

For The Term of His Natural Life

By MARCUS CLARKE

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)
"Pine," says Captain Blunt, as the two were left alone together, "you and I are always putting our foot into it!"

"Women are always in the way aboard ship," returned Pine.
"Ah! doctor, you don't mean that, I know," said a rich, soft voice at his elbow.

It was Sarah Purfoy emerging from her cabin.

"We were talking of your eyes, my dear," cries Blunt. "They're the finest eyes I've seen in my life, and they've got the reddest lips under 'm, that—"

"Let me pass, Captain Blunt, if you please. Thank you, doctor."

And before the admiring commander could prevent her, she modestly swept out of the cuddy.
"She's a fine piece of goods, eh?" asked Blunt, watching her. "I don't know where Vickers picked her up, but I'd rather trust my life with the worst of those ruffians 'tween deck than in her keeping, if I'd done her an injury. I don't believe she'd think much of sticking a man, either. But I must go on deck, doctor."

Pine followed him more slowly. "I don't pretend to know much about women," he said to himself. "But that girl's got a story of her own, or I'm much mistaken. What brings her on board this ship as a lady's maid is more than I can fathom." And as he walked down the now deserted deck to the main hatchway, and turned to watch the white figure gliding up and down, he saw it joined by another and a darker one, he muttered, "She's after no good." At that moment his arm was touched by a soldier in undress uniform, who had come up the hatchway.

"What is it?"
"If you please, doctor, one of the prisoners is taken sick, and as the dinner's over, and he's pretty bad, I ventured to disturb your honor."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"
In the meantime the woman who was the object of the grim old fellow's suspicions, was enjoying the comparative coolness of the night air. Her mistress and her mistress' daughter had not yet come out of their cabin. The awning had been removed, the stars were shining in the moonless sky, and Miss Sarah Purfoy was walking up and down with no less a person than Captain Blunt himself. She had passed and repassed him twice silently, and at the third turn, the big fellow, peering into the twilight ahead somewhat uneasily, obeyed the glitter of her great eyes and joined her.

"You weren't put out," he asked, "at what I said to you below. I was a bit rude, I admit."

"Oh, dear, no. You were not rude."

"Glad you think so!" returned Phineas Blunt, a little ashamed at what looked like a confession of weakness on his part.

Sarah Purfoy laughed a low, full-toned laugh, whose sound made Blunt's pulse take a jump forward, and sent the blood tingling down to his fingers' ends.

"Captain Blunt," said she, "you're going to do a very silly thing."

"What?"

"You are going to fall in love with a girl of nineteen."

"Who is that?"

"Myself," she said, giving him her hand and smiling at him with her rich red lips.

"I believe you are right," he cried; "I am half in love with you already."

"That is your affair," she said; and as the head of Mr. Frere appeared above the companion, Blunt walked aft, feeling considerably bewildered, and yet not displeased.

"She's a fine girl!" he said, cocking his cap, "and I'm hanged if she ain't sweet upon me."

And then the old fellow began to whistle softly to himself as he paced the deck, and to glance toward the man, who had taken his place, with no friendly eyes. But a sort of shame held him as yet, and he kept aloof. Maurice Frere's greeting was short enough.

"Well, Sarah," he said, "have you got out of your temper?"

"What did you strike the man for? He did you no harm."

"He was out of his place. What business had he to come aft? One must keep these wretches down, my girl."

"Or they will be too much for you, eh? Do you think one man could capture a ship, Mr. Maurice? What could they do against the soldiers? There are fifty soldiers."

"You are a strange girl; I can't make you out. Come," and he took her hand, "tell me what you are really."

"Lady's maid in the family of a gentleman going abroad."

"Sarah, can't you be serious?"

"I am serious. That was the advertisement I answered."

"But I mean what you have been. You were not a lady's maid all your life. Have you no friends? What have you been?"

She looked up into the young man's face—a little less harsh at that moment than it was wont to be—and, creeping closer to him, whispered:

"Do you love me, Maurice?"

He raised one of the little hands that rested on the taffrail, and, under cover of the darkness, kissed it.

"You know I do," he said. "You may be a lady's maid, or what you like, but you are the loveliest woman I ever met."

"Then, if you love me, what does it matter?"

"If you loved me, you would tell

me," said he, with a quickness which surprised himself.

"But I have nothing to tell, and I don't love you—yet."

He let her hand fall with an impatient gesture; and at that moment Blunt, who could restrain himself no longer, came up.

"Fine night, Mr. Frere."

"Yes, fine enough."

Just then, from out of the violet haze that hung over the horizon, a strange glow of light broke.

"Halloo!" cries Frere. "Did you see that? A flash of light."

They strained their eyes to pierce through the obscurity.

"Best saw something like it before dinner. There must be thunder in the air."

At that instant a thin streak of light shot up, and then sunk again. There was no mistaking it this time, and a simultaneous exclamation burst from all on deck. From out of the gloom which hung over the horizon rose a column of flame that lighted up the night for an instant, and then sunk, leaving a dull red spark upon the water.

"It's a ship on fire!" cried Frere.

CHAPTER IV.

They looked again. The tiny spark still burned, and immediately over it there grew out of the darkness a crimson spot that hung like a lurid star in the air. Mrs. Vickers, with little Sylvia clinging to her dress, came up to share the new sensation.

"Captain, you'll lower a boat. We may save some of the poor fellows," cries Frere, his heartiness of body reviving at the prospect of excitement.

"Boat?" said Blunt; "why, she's twelve miles off, or more, and there's not a breath o' wind! They've got their own boats. In the meanwhile we'll show 'em that there's some one near 'em."

And, as he spoke, a blue light flared hissing into the night. "There, they'll see that, I expect!" he said, as the ghastly flame rose, extinguishing the stars for a moment, only to let them appear again brighter in a darker heaven.

"Mr. Best, lower and man the quarter boats! Mr. Frere, you can go in one, if you like, and take a volunteer or two from those gray jackets of yours amidships. I shall want as many hands as I can spare to man the long boat and cutter, in case we want 'em. Steady there, lads! Easy!" And, as the first eight men who could reach the deck parted to the larboard and starboard quarter boats, Frere ran down on the main deck.

At his nod the prison door was thrown open. The air was hot, and that strange, horrible odor peculiar to closely packed human bodies filled the place. He ran his eye down the double tier of bunks which lined the side of the ship, and stopped at the one opposite him.

There seemed to have been some disturbance there lately, for, instead of the six pairs of feet which should have protruded therefrom, the gleam of the bull's eye showed but four.

"What's the matter here, sentry?" he asked.

"Prisoner ill, sir. Doctor sent him to hospital."

"But there should be two."

The other came from behind the break of the berths. It was Rufus Dawes. He held by the side as he came, and saluted.

"I felt sick, sir, and was trying to get the scuttle open."

Maurice Frere stamped his foot indignantly.

"Sick! What are you sick about? I'll give you something to sweat the sickness out of you. Stand on one side here!"

Rufus Dawes, wondering, obeyed.

"Which of you fellows can handle an oar?" Frere went on. "There, I don't want fifty! Three'll do. Come on now, make haste!"

The heavy door clashed again, and in another instant the four "volunteers" were on deck.

"Two in each boat!" cries Blunt. "I'll burn a blue light every hour for you, Mr. Best, and take care they don't swamp you. Lower away, lads!"

As the second prisoner took the oar of Frere's boat, he uttered a groan and fell forward, recovering himself instantly.

Sarah Purfoy, leaning over the side, saw the occurrence.

"What is the matter with that man?" she said. "Is he ill?"

Pine was next to her, and looked out instantly. "It's that big fellow in No. 10," he cried. "Here, Frere!"

But Frere heard him not. He was intent on the beacon that gleamed ever bright in the distance. "Give way, my lads!" he shouted. "And amidst a cheer from the ship, the two boats shot out of the bright circle of the blue light, and disappeared into the darkness!"

Sarah Purfoy looked at Pine for an explanation, but he turned abruptly away. For a moment the girl paused, as if in doubt; and then, ere his retreating figure turned to retrace its steps, she cast a quick glance around, and, slipping down the ladder, made her way to the 'tween-decks.

The iron-studded oak barricade that, loop-holed for musketry, and perforated with plated trap-door for sterner needs, separated soldiers from prisoners, was close to her left hand, and the sentry at its padlocked door looked at her inquiringly. She laid her little hand on his big rough one, and opened her brown eyes at him.

"The hospital," she said. "The doctor sent me;" and before he could answer her white figure vanished down the hatch, and passed round the bulkhead, behind which lay the sick man.

Though not so hot as in the prison, the atmosphere of the lower deck was close and unhealthy, and the girl, pausing to listen to the subdued hum of conversation coming from the soldiers' berths, turned strangely sick and giddy. She drew herself up, however, and held out her hand to a man who came rapidly across the misshapen shadows, thrown by the sulky swinging lantern to meet her. It was a young soldier who had been that day sentry at the convict gangway.

"Well, miss," he said, "I am here, yer see, waiting for yer."

The tone of the sentence seemed to awaken and remind her of her errand in that place. She laughed as loudly and merrily as she dared, and laid her hand on the speaker's arm. The boy reddened to the roots of his closely cropped hair.

"There, that's quite close enough. You're only a common soldier, Miles, and you mustn't make love to me."

"I know you're above me, Miss Sarah. You're a lady, but I love yer, I do, and you drives me wild with your tricks."

"Hush, Miles! they'll hear you. Who is in the hospital?"

"I dunno."

"Well, I want to go in."

"Don't ask me, miss. It's against orders, and—"

She turned away. "Oh, very well. If this is all the thanks I get for wasting my time down here, I shall go on deck again. Mr. Frere will let me go in, I dare say, if I ask him."

"Go in if yer like; I won't stop yer, but remember what I'm doin' of."

She turned again at the foot of the ladder, and came quickly back. "That's a good lad. I knew you would not refuse me," and smiling at the poor lout she was befooling, she passed into the cabin.

There was no lantern, and from the partially blocked stern windows came only a dim vaporous light. The dull ripple of the water as the ship rocked on the slow swell of the sea, made a melancholy sound, and the sick man's heavy breathing seemed to fill the air. The slight noise made by the opening door roused him; he rose on his elbow and began to mutter. Sarah Purfoy paused in the doorway to listen, but could make nothing of the low, uneasy murmuring. Raising her arm, conspicuous by its white sleeve in the gloom, she beckoned Miles.

"The lantern," she whispered—"bring me the lantern."

He unhooked it from the rope where it swung, and brought it toward her. At that moment the man in the bunk sat up erect, and twisted himself toward the light. "Sarah!" he cried, in shrill, sharp tones. "Sarah!" and swooped with a lean arm through the dusk, as though to seize her.

The girl leaped out of the cabin like a panther, and was back at the bunk head in a moment. The convict was a young man of about four and twenty. His hands were small and well shaped, and the unshaven chin bristled with promise of a strong beard. His wild black eyes glared with all the fire of delirium, and as he gasped for breath the sweat stood in beads on his sallow forehead.

The aspect of the man was sufficiently ghastly, and Miles, drawing back, did not wonder at the terror which had seized Mrs. Vickers' maid. With open mouth and agonized face, she stood in the center of the cabin, like one turned to stone, gazing at the man on the bed.

"Ecod, he be a sight!" says Miles, at length. "Come away, miss, and shut the door. He's raving, I tell yer."

"He's choking. Can't you see? Water! give me water!"

And, wreathing her arms around the man's head, she pulled it down on her bosom, rocking it there, half savagely, to and fro.

Awed into obedience by her voice, Miles dipped a pannikin into a small unheated puncheon cleated in the corner of the cabin, and gave it her; and, without thanking him, she placed it to the sick prisoner's lips. He drank greedily, and closed his eyes with a grateful sigh. Just then the quick ears of Miles heard the jingle of arms.

"Here's the doctor coming, miss!" he cried. "I hear the sentry saluting. Come away! Quick!"

She seized the lantern, and, opening the horn slide, extinguished it.

"Say it went out," she said, in a fierce whisper, "and hold your tongue. Leave me to manage."

She bent over the convict as if to arrange his pillow, and then glided out of the cabin just as Pine descended the hatchway. As he groped his way with outstretched arms in the darkness, Sarah Purfoy slipped past him.

(To be continued.)

A Discriminating Intelligence.
"That's a wonderfully intelligent dog of Hardupp's."

"What can he do?"

"Why, he bit three bill collectors last week."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The Reason.
"I'm master in my own house," said he. And we wonder now no more—

Though we did at first—we have found you see.

—Cleveland Leader.

Mean Thing.
Susie—Just think! Tom says there isn't a girl in town with a complexion like mine.

Lucie—Isn't he the knocker?—Cleveland Leader.

Why He Is.
Biggs—Young Authorton seems to be rather a smart chap.

Diggs—No wonder. The criticisms of his new book are enough to make him smart.

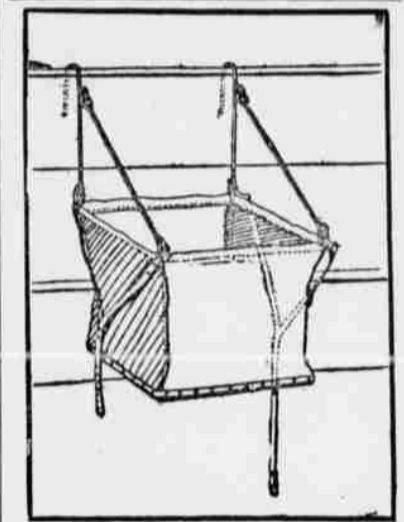
While Germany has 6,500,000 women who earn their own living, Italy, with only one-half the population, has 5,200,000.

FARMS AND FARMERS



Feed Bag.

In the illustration below is shown a feed bag which can be conveniently used at any point where the teamster might be. When necessary it can be suspended from a fence or the vehicle wheel, but when these are not available it can be supported directly upon the ground or suspended from the head of the animal. It is the invention of a Texas farmer, and comprises a receptacle for the feed, having a bottom



SUSPENDED FROM A FENCE.

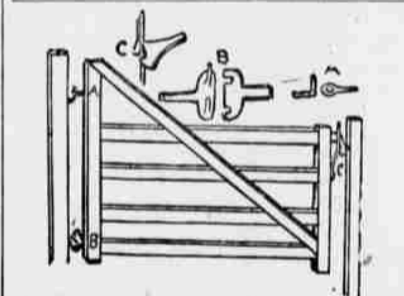
made of wood or sheet metal, sides cut from canvas or similar suitable material and a wire frame sewed into the upper rim. The receptacle will preferably be square, with four loops in the frame, one at each corner. Connected with two of the loops are rods which serve as a support, being formed in the shape of hooks, brace rods connecting the support and the loops in the front of the frame. When not in use the bag can be collapsed into a small space and carried beneath the seat of a vehicle or otherwise disposed. Straps can also be supplied for attaching over the animal's head and suspending the device as an ordinary feed bag.

Butter Color Poison.

Coloring for cheese and butter used to be made from annatto, but coal tar colors are so much cheaper that probably four-fifths of the coloring matter used in both butter and cheese at the present time is made from coal tar, and consequently more or less poisonous. As in all adulterated food products the argument is advanced that the amount of poison eaten with the butter is so small as to render it perfectly harmless. In fact it is stated that the ordinary consumer of butter would not get more than an ounce of coloring matter in four years. But there is no end to argument—a good talker will make black appear white. The only safe rule is to discard everything in the production of food that has an injurious tendency.

An Automatic Gate.

A shows the irons for the upper hinge. B shows the lower hinge which has double pinions, while C shows the catch driven into the post with the spring. To open and shut itself, the



AUTOMATIC GATE.

gate must be hung about four inches out of plumb, having the lower hinge (B) project out from the post that much further than the upper one. It shuts then just like a wagon rolling downhill. The lower hinge (B) must be eight inches from slot to slot.—Exchange.

Feeding the Hens.

Peas and beans in small quantities are of great value to laying hens. They are so rich in albuminoids—egg producing material.

About Planting Navy Beans.

Commenting upon what he calls a fatal mistake in growing navy beans—viz., planting them in March, April and May—a correspondent of the Atlanta Southern Cultivator says: "I have grown them for several years in a small way, and at first was greatly annoyed by weevil. In fact, I had one entire crop destroyed by weevil. The certain remedy in this section is not to plant before June 1, and I should think farther south some later. The weevil does not bother my June-planted beans."

Testing for Fertility of Eggs.

Eggs are never so fertile in winter as in the warm weather, and all should be tested on the eighth day. A piece of cardboard, with a hole cut out in which to fit the egg, is usually employed to assist the tester, and this is certainly an aid, but by encircling the egg between the forefinger and thumb we shut the light out all around it, and thus obtain the same result. Eggs should be tested in a dark room by the aid of a candle or lamp; hold the egg up against the light, and it will be more or less transparent, according as to whether it is dark or white shelled. Then, if the egg is fertile, looking closely a dark spot will be seen floating inside the shell. This is the germ which has awakened to life, and is growing. By the eighth day it is quite discernible, but, if the light is good and the operator experienced, fertile and unfertile can be separated about the fourth day, though the eighth is quite soon enough for the average poultry keeper. Dark brown shelled eggs are more difficult to test than white, owing to the shell being more opaque; if any are doubtful put them back and test again the following night. It is well to have a fresh egg to compare with the tested egg, if doubtful about the latter, the difference between fertile and unfertile shows them up more clearly. Be careful the eggs do not get chilled if tested on a cold night. If there are many eggs to test it will pay to have one of the very quick and convenient testers sold by the incubator and poultry supply houses.—New England Homestead.

Convenient Post Puller.

In removing a fence, those having experience know what a slow, back-breaking job it is to pull the posts by digging around them with spade and lifting them out. For the benefit of those having such work to do—and there is more or less of it to do on every farm—I give the accompanying cut and description of a simple little



POST PULLER.

device—not original with me—convenient and worthy of reproduction.

One and two are pieces each 2x4 inches by 5½ feet long. Three is base board one inch by 6 or 8 inches by 3 feet long, well nailed together, forming a crotch 6 inches from end for chain to pull in. Stand the jack about 3 feet from post, leaning against post at top. Hook chain around post at ground and laying it over in crotch of jack, which gives an almost vertical lift.—Homer Shirley, in Michigan Farmer.

Tuberculosis in Hogs.

A good many cases of tuberculosis in hogs, we fear, can be traced to the creamery, due to the fact that the skim milk has not been heated to a sufficiently high temperature or kept at that temperature long enough to destroy the germs, says Kimball's Dairy Farmer. Ordinarily it is assumed that herds become infected through bringing other animals among them, but the question of tuberculosis infection through the skim milk from the creamery is becoming so serious that it will eventually lead to compulsory pasteurization of skim milk. Indeed, this is now required in some States, notably Minnesota, but the trouble is that the buttermakers do not heat the skim milk hot enough or keep it at that temperature long enough.

Milking Machines.

At the National Dairy show in Chicago a milking machine was on exhibition in practical operation. For a great many years inventors have worked on this problem. Several times it has been reported that the difficulties have been overcome, and that a practical machine was the result. But up to the present time the old-fashioned hand manipulation has prevailed. It is to be hoped that the inventor has succeeded this time, because milking is one of the hard tasks that comes twice a day, Sundays and holidays and all. We have machinery to help out in every other branch of the business, why not in the milking stable?—Field and Fireside.

Coppers as Fertilizer.

Experiments made by E. Leclercq, of Brussels, have proved that 250 units of coppers will produce as great an effect on oats as 150 of nitrate of soda. An additional benefit is the destruction of weeds by the coppers. The experimenter claims that the fertilizer value of the coppers is in the iron, not in the sulphuric acid. Considering that nitrate of soda sells at five times the price of coppers, there would be a material saving to agriculturists.