

TOILERS OF THE COLUMBIA

By Paul De Lancy

Author of "Lord of the Desert," "Oregon Sketches," and other Pacific Coast Stories

CHAPTER III—Continued.

Left master of the situation, old Seadog pursued his investigations. The ship had filled with sand in the neighborhood of the captain's quarters. It was this very point that attracted the crafty fisherman's attention.

Shovels were secured and the boys were ordered to drive their way into the captain's room. It was easy to find the door since the sand only extended about half way to the ceiling of the cabin.

While the boys were shoveling back the dripping sand, old Seadog was alternately on the lookout inside and out. He let nothing on the stranded vessel escape his observation and kept a constant vigilance over the bay to see that no one was approaching.

"If I can make sure that they were aboard my future is no longer an uncertainty," said the old man as he mused to himself. "It is impossible for any one to survive," he continued. "The whole crew and all aboard went to the bottom of the sea and the crabs will have disfigured their bodies beyond recognition before they rise to the surface. And even should they escape these busy scavengers they may drift back to the ocean where they will furnish food for the larger fish."

The fishermen were already suspicious of old Seadog and when driven from the wreck at the muzzle of his gun they immediately returned to the village and spread the news.

"The officers ought to take the matter in hand," said one.

"Yes, he is up to stealing the ship and cargo," said another.

The justice of the peace was appealed to as well as the village constable, but these two functionaries declared that they had only jurisdiction on the land and not on the sea.

"But the pillaging should be stopped," insisted the honest fishermen.

When the justice of the peace saw that his neighbors were informed that the higher courts had jurisdiction on the water; that the government itself would act if it were informed; that the vessel was a foreign one and that the consul of the country from which the vessel came would protect it from the hands of the land pirates.

Astoria then had her customs officials and she had a United States commissioner. Cape Disappointment had her lighthouse, but it was before the days of telephone and telegraph service at that point and there was no way to communicate with the government authorities at Astoria, sixteen miles away on the south bank of the river, except by crossing the stream in a small boat.

But those men of the river were not slow in arranging for the trip. A small boat was launched and three of the most intelligent went aboard and were soon cutting their way across north of Sand Island as fast as the wind could carry them.

Old Seadog's watchful eye did not let them escape unnoticed, and he knew that ordinary matters did not prompt his neighbors on such a journey.

"Dig for your lives, boys; lift out that sand! We may have trouble before our job is done. Some of those halfbreeds have gone to Astoria to raise trouble and we must get well and through before the storm blows back."

Old Seadog did not mean to disturb the property left on the vessel. He had a personal motive in view. His mission was not in quest of gold; neither would he have carried away the smallest thing of intrinsic value, but would have risked his life and that of his boys for that which he sought.

While delving their way into the cabin they came upon many valuables. These were cast aside as so much rubbish. Gold and silver trinkets were thrown upon the heaps of sand as if they were of no value.

It was several hours after they had begun work and old Seadog was already casting uneasy glances toward the south side of the river when the boys struck the sea captain's iron chest.

While toiling with the storm the heavy receptacle had shaken its place and had hurled it about the room like a ping pong ball. But like a wedge it had been driven into a heap of furniture and baggage jammed together in one corner of the room and backed by these and the heavy bank of sand piled upon the top of the whole, it seemed a thing as solid and immovable as the hull of the vessel itself.

It was at this crisis that old Seadog discovered a revenue cutter approaching from the south, at whose helm floated the stars and stripes.

"Exert yourselves, boys, exert yourselves for your lives, or all is for naught! Those fools have informed the officers and they will soon be upon us," said the old man.

Then they all put to and gave their energy to securing the iron chest. The old man abandoned his lookout and joined the boys in the work. The timbers were interlocked about it and at the same time deeply imbedded in the sand.

"Get the capstan lever, boys; get the capstan. We must have her now or it will be too late!" exclaimed the excited old Seadog.

Some crowbars had been unearthed from the ship's tool room and with the addition of the capstan lever they set to work with renewed vigor.

"Pry down to the left, boys, pry down to the left!" shouted the father. Already the exhaust of the government launch could be heard as it slowed up to weigh anchor at a safe distance from the sandbar.

It would only require the lowering of a boat and a few strokes of the oars to land the officers upon the fishermen.

Fortune had always favored old Seadog and it favored him again. With a heavy lurch they brought the chest from under the timbers that held it down.

Fortune doubly favored him. When

the iron receptacle had been turned round it was found that the keys still remained in the lock. The captain had possibly attempted to open it at the last moment and had been driven out by the way.

"Rush outside, boys; rush outside; I will do the rest!" commanded the stern old parent. The boys were barely in time. They were confronted by the officers immediately upon climbing up to the deck.

"In the name of the government, men, we proclaim you our prisoners," calmly spoke one of the officers.

The boys looked bewildered but spoke not in the absence of their father, to whom they had always looked for advice and guidance.

But the old man was busily engaged. With a surprising quickness he had opened the chest and torn from it the register roll. Then he closed the chest, locked it and cast the keys into the water at the lower end of the hole.

Then he climbed out through a port-hole at the rear, hurriedly secreted the roll in the sand at a safe distance from the vessel, climbed back through and joined his boys who were prisoners on deck. But before he had hidden the parchment upon which the ship's register was made he had turned through it quickly. His eyes had rested upon two names. This brought from him the ejaculation:

"Old Seadog rejoices at last; old Seadog rejoices at last; old Seadog has cause to rejoice! In the language of the convict who swam to the Diamond Isles, 'the world belongs to old Seadog now!'"

CHAPTER IV.

Odd Companions.

After releasing the old man and the child from their entanglement they were carried to the nearest fishermen's cabin. The man, though lashed to the driftwood was held no closer than was the babe. His arms held it like a vice. They had been so long about it that they had formed like clasps around the body and, benumbed by the cold, they were as difficult to pry apart as are the creepers which hold a vine in its upward climb.

Young as it was, only a few weeks old, the infant possessed more vitality than did its aged protector. It stretched forth its little hands and legs with surprising strength and cried pitifully, though in a voice that showed that its lungs were still strong and healthy.

But the old man scarcely breathed. He opened his dull eyes for a moment and stared blankly into the faces of those directly in the line of his vision, and then closed them. He was unconscious of all that was going on about him. His long gray hair hung in strands about his face and neck. His silken gray beard was matted with the sand and trash of the beach. But for the slow pulsation of his heart he would have been pronounced dead by those around him.

The women were running about as busy as any women can be when they are doing some great act of charity, and their devotion was increased by the fact that some dead mother's child had fallen into their hands, and each felt a double responsibility on this account.

Some were bringing dry clothing from the wardrobe of their own children, others were warming cow's milk in a small basin on the stove, while more thoughtful mothers were sharing the breast of her own babe with the little waif. And those good women smiled with tears in their eyes as the little stranger tugged greedily at its new found mother's breast.

"Oh, it will get along all right," said one.

"Yes, so long as it eats, the signs are good," said another.

"Just so you don't give it too much," remarked an elderly woman who was watching the proceedings.

"But I fear it is all over with the old gent," whispered one of the women who had just returned from the adjoining room where the men were working with the child's elderly companion.

The men were rubbing his arms and legs, and irons were being heated to place at his feet. Some brandy had been forced through his lips, but it was slow in showing encouraging effects.

His eyes were fixed in his head, his features were as pale as death. His firm lips were set as if in his last conscious moment he had fixed his determination upon some given object.

He was a little more than five feet as he lay upon the bed. Still he was rather plump and well-kept for his age. But his skin was smooth and his muscles soft, which indicated that he had not been a man of toil.

When the hair was pushed back from his face a broad intelligent forehead was exposed. Had those fishermen been able to read phrenological signs they would have discovered that the aged man before them was no ordinary being. His intellectual forehead, small feet and hands, dress and general appearance indicated that he had followed one of the professions.

In the meantime the village physician arrived and aided in resuscitating the old man. The child gradually passed away to sleep after its wants were satisfied and slept as soundly as if its own mother still hovered over it. It was a soft sweet sleep such only as is seen in the repose of the innocent before the trials and tribulations of life have come to their knowledge.

It knew not of its lost mother and father, the fearful storm at sea, the hours in the water, the terrible night among the driftwood on the beach. It slept in a repose akin to perfect bliss.

"She's a darling little girl," said the woman who had shared her own child's clothing with the little sleeper.

"What pretty blue eyes she has," remarked she who had warmed the milk.

"Such dainty little limbs," said the woman who had run about the place nervously trying to do everything and had accomplished but little.

"But look what pretty features and sweet lips," said the one who had nursed the child to sleep, with an air of superiority.

The child did not exceed one month in age. It was probably younger. Its light hair, fair skin and pretty blue eyes even at so young an age showed that it was a born beauty. Still its features were much like those of the Finlanders, so many of whom had settled along the Columbia in the fishing districts.

"They think the old man is dying," said one of the women in a whisper who had been watching the men work with the aged sufferer.

"Oh, such a pity," remarked the woman in a subdued chorus.

"We will never learn the child's name or anything about the fate of its mother or father."

"It must have been born on the voyage," said one, "for they say the ship was a Finnish vessel and has been many weeks at sea."

"Old Seadog's action in the matter is a mystery to everybody. Why he made such quick haste to board the ship is beyond all understanding. And he actually pointed firearms at the men when they attempted to go aboard the vessel," said a woman who had just been talking with her husband on the outside. "But the officers will ravel the matter out," she continued as she remembered the details of the episode as given her by her husband.

Then there was a commotion outside. A fisherman had just arrived from the sand spit. He had brought news of the arrival of officers at the scene of the wreck.

"Old Seadog and his boys are all under arrest!" was whispered from lip to lip.

ASHES OF FUN



Guest—I want a good porterhouse steak. Waiter—Gents what order porterhouse steak are required to make a deposit, sir.—Chicago Tribune.

Swatter—I see you are mentioned in one of the books just published. Primly—Indeed! What book? Swatter—The directory.—Chicago News.

Gabber—You ought to meet Dyer. A fully clever imitator. He can take off anybody. Miss Duncan (wearily)—I wish he was here now.—Tit-bits.

Stringem—Say, do you want to get next to a scheme for making money fast? Nibbles—Sure I do. Stringem—Glue it to the floor.—Chicago News.

At the Art Exhibition: First Judge—Daubleigh is a proudfie painter, isn't he? How would you estimate his work? Second Judge—By the quart.—Life.

Another hateful thing: "How did you like our new duet?" she asked. "Oh, was that a duet? I thought you were only quarrelling!"—Yonkers Statesman.

Roosevelt and Parker outdistanced: Stella—Men are so stupid. Bella—Yes, indeed; do you suppose it would take me weeks to write a letter of acceptance?—Exchange.

Customer—The last fish I had from you didn't seem very fresh. Fish Dealer—Well, mum, 'ow can you expect fresh fish to come out o' salt water?—New Yorker.

First Physician—So the operation was just in the nick of time? Second Physician—Yes, in another twenty-four hours the patient would have recovered without it.—Harper's Bazar.

At the seaside: She—Oh! George, what lovely waves! He—Very nice; but, poor things, they're just like me; we both arrive at the shore in splendid style and go back broke.—Judy.

Visitor (at Putin Bay)—What do you do in here all summer? Native—Loaf and fish. Visitor—And what do you do in the winter? Native—We don't fish.—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

"I suppose," said the drummer, "you labor on the Sabbath, and rest the remainder of the week." "No," replied the village parson; "I try to collect my salary on week days."—Chicago News.

More Troublesome: "It's pretty hard to be worried by a lot of debts you can't pay." "Nonsense! That's nothing to be worried by; a lot of debts you simply have to pay."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Diagnosis: Patient—Do you consider this trouble fatal, doctor? You know my means are limited, and— Doctor—Well, as a rule, the patient succumbs to it after about two thousand dollars' worth of treatment.—Life.

Sure enough: "Of course, I don't want to criticize, but I don't think it was altogether right for David to say 'all men are liars.'" "Well, at any rate, it was safer than to pick out one man and say it to him."—Philadelphia Press.

Artist—Have you taken my picture to the exhibition? Porter—Yes, sir; it seemed to please the gentlemen very much. Artist—What did they say? Porter—Oh, they didn't say nothing, but they laughed that 'earty.—Glasgow Evening Times.

"Did you ever make any money on the board of trade?" "Yes, I made one hundred and seventy-five dollars there one day in less than twenty minutes." "How! What did you do with it?" "Oh, they got it back before I had a chance to see it."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Teacher—Have you looked up the meaning of the word "imbibes," Fanny? Fanny—Yes, ma'am. Teacher—Well, what does it mean? Fanny—To take in. Teacher—Yes. Now give a sentence using the word. Fanny—My aunt imbibes boarders.—Woman's Home Companion.

"Mr. Heavyweight," said the minister, "is willing to subscribe \$10,000 for a new church, provided we can get other subscriptions making up the same amount." "Yet you seem disappointed," said his wife. "Yes, I was in hopes he would contribute \$100 in cash."—Brooklyn Life.

Jones—It is just impossible for me to keep a lead pencil. People are always borrowing, you know, and they always forget to return. Brown—'I've got a whole rest-pocketful of pencils. Jones—Doesn't that prove just what I said?—Boston Transcript.

The Elder Miss Spinster (appearing at the back door)—Tell me, my good man, are the person who called here last week? Knight of the Road—You don't mind the bloke wot you give the 'onade pie to? No, mum, I ain't 'im. 'E left me his ole togs when 'e pegged out, that's all.—Judge.

Sunday School Superintendent—So you are the little man that won the prize books, "The Lives of the Saints," for good behavior. Now, what are you going to do with the books, my little man? Johnny Miggis—Gunner change 'em, sir, for 'illy der Black Pirate' and "How Jimmy Raised der Ranch."—Life.

"There's mighty few people," said Farmer Cortis-el, "that knows what to do with a farm after they get one." "I have noticed that," answered the girl with frizzes; "they always insist on filling the whole place up with corn and oats and things, when they might have such lovely tennis courts and golf links."—Washington Star.

Ear Monument.

Throughout Korea a number of monuments are still standing which date from the war of 1892, when Japan invaded Korea with 300,000 men. These "monuments of ears," as they are called, mark the burial places of the 10,000 ears which were cut from the heads of the Koreans as trophies of victory. There are many of these monuments in Japan also, for some of these grewsome relics were taken home by the conquering army.

The small boy is always heard when posing amid the scenery.

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