

The GREEN PEA PIRATES

By PETER B. KYNE

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Author of
"WEBSTER-MAN'S
MAN,"
"THE VALLEY
OF THE
GIANTS,"
Etc.

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

A Jacob's ladder was hanging over the side of the schooner as the canoe shot in under her lee quarter, and half a minute later the expectant Neils stepped upon her deck. A tall dark man, wearing an ancient palm-leaf hat, sat smoking on the hatch coaming, and him Neils Halvorsen addressed.

"Aye bane want to see Cap'n Scraggs," he said.

The tall dark man stood erect and cast a quick, questioning look at Neils Halvorsen. He hesitated before he made answer.

"What do you want?" he asked deliberately, and there was a subtle menace in his tones. As for Neils Halvorsen, thinking only of the surprise he had in store for his old employer, he replied evasively:

"Aye bane want job."

"Well, I'm Captain Scraggs, and I haven't any job for you. Get off my boat and wait until you're invited before you come aboard again."

For nearly a minute Neils Halvorsen stared open-mouthed at the spurious Captain Scraggs, while slowly there sifted through his brain the notion that he had happened across the track of a deep and bloody mystery of the sea. There was "something rotten in Denmark." Of that Neils Halvorsen was certain. More he could not be certain of until he had paved the way for a complete investigation, and as a preliminary step toward that end he clinched his fist and sprang swiftly toward the bogus skipper.

"Aye tank you bane d—n liar," he muttered, and struck home, straight and true, to the point of the jaw. The man went down, and in an instant Neils was on top of him. Off came the sailor's belt, the hands of the half-stunned man were quickly tied behind him, and before he had time to realize what had happened Neils had cut a length of cord from a trailing halyard and tied his feet securely, after which he gagged him with his bandanna handkerchief.

A quick circuit of the ship convinced Neils Halvorsen that the remainder of the dastard crew were evidently ashore, so he descended to the cabin in search of further evidence of crime. He was quite prepared to find Captain Scraggs' master's certificate in its familiar oaken frame, hanging on the cabin wall, but he was dumfounded to observe, hanging on the wall in a similar and equally familiar frame, the certificate of Adolbert P. Gibney as first mate of steam or sail, any ocean and any tonnage. But still a third framed certificate hung on the wall, and Neils again scratched his head when he read the wording that set forth the legal qualifications of Bartholomew McGuffey to hold down a job as chief engineer of coastwise vessels up to 1,200 tons net register.

It was patent, even to the dull-witted Swede, that there had been foul play somewhere, and the schooner's log, lying open on the table, seemed to offer the first means at hand for a solution of the mystery. Eagerly Neils turned to the last entry. It was not in Captain Scraggs' handwriting, and contained nothing more interesting than the stereotyped reports of daily observations, currents, weather conditions, etc., including a notation of arrival that day at Honolulu. Slowly Halvorsen turned the leaves backward, until at last he was rewarded by a glimpse of a different handwriting. It was the last entry under that particular handwriting, and read as follows:

"June 21, 19— Took an observation at noon, and find that we are in 20-48 S., 178-4 W. At this rate should lift Tuvanna-tholo early this afternoon. All hands well and looking forward to the fun at Tuvana. Bent a new flying jib this morning and had the king and Tabu-Tabu holystone the deck. A. P. GIBNEY."

Neils Halvorsen sat down to think, and after several minutes of this unusual exercise it appeared to the Swede that he had stumbled upon a clue to the situation. The last entry in the log kept by Mr. Gibney was under date of June 21st—just eleven days ago, and on that date Mr. Gibney had been looking forward to some fun at Tuvana-tholo. Now where was that island and what kind of a place was it?

Neils searched through the cabin until he came across the book that is the bible of every South sea trading vessel—the British admiralty reports. Down the index went the old deck-hand's calloused finger and paused at "Friendly Islands—page 177," whereupon Neils opened the book at page 177 and after a five-minute search discovered that Tuvana-tholo was a barren, uninhabited island in latitude 21-2 south, longitude 178-40 west.

Ten days from the Friendly Islands, the paper said. That meant under power and sail with the trades abaft the beam. It would take nearer fifteen days for the run from Honolulu to that desert island, and Neils Halvorsen wondered whether the marooned men would still be alive by the time aid could reach them. For

by some sixth sailor sense Neils Halvorsen became convinced that his old friends of the vegetable trade were marooned. They had gone ashore for some kind of a frolic, and the crew had stolen the schooner and left them to their fate, believing that the castaways would never be heard from and that dead men tell no tales.

He rushed on deck, carried his prisoner down into the cabin, and locked the door on him. A minute later he was clinging to the Jacob's ladder, the canoe shot in to the side of the vessel at his gruff command and passed on shoreward without missing a stroke of the paddle. An hour later, accompanied by three Kanaka sailors picked up at random along the water front, Neils Halvorsen was pulled out to the Maggie II. Her crew had not returned and the bogus captain was still triced hard and fast in the cabin.

The Swede did not bother to investigate in detail the food and water supply. A hasty round of the schooner convinced him that she had at least a month's supply of food and water. Only one thought surged through his mind, and that was the awful necessity for haste. The anchor came in with a rush, the Kanaka boys chanting a song that sounded to Neils like a funeral dirge, and Neils went below and turned the gasoline engines wide open. The Maggie II swung around and with a long streak of opalescent foam trailing behind her swung down the bay and faded at last in the ghostly moonlight beyond Diamond head; after which Neils Halvorsen, with murder in his eye and a tarred rope's end in his horny fist, went down into the cabin and talked to the man who posed as Captain Scraggs. In the end he got a confession. Fifteen minutes later he emerged, smiling grimly, gave the Kanaka boy at the wheel the course, and turned in to sleep the sleep of the conscience-free and the weary.

Darkness was creeping over the beach at Tuvana-tholo before Mr. Gibney could smother the despair in his heart sufficient to spur his fabled imagination to working order. For nearly an hour the three castaways had sat on the beach in dumb horror, gazing seaward. They were not alone in this, for a little further up the beach the two Fiji islanders sat huddled on their haunches, gazing stupidly first at the horizon and then at their white captors. It was the sight of these two worthies that spurred Mr. Gibney's torpid brain to action.

"Didn't you say, Mac, that when we left these two cannibals alone on this island that it would develop into a case of dog eat dog or somethin' of that nature?"

Captain Scraggs sprang to his feet, his face white with a new terror. However, he had endured so much since embarking with Mr. Gibney on a life of wild adventure that his

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At the first hint of dawn Mr. Gibney, true to his promise, was up and scouting for breakfast. He found some gooneys on a rocky crag and killed half a dozen of them with a club. On his way back to camp he discovered a few handfuls of sea salt in a crevice between some rocks, and the syndicate breakfasted an hour later on roast gooney. It was oily and fishy but an excellent substitute for nothing at all, and the syndicate was grateful. The breakfast would have been cheerful, in fact, if Captain Scraggs had not made repeated reference to his excessive thirst. McGuffey lost patience before the meal was over, and cuffed Captain Scraggs, who thereupon subsided with tears in his eyes. This hurt McGuffey. It was like salt in a fresh wound, so he put the skipper on the back and humbly asked his pardon. Captain Scraggs forgave him and murmured something about death making them all equal.

"The next business before the syndicate," announced Mr. Gibney, "is a search of this island for water."

They searched all forenoon. At intervals they caught glimpses of the two cannibals skulking behind sand-dunes, but they found no water. Toward the center of the island, however, the soil was less barren, and here a grove of coconut palms lifted their tufted crests invitingly.

"We will camp in this grove," said the commodore, "and keep guard over these green coconuts. There must be nearly a hundred of them and I notice a little taro root here and there. As those coconuts are full of milk, that insures us life for a week or two if we go on a short ration. By bathing several times a day we can keep down our thirst some and perhaps I'll rain."

"What if it does?" snapped Captain Scraggs bitterly. "We ain't got nothin' but our hats to catch it in."

"Well, then, Scraggs, old stick-in-the-mud," replied the commodore quizzically, "it's a cinch you'll go thirsty. Your hat looks like a culender."

Captain Scraggs choked with rage, and Mr. Gibney, springing at the nearest palm, shinned to the top of it in the most approved sailor fashion. A moment later, instead of coconuts, rich unctuous curses began to descend on McGuffey and Scraggs.

"Gib, my dear boy," inquired Scraggs, "whatever is the matter of you?"

"That bound Tabu-Tabu's been strippin' our coconut grove," roared the commodore. "He must have spent half the night up in these trees."

"Thank the Lord they didn't take 'em all," said McGuffey piously. "Chuck me down a nut, Gib," said Captain Scraggs. "I'm famished."

In conformity with the commodore's plans, the castaways made camp in the grove. For a week they subsisted on gooneys, taro root, coconuts and coconut milk, and a sea-turtle which Scraggs found wandering on the beach. This suggested turtle eggs to Mr. Gibney, and a change of diet resulted. Nevertheless, the unaccustomed food, poorly cooked as it was, and the lack of water, told cruelly on them, and their strength failed rapidly.

At the end of a week, all hands were troubled with indigestion and McGuffey developed a low fever. They had lost much flesh and were a white, haggard-looking trio. On the afternoon of the tenth day on the island the sky clouded up and Mr. McGuffey predicted a williwaw. Captain Scraggs inquired feebly if it was good to eat.

That night it rained, and to the great joy of the marooned mariners Mr. Gibney discovered, in the center of a big sandstone rock, a natural reservoir that held about ten gallons of water. They drank to repletion and felt their strength return a thousandfold. Tabu-Tabu and the king came into camp about this time, and pleaded for a ration of water. Mr. Gibney, swearing horribly at them, granted their request, and the king, in his gratitude, threw himself at the commodore's feet and kissed them. But Mr. Gibney was not to be deceived, and after furnishing them with a supply of water in coconut calabashes, he ordered them to their own side of the island.

On the eighteenth day the last drop of water was gone, and on the twenty-second day the last of the coconut disappeared. The prospects of more rain were not bright. The gooneys were becoming shy and distrustful and the syndicate was experiencing more and more difficulty, not only in killing them, but in eating them. McGuffey, who had borne up uncomplainingly, was shaking with fever and hardly able to stagger down the beach to look for turtle eggs. The syndicate was sick, weak and emaciated almost beyond recognition, and on the twenty-

fifth day Captain Scraggs fainted twice. On the twenty-sixth day McGuffey crawled into the shadow of a stunted mimosa bush and started to pray!

It was the finish. The commodore knew it, and sat with bowed head in his gaunt arms, wondering, wondering. Slowly his body began to sway; he muttered something, slid forward on his face, and lay still. And as he lay there on the threshold of the unknown he dreamed that the Maggie II came into view around the headland, a bone in her teeth and every stitch of canvas flying. He saw her luff up into the wind and hang there shivering; a moment later her sails came down by the run, and he saw a little splash under her port bow as her hook took bottom. There was a commotion on decks, and then to Mr. Gibney's dying ears came faintly the shouts and songs of the black boys as a whaleboat shot into the breakers and pulled swiftly toward the beach. Mr. Gibney dreamed that a white man sat in the stern sheets of this whaleboat, and as the boat touched the beach it seemed to Mr. Gibney that this man sprang ashore and ran swiftly toward him. And—Mr. Gibney twisted his suffering lips into a wry smile as he realized the oddities of this mirage—it seemed to him that this visionary white man bore a striking resemblance to Neils Halvorsen. Neils Halvorsen, of all men! Old Neils, "the squarehead" deckhand of the green-pea trade! Dull, bowlegged Neils, with his lost dog smile and his—

Mr. Gibney rubbed his eyes feebly and half staggered to his feet. What was that? A shout? Without doubt he had heard a sound that was not the moaning of their remorseless prison-keeper, the sea. And—

"Hands off," shrieked Mr. Gibney and struck feebly at the imaginary figure rushing toward him. No use. He felt himself swept into strong arms and carried an immeasurable distance down the beach. Then somebody threw water in his face and pressed a drink of brandy and sweet water to his parched lips. His swimming senses rallied a moment, and he discovered that he was lying in the bottom of a whaleboat. McGuffey lay beside him, and on a thwart in front of him sat good old Neils Halvorsen with Captain Scraggs' head on his knees. As Mr. Gibney looked at this strange tableau Captain Scraggs opened his eyes, glanced up at Neils Halvorsen, and spoke:

"Why if it ain't old squarehead Neils," he muttered wonderingly. "If it ain't Neils, I'll go to hades or some other seaport." He closed his eyes again and subsided into a sort of lethargy, for he was content. He knew he was saved.

Mr. Gibney rolled over, and, struggling to his knees, leaned over McGuffey and peered into his drawn face.

"Mac, old shipmate! Mac, speak to me. Are you alive?"

B. McGuffey, Esquire, opened a pair of glazed eyes and stared at the commodore.

"Did we lick 'em?" he whispered. "The last I remember the king was puttin' it all over Scraggsy. And that Tabu boy—was no stouch." McGuffey paused, and glanced warily around the boat, while a dawning horror appeared in his sunken eyes. "Go back, Neils—go back—for God's sake. There's two niggers—still—on the island. Bring 'em some water. They're cannibals—Neils, but never mind. Get them aboard—the poor devils—if they're iting. I—wouldn't leave a—crocodile on that—hell hole, if I could—help it."

An hour later the Robinson Crusoe syndicate, including the man Friday and the Goat, were safe aboard the Maggie II, and Neils Halvorsen, with the tears streaming down his bronzed cheeks, was sparingly doling out to them a mixture of brandy and water. And when the syndicate was strong enough to be allowed all the water it wanted, Neils Halvorsen propped them up on deck and told the story. When he had finished, Captain Scraggs turned to Mr. Gibney.

"Gib, my dear boy," he said, "make a motion."

"I move," said the commodore, "that we set Tabu-Tabu and the king down on the first inhabited island we can find. They've suffered enough. And I further move that we readjust the ownership of the Maggie II syndicate and cut the best Swede on earth in on a quarter of the profits."

"Second the motion," said McGuffey. "Carried," said Captain Scraggs.

CHAPTER XIV.

The lookout on the power schooner Maggie II had sighted Diamond head before Commodore Adelbert P. Gibney, Captain Phineas P. Scraggs, and Engineer Bartholomew McGuffey were enabled to declare, in all sincerity (or at least with as much sincerity as one might reasonably expect from this band of roving rascals), that they had entirely recovered from their harrowing experiences on the desert island of Tuvana-tholo, in the Friendly group.

At the shout of "Land, ho!" Mr. McGuffey yawned, stretched himself, and sat up in the wicker lounging chair where he had sprawled for days with Mr. Gibney and Captain Scraggs, under the awning on top of the house. He flexed his biceps reflectively, while his companions, stretched at full length in their respective chairs, watched him lazily.

"As a member of the Maggie syndicate an' ownin' an' votin' a quarter interest," boomed the engineer, "I hereby call a meetin' of the said syndicate for the purpose of transactin' any an' all business that may properly come before the meetin'."

"Pass the word for Neils Halvorsen," suggested Mr. Gibney. "Bless his squarehead soul," he added.

"We got a quorum without him, an' besides this business is just between us three."

"Meetin' come to order." The commodore tapped the hot deck with his bare heel twice. "Haul away, Mac."

"I move you, gentlemen, that 'e be the sense of this meetin' that B. McGuffey, Esquire, be an' he is hereby appointed a committee o' one to lam the everlastin' daylight out o' that sinful former chief mate o' ours for abandonin' the syndicate to a horrible death on that there desert island. Do I hear a second to that motion?"

"Second the motion," chirped Captain Scraggs.

"The motion's denied," announced Mr. Gibney firmly.

"Now, looky here, Gib, that ain't fair. Didn't you fight Tabu-Tabu an' didn't Scraggsy fight the king o' Kan-davu? I ain't had no fightin' this entire voyage an' I did callate to lick that doggone mate."

"Mac, it can't be done now."

"Oh, it can't, eh? Well, I'll just bet you two boys my interest in the syndicate—"

"It ain't that, Mac, it ain't that. Nobody's doubtin' your natural ability to mop him up. But it ain't policy. You wasn't sore agin 'em cannibal savages, was you? You made Neils

go back an' save 'em, an' it took us two days to beat up to the first inhabited island an' drop 'em off—"

"But a cannibal's like a dumb beast, Gib. He ain't responsible. This mate knows better."

"Ah!" Mr. Gibney leveled a horny forefinger at the engineer. "That's where you hit the nail on the head. He's too fly, and there's only two ways to keep him from flyin' away with us. The first is to feed him to the sharks and the second is to treat him like a long-lost brother. I know he ought to be hoove overboard, but I ain't got the heart to kill him in cold blood. Consequently, we got to let the villain live, an' if you go to beatin' him up, Mac, you'll make him sore an' he'll peach on us when we get to Honolulu. If us three could get back to San Francisco with clean hands, I'd say lick the beggar an' lick him for fair. But we got to remember that this mate was one o' the original filibuster crew o' the old Maggie I. The day we tackled the Mexican navy an' took this power schooner away from 'em, we put ourselves forty fathom plumb outside the law, an' this mate was present an' knows it. We've changed the vessel's name an' rig, an' doctored up the old Maggie's papers to suit the Maggie II, an' we've give her a new dress. But at that, it's hard to disguise a ship in a live port, an' the secret service agents o' the Mexican government may be a-layin' for us in San Francisco; and with this here mate agin us an' ready to turn state's evidence, we're pirates under the law, an' it don't take much imagination to see three pirates swingin' from the same yard-arm. No, sir, Mac. I ain't got no wish, now that we're fixed nice an' comfortable with the world's goods, to be hung for a pirate in the mere shank o' my youth. Why, I ain't fifty year old yet."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SALT WATER MORE BUOYANT

Fact That is Well Known to Mariners May Be News to Some of Our Readers.

A boy dropped a ball into a small hole and could not get it out, so he poured water into the hole, thinking the ball would float to the surface. As the ball was slightly heavier than the water it remained on the bottom. Then the boy thought of mixing salt with the water, since he knew salt water would float heavier objects than fresh water would. He tried this and was rewarded with the floating ball.

This particular fact is demonstrated at the mouths of rivers. Objects rolling along the bottom of a river, too heavy to come to the top, will rise when carried out to sea. The rule also applies to boats. A ship with a cargo on the sea will sink sometimes a foot or two on entering a fresh water port. If she leaves the port with her cargo, she will rise on entering the ocean. For that reason a ship may be loaded apparently too heavily at a pier and still be all right on the waves.

In building a dam, the fact of salt water's being heavier than fresh must be remembered.—Kansas City Star.



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