

## CHAPTER IX.

### IN WHICH A REWARD OF FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS STERLING IS OFFERED.

Patrick O'Donoghane, as far as Erik could make out through Mr. Bowles' rambling account of him, was not a model of virtue. The proprietor of the Red Anchor had known him as a cabin-boy and sailor, both before and after the loss of the "Cynthia." Up to that time Patrick O'Donoghane had been poor, as all sailors are. After the shipwreck he had returned from Europe with a large bundle of bank-notes, pretending to have inherited some money in Ireland, which seemed likely enough.

Mr. Bowles, however, had never believed in this inheritance. He thought that this sudden accession of wealth was connected in some way with the loss of the "Cynthia," and that Patrick O'Donoghane was afraid to say so; for it was evident that contrary to the usual habit of seamen in such cases, he carefully avoided speaking about the sad occurrence. He would always turn the conversation if any one alluded to it before him, and he was very anxious to start on a long voyage before the lawsuit brought by the company to recover the insurance due on the "Cynthia" should take place. He did not wish to be summoned as a witness. This conduct appeared very suspicious, as he was the sole known survivor from the shipwreck. Mr. Bowles and his wife had always suspected him, but they had kept their own counsel.

What looked still more suspicious was the fact that when Patrick O'Donoghnan was in New York he was never short of money. He brought back very little with him after a voyage, but a few days after his return he always had gold and bank-notes; and when he was tipsy, which frequently happened, he would boast of being in possession of a secret which was worth a fortune to him. The words which most frequently escaped from his lips were, "the baby tied to the buoy!"

"The baby tied to the buoy," he would say, striking the table with his fist, "The baby tied to the buoy is worth its weight in gold."

Then he would laugh, as if well satisfied with himself. But they could never draw out of him any explanation of these words, and for many years the Bowles household were lost in conjectures as to what they could possibly mean.

This accounted for Mrs. Bowles' excitement, when Erik suddenly announced to her that he was the famous baby who had been tied to a buoy.

Patrick O'Donoghnan, who had been in the habit of lodging at the Red Anchor, whenever he was in New York, for more than fifteen years, had not been seen there now for more than four years. There had also been something mysterious about his last departure. He had received a visit from a man who had been closeted with him for more than an hour. After this visit Patrick O'Donoghnan, who had seemed worried and troubled, had paid his board bill, taken his carpet bag, and left in a hurry.

They had never seen him since that day.

Mr. and Mrs. Bowles were naturally ignorant of the cause of his sudden departure, but they had always thought that it had some connection with the loss of the "Cynthia." In their opinion the visitor had come to warn Patrick O'Donoghane of some danger which threatened him, and the Irishman had thought it prudent to leave New York immediately. Mrs. Bowles did not think he had ever returned. If he had done so, they would have been sure to hear of him through other seamen who frequented their house, and who would have been astonished if Patrick O'Donoghane had boarded anywhere else, and would have been sure to ask questions as to the reasons for his doing so.

This was the substance of the story related to Erik, and he hastened to communicate it to his friends.

His report was naturally received with all the interest which it merited. For the first time, after so many years, they were on the track of a man who had made reiterated allusions to the baby tied to a buoy. It was true they did not know where this man was, but they hoped to find him some day. It was the most important piece of news which they had as yet obtained. They resolved to telegraph to Mrs. Bowles, and beg her to prepare a dinner for six persons. Mr. Bredejord had suggested this idea, as a good means of drawing the worthy couple out; for while they talked during the dinner, they might be able to glean some new facts.

Erik had little hopes of obtaining any further information. He thought that he already knew Mr. and Mrs. Bowles well enough to be convinced that they had told him all that they knew. But he did not take into account Mr. Bredejord's skill in questioning witnesses, and in drawing from them information which they themselves were scarcely aware of.

Mrs. Bowles had surpassed herself in preparing the dinner. She had laid the table in the best room on the first floor. She felt very much flattered at being invited to partake of it, in the society of such distinguished guests, and answered willingly all of Mr. Bredejord's questions.

They gathered from this conversation a certain number of facts which were not unimportant.

One was that Patrick O'Donoghane had said at the time, of the lawsuit against the insurance company, that he was going away to avoid being summoned as a witness. This was evident proof that he did not wish to explain the circumstances under which the shipwreck had occurred, and his subsequent conduct confirmed this theory. It was also evident that in New York or its environs he received the suspicious revenue which seemed to be connected with his secret. For when he arrived he was always without money, but after he had been about for a short time he always returned with his pockets full of gold. They could not doubt that his secret was connected with the infant tied to the buoy, for he had

frequently affirmed that such was the case.

The evening before his sudden departure Patrick O'Donoghhan had said that he was tired of a sea-faring life, and that he thought he should give up making voyages, and settle in New York for the remainder of his life.

Lastly, the individual who had called to see Patrick O'Donoghhan was interested in his departure, for he had called the next day and asked for the Irishman who was boarding at the Red Anchor, and had seemed pleased to hear that he was no longer there. Mr. Bowles felt sure that he would recognize this man if he saw him again. By his conversation and actions he had believed him to be a detective, or some agent of the police.

Mr. Bredejord concluded from these facts that Patrick O'Donoghhan had been systematically frightened by the person from whom he drew the money, and that this man had been sent to make him fear that criminal proceedings were about to be taken against him. This would explain his precipitate flight, and why he had never returned to New York.

It was important to find this detective, as well as Patrick O'Donoghhan.

Mr. and Mrs. Bowles, by referring to their books, were able to give the exact date of the Irishman's departure, which was four years, lacking three months; although they had previously believed that it was four or five years ago.

Dr. Schwaryencrona was immediately struck by the fact that the date of his departure, and consequently of the visit of the detective, corresponded precisely with the date of the first advertisements which he had caused to be made in Great Britain for the survivors of the "Cynthia." This coincidence was so striking that it was impossible not to believe that there was some connection between them.

They began to understand the mystery a little better. The abandonment of Erik on the buoy had been the result of some crime--a crime of which the cabin-boy O'Donoghane had been a witness or an accomplice. He knew the authors of this crime, who lived in New York or its environs, and he had for a long time enjoyed the reward of his secrecy. Then a day had come when the excessive demands of the Irishman had become burdensome, and the announcement in the newspapers by advertisement had been made use of to frighten Patrick, and cause his hurried departure.

In any case, even if these deductions were not correct in every point, they had obtained sufficient information to entitle them to demand a judicial investigation.

Erik and his friends therefore left the Red Anchor full of hope that they would soon obtain some favorable intelligence.

The next day Mr. Bredejord was introduced by the Swedish consul to the chief of police of New York, and he made him acquainted with the facts

which had become known to him. At the same time he entered into conversation with the officers of the insurance company who had refused to pay the claims due on the "Cynthia," and read the old documents relative to this matter, which had lain undisturbed so many years. But the examination of these papers did not afford him any important intelligence. The matter had been decided upon technical points, relating to an excess of insurance far above the value of the vessel and cargo. Neither side had been able to produce any person who had been a witness of the shipwreck. The owners of the "Cynthia" had not been able to prove their good faith, or to explain how the shipwreck had taken place, and the Court had decided in favor of their adversaries. Their defense had been weak, and their opponents had triumphed.

The insurance company, however, had been compelled to pay several claims on the lives of the passengers to their heirs. But, in all these law proceedings, there was no trace of any infant nine months old.

These examinations had occupied several days. Finally, the chief of police informed Mr. Bredejord that he had been unable to obtain any intelligence about the matter. Nobody in New York knew any detective who answered to Mr. Bowles' description. Nobody could tell who the individual was who was interested in the departure of Patrick O'Donoghane. As for this sailor, he did not appear to have set his foot in the United States for at least four years. All they could do was to keep the address of the place where he was born, which might prove useful some time. But the chief of police told Mr. Bredejord, without

any dissimulation, that the affair had happened so long ago--now nearly twenty years--that even if Patrick O'Donoghane ever returned to New York, it was at least doubtful if the authorities would be willing to investigate the matter.

At the moment when Erik believed that he was about to obtain a solution of the mystery which clouded his life, all their investigations came to a sudden end, and without producing the slightest result. The only thing that remained to be done was to pass through Ireland as they returned to Sweden, to see if perchance Patrick O'Donoghane had returned there to pass the remainder of his days planting cabbages.

Dr. Schwaryencrona and his friends, after taking leave of Mr. and Mrs. Bowles, resolved to pursue this route. The steamers between New York and Liverpool touch at Cork, and this was only a few miles from Innishannon, the place where Patrick was born. There they learned that Patrick O'Donoghane had never returned to his native place since he left it at the age of twelve years, and that they had never heard from him.

"Where shall we look for him now?" asked Dr. Schwaryencrona, as they embarked for England, on the way to Stockholm.

"At the seaport towns evidently, and clearly at those which are not American," answered Mr. Bredejord. "For note this point, a sailor, a sea-faring man, does not renounce his profession at the age of thirty-five. It is the only one he knows. Patrick is doubtless still on

the sea. And all vessels have some port or other for their destination, and it is only there that we can hope to find this man. What do you think, Hochstedt?"

"Your reasoning seems to be just, although not altogether indisputable," answered the professor, with his customary prudence.

"Admit that it is right," continued Mr. Bredejord. "We know that Patrick O'Donoghane was frightened away and would be in dread of pursuit, perhaps of being extradited. In that case, he would avoid his old companions, and seek in preference ports where he was not likely to meet any of them. I know that my ideas can be contradicted, but let us suppose they are well founded. The number of ports which are not frequented by American vessels is not very large. I think we might begin by seeking in these places news of Patrick O'Donoghane."

"Why not have recourse to advertisements?" asked Dr. Schwaryencrona.

"Because Patrick O'Donoghane would not answer them if he is trying to hide himself; even supposing that a sailor would be likely to see your advertisement."

"But you could word your advertisement so as to assure him that you intended to do him no injury, but rather that it would be greatly to his advantage to communicate with you."

"You are right, but still I am afraid that an ordinary seaman would not be likely to see such an advertisement."

"Well, you might try offering a reward to Patrick O'Donoghhan, or to any one who would give you information as to where he might be found. What do you think about it, Erik?"

"It seems to me that such an advertisement to produce any result would have to be continued for a long time, and in a great many different papers. That would cost a great deal, and might only frighten Patrick O'Donoghhan, no matter how well worded the advertisement might be, provided it is to his interest to remain concealed. Would it not be better to employ some one to visit personally those seaports which this man would be likely to frequent?"

"But where could we find a trusty man who would be willing to undertake such a task?"

"I can furnish one, if you wish it," answered Erik. "I would go myself."

"You, my dear child--and what would become of your studies?"

"My studies need not suffer. There is nothing to prevent me from pursuing them, even during my travels. And another thing, doctor, I must confess to you, that I have already secured the means of doing so without costing me anything."

"How is that possible," asked Dr. Schwaryencrona, Mr. Bredejord, and Professor Hochstedt, simultaneously.

"I have simply been preparing myself for a sea-faring life. I can pass the examination to-day if necessary. Once in possession of my diploma, it would be easy for me to obtain a position as a lieutenant in any sea-port.

"And you have done all this without saying a word to me?" said the doctor, half grieved, while the lawyer and the professor both laughed heartily.

"Well," said Erik, "I do not think that I have committed any great crime. I have only made inquiries as to the requisite amount of knowledge, and I have mastered it. I should not have made any use of it without asking your permission, and I now solicit it."

"And I shall grant it, wicked boy," said the doctor, "But to let you set out all alone now is another matter--we will wait until you have attained your majority."

Erik submitted to this decision willingly and gratefully.

However, the doctor was not willing to give up his own ideas. To search the sea-ports personally he regarded as a last expedient. An

advertisement on the other hand would go everywhere. If Patrick O'Donoghán was not hiding away, they might possibly find him by this means. If he was hiding, some one might see it and betray him. He therefore had this advertisement written in seven or eight different languages, and dispatched to the four quarters of the globe in a hundred of the most widely circulated newspapers.

"Patrick O'Donoghán, a sailor, has been absent from New York for four years. A reward of one hundred pounds sterling will be paid to any one who can give me news of him. Five hundred pounds sterling will be given to the said Patrick O'Donoghán if he will communicate with the advertiser. He need fear nothing, as no advantage will be taken of him.

"DOCTOR SCHWARYENCRONA.

"Stockholm."

By the 20th of October, the doctor and his companions had returned to their homes.

The next day the advertisement was sent to the advertising agency in Stockholm, and three days afterward it had made its appearance in several newspapers. Erik could not repress a sigh and a presentiment that it would be unsuccessful as he read it.

As for Mr. Bredejord, he declared openly that it was the greatest folly in the world, and that for the future he considered the affair a failure.

But Erik and Mr. Bredejord were deceived, as events afterward proved.