

THE ADVENTURE OF CAPTAIN KETTLE

THE RAIDING OF DONNA CLOTTILDE

BY CUTCLIFFE HAYNE

This story published to-day—The Raiding of Donna Clotilde—is the fifth of a series of thrilling sea stories by Cutcliffe Hayne detailing "The Adventures of Captain Kettle." If you want something that will warm the blood and lift you out of the dead level of every-day commonplaces, don't miss these stirring experiences of Captain Kettle. One complete story of adventure will appear every week in The Sunday Call until the series is finished.

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FANT one had announced in the captain's room at Hallett's that a man could leave that sanctum shortly before turning out time, and forthwith sidestepped in the open streets of South Shields, every master mariner within hearing would have put him down contemptuously as a gratuitous liar.

Into this exclusive chamber Captain Owen Kettle had made his way that day with tea, and over two modest half pints of bitter beer had done his share in the talk and the listening, from 8 till 10:30 of the clock. He had exchanged views with other shipmasters on cargoes, crews, insurances, climates, and those other professional matters which the profane world (not in the shipping interest) finds so dreary; and had been listened to with deference. He was a man who commanded attention, and though you might not like what he said, you would not dream of refusing to listen to it.

That special night, however, Captain Kettle's personal views on maritime affairs were listened to with even more deference than usual. A large red-haired man swung into the captain's room some few minutes after Kettle had seated himself, and after ordering his beverage and a cigar, nodded with a whimsical smile in Kettle's direction, and asked him how he liked the neighborhood of Valparaiso as a residence.

"I forget," said the little sailor, dryly enough. "All right, captain," said the red-haired man, "don't you mind me. I never remember too much myself either. Only you did me a good turn out there, although you probably don't know it, and I'd be proud if you'd have a drink or a smoke with me now in remembrance."

"You're very polite, captain," said the red-haired man, and struck the bell. "Some? Half-a-pint of bitter, please, miss, and one of your best four-penny smokes."

The general talk of the captains' room, which had halted for the moment, went on again. A salvage point was brought up by a stout gentleman in the Baltic timber trade who was anxious to air his sentiments, but the red-haired man skillfully intervened, and "Kettle on Salvage" was asked for and heard. And so on all through the evening. The red-haired man did his work cleverly, and no one resented it.

Now, Kettle was a man who liked being listened to, and there is no doubt that his vanity was tickled by all this deference from his professional equals. There is no doubt also that the smug security of Hallett's lulled his usual sense of wariness, which may in part account for what happened afterward. And so, without further excuse for him, it is my painful duty to record that an hour after he left the captains' room the little sailor was entrapped and kidnaped by what, to a man of his knowledge, was one of the most vulgar of artifices.

He emptied his tumbler, stood up and said he must be going. The red-haired man looked at the round cabin clock on the wall and mentioned that it was his time also; and together they went outside into the damp, dark main street of South Shields.

"Going back to your ship, captain?" asked the big stranger. "Why, no, captain," said Kettle, "I live here, and I'm off home." "Then I suppose I must say good night. Hope to meet you again, though. What boat are you on now, captain?"

"Well, I'm putting in a bit of a spell ashore just now, captain. Fact is, I haven't run across any employment quite to my taste lately. Don't every shipowner I care to serve under."

"No," said the red-haired man. "They are brutes, most of them. But look here, captain, there'd be no offense in my getting you the refusal of a berth, would there?"

"Kettle flushed. "Captain," he said, "you're very good. You see, I'm married with children, and I've never earned enough to put anything by. Between men, I don't mind telling you I'm on my beam ends. If I can't get hold of an advance note this week, it will mean going to the pawnshop for Mrs. Kettle's next Sunday dinner."

The red-haired man sighed. "Well, captain," he said, "you needn't thank me. It's just my duty to my employers to put this thing in your way. But we'll meet again if it here in the open. Come along off to my steamboat."

whisky might be a good thing to keep out the cold while we talk. Excuse me a minute while I get a couple of tumblers. I guess the steward's turned in."

Kettle seated himself on a velvet-covered sofa and looked round at the elaborate fittings of the cabin. "Satinwood panels," he commented, "nickel battens to put the charts on, glass-backed book-cases, and silk bunk curtains; no expense spared anywhere. Lord, who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea? But the old man said she wasn't pleasant. I wonder what the game is? Contraband, I guess; many a yacht's great on that. Well, any way, I've got to hear."

The red-haired man came back with two half-filled tumblers and a water jug. "Here's the poison," said he; "mix it according to your own weight."

"That's rather more than my usual whack," said Kettle, eyeing the tumbler; but he's a cold, wet night, so here goes. The red-haired man finished his glass and said: "My name?"

"Oh, yes; I'm Douglas, Captain Douglas," said Kettle. "Captain Douglas," said Kettle, thoughtfully. "No, I can't say I recall it at present. Well, sir, any way, here's your very good health and prosperity."

"Same," said the red-haired man, and absorbed his whisky and water with the dexterity of an artist. But of politeness Captain Kettle finished his tumbler also; there is an etiquette about these matters.

Silence filled the cabin for a minute or so, broken only by the distant clatter of a shovel on a firebar, and Kettle looked at the cabin clock. It was 11:30 and Mrs. Kettle would be expecting him home. "Hallo," he said, "firing up? Oh, I suppose you've got to keep steam in the donkey boiler while you're in the harbor, but of politeness you were talking about some employment you could put in my way, captain?"

"Employment?" said Douglas uneasily. "Oh, was it? Employment? Yes, to be sure. Well, you see, captain, it was my owner I was speaking for, and I've been thinking it over and perhaps on the whole you'd better see her for yourself."

"Her?" said Kettle. "Is there a woman at the head of this concern?" "A lady, call her. But look here, captain, you're getting sleepy. Why not turn in here for the night, and see her yourself in the morning?"

Kettle yawned, and his head nodded. "I am sleepy and that's a fact, though I don't know why I should be. But it wouldn't do for me to turn in here for the night. Mrs. Kettle's expecting me at home, and I've never broken word to her since I was married. I should take it as kind, captain, if you could give me some notion about this piece of employment now, so that I could see whether it's worth—"

He yawned again, and struggled with his heavy eyelids. "You must understand, please, captain, that time is scarce with me; I must get employment at once. I can't stand by and see my missus and youngsters hungry."

Captain Douglas swore and hit the table with his fist. "It's better hard," he said, "and I hate myself for bringing you here."

"What's that noise overhead?" said Kettle. "What are your crew doing on deck?" He tried to rise, but fell back stupidly on the sofa. A harsh bell clanged from somewhere beneath, and the slop-slop of water came to him through the yacht's side.

"She's swinging around in the stream, and some of us rung 'stand-by' to the engine-room."

The voyage was not one of monotony. Captain Kettle lay for the first twenty-four hours in a state of snoring unconsciousness, and when he did come to his wits again found himself in a cabin alone. He got up and stretched. His limbs were heavy and languid, but he was not conscious of having sustained any hurt. He clapped a hand to the region of his loins and nodded his grim head significantly. His pistol was missing.

The time was night; the cold air was full of moonshine, and fortune favored him in so much that the red-haired man whom he sought was himself standing a watch. He walked up to him without any concealment, and then, swift as light, slung out his right fist, sending every ounce of his weight

after it, and caught the red-haired man squarely on the peak of the jaw. The fellow went down as if he had been pole-axed and Kettle was promptly on top of him. The three other hands of the watch on deck were coming fast to their big captain's assistance and Kettle made the most of his time. He had been brought up in a school where he was taught to hit hard and hit first, and keep on hitting, and moreover he was anatomically skilled enough to know where to hit with most effect. He had no time then for punctilious fighting; he intended to mark his man in return for value received, and he did it. Then the three lusty deck hands of the watch came up and wrenched him off and held him for their officer in turn to take vengeance on.

Kettle stood in their grip, panting, and pale, and exultant. "You great ugly red-poll'd beggar," he said, "I've made your face match your head, but you needn't thank me for it. You'd dare to shanghai me, would you? By James, I'll make your ship a perfect hell till I'm off it."

"You hit a man when he's not looking," said Kettle. "You saw me plain enough. If you were half a sailor you'd never have been hit."

"You're half my size. I couldn't fight you."

"Tell your hands to set me adrift and go home," said Kettle. "The big man was tempted, but he swallowed down his inclination. He ordered the men who were holding Captain Kettle to set him free and go away forward again, and then he thrust his own fists resolutely in his pockets.

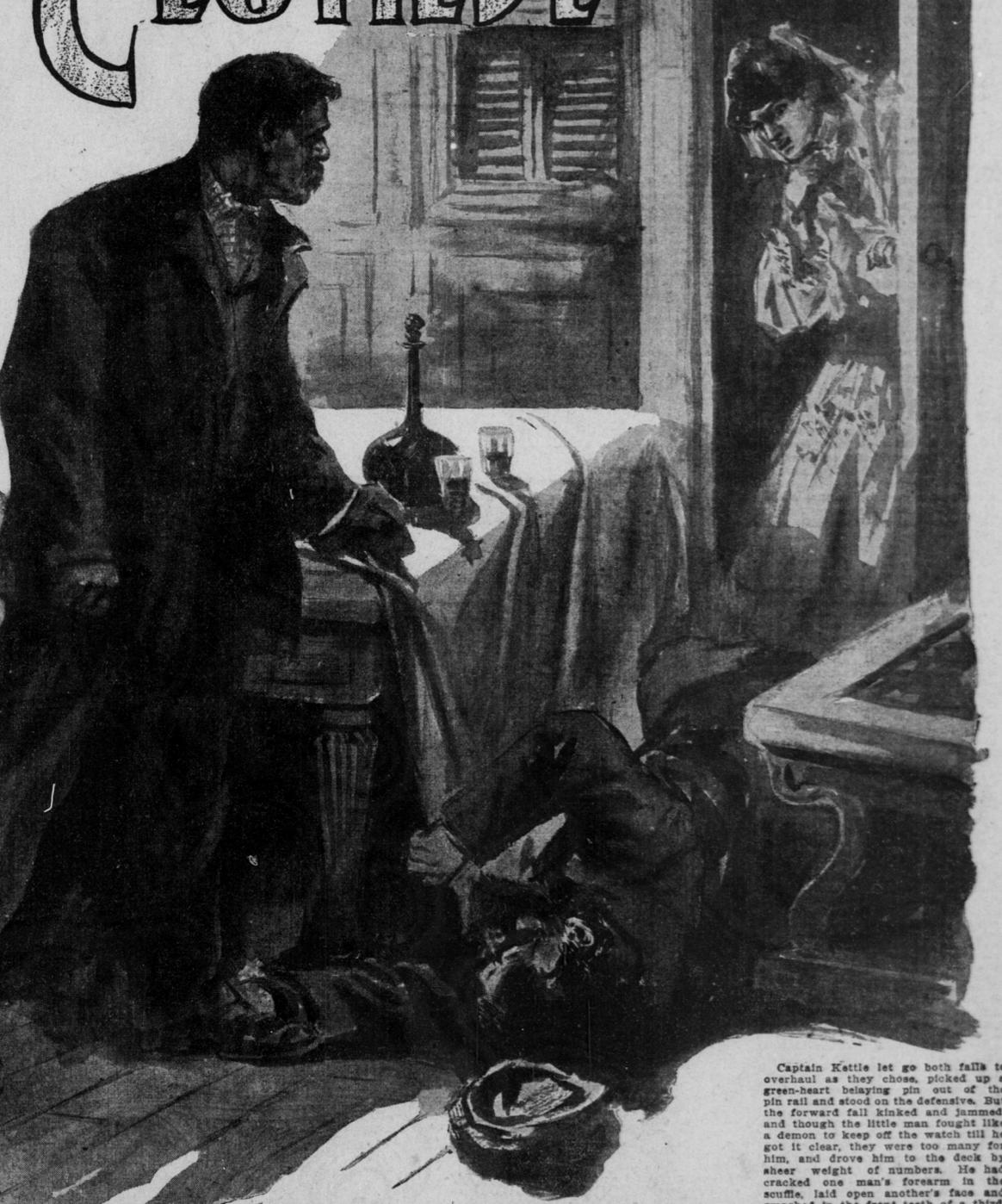
"Now," he said, when they were alone, "I own up to having earned what you've given me, and I hope that'll suit you for if it doesn't I'll shoot you like a rat with your own gun. You've handled me

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THE DOOR OF THE STATE ROOM CREAKED SLYLY OPEN. HE TURNED AND SAW A TALL DARK WOMAN JUST CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

in a way no other man has done before, and so you can tickle your pride with that and simmer down. If you want to know, I was a man like yourself—hard up—and I was paid to kidnap you, and I'd have kidnaped the devil for money just then."

"I know nothing about the devil," said Kettle acidly; "but you've got me, and you couldn't very well find a worse bargain. If you are not a fool you will set me ashore at once."

"I shall act entirely by my owner's orders."

"Then trot out your owner, and I'll pass the time of day with him next. I'm not particular. I'll kill the whole blooming ship's company if I don't get my own way."

By some subtle transference of thought the woman in her berth below became conscious of his regard, grew restless, woke, got more restless, dressed, came on deck and saw this man with whom she was so fiercely enamored staring gloomily over the bulwarks. With her lithe, silent walk she stepped across the dewy decks under the moonlight, and without his hearing her, leaned on the rail at his side and fung an arm across his shoulders.

Captain Kettle woke from his musings with a start, stepped coldly aside and saluted formally. He had an eye for a good-looking woman, and this one was deliciously handsome. He was always chivalrous toward the other sex, whatever might be their characters; but the fact of his own kidnaping at the moment of Mrs. Kettle's pressing need made him almost as hard as though a man stood before him as his enemy.

"Miss La Touche," he said, "do you wish me to remember you with hatred?" "I do not wish you to have need to remember me at all. As you know, I wish you to stay with me always."

"That, as I have told you before, miss, is impossible for more reasons than one. You have done me infinite mischief already. I might have found employment by this time had I stayed in South Shields, and meanwhile my wife and children are hungry. Be content with that, and set me ashore."

"Thank you, but I do not accept the terms. Money is not everything."

"And meanwhile, remember, I keep you on board here, whether you like it or not; and until you give way to what I want your wife may starve. So if she and your children are in painful straits you must recollect that it is entirely your fault."

"Quite so," said Kettle. "She will be content to starve when she knows the reason."

Donna Clotilde's eyes began to glitter. "There are not many men who would refuse if I offered them myself."

"Then, miss, I must remain curious."

Captain Kettle let go both falls to overhand as they chose, picked up a green-heart belaying pin out of the pin rail and stood on the defensive. But the forward fall kinked and jammed, and though the little man fought like a demon to keep off the watch till he got it clear, they were too many for him, and drove him to the deck by sheer weight of numbers. He had cracked one man's forearm in the scuffle, laid open another's face and smashed in the front teeth of a third, and they were rather inclined to treat him roughly, but the red-haired skipper came up and by sheer superior strength picked him up, kicking and struggling, and hustled him off below whether he liked it or not.

The lifeboat dangled half-swamped from the forward davit tackle and all hands had to be piped before they could get her on board again, and by the time they had completed this job there was another matter handy to occupy their attention. A fireman came up from below, white-faced and trembling:

"The yacht's half full of water," he said. "That their attention was called to it, they noticed the sluggish way she rode the water."

"She must have started a plate or something," the fireman went on excitedly. "We've got both bilge pumps running and they won't look at it. The water's coming in like a sluice."

"Carpenter," sang out the red-haired man, "come below with me and see if we can find anything. And he led the way to the companion. Between decks they could hear the water slopping about under the flooring. It seemed a bad, almost a hopeless case.

Instinctively the red-haired man went to his own room to pocket his valuables, and by a chance he was moved to lift up the door in the floor which covered the bath beneath it. Ah, there was the mischief. The seacock which filled the bath tub was turned on to the full, and the tub was gushing water on every side. The next stateroom was empty, but the bath cock there was also turned on to the full, and after going round the ship, and finally entering Kettle's room (and covering him with a revolver) and turning off his water supply he found that the sea had been pouring inboard from no fewer than eight separate apertures.

"And this is your work, you little fiend, I suppose?" said the red-haired man savagely.

"Certainly," said Captain Kettle; "shoot me if you like, but me ashore if you choose, but don't grumble if you find me a dauced ugly passenger. I'm

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