

## CHAPTER II. SHANGHAIED

WHEN Billy opened his eyes again he could not recall, for the instant, very much of his recent past. At last he remembered with painful regret the drunken sailor it had been his intention to roll. He felt deeply chagrined that his rightful prey should have escaped him. He couldn't understand how it had happened.

"This Frisco booze must be something fierce," thought Billy.

His head ached frightfully and he was very sick. So sick that the room in which he lay seemed to be rising and falling in a horribly realistic manner. Every time it dropped it brought Billy's stomach nearly to his mouth.

Billy shut his eyes. Still the awful sensation. Billy groaned. He never had been so sick in all his life before, and, my, how his poor head did hurt. Finding that it only seemed to make matters worse when he closed his eyes Billy opened them again.

He looked about the room in which he lay. He found it a stuffy hole filled with bunks in tiers three deep around the sides. In the center of the room was a table. Above the table a lamp hung suspended from one of the wooden beams of the ceiling.

The lamp arrested Billy's attention. It was swinging back and forth rather violently. This could not be a hallucination. The room might seem to be rising and falling, but that lamp could not seem to be swinging around in any such manner if it were not really and truly swinging. He couldn't account for it. Again he shut his eyes for a moment. When he opened them to look again at the lamp he found it still swung as before.

Cautiously he slid from his bunk to the floor. It was with difficulty that he kept his feet. Still that might be but the effects of the liquor. At last he reached the table to which he clung for support while he extended one hand toward the lamp.

There was no longer any doubt! The lamp was beating back and forth like the clapper of a great bell. Where was he? Billy sought a window. He found some little round, glass-covered holes near the low ceiling at one side of the room. It was only at the greatest risk to life and limb that he managed to crawl on all fours to one of them.

As he straightened up and glanced through he was appalled at the sight that met his eyes. As far as he could see there was naught but a tumbling waste of water. And then the truth of what had happened to him broke upon his understanding.

"An' I was goin' to roll that guy!" he muttered in helpless bewilderment. "I was a-goin' to roll him, and now look here wot he has done to me!"

At that moment a light appeared above as the hatch was raised, and Billy saw the feet and legs of a large man descending the ladder from above. When the newcomer reached the floor and turned to look about his eyes met Billy's, and Billy saw that it was his host of the previous evening.

"Well, my hearty, how goes it?" asked the stranger.

"You pulled it off pretty slick," said Billy.

"What do you mean?" asked the other with a frown.

"Come off," said Billy; "you know what I mean."

"Look here," replied the other coldly. "Don't you forget that I'm mate of this ship, an' that you want to speak respectful to me if you ain't lookin' for trouble. My name's MR. Ward, an' when you speak to me say SIR. Understand?"

Billy scratched his head, and blinked his eyes. He never before had been spoken to in any such fashion--at least not since he had put on the avoirdupois of manhood. His head ached horribly and he was sick to his stomach--frightfully sick. His mind was more upon his physical suffering than upon what the mate was saying, so that quite a perceptible interval of time elapsed before the true dimensions of the affront to his dignity commenced to percolate into the befogged and pain-racked convolutions of his brain.

The mate thought that his bluster had bluffed the new hand. That was what he had come below to accomplish. Experience had taught him that an early lesson in discipline and subordination saved unpleasant encounters in the future. He also had learned that there is no better time to put a bluff of this nature across than when the victim is suffering from the after-effects of whiskey and a drug--mentality, vitality, and courage are then at their lowest ebb. A brave man often is reduced to the pitiful condition of a yellow dog when nausea sits astride his stomach.

But the mate was not acquainted with Billy Byrne of Kelly's gang. Billy's brain was befuddled, so that it took some time for an idea to wriggle its way through, but his courage was all there, and all to the good. Billy was a mucker, a hoodlum, a gangster, a thug, a tough. When he fought, his methods would have brought a flush of shame to the face of His Satanic Majesty. He had hit oftener from behind than from before. He had always taken every advantage of size and weight and numbers that he could call to his assistance. He was an insulter of girls and

women. He was a bar-room brawler, and a saloon-corner loafer. He was all that was dirty, and mean, and contemptible, and cowardly in the eyes of a brave man, and yet, notwithstanding all this, Billy Byrne was no coward. He was what he was because of training and environment. He knew no other methods; no other code. Whatever the meager ethics of his kind he would have lived up to them to the death. He never had squealed on a pal, and he never had left a wounded friend to fall into the hands of the enemy--the police.

Nor had he ever let a man speak to him, as the mate had spoken, and get away with it, and so, while he did not act as quickly as would have been his wont had his brain been clear, he did act; but the interval of time had led the mate into an erroneous conception of its cause, and into a further rash show of authority, and had thrown him off his guard as well.

"What you need," said the mate, advancing toward Billy, "is a bash on the beezer. It'll help you remember that you ain't nothin' but a dirty damn landlubber, an' when your betters come around you'll--"

But what Billy would have done in the presence of his betters remained stillborn in the mate's imagination in the face of what Billy really did do to his better as that worthy swung a sudden, vicious blow at the mucker's face.

Billy Byrne had not been scrapping with third- and fourth-rate heavies, and sparring with real, live ones for nothing. The mate's fist whistled through empty air; the blear-eyed hunk of clay that had seemed such easy prey to him was metamorphosed on the instant into an alert, catlike bundle of steel sinews, and Billy Byrne swung that awful right with the pile-driver weight, that even The Big Smoke himself had acknowledged respect for, straight to the short ribs of his antagonist.

With a screech of surprise and pain the mate crumpled in the far corner of the forecastle, rammed halfway beneath a bunk by the force of the terrific blow. Like a tiger Billy Byrne was after him, and dragging the man out into the center of the floor space he beat and mauled him until his victim's blood-curdling shrieks echoed through the ship from stem to stern.

When the captain, followed by a half-dozen seamen rushed down the companionway, he found Billy sitting astride the prostrate form of the mate. His great fingers circled the man's throat, and with mighty blows he was dashing the fellow's head against the hard floor. Another moment and murder would have been complete.

"Avast there!" cried the captain, and as though to punctuate his remark he swung the heavy stick he usually carried full upon the back of Billy's head. It was that

blow that saved the mate's life, for when Billy came to he found himself in a dark and smelly hole, chained and padlocked to a heavy stanchion.

They kept Billy there for a week; but every day the captain visited him in an attempt to show him the error of his way. The medium used by the skipper for impressing his ideas of discipline upon Billy was a large, hard stick. At the end of the week it was necessary to carry Billy above to keep the rats from devouring him, for the continued beatings and starvation had reduced him to little more than an unconscious mass of raw and bleeding meat.

"There," remarked the skipper, as he viewed his work by the light of day, "I guess that fellow'll know his place next time an officer an' a gentleman speaks to him."

That Billy survived is one of the hitherto unrecorded miracles of the power of matter over mind. A man of intellect, of imagination, a being of nerves, would have succumbed to the shock alone; but Billy was not as these. He simply lay still and thoughtless, except for half-formed ideas of revenge, until Nature, unaided, built up what the captain had so ruthlessly torn down.

Ten days after they brought him up from the hold Billy was limping about the deck of the Halfmoon doing light manual labor. From the other sailors aboard he learned that he was not the only member of the crew who had been shanghaied. Aside from a half-dozen reckless men from the criminal classes who had signed voluntarily, either because they could not get a berth upon a decent ship, or desired to flit as quietly from the law zone of the United States as possible, not a man was there who had been signed regularly.

They were as tough and vicious a lot as Fate ever had foregathered in one forecastle, and with them Billy Byrne felt perfectly at home. His early threats of awful vengeance to be wreaked upon the mate and skipper had subsided with the rough but sensible advice of his messmates. The mate, for his part, gave no indication of harboring the assault that Billy had made upon him other than to assign the most dangerous or disagreeable duties of the ship to the mucker whenever it was possible to do so; but the result of this was to hasten Billy's nautical education, and keep him in excellent physical trim.

All traces of alcohol had long since vanished from the young man's system. His face showed the effects of his enforced abstemiousness in a marked degree. The red, puffy, blotchy complexion had given way to a clear, tanned skin; bright eyes supplanted the bleary, bloodshot things that had given the bestial expression to his face in the past. His features, always regular and strong, had taken on a peculiarly refined dignity from the salt air, the clean life, and the dangerous occupation of the deep-sea sailor, that would have put Kelly's gang to a pinch to

have recognized their erstwhile crony had he suddenly appeared in their midst in the alley back of the feed-store on Grand Avenue.

With the new life Billy found himself taking on a new character. He surprised himself singing at his work--he whose whole life up to now had been devoted to dodging honest labor--whose motto had been: The world owes me a living, and it's up to me to collect it. Also, he was surprised to discover that he liked to work, that he took keen pride in striving to outdo the men who worked with him, and this spirit, despite the suspicion which the captain entertained of Billy since the episode of the fore-castle, went far to making his life more endurable on board the Halfmoon, for workers such as the mucker developed into are not to be sneezed at, and though he had little idea of subordination it was worth putting up with something to keep him in condition to work. It was this line of reasoning that saved Billy's skull on one or two occasions when his impudence had been sufficient to have provoked the skipper to a personal assault upon him under ordinary conditions; and Mr. Ward, having tasted of Billy's medicine once, had no craving for another encounter with him that would entail personal conflict.

The entire crew was made up of ruffians and unhung murderers, but Skipper Simms had had little experience with seamen of any other ilk, so he handled them roughshod, using his horny fist, and the short, heavy stick that he habitually carried, in lieu of argument; but with the exception of Billy the men all had served before the mast in the past, so that ship's discipline was to some extent ingrained in them all.

Enjoying his work, the life was not an unpleasant one for the mucker. The men of the fore-castle were of the kind he had always known--there was no honor among them, no virtue, no kindness, no decency. With them Billy was at home--he scarcely missed the old gang. He made his friends among them, and his enemies. He picked quarrels, as had been his way since childhood. His science and his great strength, together with his endless stock of underhand tricks brought him out of each encounter with fresh laurels. Presently he found it difficult to pick a fight--his messmates had had enough of him. They left him severely alone.

These oft-times bloody battles engendered no deep-seated hatred in the hearts of the defeated. They were part of the day's work and play of the half-brutes that Skipper Simms had gathered together. There was only one man aboard whom Billy really hated. That was the passenger, and Billy hated him, not because of anything that the man had said or done to Billy, for he had never even so much as spoken to the mucker, but because of the fine clothes and superior air which marked him plainly to Billy as one of that loathed element of society--a gentleman.

Billy hated everything that was respectable. He had hated the smug, self-satisfied merchants of Grand Avenue. He had writhed in torture at the sight of every shiny, purring automobile that had ever passed him with its load of well-groomed men and women. A clean, stiff collar was to Billy as a red rag to a bull. Cleanliness, success, opulence, decency, spelled but one thing to Billy--physical weakness; and he hated physical weakness. His idea of indicating strength and manliness lay in displaying as much of brutality and uncouthness as possible. To assist a woman over a mud hole would have seemed to Billy an acknowledgement of pusillanimity--to stick out his foot and trip her so that she sprawled full length in it, the hall-mark of bluff manliness. And so he hated, with all the strength of a strong nature, the immaculate, courteous, well-bred man who paced the deck each day smoking a fragrant cigar after his meals.

Inwardly he wondered what the dude was doing on board such a vessel as the Halfmoon, and marveled that so weak a thing dared venture among real men. Billy's contempt caused him to notice the passenger more than he would have been ready to admit. He saw that the man's face was handsome, but there was an unpleasant shiftiness to his brown eyes; and then, entirely outside of his former reasons for hating him, Billy came to loathe him intuitively, as one who was not to be trusted. Finally his dislike for the man became an obsession. He haunted, when discipline permitted, that part of the vessel where he would be most likely to encounter the object of his wrath, hoping, always hoping, that the "dude" would give him some slight pretext for "pushing in his mush," as Billy would so picturesquely have worded it.

He was loitering about the deck for this purpose one evening when he overheard part of a low-voiced conversation between the object of his wrath and Skipper Simms--just enough to set him to wondering what was doing, and to show him that whatever it might be it was crooked and that the immaculate passenger and Skipper Simms were both "in on it."

He questioned "Bony" Sawyer and "Red" Sanders, but neither had nearly as much information as Billy himself, and so the Halfmoon came to Honolulu and lay at anchor some hundred yards from a stanch, trim, white yacht, and none knew, other than the Halfmoon's officers and her single passenger, the real mission of the harmless-looking little brigantine.