

THE MATE OF THE HINDU

By Captain RALPH DAVIS

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(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER IV. THE CONVICT SHIP.

An unpleasant surprise awaited me on my arrival at Liverpool. The Hindu had been thoroughly refitted for sea, but was in the hands of a gang of carpenters and blacksmiths as she lay in her berth.

"What's the meaning of all this?" repeated Captain Clark as I found him overseeing the workmen in the hold. "Well, Ralph, to be short about it, we've got a government charter for Botany Bay."

"What! The Hindu to go out to Australia with convicts?"

"Exactly. Don't fire up about it, man, until you learn full particulars. Things are very dull just now in the carrying trade, and if we hadn't made this charter we might have forced to lie here for weeks. We didn't jump at it, I assure you, but yet we look upon it as a lucky stroke, and there are a score of crafts in port which would be willing to pay us a premium."

"But it will give the ship a bad name," I protested.

"Not in this case, I hope, though we must take our chances. You see, the government has been in the habit of chartering any old tub which could be got hold of cheap. There's a public outcry against sending out convict ships which are so unseaworthy that a top-sail breeze is bound to do for them. There's also a great ado about crowding the men as if they were blacks from the African coast. Certain papers and public men have been raising a great row on this subject while you've been in drydock at Dudley, and the upshot of the matter is that the government is going to try an experiment."

"At the loss of our reputation. Why, sir, a craft which has ever made the trip to Botany Bay goes to the boneyard or into the coal trade on her return. All shippers seem to look upon her with distrust and disgust after that."

However, I came to look upon the charter with more favor after a bit. The price paid us was very high, and we had the privilege of fitting up accommodations to carry 20 passengers as well. You will understand that I am now writing of a matter really belonging to the last generation. It is a good many years since the penal colony at Botany Bay was abolished and since England ceased to send her convicts out of the country. The idea of transportation was, first, to remove bad men as far away as possible, and, second, to make convicts the nucleus of new colonies. After two or three years of proper behavior a convict got a ticket of leave and could settle outside the camp. If his record continued good for two or three years more, he was discharged and could settle anywhere in Australia. It is a matter of history that three-fourths of the sheep growers and good shapers of the business men of the big island today can trace their ancestry back to the convict camp at Botany Bay.

There were no steamers running to Australia in those days. Aside from the regular packet ships, there were craft fitted out to carry emigrants, a thousand at a time, but there was a class of people which preferred to go by convict ship. The fare was about half what the packets charged, and yet higher than by an emigrant craft, but only a few were taken, and the accommodations were very good. The Hindu had only a main hold, which had a depth of about nine feet. Our contract called for the carrying of 60 male convicts. To keep these men secure the hold of the ship was converted into three cages, as it were, each cage to hold 20 men. The entrance to them was by way of the hatches. The cages were of iron, of course, and made as strong as in a prison. There were banks for the prisoners, and portholes gave them light and ventilation. In the rear of the third cage was fitted up what is known as a "brig," or dark cell, for the confinement of refractory prisoners. The remainder of the hold was taken up by storage rooms, staterooms and cabins.

In the days of which I write a convict ship sometimes carried out as many as 350 men and women. The law laid its hand heavily upon every wrongdoer. Offenders who would not get more than three months in jail today were then sent away for five or ten years. The embezzler and the murderer were treated alike until they arrived at the Bay. Then some little difference was made in the favor of the former, though the place was a hell on earth for all, according to every man's testimony. Where a big batch was taken, the government sent along from 8 to 12 marines and an officer to take entire charge of the prisoners. In our case the contract only bound the government to furnish a doctor. We must ship hands enough to guard the convicts and land them safely at Botany Bay, and the ship must provide its own outfit of firearms.

We went about these things in good faith and with an eye as to what might happen on the voyage unless we were fully prepared for trouble. There were hundreds of men looking for an opportunity to work their passage out. We bargained with seven very decent looking fellows to pay their way by acting as guards. The odd man had been a sergeant of infantry and was to command the guard. We bought a dozen muskets and plenty of ammunition, and one day, when almost ready to receive the prisoners aboard, the captain said to me:

"Ralph, there's no knowing what may happen to us with 60 desperate villains aboard. I understand that all our prisoners are long termers and over half of them are going for life. I am going to arrange the main cabin so that

we can turn it into a fort if necessary." Presuming that you have never been aboard of a sailing craft, I make bold to tell you that our quarters comprised a main cabin, a dining room and three staterooms. Forward of it and reached by the same entrance or companionway were the quarters fitted up for the passengers. The roof of the cabin was elevated about two feet above the deck and was lighted in part by a skylight in the center. Each stateroom had a small window looking out on deck, and the dining room had three or four. The entrance to the cabin was in front.

Well, what we did was to secure iron shutters for all the windows looking out forward, each shutter having a porthole for musketry firing and likewise iron plates which could be clamped on beneath the skylight if the emergency arose. Then the bulkhead between cage No. 3 and the passengers' quarters was provided with portholes and made bullet proof as well. For the cabin defense we bought four double barreled shot-guns and two rifles. This would give us, in case of a row, six good arms, to say nothing of the officers' pistols and what firearms the passengers might bring. You will observe that I have left the seven guards entirely out in my figuring.

When the Hindu was ready to receive the convicts, a government inspector came aboard to see that everything relating to the prisoners was shipshape. There was nothing to find fault with, and he named the date when the gang would be sent aboard. Our passengers came first—exactly 20 of them. Whom do you suppose the first three were? When I first clapped eyes on them, I was so taken aback that I stood open mouthed and could not utter a word. They were Mr. and Mrs. Williams and the daughter, Mary. It had been six weeks since I left Dudley, and I had received no news of them whatever, though I was every day trying to pick up the courage to write direct to Mary herself.

"Well, Ralph, it's this way," said the father as I expressed my astonishment. "Everybody knows the gal is innocent as a babe, but she can't abide notoriety. We'll go out to Australia and have a look around, and if things don't suit we can return after a couple of years. I'd forgotten the name of your craft, and it's pleased I am to find that we are to sail with you."

I can't say that Mary seemed over-pleased to find me there. Indeed, she acted as if considerably put out about it. While I may not have been distasteful to her personally, yet the sight of me kept all the past in mind, and she had taken her troubles very much to heart. She shook hands and made an effort to be friendly, however, and that was all I could expect. Of the other 17 passengers there were four married couples, two young women servants, one single man and six children. They were all middle class people, tidy and respectable, and we could not have asked for a better lot.

The passengers came aboard in the morning. At 9 o'clock in the afternoon our prisoners came alongside under a heavy guard, and I received another shock, and a far more disagreeable one. The first convict to step aboard was Ben Johnson, the villain who was to blame for what I had gone through. We were face to face before we recognized each other. He was handcuffed and also had on leg chains, for he had become so desperate that everybody feared him. His face was full of curiosity as he stepped on deck, but the instant his eyes lighted on me he raised his manacled hands to strike and shouted at the top of his voice:

"You here, Ralph Tompkins! Ah, you cowardly cur, but I could ask for no better luck! When we take the ship, it will be my pleasure to flay you alive."

I knew, of course, that he had been sentenced to transportation for life, but it had never occurred to me that he might be among the gang of 60. The guards seized him and were hustling him along when he caught sight of Mary and her parents. He realized in an instant that they were passengers, and there was a look of devilish ferocity on his face as he cried out:

"What! And Mary too! Why, satan himself seems bound to play into my hands on this trip. Three cheers for Ben Johnson's luck!"

The girl and her people were as badly knocked out as I was, and had we not been all ready to weigh anchor they would have quit the brig and forfeited their passage money. Mary had to be led below, while the father declared to me that nothing on earth could have induced him to go with the Hindu had he known that Ben Johnson was to be one of the gang. The situation was a bad one for all four of us, but the only way left us was to put on a bold face and make the best of it. Ben Johnson was perhaps the most desperate man in the lot, but the gang as a whole was one of the worst ever embarked. When they had been divided and caged, the officer of the guard felt it his duty to say:

"I have handled at least 50 gangs of convicts in my time, and I tell you that no ship ever had a worse one under hatches. There are plenty of men afloat and ashore who are willing to bet two to one that you never get as far as the



"You here, Ralph Tompkins!"

these fellows day and night. If you get careless for a day, they'll capture the ship and cut the throats of officers, passengers and crew at the first rush."

We had a sailing crew of 14 men. Each had signed for the round trip and knew what the cargo would be, and yet when they saw what a villainous gang had come aboard at least half the sailors would have deserted if there had been opportunity. If there was one single person above decks who was satisfied with the situation, he must have kept his thoughts to himself. We were off, however, and it was useless to growl or lament. Just as the towboat had got our cable a wherry dropped alongside, and a letter was handed up for the captain. It was badly written and spelled, and its contents were another dose for us. It read:

"I think it my duty as an honest man to tell you that at least one of your guards is a friend of Ben Johnson's and will stop at nothing to help him take the ship. Be on your guard."

CHAPTER V. THE SHIP'S DOCTOR.

In every ship sent out with convicts the prisoners were under the charge of the doctor sent along at government expense. His authority was supreme. He represented the government. We of the

Hindu did not catch sight of our doctor until the last moment before sailing, and the sight of him gave us a surprise.

"Why, Ralph, the authorities must be blind or crazy to send such a man along with a gang like this," growled Captain Clark after the man had introduced himself and walked away.

He was a young man, not over two and twenty, a medical student, or just graduated, and we marked him down at once for a man without any spirit. I may as well tell you that he had secured the place through the influence of relatives, and that he had but a faint idea of the burdens and responsibilities of the position. He had had some little medical practice in the charity hospitals and had perhaps been told that all he would have to do on shipboard would be to prescribe opium salts or blue mass and see that the convicts swallowed the same.

"Why, we'll have a row before we are fairly clear of the land," continued the captain, who had pretty thoroughly posted himself as to matters aboard of a convict ship while we were fitting out. "I'm a good mind to cast off, come to anchor and demand that he be replaced by an old hand."

I protested against such a step, arguing that the authorities knew their business and must have confidence in the man they had put aboard; but, to tell you the truth, I had little faith in my own words. Supper was the first meal to be served to the convicts. We had a double galley on deck, with two cooks, and the convicts were to be supplied with government provisions. It was for the doctor to see that things were properly cooked, to set the hours for the meals and to take general charge of the provisions while on deck. The cages, as I have told you, were built one in rear of the other, beginning at the fore-castle bulkhead. The gangs of convicts were numbered 1, 2 and 3, and each had its captain or boss. Every man was supplied with a tin plate and cup. The first gang to come up was No. 1. A ladder which was kept on deck when not in use was let down through the fore-hatch into a space between the first two cages. Two men stood there with muskets, and the doctor unlocked the door and called to the men to come out in line, headed by their captain. As they passed up they marched to the galley, placed cup and plate on a shelf outside of a sliding window, and the cook gave them their food and drink. Then the line marched around the galley and descended to its cage to eat the meal. Thus only one gang was on deck at a time.

I am telling you how things went with a doctor who knew his business and how they did go with us after a time, but that first meal settled all doubts as to what sort of a man our doctor was. He had to call upon the captain to post him, and when he learned that he must go down and unlock the iron doors it was plain to see that he had no more nerve than a woman. I very much doubt if he would have put foot on the ladder if the second mate hadn't shown him the way and the captain given him a hard rub about his cowardice. As I told you, we had seven regular guards. Had the doctor been the right sort of a man this force would have been sufficient. Knowing that the convicts would size him up for a coward, the captain ordered two of the crew below with the guards and armed two more for the deck.

Things passed off all right, so far as having the convicts up and down again, but such of us as were closely watching the fellows made sure that they had taken the doctor's dimensions. I looked over every one of the 60 full in the face, and though I laid no claim to being a physiognomist, I decided for myself that we might as well have had 60 red handed pirates aboard. The idea of a boy attempting to govern such a gang would have brought a smile had I been ashore and clear of consequences.

The passengers had a table to themselves, while the three officers of the ship and the doctor ate at a smaller one. We did not have our supper until after the convicts had been served. Captain Clark was not a man to mince words with any man living, though he was neither brutal nor lacking in good manners. He had seen enough to warrant him in opening the subject with the doctor, and they were scarcely seated at the table when he led off with:

"Now, then, I suppose this is your first voyage as a doctor?" "Yes, sir." "And I suppose you have had no experience whatever with convicts ashore?" "Not the slightest."

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Guaranty Bond Project.

State Treasurer-elect Meserve will undoubtedly have some bankers on his official bonds, although strong pressure has been brought to bear to induce him to give a bond without the assistance of the banks, and prominent and well-to-do farmers in all parts of the state have volunteered their kindly offices for that purpose. There was some friction, it was reported, between the state treasurer-elect and representative bankers. It was not because of any indisposition on the part of the banks to go upon his bond, but because of some of the conditions sought to be imposed by bankers, of which Mr. Meserve did not approve. There was a proposition, it is said, to induce him to make certain deposits in certain small banks which he did not consider advisable to make, and that is reported to have been the only cause of friction between him and the bankers. The suggestion that the bankers had formed a combination against him, while partially true, may have given rise to a suspicion that he would experience difficulty in giving the \$200,000 bond required. The truth is that many bankers have been anxious to furnish the bond, while he has been proffered names of farmers that would make a list of 100 feet in length. These farmers could qualify for several times the required amount.

It is reported to be Mr. Meserve's intention to give the required \$200,000 bond with the usual individual sureties, and the proposition to have the legislature meet the expense of a guaranty company bond will be considered later.

It is intimated that Mr. Meserve has found several of the Lincoln banks more than willing to aid him, and that he has found them asking for nothing unreasonable. In fact it is said that at least one Lincoln bank will become the depository for a liberal share of the state funds. The guaranty company bond proposition is suggested in the hope of taking the handling of state funds out of politics.

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OFFICIAL FIGURES.

Shown by the Canvas of the Returns on the State Ticket.

The following are the figures shown by the canvas of the duplicate returns in the office of the secretary of state giving the vote cast for state officers:

Governor—Robert S. Bibb, democrat, 3,557; R. A. Hawley, national, 930; Silas A. Holcomb, demo-pop., 116,415; J. H. MacColl, 94,723; Charles Sadilek, socialist, 578; Joel Warner, prohibition, 1,560. Holcomb's plurality, 21,692. Lieutenant Governor—O. F. Biglin, democrat, 4,431; James E. Harris, demo-pop., 111,729; Fred Herman, socialist, national, 820; Albert Fitch, jr., prohibition, 2,149; John Mattes, jr., democrat, 5,523; Joel A. Piper, republican, 95,023; William F. Porter, demo-pop., 109,587. Porter's plurality, 14,564.

Auditor of Public Accounts—John F. Cornsall, demo-pop., 104,314; C. C. Crowell, prohibition, 2,643; Edward A. Gerrard, national, 953; Peter Olof Hedlund, republican, 97,468; Emil Heller, democrat, 5,148; Gustav Teikmeir, socialist labor, 608. Gerrard's plurality, 6,846. Treasurer—Charles E. Casey, republican 98,314; S. T. Davis, prohibition, 2,628; Stephen J. Herman, socialist labor, 746; Thomas McCulloch, national 961; Frank McGiverin, democrat, 5,222; John B. Meserve, demo-pop., 109,489. Meserve's plurality, 11,175.

Superintendent—Henry R. Corbett, republican 96,143; Martha E. Donovan, socialist labor, 1,249; Samuel G. Glover, democrat, 5,966; William R. Jackson demo-pop., 106,737; E. A. Whitman, prohibition-national, 2,969. Jackson's plurality, 10,594. Attorney General—Arthur S. Church hill, republican, 99,067; Fred Nygaard socialist labor, 730; Frank G. Odell, national, 907; Robert W. Patrick, democrat, 5,115; Constantine J. Smyth, demo-pop., 109,774; D. M. Strong, prohibition, 2,087. Smyth's plurality, 10,707.

Land Commissioner—George N. Baer, democrat, 4,904; John E. Hopper, prohibition, 2,523; John Phipps Roe, national, 1,155; Henry C. Russell, republican, 97,856; Peter P. Schmidt, socialist labor, 917; Jacob V. Wolfe, demo-pop., 109,268. Wolfe's plurality, 11,412. The official returns will not be opened until Monday, until which time the vote on presidential electors, regent of the university, contingent judges of the supreme court and constitutional amendments will not be learned.

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The Nebraska supreme court has appointed a committee comprising G. M. Lamberton of Lincoln, E. Wakely of Omaha, Isban Beavis of Falls City, S. M. Chapman of Plattsmouth and J. C. Crawford of West Point to draft resolutions touching the life of the late Judge E. S. Dundy of the federal district court.

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