

The Sail-Dragger

**Frederick William
Wallace**

Illustrated by
C. R. Patterson

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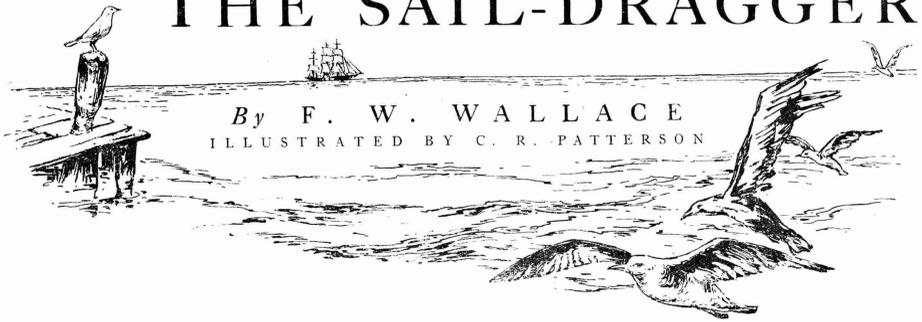
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THE SAIL-DRAGGER



The neatly-dressed and rather pretty stenographer rested from her type-writing and listened to the conversation between old John Lovell and Billy Spencer, skipper of the Boston fishing schooner *Alfarata*. She couldn't help listening. Outside the glass-partitioned private office the dialogue was audible—too interestingly audible for Miss Comstock to carry on her work.

“Sail-carrying don't pay the vessel owner!” Old Johnny was shouting in the fashion he had when excited. “Last trip you tore the jib to ribbons and split your fores'l. This time you've broke the main-boom and split the mains'l. You're rim-racking a fine vessel with your sail-dragging—”

“Now, Mr. Lovell,” interrupted a soothing voice, “don't take on so. Sure, if you'd ha' been in my place and saw Jack Macpherson in the *Allie Watson* warming her home to Boston under four lowers and me jogging home easy-like under Bank sail, you'd have said: ‘Go to it and trim him!’ ”

“Hmph!” a pause. “And did you trim him?” The anger had vanished from Old Johnny's tones and there was interest in the question.

“Did we? Well, I sh'd smile!” the other continued. “‘Joggin' to Boston this fine day?’ says he as he swings past my lee quarter.

“‘Yes—joggin',’ says I—for I didn't *want* to press her, Mr. Lovell. Then he comes back with—‘I cal'late you're savin' the *Alfarata's* canvas 'case old Johnny gets sore on ye bustin' his sails. Mean as the devil, ain't he?’ says he.”

“He said that, did he?” came Lovell's growl.

“Yes, and a lot more, Mr. Lovell,” continued the *Alfarata's* skipper. “Now, I wasn't goin' to stand for that, you know, so I hauls the riding sail off her and gives her whole mains'l and jib. It was breezing some with a

lumpish sea when I put it to her and 'long about five I had the *Allie Watson* half a mile astern and reefin' his mains'l. That hooker sails well with a tuck in, as maybe you know, but I darsen't stop to reef but kep' a-coming. It blowed pow'ful hard that night and after we passed the *Araminta Silver* off Boston Lightship lying-to waiting 'til it eased up in the Bay, a squall hit us and the main-boom broke and the sail split. . . ."

"What did you do then?" Johnny's voice betokened deep interest.

"Had to take it in and sock her along under the riding sail. We made good going and arrived at the Fish Pier this morning at seven with a hundred and twenty thousand of cod and haddock—prime fish. It's noon now and the *Allie Watson* ain't in yet."

There was a grunt of approval from the vessel owner and he remarked in a mollified tone: "Well, after hearing the facts of the case, I'll admit you had good reason to press the *Alfarata*. Don't take any sass from Jack Macpherson at any time. You'll need a new boom and the mains'l can be repaired. I'll see to that right away"

"There's a few other small items, Mr. Lovell," came a gentle interposition from Captain Spencer. "Some penboards were washed out of the kid; the top of the wheel-box vanished somehow and the patent log broke adrift. The baitboards disappeared during the night and the cover of the stays'l box is gone as well. There's a deck tub missing and I ain't sure but what the leach of the jib's tore. A carpenter'll soon fix up the glass what was broke in the cabin skylight and he can soon knock up a new cable-box"

There came the grating sound of a chair being shoved back and the smack of a heavy fist on a desk. "Sufferin' Judas Priest!" shouted Lovell wrathfully, "don't tell me any more. I cal'late I'll go right down and see if the vessel ain't a hulk and all racked to pieces. Confound it, man, what d'ye think you're a-doing? Racing for the Fisherman's Cup?"

"Well, it blowed hard last night and there was some sea in the Bay," came a calm voice in extenuation.

"Blowed hard be hanged!" snapped Old Johnny. "Since you've been in that schooner you've ripped and tore her all to pieces with your infernal sail-dragging. You always scare up an excuse to go racing with some joker and it takes all I make to square up your hell-bent-for-election damages. It's fishin' I want the *Alfarata* for—not racing. Get out before I eat you!"

The pretty stenographer bent to her typewriter again as a broad-shouldered, clean-looking young fellow of about twenty-eight came out of the private office. There was the dimple of a suppressed smile in his ruddy cheeks and the hint of almost boyish enjoyment in his bold grey eyes as he closed the door softly on the fuming occupant of the inner sanctum.

The young woman rose and delved into a mail-box. "A registered letter for you, Captain Spencer," she said, handing it over. The young fellow gave the envelope a cursory glance and carelessly thrust the missive into the pocket of his blue flannel shirt. He took off his cap again and leaned across the counter. "And how's every little thing with you, Miss?" he enquired somewhat bashfully speaking pleasingly with the dialect of Nova Scotia.

"Oh, same as usual, Captain," answered the girl—placing a pile of accounts into a basket. "Pounding this machine all day and breathing the odor of fish from nine to five. My clothes seem to reek with it."

"Awful smell to stick, ain't it?" observed Captain Billy pleasantly.

"And it ain't Floridy Water neither. *He*—" the skipper indicated the private office with a jerk of his head, "—must be an awful feller at times, I cal'late, eh?"

The girl laughed. "No, indeed," she replied. "He's very nice and very kind and patient. He never loses his temper with *me*."

The other noted the accented "me" and grunted. "Ahem! I reckon you don't give him any cause." Spencer paused and looked rather intently at the young woman seated at the desk sorting papers. He had chatted with her a good many times between voyages now, and of late her face had often figured in his fancies. But casual conversations upon unimportant topics were unsatisfying and the more he saw of Miss Comstock the more his thoughts were disturbed. As he lounged over the counter regarding her, his keen eyes took in her trim figure, her soft brown hair and appealing features. Her brown eyes seemed to hold a teasing expression when she talked to him and he felt a sensation of pleasure, when she smiled and revealed her white teeth. He was fascinated by her fresh cheerfulness, her intelligence, and refined speech and often wondered and worried how he could get better acquainted.



The girl looked up from her work. "You're fond of sailing fast, Captain Spencer," she said teasingly.

The girl looked up from her work. "You're fond of sailing fast, Captain Spencer," she said teasingly. "I've got a number of accounts here for repairs to the *Alfarata*. None of Mr. Lovell's other schooners seem to have the repair bills that you have."

Billy smiled. "Aye, and none of the other skipper's have the fun out of fishing that I have. I wouldn't go a-fishing, if I didn't have a bit of a hook with another vessel now and again."

She gave him a keen glance from under her eye-lashes and noted the humorous expression on his tanned face. Those bold grey eyes—she was sure he was frightfully daring and reckless—appealed to her. Something spurred Spencer to action. His look met hers and he took heart. "Say, Miss Comstock," he began hesitatingly, "I—I hope you won't think I'm fresh. I—I don't know any nice girls like you in this town and often-times I feel I'd

like to have one for a pal to go around with when ashore. I'm a rough cuss, I know, and you're a little lady, but—but, would you care to go out to a theatre with me tonight? I—I hope I ain't fresh in asking you?"

The stenographer turned away rather nonplussed. Certain family reasons decreed that she refuse the invitation but something was impelling her to accept. She had, for some time past, been compelled to avoid making acquaintances and to repress the age-old desire for the companionship of the other sex. And now an offer of intimate friendship was coming from a young fishing skipper. A cleanly, courteous and fine-looking fisherman, 'tis true. . . . but, "What would her mother think of it?"

"How about it, Miss Comstock?" Billy was waiting eagerly for his answer. "I—I suppose it will be all right," she stammered in confusion. "That is—I—It's very kind of you—"

"Where do you live?" enquired the skipper instantly.

"Number twenty-four Walnut Avenue, Apartment ten—near Dudley Street."

He wrote the address in his notebook and looked up with pleasure in his eyes. "I'll be there at half-past seven sharp," he said happily.

"Till then, good-bye—and thank you kindly."

The young skipper passed down the stairs and on to the wharf leaving Miss Comstock a prey to conflicting emotions.

"Whatever made me do it?" she almost wailed. "Just because I was fascinated by his manner and his bold ways I fall for him like—like a cave-woman. I can imagine those fishermen's tastes—a burlesque show where they smoke and eat pea-nuts between the acts. Horrors! What will mother say? If he's like some of those other captains, he'll come for me dressed in a loud suit and wearing a howling tie and he'll have his vest pockets crammed with cigars and be smoking them all the time on the streets. There'll be a huge box of candy—the biggest he can buy—and he'll want to hold my hand after the first act—" She stopped at the thought of it and continued with grim determination. "If he isn't all right when he calls, I'll plead a head-ache and refuse to go with him!" And she turned to her work again with many misgivings.

illy Spencer was at his boarding house and seeking advice from his friend Wesley Carson. Wesley was a Bostonian and as a city-dweller was supposed to know the ropes.

“I’ve asked a young lady to go out with me tonight, and I don’t want to make any breaks. What show will I take her to? What seats will I get? How’ll I dress? Should I take her out to a lunch afterwards? Will I call for her in an automobile? Will I . . .”

“Hold hard, Billy,” cried Carson with a laugh. “Who’s the lady anyway? One of those Atlantic Avenue dames that pal up with a trawler and his high-line roll? Or is it one of the Commonwealth Avenue society set? If it’s the former you want to leave your watch and your money at home and if it’s the latter, you’ll need a dress suit with a red tie and tan boots. . . .”

“Quit your foolin’, you beach-comber!” growled Spencer, proceeding to divest himself of his sea clothes. “It’s little Miss Comstock down to Lovell’s office. . . .”

Carson whistled. “Some speed to you!” he observed.

“That’s my middle name—Speed Spencer, they call me, and I want a little of it from you. Give me a true bill, old man. I don’t want to make a mug of myself or her.”

“And how did *you* manage it? Half the clerks on the Pier have tried to make a date with her and she turns ’em all down. Don’t go out with anybody but keeps to herself. But a mighty nice little girl too.” He paused and thought for a moment and continued. “Now, old-timer, you just leave yourself in my hands. I’ll get you orchestra seats at the Colonial. They’re playing ‘Brewster’s Millions’ there which will show you how hard it is to spend money. Put on your blue serge suit and your black shoes. . . .” And Spencer allowed his friend to rig him up and to furnish him with the “course and distance” as seamen say.

“Will I take her anything?” queried the skipper after the orthodox in dress and procedure had been prescribed for him.

“Yes—candy or flowers would be quite in order.”

“I’ll take flowers,” decided Spencer. “Get me some nice ones—roses, I cal’late.”

If Mabel Comstock felt nervous before Billy’s arrival, her apprehensions vanished when he entered the little Walnut Avenue apartment. Her mental picture of a bold-looking fisherman tricked out in garb as vari-colored as the

International Code collapsed with the sight of the quietly dressed and handsome young man whom she introduced to her mother.

“I didn’t think he would be so neat and nice,” she said to herself as she left the parlor to get her cloak. She buried her face in the exquisite bunch of American Beauty roses which he had brought her and voiced a hope that he wouldn’t spoil the evening or her good opinion by a lapse into any of the crudities or vulgarities—commonly, and often erroneously, ascribed to fishermen on shore excursions.

Attired in a simple grey *crepe-de-chine* dress which Billy thought made her appear fascinatingly desirable, Miss Comstock slipped on her cloak and kissed her mother. “You won’t mind my leaving you for one night, mummy-dear?” she asked.

“And I hope you won’t mind my asking your daughter to have a little lunch after the show if she cares to?” enquired Captain Billy with an apologetic smile which the mother liked. “It may keep her a little late. . . .”

“That’ll be quite all right, Mr. Spencer,” answered Mrs. Comstock regarding her daughter with affection. “I’m so glad to see her go out. She’s been debarred from many pleasures of late and it’s very kind of you. You’ll take good care of her and I hope you’ll enjoy yourselves. I’ll see you when you come back.”

Spencer had to admit that he was nervous at first. It was an entirely new sensation for him to be nervous with a woman. He had met the sex before, many times, but they were not of Mabel Comstock’s type. He was glad now that his relations with women had always been above-board and that he had ever cherished an ideal in those matters. “I’m an awful bear, Miss Comstock,” he observed with characteristic frankness, “and I ain’t used to city ways. I hope you’ll forgive me if I make any breaks and jest steer me right when I’m heading wrong. . . .”

The girl laughed happily. She liked his boyish candor and felt a certain sense of pride in having this strapping, virile young sailor placing dependence in her. She had heard fishermen’s gossip of his daring and fearlessness. There was also a story of how he tried to ram a German submarine off the Irish coast in a three-mast schooner. . . . and other things. This fisherman admitted his short-comings in shore ways. Many men would have bluffed and concealed their ignorance. She admired him.

They thoroughly enjoyed the play. “Jupiter! I’d like to do this sort of thing every night,” Spencer murmured to himself. “Tonight, I’m here enjoyin’ myself in a decent kind of way. Tomorrow this time, we’ll be well off-shore soakin’ the *Alfarata* for Brown’s Bank and breathin’ coal-gas and bilge. If I was rich I’d never go near the sea or a vessel.”

At the after-theatre restaurant there were sweet-scented flowers on the table and a string orchestra was playing dreamy selections. Mabel Comstock, with face and eyes glowing under the shaded lights, looked fascinatingly beautiful and she was asking him questions about himself. He, delighted at her interest, was talking freely.

“Aye, Miss, I was born on a farm up in Nova Scotia, but I never knew much of a home other than a vessel. Mother died afore I really knew her and father married again—a widow with a family—and me and my brother Jim had a hard time with her. I can’t remember much of Jim. He was a big feller of seventeen when I was about four or five and he skipped out and went to sea. We never h’ard of him again and I reckon he was drowned.

“I was beat around until I was eleven when I followed Jim’s lead and ran away to sea on a coaster helpin’ the cook. Then I went off as a boy on a salt Bank fisherman and when I was seventeen I went off to see a bit of the world before the mast on a square-rigger. I came back from deep-water and fished out of Glo’ster until I was twenty-two. Then I spoke for command of a vessel and got the *Annie Wells*. We made some good trips in her but I lost her in the big winter’s breeze four years ago. I sure though’ I was done for then as I kinder lost her foolishly by drivin’ in on the land when I sh’d ha’ laid her head off-shore and took the breeze hove-to. However, I got my nerve together and when I got back to Glo’ster I asked her owner to give me another vessel. I cal’late he was took by my gall for he gave me the *Jennie Westmacott*. We made some good trips in her, but she was an old tooth-pick and after she fell apart goin’ out of Rockland one winter, I shipped as mate of a three-master running the War Zone to France. I planned to do something over there, but got sent home. . .”

“For what?” the girl showed her intense interest.

“A busted leg. Piece of shrapnel from a German submarine what sunk the schooner off Ireland. Then I came to Boston and Johnny Lovell gave me the *Alfarata*. I’m still in her. . . .”

“And from what I heard this morning, Captain Spencer,” interrupted the girl with a laugh, “you’re doing your best to lose her too.”

Spencer grinned. "Lovell was sure mad, but he doesn't really mind it. He kicks a lot at the damage but you should hear him braggin' around the Pier. Now, don't let me cram you with all this yarn about myself and my business. I'd like to know about you. Your father—is he alive?"

A shadow seemed to cross the girl's face and she crushed her serviette nervously. "No-no!" she answered falteringly and her eyes avoided his direct gaze.

"Is there jest you and your mother? No other brothers or sisters?"

"Only us two."

The skipper sipped his coffee and remarked wistfully, "You're lucky to have a mother. Fathers ain't so hard to do without—least that's my notion—but a mother. . . . Golly! I wish I had one. I cal'late we'd have a great time together."

The expression on his face when he spoke awakened a feeling of sympathy in Miss Comstock's heart. A man who longed thus for a mother was all right. She was glad that she had accepted Spencer's invitation and hoped that the friendship thus commenced would continue. She mentally accented the word *friendship*—at the present time she could not consider any other basis of acquaintance.

Billy drove her home in a taxi and felt deliriously happy. At the door of her little apartment he was about to take his departure when the girl, glancing at her wrist watch, said: "It's early yet, Captain. Won't you come in for a few minutes and say good night to Mother?" After a momentary hesitation Billy decided it would be quite correct. Besides, he was head over heels in love, and was anxious to see as much of Mabel Comstock as possible ere he sailed for the Banks.

They had entered very quietly and the roar of a passing Elevated train had drowned the sound of their voices. Leading the way to the dining-room, Miss Comstock was about to greet her mother when she stopped suddenly at the door of the room with features bloodless and fearful. The Elevated train had passed and Spencer heard a man's voice speaking in the room. "For God's sake, Mary, think of something," the stranger was saying. "I've got to get out of the country. . . ."

The girl reeled against the door frame and Spencer grabbed her and kept her from falling. He saw Mrs. Comstock staring at them, terror in her eyes, while behind her stood a roughly-dressed, bearded man of about forty-five. The latter's face expressed several emotions—apprehension and nervous

expectancy predominating—and the skipper glanced around the three uncomprehending. “What—what the deuce is the matter?” he stammered in perplexity.

Miss Comstock recovered herself and stood for a moment dumbly looking at her mother and the stranger. Her face was still white and her brown eyes were wide with alarm.

“How—how did you get here?” she enquired faintly—addressing the man with the beard.

The man looked flustered. “I—I just got in a few minutes ago, Mabel,” he said hesitatingly. “Rather unexpected. . . . I—I’m afraid I scared you, dear. I—I couldn’t help it.”

The color came back to the girl’s face and her features registered a conflict of feelings. Then yielding to a sudden impulse, she ran to the man and threw her arms around his neck. “Oh, Daddy, Daddy!” she cried in an anxious voice. “Is it all right now? Are you coming back to us again?” The man kissed her with affection; and the nervous tensivity of his expression relaxed for a space.

Spencer was dumbfounded. “Daddy!” she had called him! And but an hour ago she had told him that her father was dead. He was standing as in a daze when the stranger glanced over at Spencer and alarm showed in his eyes. “Who is that man?” he whispered in some agitation. “Can we trust him? Could he help me? I must do something quickly? They may be on my track even now.” He withdrew his arm from Mabel’s shoulders and picked up some money from the table. Mrs. Comstock slipped her arms around his neck and she was crying. Mabel walked over to where the skipper stood—her eyes mutely imploring—and she spoke tremblingly.

“Captain Spencer! I know I can trust you. This is my father. I lied to you this evening because—because—my father was in State’s Prison. He has escaped. . . . What shall we—what can we do?” There were tears in her eyes and a piteous appeal in her voice.

“This is a devil of a note,” Billy was thinking and an over-powering wave of sympathy flooded his heart. “What does he—your father—suggest? What does he want to do?” he stammered.

The man had a pleasant, good-looking face, but it was lined and care-worn. He spoke nervously and cast restless eyes about the apartment, and he appeared to be listening for something.

“I made my get-away three months ago and have been doubling around to get here to see them. Just got in from Florida—firing on a steamer. Can’t stay here, but if I could get across to Mexico or Canada I might get a chance to straighten things out.” The man seemed to hang on Billy’s answer.

“Mexico or Canada?” repeated the skipper. “I don’t know about Mexico, but I might get you into Canada.” He thought for a moment while the others focussed him with their gaze. “Let him come along with me,” he said at length with the quick decision of the vessel-master. “I’ll go to my room, get my kit, and go down aboard the vessel. He can sail with me to the Banks and I’ll arrange to land him somewheres on the Canadian coast. How’s that?”

Mother and daughter flashed him looks of hope and thankfulness and the father seemed relieved at the suggestion. “We must go now,” said Comstock hastily. “Every minute here is dangerous. I’ll find a way to let you know where I am, and Mary—Mabel—believe in me. I didn’t do it. It was the other man. They made me the scapegoat for the gang.” Turning to Spencer, he said, “Captain! You’d better leave right now and I will meet you on Atlantic Avenue. I’ll slip down the fire escape. . . .”

The young fisherman was out on the street before he knew it and making for his boarding house with long strides. Pictured indelibly on his memory was the look of unspoken gratitude expressed in Mabel’s brown eyes when she accompanied him to the door. She had squeezed his hand warmly and her last words—“I can’t thank you. Look after him . . . and God bless you!”—rang in his ears.

“Deuce of a note, this business,” he murmured as he swung along, “Fancy, her old man a convict! Ain’t that the devil and all? And I’m lettin’ myself in for somethin’ too, by jingo! Wonder what he was jugged for? Don’t look like a crim’nal. . . . Deuce of a note, by gum, but I reckon she’s worth doin’ it for. Yes, and I’d promise any blame’ kind o’ foolishness for her sake, so I would!” And in the midst of his perplexities he smiled happily.

Spencer met Comstock at the appointed place. He was wearing his sea clothes and had mapped out a plan of campaign.

“You’re an old friend of mine,” he coached the bearded man, “and you’ve been sick with the ’flu. You’re takin’ a little trip to the Banks to pick up your health. Your name is Tom Brown, remember—Tom Brown of Boston. What was your job afore you were—er—jugged?”

“I was a chemist in a large manufacturing concern.”

“You’ll need to be careful how you talk aboard a fisherman. The boys are terrors to gossip and if it got known that a chemist went to sea with me, the police might pick it up. What other job can you talk about that won’t give you away?”

Comstock thought for a moment. “I’ve been on railroad survey work and mining. . . .”

“No mining,” said Billy decisively. “If the gang thought you was a miner they’d immediately think of gold, silver and diamonds and be wantin’ to know all about mining to see if there was more money in it than goin’ afishin.’ They’d be pumpin’ you all day long. I reckon you’d better be a railroad man—a track boss. Shovellin’ dirt ain’t likely to appeal to a fisherman and they won’t ask you many questions on that kind of work. That’s the story for the present. Now, I’ll roust into this Jew outfitter and buy you a few clothes. You wait here.”

It was after midnight when Billy and Comstock jumped down aboard the *Alfarata*. The fish was out, ice and stores aboard, and the new boom was in the saddle with the sail laced to it. Spencer noted these facts with pleasure. He led the way down into the schooner’s cabin where three fisherman sat playing cards on the lockers. They looked up when the skipper entered and favored Comstock with curious glances.

“A friend of mine—Tom Brown,” vouchsafed Billy. “He’s been sick with the ’flu and ain’t able to go back to work yet awhile. He’s a comin’ with us as a bit of a holiday.”

He turned to Comstock. “There’s a spare bunk over to starb’d there, Tom. Jest chuck your dunnage in there and make yourself to home. We don’t stand on ceremony on a fisherman. Eat and sleep whenever you have a mind to and don’t wait to be introduced.”

“Th’ ’flu’s a mighty weakenin’ thing, ain’t it, Mister?” observed one of the men, addressing Comstock. “And a little trip like this’ll fix ye up good.” Mr. “Tom Brown” was soon engaged in pleasant conversation and endeavouring to act the part of a convalescent.

“Are all the boys aboard?” asked Spencer.

“All but Alec MacDonald, I guess, and he jest went up the head of the wharf.”

“Half shot I s’pose?” growled the other. He went over and tapped the barometer and the needle prophesied fair weather. With Comstock aboard Billy wanted to get away to sea immediately and he mentally cursed Alec MacDonald for his nocturnal ramblings. He looked up the cabin hatch and noted that the wind was fresh and westerly—a good night for a shove-off. “We’ll get underway, I reckon, and take advantage of this fine breeze,” he said. “Call the crowd and get yer mains’l up.”

The *Alfarata’s* gang were used to their skipper’s whims. Spencer was no time-waster. He made quick trips and good money for his men and “Speedy” Spencer was almost a proverb on the Banks. To Comstock, he said meaningly, “Better turn in, Tom. You might not get much sleep if it’s rough outside and you must remember you ain’t a well man. Rest is what you need.”

The crowd had the mains’l up and the stops were off fores’l and jumbo when MacDonald staggered down the wharf accompanied by another man. They stood on the edge of the Pier talking and Spencer could hear the stranger asking questions—odd questions, and Billy was apprehensive.

“Come aboard now, Alec!” bawled the skipper quickly. “We can’t wait all night for you!”

The other held MacDonald by the arm detaining him. “Who’s that?” he said.

“Thash th’ skipper,” replied the fisherman. “Thash ol’ Shpeedy Shpensher. Great feller’s Sheedy Pensher. I mush go, ol’ feller, mush go!”

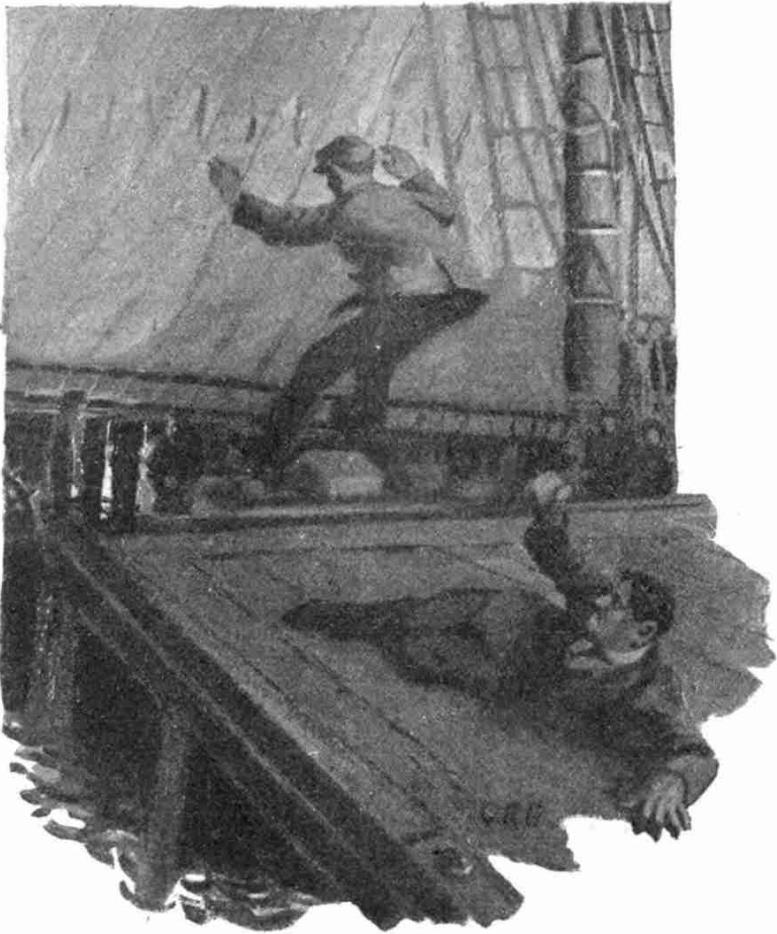
“Carrying any passengers this trip?” Billy heard the query and trembled.

“Away ye go’n yer fores’l!” he bawled. “Leggo for’ad! Come aboard you Mac, or I’ll leave you!”

McDonald endeavoured to shake off the other’s detaining hand. “Any strangers going out with you this time?” The man’s voice was insistent.

The foresail was going up and the schooner’s bow was sheering off from the wharf and Billy was slacking off the stern line—the bight of which was around a spile. “Let my man go, you wharf-rat!” roared Spencer excitedly. “D’ye want him to miss the vessel?”

“Yesh, you bum, lemme go!” protested Mac as he endeavoured to break away.



He leaped the intervening six feet between wharf and rail and spun the wheel over.

“Any passengers or strangers . . .” The foresail was up and the jumbo was screeching on the fore-stay. The schooner was moving away from the wharf when Spencer leaped up on the dock, gave the stranger a tremendous buffet on the side of the head which knocked him flat on his back, and almost hove MacDonald down on the *Alfarata’s* deck. Then he leaped the intervening six feet between wharf and rail and spun the wheel over. The *Alfarata’s* main-boom swung off as Billy deftly cast the sheet off the bitts and he glanced back in the darkness to see the man he had struck rising to his feet and brushing the mud off his clothes.

“A ruddy ’tec, I’ll swear!” gasped Billy to himself. “Must have traced Comstock down here.” Of the reeling MacDonald, he enquired sharply,

“Where did you pick that feller up, and what did he want?”

The fisherman commenced a rambling story of how he had met the stranger at the head of the dock and how he had commenced asking him a lot of questions as to whether the skipper was aboard and if he had a friend with him. “I told th’ swab that you was aboard and that you had no friends with you. ’N even if you had a friend with you it was none of his ruddy bushiness.”

When clear of the dock, Spencer ordered the light sails set and he steered the schooner down the harbor himself. Comstock, in his bunk, knew nothing of the episode on the dock, as, completely tired out, he had fallen asleep a few minutes after turning in, and when he awoke at five, it was to hear the rush of water outside the schooner’s planking and Spencer’s voice singing out: “Aft here, fellers, and sheet in yer mains’l!”

With a sigh of profound relief the man lay with eyes closed while his nerves, keyed to high tension with the fear of detection and arrest, relaxed gratefully and the harsh lines of strain and worry faded from his bearded face. He had lived an eternity in the last three months and as he lay calmly reflecting, he shivered involuntarily at the memory of the two years he had served in prison; his breakaway from the labor gang in the early morning mist and the whine of the guards’ bullets. Then came the riding of freight trains, tramping the roads, begging and working at odd jobs, but always moving on. Three months of anxious freedom and he was in Fernandina when an overwhelming desire to see his wife and daughter possessed him and he came to Boston as coal-trimmer in a tramp steamer. He had seen them and “God! If I could only prove it and be cleared,” he murmured fearfully. “But I can’t—I can’t. Ten years! I couldn’ stick it out. But let me get to Canada and I’ll have a chance to start a new life and get my people with me. . . . out in the West where they don’t ask questions.”

Spencer gave him a hail at seven. “Breakfast, Tom! We’re forty mile outside now and runnin’ to the east’ard like a hound. A day like this’ll shake the last ’flu germ out of you. Come along for’ad and get some grub inside you.”

The *Alfarata*, under all sail, was logging nine knots and riding easily over the swells. Comstock glanced around the sun-lit waters and aloft at the white canvas, and to Spencer he said softly, “Man, but it’s wonderful; it’s great to be out here—free and away from the dread of a hand on your shoulder . . . you know what I mean.” He straightened up and drew the keen

sea air into his lungs and favored Billy with an almost affectionate scrutiny. "I don't know how I—we Comstocks—can thank you for what you've done. If I can make it and get clear, I'll be in your debt for life."

They reached the Bank in twenty-eight hours and prepared for fishing. Comstock, acting the part of a convalescent, lolled around the deck. "Don't you lay a hand to a thing," warned Spencer. "You're a pretty husky lookin' feller to have gotten over a dose of 'flu and if you go pullin' and haulin' around, the boys'll smell a rat."

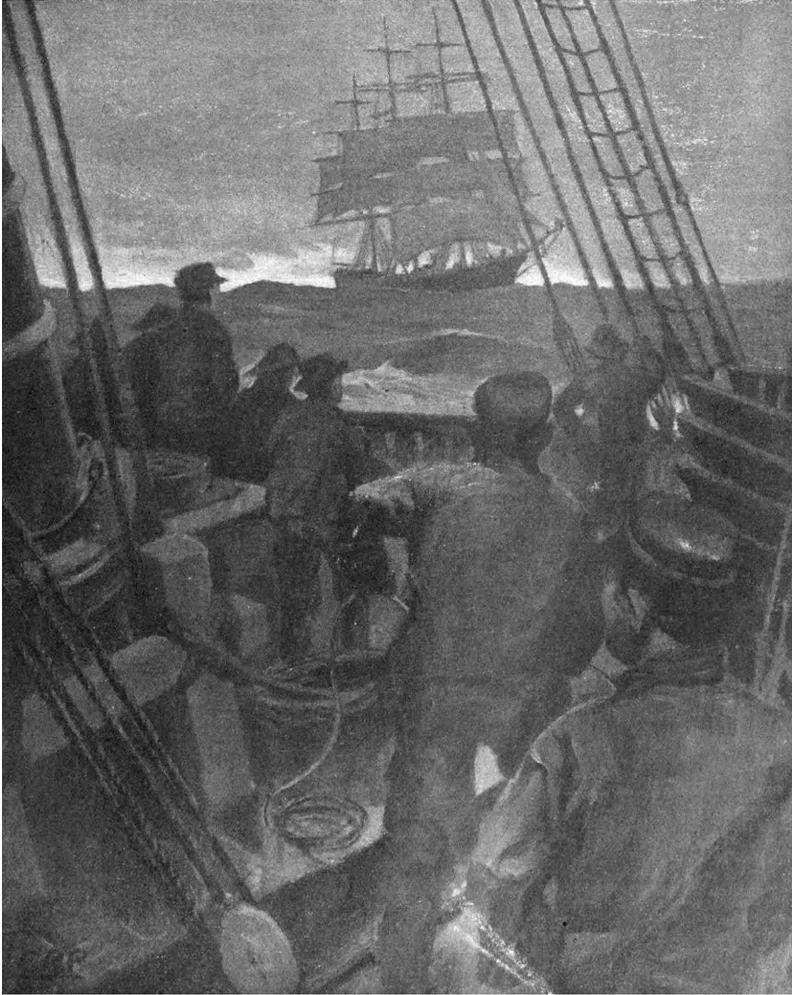
During the long summer days the dories went over the side at daybreak and the fishermen set and hauled their trawls until sun-down. Billy Spencer was as hard a fisherman as he was a vessel driver and he kept himself and all hands busy until after they had dressed the fish of an evening and stowed them in crushed ice below. While he was running the schooner around the Bank, keeping track of dories and fish, he was doing some tall thinking as to how he would land his passenger on the Canadian coast without awakening the suspicions of the men. The incident on the dock at Boston was disturbing him greatly.

"It ain't as easy as it looks," he confided to Comstock. "You've got to dodge the immigration people and I've got to have an excuse for running in."

Then, noticing the worried expression on the other's face he added hastily, "But don't you worry, there's more ways of armin' a lead than by usin' soap. I'll ship you ashore all serene and you'll have no difficulty in getting out to Western Canada. You make for Halifax or Sint John and you can easy get to Montreal and the West if you have the price." They talked over ways and means and had decided on a plan to land Comstock near Yarmouth, when events took a new and unforeseen turn.

They were on the eastern edge of the Bank when a square-rigger hove into their range of vision. Square-riggers, tho' not common nowadays, call for no unusual comment from fishermen, but this one attracted Spencer's attention by the way she acted. The weather was fine with a fresh breeze and the sailing ship should have been hull-down and out of sight within a few hours. But they raised her upper sails in the flush of the dawn and she was in sight throughout the day. At sun-down she appeared to be hove-to. Next morning, day-light revealed her close aboard and standing towards the *Alfarata*. The fishermen were just through with breakfast and getting ready

to swing the dories over and they knocked off to watch the stranger with many surmises.



The ship—a finely modelled three-master with double topgallant sails on fore and main—came rolling toward them under reduced sail.

The ship—a finely modelled three-master with double topgallant sails on fore and main—came rolling toward them under reduced sail. When within a cable's length of the fishing schooner, her main-yards were swung aback and she lay hove-to while two signal flags ran up to her mizen-gaff.

“A two flag hoist,” ejaculated Spencer. “Urgent signal. Looks like N.C. ‘In distress’ if I remember rightly.” He sung out to the wondering fishermen: “Swing a dory over, boys, and see what he wants.”

Dories from port and starboard nests were swung up and out, and as they splashed into the sea, curiosity-impelled men leaped over the rail into them. “Hold on there!” bawled the skipper. “No need for all hands to go. He ain’t inviting you aboard to have a drink, I cal’late. You, John Watson, and you, Tom Westhaver, go and see what he wants and don’t be all day about it.” As an after-thought, he turned to Comstock. “Go over with them, Tom, if you like. She looks a foreigner of some kind and maybe you can bring me back a straighter message than our fellows.” The other hesitated for a moment as though dreading the venture, then he laughed and slid over the side into the waiting dory.

Within thirty minutes they were pulling back. As soon as the dory came alongside the schooner, Comstock, with surprising agility for a supposed convalescent, sprang over the rail and approached Spencer. In his eyes there were signs of suppressed agitation. Aloud he said: “They say their captain and mate were washed overboard in a storm and they want someone to navigate the ship into New York. . . .” He gripped Billy by the arm and drew him away from the surrounding fishermen. The skipper winced under Comstock’s fingers—the man was laboring under high excitement and he whispered hoarsely, “. . . and *Jimmy the Red’s aboard her!*”

“Jimmy the who?” ejaculated Spencer wonderingly and Comstock’s squeezing fingers on his arm checked his further utterance.

“For Heaven’s sake, Spencer, come below a minute,” urged the other compellingly. “Get away from these listening men and I’ll tell you something.”

The skipper clattered down into the cabin followed by Comstock. “What the devil’s the matter?” asked Billy softly. “You look as if you’d seen a ghost. . . .”

Comstock was terribly wrought up and trembled visibly. Spencer was alarmed at the man’s excitement. “Not a ghost, Spencer,” replied the other in a portentous voice, “but the one man in all this wide world that I must get the hold of! The man who was the cause of my imprisonment! The man who threw me to the wolves. . . .”

“Where? Who is he? Quick, man!”

“Aboard that ship over there! He’s among the crew. I saw him—talked with him—James Kowalsky—Jimmy the Red—and the man who did the job

I was railroaded into the penitentiary for!”

“The devil ye say!”

Comstock continued in a rapid whisper and the perspiration of agitation moistened his forehead. “I was given ten years’ hard labor for a bombing affair. I was accused and convicted of blowing up the plant of the Plenzer Iron Works in Delancey, Pennsylvania. I was, to my eternal regret, mixing around with a crowd of so-called Socialists and I.W.W.’s at the time and while I knew of the plans for destroying the Plenzer plant, yet I honestly had no hand in it. This Kowalsky—the man aboard that ship there,—was the one who actually did the job and he managed to throw the blame on me. He was never suspected. I was sentenced.” He paused and wiped his face.

“Well,” said Spencer slowly, “what can we do about it? D’ye want me to get the gang and drag him off that hooker?”

“No, that would never do,” answered Comstock a trifle more composed.

“Kowalsky can’t be handled that way. I can only suggest one thing just at present, and that is for you to go aboard that ship and navigate her into port. I’ll go with you and make sure that Kowalsky doesn’t get away. I’ll find a way to make him confess to that Plenzer affair . . .”

The other’s face was expressionless and Comstock noted it and endeavoured to imbue him with the importance of the matter. “I have this chance, Spencer, and I *must* keep my eye on him. Boy, but you don’t know—you can’t realize—what I’ve suffered and how I’m hungering to join my wife and daughter as an honest man and a free man. It’s a terrible thing—a horrible thing—to be deprived of your liberty; to know that the law requires ten years of your life. And it’s worse to be like I am now—an escaped convict—flying from the law and always living in fear of detection. There is the hand of God in this thing, Spencer. He’s giving me a chance to prove my innocence. You’ve done a tremendous lot for me already, Spencer, help me now and I’ll make it up to you in some way.” He waited in an agony of suspense for the young skipper’s decision.

“All right! I’ll go!” said Billy at last. The intense supplication in the man’s voice and face impressed him and the thought of doing something for Mabel Comstock urged him to tackle the job. One of the boys, Juddy Moore, could take the *Alfarata* home to Boston and explain things to Johnny Lovell. He would navigate the ship to Boston and arrive there in time to take the *Alfarata* out again.

Spencer threw some necessary articles of clothing into a bag and secured his sextant, his Nautical Tables and Almanac. "We'll skip along now," he said. "Got your duds, Brown? Good!" Comstock led the way up on deck while Spencer gave a final look around. "Lemme see!" he murmured. "Have I got my pipe and tobacco?" He made a hasty survey of his pockets and when thrusting his hand into that of his flannel shirt he felt the crackle of paper therein. He was about to go ahead when recollection came to him. "Gorry! That must be the letter Miss Comstock gave me in Lovell's office and I ain't opened it yet. M'm! Must be in love, I cal'late, to be so forgetful."

He hastily tore it open and read the type-written contents. "Sufferin' Codfish!" he ejaculated in amazement as he slumped down on a locker to read the missive again.

"Dear Sir," it ran—"We have reason to believe that you are the only surviving brother of the late James Winslow Spencer who died in Seattle, Wash., on August 9th, 19—.

"Mr. Spencer, who was a resident of Victoria, B.C. left a considerable amount of property and, under the terms of his will, this is to be divided among certain charities one year exactly from the hour and date of his demise provided no claim was made by his brother William Ainslie Spencer. The late James Spencer was a rather peculiar man, unmarried, and extremely reticent as to his family and connections. He boasted that he had no relations and didn't want any. He died suddenly and a search through his personal papers failed to reveal anything regarding him, his birthplace or from whence he came.

"The writer was somewhat intimate with him and we took this matter up on the chance that an heir might be found. We traced the late Mr. Spencer's career back to where he shipped as a seaman from New York to San Francisco on an American bark. On her articles he signed as hailing from Anchorville, Nova Scotia. Enquiries made by us there elicited the information that you were his only brother.

"The object of the present is to urge you to come out to Victoria immediately—bringing such identification records as you may have. It will be necessary for you to be at our office before August 9th, otherwise the estate of your brother will go to the charities mentioned if no claim is made before noon of that date.

“We will be obliged if you will wire us immediately on receipt of this letter and trusting that our interest will have found favor with you, we remain, yours very truly,

“McGRAW, HISCOCK & DELORO,
“Barristers & Notaries, Victoria, B.C.”

Sufferin’ Codfish!” he reiterated—his wits knocked galley-west. “August ninth—and this is August second! If I was to slam the *Alfarata* for Boston right away, I’d make it easy, but on that big clumsy bally-hoo to wind’ard there. . . .?” He paused in disturbed and tantalizing hesitancy and thought of Comstock, “Jimmy the Red,” and Mabel. “Lord Harry! What sh’d I do?” he asked himself in considerable mental disquietude. It was indeed a momentous problem and it seemed as though Fate were placing the two alternatives before him and saying: “Choose!” Comstock, impatiently waiting and absorbed with his own affairs, little knew of the tremendous struggle which was taking place in Spencer’s mind.

“If I got that money I’d be fixed for life and could get away from this drudgery and I c’d maybe corral Mabel at the same time. But then her Dad would still be a wanted man and she’d never be happy. On the other hand, I might go on that wind-bag on the chance of squeezin’ the truth out of that Kowalsky joker, and Comstock may have made a mistake and it mayn’t be the man after all. I’d lose everything then.” He paused and reflected. “He seemed pretty certain,” he murmured, “and I’d like to see that shadow lifted from him and her—Gorry! I wish I knew what was best.”

He drew a coin from his pocket. “Heads—I go on the wind-bag. Tails—I slam the *Alfarata* for Boston and hike for the property!”

He tossed the coin up and it came down—tails! A vision of Mabel Comstock’s appealing face rose before his eyes and her last words rang in his ears, “Look after him. . . and God bless you!”

With a new-found determination pictured on his bronzed face, Billy thrust the letter into his pocket again and took a fresh grip of his gear. He threw the coin into the stove saying whimsically: “You’re a dam’ liar, Mister Penny. I ain’t agoin’ to do what you think. For her sake, by Godfrey, I’ll do the other thing and take a chance!”

Twenty minutes later, he and Comstock clambered up the Jacob’s Ladder of the full-rigged ship *Gregory* of Riga.

A red-haired man of medium height and sinewy build met them at the rail. He had a colorless face with high cheek-bones and prominent jaw—the muscles of which bulged visibly—and his mouth reposed in a determined line. He was of that “sandy-complexioned” type upon which one scarce bestows a second glance, and his age would be anywhere between thirty-five and forty-five. “My name is Smith,” he volunteered glibly. “I’m the stoo-ard of the ship. The captain and mate were washed over the side by a sea that boarded the poop four days ago and our second mate don’t understand navigation. . . .”

Spencer’s eyebrows went up in surprise. “Four days ago?” he exclaimed. “Whereabouts were you then?”

The red-haired steward waved his hand vaguely. “Somewhere’s to the east’ard, sir. We’re bound from Glasgow to New York, sir.”

Spencer thought it strange. For the past ten days, Atlantic weather had been smooth and summery with light southerly and westerly winds. There was neither swell nor cloud to evidence any such weather as would poop a big ship like the *Gregory*. Billy looked hard at the man and instantly became aware that he was not the nonentity he appeared at first glance. The putty-like face was enlivened by close-set eyes of an indescribable hue. Like the man’s complexion, they were tawny and cat-like and the pupils appeared to contract and expand with the fellow’s emotions. The skipper noticed that they were contracted now and this peculiarity commanded Spencer’s notice.

“Yes, sir, it was very strange,” the steward continued—his face stolid but the eyes narrowed to pin-points pupils. He spoke calmly as though he had sensed the doubt in the other’s mind. “Breeze and sea came up all of a sudden-like under a cloudless sky. The wave that boarded her, sir, had all the appearance of a tidal wave—a most extraordinary comber. After sweeping the poop, the wind fell flat and it was all over within an hour. A submarine earthquake possibly, sir.” His speech was that of an educated man in spite of lapses into ship-board idioms. His explanation sounded plausible and he continued. “And who may be addressing, sir, if I may ask?”

“My name is Spencer,” replied Billy. “I’m skipper of that fishing schooner over there and I’ll take your ship into Boston. I can’t take her to New York as I want to join my vessel again as soon as possible.” He turned and indicated Comstock. “This is my mate, Mr. Brown.”

The steward favored Mr. “Brown” with a searching glance. For a passing moment it seemed as though a startled expression showed in his

shifting eyes. The pupils seemed to be absorbed in the tawny iris for a second; then they regained their normal appearance again and his face became void of emotion. "Boston will do just as well, sir," he said. "We can get other officers there. If you'll follow me, I'll show you the chart-room."

When Smith, carrying their bundles, clambered up the poop ladder, Spencer allowed his glance to rove around the ship. The crew—the usual crowd of variously-garbed nondescripts—were gathered in a mob to one side of the deck, while two men stood on top of an after deck-house and seemed to be watching the others furtively. The crowd at the rail were strangely silent and there appeared to be an air of sullen indifference in their attitudes and expressions. One man, clad in a soldier's khaki tunic, appeared to be eyeing those on top of the deck-house in passive resentment.

An owl-faced fellow with typical Slavonic features was pacing the poop and the steward called him over. "Captain Spencer," said Smith. "This is Kimeneff—the second mate. He speaks a little English—enough to understand and give orders—but he can't navigate."

The officer smiled and raised his hat to Spencer's nod, and the latter passed on and entered the chart-room. A chart was spread out on the table and Billy scrutinized it while Comstock and Smith stood outside.

"What's yer cargo, Mister?" asked Comstock giving his words a "Down-east" twang. The steward looked at him sharply. "Case oil, sir," he replied.

"She's a Russian, ain't she?" questioned the other, and added, "Ain't a Bolsheviki Russian, is she?"

The steward laughed—a metallic cackle which grated on the ear.

"Hardly, sir. She's one of the Republican side—the anti-Bolshevik—with no home port. She hasn't been in Riga since the Revolution. Her owners are living in France, I believe. Our unfortunate captain was part owner of the ship. . . ." He paused and called to the second mate. "Vassili Ivanovitch!"—addressing him in the Russian manner. . . . "Tell those fellows on the house there that the stays'l is alright now. They're only loafing." Comstock, watching him furtively, noticed the meaning glint in his eyes when he spoke.

He turned and smiled. "Though I'm the steward of this ship, yet I've practically had to take charge of her since the officers went. Kimeneff is a clod—a stupid ass!"

Spencer had been doing some figuring on the chart and he looked up. "Does the crew understand English? Are they all Russians?" he asked.

“Most understand English, sir,” replied the steward. “They’re all nationalities, but English is the ship’s language.”

Billy walked aft to the steering compass. A man was at the wheel lolling over the spokes. “Let ’er go West b’ North when I get her braced around,” he said and the man promptly reiterated, “Vest by Nort sir, ven she’s braced around!” in an accent betraying the Scandinavian. Striding to the poop-break, Spencer sung out for the bo’sun and one of the men who had been standing on top of the deck-house came aft.

“Swing yer main-ards and take a pull on yer lee braces. We’ll brace her up on the port tack. And, bo’sun, get some more sail on her. You can give her t’gan’s’ls and royals and the mizzen and maintopm’s’t stays’ls.”

The steward vanished below and Billy spoke to the lumbering Kimeneff. “I jest told the bo’sun to brace her up on the port tack and to set more sail. You’d better tend to the weather braces and see the sails set.”

“Yaas, I do so, sir,” replied the Russian and he clattered down the ladder to the main-deck.

When he had gone, Spencer turned with studied carelessness to Comstock and asked quietly: “Are you sure of your man? Did he recognize you, d’ye think? It’s that there stoo’ard, ain’t it?”

“I’m dead sure,” replied the other in a vehement undertone. “It’s that red-headed steward and he doesn’t know me. He didn’t see much of me anyhow and I’ve grown this beard and got much thinner.”

Billy lit up a cigarette, blew a puff of smoke, and a puzzled expression crossed his features. “D’ye know, Brown; there’s something darn fishy about this hooker.” He paused and indicated the men working at the fore-braces with a jerk of his head. “Those fellers for’ad are pullin’ without singin’ out. That’s a bad sign on a windjammer. When men don’t chanty or sing out there’s something wrong. They’re sulky and sore about something. Then again, Brown, your friend the stoo’ard is lying. There ain’t been any breeze around these parts that ’ud kick up sea enough to poop a ship like this and wash skipper and mate over the side. That’s pure bunk—tidal wave, submarine earthquake and all. Another darned queer thing! I h’ard that Smith tell you that she’d a cargo of case oil. They don’t carry case oil from Glasgow to New York, but they might carry it from New York to Glasgow.”

“Then what do you think?” asked Comstock with some concern.

“I don’t believe she’s from Glasgow at all. She’s from an American port and not long out by the clean hull on her. And furthermore, I believe that stoo’ard’s a proper ruddy villain and he’s shoved the skipper and mate over the side and seized the ship. Jest look at some o’ them fellers for’ad there! D’ye notice how some of them are kinder proddin’ the others? That crowd ain’t working with a will! They’re being bullied or I don’t know the signs. That bo’sun there and them three at the fore t’ gallant braces—proper bloody toughs by the hard-bitten mugs on them? Your pal, Jimmy the Red, is evidently tryin’ his hand at some other deviltry and we’d better be on our guard. I wish I’d told the *Alfarata* to keep handy to us runnin’ in.”

He glanced around the sea-line to where the schooner’s sails made two faint sawtooths on the horizon, and continued, “Have you any plans in regard to yer red-topped friend?”

The other shook his head. “Not yet,” he admitted. “I’ve got to wait my chance now and see how things shape up. What you’ve told me about things on this ship makes it very difficult to plan anything. We’re only two against goodness knows how many. And he’s a dangerous devil, a very, very dangerous man. He’s no fool or half-baked schemer, but a man of profound education in a certain way—absolutely unscrupulous, determined, and as devilish as a rattle-snake. He’s a radical of the radicals, a Red, a Bolshevik, and he’s been the prime mover in all kinds of outrages and disturbances. And they have never caught him. He’s too clever.”

Spencer looked at the other curiously. “How did you get mixed up with him, might I ask?”

Comstock gave an apparently careless glance around and spoke softly.

“I was a chemist in the employ of the Plenzer Iron Works at Delancey, Pennsylvania, and during a spell of labor troubles I got infected with the Socialism germ. I attended meetings of the workers and listened to the oratory of Socialists, O.B.U’s, I.W.W’s, and so on and I was interested in the Utopian theories advanced. I studied Karl Marx and the writings of others and became somewhat fascinated by their ideas. I would have been nothing more than a *dilettante* at Socialism were it not for the high-handed manner in which the Plenzer people tried to break the Unions and the rotten tricks they played. I knew of these things and my sympathies were with the workers.

“I was a Moderate at first, but when Plenzer’s dismissed me suddenly for my beliefs, I became almost a radical and fraternized with a violent crowd. I

was introduced into the inner circles and saw this man Kowalsky at a secret meeting when it was proposed to blow up the Plenzer plant. I had become so angry at their treatment of their employees that I made no opposition to the plan. Then Kowalsky did the job, but he did it in such a manner as to incriminate me. I was properly framed up and given ten years hard labor. . . .” He stopped as the crew came up on the poop to man the main-braces and set the mizzen sails. Spencer glanced at the canvas on the main and turned to see the steward talking to the man at the wheel. He had come up the after-companion. He gave a furtive look to where Comstock and Spencer stood and then came respectfully forward—treading the planks with almost feline pacings.

“Breakfast is on the table, sir,” he said, addressing the skipper. Spencer laughed. “We had breakfast about five, but cal’late we kin eat again. How about it, Brown?”

“Lead me to it, Cap! Lead me to it! Reckon I never refuse grub at any time.” Smith gave an odd smile and went below.

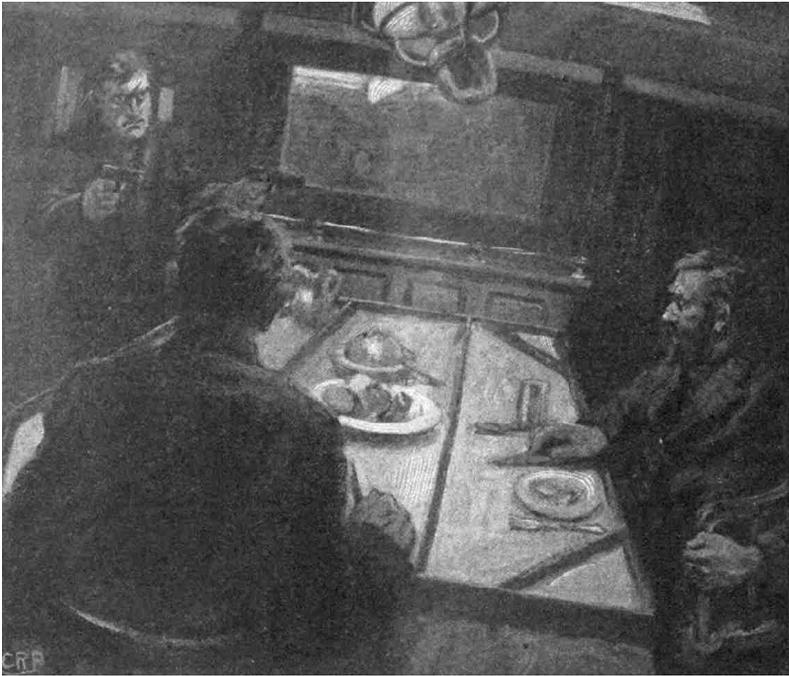
The Russian second mate came up on the poop and Billy addressed him. “West b’ North, Mister, and don’t let her go any to the nor’ad.” The man repeated the course and the others went down into the saloon.

The steward sent the food to the table by a gawky, sallow-faced English lad and the two men ate silently. Both were thinking, planning and scheming. Comstock busied his brains on ways and means for securing Kowalsky, alias Smith, and wringing a confession from him, while Spencer worried over this, the queerness of things on the ship, and the astonishing freak of fortune which required his presence in Victoria on August ninth. Mixed with his reflections were thoughts of Mabel Comstock.

Billy was vaguely wondering if Mabel would marry him whatever happened and Comstock was ruminating upon the irony of being waited upon by the man he wanted to extort his freedom from, when a grunt from the steward caused them to look up suddenly. Smith, his lips a thin resolute line, his prognathous jaws hardset and giving his pallid face a formidable aspect, was staring at them with unwinking amber eyes—menacing, with pupils contracted to pin-points—and as coldly fascinating as a snake’s. In his hands he held two blued-steel automatics—both pointing unwaveringly at their heads. “I’m sorry, gentlemen,” he said, coldly polite, “but just place your hands on the table, if you please. That’s right! Now, we’ll talk business.”

“What th’ devil’s th’ matter with you?” sputtered Billy angrily. He was furious with himself for having been caught napping. Comstock was gasping, open-mouthed, in stupid bewilderment.

The steward disregarded Spencer’s question. “I’m sorry to have to do this, but I must ask you, Captain, to change your plans a little. We want to head this ship the other way. New York or Boston has no interest for us. We left the Big Burg a week ago and the U.S.A. is no longer a desirable habitation for me and my friends. You’ll come to no harm if you do what you’re told. . . .”



“What d’ye want us to do?” blurted the skipper wonderingly, still held impotently by the unwavering weapons.

“What d’ye want us to do?” blurted the skipper wonderingly.

“Navigate the ship to the Baltic, if you please,” answered the other calmly and still covering the two. “You put her into the Gulf of Finland and we’ll pay you both well for your trouble and send you home, passage paid, and unharmed. Refuse!”—he paused for a moment and continued with menacing slowness—“and I’ll shoot you dead where you sit!” And the cold

glare in his glowing eyes impressed Spencer with the fact that he would act upon his threat without the least compunction.

“What th’—who th’ deuce are you, anyhow?” growled Billy—stalling for time and a chance to think, while Comstock gulped and piped inanelly, “Yes, yes, Mister! Who are you—and—and what have we done?” He looked more vacuous than ever.

The other favored Comstock with a contemptuous glance then he laughed—the metallic cachinnation which jarred the ear—and straightened his shoulders. He lowered the weapons a trifle and drew a deep breath. “Who am I?” he reiterated, addressing Spencer. The fellow had an audience to impress and he could not resist old habits. “Who am I?” he repeated again. “I’m a man of many names but in the inner councils they know me as Jan Kowalsky or ‘Jimmy the Red.’ I’m a leader among my fellows and they are now as numerous as the sands of the sea. I’m an emissary of a mighty experiment and I affect the social creed known to the vulgar in America as the Bolshevik. I am a Russian of the Russians, a Pole of the Poles, an American of the Americans—in short, I am a citizen of the world. I am at once a peasant and a master of socialistic education. I am a . . .” He broke off with a contemptuous snort.

“Pah! I’m talking above your ignorant seaman’s understanding. I’ll talk ship for a change and you’ll get me. This packet was in New York loading for France. She flew the flag of the First Revolution and her owners—poor fools—were pinning their faith on Kolchak—the capitalistic bungler who thought he could sweep the Red Flag from Soviet Russia. Myself and a few other comrades were being hounded out of dollar-controlled America and we decided to head for Soviet Russia. We shipped in this vessel—her skipper was glad to get men who spoke his own lingo and we bluffed him that we were Kolchak fans and Bolshevik haters—and the *Gregory* is now Soviet property. I made a mess of my story to you and I saw that you doubted it. I’m not any too familiar with seafaring. If I were, we’d have not been obliged to pick you two men up. But we tossed the skipper and the two mates overboard—there were two mates, my friends, for Comrade Kimeneff is merely a sailor and was never second mate—and afterwards found out that we were a bit hasty. There were no navigators aboard so we contrived to hook you two fishermen. That’s the story of the *Gregory’s* voyage to date.”

The menacing look seemed to have faded from Kowalsky’s face and he regarded them with tolerant amusement. He sat down at the other side

of the table and placed his weapons upon it and within instant reach of his hands. Spencer reached out his foot and gave Comstock a light kick, inwardly praying that he would receive and understand the telepathic message that went with it, then with an injured expression on his boyish features, he grumbled:

“Well, Mister, we ain’t got no quarrel with the Bolsheviks or Russia or anyone and I don’t see why you need to spring yer plans on us two poor devils of fishermen with a couple o’ pistols in yer mitts. We ain’t armed and we ain’t lookin’ for trouble, and what could we do aboard this hooker to you fellers? You only needed to come to us, gentleman-like, and tell us your proposition and make it worth our while. Me’n Brown here’ll be glad enough to pick up an extra dollar or two these hard times.”

Kowalsky, at the other side of the table, was smiling and leaning back in his chair but with his hands near the automatics. He appeared to be enjoying the effect of his hold-up in Spencer’s placating talk and Comstock’s floundering wits.

“Now, Mister,” ventured Spencer respectfully, “how much will you pay us. . . .” The young skipper gave Comstock another kick and continued, “. . . . to take the ship across. . . .” Quicker than a flash, he clutched the tablecloth with a contraction of his outspread fingers and hauled it towards him with a mighty downward jerk of his arms. The guns leaped away from Kowalsky’s hands and as the man swung himself forward to secure them, Comstock jumped up and pinned him to the table. Billy grabbed the weapons from out of the debris at his feet and gave the Bolshevik a terrific blow on the side of the head. Before Kowalsky could cry out, Billy had him pounded into insensibility.

“A poor lousy sculpin for sich a hellion as he makes himself out to be,” growled Spencer, hauling the inanimate steward aft and away from the skylight. “He looked hell’n all when he was giving us his little song-and-dance, didn’t he? And he fell for a pair of bone-head fishermen.” He stopped and espied the cabin-boy peering fearfully from out the pantry. “Grab that kid in the pantry, Brown, and don’t let him sing out or skip for’ad. I’ll tie up this red-haired Soviet rat.”

Comstock came aft with the English cabin-boy in his grip. The lad was terribly frightened.

“You’re English, ain’t you?” barked Spencer. “You ain’t one of them Sovietsers, are you? No, I thought not. Now, son, tell me? Are the hands

aboard here all Bolsheviks? Ain't there no white men among them? Are they all Red?"

The English lad recovered his wits and answered haltingly. "There's abaht six h'of them for'ad wot's Bolsheviks sir. The h'others were forced into h'it, sir."

"You're a smart lad," snapped Billy. "Now, son, you don't want to be hung for mutiny and bloody murder on the high seas, do you? Of course not! Well, I'm agoin' to give you a little job. You jest go for'ad and tell two of the hands what ain't Bolsheviki that they're wanted in the saloon. Pick out the best. Can you do that? Have ye two men in mind?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy confidently. "There's two A.B.'s—Andrew h'an' Peter. One's Scotch, t'other's Norwegian h'and they h'ain't Reds."

"Skip long and git 'em, son!" Spencer turned to Comstock. "We'll chuck this Kowalsky joker into a room and lock him up, and when those men come aft, we'll go up and pay our respects to that second mate. He'll be lookin' for his breakfast soon."

Two typical deep-water seamen shambled respectfully inside the cabin door with their hats in their hands. One was dressed in a faded khaki tunic and Spencer recognized him as the man who expressed passive resentment in his face earlier in the morning. "I've just clipped the wings of that ruddy stoo'ard," said Billy calmly, "after he flashed a couple of guns at us and tried to make us run the hooker for Red Russia and Mister Lenin. Now, you men, I cal'late you don't want to get your necks stretched for makin' away with your skipper and mates, do you?"

The others shook their heads vigorously and the man in the soldier's tunic growled sourly, "We're no Bolsheviks, sir, but we couldna help oorsel's. There's six bleedin' gun-men amang th' hands ready tae blaw oor heids aff if we look skelly-eyed. . . ."

"Good enough, I believe you! Now, I'm agoin' to take charge of this hooker and run her for Boston. I'm agoin' to let you two fellers go for'ad again and tip off the honest-to-goodness guys what's happening. I'm agoin' to muzzle that second mate in a minute and when I sing out 'Aft here, the white men!' you get your fellers to run up on the poop. Think you can remember that?"

The Scotchman smiled, "Shairly, sir!"

“Right! Away for’ad and do that little thing and see you don’t spill the beans!”

Mr. Kimeneff was relieved by Comstock and clumped down the after-companion, hungry for his breakfast. Between the foot of the stairs and the mizzen-mast, he was met by Spencer who prodded him under the ear with the cold muzzle of an automatic pistol and signed to him to sit down on the plush settee aft of the mast and place his hands behind him. The English cabin-boy, trembling, snapped a pair of rusty hand-cuffs on his wrists and Kimeneff was ordered to rise and allowed himself to be piloted to a spare room. Here he was leg-ironed and locked in to ruminate over what had happened and to mourn the loss of his liberty and his breakfast.

Pocketing the pistol, Spencer went up on the poop. The breeze was freshening and there were signs of dirty weather to the sou’west. He stood alongside the man at the wheel and glanced into the compass.

“Der vind is knocking her off,” observed the man. “She’s two points to der nor’ard now, sir.”

Spencer nodded and walked to the poop-break to where Comstock stood. A group of the hands were loafing around the donkey-boiler room. “Look after that feller at the wheel, Comstock,” said Billy shortly. “The fun’s beginning.” And he roared: “Aft here, the white men!”

At the strange command a mob of sixteen dungaree-clad shell-backs of various nationalities padded along the main-deck at the run and swarmed up the lee poop ladder headed by Scotch Andy and Norwegian Peter. Around the donkey-room stood six of the hard-bitten characters Spencer had noticed, and they were staring at the run-aways in surprise. One of them was the bo’sun, and he was the first to recover. He lugged an automatic out of his pocket and was about to fire at the crowd huddled on the poop when Spencer forestalled him with a couple of shots which struck the steel sides of the house. The bo’sun and his five companions hastily ducked into the donkey-room.

Andy remarked calmly, “All them yins for’ad noo are Bolsheviks and they’ve a’ got pistols. ’Twas them was shot an’ kil’t th’ skipper and th’ twa mates. . . .”

As he spoke, a pistol cracked and a bullet whipped a splinter from the teak rail near him. “That’s yon ruddy donkey-man,” growled Andy unmoved. The mob on the poop scattered for the shelter of the masts and

deck-houses or grovelled on the planks. Spencer, himself, lost no time in flopping to the deck when a fusillade of bullets whined over his head.

“I ain’t a strategist,” he murmured regretfully, “or I’d have thought out a better way than this.” He glanced carefully around to see who was at the wheel and found to his satisfaction that the man was a loyalist.

Billy looked carefully over the bucket-rack for’ad and saw the six gunmen watching the poop from over the winch in the donkey-room. The donkey-boiler was located in the after part of the midship-house and the donkey-room was partly open where the winch was bedded. Billy raised his automatic and essayed another shot. The bullet “clinged!” on the barrel of the winch and the six heads vanished. A moment later another volley from forward ripped splinters from the rail and “spanged!” on the iron shaft of the mizzen-mast. “Humph!” remarked the skipper calmly, “I reckon they’re well-heeled.” Spencer ruled the ship aft, but the others held her forward. But Billy’s crowd had some freedom of movement and possessed the ship’s stores, whereas those in the donkey-room could not get out of their fortress without the risk of being shot from the poop.

While his men were below in the saloon searching for weapons, Spencer and the Scotchman crawled into the chart-house. They flopped on the settees as a bullet smashed the glass of the forward windows. “A desperate gang—them Bolsheviks,” remarked Billy. “How’ll we drive ’em out or make ’em surrender?”

The sailor laughed grimly. “They’ll no surrender easy, them chaps. They’re a cauld-blooded crowd. Ye sh’d ha’ seen th’ way they did for the poor auld skipper and the mates. Juist stood aff and filled them wi’ lead—th’ bluidiest piece o’ wark I’ve seen in a dog’s age—and that swab of a steward standin’ by smilin’ wi’ them bleedin’ cat’s eyes o’ his. There’s only yin way I’d want tae drive them oot, sir, and that’s with a Mills’ bomb same’s we did in France.”

Spencer smiled. “We’ll have to use different tactics here, I cal’late. There ain’t no bombs here, I reckon.” Then a thought struck him and he turned to the Scot. “You’ve bin a soldier I take it? Yes? Well, you take this gun and these clips o’ cartridges and keep them guys from coming out of that donkey-room. I’ll slip below a minute.” He handed the automatic over and slid out and down to the cabin. The ship was still heading on her course and the helmsman, sheltered by the deck-houses, was able to steer standing up.

Below in the saloon, the loyal hands were clustered forward watching the donkey-room through the ports in the fore-end of the saloon bulkhead. They were armed with various weapons in the shape of iron belaying pins and hatch battens. Comstock had found another automatic in the second mate's room and a supply of cartridges.

“Look, Mr. Comstock, I have an idea,” said Billy. “Dirty weather's a-comin' and we've got to get those jokers out of that donkey-room. I'm afraid to rush them—they're too well armed. But we've got to be able to work the gear or something'll happen when the wind comes down. Now, is there any way in which we could make a bomb same's the soldiers used in France when the war was on?”

The other paused from filling a clip of cartridges and showed interest in the suggestion. “Why, yes, it might be done, if we had the chemicals. . . . Then let's overhaul the medicine chest in the mate's room,” interrupted Spencer. Both men entered the deceased officer's berth and Comstock opened the large mahogany chest found therein. He examined the labelled bottles with professional interest. “We've got saltpeter and sulphur here,” he murmured hopefully, “and here's a little nitric acid. There's a jar of glycerine, and by Jupiter! here's sulphuric acid. . . .”

“Could you do anything with them distress rockets up in the chart-room?” queried the skipper.

The other turned to him with an exultant smile on his face. “Get them,” he said quickly, “also some small tins or jars. Leave me for a while and I'll mix up something devilish enough to blow those fellows out of that place and into the middle of next week.”

The skipper left him busy with the chemicals and the rockets and went up on the deck to the chart-house. “I juist clipped the ear off o' yin o' them blighters,” growled Scotty. “They were gettin' gay. . . .”

“We're agoin' to make some bombs,” interrupted Billy, “my friend's a chemist and he's busy manufacturin' something that'll do the trick.”

Andy gave a pleased chuckle. “You juist let me fling them there bombs and I'll show you how we did it in th' bombin' squad o' the Argyll an' Sutherland' Hielanders. I c'd chuck yin frae here that'll hae them Bolshies oot o' yon hoose in wee bits o' red meat, b'Goad!” And he grinned with bloodthirsty gusto.

Spencer was perturbed by the look of the weather. The barometer was tumbling down and the sky was piling up with black clouds to the westward.

The wind was light and flickering and the canvas slatted and shivered against the masts. "It's agoin' to blow," he remarked to his companion. "Call the hands and we'll try and get some of the after sail off her."

Sheltered by the quarter-boats, the hands slacked off sheets and halliards and manned clew-lines, down-hauls and bunt-lines and through careful manoeuvring managed to get the mizzen-royal, mizzen-topgallant and mizzen-upper-topsails confined in their gear. The *Gregory* was well-fitted with bunt-lines and the sails were snug enough for squalls as far as the mizzen was concerned, but if it blew hard it would be necessary to go aloft and make the canvas fast to prevent it from being slatted to ribbons.

Spencer was somewhat relieved when the after canvas was reduced down to a lower-mizzen-topsail. "We'll head her east and take this squall dead aft," he said to Andy. "Let's square the main-yards now if we can. We'll have to let the fore-yards take care of themselves as we can't get to the fore-braces."

They squared away under a hail of bullets from forward but as long as the men crouched low none of the shots could take effect. Nobody dare approach the fore-end of the poop without crawling. It was an odd situation and Spencer, with the threat of the weather occupying his thoughts, glanced anxiously at the great squares of canvas on the fore and main. "With all that muslin on her," he murmured to himself, "she'll jump the sticks over the side if the wind comes on us but end first. But, until we can muzzle those murdering devils for'ad, we can do no more than we have done in stripping her for heavy weather."

Before dinner, a heavy puff of wind whirled down and sent the *Gregory* scampering east with her clewed-up mizzen canvas flogging in the gear. It soon died away and while they munched a cold dinner, the ship lay rolling in a windless swell.

At one o'clock, great drops began to fall on the decks from an overcast sky and Spencer whistled at the sight of the low barometer. "Cripes!" he muttered anxiously, "we're agoin' to get some dirt." And he mentally quoted the old sea distich—

"When the rain's before the wind, Tops'l-sheets and halliards mind!"

It was coming down in torrents when Comstock crawled into the chart-room with four innocent-looking condensed milk cans strapped and bound with wire in his hands. "I've got something real devilish here," he said

pridefully as he deposited them carefully upon the settee. “I used the chemicals in the medicine chest and some of the ingredients in those distress rockets. They’re vicious—so be awfully careful with them.”

The ex-soldier picked one up and scrutinized it with professional interest. “A fuse bomb—juist like them jam-pots we used in France afore they give us the proper hand grenades. Anything in it ’sides explosive?”

“Tacks, screws, and bits of steel,” returned Comstock. “The fuse is timed for a throw from the rail yonder.”

“I’ll chuck yin at them noo, if ye like. Captun. . . .”

Spencer pursed his lips. “I don’t like the idea of wiping them out altogether,” he said. “It’s a terrible thing to kill a man. . . .”

The Scotchman favored him with a grim smile. “Captun,” he said solemnly, “ye don’t need to waste ony sympathy on them blighters. Ef you’d ha’ seen the cruel, cauld-bluided manner in which they kil’t the skipper and mates aboard here, ye’d wipe ’em oot without ony scruples. They riddled the auld skipper wi’ bullets—every win o’ them shootin’ intae his body—and yin o’ them went up tae the young second mate an’ blew th’ face aff him while he was on his knees begging for a chance tae live.”

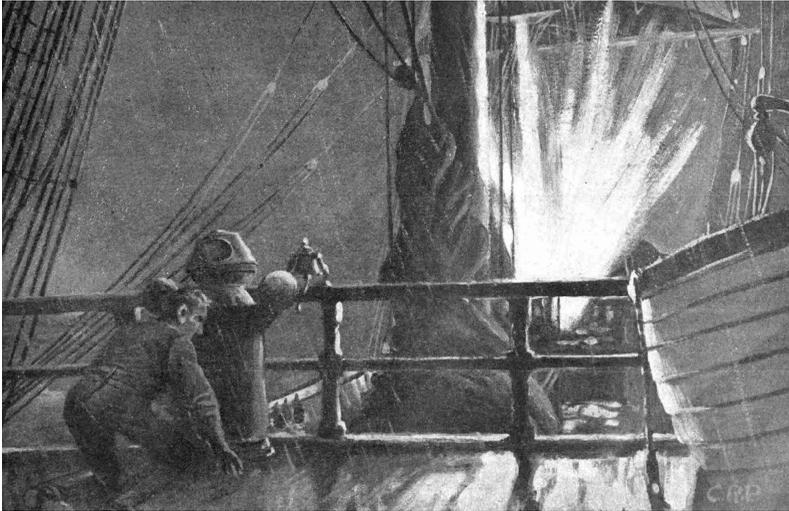
Spencer nodded. “I reckon you’re right. How about their guns? You’re liable to get plugged goin’ for’ad. . . .”

The other smiled. “I’m no feart o’ bullets,” he said drily. “I’ve heard a when o’ them in ma time.” He bit off a chew of tobacco and continued. “Bide you here, now, and watch me mop up yon donkey-room pill-box in style.” And he slithered out into the rain with the wire-bound condensed milk can clutched in his fist.

The men, in their sodden clothing, crouched around the poop and watched the Scot with palpitating hearts and anxious eyes. Some, over eager to see, exposed themselves and brought a fusillade of bullets zipping and whining. Andy turned around and cursed the careless ones with biting oaths, then, like a stranded seal endeavouring to make the water, he crawled on his stomach over the sluicing planks towards the poop-break. He reached the standard compass and cautiously peered forward in the direction of the donkey-room from which the automatics were spitting viciously. Then, squatting on his heels behind the binnacle stand, he struck a match to ignite the fuse. The spectators aft held their breath. It was a tense moment.

There came a muttered curse from Andy. The match had gone out in the downpour. He struck another, and the audience, with nerves stretched to breaking, almost shouted aloud at the delay. Had the fuse become wet? The second match went out. He opened the door to the compass stand and clumsily struck a light therein. Twice he started, and the crowd winced with him. They could almost hear the fuse sputtering.

Suddenly, the Scot leaped to his feet. His right arm swung back, then forward and the gleaming tin spun—terribly slowly it seemed—through the air. In its parabola it grazed a slack bunt-line and lobbed downwards to the opening in the donkey-room. The watchers, awestruck and dumb with excitement, braced themselves for what would follow. Bullets were clanging against the mast and the ship was rolling quietly in the swell with the rain pelting down from the brooding skies. It seemed an eternity since the missile of death was thrown.



Then came instantaneously a stunning, ear-splitting detonation followed by the clatter and clang of iron. The ship trembled to the shock.

Expected, yet unexpected, mind and eye and ear comprehended a swift and terrific vision of red and yellow flame which illuminated the dripping sails and spars and transformed the pattering raindrops into globules of blood and gold. Then came instantaneously a stunning, ear-splitting detonation followed by the clatter and clang of iron. The ship trembled to the shock, an acrid smoke belched up, and a man was shrieking.

Out on deck jumped Spencer. “For’ad with you fellers,” he roared, and down the poop ladder he leaped with the bolder hands at his heels.

Bulged and twisted iron plating and a gaping hole in the roof of the donkey-room testified to the power of Comstock's grenade. Inside the place, misty with curling wisps of smoke, a man whom they recognized as the bo'sun was screaming and tearing burning rags of clothing from his body. His face was blackened and bleeding. Two men were squirming on the shattered concrete floor—moaning and clawing amidst three silent black and smouldering heaps.

“Square the fore-yards!” bawled Spencer—glancing apprehensively at the track of the squall along the water. The men were pulling desperately at the fore-braces when the wind came a-roaring. Bang! The main-royal burst and a raffle of canvas rags slashed from the yard and festooned the stays. “Leggo yer r'yal an' t' gallant-halliards!” shouted the skipper as he ran for that of the main-upper-topgallant-sail and let it run. He and Andy manned the down-hauls and brought the yard down to the topmast cap.

For an hour the short-handed crowd toiled aloft making the canvas fast while the *Gregory* ran before the squalls under six topsails. “This is the breaking up of our fine weather,” growled Spencer dismally to Comstock as they stood on the poop in the wind and rain, “and we're runnin' east like a hound.” Billy was thinking of that Victoria estate and every mile the old ship romped to the east'ard lessened his chances of making a bid for it. He had less than seven whole days to reach the Pacific coast city. Here he was two hundred and sixty miles east of Boston and heading for Europe on an uncertain sailing wind-bag. He squinted to windward and growled a sailor's anathema on the weather, murmuring, “But I'll soon fetch you up, my lady, when the squalls ease off.”

Comstock went below and did not appear on deck during the afternoon. Billy thought the rolling of the ship had affected him but he had no time to find out. The weight of the wind blowing compelled him to strip the fore and mizzen-upper-topsails off her. A big sea rose under the impetus of the wind and the ship rolled and plunged heavily amidst the cresting combers. Night shut down black, with the stars obscured by sullen clouds and at eight bells Billy decided to make the mizzen lower and main upper topsails fast.

The English cabin-boy managed to rustle some food on to the table for supper and when he came down to the meal, Spencer noticed, with surprise, that Comstock had shaved his beard off. He was seated at the table and apparently unaffected by the ship's motion. “Yes,” he explained. “I did so before interviewing Friend Kowalsky. I had a pleasant hour with him. He recognized me quick enough. . . .”

“Was he scared?” enquired the skipper.

“He has too much control of his feelings to express surprise at anything, but it jarred him though. I could see that.”

“How about the confession?”

“Laughed at me with his cursed cackle,” answered Comstock, “and started to bargain. Said he’d give me a confession to the Plenzer job if we’d put him aboard an eastbound ship. I told him that he was in no position to bargain and that I would see him switched into Eternity for his work aboard here. He dared me to prove that he had anything to do with it. He’s a hard case, but I’ll get him yet. He’ll sign gladly before I’m through with him.”

Spencer made a hasty repast and left for the deck—leaving the other to his own resources.

After supper, Comstock showed considerable activity and spent some time carefully drafting out a paper for Kowalsky to sign. Then he carried the pen and ink and the paper to the prisoner’s berth and, after lighting the lamp, laid them on the small desk in the room. Kowalsky, lying in the bunk, and lashed up with small log-line from head to heels, favored him with a baleful glance from his tawny eyes. In the light of the lamp his heavy bulging jaws and his glinting malevolent gaze gave him an appearance strangely akin to a snake of the flat-headed deadly species.

“Well, my friend Comstock-Brown,” he jeered truculently, “what’s in your mind now? That confession. I presume?”

“Yes,” answered the other calmly, “the confession. I’ve written it out for you to sign.”

Kowalsky laughed in his irritating manner. “Let’s hear it, Comrade Comstock. Read it to me, Brother. It will while away these tedious hours of captivity.”

“You’ll not only hear it, Kowalsky,” remarked Comstock grimly, “but you’ll sign it with some haste after I get through with you.”

“That’s a threat, is it?” the other smiled derisively. “Say your little piece, Comrade—the audience awaits.”

Comstock read and the other listened with a supercilious expression upon his pallid face to the somewhat lengthy and all-embracing composition. Comstock was leaving no loop-holes.

“And I hereby declare and admit,” concluded the reader, “that the bomb used was planted by me and that I entered the Plenzer premises on the night of the bombing disguised to represent the said Comstock; that I forged Comstock’s handwriting in a threatening letter sent to Arnold Plenzer; that I arranged for Comstock to be in the vicinity of the plant at the time of the bombing by means of a fake message, and that all my actions were designed to throw the blame for the crime on the said Edgar Comstock.” Comstock paused and added grimly, “That’s what you’re going to sign!”

The captive cackled mockingly. The contracted pupils of his tawny eyes betokened the repressed hate and savagery which possessed him yet he controlled his feelings admirably. “What a nasty piece of dictation for a man to append his name to!” he flouted. “Crime?—you say! I refuse to acknowledge such a word for the end justifies the means. It was better for you to be the instrument than I, for I am the master. You were a handy tool. No, I don’t like your literary effort. I could have made a masterpiece out of such a momentous document. You’ve made a botch. . . .”

“Never mind its deficiencies,” interrupted the other coldly. “It’ll serve the purpose when your name’s at the foot of it.”

Kowalsky favored Comstock with a scornful flash of his tigerish eyes. “And my name will never appear at the foot of it,” he said with cold decision, “so you may tear up your little address of welcome and try something else.”

Comstock took no notice. He was irritatingly calm. After arranging the paper and ink and pen on the desk, he went to the large port-hole in the side of the berth and screwed it up as tight as the clamps would permit. Then, bracing his body to the rolling of the ship, he gave the room a careful scrutiny, and turned to Kowalsky. “When you are ready to sign, let me know. I won’t be far away.”

With eyes narrowed to slits, the captive drawled tauntingly, “Take yourself off, you poor fool. The prison odor clings to you. You are melodramatic. You make me weary, Mr. Brown-Comstock.”

Comstock locked the door carefully and clambered up on deck to where Spencer stood in the lee of the chart-house. It was black dark and raining; big seas were breaking phosphorescently in the gloom, and the ship, hove-to under fore and main lower topsails and fore-topmast stay sail, was plunging and rolling, while the gale whirred in her rigging as the masts swung to windward.

“I’m preparing to give Kowalsky a dose of third degree to make him sign a paper I’ve drawn up,” he said to Billy. “I’d like you to come below when he’s ready to sign.”

“You’re losing no time, Mister. Weather don’t stop you, does it?”

“With a man like Kowalsky, one cannot afford to delay. You can never tell what he may do.”

“What d’ye mean?” queried Billy. “D’ye think he’ll escape?”

“N-no! But he might make away with himself. His game is up as soon as we get in and I guess he knows it. He would die happy if he thought I had to serve out the balance of my term. He wouldn’t help me any.”

The other nodded. “You jest sing out when you want me.”

An hour later, the pallid-faced cabin-boy came upon the poop and called Spencer. “Mister Brown wants you h’immediately, sir.” And Billy followed him below, excited with curiosity.

When he entered the cabin, his nostrils were assailed by the acrid smell of burning sulphur and he sniffed wonderingly. Then Comstock hailed him and he approached the door of Kowalsky’s room to find the ventilators plugged and the door jambs covered with tacked canvas. Comstock was on his knees busily pumping sulphur fumes into the berth by means of a smoke-box used in fumigating. Sounds of violent choking and coughing, interspersed with vicious cursing, came from the interior of the apartment. “I’m giving him a rare drilling,” observed Comstock callously, “but it has to be done. He’ll be ready to sign in a minute.”

Within a minute, as forecast, Kowalsky gave in. “I’ll sign!” he gasped, and they opened the door hastily ere the man strangled. Coughing involuntarily, Comstock threw open the port-hole and allowed the fumes to dissipate with the entrance of the fresh draught. The prisoner gulped the clarified air with rasping inhalations—broken every now and again by paroxysms of racking coughs—and his peculiar eyes glowed with fury. “I’ll sign, curse you!” he wheezed viciously, “but God help you if I get a chance at you for this, Comstock!” There was portentous menace in the look he flashed at the chemist.

“I’m not losing any sleep over your chances,” retorted the other calmly. They hauled the man out and propped him up in a chair. His right hand was released from the lashings for an instant and he signed with trembling

caligraphy. Spencer witnessed the document and Comstock trussed Kowalsky up again. They gave him a drink of water and bundled him unceremoniously into the bunk and Comstock laughed exultantly. "Got it at last!" he cried, and they left the room with the prisoner's bitter oaths ringing in their ears.

The wind blew in hard squalls until midnight when the wind hauled enough to permit the ship to lay a course for Boston Bay. With the lessening of the gale's violence, Spencer turned the hands out to make sail. He was feeling more cheerful with the shift of wind, and, now that Comstock had cleared his character, Billy began to devote his energies to getting the *Gregory* into port that he might make a bid for his brother's property.

He had no idea of what the estate consisted nor its value. Neither did he know how long it would take him to cross the continent from Boston to Victoria, B.C. But when he swung the *Gregory* west again, he figured he had exactly one hundred and forty-four hours to make the trip, and he resolved to cover as many miles as he humanly could within the allotted time. A little money might help him to an existence less strenuous and precarious than that of a fishing vessel skipper; it might help him to win Mabel Comstock. The latter thought inspired him to make haste, and when the hands hoisted and sheeted home the three upper topsails, he gave orders for the main lower-topgallantsail to be set.

With a hard gale blowing and braced up, the old *Gregory* stormed along with her lee scuppers a broil of white water and solid green was cascading aboard by the weather fore-rigging. Andy kept the poop with Spencer and the two men discussed the *Gregory's* sailing abilities.

"She can sail, Captun," observed the Scot. "She was an auld London Australiaman afore the Roosians got her and ye can see she has clipper lines."

Spencer nodded and balancing to a lurching roll, he scanned the black rectangle of the main lower-topgallantsail showing against the sky. The foot of the sail was curved in an arc which betokened the great pressure of the wind which filled it. "How's her gear?" he asked.

"No bad, sir," replied Andy. "It's all fairly new and she's got a guid suit o' sails on her. She'll stand drivin' a bit. . ."

“I hope so,” said Billy quickly. “I’m going to try her. Get the crowd out and let them give her all she can hang. . . .”

The Scotchman looked at him questioningly. “Ye’ll be meanin’ juist tae gie her th’ fore lower-t’gan’s’l, I take it, sir. . . .”

“Aye,” said Spencer briskly, “and the fores’l, the upper main-t’gan’s’l, the mizzen t’gan’s’l, and mizzen and maintopm’s’t stays’ls. I’ll see how she stands that afore I give her any more.”

“She’s no’ a fishin’ schooner, this yin, sir,” ventured the other a trifle anxiously and hesitating ere he gave such an apparently rash order.

The skipper laughed and clutched the rail as the ship rolled her lee rail under in a heavy puff. “I know that, m’son. She c’d carry a fishin’ schooner on her davits. Give her the muslin, m’lad. What she won’t carry she can drag.”

The other still hesitated and looked aloft. “If ye set mair sail the noo, we’ll never be able tae tak’ it in,” he protested.

“You won’t have to. Get it on her. She’s too slow for my taste.”

Andy clawed his way for’ad to where the watch were sheltering in the wrecked donkey-room. The boiler itself was undamaged and the place had been cleared up. The bo’sun and another man were alive, though badly burned, and they were bandaged up and placed in fo’c’sle bunks. The four others were lying under the fo’c’sle-head where the sail-maker busied himself stitching them up in canvas shrouds.

“The young fella aft there is singin’ out for mair sail, lauds,” and he repeated the order. The men growled. “He’ll be jumpin’ the sticks out of her!” “She’ll be a half-tide reck!” So they opined, but at sea it’s a case of “growl ye may, but go ye must!” and they gave a hitch to their soul-and-body lashings and buttoned their sou’westers under their chins as they staggered forward to face the deluge of water at the fore gear.

From the poop, Spencer saw two hands scrambling up the fore-rigging and he knew that his orders were being carried out. A few minutes later, the big foresail was loosed and bellying and flogging in the gear. Then a hoarse chorus came echoing to his ears amidst the roar and swish of the sea, and when the sheet was hauled aft and the fore-tack swayed down on the cat-head, the *Gregory* felt the urge of the extra canvas. Whole seas came

thundering over her bows and seething brine came swirling to the poop ladders.

Andy came panting out of the gloom—his oilskins shedding salt water.

“We had a hell of a time gettin’ that fores’l on her, sir. D’ye no think that’s enough for juist the noo? There’s no livin’ for’ad and the sail-maker was sayin’ it’s nae manner o’ use for him tae stitch them Bolsheviks up as twa o’ them have been washed off th’ fore-hatch and over th’ side a’ready.” He stood respectfully awaiting Billy’s answer.



The ship was rushing along with thunderous roarings of outraged water thrust from her shearing bows.

The skipper scanned the straining fabric before him and gave a glance at sea and sky to windward. The ship was rushing along with thunderous roarings of outraged water thrust from her shearing bows and the big foresail bellied hard against the fore-stay and tugged at sheet and tack in two swelling breasts of canvas. The rounded arch of it told of tremendous wind-urge and Billy enjoyed the sight. He had sailed in square-riggers before, but only as a seaman. Here he was driving one, as he had often longed to drive one, and he was intoxicated by the thrill of it.

But he was a schooner man—a fisherman sail-dragger—and one of the Breckless type who cared little for spars and gear. No windjammer

skipper would press his ship as Spencer was doing. He judged the *Gregory's* capabilities just as he would judge a stoutly-rigged, well-ballasted Grand Banker.

“She hasn’t got her lee rail under yet,” he shouted in Andy’s ear. She took a lee roll that moment and rang the poop bell herself but Billy affected not to notice the denial on the ship’s part. “She’ll stand more. Away ye go on her stays’ls and we’ll give her the fore lower-t’gan’s’l as a starter.” Wild steering of the plunging, driving ship caused him to add: “And send a good hand to the lee wheel.”

The *Gregory's* crowd set the sails with many misgivings. “She’ll spill us all into the drink or something’ll go,” they forecast. “That fisherman we picked up is one of them Yankee-Bluenose sail-carriers.” Cursing with lurid deep-water oaths, they tugged and hauled at halliard and sheet, drenched with spray and often with their feet washed from under them by boarding dollops of green sea.

Spencer clawed his way aft and flashed an electric torch at the log-dial. It showed a speed of twelve knots since the fores’l was set—good going for a square-rigger in that sea. “This time tomorrer, if the wind holds, we sh’d be well,” he murmured. “Then, if I skip for a train, I might be about to make Victoria in time. Jupiter! I wish I knew how long it takes to go from Boston to Victoria.”

But not knowing stiffened his determination to drive the ship for all she was worth.

The crowd had just sheeted home the fore lower-t’gan’s’l when a panting figure cannoned into Spencer. He grabbed the person with quick hands wondering if it was friend or foe and in the shaded light from the chart-room windows saw it was the English cabin-boy, pallid and gasping.

“What’s up, boy?” barked Billy apprehensively.

“He’s escaped! He’s escaped! Shot the cook, sir! Oh, gorralmighty, sir, he shot at me. . . .!” He paused, choking, and caught the rail as the ship rolled.

“Who’s escaped?” Spencer reached under his oil-coat for his automatic and nerved himself for action.

“That stoo-ard, sir. That Bolsheviki feller. ’E called for Mister Brown, sir, ’n I ’eard a fight in ’is cabin, sir, h’an h’out ’e comes. The cook was goin’ dahn inter the lazareet for stores, sir, h’an he shoots ’im dead. . . .”

“Shoots who dead?”

“The cook, sir. . . .”

“Hell’s Bells!” ejaculated Spencer aghast. Kowalsky free and with a gun! Shot the cook! And Comstock? The skipper ran to the poop-break and roared for the watch to lay aft. As they shambled along the deck, he cursed them for their tardiness.

He met Andy at the poop ladder. “Kowalsky’s adrift and he’s got a gun. He’s done for the cook already and I guess Comstock as well. Come down with me! Got your gun? We’ll go down the after-companion. You others get belaying pins—anything—and enter the saloon by the main-deck door. Hurry, for God’s sake!” And followed by the Scotch sailor, he ran along the lurching deck for the after entrance to the cabin.

Kowalsky was just coming out of the room in which Kimeneff was confined when Spencer leaped down the cabin stairs. The after part of the saloon was dark but the skipper saw the man by the light from Kimeneff’s berth. The hands had opened the main-deck door and were gingerly stepping inside the saloon when Kowalsky saw them. With his tawny eyes blazing, he raised his automatic and fired two shots into the thick of them, but the rolling of the ship spoiled his aim. The bullets smashed the glass of a port and the crowd scrambled, panic-stricken, outside again. They were taking no chances.

Their entrance, however, diverted Kowalsky’s attention from Spencer and Andy. Billy, with pistol ready, swung around back of the stairs, leaving the Scotchman, also armed, where he was. By doing this the alley-way, in which Kowalsky stood, was blocked.

Spencer reached his position behind the steward. “Hands up, you blighter!” he roared, levelling his gun. Kowalsky tried to leap back into the room again but was blocked by the lumbering Kimeneff who was coming out. Andy fired, and his shot splintered the panelling alongside the man’s head. Quicker than the eye could follow him in the half-light, Kowalsky ducked to one side and jumped down the open lazarette hatch located under the cabin stairway. The heavy hinged hatch-cover slammed shut—effectually imprisoning Kowalsky below.

Kimeneff came out of the room and spied Andy at the fore-end of the alley-way. He had also secured a pistol and he began firing at the Scotchman who dodged instantly behind the stairway bulkhead. Billy could have killed

Kimeneff there and then but he disliked shooting the man in the back. Instead he shouted a command for the fellow to put up his hands. The Russian wheeled and fired. It was a snap shot but the bullet ripped the skipper's oil-skin coat and Billy also pulled the trigger. His bullet scored a furrow in Kimeneff's scalp and the man roared like a wounded bear.

The wound stung him to fury. He stood in the alley-way, balancing his body to the rolling of the ship, and yelling wild oaths and threats in Russian and broken English. He was enraged, and the expression on his heavy Slavonic features showed that the skipper's bullet had aroused in him the fanatic frenzy of the Berserkers. "Ay get von of you!" he bawled. "Angleesh son-of-a-peeg! Ay keel you!" And with the blood running down over his face, he looked a fearsome sight.

"'ull I plug him, Skipper?" yelled Andy.

"Not if you can possibly help it," he shouted back. And to Kimeneff, he said, "Drop that gun, you fool, or we'll shoot!"

The Russian winced at Billy's voice and he made a sudden dash for the bulkhead behind which Spencer sheltered. But Billy was not to be caught and had shifted his position around the partition which backed the cabin stairway. He had slipped off his heavy sea-boots in the meantime and he hurled one of them at the head of the Russian as he rushed, bull-like, around the corner. The boot was thrown with sufficient force to stagger the man and a lurch of the ship sent him flat on his back. He fired his automatic as he fell but the shots ripped into the overhead beams, and Andy ran along the alley-way and swung his foot at Kimeneff's head. The blow from his heavy boot sent the Russian into the land of dreams.

"Holy Mackerel!" panted Billy, "but that was a hot session! Tell those ruddy cowards to come in and fix things up here!" He lit the lamp in the alley-way and its light revealed a dark heap on the deck by the lazarette. It swayed slightly with the rolling of the ship, and Spencer, horror-struck, saw that it was the body of the cook. The man had been shot right between the eyes.

"God save us!" he muttered anxiously. "Where's Comstock?"

He found him lying on the floor in Kowalsky's late prison. He was bleeding from a blow on the back of the head and blood oozed slightly from a wound in the shoulder. With the aid of a sailor, he lifted the unconscious man on to a sofa and hastily opened his shirt. A small puncture in the

shoulder directly above the heart was bleeding and Billy examined the man with alarm. "Get me some brandy or whisky or rum," he ordered the cabin-boy. "The cut on the head isn't much but this looks dangerous." Andy entered, and Spencer, pointing to the shoulder wound, enquired: "What's that? Bullet wound?"

The other shook his head. "Don't look like it. Mair like a stab."

With the administration of the stimulants, Comstock regained consciousness and told what had happened. He was lying down on the settee in the after saloon feeling rather squeamish with the ship's motion and Kowalsky had shouted his name. Never dreaming that the man had wriggled out of his lashings, Comstock entered. Kowalsky, armed with a dagger which he had made out of a letter-spike, stabbed him in the shoulder as he passed the end of the bunk. He fell and struck his head on the corner of the desk and, as he lay insensible, Kowalsky possibly thought that he had stabbed him in the heart.

"Did he get your paper?" asked Spencer anxiously. The other gave a faint smile.

"No! I didn't carry it on me. It's safe enough."

Spencer had many things to attend to that morning. The ship was slugging along through the dark with a press of sail on her and required vigilant watching, and Kowalsky, with unknown potentialities for evil, was armed and loose in the lazarette.

"Could he set the ship afire?" he had asked Andy and had felt some relief when the other replied.

"Not much doon there tae burn and he canna get intae the hold. But if he had matches wi' him, ye canna tell."

Spencer, however, had searched Kowalsky, pretty thoroughly, and unless he had picked up some, he was not likely to have anything capable of raising fire.

He had just finished bathing and saturating Comstock's wounds with iodine and had made him comfortable in a lee-side berth with the English cabin-boy to watch him, when Andy returned.

"If he canna get fire, he can get water," he said calmly. "Oor Red freen's been busy doon ab'low. I can hear water pourin' intae th' lazareet. . . ."

“How can that happen?” asked Billy aghast. “He can’t knock a hole in an iron ship’s sides.”

“Naw,” returned the other, “but this yin used tae be an emigrant shup and there’s ports doon in her ’tween decks. Kowalsky has evidently opened the iron dead-lights and either opened the ports or knocked oot the gless. Wi’ her side doon in the water like it is the noo, it’ll no be lang afore there’s a power o’ water in her. Maybe enough tae scuttle her. . . .”

Spencer passed a hand across his eyes. “By the ol’ red-headed Judas Priest!” he ejaculated. “This is the hottest twenty-four hours I ever put in in all my ruddy existence. I sh’d ha’ shot that swine when I had the chance for I see us pullin’ for Boston in the boats yet!”

Spencer doused all the cabin lights and cautiously opened the lazarette hatch and the sound of rushing water was unmistakable. He shouted down into the blackness. “Come up out of that, Kowalsky!” But his only answer was a jeering laugh in the irritating manner Spencer had learned to hate.

“I’m going to flood her and sink her,” came the mocking voice out of the darkness, “and I’ll shoot the first man who attempts to come down. The law will never get me and I’ll do my little best to take a few of you pigs along when she goes. Move off. . . .”

There was a crack of a pistol and a bullet thudded into wood. Billy let the hatch slam and shot the bolt. “By golly!” he muttered dolefully. “I was never in the trenches, but I cal’late I’ve had as many bullets whizzin’ around me as any soldier this few hours. Them Bolsheviks must ha’ come aboard well-heeled.” In company with Andy, who was the best and most intelligent man in the *Gregory’s* polyglot crew, he sat down at the saloon table to discuss a plan of action.

“How can we stop that water from comin’ in?”

“Ef you were to run her off afore the wind,” replied Andy, “she wouldna take sae much as them ports are juist above her water-line.”

“We’re headin’ for Boston,” said the other grimly, “and she’s agoin’ to keep aheadin’ for Boston even ef she fills ’til she’s awash. The pumps are no use, you say?”

Andy nodded. “Ye see, Captun, there’s no scuppers in them ’tween decks that’ll let th’ water go down intae th’ bilges for th’ pumps tae get at it. That

lazaret'll fill tae th' beams wi' water and ye canna get it oot onless ye were tae bore holes in the deck o' th' place tae let it get ab'low."

Billy nodded and remained thoughtfully silent. Kowalsky knew that his life was forfeited as soon as the ship arrived, and he'd sooner die by drowning in the lazarette than face trial and the electric chair. Then again, a man of his callous type, would delight in dying if he thought he could carry Spencer and all the others to the bottom. With a gale blowing and a heavy sea running, the boats would have a hard time keeping afloat. It was doubtful if they could keep afloat.

"How can we get him out of his hole?" he asked the Scot.

"We might bomb him out," suggested the other, "but that's chancey. We might start the case-oil afire."

"How about sulphur?" ventured the skipper.

"No very easy. He's got th' ports open and it's a big place doon there."

Spencer smacked the table with his fist. "I have it," he ejaculated. "We'll drive him out by steam!"

The Scotchman caught the idea quickly. "I believe it can be done frae the donkey-b'iler. We can couple twa or three pipes or hose tae th' main supply comin' aft tae them after capstans an' th' cabin heaters and shoot them doon through holes in the cabin floor."

Spencer jumped to his feet. "Look after the job, Andy, and take all the hands you want. Hurry, now, or she'll be settlin' down on us." And he left for the deck again.

The weather was unchanged and the ship was still plunging and lifting through the big seas raised by the drive of the wind. Two men sweated in their shirt-sleeves at lee and weather wheel, and Billy noted with satisfaction that she was logging an even twelve knots.

It was breaking day-light by the time Andy reported the pipes coupled and a head of steam in the donkey-boiler. The lazarette ventilators were plugged and holes had been drilled, carefully and silently, through the cabin deck and the steam-pipes thrust in. Spencer carefully examined the arrangements. "Good enough," he said. "Now turn the steam in!" With the turning of a valve on the main-pipe, three jets of scalding vapor shot roaring into the lazarette and added their quota of sound to the swashing water below. There was something terrifying in the thought that a human being

was down in the blackness underneath facing the rising flood and the scorching steam and Billy steeled his heart to keep the valve open. After five minutes, he could stand it no longer and ordered the steam shut off. He could picture Kowalsky writhing under the scalding jets and his tender heart could endure the thought no longer.

“He’ll be deid after that dose,” observed Andy callously. Spencer ordered the lights turned down. Drawing his automatic and carrying an electric torch, he slipped back the bolt of the lazarette hatch and when Andy raised the heavy door, he flashed his light into the cloud of steam which billowed forth.

“Are you there, below!” he shouted, peering carefully into the vapor and standing clear of a possible fusillade.

“Are you there, Kowalsky?” he shouted again. There was no answer.

“He’s deid sure enough,” observed the Scot. “Nae human bein’ c’d stand five minutes under live steam. He’s a wee bit o’ suet by noo.” And he grinned grimly.

Spencer stood silent for a moment and the swash of water below spurred him to action. Someone would have to go down in the lazarette and see the condition of affairs. He spoke to Andy. “I cal’late I’ll slip down and have a look—”

“He might no be dead,” remarked a man apprehensively. “With the ports open, he might have kept clear of the steam and be waiting for someone to go below—”

“Aye, that may be so,” said Andy. “I’ve seen us chuck a bomb doon in a dug-out and have a ruddy fine wrassle when we went ab’low. But, Captun, if you’ll lead, I’ll follow.”

Spencer snapped off the torch and divested himself of his boots and Oilskins. He waited until the steam dissipated and descended the ladder in the blackness with automatic and torch ready. Andy followed behind.

They stood on the deck of the place with the water swashing around their knees in darkness that was almost palpable. The rolling of the ship was driving the water back and forth and at times they were deluged to the armpits. It was icy cold, but excitement deadened the chill of it and Spencer’s heart was pounding like a trip-hammer. The blackness awed him and he feared to flash his torch lest it should reveal the agonized face of the dead.

Something struck him and he started nervously. Reaching out with his hand he touched a floating flour barrel and gasped with relief. He fancied it might have been the corpse of the man he was seeking and he hesitated to switch on the torch and confirm the dread that possessed him. In the Stygian gloom there was an atmosphere of something portentous—depressing, ominous, and he was fearful but not afraid. Kowalsky's tawny eyes, leering and feline, appeared to dominate the place and he could picture their malevolent glare. If the man were dead, his malignant spirit seemed to pervade the dark.

With pistol levelled ready, he braced his feet to the lurching of the ship. Heavy breathing nearby caused him to start in alarm, until he remembered Andy. Then when the swirling water rolled away from him, he snapped the switch of the torch.

With the glare came a series of stunning explosions and a mocking laugh—the irritating cackle which Spencer knew so well—and Andy's voice boomed. "Tae starb'd wi' the light, Skipper! Tae starb'd." Spencer acted, sailor-like, on the order instantaneously. Over his shoulder, spurts of flame from Andy's automatic singed his cheek. The cackling laugh stopped suddenly. Half-stunned with the detonations, Spencer stared dazedly along the glaring shaft of light and saw Kowalsky lying upon a pile of boxes and barrels stowed on the starboard side of the chamber. There was a port-hole behind him, open and well above water.

While he stared at the dripping body on the boxes, the head dropped, there was a convulsive heave of the shoulders, and when the ship gave a heavy roll to loo'ard, the figure lurched forward and splashed into the water.

Spencer and Andy were hurled to the lee side of the ship deluged to the waist. As they struggled against the down-rushing waters, and floating debris, Kowalsky's body surged out of the flood and drove across their breasts. Spencer's wavering torch revealed a pallid, evil face looking up at them with a baleful sheen in the left eye. The other showed but a crimson cavity from which the blood was oozing and staining the brine which surrounded them.

"Hell's bells!" ejaculated the fisherman, horrified, and leaped out of the way. But the Scot—hard-case sailorman, and inured to such scenes in the red muck of Flanders' trenches—laughed grimly and remarked, "I havena' forgotten how tae shoot, by Godfrey! Plugged th' ruddy yella' eye oot th'

perishing blighter, by cripes! A good shot, Skipper, a damned good shot!" And both men scrambled for the ladder.

The hands were standing-by keeping calashee watch, lolling in their bunks, easing tired muscles—while two of their number remained in the donkey-room ready to call them to action on the skipper's whistle. Some slept, while others discussed the "crazy sail-dragger" aft who was driving the *Gregory* as she had never been driven for many a long day. Continually flooded decks reminded the older hands of "eastings" runs when the clippers raced wool from Australia, and they thanked their stars they were aboard a ship that was originally built for such sailing. Normally, and with less reckless masters, the *Gregory* was a "dry" ship. Spencer was pressing her as few orthodox windjammer skippers would do nowadays.

"Another twenty-four hours of this travellin' and she'll be up to Boston Light anyway," muttered Spencer cheerfully. He glanced up at a heavy squall cloud darkening the sun and sensed the coming blast. "Stand by t' gallant-halliards!" he bawled to the pair in the donkey-room.

Over and over went the ship until the poop bell clanged and the seas piled over the lee rail in solid cascades and seething froth. Aloft, the canvas strained at sheet and clue and swelled in great curves save where tautened bunt and leach-lines marred their contour. The long topgallant-masts were visibly bending to the weight of the wind in the canvas, and the men, hanging on at the rails with coils cast off and a turn of the halliards around the pins ready to let go, glanced nervously at the spars and the young fellow aft cursefully wondering when he would give the word.

Spencer braced his body to the careening of the ship and hung on to the life-line of the weather quarter-boat. He was critically staring aloft and wondering how much strain the *Gregory's* gear would stand. "If her mate was on to his job in lookin' after her," he murmured, "she'd carry her kites in this—" He stopped suddenly when a stronger gust smote the ship and she wallowed her whole lee rail under. "Leggo yer t' gallant-halliards!" he bawled when the men at the lee gear vanished from sight in a broil of cascading sea.

Half drowned and luridly cursing men cast the halliards adrift and tugged on the down-hauls as the yards came down with sails flogging. Then came a frantic shout from those at the big single topgallantsail on the mizzen and Billy ran to their assistance at the weather down-haul. "Th' yards iss

jam'dt and won't come down!" yelled a sailor excitedly—pausing in his frenzied tugging to look aloft.

"Never mind star-gazin'!" barked Spencer. "Pull, dammit, pull!" But three men were not strong enough to haul the yard down with the parral jammed against the mast with the list of the ship and the weight of the wind-filled sail.

"Aft here, some of you!" bawled the skipper. "Tally on—"

There was a sound of cracking aloft and Spencer stopped short in his intended command to shout a warning. "Stand clear of her to loo'ard!" Unable to stand the strain, the mizzen-topgallant mast with topgallant and royal yards and gear came hurtling down with twangings of snapped wire stays, floggings and thrashings of canvas, rope and blocks. The royal yard broke adrift from the mast when it struck the topmast rigging and, up-ended, it crashed down through the port life-boat, while the rest of the wreck went over-side and hung by the stays, chains and braces.

"A ruddy fine mess!" laughed Spencer grimly. "I thought she would ha' stood that puff!" And to the men coming upon the poop, he said coolly, "Clear that raffle away. She's stripped for fair on the mizzen now!"

The cabin-boy came shambling along to where the skipper stood superintending the clearing away of the debris. "What is it now?" Spencer asked him. "I never see you up here but what you're announcing grub or trouble."

Without a smile on his pasty features, the lad informed Billy that Comstock was very sick. Spencer went below and found the wounded man in a high fever, in pain, and somewhat delirious. The examination made him anxious and he pored over the "Shipmaster's Medical Guide" for directions as to what should be done in such circumstances. Following the treatment outlined, he did his best, but realized that port and a doctor were eminently desirable. As the ship had made considerable lee-way and was a trifle south of her course to Boston, he decided to run her for Provincetown.

"Away ye go to yer upper-t'gan's'ls!" he said to the crowd clearing away the last of the raffle. The burst of squall had passed but it was still blowing very hard.

"D'ye mean for us to make 'em fast, sir?" The sails had merely been clewed up.

"Make fast nawthin'," growled Billy. "Set 'em again." He explained to the crowd, "My friend is a very sick man. We've got to rush him in to a

doctor.” They nodded dumbly.

“And you can set the mains’l as well,” continued the skipper. “There’s a power of shove in a mains’l, so get it on her.”

The canvas was set and the log showed it. Thirteen knots increased to thirteen and a half and then fourteen. Billy was sure she logged fifteen in the heavy gusts when the wind hauled aft a little and allowed them to check the yards.

It was stupendous storming along, but Spencer was not driving her for the fun of it now. He was urging her on for many reasons. Comstock was in a bad way and his war experience impressed him with the value of time where infected wounds were concerned. Then again, he wanted to get away from the *Gregory*. There was something sinister about her. Nine men had died violently aboard of her within a week and three were lying in their bunks suffering, and under the fo’c’sle-head lay the canvas-shrouded bodies of Kowalsky, the cook and two of the mutineers. She was a death ship and the atmosphere of bloody deeds hung heavy about her decks.

After dinner, he came up on deck to see a fishing schooner ahead, standing up from Georges for Boston Bay. She was running along under reefed mainsail, foresail and jumbo and certain distinctive marks identified her in Spencer’s eyes. “Jack Mac and the *Allie Watson*, by gum!” he exploded. The depressed feeling lifted itself from his boyish heart, and he remarked to Andy with an expectant smile, “there’s a feller ahead that I’d like to trim in this one. I’ve trimmed him afore in a schooner, and, by Jupiter, I’d like to have a hook with him in a square-rigger. Turn the hands out. Andy-boy, and sway everything bar-taut.”

Nothing will make a crowd of sailormen work so hard as when there is a contest between ship and ship. Spencer, tired out and harassed, forgot his many anxieties, and stalked the poop with a new glint in his eyes, while the men, entering into the spirit of the thing, trudged around the decks with watch-tackle and strop taking a pull on halliards and sheets. The cross-jack was dropped down and sheeted aft with the weather clue hauled up, and everyone hoped the gear would stand the strain of the driving.

Black squalls came whirling up and the *Gregory* staggered and trembled to their onslaught. The water on deck was so heavy that they rigged a Cape Horn life-line from poop to fo’c’sle-head and coiled the lee fore-

braces up on the mid-ship house. No man could make the pass of the lee deck and the *Gregory* was plunging until solid green water covered the fo'c'sle-head and thundered down in foaming cataracts. "Holy Sailor!" cried a grizzled old seaman with something of admiration in his eyes. "Dis is de vorst I ever saw! Yess! Und I hov run der eastin' in smart ships, by Yiminy!"

Spencer stood aft by the wheel glancing aloft at the sails and over at the *Allie Watson* and the two huskies at the spokes, straining and sweating in their singlets, steered according to his orders. They expected something to give soon, but they steered as they never steered before.



She shot up into the wind and a mob of oil-skinned fishermen lined up along her main-boom.

The schooner was quickly overhauled and there were signs that she resented being passed by a clumsy square-rigged wind-bag. She shot up into the wind and a mob of oil-skinned fishermen lined up along her main-boom. "He's shakin' out the reef," observed Billy exultantly. "Now we'll have some sailin'!"

It did not take the schooner long to get her whole mainsail up and when she swung on her course again, she had the whole four lowers hung. The *Gregory* had stormed past her, however, and in an effort to regain his lead, McPherson sent his big fisherman's stays'l up between the masts. This extra canvas hauled him ahead a little and the excited watchers on the *Gregory*

could see the whole of the schooner's deck as she rolled down with the heft of the wind in the canvas.

A vicious squall piped up and the *Gregory's* taut backstays whined to it. The *Allie Watson* vanished for a moment in the slash of rain which came down the wind and when she showed up again, Billy pointed across his weather quarter with a happy laugh. "There he is," he cried, "and his stays'ls gone! We've trimmed him! We've trimmed him!" The other craft had given up the contest and was heading to the northward.

The *Gregory* then decided she had stood enough. In the next squall, the main upper-t'gallants'l burst—leaving only two of the bunt cloths in the bolt-ropes. Ribbons of canvas festooned the stays and rigging and flogged themselves into white threads. The yard was lowered and the hands were preparing to bend another sail, when the ship dived into a tremendous sea and staggered to the shock of it. It knocked the jib-boom clean out of her and the fore topgallant-mast with the royal and upper topgallant yards and sail came plunging down in a thundering, furiously thrashing raffle of canvas, wire, spars and rope.

"Lord Harry!" ejaculated Billy in half-humorous dismay. "She'll be a wrack yet. It's easy seen this bally-hoo ain't no packet for carryin' a bit of sail!" Then he turned and grinned at the wheelmen. "Well, boys, she's in fine heavy weather trim now. We only need to rip that main t'gallant-n'st out of her to put her in Cape Horn rig. But, anyway, I'm glad her gear hung out long enough for me to trim Jack Mac. I'll roast him good when I get my feet on Boston Fish Pier again!"

The men looked at him as he strode along the deck and one fellow remarked sagely, "that joker sh'd ha' bin livin' fifty years ago! He'd have made a grand skipper for the bully ol' *Dreadnought* or the *Flyin' Cloud* or *Cutty Sark*, by Judas! I've h'ard that those Yankee-Bluenose fishermen were the great lads for carryin' sail. Now, I knows it, by Godfrey!"

Old Johnny Lovell came bustling out of his office. "Come inside a minute, Miss Comstock," he said. When the young woman entered his private sanctum, he picked up a long telegram and enquired, "what do you know about a registered letter that was sent to Captain Spencer care of this office?"

"I gave it to him the last time he was here, sir," replied the girl.

"Did he open it, do you know?"

Miss Comstock thought for a moment before answering, "I don't believe he did, Mr. Lovell. He put it in his pocket if I remember right."

Old John grunted. "Just like those fellows and the careless, don't-care-a-cuss way they have with everything. It's evidently a most important letter too, for a firm of lawyers in British Columbia have sent me a telegram wanting to know if it has been delivered. Take a wire, please."

Later in the day, he came bouncing up from the wharf. The *Alfarata* had just made fast. "Spencer and a chap called Brown left the schooner on Brown's Bank to navigate a Russian square-rigger into Boston," he said to Miss Comstock excitedly, "and I've just got another wire from those lawyers asking me to get hold of Spencer and rush him out to Victoria immediately as he's fallen heir to a considerable estate which must be claimed before noon on August ninth. Lord Harry, what can I do?" He paced up and down his office blowing clouds of cigar smoke.

"That's him all over," he fumed. "Couldn't come home like any ordinary skipper but must go hellin' off on Russian windjammers. S'pose he was itching to try his hand sailing a square-rigger for a change. And I'll bet he'll rim-rack her if they allow him to play with her. Who the deuce is this feller Brown that he took as a passenger. . . ."

Miss Comstock turned deathly pale and swayed against the desk. Old Johnny gazed at her over his spectacles. "What's the matter, child?" he said with kindly concern in his voice. "Ain't you feeling well today?" Mabel recovered herself with an effort. "I'm all right, Mr. Lovell," she said with a faint smile. "I just took a little giddy turn."

"You ain't been looking good for the last two weeks," remarked the other. "It's a little vacation you need, Miss. Get a substitute and run away for a while."

At this juncture, two quietly dressed men entered the office, and Mr. Lovell swung around. "Well, sirs?"

One of the pair gave a nod of his head in the direction of Miss Comstock. "I'd like to speak with that young lady, Mister," he said politely.

Apprehensively, Mabel advanced to the counter. "You're Miss Mabel Comstock?" asked the man quietly.

"Ye-e-es!"

He leaned over the counter. "Where is your father, Miss?" he enquired in a firm, subdued voice.

The young woman turned white and gripped the edge of the counter with hands which worked nervously. Trembling, she answered, "I don't know." The other smiled faintly as if he expected just such an answer. "Of course not," he remarked in the same quiet tone, "but you saw him lately, didn't you?"

Mabel felt her heart beating like a trip-hammer and the room was swimming around. She pulled her nerves together and answered in as firm a tone as she could muster, "No!"

"Now, Miss Comstock, we know better than that. You saw him on the night of July twenty-third, did you not?"

The girl made no reply and the man continued. "We know you saw him so it don't matter. Where did he go?"

"I can't tell you," she managed to articulate.

"Now, now, Miss, you must tell me! You know where he went after he left your flat that night."

"I *don't* know," she repeated dully. Her heart was palpitating so fast that a choking sensation was overcoming her and the room was whirling around dizzily.

The stranger fixed her with cold, unsmiling eyes. The quiet politeness was gone from his tones as he said firmly, "Miss Comstock! You *do* know where your father has gone. Tell me now and no more nonsense. . ." He stopped suddenly when the girl reeled and collapsed to the floor in a faint. Old Johnny had been standing at the back of the office watching the scene with some curiosity and when Miss Comstock fell he rushed indignantly forward. "What in hell are you fellers up to? What have you done to the girl?"

The two strangers came behind the counter and exhibited metal badges pinned inside of their coats. "Detectives?" ejaculated the fish dealer in surprise. "What do you want with her?"

One of the men busied himself bathing the girl's forehead and wrists with cold water while the other explained to Lovell the object of their visit. "Her father was serving a ten year stretch for blowing up the Plenzer Iron works in Delancey, Pennsylvania, and he jumped the jug about three months ago. We traced him to his wife's flat here in Boston, but we don't know where he went from there. We do know that this young woman returned to

her mother's flat with a gentleman friend—a fishing skipper—and we have a notion that he might have had something to do with her father's get-away. . . .”

Miss Comstock was reviving and showing evidences of becoming hysterical. Lovell was in a dreadful quandary as his astute mind was putting two and two together. He knew that the gentleman friend was Spencer and he immediately thought of the passenger the skipper had taken with him on the *Alfarata*. The deduction was obvious. “Well, sirs, leave her be,” he said. “She ain't been very well and you'd better not question her. I don't believe you have any right to question her anyway, if I know the law. Let her alone and try some other way of finding out.” And he went over and stooped down by the sobbing girl and patted and soothed her in an attempt to quieten her distress.

The detectives looked at one another and the leader spoke. “I reckon we'll go, Jack. No use bothering the girl.” Turning to Lovell and Miss Comstock, he said, “We're sorry, but we're only doing what we're paid for. We'll go now. Good-day!” And they swung out of the door.

Old Johnny led Mabel into his office and produced a treasured bottle of whiskey from out of his safe. He gave the girl a small mouthful to steady her nerves and it seemed to calm her. Taking a pretty stiff swallow himself, he hustled back to her side and patted her on the shoulder. “Trust me, little girl,” he said benevolently, “I won't let them bother you again.”

Mabel looked up at his kindly face with tears in her eyes. “It's awful, Mr. Lovell, and I've been nearly crazy. Did they tell. . . .?”

“Yes, yes,” soothed Johnny, “they told me all about it. I don't blame your dad. There's a few more o' them grasping, profiteering war plants 'ud be none the worse of being blown up. . . .” He spoke thus in an effort to be kind. “. . . and maybe your father didn't do the job anyway. . . .”

“He didn't!” interrupted the girl vehemently. “He was made the scapegoat for others.”

Lovell nodded. “And he skipped off with young Billy Spencer, did he?” He spoke softly that none might hear.

The young woman made an affirmative gesture. She was afraid to speak.

“Just like the lad,” remarked old Johnny. “A fine lad, a rare boy—best skipper out of the Pier!”

He lit up the butt of a cigar and puffed strenuously. “Now, my dear,” he said at last, “I’m goin’ to send you home in a taxi. You’ll go away for ten days—you and your mother. Go away tonight. Go to Nantasket or any of them beach places and jest forget everything, and if any of them ’tecs bother you—you jest ’phone or wire me and I’ll straighten ’em out.” He called a taxi and when it arrived, he opened his wallet and pressed a number of bills into Mabel’s hand. “Take that and enjoy yourself. Mind, now, get away tonight, you and your mother, and take it easy. Come back when you’re feeling fit and don’t worry about your father. We’ll fix that up.” He escorted her into the taxi, gave her a fatherly pat on the shoulder, and saw her off. Then he went up into his office and lost himself in thought and clouds of cigar smoke.

Late that night he landed down on the Fish Pier with a suit-case and an oil-skin coat. Judson Moore, the man who brought the *Alfarata* to port, was with him, and both men boarded the deep-sea tug *Agnes Johnson*. The tug had steam up and as soon as Lovell and Moore entered the pilot-house, her skipper gave the order to cast off and she swung down the harbor. In a couple of hours, she was steaming out to sea in the tooth of a stiff blow with the twin lights of Boston Lightship and the white flash of Minot’s Ledge in sight abeam.

“This *Gregory* is a three-mast full-rigger, is she? How’s she painted? Black, grey, or what?” Lovell was asking.

“She’s a hooker of about twelve hunder’ tons, I cal’late,” Judson Moore replied, “and she’s painted black with yellor masts and yards.”

Lovell puffed hard on his eternal cigar and his quick wits were working double-tides. He had two jobs to accomplish. One was to get Spencer to Victoria, B.C., without delay, and the other was to help his stenographer’s father to avoid the detectives undoubtedly waiting for him in Boston. The latter task was worrying him considerably. To aid in the escape of a convict was an indictable offence, and Johnny was praying and hoping that Spencer had managed to get Comstock away.

Early morning saw them plunging and rolling on the Stellwagen Bank and the tug skipper and Judson Moore were figuring out the *Gregory*’s probable course. “It came on to blow after the skipper and this guy Brown left us and I cal’late that wind-bag had to square away east afore it,” said

Judson, “but Billy wouldn’t be long afore swingin’ her off for Boston. With the breeze what’s bin ablowin’ for the last two days, he ain’t far off ef I know him. He’ll push that old windjammer some, I reckon, or he ain’t livin’ up to the name they give him—Speedy Spencer.”

The tug skipper decided to run down towards Cape Cod for a while. If the ship was not sighted then, he would swing around and steam over to the Gloucester shore. Dawn revealed a wild sea and a breeze in their teeth. The tug was plunging bows-in to it and driving the spray over her in clouds, and the tug master with a pair of powerful prismatic binoculars glued to his eyes, was scanning the horizon.

As the morning brightened he stared in the wake of the rising sun and gave vent to an ejaculation. “Cuss me, ef I don’t see two square-riggers to the east’ard,” he said adjusting the focus of the glasses. “One feller’s off to th’ nor’ad headin’ for Boston Light and the other joker’s headin’ for Cape Cod way. . . .”

“Describe ’em!” snapped Old John.

“Th’ feller to th’ nor’ad’s under his two tops’ls on the fore and main, but this feller ahead seems to be half-dismasted. He’s got no t’gallant-masts on the fore or mizzen but he’s draggin’ all the sail he kin put on her. . . .”

“Make for her,” barked Lovell confidently. “That’s Spencer sure! Half-dismasted and swingin’ all sail—that’s his trade-mark sure as hell fire’s hot! Make for him, Cap. and we’ll be able to see how much he can rim-rack a square-rigger when they give him the chance.”

Within half an hour, the sailing ship came plunging into distinct view a mile distant. She was storming along with yards off the backstays and there was a creaming bone in her teeth which told of the urge in her canvas. Her fore and mizzen masts showed splintered stumps above the topmast caps and the odd lettering of her name on the bluff of the bow proclaimed the Russian. “That’s her,” cried Moore with a grin, “and sure enough, Billy’s bin tryin’ her out.”

When the ship came forging up, the *Agnes Johnson* steamed around on the *Gregory’s* weather quarter while Lovell stepped outside the pilot-house with a megaphone.

“Hi-yi, there, Spencer!” he roared.

A figure waved a hand and whipped a pair of glasses to his eyes. After a brief scrutiny, he laid them down, and leaned over the rail. It was Spencer.

“Heave-to—and—we’ll—take—you—off!” bawled Old John and his voice echoed in the towering sails of the ship.

Billy reached for a megaphone and shouted across the intervening broil of water. “Can’t—stop—now! Making—for—Provincetown! Meet—me—there!” And the *Gregory* swashed past—leaving the tug rolling in her wake.

The tow-boat skipper rang for full speed. “Swampin’ Judas!” he growled, “but that wind-bag’s travellin’! He’ll be off Provincetown as soon as us!”

They steamed astern of the sailing ship, and the tug, forging along at twelve knots, barely maintained her position in the *Gregory’s* wake. For almost an hour they ran in company thus, and the steamer failed to overtake the sailing ship. Old John, anxious and bewildered, wondered why Spencer was making for Provincetown. “Darn him,” he fumed. “I believe he’s so crazy about racing that he jest refused to heave-to so’s he could trim this tug!”

The low sand dunes of Race Point showed up and the square-rigger came in on her weather braces to round the tip of Cape Cod. When nearing Wood End, Spencer commenced reducing sail by clewing up his courses and lowering his upper topsails. Then the tug came alongside.

Lovell was met at the head of the Jacob’s Ladder by a weary-eyed, unshaven, and tired young man whose face was wind-reddened and whose eye-lids were heavy through lack of sleep. He greeted the fish dealer in a hoarse croak and his feet dragged with the fatigue of many hours standing and pacing.

“I come out here specially to get you and rush you off to Victoria,” explained Lovell, “and—” Drawing Spencer to one side, he whispered, “Where’s Comstock? Did you get him clear?”

Billy straightened up with an effort. “He’s below—a very sick man—but, thank God, a free man. . .”

“How?”

“He’s got proof of his innocence,” returned the other, “but if we don’t get him under a doctor’s hands immediately, he’ll never live to enjoy his freedom.” In a few words, he sketched the incidents of the voyage while Lovell listened in speechless, open-eyed astonishment.

The tug shoved the *Gregory* inside the harbor. Signals for a doctor and the police flew from the gaff and within an hour Comstock was being

scientifically treated, while Kimeneff and the two others were ironed and taken ashore. The *Agnes Johnson* was steaming full-bore for Boston with Spencer snoring in her skipper's bunk. It was the morning of August fourth and he had one hundred and twenty hours to capture his inheritance.

It seemed to Billy that he had slept but a few minutes when he was awakened by Lovell. "We're coming alongside the Pier now, Cap'en." He rose, yawned, and felt a trifle rested by the nap. Stepping ashore, he was greeted by his friend Wesley Carson. "I've done some scoutin' around this morning," said the latter addressing Lovell and Spencer, "and I find your quickest way to get out to Victoria is to go by the Trans-Canada Limited from Montreal to Vancouver. It's a fast through train that does the journey in ninety-two hours from Montreal. But it'll only land you in Vancouver. You'll have to leave Boston tonight at eight-thirty and get the Trans-Canada at five tomorrow afternoon."

"You say it'll only land me in Vancouver?" echoed Spencer. "Can I get to Victoria by noon of August ninth?"

"That's the devil of it," returned Carson. "You can't reach Vancouver before ten o'clock on the morning of August ninth, and Victoria is located on Vancouver Island and a five hours' sail by steamer from Vancouver. I figured you couldn't possibly do it in time so I wired those lawyers explaining matters and they wired back for you to come ahead. They are fighting for a restraint in the closing date of the will and they think it can be managed."

While Carson was talking to the skipper, a man, whom Spencer recognized as the fellow he had clipped on the Pier the night the *Alfarata* sailed, approached and spoke. "You're Captain Spencer of the *Alfarata*, I take it?"

Billy nodded with a sinking feeling within him. The other took him by the arm and drew him aside. "Where's Comstock?" he asked brusquely. "What d'ye want to know for?" growled the skipper.

The other flashed the badge of a detective officer and fixed Spencer with a cold and determined eye. "You'll come along with me," he said grimly. "I've a warrant to apprehend you for complicity in aiding the escape of one Edgar Comstock who made his get-away from the Federal Penitentiary at Colville on the morning of April sixth. Don't make any fuss or I'll put the bracelets on you!"

Spencer smiled. "I won't make any fuss, Mister, and I don't mind telling you all about the affair. . . ."

"Tell it to the Chief!" snapped the man who was evidently cherishing resentment for Billy's handling of him two weeks past.

Lovell, who had heard the conversation, broke in anxiously, "You're not going to arrest him are you? He's got to catch a train tonight. . . ."

The detective waved him aside. "He is already arrested and he has to come with me and see the Chief."

Old Johnny cursed with indignation but to no purpose. All four men tumbled into an automobile and drove to headquarters where Spencer was turned over to a superior official. The skipper told his story and the other showed his disbelief at such an astonishing story by the expression on his face. "That's the best I've heard for many a long day," he said wearily, "and we do hear some queer ones"

Billy spluttered. "Don't you believe me?" he shouted. "Call up Provincetown and ask them there. You'll find that the *Gregory's* lying in the harbor and Comstock is at the hospital. Kimeneff and them other Bolsheviks are in the town jug and I 'cal'late they're plantin' Kowalsky and his pals out in the sand-hills. . . ."

The official ordered Spencer removed for a while and they went out into an anteroom. He sat with Carson and Lovell—the two latter wrathfully discussing the affair while Billy remained silent. He was thinking over events of the past three days and his nerves were sagging and he was jaded and depressed.

After an hour's waiting, he was called inside again and his companions were allowed to accompany him. The official regarded Spencer with some interest. "I've been talking with Provincetown," he said, "and they confirm some parts of your story. I was inclined to disbelieve such an astonishing tale and thought that you had landed Comstock in Canada and spun me that yarn to clear yourself. This is a devil of a serious business. I cannot allow you to leave the country tonight."

Spencer and Lovell argued the unreasonableness of this decision and explained that a fortune stood to be won or lost by a few hours' delay. "Think of what the lad's gone through already, sir, and don't spoil his chances of claiming his brother's estate," pleaded Old Johnny.

The other shook his head and said decisively, "I can't let him leave Boston today. Suppose he goes to Canada and we find that the happenings

aboard that ship are not as he states? There's been eight or nine men killed aboard her. There will have to be an investigation into such a terrible affair. We want him as our principal witness and we find he's in Canada and refuses to come back? That means all kinds of trouble. You can appreciate my position. I would be dismissed instantly if I let him go without permission from the highest authorities. You can go bail for him on condition that he does not leave Boston, but he can't go across the border."

Spencer remained in the Bureau and Lovell and Carson left the place, furious and wondering what to do. Old John swore he would see the State Attorney, the Governor, even wire the President himself, and he made full speed to the best lawyer in Boston. He spent a small fortune in telegrams and long-distance 'phone calls, and at midnight, his representations had effect. Spencer was told that owing to the special circumstances of his case, he would be allowed to proceed on his private business on a tremendous bond from Lovell and under guarantee that he would return within fifteen days. Old Johnny cursed the inflexibility of the law and swore that within fifteen days Spencer would have the State Governor heading a delegation to acclaim him, and that Bostonians would give him the freedom of the city. But the cold fact remained that all trains for Montreal had gone.

Spencer was apathetic and crest-fallen. The heart had gone out of him, when Old Johnny came bustling alone, perspiring and excited. "You'll make it yet, son," he cried hopefully. "Wesley Carson's agoin' to drive you up to Montreal in a car. I've hired the best and most powerful in Boston and your friend knows how to drive it. Hustle, son, and get some glad-rags. He'll be ready for you in half an hour!"

Billy and Carson drove all night on the Boston-Montreal highway. They thundered through sleeping villages with glaring headlights illuminating the path and clouds of dust whirling behind. Wesley, an expert driver, burned the miles and gas, and the rising sun revealed the level farm lands of Quebec's eastern townships through which they sped at prohibited pace. Then the broad waters of the St. Lawrence opened before them and they reduced speed to cross the River on the great Victoria Bridge. Weary, dusty, and with grit in mouth, eyes and ears, they satiated famished appetites in a Montreal restaurant and Billy laughed. "I reckon I live up to that there nick-name of 'Speedy Spencer' jest as much ashore as I do at sea. That drive was sure the fastest travelin' I ever done!"

At five in the afternoon, he boarded the Canadian Pacific Trans-Canada-flyer and was soon storming west in the summer evening. The days that followed permitted Billy to rest his nerves and the ever-changing panorama of country served to soften the horrible memory of his voyage in the *Gregory*. Running on time like a clock, the crack train of the Canadian Pacific tore through the towns and farming settlements of Ontario and plunged into the vast areas of rocks, forests and lakes of the Northern regions of the Province. The stones and scrub dwindled and the earth levelled out when the prairie lands of Manitoba were reached, and Billy imagined he was forging over a great sea of green land when the train traversed the rolling plains of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Then came a morning when he gazed through the window at the mighty, snow-capped pinnacles of the Rockies, and he knew he was on the last lap of his journey when the Trans-Canada panted through the stupendous passes and canyons of the British Columbian Cordillera. "This here packet has sure logged some knots sence we started," mused Billy, and he wished Fate had made of him a locomotive engineer. "I'd get some speedin' in that job!"

At the descent of the Pacific slope a young man, wearing a returned soldier's button, boarded the train at Mission, B.C., and called out Spencer's name. He introduced himself as Walter Deloro—junior partner of the firm of McGraw, Hiscock and Deloro, Barristers, Notaries, etc., Victoria, British Columbia.

"We couldn't get a restraint on the time of closure on your brother's will," he said. "The institutions likely to benefit by the money opposed it. But I've taken a chance to get you over to Victoria in time. It's quite a distance from Vancouver to Victoria by water and we couldn't do it in less than five hours. But we'll have two hours to do the distance when we arrive in Vancouver and we'll fly it easy in an hour"

"Fly it?" gasped Spencer aghast.

The other nodded calmly as if flying were the most natural thing in the world. "Yes! I've hired an aeroplane and we'll soon boost you over the Straits of Georgia. . . ."

"I don't fancy airplanes," interrupted Spencer nervously. "They ain't in my line at all even though I'm fond of speed. . . ."

The young lawyer laughed. "Oh, there's nothing to it, Mr. Spencer. You'll like it when you get up off the ground."

The train rolled into the Vancouver depot promptly to schedule time after twenty-nine hundred miles of travelling and Spencer was hustled into an automobile and whirled out to Minoru Park where an aeroplane awaited them. A mechanic was working at the engine and young Deloro fretted at the delay.

The lawyer donned an aviator's rig and gave Billy a leather coat, helmet and gauntlets to don. "I'm going to act as pilot this time," remarked Deloro, "and I'll shoot you over. I did a lot of flying in France, y'know, when I was in the Flying Corps." He made the latter observation to reassure Spencer who was looking nervously at him.

Billy was strapped into the seat and Deloro took his place at the controls. "We've just got sixty minutes to get from here to the office in Victoria," observed Deloro and his utterance was drowned by the roar of the engine. The mechanic was aboard and in his seat, and the machine raced across the field, the planes were adjusted, and they left the ground. Spencer hung on apprehensively during the take-off and closed his eyes. He opened them slowly and looked gingerly around. The matter-of-fact manner of the lawyer and the mechanic reassured him, and he took heart.

Roaring aloft, the plane dwindled the city of Vancouver to a living chart of streets, buildings and green spaces, and Billy forgot his nervousness in the magnificent panorama which opened before his eyes. The peaks of the Coast Range serrated the horizon and the silver tracings of the Fraser River delta overlaid the green of the land below them. Ahead lay the sea—shimmering in the sun—and the blue loom of the Vancouver Island mountains towards which they were speeding.

It was cold up aloft and Billy shivered while the rush of the wind almost caused him to gasp. The roar of the engine drowned all other sounds, and he sat still, deaf and dumb, but nevertheless thoroughly enjoying the exhilaration of the flight through the clear and unobstructed ether. "It ain't a skipper, nor an engine-driver, I would be after this," he murmured. "This takes me to the Fair, by Jupiter!"

Time was becoming precious and Deloro was continually scanning his wrist watch. There was something ahead which was worrying him and Spencer realized it when the plane plunged through a bank of foggy vapor. The sight of the earth was blotted out and Deloro began to fidget. If it were foggy around Victoria, landing would be difficult and more valuable time would be wasted. Billy was wondering if he had a fog-horn and what blasts

would be sounded in such a craft, and he humorously decided it would be the three honks of a running ship, when the fog thinned out and the land showed beneath. They began to descend in dizzy spirals, and almost before Spencer was aware of it, the plane straightened out and was bumping violently over a grassy sward. "Jump out now!" urged Deloro when the machine stopped. "We've got to run for the Club-house yonder."

Without any ceremony, both men ran for the Golf Club Pavilion near where they landed. Several golfers hailed the young lawyer, but shouting, "Can't stop. Tell you the story in the Union Club tonight!" he bundled Billy into a waiting auto and gave the chauffeur directions to "drive like the devil and I'll pay the fines!"

Spencer had scarce regained his breath before the car raced into the quiet city of Victoria and he was bundled out again into a building, up a flight of stairs and into an office where several men were waiting.

Red-faced, perspiring and panting, young Deloro turned around and indicated Billy with a wave of his hand. "Gentlemen! Our client—Mr. William Ainslie Spencer—brother of the late James Winslow Spencer—and heir to his estate!" He glanced at his wrist watch and added, "And gentlemen, it is just three minutes to twelve. Our client is here in plenty of time!"

Billy Spencer was back in Boston again within the fifteen days, and as Lovell had prophesied, his reception was vastly different. The newspapers had got the story and it furnished them with copy for a week's sensation while Billy himself was heroized into the limelight from coast to coast—much to his alarm and distaste.

He slunk down to Lovell's office the morning he arrived back to dodge the news-hounds and camera-men who were trailing him, and he was waiting within when Old John came in.

"I cal'late I got to get a noo skipper for the *Alfarata* now?" the old fish dealer was saying.

"You have," replied Billy with a grin. "No more of that for me after this. I'm agoin' to give up the fast life I've been livin' lately and settle down to peace and quietness. I'm now the owner of a salmon cannery, a saw-mill, a fruit farm and a block of timber limits in British Columbia—"

"And all you need to make it complete," interrupted the other slyly, "is a wife." Spencer blushed. His expectant hearing had caught the sound of Miss

Comstock's entrance and he knew that she was within earshot. Old John always spoke at the top of his voice anyway.

"Don't blush, man," boomed the fish dealer with a twinkle in his eye. "Nothing to blush for. I'm sure I could fit you out with as trim a little girl as you'd meet anywhere, and I ain't sure but what she's took a bit of a shine to you too."

Two young people on opposite sides of a glass partition were both considerably flustered, and the young woman, looking as sweet as a morning rose and momentarily just as red, started type-writing to cover her confusion. But good white paper was being spoiled with unintelligible sentences and Billy was nervously trying to light the wrong end of a cigar.

"They call you 'Speedy' Spencer," continued Lovell. "Now, I'd like to see a little speed in a certain direction—"

"Sh!" hissed Billy warningly, but the old man was out for fun and wasn't to be deterred by the other's red-faced scowl.

"Miss Comstock! Come here a minute, please!"

She came into the office somewhat nervously, and Spencer, fidgeting and apprehensive, was surprised by the change in her appearance. The summer sun, the vacation, and the removal of the trouble that had oppressed her, were all reflected in her face and manner and Billy felt sure that he would never muster courage enough to make the proposal he had been contemplating for weeks past. She had the air and features of a girl beyond his class and all his hopes and aspirations oozed out through his boots.

Lovell cleared his throat and the skipper wondered what was coming.

"Take a letter, please!"

Mabel sat down at the desk with notebook open and pencil poised. She had merely recognized Spencer's presence by a demure nod.

"Ahem!" Old Johnny began gravely. "Mr. John Lovell, Fish Pier, Boston. Dear Sir: I regret to inform you that I will be leaving your employ at the end of the month as I am about to be married. Yours very truly—". He paused and looked humorously at the agitated Spencer and then down on the girl who was holding her pencil in fingers that trembled. He continued, "Sign that letter 'Mabel Comstock'!"

With a great laugh at the rosy discomfiture of the two young people in his office, Johnny reached for his hat and made for the door. "I'm agoin' down to the dock for a while and I'll leave you two folks in charge. You don't need to answer the telephone unless you like, but I'm alookin' for a little speed on your part, Billy Spencer!" And he stamped outside, chuckling to himself.

Captain Billy turned from looking out of the window and stole a glance at the girl bending confusedly over her notebook.

"Awful old feller, ain't he, Miss?" he ventured.

Miss Comstock raised her eyes and they were smiling. "He certainly is," she replied shortly. She bent again to the notebook and Billy wondered why she didn't rise and leave for the outer office. He shuffled his feet on the floor and thought of something to say. He wished to say a lot, but his inspiration, resolution and nerve had left him. Finally he blurted out, "How's your father this morning?"

"Coming along splendidly," replied the girl happily. "He'll soon be out and around, we hope."

"Humph." Billy was still floundering but he was gradually obtaining control of his nerves. "Er—I—I was thinkin'—" he began and stopped as if appalled at the idea of airing his thoughts.

"You were thinking—?" Mabel echoed encouragingly without looking up. Spencer swallowed hard and made up his mind to take the bull by the horns. "Yes, I was—er—thinkin' that—that Old Johnny's idea was a good one. Er—that letter, y'know—the one you jest took—" He paused, blushing and embarrassed, and gazed at her half-fearfully. She looked wonderful to him at that moment—fascinatingly desirable—and a small insistent voice seemed to be coming to his rescue when it urged him in terms he could understand. "Now, then, Billy Spencer! There's a little clipper built craft on your lee and she's hauling ahead of you, Billy, she's hauling ahead. Make sail, man, make sail! Nothing was ever won by mothering canvas! Away you go with all your muslin up and give her sheet!" That was the word—"Give her sheet!"—the old Bankfisherman's "swinging-off" command, and he thought of the many times he had swung his vessel off with booms out, everything hoisted, and the wake a-roaring with white water. Well, it would be the last time he would ever do so, maybe. . . . Her head was bowed over the notebook and she was scribbling circles with her pencil. "Give her sheet!" said the voice within him, and he rose to the occasion.



Stepping across the office he bent down and took her hands within his great bronzed fists.

Stepping across the office he bent down and took her hands within his great bronzed fists. She made no effort to take them away, and he bent over still further until her silky brown hair brushed his cheeks. "Mabel," he ventured boldly, "I've got all that junk out in British Columbia and I need a skipper to take charge. I'll ship as mate. Mabel, girl, will you be my skipper?"

When Johnny Lovell came barging into his private office, Billy Spencer was signed on for Life's voyage under a new commander. Both skipper and mate were seated upon Lovell's roll-top desk, rapturously happy and absolutely oblivious to a continuously ringing telephone. Old John beamed benevolently over his glasses. "Well, well, children," he boomed with a laugh, "something tells me that Speedy Spencer is no more and that I'm losing a skipper and a stenographer. All that I can

say now is, 'Bless you, my children!' and I hope you'll let me be god-father to the first young Spencer!"

The End

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *The Sail-Dragger* by Frederick William Wallace]