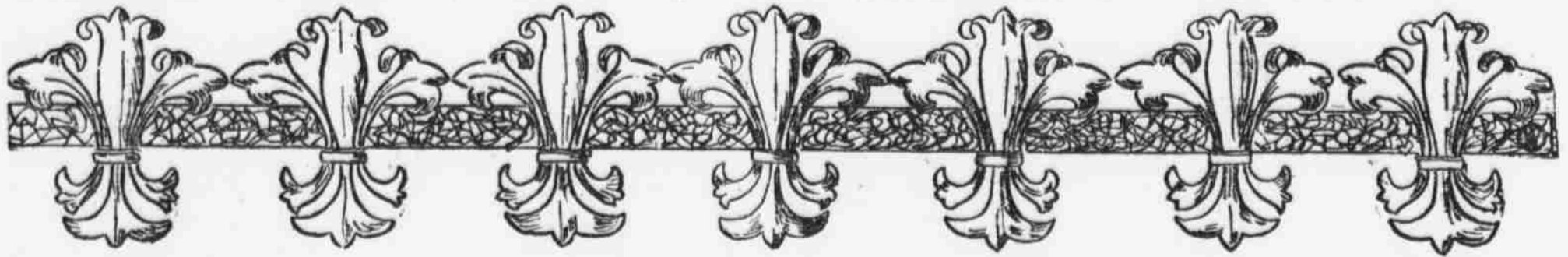


The Diamond Derelict---Being the Record of a



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

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CHAPTER IX.

It ain't allus the one with the patent locks that turns out to be the safest sea chest. --The Log Book of the Lyddy.

BESIDE the somewhat natural nervousness which Parton felt as he went to his cabin to remove the diamonds from his belt and stuff them into his pockets, preparatory to hiding them from the possibly larcenous fingers of the mate, there was distinct worry about Captain Burgoe. Even while he was in his little stateroom, engaged in this interesting labor, a vision of the old sailor's pained, drawn face rose before him and troubled him. There had been something almost uncanny in its expression of sternly combated agony. His half prediction that the mate would be in command of the Lydia Skolfeld before she reached her Boston wharf was not a pleasant prophecy. Even aside from the fact that Parton had learned to feel a real affection for the old man, and was greatly distressed to think that physical misfortune threatened him, he had cause for regret in the fact that, as the captain had said, if anything happened to him the mate would be in command of the ship.

He put the plugs which the captain had made for him in one of his outside jacket pockets, together with some crumpled-up bits of newspaper, which he thought he might need for packing. Just as he emerged from the cabin companionway the mate appeared at the head of it to go down, and Parton stood aside to let him pass.

As Parton walked aft the captain tipped him one of his prodigious winks, and intimated to him in dumb show that everything had been arranged. Parton turned and walked forward toward the open hatch, and the captain walked with him, so that the solitary excursion of the passenger should not seem strange to the man at the wheel. By the time they had reached the hatch they were hidden from him by masts and canvas, and the captain had so distributed the other members of the crew that Parton could descend into the hold without being seen by any of them.

The work of secreting the jewels took only a few moments. There was a narrow gangway running aft between two piles of the timbers, closely braced and shored so as to hold them firm in case of heavy seas. Over these braces Parton clambered quickly until he reached the second pile of the timbers. He used his light very sparingly, only flashing it from beneath his jacket after he felt certain that he was in a position where it could not be seen even by a person leaning over the hatchway and looking down.

The space between the second and the third piles of timbers was scarcely wider than was necessary for his cramped passage, and was greatly encumbered by bracing rods and beams; but it was this very narrowness which made him choose it.

He selected the log which was to form his novel safety deposit box in a way which he thought of at that very moment, and he laughed to himself as he decided on it. At random he touched a log and, feeling of its smooth, square end, found the small hole for the test which was designed to reveal the work of dishonest dealers if they had done any. Having fully investigated this hole with his fingers and found it was in all respects suitable for his purpose, he did not take it; but took the third one from it, counting toward the outer planking of the ship.

He had with him a bit of wire something like four feet in length. This he thrust into the hole, finding its depth to be about three feet. This was deep enough, and he thrust his precious packages in, one by one, until they had all disappeared into the log.

With a stick which formed part of his equipment, he poked them in as far as he could, and then he gently hammered the plug which the captain had whittled out for him after them. The old man had evidently calculated its size with great care, for it went in with just enough unwillingness to make him feel certain that it would take a definite effort to bring it out, and that it could not be dislodged by any ordinary accidental circumstance.

Then there came the necessity of marking the log for identification. First, he very carefully determined its location in the pile by count, and made elaborate notes about it in his memorandum book,

which, afterwards, he tucked into his pocket with much greater care than had ever been bestowed upon the little volume before during the whole of its existence.

But he was not satisfied with this mere memorandum. Many things, he reflected, might happen to that. He might lose the book, for instance. To mark the log itself was, as the captain had said, a most necessary precaution.

He solved the problem by taking from his pocket his key ring, and selecting a flat, steel key, with numerous eccentric notches along its edge. He held this against the end of the log, and hit it two or three smart blows with his little hammer, waiting before he struck, each time, until the ship was groaning with the strain of the sea, as all wooden vessels will. Then he flashed his light upon the log's end, and saw that there was a very distinct impression of the key there. He smiled a little as he saw it. The key had been the one with which he had opened the safety deposit box in London the day on which he had taken the belt with its precious burden

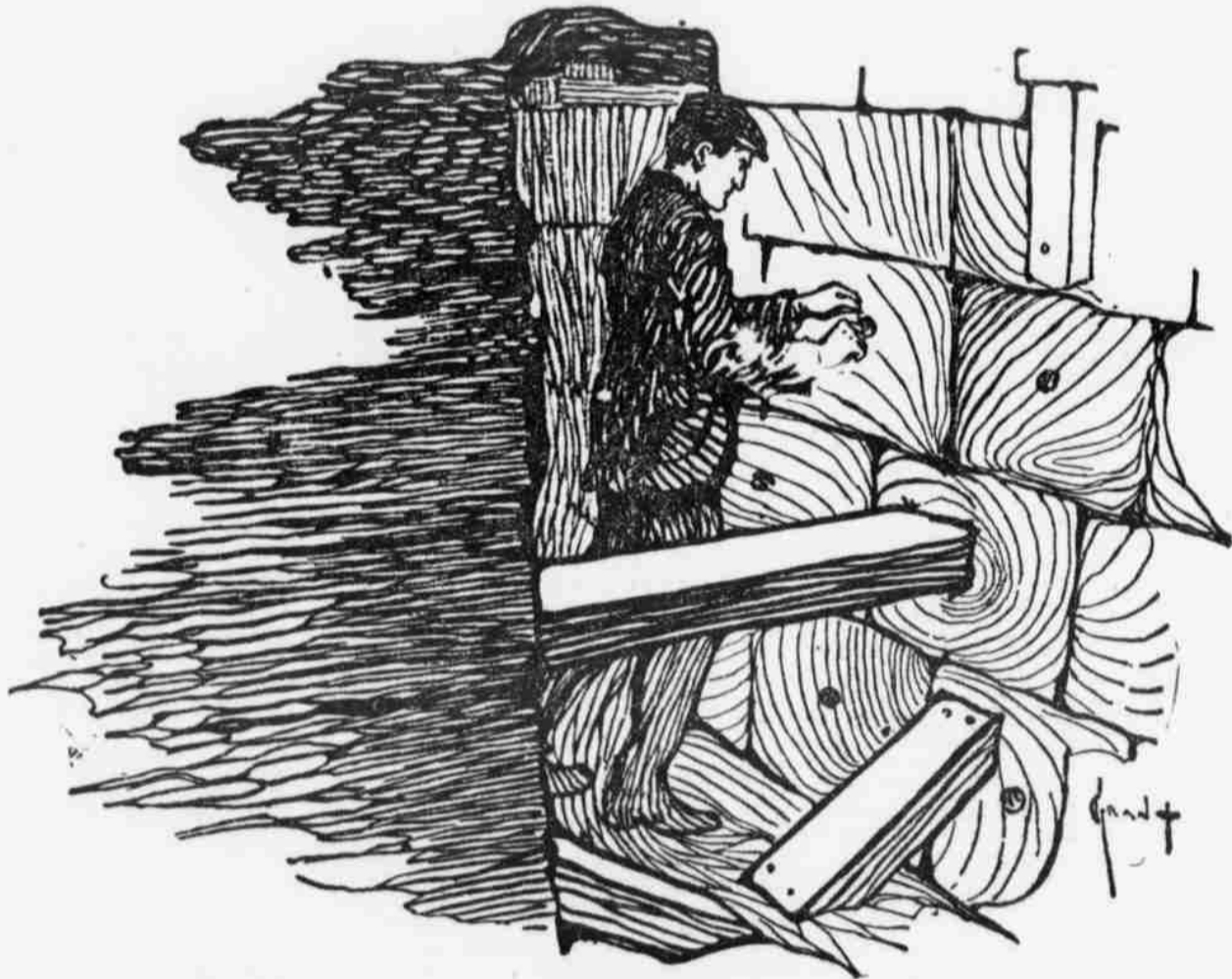
the Americas. The sun glittered prettily on the ever-moving sea, and Parton felt exhilarated and elated. He was convinced that he had escaped another danger. He was more convinced of it than before, after he had gone below. The mate was sitting at the cabin table busy with some papers and nodded rather surlily when Parton entered. Parton sat down at the table after he had left his incumbrances in his little cabin, which he could do without being seen by the other. Parton passed over the cigar box. The mate knocked off the evidently distasteful clerical work and looked up with a bad counterfeit of a good-natured smile. He took the cigar and got up and brought some whisky and water, which

Just as they began to drink the captain thrust his face through the skylight. He made some noise in doing so and attracted the attention of both men. He did not speak or call to either of them, but there was a strange and frightened look about his face which made Parton start, almost in terror. The captain's eyes were fixed on him and the forefinger of one of his

there was something in the old man's face that kept him from doing so. It was easy to see that he was already ashamed of having called him from the cabin. He seemed to be embarrassed by the thought that he had shown unmanly weakness and wished to atone for it in some way--to wish to be more than unusually jolly and light-hearted as a penance for the moment or two of almost tragic apprehension which had shown on his face.

"Yes, sir," said the captain from his seat upon the stanchion. "I wasn't in no particular hurry for you to come up, but I thought that you might want to see how the patent log works."

In substantiation of this he held out what he had in his hand. It was a brass contrivance which looked like a small model of the propeller of a ship, with, above it, a small brass cylinder with a hand like that of a watch and a series of figures in a circle on a dial enclosed under glass on it. Parton could scarcely believe that the anxiety of the captain for him to come on



PARTON THRUST HIS PRECIOUS PACKAGES INTO THE HOLES ONE BY ONE.

out of it. Thus, for the second time, it became the guardian of his treasure.

He believed that no one would be likely to observe so small a blemish. He made assurance of this doubly sure by rubbing over the impression some of the earth which clung to the end of one of the other logs. All of the log ends were more or less smeared with dried mud, and the presence of this particular soiled spot on this especial log end could not possibly attract attention to it.

After he had completed his task he examined its result with some care, and was well satisfied that he had hidden his jewels in such a way that the mate would be unable to find them.

Luck--or the captain--favored him, for no member of the crew was near at hand when he emerged from the hatch to the deck, and, indeed, he saw no man until he reached the waist of the ship, where several of the men were working with paint pot, brush and considerable profane protest. As he passed them he noticed that the sea was rising, and a dash of salt water drenched him. Here again was good luck.

If such things occurred often it would be necessary to batten down the hatches. Had it been necessary to do so before it might have been difficult to arrange it so that he could have entered or emerged from the hatch without making a good deal of trouble and attracting much attention.

The weather, although freshening, was still delightful. The Lydia drove along spankingly, with every inch of her square canvas pulling with bellies bulging toward

knotted hands beckoned to him to come on deck. Then the head withdrew and Parton started to go toward the companionway.

"You and the captain appear to be mighty good friends," commented the mate. "Guess he'll need all his friends after this voyage is ended. He won't be able to get cargoes after this, I'm afraid. The old man's queer sometimes, these days. It's lucky for him that he owns this old hooker. I don't believe he'd find many owners willing to trust him with their ships."

Parton hurried away and the mate turned back to the papers on the table.

CHAPTER X.

Sickness don't knock and ask if you're busy; it just comes aboard and makes itself to home.--The Log Book of the Lyddy.

As Parton reached the deck the captain looked at him with an expression which showed a combination of quizzical anxiety and acute pain.

"I ain't a feelin' very well," he said. "I ain't a feelin' so John Quincy Adams well as I might. That's why I ast you to come on deck. I wanted you to go aft with me."

He grinned in what Parton thought was a strained way and stopped what he knew would be a flow of sympathetic words with a wave of his hand. It trembled as it passed through the air.

"Yes," the captain continued, "I wanted you to come aft with me and see how the patent log works."

He did not go to the after rail, for which he had evidently started, but sat down somewhat suddenly on a stanchion. Parton wanted to inquire about his ailment, but

deck had been due wholly to a desire to have him observe the workings of the patent log; but made no comment for fear that he might worry the old man by so doing.

The captain, however, did not seem to be especially anxious to test the speed of the Lydia at once, but sat for some time on the stanchion. It occurred once or twice to Parton that this was as much because of physical weakness as anything else, and he watched him closely. The color had slowly come back to his cheeks and his hands, which had been somewhat tremulous, were steady again.

Suddenly the captain lurched forward toward him--they were at the after rail--and Parton put out his arms barely in time to prevent him from falling to the deck. This time there was no offer on the captain's part to take Parton's solicitude ill. He grasped the young man's arms at first, and then went close to the rail and gripped it with both hands. Again and again he passed his hands across his upper face, always letting the fingers linger in a hard pressure just above the right eye.

"By John Quincy Adams!" he said, with a strange, wandering look in his eyes. "By John Quincy Adams--that's the funnest feelin'!"

"What is it, captain?" asked Parton anxiously.

"Oh, I guess it ain't much," said the captain. "Seems like a kind of concentrated an' glorified essence o' some o' th' worst phases of seasickness. You know how dizzy you was when you was seasick? Well, multiply that by ten an' carry one,