

THE FORAY OF THE HENDRIK HUDSON.

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A TALE OF '54.

CHAPTER III. CONTRABAND OF WAR.

A glassy shen lay upon the face of the waters, dimmed and shivered now and again by little catspaws of the wind. The white wings of the Hendrik Hudson were spread, but as often as it dipped idly against the mast when the breeze died, rose and died again. Over the narrow of the sound lay a haze, shimmering in the April sun. The white cottages of Vaedbeck and other onshore villages nestled into the green of the beech woods, showing spottily against the glare. It was a perfect day in a perfect Scandinavian spring.

Barr rolled, stretched himself and then sank luxuriously back into his air among the cushions. His face expressed a beatitude of content. His cigar smoke swirled him like a Hudsonian halo. His eyes concentrated into its expansiveness the languorous delights of seven days of uninterrupted idleness. He blinked upon the Danish shores with a placid sense of proprietorship in their beauties as by right of discovery. He was soaked and surfeited in a warm bath of sea breeze and sunshine. His blood ran within him as wine.

To him entered Desmond from the companionway. A businesslike air and the importance of command lay thick upon him. He bawled his orders with to uncertain sound, and the whirl of the wheel spokes followed swift upon its words. Before a sudden gust the row crept round to starboard. The racht began to nose inland to where Copenhagen showed dim in the mantle of the heat haze, girt with the forest of her shipping.

Barr raised his eyebrows. "Going in, did you?" he queried.

Desmond nodded. "Yes; going to call for an hour."

"You said you shouldn't stop short of Olesborg. Why this waywardness?"

Desmond shrugged his shoulders. "There were all these rumors of war before we came out. Best to hear what's happened, if I can. I couldn't make out what those men meant that we halted just now. Something about Russia. If we're going to shove our heads into the bear's jaws, we may as well know how we stand."

Barr groaned loudly. "If that isn't my luck exactly! Here am I on my first holiday for two years, and then the blighted emperor of Russia must step in to spoil the whole show. I should have thought my little egg basket might have been spilled without plunging the nations into war. But, no; my luck is the kind that impresses itself upon you with stupendous and awfully thought out cataclysms. With my ordinary folk it would have been noses, or a broken arm, or, at most, shipwreck. With me it's either drop the whole business or a probable five years of a Russian fortress, or, mayhap, a bullet. Well, well, my boy, no trouble as the sparks fly upward. I'm sorry my eternal destiny has dragged you into its baneful orbit, Billy."

Desmond laughed and filled his pipe. "All's experience, my boy, even the inside of a Russian prison. Not that I think I'll come to that. We needn't make our man talk to bear more certainly. Curl yourself up again and more peacefully. I'll waken you when we clear for action."

They drifted slowly along, the two knot zephyr fanning irregularly upon their canvas, and passed into the channel that runs between the island and the blunt spit of land upon which the Danish capital stands. As the chain rattled in the hawse pipe the dingy took the water and Desmond was set laboring. Barr returned happily to his slumbers.

Two hours later he was awakened by the sound of his friend's voice and by the din of the anchor coming home. He was aware as he blinkingly surveyed his surroundings that the yacht was under weigh again and was creeping out of harbor. She was heading for the Swedish coast. Desmond had returned to his chair and to his eternal pipe, which he was methodically stuffing with birdseye. The grin that usually lurked on his ingenious countenance was lacking. He seemed to be considering something with absolute seriousness and concern. This phenomenon was so entirely foreign to his temperament and customs that Barr sat up to regard him with anxiety.

"How now, Billy?" he questioned. "For goodness sake, what's up?"

Desmond blew a cloud of "No." "Nothing at present. Everything, probably, in the near future. Victoria, queen of Great Britain, and Napoleon, emperor of the French, have conjointly espoused the cause of Turkey. They have notified Nicholas, the Russian, that he is to quit pounding the sons of Islam. Most unjustly and unaccountably they have failed to consult me. A rumspuss must needs ensue. The question is, What about us and our little game?"

"Is war an absolute certainty?"

"Nothing's a certainty, my boy, but the odds are a thousand to one on Nicholas is not the man to take that sort of thing sitting down."

Barr shrugged his shoulders. "How can I say, old man? I risk nothing but my very inconsiderable self. You risk your ship and crew. Certainly it's for you to decide."

"They seem to think our fleet's coming up here, too," mused Desmond. "It would be ripping to see the turn up. Besides, why should an absurd rumor put us from our purpose? Anyway, we've got to decide within ten minutes. When we're opposite Malmo, we must either swing port for home or aboard for the Baltic. Now, which it to be?"

"I'm yours to command in peace or in war," said Barr. "I don't mind owning that, from a strictly personal point of view, I'm for continuing. The joy and mystery of the quest were just beginning to filter into my veins. But, I said before, I have no responsibility to brake my opinion. It runs no-

weighted. Do just what you think best."

Desmond puckered his brows. "I'm hanged if I know what to do. I want to go on, of course, and so do you. But the question is, Are we justified in risking crew and ship?"

"If our fleet's to come up here, these waters will be as safe for us in a week or two as the English channel. The Russ hasn't a faintest chance of sticking up to them. But why don't you consult Jones and one or two of the crew? Of course Pladja will want to go on all the more. He'll see chances of endless gore and revenge upon the oppressor. But our men ought to have a say in the matter."

The amateur commanding officer flamed out in Desmond in a moment. "Nonsense!" he snapped. "It's an end of all discipline if you cry to your naval wet nurse every time you want to make a decision. I have it. We'll toss for it." He produced a forin from the depths of his trousers pocket. "You call," he said tersely to Barr, and

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to pass it east or west. East was no doubt shorter and in tempestuous weather safer. On the other hand, it brought them nearer the Russian coast and within reach of Russian cruisers.

Jones, the sailing master, thought fit to put in a fallacious word. "In case of trouble, air, inside Gottland would be most convenient."

That decided it. Desmond rounded on him with all the exasperation born of good and unwise advice. "In case of trouble, Mr. Jones! Great heavens! What trouble?"

"Well, sir, they say—" "Who say? And what?" "Well, sir, it was hinted by a man on the quayside at Copenhagen to Murphy, the cocksawyer there, that war was imminent."

"War imminent?" stormed Desmond. "War's going on! We're not a Turkish gunboat, but an English yacht."

"No, sir, but they say that England and France—" "Thank you, Mr. Jones. If we're to run this cruise according to the fat headed imaginations of every dockside loafer who airs his secondhand opinions, I'll let you know. At present when I want advice I'll ask for it. Outside passage, please, Mr. Jones, and stand well out to eastward," delivering which command, with great show of imperious discipline, Desmond returned along the deck to his companion.

He had a good deal of the air of a Cochin China who has had his feathers ruffled by an absurd disagreement with a bantam.

Thus again was the fate of the foray decided by a triviality, this time simply the officiousness of a well meaning and perfectly well advised old seaman.

All that day they swung along, meeting only a couple of merchantmen under Swedish colors and, as they drew nearer the Gottland coast, a country boat or two. The only dark was just beginning to fall as they sighted two vessels to starboard, one much nearer than the other and on the Swedish coast.

As they drew near the first one the yacht showed English colors. In answer the stars and stripes crept up the stranger's flag halyards, and to the English hail came the reply: "Jemima of New London. Bremen to Stockholm. Russian gunboat stern. Think war is declared with England. We have contraband."

Jones slapped his leg and snorted triumphantly. "That is the trouble I spoke of, sir."

"Well, Mr. Jones," snapped the exasperated Desmond, "what if it is? D'you think I'm to be stopped by a two penny halfpenny Russian gunboat? If war is declared, I shall stop and take her."

"Excuse me, sir," said the skipper, with dignity. "You hold no commission to levy war. Neither I nor the men signed as combatants."

"It is impossible to say what reply Mr. Jones' pusillanimity would have evoked. Desmond's mouth was agape with winged words, which in another moment would have been fitting sulphurous round the skipper's head. At that moment a rending crash pealed across the waters from the other ship. He wheeled about and looked toward her and saw that disaster had befallen. Her deck was littered with splinters, cordage and dapping canvas. Her fore topmast had given under the press of sail. She lay a prey to the Russian as easily as a shot wild duck to a retriever.

Desmond swore aloud. "Well, my fine fellow, you've got to fight now. Bring us alongside and let's hear the rights of the case."

Jones spread out his hands and began to stammer. "I must protest—" Desmond rounded on him like a flash. "May I remind you that I have a board of trade certificate and am master of this vessel? By gum, if you don't bring us alongside in two shakes of a dog's tail, I'll have you in irons for mutiny, you lily livered cook!"

They slid up to within threescore fathoms of the other vessel. Mr. Jones' expressions were varied and peculiar and his glances astern numerous.

"Well, my fine fellow, you've got to fight now. But Desmond was a very vivid actuality of unpleasantness beside him, while the Russian only loomed distant yestern. He gave in with a bad grace, it must be owned, but with a well considered weighing of the chances of immediate discomfort.

"Can we help?" bawled Desmond as they bobbed about. "Shall I send aboard?"

A red bearded, blue eyed skipper came to the side and shouted back with melancholy gratitude: "Thanks many, mister. Too late, I'm afraid. She'll be on us in quarter of an hour. She sailed fathom for fathom with us before. We can't get repaired in time. But don't you get mixed up in our dust. Cut your lucky and show your heels."

blighted if I don't stand by. I've got a finger. Let me put six pounds of lead into her for foot and surprise her weak nerves. She'll throw up the gauge if she sees we mean business."

"You ain't got a letter of marque, you see," said the merchant skipper, scratching his head for the second time, "and you don't know for certain that war's declared. You'll have to let her start, and then you can defend. But don't come no privateering tricks. And he returned to urging on his crew to their exertions with the deck litter, using a wealth of most pointed invective.

Desmond massed his men aft, and, quelling intervention on the part of Jones with a fiery glance, he addressed them in patriot wise. He put the case before them with bluntness. Here was a good civilized American ship at the mercy of a score of half tamed Tartars. Were they to leave her to be taken and her crew to rot in Russian prisons? Were they to become the talk of every dockside from the Tyne to the Liffey as the white headed lot who saw friends being pounded and sneaked out of the row? No! Perish the thought! He'd arms aboard, and all would do their duty as English seamen. Mr. Menzies would supply applicants with a glass of grog all round. Then they'd stand by to whip any and all the interfering Russians ever whelped.

A wild cheer rose as he concluded, and a simultaneous rush was made to the steward's quarters, where toasts of victory received full acknowledgment.

Then the little brass 6 pounder that had hitherto acted as ornament alone, save on foggy nights, was uncovered, sponged out and loaded. Rifles and shotguns were handed round and the deadlights screwed in. With an air of impudent unconcern the little yacht bobbed about within 100 yards of her consort, waiting what should betide.

CHAPTER IV. MR. JONES FINDS HIS COURAGE. The Russian, with the hated yellow at the mast, came along with a swing before the favoring breeze. Her sails belled out prosperously. Her cutwater spurred the spray. She leaped the billows with a proud and superior air. To her commander opposition was a thing unthinkable. A puff of smoke burst from her bow. A column of spray followed quickly, rising 50 feet ahead of the merchantman's bows. The union jack seemed to flick contemptuously from the yacht's stern as the foam died down among the waves.

The Russian sped along her course, and from her captain's speaking trumpet came a hail. Over went the yards, and the helm was put about. She rounded to within 100 fathoms.

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"Let me take you off," suggested Desmond.

The other flushed a fine color and spat contemptuously into the sea.

"Not by no manner of means," he replied. "She's only a dispatch boat. Only one gun, not much better than a signaler. Let her board and chance it. We've got 40 cases rifles and 30 tons powder, so I shall let her see. We've a couple of passengers, though—he scratched his head—but that's no good either. They'd see them and chase you and come back to us. I reckon they want them as much as the other. I'm going to let her, but don't you get into trouble."

Desmond squealed for joy. "If you're going in to win, I'll be entirely

the officer nodded, and Desmond ducked. The canister bailed down upon the planks, carrying destruction to the deckhouse and skylight, but never a man was touched, though splinters flew wide and white.

As the crash died away the sailors leaped to their feet. With a yell they greeted the crash of the meeting bulwarks, and a volley clanged at close



quarters into the ranged lines of man-of-war's men. A dozen of them rolled upon the decks in sudden helplessness.

With answering yells the Russian boarders broke across the lashed hammocks and swarmed upon the British deck.

Then ensued a scrimmage grim and great. Jones, erstwhile coward, now rumped the bloody planks a very lion of war. Whirling a capstan bar, he advanced upon the attacking party with a single blow smote upon the lieutenant's head, cracking it like an eggshell. Still brandishing his weapon, he sprang in among the following bluejackets, dealing death and destruction, while hot upon his track followed Barr and Desmond. With muskets clubbed and eyes and knives gleam the crew flung themselves into the fray.

Over the huddle of wrestling, smiting, swearing sailors the powder smoke hung like a fog, and out of it came cries and thud of fist and clod and the grate of rasping bulwarks as the ships tore at their fixed grapnels like living foes. The combatants lost themselves in a very mist of passion and fighting lust.

Half the Russians were upon the British decks. A score of British held the Russian forecabin. Jones and Desmond, unknowingly raging forward into the bows of the man-of-war, found themselves heaving clear space round the Russian gun. Barr, with half a dozen English tars, held his own deckhouse from a score of Muscovites. Across the gray haze of smoke a musket flash showed redly here and there.

Desmond, falling, gripped unseeing at the lanyard of the carronade, whose gunner had been found by a chance bullet ere he could fire her after reloading. With a resounding crash the charge roared into the bulwarks before her muzzle. With sudden inspiration he seized the lever and started the carriage at a run down the decks. Gathering impetus with the heave of the ship, the gun smote upon the shattered planking and leaped into the sea. A yell of delight rang out from the British crew as they saw the drawing of their enemy's single tooth.

From the yacht's hatchway answered another echoing shout. Out of the companion sprang Pladja, the Finn, bearded, wild eyed, wondering upon the sudden turmoil. For one moment he stared in amazement. Then, as the familiar bated uniform caught his eye, with a snarl as of a wolf about he buried himself into the fight, roaring, heaving, stabbing, like one possessed. The white faced Russians fell before him like leaves in an autumn gust.

A crash from the far side proclaimed the gunboat attacked starboard as well as port. With a cheer the Yankees sprang down upon her decks and linked forces with the British. Silently, unseen, they had towed their disabled bulk to the rescue and now swept the Muscovites before them in irresistible leaguer with their comrades of the yacht. Another two minutes' hurly burly, wherein the snap of pistols and the thudding of clubs continued ceaselessly, and the covered sailors of the crew were driven pell-mell down the hatchways in tumbled heaps and battered down. Then, with shouts of victory, the yellow flag whereon sat the double headed eagle was hauled down and cast into the sea. Vigorous were the shakings of each Yankee hand and hearty the slaps upon each British back. Upon the quarter deck the two commanders met and strove to make themselves heard above the gratulatory din.

"Thanks, mister, a hundred times!" said the merchant skipper soberly. "But the Lord—he only knows what to make of this."

"Make of it!" shouted Desmond, the unshaken blood flowing down his face. "Why, tow her back to England, the first prize of the war."

"Mercy me!" replied the other sadly. "You're young indeed, mister, or you wouldn't frame the words. This is piracy of sorts, this is. We're filibusters, we are. No commission to levy war, don't you know?"

"Dang the commission!" quoth Desmond. "Let's chance it."

"There, again, mister, you show your youth. There might be some chance for you if you've declared war, and that you can't tell yet. But there ain't a morsel for me and mine. Piracy on the high seas, it is, and no error. By all that's reasonable, let her go her evil way and pray to be forgotten and forgiven. Two good men have I lost over this most misfortunate affair, and you've been let blood, too, as your ash decks show only too plainly. Chuck their arms into the sea and send them back to Cronstadt and the devil."

Desmond looked half convinced and unhappy. "Well, skipper," he said unwillingly, "I suppose you know your business best. But how in the name of all that's extraordinary did you come to be carrying contraband in these seas? Is the Turkish fleet coming up?"

"That's a tale as I'll unfold in the cabin," said the American. "Leastways I've them there as will. Just for the

present let's get quit of this here splintered wreck." And he shouted to his crew.

Desmond bawled to his own men. "Fling over those grapnels!" he called to the wondering crew, who were already discussing prize averages, and they did as they were bid in a silence of stupefaction.

With empty, silent decks the gunboat slid from between her antagonists, like a big bully out of the grip of two revengeful urchins. Yawing to port masterless and unsteered, she was buffeted by the billows wantonly. As she drifted slowly apart from the other vessels one of her battered hatchways was flung into the air by an unseen force, and a man in military uniform stepped upon her decks.

"Pirates!" he shouted to them and shook his fist. "Pirates! But I not forget—no, I not forget!"

Then the ravaged gunboat slipped away into the darkness of the evening mist, which gathered her into its bosom, covering her wounded decks and bulwarks as with a flut of cloud.

Barr was below, and stretched upon the table of the saloon were three poor fellows with wounds that gaped scarlet-cutlass gashes that drained their lifeblood hideously. Desmond joined his trained assistance to Barr's skill, and between them they stitched and wiped and bandaged with swift-wonderful. Half a dozen more were slightly scarred by sword or bullet and patiently waited their turn.

Upon the other ship's deck as she rode alongside could still be seen the crimson remnants of the seaman who had been pulped by the round shot. The scarlet stains were dramatic evidence of the shattering of England's 30 long years of peace.

After the wounded had been got to their berths Desmond and two or three hale members of the crew transhipped to the Jemima to offer assistance with the footing of the new foremast. The skipper, with much politeness, ushered Desmond into his cabin to wet the occasion, as naval etiquette demanded.

Two persons rose to greet them as they entered—a tall, gray mustached military gentleman and a slight, fair haired girl.

"My passengers," announced the American, with matter-of-factness. "Let me introduce Colonel and Miss Preobelsina. Mr.—Desmond."

Desmond began to be acutely conscious of his general dirt and dishevelment. His clothing was gashed and ragged and his face a resting place for smuts unnumbered. Dark stains splashed his jacket here and there. No wonder, then, that he blushed and stammered like a schoolboy as he eyed this wonderful apparition in surroundings so unlikely for this maiden who bowed and smiled at him with such sweet cordiality was, so he swiftly realized, the one peerless woman in the wide world.

CHAPTER V. PLADJA, THE FINN, EXPLAINS HIMSELF. It was the colonel who broke the silence. He held out his hand with a frank smile, speaking in excellent English.

"We owe you great thanks, sir," he said, "for aid most opportune. But for your assistance I fear we should have been compulsory passengers aboard the gunboat you have so gallantly beaten off, sailing for Cronstadt, which in my case, at any rate, would have meant a very early death. We should have ranked as prisoners, but not of war."

"But why?" stammered Desmond. "Surely the fact of your vessel bearing contraband of war doesn't affect you?"

"Unfortunately," replied the colonel. "It belonged to me. I see I must explain a little. The fact is, I have had my little differences with the paternal government of the czar. I and a few thousand of my fellow countrymen—I have the honor to be a Pole—took upon ourselves to reason with our Russian administrators on a matter of sentiment. We objected to their methods and perhaps were a trifle forcible in our manner of expressing our ideas. In fact, as you probably are aware," continued he, "we killed a few thousand of them a year or two back."

Desmond held out his hand. "If you are one of the Polish patriots, sir, I should like to shake hands with you again. By Jove, I wish we'd sunk those brutes! But how in the world did you come to be pursued? Where did you sail from?"

"From Bremen," said the colonel, "as I think I heard our friend here inform you."

"Of course, I forgot. But how in the world did a Russian gunboat come to be on your trail from Bremen?"

"I see I must give you the whole story. Besides my Polish property, I have a good deal of land on the Baltic coast. This has been confiscated by the paternal government aforesaid, together with what I own elsewhere. The creature whom they have installed as their agent in, I much regret to say, my cousin. This vile wretch found out, by some means unknown to me, my presence in Bremen and notified the executive. He was, in fact, the gentleman who bid us that dramatic farewell from the gunboat's deck just now. How he got his gunboat timed to meet us in the Baltic I cannot say. Probably we were watched leaving Bremen harbor. Anyway, there we were, and the result we have seen."

"But the contraband of war—he must have known of that or wouldn't have dared to stop a ship under the stars and stripes."

tion. You have already risked life and property for entire strangers. What is there left for your kindness to suggest? I heard your offer to take us off before the fight began. It was only because I knew that we should be seen and pursued that I didn't accept it. Believe me, the Russians would have followed you under the guns of Fort Washholm rather than let you escape to Stockholm with us on board. You have indeed done all there is to do."

"Yes, indeed you have," chimed in the daughter. "How can we thank you enough?"

As Desmond looked up he felt that she of all people in the world could find a means. Yet the audacity of the mere thought made him blush and muster innuities as he strove to find a reply. The soft earnestness of those blue eyes, the sweet gratitude that shone in the deliciously flushed face—these things made his brain whirl with the rapture of regarding them. It seemed impossible that this charming creature could really be considering him when she spoke in this manner.

"Anything I have done has been an honor as well as a pleasure," he stammered. "But don't you think another vessel may be still in pursuit? If they set such importance on your capture, they will surely try to insure it. If you would only condescend to accept the hospitality of my yacht, I should have the greatest pleasure in conveying you to Stockholm or wherever you like as soon as possible. This unfortunate accident to your mast must detain you."

The colonel spread out his hands deprecatingly. "You are kindness itself," he answered. "I couldn't think of disturbing your cruise"—he began, but Desmond interrupted eagerly.

"I was bound for Stockholm in any case," he averred mendaciously, "and if Miss Preobelsina will excuse our bachelor ménage—the blue eyes sparkled merrily—"I can promise to try at any rate to make you fairly comfortable."

The colonel was overwhelmed by this offer, but in truth it could not be accepted. There were the munitions of war. These he could not bring himself to desert.

Desmond was determined. The munitions of war could be transhipped. The colonel owed it not only to himself, but to his country, to do that which served her best. As a mere question of principle he hoped the matter might be reconsidered from this point of view.

The colonel wavered and was profound in his acknowledgments. How could he force himself on such an astounding good nature? He appealed to his daughter. She, with graceful outspread hands, could find no arguments to help him and could but smile her helplessness. Lane, the skipper, when appealed to, was most evidently agreeable to losing his passengers, having an eye to the dangerous nature of both them and their cargo. Finally the long and the short of it was that within two hours the Polish refugees were ensconced in the yacht's best cabins and the cases of rifles in her hold.

When morning dawned, the merchant vessel was a dwindling speck upon the horizon, and with every sail set the Hendrik Hudson was dying north to Stockholm.

Pladja, the Finn, was talking in the little English he had managed to pick up when Desmond and his guest strolled on deck after breakfast. He was addressing Jones excitedly, holding his lips reminiscently over the glories of the fight. A cutlass wound had seared his forehead and was bound with ample folds of lint. In this he resembled more than one of the yacht's crew, but Barr had pronounced them all to be healthy wounds and likely to heal, though some of them were shrewd enough waxes.

As the colonel's voice was raised in answer to some remark of his host a strange thing happened. The Finn whirled round and stared at him from beneath his bandaged brows, his eyes ablaze, his mouth open, intense amazement shining in every feature. With a wild cry he rushed across the intervening deck and cast himself at the other's feet, snatching at his hands, covering them with kisses, pouring out a babel of disjointed, trembling words, fawning like a dog who has found his master after long days of separation.

For the moment the colonel was entirely nonplussed. Then as the bearded

face was turned up to him, the brown eyes appealing hungrily for recognition, the thin hand, catching at his knees, a shout burst from between his lips. Raising the man to his feet, he wrung his hand, smiling, talking, patting his shoulder, while great tears coursed down his cheeks.

"Lars! Lars!" he called continually, and the babel of words roared gladly between them, while the English could only watch and wonder. For an instant Miss Preobelsina regarded her father with uncomprehending amazement. Then, with a glad cry, she too, ran to the chattering, hand grasping pair and joined in the melée of happy words.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Lying Somewhere