HIGH TREASON!

A Romance of War and Wireless

By EDWIN BALMER

(Copyright, 1914, by Street & Smith).

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

[illegible]

CHAPTER VIII.

(Continued.)

Disaster and Treason.

"BUT they must hold very seriously against him indeed, I fear, my dear," the old man explained, "the matters with which Admiral Barlow has just acquainted us. The chief object of Lieut. Sommers's detail down about Bagol, my dear, has been to prevent the insurgents from providing themselves with arms. This uprising has shown how utterly he failed to do his duty down there. And not only that, my dear," he continued, as his daughter raised her head quickly for defence, "but, from the circumstances of this uprising, he is now charged, not only with negligence but with direct connivance with the chiefs to enable them to provide themselves with arms!"

"And you believed that of Lieut. Sommers, father—Etherington? Admiral Barlow also believed that of him?"

"Neither of us could credit it for a moment at first, Frances," returned Pinckney. "The Admiral told us that when he first heard this charge he, too, thought it entirely absurd. But then came even a more serious charge against him—which, as it directly concerned your father and myself, he communicated to us."

"What is that?"

"Again the younger man deferred to his older."

"That is, my dear, that Lieut. Sommers, at the same time he sent copies of his designs for his gun to be made by us, also sent duplicate designs, through an agent, to sell them to representatives of foreign gun works—both German and Japanese. Now, my dear"—he checked her again as she started to protest—"this matter was presented with certain proofs. As Etherington has said, the Admiral, like ourselves, refused to credit the charges in connection with the Bagol chiefs, until this matter came to his attention through official channels from Washington. My dear, the copies of Lieut. Sommers's plans and designs, made out from his own originals, have actually been taken at Hongkong by our Secret Service agents just as they were being offered to representatives of these foreign gunworks. Lieut. Sommers's agent escaped, unfortunately; but his drawings and designs were taken and sent at once to Washington, where Lieut. Sommers is now summoned to stand trial for treason!"

The girl steadied herself and faced her father and her friend bravely.

"Where is Lieut. Sommers now?" she demanded. "What has he said to these charges?"

"For five weeks he has been fighting in Bagol, my dear," the father replied. "He does not know yet that these charges are made against him. He cannot know even that his gun has failed in the test."

"Why has not Admiral Barlow sent for him to answer those accusing him, at once?"

"Because the transport Mongolian, my dear, the only ship leaving here for the States for some weeks, left yesterday, before the serious nature of these second charges was communicated from Washington. Lieut. Sommers is now landed, and is actively in the fighting line ashore at Bagol. Under these circumstances, Admiral Barlow considers he can do the kindest thing by leaving him to fight down there until the last moment, when he must be summoned to take the next ship for home. He has ordered him watched and practically under arrest. But, if he can make any favorable record in the fighting down there during these next weeks, we want to give him that advantage."

"But if he is killed?"

"Perhaps, under the circumstances, that might be the best solution of the matter," replied her father gravely.

"To let him be killed with such charges against him, without giving him a chance even to answer? No—no! I don't care how serious and how sure they seem! He is not guilty! He must be given a chance to answer now, at once, and to prove it!"

"But there is no ship for three weeks," Etherington objected.

"No ship? Surely we go back before then, father," the girl cried suddenly.

"What!" The startled exclamation came from Pinckney's lips.

"Don't we, father?"

"Why, yes, my dear. One of the points about which Admiral Barlow wished to see me, besides those I have just told you, was that the important matters which I came here to oversee in person must now wait over till next fall. So we can return practically any day now, my dear."

"Then let us return at once, father, and by way of Bagol—to take Lieut. Sommers with us! This is not a time to let him fight down there! Any one of a thousand men can take his place there now! This is the time for him to return to take up the charges against him; to clear himself; to prove—the true traitor! You have just said we may go back any time now, father!" she reiterated excitedly. "Then let us go back at once by way of Bagol, and make the Admiral give you charge of Lieut. Sommers, to take him back to answer his accusers!"

"But, Frances!" Etherington put in hastily, as she stopped breathlessly.

"My, dear—my dear girl!" cried her father.

But Frances had her way.

Bagol, with its lukewarm, limpid sea bounded by the white stitches of its bays, lay again ahead of the little Irvessa before the sunset of the second day. In the bay on the north, where on the former occasion the yacht had lain alone, the San Juan and two other gunboats, a transport and a cruiser now lay at anchor. In the afternoon, when the Irvessa was still seventy miles off, Pinckney had first picked up the little fleet by wireless. He had informed the naval captain in command that Mr. Durant was coming to take the arrest and parole of Lieut. Sommers to take him at once to Washington. The commandant had replied the lieutenant was then far inland with a party of soldiers and marines, but that he had been sent for and might be expected to return during the night.

The yacht swung in beside the gunboats and anchored. The officer from the cruiser came over and furnished more particulars.

Lieut. Sommers had been continuously at the front on a special detail, forcing the fighting, ever since his return. He had planned for that day a coup which drew upon every available man from the ships to help the soldiers. The chiefs were to be surprised and surrounded in their stronghold. Yet the natives were very strong and well armed. The fighting was sure to be close and fierce. But probably about this time—8 o'clock—it would all be over. If Lieut. Sommers were found at once by the man sent to summon him, he was to be expected back between 12 and 1 o'clock that night, probably.

"If he found him alive, he meant to say," Frances told herself fearfully. She withdrew from the others as soon after this as she could, and from the darkness of the deck watched the black outlines of the deserted shore showing dimly under the baffling, inscrutable shimmer of the stars.

Finally the officer, returning to his ship, passed her with an encouraging word. She did not care that he had seen what it meant to her to have Dick back. Her father and Etherington came to her; but still she felt herself sitting terribly, terribly alone, as she waited for the first sounds of men breaking from the bush there upon the beach, and for the first shout or signal to tell that they—that he was safe.

This time there was no firing from behind the trees to ring in her ears. She could only wait and wait, answering her father's and Etherington's hollow encouragement in shortening syllables, as the time crept on and on.

From somewhere far behind the black wood a signal shot rang out; then, like an echo, there came a reckless, triumphant shout, and the loud trampling and crashing of men returning in victory. Lights shone suddenly between the trees, and the marching men showed in the luminous patches between the dancing shadows. Oars pounded upon thwarts and splashed into the water; boats bumped and scurried in confusion between the war vessels and the shore. Then suddenly Frances saw a boat, which had gone first to the San Juan, strike straight for the Irvessa.

"Isn't that he—Lieut. Sommers—there in the stern?" She caught her father's hand. "Isn't that he? Lieut. Sommers!" She called aloud as the boat came alongside.

"Miss Durant!" The incredulous recognition came back. The officer in the stern sprang up as the boat glided in; he caught the companion ladder, and was at once upon the deck. "You came with them down here too? They told me your father and Mr. Pinckney had come, and that you had sent for me, sir." He bowed to Mr. Durant. "But you"——

"Yes, I came," was all the girl could say miserably, as he stopped.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Dick, quietly, and turned to the others.

"You should at least—suspect it by this time I should think, Lieut. Sommers!" returned Pinckney sternly.

"Oh, come into the cabin first father—Etherington—Lieut. Sommers!" pleaded the girl. "And first, father, before you tell him, let me ask—you have won this battle and captured them?"

"Why, yes." Dick watched her, puzzled. "We were lucky enough to catch them just right to-night. We got three of the chiefs, and I believe after this it must be about over. But—Miss Durant!" he cried, alarmed, as he now saw her more plainly in the light of the cabin. "What is the matter?"

"I repeat, I think this should scarcely surprise you, Lieut. Sommers," Pinckney said again.

"I have not asked for your opinion, Mr. Pinckney," said Dick, coldly. "Miss Durant, or Mr. Durant, will doubtless tell me in their own time what I have asked. Perhaps it may interest you, meanwhile, to know that to-night we not only captured three of the chiefs, but also discovered from them"——

"Lieut. Sommers, what Mr. Durant hesitates to tell you, but what you had probably better know at once, is that we have come down here at this time and in this manner, sir, to take your arrest!"

"My arrest?"

"Yes, sir; two days ago you were officially put under arrest at Manila, but paroled to Mr. Durant in order that we may take you with us back to Washington at once, to stand trial for treason!"

"What is this that Mr. Pinckney is talking about, sir?" Dick turned from Pinckney to Mr. Durant.

"Only the truth, I am sorry to say, Lieut. Sommers," replied the old man sorrowfully. "When we arrived at Manila two days ago I found, sir, that you had already been placed under arrest. No ship, however, would take you back to the States for some weeks. At my daughter's wish—that is, as we were returning at once in the Irvessa—Admiral Barlow permitted you to be paroled to me, to take you back with us."

"To stand trial in Washington?" cried Dick, puzzled.

"I am sorry—yes."

"For—treason, as this man says?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"In the first place, Lieut. Sommers," Pinckney cut in again as Mr. Durant hesitated, "your gun exploded at the first discharge in the test, killing three men and maiming four others."

"It did?" Dick turned [illegible]

Which? ✣ ✣ By Robert Minor

Copyright, 1915, by The Press Publishing Co. (The New York Evening World).

upon Pinckney. "And they are to court-martial me for that?"

"No. More particularly, I should say, upon the charge of your connivance, or conspiracy, with the Bagol chiefs here in permitting them to provide themselves with arms!"

"Pinckney! You can say that I"——Dick's blue eyes blazed, and his hands clenched at his sides.

"But even beyond that, lieutenant," Pinckney continued serenely, "there is a still more treasonable charge against you. Chiefly, I may say, you are to be tried for your attempt to sell to Japanese and German agents the designs and drawings for your coast-defense and naval gun designs which the Government agents captured in Hong Kong."

"What! Will you tell me, sir"—he appealed again to Mr. Durant—"what is there in what this man says?"

"I regret to have to tell you, Lieutenant Sommers," Mr. Durant had to confirm again, "that, as Mr. Pinckney says, copies of your original designs and drawings were taken in Hong Kong as they were being offered for sale to agents of foreign gun works."

"What?" Dick turned at last to Frances, to see if the others could be playing with him. But the sight of her face was enough.

"And so you have come to take me back with you?" he asked miserably.

"Yes; and you must come with us too!" The girl spoke at last. She came bravely over to him and touched him gently, sweetly, with a touch which thrilled through him. "To-night, you have just told me, you struck the blow which must finish your work here. You can have no cause for staying. You owe it to yourself—to me—to go back at once with us!"

"To you, Miss Durant!"

"To me and to all your friends, as well as to yourself. You must clear yourself at once!"

"But to return with you in this way—on your yacht—disgraced, under arrest, and with—with"——

"Oh, I know that this way is the hardest, not the easiest! That is why I know you will take it. Will you not? Oh, thank you! Father, as soon as the boat can return with Mr. Sommers's things, tell Adrian we are ready to return at once to America. And, Lieut. Sommers—I shall make it as easy for you as I can."

CHAPTER IX.

In the Fear of Death.

"DIN FOR it to-night, eh, Lieutenant?" Pinckney stopped Sommers.

Dick was descending from the bridge, smiling, dripping wet with the drench of the tropical hurricane. He had just finished his regular watch, and was passing through the saloon, a little after 8 o'clock.

On the first morning after passing Samar Island and striking free from the Philippines into the open sea, he had appealed to Mr. Durant and to Adrian for regular occupation and a regular watch. As Nichols, the first mate, was not well, they had given Dick his duties. He had accepted the work gratefully, and for ten days he had taken refuge in the routine, smiling and speaking shortly and formally, as would Nichols himself, when he passed Mr. Durant, or Frances, or Pinckney.

Frances and her father, both appreciating the difficulty of the young officer's position, pretended that he was indeed a new first mate; and upon this basis they got along very well. Pinckney and Dick, by mutual consent, had adopted the most perfunctory manner of acknowledging each other's presence. But to-night, as the black storm following behind blew closer and spattered great sheets of green water over the stern, Pinckney detained the naval officer as he passed.

"A bit of a blow, I should say; maybe quite a storm," Dick replied easily.

"But nothing is going wrong? Adrian seemed a good deal worried about something when I saw him."

"Nothing more than that we haven't our bearings," Dick replied. "But we haven't had them, you know, for a couple of days now."

"Why not?"

"Why, we haven't seen the sun for three days; so we've been running on dead reckoning for the last twelve hundred miles. Of course, with the water running as it has been, our reckoning is bound to be pretty bad; and this is a bad part of the Pacific to be caught in by a storm with only dead reckoning."

"The glass is falling, too, Adrian says." Pinckney tried to appear at ease.

"Yes; it's pretty low. But it isn't the blow that the Irvessa, light as she is, is afraid of. It's the reefs about here—the rocks and coral reefs and shoals—some of them aren't any too well placed on the charts, even if we knew exactly where we were."

"What are you doing about it, then?" Pinckney was paling now.

"Running as cautiously as we can, with doubled lookouts. Using our searchlight, too, all we can. Adrian's taken the bridge himself, and I guess maybe I'll go back, after I've had a bite."

Dick nodded almost cordially to the other, and started to pass on.

"I was only asking as Frances—Miss Durant was a little afraid," Pinckney explained.

"Oh, was she? She seemed all right when I passed her on the upper deck, just as I came down." Dick paused on.

Pinckney remained irresolutely in the passage for a moment. Frances's maid came from her cabin and questioned him about the storm. He succeeded, apparently, in cheering himself by his efforts to reassure her. She returned to her cabin, and he went on deck. He found Frances and Mr. Durant in the shelter of the wireless cabin, watching the dark, rising water strike and splash in great waves over the stern and sweep along the decks.

The storm, which had been driving the little yacht blindly before it for three days, seemed about to swoop down upon the Irvessa at last. Great flashes and bursts of tropical lightning tore through the heavy pall-clouds just astern and cast over the pursuing waves a green, gleaming glaze of electricity.

"Don't be afraid, Frances!" Etherington caught her. The girl was quietly watching the storm-centre gain on the yacht. "Don't be afraid!" he muttered to her.

The girl shook off his insecure fingers, but let him take her arm again a moment later, as though she realized that it steadied him, at least.

"I've been on the Irvessa," she said proudly, "when she's ridden out worse than this. Adrian can bring us through as well, unless we find some reef!"

"So you know about the reefs, then?"

The roar of the storm almost swept the words from his lips.

"Yes; but Adrian's a good skipper."

"Of course; but—what's that?" He had slipped suddenly and sprawled to the deck. "What's that?" he cried again, as he steadied himself.

As he fell he had tightened his hold upon Frances's arm, so that his weight had thrown her through the doorway in which they stood watching the storm and had dashed her to the wet, washed decks without. But she caught at the railing beside the cabin.

"The storm's on us now!" she replied.

"But that was not all!"

With a shriek and a roar the hurricane had hurled all its force upon them; and, indeed, that was not all. There was a sudden grind, and a wrench which no mere wave could have caused.

"We've struck! That was the keel scraping!" cried Pinckney.

"A reef!" cried Frances, clutching the hand rail harder, as the whole vessel seemed to shudder.

"Yes, we're on a reef!"

"We're off again! But oh—oh, some one has fallen from the bridge! Lieut. Sommers! Dick—oh, Mr. Sommers. Adrian has fallen from the bridge!"

"Adrian!" Pinckney was screaming, beside himself. "Adrian!"

The stunned form of the skipper lay on the deck at his feet. "Adrian!" He tried roughly to revive him.

But Frances had skipped past him, and was making for the cabin companionway.

"Dick—Dick!" she cried. "Oh, take command!" She had met him hurrying to her. "Adrian has fallen from the bridge—and we're on a reef!"

"No; we washed over it!" Dick shouted back. "I'll take the bridge. But, Frances, go below!"

"Struck again! Reefs ahead—reefs ahead!" A fearful cry somehow made itself articulate above the shriek of the hurricane.

With a sickening, grinding shudder, the yacht struck solid rock under her keel. Again she quivered from stem to stern, rising high in the effort to surmount the obstacle as before; but now she struck down the harder after the wave's wash had passed, and settled upon the unyielding reef which tore its way horribly through the helpless hull.

"Engines reverse—full speed astern!" Dick had leaped to the bridge and signaled the engine room. But the trembling tug of the little turbines, reversed at full speed against the pitiless force of the storm, was of no avail.

"Full speed ahead!" signaled Dick again, in the last sorry hope to drive the little vessel before the waves over the rising reef. But the rock only gripped her the harder; her plates began to crack, yield and give way.

Dick descended from the bridge in the wake of the panic-stricken sailors.

"Mr. Durant—Miss Durant!" he called. "We must abandon ship! Lifeboats away!" he commanded. "Warner"—he caught the second mate—"take charge of starboard lifeboat. Take Miss Durant, her maid, Mr. Durant and fifteen of the men with you! You leave first! Nichols!" he cried to the first mate, who staggered up. "Make ready port boat. Take Adrian, Mr. Pinckney and rest of crew. Pinckney"—he swung about and faced Etherington—"stand by wireless at once! Try signal some ship! Perhaps the Mongolian—she's slower than we—is in communication. Get some ship, and stand by till they can understand where we are! Tell them we are about to abandon ship!"

"Oh, but there's no one—there's no one in this part of the ocean!" cried Pinckney.

"Try it—the wireless!" Sommers shouted to steady him. "Try it—the wireless—to save us all—to save yourself!"

"To the boats—to the boats!" cried Pinckney, unheeding the order of the Lieutenant, as the storm burst upon them again. "To the boats at once!" he yelled.

"It is useless to take to boats to save ourselves in this part of the sea," Sommers tried to reason with the fear-crazed man, "unless we can warn some ship to pick us up! The wireless! It is the only chance for any of us—for yourself!"

But now the crew, wild-eyed and beside themselves with fear, crowded forward and started a rush for the boats. Dick threw himself against them and tried to check and command them. But Pinckney himself joined them and increased their panic.

Dick stepped suddenly, drew a revolver from the pocket of the reviving skipper, cocked it, turned, and cried to the crew:

"The first man to get into a boat—till I give the order—will be shot like a dog! Some one of you who understands the dynamo go down to the dynamo room and see that the current is supplied! Pinckney, go to the key and call—call for your life and the lives of us all! Go—or I shall shoot you first! Are you afraid, you fool, that I'll get off and leave you? No! I'll stay here to shoot the next to the last to leave if he disobeys me! Remember—the women and Mr. Durant first! In order, there! Prepare to abandon ship!"

CHAPTER X.

From the Reef.

"SCHJETMAN REEF—E. D. Existence doubtful!" The Marconi operator translated his chart to himself. "Shoals also E. D. Reefs, existence doubtful; no—P. D." He corrected himself. Position doubtful. More reefs reported"——

With the spray of the mid-Pacific hurricane splashing the glass of even his wireless cabin, set far up on the highest deck beneath the Mongolian's bridge, the operator strained his eyes anxiously into the blackness ahead.

In spurts and short dashes—as a company under fire crouches and crawls while the opposing batteries beat upon it, and then springs forward in the lulls while the batteries must rest or reload—the great Mongolian, bound from the Philippines to San Francisco, was making her slow advance. As the hurricane beat upon her, Harling could feel the ship almost consciously pause and crouch; then, as the storm fell away, she would gather herself and charge forward once more.

The young man caught the hand rail at his side and patted it impulsively as the ship, bearing through the very heart of the storm, swung steadily on again in her course.

"Good old Mongolian!" he muttered approvingly. Then, shaking off his preoccupation, he reseated himself at his instrument, reclamped his receivers to his ears and, as he sat again at his watch with patiently straining ears, drew his chart to him once more.

It was a chart of that great empty expanse of the Pacific which lies more than 1,000 miles west of our Hawaiian Islands and double that distance east of the Philippines.

Within those thousands of miles there are, of course, many known and accurately determined sea marks. For instance, only seven hundred miles or so east and south of the position which Harling had marked on the chart, there is a chain of peaks of marine mountains, where the rocks have reached almost to the surface of the sea. Where the peaks themselves have topped the tide levels, they are islands, of course; but, even where the mountain summits have not been able quite to reach the surface, but are so close below it that they might be dangerous to ships, most of those submerged summits in that part of the Pacific have managed to become islands, anyway. For in those warm waters, ages ago, the coral builders added their product to the sunken peaks, and built them up until they had caught floating vegetation. Then land was formed, and a few savage inhabitants came. Eventually the islets were discovered, claimed and put upon the map.

But many of these peaks still lie below the surface, unknown and undetermined. If you look at the chart you will see them recorded only as Harling read them: "Reefs reported in such and such a year," and, after most of them, the letters "E. D." or "P. D."

"Existence doubtful—position doubtful! Why?"

Harling's hands clenched as he felt the storm lift the great Mongolian for an instant, and then fling her down contemptuously again. "Because 'dead men tell no tales,'" he quoted, grimly. "So these"—he touched his chart—"are only the reefs which those who found them have escaped. But what of the uncharted reefs?"

His hands clenched again, and his muscles tightened spontaneously. At the subconscious alarm, instinctively he raised himself in his seat and strained his eyes, staring out into the lightning-riven pall ahead. Still faint and imperceptible almost, but distinct enough now to call consciously to the operator, the tapper within the receptor before him quivered and trembled. A quiver again, and then once more the trembling tap sounded from the resonator.

Now, stronger and more audible, as the Mongolian pushed her way further within the range of the other's communication, the tapper rattled again. A long, trembling tap; a quick, nervous rasp; a tremble again; then the rap, and again the quiver.

Harling swept his chart aside and waited, alert, cool, collected. His hand, which had shot forward impulsively to his key, sustained the steady fingers over it patiently. The discipline of habit was so strong that, when it had again taken command, it mastered automatically the impulse which had first come to him, hearing the call that came trembling to him through the storm. Again the tapper rattled; and in the same trembling panic the call clattered out once more.

"The call in the Continental code!" Harling muttered. "And—lightning doesn't throw off the message that way. That's lost nerve!"

The terrible suspense and exaltation of one who holds a telegram unopened came to Harling, magnified a thousand fold. Somewhere in that black, broken, hurricane tossed wash of the ocean before him, a ship was trembling out its chattering call through the storm, and the man who was sending was in fear.

Harling lifted his head. "There's no one answering," he exulted. "I guess it's ours!"

He pressed his key down firmly; and with a hissing crash the great blue twelve-inch spark leaped across the gap. From the humming ninety-foot aerials overhead, the electric waves spread steadily out against the storm. With quick, rattling volleys of discharges from the high-powered current, "Mongolian!" he signalled. "Position about 176 west, 14.65 north. Eastbound."

"Ra-attle, rap, ra-a-attle, rap, ra-attle!" The call was still trembling in the Mongolian's resonators. The lip of the operator curled.

"Why doesn't he stop sending, to receive?" he demanded of himself, angry in his impatience.

"Mongolian, 176 west, 14.65 north. Eastbound!" The current from Harling's coil crackled again. "What do you want?"

"Mongolian!" He found himself writing his transcription as the receptor clattered. "Mongolian!" The man at the other end was repeating the word senselessly. "Yacht Irvessa going to pieces on reef. Help us! Must have aid at once. Help us! Help us!" The sounder clattered feverishly. "Come to us. We cannot last."

Harling pressed his lips tight in his disgust as the message chattered on. The young operator's tense muscles snapped down upon his key.

"Ash-era-ash!" His coils roared their imperative interruption. "Ash-ash-ash-ash-ash!" they exploded rapidly. "Cra-ash! What reef? What is your position?"

"Help us for"——Harling snapped his pencil over the words, and sprang upon his key again.

"Cra-a-ash! Where are you?" he demanded.

He stopped again to listen. But not for a second, in the panic of his sending, had the other man held his current to receive.

"What is your position? What reef are you upon?" Harling volleyed back madly in his impotency. "Irvessa! Send your position at once!"

"Two hours ago—have thirty on board"——

"The reef!" Harling cried helplessly into the storm.

"Call-call-call-call-call." He read the dots and dashes on his tape contemptuously from the beginning. "Mongolian—Mongolian. Yacht Irvessa going to pieces on reef. Help us! Must have aid at once. Come to us! We cannot last"——

There was the break where Harling himself had been sending, but——"Help us!"—the whine was repeated again. "Are going to pieces—are going to pieces—cannot last half hour—breaking up—thirty aboard. I am Pinckney—E. H. Pinckney, for George Durant, owner. Will surely reward you"——

Again, as Harling swore softly to himself, the roar of the Mongolian's great spark silenced the resonator; and again, as the last discharge which crashed its demand across the space hissed down, the receptor, unheeding, continued its clattering jerks. "Will reward"——it chattered on in its heedless fright. "Only, come!"

Harling grabbed the bridge communicator. "Captain! Harling!" he reported quickly. "I have picked up yacht Irvessa by wireless, sir! She reports she is going to pieces on a reef—I didn't know—No, sir—no, I can't even get them to listen——Yes, sir. Thank you!"

Black sheets of rain flooded the glass ahead, and the chattering of the resonator had ceased as the captain slid back the door. The spark behind was already volleying rapidly again.

"It's a bender of a night!" The captain nodded to the other as, shiny and dripping, he stood over the operator and glanced through the transcription of the messages. He nodded his understanding again as he put them down. "What are you sending now?"

"He seemed to have run out; so, on the chance he may be listening, I'm trying again to ask him where he thinks he is, sir. Ah! Here it comes."

"It says?"

"I don't know. I don't know." Harling read it slowly. "We were bound for San Francisco"—the panicky chattering of the sounder was running more rapidly now—"from Manila. Have been driven before this storm two days; till struck this reef. No land within thousand miles. Come to us! We are breaking up! We"——

The captain nodded his fuller comprehension as he turned from the operator, and Harling swore unrebuked.

"The Schjetman Reef is the only charted reef within three hundred miles of our reckoning," the captain said, "and that is almost two hundred miles to westward. Could you send that far to-night?" he asked the operator.

"I don't think we could," Harling said, "and a yacht"——

"What are you asking?"

"For his radius of communication. Here it comes, sir! Seventy miles, he thinks."

"A yacht, under these conditions?" asked the captain [illegible]. "Even if it could make [illegible] precluded the Schjetman [illegible] the place the charts show it. What are you asking?"

"His aerials—how long his wires are. Here it comes!"

"Thirty feet, he says. Seventy miles! The"——Harling [illegible] himself. "We must have been within forty miles, to get him at all to-night, sir," he said. "If we are going forward him, we might now be within thirty-five. But, of course, he may be anywhere within a circle of the forty miles. What, sir?"

"Some unreported reef, then, I said," the captain muttered. "Where? You have said it yourself!" He jerked his head to the blackness without. "Anywhere within a reach of thirty miles ahead or on either side. And this night we could scarcely see even a searchlight five miles! Unless you can—what's that?"

"Save us!" Harling read in answer. "We're breaking up! We're breaking up! Save us! Ir"——

The chattering was checked in the midst of a letter. The older man watched, unmoved, as the younger sprang to the key. "Irvessa! Irvessa! Pinckney! Irvessa!"

The captain put his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder as the latter looked up. A moment before, in his intolerant, impatient impatience, Harling had been swearing at the man who had now ceased to call. But his eyes now filled with tears which he let his commander see, unashamed. Again he called, and again. No answer came.

"You've done all you could, boy; they're gone," the captain said with what, to youth, seems the college acceptance and easy resignation of the old.

Yet he waited while the boy turned rebelliously again to his key. Again Harling signalled, and again; but the tape which had brought him the chattering cries of one going to death pounded no more. The one who had called had been one who, through every rap and tremble of his messages, the boy had despised; yet he had called to this boy for help, and now he was gone—smashed.

"They're gone, sir."

The captain gathered up the operator's transcription in silence.

"I'll take these for the log," he said. "They are complete? The yacht Irvessa, and the man who was sending said he was E. H. Pinckney."

"Yes, sir; the Irvessa." Harling checked it off from the tape of the automatic register. "The man who was sending said he was E. H. Pinckney, sir, for George Durant, owner. He said also that there were thirty on board. You have it all there, sir."

"Very good. It was [illegible]." The Captain nodded abstractedly. "The Durants' Irvessa, with Pinckney on board, again."

"Why, sir"—the boy glanced [illegible]ively as he watched the [illegible]—"do you know anything about them, sir?"

"Don't you, boy?" the Captain returned inscrutably, as he slid back the door. "Have you forgotten the yacht and the people who got in that spike off Bagol a few months back?"

"No!" Harling shouted excitedly as he sank back. "Then this man who was sending was the Pinckney with the Durants whom Sommers saved the San Juan saved!"

"Yes. I shall be on the bridge now. If any other ship signals, report to me at once."

He ducked, dripping, into the storm. Harling settled the receivers over his ears excitedly. But now he picked up the tape, to read again the message which had come in unknown, but which was lost. He studied the repeated and unsteady marks of the sending of the man who had called to him from the breaking ship.

"So you were Pinckney—the man Pinckney with the Durants!" he muttered to himself. "You were the fellow whom Sommers saved. But—the girl must have stuck by you, after all! For there you were with them again! Sure; she must have stuck to you! But if she ever saw this!" He [illegible] the record tape in disgust; for it recalled vividly to him the frightened, shaking chattering of that man's messages. "I wonder! Just suppose Sommers—the fellow that came to this you—had been there on the Irvessa with Frances Durant this time, instead of you. I wonder if he would have sent this, or if he"——

Harling caught himself up. Of course, in the absence of Sommers, he could imagine anything he chose. Yet——

"Ta-ap, ta-ap; ta-ap, ta-ap; ta-ap; ta-ap; ta-ap!" The resonators were ringing steadily. The first chart of hope which startled Harling forward dropped him back limply.

"M-M-M-M," registered itself mechanically upon his mind. It meant to some private call of some other ship; for the sound and "feel" of the sending was far different, too. It was firm and steady, and upon this vessel there was no panic.

But "Ta-ap, ta-ap!" it kept coming. "M-M!"

"Ta-ap, ta-ap! M-M! A-A" Harling shouted crazily. "A-A! A-A!"

Mechanically his mind had taken it in the code he had been using—the Continental, which wrote it in senseless Ms upon his mind; but, in the burst of his returning alertness, "A-A!" it came. "The navy code! The general call in the navy code, of course!"

"Mongolian!" The roar of his answering spark behind him subdued his excitement for the moment. Of course, a hundred ships might call in the navy code; and why should the Irvessa?

"Try"—he replied, with the current breaking out again. "Irvessa," spelled the taps in the navy code.

"The Irvessa!" he cried, and took down the bridge telephone.

"Captain!" he shouted. "Captain! Harling. I've the Irvessa again, sir!"

"Look!" he cried, pointing at the tape, and forgetful of his transcription as the captain again stood dripping over him. "The Irvessa, sir. It's not the same one—not Pinckney sending, sir; for it's in the navy code, and"——

Steadily and firmly, still without chatter or tremor, the message was coming in.

"And, besides, this one's no amateur operator, sir; he's just plastered it on. But he keeps his nerve. Listen, sir. Irvessa is aground on reef, probably within thirty-five miles of you! [illegible] message. Storm centre [illegible] rest northeast by east. [illegible] heavy clouds now. Strength [illegible]

(To Be Continued.)

NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE NOVEL IN THE EVENING WORLD

THE LAST VOYAGE of the DONNA ISABEL

By RANDALL PARRISH

Author of "THE RED MAYF," Etc.