

I thought better of it, and turned in again.

CHAPTER VI

Halstead spent the morning purposefully in giving Diaz orders about breaking out the Yap cargo, going over the bills of lading with him as if he confidently expected to reach Tomil bay on Friday. As for myself, I followed his suggestions to the extent of winning over 40 of Don Silvestre's dollars at Sancho Pedro, in the smoking-room, and then losing nearly all back to him. This put the old gentleman in high good humor. We were getting quite chummy, when the senorita came along forward and asked me to tell her how observations were taken; she had noticed Moreno on the bridge with his sextant, and made that an excuse to get me out for a chat.

It still lacked ten minutes of noon, so I fetched a spare instrument from Halstead's locker and held it so that she could see the sun, like a red ball, through the smoked glass. She couldn't seem to keep it from wobbling out of sight, but persistently squinted through the lens while she scolded me for leaving her alone the whole morning.

"Al," she said, "I did my new shoes put on before el desayuno because I the promenade did expect with el capitán or el Senor Enrique. See, are they not pretty?" She placed the little toe of one in a mesh of the netting, drawing up her skirt a trifle so that I could see the whole of the dainty toe, and, above it, a few inches of beautifully rounded ankle in open-work silk stockings, which disappeared in a cloud of lace edging. "And then, when I did with that stupid cura have to walk, what saw I but el capitán the tiresome occupation talking with el primero. El Senor Enrique was in sight nowhere; but presently I am told he does mi padre's doubloons win at the Pedro, en la camara de fumar. So I did think that it was bad for my father that his doubloons he should lose to a young man like el Senor Enrique, and that I should know if offended him I have, or el capitán, that neglect me they should."

"Capt. Dick is responsible for the safety of the ship and all our lives, senorita mia, and I—well, do you not think it is well that I should be good friends with your father?"

"Oh, yes, good friends, Enrique mio; but not so noticeable you should make. The Spanish etiquette you do not understand. When particular attention the gentleman has paid to the young girl, as but yesterday and the days before you have done, he so boldly should not go to her father. On the land, the liberty to see you so much alone of the time as on el vapor we have done I never should have; it is not the custom. That is why las senoritas the gentlemen like to be so friendly when—the opportunity they do have; it so seldom is. But when to the senorita's father the gentleman so boldly does go, people do think that for his wife he does wish her."

"Well, suppose they do. I guess I can stand it if you can."

"Ah, but Enrique mio, you do not wish. Not now, I am quite sure. But if the people you do make to think so, you would me have to take or else the duello to fight with mi padre. They would say: 'Behold, el senor the grand admiración has for la senorita. But un honorable he is; the respects he does not pay to su padre; much alone it is permitido that he does her see. Then he does find that she is not as he did think; remain he will not with her; and su padre must the senor then kill por la honra de la familia.' Do you not see, Enrique mio?"

"I'm beginning to, dimly. You know I'm not as familiar with your Andalusian customs as I should be. But see, the sun must be at the zenith. Here, let me adjust the sextant for you. Now look. Isn't the lower edge just touching the water?"

As she peeped through the glass, Halstead, on the bridge, took the sextant from his eye and said: "Strike eight bells, quartermaster." Then he and the mates went into the wheel-house to figure up the reckoning.

For perhaps half an hour longer we stood talking in the shadow of the forward life-boat. Then, just as the steward came along with the lunch-gong, there was the muffled sound of a crash from the engine-room gratings, and the machinery stopped. In an instant heads appeared at various windows and doors; the passengers, with pale faces and questioning looks, crowded out upon the decks. Echoes of voices shouting excited orders came from somewhere below, and the good old ship, having lost her headway, rolled uneasily upon the long, glassy swell. Halstead stepped quickly down the starboard ladder and aft to the engine-room gangway. The senorita clung tightly to my arm with one hand, while with the other she fished her beads from their warm concealment and held them ready for instant use. Her bosom was pressed so closely against my side that I could feel her heart beating about a hundred and forty to the minute. She looked aft with dilated eyes toward where the captain had disappeared, then beseechingly into my face, as she whispered: "Madre de Dios, Enrique! what is it? Shall el vapor in the water sink? Is it la muerte? Ricardo—why goes he below into the danger? tell me! Por Dios, tell me!"

I was beginning to think, myself, that for a bluff it was pretty realistic. Perhaps I may have caught some of the senorita's nervousness. The crash below was what puzzled me; that hadn't been on the programme. I comforted the girl as well as I could by saying I didn't think the steamer was likely to sink right away, though there was certainly something wrong with the machinery, and then suggested our going along to the engine-room, where we might look down and see what the trouble was. I was considerably more shaken up than I cared to admit, especially as the quartermaster before

pecially as the quartermasters and stewards, in obedience to the discipline which Halstead always enforced at sea, had taken their stations for the signal: "All hands stand by to abandon ship."

When it came to actually approaching the vicinity of danger, the senorita's curiosity, with possibly an unconfessed anxiety for the captain, got the better of her fears, and she followed me as far as the gratings over the cylinders. No one else had the temerity to accompany us, if, indeed, they knew where the gangway led to.

From the depths under our feet we could hear McPherson and the captain in earnest conversation, broken now and then by a dull tapping, as of a hammer on hollow or fractured steel. Occasionally one of the Spanish assistants would about some order to the oilers, at work upon the high-pressure cross-head. Presently we heard Halstead say: "Turn her over once or twice, Mas, while I keep my hand on the shaft;" and in a moment one of the great oily pistons stretched itself up to within a foot of Garcia's pretty nose, as she leaned over the steel rail, starting a subdued squeal of surprise from the girl, who had no idea the thing moved. Up and down, greasily, insinuatingly, they slid, while we could hear a little sharper tapping from the shaft-alley; then, with a slippery sough of content, they rested again. Another period of consultation below, while the steamer rolled in the trough of the sea; after which we heard the captain say: "Well, keep her at about 60 turns for half an hour and see how she feels. Then report to me." In another moment we saw him coming up.

He smiled reassuringly as he reached the grating where we stood, but looked thoughtful. As soon as he stepped out on deck the passengers crowded about with anxious questions; and he told them, briefly, that there had been an accident to the shaft, how serious a one it was impossible to say at present, but that the ship was in no immediate danger, and that they had better go below for lunch. Then he called to the mate, on the bridge: "Pipe your men down, Mr. Diaz, and come to my room as soon as you are relieved." I was very anxious to question him, but, by an almost imperceptible motion, he signaled me to go below with the senorita.

When we reached the saloon every one was talking excitedly about the accident and speculating as to whether the steamer would be obliged to lay up for repairs at Yap. The pulsation of the screw was noticeably slower; and the second mate, after hastily finishing his meal, hurried on deck to relieve Diaz, so that he might consult with the captain. The engineer's chair was empty; he did not put in an appearance until dinner-time. About the time we reached the dessert, the screw stopped again. The stewards continued to wait upon us as if nothing had happened, and this alone kept several from rushing on deck again. When we did finally leave the table, McPherson came down from the captain's quarters and assured Padre Sebastiano that the danger was not serious. But as bell after bell struck without the engines being started, a vague uneasiness spread through the ship, and every one talked in subdued tones. Three of the passengers went below to make up small bundles of their valuables in case it should be necessary to take to the boats.

Late in the afternoon, Halstead came down from his room, followed by the mate, and told those on deck that, owing to the accident, he had decided to head for the island of Guajan in the Ladrone, where he hoped to obtain spare machinery which would enable the steamer to make the remainder of the voyage in safety. Then he asked the senorita, Padre Sebastiano and me if we would like to go down into the engine-room and see the damaged shaft. I fancy the padre would have preferred remaining on deck, but, as it was against his principles to miss anything, we went, holding bunches of cotton waste as a protection against grease on the hand-rails and machinery. The captain naturally went first, and the senorita followed, blushing like a peony at the revelations for which the steepness of the iron ladder was responsible. Down, down, grating after grating, until we were 12 feet below the water-line and the cylinders towered above us like grotesque monsters; then through a tiny door into the long tunnel, or shaft-alley, lighted at intervals by hanging incandescents and extending clear to the inboard bearing at the stern of the ship. Four of the assistants and oilers were leaning against the wall-plates, like navvies waiting for the ore car in a coal mine; while down at one side, obstructing the passage, was the wreck of an iron tank which had been lashed on brackets to hold lubricating oil, and which evidently, fetching loose as the steamer rolled, had fallen upon the shaft with sufficient force to start the crack that we could see distinctly as Halstead swung a torch over it. There was quite a perceptible dent where the tank had struck, and, leading from it, the finer line of a fracture in the steel which extended two-thirds of the distance around the shaft, slanting spirally toward the stern. To our inexperienced eyes it seemed that anything over the normal resistance upon the screw might easily twist it apart, but the captain said it was not quite as bad as it looked, tapping the steel with a hammer and calling our attention to the sound as he did so. He said that in ordinarily smooth weather he might get back to Manila without an actual break, but that, as the risk would be great in squalls or heavy seas, it would be foolhardy to proceed without the strengthening rings and clamps which he expected to find at Guajan.

the wisdom of his decision seemed undeniable, and the whole affair had been managed in so realistic a manner that I thought the engineer had done his work a little too well. Having seen all there was to see, we made our way back to the engine-room, where Halstead scared Garcia nearly out of her wits by placing her hand upon the throttle-lever and telling her to push it down, slowly, the answering plunge of the great connecting rods making her think that something was about to explode. Then we climbed to the deck, the senorita insisting that Sebastiano should go first with me, and accepting Halstead's support in order to keep him on a level with herself.

During the remainder of the afternoon, Sebastiano appeared to be in a brown study, planking a secluded corner of the deck with Cura Juan. At dinner he started a discussion concerning the change of route by joking the cura upon the unexpected length of his voyage, and hoping that it would not inconvenience the other passengers; adding that as far as he personally was concerned the accident had been a fortunate one, inasmuch as it would enable him to reach his destination at least two weeks sooner than he expected. I noticed that he was questioning Diaz during the meal, so was not surprised at their coming on deck together, or when they approached Halstead and myself as we were enjoying our after-dinner cigars on the bridge. Diaz merely touched his cap and retired to port, but the padre, remaining upon the ladder until he should receive permission to invade the official precincts, said that he'd like to have a little chat about the voyage.

Halstead sent one of the quartermasters below for another stool, and



"Nine or ten of the hours! Santissima!"

courteously offered him a cigar. When we were settled comfortably, the padre said:

"Senor Capitan, this my first voyage is to the Ladrone; but much of the interest I have for them, and the intention have to un gran descripción write while among las Islas I do remain. You the knowledge have that I go to Saipan, I believe. Yes? And Saipan is how far from Agaña?"

"M—well, let me see. I presume you'll stop at Garapang, that's Tanapa harbor. About a hundred and twenty-five miles, padre."

"And the transportation, capitan? I am told that nothing they have but—the proas, the native boats; and that very wet they sometimes are—muy descomodo."

"Well, they are rather cramped for room, and I guess, when there's much of a wind, rather sloppy. Still, they are very fast; if you have a good wind you can make the run in nine or ten hours, I should say."

"Nine or ten of the hours! Santissima! In the one posición! What does one not do por la servicio piol! He is not the voyage dangerous, is he, capitan?"

"Dangerous? Oh, I don't think so, at this time of year. You might strike a hurricane in July or August, but you could put in at one of the islands if the weather looked threatening; they're none of them very far apart. You're familiar with the general position of the archipelago, are you not, padre?"

"Si, senor; I have seen them upon the atlas. Like the string of little pin-points."

"Shucks! You can't tell anything about them from an atlas; the scale's too small, and they're miles out of the true position. Haven't you ever seen a chart of the Ladrone? Would you like to look at one?"

"No—si—he mucho interes por las islas. I fear it will you incomodar."

"Not at all, padre; not at all. If you and Mr. Stevens will come below, I'd be pleased to show it to you. I'm obliged to refer to the charts constantly, you know."

The Imray chart of the western Pacific was still upon the table in our quarters, and Halstead took from the locker another, on a larger scale, of the archipelago itself, showing the exact shape and bearing of each island. From the absorbed way in which the padre bent over them and listened to the captain's remarks, it was easy to see that his education had been a broad one, comprehending readily, as he did, marks and measurements that would have puzzled most landsmen. Halstead had carefully erased our pencilings from the larger chart, leaving only the course as actually sailed up to noon of that day; and at Sebastiano's request he drew a line to indicate the direction in which we were then sailing—east, half north—in order to make Point Orote, on Guajan. When he removed the ruler, Sebastiano said:

"I was told, capitan, that el Guajan the most southerly island was; but here I do one more see—la Isla Santa Rosa, with five little crosses marked in its circle. All entiendo; he is una isla de coral—una laguna. Is it not so?"

"Well, it may have been a good while ago, padre; but it's all under water now, and has been for several hundred years. We call it a reef in English—'una roca sumergida' I

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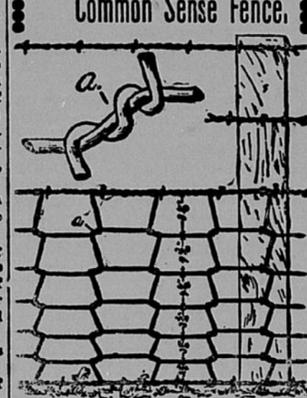
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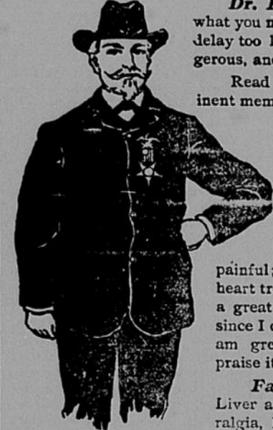
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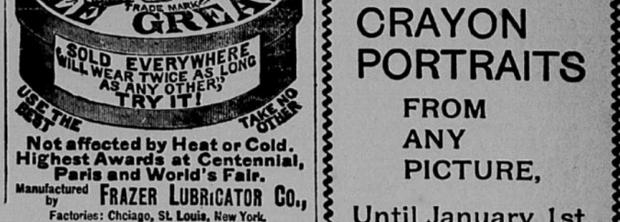
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