

IN CHURCH.

I never mark the pastor's pose, His ministerial air; I never even note the clothes The congregation wear...



A FREE-LANCE By CHAUNCY C. HOTCHKISS

CHAPTER XV. THE FOG.

The moon was up, and it cast a lusty light over the lowlands and the river, though its setting would not be late. It was a lovely night; in faith, all nature was possessed of a beauty which made the thought of yielding up of life bitter enough.

I turned back to the others, and we ate the balance of our meal in silence, even the girl feeling the growing nearness of the end and glancing furtively at each man's face in turn.

The spell of silence and inactivity was broken, for the girl left her chair and stepped softly to the window as I replied: "I have thought of boats, but only for the Hudson side. Could we go far and not be picked up by another such sneaking devil of a patrol as I saw yonder? Whether shall we go? I say we, for it must be we. I have cast my lot with the others."

"I have it! I have it! Now is the time! Will you follow me and take a monstrous chance? Look, man! Mark the fog! We will to the boat—drift for the Phantom—cut her cable and trust to the ebb and God above to carry us past the fleet."

"The phantom! For the love of God, what phantom? Are you suddenly daft, Thorndyke, that you see ghosts?" was the vehement return of the youth, as with a violent twist he tried to free himself from my grasp.

to life! I am for it! We have no home, and can lose no more than is already lost if we remain here. Will you cast your lot with him—with us—and risk the danger which can be no greater beyond than in this place?

"There was no need of argument, however, for with one hand in that of her brother and the other stretched toward me, she simply answered: 'I dare all you dare! Have I yet failed?' and stood with lifted head and untrembling form as she spoke the words.

"Arms and provisions you can have. They are even now in the barn room," he answered slowly and in strong contrast to my excited speech. "But," he continued, as he closed the shutters, blocked the windows, and lighted the candle, "might you not overshoot your vessel in the fog, or run into some of the anchored fleet when once adrift?"

With the opening of possible escape before me, and one demanding immediate action, my spirits went aloft in the measure of their former depression. Nor did I fear their reaction, as an enough uncertainty lay before to keep a man's eyes and wits awake, and that, without the aid of liquor.

This much settled, and in less time than it has taken to write it, I thought and spoke no more of the barn room, but turned with the rest to making ready. Beyond the boat, the bundle of provisions, an extra brace of pistols, and a rapier, we mulcted our host of nothing. In an hour the boat, which was no more than a flat-bottomed scow squared at the ends, was brought from its hiding place.

After cleaning it, there was little else to do but load the boat, getting the arms snugly bestowed, and then wait for the slackening of the flood tide. It was tedious and impatient waiting, for I feared that the wind might rise and wreck the boat. If this should happen before dawn our prospects would be wrecked with it, and then—and then—

CHAPTER XVI. THE CABIN OF THE PHANTOM. With my mind lost to all else save the calculation of the speed and distance we were making, and my body braced forward awaiting the proper moment to sever the boat's course, I was suddenly startled by a quick exclamation from Ames, which was at once followed by a rasping bump and the heeling of the scow until the water poured in over the gunwale.

It was nervous work. Ames was forward as a lookout, his figure even at that short distance being almost lost in the combined darkness and blur. The girl, seated upon the center thwart, held herself as straight as an arrow, though her head was slightly bent, as in intense listening. Fears of her becoming an incubus had long since vanished, and if her heart beat thickly at our dubious adventure, it did not show in the quiet and confident smile with which she had adopted every suggestion and obeyed every order with as little hesitation as though she had been a disciplined soldier.

the boat's head inshore, I ran close to the rocks, and then slid along (more slowly for being hard by the bank) just below what I thought to be the boom of the land. By this I had gotten into the swing of the situation and had less fear of interruption than of missing the Phantom. "I would be an easy matter to slip by her, and even could I once mark the height of Corlears Hook, with its alarm beacon always ready for the touch of a torch, I would then be an unusual sailor if I could make a straight course for the schooner, though she still lay at her old anchorage. In the darkness both beacon and heights would be beyond vision, and I was approaching what was very like real worry when my fears were relieved and our present situation indicated by the sound of eight bells struck in true mainmast man's style that came floating over the river about our larboard beam.

"Is your ship still where she has been? Is she deserted, or, at least, is she not guarded?" "Three days ago not a gasket had been touched since the broad arrow was painted on her bow," I answered. "By night she is guarded by a single man, but that troubles me less than would a fly on a hot day. He has seen his last sun if he thwarts me. I care not for one man nor three if I can but guide my approach. From aught I have seen—and I have watched her well—nothing has been done to her, naught carried away. She was thought fit to go on an errand to Pigot, only wanting in men, arms, and provisions; even the fresh water stowed forward may be good!"

The rift was but a few hundred feet across, though it apparently extended from shore to shore, like the waters rolled back for the passage of the children of Israel. Not a boat was in sight. On either hand the water lay black and flat, only shimmered here and there by the light of the stars that shone clearly overhead. This incident must not be considered forced. The writer saw these exact conditions while on a ferry boat from New York to Brooklyn during a foggy night in the summer of 1885. The phenomenon is probably due to a warm and comparatively dry streak of slowly moving air, and lasts but a few moments.



Fog.

CHAPTER XVII. With my mind lost to all else save the calculation of the speed and distance we were making, and my body braced forward awaiting the proper moment to sever the boat's course, I was suddenly startled by a quick exclamation from Ames, which was at once followed by a rasping bump and the heeling of the scow until the water poured in over the gunwale. At the same moment the starboard oar received a blow that almost drove it from my hand, and what seemed a huge black object arose along side and quickly vanished in the mist and darkness astern. The suddenness and smartness of the shock were startling; but, quick as were the appearance and disappearance of the obstruction we had fouled, I recognized it to be the spar buoy which marked the outer edge of the reef extending from the Hook into the river.

One might have cruised a week under the conditions besetting us and failed to have picked it up. It was like groping through the proverbial haystack and finding the proverbial needle without having looked for it, and though its greeting had well-nigh been disastrous, it gave me the one point I wished with absolute accuracy. I now knew that we were nearly dead on the Phantom, and not two cable lengths away; indeed, had we missed the rude warning of the spar, it was but fair to reckon we would have fouled the schooner herself unless in my miscalculations I had altered our course, in which case we would have missed her altogether.

nified through the fog, loomed up like a blank wall the bow of the schooner. So suddenly were we upon it that the job boom was well over us before I sighted the black wall, and with all my might I checked the boat's way, grasping the helmsman in time to save the taut cable, and we came to a rest. The suck of the rushing waters against the broad, flat end of the scow made me fearful that the noise would call the guard's attention forward, and, whispering into the ear of Ames to hold all fast until I returned, I gently rid me of my boots, took my sword betwixt my teeth, swarmed up the stay to the bowsprit, and stood again on the deck of my own schooner.

"Nay," came the answer from a boat; "ye do me a good turn by giving me this leave; fear me not. I'll ne'er betray you or fail to be back in time for you to get ashore. 'Tis a summer's fog, an' will melt by sunrise." Tell him I will fetch the rum."

"Fetch it, then, but not in yer skin," was the return. "If they speak of me, say ye heard I was going on a quest to Kingsbridge, to be back on the morrow. Ye had better belay yer lip, for ye are off post, an' I hold ye in my hand."

Getting to the deck again, I moved slowly aft, stopping as I noticed a slight luminosity at the side of the cabin, but on further cautious approach found the cause. The cabin was lighted. To prevent the light from going beyond the vessel a tarpaulin had been stretched over the cabin house from rail to rail, thus leaving an open space betwixt the rails and the deadlights, whereby was served the double end of obtaining air and guarding the outward show of light. Here was daylight for sure. Dropping on to my stomach, I snaked myself beneath the tarpaulin, brought my eye to the swung back port, and nearly betrayed myself by the start I made.

A READER OF CHARACTER. Stuart, the American Painter, was a Good Judge of Human Nature.

"I don't want people to look at my pictures and say how beautiful the drapery is; the face is what I care about," said Stuart, the great American painter. He was once asked what he considered the most characteristic feature of the face; he replied by pressing the end of his pencil against the tip of his nose, distorting it oddly.

His faculty at reading physiognomy sometimes made curious hits. There was a person in Newport, R. I., celebrated for his powers of calculation, on one day Stuart, being in the British museum, came upon a bust whose likeness was apparently unmistakable. Calling the curator, he said: "I see you have a head of 'Calculating Jemmy.'"

On another occasion, while dining with the duke of Northumberland, his host privately called his attention to a gentleman, and asked the painter if he knew him. Stuart had never seen him before. "Tell me what sort of a man he is." "I may speak frankly?" "By all means."

Only Faney. Husband (on his return from business)—Why, my dear, what is the matter? You look ill. Wife (faintly)—Oh! Jim, I've just been reading some patent medicine advertisement, and I find I have 16 diseases, any one of which may prove fatal.—Ailly Slopier. Liberty's Limitations. Immigrant—At last I am in free America. A man can do pretty much as he pleases in this country, can't he? Native—Yes, unless he's married.—N. Y. Weekly. Blink—Is there anything worse than to have a guest you can't amuse? Wink—Yes; to be the guest of a man that can't amuse you.—N. Y. World.

HER ASPIRATIONS.

A Kansas Girl Who Took a Practical View of Educational Advantages.

There was little of the idealistic about the essay of a Kansas girl at her recent graduation. Her teacher had given her for a theme the phrase: "Beyond the Alps Lies Italy." She astonished her preceptor and schoolmates by these emphatic words: "I do not care a cent whether Italy lies beyond the Alps or even in Missouri. I do not expect to set the river on fire with my future career. I am glad I have a good, very good education, but I am not going to misuse it by writing poetry or essays about the grammar of any lover I may have, should he speak of 'dorgs' in my presence, or say he went somewhere. It will also come handy when I want to figure out how many pounds of soap a woman can get for three dozen eggs at the grocery. So I do not begrudge the time I have spent in acquiring it. But my ambitions do not fly so high. I just want to marry a man who can lick anybody of his weight in the township, who can run an 80-acre farm and who has no female relatives to come around and try to boss the ranch. And I will agree to cook good dinners for him that won't send him to an early grave and lavish upon him a whole lot of wholesome affection and see that his razor hasn't been used to cut broom wire when he wants to shave. In Missouri, I don't care if I do get a little rusty on the rule of three and kindred things as the years go by."—Chicago Chronicle.

The Finest Road. "I suppose," he began, as he entered a railroad ticket office—"I suppose you sell tickets to New York?" "Certainly, sir," was the reply. "You have a direct line?" "It is down on the map as the only direct line." "As you see, sir," replied the agent, as he opened a folder. "Yes, I see. You land passengers in New York ahead of competing lines, of course?" "Of course."

Woman in Finance. A Detroit man, whose wife was coming to San Francisco on a visit, accompanied her as far as Chicago and put her on the overland train. Before leaving her he gave the porter half of a five dollar bill that he had torn in two, telling the man that his wife had the other half and would give it to him at the end of the journey if she were properly looked after. When he got home he found he had neglected to give his wife the other half of the torn bill, and a few days later he received a letter from his wife reminding him of the fact, and saying she had torn a dollar bill in two and given half of it to the porter. Somewhere along the line there must be a wild-eyed dorky with the halves of two worthless bills in his possession and a firm conviction that he has been working by some sort of a new flimflam game. Meanwhile, the Detroit man is anxious to find out what sort of reasoning his wife used when she gave that porter a half instead of the whole of that one dollar bill.—San Francisco Argonaut.

An Extinguisher. Thump, thump! Rattle, rattle, crash! Young Percy Stonebroke rolled down the steps of the palatial residence of Mr. Goldbands.

The Farmer Scored. A farmer drifted into a hardware store at Millhill and was asked by the manager: "Don't you want to buy a bicycle to ride around your farm on? They're cheap now. Can give you one for \$35."

"Calculating Jemmy!" repeated the curator, in amazement. "That is the head of Sir Isaac Newton." On another occasion, while dining with the duke of Northumberland, his host privately called his attention to a gentleman, and asked the painter if he knew him. Stuart had never seen him before.

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