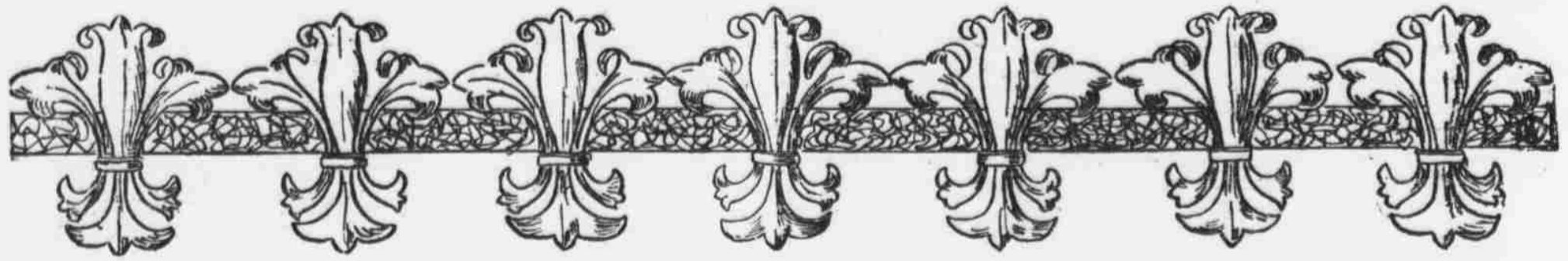


The Diamond Derelict---Being the Record of a



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

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CHAPTER XXV.

The Generosity of Captain Sears.

When a stingy man gives somethin', it's gener'ly somethin' that he figgers ain't no use to nobody--and he allus makes a presentation speech.--The Log Book of the Lyddy.

THE progress from the Burgee homestead to the dock was a ceremony, and such a one as would be unlikely to be born out of the hearts of any folk except Cape Codders. Without planning or prearrangement, rejoicing at the good luck of the old man at their head, they fell into a strange lantern and torchlit procession and tramped through the deep sand of the narrow road toward Provincetown. Soon some one of them began a "Gospel Hymn." Churches languish on the Cape, but the Moody and Sankey songs go on forever. Whether it was through chance, or, perhaps, because in the confused mind of the woman who started the singing there was an appropriateness in it, no one knew, but the song first started was "The Prodigal Child."

The fire-scarred hulk of the Lydia Skolfeld had been tied up after the menhaden had cast off the towing lines, at one of those great, decaying wharves, which now show so melancholy at the Cape's chief ports. There had been days when many hundred sailors had homed there, but the memories of those times now seem like legends. The days when the rotting pier which was the goal for the straggling little band which followed in the captain's wake had been as busy as any on this coast or any other had long passed by, and this night the men with the lanterns tiptoed on it cautiously.

The light of many lanterns showed the floating ruin of the ship beyond the rough and broken platform. The shouts which had risen from the crowd were now subdued. The investigators declared that the dock was quite too shaky to risk much weight upon it, and so the captain's armchair was deposited for the time in the midst of a chattering, good-natured group upon the solid earth, full thirty feet away from the dismantled ship he loved so well.

Parton and Captain Sears were the first to board the Lydia and make a preliminary survey and investigation.

It was after Captain Sears and Parton had succeeded, with the assistance of much shouted advice from the onlookers, in getting an improvised gangplank securely fixed so that it bridged the three or four feet of water between the ship and the pier, and rested on a portion of the vessel's rail that was not too badly burned to make it a firm support, that he yielded to the American impulse to make a speech.

He had been greatly impressed by the exhibition of popular delight over Captain Burgee's good fortune. It had angered him a little even, for he did not understand it, but his slow wits were quick enough to tell him that this he must not show. People had jeered him and he knew that he was unpopular. This had long worried him.

The remark that a dock lounge had made just as the Susy had begun the voyage which ended when she towed the Lydia in had galled him deeply. The man had called out, cheerfully:

"Bun y'age, Cap. Hope ye'll have good luck this trip! P'raps you'll run across another floatin' co'pse--this time, one that's left a rich widder--that can pay!"

There was an especial reason why he sorrowed over this trend of public thought at this particular time. A government commission was to be appointed to study Cape Cod's sand dunes. One native was to grace its councils at a salary of \$600 for the session of six months. Captain Sears was beginning to get old and life on the menhaden steamer was most laborious. He wished to be that native.

He had thought much of this the while the recent voyage was in progress. And after he picked up the Lydia a great thought came to him. He looked the melancholy derelict over with some care and decided that she was almost worthless. Salvage for her rescue would be divided, according to the law in such cases, among his entire crew (if she was declared to be worth anything at all), and he would get but little, he reflected, at the best. It occurred to him that therein lay his opportunity to redeem his damaged reputation for generosity and general decency. The

other members of the crew were certain to consent. The loss could not be great, for the derelict of the Lydia was scarcely worth, he estimated, the coal it cost to tow her in.

Thus where all the people were gathered, thinking of nothing but the wreck and of no one but the captain, was the time and there the place to "spring" it.

"Captain Burgee," he said, leaning against a wharf post and trying to make his face take on an expression as near as possible to geniality, "there's somehin' that I want to say an' I'm a-goin' to say it. This here findin' of your ship a-driftin' 'round gives me jest the chance that I've be'n lookin' for. They is them here on the Cape that's spoke an' think hard of me in times gone past, because of things I may have done. They was especial tad-

rious Sears, were at first quite speechless, and then broke into a jerky cheer. It was, as it were, literally yanked out of them by their surprise. It rose in spasms.

Captain Sears flushed by this spectacular success, went on:

"After we had picked her up and while we was a-comin' into port, we talked this matter over. And, in order that there couldn't be no mistake at all about it, I made out a paper. We signed it and we was glad to sign it. It transfers our claims to you, an' we don't reckon that you are a-goin' to sue yourself for salvage. If you'll jest step for'ard here a little, Mis' Burgee, I'll hand the paper to you. I've got it right here in my pocket."

Mrs. Burgee stepped forward, and Captain Sears did hand her the paper. She took it to her husband. All she could say

face. If he reckoned there was much in salvage on the Lyddy as there is in sal'ry on th' job, he wouldn't be so gosh-darned generous. When some folks asts ye to sail in an' take a bite out o' red apples, ye'll be clever if ye makes a careful squint for w'o'm holes."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Again the Cargo of the Lydia.

Ain't God clever? Look at all th' new ways He finds of punishin' th' wicked, an' givin' goodies to th' good! Don't they make our prisons an' our penalties, an' our presents an' prosperities seem just foolish?--The Log Book of the Lyddy.

No other means of shipwreck ever can give a ship so desolate an appearance as can fire. The stump of the Lydia's mainmast still stood, but it gleamed no longer with that rich yellow of its Norway pine



HE DREW HIS BREATH IN QUICKLY WHEN HE SAW THAT THE EARTH WHICH HE REMEMBERED TO HAVE RUBBED OVER THE LOG'S END WAS QUITE GONE.

feelin' over the fact that I ast the widder Briscoe for the usual fee for pickin' up her husband's co'pse. Now I think it over, I see that I was wrong to ask pay for the findin' of Ned Briscoe dead, when he was wothless livin'. I'm sorry that I done it. Now what I want to say is this: There is times and there ain't times for askin' assy-ge. I thought that the time when I found Briscoe a-bobbin' 'round out there like a cork loose from a boy's fish line was the time to do it. I know that now, when I've found your ship a-floatin' is the time not to do it.

"Now, you folks know as well as I do what claims for salvage me an' my men might make ag'inst this ship an' whatever may be left in her. Well, we ain't goin' to make no claim! That's all there is to that. An' me an' my men--we're all consid'able glad to say so. Ain't we, boys?"

The three members of his crew were present and they manifested their approval of what he said in three awkward shamed-faced ways--although it is probable that their generous sincerity was at least as great as was his own. The other people on the dock, amazed at this from the penu-

was, "Thank ye, Captain Sears, thank ye!" But the fist that stole up to his eyes trembling, a moment later testified there was much more which he thought but could not say.

Captain Sears unquestionably had the people with him now. If he had stopped there, he might have won back that popularity which had passed with the Briscoe corpse salvage incident. But he continued, saying:

"And now, feller citizens, I hope there ain't none here as thinks hard o' me no more. An' I hope that when my claims is properly presented to th' gov'ment, there ain't none as will oppose my gittin' on th' Cape commission."

Mostly the simple minded folk there present were properly impressed. Mostly they felt that they had wrongedly judged him in the past, and that if, in order to make up, they could help him in the future, they would do it; but there was one old, grizzled seadog, who spat tobacco juice and said:

"Yah! I thought there was a current runnin' that didn't show up on th' sur-

which it had been the captain's pride over to keep shining over all of it. The upper end was charred and ugly. The mainmast was entirely gone, and that part of the deck in which it had been stepped was also torn up and destroyed. A great hole with charred edges where the explosion had torn the planking up had given the fire free chance to eat its way and yawnd gloomily.

Fore and aft the ruin was much less complete than it was amidships. The rain had evidently started in before the flames had had a chance to eat deep into the solid timbers, and there were spots around the edge of the jagged rent there in the deck which showed the fresh yellow of the pine as it was torn by the explosion, where it had not been at all blackened by the fire or smoke.

The entrance to the cabin companionway was charred, but held its sharp edges. The greater part of the exterior of the deck house was not burned, although the paint on it was faintly clouded by the smoke, and, in some places, yellowed and blistered. Parton remembered with a shudder how intense the heat had been and how