

THE GREEN PEA PIRATES

By PETER B. KYNE

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GUN RUNNING.

Synopsis.—Captain Phineas P. Scraggs has grown up around the docks of San Francisco, and from mess boy on a river steamer, risen to the ownership of the steamer Maggie. Since each annual inspection promised to be the last of the old weatherbeaten vessel, Scraggs naturally has some difficulty in securing a crew. When the story opens, Adelbert P. Gibney, likable, but erratic, a man whom nobody but Scraggs would hire, is the skipper, Nella Halvorsen, a solemn Swede, constitutes the forecastle hands, and Bart McGuffey, a wastrel of the Gibney type, reigns in the engine room. With this motley crew and his ancient vessel, Captain Scraggs is engaged in freighting garden truck from Halfmoon bay to San Francisco. The inevitable happens; the Maggie goes ashore in a fog. A passing vessel hailing the wreck, Mr. Gibney gets word to a towing company in San Francisco that the ship ashore is the Yankee Prince, with promise of a rich salvage. Two tugs succeed in pulling the Maggie into deep water, and she slips her tow lines and gets away in the fog. Furious at the deception practiced on them, Captains Hicks and Flaherty, commanding the two tugboats, ascertain the identity of the "Yankee Prince" and, fearing ridicule should the facts become known along the waterfront, determine on personal vengeance. Their hostile visit to the Maggie results in Captain Scraggs promising to get a new boiler and make needed repairs to the steamer. Scraggs refuses to fulfill his promises and Gibney and McGuffey "strike." With marvelous luck, Scraggs ships a fresh crew. At the end of a few days of wild conviviality Gibney and McGuffey are estranged and seek their old positions on the Maggie. They are hostily received, but remain. On their way to San Francisco they sight a derelict and Gibney and McGuffey swim to it. The derelict proves to be the Chesapeake, richly laden, its entire crew stricken with scurvy. Scraggs attempts to tow her in, but the Maggie is unequal to the task and Gibney and McGuffey, alone, sail the ship to San Francisco, their salvage money amounting to \$1,000 apiece. His crew having deserted him, Captain Scraggs induces them to return. At an "old horse" sale the three purchase two mysterious boxes which they believe to contain smuggled "Oriental goods." They find, instead, two dead Chinamen. Scraggs seeks to "double cross" his associates, but Mr. Gibney outwits him and makes a satisfactory financial settlement with the Chinese company to whom the bodies have been consigned, leaving Scraggs out in the cold.

CHAPTER IX.

Even after allowing for the expenditures on the engine weighing heavily on Captain Scraggs, that individual continued morose and more than ever inclined to be sarcastic. Mr. Gibney commented on the fact to Mr. McGuffey.

"He's troubled financially, Gib."

"Well, you know who troubled him, don't you, Bart?"

"I mean about the cost of them repairs in the engine room. Unless he can come through in thirty days with the balance he owes, the boiler people are goin' to libel the Maggie to protect their claim."

Mr. Gibney arched his bushy eyebrows. "How do you know?" he demanded.

"He was a-tellin' me," Mr. McGuffey admitted weakly.

"Well, he wasn't a-tellin' me," Mr. Gibney's tones were ominous; he glared at his friend suspiciously as from the Maggie's cabin issued forth Scraggs's voice raised in song.

"Hello! The old boy's thermometer's gone up, Bart. Listen at him. 'Ever o' thee he's fondly dreamin'. Somethin' busted the spell an' I'll bet a cooky it was ready cash.' He menaced Mr. McGuffey with a rigid index finger. "Bart," he demanded, "did you loan Scraggs some money?"

The honest McGuffey hung his head. "A little bit," he replied childishly.

"What d'ye call a little bit?"

"Three hundred dollars, Gib."

"Secured?"

"He gimme his note at eight per cent. The savin's bank only pays four."

"Is the note secured by endorsement or collateral?"

"No."

"Hum-m-m! Strange you didn't say nothin' to me about this till I had to pry it out o' you, Bart."

"Well, Scraggs was feelin' so dog-goned blue—"

"The truth," Mr. Gibney insisted firmly, "the truth, Bart."

"Well, Scraggs asked me not to say nothin' to you about it."

"Sure. He knew I'd kill the deal. He knew better'n to try to nick me for three hundred bucks on his danged, worthless note. Bart, why'd you do it?"

"Oh, h—ll, Gib, he a good feller," poor McGuffey pleaded. "Don't be too hard on ol' Scraggs."

"We're discussin' you, Bart. 'Pears to me you've sort o' lost confidence in your old shipmate, ain't you? 'Pears that way to me when you act sneaky like."

McGuffey bridled. "I ain't a sneak."

"A ree by any other name'd be just as sweet," Mr. Gibney quoted,

"You poor, misguided simp. If you ever see that three hundred dollars again you'll be a lot older'a you are now. However, that ain't none o' my business. The fact remains, Bart, that you conspired with Scraggs to keep things away from me, which shows you ain't the man I thought you were, so from now on you go your way an' I'll go mine."

"I got a right to do as I blasted please with my money," McGuffey defended hotly. "I ain't no child to be lectured to."

"Considerin' the fact that you wouldn't have had the money to lend if it hadn't been for me, I allow I'm insulted when you use the said money to give an' an' comfort to my enemy, I'm through."

McGuffey, smothered in guilt, felt nevertheless that he had to stand by his guns, so to speak. "Stay through, if you feel like it," he retorted. "Where d'ye get that chatter? Ain't I free, white, an' twenty-one year old?"

Mr. Gibney was really hurt. "You poor boob," he murmured. "It's the old game o' settin' a beggar on horseback an' seein' him ride to the devil, or slippin' a gold ring in a pig's nose. An' I figured you was my friend!"

"Well, ain't I?"

"Fooy! Fooy! Don't talk to me. You'd sell out your own mother."

"Gib, you tryin' to pick a fight with me?"

"No, but I would if I thought I wouldn't get a footrace instead," Gibney rejoined scathingly. "Cripes, what a double-crossin' I been handed! Honest, Bart, when it comes to that sort o' work Scraggs is in his infancy. You sure take the cake."

"I ain't got the heart to clout you an' make you eat them words," Mr. McGuffey declared, sorrowfully.

"You mean you ain't got the guts," Mr. Gibney corrected him. "Bart, I got your number. Goodbye."

Mr. McGuffey had a wild impulse to cast himself upon the Gibney neck and weep, but his honor forbade any such weakness. So he invited Mr. Gibney to betake himself to a region several degrees hotter than the Maggie's engine room; then, because he feared to linger and develop a sentimental weakness, he turned his back abruptly and descended to the said engine room.

On his part, Adelbert P. Gibney entered the cabin and glared long and menacingly at Captain Scraggs. "I'll have my time," he growled presently. "Give it to me an' give it quick."

The very intonation of his voice warned Scraggs that the present was not a time for argument or trifling. Silently he paid Mr. Gibney the money due him; in equal silence the navigating officer went to the pilot house, unscrewed his framed certificate from the wall, packed it with his few belongings, and departed for Scab Johnny's boarding house.

"Hello," Scab Johnny saluted him at his entrance. "Quit the Maggie?"

Mr. Gibney nodded.

"Want a trip to the dark blue?"

"Lead me to it," mumbled Mr. Gibney.

"It'll cost you twenty dollars, Gib. Chief mate on the Rose of Sharon, bound for the Galapagos Islands sealin'."

"I'll take it, Johnny," Mr. Gibney threw over a twenty-dollar bill, went to his room, packed all of his belongings, paid his bill to Scab Johnny, and within the hour was aboard the schooner Rose of Sharon. Two hours later they towed out with the tide.

Poor McGuffey was stunned when he heard the news that night from Scab Johnny. When he retailed the information to Scraggs next morning, Scraggs was equally perturbed. He guessed that McGuffey and Gibney had quarreled and he had the poor judgment to ask McGuffey the cause of the row. Instantly, McGuffey informed him that that was none of his daddled business—and the incident was closed.

The three months that followed were the most harrowing of McGuffey's life. Captain Scraggs knew his engineer would not resign while he, Scraggs, owed him three hundred dollars; wherefore he was not too particular to put a bridle on his tongue when things appeared to go wrong. McGuffey longed to kill him, but dared not. When, eventually, the railroad had been extended sufficiently far down the coast to enable the farmers to haul their goods to the railroad in trucks, the Maggie automatically went out of the green-pea trade; simultaneously, Captain Scraggs's note to McGuffey fell due and the engineer demanded payment. Scraggs demurred, pleading poverty, but Mr. McGuffey assumed such a threatening attitude that reluctantly Scraggs paid him a hundred and fifty dollars on account, and McGuffey extended the balance one year—and quit.

"See that you got that hundred and fifty an' the interest in your jeans the next time we meet," he warned Scraggs as he went overboard.

Time passed. For a month the Maggie plied regularly between Bodega bay and San Francisco in an endeavor to work up some business in farm and dairy produce, but a gasoline schooner cut in on the run and declared a rate

war, whereupon the Maggie turned her blunt nose riverward and for a brief period essayed some towing and general freighting on the Sacramento and San Joaquin. It was unprofitable, however, and at last Captain Scraggs was forced to lay his darling little Maggie up and take a job as chief officer of the ferry steamer Encinal, plying between San Francisco and Oakland. In the meantime, Mr. McGuffey, after two barren months "on the beach," landed a job as second assistant on a Standard Oil tanker running to the west coast, while thrifty Nella Halvorsen invested the savings of ten years in a bay scow known as the Willie and Annie, arrogated to himself the title of captain, and proceeded to freight hay, grain and paving stones from Petaluma.

The old joyous days of the green-pea trade were gone forever, and many a night, as Captain Scraggs paced the deck of the ferryboat, watching the ferry tower loom into view, or the scattered lights along the Alameda shore, he thought longingly of the old Maggie, laid away, perhaps forever, and slowly rotting in the muddy waters of the Sacramento. And he thought of Mr. Gibney, too, away off under the tropic stars, leading the care-free life of a real sailor at last, and of Bartholomew McGuffey, imbibing "pulque" in the "cantina" of some disreputable cafe. Captain Scraggs never knew how badly he was going to miss them both until they were gone, and he had nobody to fight with except Mrs. Scraggs and when Mrs. Scraggs (to quote Captain Scraggs) "slipped her cable" in her forty-third year Captain Scraggs felt singularly lonesome and in a mood to accept eagerly any deviltry that might offer.

Upon a night, which happened to be Scraggs's night off, and when he was particularly lonely and inclined to drown his sorrows in the Bowhead saloon, he was approached by Scab Johnny, and invited to repair to the latter's dingy office for the purpose of discussing what Scab Johnny guardedly referred to as a "proposition."

Upon arrival at the office, Captain Scraggs was introduced to a small, fierce-looking gentleman of tropical appearance, who owned to the name of Don Manuel Garcia Lopez. Scab Johnny first pledged Captain Scraggs to

sneakin' 'em into Mexico we'll spend the rest of our lives in a federal penitentiary for bustin' the neutrality laws. All them rifles an' the ammunition is cased an' in my basement at the present moment—and the government agents knows they're there. But that ain't trouble me. I rent the saloon next door an' I'll cut a hole through the wall from my cellar into the saloon cellar, carry 'em through the saloon into the backyard, an' out into the alley half a block away. I'm watched, but I got the watcher spotted—only he don't know it. Our only trouble is a ship. How about the Maggie?"

"I'd have to spend about two thousand dollars on her to put her in condition for the voyage," Scraggs replied. "Can do," Scab Johnny answered him briefly, and Senior Lopez nodded acquiescence. "You discharge on a lighter at Descanso bay about twenty miles below Esenada. What'll it cost us?"

"Ten thousand dollars, in addition to fixin' up the Maggie. Half down and half on delivery. I'm riskin' my hide an' my ticket an' I got to be well paid for it."

Again Senior Lopez nodded. What did he care? It wasn't his money. "I'll furnish you with our own crew just before you sail," Scab Johnny continued. "Get busy."

"Gimme a thousand for preliminary expenses," Scraggs demanded. "After that Speed is my middle name."

The charming Senior Lopez produced the money in crisp new bills and, perfect gentleman that he was, demanded no receipt. As a matter of fact, Scraggs would not have given him one.

The two weeks that followed were busy ones for Captain Scraggs. The day after his interview with Scab Johnny and Don Manuel he engaged an engineer and a deck hand and went up the Sacramento to bring the Maggie down to San Francisco. Upon her arrival she was hauled out on the marine ways at Oakland creek, cleaned, calked, and some new copper sheathing put on her bottom. She was also given a dash of black paint, had her engines and boilers thoroughly overhauled and repaired, and shipped a new propeller that would add at least a knot to her speed. Also, she had her stern rebuilt. And when everything was ready, she slipped down to the Black Diamond coal bunkers and took on enough fuel to carry her to San Pedro; after which she steamed across the bay to San Francisco and tied up at Fremont street wharf.

The cargo came down in boxes, variously labeled. There were "agricultural implements," a "cream separator," a "windmill," and half a dozen "sewing-machines," in addition to a considerable number of kegs alleged to contain nails. Most of it came down after five o'clock in the afternoon after the wharfinger had left the dock, and as nothing but a disordered brain would have suspected the steamer Maggie of an attempt to break the neutrality laws, the entire cargo was gotten aboard safely and without a jot of suspicion attaching to the vessel.

When all was in readiness, Captain Scraggs incontinently "fired" his deck-hand and engineer and inducted aboard a new crew, carefully selected for their filibuster virtues by Scab Johnny himself. Then while the new engineer got up steam, Captain Scraggs went up to Scab Johnny's office for his final instructions and the balance of the first instalment due him.

Briefly, his instructions were as follows: Upon arrival off Point Dume on the southern California coast, he was to stand in close to Dume cove under cover of darkness and show two green lights on the masthead. A man would come alongside presently in a small boat, and climb aboard. This man would be the supercargo and the confidential envoy of the insurrecto junta in Los Angeles. Captain Scraggs was to look to this man for orders and to obey him implicitly, as upon this depended the success of the expedition. This agent of the insurrecto forces would pay him the balance of five thousand dollars due him immediately upon discharge of the cargo at Descanso bay. There was a body of insurrecto troops encamped at Meganan rancho, a mile from the beach, and they would have a barge and small boats in readiness to lighten the cargo. Scab Johnny explained that he had promised the crew double wages and a bonus of a hundred dollars each for the trip. Don Manuel Garcia Lopez paid over the requisite amount of cash, and half an hour later the Maggie was steaming down the bay on her perilous mission.

The sun was setting as they passed out the Golden Gate and swung down the south channel, and with the wind on her beam, the aged Maggie did nine knots. Late in the afternoon of the following day she was off the Santa Barbara channel, and about midnight she ran in under the lee of Point Dume and lay to. The mate hung out the green signal lights, and in about an hour Captain Scraggs heard the sound of oars grating in rowlocks. A few minutes later a stentorian voice hailed them out of the darkness. Captain Scraggs had a Jacob's ladder slung over the side and the mate and two deckhands hung over the rail with lanterns, lighting up the surrounding sea

feebly for the benefit of the lone adventurer who sat muffled in a great coat in the stern of a small boat rowed by two men. There was a very slight sea running, and presently the men in the small boat, watching their opportunity by the ghostly light of the lanterns, ran their frail craft in under the lee of the Maggie. The figure in the stern sheets leaped on the instant, caught the Jacob's ladder, climbed nimbly over the side, and swore heartily in very good English as his feet struck the deck.

"What's the name of this floating coffin?" he demanded in a chain-locker voice. It was quite evident that even in the darkness, where her many defects were mercifully hidden, the Maggie did not suit the special envoy of the Mexican insurrectos.

"American steamer Maggie," said the skipper frigidly. "Scraggs is my name, sir. And if you don't like my vessel—"

"Scraggs!" roared the special envoy. "Scraggs, for a thousand! And the old Maggie of all boats! Scraggs, old tartar, your fin! Duke me, you doggoned old salamander!"

"Gib, my dear boy!" shrieked Captain Scraggs and cast himself into Mr. Gibney's arms in a transport of joy. Mr. Gibney, for it was indeed he, pounced Captain Scraggs on the back with one great hand while with the other he crushed the skipper's fingers to a pulp, the while he called on all the powers of darkness to witness that never in all his life had he received such a pleasant surprise.

It was indeed a happy moment. All the old animosities and differences were swallowed up in the glad hand-clasp with which Mr. Gibney greeted his old shipmate of the green-pea trade. Scraggs took him below at once and they pledged each other's health.

"Well, I'll be keel-hauled and skull-dragged!" said Captain Scraggs, producing a box of two-for-a-quarter cigars and handing it to Mr. Gibney. "Gib, my dear boy, wherever have you been these last three years?"

"Everywhere," replied Mr. Gibney. "I have been all over, mostly in Panama and the Gold coast. For two years I've been navigatin' officer on the Colombian gunboat Bogota. When I was a young feller I did a hitch in the navy and became a first-class gunner, and then I went to sea in the merchant marine, and got my mate's license, and when I flashed my credentials on the president of the United States of Colombia he give me a job at 'dos centi pesos oro' per. That's Spanish for two hundred bucks gold a month. I've been through two wars and I got a medal for sinkin' a fishin' smack. I talk Spanish just like a native, I don't drink no more to speak of, and I've been savin' my money. Some day when I get the price together I'm goin' back to San Francisco, buy me a nice little schooner, and go tradin' in the South seas. How they been comin' with you, Scraggs, old kiddo?"

"Lovely," replied Scraggs. "Just simply grand. I'll pull ten thousand out of this job."

Mr. Gibney whistled shrilly through his teeth.

"That's the ticket for soup," he said admiringly. "I tell you, Scraggs, this soldier of fortune business may be all right, but it don't amount to much compared to being a sailor of fortune, eh, Scraggs? Just as soon as I heard there was a revolution in Mexico I quit my job in the Colombian navy and come north for the pickin's. . . . No, I ain't been in their rotten little army. . . . D'ye think I want to go around killin' people? . . . There ain't no pleasure gettin' killed in the mere shank of a bright and prosperous life. . . . A dead hero don't gather no moss, Scraggs. Reads all right in books, but it don't appeal none to me. I'm for peace every time, so right away as soon as I heard of the trouble, says I to myself: 'Things has been pretty quiet in Mexico for twenty years, and they're due to shift things around pretty much. What them peons need is a man with an imagination to help 'em out, and if they've got the money, Adelbert P. Gibney can supply the brains.' So I comes north to Los Angeles, shows the insurrecto junta my medal and my honorable discharges from every ship I'd ever been in, includin' the gunboat Bogota, and I talked big and swelled around and told 'em to run in some arms and get busy. I framed it all up for this filibuster trip you're on, Scraggs, only I never did hear that they'd picked on you. I told that coffee-colored rat of a Lopez man to hunt up Scab Johnny and he'd set him right, but if anybody had told me you had the nerve to run the Maggie in on this deal, Scraggs, I'd a-called him a liar. Scraggs, you're mucho-bueno—that is, you're all right. I'm so used to talkin' Spanish I forget myself. Still, there's one end of this little deal that I ain't exactly explained to all hands. If I'd a-known they was charterin' the Maggie, I'd have blocked the game."

Scraggs and Gib prepare for war, horrid war.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"The Job That Confronts Us is to Get These Munitions Down to Our Friends in Mexico."

absolute secrecy, and made him swear by the honor of his mother and the bones of his father not to divulge a word of what he was about to tell him.

Scab Johnny was short and to the point. He stated that, as Captain Scraggs was doubtless aware, if he perused the daily papers at all, there was a revolution raging in Mexico. His friend, Senior Lopez, represented the under-dogs in the disturbance, and was anxious to secure a ship and a navy sea captain to land a shipment of arms in Lower California. It appeared that at a sale of condemned army goods held at the arsenal at Benicia, Senior Lopez had, through Scab Johnny, purchased two thousand single-shot Springfield rifles that had been retired when the militia regiments took up the Krag. The Krag in turn having been replaced by the modern magazine Springfield, the old single-shot Springfields, with one hundred thousand rounds of 45-70 ball cartridges, had been sold to the highest bidder. In addition to the small arms, Lopez had at present in a warehouse three machine guns and four 3-inch breech-loading pieces of field artillery (the kind of guns generally designated as a "jacksack battery," for the reason that they can be taken down and transported over rough country on mules)—together with a supply of ammunition for same.

"Now, then," Scab Johnny continued, "the job that confronts us is to get these munitions down to our friends in Mexico. If we're caught

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