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W. F. McCarty

THE GRIP OF HONOR by Cyrus Townsend Brady. Author of "The Southerner," "In the Wake of the Mast," etc.

given. The Americans, having effected this lodgment in the maintop of the Serapis, now turned their fire upon the fore and mizzen tops and enabled boarding parties from their own ship to gain possession of all the upper works of the enemy.

It was at this moment that the gunner and the carpenter reached the deck, crying that the ship was sinking and proffering to surrender. The gunner ran aft shrieking: "Quarter! Quarter!" intending to lower the flag. Jones, who had been superintending the work-



Silencing him forever.

ing of the quarter deck guns, which were without an officer since Mease, who had been fighting heroically, had been severely wounded, of course heard the noise, and, turning about, saw the gunner running for the flag. Fortunately the flag had been shot away, and as the gunner was seeking it, fumbling over the halcyards in the darkness, Pearson, hearing the cries, called out again:

"Do you ask for quarter?" Jones had taken two long steps across

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the deck to the side of the gunner. Seizing his discharged pistol, he brought the butt of it heavily down upon the forehead of the man, cracking his skull and silencing him forever.

"Never!" he shouted in reply to the Englishman.

"Then I will give none!" said Pearson—an entirely superfluous remark, by the way.

It was at this juncture that the Alliance was seen coming down again as before. Jones had time but for one glance of apprehension when he heard the noise of the leaping prisoners below. He sprang to the main hatch.

"The prisoners have been released," cried De Weibert, meeting him. The Frenchman had been tolling like a hero on the gun deck. "The battery is silenced; we have not a single gun to work; the ship is afire! We must yield!" he exclaimed.

As the frightened men came crowding up the hatchways Dale, who had just fired the only remaining gun on the deck that was left fit for action, took in the situation at once. He stayed the rush in the nick of time by voice and action. He sprang into the midst of them, threatening them, striking them, beating them down, driving them back with his sword. It was a magnificent display of hardihood and courage, presence of mind and resource.

"To the pumps!" he cried with prompt decision. "For your lives, men! The English ship is sinking, and we'll go down with her unless you can keep us afloat!" he shouted in thunder tones with superb audacity. The battle lost was won again in that minute.

"Well done, Richard!" shouted Jones, leaping through the hatchway and seconding the daring ruse of his noble lieutenant by his own mighty voice and herculean efforts, crying masterfully: "Get to the pumps, men! Live for God's sake! The ship is sinking under your feet! The English ship is going!"

It was unparalleled assurance, but it won. The two officers actually succeeded in forcing the English prisoners to man the pumps, where they worked with a frantic energy born of their persistent daze of terror. This left the regular crew of the ship free to fight the fires and to do what they could with the remaining guns. As Jones sprang back to the quarter deck, the surgeon, covered with blood and appalled at the carnage, came running toward him, crying:

"The ship is sinking, sir! The cockpit is under water! I have no place to stow the wounded. We must surrender!"

"Strike! Strike!" cried De Chamillard, who was wounded. "We can do no more!"

"What, gentlemen," cried Jones, "would you have me strike to a drop of water and a bit of fire? Up, De Chamillard! Here, doctor, help me get this gun over."

The surgeon hesitated, looked around again, and, not liking the appearance of things about him, turned and ran below. Not to his station, for that was under water. His mates had been killed. He wandered up and down the decks, doing what he could—which was but little—for the wounded where they lay. Assisted by two or three of the seamen, with his own hands Jones dragged one of the 9 pounders from the disengaged side of the deck across to the starboard side to take the place of a dismounted one; and, while the heavy battery of the Serapis continued its unavailing fire below, these three small guns under his personal direction concentrated their fire upon the mainmast of the Serapis.

The fortuitous position of the Americans in the enemy's tops enabled them to pour a perfect rain of small arm fire upon the spar deck of the Serapis with little possibility of effective return. Man after man was shot down by the side of the intrepid Pearson, who, whatever his other lack of qualifications, showed that he possessed magnificent personal courage, until he remained practically alone upon the deck—alone and as yet undaunted.

It is impossible to describe the scene. It is not within the power of words to portray the situation, after over two hours of the most frightful and determined combat. No two ships were ever in such condition. No battle that was ever fought was like it. The decks were covered with dead and dying. Bands of men in different directions were fighting the fires. The smoke in lowering clouds hung heavily over the ships, for the wind had died and there was scarcely enough to blow it away. The pale moonlight mingled with the red glare from the flames and threw an added touch of lurid ghastliness trembling over the smoke wrapt sea. From below came the steady roar of the Serapis' guns, from above the continuous cracking of the Richard's small arms. The noises blended in a hideous diapason of destruction which rose to an offended heaven in the horrid discord of an infernal region. The prisoners, still under the influence of their terror, tottered at the clanking pumps. The water gushed redly from the bleeding scuppers. Order, tactics, discipline, had been forgotten. Men glared with blood-shot eyes, set their teeth beneath foam flaked lips and fought where they stood—fought in frenzy against whatever came to hand, whether it was the English ship or the roaring flames or the rushing waters. They recked nothing of consequences. In their frantic battle they beat upon the sides of the other ship with their bare hands and bloody knuckles and knew not what they did. Their breath came quick and short. The red of battle was before their vision. They had but one thought—kill! One would have said that the brute instinct was uppermost in every heart. But in scenes of this kind it is not the least brute that wins, but the truest soul, and the one man who still preserved his calmness in this orgy of war was the man to win the battle—

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Jones.

The Alliance had repeated her previous performance, but the men had been worked to such a pitch that they never heeded her. Many of them did not know of it. Both ships were thoroughly beaten. It was a question as to which would realize it first, who would first surrender. Nay, there was but one possible finish—there was no question of Jones' surrender under any circumstances whatsoever. Pearson would give up under some conditions, and those had at last arrived. That was the essential difference between the two men. It was radical.

CHAPTER XXII.

SINKING, BUT TRIUMPHANT.

AND now happened the incident which finally decided the battle. By Jones' orders quantities of hand grenades, a small, highly combustible and explosive shell about the size of a large apple, had been placed in the tops. After the battle in midair by which the Americans had gained possession he shouted out that they be used in accordance with his instructions. Fanning sent a man with a bucket of grenades out on the extreme end of the main yardarm. Wrapping his legs around the yard, he sat down, and, leaning against the lift, deliberately threw his bombshells, one by one, down the open main hatchway of the Serapis. The powder boys of the latter ship had been bringing charges of powder for the various guns from the American fire, the supply had been greater than the demand. A large pile had been carelessly allowed to accumulate upon the deck. One of the grenades caromed against the hatch combing and fell into the center of the charges.

There was a detonating crash, so loud, so terrific, that it actually seemed to blow even the roar of the battle into eternity. Twenty or thirty men were killed or badly wounded, many of them torn to atoms, by the explosion, and the rest of the men on the Englishman's deck were dazed and driven from their stations by the concussion. The clothes of many were actually ripped from their bodies, so that they stood naked and wondering, though they were otherwise unhurt. A long moment of ghastly silence succeeded this accident on the Serapis. Men everywhere paused with bated breath to wait the issue. The Serapis, dragging the Richard, reeled and rocked under the shock. It was a last catastrophe which broke the strength of Pearson's endurance and ended his resistance. He could fight no more. Was it the devil himself who commanded the other ship? The English captain sprang aft to the mizzenmast. A great Eng-



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lish standard had been nailed to the timber of the spar. With his own hands he tore it down. The battle was over! At the same moment the mainmast of the Serapis, undermined and eaten away in its heart by the gnawing attack of the quarter deck guns of the Richard, came crashing down, a hopeless ruin, carrying some of the Americans into eternity as it fell.

"They have struck their flag!" cried Jones, who had sprung upon the rail at the moment of the explosion and had witnessed Pearson's action. "Cease firing!"

His voice rang through the ship with such a note of proud triumph as has rarely been heard within the fought over confines of the narrow seas.

"They have struck! The ship is ours!" ran from man to man among the Americans. Wild cheers broke into the night in an ever increasing volume of sound.

"Send Mr. Dale to me," said Jones to young Brooks as the flag came down. The midshipman had been wounded, but still kept his station.

As Dale came running toward his captain Jones cried: "Must a boarding party and take charge of the prize. The fight is over!" But, no, the battle was not over. A few moments before an English ship captain among the prisoners had succeeded in escaping through the rents in the shattered sides of the two ships and had told the plight of the Richard to the first lieutenant of the Serapis. With this information the men on the gun deck had been rallied and, led by their officers, had returned to their quarters and resumed the battle. They, too, were heroes. Mayrant, who ran aft from the forecastle as he saw Pearson strike his flag, jumped on the rail by Jones' orders and followed Dale upon the deck of the English ship. Such was the confusion of the moment that as Mayrant leaped on the deck he was actually run through the thigh by a pike in the hand of a wounded British sailor. Pearson was standing alone as if dazed, on the quarter deck of his ship, holding one clinched hand against his breast, with the other grasping his trailing flag. In his face was that look of defeat and despair which is the saddest aspect of baffled, impotent humanity.

"Have you struck, sir?" cried Dale, stopping before the English captain. "Yes," was the grim reply. His voice was a broken whisper indicating in the tones his mental agony.

"I am come to take possession." "Very good, sir," said Pearson bitterly, as before, and dropping the flag. Then he reached for his sword. Just at this moment Pascoe, the first lieutenant of the Serapis, came bounding up the hatchway from the deck below.

"A few more broadsides, sir, and they are ours!" he cried impetuously. "They are in a sinking!" "The ship has struck, sir, and you are my prisoner," interrupted Dale quickly, seeing the necessity of promptitude.

"Strike! This ship! Your prisoner!" cried the astonished Englishman. "Yes, sir. Your sword," demanded Dale. The man hesitated. "Disarm him!" cried the American.

Pearson was standing alone as if dazed. Two or three of the boarding parties closed around them. "Sir," asked the lieutenant, turning to his captain, "is it true that we have struck?" "Yes, sir," answered Pearson hoarsely.

"My God!" cried Pascoe. There was a momentary silence. "I have nothing more to say, sir," he added. "I will go below and call off the men," said the lieutenant, turning away.

"No, sir," interrupted Dale. "You will accompany your captain on board our ship at once. Pass the word to cease firing. The ship has struck."

As the English captain and his first lieutenant stepped over the rail upon the high poop of the Richard the roar of the guns died away, this time for good. Seizing a dangling rope, they swung themselves inboard and found themselves face to face with a little man in a tattered uniform, hatless, covered with dust and smoke, powder stained and grimy with the soil of the battle. Blood spattering from a wound in his forehead had congealed upon his cheek. He was a hideous looking spectacle. The red fire light played luridly upon him. Nothing but the piercing black eyes which burned and gleamed out of his face in the darkness bespoke the high humanity of the man.

"Is it?" "Captain John Paul Jones, at your service, gentlemen." "My sword," said Pearson, tendering it to him formally. "I regret," he added ungraciously, "at being compelled to strike to a man who has fought with a better array."

"Sir," said Jones, with

himly as great as his valor, "you have fought like a hero, and I make no doubt that your sovereign will reward you in the most ample manner. Mr. Brooks, escort these gentlemen to my cabin."

The two ships were now cut adrift, Dale remaining on the Serapis to take command. He had sat down a moment for rest, and as he attempted to rise to his feet he fell to the deck, discovering only in that way that he had been severely wounded.

By the most heroic efforts of the prize crew on the Serapis and the remaining men on the Richard the English prisoners were driven back into the hold, the flames subdued and some semblance of order restored. Cottineau had captured the Scarborough after an hour of good hard fighting, and the victory was entirely with the Americans. But it had been purchased at a fearful cost. There is no battle on land or sea in the world's history where the percentage of loss was greater than the battle between the Serapis and the Richard.

About 70 per cent on the Serapis and over 50 per cent on the Richard had been killed or wounded, and the Bon Homme Richard was in a sinking condition. She had been literally beaten to pieces. It was not safe to remain upon her decks. Consequently the prisoners and the wounded, groaning and crying in anguish, were removed to the Serapis. In the early morning of the day following, the brave ship which had earned undying immortality in her worn old age, because for three brief hours John Paul Jones and his men had battled upon her decks, sank forever beneath the sea.

The refitting of the prizes for the returning voyage was at once begun. To anticipate events, it is recorded that Captain Landais, the jealous and false hearted Frenchman who had so treacherously maneuvered the Alliance, was subsequently court martialed and dismissed from the service.

CHAPTER XXIII. ON BOARD THE SERAPIS AGAIN.

"THE battle is on," said O'Neill, in the small boat, to Elizabeth, "and I am not there. O God, give us a little breeze!" he cried. In anticipation he swung the oars inboard, stepped the mast once more, letting the sail hang, and then resumed his place by her side.

"God is good to me," she said at last. "He will not let you be there to be killed. You have had trouble enough and have run enough risks. He wishes to keep you for me." He shook his head.

"My place is there. My duty is on yonder deck. Would that I had returned to the ship without going up to the castle!"

"Why, then," she said reproachfully, "you would not have seen me?" "I know," he replied, "but then I would be in my rightful place, fighting where I should be. Coventry would be honored in doing his duty. The admiral would be happy. Your marriage would take place."

"And you," she cried, womanlike, placing him in the balance as opposed to all the rest, "would you have been happy?" "Happiness has nothing to do with that," he answered impatiently. "It is a question of duty. I have been a fool."

"Has the fool been rewarded in accordance with his folly?" she asked him. "Nay, look at me before you reply," she cried imperiously, turning his head until his eyes looked into her own. In the face of that girl, in the limpid light of her magic glance, in that mystic night, there was but one answer to be made.

"I say no more," he replied, kissing her softly. "You are right. I have you. You are worth it all. I will try to be a philosopher about all the rest." Meanwhile the intermittent reports had been succeeded by a steady roar of artillery which reverberated and rolled along the surface of the water. The Scarborough, some distance from the Serapis and the Richard to the northwest, was apparently hotly engaged with the Pallas, while the Alliance seemed to be sailing back and forth between the two groups of combatants, pouring in a random fire upon friend and foe alike. Great clouds of smoke, punctured by vivid flashes of light, overhung the ships.

"We ought to pick them up next week!"

The feelings of the young men be imagined. Adrift in that little watching the awful combat, at the presence of the woman he could compensate him for his loss in spite of his attempted philippic. The fever of the conflict pelted him. His breath came hard and sweat stood on his forehead. He had as never before for a breeze in the fight. He murmured herent words which told to the listener something of the terrible gle which raged within his bosom. The long hours wore away.

Toward 11 o'clock they heard a terrific explosion, and then the battle slackened and finally away. When the smoke drifted the two ships were lying side by side. Farther off, almost hidden by the Scarborough and the Pallas, had ceased their fight some time ago. The battle was over. Who had won? But it was late, and the long wished for now sprung up more, and the little boat gathered and began to slip through the again. The sky had become overcast. It grew very dark. The wind ended steadily and finally blew so that it required all the skill and dress of which O'Neill was possessed to keep his unsteady little craft capsizing. Finally he was forced to drop the sail and take to the oars to keep afloat at all. About 2 o'clock the morning a squall of rain came down, and they lost sight of the Scarborough and the Pallas again, and they were enabled to sail once more. But the ocean covered with a dense mist. They were in the thick of it and could see nothing. As nearly as he could judge out the aid of a compass O'Neill led the boat toward the place where they had last made out the two ships. "We ought to pick them up next week!"

Why O'Neill was so sure that the two ships would be seen again, was a question which he never asked himself. He was a philosopher about all the rest.

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