

# THE REFUGEES

By A. CONAN DOYLE,  
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(Continued from Saturday.)

Amos had been too occupied to take notice of this singular individual, but Amos Green gave a shout of delight at the sight of him, and ran forward to greet him.

"Why, Captain Ephraim," cried Amos in English, "who ever would have thought of finding you here? De Catinat, this is my old friend Ephraim Savage, under whose charge I came here."

"Anchor's apeak, lad, and the hatches down," said the stranger in the peculiar drawling voice which the Englishers had retained from their English Puritans.

"And when do you sail?"

"As soon as your foot is on her deck, Providence serve us with wind and tide. And how has all gone with thee, Amos?"

"Right well. I have much to tell you."

De Catinat and his relatives were far too engrossed with their own affairs to give a thought to the others. De Catinat told his tale in a few short, bitter sentences, the injustice that had been done him, his dismissal from the king's service and the ruin which had come upon the Huguenots of France. Adele, who is the angel instinct of woman, and not only of her lover and his misadventures as she listened to his story, but the old merchant tottered to his feet when he heard of the revocation of the edict.

"What am I to do?" he cried. "What am I to do? I am too old to begin my life again."

"Never fear, uncle," said De Catinat heartily. "There are other lands beyond France."

"But not for me. No, no; I am too old. Lord, but thy hand is heavy upon my servants. What shall I do and whither shall I turn?" He wrung his hands in his perplexity.

"What is amiss with him, then, Amos?" asked the seaman.

"He and his must leave the country, Ephraim."

"And why?"

"Because they are Protestants and the king will not abide their creed."

Ephraim Savage was across the room in an instant and had inclosed the old merchant's thin hand in his own great knotted fist. There was a brotherly sympathy in his strong grip and rugged, weather stained face.

"Tell this man that we shall see him through, Amos. Tell him that we've got a country where he'll just fit in like a bung in a barrel. Tell him that religion is free to all there. Tell him that he wants to come the Golden Rod is waiting with her anchor apeak and her cargo aboard."

"Then we must come at once," said De Catinat as he listened to the cordial message which was conveyed to his uncle. "Tonight the orders will be out, and tomorrow it may be too late."

"But my business!" cried the merchant.

"Take what valuables you can and save the rest. Better that than lose all, and liberty into the bargain."

And so at last it was arranged. That very night, within five minutes of the closing of the gates, there passed out of Paris a small party of five, three upon horseback and two in a closed carriage which bore several weighty boxes upon the top. They were the first leaves flying before the hurricane, the earliest of that great multitude who were within the next few months to stream along every road which led from France.

As to the early tidings which the Puritan had brought with him, his little party were now ahead of the news. At Rouen all was quiet, and Captain Ephraim Savage before evening had brought both them and such property as they had saved aboard his brigantine, the Golden Rod. It was but a little craft, some seventy tons burden, but at a time when so many were putting out to sea in open boats, preferring the wrath of nature to that of the king, it was a refuge indeed. The same night the seaman drew up his anchor and began to slowly make his way down the winding river.

With the early dawn the river broadened out and each bank trended away, leaving a long, funnel shaped estuary between. Ephraim Savage snuffed the air and paced the deck briskly, with a twinkle in his keen gray eyes. The wind had fallen away, but there was still enough to drive them slowly upon their course.

"Where's the gal?" he asked.

"She's in my cabin," said Amos Green. "I thought that maybe she could manage there until we got across."

"Where will you sleep yourself, then?"

"Tut! A litter of spruce boughs and a sheet of birch bark over me have been enough all these years. What would I ask better than this deck of soft white pine and my blanket?"

"Very good. The old man and his nephew—him with the blue coat—can have the two empty bunks. But you must speak to that man, Amos. I'll have no philandering aboard my ship, lad; no whispering or cuddling or any such foolishness."

"It's a pity that we left so quick, or they might have been married before

we started. She's a good girl, Ephraim, and he a fine man, for all that their ways are not the same as ours."

"But what is the matter with the old man? He doesn't seem easy in his mind," said Captain Savage.

The old merchant had been leaning over the bulwarks, looking back with a drawn face and weary eyes at the red curving track behind them which marked the path to Paris. Adele had come up now with not a thought to spare upon the dangers and troubles which lay in front of her as she chafed the old man's thin cold hands and whispered words of love and comfort into his ears.

"We are always in the hollow of God's hand," he whispered, "but, oh, Adele, it is a dreadful thing to feel his fingers moving under us!"

"Come with us, uncle," said De Catinat, passing his arm under that of the old man. "It is long since you have rested. And you, Adele, I pray that you will go and sleep, my poor darling, for it has been a weary journey. Go now to please me, and when you wake both France and your troubles will lie behind you."

When father and daughter had left the deck De Catinat made his way aft again to where Amos Green and the captain were standing.

"I am glad to get them below, Amos," said he, "for I fear that we may have trouble yet."

"And how?"

"You see the white road which runs by the southern bank of the river. Twice within the last half hour I have seen horsemen spurring for dear life along it. Where the spires and smoke are yonder is Honfleur, and thither it was that these men went. I know not who would ride so madly at such an hour unless they were the messengers of the king. Ah, see, there is a third one!"

On the white band which wound among the green meadows a black dot could be seen, which moved along with great rapidity, vanished behind a clump of trees and then reappeared again, making for the distant city. Captain Savage drew out his glass and gazed at the rider.

"Aye, aye," said he as he snapped it up again. "It is a soldier, sure enough. I can see the glint of the scabbard which he carries on his larboard side. I think that we shall have more wind soon. With a breeze we can show our heels to anything in French waters, but a galley or an armed boat would overhaul us now."

De Catinat, who, though he could speak little English, had learned in America to understand it pretty well, looked anxiously at Amos Green. "I fear that we shall bring trouble on this good captain," said he, "and that the loss of his cargo and ship may be his reward for having befriended us."

Ask him whether he would not prefer to land us on the north bank. With our money we might make our way into the lowlands."

Ephraim Savage looked at his passenger with eyes which had lost something of their sternness. "Young man," said he, "I see that you can understand something of my talk."

De Catinat nodded.

"I tell you, then, that I am a bad man to beat. Any man that was ever shipmate with me would tell you as much. I just jam my helm and keep my course as long as God will let me. D'ye see?"

De Catinat again nodded, though, in truth, the seaman's metaphors left him with but a very general sense of his meaning.

While the Puritan seaman had been talking his eyes had kept wandering from the clouds to the flopping sails and back. Such wind as there was came in little short puffs, and the canvas either drew full or was absolutely slack. The fleecy shreds of cloud above, however, traveled swiftly across the blue sky. It was on these that the captain fixed his gaze, and he watched them like a man who is working out a problem in his mind. They were abreast of Honfleur now and about half a mile out from it. All was quiet on the curving quay and on the half moon fort, over which floated the white flag with the golden fleur de lis. The port lay on their quarter now, and they were drawing away more quickly as the breeze freshened. De Catinat, glancing back, had almost made up his mind that their fears were quite groundless when they were brought back in an instant.

Round the corner of the mole a great dark boat dashed into view ringed with foam from her flying prow and from the ten pairs of oars which swung from either side of her. A dainty white ensign drooped over her stern, and in her bows the sun's light was caught by a heavy brass cannonade. The captain brought his glass to bear upon them and whistled; then he glanced up at the clouds once more.

"Thirty men," said he, "and they go three paces to our two. You, sir, take your blue coat off this deck or you'll bring trouble upon us. The Lord will look after his own if they'll only keep from foolishness. Get these hatches off, Tomlinson. So! Where's Jim Sturt and Hiram Jefferson? Let them stand by to clap them on again when I whistle. Starboard; starboard! Keep her

as full as she'll draw. Now, Amos, and you, Tomlinson, come here until I have a word with you."

The three stood in consultation upon the poop, glancing back at their pursuer. There could be no doubt that the wind was freshening. It blew briskly in their faces as they looked back, but it was not steady yet, and the boat was rapidly overhauling them. Already they could see the faces of the marines who sat in the stern and the gleam of the lighted linstock which the gunner held in his hand.

"Hola!" cried an officer in excellent English. "Lay her to or we fire!"

"Who are you, and what do you want?" shouted Ephraim Savage in a voice that might have been heard from the bank.

"We come in the king's name, and we want a party of Huguenots from Paris who came on board of your vessel at Rouen."

"Brace back the foreyard and lay her to!" shouted the captain. "Drop a ladder over the side there and look smart. So! Now we are ready for them."

The yard was swung round, and the vessel lay quietly rising and falling on the waves. The boat dashed alongside, her brass cannon trained upon the brigantine, and her squad of marines ready to open fire. They grinned and shrugged their shoulders when they saw that their sole opponents were three unarmed men upon the poop. The officer was on deck in an instant, with his drawn sword in his hand.

"Come up, two of you," he cried. "You stand here at the head of the ladder, sergeant. Throw up a rope, and you can fix it to this stanchion. Keep awake down there and be all ready to fire. You come with me, Corporal Lemoine. Who is captain of this ship?"

"I am, sir," said Ephraim Savage submissively.

"You have three Huguenots aboard."

"Tut, tut. Huguenots, are they? I thought they were very anxious to get away, but as long as they paid their passage it was no business of mine. An old man, his young daughter and a young fellow about your age in some sort of livery."

"In uniform, sir—the uniform of the king's guard. Those are the folk I have come for."

"And you wish to take them back?"

"Most certainly."

"The old man is in his bunk asleep, the maid is in a cabin below, and the other is sleeping down the hold."

"Sleeping, you say? We had best surprise him."

"But think you that you dare do it alone? He has no arms, it is true, but he is a well grown young fellow. Will you not have twenty men up from the boat?"

Some such thought had passed through the officer's head, but the captain's remark put him upon his mettle.

"Come with me, corporal," said he. "Down this ladder, you say?"

"Yes, down the ladder and straight on. He lies between those two cloth bales." Ephraim Savage looked up with a smile playing about the corners of his grim mouth. The wind was whistling now in the rigging, and the stays of the masts were humming like two harp strings. Amos Green lounged beside the French sergeant who guarded the end of the rope ladder, while Tomlinson, the mate, stood with a bucket of water in his hand exchanging remarks in very bad French with the crew of the boat beneath him.

The officer made his way slowly down the ladder which led into the hold. The corporal followed him, and had his chest level with the deck when the other had reached the bottom. It may have been something in Ephraim Savage's face or it may have been the gloom around him which startled the young Frenchman.

"Up again, corporal!" he shouted. "I think that you are best at the top."

"And I think that you are best down below, my friend," said the Puritan, who gathered the officer's meaning from his gesture. Putting the sole of his boot against the man's chest, he gave a shove which sent both him and the ladder crashing down on to the officer beneath him. As he did so he blew his whistle, and in a moment the hatch was back in its place and clamped down on each side with iron bars.

The sergeant had swung round at the sound of the crash, but Amos Green, who had waited for the movement, threw his arms round him and hurled him overboard into the sea. At the same instant the connecting rope was severed, the foreyard creaked back into position once more and

the bucketful of salt water sousea down over the gunner and his gun, putting out his linstock and wetting his priming. A shower of balls from the marines piped through the air or rapped up against the planks, but the boat was tossing and jerking in the short, choppy waves, and to aim was impossible. In vain the men tugged and strained at their oars, while the gunner worked like a maniac to re-light his linstock and to replace his priming. The boat had lost its weigh, while the brigantine was flying along now with every sail bulging and swelling to bursting point. Crack! went the cannonade at last, and five little slits in the mainsail showed that her charge of grape had flown high. Half an hour afterward a little dark dot upon the horizon with a golden speck at one end of it was all that could be seen of the Honfleur guard boat. The smoke of Hatre lay like a little cloud upon the northern horizon, and Captain Ephraim Savage paced his deck with his face as grim as ever, but with a dancing light in his gray eyes.

(To Be Continued.)

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