SYNOPSIS OF CAPTAIN KETTLE.

CHAPTER I—The British steamer Norman Towers, commanded by Captain Saturday Farnish, finds itself, through the freak of a crazy engineer, adrift in the Sargossa Sea without coal while en route from Mexico to Liverpool.

CHAPTER II—The first mate, Owen Kettle, sets off in the lifeboat with a crew of rough-necks in the hope of finding a ship (via Greek) with enough of its coal to enable the disabled vessel to reach Liverpool. He meets the steamer Rhein.

CHAPTER III—But the Rhein refuses to stop. A woman on board, Miss Violet Chesterman, sees the dirty deed, and influences a fireman, McTodd, to disable the engines.

CHAPTER IV—Owen Kettle then overtakes the Rhein, clambers up its side with his crew, forcibly assumes charge of the vessel, and navigates it to the point where the Norman Towers is drifting, and which he re-coals.

CHAPTER V—Arrival of the Norman Towers at Liverpool. Mate Kettle surreptitiously drops out of the ship into the river Mersey in order to save his captain from a possible scandal because of the misadventure of his coal supply and too much liquor supply. Two river pirates find and rob Kettle and leave him badly injured. Is rescued and nursed back to health by Miss Dubbs, barmaid at the Master's Arms.

CHAPTER VI—Owen Kettle engages with Sir George Chesterman to go as captain of the Wangaroo and search the African coast for an abandoned ship laden with metal of great value.

CHAPTER VII—At Liverpool Captain Kettle meets McTodd, the man who had disabled the engines of the Rhein, and signs him as one of the crew of the Wangaroo.

CHAPTER VIII—In Las Palmas harbor Miss Dubbs appears on board the Wangaroo a stewardess, ostensibly at the suggestion of Sir George, but really because she wished to be near Captain Kettle, with whom she is in love and to whom she is engaged. Miss Violet Chesterman also becomes a passenger.

CHAPTER IX—The Wangaroo cruises cruises up and down the West African seaboard, and Captain Kettle finally locates the missing treasure ship in an almost wholly hidden bay. She proves to be the old Norman Towers.

CHAPTER X—Distracted with jealousy, caused by Miss Chesterman, Miss Dubbs cancels her engagement with Captain Kettle.

CHAPTER XI—Captain Kettle perilously nears the Wangaroo into the harbor where lies the Norman Towers, which is in possession of natives, who fire on the Wangaroo.

CHAPTER XII—Chief Bergash appears on shore at the head of a troop of Berbers and seeks an interview. He is invited aboard the ship. He proves to have been educated at an English university. Captain Kettle heartily dislikes him. He tells the Englishmen that they cannot take the Norman Towers away. Miss Dubbs recognizes Bergash as one whom she had helped in a bicycle accident during his school days in England.

Chapter XIII—Said Bergash's stone castle in the Atlas mountains. Why his son was sent to England to be educated.

(Now go on with the story.)

On three sides of the castle the rock drops practically sheer into the valley, which is a trifle of twelve hundred feet below. The causeway, which was the only road by which one could get into the castle, was quite a notable feature in its way. Two cows abreast can get along that causeway, if they are not fat; or two horsemen, if they crook up their outside legs so as not to interfere with the parapet; or three footmen, if the middle man does not swing out his elbows. The length of it from the little gateway in the big wall to where it fans out into barbican, is some two hundred and fifty feet to two hundreds and eighty yards, and the drop over the parapet averages anything between fifty and ninety feet sheer. Furthermore, it is an exception to all modern Moorcan rules of architecture, in that it is kept in excellent repair.

Now, Sidi Ibrahim Bergash (of pious memory) had one wife who occupied all of his tender affections, and as she continued at decent intervals to bear him sons, he took no other. In the course of his reign he learned that there were things abroad which threatened the existence of the Berber nation in the Atlas, and the origin of them must be sought out. Only one way of effecting this showed itself: he must send a son to the land of the Yaiours to learn the Yaiours' ways. With moody eyes he inspected his infant brood, and wondered which one of the six to send. But soon he decided that there could be no question about the choice. It must be the apple of his eye, his eldest, the going-to-be-saint, who would follow him in the saintship, who must depart to the accursed shore to learn how saints in these modern days kept up their state and dignity.

The case was laid before a great banker in London, and he, as though every day business made the arrangements. This banker sent out, first of all, a tutor to Mogador. The man was to take a house, furnish and staff it efficiently, and give the mountain boy the first course of his new education. In other words, he was to teach him a working modicum of the English language, introduce him to trousers and a hard collar, and break him in to knife and fork. The tutor was paid five hundred pounds a year over and above expenses—and earned it.

Next came a couple of years at a carefully chosen preparatory school; and then, when the boy was declined by an officers' as unsuitable, he went to Cheltenham and so on, in due time to the university.

He was probably one of the most narrowly watched school-boys in Europe during this period. The boy made neither boast nor concealment about his origin. He grew up among the sons of soldiers and parsons, peers and butchers, grocers and dramatists, stock-holders and princes, and got molded into the public school caste, and was taught (via Greek, foot-ball, and fives) how to rule men justly and efficiently when his time came to do so.

The only mistake about the whole scheme was that they made three-quarters of him into an ordinary English gentleman, and in Great Britain, at any rate, the remaining twenty-five per cent. of Berber was so much submerged as to be unnoticeable.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Beginning of War.

"THANK you, sir," said Captain Kettle, "but I'll not step down to dinner this evening. As soon as dark comes away, I'm going to up-anchor and as quietly as may be move the Wangaroo across to another berth. Mr. Bergash may be all right, sir, as you and Miss Chesterman appear to think, though we've only his word for it, and though you must allow me to still hold my own opinion. But there are two thousand dark Africans either on the Norman Towers or lying hid near her, and they aren't doing that for the good of their own health—or ours."

"Have it your own way," said Sir George rather stiffly. "But I think you're carrying prejudice too far. I've lived in Louisiana and I've lived in India, and I've as much dislike for the black man otherwise than as a black man as it's possible to have. I've got no possible use for the ignorant Enter Hall. Uncle Tom's Cabin theory of a man and a brother. But I'm not wilfully blind. This fellow isn't an African nigger any more than I am. He's a blue-eyed, pure-blooded Berber!"

"Well, sir," retorted Kettle doggedly, "he may be Neapolitan, if you choose, and I'm sure his tongue's glib enough for it; but I don't like him, and there you have a solid fact. I can't talk Cambridge College, and polo in the moonlight to him, like you and Miss Violet do, but I can listen and use my eyes, and if Mr. Bergash is here for philanthropy alone, and not for Mr. Bergash—well, I'm content to have my ticket indorsed for competency."

"Well," said Sir George shortly; "then if you won't dine with him, you won't."

Captain Kettle wished to give a message to his crew, but he did not call them on deck, as, he had a shrewd idea that such items would be noted from the shore and intelligently commented on. Instead, he told his three mates and the boatswain, one by one, to go to the chart house; and, when they were all assembled, joined them there, and gave his orders in a few words.

"I may be wrong, but I expect those niggers will try and get aboard tonight. Now, there'll be no moon, and, with this heat haze about, no light from the stars. The night'll be as black as the inside of a heathen, and I'm not going to let our amateurs play around with those rifles. They'd be just as likely to shoot some one on board here as the Moors over the side; and when they'd shot their magazines empty they'd be whanging in with the butt and smashing good rifles which will perhaps be of use later on. Bo's'n, I believe there's a keg of spare iron belaying-pins in your locker?"

"There is, sir."

"Then you will deal out one belaying-pin to every man on board, and, if the hands are wanted, you mates, and you, Mr. McTodd, will see that they are strung out at reasonable intervals round the rail. I guess an old belaying-pin, well driven, will cave in even a nigger's skull. That will do."

Night fell, as it falls in the tropics—as though the sun had been shut into a box, and by her captain's orders, all lighted port-holes and skylights on the little steamer were carefully shrouded. When his anchor was once a-trip, with engines just turning at dead slow ahead, and binnacle light carefully shrouded, Kettle moved the Wangaroo half a mile further north, and again dropped anchor and held there to a short cable.

From the saloon below there drifted up the chatter of voices and whiffs of laughter. Captain Kettle hit his lips with vexation. He knew well enough how sound travels across water, and it looked as if his ruse of shifting anchorage would be wasted. What if he were to go below and ask for silence?

With ordinary passengers he would have done it in a moment, yes, have ordered it, and one can imagine that under the circumstances his manner would have been, to say the least of it, brusk. But, as things were, the whole theory of his sea upbringing rose in arms at the idea. An owner was an owner all the seas over. Captains existed merely for owners' profit and pleasure. And so he stayed on deck and did his best.

A voice and a whiff of whisky came to him out of the dark.

"Captain?"

"Yes, Mr. McTodd."

They exchanged some words about the condition of affairs when the captain suddenly stretched his arm out over the water, saying, "Look there!"

He pointed to the south and east. The black velvet darkness was flawed by a flicker of infinitesimal flames.

"Phosphorescence," said McTodd. "The outer splashes of light'll be oars. Gosh, but she's a big craft, yon. She'll have a dozen oars aside. She'll be one of those big kherbs."

"A lighter."

"The Moorish word's kherb, as ye'd know if ye'd my education. I don't see for why ye're surprised. It's the natural sequence of events that the other blackguards come off to join their chief who's tucked his way in among us so cannily. I should say that the throat-cutting will begin within five seconds of their coming over the side."

"That's my idea of it, and I've made my preparations accordingly. The mates know, and the deck-hands are standing by. But I've another surprise packet for them first. What steam have you?"

"Enough, maybe, to just turn her over with."

"I told that old fool of a chief to keep steam for full speed all night. By James, I'll log that man for incompetence!"

"You should have given your order through me, and I would have seen it carried out. The chief's very canny on coal, and in private I may tell ye I suspect him of being an Aberdonian. But I'll away below, and get a boost on those gages."

The oasis of phosphorescence crawled slowly across the black desert of the night, and presently a second flickering oasis disclosed itself, and then a third, and a fourth.

"Four big lighters crammed with men, and all of them of the true fighting trade," mused Captain Kettle. "If they're the ordinary cargo kherb of the Northwest coast they'll carry a hundred and twenty hands apiece in smooth water like this lagoon. That means four to five hundred enthusiasts coming to call, and all carrying cutlery. Well, if they go direct to my old anchorage, I'm free to own they'll get a surprise."

Silence and secrecy was the order of the night. Mr. Trethewy, the mate, received orders and departed swiftly to the forecastle head. The carpenter was dropped into the cable-locker, and battened down there, so that the noise of his knocking out a shackle should not make itself heard. Then the heavy cable was muffled in every way possible, and dropped through the hawse-hole, link by link, and finally let go with a rope and buoy to mark it. Phosphorescence, now that they were looking for it, showed them the line of the cable right down to the lagoon's floor, and to the men on board seemed an open advertisement of their position; but no trace of this reached the kherbs, and they plodded steadily along their course to the Wangeroo's old anchorage. Steam meanwhile was beginning to pour quietly through the escape pipe, and Captain Kettle nodded appreciatively to himself as he took the temperature from time to time from the outside of the funnel casing.

The leading kherb reached the spot where the steamer should have been, eased her phosphorescence-stirring oars, and disappeared into the blackness of the night, and as the others came up and lost their way also vanished into nothingness.

Captain Kettle put a cigar between his teeth, but he did not venture to light it, nor did he risk the clanging bell of the engine-room telegraph. Instead he applied his lips to the voice tube, and got into communication with a very sober and alert McTodd, who said he had found it necessary to put his chief to bed.

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The Wangeroo gathered way slowly and without noise, and Captain Kettle, to avoid the clamor of giving orders, took the steam steering-wheel in his own hands. The night ahead was without beacon, and full of a dense amorphous darkness; but with a sailor's knack of memory the little sailor had the bearings of his old anchorage, and of every salient point of the lagoon firmly charted in his head, and worked out a dead reckoning of his steamboat's course as he went along.

He kept one eye on the carefully hooded binnacle and the other roving through the blackness ahead, and without mental incovenience, did sums each minute as to direction and distance run as is the habit of sailormen, and incidentally kept an attentive ear for the talk and laughter in the saloon below to make sure that his owner, Miss Chesterman, and the saint were still merrily engaged in their occupation of killing time. And when he reckoned he was within a hundred yards of the kherbs he called to Mr. McTodd to "whack her up all he knew."

The kherbs had heard the steamer's coming by this time, as the renewed phosphorescence from their oars showed very plainly. But they strung out into a line and gave themselves over as her prey. She had worked up by this time to the full eight knots of her speed, and Kettle steered her into the rearmost kherb, and drove over it, and then held on for the next ahead. Those of the lighter's crew who were wise struck out straightway for the shore. Those who had more talent for fighting leaped for the Wangaroo's low rail as they stamped the wreck of their own craft under water, and hauled themselves up, and were met by frenzied white men flailing at them with iron clubs. Whack, crash, crunch went the belaying-pins, and true believers fell back into Paradise or the lagoon.

The Wangaroo scraped over the ruins of the first kherb, crunched through the second, and of her own accord put in her celebrated sheer to starboard and bagged the third. But she was a slow little tub when all was said and done, and, anyway, she was not built for a ram, and the impacts had shaken her a good deal, and knocked off her pace and upset her steering, and kherb number four, furiously rowed, managed to beach itself and emit its crew intact.

"But still I don't call that bad," said a quiet voice from behind, and Captain Kettle rang off his engines and turned round to gaze on a lighted cigar and the face of Sidi Mohammed Bergash.

"Get down off my bridge!"

The little sailor yapped out the words with venomous precision, and then turned to the two other figures behind. "And to you, sir, you may be my owner, but of your own free will I heard you offer to serve under my command, and I'm ashamed of your lack of discipline. As to your place, miss, I make no suggestion, but if you've heard all the language that's been flying about on this bridge during this last ten minutes, and liked it, I'm sorry for your taste, that's all."

"I apologize, Skipper," said Sir George.

"Very good, sir. Make it so. Take that native gentleman with the English accent down below, and keep him there till I come. And if he doesn't want to go, tell the bo's'n to put hi min irons. By James, I'm going to have discipline on this ship, or I'll know the reason why!"

When these had left the upper deck, out of sheer delight in his own skill in seamanship (and I'm afraid also through knowledge that Miss Dubbs was a spectator in the life-boat behind him) Kettle swung the steamer round and, plotting a course through the unrelieved dark, made back for the spot whence he had started.

He returned as he had come, full steam ahead, and only slowed up to bring the steamer's forefoot to a standstill on the anchor buoy.

In the meantime argument held sway in the saloon.

"I'm afraid," said the saint, "from your point of view it must look uncommonly fishy."

"I'm sure my skipper thinks so," Sir George agreed.

"Well, I'll ask you not to let him hang me out of hand, which I gather would be his agreeable method of making all things entirely safe; and, of course, if you insist on keeping me on board as a hostage, I shall have to stay. But, really, I think I should be of more use to you ashore. These aren't my people, as I've told you, but as kaid of the big Berber tribe hereabouts I have a good deal of local influence."

Sir George Chesterman rubbed his chin. "This attack will take a bit of explaining, you know."

"If you mean your captain's unprovoked attack on some boats that hadn't harmed him, I should say it will."

The big, untidy Englishman laughed. "Of course, those four or five hundred armed ruffians had come out merely for a quiet evening row! However, my dear man, we won't worry about past history. The question is: What's going to be done next? We, I should again like to remind you, have come here to salvage that steamer, and the sooner we get it the better it will be for the neighborhood."

The Berber chief threw back his head; there was a hard glint in his blue eyes. "Well, you will not get the steamer. By the customs of this coast she belongs to the people of the coast, and I am going to see that they get her."

"I thought you said an hour ago that you were a rich man. What good's this wretched old wreck to you, even if you can realize on her, which is doubtful?"

"In money, no good whatever. But, my dear Chesterman, you make the usual superficial Englishman's mistake. If any one asks you suddenly what is your aim in life, you always reply, without thinking, that money's the one thing you want. You don't really mean it, but you've got into the habit of saying it. Now, money doesn't amuse me a bit. With the curse of my English education behind me, I tell you frankly this country bores me stiff, and if you were to forget I came on board here under a flag of truce—which, of course, you can't—and hang me out of hand, 'pon my word I should be a good deal obliged to you. And I'm sure it would save you a lot of trouble."

"Of course, you can be put ashore when you wish. And you may either tell us how your future policy, or you can do the other thing."

"Now you're angry. Don't you call that a bit of unreasonable of your brother, Miss Chesterman? I've been quite frank with you about the shore situation and our resources, instead of leaving you to find out all that for yourself. I've pulled the handicap distinctly in your favor, and yet I know you'll be angrier with me still when I tell you that presently I'm going to fight for the possession of that useless and rusty old steamer for all I'm worth."

Violet Chesterman shut her fan with a click. "Now, look here, you two, this has gone far enough, and, to my mind, it's getting ridiculous. You talk about fighting as if you were challenging one another to a game of polo. George, go up and fetch Captain Kettle down to have a whisky and soda, and by the time you are back I think you will find that Mr. Bergash and I have arrived at a friendly treaty."

CHAPTER XV.

The Call of the Queen.

CAMELS on sunlit sand—and at a respectable distance are, I think, always decorative. From an artistic point of view it is always advisable to keep them there—namely, on sand, and at a distance, because nearness to the workaday camel quite takes the enchantment from the view of him.

The camels tipped out from behind a dune, with nodding heads and ridiculous necks, and swung down to the beach opposite the ruins of Norman Towers, and then held along the hard sand northward. Some had riders, some carried bales, and two wore hood-shaped tilts, bright with blue and red draperies.

"The ladies will be inside those covered contraptions," Sir George explained.

"How ghastly hot they must be, poor dears," said his sister. "Those coverings look like carpet."

"They are carpet," said the saint, "and of our own weaving. We're rather proud of them."

"There seems to be a very large escort," said Sir George rather thoughtfully, "considering that you said the country was perfectly quiet. I was wondering how we are going to find room for them all. We're a bit cramped here, you know, on this little tub."

"Oh, you needn't worry about putting up all the entourage. They'll form camp, as you'll presently see, on the shore, and I should think, when it comes to the point, my mother will prefer to sleep there, too. She talked very big, poor dear, about her keen desire to accept your invitation to come and live N'zaranee fashion on a N'zaranee ship, but I expect when she really tries it she'll detect a wobble even on this smooth lagoon."

Ashore on the dazzling beach the leading camel had halted, shut himself up in sections like a four-joint two-fold rule, and discharged his white-draped rider. The other camels also came to moorings, and the escort, pulling round to the north, dismounted, drove in their picket pins, and soon had their horses straddled out to impossible spans by well-stretched heel ropes.

Drivers and escort jumped to the loads, threw off the lashings, and opened bales. Tent poles were laid out on level stretches of the sand at unexpected angles, camel's-hair cloth was laid over these, and then the men lifted, and thrust, and pulled, and there was the black tent, shaped like a dozen big beehives running into one another.

Carpets were spread, and a gaudy red flag, lettered in Arabic, run up on a pole. Other carpets were strung up to divide the tent off into chambers, and to hide the crudities of the walls; and a divan was set in place and loaded with cushions. And then the camels which carried the douar were brought one by one to the doorway of the tent, and made to kneel. The escort lined up on either side, lifting thick folds of their jellabs before their eyes. And so out of sight of all men, the widow of the late Sidi Ibrahim Bergash and her women moved from their places on camel back to the shelter of the black tent, and closed the flap as became state and sex.

Thereafter more black tents went up, these being arranged in a guarding circle, and then the camels were rearranged, and parked in outer circle beyond, again, and fed.

"Don't you think it would be polite to put in a call now?" Miss Chesterman suggested.

"Wait," said the saint. "We don't hurry matters in court circles on the Atlas. My lady mother will make a move all in her own good time. Ah, and it won't be long now. Do you see that kherb coming out from behind the Norman Towers?"

"The one I didn't run down last night," Captain Kettle suggested acidly.

It was curious how Sidi Bergash and Captain Kettle disliked one another.

The kherb, rowed slowly by a dozen oars, coasted slowly along the shore till it reached the camp, halted there, and backed into the beach. Three men, bearing burdens, stepped on board, and the kherb pushed off again, and slowly ferried them across to the Wangaroo.

Captain Kettle put down his glasses with an angry sigh. The kherb was undecked and everything within her frankly open to the eye. There was no chance of ambush or sudden attack, and reluctantly he allowed them to bring up alongside the ladder without further objection.

The three burden-bearers came up on deck, saw their kaid, did obeisance to him, and one with hung head delivered a message. He, like his fellows, was a rich plum-black color, clean-shaved, and inclined to corpulence.

"Give the presents to Miss Chesterman," said Sidi Bergash.

They proved to be carpets, sus enamels, and a rare Arabic food preparation called couscoussn. As a return of the compliment Miss Chesterman sent to the queen an amethyst brooch and some heirloom lace.

"Much better this exchange of friendliness," said Sir George, "than fighting the whole countryside."

"I'll give you my opinion, sir, when we're away at sea again, with the Norman Towers steaming in company. It's useless to ask me, sir, to like Mr. Bergash. I can't do it. To my way of thinking he's a native, and he'll have all a native's faults tucked away somewhere, and the fact of his having been at Cambridge College makes him rather worse than better. I can't forget that I'm master of this steamboat; and as that it's my duty to look out for dirty weather ahead."

Sir George pointed to the beach, and said: "By gad, Skipper, talk of fuss! Look there! You'd think from all the ceremony that the queen of the East was coming to inspect the navy of Tarnish."

Three women came out profusely veiled and voluminously clad, and walked down somewhat clumsily on the hot loose sand to the beach. From the gestures those on the steamer could see that Mr. Trethewy was hospitably offering to take them off. But her majesty preferred her own craft, the big kherb, and very possibly considered that the smart gig was both cramped and dangerous. So off she was rowed in the ponderous lighter, she and her women and her black attendants.

The brown-bearded saint met them at the foot of the ladder, and escorted them up the side and across the deck, and Miss Chesterman received them at the head of the companionway, and Miss Dubbs closed the door on the party of them as soon as the visitors had stepped across the high threshold.

Once down below, obviously there would be the difficulty which first arose round the tower of Babel. But the kaid said it would be quite in order for him to be present as interpreter. Even in the strictest Moslem circles, and in Berber petty courts, it is quite within the law for a mother to unveil before her eldest son.

Cherry Pickles

Stone cherries; pouring off all juice, cover cherries with vinegar; let stand over night, then drain and the vinegar off; take equal puantities of cherries and sugar; mix well together; let stand in porcelain or earthenware until all sugar dissolves, stirring occasionally; have ready perfectly dry jars; fill and seal. Will keep indefinitely.

Use for Crusts

Do not throw away crusts of bread. Keep all the bits that accumulate in an open receptacle in a dry place. Every once in a while dry in a pan in a slow oven. Then put through the finest part of the meat chopper, fill glass jars and they will be all ready for bread puddings, stuffings for turkey, chickens or lamb and for covering escalloped dishes. It is preferable to cracker crumbs and will keep for weeks.

F. E. O. Salad

Two cans pineapple, sliced, two cups Maraschino cherries sliced, soaked one hour in water, three sour cucumber pickles, soaked one hour, three bunches white grapes, two 10 cent bottles stuffed olives, the choice part of six bunches of celery. Any salad dressing will do. Add whipped cream before serving. This will make enough salad for forty people.

Russian Sandwiches

Cut bread in thin slices, butter, slightly moistened, finely chopped olives with mayonnaise.

CAFE PARFAIT—Set a bowl in a pan of cracked ice, and turn into it one quart of thick cream. Add to this one-half of a cupful of very strong filtered coffee, and one-half of a cupful of powdered sugar. Mix lightly together, then with an egg beater whip the cream, skimming off the froth as it rises and putting it on a sieve to drain. Return the drained liquid to the bowl and continue to whip until no more froth will rise. Turn the drained froth into an ice-cream mold, or freezing can. Cover and bind the lid with a strip of muslin dipped into melted butter. Bury in ice and salt for three to four hours before serving.

STEWED LAMBS' HEARTS—Wash the hearts; sprinkle with pepper and salt and dredge with flour. Saute in two tablespoonfuls of fat, adding three tablespoonfuls of finely chopped onion when half sauted. Cover with water and cook in a covered baking dish in a slow oven for three hours, adding more water if required. Arrange hearts on a hot platter, strain gravy over them and garnish with fried croutons.

To remove the gloss from serge materials, lay a cloth dampened with hot water on the shiny surface, then press with a hot iron. While steaming lift the damp cloth and allow the garment to dry without more pressing.