

(From Chambers' Journal.)
A Cast of the Net.

THE STORY OF A DETECTIVE OFFICER.

CHAPTER III.—CONTINUED.

I peeped out after him, and saw him actually come into the tavern, entering by another door the compartment of the bar next to mine!

I was in the commonplace; he was in one of those divisions where "glasses only are served in this department;" and so on. There was some one there already, for I had heard the occasional clink of a spoon and glass, and a cough; but there wasn't more than one, for I had heard no voices. I now heard some one speak; I judged it to be young Mr. Byrle, and I was right.

"Hollo, skipper!" he said, "What have you been doing to your face? Have you been fighting?"

"Fighting!—Well, never mind my face; I don't want to talk; I shall settle that account some day," said a voice. (I knew that voice; I knew what was the matter with the man's face.)

His tone seemed to shut young Mr. Byrle up on the subject, for he gave a sort of forced laugh and said no more about it.

"When do you sail?"—for certain, now. I must know to an hour to-day, for I don't like what I hear of things," said Mr. Byrle.

"Don't speak so loud," said the other; "you can never tell who is listening."

And there he was more thoroughly right than he suspected. However, they dropped their voices so completely after this, that though I sat right up against the partition, I could hear nothing more than a stray word or so, out of which I could make no sense, until at last Mr. Byrle said: "Time's about up, skipper."

"I suppose so," said the other. "Well, you feel quite confident about her, then; her courage won't fail, you think?"

"Her courage fail? Ha, ha! skipper," said Mr. Byrle; "you don't know her, or you wouldn't say that. She'll come with the material, you'll see. From first to last she's never wavered; and look, what a penetrating mind she has got!"

"Yes; she's clever, I think," says the skipper.

"Clever!" Mr. Byrle repeated, with a deal of contempt in his voice—"clever! Who but her would have found out the scheme—"

"Hush!" said the skipper, stopping the young man, just as his conversation was getting as I may say, instructive and important. Then Edmund Byrle said his train was due, and posted off to the station.

A minute or so after I heard the skipper put down his glass as though he had emptied it, and then he too left. I followed at a little distance, and got into the same train with him, and still followed, saw him go to the ferry, pick out, as I knew he would, the surly waterman; and I saw him rowed to his own ship, where the waterman left him, and then rowed over to the other side. Very good. Then the skipper had gone to T— specially to meet Edmund Byrle; and Edmund Byrle had gone there specially because his father was away; and—then I couldn't follow it up any farther.

I went boldly into the Yarmouth Smack, and not seeing Tilley anywhere about, I asked for him under the agreed name, and was told he had gone to work on Byrle's wharf; not for the firm, but for a lighter-man who frequented the public house. This looked well; and if I got taken on, as I expected, the next Monday, I thought it would be very odd if between us we didn't find something out. Yet my interest in the business seemed dying away, or drifting into altogether a new channel, for I could not believe for a moment that Miss Doyle and Edmund Byrle, and the skipper and the sulky ferryman, were all linked in with stealing a few paltry brass fittings.

I crossed over before the old ferryman came back, and had my dinner in the tap-room of the *Anchor and Five Mermaids*. It wasn't a nice place for a dinner, and I was always partial to having my things neat and tidy, which was by no means the rule at the *Anchor*, and the company was by no means to my standard. I was late to-day, so I missed the factory hands, and there were only two men in the room with me; one was a coarser-looking fellow, rough in a velvet coat and fur cap, which was about all I could see of him, for he was asleep all of a heap in a corner. The other was a man who had his dinner in a newspaper, and took it out, whatever it was, with his fingers, till he had finished it, and then he went away.

To be Continued.

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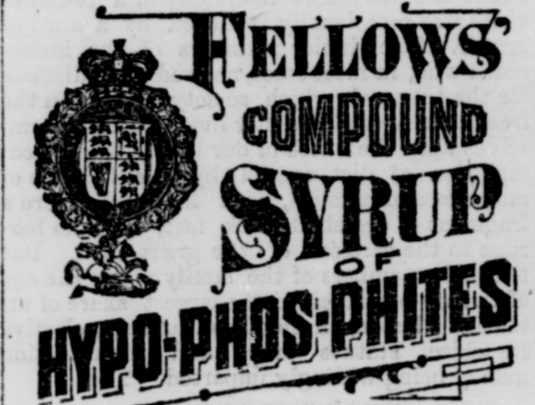
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