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ICE BOUND.

By W. CLARE RUSSELL

Author of "The Wreck of the Grossenon" "Jack's Courtship," "My Watch Be-low," ' The Lady Maud " Etc.

CONTINUED. CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FRENCHMAN DIES.

However, if I expected my Frenchm to sit very long silent, he soon undeceived me by beginning to complain in his tremu-lous, aged voice of his weakness and aching limbs. "Tis the terrible cold that has affected

"The better the set of and knowingness, grinning very oddly; and then falling grave with a startling sudden ness, he began to dribble out a piratical love story he had once before favored me with, escribing the charms of the woman with a horrid leer, his head nodding with the nervous affection of age all the time, while he looked blindly in my direction-a hideous and yet pitiful object!

I could not say that his mind was gone, but he talked with many breaks for breath, and not very coherently, as though the office of his tongue was performed by habit rather of his tongue was performed by habit rather than memory, so that he often went far astray, and babbled into sentences that had no reference to what had gone before, though on the whole I managed to collect what he meant. I was sure he had not power enough of vision to observe me in the dim reddish light of the context and the dim reddish light of the cook room, and this being so he

could not know I was present-more particu-larly as he could not hear me; yet he persisted in his poor babble, which was a behavior in him that, more than even the matter of his

speech, persuaded me of his imbecility. He made no reference to our situation, and in solemn truth I believe his memory retained no more than a few odds and ends of the evil story of his life-like bits of tared lace and a rusty button or two lying in the bottom of a dark chest that has long been emptied of the clothes it once held.

But my condition made such heavy de-mands upon my thoughts that I had very much less attention to give to this surprising omenon of senility than its uncommo merits deserved. It has puzzled every mem-ber of the faculty that I have mentioned it to, the supposition being that, given the case of suspended animation, there is no waste, and the person would quit his stupor with the same powers and aspect as he possessed when he entered it, though it lasted a thousand years. But granting there is no waste Time is always present, waiting to settle ac-counts when the sleeper lifts his head. There may be an artificial interval, during which the victim might show as my pirate did-but the poised load of years is severed on a sudden by the scythe and becomes superincum-bent, and with the weight comes the transformation; and this theory, as the only eye witness of the marvelous thing, I will hold and maintain while I have breath in my body to support it!

I left him gabbling to himself-sometimes grinning as if greatly diverted, sometimes lifting a trembling hand to help his ghostly recital by an equally ghostly dumb show-and went on deck, satisfied that he was too weak to get to the fire and meddle with it, but sufficiently invigorated by his long night's rest to sit up without tumbling off

This time I carried with me an old perspective glass I had noticed in the chest in my cabin-the chest in which were the nautical instruments, charts and papers—and leveled it along the coast of the island; but it was a poor glass, and I found I could man<text>

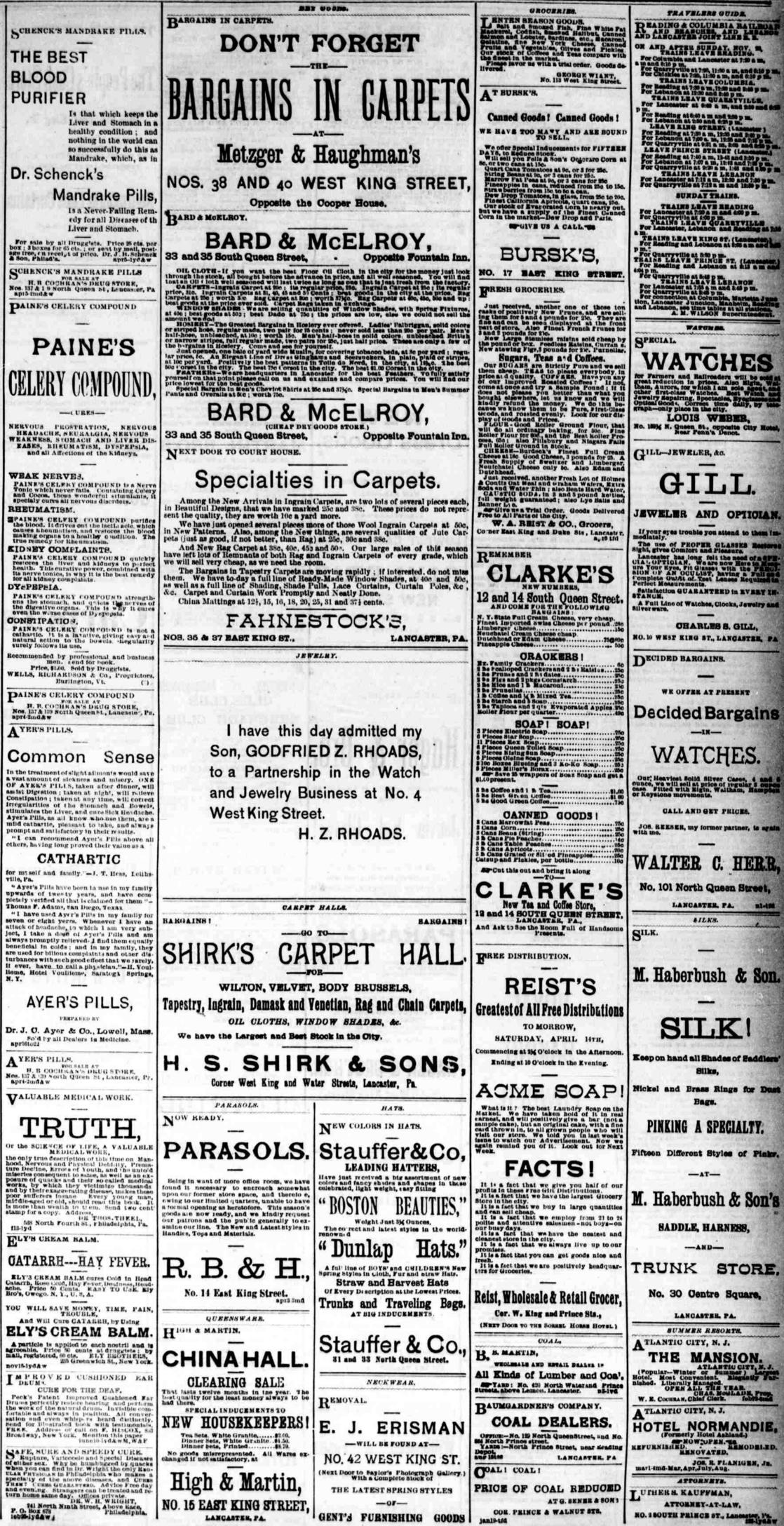
povered him up. In a rew minutes he was

on the deck all the afternoon, sometimes dozing, sometimes waking and talking to himself, and appearing on the whole very easy and comfortable, and went to my cabin. I slept sound the whole night through, and in waking went on deck before going to the cook house and lighting the furnace (as was my custom) so impatient was i to observe our state, and to hear such news as the ocean had for me. It was after 5-a very curious day, somewhat darksome, and a dead calm, with a large, long swell out of the southeast. The sky was full of clouds, with a stooping appearance in the hang of them that re-The sky was full of clouds, with a stooping appearance in the hang of them that re-minded you of the belly of a hanmock; they were of a sallow brown, very uncom-mon; some of them round about sipped the sea line, and their shadows, obliterating those parts of the cincture which they over-hung, broke the continuity of the horizon as there is the sea the sea bar of the second second second second the sea the second second second second second second the second second second second second second second second the second se

though there were valleys in the ocean there. A good part of our bed of ice was gone-at least a fourth of it; but the schooner still lay as strongly fixed as before. I had come to the deck half expecting to find her afloat from the regular manner of her heaving, and from the regular manner of her heaving, and was bitterly disappointed to discover her rooted as strongly as ever in the ice, though the irritation softened when I noticed how the bed had diminished. The mass, with the ship upon it, rose and sank, with the slug-gish, squatting motion of a water logged ves-sel. It was an odd sensation to my legs after their long rest from such exercise. The heav-ing satisfied me that the base of the bed did not go deep, but at the same time it was all too solid for me, I could not doubt; for, had the sheet been as thin as I had hoped it, it must have given under the weight of the schooner and released her. I went below and got about lighting the fire. The Frenchman lay very 'quiet, under

fire. The Frenchman lay very quiet, under as many clothes as would fill a half dozen of as many clothes as would fill a half dozen or sacks. It was bitterly cold-sharper in the cook house than I had ever remembered it; and I could not conceive why this should be, until I recollected that I had forgotten to close the companion hatch before going to bed. I prepared some broth for my com-panion, and dressed some ham for myself, and ate my breakfast, supposing he would meanwhile awake. But after sitting some meanwhile swake. But after sitting some time and observing that he did not stir, a suspicion flashed into my mind; I kneeled down, and, clearing his face, listened. He did not breathe. I brought the lantern to him; but his countenance had been so changed by his unparalleled emergence from a state of middle life into middle life into extreme old] age-he was so puckered, hollowed, gaunt, his features so distorted by the great weight of his yearsviewing him. I threw the clothes off him, listened at his mouth breathlessly, felt his hands, which were ice cold. Dead indeed! thought I. Great Father, 'tis thy will! And I rose very slowly and stood surveying the silent figure with an emotion that ow inspiration partly to the several miracles of vitality I had beheld in him during our association, and to a bitter feeling of ioneliness that swelled up in me,





age nearly as well with the naked eye. There was no change of any kind, only that there was a sensible diminution in the blowing of the wind, and a corresponding decrease in the height of the seas. The ice stretched in a considerable bed on either hand the ship and ahead of her; the water frothed freely over it, and there was a great jangling and flashing of broken pieces, but the hull was no longer heavily hit by them. I got into the main chains to view the body of the vessel, and noticed with satisfaction that the constant pouring of the sea had thinned down the frozen snow to the depth of at least a foot. This encouraged me to hope that the restless tides would sap to her keel at least and put her into a posture to be easily launched by the blow of a surge upon her bows-that is if fortune continu d to keep her head on. To determine the hour and our position, I

fetched a quadrant from my cabin, and was happily just in time to catch the sun cros meridian. My watch was half an hour fast, so I had been out of my reckoning to the extent of thirty minutes ever since I had been cast away. I made our latitude to be 64 degs, 28 mins, south, and the computation was perhaps near enough. This business ended, I went to the cook

house to prepare dinner, and the first object I saw was Tassard flat upon his face near the door that opened into the cabin. He groaned when I picked him up-which I managed without much exertion of strength, for so much had he shrunk that I dare say more than half his weight lay in his clothes-and set him upon his bench with his back to the dresser. 1 put my mouth to his ear and roared, "Are you hurt?" His head nodded as if he understood me, but I question if he did. He was the completest picture of old age that you could imagine. I fetched a couple of spears from the arms room, and, cutting them to his height, put one in each hand, that he might keep himself propped; and while my own dinner was broiling I made him a mys of broth, with which I fed him, for now that he had the sticks he would not let go of them. But in any case I doubt if his trembling hand could have lifted the spoon to his lips without capsizing the contents down his beard.

With some small idea of rallying the old villain, I mixed him a very stiff bumper of brandy, which he supped down out of my hand with the utmost avidity. The draught soon worked in him, and he began to move his head about, seeking me in his blind way, and then cried, in his broken notes, "I have lost the use of my legs, and cannot walk. Mother of God, what shall I do! Oh, holy St. Antonio, what is to become of me!"

I guessed from this that, impelled by habit or some small spur of reason, he had risen to go on deck, and had fallen. He went on vaporing pitifully, gazing with sufficient stead-fastness to let me understand that his vision received something of my outline, though he would fix his eyes either to the left or right of me, as though he was not able to see if he looked straight; and this, and his mournful cackle, and his nodding head, bowed form, propped hands and diminished face, made as distressful and melancholy a picture of Time as ever mortal man viewed. He broke off in his rambling to ask for more brandy, taking it for granted that I was still in the cook room, for I never spoke; and I filled a can for him, and as before held it to his mouth, which he opened wide-a piece of behavior which went to show that some of his wits still hung loose upon him. This was a strong dose, and, co-operating with the other, soon seized hold on his head, and presently he began to laugh to himself and talk, and even broke into a stave or two-some French song, which he delivered in a voice like the squeaking of a rat, alternating with the growling of a terrier.

I guess his stumbling upon this old French catch (which I took it to be com seeing him feebly flourish one of his sticks, as if inviting a chorus) put him upon speaking his own tongue altogether; for though he continued to chatter with all the volubility his breath would permit during the whole time I sat eating, not one word of English did he speak, and not one word, therefore, did I understand. Seeing how it must be with him presently, I brought his mattress and rugs from his cabin, and had scarce laid them down when he let fall one of his sticks and dropped over. I grasped him, and, partly lifting, partly hauling, got him on his back and

Dead indeed! thought I. Yes, I had feared and detested this man:

but his quick transformation and silent, dark exit affected me, and I looked down upon him sadly. Yet, to be perfectly candid with you, I recollect that, though it occurred to me to test if life was out of him by bringing him close to the fire and chafing him and giving him brandy, I would not stir. No, I would not have moved a finger to recover him, even though I should have been able to do so by merely putting him to the furnace. He was dead, and there was an end; and without further ado I carried him into the forecastle and threw a hammock over him. and left him to lie there till there should come clear water to the ship to serve him for

TO BE CONTINUED.)

a grave.

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