



CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

"By the tall o' the Great Sacred Bull," chattered Scraggy. "Gib's right." McGuffey was plainly disappointed.

"I hadn't thought o' that at all, Gib. I been cherishin' the thought o' lammin' the whey out'n that mate, but if you say so I'll give up the idee. But if bringin' the Maggie II into home waters is invitin' death, what in blue blazes're we goin' to do with her?"

Mr. Gibney smiled—an arch, cunning smile. "We'll give her to that murderin' mate, free gratis."

Captain Scraggy bounded out of his chair, struck the hot deck with his bare feet, cursed, and hopped back into the chair again. McGuffey stared incredulously. "Gib, my dear boy," quavered Scraggy, "say that agin."

"Yes," continued the commodore placidly, "we'll just get her o' her peaceable like by givin' her to that mate. Don't forget, Scraggy, old tar-pot, that this mate's been passin' himself off for you in Honolulu, an' if there's ever an investigation, the trail leads to the Maggie II. This mate's admitted being Captain Scraggy, an' if he's found with the schooner in his possession I'll take a heap o' evidence for him to prove that he ain't Captain Scraggy. We'll just keep this mate in the brig while we're disposing of our black coral, pearl, shell and copra in Honolulu, an' then, when we've cleaned up, an' got our passages booked for San Francisco—"

"But who says we're goin' back to San Francisco?" cut in McGuffey.

"Why, where else would men with money in their pockets head for, you oil-soaked piece of ignorance? Ain't you had enough adventure to do you a spell?" demanded Captain Scraggy. "Me an' Gib's for goin' back to San Francisco, so shut up. If you got any objection, you're outvoted two to one in the syndicate."

McGuffey subsided, growling, and Mr. Gibney continued:

"When we're ready to leave Honolulu, we'll bring this mate on deck, make him a kind Christian talk an' give him the Maggie II with the compliments of the syndicate. He'll think our sufferin' on that island has touched us with religion an' he'll be so tickled he'll keep his mouth shut. Then, with all three of us safe an' out o' the mess, an' the evidence off our hands, we'll clear out for Gawd's country an' look around for some sort of a profitable investment."

The commodore sighed. "She's a love of a boat an' it breaks my heart to give up the only command I've ever had, but the fact is, Mac, her possession by us is dangerous, an' we don't need her, an' we can't sell her because her record's got blurs on it. We can't convey a clean an' satisfactory title. Anyhow, she didn't cost us a cent an' we give her to this mate. He'd be glad to get her if she had yellow jack aboard, an' if he's caught with her he'll have to do the explainin'. When you're caught with the goods in your possession, Mac, it makes the explainin' all the harder. Besides, we're three to one, an' if it comes to a show-down later we can outwear the mate."

Captain Scraggy picked his snaggle teeth with the little blade of his jack-knife and cogitated a minute.

"Well," he announced presently, "far be it from me to fly in the face o' a felon's death. I've made a heap o' money, follerin' Gib's advice, an' bust my bob-stay if I don't stay put on this, Gib, it's your lead."

"Well, I'll follow suit. Gib's got all the trumps," acquiesced the engineer. "We got plenty o' dough an' no board bills comin' due, so we'll loaf along-shore until Gib digs up somethin' good."

"How about Nellis?" queried Captain Scraggy. "Do we continue to let that ex-deckhand in on our fortunes?" "If Nellis Halvorsen had asked you that question when he come to rescue you that day you lay a-dyin' o' thirst on that desert island, wouldn't you have said yes?" "Sure pop."

"Then don't ask no questions that's unworthy of you," said Mr. Gibney severely. "I don't want to see none o' them green-pee trade ethics croppin' up in you, Scraggy. If it wasn't for that Swede the sea-gulls'd be pickin' our bones now. Nellis Halvorsen is included in this syndicate for good."

"Amen." This from the honest McGuffey.

"Meetin's adjourned," said Captain Scraggy icily.

Under the direction of the crafty commodore, the valuable cargo of the Maggie II was disposed of in Honolulu. During the period while the schooner lay at the dock discharging, Captain Scraggy and McGuffey prudently remained in the cabin with the perfidious mate, in order that, should investigation be undertaken later by the Treasury department, no man

might swear that the real Phineas Scraggy, filibuster, had been in Honolulu on a certain date. The Kanaka crew of the schooner Mr. Gibney managed to ship with an old shipmaster friend bound for New Guinea, so their testimony was out of the way for a while, at least.

When the Maggie II was finally discharged and the proceeds of her rich cargo nestled in crisp bills of large denomination, in a money belt under Mr. Gibney's armpits and next his rascally skin, he purchased tickets under assumed names for himself, Scraggy, McGuffey and Halvorsen on the liner Hilonian, due to sail at noon next day.

These details attended to, the Maggie II backed away from the dock under her own power and cast anchor off the quarantine station. The mate was then brought on deck and made to confront the syndicate.

"It appears, my man," the commodore began, "that you was too anxious to horn in on the profits o' this expedition, so in a moment o' human weakness you did your employers an evil deed. We had it all figured out to feed you to the sharks on the way home, because dead men tell no tales, but our sufferin' on that island has caused us all to look with a milder eye on mere human short-comin's. The Good Book says: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass agin us,' an' I ain't ashamed to admit that you owe your wicked life to the fact that Scraggy's got religion an' McGuffey ain't much better. But we got all the money we need an' we're goin' to Europe to enjoy it, so before we go we're goin' to pass sentence upon you. It is the verdict o' the court that we present you with the power schooner Maggie II free gratis, an' that you accept the same in the same friendly spirit in which it is tendered. Havin' a schooner o' your own from now on, you won't be tempted to steal one an' commit wholesale murder a-doin' it. You're forgiven, man. Take the Maggie II with our blessin', organize a compny, an' go back to Kandavu an' make some money for yourself. Scraggy, are you a-willin' to prove that you've given this errin' mate complete forgiveness by shakin' hands with him?"

"I forgive him freely," said Captain Scraggy, "an' here's my fin on it." The unfortunate mate hung his head. He was much moved.

"You don't mean it, sir, do you?" he faltered.

"I hope I may never see the back o' my neck if I don't," replied the skipper.

"Surest thing you know, brother," shouted Mr. McGuffey and swatted the deluded mate between the shoulders.

"No more sky-larkin', Scraggy, you old cut-up," Mr. Gibney ordered. "We had our good time comin' after all that we've been through, but it's time to get down to business agin. Riches has wings, Scraggy, old salamander, an' even if we are ashore, I'm still the commodore. Now, set around an' we'll hold a meetin'."

He banged the chiffonier with his great fist. "Meetin' o' the Maggie syndicate," he announced. "Meetin' come to order. The first business before the meetin' is a call for volunteers to furnish a money-makin' idee for the syndicate."

Nellis Halvorsen shook his sogrel head. He had no ideas. B. McGuffey, Esquire, shook his head also. Captain Scraggy wanted to sing.

"I see it's up to me to suggest somethin'," Mr. Gibney smiled benignly, as if a money-making idee was the easiest thing on earth to produce. "The last thing I remember before we went to that Turkish bath was us four visitin' a fortune teller an' havin' our fortunes told, past, present an' future, for a dollar a throw. Anybody here remember what his fortune was?"

It appeared that no one remembered, not even Mr. Gibney. He therefore continued:

"The chair will app'nt Mr. McGuffey an' himself a committee o' two to wait on one o' these clairvoyants and have their fortunes told agin."

McGuffey, who was as superstitious as a negro, seconded the motion heartily and the committee forthwith sallied forth to consult the clairvoyant. Within the hour they returned.

"Members o' the syndicate," the commodore announced, "we got an idee. Not a heluva good one, but fair to middlin'. Me an' Mac calls on this Madame de What-you-may-call-her an' the minute she gets a lamp at my mit (it is worthy of remark here that Mr. Gibney had a starfish tattooed on the back of his left hand, a full-rigged ship across his breast, and a gorgeous picture of a lady climbing a ladder adorned the inner side of his brawny right forearm. The feet of the lady in question hung down below the fringe of Mr. Gibney's short sleeve) she got up an' says: 'My friend, you're makin' a grave mistake remainin' ashore. Your fortune lies at sea.' Then she threw a fit an' mumbled something about a light-haired man that was goin' to cross my path. I guess she

must have meant Scraggy or Nellis, both bein' blondes—an' she come out of her trance shiverin' an' shakin'.

"Your fortune lies at sea, my friend," she kept on sayin'. "Go forth an' seek it."

"Gimme the longitude an' latitude, maam, I says, 'an' I'll go out.' "Look in the shippin' news in the papers tomorrow," she pipes up. "Five dollars, please."

"You didn't give her five dollars, did you?" gasped Captain Scraggy. "Why, Gib, my dear boy, I thought you was sober."

"So I was."

"Then, Gib, all I got to say is that you're a sucker. You want to consult the rest of us before you go throwin' away the funds o' the syndicate on such tom-fool ideas as—"

McGuffey saw a storm gathering on Mr. Gibney's brows, and hastened to intervene.

"Meetin' adjourned," he announced, "pendin' the issue o' the papers to-morrow mornin'." Scraggy, you oughter j'ine the Band o' Hope. You're ugly when you got a drink in you."

Nellis Halvorsen interfered to beg a cigar of Mr. Gibney and the affair passed over.

At six o'clock the following morning the numbers of the syndicate were awakened by a prodigious pounding

at their respective doors. Answering the summons, they found Mr. Gibney in undress uniform and the morning paper clutched in his hand.

"Meetin' o' the Maggie syndicate in my room," he bawled. "I've found our fortune."

The meeting came to order without the formality of dressing, and the commodore, spreading the paper on his knee, read aloud:

"FOR SALE CHEAP

"The stern-wheel steamer Victor, well found, staunch and newly painted. Boilers and engines in excellent shape. Vessel must be sold to close out an estate. Address John Coakley, Jackson Street wharf."

"How d'ye know she's a fortune, Gib?" McGuffey demanded. "Lemme look at her engines before you get excited."

"I ain't sayin' she is," Mr. Gibney retorted testily. "Lemme finish readin'!" He continued:

"REPORTS PASSING DERELICT

"The steam schooner Arcthusa, Grays Harbor to Oakland Long wharf, reports passing a derelict schooner twenty miles off Point Reyes at six o'clock last night. The derelict was down by the head, and her rail just showed above the water. It was impossible to learn her identity."

"The presence of this derelict in the steamer lanes to North Pacific ports is a distinct menace to navigation, and it is probable that a revenue cutter will be dispatched today to search for the derelict and either tow her into port or destroy her."

"Gentlemen o' the syndicate, them's the only two items in the shippin' page that looks likely. The question is, in which lies our fortune?"

Nellis Halvorsen spoke up, giving it as his opinion that the fortune-telling lady probably knew her business and that their fortune really lay at sea. The derelict was at sea. How else, then, could the prophecy be interpreted?

"Well, this steamer Victor isn't exactly travelin' overland," McGuffey suggested. He had a secret hankering to mess around some real engines again, and gave it as his opinion that fortune was more likely to lurk in a solid stern-wheel steamer with good engines and boilers than in a battered hulk at sea. Captain Scraggy agreed with him most heartily and a tie vote resulted. Mr. Gibney inclining toward the derelict.

"What're we goin' to do about it, Gib?" Captain Scraggy demanded.

"When in doubt, Scraggy, old tar-pot, always play trumps. In order to make no mistake, right after breakfast you an' McGuffey go down to Jackson street wharf an' interview this man Coakley about his steamer Victor. You bein' good to sea long enough to know a good hull when you see it, an' if we can't trust Mac to give a good set of inner works we'd better dissolve the syndicate. As for me an' Nellis, we'll go down to the Front an' charter a tug an' chase out

after that there derelict before the revenue cutter gets her an' blows her out o' the path o' commerce with a stick o' dynamite."

Fortwith Mr. Gibney and Nellis, after snatching a hasty breakfast, departed for the waterfront, where they chartered a tug for three days and put to sea. At about ten o'clock Captain Scraggy and McGuffey strolled leisurely down to Jackson street wharf to inspect the Victor. By noon they had completed a most satisfactory inspection of the steamer's hull and boilers, and bought her in for seven thousand dollars. Captain Scraggy was delighted. He said she was worth ten thousand. Already he had decided that heavy and profitable freights awaited the syndicate along the Sacramento river, where the farmers and orchardists had been for years the victims of a monopoly and a gentlemen's agreement between the two steamboat lines that plied between Sacramento, Stockton and San Francisco.

On the afternoon of the third day Mr. Gibney and Nellis Halvorsen returned from sea. They were unutterably weary and hollow-eyed for lack of sleep.

"Well, I suppose you two suckers found that derelict," challenged McGuffey.

"Yep. Found her an' got a line aboard an' towed her in, an' it was a tough job. She's layin' over on the Berkeley tide flats, an' at lowtide tomorrow we'll go over an' find out what we've got. Don't even know her name yet. She's practically submerged."

"I think you was awful foolish, Gib, buyin' a pig in a poke that way. I don't believe in goin' in blind. Me an' Mac's bought a real ship. We own the Victor."

"I'm dead on my feet," growled the commodore, and jumping into bed he refused to discuss the matter further and was sound asleep in a jiffy.

Mr. Gibney was up bright and early and aroused the syndicate to action. The tide would be at its lowest ebb at nine thirty-one and the commodore figured that his fortune would be lying well exposed on the Berkeley tide flats. He engaged a diver and a small gasoline launch, and after an early breakfast in a chophouse on the Embarcadero they started for the wreck.

They were within half a mile of it, heading right into the eye of the wind, when Captain Scraggy and McGuffey stood erect in the launch simultaneously and sniffed like a pair of—well, sea dogs.

"Dead whale," suggested McGuffey. "I hope it ain't Gib's fortune," replied Scraggy drily.

"Shut up," bellowed Mr. Gibney. He was sniffing himself by this time, for as the launch swiftly approached the derelict the unpleasant odor became more pronounced.

"Betcher that schooner was in collision with a steamer," Captain Scraggy announced. "She was cut down right through the fo'castle with the watch below sound asleep, an' this here fragrance appeals to me as a sure sign of a job for the coroner."

Mr. Gibney's eyes flashed, but he made no reply. They had rounded the schooner's stern now, and her name was visible.

"Schooner Kadlak, Seattle," read Scraggy. "Little old three sticker a thousand years old an' cut clear through just abut the foremast. McGuffey, you don't s'pose this here's a pirate craft an' just bulgin' with gold?"

"Sure," retorted the engineer with a slow wink, "tainted wealth."

Mr. Gibney could stand their harkling no longer. "Looky here, you two," he bawled out angrily. "I got a hunch I picked up a lemon, but I'm a-willin' to tackle the deal with Nellis if you two think I didn't do right by the syndicate a-runnin' up a bill of expense towin' this craft into port. I ain't goin' to stand for no kiddin', even if we are in a five-hundred-dollar towage bill. Man is human an' bound to make mistakes."

"Don't kid the commodore, Scraggy. This aromer o' roses is more'n a strong man can stand, so cut out the Josh."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WIG TOO SMALL FOR FRANKLIN

Representative From the New America Had to Appear Before French King in Bald Pate.

Benjamin Franklin was about to be presented to the French king on the occasion of his first visit to France in the capacity of representative from the new America. The court custom of the time demanded that one going to an audience with the king must wear a wig of the proper fashion. A count, who had Franklin in tow, sent a wigmaker the day before to take Franklin's measure and fit him out for the audience. The wigmaker arrived at Franklin's lodgings, measured the poll of the great American fore and aft and around and about and took his departure. An hour before the audience the wigmaker returned with the wig. But when Franklin attempted to put it on it would not fit; he couldn't begin to get it on his head. "Sir," said Franklin to the wigmaker, "your wig is unfortunately too small for my head."

"Pardonnez moi, monsieur," replied the wigmaker, "your head is vastly too large and quite beyond the fashion of the court."

Franklin appeared, therefore, at court with his bald pate and shaggy gray hair.—Detroit Free Press.

Two Chicks in One Egg.

Two chicks were hatched out of one shell; they were joined together by their toes, says a New Brunswick reader. The both died in a short time.



"Meetin' o' the Maggie Syndicate in My Room," He Bawled. "I've Found Our Fortune."



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