

THE GREEN PEA PIRATES

By PETER B. KYNE

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SCRAGGS IS ONE LUCKY SEA DOG.

Synopsis.—Captain Phineas P. Scraggs has grown up around the docks of San Francisco, and from mess boy on a river steamer Maggie, since each annual inspection promised to be the last of the old weatherbeaten vessel, Scraggs naturally has some difficulty in securing a crew. When the story opens, Adelbert P. Gibney, likeable, but erratic, a man whom nobody but Scraggs would hire, is the skipper. Neils Halvorsen, a solemn Swede, constitutes the forcible hands, and Bart McGuffey a wastrel of the Gibney type, reigns in the engine room. With this motley crew and his ancient vessel, Captain Scraggs is engaged in freighting garden truck from Halfmoon bay to San Francisco. The inevitable happens, the Maggie going ashore in a fog. A passing vessel hailing the wreck, Mr. Gibney gets word to a towing company in San Francisco that the ship ashore is the Yankee Prince, with promise of a reef, salvage. Two lugs succeed in pulling the Maggie into deep water, and she slips her tow lines and gets away in the fog. Furious at the deception practised on them, Captains Hicks and Flaherty, commanding the two tugboats, ascertain the identity of the "Yankee Prince" and, fearing ridicule should the facts become known along the waterfront, determine on personal vengeance. Their hostile visit to the Maggie results in Captain Scraggs promising to get a new boiler and make needed repairs to the steamer.

CHAPTER V.

A week had elapsed and nothing of an eventful nature had transpired to disturb the routine of life aboard the Maggie, until Bartholomew McGuffey, having heard certain waterfront whispers, considered it the part of prudence to lay his information before Scraggs and Mr. Gibney.

"Look here, Scraggs," he began briskly. "It's all fine and dandy to promise me a new boiler, but when do I get it?"

"Why, jest as soon as we can get this glut o' freight behind us, Bart, my boy. You've managed with the old boiler this long, so it 'pears to me you might be patient an' bear with it a mite longer, Bart."

"Oh, I ain't tryin' to be disagreeable. Scraggs, only it sort o' worries me to have to go along without bein' able to use our whistle."

"We'll fix it when business slacks up," Scraggs decided with finality. He glanced at his watch. "Sufferin' salior!" he cried in simulated distress. "Here it's one o'clock an' I ain't collected a dollar of the freight money from the last voyage. I must beat it."

When Captain Scraggs had "beaten it," Gibney and McGuffey exchanged expressive glances. "He's runnin' out on us," McGuffey complained.

"Even so, Bart, even so. Therefore, the thing for us to do is to run out on him. In other words, we'll work a month, save our money, an' then, without a word o' complaint or argument, we'll walk out."

"Oh, I ain't exactly broke, Gib. I got eighty-five dollars."

"Then," quoth Gibney decisively. "we'll go on strike tonight. Scraggs'll be stuck in port a week before he can get another engineer an' another navigating officer, me an' you bein' the only two natural-born fools in San Francisco an' ports adjacent, an' before three days have passed he'll be huntin' us up to compromise."

"I don't want no compromise. What I want is a new boiler."

"You'll get it. We'll make him order the paint an' the boiler an' pay for both in advance before we'll agree to go back to work."

The engineer nodded his approval and after sealing their pact with a hearty handshake, they turned to and commenced discharging the Maggie. When Captain Scraggs returned to the little steamer shortly after five o'clock, to his great amazement, he discovered Mr. Gibney and McGuffey dressed in their other suits—including celluloid collars and cuffs.

"The cargo's out, Scraggs, my son, the decks has been washed down an' everything in my department is shipshape." Thus Mr. Gibney.

"Likewise in mine," McGuffey added.

"Consequently," Mr. Gibney concluded, "we're quittin' the Maggie an' if it's all the same to you we'll have our time."

"My dear Gib. Why, whatever's come over you two boys?"

"Stow your chatter, Scraggs. Shell out the cash. You've fooled us once in the matter o' that new boiler an' the paintin', an' we're not goin' to give you a second chance. Come through—or take the consequences. We'll sail no more with a liar an' a fraud."

"Them's hard words, Mr. Gibney."

"The truth is ailers bitter," McGuffey opined.

Captain Scraggs paused to consider the serious predicament which confronted him. It was Saturday night. He knew Mr. McGuffey to be the possessor of more money than usual and if he could assure himself that this reserve should be dissipated before Monday morning he was aware, from experience, that the strike would be broken by Tuesday at the latest. And he could afford that delay. He resolved, therefore, on diplomacy.

"Well, I'm sorry," he answered with every appearance of contrition. "You fellows got me in the nine-hole an' I can't help myself. At the same time,

I appreciate fully your p'nt of view, while realizin' that I can't convince you o' mine. So we won't have no hard feelin's at partin', boys, an' to show you I'm a sport I'll treat to a French dinner an' a motion picture show afterward. Further, I shall regard a refusal of said invite as a personal affront."

"By golly, you're gittin' sporty in your old age," the engineer declared. "I'll go you, Scraggs. How about you, Gib?"

"I accept with thanks, Scraggsy, old tarpot. Personally, I maintain that seamen should leave their troubles aboard ship."

"That's the spirit I appreciate, boys. Come to the cabin an' I'll pay you off. Then wait a coupler minutes till I shift into my glad rags an' away we'll go, like Paddy Ford's goat—on our own hook."

"Old Scraggsy's as cunnin' as a pet fox, ain't he?" the new navigating officer whispered as Scraggs departed for his other suit. "He's goin' to blow himself on us tonight, thinkin' to soften our hard resolution. We'll fool him. Take all he gives us, but stand pat, Bart."

Bart nodded. His was one of those sturdy natures that could always be depended upon to play the game, win, lose or draw.

As a preliminary move, Captain Scraggs declared in favor of a couple of cocktails to whet their appetites for the French dinner, and accordingly the trio repaired to an adjacent saloon and tucked three each under their belts—all at Captain Scraggs' expense. When he proposed a fourth, Mr. Gibney's perfect sportsmanship caused him to protest, and reluctantly Captain Scraggs permitted Gibney to buy. Scraggs decided to have a cigar, however, instead of another Martini. The ethics of the situation then indicated that McGuffey should "set 'em up," which he did over Captain Scraggs' protest—and again the wary Scraggs called for a cigar, alleging as an excuse for his weakness that for years three cocktails before dinner had been his absolute limit. A fourth cocktail on an empty stomach, he declared, would kill the evening for him.

But why descend to sordid and vulgar details? Suffice that when the artful Scraggs, pretending to be overcome by his potations and very ill into the bargain, begged to be delivered back aboard the Maggie, Messrs. McGuffey and Gibney loaded him into a taxicab and sent him there, while they continued their search for excitement. Where and how they found it requires no elucidation here: it is sufficient to state that it was extensive, for when men of the Gibney and McGuffey type have once gotten a fair start naught but financial dissolution can stop them.

On Monday morning, Messrs. Gibney and McGuffey awoke in Scab Johnny's boarding house. Mr. Gibney awoke first, by reason of the fact that his stomach hammered at the door of his soul and bade him be up and doing. While his head ached slightly from the fiery usquebaugh of the Bowhead saloon, he craved a return to a solid diet, so for several minutes he lay supine, conjuring in his agile brain ways and means of supplying this need in the absence of ready cash. "I'll have to hock my sextant," was the conclusion at which he presently arrived. Ten minutes later he took his sextant under his arm and departed for a pawnshop in lower Market street. From the pawnshop he returned to Scab Johnny's with eight dollars in his pocket, routed out the contrite McGuffey, and carried the latter off to ham and eggs.

They felt better after breakfast and for the space of an hour lolled at the table, discussing their adventures of the past forty-eight hours. "Well, there's one thing certain," McGuffey concluded, "an' that thing is sure a cinch. Our strike has petered out. Let's mosey along down to the Maggie's dock an' see how Scraggsy's gettin' along."

Forthwith they set out to interview Captain Scraggs. The owner of the Maggie greeted them cheerily, but after discussing generalities for half an hour, Scraggs failed to make overtures, whereupon Mr. Gibney announced casually that he guessed he and Mac would be on their way. "Same here, boys," Captain Scraggs piped breezily. "I got a new mate an' a new engineer comin' aboard at ten o'clock an' we sail at twelve."

"Well, we'll see you occasionally," Mr. Gibney said at parting.

"Oh, sure. Don't be strangers. You're always welcome aboard the old Maggie," came the careless rejoinder. Somewhat crestfallen, the striking pair repaired to the Bowhead saloon to discuss the situation over a glass of beer. However, Mr. Gibney's spirits never dropped below zero while he had one nickel to rub against another; hence such slight depression as he felt was due to a feeling that Captain Scraggs had basely swindled him and McGuffey. He was disappointed in Scraggs and said as much. "However, Bart," he concluded, "we'll never say 'die' while our money holds out, and in the meantime our luck may have changed. Let's scatter

around and try to locate some kind of a job; then when them new employees o' Scraggsy quit or get fired—which'll be after about two voyages—an' the old mas comes around holdin' out the olive branch o' peace, we'll give him the horse laugh."

Three days of diligent search failed to uncover the coveted job for either, however, and on the morning of the fourth day Mr. Gibney announced that it would be necessary to "raise the wind," if the pair would breakfast. They retired to the sidewalk to hold a caucus and Mr. McGuffey located a dime which had dropped down inside the lining of his coat. "That settles it," Gibney declared. "We've skipped two meals but I'll be darned if we skip another. We'll ride out to the San Mateo county line on the trolley with that dime an' then hoof it over the hills to Halfmoon bay. Scraggs won't git away from the dock here until after twelve o'clock, so we know he'll be at Halfmoon bay all night. If we start now we'll connect with him in time for supper. Eh, Bart?"

"A twenty-mile hike on a tee-totally empty stomach, with a battle royal on our hands the minute we arrive, weak an' destitute, ain't quite my idea o' enjoyment, Gib, but I'll go you if it kills me. Let's up hook an' away, I'm for gittin' back to work an' usin' moral persuasion to git that new boiler."

They took a hitch in their belts and started. From the point at which they left the trolley to their journey's end was a stiff six-hour jaunt, up hill and down dale, and long before the march was half completed the unaccustomed exercise had developed sundry galls and blisters on the Gibney heels, while the soles of poor McGuffey's feet were so hot he voiced the apprehension that they might burn to a crisp at any moment and drop off by the wayside.

The crew of the Maggie had ceased working cargo for the day and Captain Scraggs was busy cooking supper in the galley when the two prodigals, exhausted, crippled and repentant, came to the door and coughed proptly, but Captain Scraggs pretended not to hear, and went on with his task of turning fried eggs with an artistic flip of the frying pan. So Mr. Gibney spoke, struggling bravely to appear nonchalant. With his eyes on the fried eggs and his mouth threatening to slaver at the glorious sight, he said:

"Hello, there, Scraggsy, old tarpot. How goes it with the owner o' the fast an' commodious steamer Maggie? Git that consignment o' post-holes aboard yet?"

Mr. Gibney's honest face beamed expectantly, for he was particularly partial to fried eggs. As for his companion in distress, anything edible and which would serve to nullify the gnawing at his internal economy would be welcome. Inasmuch as Captain Scraggs did not readily reply to Mr. Gibney's salutation, McGuffey decided to be more emphatic and to the point, albeit in a joking way.

"Hurry up with them eggs, Scraggs," he rumbled. "Me an' Gib's walked down from the city an' we're hungry."



Mr. McGuffey Located a Dime Which Had Dropped Down Inside the Lining of His Coat.

Jawn D. Rockefeller'd give a million dollars for my appetite. Fry mine hard, Scraggsy. I want some'n' solid."

"Get off my ship, you murderin' pirates," Scraggs screamed. "Not till we've et," the practical-minded engineer retorted. "Even then we won't get off. Me an' Gib ain't got any feet left, Scraggs. If we had to walk another step we'd be crippled for life. Fry my eggs hard, I tell you."

"This is piracy, men. It's robbery on the high seas, an' I can put you over the road for it," Scraggs warned them. "What's more, I'll do it."

"The eggs, Scraggsy," boomed Mr. Gibney. "The eggs."

Half an hour later, as the pirates, replete with provender, sat dangling their damaged underpinning over the stern railing where the gentle wavelets laved and cooled them, Captain Scraggs, accompanied by the new navigating officer, the new engineer, and The Squarehead, came aft. The cripples looked up, surveyed their successors in office, and found the sight far from reassuring.

"I've already ordered you two tramps off'n my ship," Scraggs began formally, "an' I hereby, in the presence o' reliable witnesses, repeats the invitation. You ain't wanted; your room's preferred to your company, an' by stayin' a minute longer, in defiance o' my orders, you're layin' yourselves liable to a charge o' piracy."

Mr. Gibney carefully laid his pipe aside and stood up. He was quite an imposing spectacle in his bare feet, with his trousers rolled up to his great knees, thereby revealing his scarlet flannel underdrawers. With a stifled groan, McGuffey rose and stood beside his partner, and Mr. Gibney spoke:

"Scraggs, be reasonable. We ain't lookin' for trouble; not because we don't relish it, for we do where a couple o' scabs is concerned, but for the simple reason that we ain't in the best o' condition to receive it, although if you force it on us we'll do our best. If you chuck us off the Maggie an' force us to walk back to San Francisco, we're goin' to be reported as missin'. Honest, now, Scraggsy, old side-winder, you ain't goin' to maroon us here, alone with the vegetables, are you?"

"You done me dirt. You quit me cold. Git out. You can play at a dirty game an' your dog must have his day. This is my day, Gib. Scat!"

"Pers'nally," McGuffey announced quietly, "I prefer to die aboard the Maggie, if I have to. This ain't movin' day with B. McGuffey, Esquire."

"Them's my sentiments, too, Scraggsy."

"Then defend yourselves. Come on, lads. Bear a hand an' we'll bounce these muckers overboard." The Squarehead hung back, having no intention of waging war upon his late comrades, but the engineer and the new navigating officer stepped briskly forward, for they were about to fight for their jobs. Mr. Gibney halted the advance by lifting both great hands in a deprecatory manner.

"For heaven's sake, Scraggsy, have a heart. Don't force us to murder you. If we're peaceable, what's to prevent you from givin' us a passage back to San Francisco, where we're known an' where we'll have at least a fightin' chance to git somethin' to eat occasionally?"

"You know mighty well what's to prevent me, Gib. I ain't got no passenger license, an' I'll be keel-hauled an' skull-dragged if I fall for your cute little game, my son. I ain't layin' myself liable to a fine from the inspectors an' maybe have my ticket book took away to boot."

"Enough of this gab," Mr. Gibney roared. "My patience is exhausted. I'm dog-tired an' I'm goin' to have peace if I have to fight for it. Me an' Bart stays aboard the steamer Maggie until she gets back to Frisco town or until we're hove overboard in the interim by the weight of numbers. An' if any man, or set o' male bipeds that calls themselves men, is so foolish as to try to evict us from this packet, then all I got to say is that they're triffin' with death. I got my arms left, even if my feet is on the fritz, Scraggs," he continued, "an' if you start anything I'll hug you an' your crew to death. I'm a rip-roarin' grizzly bear once I'm started an' there's such a thing as drivin' a man to desperation."

The bluff worked! Captain Scraggs turned to his retainers and with a condescending and paternal smile, said: "Boys, let's give the dumb fools their own way. If they insist upon takin' forcible possession o' my ship on the high seas, there's only one name for the crime—an' that's piracy, punishable by hangin' from the yard-arm. We'll just let 'em stay aboard an' turn 'em over to the police when we git back to the city."

He started for his cabin and the crew, vastly relieved, followed him. The pirates once more sat down and permitted their hot feet to loll overboard.

About ten o'clock next morning the little vessel completed taking on her cargo, the lines were cast off, and the homeward voyage was begun. Messrs. Gibney and McGuffey were seated on the stern bits as the Maggie came abreast the Point Montara fog signal station, when Mr. Gibney observed a long telescope poking out the side window of the pilot house, and following the direction in which the telescope was pointing he made out a large bark standing in dangerously close to the beach. In fact, the breakers were tumbling in a long white streak over the reefs less than a quarter of a mile from her.

In an instant all was excitement aboard the Maggie. "That looks like an elegant little pick-up. She's plumb deserted," Scraggs shouted to his nav-

igating officer. "I don't see any distress signals flyin' an' yet she's got an anchor out while her canvas is hangin' so-so."

"If she had any hands aboard, you'd think they'd have sense enough to clew up her courses," the mate answered.

At this juncture, Mr. Gibney and McGuffey, unable to restrain their curiosity, and forgetful of the fact that they were pirates with very sore feet, came running over the deck and invaded the pilot house. "Gimme that glass, you sock-eyed salmon, you," Gibney ordered Scraggs, and tore the telescope from the owner's hands. "Hum—m—m! American bark Chesapeake. Starboard anchor out; yards braced a-box; royal an' to-gallan'-s'is clewed up; courses hangin' in the buntlines an' clew garnets, Stars-an'-Stripes upside down."

He lowered the glass and roared at Neils Halvorsen, who was at the wheel, "Starboard your helm, Square-



"I'll Hug You and Your Crew to Death."

head. Don't be afraid of her. We're goin' over there an' hook on to her. I should say she is a pick-up!"

Mr. Gibney had abdicated as a pirate and assumed command of the S. S. Maggie. With the memory of a scant breakfast upon him, however, Captain Scraggs was still harsh and bitter.

"Git out o' my pilot house an' aft where the police can find you when they come lookin' for you," he screamed. "Don't you give no orders to my deckhand."

"Stow it, you ass. Youder's a prize, but it'll require imagination to win it; consequently you need Adelbert P. Gibney in your business, if you're contemplatin' hookin' on to that bark, smakin' her into San Francisco bay, an' libelin' her for ten thousand dollars' salvage. You an' Mac an' The Squarehead here have salled this strip o' coast too long together to quarrel over the first good piece o' salvage we ever run into. Come, Scraggsy. Be decent, forget the past, an' let's dig in together."

The new navigating officer drew Captain Scraggs aside and whispered in his ear: "Make it up with these Smart Alecks, Scraggs. They got it on us, but if we can send you an' Halvorsen, McGuffey and Gibney over to the bark, you can get some s'all on her an' what with the wind helpin' us along, the Maggie can tow her all right."

Mr. Gibney saw by the hopeful, even cunning, look that leaped to Scraggs' eyes that the problem was about to be solved without recourse to the Gibney imagination, so he resolved to be alert and not permit himself to be caught out on the end of a limb. "Well, Scraggsy?" he demanded.

"I guess I need you in my business, Gib. You're right an' I'm always wrong. It's a fact. I ain't got no more imagination than a chicken."

"My imagination's better'n my reputation, Scraggsy, an' I ain't working for nothin'!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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