The Free Press Short Story

"TROUBLED WATERS"

JOHN SCOTT DOUGLAS

dock at Ketchikut as the coastwise steamer backed into the deeper main channel of the Alaskan Narrows. Lines of anxiety creased his rugged, bronzed face as he surveyed the spum :flecked breakers crashing against the landlocked harbor of the cannery town for the rougher waters outside the two outjutting spits of land. These tongues of land failed entirely to break the windlashed waters before they reached, the dock. His "Bubbles" careened violently, fighting the hawser binding it to the dock.

"Guess It'll hold long enough for me ugain!" muttered humorous mouth. "A college education landlocked harbor. Mountainous waves mendation to one trying to find a job fleet" of ten small fishing boats which up here in Alaska."

clothes and high rubber boots. twinkling blue eyes sobered suddenly when | Ketchikuni" they met the cold green gaze of a wellthe dock at Ketchikut. family?"

ered briefly on Hugh Sargent's mouth. me a fish for love or money." "I've. come to take over the management -"Wave -vou ever teled - reconcillations of the Moffit Cannery," he said coolly. demanded Lane. "Any bort in a storm, Crosby."

clamation.

position. Completing his business ad- and our cannery had different brokers; Washington, he had left Scattle in his they got more at that time." only material possession, the "Bubbles." . "Well, you'd think he'd come into the fore. Having worked his way through college harbor until this storm blows over, anyby any mental task which came to hand | way." in the Alaskan canneries, ne had counted on his experience in getting him an face; "you would. But Axel'd rather making way for the larger boat. executive position in the work he knew drown first. He feels that strongly."

Graduation had left him almost penni- men?" less; so he had set out for Alaska in his little boat, seeking an executive position like sheep. He's their self-appointed him to keep clear. in every plant along the coast. Fre- leader." quently he had worked as a cannery hand to pay his way. Word had come with a trace of irritation in his voice to him that the manager of the Moffit Cannery Company had died. He had left his last job to come farther north down to the "Bubbles." to apply for the position.

Lane was keenly disappointed to find Monit. that Hugh Sargent had preceded him. and that Sargent was confident the position was his. Ruffus Motfit and Hugh Sargent's father were, he knew, the best of friends. Mr. Sargent, the elder, was influential. Lane, himself, had neither father nor mother. Their boat had been found capsized after a and jumped onto the swaying deck of ing mildly around the little boats, calmstorm and they had never been found. his little boat. Lane however, had been rescued, halfdrowned, tied to a little raft by the loving engine, swung the wheel. hands of a mother he could not remem- engine caught, and the steady put-put-

world, he had left the foundling home ing in the breakwater. which had helped him through childhood, and had worked his way through opening of the harbor Lane steered; threatened by a storm, on a larger scale. college. Not, however, without the then he was outside the protected water slightly contemptuous slights of fellows The motor boat lifted and leaned, the story. like Hugh Sargent. He and Lane had small craft shuddering with a faint wone through the same business admin- driving vibration as it headed toward the istration course, and the latter's marks little "mosquito ffeet" struggling in nildhad always been the best. This had not kept Sargent from reminding Lane by inference from time to time that he caps. was bound to get nowhere. He had no one pushing him, no influence.

It slightly gulled Lane now that Sargent was to have the position he had counted on so heavily for the past week. "Lucky fellow!" he said by way of congratulation. "But I always thought you were going to work in, your father's wholesale grocery firm in Seattle, Sargent."

"I was," said the other dryly; "but ," while taking a pleasure trip up here. Dad wired me that the firm had gone into bankruptcy and to look for work up here since business was terribly depressed in Seattle.. I wired Mr. Moffit. and he told me his manager had died. and he would give me an interview. Which is the same way as telling me I'll get the job, I guess."

"Concelled as ever," thought Lang disconsolately: "but he's probably right." He looked at the two expensive suit cases which stood beside Hugh Sargent. "Can I help you take them up to Mr. Month's house?" Inquired Lane unubly. "I was going to see him, too."

"Don't bother," said Sargent lightly "Some one's gone to find him. He's not at the house; he's somewhere around the cannery."

Half of the broad dock was occupied by the cannery. 'The clatter of cans and the humming of the rotaries drowned out the sound of approaching footsteps. Their first intimation of another presence came when a booming voice said, "Hello there, Hugh! Glad to see you again. Sorry as anything to hear your father had such a bad time of ft!"

Lane turned as Surgent shook hands with a big man whose ruddy face was lined with wrinkles which not even his shagey white mustache could hide. Heavy white eyebrows gave the impres-

ANE CROSBY tied up his little ision that Mr. Moffil's piercing gray eyes twent-footy motor toat to the were deep set. If the cannery owner had noticed Lane at all, it was to conworkers. Hugh Sargent corrected this

impression "Mr. Moffit, Lane Crosby," he said in informal introduction. "I believe Lane sides of the steamship when it left the wanted to see you about something, too." Mr. Moffit scanned Lane questioningly as they shook hands.

Lane smiled. "I wanted to see you plant," he said cheerfully. "But I guess Sargent is one jump ahead of me."

in work clothes, but he said nothing. At that moment Lane's eyes' were drawn to a bunch of bobbing specks on Lane, a faint smile quirking his wide, the foam-dappled water outside the recom- were crashing over the little "mosquito were struggling up the Narrows. "Why He climbed up the ladder, a long, don't they come into the harbor?" derough-hewn Toure of a youth in work manded Lane. "They haven't a chance His to beat their way up the Narrows to

Mr. Monit's gray eyes cooled as they dressed youth the steamer had left on met Lane's. "Perhaps not," he said "Hello, Sar- gruffly. "But that's Axel Sevenson's gent," greeted Lane in a voice he tried group of boats. We nad a fight about hard to make friendly. "What brings prices four years ago; Ketchikan canyou up here? Visiting the Motfit neries could pay more than we could. Now we pay about the same but Axel - A slightly-condescending smile-flox- | Sevenson's stiff-necked and wouldn't sell

Mr. Monit seemed to bristle, "Have Y? "Oh!" was Lane's only comment; but But it didn't do any good. Axel thought his heart was not so light as his ex- I tried to cheat him four years ago, and now he won't listen to me. What he Lane had come seeking that same couldn't understand was that Ketchikan ministration course at the University of they were paying more for fish because

> "Sure," said Mr. Molfit, making a wry Lane snorted. "And the other fisher-

"It's an insane attitude," said Lane,

"And I'm going to tell them so." He started toward the ladder, leading

"Perhans, but I can at least try." "Why risk your neck for some stiffnecked Swede's?" he demanded. Lane glared at him, wondering how the

other could be so unfeeling; then ne turned, climbed swiftly down the ladder,

He freed the hawser, primed the Porced to make his own way in the as he swung the prow toward the open-

Straight toward the bottle-necked channel, making practical no headway at all against the choppy sea of white-

The little fishing boats were tacking. swinging about crazily at times, their iridescent propellers operated by auxiliary

notors lifted high above the water seething flatly along their hulls.

The "Bubbles" was creaking groaning with the alternate hiss and boom of the sea striking the bow. There mountainous waves crashed, hurling sheets of water over the plict house. Lane was drenched by waves striking the sides, water which swished along the bottom, water which came high on his ankles. Could be reach the little boats? They teemed no nearer; yet he knew his motor was more powerful than theirs. He must be gaining, imperceptibly. must be!

A hundred times in the next Lane felt that the "Bubbles" burst into shattered fragments from blows of the crushing mountains of water which poured over it. A hundred times he felt he had failed, his heart constricting sharply as he expected to see the boat he had built with his own hands ity to pieces.

Miraculously, however, it held gether, and fought its way closer closer. At last Lane could see a grimaced man in one of the boats staring at him. He raised his voice above the shrilling of the wind and the tumultuous thunder of swells breaking over his own gent angrily. Mr. Moffit studied the tall young man row. "Are you Axel Sevenson?"

> The grim-faced man nodded his grizzied contenunce. "Why don't you go into the harbor?

Lane demunded Sevenson's eyes were cald, unfriendly

'Why should Y?"

nine boats by your stubbornness!" That's my business!" said Sevenson, Sargent on the dock. turning to the front. Lane called to him, but received no "How you smell!" further reply; so he continued steering

for the centre of the small, bobbing boats, fighting the jerking wheel until his hands were raw and bleeding. Axel turned his head a few minutes to seek the manager's position?" later and saw Lane steering straight for his own, boat. His face grew apprehensive, his brows nurrowed. "Keep

ram me." toward Axel Sevenson's boat. If he his boats back here at a time when could not persuade the stubborn Swede we're badly in need of fish, and he likes to enter the harbor, he might do some- you. The men in the plant like you, thing else which would lesson the risk too; I could see that. And I need a man to the little boats. It was a strategic move he had heard of an oll tanker making in a stormy sea some years be-

Axel Sevenson saw Lane coming straight toward him, paying no heed to his warnings. He tacked furlously, less than ten minutes. Lane was in the centre of the "mosquito fleet," with boats on all sides of him, struggling up Mr.-Moffit grunted. "They follow Axel the Narrows, angry men shouting at

Lane grimly lashed his steering wheel and crawled down into his cabin. He returned in a moment with a barrel of oil. He crawled down a second time. bringing forth another barrel. He fought for footing in the water which swirled "You're wasting your time," said Mr. about his rubber boots with every lurch of the boat.

Groping around in the bottom of the Hugh Sargent forced a sardonic laugh, boat, he found a big hammer, and knocked the tops off the two barrels. He then pushed them into the plunging waters. The effect was almost instantaneous. The oil spread quickly, coloring the Narrows with brilliant hues, careening the waters as only oil can do.

It was strange to look beyond the The warm | Iridescent patch of water over which the oil had spread, to see it still tumbling put of the motor vibrated the "Bubble;" and foaming. The water around the little boats, however, was no quiet, miraculously so. The oil tanker had done the same thing when it had been Lane was glad he had remembered th

He turned to Axel Sevenson, amiling, "Now you can push on to Ketchikan. Enough oil will cling to the sides of your boats to take you most of the way there in safety. It will calm the water before it can do any damage to your

Axel Sevenson stared at Lane's smiling face for a moment in sullen silence then

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he said gruffly. "Who said I was going who isn't afraid to dirty his hands when to Ketchikan? "I thought that was your destination,"

said Lane in surprise. "You're mistaken!" growled Sevenson. "We're to take our fish in to the Ketchikut cannery!"

"But," expostulated Lane, "you're under no obligation to them nor to me Sevenson's blue eyes lost their cold ook and were twinkling. "Have you any objections?"

Lane laughed. "Naturally not!"

Their return trip was made easy by reason of the oil clinging to the sides of the boats, smoothing the water as they scudded along. In less than an hour eleven bouts, including the "Bubbles," were tled up to the wharf at Ketchikut.

Cannery men began unloading the fish, Due to the unexpected inflow, however, the cannery was short-handed. Lane watched the men for several minutes. standing beside Mr. Motfit and Sargent; then he removed his Mackingw went to work. "Come on and help," he shouted at Sargent. "Don't you they're short-handed?"

"I'm no laboring man," returned Sar-

Lane grinned. "I'm afraid I'll have to be one. As long as the cannery's short handed, unyway!""

He helped unload the fish for several hours until the last of the little boats was empty. He chatted with Sevenson as he worked, and the fishermen thawed out considerably, laughing and joking "Because you're risking the lives in with Lane as if they were old friends. Finally he rejoined the plant owner and

Sargent wrinkled his nose distintefully

are unloaded, that's the main thing." Mr. Molfit broke a long, thoughtful of pigs. silence. "Did you say you've come here

Lane smiled ruefully .. J'Yes; but

guess-it's-filled, isn't-it?-I'll-move on in my 'Bubbles' and look somewhere else. away!" he shouted ... "You're going to ... "There is!" -sakl-Mr ... Molfit oulckly - romer Right here, too, if you want the pos-Lane-said-nothing, continuing to aim ition. You've brought Sevenson and

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*Constipution due to insufficient ."bulb"

he's needed." Lane's eyes widened incredulously.

"But I thought Sargent-" Sargent's eyes flushed. seem to me to be a manager's place to

unload fish!" When Mr. Moffit turned to Sargent, his eyes were quite cool under their shaggy brows. . "I think I'm the best udge of that," he said frigidly. "I need manager who's willing to fit in anywhere he's needed, any time he's need-

Sargent deliberated, a slow, painful right," he said at length. "I've appraised myself a little too highly. Never gotten down to facts in my life. Y wonder there's some place in your plant for chap who has to start at the bottom?

COURAGE OF THE HEART

Fortitude is the sentinel and guardian drive; without it all other virtues and in peril. Daring is inborn, and often born blind. But fortitude is implanted. nurtured, unfolded in the school of life. I praise the marvellous courage of the human heart, enduring evils, facing perplexitles, overcoming obstacles, rising after a hundred falls, building up what gravity pulls down, tolling at tasks neve finished, relighting - extinguished fires hoping all things.-Van Dyke.

SHOULD BE THANKFUL

sessed, but found their eduaction expensive; and this, with other immedal troubles, had put him into a bad temper. Lane grinned again. "Well, the fish But he managed to answer a farmer civilly when maked to admire a fine litter

When he was told how expensive it was to keep them he again lost his temcan do a nice piece of work in one nour

"Keep them!" he roared, "Keep them! and your mother can do it in one, hour, Be thankful you haven't got to educate how long will it take them to do it to-

WHAT NONSENSES

Enemy at Manoeuvres-"You are my Sergt. Binks-"Nonsense! How did you

et here?"

India who had left a native assistant Enemy-"Over the bridge." Sergt. Binks-"Then, my dear fellow in charge of a serious case: you are drowned. We blew up that bridge yesterday."

MADE HIS OWN WAY

The banker was questioning the Negro applicant for a chauffeur's job. "Are you married?" the banker asked "Nawsah, boss," replied the applicant 'nawsah: Ah makes mah own livin'."

MAY GROW AS MANY AS 40 HLW SETS OF TEETH INA

SCOTT'S SCRAPBOOK

NO OVERCHARGE

is right, sir. Forty cents for shaving and

KNEW HIS FOLKS

Teacher: 'Now, James, if your father

James: "It would take three hours-

including the time they wasted arguing

ALL OVER!

This report was found by a doctor in

"11.00 a.m.-Patient in low degree.

SORRY TO INTERRUPT

Wife: "Henry, you were talking in your

Henry: "Was I? Sorry to have inter-

"11.30 a.m .- Patient in the sink.

12.00 n .- Patient on the flit.

"12.05 p.m .- Patient flut."

a dime for the sticking-plaster."

five or six times."

BASS- A FISH

MUSKLY BAHRELS OF COLONIAL TIMES WERE PURPOSELY MADE LONG BECAUSE A MUKKET WAS WORTH ITS HEIGHT IN BEAVER PELTS- BENCE THE LONGER

WOULD BRING IN TRADE

COMMENT, INE CHIEF HIS ASSCIATION

OPINIONS

ARE CHOWN ON GERHAMS

HEW STAMPS .

Victim (leaving barber's chair)-"Fifty "It is our business to have a pageancents! Here I say, that's a bit stiff for try of peace that is as attractive as the a shave, especially when you've cut me pageantry of war, to see that the devil has not all the good times." - J. B. Razor-wielding beginner-"Pifty cents' Priestley.

> "It has become clear that treatles count for nothing in the face of national ambition and of what the ruling statesmen regard us national security." -Nicholas Murray Butler.

> -"By--2035,-- crime-will-no-longer-be considered as a manifestation of per-50001-Wickedness but the will be regarded and treated as a form of disease."-Hendrik Willem Van Loon.

"The objective of American life must be to up build and protect the family and the home, whether farmer, worker, or business man. That is the unit of American life."-Herbert Hoover.

"Any government which is organized as well as any business which is organized must plan in relation to the new conditions regardless of how much we may prefer the old."-Edward A. Pllene.

"Until we recognize that each country owes a duty to the others in just the same way as each man owes a duty to his neighbor, war must be a recurring incident in international life." - Lord Cecil of Chelwood.



sleep last night.'

rupted you."

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