ain't drowned? Your fortunes is made,' says she, 'for pop owns the ha'f of Minneapolis, and I guess he'll give you ha'f of what he owns. You wait till you hear the yarn I'll sling him—— Here they come!'

"They sighted us, and ha'f a hundred gaso-line launches were nose end on for us, fanning out like a regatta, and in the leadin' launch sat an old chap with white whiskers and a fifty-dollar panama on his head.

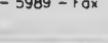
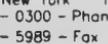
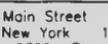
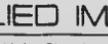
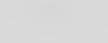
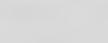
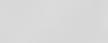
"'That's pop,' she said.

"He were, and we hove to, whiles he came



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climbin' on board like a turtle, one leg over the bulwarks and one arm round her neck, and then up went a hallelujah chorus from that crowd of craft round us, women wavin' handkerchiefs and blowin' their noses and blubbing nuff to make a camel sick.

"Then he and she went down to the cabin to make explanashions, and the parties in the boats tried to board us, till I threatened them with a boat hook and made them fend off while we got way on the *Heart*.

"When we were near into Avalon Bay, the Culps came on deck, and old man Culpepper took off his hat to me and Blood and made us a speech, sayin' we'd lifted weights off his heart, and all such.

"'Never mind,' says Blood, 'we haven't done nuthin'. Put it all down to Providence,' says he, 'for if we saved her she saved us, and I ain't used to bein' thanked for nothin'.'

"But, Lord bless you, you might as well have tried to stop the Mississippi in flood as that old party when he'd got his thank gates up. He said we were an honour to merchant

seamen, which we weren't, and the great American nation—and Blood black Irish and me Welsh, with an uncle that was a Dutchman—and then I'm blest if he didn't burst into po'try about the flag that waves over us all.

"It began to look like ten thousand dollars in gold coin for each of us, and more than like it when we'd dropped anchor in the bay and he told us to come ashore with him.

"Now I don't know how longshore folk* have such sharp noses, but I do know them longshore boatmen on Avalon Beach seemed to know by the cut of the *Heart* and us we weren't no simple seamen, with flags wavin' over us and an honour to our what-you-call-it navy. They sniffed at us by some instinct or other, more special a wall-eyed kangaroo by the name of Aransas Jim, I think it were.

"Said nothin' much, seein' old man Culp was disembarkin' us with an arm round each of our necks, so to say, but we took up their

* Allow me to assure the "longshore boatmen" on Avalon Beach that my opinion of them is not that expressed hereafter by Mr. Harman.—AUTHOR.

looks, and I'd to lay pretty strong holts on myself or I'd have biffed the blighters, lot o' screw-neck mongrels, so's their mothers wouldn't have known which was which when sortin' the manglin'.

"Now you listen to what happened then. Culp he took us up to a big hotel, where niggers served us with a feed in a room by ourselves. Champagne they give us, and all sorts of truck *I'd* never set eyes on before. And when it was over in came old man Culp with an envelope in his hand, which he gives to Blood.

" 'Just a few dollars for you and your mate,' says he, 'and you have my regards always.'

"The girl she came in and near kissed us, and off we went with big cigars in our mouths, feelin' we were made men. The longshoremen were still on the beach scratchin' the fleas off themselves and talkin', I expec', of the next millionaire they could rob by pretendin' to be fishermen. Blood he picked up a pebble on the shingle and put it 'n his pocket, and when the longshore louts saw us comin',

smokin' cigars and walkin' arrogant, they made sure old man Culp had given us ha'f a million, and they looked it. All them noses of theirs weren't turned up just now. They saw dollars comin' and hoped for a share.

"'Here, you chap,' says Blood to Aransas Jim or Aransas Joe or whichever was his name, 'help us to push our boat off and I'll make it worth your while.' The chap does, and wades after us, when we were afloat, for his dues. He held out his hand, and Blood he clapped the pebble into it, and off we shot with them helaballoing after us.

"Much we cared.

"On board the *Heart*, we tumbled down to the cabin to 'xamine our luck. Blood takes the envelope from his pocket, slits it open, and takes out a little check that was in it. How much for, d'you think? Five thousand dollars? No, it weren't.

"Twenty dollars was writ on it. Twenty dollars, no cents.

"'Say, Blood,' says I to him, 'you've got the pebble this time.'

“Blood he folded the check up and lit his pipe with it. Then he says, talkin’ in a satisfied manner ’s if to himself:

“ ‘It were worth it.’

“That’s all he said. And, comin’ to think of it now meself, it were.”

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V

THE BIG HAUL

I

CAPTAIN MICHAEL BLOOD and Billy Harman, having received ten thousand dollars for services rendered to Henry Clay Armbruster, and having cashed the check, held a consultation as to what they should do with it.

Harman was for filling up their schooner, the *Heart of Ireland*, with trade and starting off for the islands in search of copra. Blood, tired of the sea, for a while demurred. He said he wanted to enjoy life a bit.

"And who's to stop you?" replied the open-minded Harman. "A thousand dollars is all we want for a bust, and a week to do it in. I've took notice that the heart is mostly out of a bust by the end of a week, after that it's a fair wind and followin' sea for the jimjams

with an empty hold when you fetches them. Let's lay our plans and work cautious, for when all's said and done, it's no great shake to wake jailed with empty pockets, robbed of your boots by the bar drummers you've been fillin' with booze.

"Booze ain't no use," continued Mr. Harman, finishing his glass—they were celebrating the occasion in a bar near the China docks. "Look at the chaps that sell it, and look at the chaps that swallow it—one lot covered with di'monds and the other lot with their toes stickin' out of their boots. We've got to work cautious and keep takin' soundings all the time, for riches is rocks, as I heard a chap once sayin' in a temp'rance meetin' on the Sand Lot. Twenty year ago it was, but the sayin' stuck in my head—have another?"

They failed to "work cautious" that night. Flushed with prosperity and unaccustomed drinks, they found themselves playing cards with professional gamblers, who relieved them of five thousand dollars in an hour and twenty-five minutes.

"Riches is rocks." There was never a truer saying; and next morning, not being altogether fools, they determined to thank God the whole of their little fortune was not gone and to set to work to retrieve their losses.

Now, it had become known all about the waterside that the *Heart of Ireland* was back. The fate of Ginnell, her original owner, who had been jugged for gun running, was still fresh and pleasant in the mind of the public; and the authorities, who boarded the *Heart* on the morning after the gambling adventures of Blood and Harman, would have had a lot of things to say to those two had not Harman already made things straight with the "Clancy crowd," that amiable political ring whose freemasonic friendship and protection was never invoked in vain by even the least of its members. So it came about that after friendly conversation and cigars the authorities rowed off, and scarcely had they gone when a boat with a big, fat man in the stern came sculling up.

"That's Mike Rafferty," said Harman to his

companion. "He's a cousin of Ginnell. Now what in the nation does he want with us?"

Rafferty hailed Harman by name and came aboard. Rafferty knew everything about them, from the fact that they were flush with coin to the fact that they were in a kind of lawful-unlawful possession of his cousin's schooner.

He talked quite openly on these matters, but of the fate of his Cousin Ginnell he said nothing, with the exception of a dark hint that wires were being pulled in his favour.

Harman was equally explicit.

"He jugged us in the cabin of this schooner," said Harman, "and made off on the dereft when we struck down the coast there; he gave me the present of her. That we stick to, and if I ever lay hands on Pat Ginnell I'll give him a present that'll stick to him for the rest of his nacheral."

"Aisy, now," said Rafferty; "don't be laying on your hair. I know the swab, and, though he's workin' in his favour, bein' cousins, I've

own down on him. He sold me a pup over the last cargo of oil he brought in, and if it wasn't for the disgrace of the family I'd l'ave him lie without raisin' a finger to better him. What I've come about is bizness. I hear you've been talkin' of copra."

Harman had, in various bars, and he made no trouble about admitting the soft impeachment.

"Well," said Rafferty, "it's become a poor business, what with them Germans and missionaries and such. You go to any of the islands with trade, and see what you'll get. I've worked the Pacific since I was a boy the height of me knee, and I know it. There's not an island, nearly, I'm not acqeuented with, not a reef, begob; you ask any one, and they'll tell you."

Harman knew this to be a fact. Rafferty, who was no good age, had been engaged in blackbirding, in copra, in opium smuggling, in all the in-and-out ways of life that the blue Pacific held or holds open to man.

"Heave ahead," said he.

"Well," said Rafferty, "this is me bizn with you. Pay me fifty dollars down and ten per cent of the takin's, and I'll put you on an island where you'll fill up with copra for a few old beads and baccy pipes. It's a var island out of trade tracks; you won't find a Dutchman there, and the Kanaka girls come dancin' round you with nuthin' on them but flowers. You won't find any Bibles nor cri lines sp'ilin' the people there. I marked down last year when I was comin' up from south of the line, with a never-mind cargo. But I left the sea last spring, as maybe you know, else I'd have taken a ship down there meself. Fifty dollars down and ten per cent on the takin's, and I'll put you on the spot."

Harman begged time to consider the matter, and Rafferty, after drinks and conversation of a political nature, took his departure, leaving his address behind.

"Now, you see how crookedness don't pay," said Harman, as he watched the boat row off. "Pat Ginnell was so good at bestin' he bested his own relations. I remember that bizn

about the shark oil; Rafferty was givin' Ginnell his name over it in every bar in Frisco, and now Rafferty's spoilin' to get his own back by usin' the *Heart*. Funny them Irish are, for he's tryin' with the other hand to get him clear of jail for the sake of the family. Jail's hell to an Irishman. I've always took notice of that—no offence to you."

Blood looked away over the blue waters of the bay. "It is," said he, "and, bad as I hate Ginnell, if I could turn the lock to let him out, I'd do it to-morrow—and scrag him the moment after. Jail's not natural to a man. If a man's not fit to live loose, kill him, if you want to; if you want to make him afraid of the law, cut the skin off him with a cat-o'-nine-tails, but to stick him in a cage—and what's jail but a cage?—is to turn him into a brute beast. And it never betters him."

Harman concurred. Sailors have a way of getting at the truth of things because they are always so close to them; and these two, discussing penal matters on the deck of the *Heart of Ireland*, might have been listened to with

advantage by some of the law officers of nations.

Then they had drinks, and later in the evening they called on Rafferty at his office in Ginn Street.

They had come to the decision to take the offer. A soft island was well worth paying for. Cayzer, the owner of the great Clan line of steamers, made his fortune by knowing where to send his ships for cargo, and, though Harman knew nothing of the owner of the Clan line, he was keenly alive to the truth in this matter.

"So you've come to agree with me," said Rafferty. "Well, you won't be sorry. Now how will you take it—fifty dollars down and a ten-per-cent royalty to me on the takin's, or would you sooner make a clean deal and pay me a hundred and fifty down and no royalty? For between you and me there's a lot of chances to be taken and the old *Heart* is not so young as she used to be."

Blood and Harman took a walk outside

consult, and determined to make a "clean deal."

"I don't want to be payin' no royalties," said Harman; "let's cut clear of the chap and pay him a hundred down; he'll take it."

He did, after an hour's bargaining and wrangling and calling the saints to observe how he was being cheated.

Then, the hundred dollars having been paid, he gave them the location of the island on the chart which Harman had brought.

To be almost precise, the island was situated in the great quadrilateral of empty sea southwest of Honolulu, bounded by the International Date Line to westward, latitude 10° north to southward, longitude 165° to eastward, and the Tropic of Cancer to northward.

Having paid a hundred dollars for the information, Blood and Harman left Rafferty's office and that very afternoon began to purchase the trade for their new venture.

II

A fortnight later, with a full Chinese crew and Harman at the helm, the *Heart* shook out her old sails, and, picking her anchor out of the mud, lay over on a tack that would take her midway between Alcatraz and Bird Roost. It was a bright and lovely morning, with a west wind blowing, and Harman whistled softly to himself as he shifted the helm under Alcatraz and the slatting sails filled on the tack for Black Point. She was catching the fresh breath of the sea here and heeled with a green water a foot from the starboard gunwale as she made the reach for Line Point, then, on the port tack she felt the first Pacific sea, taking the middle channel.

After fighting the tumble of the thirty-foot water of the bar, Harman, having made their course, relinquished the wheel to one of the Chinamen and joined Blood.

In buying the trade, they had received some tips from Rafferty. "Now," said that gentleman, "there's no use in takin' hats to Paris

coals to Newcastle. If you're going to trade with a place, you must take the things that's wanted there. I was sayin' you could get all the copra you wanted for baccy pipes and beads—that was only me figure of speech. Them chaps on Matao—the name of the island—want stuff different from that, I took note when I was there, thinkin' to trade some time with them. They're no end keen on diggin' the land and growin' things, and they traded me a lot of fish and shells for a packet of onion seed. They want stuff that's not grown there natural—onions, potatoes, and garden seed in general. You might take some spades and wheelbarras and not be amiss; and tinware, pots, and pans, and so on."

Harman took this useful tip, and the *Heart* was well provisioned with things useful in the way of agriculture. He was talking now with Blood on the stowage; the wheelbarrows were exercising his mind, for there is nothing more awkward to stow, or, in its way, more likely to be damaged, and they had seven of them. It was a feature of Harman's make-up

that he sometimes didn't begin to bother about things till it was impossible to put them right, and Blood hinted so in plain language.

"What's the good of talkin' about it now," said he. "We worked the thing out ashore and what's done is done. You got them chests and if the Kanakas don't take to them they always fetch their price in any port."

"That's what's bothering me," said Harman; "for if the Kanakas don't want them we fill up with copra, we'll have to dump our damned things, for we won't have stowage room for them."

"Wait till we've got the copra," replied Blood.

Then they stood watching the Californian coast getting low down on the port quarter and a big tank steamer pounding along half a mile away making to enter the gates.

"Wheelbarrows or no wheelbarrows, I may thank your God you're not second mate on *that*," said Blood.

Harman concurred.

III

They had favourable winds to south of Bird Island, which is situated north of Niihau and Kaula in the Hawaiian group, then came a calm that lasted three days, leaving the old *Heart* groaning and whining to the lift of the swell and the grumbling of Harman, hungry for copra.

"There's somethin' about this tub that gets me," said he. "Somethin' always happens just as we're about to make good. I believe Pat Ginnell's put a curse on her."

"Oh, close up!" said Blood. "How about Armbruster? I reckon she's lucky enough; it's the fools that are in her that have brought any bad luck there's been going."

"Well, we'll see," replied the other.

As if to disprove his words, an hour later the wind came; and three days later, nosing through the great desolation of blue water between Sejetman Reef and Johnston Island, the *Heart of Ireland* raised the island. It was midday when the sea-birdlike cry of one of the

Chinamen on the lookout brought Blood and Harman tumbling up from the cabin. Yes, it was the island, right enough, and Harman through his glass could make out the tops of palm trees where the sea shimmered.

He held the glass glued to his eye for a moment, and then handed it to Harman.

"I reckon," said he, "the pa'ms is as plentiful there as the hairs on a bald man's head. Why, there ain't any pa'ms!"

Blood swore and closed the glass with a snap.

Even at that distance the poverty of the place in copra shouted across the sea, but it was not till they had drawn in within sound of the reefs that the true desolation of this forsolate island became apparent.

The place was horrible. A mile and a half or maybe two miles, long by a mile broad, protected by broken reefs, the island showed but one grove of maybe a hundred trees; the rest was scrub vegetation and sea birds.

Strangest and perhaps most desolate of the features was a line of shanties, half p

tected by the trees, shanties that seemed gone to decay.

Then, as the *Heart* hove to and lay sniffing at the place, appeared a figure. A man was coming down the little strip of beach leading from the shanties to the lagoon.

"Look!" said Harman. "He's pushin' off to us in a boat. Say, Blood, d'you see any naked Kanaka girls crowned with flowers waitin' to dance round us?"

"Rafferty's sold us a pup," said Blood.

"It's easy to be seen. We'll wait. Let's see."

The boat, a small one, was clearing the reef, opening and making toward them, the man sculling her looking over his shoulder now and then to correct his course.

Close up, she revealed herself as an old fishing dinghy, battered with wear.

Alongside, the man in her laid in his oars, caught the rope flung to him by Harman, and made fast.

He was a pale-faced, lantern-jawed, dyspeptic-looking person, and he was chewing, for

the first thing he did after scrambling on deck was to spit overboard. The next was to ask a question.

"What's your name?" said he, saluting the afterguard with a nod, and sweeping the deck with his eyes—eyes like the wine-coloured large, soulless eyes of a hare.

"*Heart of Ireland*, out of Frisco—what yours?" replied Harman.

"Gadgett," replied the hare-eyed man. "I came out thinking maybe you were bringing news of my schooner, the *Bertha Mason*. She's overdue from Sydney. I'm owner here. This island's mine, leased from the Australian government." Then, with another look round the deck: "What in the nation are you doing down here anyway?"

"Makin' fools of ourselves," replied Harman, "unless we've mistook your place for a big copra island that ought to lay in your position. You haven't heard tell of such an island hereabouts?"

"Look at your charts," said Gadgett. "The place is only marked on the last British Ac

miralty charts. There's nothing round here but water from the Change Time Line to Johnston Island. You've come a thousand miles out for copra."

"What's your venture here, may I ask?" put in Blood.

"Shell," replied Gadgett, leaning now against the starboard rail and cutting himself a new plug of tobacco. "I've been working this island six years, and had her nearly stripped of shell last spring, but I've hung on to clear the last of it. There isn't much, but I thought I'd take the last squeeze. My schooner is overdue, and when it comes I'm going to clear out for good."

"Say," said Harman, "did a chap called Rafferty call here last spring?"

Gadgett turned his eyes to Harman.

"Yes, a chap by that name was here in a schooner. I've forgot her name. Blown out of his course by weather, he was, and called for water."

"Well, now, listen," said Harman. Then he told the whole story we know.

Gadgett was a good listener. You could feel him putting his hands into the pockets of the yarn, so to speak, and weighing the contents, nodding his head the while, but not saying a word. When it was finished, he took from his pocket the knife with which he had cut the tobacco, opened it, and began cutting gently at his left thumb nail.

"Well," said he, "it's pretty clear you two gentlemen have been sold. Brought wheelbarrows here and onion seed and pots and pans; might as well have brought an emporium hold for all the trade to be done in this place for when I'm gone, with the few Kanakas I have with me—they are fishing over on the other side just now—there'll be nobody here but sea gulls. Rafferty—I see him clear—big-featured man he was, a questioning character too. Well, there's no doubt about it; he slung you a yarn. But what made him do it?"

"What made him do it!" said Blood. "Why, to guy us all over Frisco and to go right with us over a deal we had with a cousin of his by the name of Pat Ginnell. I'm Irish."

myself, and I ought to have known how they stick together. No matter, there's no use in crying over spilt milk. Can we come into your lagoon for a brush-up?"

Gadgett assented. There was a broad fairway, and he steered the *Heart* himself, the boat following streamed on a line. When the anchor was down, he asked them ashore, and as they were rowing across to the beach said Gadgett: "Do you gentlemen know anything of oyster fishing—shell?"

"No," said Harman.

"That's a pity," said Gadgett, "if you'd been disposed and knew the business you might have cared to stick here. I put down spat this spring on the whole floor of this lagoon, and the place will be thick with oysters by Christmas. I'd have sold you the remains of the lease—over forty years to run—for a trifle. There's money to be made here—if you cared to take the thing on."

"No," said Harman, rather shortly.

"We're not open to any trade of that sort."

"Well, there was no harm in mentioning said Gadgett.

He took them up to the frame house in the cocoanut grove, where he lived, and showed them the drinks. Then he showed them the god house where shell was stored and the Kanaka shanties.

Then Blood and Harman went off for a walk by themselves to explore the horrible desolation of the place.

Said Harman, when they were alone: "Skunk—he's been tryin' to do us, him and me, spat! I know all about oysters, shell and pearl. Why, this place won't be no use in another fifty years after the way he's scraped it. He looks on us as a pair of mugs, wantin' about with a cargo of wheelbarrows, which we are. But we ain't such mugs as to pay him good money for lyin' yarns."

They walked to the only eminence on the island, a rise of ground some hundred feet above the sea level, and there they stood breathing the sea air and watching the g

and listening to the eternal song of the surf on the reef.

Then they came back to the beach and hailed the schooner for a boat, which presently put off and took them on board.

Once on deck, Mr. Harman made a dive below into the cabin, and Blood, following him, found him in the act of uncorking a bottle of whisky.

"I'm fair let down," said Harman, mixing his drink. "It's not Rafferty, nor the dog's trick he's played us, nor the sight of this blasted place that's enough to give a dromedary the collywobbles. It's that chap with the yalla eyes. I heard him laffin' to himself when he went into the house, laffin' at us. I've never been laffed at like that, but it's not so much that as the chap. He's onnatural."

"I want to get back to Frisco and scrag Rafferty," said Blood, taking hold of the bottle. "That's all *I* want."

"You'll have to scrag the whole of Frisco, then," said Harman, "for the place is rockin' with laughter now, from the China docks to

Meiggs'. It's the wheelbarrows that have done us; they'll be had against us everywhere and not a bar you'll go into but you'll be asked: Is your wheelbarrow outside? I don't want to go back to Frisco, I tell you I don't. I want to get to some place where I can sit down and cuss quiet. Lord, but that chap has had us lively!"

There was no doubt of that fact. Rafferty, with that fatal sense of humour for which he had a reputation of a sort, had well avenged his kinsman, Ginnell, put a hundred dollars into his own pocket, and made Blood and Harman forever ridiculous to a certain order of minds. And his whole working material had been just the recollection of this forsaken island—nothing more than that.

IV

Gadgett's schooner, the *Bertha Mason*, came into the lagoon that night under a full moon lifting in the east. Blood and Harman had not gone to bed, and they were treated to a lovely sight which left them unimpressed.

THE "HEART OF IRELAND" 305

Nothing could be more perfect in the way of a sea picture than the schooner fresh from the sea spilling her amber light on her water shadows to the slatting of curves and the sounds of block and cordage, moving like a vision with just way enough on her to take her to her anchorage.

Then the lagoon surface reeled to the splash of the anchor, the shore echoes answered to the rumble-tum-tum-tum of the chain, and the *Bertha Mason* swung to her moorings, presenting her bow to the outward-going current and her broadside to that of the *Heart*.

"Blast the blighters!" said Harman. Then the two went below to their bunks.

Next morning there were salutations across the water from one schooner to the other. The fellows on the *Bertha Mason* were at work early getting the shell on board, and the Chinese crew of the *Heart* were busy fishing. During the day there was little communication between the two vessels, and at night there was no offer of the *Bertha Masonites* to come

aboard, yet it was their duty to pay first call as the *Heart* was a visitor.

"They're a stand-off lot," said Harman. "They're turnin' up their noses. I s'pose, 'cause we have a crew of chinkies. Well, they can keep to themselves, for all I care. When're we goin' to put out?"

"I c'n't want to leave before them," said Blood. "Besides, there are repairs to be done and we want to fill up with water. They won't keep us long."

Harman said nothing. He wanted to be like Blood but he felt as Blood did; his enmity against the Gadgett crowd made him want to hold his tongue, pretending to care nothing, and that enmity was increased next morning. The *Bertha Mason*, dragging her anchor a bit on the strong incoming current, came near to foul the *Heart*. Harman used language to which came a polite inquiry as to how he was off his wheelbarrows.

"Gadgett's told," said he to Blood, making suitable answer to the question. "They're laffin at us. The yarn will be

over Sydney now; they'll be tellin' it in N' York before they've done with it. We'll have to change our names and sink the *Heart* to clear ourselves. Well, I'm goin' off fishin'. Gadgett said there was good fishin' from the rocks on the other side of the island. I can't stick here doin' nuthin'. The deck's burnin' my feet."

He rowed ashore with lines and fish that the Chinese had caught for bait. It was five o'clock in the evening, and the *Bertha Mason*, her cargo stowed, was preparing to leave when he returned.

Blood was down below when Harman came tumbling down the companionway. He was flushed, and looked as though he had been drinking, though his legs were steady enough, and there was no smell of alcohol.

"Blood!" shouted Harman. "We're made! Where's your pocketbook? Gimme it! Come on, haste yourself; come with me and try to look like a fool. Gimme the pocketbook, I tell you, and don't ask no questions; I'm fit to burst, and there's no time. They're

handlin' the sails on that bathtub. Up wi
you and after me!"

He seized the pocketbook, which had fi
teen hundred dollars in it, the remains of the
money, and rushed on deck, followed b
Blood.

The boat was still by the side, with tw
Chinamen in her. They got in and rowed
the *Bertha Mason*.

Next moment they were on the deck of th
Bertha, facing Gadgett.

"Mr. Gadgett," said Harman, "when yo
talked of having put down oyster spat in th
lagoon, did you mean pearl-oyster spat?"

"Of course," said Gadgett, scenting vague
what was coming.

"And will them oysters have pearls in the
by next Christmas?"

"Of course they will," replied the othe
"Not every oyster, but most of them will."

"You talked of selling the remains of t
lease of the place," said Harman. "We
we've come to buy. What would you want f
it?"

"Two thousand dollars," said Gadgett. They went below to bargain, and in five minutes, anxious to be done with the fools and get away, Gadgett came down to five hundred dollars.

He knew well that not only was the place stripped by him, but that lately it had been giving out. Oysters are among the most mysterious denizens of the sea, and shell lagoons "give out" for no known reason. The oysters cease to breed—that is all. Gadgett would have sold the remains of his lease for five dollars, for five cents, for a cent. He would have given it away—to an enemy.

He got five hundred dollars for it and reckoned that he had crowned his luck.

Harman went below and examined the lease. It included all rights on the island above and underground, and all rights to sea approaches and reefs.

Gadgett had a government stamp for the new contract. He was a man who always foresaw, and in five minutes Harman and Blood found themselves in possession of

Matao for a term of forty-four years, with option of renewal for another twenty years on a year's notice.

Then Harman, with this in his pocket, came on deck, followed by Blood, and as they stood saying good-bye to Gadgett the fellow in command began giving the order to handle the throat and peak halyards.

As they rowed off, the jib was being set, and when they reached the *Heart*, the sound of the windlass pawls reached them, and the rasp of the anchor chain being hove short.

"What is it?" said Blood, who knew Harman too well to doubt that they had got the weather gauge on Gadgett.

"Wait till they've cleared the lagoon—wait till they've cleared the lagoon!" said the other. "I'm afraid of thinkin' of it lest that chap should smell the idea and come back and murder us. Oh, Lord, oh, Lord! Will they never get out?"

The anchor of the *Bertha Mason* was now rising to the catheads; she was moving. A

she passed the reef opening, she ran up her flag and dipped it, then the Pacific took her.

"Come down below," said Harman.

Down below, not a word would he say till he had poured out two whiskies, one for himself and one for Blood.

Then he burst out:

"It's a guano island. Yesterday, when I went fishin', I took notice of signs, then I prospected. All the top part is one solid block of guano—nuff to manure the continent of the States. That chap has been sittin' five years on millions of dollars and playin' with oyster shells. Oh, think of Rafferty—and the wheelbarrows! Think of his long, yellow face when he knows!"

"Are you sure?" said Blood.

"Sure—why, I've a workin' knowledge of guano. Sure—o' course I'm sure! Come ashore with me, and I'll show you."

They went ashore, and before sunset Harman had demonstrated that even on this side, where the deposit was thinnest, the store was vast.

"Think of the size of the place," said "and remember from this to the other side gets thicker. Fifty years won't empty it."

The sea gulls of a thousand years had presented them with a fortune beyond estimation and Blood for the first time in his life saw himself a rich man—honestly rich.

Their joy was so great that the first thing they did on returning to the *Heart* was to fling the whisky bottle into the lagoon.

"We don't want any more of that hell stuff ever," said Blood. "I want to enjoy life, and not that spoils everything."

"I'm with you," said Harman, "not to say I'm goin' to turn teetotal, for I've took notice that them mugs gets so full of themselves that they haven't cargo room for nuthin' else. But I don't want no more drunks—not me."

During the next fortnight, with the help of the wheelbarrows and agricultural implements, they took in a cargo of guano. Then they sailed for Frisco.

I never heard exactly the amount of money they made over their last sea adventure, but

do know for a fact that Rafferty nearly died from "mortification" and that Blood and Harman are exceedingly rich men.

Blood turned gentleman and married; but Billy Harman is just the same, preferring sailormen as company and taking voyages to his island to sniff the source of his wealth and for the good of his health.

Billy is the only man I have ever known unspoiled by money.

