

shall not take half this man's ships from him and leave him helpless in the hour of victory. Oh, God, give him the strength to disobey such an infamous order, should it reach him."

He jumped up and rushed out of Lloyds through the door leading into the coffee house. Lord Stacy stepped up to him. "Sir, he said, with freezing dignity, "I desire to inform you with all the vehemence at my command, that you are an unmitigated cad, a cur of the first water, a blighter, a bounder, a — a—"

"Well met, Stacy. Just the man I am seeking. Would you dare approach your uncle by marriage, Lord Drayton, calm in the certainty that he would not have you booted out of his office?"

"Of course."

"Stacy, I will give you fifty pounds if you will come with me now, in my carriage, to the Admiralty, and secure for me a five minute interview with Lord Drayton."

"Upon my word, I couldn't consider doing it for a cent less than a hundred."

"Agreed. One hundred pounds as soon as you have earned it. Follow me."

"Right-o," said Lord Stacy and trotted obediently after Jonathan.

#### CHAPTER NINETEEN

In the anteroom of the Admiralty office a vice-admiral, aide to the first lord of the Admiralty, came out of His Lordship's office and said to Lord Stacy, "Lord Drayton regrets that you have rendered it impossible for him to receive you. He turned to Jonathan. "Your business, sir?"

"I am Jonathan Blake, the inventor of and owner of the rapid communications system between this country and various points on the continent. Indeed, in a letter which I received this morning from Lord Nelson, he informs me that, in a modified way, he is using my device for night signaling with the Grand Fleet. I wish to speak to Lord Drayton with reference to a matter of very vital importance to Lord Nelson."

The vice-admiral disappeared into the private office. Jonathan turned to Lord Stacy. "You over-estimated your influence with your relative," he said, "so, since you have been of no service to me in securing an audience, you are out one hundred pounds. Be good enough to run along before this Admiralty aide acquires the impression that I am a friend of yours."

"Cad, cur!"

The vice-admiral returned. "Lord Drayton will receive you, Mr. Blake," he said.

Lord Drayton did not ask Jonathan to be seated. "Explain your mission, sir," he said curtly. When Jonathan had explained it the tremendous ass nodded and said: "The matter has already been decided, Mr. Blake. It is of the utmost importance that British merchantmen, bearing food stuffs, should be protected. I have given the gentlemen from Lloyds my promise that their desires shall be complied with."

Jonathan began an impassioned plea for a revocation of that promise, but Lord Drayton cut him short. "I am fully aware of what I am doing, sir," he said severely. "I require no advice from you, sir. The interview is at an end." He touched a bell and the aide opened the door and stood courteously aside to permit Jonathan to pass.

Outside, in the hall, Lord Stacy lingered, moved by curiosity as to the object of Jonathan's visit. When he saw tears raining down Jonathan's cheeks he didn't know whether they were tears of joy or of despair. He plucked at Jonathan's sleeve.

"Was the visit successful?" he queried.

"Get out of my sight, you—you slub," Jonathan roared, and aimed at Stacy a blow he would have preferred should land on Lord Drayton's aristocratic nose. "If you ever get in my way again, Stacy, I'll take you apart to ascertain why God permits insects like you to encumber the earth."

So the interview had not been successful! Good! Lord Stacy, upon emerging from the Admiralty, flagged a four wheeler, drove to his club, packed his bags and late that afternoon boarded the coach for Dover, from which point a packet sailed nightly for Ostend. She was a Dutch packet and, under the Dutch flag, was secured from attack by the French war dogs that dogged Lord Nelson's ships in the channel and the North Sea.

At the inn where the coach halted half an hour to change horses and permit the passengers to eat supper, he discovered, upon entering the dining room, no less a person than Jonathan Blake. He observed that Jonathan was half through his dinner, so he realized the latter was traveling by private conveyance. Therefore he interviewed the landlord on the subject and was informed that Mr. Blake had arrived in a dog cart with a tandem team; that his horses were exhausted; that he had purchased a saddle animal in the village and was riding away immediately after dinner; that he was leaving his exhausted team to be cared for by the landlord until his return.

"Now, what the devil is the fellow up to?" Stacy reflected.

At Dover he purchased a ticket to Ostend, placed the ticket in his wallet and set out for a stroll about the town, for he had two hours to kill before going aboard the Dutch packet. When he arrived at the gangplank, preceded by a youth from the inn carrying his two large portmanteau, he saw Jonathan going aboard. He reached for his wallet to extract the ticket and to his horror it was not there. Search through all his pockets failed to reveal it . . . evidently a pickpocket, a class of criminal which abounded in England in those days, had done a workmanlike job on Lord Stacy.

Well, his trip to Holland was out of the question now. He would have to return to London and raise the wind again . . . He hoped Elizabeth would believe his tale of having had his pocket picked. Sadly he returned to the inn, was directed to a pawnshop, where he pledged a diamond ring for sufficient money to get him back to London three days later.

Seemingly London had gone crazy during his absence. The people surged through the streets cheering, weeping, shouting, clapping each other on the back. From every grogery came ribald shouts and toasts to Lord Horatio Nelson. Inquiry revealed that a message had come from Ostend that afternoon to Lloyds of London, to the effect that the British Grand Fleet had encountered the entire French fleet off the coast of Holland the day previous and had utterly destroyed it.

Having a few sovereigns left,

Lord Stacy went to his club where the membership was wondrously intoxicated, and proceeded to become intoxicated himself. Not because he was remotely interested in Lord Nelson or cared a hoot whether the latter won a victory or suffered a defeat, but because he was low in spirits and convinced that the world was against him.

Elizabeth was out of the city when he called and the butler could give him no information other than that he expected her back in a week. So he returned to his club where he still had credit for board, lodging and drinks and on the fourth day of his Gethsemane, Elizabeth not having returned, he went up to Lloyds coffee house, hoping there to meet Old Q and borrow a tenner or two. Old Q was not there but the affable and democratic Sir Gavin Gore was having a cup of coffee, so Lord Stacy harkened to Sir Gavin's invitation to join him. Sir Gavin was feeling quite happy.

"Egad, sir," he declared, "but Nelson found those French ships just in time, for the Admiralty was getting a sloop of war ready to go forth and seek him, with orders to divide his fleet—"

Lord Stacy wasn't very smart but he was smart enough to fairly shrivel at the thought of such idiocy on the part of his relative, Lord Drayton. "What rot!" he cried. "That would have been fatal."

"We're all quite glad now that Nelson's victory has operated to nullify that order. The seas are clear of French ships now, British shipping may proceed in peace and young Jonathan Blake's plan of lower insurance rates and steal all the business of his colleagues has been knocked in the head."

"Good! I despise the fellow. There is no virtue in him."

"I understand he called on Lord Drayton to protest His Lordship's decision to detach half of Nelson's fleet, and was shown the door. Impudent puppy!"

"Oh, so that's why he wanted to see Lord Drayton! Where is Blake now?"

"Angerstein reports him as home ill."

"He's in Ostend. I saw him board the packet at Dover. Now, what is he doing in Ostend when he is reported as home ill?"

"Damn me, if I know. Sounds sort of screwy, eh, what?"

"Has Lloyds had a confirmation of the first news of Nelson's victory?"

"Come to think of it, there has been no confirmation."

"There has been ample time for such confirmation, has there not? The action was stated to have taken place off the coast of Holland. Surely some of Nelson's ships would have reached the coast of England with news of the details of the fight forty-eight hours later."

"Damn my eyes, do you think it possible—"

"I do. Blake wanted Nelson's fleet kept intact, so his now insurance rates would hold while the others raised theirs. The fellow was engaged in a vast gamble and I happen to know who furnished the funds for his gamble. Five million pounds, by gad, sir. Thrown out of the admiralty he fled to Dover, thence to Ostend, where he sent a fake message of a tremendous victory for Nelson's fleet."

"Why would Blake do that, do you suppose?"

"So that the news would induce

Lord Drayton to cancel his order to Nelson to detach half his fleet for convoy duty with the merchant fleet."

"Stacy, you're right. You're marvelous. Lloyds is under tremendous obligation to you."

"I'll settle for the loan of a tenner until the day after tomorrow," said Lord Stacy.

The news was all over Lloyds in ten minutes. It appeared as a scare story in the evening papers whereupon all England began to fear that a gigantic news fake had been perpetrated and was not slow in attributing the crime to Jonathan Blake. The Times editorially declared he should be tried for treason and hanged.

The committee from Lloyds grew apprehensive again; again it called upon Lord Drayton, but the latter had now had time to consider his earlier acquiescence and a note summoning him to Buckingham Palace where the king had bluntly informed him that he was an ass and not to do it again. So he refused to receive the committee and on top of this fateful event came a bulletin to the effect that a hundred and forty-two British merchantmen in convoy from the Baltic had been destroyed or captured by the French fleet. It was reported to Lord Stacy by Sir Gavin Gore that every one of these ships and her cargo had been insured by the Angerstein syndicate, their owners having cancelled the policies held with other syndicates in order to take advantage of the lower rates of the Angerstein syndicate.

"Old John Angerstein has gone home ill," Sir Gavin added. "This latest disaster flattens the Angerstein syndicate, and the five million pounds of new capital Blake is said to have raised has all been lost."

Lord Stacy blinked as if something had hit him between the eyes. Elizabeth's five million gone! Gad, they'd both be paupers now until the state had worked her out of the hole she was in, by reason of having borrowed that two million pounds. The damned villain, Blake, had swindled her—swindled him—swindled him out of the divorce settlement, because that would be delayed for years now . . . damned cur. Death was too good for such a man.

Clutching Sir Gavin Gore's tenner he repaired to his club and there proceeded to get very, very drunk and weep and tell his sad story to all who would listen to him. Toward nightfall, filled with Dutch courage, he put two short double-barreled pistols in his great coat pocket, called a four wheeler and set forth for Jonathan Blake's lodgings. He had resolved to demonstrate that he was a man. He would shoot Jonathan Blake.

(Continued Next Week)

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