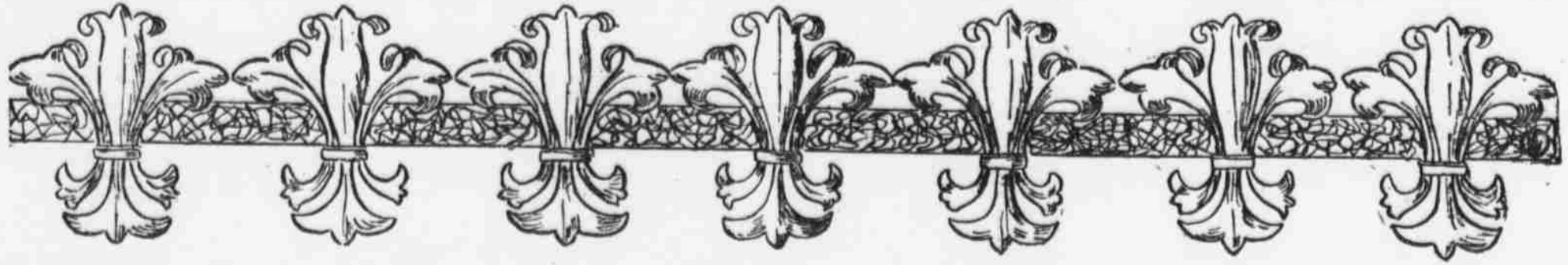


The Diamond Derelict---Being the Record of a



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

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CHAPTER XII.

A good lickin's the only text some men can understand a sermon from.—The Log Book of the Lyddy.

THE OPEN defiance of the mate had been a great relief to Parton. What he wanted of the men he ordered them to do for him without the least hesitation thereafter—and they did it.

It can, indeed, scarcely be said that the new situation was wholly without a certain curious enjoyment for Parton. He had been a coward in his flight from London, and he knew it; but that flight had not been from any individual or any clearly definable danger. It had been from a great, indefinite thing; his fear had been born of a vast, lowering, confusing danger of attack by a loathsome enemy—injustice. Now, when he had a human enemy to fight, when the wrong that he resented was a definable one, and when he felt that he must match wit against wit, muscle against muscle, courage against courage, he felt almost elated by the struggle. He had faced death many a time in Africa, and his nostrils dilated this direct presence of tangible danger.

The mate was wholly his inferior, mentally and physically. He treated him as if he had not ever dared to dream himself that he was anything else. He spoke to him when they met upon the deck, but he spoke calmly and indifferently as one might speak to a servant deserving of courtesy, and no more.

That the mate felt it and was infuriated he could not doubt. The man showed the strain of his position every day a bit more plainly, and he made the great mistake of drinking in an effort to overcome it. That helped to lose for him the respect of the men. The entire crew guessed that something had happened between their accidental commander and Parton, and recognized that Parton had won a victory of some sort.

Parton took complete charge of the sick man. Once or twice the mate gave orders concerning him which Parton quickly countermanded—and the men obeyed him. After that the mate interfered not at all with him, and rarely showed enough interest in the old man's condition even to inquire about it.

Parton ate his meals as he had before the captain's affliction, at the captain's table. There was no further suggestion that he should have them on deck.

Somehow the trouble with the mate seemed to have cleared a good many cobwebs out of his brain. It had roused him from the fear of being caught, that had hung over him with the depressing effect of a pall ever since he had first started on his flight. It had restored him to the same spirit of adventurous willingness to take his chances in his battle with the world which had won for him all that he had won in South Africa.

It had changed his mental attitude toward himself and toward the world, and it had changed it for the better. He regained the mind-control which he had lost during the nightmare of his flight from London. Brave men and strong men sometimes suffer from panic, and Parton had been panic-struck.

He was so no longer. He felt amply strong to stand up and fight whatever battles might lie waiting for him in the future. And with the return of this more normal frame of mind came something else, infinitely sweet and very puzzling to him.

For the first few weeks of the voyage he had forced back the thoughts which came to him about the big-eyed, graceful-limbed Irish girl who had flashed so suddenly into his life and then flashed so suddenly out of it again. He took from his pocket a dozen times a day that advertisement which he had cut from the newspaper and which showed to him that she at least was in sympathy with him, and did not question the right of the course which he had taken.

His heart beat a little faster, and he went to the rail and leaned over it, gazing at the Lyddy's wake, and thinking about Norah.

Parton had never been in love before, but it seemed to him that this passion must have lain unsuspected, but still existing, in his heart ever since that heart had first had power to love. The fact that he had not known the object upon which it now poured itself out until that day when he went daily to his mother's house in Lon-

don made no difference. It was a part of the arrangement of eternal things.

The love for her had been there—waiting. He reflected that the rose does not know the bosom which God fashioned it to adorn; but that it grows for it, and waits for it, and blooms for it, and yields its fragrance for it just the same, beginning with the moment when the first seed is dropped into the ground. And he felt now that that love had been growing in his heart, not bestirring itself and making itself known, even to him, but growing and waiting calmly and peacefully, but with unalterable certainty for her—Norah.

He knew that many difficulties lay in the path which might eventually take him to her again; but he could find in his mind no doubt whatever that they would be overcome and that he should go to her and find her waiting for him.

From such pleasing reflections as these

own small cabin on the other side of the ship and scarcely fifteen feet away from him. He stepped toward it, and, through the half-open door, saw the mate bending over his berth and pulling and hauling its sheets and blankets about in evident search.

Parton's rage was quick and furious. He stopped not a single moment to consider what he was about to do; but with two bounds cleared the space which intervened between him and the stooping man.

In an instant he had the astonished mate by the collar and had dragged him backwards out of the stateroom to the floor of the cabin itself. The mate, at first too astonished to exclaim, was prevented from doing so by the tight grasp of Parton's fingers on his windpipe.

For a moment the two men rolled on the cabin floor. The mate struggled valiantly. Neither made any sound—the mate

Then he loosened his hold, rolled the man about a bit to be sure that his unconsciousness was real and not assumed, and rose.

On the table in the cabin always stood a pitcher of drinking water. It was one of those great silver-plated affairs which swings on a pivot between two uprights and stands on an ornate tray, bestrewn with flourishes and other evidences of the silver chaser's art. It had been given to the captain by admiring townspeople. Parton started for it, but it was not in its usual place. He had hardly had time to wonder at this, when a calm voice said:

"Was you lookin' for th' water, sir? I'll throw some in his face. He looks like he needed it—bad. I just got some fresh here. I come down a while ago and took it up to fill it. I'm mighty glad I come down agin jest as I did—I got here in time to see th' hull thing. It was an all-right scrap. He'll be crazy when he wakes up—if he's got



FOR A MOMENT OR TWO THE MEN ROLLED ON THE CABIN FLOOR. THE MATE STRUGGLED VALIANTLY.

he turned to go below to the cabin. His attendance on the captain had been almost all that the old man had had—the mate gave him none, and while the sailors unquestionably felt a desire to look after him, there was also the feeling among them that the mate would resent it if they did, and so they kept away from him unless ordered to do something for him by either Parton or the mate.

When Parton entered the cabin he thought that there was no one there except the captain. The latter's presence was at once manifest by that ceaselessly reiterated "John—John—John—John," which came from his lips as regularly as the ticking of a clock.

Parton went to his berth and leaned over him. He had made no effort to be especially quiet in his entry into the cabin; but, as a matter of fact, he had made no noise so loud that it was not overcome by the gentle swishing of the water along the sides of the vessel and the monotonous creaking of the timbers which every ship gives forth when at sea, and which to those who love to voyage becomes a pleasant sound.

For a moment Parton bent over the sick man. Then a sound, louder than any that had before reached his ears, came to him. It was the half-suppressed voice of the mate cursing to himself.

The sounds unmistakably came from his

could not if he had wished to, and Parton was too thoroughly engaged to feel that waste of breath would be wise.

They were not unevenly matched; but Parton had the advantage of position, and the other and great advantage of having taken his opponent unawares. Besides, the grasp which he had closed on the mate's windpipe was beginning to decrease the vigor of the man.

Gradually, however, the mate's steady pull downward on the back of Parton's neck began to tell and bring their faces closer together.

Then with a snap as vicious as a dog's, the mate's teeth closed on Parton's hair, and as Parton jerked his head upwards, a great sheaf of it was literally pulled from his head.

The spirit of the animal infuriated broke loose in Parton, and once, twice, three times he struck full, hard fist blows on the corner of the mate's jaw. Gradually the man's hold relaxed, his eyes turned upward and he went limp there on the floor.

Parton knew exactly what had happened to him, and was neither frightened by the ghastly look which the mate's face assumed nor sorry for the knockout blows which had put it there. He was filled with the exultation of an animal which has won a fight, and for a moment looked down at his foe with real and aboriginal satisfaction in his rapidly beating heart.

enough left in him, but I don't believe he'll tackle you. Not him. No, sir, 't John Quincy Adams, as th' cap'n uset to say; not him!"

Parton had not had breath enough to permit him to reply to this speech, even if he could have found words. He fancied that he had done something now which would bring things to a climax, and a very disagreeable for him, without delay. The fact that there had been a witness made it worse. The fact that the sailor had seen his humiliating defeat would undoubtedly drive the mate to the extreme measure of assuming a commander's prerogative and in some way make Parton pay for the assault.

Parton wondered if he would order him put into irons. Of course, if he did he should have to submit as gracefully as he could, for the whole crew was under the orders of the mate.

"Yes, sir," the impassive sailor went on, "I saw the hull business, and I'm dum glad you licked him. If there was ever a man a-needin' of it, he was that man. Three of us had fixed it up between us to take turns a-lickin' of him after we got ashore; but out here to sea we can't do nothin', you know. We can't do nothin' out to sea. I've see him in your bunk before a-haulin' over your stuff. We've most of us that's been down here at all seen him there at one time or 'nother. He must a thought you had somethin' good an' worth while