

The Green Pea Pirates

By PETER B. KYNE

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DERELICT RICHLY LADEN.

Synopsis.—Captain Phineas P. Scraggs has grown up around the docks of San Francisco, and from mess boy on a river steamer, risen to the ownership of the 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, likewise, but erratic, a man whom nobody but Scraggs would hire, is the skipper. Neils Halvorsen, a solemn Swede, constitutes the forecastle 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 goes ashore in a fog. A passing vessel hauling the wreck, Mr. Gibney gets word to a towing company in San Francisco that the ship astore is the Yankee Prince, with promise of a rich salvage. Two tugs succeed in pulling the Maggie into deep water, and she slips her tow lines and gets away in the fog. Furious at the deception practiced 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 water front, 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. Scraggs refuses to fulfill his promises and Gibney and McGuffey "strike." With marvelous luck, Scraggs ships a fresh crew. At the end of a few days of wild conviviality Gibney and McGuffey are stranded and seek their old positions on the Maggie. They are hostilely received, but remain. On their way to San Francisco they sight a derelict.

CHAPTER V—Continued.

"Spoken like a man—I do not think Scraggs, for once in my life I have you where the hair is short. I'm willin' to dig in an' help out in a pinch, but it's gettin' so me an' Mac can't trust you no more. We're that leery of you we won't take your word for nothin', since you fooled him on the new boiler an' me on the paint; consequently, we're off you an' this salvage job unless you give us a clearance, in writin', statin' that we are not an' never was pirates, that we're good, law-abidin' citizens an' aboard the Maggie as your guests, takin' the trip at our own risk. When you sign such a paper, with your crew for witnesses, I'll demonstrate how that bark can be salvaged. My imagination's better'n my reputation, Scraggsy, an' I ain't workin' it for nothin'!"

"Gib, my dear boy, you're the most sensitive man I ever sailed with. Can't you take a little joke?"

"Sure, I can take a little joke. It's the big ones that stick in my craw an' stifle my friendship. Gimme a fountain pen an' a leaf out of the log book an' I'll draw up the affidavit for your signature."

Scraggs complied precipitately with this request, whereupon Mr. Gibney spread his great bulk over the chart case and with many a twist and flip of his tongue on the up and down strokes, produced this remarkable document:

"At Sea, Off Point Montara,
"aboard S. S. Maggie,
"of San Francisco.
"June 4, 19—

"This is to certify that A. P. Gibney, Esq., and Bart McGuffey, Esq., is law-abidin' citizens of the U. S. A. and the constitution thereof, and in no way pirates or such; and be it further resolved that the said parties hereto are aboard said American steamer Maggie this date on the special invite of Phineas P. Scraggs, owner, as his guests and at their own risk."

"Witness my hand and seal:"

Captain Scraggs signed without reading and the new mate and Neils Halvorsen appended their signatures as witnesses. Mr. Gibney thereupon folded this clearance paper into the tiniest possible compact ball, wrapped it in a piece of tinfoil torn from a package of tobacco, to protect it from his saliva, tucked it in his cheek and with a sign for McGuffey to follow him, started crawling over the cargo aft. By this time the Maggie was within a hundred yards of the distressed bark and was ratcheting slowly backward and forward before her.

"In all my born days," quoth Mr. Gibney, speaking a trifle thickly because of the document in his mouth. "I never got such a wallop as Scraggs handed me an' you last night. I don't forget things like that in a hurry. Now that we got a vindication of the charge o' piracy again us, I'm achin' to get shot of the Maggie an' her crew; so if you'll kindly peel off all of your clothes with the exception, say, of your underdrawers, we'll swim off to that bark an' give Phineas P. Scraggs an exhibition of real sailorin' an' seamanship."

"What's the big idee?" McGuffey demanded cautiously.

"Why, we sail her in ourselves—be an' you an' grom all the salvage for ourselves. Tell with Scraggs an'

the Maggie an' that new mate an' engineer. I'm off'n 'em for life."

Pop-eyed with excitement and interest, B. McGuffey, Esquire, stood up, and with a single twist shed his cap and coat. His shirts followed. Both he and Gibney were already minus their shoes and socks. To slip out of their faded dungarees was the work of an instant. Strapping their belts around their waists to hold up their drawers, the worthy pair stepped to the rail of the Maggie.

"Hey, there? Where you goin', Gib? I give you that clearance paper on condition that you was to tell me how to salvage that there bark."

"I'm just about to tell you, Scraggs. You don't touch a thing aboard the Maggie. You leave her out of it entirely. You just jump overboard, like me an' Mac will in a jiffy, swim over to the bark, climb aboard, and sail her in to San Francisco bay. When you get there you drop anchor an' call it a day's work." He grinned broadly. "One o' these bright days, Scraggs, when me an' Mac is just wallerin' in salvage money, drop around to see us an' we'll give you a kick in the face. Farewell, you boobys," and he dove overboard.

"Ta-ta," McGuffey cried in his tantalizing falsetto voice, and followed his leader into the briny deep.

CHAPTER VI.

The tide was still at the flood and the two adventurers made fast progress toward the Chesapeake. Choosing a favorable opportunity as the vessel dipped, they grasped her martingale, climbed up on the bowsprit, and ran along the bowsprit to the to-gallan'-fo'castle. On the deck below a dead man lay in the scuppers, and such a horrible stench pervaded the vessel that McGuffey was taken very ill and was forced to seek the rail.

"Scurvy or somethin'," Mr. Gibney announced, quite calmly. "There should be chloride of lime in the mate's store-room—I'll scatter some on these poor devils. Too close to port now to chuck 'em overboard. Anyhow, Bart, me an' you ain't doctors, nor yet coroners or undertakers, so you'd better skip along an' build a fire under the donkey aft. Matches in the galley, of course."

He trotted down to the main deck and prowled aft. On the port side of her house he found two more dead men, and a cursory inspection of the bodies told him they had died of scurvy. He crept the ship, came back to the fo'castle, entered, and found four men alive in their berths, but too far gone to leave them. "I'll have you boys in the Marine hospital tonight," he informed the poor creatures, and sought the master's cabin. Lying on his bed, fully dressed, he found the skipper of the Chesapeake. The man was gaunt and emaciated.

The freebooter of the green-pea trade touched his wet forelock respectfully. "My name is Gibney, sir, an' I hold an unlimited license as first mate of sail or steam. I was passin' up the coast on a good-for-nothin' little bumboat, an' seen you in distress, so me an' a friend swim over to give you the double O. You're in a bad way, sir."

"Two hundred and eighty-seven days from Hamburg, Mr. Gibney. Our vegetables gave out and we drank too much rain water and ate too much fresh fish down in the Doldrums. Our potatoes



"Out of My Cabin or I'll Riddle You," He Barked Feebly.

all went rotten before we were out two months. Naturally, the ship's officers stuck it out longest, but when we drifted in here this morning, I was the only man aboard able to stand up. I crawled up on the to-gallan'-fo'castle and let go the starboard anchor. I'd had it cock-billed for three weeks. All I had to do was knock out the stopper."

While Mr. Gibney questioned him and listened avidly to the horrible tale of privation and despair, McGuffey

appeared to report a brisk fire under the donkey and to promise steam in forty minutes; also that the Maggie was hove to a cable length distant, with her crew digging under the deck-load of vegetables for the small boat. "Help yourself to a belayin' pin, Bart, an' knock 'em on the heads if they try to come aboard," Mr. Gibney ordered nonchalantly.

"Do I understand there is a steamer at hand, Mr. Gibney?" the master of the Chesapeake queried.

"There's an excuse for one, sir. The little vegetable freighter Maggie. She'll never be able to tow you in, because she ain't got power enough, an' if she had power enough she ain't got coal enough. Besides, Scraggs, her owner, is a rotten bad article an' before he'll put a rope aboard you he'll tie you up on a contract for a figger that'd make an angel weep. The way your ship lies an' everything, me an' McGuffey can sail her in for you at half the price."

"I can't risk my ship in the hands of two men," the sick captain answered. "She's too valuable and so is her cargo. If this little steamer will tow me in I'll gladly give her my tow-line and let the court settle the bill."

"Not by a million," Mr. Gibney protested. "Beg pardon, sir, but you don't know this here Scraggs like I do. I couldn't think of lettin' him set foot on this deck."

"You couldn't think of it? Well, when did you take command of my ship?"

"You're flosam an' jetsam, sir, an' practically in the breakers. You're sick, an', for all I know, delirious, so for the sake o' protectin' you, the sick seaman in the fo'castle an' the owners, I'm takin' command."

The master of the Chesapeake reached under his pillow and produced a pistol. "Out of my cabin or I'll riddle you," he barked feebly.

Mr. Gibney departed without a word of protest and proceeded to make his arrangements, regardless of the master's consent. As he and McGuffey busied themselves, laying the leading blocks along the deck, they glanced toward the Maggie and observed Captain Scraggs hurling crates of vegetables overboard in an effort to get at the small boat quickly. "He'll die when the freight claims come in," Mr. McGuffey chortled. "Poor ol' Scraggsy!"

When Captain Scraggs came aboard, Mr. Gibney escorted him around to the master's cabin, introduced him, and stood by while they bargained. "The tow will cost you five thousand, Captain," Scraggs began pompously.

"Me an' McGuffey'll sail you in for four," Gibney declared.

"Three thousand," snarled Scraggs. "Sallin's cheap as dirt at two thousand. As a matter of fact, Scraggsy, me an' Mac'll sail her in for nothin' just to skin you out o' the salvage."

"Two thousand dollars is my lowest figger," Scraggs declared. "Take it or leave it, Captain. Under the circumstances, bargainin' is useless. Two thousand is my last bid."

The figure Scraggs named was probably one fifth of what the master of the Chesapeake knew a court would award; nevertheless he shook his head.

"It's a straight towing job, Captain, and not a salvage proposition at all. A tug would tow me in for two hundred and fifty, but I'll give you five hundred."

Remembering the vegetables he had jettisoned, Scraggs knew he could not afford to accept that price. "I'm through," he bluffed—and his bluff worked.

"Taken, Captain Scraggs. Write out an agreement and I'll sign it."

With the agreement in his pocket, Scraggs, followed by Gibney, left the cabin. "One hundred each to you an' Mac if you'll stay aboard the Chesapeake, steer her, an' help the Maggie out with what sail you can get on her," Scraggs promised.

"Take a long, runnin' jump at yourself, Scraggsy, old sorrowful. The best me an' Mac'll do is to help you cock-bill the anchor, an' that'll cost you ten bucks for each of us—in advance." The artful fellow realized that Scraggs knew nothing whatever about a sailing ship and would have to depend upon The Squarehead for the information he required.

"All right. Here's your money," Scraggs replied and handed Mr. Gibney twenty dollars. He and Neils Halvorsen then went forward, got out the steel towing cable, and fastened a light rope to the end of it. The skiff floated off the ship at the end of the painter, so The Squarehead hauled it in, climbed down into the skiff, and made the light rope fast to a thwart; then, with Captain Scraggs paying out the hawser, Neils bent manfully to the oars and started to tow the steel cable back to the Maggie. Half way there, the weight of the cable dragging behind slowed The Squarehead up and eventually stopped him. Exerting all his strength he pulled and pulled, but the sole result of his efforts was to wear himself out, seeing which the Maggie's navigating officer set the little steamer in toward the perspiring Neils, while Captain Scraggs, Gibney, and McGuffey cheered lustily.

Suddenly an oar snapped. Instantly Neils unshipped the remaining oar,

sprang to the stern, and attempted, by sculling, to keep the skiff's head up to the waves. But the weight of the cable whirled the little craft around, a wave rolled in over her counter, and half-filled her; the succeeding wave completed the job and rolled the skiff over and The Squarehead was forced to swim back to the Chesapeake. He climbed up the Jacob's ladder to face a storm of abuse from Captain Scraggs.

The cable was hauled back aboard with difficulty, owing to the submerged skiff at the end of it. Captain Scraggs and The Squarehead leaned over the Chesapeake's rail and tugged furiously, when the wreck came alongside, but all of their strength was unequal to the task of righting the little craft by hauling up on the light rope attached to her thwart.

"For ten dollars more each me an' Mac'll tail on to that rope an' do our best to right the skiff. After she's righted, I'll bail her out, borrow new oars from this here bark, an' help Neils row back to the Maggie with the cable," Mr. Gibney volunteered. "Cash in advance, as per usual."

"You're a pair of highway robbers, but I'll take you," Scraggs almost wailed, and paid out the money; whereupon Gibney and McGuffey "tailed" on to the rope and with raucous cries hauled away. As a result of their efforts, the thwart came away with the rope and the quartet sat down with exceeding abruptness on the hard pine deck of the Chesapeake.

"I had an idee that thwart would pull loose," Mr. Gibney remarked.

"Well, what're you goin' to do now?"

"I ain't licked yet—not by a jugful," Scraggs snapped. "Halvorsen, haul down that signal halyard from the mizzenmast, take one end of it in your teeth, an' swim back to the Maggie with it. We'll fasten a heavier line to the cable, an' haul the cable aboard with the Maggie's winch."

"You say that so nice, Scraggsy, old hopeful, I'm tempted to think you can whistle it, Neils, he's only askin' you to risk your life overboard for nothin'. Tain't in the shippin' articles that a seaman's got to do that. If he wants a swimmin' exhibition make him pay for it—through the nose. An' if I was you, I'd find out how much o' this two thousand dollars towage he's goin' to distribute to his crew. Pers'nally I'd get mine in advance."

"Adelbert P. Gibney," Captain Scraggs hissed. "There's such a thing as drivin' a man to distraction. Halvorsen, are you with me?"

"Aye lane—for sixty dollars. Hay lane worth a month's pay for take dat swim."

"You dirty Scowegian ingrate. Well, you don't get no sixty dollars from me. Bear a hand and we'll drop the ship's work boat overboard. I guess you can tow a signal halyard to the Maggie, can't you, Neils?"

Neils could—and did. Within fifteen minutes the Maggie was fast to her prize. "Now we'll cockbill the anchor," quoth Captain Scraggs, so McGuffey reporting sufficient steam in the donkey to turn over the windlass, the anchor was raised and cockbilled, and the Maggie hauled away on the hawser the instant Captain Scraggs signaled his new navigating officer that the hook was free of the bottom.

"The old girl don't seem to be makin' headway in the right direction," McGuffey remarked plaintively, after the Maggie had strained at the hawser for five minutes. Mr. Gibney, standing by with a hammer in his hand, nodded affirmatively, while the skipper of the Chesapeake, whom Mr. Gibney had had the forethought to carry out on deck to watch the operation, glanced apprehensively ashore. Scraggs measured the distance with his eye to the nearest fringe of surf and it was plain that he was worried.

"Captain Scraggs," the skipper of the Chesapeake called feebly. "Mr. Gibney is right. That craft of yours is unable to tow my ship against this wind. You're losing ground, inch by inch, and it will be only a matter of an hour or two, if you hang on to me, before I'll be in the breakers and a total loss. You'll have to get sail on her or let go the anchor until a tug arrives."

"I don't know a thing about a sailin' ship," Scraggs quavered.

"I know it all," Mr. Gibney cut in, "but there ain't money enough in the world to induce me to exercise that knowledge to your profit." He turned to the master of the Chesapeake. "For one hundred dollars each, McGuffey an' I will sail her in for you, sir."

"I'll not take the risk, Mr. Gibney. Captain Scraggs, if you will follow my instructions we'll get some sail on the Chesapeake. Take those lines through the leading blocks to the winch—"

The engineer of the Maggie came up on deck and waved his arms wildly. "Leggo," he bawled. "I've blown out two tubes. It'll be all I can do to get home without that tow."

"Jump on that, Scraggsy," quoth McGuffey softly and cast his sliken engineer's cap on the deck at Scraggs' feet. The latter's face was ashen as he turned to the skipper of the Chesapeake. "I'm through," he gulped. "I'll have to cast off. Your ship's drivin' on the beach now."

"Oh, say not so, Scraggsy," said Mr. Gibney softly, and with a blow

of the hammer knocked out the stopper on the windlass and let the anchor go down by the run. "Not this voyage, at least." The Chesapeake rounded with a jerk and Mr. Gibney took Captain Scraggs gently by the arm. "Into the small boat, old ruin," he whispered, "and I'll row you an' The Squarehead back to the Maggie. If she drifts ashore with that load o' garden truck, you might as well drown yourself."

Captain Scraggs was beyond words. He suffered himself to be taken back to the Maggie, after which kindly action Mr. Gibney returned to the Chesapeake, climbed aboard, and with the assistance of McGuffey, hauled the work boat up on the deck.

"Now," Mr. Gibney inquired, approaching the skipper of the Chesapeake, "what'll you give me an' Mac, sir, to sail you in?"

"One thousand dollars," the skipper answered weakly.

"You refused to let us do it for a hundred. Now it'll cost you two thousand, an' I'm lettin' you off cheap at that. Of course, you can take a chance an' wait until word o' your predicament sifts into San Francisco an' a tug comes out for you, but in the meantime the wind may increase an' with the tide an' the flood how do you know your anchor won't drag an' pile you up on them rocks to leeward?"

"I'll pay two thousand, Mr. Gibney."

Without further ado, Mr. Gibney went to the master's cabin, wrote out an agreement, carried the skipper aft and got his signature to the contract. Then he tucked the skipper into bed and came dashing out on deck.

"Come here till I introduce you to the jib halyards," he bawled to McGuffey, and they went forward.

With the aid of the winch, they braced the foreyard; then McGuffey ran aft and took the wheel while Mr.



Was Forced to Swim Back to the Chesapeake.

Gibney scuttled forward, eased up the compressor on the windlass, and permitted the anchor chain to pay out rapidly. With the hammer, he knocked out the pin at the forty-five fathom shackle and leaving the anchor to go by the board, for it worried him no longer, the bark Chesapeake moved gently off on a west-southwest course that would keep her three points off the land. She had sufficient head sail on now to hold her up.

Mr. Gibney fell upon the main to-gallan'-s'l leads like a demon, carried them through the leading block to the winch head, turned over the winch and sheeted home the main-to-gallan'-s'l. The Chesapeake gathered speed and Mr. Gibney went aft and stood beside Mr. McGuffey, the while he looked aloft and thrilled to the whine of the breeze through the rigging. "This is sailorin'," he declared. "It sure beats bumboatin'. Here, blast you, Bart. You're spillin' the wind out o' that jib. First thing you know we'll have her in irons an' then the fat will be in the fire."

He took the wheel from McGuffey. When he was two miles off the beach he brought her up into the wind and made the wheel fast, a spoke to leeward. "Sheet home the fore-to-gallan'-s'l," he howled and dashed forward. "Leggo them buntlines an' clewlines, my hearties, an' haul home that sheet."

Luck is with our two adventurers.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Llamas' Devil Dance.

Once, at Darjiling, I saw the Llamas' devil dance; the soul, a white-faced child with eyes unnaturally enlarged, fleeing among a rabble of devils—the evil passions. It fled wildly here and there, and every way was blocked. The child fell on its knees, screaming dumbly—you could see the despair in the starting eyes; but all was drowned in the thunder of Tibetan drums. No mercy—no escape. Horrible! I shall always see the face of the child, hunted down to hell, falling on its knees, and screaming without a sound, when I hear the drum.—L. Adams Beck in the Atlantic Monthly.

Innocents at Home.

Mrs. Youngbride—Jack, dear, we'll have to send that refrigerator back. Every time the ice man puts ice in it, it begins to leak.—Boston Transcript.

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