

The Sea Scourge

CHAPTER II

It was a cold, wet day in autumn, and the sun, which had not been seen since morning, was wearing its western bonnet of rest. Upon the road from Cambridge to Boston walked a man and two children. The former was young—not over six-and-twenty—and habited in the garb of a seaman. He was short in stature, and broad and heavy in his build, with a face of a bronzed hue, upon which was stamped much intelligence and wit. A careful observer would have seen the index to a quick, passionate disposition in that face, and from the dark, somber smile that sometimes played upon it, he would have also concluded that his possessor was not burdened with conscientious scruples where his own purposes were at stake. Upon his shoulder he carried a small bundle, and about one corner of the handkerchief which served for a portmanteau was printed in small, black letters the name "Marr Laroon."

The children were a boy and a girl. The boy could not have been over five years old, and he showed signs of excessive fatigue. He was a bright-looking little fellow, and possessed much physical beauty. The girl was younger still, and as she walked wearily along beside her conductor, the tears ever and anon started from her large blue eyes. Her garb was plain and homely in the extreme, but her appearance did not at all correspond with it. Her face was very pale and delicate, her hair long and glossy, and betrayed much previous care and dressing, while her hands gave no token of acquaintance with dirt. The boy had shed some tears, for the traces of them were still to be seen upon his plump cheeks; but he shed none now, for he had received a blow for crying.

"You're tired, aren't you?" said the man, addressing the boy.

"Yes, sir," returned the lad, looking up and shuddering as he met the gaze of his conductor.

"Well, never mind; we've only three miles farther to go before we reach the Cross-Hands Inn. You'll be glad to get there, won't you?"

"Yes, sir."

The words were spoken timidly, and with evident reluctance.

"And when you do get there, you'll remember you are my child, won't you?"

"But you aren't my father. Please don't make me say so."

"You'd rather be whipped, eh?"

"No, no!" shrieked the boy, and as he did so the little girl sprang forward and threw her arms about his neck, and burst into a passionate fit of weeping. Marr Laroon removed the girl with a strong grip, and then looking the boy in the eye, he said:

"I am your father, and you must know it and say so. Where do you think your father is?"

"He's dead, sir," sobbed the poor child. "Mr. Humphrey told me so."

"He told you a lie, then. I left you with him two years ago, and you are my boy. I was going away, and he said he would take care of you till I came back. So when I came back I took you. Perhaps he thought I was dead, though. Very likely he did. Now just remember this, and if anybody asks your name, tell 'em 'tis Paul Laroon. Mind, now. I don't think you want me to kill you, but I shall if you don't speak just as I have told you."

The little fellow's lips trembled, and he would have burst into tears, but the look of his master prevented him.

"Mary," spoke Laroon, very kindly, "you are tired, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," lisped the child.

"Say, 'yes, uncle!'"

"Yes, uncle," repeated she, as nearly as she could.

"Mary is your cousin, Paul. And now, my little Mary, you shall ride in my arms a while; and perhaps I will carry Paul, by and by, if he gets very tired."

So saying, the stout sailor lifted the tiny form of the girl into his arms. It was fairly dark when they reached a little village, where stood the Cross-Hands Inn, at which place they stopped. Laroon calling the landlord out, ordered a room provided with two beds in it, and thither he took his little charges. As it was too cold to sit up, Laroon brought the children up their supper, and as soon as they had eaten it, he helped them to bed, remarking as he did so that he was going down below a while, and that they must be sure and make no noise.

When they were safely tucked up in their nest, he gathered up the few dishes and left the chamber, being careful to lock the door after him and take away the key.

It was quite late when Laroon came up, and having assured himself that the children slept, he proceeded to undress and get into the other bed, and ere long his heavy, discordant snoring mingled harshly with the gentle breathings of those who occupied the other couch.

Away off in a distant part of the State there was alarm and anguish. A man, frantic and delirious, was calling aloud for his child—for his children—and calling in vain. Lanterns and torches were flashing in every nook and corner where children had been wont to play, but no children were to be found. The streams were sounded and dragged, and the woods and hedges were scoured all through, but the lost ones came not. At midnight the man was upon his knees, crying aloud for his children; but his frantic prayer was in vain.

CHAPTER II

way amidstships. These guns were now covered with neatly fitting tarpaulins, and secured inboard, the ports being snugly closed.

There were seventy-seven men on board, and they all belonged to her; and though the reader may have already guessed the character of the craft, yet the crew were not of that appearance which we are generally led to look for in such a place. They were as neat and orderly in their behavior as the crew of any man-of-war.

Such was the Scourge, a name by which the brig and its commander were known, not only by the crew, but by many others who had occasion to prove the aptness of the name.

Near the wheel, with a glass under his arm, stood a man whose dress showed him to be the captain of the brig. He was short in stature, but very thick and broad, exhibiting much physical power of strength and endurance. His features were by no means repulsive; nor were they prepossessing; but gave evidence of a keen, penetrating judgment, a quick, ready wit, and an untrammelled will. He was not far from forty years of age, and his name was Marr Laroon. The reader has seen him before—long years ago—on one of the highways of New England.

Close by the captain stood another, who is not wholly a stranger, though he retains nothing by which we might know him save his name. He is a youth, not over nineteen years of age, and possessing that keen, penetrating judgment, a quick, ready wit, and an untrammelled will. He is not far from forty years of age, and his name was Marr Laroon. The reader has seen him before—long years ago—on one of the highways of New England.

"You had better get old Saladin in order, and bring up some of your pills."

"The long gun had been christened by the name of the renowned Saracenic sultan, and ere long it was directed of its tarpaulin, and the shot lost by its side was filled. The gun was hoisted, and the ball driven snugly home, and then Ben Morton sat down upon the rail way and waited further orders. At the end of half an hour the second lieutenant came down and reported that the stranger was a Russian sloop-of-war.

"Stand by to take in the starboard studding-sails," ordered the captain. "We will choose our own course, and run as fast as we can, and if the fellow wants to overhaul us he may make the trial."

The starboard studding-sails were soon in, and ere long the brig was heading due west, the very course she must take to reach her destination, though Laroon had meant to stop at Manila, if it came perfectly convenient.

It was now about half-past one, and the ship's lower yards could be seen from the brig's deck, while the lookout at the cross-trees, who had the lieutenant's glass, could see her deck. He reported that she was a second-class corvette.

As soon as the men learned the character of the craft that was probably giving them chase, they smiled at each other with knowing nods and winks, for they felt sure that old Ben would cripple her before she could come near enough to do any harm.

When the brig had changed her course it was noticed that the ship did the same, thereby clearly indicating that she meant to give chase. Had the pirates chosen to run to the southward she would easily have escaped, for she was evidently the best sailer, but she meant to do no such thing. This would put her back from her destination, and Marr Laroon had reasons for wishing to reach that point as soon as convenient.

Anath a curl of smoke was seen to rise from the ship's deck, and in an instant more came the report of a gun.

"That means for us to show our bunting," said Langley.

"Yes," responded the captain, "and up it goes. They shall see that we are not ashamed or afraid to show our colors."

In a few minutes more a small, compact ball arose to the main peak, and as soon as it was at its place the knot was drawn and the flag fluttered in the breeze. It was simply a field of black, with a pair of crossed swords in white relief. As soon as this piece of imperlinence was perpetrated, the ship fired another gun, and this time she seemed to have fired a shot, for something fell in the water about midway between the two vessels. But the brig kept on without paying any attention to this polite request.

The vessels were not now far from a mile apart. The brig, as we have before remarked, was heading due west. The sloop-of-war was now nearly ahead, and reading about southwest, so that she would come within easy range if she kept on in that way, even allowing that the brig sailed faster.

(To be continued.)

Took No Chance.

Phelim Casey was engaged on the edge-pole of Squire Pond's house when he lost his footing and slid down to the edge of the roof. His legs went down, but he clutched the eaves-trough and hung on for dear life.

"That's right, Phelim!" called the squire, who had seen him slip. "You hang on a minute till I can get a ladder up there!"

But even as he spoke Phelim relaxed his hold and dropped to the ground.

As soon as the squire made sure that his bones were broken, and that Phelim was simply bruised here and there and shaken up, he began to berate the man in vigorous language.

"Why in the world didn't you hang on, as I told you to, you great stupid!" he demanded. "I'd have been here in a minute."

"Maybe you wud," said Phelim, sullenly, "but how did I know but the eaves would give way before you got here?"

A Young Logician.

Jennie's mother was expecting company, but just before train time, says what to eat, a telegram arrived which read, "Missed train. Will start raine lime to-morrow."

Jennie rushed from school expecting to see the guest, but instead was shown the message. After reading it stormily, and carefully through, she exclaimed:

"Why, mamma, if she starts at the same time to-morrow, she will miss the raine again!"

In Love and War.

"I notice," said the young man, "that soldiers speak of battles as engagements, but all engagements are not battles."

"No," replied Henpeck, "but most marriages are."—Philadelphia Press.

To err is human and the ability to side it is divine.

OUR BUDGET OF FUN.

HUMOROUS SAYINGS AND DOINGS HERE AND THERE.

Jokes and Jokelets that Are Supposed to Have Been Recently Born—Sayings and Doings that Are Old, Curious and Laughable—The Week's Humor.

Biggs—Did you ever notice what a healthy-looking man Dr. Peltot is?

Diggs—Yes; he looks so different from his patients. I wonder who his physician is?

Force of Habit.

"I appreciate the fact that you have honored me with a proposal," said the dear girl, "but are you sure your love for me is the real thing?"

"Perhaps not," frankly replied the young doctor, "but it is less expensive and just as good."

Equal to the Emergency.

Mr. Lovelorn—Oh, Miss Matilda, my heart is on fire for thee—it is burning!

Miss Matilda—Sakes alive! The ought to put it out and cool ye, too!

His Explanation.

"But why," I asked the good wife, "are you so anxious to secure the top flat in that ten-story apartment house?"

"Because," explained the household freight payer, "the elevator works a great help to us in bringing up the children."

Such Dear Friends, Too.

Clara—I'll tell you a secret, dear, if you'll promise never to repeat it.

Maudie—All right. Out with it.

Clara—Fred proposed to me last night.

Maudie—Oh, say, doesn't he do it awkwardly, though?

Feminine Charity.

Mrs. De Playne—When I married my husband my eyesight was very poor.

Mrs. Dimples—Yes, it must have been.

It Looked that Way.

Mrs. Henpeck—I don't think she'll ever marry him.

Mr. Henpeck—Why not?

Mrs. Henpeck—Oh, she quarrels with him so and is so domineering.

Mr. Henpeck—Indeed? I'll bet they have been secretly married already.—Philadelphia Press.

Billville Literary Note.

A Billville literary note reads as follows:

"While one of our leading authors was peacefully plowing in the field some miscreant stole his shirt, his shoes and six poems. Verily the way of the literary man is not as smooth as a railroad."—Atlanta Constitution.



What Papa Said.

Willie—Why, grandma, are you going home? Papa just said yesterday that he thought you were going to stay forever.

Not Up-to-Date.

"He has a promising future. He's a very eloquent young preacher."

"Oh, he's too old-fashioned. He will insist upon taking his texts from the Bible."—Philadelphia Press.

Possible Explanation.

Miles—There is said to be a race of savages in Africa whose vocabulary consists of but eight words.

Giles—What! Do you mean to say there are no females among them?

Hereditary.

"I hear," said the friend of the family, "that your son is sowing wild oats broadcast since he went to the city."

"Takes after his ole dad, I reckon," replied old man Cornutus, "T'farmer in him air bound tew crop out, by hen!"

Advice.

"Anybody kin' gaves advice," said Uncle Eben, "but I takes a right smart man to pick out de right kind an' take it."—Washington Star.

LESSON FOR TEACHER AND PUPIL.

Absent-Minded.

Mrs. Schoppen—I want five pounds of sugar, please.

Grocer—Yes'm; anything else?

Mrs. Schoppen—No, that's all; I'll take it with me if it isn't too heavy a package.

Grocer—Oh, it'll only weigh three or four pounds, ma'am.—Philadelphia Press.

Where He Was Lacking.

"Brier Thomas wuz always singin' dat song 'bout 'De Yuther Side of Jordan,' but you orter heard him wen de doctor tol' him his time had come ter go dar."

"What he say den?"

"Belowed lak a bull, en' boilered: 'I can't swim a lick! I never did take no swimmin' lessons!'"—Atlanta Constitution.

Unabashed.

"It is hinted," said the close adviser, "that there is no reason for your having so much money."

"My friend," answered Senator Sorghum, "those people don't understand our social system. Nowadays it is a waste of time to expect a man to stand up and apologize for having money."—Washington Star.

What Did She Mean?

"If you feel chincy," said he, as they strolled, "remember I have your shawl here on my arm."

"You might put it around me," she said, demurely.—Philadelphia Press.

Prudent Boss.

The contractor frowned up at the bricklayer sitting dangerously near the edge of the scaffold.

"Get off av thar, Thomas Murphy!" he finally bellowed. "First thing of know ye will fall thar storkes, break yez poipe awn want an hour to go out awn buy a new one."

On the Jersey Coast.

"I'm not going to remain at this hotel another night."

"What's the trouble?"

"Why, do you know that object in our room we took to be a trolley car fender?"

"Yes?"

"Well, the landlord says it's mosquito netting."

Future Assured.

"Yes, we found the baby playing with a volume of verse."

"Indeed? He will probably turn out to be a poet."

"But he tore the verses up and tossed them out of the window?"

"Did, eh? Well, that shows he's going to be an editor."

He Read It.

The Deaf and Dumb Beggar—A friend told me this morning that the police are going to stop begging on the streets.

The Blind Beggar—Yes; I read that in the paper yesterday.

Willing to Repair.

"Young man," said the stern father, "you have been calling on my daughter until you have worn out the sofa. You know what that means, don't you?"

"Certainly, sir," responded the young man. "I'll send up an upholsterer to-morrow."

Given a Raise.

With tender hands they took him from the topmost branches of a tall pine.

"What happened?" he gasped feebly.

"You were tossed by a bull," they responded.

"Then it's not so bad. I thought I was tossed by a racing automobile."



Trials of Cupid.

"Yes," related the romantic young man, "as we sat on the park bench I leaned over and planted a kiss on her ruby lips."

"Planted, eh?" remarked the buffoon friend. "Did you raise anything?"

"Yes. A policeman saw me and soon afterward I had to raise \$10 for a fine."

Love in a Flat.

"Why does Harker look so cross these days?"

"He's married and has three little ones."

"I don't see why three children should put him in a bad humor."

"Who said anything about children? He is married and has three little rooms."

Taken for Granted.

Judge—Why did you arrest this man?

Officer—For profanity on the street.

Judge—Did you hear him using it?

Officer—No, but his shoestring broke twice as he was running for a car.

It Would Seem So.

"Truth," remarked the moralizer, "is stranger than fiction."

"Yes," rejoined the demoralizer, "and the majority of men seem to be shy of associating with strangers."

Up to Her.

"What would you do if I were to die?" asked the bride of six months.

"That's for you to say, my dear," replied the other half of the sketch. "Which would you prefer—burial or cremation?"

Himself and Another.

Him—There are two men of my acquaintance whom I really admire.

Her—Indeed! And what is the name of the other one?

Cure for Varicose Veins.

Dr. Marchais, of the Paris hospital, has just submitted to the French Academy of Medicine a somewhat novel treatment for the cure of varicose veins in the legs.

He had observed that among rumpsteers, obliged to go long distances on foot, there were few men who suffered from varicose veins, and those who had varicose veins quickly recovered from them. Now, as a rule, patients with varicose veins are advised to walk as little as possible, but Dr. Marchais has changed all this, and as the result of experiments he has successfully carried out on twenty-one patients he asserts that the most effective cure for varicose veins in the legs consists of walking.

He shows that, in order to obtain lasting results, it is necessary to go back to the cause of the affliction, which is the hypertension of the blood in the veins. It is, he says, possible even for those badly afflicted to cure themselves by rational daily walking exercises, preceded by massage of the legs.

Sometimes the proof of the pudding is the undertaker's little bill.