

The Sea Scourge

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

"What was the news on shore? Any truisers been in sight?"

"Yes, one," replied Laroon. "A Russian corvette has been hovering around the island, but she left three days ago. Off somewhere to the northward."

Laroon at that moment was attracted by some sort of disturbance forward. He went immediately to the forecabin, with a heavy frown upon his brow; but when he arrived there he found that the disturbance had been occasioned by the gunner's falling from the breech of one of the bow guns, where he had been standing to look upon the shore.

At first the accident seemed likely to pass off with only a laugh, for old Ben arose immediately to his feet and smiled. But his smile was a very blank and ghastly one, and he staggered some as he attempted to move away. He had hit his head upon the deck in falling, and the blow was far from being a light one. The old man had not taken more than half a dozen steps when he stopped and threw his arms wildly about him, and in a moment more he sank heavily upon the deck. The men gathered quickly about him, and Buffo Burnington took him into his arms as he would have taken a child and carried him aft.

"He's hurt pretty bad, I am sure," Buffo said, as he stopped before Paul.

"I hope not," uttered the youthful surgeon, seeming to speak with himself, "for I shall have lost my best friend if—"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment the captain came up, and at his order the senseless form was placed upon the trunk of the companion-way. Paul at once set about examining the old man's head; he found where the blow had been received, but there was no fracture of the skull that he could detect.

"How is it?" asked the captain, as Paul arose from the examination.

"The brain has received a severe shock, and the utmost care will have to be taken to prevent a fatal result."

This intelligence created much sensation among the crew, for Ben was the last man whom most of them would wish to have spared. Ere long the old man came to, and as soon as he was fully conscious he began to groan and writhe with pain.

"My head! my head!" he fairly shrieked. "It will split!"

Paul's first movement was to bathe the head in cold water; then he applied leeches. As soon as the blood began to flow, his head felt easier, and Paul had a hot bath prepared for his feet, after which he applied draughts. He had the invalid removed to his cot, and then placed a watcher by him, to keep the bandages about the head wet with cold sea water.

The youth had now done all he could, and he could only see that his patient was kept perfectly quiet, and water for him; new development that might manifest itself. At 9 o'clock Paul gave a strong dose of opium; but the poor fellow got no rest during the night, for the pain in his head was so severe that no narcotic could overcome it while life remained.

Mari Laroon watched the invalid with much anxiety, for now that the gunner was disabled, he was led into a train of thought upon what would be the probable result of meeting a fleet cruiser from whom he could not escape by fair sailing.

CHAPTER V.

As the sun arose, the men were gathered about the quarter deck, waiting for the appearance of the young surgeon, for they were anxious to hear of the gunner. Ere long Paul came up, and he informed the men that he believed Ben to be out of danger, but that it would be some time before he could return to his duty; and at the same time he requested them to make as little noise as possible about the deck.

Four days passed away, and the gunner was no easier, though Paul felt sure that, if no accident happened, the result would not be fatal. On the following morning the coast of Japan was in sight upon the starboard bow, and to take advantage of a current the brig was kept pretty close in to the shore.

Near midway of the southern coast of the island of Yaku there is a long, high cape, or promontory, making out into the sea a distance of some ten miles. At 9 o'clock a. m. this cape was upon the lee bow, and not more than four miles distant; and at that time the wind came to a lull, and then chopped around to the northward, coming off shore. As the brig's course now lay she would pass within two furlongs of the cape, but Laroon knew the channel well, and he was not afraid of the shore. At half-past 9 the wind was steady once more, and the brig now had her starboard tack aboard, and in fifteen minutes more the headland of the cape was directly under the weather bow, and not two cables' lengths distant.

"Call ho!" at this moment came from the foretop, in tones that made every man start.

And now they could all see the fore and main royals of a ship looming up over the promontory.

"Up with the helm!" shouted the pirate captain; "jump to the braces—cast off to leeward—round the weather braces!"

In a few moments the brig's head was to the southwest, and by the time the braces were belayed she had cleared the cape; and there, just under the western bluff, and not a quarter of a mile distant, was a Russian corvette under full sail, with her yards nearly square.

"To the guns, every man!" ordered Laroon, much excited—"every man who belongs there, and the rest of you get up the small arms. Load every pistol

and carbine, and each man secure his cutlass! Load—quick!"

The brig's crew sprang to the work with a will, each man knowing just what to do. Two of the port guns were run aft and secured to the after ports, and just as the breeching of the last gun was lashed, there came a shot from the enemy's bow. The ball whizzed over the starboard bumpkin, and did no damage.

"Now give 'em a shot in return," cried Laroon.

Accordingly one of the stern guns was fired, but without effect. Next came another shot from the corvette, which struck in the water some twenty yards from the brig's starboard beam.

During this exciting prelude poor Ben Marton had been in a state of intense excitement. At the first mention of the man-of-war he had leaped from his bunk, and it was with the utmost difficulty that Paul could get him back again.

"I must go on deck!" the old man cried.

"Well, let's see you go," returned the surgeon.

"Help me up—help me up!" gasped Ben, who found himself totally unable to rise to his feet.

"But what's the use? You couldn't stand if you should get up there."

For some time the old gunner raved and prayed by turns, but at length Paul managed to convince him that it would be of no use, and he allowed himself to be lifted back into his berth.

At length there came a shot from the corvette which struck the brig upon the stern rail, and killed two men who stood by one of the guns. At this sight the pirates were frenzied, and they begged as one man to be laid alongside the foe. Mr. Storms had been aloft with his glass, and he reported that the corvette carried twenty guns. It was soon evident, also, that the ship was the best seller in the wind as it was now at any rate; though probably the brig would have sailed faster on a taut bowline.

The pirate kept his stern guns going, and he did some damage to the corvette, but no more than she seemed able to return, for at the fourth fire from the one that shattered the taffrail the brig's main yard was carried away in the slings, a ball having just grazed the mast and struck square upon the yard.

"Lay us alongside! Lay us alongside!" cried the crew.

"I shall do it, boys!" uttered the commander, after a few moments of thought. "Before we can possibly get away from that craft she may totally disable us. She probably has more than double the men we have, but I shall trust to you to overcome them. The moment I give the order to heave to, be sure, every man of you, that you have a carbine and two pistols in readiness."

Just as the captain arrived at this point another ball struck the brig's stern and sent the splinters flying over the deck, but no one was hurt by them. As soon as this was done the captain gave orders for heaving to, and ere long the pirate lay upon the wind with her foretopsail aback, the main topsail being useless from the loss of the mainyard.

The carbines—and there were over a hundred of them—were loaded and laid beneath the lee rail, it being evident that the ship would come to upon that side. Besides this, each man had a brace of pistols concealed beneath his frock and his cutlass at hand. The brig now lay upon the starboard tack, and the corvette came down within a cable's length and began to round to under her stern.

"Brig ahoy!" came from the enemy.

"Where's your flag?"

"Down. We've surrendered."

"You're the Scourge?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll soon clip your wings."

"But you shall be honorable in your deal. We won't surrender unless you promise to treat us as prisoners of war. We'll die at our guns first."

"Wait till we see what you are made of," was the response; and the ship's yards were braced sharp up, and she came gliding along under the brig's lee quarter.

Of course most of the enemy were either at the ports or else looking over the nettings, for they had a curiosity to see the dreaded pirates, seeming to think that they were already prisoners. There were at least a hundred heads exposed, and the pirate chieftain saw that now was his moment to give the first blow. His men had been trained to this work. They were not only excellent marksmen, but they each had their station and knew how to pick off an enemy without wasting a dozen shots upon the same mark.

"—sh!" hissed the captain, in a sharp, shrill note that was heard all over the deck.

The men gathered quickly to their stations and selected their marks.

"One! Two! Three—fire!"

CHAPTER VI.

At the first word the men stooped to their pieces; at the second they cocked and made ready; at the third they started up and took aim, and then fired. The whole was performed in a very few seconds, and from the howl which arose from the corvette's deck it was evident that much execution had been done.

"Pistols! your pistols!" shouted Laroon. "Stand by to board! Grapplings, there! Now for it!" he shouted.

But these orders were not to be fully carried out, for no sooner had the vessels come near touching than the enemy threw their grapplings and prepared to board. They were frantic with rage at the cruel deception which the pirate had practiced, and they seemed prepared to face a foe ten times their own number. But they had no ordinary foe to deal with now. In a moment after the grap-

plings were thrown, the ship's nettings were crowded with men.

"—sh!" again came hissing from the captain's lips. At the sound of that well-known signal, the pirates were calm in an instant.

"Pistols! Be sure of your aim! Fire!" Seventy-two pistols were discharged on the instant, and more than a score of dead men came tumbling in on the brig's deck, besides others who fell overboard, and some who fell back upon their own deck. Now, however, the foe began to pour upon the brig's deck, and they rattled away with their pistols as they did so; but, strange as it may appear, they did but little damage, for they were so excited that they paid no attention to their aim, while, in the meantime, the pirates were laying about with their long, keen, heavy cutlasses.

All this while Ben Marton had been in a frantic, and when he heard a report of the firearms, and also the voices of the enemy, his frenzy knew no bounds. At length he heard the rushing of feet, and the clashing of steel, and he knew that the enemy were upon his deck. With one mighty effort he leaped from his cot, and pushing Paul aside he rushed for the ladder. It was the strength of a maniac which served him now, and before the youth could reach him he had gained the deck. Paul had the presence of mind to seize his cutlass before he followed his patient, and then he sprang up the ladder. When he reached the deck he found Ben just throwing a Russian officer over the taffrail, which feat he accomplished as though the man had been an infant. In a moment more the officer was in the water, but three stout men had seen the movement, and simultaneously they sprang upon the old gunner with their cutlasses. Paul felled the first with one blow of his weapon. Ben sprang upon the second and wrenched his cutlass from him, while the third engaged Paul hand to hand. He was a powerful fellow and an adept at the sword exercise, as he proved himself by the first few passes he made. Ben Marton had his antagonist low in an instant, but he could do no more. The strange flame which had started so suddenly and so powerfully to life in his soul now went out, and with a heavy groan he sank down upon the body of the man he had killed.

Most of the fighting was going on amidships and forward, the only combatants at that moment abaft the mainmast being Paul and his antagonist. From the manner in which the Russian came to this contest he evidently expected an easy conquest, but he was doomed to find himself greatly mistaken; for the youth was not only quick, cool and powerful, but he was thoroughly versed in every part of the sword play. He was surely getting the advantage, and in a few moments more would have felled his adversary had not some new men come upon the scene. Two of the corvette's men, as they saw their shipmate likely to get the worst of it, leaped upon the brig's quarter rail, and thence to the deck, landing close upon the swordsmen, with their cutlasses drawn. Paul saw the movement, and with a quick motion he started back against the taffrail, but he must quickly have been dispatched beneath the combined efforts of three stout men had not a new actor appeared upon the field. The youth was in the act of warding off a blow when something flashed above his head, and on the next moment one of the men before him fell with his skull cleft in twain, and before a movement could be made toward the newcomer a second had fallen. Then it was that Paul looked up, and found Buffo Burnington by his side.

"Lay him down," said the stout, strange man, pointing to the remaining Russian as he spoke. "He is the one who first gave you battle."

The youth dropped the point of his cutlass from exhaustion, for he had performed almost a Herculean task in keeping the old gunner below as long as he did; but no sooner did the point of his weapon fall than his enemy sprang upon him, but he had been watched, and just as he raised his sword arm the cutlass of Burnington passed through his body.

"Now, Mr. Laroon," spoke the man, "I'll help you carry Ben Marton down, and I hope you'll stay there with him."

"Call me anything but that," quickly uttered the youth, as he turned toward the spot where Ben had fallen.

"And what else shall I call you?"

"Call me Paul."

"Very well—we'll think of that another time; but now let's get old Ben down, for you'll soon have your hands full. The battle has turned, and must soon come to an end."

Without speaking further they lifted Ben up and carried him below, and just as Buffo returned to the deck the enemy were crying for quarter. The battle had been a quick one; for after the conflict came hand to hand the Russians had not much the advantage of numbers, for as it afterwards appeared, fifty men were either killed or disabled by the discharge of musketry, and nearly fifty more by the pistols.

(To be continued.)

How Bryan Exercised.

During his recent visit East William Jennings Bryan was the guest of the students at the Union Theological Seminary. He went with the boys to their rooms, and, throwing aside temporarily all thoughts of bimetallicism, indulged in jokes and reminiscences of his boyhood days.

Finally the conversation turned on athletics and outdoor sports. The boys expressed some surprise at Mr. Bryan's well-developed muscles.

"What kind of exercise do you take?" asked one.

"For the last five or six years my principal exercise has been running," he replied.

"What kind of running, Mr. Bryan?"

"For office," was the laconic response.—Detroit Free Press.

SUPPOSE WE SMILE.

HUMOROUS PARAGRAPHS FROM THE COMIC PAPERS.

Pleasant Incidents Occurring the World Over—Sayings that are Cheerful to Old or Young—Funny Selections that Everybody Will Enjoy.

"I always enjoy reading the papers," said Senator Depew.

"You do?" asked the friend.

"Yes; it gives me the opportunity of hearing for the first time the jokes I told the night before."

Modern Style.

"But, my dear," protested the young husband, "you promised after our marriage you would seldom visit the dressmaker."

"And I have kept my word," replied the young wife. "Only old-fashioned people go to dressmakers. I visit ladies' tailors."

Expert Opinion.



"But, papa," protested Gladys, "I am not a bit too young to marry. You know perfectly well that you married mamma when she was 18, and I am a whole year older than that."

"I know, but I never thought much of your mother's judgment in that respect."

Cruel of Him.

"Now, just look at these miniature biscuits I baked," said the egotistical wife. "They are dainty little tablets."

"Yes," spoke the brute husband, "dyspepsia tablets."

Summer Girl.

Ernie—Gladys tells every man she flirts with he is the apple of her eye.

Eva—Gracious! She must be cultivating an orchard.

A Doubtful Compliment.

He—You are just as sweet as you can be.

She—I don't think that much of a compliment. You see, it all depends upon how sweet you suppose I am capable of being.—Town Topics.

The Limit.

Tired Tatters—Dis paper tells erbouta feller wot died frum ennul.

Weary Walker—Wot's dat?

Tired Tatters—It's de feelin' wot comes to a man when he gits so lazy dat loafin's hard work.—Chicago News.

No Danger.

Miss Playne—I was almost frightened to death when he suddenly kissed me.

Miss Dimples—But you had no real cause for alarm. Joy never kills, you know.

Way They Have.

"Does your club pay any attention to parliamentary rules?" asked Wigwags.

"Of course we don't," replied Mrs. Wigwags. "We didn't make them."

Then And Now.

"Matches," remarked the sentimental female, "are made in heaven."

"Perhaps they were in former years," rejoined the practical young man, "but that must have been before the match trust was organized."

Patent to Prevent Baldness.



His Private Opinion.

Mrs. Enpeck—Here's a story about a man who actually sold his wife. Now what do you think of that?

Enpeck—Oh, there are some fools in the world who will buy any old thing.

Couldn't Be Worse.

Ethel—Charlie Supleigh isn't quite himself of late.

Frances—Indeed! I hadn't noticed any improvement.

Hated to Be Disturbed.

"That is the laziest boy I ever met."

"Why so?"

"Well, I told him he might wake up some day and find himself famous."

"Was he pleased?"

"No, he said he hoped he wouldn't wake up before the alarm clock went off."

More Than Lifelike.

DeAuber (showing portrait)—What do you think of it, old man?

Criticus—It's remarkably lifelike. Is it a portrait of some friend of yours?

DeAuber—Yes, it Muggsby. I thought you knew him.

Criticus—Know Muggsby? Why, of course I know him. I've known him intimately for more than twenty years.

Reason Why.

"But you Americans," protested the Englishman, "have no ancestors to whom you can point with pride."

"Well, that is our misfortune rather than our fault," replied the American girl. "Most of our ancestors came from England, you know."

Practical Demonstration.

"Oh, how could you!" exclaimed the fair maid, who had been kissed unexpectedly.

"It will afford me pleasure to show you," calmly replied the audacious young man.

Whereupon he proceeded more slowly.

Usual Verdict.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what race do we belong to—civilized or half-civilized?

Pa—Civilized, my son; but our next door neighbors are only half-civilized.

Slight Interruption.

He kissed her once, he kissed her twice. He was the happiest of all men; No doubt he would have kissed her thrice—

But her papa came in just then.

Shutting Him Off.

Newpop—I have an unusually smart little boy.

Nagsby—Yes, so I've been told.

Newpop (flattered)—Ah, who told you?

Nagsby—You did a moment ago.

His Choice.

Plodding Pete—Lew, ef youse wuz a machine, wot kind would youse ruther be?

Lazy Lew—One uv dem perpetual motion machines.

Plodding Pete—Coz why?

Lazy Lew—Coz dey never work.

Didn't Mind It.

Satan—Those men over there don't seem to mind the heat at all. Who are they?

The Janitor—They used to be Turkish bath attendants.

Proper Definition.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what is the meaning of premonition?

Pa—It's something that ails people who say 'I told you, my son.'

Two of a Kind.

"Yes," said the young drug clerk who had been trotting in double harness for nearly two weeks; "I've got a boss wife."

"Well, you have my sympathy," rejoined the man who had come in to buy a bottle of hair restorer; "I've got that kind of a wife, too."

Old, Old Stories.

"Is your husband fond of fiction?" asked the literary woman.

"Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Gayboy. "His favorite is the 'detailed-at-the-office' narrative, with the 'sick-friend' story a close second."

Important Settlement.

The Friend—So your engagement with Count DeBroque is a settled fact, is it?

The Heiress—Not quite. He is now preparing a schedule of his debts for papa to settle.

His Lonely Flight.

"Oh, fly with me," the young man cried, "Where fond hearts oft have flown." But her papa chanced to hear him, and—

Well, the young man flew alone.

Just for a Bluff.

Him—Would you scream if I attempted to kiss you?

Her—Indeed I would—if anyone happened to be looking at the time.

Wise Young Man.

Elvira—And did he kiss you before your chaperon?

Marcia—Oh, no. He was wise enough to kiss her first.

Necessary Evil.

Miss Verjuice—What a shame it is how the men deceive us poor women.

Miss Bluehose—They would never get a woman to marry them unless they did, my dear.—Philadelphia Bulletin.

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