

# The Sea Scourge

## CHAPTER I.

It was a cold, wet day in autumn, and the sun, which had not been seen since morning, was wearing its western home 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 its possessor was not burdened with conscientious scruples where his own purposes were at stake. Upon his shoulder he carried a small bundle, and upon one corner of the handkerchief which served for a portmanteau was printed in small, black letters the name "Marl 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 other 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 further 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 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. Marl 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 landlout 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 delicious, 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 hedgerows 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.

Again, and it was a bright, calm day in summer. Upon the bosom of the broad Pacific, in about the latitude of Manila, but some three hundred miles to the eastward thereof, rested one of the most beautiful specimens of marine

architecture that ever met the gaze of an untraveled seaman. It was a full-rigged brig, with royals set, and studding sails upon both sides, of about two hundred tons burden.

The deck was as white as pure wood can be made. The disposition of the rigging showed that there was a rule for every department, even to the arrangement of the smallest item, while the arrangement itself proved that the whole was under the supervision of some master mind. There were eleven guns, and all of brass, ten of which were upon the sides, while the eleventh was much longer, and fixed upon a pivot and railway amidships. 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 Marl 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 nothing in his outward appearance that could indicate his membership with such a crew. But he is a member, and has been for years. He is tall and straight, with features of more than ordinary beauty, and showing by every external look and action a noble, generous soul. He is called Paul Laroon.

Not far off stand three more persons conversing together. The tallest of the three—he with the black hair and eyes, and the thin, satanic-looking lips, is John Langley, the first lieutenant. He is not five-and-thirty. The next, who is of medium size and only peculiar on account of the light, flaxen hair, and large, yellowish eyes, which sometimes have a pure green shade, is Philip Storms, the second lieutenant. The third is a short, stumpy man, broad and heavy in his build, with elephantine motion. His head is large, and covered with coarse gray hair, and his eyes are quick and keen. He is the oldest man on board, being in the neighborhood of sixty years of age, and is the gunner of the brig. His name is Ben Marton. The men look to their captain for orders, and when he is cool and assured they are the same; but when the pinch comes, and a few well-directed shots can help them out of a scrape, all eyes are turned to old Ben Marton, for well do they know that he alone can handle that long gun with a sure skill.

"Paul," spoke the captain, turning to his youthful companion, "we shall reach our retreat ere long. Were you not thinking of the same thing?"

There was a strange tinge of irony or perhaps of bitterness in these last words, and the dark-faced man gazed into the other's eyes as he spoke.

"I was thinking of reaching the shore once more," answered the youth in low, but steady tones.

"But weren't you thinking of any particular point on shore, eh? And perhaps you were thinking of some particular person you would like to see?"

"I was thinking of a variety of things," answered Paul; "but I know of nothing particular that was uppermost."

"How would you like to see our little Mary?" asked the captain, speaking very low—almost in a whisper—and eying his companion sharply.

The youth started with a quick emotion, and for an instant his eyes dropped; but he collected himself as quickly as before, and then looking up again into his interlocutor's face, he replied: "I should like to see her very much."

"Of course," responded Laroon. "It's natural you should." And thus speaking he started toward the gangway, where some of the men were weaving a mat. Paul watched him as he walked away, and a troubled expression came upon his face.

"What does he mean?" said he to himself. And after some moments of thought, he mentally added, "only to tease me, that's all."

Shortly after this the boatswain piped to dinner. Paul quartered in the cabin and was the surgeon of the brig. Some years before there had been an old man on board, who had served in that capacity, and as he grew aged and feeble he wished to spend the evening of his life on shore. Laroon granted his request on condition that he would procure a good surgeon to take his place. Paul had already gained much experience in helping the old surgeon manage the sick and wounded. So the old man agreed to take Paul in hand and teach him all the mysteries of the craft, and Laroon consented. The youth soon became expert in his new profession, and at the present time he had been two years in charge of the sick.

Dinner was eaten, and when the captain returned to the deck he found that

the breeze had freshened. He was standing by the binnacle watching the compass, when the lookout at the cross-trees reported a sail. In an instant all was life and bustle on board the brig, and the captain sprang for his glass and hastened forward.

"Fore-topgallant-mast, there! Where away?"

"Three points on the starboard bow. Keep your eye on her. Here, Storms, lay aloft with the glass and help the lookout."

The second lieutenant took the glass and went aloft, and then the captain returned to the wheel, where Paul was standing by the side of the helmsman.

"Well, Paul, what do you think has turned up now?" said he.

"Perhaps a merchantman," replied the youth, with a shudder.

"Mayhap it is, and mayhap it isn't. We are in the latitude of such craft; but there's another kind of chap cruising about these waters."

"A Russian cruiser, you mean?"

"Yes. How would you like to meet one?"

"It would not be the first one," replied the youth, without the least show of discomposure.

"That is true; but we might not reach Silver Bay. How would you like that?"

A quick shudder ran through Paul's frame, but there was mere of indignation in his look than of fear, and at the end of a single moment he replied, with a half-sarcastic smile:

"Well, I think of Silver Bay after we have made ourselves sure of reaching it."

"Well spoken, my son," cried the captain; and then he turned away.

"Son!" whispered the youth to himself, as he watched the movements of the dark man. "I do not believe that man is my father! I never believed it. His blood never flowed in those veins. But whose blood does flow there?"

At this question Paul always stopped. He asked it of himself very often, but no answer ever came.

"Hullo!" at this moment came from the second mate, who was standing aloft with his glass. "It's a square-rigged craft, and standing towards us."

For fifteen minutes the captain paced the quarter deck in silence, and at the end of that time Mr. Storms reported that the strange sail was a ship, and to all appearances a man-of-war.

"Very well," returned Laroon, perfectly calm. "We'll find out her mettle before we show our stern. Ben!"

The old gunner moved quickly forward and touched his hat.

"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 divested of its tarpaulin, and the shot box by its side was filled. The gun was loaded, and then a mortar sat down upon the railway 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 yard 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 pirate chosen to run to the southward she might 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 Marl Laroon had reasons for wishing to reach that point as soon as convenient. At length 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 impertinence 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 abeam, and heading about southwest, so that sea would come within cannoning range if she kept on in that way, even allowing that the brig sailed faster.

(To be continued.)

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 Herpeck, "but most engagements are."—Philadelphia Press.

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

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**WORLDS' FAIR NEWS NOTES**  
Two unique and historic snuff boxes, one of which was once the personal property of Marie Antoinette, are exhibited in the Denmark section of the Palace of Varied Industries at the World's Fair. The other, which is the more elaborate formerly belonged to King Frederick VII of Denmark.

A section of a window from Salisbury Cathedral, England, is exhibited in the British section of the Palace of Liberal Arts at the World's Fair. The window was of leaded glass of various colors, arranged in a conventional design, and the fragment shown is in a fair state of preservation, with traces of the original colors still discernible.

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