A LONE HAND;

or

The Capture of a German Pirate

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd.)

Meanwhile he watched with intense interest the actions of the crew before him. They stepped into the positions and prepared the tube for action with the quickness and certainty of long practice. The deadly missile was already in place; he knew now when it was put there. In a few minutes the lights were snapped off, except a small bulb which barely illuminated the sighting mechanism. Then a panel slid back, and a large porthole opened in the larboard bow. Crane could not see the doomed freighter, but he could see the reflection of her lights on the water. There were a few low orders, a clicking of machinery, and then a sudden hiss of escaping air as a long black shadwo shot through the open porthole. Regardless of danger, Crane leaped up and scrambled into his ventilator.

The night was black, the sky overcast. Hardly a thousand yards away, and slightly in advance, the British vessel glided along, her bulk pricked out by occasional lights. She seemed not to realise the Cocos's presence. Everything was calm and quiet; his senses refused to realise the meaning of that sinister black shape slipping so silently through the black water. A few moments thus, and then a red glare showed at the freighter's water-line and flamed upward, setting out every detail of the scene like a photographer's flashlight. He saw the big freighter heel over; a quarter of her port-side disappeared, showing her interior structure like a house struck by a cyclone. The glare died down; then a second explosion came as the water reached her boilers, and a shower of embers from her furnaces flew out and hissed into the sea. A muffled roar filled his ears, a sharp blast of air struck his face, and the Cocos rocked and tossed in the waves.

All was dark now; only a black bulk showed where the freighter lay—a black bulk that settled slowly, slowly lower. A jumble of minor sounds came across to him, small explosions, screams, shouts, commands. The black bulk heaved once endwise, settled back gently, and disappeared. For a few moments there was silence.

Then, like the crack of a whip, the Cocos's searchlight leaped across the waters and played upon the spot. A little wreckage floated—surprisingly little. A few men clung to boxes or planks, and one small boat, with about a dozen occupants, rowed toward them. The Cocos was swinging in closer, and Crane expected to see a boat manned for the rescue. Then he heard a crisp order forward, and saw the crew of the quick-firer leap to stations. The gun swung round; three sharp explosions rent the air in rapid succession. Three more explosions echoed back as the shells reached their mark, and the small boat crumpled like an eggshell. Once more the searchlight swept the scene, then flickered out; the hum of the engines quickened, and the nose of the ship swung away to the west.

Sick at heart, sick in mind and body, Crane crept down from the lookout, and lay almost listlessly watching the German crew as they opened the nearest box and fitted another torpedo into the tube. For the first time he realised the capabilities of the literal, scientific Teutonic mind. The men before him did not look cruel or brutal. They were simply carrying out a plan to its logical conclusion. Their operations could be carried on only by absolute secrecy. They could not burden themselves with prisoners. They knew before they attacked that the crew of the freighter must die. The destruction of the few miserable, helpless survivors was, to them, not murder, but a simple military measure. They must not be left to be picked up and to spread their story. It was no worse than dropping bombs from aircraft on sleeping cities, or shelling towns filled with non-combatants, both common events in the present war. Nevertheless his flesh crept and his fingers closed convulsively on the handle of his heavy Leuger.

Presently the torpero-crew finished their work, the panels were shut, and they filed out through the hatchway. Crane lay thinking for an hour or more as the ship settled into quiet. A plan was taking shape in his mind, and he wished to work it out to the last detall. When midnight came, he roused himself and climbed down to the floor. The time for work had come.

CHAPTER IV.

His first act was to locate the mechanism that opened the concealed door. He tried it; the panels parted easily. He opened the door wide enough to slip through, found that he could operate it from the inside, and closed it behind him. Then he went carefully over every detail of the giant tube and the lay-out of the room. The ceiling hung low on heavybeams; that was the cockpit of the gun overhead. He was familiar with all the details of torpedo construction. He went back to his den for his tools, then opened the breech of the tube. For two hours he worked silently and rapidly; then he closed the breech, arranged everything as he had found it, and stood up with a sigh of relief. He had disarranged the steering apparatus of the great steel fish inside. Instead of swimming straight ahead to its mark, this one would curve rapidly away and lose itself in the sea.

So he closed the bulkhead door and sought out one of the smaller iron-bound boxes. This he opened, and found, as he had anticipated, a number of the twenty-pound shells. Four of these he lugged into his den, then carefully hid the box away. Then he once more retired to his den, where the sounds of his work were less likely to be detected.

It was ticklish work opening the big cartrdiges; but his plans called for it, and open them he must. His trusty bag yielded a small coil of waterproof fuse and some caps; and when his daylight bedtime arrived the four shells had changed into excellent hand-grenades, with five-second fuses. Meanwhile his chart showed that the captain had changed his course, and was now heading south-west. Evidently he had decided to look for victims along the sea-lane between Honolulu and Australian ports.

During the next afternoon the Cocos was again chased by a warship, a fast British destroyer this time, which put up a determined race. But the Cocos's powerful engines settled to their task, and maintained a lead beyond the range of the destroyers's shells. The ecaptain did not seem anxious to show his utmost speed; he simply kept his distance till night came on. Then he dodged to and fro for a while with lights blanketed, and presently left the British ship far to the leeward, her ineffectual searchlight playing back and forth over the empty waste.

The same ruse had to be repeated next day this time for the benefit of the Australian cruiser Sydney. Crane gathered over the 'phone that she was acting as convoy to a fleet of five merchant vessels. Then, too, certain code messages, picked up during the night by the wireless operator, seemed to indicate that a small gray ship, having given the slip to several warvessels, was under suspicion. The captain evidently decided that these waters were to well guarded, then he would seek new postures; for he set a south-west course at a good speed which led, through unfrequented seas, toward the Dutch East Indies.

A week passed by quietly, and the Cocos was threading her way through the narrow seas of the Dutch archipelagoes. Not a ship had been sighted except two small traders, with which the Cocos exchanged signals, reporting herself as bound from the Marshall Group for Borneo. Twice she stopped at small trading stations, left a little freight, and took on small quantities of shell and copra, doubtless to strengthen her disguise in case of necessity. Certainly the shell part of the cargo strengthened her odour perceptibly. Sometimes men walked through the corridor within a few feet of Crane, as he lay in his narrow cell; but his luck held. Then one dark night they ran the Strait of Sunda, between Sumatra and Java, and when the morning came were in the India Ocean, standing out in the track of shipping from Australia to the Suez Canal.

All this time Crane had been busily working at night and lying hidden by day. His work was laborious and slow, by reason of his inadequate tools and the constant necessity to work noiselessly and leave behind no visible trace of his operations. This much he had accomplished. Digging patiently, hour after hour, with his small gimlet, saw, and chisel, he had hollowed out two spaces in one of the thick ceiling-beams, and had planted two of the twenty-pound shells directly under the feet of the gun-crew on deck, and likewise just over the heads of the torpedo-crew. To make sure, he had planted two more shells in the floor just under the sliding-door through the forward bulkhead. The outside sections of wood removed he fiitted back into place, puttying the cracks with a mixture of sawdust and baked beans, colored with scraped iron rust. These shells were connected up by his fine copper wires, concealed in cracks in the planking, caulked with dust. The wires ran back below the freight and up to his lookout station under the ventilator. The free ends were fastened some three inches apart, so that he could bridge the gap with his saw-blade. Then he brought in a lead from the electric-light wires, and this plant was ready. A simple touch of his switch would seal the fate of every man around the torpedo-tube and the gun above.

The thing that worried him most was the uncertainty as to conditions in the stern of the ship. He suspected that another gun was concealed there, but knew nothing of how it was placed. However, he did not dare to venture on deck, even at night. The slightest suspicion of his presence on board meant death, and, worse than death the failure of all his plans. He had seriously considered death; it was so easy to blot this ship instantly from the face of the waters. A hammer swung on the nose of one of these torpedos, and the thing was done. He would go too, like scores of nameless heroes who have given up life gladly to accomplish lesser things for the Motherland. The results were worth the cost, but for one thing. He did not believe that the intelligence which had conceived and directed this grisly masquerade was on this ship. If one such craft could operate, why not a dozen? Where there not others now at large under various disguises? It was his duty to se that the information he had should reach the Admiralty, that the ports and lanes of the Seven Seas be watched for such ghouls. So he could take no unnecessary chances with his life yet.

For two days longer the Cocos cruised north-ward through the Indian Ocean, while Crane grew restless and nervous from enforced confinement and inactivity. Then, in early morning, the lookout reported smoke ahead. Soon it apeared that they were overhauling a fleet of three large passenger-steamers convoyed by a battleship which was in the lead. When this was learned, the Cocos slackened speed and allowed the flotilla to draw away. At sundown the lookout reported the smoke barely visible. The crisis was still postponed.

About eight o'clock, however, a message passed over the 'phone that brought Crane up on the alert. Picked up by the wireless operator, it identified the flotilla ahead as H. M. Battleship Dauntless, convoying three transports that carried five thousand Australian troops, bound to the help of the Mother Country. The speed of the Cocos increased, and her course swung slightly to port. Crane let himself out of his chamber and hurried to his lookout post. Soon the deck lights flicked out, and the gun-crew came forward and began stripping the piece. He realised that the captain would try to sink one or more of these transports, and trust to the darkness and his great speed to slip away from the guns of the battleship. They represented great prizes to the captain, well worth the risk. Crane realised that the crisis was at hand, and his courage and determination rose to meet it. Everything hinged on his actions in a few short minutes, and his brain cooled and his muscles hardened to the task.

(To be Continued.)

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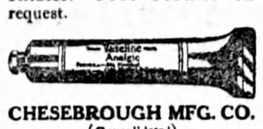

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CHILDREN AND DISCIPLINE.

Make the Child Trust You, and Use No Threats.

The following hints to teachers which appeared in the Educational Review will be equally useful for parents.

Prevention of wrongdoing is better than punishment of the wrongdoer.

Exercise great care in taking a stand that you may have no occasion to retreat.

Fault-finding is not calculated to cure a fault.

Distrust in the parent breeds deceit in the child.

A child properly employed gives no trouble.

Be firm.

Be kind.

Be patient.

Be self-contained.

Be as perfect as you ask your children to be.

And above all, make no threats.

ON THE FARM

Prepare Good Seedbed.

The promise of an early Spring will attract the attention of farmers to the approach of the grain-sowing season. The first crop considered by the majority is oats, and the buying of seed or preparing of the home-grown grain for seeding should be looked after at once.

The best way to sow oats is with the grain drill. Drilling gives a more even stand than broadcast seeding, for all the seed is covered to about the same depth. In sowing broadcast some of the seed may not be covered at all and some may be covered too deeply. Germination is better from drilled seed and the growth is more uniform throughout the season. In numerous tests at the experiment stations drilled oats have outyielded oats sown broadcast by several bushels to the acre. Better stands of grass and clover can also be obtained in drilled than in broadcast oats.

The best depth to sow oats varies with the soil and the season. In any case they should be covered with half an inch to an inch of moist soil. They should be sown deeper in sandy soils than in loams or clays. Deeper seeding is also necessary when the ground is dry than when it is moist. On the average the best depth is from one to one and a half inches.

Oats should be sown as early in the Spring as it is possible to make a good seed bed. The exact date of course varies with the season and with the locality. This does not mean that the preparation of the land should be neglected in order to sow early. Better yields will be produced from seed sown in a good seed bed than from that sown a few days earlier in ground too cold and wet for the seed to germinate.

In a good seed bed the best rate of seeding in the corn belt is about two and a half bushels to the acre. If the seed is sown broadcast, more is necessary. More seed is required in a poor seed bed than in a good one, as fewer seeds are likely to grow. A lower rate of seeding may be used for small-kerneled varieties than for large-kerneled ones for there are many more of the former in a bushel.

Allow the Winter protection provided the plants last Fall to remain upon the plants for some time to come. It is during the alternate freezing and thawing weather of late Winter and early Spring that the protection is most needed.

Maintaining Humus in the Soil.

A valuable pamphlet has just been issued by the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. It deals with soils, soil cultivation and crops in that province, being a reprint of a series of articles appearing in the annual report of the Secretary for Agriculture for the year 1915. The articles have been specially prepared by experts and contain a fund of valuable information for farmers generally. In an article prepared by Mr. Cumming appear the following valuable hints on humus:

Humus may be maintained or even gradually increased by the following practices:—

(a) Live stock farming, with its attendant use of barnyard manure.

(b) Reasonably short dotations in which clover and grass sods are plowed under at not more than 3 to 5 years intervals.

(c) The use of clover, always, when seeding down.

(d) The plowing under in extreme instances of green crops, such as buckwheat, rye, clover, vetches, etc.

(e) When commercial fertilizers are largely depended upon, short rotations and the plowing under of green crops are absolutely necessary.

The humus supply may be depleted by the following practices:—

(a) Selling hay and other products off the farm instead of feeding to live stock.

(b) Careless preserving of barnyard manure.

(c) Growing too many successive crops of oats, etc. or roots or even hay (the latter is the most common source of humus depletion in Nova Scotia).

(d) The wrong use of commercial fertilizers.

In a light, open soil, humus is rapidly decomposed and lost, and consequently one must apply manure more frequently and follow a shorter rotation in order to conserve the humus supply than on heavier soils.

Reduce Fire Risks.

The average farm building is a fire trap from one end to the other. It is full of readily inflammable material. Once started, a farm fire is very seldom stopped. We will suggest a few precautions which we take to reduce fire risks.

If a lantern is upset almost anywhere in the ordinary barn or stable, there is a litter of chaff around to take fire. The first precaution we would advise is to clean up the chaff and litter and eliminate this danger. Another precaution is never to set a lantern down where it can be knocked over. Everywhere in our barns we have convenient hooks or wires running from one end of the stable to the other on which the lantern may be suspended.

Spontaneous combustion is supposed to be the cause of many farm fires. Is there such a thing? A United States professor who has examined into hundreds of cases, states his belief that in almost all cases of so-called spontaneous combustion the heating of the forage was not sufficient to set the forage itself on fire, but that it set some smudge of oil or grease a-blazing. The dirty lantern carried into the hay mow is a prolific disturbutor of oil dirt. The best preventative is to throw down the hay by daylight. A lantern in which the burner is always kept clean, however, is not so liable to distribute oil.

We never let the tramps sleep in our barns, no matter how solemnly they swear that they will not smoke or throw matches around. They are a prolific source of farm fires. We restrain our own love for "the weed" when we are around the buildings. Farm and Fireside, compares a smoking man to a walking stick of dynamite, and they are about right. There may be dozens of other methods of reducing fire risks. These are a few.—J. Fraser in Farm and Dairy.

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packet. Young tender leaves only, grown with utmost care and with flavour as the prime object, are used to produce the famous Salada blends.

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So, on one occasion, wrote James I., who hated smoking more than he hated anything else; which recalls the fact that Swinburne, the poet, detested tobacco so much that he forgave James I. for being a knave, tyrant and coward because he "slit the throat of that blackguard Raleigh who invented this filthy smoking."

Gladstone and William Penn hated tobacco like poison, while Wellington abominated smoking to such a degree, and was so annoyed by the increase of cigar-smoking among officers of the army, that in the early 'forties he issued a General Order (No. 577) which contained a paragraph which would have delighted the heart of James I. It ran thus: "The Commander-in-Chief has been informed that the practice of smoking, by the use of pipes, cigars or cheroots, has become prevalent among the officers of the army, which is not only in itself a species of intoxication occasioned by the fumes of tobacco, but undoubtedly occasions drinking and tippling by those who acquire the habit."

Both Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort detested smoking, so tobacco was taboo wherever the court was. "On the other hand, many royal ladies of Europe, contemporaries of Queen Victoria and her son, have had the reputation of being confirmed smokers. Among them may be named "Carmen Sylva," the poetess-Queen of Rumania; the Dowager Czarina of Russia; the late Empress of Austria; King Alfonso's mother, formerly Queen Regent of Spain; the Dowager Queen Margherita of Italy; and ex-Queen Amelie of Portugal, says Mr. G. L. Apperson in his book, "The Social History of Smoking." It is, of course, well known that Austrian and Russian ladies generally are fond of cigarette smoking. On Russian railways it is not unusual to find a compartment labelled "For ladies who do not smoke."

Among men of letters and artists who ignored the social prejudices in regard to smoking which Queen Victoria fostered was Sir John Millais. He is said to have smoked a clap pipe in his carriage during the first Jubilee procession of the Queen. William Morris was a pipe smoker, so was Rossetti, while Carlyle, as everyone knows, was a great smoker. The story is familiar—it may be true—that one evening he and Tennyson sat in solemn silence smoking for hours, one on each side of the fireplace, and that when the visitor rose to go, Carlyle, as he bade him goodnight, said, "Man, Alfred, we hae had a graund nicht; come again soon."

TRAINING 15,000,000 MEN.

Russia Can Put Huge Army in Field Before 1918.

Colonel Kousnetsof, who is now retired and whose activities are confined to army missions for the Russian Government, has just returned to Petrograd from a tour of the empire, including Central Asia, and has told the correspondent of the Paris Figaro that 15,000,000 Russian soldiers, of whom a certain part are already trained, can easily be put in the field between 1916 and 1918, if the war lasts that long.

"They are all men of sound constitution and of military age," he says. "We will leave in peace at home the men of the older classes corresponding to the oldest classes of the German landsturm. Russia has enough men of sound constitution and fit for war to make a breach in the German lines and destroy the Kaiser's strongest armies."

The Whale's Little Joke.

Tom—That saying. "It's hard to keep a good man down," is thousands of years old.

Dick—That so?

Tom—For a fact. That's what the whale told Jonah.

Obvious.

Father (reprovingly)—"Do you know what happens to liars when they die?"

Johnny—"Yes, sir; they lie still."

It pleases the average man more to have a woman tell him that he is the first man she ever loved than to have her tell him the truth.

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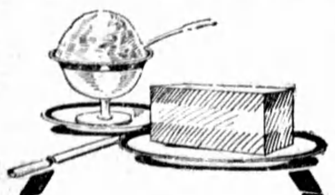

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