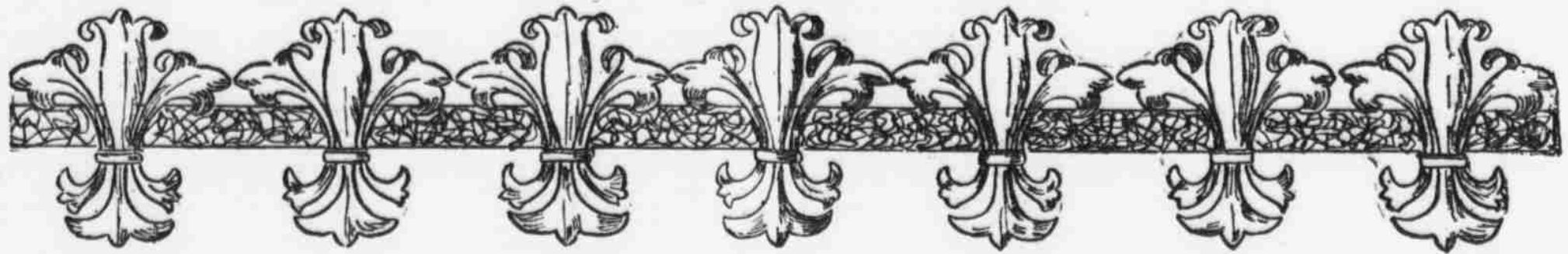


The Diamond Derelict---Being the Record of a



Young Man Who Finally Won Out---By Edward Marshall

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CHAPTER VI.

It ain't the powder magazine that's dangerous. It's the light with the lighted match.—The Log Book of The Lyddy.

NEXT day as they were passing out of the last reaches that might by any possibility be called the "Channel" they were fortunate enough to travel with and through one of those extraordinary processions of the world's craft which are more often seen there, perhaps, than in any other waters on the surface of the earth. Of all of them the captain discoursed learnedly, with many quaint expressions and from divers original points of view, which pleased Parton more and more as the distance between the Isle of Wight and the Lyddy Shoelfeld increased.

It was at the season of the British naval maneuvers and many small war craft were steaming about with apparent aimlessness. Among them were a dozen or more torpedo boats, whose speed curled the water over their bows in great cascades of white foam. The two men rose from their seats and leaned over the rail to watch them as they raced past. Suddenly, with a swish and a saucy toot from her whistle, one of them shot along at the side of the Lyddy with great speed and apparently recklessly near. She sat low in the water, her funnel's top being scarcely higher than the Lyddy's rail, and as she passed not more than four or five feet of water separated her from the sailing craft.

It was a reckless piece of dare-devilment and the captain burst into a fury of wrath. He ran aft, trying to keep alongside of the flying craft as long as he could and hurling his strange substitute for profanity at the natty young commander as long as he could feel at all sure that his voice would carry so as to reach his ears.

When he returned to his place at Parton's side he was breathless with indignation. He fumed for a few moments and then burst into a hearty laugh.

"By John! But he'd been a badly fooled commandin' monkey if he'd rammed me," he said, with a face on which the imagined joy of sweet revenge was brilliantly reflected. "Quincy! If he'd hit me just one good, hard punch amidships he'd thought that war had been declared, and that it all was happenin' right here and all at once. If he's a good man an' got a soul calc'lated to go to heaven I guess it'd had a right smart hustle to git there 'fore his body did. If he'd rammed me in my middle! By Adams! Yes, sir, as they say at th' county fair, it would be a purty race, with all th' odds in favor o' th' body, by John Quincy Adams!"

"Why?" asked Parton. "Would he have blown up? I don't believe they carry real explosives on these practice trips, do they?"

"Well, mebbe they do an' mebbe they don't," said the captain. "Even if they do they only carry a little. There's where the joke would a come in. You'd think they was all ou'doors dangerous with their war paint on, an' their officers in service uniform, an' all that, now wouldn't you? An' you'd never believe that th' old Lyddy here could blow 'em all—th' hull John fleet of 'em into Kingdom Come, if they should go pokin' any o' their noses into her innards! But she could, an', what's more, if they should hit her right, I guess she would. That's what made me so mad at that fleet."

"Why?" asked Parton in surprise.

"Well, I'll tell you. It's for th' same reason that I don't like to have you smoke for'ard. I've got a big consignment of Humberite 'bout 'midships. It's a new explosive that's been invented by an Englishman. He wants to sell th' patent, or somethin', to th' United States, an' I'm 'arryn' over a ton and a half of samples, so to speak. They wouldn't take it on none o' th' regular freighters. It knocks me out o' my insurance, but I get a mighty ne cargo price for it, an' made up my mind I'd take my chances. Mebbe I'd aught a told you 'bout it 'fore we started; but, somehow, it didn't seem necessary. Mebbe you'll want to git out an' walk, now hat I have told you. I'll stop th' ship, o'st you c'n climb over th' side nice and 'omf'able, if you want me to."

"I think I'll stay on board," said Parton.

CHAPTER VII.

If you feel that you've really got to tell a secret, go somewhere where it's dark and you'll be all alone. Then keep your mouth shut.—The Log Book of the Lyddy.

It was not until several days afterward that the captain reverted to the time when

Parton had told him the story of the diamonds on the after deck while the captain sat on the cabin skylight and suddenly rose with the declaration that they were "a pair o' fools."

During the entire morning the captain had roamed around the ship with an activity that was almost feverish and was by no means welcome to the men. He insisted, always, that the Lyddy should be kept in shipshape, but this day he was more than ordinary exacting, and kept the men at work continually at scrubbing and polishing, small repairing and painting. By the time supper was over and the men were forward growling because they could not smoke, and he was aft, sitting quietly by Parton's side and watching the early evening sea, both he and the crew were thoroughly tired. It was Mr. Brown's watch

Brown was down there, listenin'. I don't mean to say that he overheard us for sure, or that if he overheard us he'd take advantage of it for sure. But I'm just a-warnin' of you, that's all.

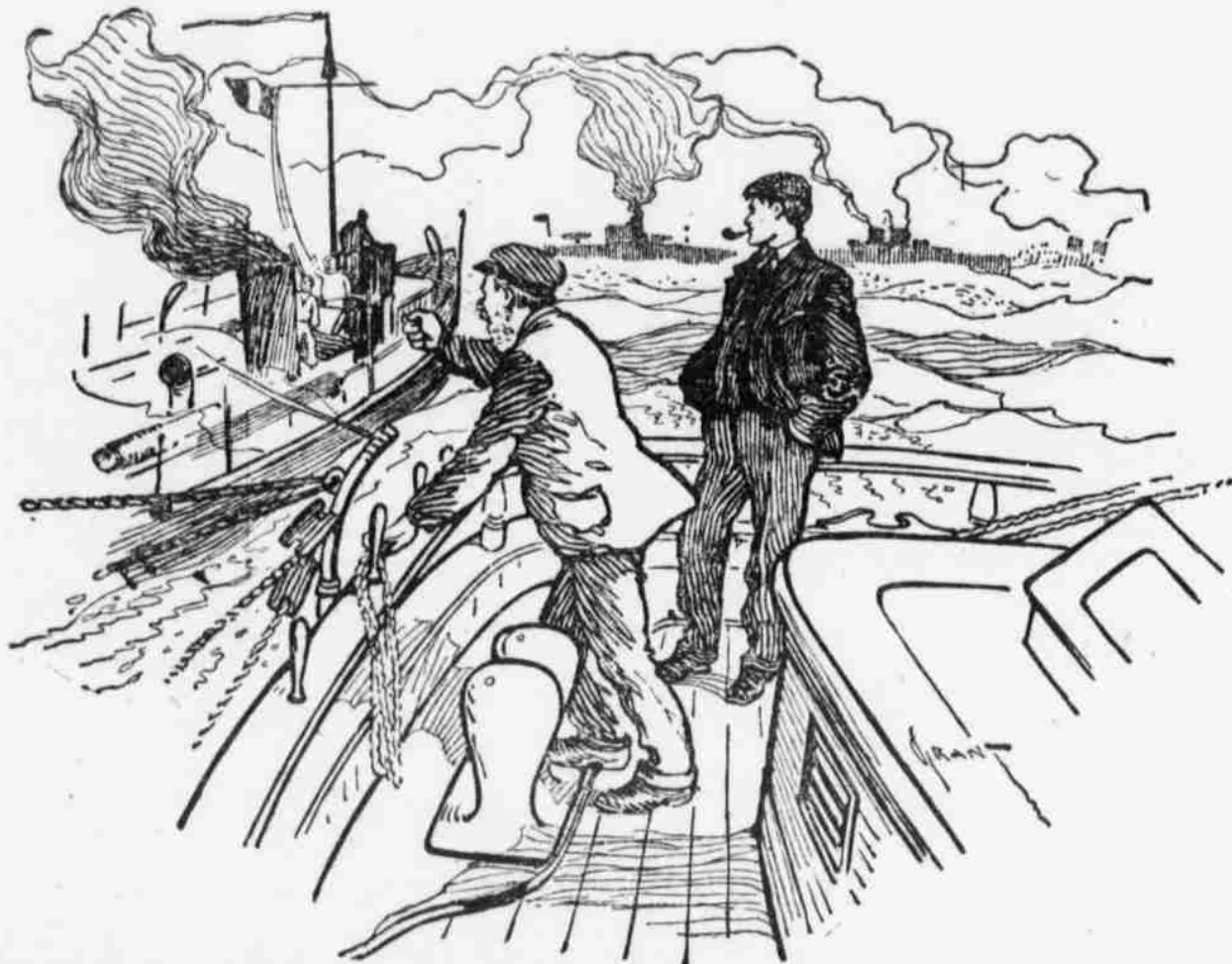
"I know that man, an' what I think of him's best told when I say that I wouldn't nohow shipped him if I could get anybody else. It's mighty hard to git officers for wind-jammers these days. I'm mighty sorry to have to say it, but I don't believe that that man's any better'n a yaller dog—that is, as a man. As a sailor he can't be beat. He's a reg'lar Yankee Doodle sailor, an' Yankee Doodle means the best they is. But as a man he re'ly ain't worth mentionin'."

"He'd be a sea lawyer if he was before th' mast; he'd be a brute to th' men if he was in command. As it is, he's their

of a desire to establish an intimacy became even more pronounced and Parton talked it over with the Captain. They agreed that they could only let matters take their course and trust in Providence, hoping that the mate had not overheard the conversation.

It was not long before Parton was glad that he had been put upon his guard, for he saw a growing tendency on the part of the mate to sound him on subjects which indicated that the Captain had been right in his fears that the conversation that day by the open cabin skylight had been overheard.

This came about in the most natural of ways. The mate asked him some questions about South Africa, and Parton knew that he had never mentioned to him the fact that he had been there, although



THE CAPTAIN RAN AFT, HURLING HIS STRANGE PROFANITY AT THE YOUNG COMMANDER.

below and it was possible at times to hear that officer's hearty snores through the open cabin skylight. Parton laughed a little as one of them, born only after a severe nasal struggle, drifted out to them, and the captain, looking up, smiled, too. Then he rose quietly and beckoned to Parton to walk aft. When they had reached the Lyddy's afterdeck they leaned over it and watched the ship's wake for a few moments, the white, phosphorescent, eddying foam gleaming prettily and stretching back like an undulating ribbon of sparkling silver until it was lost in the gloom of approaching night.

They discussed the matter of the disposal of the stones after they should reach port, and both agreed that it would be dangerous to even attempt it for a long time after the Lyddy reached Boston.

"I don't see that you're goin' to be much better off than you would be if you didn't have 'em," said the captain. "You simply can't sell 'em—'twouldn't be safe for a minute."

"Well," said Parton, "I suppose that I can carry them around with me after I get ashore just as I do now when I'm on board ship. I can do so for a while, anyway, and—"

"Don't you say a word to me nor anybody 'bout where they be whilst you're on this ship," interrupted the captain quickly. "That's what I've got to tell you. You remember the day we'd been sittin' on th' cabin skylight, talkin' about them diamonds, when suddenly I began to cuss an' got up. That was because I happened to realize that what we'd been sayin' might a been heard down in th' cabin if there'd been any one there to hear it, for th' skylight was open, an' its astonishin' how plain you can hear anythin' that's goin' on on deck down there when that skylight's open! By Quincy! It's astonishin'. Now—I ain't a-goin' to say nothin' about this ag'in; but I'm inclined to think that Mr.

chum, an' th' best way to spoil a sailor, next to abusin' of him, is to get chummy with him. I don't like him an' I don't count on him an' I don't want you to like him, and I don't want you to count on him. Have you noticed anything queer about him and you?"

"Well," said Parton, "he asks a good many questions."

"That's always when I ain't around, ain't it?" commented the Captain in one of those questions which New Englanders ask without expecting an answer. "Now, my notion is that he overheard what we was sayin' there that day. Mebbe he d'dn't. If he did—you see I've got to tell you th' or I wouldn't—I'm afraid that th' chance of gittin' that big reward might go some considerable distance further with him than it would with some other folks that I can think of. I'm John sorry! Quincy! I wouldn't a-had it happen for a new penny."

"At first I thought I wouldn't say nothin' to you about it, but presently when I see that he was a-tryin' to make up to you and git friendly when he thought I wasn't by, I reckoned I'd better tell you what's perfectly true, that I don't trust him, neither. Only don't git him mad at you. That might be jest as bad as th' other."

From that time on Parton watched the mate with some suspicion. He noticed with new attention now that Mr. Brown showed a singular curiosity about his past life and was prone to ask many questions when they were by chance thrown together out of the Captain's earshot.

When the Captain was by the mate kept his distance and was anything but familiar in his manner. Parton, however, attributed a part of this to the habit of discipline into which he knew a sailor must almost involuntarily fall. That he had tried to be especially friendly in an insinuating sort of way Parton now realized.

During the following week these marks

he remembered very well the fact that it had been discussed in the course of that unfortunately unguarded talk.

Nothing definite was said about it, but there seemed to be a calm assumption—doubtless unconscious of what reflections and suspicions it might give rise to—that Parton had been in South Africa and that he knew that country pretty thoroughly. For a few moments Parton put the subject off without comment. He neither affirmed nor denied that he had been at the Cape and knew about that vast and largely unexplored country which lies to the north of the Transvaal. But one day the mate asked him a point blank question about Kimberley.

Parton may have changed color at this direct confirmation of the captain's suspicions; but he tried to conceal the trouble that it gave him as he answered:

"What in the world, Mr. Smith, makes you think that I have been in South Africa?"

The mate saw that he had made a slip and colored darkly underneath the ocean tan.

"Oh, I don't know what did make me think so," said the mate, and Parton knew that he lied.

CHAPTER VIII.

If you keep your rum keg out of sight, you won't tempt no one, and you'll have more for yourself.—The Log Book of the Lyddy.

That evening Parton told the captain about the mate's strange knowledge of his journeying in South Africa. The good old man was obviously worried by it.

The next morning Parton, who had been on deck, went to the cabin to get something, and was amazed as he entered, to see the mate emerging hurriedly from his berth. The mate colored vividly, and, laughing uneasily, tried to pass the episode off with a statement that he had con-