

# THE Story of Francis Cludde

## A Romance of Queen Mary's Reign.

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

### CHAPTER VI.—CONTINUED.

"Never mind my baggage," she answered impatiently. "I have made other arrangements for it. Two or three things I know came on board last night. I want to start—to start at once, do you hear?"

The captain shook his head and said sulkily that it was impossible. Spitting on the deck, he ground his heel leisurely round a knot-hole. "Impossible," he repeated. "It would be as impossible to start in a fog when the fog lifts, as it will be to go on when the fog lifts."

"At Leigh?"

"And when will you go from Leigh?" she cried indignantly.

"Daybreak tomorrow," he answered. "You leave it to me, mistress."

"You continue in a tone of rough patronage, and you will be your good man before you expect it."

"But, man," she exclaimed, trembling with impotent rage, "did not Master Bertram engage you to bring me across whenever I might be ready? Now, an hour ago, I asked you for it? Did he not, sirrah?"

"To be sure, to be sure!" replied the giant unmoved. "Using seamanship and not going to sea in a fog, if it please you."

"Does not please me," she retorted. "And why stay at Leigh?"

He looked up at the rigging, then down at the deck. He set his heel in the knot-hole and ground it round again. Then he looked at his questioner with a broad smile. "Well, mistress, with a very good reason. It is there your good man is waiting for you. Only," added this careful keeper of a secret, "he bade me not tell any one."

She uttered a low cry, which might have been an echo of her own, and convulsively clasped the child more tightly to her. "He is at Leigh," she murmured, flushing and trembling, another woman altogether. Even her voice was wonderfully changed. "He is really at Leigh?"

"To be sure!" replied the captain with a portentous wink and a mysterious roll of the head. "He is there safe enough! Safe enough, you may be sure, for your handsome face to a rushlight. And he will be there tonight."

She started up with wild gesture. For a moment she had sat down on a cask standing beside her and forgotten her peril and the probability that she might never see Leigh at all. Now, she had sprung up, and she was uttering, "Oh, no, no! Let us go at once. We must start at once!" Her voice was hysterical in its sudden anxiety and terror as the consciousness of her position rolled back upon her. "Captain, listen, listen!" she pleaded. "Let us start now, and my husband will give you double. I will promise you double whatever he said if you will change the fog."

"I think all who heard her were moved, save the captain only. He rubbed his head and grinned. Slow and heavy, he saw nothing in her prayer save the freak of a woman wild to get to her man. He did not weigh her promise at a groat. She was but a woman. And being a foreigner he did not perceive a certain air of bravado which might have influenced a native. He was one of those men against whose stupidity Father Carey used to say the gods fight in vain. When he answered good naturedly, "No, no, mistress, it is impossible, it is not to be seamanship," I felt that we might as well try to stop the ebbing tide as move him from his position."

The feeling was a maddening one. The special which menaced my companions I did not know. But they feared pursuit, and I had every reason to fear it for myself. Yet at any moment, out of the fog which encircled us so closely that we could barely see the water below, and the shore at all, might come the tramp of hurrying feet and the stern hall of the law. It was maddening to think of this and to know that we had only to cast off a rope or two in order to escape and to know also that we were absolutely helpless."

I expected that Mistress Bertram, brave as she had shown herself, would burst into a passion of rage and tears. But apparently she had one hope left. She looked at me.

"I tried to think hard, alas, I seemed only able to listen. An hour had gone by since we parted from the rascal in the court, and we might expect him to appear at any moment. I was patient and exultant, with a posse at his back. Yes, I tried to think, and the fog presently suggested a possible course. "Look here," I said suddenly speaking for the first time, "if you do not start until the fog lifts, the captain will be well breakfast ashore and return presently."

"That is as you please," he answered indifferently.

"What do you think?" I said turning to my companions with as much carelessness as I could command. "Had we not better do that?"

Mistress Bertram did not understand, but in her despair she obeyed the motion of my hand and mechanically walked to the side. The younger woman followed me slowly, so that I had to speak to her with some earnestness, bidding her make haste, for I was of a fever until we were clear of the Whelp and the Lion wharf. It had struck me that if the ship were not to leave at once, we were nowhere in so much danger as on board. At large in the fog we might escape detection for a time. Our pursuers might as well look for a needle in a haystack as seek us through it when once we were clear of the wharf. And this was not the end of my plan. But for the present it was enough. Therefore I took Mistress Anne very short. "Come," I said, "be quick! Let me help you."

She obeyed and I was ashamed of my impatience when at the foot of the ladder she thanked me for my help and almost with good cheer in my voice and a rebound of spirits that I explained as I hurried my companions across the raft what my plan was.

The moment we were ashore I felt safer. The fog swallowed us up quick, as the old says. The very hull of the ship vanished from sight before we had gone half a dozen paces. And I had never seen a London fog before, and to me it seemed portentous and presidential—a marvel as great as the crimson hall which fell in the London gardens to mark her majesty's accession.

Yet after all, without my happy thought, the fog would have availed us little. We had scarcely gone a score of yards before the cautious tread of several people hastening down the strand toward the wharf struck my ears. They were proceeding in silence, and we might not have noticed their approach if the foremost had not by chance tripped and fallen, whereupon

one laughed and another swore. With a warning hand I grasped my companions' arms and hurried them forward some paces until I felt sure that our figures could not be seen through the mist. Then I halted, and we stood listening, gazing into one another's strained eyes, while the step came nearer and nearer, crossed our track and then with a noisy rush thundered on the wooden raft. My ear caught the jingle of harness and clank of weapons.

"It is my watch," I muttered. "Come, and make no noise. What I want is a little this way. I fancy I saw it as we passed down the wharf."

They turned with me, but we had not taken many steps before Mistress Anne, who was walking on my left side, stumbled over something. She tried to save herself, but failed, and fell heavily, uttering as she did so a loud cry. I sprang to her assistance, and before I raised her I laid my hand lightly on her mouth. "Hush!" I said softly. "For safety's sake, make no noise. What is the matter?"

"Oh, she moaned, making no effort to rise, my ankle, my ankle! I am sure I have broken it."

I muttered my dismay, while Mistress Bertram, stooping anxiously, examined the injured limb. "Can you stand?" she asked.

But it was no time for questioning, and I put her aside. The troop which had passed were within easy hearing, and if there should be one among them familiar with the girl's voice we might be pounced upon, fog or no fog. I felt that it was no time for ceremony and whispering to the older woman. "Go on ahead!" I think I see the boat. It is straight before you."

Luckily I was right. It was the boat, and so far well. But at the moment I spoke I heard a sudden outcry behind me, and I turned to see the others. I plunged forward with my burden, recklessly and blindly, through mud and over obstacles. The ferry for which I was making was moored in the water a few feet from the edge. I had remarked down to the wharf and had even noticed that the oars were lying in it. Now, if we could reach it and start down the river for Leigh, we might by possibility gain that place and meet Mistress Bertram's husband.

At any rate, nothing in the world seemed so desirable to me at that moment as the shelter of that boat. I plunged through the mud and waded desperately through the water to it. Mistress Bertram scarce a whit behind me. I reached it, but reached it only after the most painful struggle. I was pushing off the boat with all my strength and was in it as it floated away and was in it. But one second's delay would have undone us. To them were already in the water up to their necks and their very breath was hot on my face as we swung out into the stream.

Fortunately I had had experience of boats on the Avon, at Bedford, and Stratford, and could pull a good oar. For a moment I doubted the wherry folk, and dipped as I snatched up the sculls, but I quickly got her in hand, and bending to my work sent her spinning through the mist, every stroke I pulled increasing the distance between us and the pursuing boats. Happily we were below London Bridge and had not a dangerous passage to make. The river, too, was nearly clear of craft, and though once and again in the pool a huge hulk loomed suddenly across our path, and once and again we were into the mist like some monstrous phantom, and so told of a danger narrowly escaped, I thought it best to run all risks and go ahead as long as the tide should ebb.

It was strange how suddenly we had passed from storm into calm. Mistress Anne had bound her ankle with a handkerchief and bravely made light of the hurt, and now the two women sat crouching in the stern watching their clear heads together, their faces pale. The mist had closed round us, and we were alone again, gliding over the bosom of the great river that runs down to the sea. I was oddly struck by the strange current of life which for a week had tossed me from one adventure to another, only to bring me into contact at length with these two and sweep me into an unknown whirlpool of their fortunes.

Who were they? A merchant's wife and her sister flying from Bishop Bonner's inquisition? I thought it likely. Their clothes and hood, indeed, and all that I could see of their clothes, and below such a condition, but probably they were worn as a disguise. Their speech rose as much above it, but I knew that of late many merchants and might pass in noblemen's houses. Even so, in those days when London waxed fat and set up and threw down governments, every alderman had come to ride in mail.

No doubt the women, watching me in anxious silence, were as curious about me. I still bore stains of country travel. I was unwashed, unkempt, my doublet was torn, the cloak I had cast at my feet was the very wreck of a cloak. Yet I read no distrust in their looks. The elder's brave eyes seemed ever thinking me. I never saw her lips move silently that they did not shape "Well done!" And though I caught Mistress Anne scanning me once or twice with an expression I could ill interpret, a smile took its place the moment her gaze met mine.

We had passed but were still in sight of Greenwich palace—as they told me—when the mist rose suddenly like a curtain rolled away, and the cold, bright February sun, shining out, disclosed the sparkling river, with the green hills rising on our right hand. Here and there on its surface a small boat such as our own moved to and fro, and in the distant pool from which we had come rose a little forest of masts, and my eyes were drawn to a two-masted vessel which, nearly half a mile below us, was drifting down, gently heeling over with the current as the crew got up the sails. "I wonder whether she is bound," I said thoughtfully, "and whether they would take us on board by any chance."

Mistress Bertram shook her head. "I have no money," she answered sadly. "I fear we must go on to Leigh if it be any way possible. You are tired, and no wonder. But what is it?"

A sudden change of voice. "What is the matter?"

I had flashed out the oars with a single touch and begun to pull as fast as I could, down the stream. No doubt my face, too, proclaimed my discovery and

awoke her fears. "Look behind!" I muttered and turned and the instant uttered a low cry, a wherry like our own, but even lighter—in my first glance up the river I had not noticed it—had stolen nearer to us and yet nearer, and now, throwing aside disguise, was in hot pursuit of us. There were three men on board, two of whom I had seen before.

When they saw that we had discovered them, they hailed us in a loud voice, and I heard the steersman's feet rattle on the boards as he cried out to his men to give way and stamped in very eagerness. My only reply was to take longer stroke and pulling hard to sweep away from them.

But presently my first strength died away, and the work began to tell upon me, and little by little they overhauled us. Not that I gave up at once for that. They were still some 50 yards behind, and for a few minutes, at my rate, I might put off capture. At the worst they were only three to one, and their boat looked light and cranky and easy to upset.

So I pulled on, savagely straining at the oars. But my chest heaved and my arms ached with a morbid monotony with each stroke. The banks slid by and, though I saw nothing of them, another, though I saw nothing of them, I saw only the pursuing boat, on which my eyes were fixed, heaving and rattling like the oars in the rowlocks. A minute, two minutes, three minutes passed. They had not gained on us, but the water was beginning to waver before my eyes; their boat seemed floating in the air; there was a pulsation in my ears louder than that of the oars. I struggled and yet I flagged. My knees trembled. Their boat shot nearer now, nearer and nearer, so that I could read the smile of triumph on the steersman's dark face and hear his cry of exultation. "Nearer, and then with a cry I dropped my oars."

"Quick!" I panted to my companions. "Change places with me! So!" Trembling and out of breath as I was, I crawled between the women and gained the stern sheets of the boat. As I passed the Mistress Bertram she looked at me with a gasp. Her eyes met mine, flashed fire; her lips were white. "The man steering!" she hissed between her teeth. "Leave the others. He is Clarence, and I fear him!"

I nodded, but still, as the hostile boat bore swiftly down upon us, I cast a glance around to see if there were any help at hand. I saw the sign of any. I saw only the pale blue of the sea and the stream flowing swiftly under the boat. I drew my sword. The case was one rather for despair than courage. The women were in my charge, and, if I did not acquit myself like a man now, when should I do so? Bah, it would soon be over!

There was an instant's confusion in the other boat as the crew ceased rowing, and, seeing my attitude, and not liking it, changed their seats. To my joy the man who had hitherto been steering flung his oars and came forward to bear the brunt of the encounter. He was a tall, sinewy man, past middle age, with a clean shaven face, a dark complexion and cruel eyes. So he was Master Clarence! Well, he had the air of a swordsman and a soldier. I trembled for the women.

"Surrender, you fool!" he cried to me harshly. "In the queen's name, do you hear? What do you in this company?"

I answered nothing, for I was out of breath. But softly, my eyes on his, I drew out with my left hand my hunting-knife. I reversed the blade, and I would spring upon him and drive the knife home with that hand. So, standing erect in bow and stern, we faced one another, the man and the boy, the flush of rage and exertion on my cheek, a dark shade on his. And silently the boats drew together.

Thought is quick—quicker than anything else in the world, I suppose, for in some drawn out second before the boats came together I had time to wonder where I had seen his face before in my memory. I knew no man of eight and twenty, the coxswain of the lifeboat crew, as brave and daring a man as ever manuevered a craft in the boiling surf of the Goodwins. Very proud was pretty Nora of her sturdy brother, whose prowess had won him many medals of the Royal Humane society. Ordinarily she was a brave and hearty young woman, who looked on the brighter side of things and sent her brother off to his sea duty with a cheery word and encouraging smile. But on this occasion she felt unaccountably nervous and low spirited. This may have been because her sweetheart, Harry Hobden, mate of a bark in the China trade, was long overdue. The firely was now 100 days out from Hong Kong, and fears were felt for her safety. Nora had by no means given up her lover for lost, but she was anxious about him, and when the sudden midnight summons called the lifeboat's crew her feelings were too much for her. She wrapped herself up in her warmest cloak and followed her brother to the beach, and with palpitating heart gazed at the boat fighting with the sea until it vanished in the murky gloom of the night.

Meanwhile the lifeboat had reached the wreck. The great white combers were dashing her to pieces, tearing at her until she had lost all semblance of a ship. The sea breaching over her battered deck had forced the crew aloft, into the maintop, where they clung waiting for the end. The burning of blue lights ashore assured them that their flame had been seen, but even now they scarcely dared to hope that succor could come out to them in the teeth of a tempest so blustering and a sea so raging.

The lifeboat anchored ahead of the wreck and veered away rope until she was abreast of the ship, but of such a distance that she could not be dashed against her. The men in the rigging of the wreck did not see the lifeboat until her coxswain lighted a blue light, whose spectral glare illumined the boat plunging in the breaking and seething salt spume, its wild flame playing on the spray-drenched crew, each with his cork life belt round his waist and a yellow sou'wester on his head.

The only chance of rescue for the sailors on the wreck was to make a daring plunge into the watery abyss and try to swim across the yeasty chasm which divided the ship from the lifeboat. The coxswain, with the long steering sweep in his nervous grasp, stood ready to shear the boat as close to the wreck as he dared. The seamen aloft watched their chance for a smooth spout—that is, an interval when the raging waves relaxed for a while their ferocity. Slowly, for the life was al-

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The bright glare of a blazing tar barrel far out at sea, where the breakers dashed high on the Goodwin sands, was seen by the coxswain of the spectral shape of a large sailing vessel stranded on that dangerous British shoal. The southerly gale blew furiously, the rain poured in torrents. It was a wild tempestuous night, dark as pitch with no gleam of moon, and stars to brighten the sky, but there was a white sheen on the seaward horizon, where the surf beat on the great bank of sand which has proved the cemetery of thousands of fine ships.

The sturdy coxswain, on the alert for such signals of disaster, pressed the electric button which gave the alarm to the lifeboat house on the beach at Deal. The crew responded to the call, and despite the fury of the storm, a little knot of curious people gathered at the edge of the sea to see the lifeboat launched. Among them was one young woman, the sister of the captain of the volunteer crew of the lifeboat, whom a sense of impending disaster had induced to accompany her brother and see him embark.

"Why so nervous, Nora dear?" laughed Dick Satterthwaite, as the impulsive girl clung to him just as he was about to embark. "This will make my twentieth trip and on each we have saved life."

So saying he tore himself from the arms of the trembling girl, and climbing into the lifeboat gave the signal for the launch. In a few minutes the buoyant craft was battling with the big waves and steering a course for the blazing beacon on the deck of the stranded vessel. Fiercely the gale blew and strident was its shriek, as once clear of the breakers the crew of the lifeboat set the lugsails, the direction of the wind being such as to al-

most washed and blown out of them, they descended from their tempest-stricken aerial aloft and stood by for an opportune moment to leap into the sea.

The coxswain deftly sheered the lifeboat within a fathom of the side of the wreck, where the raging waves seethed and swirled. Prave men watched to save the men as they jumped for their lives. One heroic fellow essayed the plunge. A few vigorous strokes and he was grasped and hauled safely aboard the lifeboat. His successful example stimulated the rest. Nine others, all that survived, were rescued.

The coxswain had been so actively engaged with his steering and keeping the lifeboat clear of the wreck that he had no time to look after the rescued. But when the last man was hauled aboard, the anchor hoisted and the lifeboat headed back for Deal, he relinquished the helm to a trusty member of his crew and went among the men whose rescue was due to his pluck and skill. He produced his brandy flask and gave each enfeebled being a "nip." One man in the gloom of the storm struck him as being familiar. Opening a little flask in which he kept his wind matches safe from the wet, he touched off the fuse of a blue light. Its flame shone out bright and its pale glare flashed on the face of his sister's sweetheart, Harry Hobden! The penetrating spirit revived the sunken man, but not sufficiently for him to recognize his old chum, whose duty called him away immediately to take the helm of the lifeboat.

Nora was waiting for her brother's return. On the crest of a swirling comber the lifeboat was hurled onto the beach. A big crowd hailed her up. The rescued seamen were taken out. Satterthwaite had reserved one pleasure for himself. He kept Hobden aboard till the last. Nora's lover had fully re-



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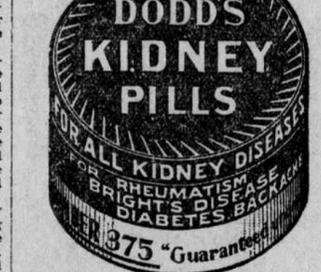
Meanwhile the lifeboat had reached the wreck. The great white combers were dashing her to pieces, tearing at her until she had lost all semblance of a ship. The sea breaching over her battered deck had forced the crew aloft, into the maintop, where they clung waiting for the end. The burning of blue lights ashore assured them that their flame had been seen, but even now they scarcely dared to hope that succor could come out to them in the teeth of a tempest so blustering and a sea so raging.

The lifeboat anchored ahead of the wreck and veered away rope until she was abreast of the ship, but of such a distance that she could not be dashed against her. The men in the rigging of the wreck did not see the lifeboat until her coxswain lighted a blue light, whose spectral glare illumined the boat plunging in the breaking and seething salt spume, its wild flame playing on the spray-drenched crew, each with his cork life belt round his waist and a yellow sou'wester on his head.

The only chance of rescue for the sailors on the wreck was to make a daring plunge into the watery abyss and try to swim across the yeasty chasm which divided the ship from the lifeboat. The coxswain, with the long steering sweep in his nervous grasp, stood ready to shear the boat as close to the wreck as he dared. The seamen aloft watched their chance for a smooth spout—that is, an interval when the raging waves relaxed for a while their ferocity. Slowly, for the life was al-

**Time and Motion.**  
From the Philadelphia Ledger.  
A traveler, finding that he had a couple of hours in Dublin, called a cab and told the driver to drive him around for two hours. At first all went well, but soon the driver began to whip up his horse so that they narrowly escaped several collisions.  
"What's the matter?" demanded the passenger. "Why are you driving so recklessly? I'm in no hurry."  
"Ah, it's an old yid yez," retorted the cabbie. "D'ye think I'm going to put the whole day drivin' you around for two hours? Gitap!"

Boston is in hard luck. Just as the city is recovering from the financial panic it is struck with a shortage of the bean crop.



Canada's new transcontinental railway from Moncton on the Atlantic to Prince Rupert on the Pacific, a distance of rather more than 3,000 miles, is fully under way and is to be completed by December 1, 1911, at cost of \$200,000,000.

That earthworms as well as squirrels may aid the forester is the novel suggestion of an American naturalist. Dry maple seeds are drawn into worm burrows, where they sprout, and it is believed that some of them must survive in favorably moist seasons.

Attention homeseekers, 320 acres free government land for farming and grazing. Millions of acres to choose from. Fine soil. Water plentiful. Send 25 cents in stamps for information. Wiebke & Co., Locators, Miles City, Mont.

Several companies have been organized of late to raise coffee, sisal, and cattle in German East Africa. Cattle farming is also receiving attention. Alfalfa is raised as food for the birds.

The total value of the stone product of the country in 1906 was \$66,378,794, an increase of \$2,570,946 over that of 1905, and an increase of \$12,415,565 over that of 1896.

**The Earth-Hour.**  
The earth was made in twilight, and the hour of blending dusk and dew is still her own. Soft as it comes with promise and with power Of faded heavens, lately sunset-blown.

Then was who know the bitter breath of earth. Who hold her every rapture for a pain, Yet leave the travail of celestial birth To wipe our tears upon the dusk again.

But vain the spirit takes, in sovereign mood. A sure revenge, as in some tree apart. A whippoorwill sets trembling all the wood. The silence mends more quickly than the heart.

—Charles L. O'Donnell, in the April Atlantic.

**An Irish Answer.**  
Washington Star: "Secretary Crotty was discussing," said a New York broker, "a question of finance during the panic. He broke off to tell a story.  
He said he was reminded of the Irish farmer on the day to the cattle fair.  
"Where are you going, my man?" said an English tourist, stopping this agriculturist.  
"To Waterford fair, your honor," was the answer.  
"The Englishman looked approvingly at the heifers the other was driving."  
"And how much do you expect to get for your beasts at Waterford fair?" he asked.  
"Sure, an' if I get £8 a head I shan't do badly," said the Irishman.  
"Ah, that's a sample of your country," said the Englishman, severely.  
"Take those heifers to England and you'd average £14 a head for them."  
The Irishman laughed.  
"Just so, yer honor," he said, "and if yez were to take the Lake of Killarney to purgatory yez would get a guinea a drop."

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The good humored man can pick up and carry off a load that the man with a groan wouldn't attempt to lift.

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