



SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Captain Phineas P. Scraggs has grown up around the docks of San Francisco, and from mess boy on a river steamer, risen to the ownership of the steamer Maggie. Since each annual inspection promised to be the last of the old weather-beaten vessel, Scraggs naturally has some difficulty in securing a crew. When the story opens, Adelbert P. Gibney, likable but erratic, a man whom nobody but Scraggs would hire, is the skipper. Neils Halvorsen, a solemn Swede, constitutes the fo'castle hands, and Hart McGuffey, a wastrel of the Gibney type, reigns in the engine room.

(Continued from last issue)

CHAPTER II.

Captain Scraggs and The Squarehead partook first of the ham and eggs, coffee and bread, which the skipper prepared. Scraggs then prepared a similar meal for Mr. Gibney and McGuffey, set it in the oven to keep warm, and descended to the engine room to relieve McGuffey for dinner. Neils at the same time took the course from Mr. Gibney and relieved the latter at the wheel. By this time, darkness had descended upon the world, and the Maggie had entered the fog; following her custom she proceeded in absolute silence, although as a partial offset to the extreme liability to collision with other coastwise craft, due to the non-whistling rule aboard the Maggie, Mr. Gibney had laid a course half a mile inside the usual steamer lanes, albeit due to his overwhelming desire for peace he had neglected to inform his owner of this; the honest fellow proceeded upon the hypothesis that what people do not know is not apt to trouble them.

Captain Scraggs read the log and reported the mileage to Mr. Gibney, who figured with the stub of a pencil on the pilot house wall, wagged his head, and appeared satisfied. "Better go for'd," he ordered, "an' help The Squarehead on the lookout. At eight o'clock we ought to be right under the lee o' Point San Pedro; when I whistle we ought to catch the echo thrown back by the cliff. Listen for it."



But No Answering Echo Reached His Ears.

echo reached his ears. "Hear anything?" he bawled.

"Heard the Maggie's siren," Captain Scraggs retorted venomously.

Mr. Gibney leaped out on deck, selected a small head of cabbage from a broken crate and hurried it forward. Then he sprang back into the pilot house and straightened the Maggie on her course again. He leaned over the binnacle, with the cuff of his watchcoat wiping away the moisture on the glass, and studied the instrument carefully. "I don't trust the danged thing," he muttered. "Guess I'll haul her off a couple points an' try the whistle again."

He did. Still no echo. He was inclined to believe that Captain Scraggs had not read the taffrail log correctly, and when at eight-thirty he tried the whistle again he was still without results in the way of an echo from the cliff, albeit the engine room howler

brought him several of a profuse character from the perspiring McGuffey. "We've passed Pedro," Mr. Gibney decided. He ground his end and muttered ugly things to himself, for his dead reckoning had gone astray and he was worried. The fog, if anything,

to pay and no pitch hot."

"McGuffey's fired!" Captain Scraggs screamed.

"Come, come, Scraggs, old tarpot," Mr. Gibney soothed. "This ain't no time for fightin'. Thinkin' an' actin' is all that saves the Maggie now."

But Captain Scraggs was beyond reason. "McGuffey's fired! The dirty rotten wharf rat! Call yourself an engineer?" he continued witheringly. "As an engineer you're a howling success at shoemakin', you slob. I'll fix your clock for you, my hearty. I'll have your ticket took away from you, an' that's no Chinaman's dream nuther."



"How're We to Get My Maggie Off the Beach?"

"It's all my fault runnin' by dead reckonin'," the honest Gibney protested. "Mac ain't to fault. The engine room telegraph busted an' he got the wrong signal."

"It's his business to see to it that he's got an engine room telegraph that won't bust."

"You dog!" McGuffey roared and sprang at the skipper, who leaped nimbly up the little ladder to the top of the pilot house and stood prepared to kick Mr. McGuffey in the face should that worthy venture up after him. "I can't persuade you to git me nothin' that I ought to have. I'm tired workin' with junk an' scraps an' copper wire and pieces o' string. I'm through!"

"You're right—you're through, because you're fired!" Scraggs shrieked in insane rage. "Get off my ship, you maritime impostor, or I'll take a pistol to you. Overboard with you, you greasy, addlepated bounder! You're rotten, understand? Rotten! Rotten! Rotten!"

"You owe me eight dollars an' six bits, Scraggs," Mr. McGuffey reminded his owner calmly. "Chuck down the spoolulicks an' I'll get off your ship."

Captain Scraggs was beyond reason, so he tossed the money down to the engineer. "Now git," he commanded. Without further ado, Mr. McGuffey started across the deck toward the fo'castle head. Scraggs could not see him but he could hear him—so he pelted the engineer with potatoes, cabbage heads and onions, the vegetables descending about the honest McGuffey in a veritable barrage. Even in the darkness several of these missiles took effect.

Upon reaching the very apex of the Maggie's bow, Mr. McGuffey turned and hurled a promise into the darkness: "If we ever meet again, Scraggs, I'll make Mrs. Scraggs a widow. Paste that in your hat—when you get a new one."

The Maggie was resting easily on the beach, with the broken water from the long lazy combers surging well up above her water line. At most, six feet of water awaited the engineer, who stood, peering shoreward and listening intently, oblivious to the stray missiles which whizzed past. Presently, from out of the fog, he heard a grinding, metallic sound and through a sudden rift in the fog caught a brief glimpse of blue flame with sparks radiating faintly from it.

That settled matters for Bartholomew McGuffey. The metallic sound was the protest from the wheels of a Cliff house trolley car rounding a curve; the blue flame was an electric manifestation due to the intermittent contact of her trolley with the wire, wet with fog. McGuffey knew the exact position of the Maggie now, so he poised a moment on her bow; as a wave swept past him, he leaped overboard, scrambled ashore, made his way up the beach to the great highway which flanks the shore line between the Cliff house and Ingleside, sought a roadhouse, and warmed his interior with four fingers of whisky neat. Then, feeling quite content with himself, even in his wet garments, he boarded a city-bound trolley car and departed for the warmth and hospitality of Scab Johnny's sailor boarding house in Oregon street.

Captain Scraggs sat down on the half-emptied crate of vegetables and commenced to weep bitterly—half because of rage and half because he regarded himself a pauper. Already he had a vision of himself scouring the waterfront in search of a job.

"No use boo-hoo'n' over spilt milk, Scraggs," Always philosophical, the author of the owner's woe sought to carry the disaster off lightly. "Don't add your salt tears to a saltier sea until you're certain you're a total loss an' no insurance. I got you into this

and I suppose it's up to me to get you off, so I guess I'll commence operations." Suiting the action to the word, Mr. Gibney grasped the whistle cord

and a strange, sad, sneezing, wheezy moan resembling the expiring protest of a lusty pig and gradually increasing into a long-drawn but respectable whistle rewarded his efforts. For once, he could afford to be prodigal with the steam, and while it lasted there could be no mistaking the fact that here was a steamer in dire distress.

The weird call for help brought Scraggs around to a fuller realization of the enormity of the disaster which

had overtaken him. In his agony he forgot to curse his navigating officer for the latter's stubbornness in refusing to turn back when the fog threatened. He clutched Mr. Gibney by the right arm, thereby interrupting for an instant the dismal outburst from the Maggie's siren.

"Gib," he moaned. "I'm a ruined man. How're we ever to get the old sweetheart off whole? Answer me that, Gib. Answer me, I say. How're we to get my Maggie off the beach?" Mr. Gibney shook himself loose from that frantic grip and continued his pull on the whistle until the Maggie, taking a false note, quavered, moaned, spat steam a minute and subsided with what might be termed a nautical sob. "Now, see what you've done?" he bawled. "You've made me bust the whistle."

"Answer my question, Gib." "We'll never get her off if you don't quit interlatin' an' give me time to think. I'll admit there ain't much of a chance, because it's dead low water now an' just as soon as the tide is at the flood she'll drive further up the beach an' fall apart."

"Perhaps McGuffey will have heard enough to telephone into the city for a tug."

"Tain't scarcely probable, Scraggs. You abused him vile an' threw a lot of fodder at him."

"I wish I'd been took with paralysis first," Scraggs wailed bitterly. "You'd best jump ashore, Gib, an' phone in. We're just below the Cliff house and you can run up to one o' them beach resorts an' phone in to the Red Stack Tug Boat company."

"Two'dn't be ethics for me, the registered master o' the Maggie, to desert the ship, Scraggs, old stick-in-the-mud. What's the matter with gettin' your own shanks wet?"

"I dassen't, Gib. I've had a touch of chills an' fever ever since I kicked to run mate up the San Joaquin sloughs. Here's a nickel to drop in the telephone slot, Gib. There's a good fellow."

"Scraggs, you're deludin' yourself. Show me a tugboat skipper that would come out here on a night like this to pick up the S. S. Maggie, two decks an' no bottom an' loaded with garden truck, an' I'll wag my ears an' look at the back o' my neck. She ain't worth it."

"Ain't worth it! Why, man, I paid fifteen hundred hard cash dollars for her."

"Fourteen hundred an' ninety-nine dollars an' ninety-nine cents too much. They seen you comin'. However, grantin' for the sake of argument that she's worth the tow, the next question them towboat skippers'll ask is: 'Who's goin' to pay the bill?' It'll be two hundred an' fifty dollars at the lowest figger, an' if you got that much credit with the towboat company you're some high financier. Ain't that logic?"

"I'm afraid," Scraggs replied sadly, "it is. Still, they'd have a lien on the Maggie."

"Steamer ahoy!" came a voice from the beach.

"Man with a megaphone," Mr. Gibney cried. "Ahoy! Ahoy, there!"

"Who are you an' what's the trouble?"

Captain Scraggs took it upon himself to answer: "American steamer Mag—"

Mr. Gibney sprang upon him tigerishly, placed a horny, tobacco-smelling palm across Scraggs' mouth and effectively smothered all further sound. "American steamer Yankee Prince," he bawled like a veritable Bull of Bashan, "of Boston, Hong Kong to Frisco, with a general cargo of sandal wood, rice an' silk. Where're we at?"

"Just outside the Gate. Half a mile o' the Cliff house."

"Telephone in for a tug. We're in nice shape, restin' easy, but our rudder's gone an' the after web o' the crank shaft busted. Telephone in, my man, an' I'll make it up to you when we get a safe anchorage. Who are you?"

"Lindstrom, of the Golden Gate Life Saving station."

"I'll not forget you, Lindstrom. My owners are Yankees, but they're sports."

"All right, I'll telephone. On my way!"

"God speed you," murmured Mr. Gibney, and released his hold on Captain Scraggs, who instantly threw his arms around the navigating officer's burly neck. "I forgive you, Adelbert," he crooned. "I forgive you freely. By the tail of the Great Sacred Bull, you're a marvel. She's an all night fog or I'm a Chinaman, and if it only stays thick enough—"

"I'll hold," Gibney retorted doggedly. "It's a tale fog. They always hold. Quit huggin' me. Your breath's bad."

Captain Scraggs, hurled forcibly backward, bumped into the pilot house, but lost none of his enthusiasm. "You're a jewel," he declared. "Oh, man, what a head! Whatever made you think of the Yankee Prince?"

"Because," Mr. Gibney answered calmly, "there ain't no such ship, this

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When "Hap" enlisted in the marine corps at Paris Island, a red-necked sergeant asked him what his occupation was.

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