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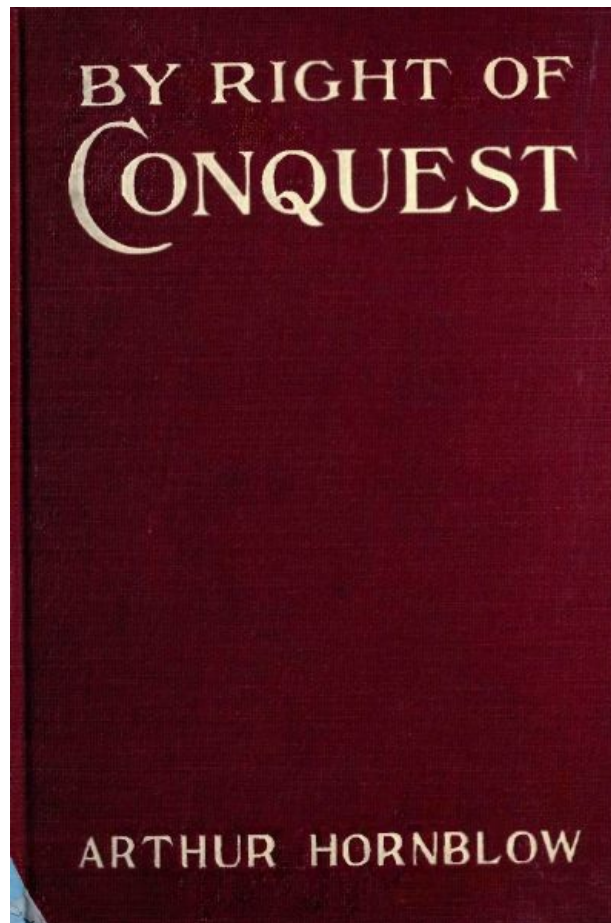
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**WHAT RIGHT HAD HE TO ACCOST HER?**  
Frontispiece. Chap. XVII. Page 282.

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## **BY RIGHT OF CONQUEST**

a Novel

BY

**ARTHUR HORNBLow**

Author of "The Profligate," "The End of the Game,"

"The Lion and the Mouse" (from the play), etc.



Illustrations by

**ARCHIE GUNN and CHARLES GRUNWALD**

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## CHAPTER I.

In a dark, dirty, foul-smelling room back of a small ship-chandler's store on West Street, four sailormen were seated at a table, drinking, quarreling, cursing. The bottle from which they had imbibed too freely contained a villainous compound that ensured their host a handsome profit, set their brains afire, and degraded them to the level of the beast. Not that their condition in life was much better than that of the dumb brute. Animals often enjoy more creature comforts, are better housed and more kindly treated.

They were not really sailors, for in their long experience on the high seas they had never reefed a sail or hauled on a rope. Only too often they never got so much as a glimpse of God's blue sky or the immense stretches of tumbling, foaming ocean. They were the galley-slaves of modern seagoing—the stokers, the men with oily skin and heat-bleared eyes, who toil naked in the bowels of the giant steamship, each crew doing its "watch" of four hours in a dark pit at the bottom of the huge vessel, deprived of air and sunlight, firemen and trimmers working feverishly in a maddening temperature of 140 degrees and over, thrusting and pulling with rod and rake in the insatiable maw of the raging furnace. The hot blasts scorch the men's faces and blister their skins, yet they are compelled to keep up the furious pace. They must never slacken, for on their muscles and their nerves depend the speed of the ship and the prestige of the line. So they shovel faster and faster, tirelessly, endlessly, the flying coal-dust settling on their sweating faces and bare bodies until they lose semblance to anything human and recall those lurid pictures of the Inferno in which Satan's imps, armed with pitch-forks, thrust back shrieking sinners, condemned

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to everlasting torment, who are struggling to escape from the bottomless pit. That the luxurious liner may break a record and retain the patronage of the millionaire passengers reclining indolently on the promenade-decks above, the unknown, unseen slaves in the hellish regions below must shovel, shovel, shovel, always faster, faster until at last nature gives way. Exhausted by fatigue, overcome by the killing heat, the man falls headlong. They pick him up and carry him on deck, where the pure air may or may not revive him. Perhaps he is already dead. His filthy, almost unearthly appearance chills the sympathies of the fastidious cabin passengers. Who is he? What's happened? "Only a stoker!" yawns some one, and all go unconcernedly down to dinner.

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The time passed and the men still loafed in the Chandler's shop, drinking and arguing. The day was already advanced, the active, busy world without summoned them urgently to duty, at noon their ship would cast off her moorings and steam majestically out to sea, and yet the four firemen sat idly in the evil-smelling den, noisy in drunken argument—all but one man, a big, athletic-looking fellow, who drank in sullen silence. Occasionally one of them would stop and glance furtively in the direction of the street, as if apprehensive that an unwelcome visitor might suddenly put in an appearance.

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But no one disturbed them, not even Schmalz, the proprietor of the place, a fat, tousled-headed German, who found his customers too profitable to quarrel with. As fast as bottles were emptied, he replaced them, and that he sold liquor without going through the formalities of procuring a license was evident from his catlike movements, the absence of any outward signs of the clandestine traffic, and his extreme care to keep the inner room and its occupants well secluded from observation.

The outer shop was typical of the many nautical stores of its kind scattered along New York's waterfront. It contained everything a sailor needs, from yellow oilskins, thick woolen socks, and blue jerseys to fried herrings, pickles, and mustard plasters. The atmosphere was heavy with an agglomeration of different and conflicting smells—fish, tar, paint, garbage, and stale tobacco. From time to time customers dropped in, and Schmalz, shrewd and urbane, exercised his talents inducing them to buy, the while keeping one cautious eye on his open money-drawer, the other on his boisterous patrons in the inner room.

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From the street came refreshing whiffs of salty air and the roar of heavy traffic rolling along the busy thoroughfare. Trucks groaning and creaking under mountains of merchandise, cabs filled with travelers and piled high with baggage, slowly threading their way in and out to trains and steamers, rickety horse-cars, crowded to the guard-rails, hucksters' push-carts, piled high with decaying fruit, bewildered immigrants, fresh from the Old World, nimble commuters from the suburbs hurrying to and from the ferries—all these, men, horses, and vehicles were tangled up in seeming hopeless confusion. Along the water's edge, where the four-mile line of docks sheltered the world's shipping, arose a forest of ship-masts, with here and there gigantic funnels of ocean liners, belching smoke as they made ready for their journey to the sea. From mid-river came the shrill tooting of mosquito-like tugs, and the churning sound of ferry-boats as they glided from shore to shore.

"Naw, Jack, my boy, it's too blarsted risky," said decisively one of the four, a short, stocky man, with a pock-marked face and cockney accent. "'Tain't no good arguin' an' chewin' the rag any longer, ye know. I won't do it, an' that's all there's to it."

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"Shorty's dead right," spoke up another of the men, as he drained his glass. "We'd be caught, sure as yer name's Jack Armitage."

"Bah!" grunted the third man. "Wot's the good of kickin'? If it isn't one thing, it's another—so wot's the use?"

The foregoing remarks were directed principally at the big, straight-limbed fellow who sat at the table in sullen silence, his face buried in his folded arms. He vouchsafed no answer to his comrades' arguments. Lifting his head, he turned his bloodshot eyes on them, and, as if to show his utter contempt for their opinion, he shrugged his massive shoulders and, picking up the whiskey-bottle, refilled his glass.

Apparently a few years younger than his associates, he was a clean-cut, good-looking fellow with a smooth face, and regular features, and there was something in his manner, an air of authority in the toss of his head, which suggested that he might be fashioned of a different clay, yet his grimy skin and oil-stained, coal-blackened clothes indicated that his condition of life was the same. His eyes were red from drinking and there were grim lines about his mouth that prompted his companions to leave him to himself. They knew their customer.

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In the stokers' fore-castle Jack Armitage had made himself quickly known as a man whom it was unwise to monkey with. Directly he joined the ship, he gave them to understand that clearly. The cock of the boiler-room, a bully who had heretofore run things to suit himself, rashly started an argument with the newcomer, and before he knew what had hit him, he was a fit subject for the hospital. Quick to admire physical strength, his comrades respected Armitage after that episode, and they nicknamed him Gentleman Jack, because his English was straighter than theirs and because he appeared to have known better days. Sometimes they hailed him as "Handsome," because of his shape, regular features and wavy hair. Of his history they knew nothing, and

seeing that he was moody and uncommunicative, no one ventured to arouse his wrath by asking questions that he might consider too personal. Besides, no one cared. There's no "Who's Who?" in a steamer's stoke-hold. A natural refuge for the scum of the cities—for those wanted by the police as well as for those who have failed—even a detective will hesitate to follow his quarry into the red jaws of hell itself. To this, as much as anything else, the stoke-hold owes its reputation as the modern Sanctuary.

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So they let Armitage alone. He did his "shift" along with the rest, gaining promotion first as coal-passer, then as trimmer, then as fireman. His services were valued because of his great strength and power of endurance. He could go on raking and pulling out fires long after his mate had fallen back exhausted. But with his superiors he was not very popular. Discontented, intolerant of discipline, mutinous, he was nearly always in trouble, and, owing to his violent, uncontrollable temper, quarrels were incessant even with his comrades. They feared him more than they loved him, and perhaps this explained why his present attempt to induce them to desert ship just before sailing-time had not met with much success.

The first speaker went on:

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"They'll catch ye, it's a cinch! Then it'll go hard wid ye. 'Tain't no worsen for you than for the rest of us. The boiler-room's bad enough, I grant ye that, but it's a darn sight better than goin' to jail. What do you say, Dutch?" he demanded, turning to another.

Armitage maintained his sulky silence. The man called "Dutch," a lantern-jawed chap with red hair and a squint, expectorated a long stream of saliva on the floor before replying. Shifting his quid, he said:

"I guess Shorty's right, Jack. I ain't no fonder of doin' the suicide act in that hell-hole than ye is yerself. I'd quit right now, and never want to see the sight of a bloomin' ship again. But we've signed for the voyage, ain't we? We must grin and bear it for another trip. The law gives 'em the right on us. I'm goin' back now, before I'm taken back. What d'ye say, Bill?"

Bill, already half-seas over, nodded in a stupid, maudlin manner. He had drunk so much that he could hardly keep his head up, and the words came thickly from his lips:

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"Desert ship?—hie! No, siree! Hie! Ye remember—Robinson, who tried to beat it at Naples? Hie! They didn't do a thing to him—almost fed the bloody furnace with him, that's all! No, siree, no pier-head jumps for me!"

The clock in the outer shop struck eleven. Shorty jumped to his feet.

"Say, lads!" he exclaimed, with another nervous glance toward the street. "The blessed ship sails in another hour. We'll be missed and they'll be after us, sure as yer born. I'm goin' back right now. Who's comin'?"

Bill and "Dutch" staggered with difficulty to their feet. While Shorty settled accounts with the urbane Schmalz, "Dutch" turned to Armitage, who remained seated at the table.

"Ain't ye goin' back, Jack?" he demanded, as he shot with expert aim another stream of saliva into Schmalz's cracked cuspidor.

Armitage raised his head and glared at them. There was a look in his face that made "Dutch" wince. Hoarsely, savagely he burst out:

"You call yourselves men! You're nothing but a lot of white-livered, whining curs! You've had a taste of hell in that ship, and you want to go back and endure another three months of it, because you haven't manhood enough to put an end to it. I'll not sail, I tell you. They'll never take me back, do you hear?"

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"Does ye mean ye goin' to desert?" demanded Shorty, eyeing the big fellow with astonishment.

The other two men stared at him, open-mouthed. "Dutch" scratched his head, and, to better conceal his emotion, let go another flyer of saliva at the cuspidor. Then, with great deliberation, he bit off another chew of tobacco, and said, with a nasal drawl:

"P'r'aps we might make so bold as to inquire of the gen'l'man what 'ee's goin' ter do fer a livin'. I allus suspected he didn't 'ave ter work if 'ee didn't 'ave ter. But if 'ee's come in for a fortune 'ee might let 'is pals know summat about it."

"I guess 'ee's gwine ter be a bloomin' bondholder and cut his coupons!" grinned Bill, in a feeble attempt at jocularity.

Armitage bit his lip and scowled. He was in no humor for jests, and his hand moved dangerously in the direction of the empty whiskey-bottle. Bill ducked and the other men immediately gave the table a wider berth. Shorty cast another nervous glance at the clock.

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"Come, boys," he said impatiently. "We ain't got no time to lose. Stop yer foolin', Armitage. Let's get back to the ship, or there'll be the devil to pay."

There was a moment of silent suspense. The other men looked toward Armitage, who did not stir. Shorty stepped forward and shook him by the arm. Armitage jerked himself free with an oath, and, raising his fist, powerful as a sledge-hammer, brought it down on the table with a force that made the glasses dance. His eyes literally blazed with fury as he turned on his comrades.

"Go and be damned!" he shouted. "Go back to the ship and tell 'em to count me out. I'll go to hell soon enough without getting hell here, too. Don't worry about what'll become of me. I guess I'll be all right. Anyhow, I'm not goin' back, do ye hear? If I was a coward, afraid to call my soul my own, like you fellows, it'd be different. But I ain't!"

Shorty flushed up. He had been a champion light-weight boxer before things went wrong and he took to the sea, and he resented this reflection on his personal courage. He had not yet had an encounter with Armitage, but he knew enough of the science of self-defense not to be as much intimidated by the big fellow as were the rest of his shipmates. Advancing spunkily, he retorted:

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"No man ever yet called me a coward, 'Handsome,' an' I ain't goin' to take it from you. If it comes to a showdown, the coward's the chap as deserts 'is ship, not the chap as stands by 'is signed articles."

Armitage sprang to his feet, his six feet of athletic masculinity towering above them all.

"Clear out! Clear out!" he shouted, wildly waving his arms. "Clear out before I kill one of you!"

Bill and "Dutch" obeyed with almost ludicrous alacrity, and retreated into the outer shop, but Shorty pluckily stood his ground. Before Armitage could lay hands on him, the cockney closed to the attack, a sinewy arm shot out like a flash, and there was a thundering smack as the blow went home on Armitage's jaw.

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For a brief moment the athlete staggered, but more from sheer surprise than anything else. Then, with a volley of fierce expletives, he made a savage rush at his adversary. The men clinched, arms and legs whirled around in a cyclone of dust, tables and chairs were sent crashing to all corners of the room. It was all over in a minute. By the time Schmalz, terrified by the noise of the fracas, ran in to see what was the matter, Shorty was lying on his back on the floor, bleeding profusely from the nose.

While Bill and "Dutch" helped the worsted ex-champion to a chair, Armitage coolly readjusted the rest of the scattered furniture, and, resuming his seat at the table, bellowed at Schmalz, who stood, open-mouthed:

"Don't stand grinning there, you blamed fool! Let's have some more whiskey. This scrapping makes one thirsty."

Schmalz hesitated. He stood in no little fear of his burly customer. On the other hand, it was dangerous to let him go on drinking. There was no telling what he might do. He looked from Shorty, who was trying to stop his nose-bleed, to the broken glasses on the floor.

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"I guess you haf enough alretty yet," he growled.

Armitage struck the table viciously.

"Don't stand chinning there!" he shouted. "Bring some booze on the double quick, or it'll be the worse for you!"

With a helpless shrug of his shoulders, Schmalz went after more liquor. Shorty, partly recovered from the knock-out, staggered painfully to his feet and made for the door, followed by "Dutch" and Bill. When he reached the threshold, the defeated fireman turned and shook his fist at Armitage.

"Yer'll be sorry for this, 'Handsome!'" he shouted. "I'll get even with ye afore the day's out."

Armitage shrugged his shoulders by way of answer, and the three men slouched out. As Shorty passed Schmalz in the outer store, he said to the German in an undertone:

"Look out for him, d'ye hear? He's a bad 'un. He's not to be trusted!"

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Jerking his thumb significantly in the direction of the cash-drawer, he whispered:

"He'd as soon cut your throat as not—for what ye've got there."

Schmalz turned pale. Shorty went on:

"I've got an account to square with him. Give him all the whiskey he wants. Keep him here until we can get back to the steamer. They'll come and nab him. Serve him right. He's better out of yer way."

"Ya-ya!" exclaimed Schmalz nervously, "But mach schnell, eh?"

The men hurried away, leaving their irate shipmate to his own reflexions. For a long time after their departure there reigned a perfect quiet, which seemed all the more intense by contrast with the recent turmoil. Schmalz, busy at his desk, absorbed in the arduous task of disentangling his accounts, gave no heed to his quarrelsome customer, who, now that the immediate cause of his irritation was removed, was inclined to be more amiable. His sullenness of manner disappeared and he seemed even willing to argue amicably with his host the merits of the recent affray. Schmalz paid no attention, yet the fireman talked on. It wasn't his fault, he insisted. Shorty had called him names, and he wouldn't stand that from any man. He knew what he was about. Flesh and blood simply couldn't stand that stoke-hold any longer. Only the last trip, one of the men collapsed under the strain. Seized with "stoker's madness," he had rushed to the deck and jumped overboard. He'd had enough of such horrors. He'd die rather than return to the ship.

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"D'ye hear, Schmalz?" he shouted, to better attract his host's attention. "I tell ye I'm through with seagoing. They'll never get me back!"

Schmalz, however, turned a deaf ear. He was unwilling or else too busy to listen. So, finding that he had no one to whom he could impart his sorrows, Armitage turned once more to the whiskey-bottle, with the idea of drowning them. The strong liquor soon had the effect of making him drowsy. His head dropped heavily on his broad chest and his snores shook the room.

He might have slept in this way for hours without disturbance, only Schmalz clumsily dropped a tray, and the sudden crash aroused the stoker with a start. Rubbing his eyes, he turned eagerly to the clock, and a look of satisfaction overspread his face. The *Atlanta* would soon be on her way to the Mediterranean. Half an hour more and he would have nothing to fear. They would have sailed without him. Then he need skulk no longer in this den. He could go forth a free man, at liberty to do what he chose. [Pg 24]

But as his befuddled brain began to clear, he grew uneasy. He knew the boiler-room was short-handed. They must have discovered his absence. Shorty and the others, in revenge, would be likely to peach on him and say where he was to be found. The officers would come after him and drag him back to that abominable stoke-hold. He knew enough of the shipping laws to be aware that they had the right. He being an English fireman in a foreign port, all they had to do was to go before the British consul and secure his arrest. Putting his hand to his hip pocket, he drew out a revolver and regarded lovingly its polished surface.

"My only friend!" he muttered. "Let 'em come! I'll give 'em all the fight they want—more than they want! I'll put a bullet through my own head rather than be dragged back to that stoke-hold!" [Pg 25]

And if the *Atlanta* sailed without him—what then? He had had enough of the sea, that was certain, yet he must earn a living somehow. He hadn't a dollar in the world, and he knew no trade that he could turn his hand to. His life at sea had unfitted him for anything else. Even if he made the effort and let the whiskey alone, how could he seek employment looking as he did? With no linen and in his grimy, oil-stained clothes, he would be eyed everywhere with suspicion. Nobody would have anything to do with him. The world has no use for its failures, for men who are down on their luck. The outlook was hopeless, for he saw no way to improve his condition.

"It's easy to lose one's self-respect and sink into degradation," he muttered bitterly to himself; "and when at last you see your folly, then it's too late—it's impossible to get back. Pshaw! What's the good?"

With a shaking hand, he helped himself to another drink, grateful to the lethal liquor which dulled his thoughts. Yet, in spite of himself, his clouded brain remained active. Memory slipped back ten years. If only those years could be lived over again! How dearly he had paid for the follies which had brought him where he was! Wild oats? Yes—he had sown them in plenty, and a damnable harvest he had reaped! Things had gone from bad to worse, until one day came the crisis. He was down and out, almost starving, without a friend to extend a helping hand. After he had fasted forty-eight hours, and the river seemed to be the only way out, a barroom companion told him of a job as coal-passer on an ocean liner which was to be had for the asking. He jumped eagerly at the chance as a drowning man grasps at a drifting straw. At least, it would mean temporary food and lodging. He was strong as an ox and could stand the pace, no matter how hard the work was. Besides, hidden away in a steamer's stoke-hold, he reckoned out that he would be dead to the world. No one would think of seeking him there. The brutal work and brutal companions would help him to forget the past. [Pg 26]

For five long years he had stood it, but he could endure it no longer. Five years of physical and mental torment, and the future—a hopeless blank. The old days were wiped out completely, every decent tie shattered forever. He could never redeem the past. He had joined the vast army of life's failures, which goes marching on, silently, grimly to perdition. The sooner the end came the better. He was weary of it all. The best way would be to make an end of it at once. He knew he had only himself to blame, but, like most men who have gone to the devil, he held society responsible. The world is without pity for those who make mistakes. The man who's down is given no mercy. They said he was quarrelsome, a trouble-maker. So he was. In all these years of suffering he had steeled his heart to hate his fellow man. He detested the rich, idle class because he held it accountable for his present miserable condition, and in obscure socialistic and anarchistic meetings in the slums of New York and London he had listened gloomily to the wild-eyed orators' frenzied teachings of class-hatred. His sufferings had embittered him against the whole human race. He had fought his way through it all fiercely, because the whole world seemed in league against him, every man and woman his enemy. The only law he knew was that enforced by a strong arm. The weaker had no rights. It wasn't his fault if he had to defend himself. He had given the world back what it gave him and with interest. That's why he hit back every time blindly, savagely. [Pg 27]

With an unsteady hand, he took up the whiskey-bottle and started to refill his glass. His back was partly toward the door, so he could not see the front store suddenly darken by the abrupt entrance of four men who pushed their way unceremoniously past Schmalz and rushed into the room where he was sitting. Two of the newcomers were ship's officers, the others were policemen. [Pg 28]

Armitage was taken completely by surprise. He knew at once that they had come for him. With an oath, he jumped to his feet and his right hand went quickly to his hip pocket. But before he could



draw his gun, the officers and policemen threw themselves upon him and pinioned his arms.

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"You'd better come quickly, Armitage, or it'll go harder with you!" said the senior officer sternly.

"What d'ye want with me?" demanded the fireman hoarsely.

"You're under arrest for desertion," replied his superior.

"Where d'ye want me to go?" stammered Armitage, his breath coming and going in short, spasmodic gasps.

"Back to the ship. Not as you're much good—only to give you your medicine," was the laconic rejoinder.

"Back to the ship! Never while I live!" shouted the big fellow.

By a superhuman muscular effort he threw off his four captors as easily as if they had been children, and made a dash for liberty through the store. But he was not yet clear of his foes. Seeing him coming, Schmalz quickly put out his foot, and the fugitive fell all his length to the floor. Before he could scramble to his feet again, the policemen were upon him, and soon had his arms securely pinioned.

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"Quick, back to the ship with him!" commanded the senior officer. "She sails in ten minutes. We've just time to make it!"

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## CHAPTER II.

The scene on the dock just before sailing-time of an ocean liner is always an animated one, full of interest and color for those having eyes to see. The huge steamer, freshly painted, all spick and span, laden to the water-line with precious freight, her enormous funnels belching clouds of black smoke, with white steam hissing from every part of her giant hulk, as if the imprisoned energy were eager to put its power to the test; the air filled with the babel of many voices, smart stewards standing at attention on the lower deck, ready to serve the embarking passengers, uniformed sailors hurrying to obey sharply given orders; officers resplendent in immaculate white duck and gold braid, solemnly promenading the bridge, as if impressed with the weight of their responsibility; excited travelers arriving in every description of vehicle; messengers rushing here and there with floral baskets and hot-house fruit sent as parting gifts; telegraph-boys bringing words of farewell; tear-stained faces smiling *au revoir*, handkerchiefs waving and much shouting; policemen pushing back the spectators anxious to see the last of friends and relatives; the crowd growing gradually smaller and the shouts more distant as the leviathan swings out in to the stream—all this makes up a picture which, once beheld, is forever engraved on heart and memory.

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The annual around-the-world cruise of the palatial Blue Star steamer *Atlanta*, 17,000 tons, was always an event of more than ordinary interest, and sailing-day never failed to draw a large crowd. In fact, going down to the dock to give a noisy send-off to those friends lucky enough to be able to make the delightful Mediterranean trip had of recent years assumed the importance of a social function. The voyage being pre-eminently for health and pleasure, it generally attracted a goodly number of well-to-do and congenial people. Many of the passengers, moving in the same sets in society, were already well acquainted before going on board, and strangers had no difficulty in securing introductions. Almost as soon as the anchor was weighed, the barriers of exclusiveness were thrown down. Before the vessel had proceeded very far from port, every one knew every one else, and the ship's company had become one big jolly family.

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The passenger-list contained many names well known in society. Mrs. Townsend Lee, one of the leaders of New York's 400, was on board; so was Mrs. Wesley Stuart, whose *musicales* were counted among the most delightful affairs of the season. Professor Hanson, the noted sociologist, was a passenger; so also was Mrs. Phelps, the wealthy young widow whose recent bereavement had made her the target of every impecunious nobleman in Europe. It was perhaps only a coincidence, yet still a fact the significance of which escaped no one, that two staterooms had been engaged—one by the Honorable Percy Fitzhugh, a callow Englishman who had made himself ridiculous with a Casino chorus-girl, the other by Count Herbert von Hatzfeld, scion of an aristocratic German family, who in a newspaper interview gave out that he was globe-trotting for his health. Gossip had linked the names of both men with Mrs. Phelps, and as neither had been at any pains to deny that he was a suitor for the widow's hand, there was considerable speculation as to whom was making most progress in her favor.

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But the name on the list which excited most interest and comment among the crowd of sightseers and seagoers who literally mobbed the big ship, was that of Miss Grace Harmon, the beautiful daughter of the well-known railroad magnate, whose *début* in society two years before, at a splendid ball given in her honor at the Harmon's palatial Fifth Avenue home, was still talked about as the most brilliant and costly affair of that season.

Grace Harmon was conspicuous for her beauty even in a land famous for its fair women. Tall and slender, with aristocratic features and queenly carriage, she was the typical Gibson girl. Women raved about her wonderful complexion, her splendid eyes, her magnificent hair, her graceful

figure. They went into ecstasies over her gowns, her beautifully arched eyebrows, academic nose, dazzling white teeth, and a sensitive, delicately modeled mouth, that might have tempted Saint Anthony himself. Men looking for money whispered that she was the prize catch of the matrimonial market, being the only heir to her father's millions, and the more enterprising laid their lines accordingly. When she went out driving or appeared in her box at the opera, everybody craned their necks and stared rudely, eager to feast their eyes on the priceless gifts this favorite of fortune had received from the gods. In their cheap hall bedrooms, timid poets wrote love-sonnets which they mailed to her anonymously, expecting no acknowledgment, happy only that they had expressed on paper what lay heavy on their hearts.

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So far Grace had shown herself indifferent either to sentiment or matrimonial ambitions. She had not encouraged any of the men who showered her with attentions, and even with her intimates she declined to discuss what they declared to be *the* all-important question. But that eventually she would make a sensationally brilliant marriage went without the saying, and society wiseacres predicted that Prince Sergius of Eurasia, the most persistent of her suitors, would sooner or later carry off the prize. The nephew of the reigning monarch of a bankrupt little kingdom in the Balkans, the prince had been well known in New York and Newport for several seasons past as a dissipated spendthrift anxious to make a good matrimonial catch. Grace had disliked him the first moment she set eyes on him, and he had never succeeded in removing this first unfavorable impression. On the other hand, such a match certainly had advantages which to many a girl would prove too dazzling and tempting to resist. But Grace declined to be hurried into a decision. She demanded time, and while waiting to know his fate the Prince was suddenly recalled to Europe. This was as far as the affair had gone, and secretly Grace was glad to see the last of him, at least for a time, although the well-informed press sagely gave out that it was "understood in society circles that a formal engagement of Miss Grace Harmon and the Prince of Eurasia would shortly be announced."

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Fully conscious of her power, well aware that her mere presence aroused jealousy in every woman and admiration in every man, Grace would have been more than human had she escaped being spoiled. The spitefully inclined accused her of haughtiness and of carrying her head high. It is true that she was careful in choosing her intimates and quick to snub those who were too ready to claim acquaintance, yet friends once made she kept, and she was popular in her set. In the more private home circle she was fairly idolized, especially by her father, who had indulged her every whim ever since she was born. Her mother, for years a chronic invalid, had left chiefly to servants the care of bringing her up, but to her father she was all that was worth while in life. The old man existed only for his beautiful daughter. Everything money could purchase—fine clothes, costly trinkets, smart automobiles were hers for the asking. After graduating from Bryn Mawr, she spent two years in France, Italy and Germany, acquiring a superficial knowledge of the continental languages. On her return home she joined the social whirl and became proficient in bridge. In short, Grace Harmon was accomplished to the tips of her tapering, carefully manicured fingers.

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Brought up in the lap of luxury, never having expressed a desire that was not immediately gratified, Grace discovered after a time that wealth, while useful, has also its drawbacks. Having everything, she wanted nothing. She found herself wishing there might be something she could not have, so that for once, at least, she might experience the emotion of longing for the unattainable.

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The plain truth was that Grace was no ordinary girl. She had more brains than people gave her credit for. Although reared in the tainted hot-house atmosphere of society, with its degenerate amusements, its low moral tone and trivial ambitions, she took little real interest in its shallow, vulgar pleasures. The women she soon discovered to be empty-headed or frankly immoral; the men were, for the most part, libertines, gamblers, fortune-hunters. The homage paid to her beauty flattered her vanity, but once the novelty of her first two seasons had worn away, surfeited with dinners, receptions, dances, and bridge-parties, she grew deadly tired of the social treadmill. It ceased to amuse her. She felt there was something wanting to complete her happiness. She lost her buoyancy of disposition, her high spirits disappeared, even her beauty paled. She became depressed and melancholy. People whispered that she was going into a decline. There had been a case of consumption in the family, they said. Her father, laughingly declaring that she was in love, asked for the name of the lucky man.

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"Are you going to make the Prince happy at last, child?" he said.

"No, dad," she replied seriously. "It's nothing to do with that. Among all the men who've paid me attention there's not one I'd marry—now."

What seemed to Grace a more correct diagnosis of her trouble was made by Mrs. Wesley Stuart, her practical married friend:

"It's only your nerves, my dear—a natural reaction after the pace you've been going. What you need is a radical change of scene, something to stimulate your imagination. Take a trip around the world. If you'll go, I'll go with you."

Wesley Stuart was one of the big men in the Steel Trust and several times a millionaire. Gossip had long hinted that there was no love lost between him and his young wife, and she never denied it. He went his way; she went hers. She had all the money her expensive tastes called for, and this, coupled with a certain amount of natural cleverness, had given her considerable prominence in the artistic set. Her *musicales* were a success because her ready tact and intimate

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acquaintance with famous artists enabled her to surround herself with interesting people. Having some musical talent herself, she nourished the hopeless ambition that one day she would be able to sing in opera. Injudicious friends had encouraged her in this fatuous belief, and she had worked so hard and spent so much time and money studying with expensive teachers, with the idea of going on the stage, that at last her health gave way. Threatened with nervous breakdown, her physician had advised a long sea voyage, and this was just the opportunity she had been looking for. Both would have the other's company. If Grace would go, she wouldn't hesitate a second. As for her husband, he would be glad to be rid of her. She said it as a jest; in her heart she knew it was true. Not that she cared. Wesley gave her all the money she asked for and never interfered with her. According to her philosophy of life, theirs was as perfect a matrimonial understanding as she could wish for.

The idea of the trip at once appealed strongly to Grace. Enthusiastically she declared that she would like nothing better. It would be so novel and exciting, quite unlike any experience she had yet had. Some friends who had already made the trip gave glowing accounts of their travels, and the more she thought of it the more decided she was that around the world she would go. This decided it, for when once Grace made up her mind, everything was as good as settled. Nothing her father or mother might say could deter her from the project. She pleaded that the trip was absolutely necessary, not only for her health, but as a finishing touch to her education. The ship was not only going to China, Japan, India, and Egypt. It would visit also many out-of-the-way islands which are practically inaccessible to the usual tourist and seldom if ever visited. As a lesson in geography alone it was worth the money. Harmon *père* did not mind the expense. The few thousands the trip would cost was a bagatelle to the man of millions. What he balked at was the idea of losing his cherished daughter for six long months. The uncertainties of Wall Street made it impossible for him to accompany her, and Mrs. Harmon suffered so horribly from seasickness that she threw up her hands at the very suggestion. Seizing the excuse that a young girl could not go unaccompanied, her father, for the first time in his recollection, asserted his authority, emphatically refused consent, and was obdurate to all coaxing. Then Grace played her trump card. Their friend Mrs. Stuart was going on the same steamer. With a married woman for a chaperon, what further objection could there be? Seeing that he was check-mated, and that his daughter, as usual, would have her way in the end anyhow, Mr. Harmon reluctantly capitulated.

He was down at the steamer to see her off, a tall, distinguished-looking, silvery-haired old gentleman, conspicuous in the group of friends who had come to bid his daughter *bon voyage*. It was a noisy, jolly, unruly crowd. Every one talked at the same time, pushing and elbowing, blocking the gangway up which rushed each minute fresh arrivals laden with rugs and handbags. Ten minutes more and the "All ashore" gong would sound, and then the big ship would slowly pull out and point her nose for the open sea. Grace stood in the center of the fashionably dressed throng, herself stylishly attired in a chic, long gray cloth *directoire* coat and picture hat, bestowing smiles and handshakes right and left like a queen holding court. Everybody was in high spirits, all except Mr. Harmon, who tried to look brave as he furtively wiped away a tear.

"Don't do that, dad, or I'll spoil my complexion," whispered Grace, making heroic efforts to swallow a hard lump that arose in her own throat. "One would think I were going away forever. I'll be back safe and sound before you imagine—you'll see!"

"I hope so, child, I hope so," murmured the old man, clasping her to his breast. "It's foolish of me, of course. All the same, I can't help wishing you weren't going. I have a sort of presentiment that something will happen."

Grace laughed merrily.

"Nonsense, dad! What can happen? Nothing ever happens on ocean voyages. They are awfully tame and exasperatingly free from incident. Shipwrecks and things like that occur only in novels. Sometimes I wish things would happen."

"Really, Grace!" protested a feminine voice at her side, "I do wish you wouldn't say such wicked things. You know how nervous I am."

The speaker was Mrs. Wesley Stuart, under whose protective wing Grace was traveling. She was a willowy and rather attractive blonde, not yet in the thirties, but with a complexion somewhat the worse for rich foods, old wines, and late hours. Showily dressed, with a large black felt mushroom hat and heavy pearl pendants in her ears, she talked with affected languor and used a gold lorgnon.

"Your father is quite right, dear," she went on. "There are all sorts of perils at sea. A hundred things might happen. Our machinery might break down, we might drift for weeks without being sighted, we might collide with an iceberg in the fog, we might even turn turtle. Don't you remember that awful affair of the *City of Berlin*? Of course you don't. It was before your time—before mine, too, for that matter. The steamer left Liverpool about thirty years ago, crowded with passengers. She never reached port, and has never been heard of from that day to this. Every vestige of her was wiped out. They never picked up a life-boat, or even so much as a steamer-chair. The theory was that she turned turtle and went right down."

"No—really—you don't say so!" exclaimed behind them a man's voice with the exaggerated Piccadilly intonation some Englishmen affect. "It's a jolly shame, don'tcher know—to frighten Miss Harmon like that. She'll believe every bally thing you tell her and get the blue spiders and all that sort of thing—eh, what?"

Grace turned, smiling, to greet the Honorable Percy Fitzhugh, who was hemmed in the crowd at their elbows. He had just come aboard with a green Tyrolian hat on the side of his head, a monocle in his eye, and a bull-terrier tucked under his arm. Close behind was his valet, carrying a wonderful collection of walking-sticks and a huge bouquet of flowers.

"Oh, I don't mind!" laughed Grace. "I'm a fine sailor and not a bit nervous. The sea has no terrors for me."

"I wish I could say as much," sighed Mrs. Stuart. Petulantly she added: "I never feel safe on the ocean. I don't mind storms, but I'm terribly afraid of fog and icebergs and fire. Whenever it's foggy I can't eat or sleep. I'm in a state of mental anguish until it clears again."

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"It's a jolly good thing some of us have nerve—eh, what?" exclaimed Mr. Fitzhugh, with a wink at Grace. Addressing Mrs. Stuart, he went on: "You remind me of Rex, my terrier here. He loathes the sea—howls and whines dismally the whole time. But please don't get the blue spiders, that's a good girl. We're going to be an awfully jolly party. Don't spoil the fun. Try a champagne cocktail. Best antidote for nervousness in the world. If one don't work, take two. You'll feel bully." Turning to his man, he added: "Thompson, take those flowers to my stateroom, and go and see about my 'tub' and steamer-chair."

The next moment the Englishman and his green thatch were swallowed up in the crush of new arrivals.

"Did you ever see such a coarse, selfish creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart indignantly. "The impudence of his comparing me to his miserable dog!"

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"Who are the flowers for?" laughed Grace.

"Mrs. Phelps, of course. He's head over heels in debt. He needs her money. I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't catch on. She's very ambitious—the title attracts her. There she comes now."

A stylish, handsome woman, richly dressed all in black, with large Gainsborough hat to match, came leisurely up the gangplank, followed by a smart footman weighed down with packages. She nodded cordially to Grace and Mrs. Stuart as she caught sight of them, and disappeared in the direction of the staterooms.

"She's literally bursting with money," whispered Mrs. Stuart, who knew everybody's business. "Her husband left her ten millions. He was a simple soul—a plain, matter-of-fact business man. All he thought of was making money. She never cared for him. It's just as well he died. She can marry again now and live the life she likes best. All the men are after her. Some think Count von Hatzfeld has the best chance. Of course you know he's on the ship. You see, it's all cut and dried."

"I don't blame her," said Grace cynically, as she returned the bow of another arrival. "It must be dreadful to be a mere 'Mrs. Green' or 'Mrs. Brown.' I couldn't live with any ordinary man—a mere business man whose one thought was figures and profits. My ideal is an English peer or an Italian count—preferably the latter. They are less expensive. English dukes, they say, drink hard and beat their wives. It would be nice to be addressed as 'Duchess,' or 'Comtesse.'"

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Mrs. Stuart looked approvingly at her *protégée*.

"I'm glad to see you're so practical, my dear."

"Why not? This is a practical age," laughed Grace.

"Well, there's Prince Sergius. He's only waiting the word. Why don't you marry him and be a princess—only two lives removed from a throne? Every woman in America would envy you."

Grace frowned.

"And I—would despise myself?" she answered. "Every one knows his reputation. It's my money he wants, that's all. I haven't yet sunk so low as to purchase a titled husband at the price of my self-respect. Besides, I could not endure a tie that would be entirely loveless, wholly mercenary. I hope I have some ideals; some sentiment left."

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"Were you ever in love?" persisted her companion.

"I suppose I was, like most girls. When I first left school I saw boys I liked. All girls are silly at some period of their life. But I survived those early attachments. I am still heart-whole. I never see nowadays a man with whom I could fall in love. To me, they all seem conceited and selfish. Of course I shall have to marry one day or other, but I'm afraid it will be what the French call a *mariage de convenance*.

"Or, in plain Yankee, marriage with an eye to the main chance," rejoined Mrs. Stuart. "But you don't have to marry for money, child. You are rich."

Grace was thoughtful a moment, and then she replied:

"Money is not everything—mere money is vulgar. One gets horribly tired of it." Pensively she went on: "You think I am cold and devoid of sentiment. You are wrong. I yearn for life in the sunlit countries of the old world, in historic lands of intrigue, love, and passion, with brilliant state functions amid scenes of regal splendor, where class and birth count for more than mere wealth."

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In America we have only the money standard. The wife of any little grocer who gets rich overnight may be a social leader to-morrow. It's disgusting!"

Mrs. Stuart was about to say something when a sudden commotion on the dock attracted everybody's attention, and there was a general rush to the rail. A large crowd had gathered near the entrance of the gangway, surrounding a man who lay struggling on the ground. Policemen and ship's officers were stooping over him trying to quiet him.

"What's the matter?" cried Grace anxiously. "I hope no one's hurt!"

"It looks as if some one had fallen in a fit," said Mrs. Stuart, looking through her lorgnon.

Mr. Harmon, who had been conversing with an acquaintance, came up hurriedly. Having noticed the excitement, he feared that some harm threatened his daughter.

"It's an accident of some kind," he said.

"Oh, I knew something would happen!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, getting out her smelling-salts. [Pg 51]

"Do you know what the matter is?" inquired Grace of a sailor.

The man grinned and touched his cap.

"'Tain't nothin', miss. Only one of 'em blokes what keeps the fire's a-goin' got it inter ees 'ead that it was too bloomin' 'ot for 'im. So 'ee jumps the blessed ship without so much as askin' leave, an' gets run in by the cops fer 'is pains."

The explanation, such as it was, was wholly incomprehensible to Grace, who knew as much as she did before. Meantime the crowd grew bigger, the noise louder and the excitement more intense. A number of ship's officers had the man on his feet and were half dragging him, half carrying him to the gangplank. It was not exactly an agreeable spectacle with which to regale fastidious passengers on sailing-day, and the ship's officers would have gladly avoided it. But the refractory stoker was necessary to the speed of the vessel, and there was no way of getting him aboard except by the main gangway. It was late. The steamer would pull out any moment, and the other gangways had been already pulled in. [Pg 51]

Mrs. Stuart offered to interpret the sailor's speech:

"He says that one of the sailors has been overcome by the heat and fallen on the dock in a faint."

"Not exactly, miss," grinned the man, with another tug of his cap. "'Ee's not the kind wot faints. 'Ee's puttin' up a fight. 'Ee's a fighter, is Handsome Jack."

Grace turned in bewilderment to her father, who had just returned on board.

"Handsome Jack!" she echoed. "What does he mean?"

"It's only a deserter," explained Mr. Harmon. "A fireman who attempted to get away before the ship sailed. The officers found him in a drinking-shop and brought him here."

"I don't blame the poor beggar for trying to desert," said the Honorable Percy Fitzhugh, who had just come up from below-stairs. "It's jolly awful in that stoke-hold, don'tcher know? Ever been down in the stoke-hold, Miss Harmon? No? I'll take you down some day—eh, what? I don't see how they get men to do such work. I'd rather commit suicide, by Jove!" [Pg 53]

"Yes, it is terrible work," said Mr. Harmon. "They take to it only when desperate and forced by circumstances. It is well known that murderers and criminals of every description take to stoking when they wish to lie low. They know the police will never look for them in the stoke-hold, on the theory that they are getting punishment enough."

"How dreadful!" yawned Grace, as she watched with languid interest the commotion on the shore. Presently she asked: "Can they make him go back to work in the stoke-hold whether he likes or not?"

"Certainly," replied her father. "This is an English ship. He probably signed articles in Liverpool. Under British maritime law, any member of the crew deserting ship in a foreign port can be arrested. That's what, in sailor parlance, is called 'a pier-head jump.' You see, a big vessel like this must have its full complement of stokers, otherwise she can't get up enough steam, and the record suffers. That's why they take the trouble to go after deserters. They say that this fellow deserves no sympathy. He's a good-for-nothing, brutal, violent fellow. Here he comes now." [Pg 54]

"I'd like to see him!" exclaimed Grace, pushing forward to get a closer view of the group of men as they came struggling up the gangplank.

"Oh, Grace, how can you look at such horrid sights?" ejaculated Mrs. Stuart, fanning herself nervously and averting her face.

The prisoner by this time was nearly exhausted, and presented a sorry sight. His grease-stained clothes were torn to rags, his hair was disheveled, blood flowed freely from a cut on his cheek, making all the more striking the contrast with his white, set face and its grim, hopeless expression.

Armitage knew he was beaten. His strength and determination had availed him nothing, yet he

was still full of fight. It was all they could do to drag him on board inch by inch. As they reached the deck, and he realized that once more the ship had enslaved him, a hoarse cry of despair escaped his lips. With a last superhuman effort, he shook himself free. One of his captors was hurled to the left, the other sent flying to the right. His fists shot out, and a third officer fell like a log. For a moment he was free, and, surprised at his success, he stood triumphant over their prostrate forms, just as a gladiator, doomed to die, might tower for a few brief seconds above his worsted foes. His fists clenched, his shapely head thrown back, every muscle taut, his eyes flashing, chest heaving, he resembled a classic hero battling with pigmies.

"Isn't he handsome!" exclaimed Grace.

"Aye, miss," grinned the voluble sailor. "That's wot we call 'im—Handsome Jack. Sometimes it's Gentleman Jack, cause of 'is fine manners; but 'ee's only a stoker, just the same."

The officers regained their feet and again sprang at their prisoner. The passengers fell back alarmed.

"Come here, Grace!" cried Mr. Harmon uneasily. "You'll get hurt."

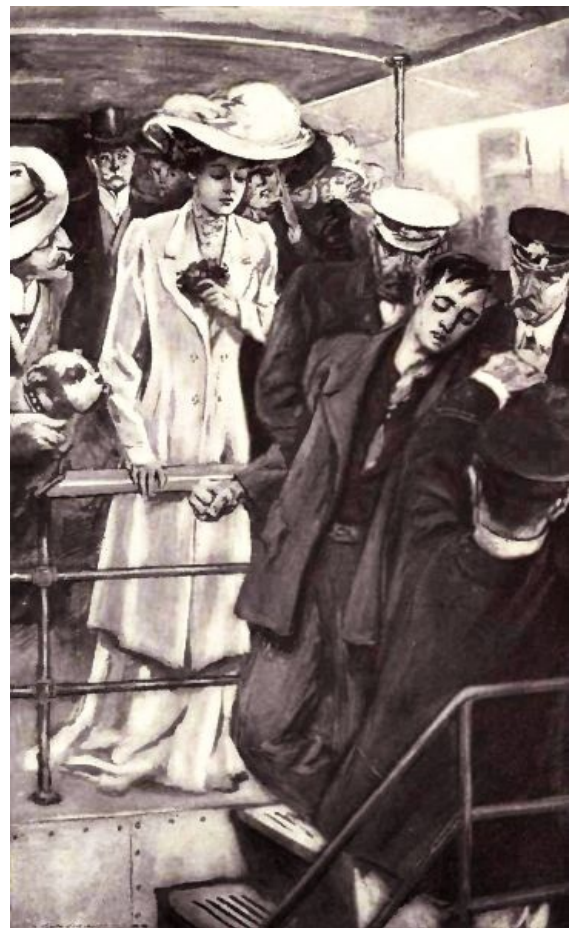
But there was no danger. More officers and sailors ran quickly up, and confronted by such reinforcements, the fireman stood no chance. Before he had time to take advantage of his temporary victory, he was again overpowered and dragged without further ado in the direction of the forecabin. Grace shrank back as he was taken

past, but she could not help seeing his wild, staring eyes and white face with its expression of despair. As he disappeared, the last gong sounded, every visitor hurried ashore, the siren started its deep-toned blasts as warning that the leviathan was getting under weigh.

"I wish it hadn't happened," said Grace, as she kissed her hand in adieu to her father, who stood on the dock watching the vessel go out.

"It's made me positively ill," complained Mrs. Stuart, busy with her smelling-salts.

Long after New York's sky-scrapers had faded from view and the land was only a dim line on the horizon, Grace was still haunted by that white, set face, with its expression of utter despair.



**IT WAS ALL THEY COULD DO TO DRAG HIM ON BOARD.**

### CHAPTER III.

The Indian Ocean, a vast expanse of tossing blue water, its heaving bosom still agitated by the expiring gale, glorious in the outburst of sunshine that followed the storm, stretched away to every point of the compass. As far as the eye could carry, away to where the breaking clouds touched the fast-disappearing land line of mysterious Asia, the boisterous white-capped seas scattered showers of prisms and spray. Rolling and tumbling, their lofty crests flecked with fleecy foam, the endless waves advanced majestically, with rhythmical motion and the stateliness and precision of trained battalions, all scurrying in one direction, urged on by the whip of the southwesterly gale. The tempest had abated, the lowering clouds were rapidly dispersing, once more Nature was smiling and serene, diffusing the beauty and gladness of life through water and sky. Graceful, white-winged sea-birds uttered shrill cries of delight as they circled in the air, gorgeously colored flying fish leaped joyously from the dancing waters, which flashed like jewels in the blinding sunlight. The world was at its brightest and fairest, full of movement and color. The breeze was caressing and balmy, and as the *Atlanta*, now three weeks from home, plunged her way resistlessly Eastward, the great liner was sonorous with the music of wind and sea.

Thus far the voyage had hardly been all that could be desired as regards weather. January is seldom a good month for the Atlantic, and this year the crossing was nastier than usual. The *Atlanta* had no sooner cleared the Banks than it began to blow great guns. Gale followed gale with tropical downpours of rain, the wind blowing from every quarter at once, piling up mountainous combers that every now and again broke over the bridge, forty feet above the water. The tremendous seas crashed aboard with a thunderous roar, frightening the more timid among the passengers, smashing life-boats and ventilators, sweeping the decks from bow to stem with avalanches of green water. Skylights were shattered, bridge stanchions bent and twisted, but otherwise there was no damage. The big ship steamed true on her course, haughtily

indifferent to the capricious ocean's moods, staunch as a rock, and quite as steady as any railroad-train moving at full speed.

The rough weather had the natural effect of confining most of the women folk to their staterooms, and as the men also kept to themselves, preferring bridge and poker in the smoking-room to the wet decks, there was not much opportunity for social amenities.

Owing to the high seas, no attempt was made to land at Madeira, and there was no little grumbling because the vagaries of the elements made it impossible to visit Funchal, the Pico Ruivo, Ponta Delgada, and other picturesque places of perennial verdure and flowers. The storm gradually abated, but it was not until the steamer entered the smoother waters of the Mediterranean that there was the slightest pretense at dress or any attempt made to put in regular appearances at dinner. However, the improvement in the weather and the close proximity of land, with the cheering prospect of going ashore, brought about a quick change in everybody's humor. The passengers' spirits rose with the barometer. Fine toilettes made their appearance on deck, the usual little steamer-chair cliques were speedily formed, and every one now started in to enjoy themselves as if the voyage had only just begun.

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They landed gleefully in tenders, some to inspect the wonders of England's impregnable fortress, others to visit Spanishtown; they crowded to the rail as the ship steamed slowly past the enchanted island of Capri, so dear to the archeologist, and in the Bay of Naples they gazed in awe upon frowning Vesuvius, still smoking and rumbling after a disastrous eruption that had cost hundreds of lives. Sheep-like, after the manner of tourists, they hurried breathlessly through the attractions Naples had to offer, and then, skirting classic Scylla and Charybdis, they steamed on to the land of the Pharaohs, where a complete change of scene awaited them.

So far, Grace had kept much to herself. She was not particularly interested in anybody on board, and she found it a welcome novelty, after her recent strenuous social activities, to be able to enjoy a few hours of absolute rest. What with unpacking, writing letters home, and looking after Mrs. Stuart, who, almost from the start, had been completely prostrated with seasickness, she had found the time slip by rapidly and agreeably enough without having to seek diversion outside her immediate little circle. Her chaperon's indisposition furnished her with an admirable excuse for remaining in seclusion, and if another were needed, she had it in the inclemency of the weather. While she herself was not distressed by the rolling and pitching, the unusual motion did not add to her comfort. She preferred to stay in the privacy of her luxurious quarters, which were the object of the envy and curiosity of every other woman on board.

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Mr. Harmon had spared no expense to secure for his daughter the best on the ship that money could buy. Grace occupied the "royal" suite, a series of sumptuously furnished and richly decorated rooms, entirely shut off from the rest of the ship, thus ensuring complete privacy, comprising bedroom, parlor, dining-room, with piano, telephone, library, etc. With her own maids to wait on her and all meals served privately, there was no necessity to leave her rooms unless she wished to, and if she chose to breathe the invigorating sea air there was no one to see her walk on the deserted lower promenade-deck on which her suite directly opened.

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She had not gone ashore with the other passengers when the steamer stopped at Gibraltar and Naples. Mrs. Stuart was still indisposed, and she refused to leave her, but when the *Atlanta* reached Cairo, her chaperon was feeling better, and they both landed to see the sights. Mrs. Stuart had visited Egypt before, but to Grace it was like a glimpse of grand-opera land, a scene from "Aida." The waving palm-trees, the queer Oriental dwellings, the wonderful blue sky blazing on the peaceful desert, with its endless miles of burning sands, its beautiful oases, its camels and picturesquely costumed natives—all this made up a picture of delightful novelty for the young girl fresh from prosaic New York. She gazed wondering at the blue-turbaned Copts, they laughed merrily at the Fellahin in their blue skirts and stared at the yellow-turbaned Jews, fierce-looking Bedouins and black Nubians. At the cost of a few piastres but much muscular exertion, they were dragged up the face of the mighty pyramids, and with varying emotions they contemplated the time-eaten features of the inscrutable Sphinx.

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The two women derived much enjoyment from their little jaunts. Sometimes they were escorted by Mr. Fitzhugh, who, despairing of making any headway with Mrs. Phelps now that his detested German rival, Count von Hatzfeld, had contrived to monopolize the widow, had begun to dance attendance upon Grace. He knew she had money in her own right, and his mouth watered at the magnitude of her expectations. There seemed no reason why the Harmon millions should not be as usefully employed in regilding the dilapidated Fitzhugh coat-of-arms as those of the late Mr. Phelps. But he did not make much progress, and he had a vague premonition that he was not the kind of chap to appeal to this cold, proud beauty. Discreet conversations on the subject with Mrs. Stuart went far to discourage him altogether.

"Grace does not expect to love the man she will marry, so her utter indifference does not reflect her feelings to you in the least," said that perspicacious student of modern femininity. This statement was not exactly true, but it served the purpose of the moment. "Even if she considered you a desirable match," she went on, "she would not be any more unbending. That indifferent, independent manner is her chief charm. It is the stateliness of the lily. Grace might marry you, but she would not love you. She is too much up to date to believe there is any such thing as love. Self-interest governs the world to-day—not love, which, after all, is only a primitive, vulgar emotion. Girls who want to marry well understand this thoroughly. Love and lovers are very delightful in fiction, but no sensible girl to-day takes them into account when planning her future welfare. When Grace does change her name, it will be to take that of one of the proudest families

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in Europe. Surely you know that she's already as good as engaged to Prince Sergius of Eurasia! As far as titles are concerned, that's going some!"

"But I may be a peer one day," protested Mr. Fitzhugh.

"You may be, but you're not," retorted Mrs. Stuart. "Your father, the earl, is still alive, and your elder brother is aggressively healthy. American girls do not deal in futures." [Pg 65]

The Englishman took the hint, and, profiting by a temporary indisposition of Count von Hatzfeld, returned to the siege of the fascinating Mrs. Phelps, whose millions were nearly as many and aspirations not quite as high as those of Miss Grace Harmon.

The steamer stayed in port over a week, much to the delight of the passengers, who enjoyed the holiday ashore hugely after having been cooped up so long aboard. The weather continued ideal, and every one took advantage of it to see everything that was worth seeing.

The more enterprising passengers undertook little side excursions up the historic Nile; others roamed through the native bazaars, buying at exorbitant prices a vast quantity of things for which they had no possible use; others drove to the tomb of Mehemet Ali, or to the viceroys' palace, keeping up the sightseeing day and night, until all were so weary that they were glad when the *Atlanta* once more weighed anchor and proceeded down the Red Sea and so into the Indian Ocean, *en route*, for Bombay. [Pg 66]

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## CHAPTER IV.

As she sat on the deck, reclining indolently in her steamer-chair, propped up with soft cushions, gazing dreamily on the splendid panorama that unfolded slowly before her—the endless procession of majestic, foam-tipped waves, fleecy clouds drifting lazily in a sky of turquoise blue, the sails of a distant vessel whitened by the sun—Grace felt exuberant with the joy of life.

The latest novel was on her lap, yet she made no attempt to read. Mrs. Stuart, stretched out on a chair alongside, had vainly endeavored to engage her in conversation. But she did not care to talk, and she found it impossible to center her attention on a book, preferring to just lay still, her eyes semi-closed, rocked gently by the steamer's gradual motion, her senses gently thrilled by the sensuous sounds of ship and sea.

The promenade-deck presented the picture of comfort and peace usually to be seen, any fine morning on a liner in mid-ocean—the passengers of both sexes laid out in rows, mummylike, on steamer-chairs, each covered with a rug different from his neighbor's and of bizarre design and color, some reading, some sleeping, some conversing in subdued tones, some sipping cups of bouillon brought on trays by nimble stewards; the decks scrubbed an immaculate white, the brasses highly polished; a neatly uniformed quartermaster standing at a gangway, patiently splicing a rope; two officers on the bridge sweeping the horizon with their glasses or pacing up and down with monotonous precision. With no noises to irritate the ear, a sea voyage has no equal as a rest cure. One heard nothing but the purring of the wind, the gentle flapping of canvas, the splash of the waves, the regular throb of the ship's propeller. Conditions were ideal for day-dreams, and Grace was thinking. [Pg 67]

As she idly watched the foaming water rush past the rail she thought how pleasantly fate had planned her life. She might have been born poor and compelled to work in a store for miserable wages, standing on her feet behind a counter ten long and weary hours a day, forbidden to sit down on pain of dismissal, bullied by arrogant employers, insulted by inconsiderate customers. This she knew was the lot of thousands of girls whose pale, tired faces had frequently aroused her sympathy when shopping. She belonged to the small, lucky minority—the ruling class—which by the power of its great wealth is able to enslave nine-tenths of the human race. The world, she ruminated, was full of unfortunates whose only fault was that they were born poor. Her mind reverted to the handsome stoker whom they had dragged on board with such little ceremony the day the ship sailed from New York. She wondered what his life had been to force him to take to such an occupation, and what had become of him. Perhaps at that very moment, while she sat there surrounded by every luxury, he was suffering the agonies of the damned. She reproached herself for not making inquiries after him. When she next saw the captain she would certainly do so. [Pg 68]

How different was her own life! Sailing along on this splendid ship, with perfect weather and ideal surroundings, the world seemed to exist only to afford her pleasure. If the sun shone brightly, it was only to give her joy; if the soft winds blew, it was only to caress her cheek. It seemed unjust. Things were not equal. At times she was sorry that her father was so rich. Had he been poor, she would have had an incentive to work hard and do something. Although she had everything she desired, she was not really happy. She felt there was something wanting, and she thought it was because her life lacked a definite aim. Other girls did things—they painted pictures, wrote books, went on the stage. If her father became bankrupt to-morrow, where would she be? A perfectly useless member of society, ornamental, possibly, but quite useless. Only two alternatives would be open to her—either to seek some humble employment or throw herself in the arms of a rich man. She would not be the first victim of the plutocracy which closes the doors of the liberal professions to its daughters, only to throw them, in the hour of adversity, into the [Pg 69]



palsied arms of the roué and the voluptuary.

Like most American girls, Grace had little to learn in regard to life's fundamentals. She had read all the decadent novelists, from D'Aununzio to Eleanor Glyn, and the daily newspapers, coupled with whispered conversations over five-o'clock teas, had speedily shattered what other illusions had been left over from her school-days. The low moral standard of the set in which she moved had made her cynical in her attitude toward the men who courted her. She had a horror of fortune-hunters, and most of the men who had paid her attention, Prince Sergius and the rest, she suspected of being after her money. Yet she must marry some day. She must find a husband, even if she were not to love him. A married woman is able to take a place in society that is denied the single woman. Marry she must, but whom? The men she knew either bored her or disgusted her. He need not be a rich man, for she had enough for both, yet if a poor man presented himself, she would certainly put him in the fortune-hunting class. As she had told her friend, Mrs. Stuart, a man with a proud title would suit her best. There would be no question of love, of course, only self-interest on both sides. He would furnish the coronet, she the dollars. It would be the *mariage de convenance*, with its hypocrisies, its lies, its miseries.

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She wondered if her attitude toward life were wrong, if really there were not a man somewhere whom a woman could respect and admire for his strength, his bravery, his nobility of character. The old-fashioned authors—the Dumas, the Scotts, the Bulwer Lyttons, the Elliots—presented such men as their heroes. Were there no such men left in the world to-day? Or were the writers of modern fiction right when they depicted the men of to-day as fortune-hunters, egotistical coxcombs, conscienceless libertines, deliberate destroyers of women's virtue? Cynical as the reading of unwholesome books and witnessing salacious plays had made her, Grace had still a little of the romantic left in her. She was still healthy-minded enough to find romance more satisfying than the vulgar realism of the modern risqué novel. And as she lay there in her chair, basking in the warm sunshine, her eyes half closed, she abandoned herself momentarily to the sensuousness of the moment.

In her imagination gradually took form the ideal hero her heart craved for. She was resting on a country road, and a man was approaching. He was tall, with dark, wavy hair and smooth face, and the clean-cut features of a Greek god. He knew she was rich, but he cared not, for he despised mere wealth, and he was about to pass by unheeding, when he chanced to notice her face, which pleased his sense of beauty. He stopped wondering, and, chatting with her, marveled at the liquid splendor of her eyes. This was the woman he had sought, the woman for whom he would toil and fight. He took her hand, and at his touch her heart leaped ecstatically. A strange thrill stirred her as he gazed hungrily into her eyes and gently drew her to him. Timidly she yielded to his ardent embrace, and as he clasped her soft form roughly to his strong breast and his warm lips met hers in a deep, lingering kiss that seemed to aspire her very soul, a sensation she had never known before invaded her entire being. She felt as though she would swoon.

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"Aren't you getting hungry, Grace? Whatever are you so engrossed about?" said Mrs. Stuart petulantly.

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The interruption was so sudden and abrupt that Grace was startled, and it was with some confusion that she replied:

"Just thinking—that's all! This weather actually makes one foolish."

"Good morning, ladies!"

A shadow suddenly shut out the glare of the sun. Grace and Mrs. Stuart looked up. It was Captain Summers, who was walking the deck with Professor Hanson. The *Atlanta's* commander was a typical sea-dog, big, broad-shouldered, with a deep bass voice and a face tanned by exposure to all sorts of weather. Contrasted with Professor Hanson, a nervous little man, with a bald, domelike cranium, he looked like a giant. Like most Englishmen, he was frigid in manner and not too amiable in his intercourse with the passengers. But Grace, Mrs. Stuart, and the professor happened to sit at his table, which made a difference. For them he condescended to unbend. He was not blind to the fact that Grace was an uncommonly good-looking girl, and Mrs. Stuart amused him. Touching his cap, he sank into the empty seat on the other side of Grace, while Professor Hanson drew up another chair.

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"How long can we expect this glorious weather to last, captain?" asked Mrs. Stuart, greeting the commander's salute with a gracious smile.

"It's hard to say," he replied pleasantly, after a quick glance at the sky. "The barometer's steady enough now, but in these latitudes one may expect anything at any time. The Indian Ocean is as capricious in its moods as a woman. I've seen it as quiet as this at noon, yet by nightfall we'd run into such a storm that you'd think the ship would be blown out of the water."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, with a little nervous laugh. "I hope we shan't have any such experience. I'd die of fright."

"Don't worry, m'm," replied the captain reassuringly. "There's no sign of a change." Gallantly he added: "I wouldn't hear of you ladies being put to the slightest inconvenience. I'll see that this weather continues until we arrive at Bombay."

"When do we get in, captain?" demanded Grace languidly.

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"You're not getting tired of us, I hope," replied the commander, with a laugh.

"Oh, no. I only want to know when I must begin to pack my trunks. You know, we're going on a motor tour inland."

"Next Saturday we shall have the captain's dinner, with the dance afterward," interrupted Mrs. Stuart. "So I suppose they expect to land us Monday."

"How about that, captain?" demanded the professor.

Captain Summers looked at all three in an amused sort of way, and for a moment made no answer. Then gruffly he said:

"A sailor of experience never ventures to make predictions. We are due at Bombay next Monday. If all goes well, I expect to land my passengers on that day. As Mrs. Stuart says, we shall entertain you at dinner and give you a dance on deck next Saturday, in honor of our arrival. But if anything delays us, don't be disappointed. We might run on a rock and go to the bottom. Or we might break our propellers. If that happened, we should be completely helpless. We might drift out of our course for weeks before help could reach us."

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"Oh, wouldn't that be awful!" cried Mrs. Stuart.

"How could we summon assistance?" asked Grace eagerly.

"By wireless, of course," broke in the professor, who assumed the air of superior knowledge on every subject broached. "The invention of wireless telegraphy has practically reduced the perils of seagoing to a negligible minimum."

"Thank Heaven, we've got the wireless!" gasped Mrs. Stuart. "I could hug the man who invented it—Macaroni—what's his name?"

"You mean Marconi, my dear madam," interposed the professor solemnly.

"The wireless is all right as far as it goes," said the captain grimly. "Certainly its invention is a great step forward, but two things are essential for its success in a critical situation. Firstly, it must be in working order. In bad weather the aerial wires are apt to be put out of commission. Secondly, there must be a Marconi station or receiver within a few hundred miles of where you happen to be. If these conditions are not present, you might as well whistle!"

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Mrs. Stuart looked so depressed at this discouraging opinion that Grace could not repress a smile. Professor Hanson, never sorry of an opportunity to air his fund of information, went on pompously:

"Captain, you spoke just now of running on a rock. Is it not a fact that in this ocean there are rocks and small islands not shown on the nautical charts, and that for this reason navigation in these waters is more dangerous than elsewhere?"

For all reply, the commander gave vent to a loud guffaw and, with a side glance at Mrs. Stuart, winked slyly at Grace.

"If we keep up this kind of talk, Mrs. Stuart will think we're doomed to come to grief of some kind. Let's be more cheerful."

"Am I right or wrong, captain?" persisted the professor. "My information came from a naval man."

The commander's face became set and stern, as it usually did when he was serious. Removing his cigar, he said slowly:

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"Your informant was right. For some reason or other, there is no such thing as an absolutely accurate chart of the Indian Ocean. They have talked for years of making a new chart, but, so far, nothing has been done. Yet we sailors who regularly navigate these waters know from experience that there are hereabouts currents strong enough to divert a vessel from her true course, and a number of small islands no mention of which is made on the existing charts. The Admiralty and Lloyds are well aware of the existence of these dangers to navigation, but you all know what red tape is."

"How delightfully romantic!" cried Grace, with enthusiasm. "Unexplored islands inhabited by savages who never saw white people, and who trade in beads and go naked!"

"Cannibals, no doubt," suggested Mrs. Stuart, with an affected shudder.

"Where are these islands?" inquired Grace.

"A long way out of our course, I hope," laughed the captain. "Yet I've passed quite close to some of them. They seem quite deserted. So far as we could make out, there is not even animal life on them. But, being in the direct steamer lane to India, they constitute a menace to shipping that should be removed."

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"Most decidedly—most decidedly!" said the professor emphatically.

Captain Summers arose to go.

"It's very delightful chatting here," he said, with a smile; "but I must go up on the bridge and attend to my duties. Otherwise, we may bump right on to one of those islands."

"By the way, captain," said Grace. "What has become of that poor fireman who made such a disturbance the day we sailed from New York?"

The captain frowned.

"Oh, he's down where he belongs—shoveling coal." Then he added: "Don't waste any sympathy on him. He's about as hard a character as you could find. Stokers are all troublesome as a class, but this Armitage fellow is quite unmanageable. I shall be glad to get rid of him. We had to put him on bread and water the first ten days out. It wasn't until he was nearly dead from starvation that he consented to go to work."

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"Stoking down in that pit in that terrific heat must be fearful!" exclaimed the professor.

"Yes," growled the captain. "It is pretty bad. Most of them don't mind it, though. They aren't good for anything else. They're tough, coarse-fibered creatures, scarcely superior in instincts to the savage. They'd think nothing of running a knife into you, and that Armitage chap is worse than the worst of them. We've had trouble with him all along."

"Still, after all," mused the professor, "we mustn't forget that it is they who make the ship go. We couldn't do without them. Every man has his place in the world's economy."

"It must be very interesting to see them at work," remarked Grace. "I'd like to see what the stokehold looks like. Mr. Fitzhugh said he would take me down." Looking down the deck, she added: "Here he comes now. I'll ask him."

"There's no time like the present," said the captain. "See Mr. Wetherbee, the chief engineer. He'll take you down."

"Yes," said the professor pedantically. "The spectacle will be a good object lesson for you—a pampered daughter of the plutocracy. With a little imagination, you can see in the stokehold social conditions as they actually are in the world to-day. In the stokers you have the laborers, the mill-hands, the sweat-shop workers, the common people who toil painfully for pitiful wages, for their daily bread. We others up here, lolling in our luxurious steamer-chairs, living on the fat of the land—or, rather, sea, to be more correct—are the masters, the capitalists. It is the slave system of ancient Rome under another name, that's all. It's all wrong. Man's injustice to man is the great crime of the centuries. Why should I be here enjoying every comfort and those unfortunate men down there condemned to tortures as cruel as those devised by the merciless Inquisition."

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Captain Summers shrugged his massive shoulders, and, as he turned to go, said laughingly:

"Mind you don't talk that way in the stokehold, or they might take you at your word and keep you down there."

"No danger of that, captain," laughed Mrs. Stuart. "The professor's only theorizing, you know. It costs nothing to expound theory. He has no idea of exchanging places with the stokers."

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The commander guffawed loudly, and, with a parting salute to the ladies, turned on his heel and disappeared up the companionway. At that moment the Hon. Percy Fitzhugh came up, the inevitable monocle in his eye.

"Oh, I say, Miss Harmon," he began, with his affected English drawl. "Be my partner at shuffleboard, eh, what?"

Mrs. Stuart, irritated at an invitation which ignored her, answered for her ward:

"Miss Harmon has more serious things to attend to. Don't come disturbing us with your idiotic games. We are intellectual here—talking socialism, cannibals, wireless, stoke-holds, and such things. If you can't be intellectual, keep away."

"Mr. Fitzhugh," said Grace, laughing, "you promised to take me down to the stokehold. Suppose we all go now?"

Mr. Fitzhugh beamed. The beautiful one had actually deigned to ask him a favor. Overcome with emotion, he stuttered his reply:

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"Delighted, of course. It'll be jolly good sport to see the beggars hard at work down there. I'll let the shuffleboard go hang. Come, we'll go and see the chief engineer, eh, what?"

He assisted Grace and Mrs. Stuart to their feet, and, followed by the professor, they all made their way to Mr. Wetherbee's cabin.

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## CHAPTER V.

The chief engineer, a blunt-spoken Englishman, with bushy side-whiskers, was amiability itself, and readily consented to escort his visitors down to the region where he was king.

"There's nothing very attractive down there!" he said, by way of warning.

"Oh, I'm very anxious to see the poor fellows at the furnaces. It must be a most interesting sight," exclaimed Grace, with a flush of pleasurable anticipation.

"Won't it spoil our frocks?" demanded Mrs. Stuart, apprehensive of damage to her white chiffon gown.

The engineer took the question as almost a personal insult.

"Bless you, no, m'm. It's as clean as Delmonico's kitchen. We're proud to show it for that reason. Of course, there's plenty of coal-dust flying down in the stoking-pit, where the firemen are, but you'll not go near enough to hurt. Follow me!"

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He led the way through a narrow door amid-ships, on the port side, and they found themselves in a steel-lined gallery, well lighted and fitted on all sides with steel ladders, pipes, and valves. The hissing of escaping steam and the roar of powerful machinery in motion made any attempt at speaking impossible.

"This is the engine-room," shouted Mr. Wetherbee.

Looking down, they saw mighty arms of polished, well-greased steel rise, swing slowly and descend rapidly on the other side. The huge rods of metal ascended and fell again with great rapidity, with a rhythmical, irresistible sweep that was fascinating to watch, making at each thrust and uplift a rushing, roaring noise like the simultaneous blows of a hundred sledge-hammers.

"A man was caught in there once," shouted the engineer, so as to make himself heard above the din. "It was just before the ship sailed. The poor fellow noticed that the crank needed oil, and thought he had time to do it before we started. Just as he was finishing, the signal 'Go ahead' came from the bridge. We didn't know he was in the pit, and we pulled the steam-chest lever. The massive arm rose. He shrieked. Before we could stop the machinery, it dropped again, and he was ground to pieces before our eyes."

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Grace shuddered while the engineer calmly went on to explain the particular use of each part of the wonderful mechanism over which he had supreme control, speaking of each with as much affection as if it were his own offspring.

"Those cranks turn the shaft which gives the propellers their thousand revolutions a minute. The vibration you notice is caused by the enormous steam pressure. Two hundred pounds of steam pressing against every square inch of boiler surface represents power equal to the strength of 10,000 horses." Patting the head of the great beam as it rose to him, he added: "This is the best friend we've got—never tired, always true. But for this we should not be cutting through the water at the speed of twenty knots an hour."

Turning to an iron staircase on the left, he said:

"We'll go now to the boiler-room and see how we make the steam that gives life to the cylinders."

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Beckoning them to follow, he disappeared down a steep stairway, spiral in form, which reached from the promenade-deck down to the very bottom of the vessel. The engineer gallantly extended his hand to assist Grace, and Professor Hanson, not quite sure himself of his footing, made a pretense of rendering similar service to Mrs. Stuart. Mr. Fitzhugh brought up the rear, stepping gingerly. Down they went, round and round, threading their way along an amazing labyrinth of valves, levers, gauges, eccentrics, tubes, and steam-pipes. They were now deep down in the bowels of the ship, a region with a sickening smell of machine-oil and steam. Down, down they went, past the coal-bunkers, following the engineer. The stairway being only imperfectly lighted by electric bulbs, they had to tread carefully. It grew perceptibly hotter. Presently they saw double rows of boilers set sideways. They were in the stoke-hold.

"Look out!"

The warning cry came from Mr. Wetherbee, who stopped short and held out his arms to prevent the visitors proceeding any farther. Then he shouted: "There are the furnaces! You'd better shade your eyes!"

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There was a sudden glare which was almost blinding, a roar of flames under forced draught, and a wave of sickening heat. The air all at once became so thick with flying particles of coal that it was difficult to breathe. Choking, coughing, Grace and her companions clutched nervously at the slender guard-rail which alone interposed between the steel gallery where they stood and the inferno of smell, noise, and heat below.

An extraordinary spectacle presented itself to their eyes. In the blackness underneath, between the rows of boilers, were the stoking-pits, in which fourteen fires, each raging at a fierce white heat, glowed angrily like the red cavernous maws of legendary monsters. Through the open furnace doors issued a blinding light that only intensified the surrounding gloom. Standing about, recoiling from the withering heat, could be seen a dozen stalwart forms. Every now and then they advanced quickly to the furnace, to throw on fresh fuel or to rake the glowing coal, and in the vivid light they were seen to be human beings, but so begrimed and terrible of aspect as to be well-nigh unrecognizable as men. They were entirely naked from the waist up, and so covered with coal-dust from head to heel that they looked like negroes. Only the white circles around the bloodshot eyes and their straight hair betrayed the true color of their skins. They worked silently

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and resignedly, like men accursed, and doomed for some sin committed to everlasting toil and torment. Mere machines of flesh and sinew, they executed with the rapidity and expertness of long practise certain mechanical movements, their toughened muscles and iron frame standing the strain and heat with amazing endurance, sweat literally pouring off their faces and bodies in streams. At moments the heat became intolerable—the stoker himself caught fire. His skin began to blister, his hair started to smoke. He gave a shout, and a comrade quickly emptied a bucket of water over him, throwing off a cloud of steam. Thus temporarily relieved, he set to his devilish task again. It was the hardest kind of labor known to man, but, like the ancient stoics, the stokers gave no sign of their suffering. They toiled uncomplainingly in grim silence, as if resigned to accept this degraded, painful occupation as their proper lot in life. They worked on and on until gradually even their great strength gave out. Overcome by the appalling heat, suffocating from lack of fresh air, one by one they were forced to fall back and give place to fresher men.

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The daintily gowned, carefully groomed passengers from the first cabin watched them, fascinated. It was difficult for Grace, who had seen nothing but plenty around her since she came into the world, to understand that there were human beings so miserably poor, so low down in the social scale that they had to earn their bread in this way. The literalness of the saying "making a living by the sweat of one's brow" dawned upon her for the first time. She was shocked, and then she felt sorry—sorry that any human being should be so degraded. A sense of guilt came over her, as if she realized that the luxuries her class loved and exacted were responsible for this degradation, this suffering.

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She wondered where the refractory fireman was, and presently she perceived him, emerging from the gloom, approaching the roaring furnace, steel rod in hand, to rake the fiery coal, covering his face with his unemployed hand to ward off the blistering heat. He was easily recognizable in spite of his forbidding, ghoulisn aspect, towering as he did several inches above his comrades. Built like a Hercules, he had a torso that would have given joy to the great Praxiteles himself. His lines were academic, the muscles on his massive yet admirably molded shoulders and arms stood out like whip-cords, and as he stood before the open fire, working the steel rod in and out, one leg thrust forward, the rest of the body thrown backward to avoid the heat, his pose recalled one of David's Latin warriors about to let fly a javelin at the enemy.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzhugh. "There's the chap who made such a fuss when we sailed."

"Yes, that's the fellow!" said the chief engineer. "He's going his 'shift' readily enough now, but we've had a hard time with him. He had to be driven to work like a dog. He's a surly brute and always ready for a fight. You'd better not attract his attention."

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So far, the stokers had not noticed the visitors' presence, but Mr. Fitzhugh's exclamation made them look up. One of the firemen laughed, and said something in an undertone to a comrade, whereupon the man grinned, and, turning to the others, pointed to the Hon. Percy, who, with his monocle, his green Tyrolian hat and white spats, looked comical enough to excite derision. The jeers attracted the attention of Armitage, who dropped back from the furnace he was cleaning out and glared up at the intruders. He clenched his fist and ground his teeth as he saw these perfumed, pampered passengers watching them as they might view wild animals in a cage. It made his blood boil to see their clean skins, their fine clothes. No doubt, they had not done a day's honest work in their lives. That animated monkey with the monocle and white spats, and those dainty dolls in laces and jewels, came simply from idle curiosity, to gibe at their dirty, miserable appearance, to mock at their sufferings. The thought maddened him. In a frenzy of rage, he shook his fist in the direction of the little gallery where Grace and her party stood.

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"Get out of here!" he shouted furiously. "We don't want you! This isn't a circus! Get out—do you hear?"

He stooped quickly, and, picking up a heavy piece of coal, lifted his arm as if about to hurl it in their direction. Grace, frightened, recoiled, and her companions also shrank back. Mr. Fitzhugh and the professor had already bolted up the spiral stairway. The chief engineer said quietly to Grace:

"You'd better go. There's no telling how he might excite the other men. I regret very much that you should have been subjected to his insults. He's half-crazy. Leave me to deal with him!"

Shaking his fist at the fireman, he shouted:

"You'll pay for this, Armitage. This means another dose of the 'hospital' for you!"

"Go to hell!" cried the stoker's hoarse voice.

Grace and Mrs Stuart were breathless when they reached the deck, and they gave a sigh of relief when they were able once more to fill their lungs with fresh air.

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"What a shocking place!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, examining her gown to see if she had sustained any damage.

"What a terrible man!" echoed Grace.

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## CHAPTER VI.

All day it had been uncomfortably hot and oppressive. The blazing sun looked like a molten disk in a copper-colored sky. The horizon was veiled in a sort of milky haze. The sea had quieted down to a dead calm. There was not so much as a ripple on the ocean's smooth, oil-like surface.

The big liner was still pounding her way toward Bombay. Another two days and the passengers would go ashore. Saturday afternoon had already arrived. Sailors were busy rigging canvas and putting up decorations for the dance which was to take place that evening. In a cozy corner of the promenade-deck an animated group, which included Grace, Mrs. Stuart, Mrs. Phelps, Count von Hatzfeld, and Professor Hanson, were taking tea.

"I don't see how we can dance in this heat! I think we'd better put off the ball, don't you, count?" exclaimed Grace, appealing to Mrs. Phelps' aristocratic admirer.

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Count Herbert von Hatzfeld was the typical Teuton, tall and blond, with soldierly bearing. His mustache had the uptwist dear to the Kaiser. He had good teeth, polished ways, and an engaging smile. Like most Germans, his speech was stiff and slow, and he sat bolt upright, as if he had accidentally swallowed a poker, which made it impossible for him to unbend.

Grace's suggestion did not seem to appeal to him, for, with a hasty glance at Mrs. Phelps, who appeared engrossed in something Professor Hanson was saying, he replied:

"Ach—that is nothing. I like dancing with you in the heat better than not dancing at all."

Grace purposely ignored the compliment. She had no desire to make Mrs. Phelps jealous; so, hastening to draw the widow into the conversation, she leaned over to her.

"What do you think about it, Mrs. Phelps? I just told the count that I thought it too hot to dance to-night. What's your opinion?"

"Oh, dear, no," laughed the widow, fanning herself. "Let's enjoy ourselves as long as we can. This weather's nothing to what we shall get in the interior of India. I wouldn't miss the dance for anything."

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"Mrs. Stuart, may I trouble you for some more tea?" asked Professor Hanson, with his customary exaggerated politeness.

"You, professor, may have anything," replied Mrs. Stuart, with a smile meant to be fascinating. Archly she added: "You know, I call you my walking encyclopedia. Just think what you've taught me on this voyage—all about ocean currents, the stars, wireless telegraphy. You are a wonderful man."

The professor bowed and preened himself as he sugared his tea.

"You flatter me, my dear madam. Really, you flatter me. It has been an honor and delight to talk with so charming and intelligent a woman."

"Do you hear that, Grace?" laughed Mrs. Stuart. "The professor says I'm charming and intelligent."

"*Ja wohl*, it is true—it is true," exclaimed the count gallantly. "You are very charming. The herr professor vouches for your intelligence also. He is more competent than I to pass on that question. But I can certainly vouch for your being irresistibly charming."

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Mrs. Phelps frowned. For some reason she seemed to regard Mrs. Stuart as more dangerous than Grace. Fanning herself vigorously, she exclaimed:

"It is hotter than I thought it was. I think we're in a warm corner. Count, suppose we take a turn on deck."

"*Ja wohl*—if you wish it," responded the German, rising with native politeness.

Somewhat reluctantly, Mrs. Stuart thought, he joined Mrs. Phelps, and they walked off briskly together down the deck.

"Now they're gone, you'll have to amuse us, professor," laughed Mrs. Stuart.

"I wish I had some one to fan me," complained Grace languidly.

"Allow me," exclaimed the professor eagerly.

Dapper and enthusiastic, he danced around, and, drawing up a chair, took the fan which Grace willingly surrendered. The professor was not exactly the man of her day-dreams, but he was as good as any one else to arrange the rugs around her chair or to pick up the things she was continually dropping. No one had seen the Hon. Percy Fitzhugh for the last two days. He had not dared to show his face on deck since his ignominious flight from the stoke-hold.

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"Why is it so sultry, professor?" asked Grace wearily.

The professor fanned her gently, taking mental inventory as the gentle breeze he made stirred his companion's veil. Her aristocratic features, her transparent, satinlike skin, her long silky lashes drooping on a velvety cheek, half concealing her dark, soul-disturbing eyes, the slender white neck and full bosom covered with dainty open laces partially concealing hidden charms, and an upturned, wistful mouth, with full red lips that suggested unholy delights—all this the

professor noted, and he turned away his head and sighed. For all his science, he was, after all, only a man. And, alas, he had a wife at home. Besides, who knew better than he—the man of science—the futility of lifting one's eyes to the stars. He fanned on in philosophic silence.

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"Tell me why is it so hot?" repeated Grace, quite unconscious of the emotions she was stirring in her bespectacled *vis-à-vis*.

"Really, I don't know," said the professor, startled out of his reveries. Looking around at the sky, he added: "I think we're going to have a change in the weather."

"Oh, I hope not!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart anxiously. "What makes you think that?"

"Well," replied the professor, scanning with the expert air of a weather prophet the distant horizon, where the fiery sun was sinking behind a great mass of purple cloud, "I don't much like the formation of those clouds over there. In these latitudes they usually portend a storm of considerable violence. The sultriness, the unnatural calm, are all storm warnings to the sailor, and if another proof were wanted, the barometer has been falling rapidly all day. We're sure to get something before long."

"Anything's better than this heat," yawned Grace. "I'd love to see a big storm, with tremendous waves washing all over the ship."

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"Really, Grace, I think it's horrid of you to talk that way," protested Mrs. Stuart, half in jest, half in earnest. "If we were wrecked or something, it would serve you right."

"I wouldn't mind being wrecked," laughed Grace. "It would be awfully romantic—so different from our conventional, humdrum life. Just fancy, professor, if the ship were wrecked and you and I were cast away on a desert island, with only monkeys, snakes, and possibly savages for neighbors!"

"You jest, Miss Harmon," replied the professor seriously. "But such things have occurred. Don't you remember what happened to the passengers of the *Aeon*, when that steamer was wrecked on Christmas Island? The survivors were ten weeks on a barren rock in the South Pacific. One woman's hair, which was brown, without a trace of gray, when she sailed on the *Aeon*, turned almost white, as a result of the privations and nerve strain endured on the island."

"Yes, I remember reading about it in the papers," said Mrs. Stuart. "Possibly she lost her hair dye in the panic."

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"I'd look pretty with white hair," laughed Grace. "It's the fashion now to wear tufts of white hair among your own."

"If a cannibal cooked you *à la fricassée*, it wouldn't matter how you looked!" growled Mrs. Stuart.

"Talking of desert islands," said the professor thoughtfully, "a very interesting sociological problem might be solved if one had the time to be shipwrecked and the courage to put my theory to the test."

"What theory is that?" demanded Grace, with languid curiosity.

The professor peered dubiously at both women over his gold-rimmed spectacles, as if questioning their ability to grasp intellectual problems of any nature. Then pedantically, pompously, as if addressing a college class, he went on:

"Ethnology and sociology, as you are perhaps aware, are pet sciences with me. I have always taken keen interest in studying man in his relations to his fellow man, particularly in his relations with women."

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He paused, as if afraid he had said something indelicate. Mrs. Stuart sat up, made her pillows more comfortable, and said, with a laugh:

"This sounds interesting. Go on, professor!"

Thus encouraged, the professor continued:

"We must not lose sight of the fact that man as we see him to-day—clean-shaven, manicured, trouser-creased—is only a step removed from the naked savage ancestor who in the palæolithic age emerged from his cave, club in hand, to defend his family or provide it with food. The man of the stone age tore flesh from the skeletons of wild animals he slew, and made of his wife a beast of burden. To-day, our city dweller employs a French *chef*, and buys for his wife a box at the opera. Conditions have altered radically since the dawn of history, thousands of years of education and refining influences have tamed the primeval man and woman and taught them how to keep their instincts, their passions, under control. Yet the change is far more apparent than real. Civilization is purely artificial. It is only a compromise, a convention. Our boasted refinement at best is little more than skin deep. There's an old saying: 'Scratch a Russian and you'll find a Tartar.' We might also say: 'Scratch civilized man and you'll find a primeval brute.' Fundamentally, men and women of to-day are the same as their savage ancestors, they are moved by the same impulses and desires as when in the dark quaternary epoch they roamed naked through the virgin forests, ferocious-looking and bestial in appetite, their matted hair falling over their brutal faces, their prominent teeth sharp and pointed like wolves' fangs. By nature we are thieves, murderers, liars, cheats."

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"You have a fine opinion of your fellow men, I must say," interrupted Grace, with a mischievous smile at Mrs. Stuart.

"I am stating a cold, scientific fact, and one that is unqualifiedly endorsed by every self-respecting ethnologist," replied the professor firmly. "Civilization," he went on, "teaches us that it is wrong to kill, to steal, to lie, and society has amended Nature's law by decreeing that the murderer shall be executed, the thief imprisoned, the liar and cheat ostracized. That, frankly, is the chief reason why the majority of us behave ourselves. But some men are so constituted that they are unable to control their brutal instincts, their evil passions. Morally and mentally, sometimes physically, even, they resemble in striking fashion their savage prototypes of six thousand years ago. For instance, take that fireman Armitage—a colossus in physical strength, obeying only brutal impulses, to all intents and purposes an untutored barbarian. Civilization, you see, has done nothing for him. He is the primeval man. To me he is interesting, for he proves the truth of my atavistic theory."

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Grace yawned. The professor was too deep for her. In fact, she found him rather tiresome, particularly as she could not guess what he was driving at. Mrs. Stuart, however, was a more attentive, if somewhat puzzled, listener.

"But what has all this to do with being wrecked on a desert island?" she demanded.

The professor smiled in a superior kind of way.

"Allow me to come to my point," he said, with a lordly wave of his hand. "Suppose a ship like the *Atlanta*, for instance, were wrecked, and the only two persons who survived the disaster—a man and a woman—found themselves on a desert island, far from the regular track of steamers and with the remotest chance of any vessel seeing their signal of distress. Suppose the man was one of the crew, a common sailor, a brute, say, of the type of that Armitage fellow, and the woman one of the first-cabin passengers, a beautiful, highly cultured girl, rich, luxury-loving, fastidious, such, for instance, as Miss Harmon——"

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"Please do me the favor to leave me out of your comparisons," interrupted Grace coldly. She did not exactly relish the coupling of her name with that of a disreputable stoker.

"Oh—I only wanted to make my meaning as plain as possible," stuttered the professor, in profuse apology.

"Your meaning isn't plain at all!" retorted Grace, not knowing whether to laugh or to be angry.

"It's about as dense as an Irish Channel fog. But I grasp enough to see that it's interesting," exclaimed Mrs. Stuart. "Please don't talk in parables any longer, professor. Come quickly to the point. I'm getting interested."

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"This is the point," smiled the professor. "What would be this man's and woman's attitude to each other? Separated under normal social conditions by the widest gulf imaginable, on the desert island they would be thrown together in the closest intimacy. The highly educated woman, the refined product of centuries of high breeding, would suddenly find herself the associate and helpmate of an uncouth, brutal fellow barely redeemed from barbarism. Necessity would compel her to look to him for food. Instinct would prompt him to build her a shelter from the elements, and to protect her from attack. As their enforced sojourn on the island grew longer, the common sailor would begin to cast covetous, lustful eyes on his involuntary companion, and as each day the hope of rescue became more remote, he might insist on ties the very suggestion of which would overwhelm her with horror. Yet with no one but God above to call upon for help, she would be completely at the man's mercy. She would be powerless to resist or to deny herself. Her refinement, her culture, her high intelligence, would go for nothing. The primeval man, the beast, would assert his rights and only death could save her honor from the exercise of his brutal force."

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"What a horrid nightmare to conjure up," interrupted Grace, with a shudder. "If such a thing happened to me, I'd jump into the sea."

"I'd pick up a carving-knife and stick him in the ribs," exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, laughing.

"I don't think either of you would do anything of the sort," rejoined the professor. "The sailor would quickly pull Miss Harmon out of the water, and there wouldn't be carving-knives lying around with which to do any rib-sticking. No, you would let Nature work out the problem."

"What!" cried both women simultaneously. "You mean to say that we should——"

"No—not at all," smiled the professor. "You go too quickly. I have merely stated the sailor's desires. Now, the interesting question arises: Will he exercise his rights as the stronger, will he drag this delicate, highly nurtured girl down to his own animal level, or will she by sheer force of character, by her fine mentality and spiritual force, be able to tame the beast and lift him up to her level? That is the problem—a most interesting one from the sociological standpoint; but it could be solved only by being put to an actual test."

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"I hope you don't expect either of us to make the experiment," laughed Mrs. Stuart.

"If you did, I should certainly aspire to be the sailor," retorted, gallantly, the man of science.

"The hypothesis is an interesting one," said Grace thoughtfully. "After all, the situation is not impossible."



The professor rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"Quite so—quite so!" he replied. "What, in your opinion, would be the outcome?"

For a moment Grace left the question unanswered. Then, decisively, she said:

"Such a girl would never yield. Her training, her pride, her self-respect, would protect her. She would die before she degraded herself."

"The idea is preposterous!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart impatiently.

The professor shook his head.

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"My dear ladies, you are both mistaken. I once knew a New York girl, highly educated, wealthy, popular with her friends, who gave up everything, a luxurious home, her position in society, to follow the man she loved—a full-blooded Indian—back to the tents of his people. To-day that girl is living Indian fashion on a Western reservation. In place of her one-time elegance she wears her hair down over her shoulders, an old blanket keeps her warm, her proud carriage has given place to the uncertain, shambling gait, on her back is strapped her Indian papoose. Her old life is practically blotted out."

"Ah," interrupted Grace, "but that is a different case. She loved the Indian. If the girl on the island loved the sailor, she might fall, too, but love should never degrade. On the contrary, it should redeem and uplift the man."

The professor nodded approvingly.

"Bravo! bravo!" he cried.

"Really, Grace, I had no idea you were so sentimental!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart.

"In other words," went on the professor, addressing the younger woman, "you think——"

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"I think," replied Grace slowly and deliberately, "that if they found they loved each other, she would not quite descend to his level nor would he quite ascend to hers. There would be a compromise. In other words, she would stoop; he would reach up. That is my view."

"A most sensible view—most sensible!" said the professor, with enthusiasm.

Mrs. Stuart sprang up from her chair. Collecting her wraps, she said:

"This debate is highly interesting and instructive, but if I stop to listen to any more I shall never be dressed for dinner. Come, Grace, don't forget we dine earlier to-night, because of the dance."

The professor assisted Grace to her feet.

"Thanks," she said. "I've enjoyed our talk so much. You've set me thinking. It's so seldom one is encouraged to think of anything worth while."

The ladies disappeared below, and the professor, tipping his cap, turned on his heel and continued his walk. On the promenade-deck, where a dozen sailors were busy preparing for the evening's coming festivities, he met Captain Summers, who was enjoying a smoke before dinner.

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"Well, captain, pretty warm for dancing, eh? Is it going to get any cooler?"

The captain stopped short and squinted around at the sky. As he took in the weather signs, an anxious look came into his face, and he replied gruffly:

"We'll get something to-night, that's sure. The glass is falling rapidly. But I wouldn't say anything about it to the ladies, if I were you."

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## CHAPTER VII.

Enclosed with sail-cloth for almost its entire length, brilliantly illuminated by hundreds of electric bulbs skilfully clustered in the folds of the artistically draped bunting, with its crowds of dancers, the women with their beautiful gowns, white shoulders and flashing jewels, the ship's officers in full uniform, the men passengers in dress coats—the promenade-deck presented an animated scene of gaiety, light, and color, rendered all the more striking by the sharp contrast with the inky darkness beyond the steamer's rail. The steward's orchestra, screened behind a bank of decorative plants in a railed-off space at the far end of the deck, was playing a dreamy Waldteufel waltz, and the gay, laughing couples, their faces slightly flushed from champagne, whirling gracefully to the strains of the languorous music, made up a picture that appealed sensuously to ear and eye.

Grace was dancing with Count von Hatzfeld. In a décolleté, clinging gown of rose-colored chiffon, cut to set off to full advantage her snow-white shoulders and perfect figure, never had she looked so radiant. Around her slender throat was a string of priceless pearls, a gift from her father, and her hair, dark and lustrous, was arranged in a Grecian Psyche knot with gold bands. She held undisputed sway as belle of the ball, and covetous feminine eyes, ardent masculine eyes, followed her and her lucky partner as they waltzed up and down the deck. Both tall and graceful, they

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made a striking couple.

The count held her pressed closely to him as they turned slowly to the measured time of the voluptuous music. Her eyes were closed and her head drooped slightly on his shoulder. To him it seemed like a taste of heaven to hold this beautiful creature in such close embrace, and as he inhaled the subtle aroma that emanated from her skin and hair, like some exquisite, unfamiliar perfume, intoxicating in its effect, he wondered how he could have been such an ass to waste so many precious hours on Mrs. Phelps.

But Grace was not thinking of the count. He was not the type of man to interest her. She enjoyed dancing for itself, and she abandoned herself to it without a thought of the man who might happen to be her partner. She loved the graceful, rhythmical movement of the waltz, the rapid whirling round and round which made her heart beat tumultuously, the languorous music which intoxicated. She loved the luxury of costly costumes, the odor of beautiful flowers, the sparkle of diamonds and the careless gaiety and unconsequential chatter of the people of her own set. In short, hers was purely a sensual enjoyment—not materially different to that she aroused in the men—but she did not realize it.

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"*Ach*, this is divine!" whispered the count. "May I have the next waltz?"

At that moment a couple brushed past them.

"There's Mrs. Phelps with Mr. Fitzhugh," said Grace mischievously. "She would scratch my eyes out if she caught me dancing with you again so soon."

"I care not," replied the German recklessly and ardently. "When I see your eyes, the world is dead to me."

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A compliment of this kind would have pleased most women, but Grace was accustomed to them. They rather irritated her.

"I'm tired now," she said languidly. "Please take me to my seat."

They joined Mrs. Stuart, who, comfortably ensconced in a corner, was flirting desperately with Mr. Brown, the second officer, a tall, handsome man, smart-looking in his full-dress uniform and white gloves. The count murmured his thanks, bowed, and retired.

"I'm so thirsty!" gasped Grace, sinking into a chair. "I wish I had an ice."

"Allow me to get you one," said Mr. Brown.

Before she could protest, the second officer had disappeared in the direction of the saloon, where an elaborate supper was laid out.

Mrs. Stuart turned to her protégée:

"Grace, you've made a tremendous hit to-night. Your pearls look magnificent. All the women are raving about them."

"They ought to be," replied Grace indifferently. "They cost enough."

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"Forty thousand, didn't you say?"

"I think that's what dad paid."

"Lucky girl! They might be glass for all you seem to care."

Grace made a gesture of impatience as she answered:

"What good are they? Merely pretty gewgaws. Their value means nothing to me. I'm sick of hearing what things cost. They won't bring me what I want most."

"What's that—a husband?" smiled Mrs. Stuart.

"Yes," replied Grace petulantly. "A husband—a man I could respect enough to want to marry. I lose patience with all these animated monkeys that dangle after me. I want a real man."

"Not very kind to the count after he's been so attentive to you all the evening," replied Mrs. Stuart, elevating her eyebrows. "No wonder you're tired, after dancing every single dance. I should be dead in your place. It's all very well to be the belle of the ball, but it's wearing on the nerves. I'm satisfied to play wallflower and talk to the second officer. You've no idea how perfectly fascinating he is. His gold braid and buttons are too cute for anything! What was the count breathing down your neck?"

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"Oh, a lot of foolishness!" laughed Grace.

"Take care," exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, holding up a warning finger. "I saw Mrs. Phelps glaring at you several times. Besides, Germans make impossible husbands. The common German is gross, the educated German is conceited. Both are insufferable. You'd be miserable."

"Don't be alarmed, dear," smiled Grace. "I think no more of the count than I do of those musicians, not so much. Their music charms and he bores."

Mr. Brown reappeared, followed by a steward carrying a tray on which were ices and *petits fours*.

"Oh, how perfectly sweet of you!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart. "I was dying for an ice—the heat is positively dreadful."

"It's getting warmer every minute," panted Grace. "I can hardly breathe. I think we're going to have a storm, don't you, Mr. Brown?"

"Oh—I don't know," replied the officer hesitatingly. "It's always hot in these latitudes, you know. This is nothing to what you'll get in Bombay." [Pg 119]

"Yes, I know," said Grace, nibbling daintily at the delicious frozen delicacy, "but there's something weird in the unnatural stillness of the air. I don't like to see the water so calm."

The second officer shifted uneasily about on his feet. He knew well that there was every indication of a storm. The barometer had been falling steadily for hours. The latest reading marked ten-twenty-nine, which was the lowest he had ever seen it. The captain, too, was uneasy. In fact, they were only waiting for the dance to break up to hurry and get everything shipshape for the blow which they knew was inevitable. Meantime, he argued to himself, there was no use in alarming the ladies or spoiling their fun. He was about to put off further questioning by some reassuring remark, when just then a quartermaster ran up, and, touching his cap, said:

"Cap'n wishes to see you on the bridge, sir."

"Very well, I'll come at once."

Turning to the ladies, Mr. Brown excused himself, and, with a salute, went away, followed by the sailor. [Pg 120]

The gaiety was now at its height. It was impossible to move about the deck, so crowded was it with dancers and promenaders. Suddenly the concealed orchestra struck up the dulcet strains of Strauss' *Blue Danube*, and once more the couples began gliding and turning on the spotless deck, the women's gowns making a beautiful and ever-changing kaleidoscope of color and motion. Everybody was in high spirits. The women were flirting and drinking champagne. The men were laughing and having what the Hon. Percy Fitzhugh declared a ripper of a good time. It was a festival of fortune's favorites, a merrymaking of those lucky few who have nothing to do but enjoy life's pleasures.

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Up on top of the deckhouse, hidden among the ventilators and smokestacks, two men gloomily watched the gay scene below. They were grimy with coal-dust and they wore greasy clothes, with tattered coats buttoned close to their necks. Hot as was the night, it felt cool to them, accustomed as they were to the withering heat of the furnaces below. One was Armitage; the other was Bill. The two stokers had crawled out of the inferno to steal a breath of fresh air. The scene before them seemed like a vision of fairyland.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Bill, when he had somewhat recovered from his astonishment. "It's like at the theayter. Get on to 'em lights and the flags, will ye, and the bloomin' musicians! Look at 'em women folk dancin' all decked out in their sparklers, and 'em blokes wid their open-faced clothes! Officers, too, has on their Sunday duds. And, by gosh! If they ain't drinkin' fizz! Say, ain't it great to be rich!" [Pg 121]

"Let them dance!" growled Armitage savagely, as he sullenly watched the merry crowd. "They'd dance to another tune if the boilers were suddenly to burst, or if the ship ran foul of a rock." Fiercely, he added: "D—n 'em! I'd like to see them down on their blessed knees, weeping and praying!"

To him these men and women, enjoying themselves in fine clothes, with plenty of money, without a care, represented the enemy. They belonged to the class that had wronged him, the world that had been trampling on him all these years. They were those who laughed when he suffered, who threw him a bone as one does to a dog. How he hated them! He ground his teeth at the consciousness of his own impotence to do them injury. [Pg 122]

"That's all right!" grinned Bill. "But anythin' as happens to 'em would catch us, too. I ain't ready for Davy Jones' locker yet."

Still watching the brilliant crowd below, as if fascinated, Armitage replied with an oath:

"I'm ready for anything. I'd just as soon go to the bottom as not. What do you fellows get out of life, anyhow? Nothing but hard work, kicks, and curses—scarcely enough to eat, while those swells have more than they know what to do with. And they never earned a cent of it." Savagely, he went on: "It's dead wrong, I tell you. Why should one come into the world poor and the other rich? Do you wonder I hate them?"

On the deck beneath, Grace rose from her chair and took Count von Hatzfeld's proffered arm. The count had been most persistent in asking for another dance, and to get rid of his importunities, she had consented. Slowly they began to turn to the charming strains of the *Fledermaus* waltz, their tall, graceful figures making them conspicuous among all the other dancers. [Pg 123]

"Say!" exclaimed Bill. "Does ye see that tall gal dancin' wid the guy wid the Dutch whiskers? Ain't she a stunner?"

Armitage's eyes followed those of his mate until they alighted on Grace, when they were immediately arrested. For a few minutes he said nothing, watching in silence the proud beauty who was the cynosure of every eye on deck. With growing interest he took mental note of her dark, flashing eyes, her slender neck and snow-white shoulders, her splendid figure, beautiful hair, and graceful carriage.

"She's pretty, all right!" he muttered, at last. "Look at those pearls round her neck. They're worth a fortune. Isn't she one of those women who came down to the stoke-hold the other day?"

Before Bill could reply there was a flash of lightning, followed by a sharp clap of thunder. The sail-cloths began to flap ominously. On their grimy faces the two stokers felt drops of rain. [Pg 124]

"We're in for it!" cried Bill. "Did ye see 'em storm-clouds?"

There was another glare, more vivid than the first, followed almost immediately by a report that left no doubt of the violence of the storm which was fast approaching. The flash revealed a mass of low-lying clouds, swollen with moisture to the bursting point, around which danced lurid green flames. The wind was rising rapidly with a sinister moan. The sea, while still smooth, was seething and covered with foam like water boiling.

"It's goin' to be a corker!" shouted Bill. "Let's get in before it breaks."

Without waiting to see if Armitage was following him, he ran back to the ventilator up which both men had climbed, and disappeared. [Pg 125]

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Below on the promenade-deck all was excitement and confusion. The peal of thunder had spread consternation among the women, and there was a general stampede for shelter.

The first rush of wind played terrible havoc with the bunting. The floral decorations were scattered in all directions. Part of the canvas awning was torn down. Chairs, tables, and glasses crashed to the deck. Amid the uproar were heard the harsh commands of the ship's officers, and the running here and there of sailors, as they hastened to execute orders. The wind squall died away as quickly as it had come, and for a brief spell the turmoil was succeeded by an unnatural quiet. Some of the passengers, inexperienced in weather signs, thought the worst was over, but the wiseacres shook their heads. It was the lull before the onrushing storm.

Grace and Mrs. Stuart had fled inside at the first alarm, and they both stood at the saloon entrance, peering nervously into the darkness beyond the rail, anxiously questioning Professor Hanson and Count von Hatzfeld, who tried to reassure them. The Honorable Percy Fitzhugh, his face white and visibly nervous, was so excited that he stuck his monocle in the wrong eye. [Pg 126]

"I don't think it will amount to much," asserted the professor, in his pompous, authoritative way.

The words were barely spoken when he was rudely contradicted. Another blinding flash rent the heavens, revealing great masses of forbidding-looking clouds scudding across the sky and hanging so low that they seemed almost to touch the water. A terrific report followed, which shook the ship.

"Oh, I'm so frightened!" wailed Mrs. Stuart, clinging nervously to Mr. Fitzhugh's arm, much to the annoyance of that gentleman, who felt none too comfortable himself.

"Nonsense, Cora, don't be so foolish!" protested Grace. "We're perfectly safe here, no matter what happens."

"She's beginning to roll," said the professor, as the ship gave a sudden lurch. [Pg 127]

"Why are we rolling—is it getting rough?" asked Grace, who was beginning to show signs of trepidation. "There doesn't seem to be any wind."

"It's so deuced dark one can't see a bally thing!" stammered Mr. Fitzhugh.

The night was pitch-dark, and after the brilliancy of the electric lights, to which their eyes had grown accustomed all evening, the surrounding wall of blackness seemed all the more opaque and impenetrable. Still, there was no wind, and the heat was suffocating. The uncanny silence continued. What could be seen of the sea was smooth, and oily, and illuminated in spots with green phosphorescent lights. A deep swell had set in. Rolling in great billows from the south, it caused the steamer to rock so violently that the women had to hold fast in order to keep their feet.

"Isn't this rolling horrible? Each minute I imagine the steamer is going to turn over!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, so alarmed that she hardly knew what she was saying.

"A heavy swell like this," explained the professor calmly, "either follows a gale or comes in advance of one. This sea is evidently the forerunner of a storm. The ladies had better go below [Pg 128]

before it gets any worse."

"I wouldn't think of going to bed," declared Mrs. Stuart emphatically. "Just think if we had to take to the boats and I were in my curl-papers."

Still no wind; only a weird moaning in the distance, which was distinctly audible amid the profound, mysterious silence. The lightning, now more frequent, revealed a sky terrifying in aspect. The suspense was nerve-racking to the stoutest hearted. The captain was heard shouting orders on the bridge. Officers and sailors hurried aft, and, driving the passengers below, closed and barricaded the storm doors. Gathered at the port-holes, their anxiety increasing each moment, the passengers waited and watched. Momentarily, the sea grew more convulsive. The waves increased perceptibly in size, and the ship rocked more violently. Nearer and nearer came that weird, depressing, wailing sound, like the moaning of all the unhappy souls that were ever drowned in the treacherous waters of the deep. Grace and her companions, now thoroughly alarmed, felt that something extraordinary was about to happen, and it did.

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All at once it came. There was a blinding sheet of greenish flame, followed by a deafening report. Then hell itself broke loose. The hurricane was upon them. It came with a terrifying rush of air, which, screeching and howling, raced along at a velocity of a hundred miles an hour, accompanied by torrents of rain. Nothing could withstand the whirlwind's fearful force. Everything loose on deck was instantly swept away. The Marconi aerial wires, snapping like twine, were rendered useless in an instant, the life-boats strained at their lashings, the air was full of flying débris, the officers on the bridge held on for their lives. The sea, now rising rapidly and worked into a frenzy by the force of the wind, was nothing but a waste of seething foam. The huge steamer heeled over at the first shock, and great, green seas, capped with foam, began to break upon the decks. Inside, the stewards ran here and there, closing ports, while the passengers, scared out of their wits, were gathered in the big dining-saloon, gathering such comfort as they could by ceaseless questioning of the busy ship's officers.

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"Is there any danger, Mr. Brown?" Grace asked the second officer, as he hurried past.

"No—no danger at all!" he laughed unconcernedly. "Just a little blow, that's all. No storm that was ever brewed could sink this ship."

Grace was reassured, and she breathed more freely, but Mrs. Stuart was skeptical.

"Ship's officers never acknowledge there is danger," she said crossly. "They wouldn't admit it even if we were all struggling for our lives in the water."

"Oh, there's no question that the ship is staunch enough," said the professor. "The only cause for alarm would be if the hurricane blew us out of our course and the steamer were to run on a rock."

As he spoke there was a terrifying crash of glass and an inrush of water. Mrs. Stuart screamed, and stewards ran from all directions. A giant wave had broken the great glass dome over the dining-room, and the water was pouring down in torrents.

"What will become of us? Where can we go?" wailed Mrs. Stuart.

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"The staterooms are the best place in a storm," said the professor.

"Yes," said Grace. "Let's go to my stateroom. It's large enough to hold us all. We can be miserable together. Come."

They followed Grace, leaving the stewards to mop up the water.

The tempest had now reached its height. The shrieking of the wind and the thunderous blows of the terrific seas, as they broke against the sides of the ship, was terrifying to listen to. The boldest among the men passengers no longer concealed their anxiety, and most of the women were in a mental condition bordering on panic. Mrs. Phelps refused to follow the example of Grace and retire to her stateroom. She preferred, she said, to be where she could get out easily if anything happened. So with a stiff brandy and soda to give her courage, and Count von Hatzfeld to keep her company, the widow prepared to sit out the night in company with a crowd of other frightened passengers, who sat all huddled together in a sheltered corner of the dining-saloon.

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Up on the deck, where duty compelled the officers and crew to expose themselves to the full fury of the storm, the scene was wild beyond description. The force of the wind was extraordinary. It was impossible to face it and breathe. The noise was deafening. What with the continual roar of the now raging sea, the screeching of the tempest and the crash of thunder, the tumult was appalling. The officers on the bridge, clad all in oilskins, hung on for their lives, shouting orders through megaphones.

A tremendous sea was running and the *Atlanta* labored heavily. She rolled so badly that it seemed impossible that she could ever right herself again, and every now and then there came a lurch that strained all the joints, throwing everybody off their feet. The promenade-deck, swept by foaming green water, was practically afloat. One giant comber after another broke over the rail with a thunderous roar, sending up clouds of spray that completely hid the bridge from sight. The night was pitch-dark. Only the intermittent flashes of lightning permitted a glimpse of the raging ocean. It being impossible to see farther than a ship's length ahead, the officers on the bridge were ready for any emergency. The lookouts had been doubled, and the engines slowed

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down. Captain Summers had left nothing undone to ensure the safety of the passengers entrusted to his care and skill, but it was evident from the way in which he bent forward and strained his eyes in an effort to penetrate the murk ahead, that the situation was critical.

Among those exposed to the weather on the upper decks there was only one who watched with grim indifference the fury of the hurricane. The fiercer the wind blew, the angrier grew the ocean, the higher rose Armitage's spirits. When the tremendous seas began to break over the vessel, the stoker exulted. He was still among the ventilators where Bill had left him, not having had time to retreat before the storm broke. Caught by the first rush of wind, he was hurled violently against an iron stanchion and knocked senseless. When he came to, he found himself clinging desperately to a rail, with the hurricane blowing right over him. The force of the wind was inconceivable. He tried to stagger to his feet and resist it, but he could not move. The atmosphere was full of a rushing, irresistible force which suffocated him. The rain, driven with merciless violence, blinded him. He could neither breathe nor see. His ears were deafened by the unearthly screeching of the wind and the constant roar of the waves. A flash rent the surrounding blackness. He caught a glimpse of the water convulsed in a fury, the decks below swept by foaming seas, the ship's officers and crew running excitedly about.

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It flashed upon him suddenly that the steamer was in danger, yet, instead of making him tremble with apprehension, the thought stirred within him a thrill of savage exultation. Why should he care? Only those who enjoyed life had reason to recoil from death. What joys did life hold out to him? He could never redeem the past. He was tired of the struggle. He had knocked about the world long enough. He would be discharged on the steamer's return to port, and it would be hard, if not impossible, to find another job. Luck was certainly against him. What was the use of bucking against one's luck? It would be as well to have done with it all. A jump into the sea, a moment's choking and involuntary struggle with the waves, and all would be over. His jaws closed with a click, and a hard expression came into his eyes. If this was to be the end of all his hardships and suffering, at least he would not go alone. Those first-cabin passengers, with their dainty frocks and fastidious manners—they would have to take the same watery road as he. The rich and the poor, the happy and the wretched—all are equal in the presence of Death. And as each second the hurricane increased in fury, and the ship plunged more heavily, he had a sense of savage joy as, in his mind, he pictured the final catastrophe, the wild scramble for the boats, and the final screams and death struggles in the boiling waves.

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Suddenly there was a deafening roar. He heard warning shouts, followed by the splintering of wood and the smashing of glass. Then came a solid wall of green water. A mountainous sea swept clean over the place where he lay, and passed on, leaving him bruised and gurgling for breath. Only the rail had prevented him from being carried bodily over the side. A giant wave had crashed down on the ship, twisting rails, smashing life-boats, and deluging the interior of the ship with tons of water. Below could be heard the shouts of the passengers. A moment later, without further warning, came another and more serious shock, a series of bumps on the ship's bottom, accompanied by a harsh, rending sound. The steamer stopped and trembled from bow to stern. There was a grinding sound. The vessel listed and heeled far over. The engines suddenly stopped. The siren began to blow dismally. The officers were shouting. The *Atlanta* had run on a rock.

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In the saloon and staterooms all was chaos and confusion. The electric lights had gone out, the sudden inrush of water having extinguished the furnaces. Already the scared firemen were climbing up from the stoke-hold like rats escaping from a sinking ship. Every one realized that the steamer was doomed, yet there was no panic. The imminence of the peril seemed to have stricken every one dumb, passengers and stewards alike. Hardly a sound was heard except the quick orders given by the officers and the noise of the passengers' footfalls, as they hastened up on deck. Every one was cool. The men retained their self-possession, the women their fortitude. There was no sign of hysteria. On every one's face was a tense look of quiet anxiety, as if it was realized that death was near, and each had summoned up courage to meet it bravely. Even Mrs. Stuart, white-faced and half fainting, did not give way entirely. She and Grace, assisted by Professor Hanson, made their way as quickly as they could to the deck where, all huddled together, they patiently waited for the sailors to lower the boats. The waves were running mountain high. What use were the life-boats in such a sea? Grace's lips moved in prayer.

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Armitage, still clinging to the rail, watched the sailors as they worked rapidly at the davits to lower the boats. This, he said to himself, was certainly the end. No boat could live in those tremendous seas. They would all drown like rats. He saw the Honorable Percy Fitzhugh, still in his spats and green Tyrolian hat, but very humble now, and white-faced, standing by the girl he had seen dancing—the proud beauty with the big dark eyes. She was pale and silent, yet she did not give way to hysterical emotion. He admired her for her pluck. She was spunky—that was evident. Some women got into a boat, which was lowered away in safety. Another was let down, loaded to the gunwale with human freight. Just as it touched the water there came a tremendous wave, the fragile boat was tossed high in the air, and in an instant its occupants were struggling in the water. There were women's screams and men's shouts, then a sinister silence. Armitage laughed. At last he had the upper hand. These swell cabin passengers drowning there before his eyes were afraid of death, while he welcomed it. He felt grateful that this much revenge had been vouchsafed him. The cries of the dying, the frightful tumult raised by this death orgy of wind and sea, instead of frightening him, sounded in his ears like the most sublime music he had ever heard.

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As the doomed ship settled deeper on the reef, the waves broke on board with redoubled force. It was only a question of minutes when the huge hulk would begin to go to pieces. Suddenly there

was a terrific explosion, the deck rose under him, and the next thing he knew he was in the sea, battling with the waves. [Pg 139]

He was an expert, powerful swimmer, and he found himself struggling for life in spite of himself. He tried to stop swimming, to let himself sink. He could not. The instinct of self-preservation was too strong. So he swam on, now resting, now floating. He saw nothing of the ship or of the boats. He presumed some got away. He heard shouts, but paid no heed. Steadily he swam on, wondering when his strength would give out and nature would let him drown. All at once he bumped against something soft.

"Save me!" cried a woman's voice weakly.

Instinctively he put out his hand and caught her by the hair just as she was going down for the second time. Her eyes were closed and her face pale as death. It was the tall girl with the dark eyes. If she had not spoken he would have thought she was dead. Supporting her firmly with one hand and keeping her head above water, he swam on. He wondered why he took the trouble. He would tire soon and then both must sink. But he swam on, with Grace limp, unconscious, half drowned at his side. He felt he was unable to stay afloat much longer. His left arm was already numb from the girl's dead weight. Every muscle in his body ached. The end must soon come. Why not let her go now and have done with it? [Pg 140]

Suddenly he heard a sound that gave him renewed energy. It was the roaring noise of heavy surf beating on the shore. They must be close in land. Another determined effort and perhaps he could get in. Desperately exerting the last of his great strength, he swam on. A monster wave carried him forward, high on its crest, and as the water retired he felt sand underneath his feet. Another billow carried them in still farther. He was in a maelstrom; he could not see; there was a rushing, roaring sound in his ears. A wave knocked him down, and they were both nearly suffocated as they rolled over and over in the boiling water. He staggered to his feet and was again dragging her in when a receding wave snatched them back. Then came another and bigger wave which threw them in again. This time he dug his feet desperately in the shifting sand, and, by a herculean effort, resisted the deadly suck of the undertow. The wave receded, leaving them still higher. Before another could reach them he had picked his unconscious companion up in his arms, and staggered up the beach safe out of the clutch of the water. [Pg 141] [Pg 142]

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## CHAPTER IX.

Dawn broke, gray and wet. Although the storm had spent its fury and the wind had quieted down to a gentle breeze, the sea still ran mountains high and a fine rain was falling. But there was promise of clearing weather. Low on the eastern horizon a fringe of fiery red broke through the leaden clouds, putting in relief the water-line and heralding the near approach of sunrise. Away out yonder, far beyond the towering, white-capped breakers, protruded the jagged points of the treacherous sunken reef on which the ill-fated *Atlanta* had crashed to her doom.

Armitage strained his eyes in every direction until they ached. With the coming of daylight he had expected to get a glimpse of the wreck; possibly he would see people still on board, signaling for help. But as the darkness paled and he was able to distinguish water and sky through the receding gloom, he saw, to his amazement, that the steamer had completely disappeared. He perceived pieces of wreckage, and, near the reef, he thought he spied an upturned boat, but of the big steamer and the other life-boats which got away before the boilers exploded, there was not a sign. Nothing but a desolate waste of tossing gray water met his eyes everywhere. [Pg 143]

As far as he could make out they were on an island. He had no idea how large it was, or if it was deserted or inhabited. He had heard his shipmates talk of islands in the Indian Ocean that were a peril to navigation, and he supposed this was one of them. When it got lighter he would be better able to take his bearings.

He was exhausted and weak after his long struggle with the waves, and his brine-soaked clothes hung heavily on him. Yet he no longer looked the same man he had been on the ship. The transformation in his appearance was startling; the long swim had effected a wonderful change. All trace of coal-dust had disappeared from his face and neck; once more he was a white man. His hands were cut and bleeding from the sharp rocks, and his body was bruised from head to foot, but nothing could conceal the fact that his bearing had distinction, that his head was well shaped, his features clean cut, that he had a strong mouth and a clear eye. [Pg 144]

But he was supremely unconscious of how he looked. He was desperately hungry. His throat was dry and parched. His brine-soaked clothes hung heavily on him. His senses and consciousness seemed numbed. In truth, he marveled to find himself alive. Why had he exhausted and bruised himself struggling with the waves, fighting death, when he had no desire to live? Yes, he remembered now. It was the girl's fault. She had cried out to him, and somehow, in spite of himself, he had clutched at her and saved her from drowning.

He clenched his fists and muttered an oath as he turned to look at her. She was still lying, apparently unconscious, in the spot where he had carried her after they both staggered out of the jaws of death, and fell, exhausted, on the wild, storm-swept beach. His first instinct on gaining a foothold safe from the deadly suck of the thundering breakers had been to find for his helpless

companion some kind of shelter from the wind and rain, and as he was assisting her over the slippery stones, green with slimy sea grass, they accidentally stumbled across a wide opening in the face of the precipitous cliff. Nearer inspection showed it to be a deep crevice, hollowed out of the solid rock in past ages by the action of the water. The sea had since receded, leaving a kind of cave, of no great height or depth, yet large enough to accommodate half a dozen persons. The interior was dry, while the thick growth of velvety moss underfoot provided a comfortable couch.

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"A shipwrecked young woman couldn't wish for more luxurious quarters," muttered Armitage grimly to himself, and after he had taken mental note of the natural advantages of the place, he turned to look at the prostrate girl.

As yet Grace had given no sign of life. Her eyes were closed and her face livid. But for the nervous twitching of her mouth, and a low moan which from time to time escaped her lips, one might think she was dead. Her head was thrown back against the cold, damp wall, her beautiful, long hair, matted by sea water, was all disheveled. Water ran off every part of her and formed a little puddle by her side. Her dainty ball-dress, the envy of every woman on board only a few hours before, was in shreds. What remained of it, soaked and discolored, clung closely to her figure, revealing to Armitage's gaze outlines which caused the blood to rush tumultuously to his head. Her low-necked gown, torn during the panicky rush for the life-boats, had collapsed entirely at one side, exposing part of the delicately rounded, blue-veined bosom, and shoulders and arms as white and academically beautiful as if cut in marble by the sculptor's chisel.

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**NEVER IN HIS LIFE HAD HE BEHELD A WOMAN SO FAIR.**

Armitage stood transfixed, his pulse throbbing furiously, his heart in his mouth. For a moment the beast was aroused. His eyes sparkled sensually, incoherent sounds issued from between his clenched teeth. A kiss on that gently curved, sensitive mouth would be as near a taste of heaven as ever he would get. He'd be a fool to hesitate. They were alone—he and this girl—not a human being was within a thousand miles of them. The chances of rescue were infinitesimal. They had escaped the waves only to die of starvation—that was certain. If they must die—to-day—to-morrow—or the next day—why deny oneself any joy that the world still had to offer? Thus he argued, not in these words, but in feverish, unreasoning, reckless thought. Boldly he approached her. His face was flushed, his eyes were ardent as they took in every voluptuous detail of her motionless form. He advanced closer, and, bending over her, stood for a moment fascinated by the sight of her bare, alabaster-like skin and perfectly modeled arms. Never in his life had he beheld a woman so fair.

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Suddenly she stirred and uttered a low moan. Armitage sprang back and looked around guiltily. Only the screaming sea-gulls were there to witness his discomfiture, yet his face had the expression of one detected in an unworthy action. Again Grace moaned and stirred as if in pain. He stood irresolute, embarrassed, not knowing what to do to help her, trying to feel that he didn't care, surly and ill-tempered because he felt contempt for himself. What was this woman's suffering to him? She belonged to the class he now hated, the detested plutocracy upon which he had declared war. The money she spent on her finery and

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pleasures was no doubt gotten by cheating such poor fellows as he out of their rights. Let her have her share of hard knocks. He chuckled to himself as he reflected on life's ironies. Only a few brief hours ago, on the luxuriously appointed liner, she was everything, he was nothing. She was the grand lady, the pampered cabin passenger; he was the despised stoker, hardly to be counted among human beings. Suddenly what an astounding revolution! A cataclysm, and all was changed—distinctions of birth, education, and wealth were instantly abolished. Now they were merely two helpless human beings cast away on a deserted island in the lonely mid-ocean, one dependent upon the other, one no better than the other. They had returned to primeval conditions. In what way was she his superior now?

Thus arguing to himself, he took fresh courage and drew nearer. She was certainly pretty, there was no getting away from that, and he—was a man!

Lying there, pale, soaked, bedraggled, Grace looked the picture of utter misery. Of the artificial aids to good looks which women in their vanity love to employ, not one remained, yet even with every adjunct of self-adornment gone she was still beautiful. The exuberant spirits and pride of bearing were no longer there, only a sad, wistful, pallid loveliness that was even more potent in its appeal than the radiant, gay, fashionably gowned, proud beauty who had attracted his gaze when, from his place of concealment among the ventilators, he had gloomily watched the brilliant

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scene on the promenade-deck.

She made no attempt to move. Still stunned by the awful calamity which had so swiftly overtaken the steamer, her ears still ringing with the despairing cries of her friends as they were swept to their deaths, her brain was a blank. She could not think or reason. Every sense seemed paralyzed. She felt no sensations of hunger or thirst. She was surprised to find herself still alive. All she remembered was the terrible explosion, the frenzied scramble for the boats, and then all at once she found herself in the water, swimming, trying to keep herself afloat. How she reached the shore she did not know. A man had caught her as she was sinking, and in a vague sort of way she thought he was one of the crew. She wondered where she was and why her body ached so. The air chilled her bare shoulders. She shivered, moaned, and opened her eyes.

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"Are you hurt?" he asked, advancing.

This abrupt breaking of the long silence by the sound of a human voice seemed strange to her. She thought she was dreaming, and she smiled faintly at the absurdity of it.

"Are you hurt?" he demanded, again stooping over her.

She turned her gaze wonderingly on Armitage. In the uncertain light it was difficult to get a good view of his face. He seemed a stranger to her. From him, her eyes wandered inquiringly round the cave.

"Where am I?" she asked, in a low voice.

"On an island," he replied shortly. "The steamer's lost. Only you and I were saved."

She turned white, and her breath came and went quickly. Then she caught sight of her torn gown, and quickly she covered herself modestly, a faint flush overspreading her pale face. She continued to stare at Armitage, as if he reminded her of some one she had seen before. Puzzled, she passed her hand over her eyes as if trying to remember.

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"Who are you?" she said finally. "Where have I seen you before?"

He shifted uneasily on his feet and looked away, avoiding her scrutiny. Why should she know that he had been one of the poor devils in the stoke-hole? Perhaps she already recognized him as the deserter who was so unceremoniously dragged on board ship in New York Harbor. Gruffly he answered:

"I was swimming. I heard you cry out. I brought you in—that's all."

"You were one of the crew?"

He nodded.

"Yes—one of the crew."

"How can I thank you!" she exclaimed. "My father is rich. He will reward you."

He laughed harshly.

"Money isn't much good here. You don't realize where we are. Every one's gone but we—all are drowned. We're as good as dead. We're a thousand miles from the mainland—with no means of getting away and no food. There's little chance of being sighted by a passing ship, for the storm had blown us out of the regular steamer track." Brutally, he added: "You might as well understand the situation. Death by starvation stares us in the face."

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Grace interrupted him by an outburst of hysterical weeping. Weakened physically by exertion and exposure, her nerves overwrought by terror and suspense, little wonder that at last she gave way. She sobbed like a child, a piteous passion of tears that would have melted a heart of stone. She didn't care for herself. She was ready to die. But she was sorry for Daddy and her poor mother. They would grieve for her and it would break their hearts. She shuddered as she thought of the shocking fate which had befallen her recent companions on the ship.

"Perhaps some of them got away in the boats," she gasped between her tears.

"Maybe they did," he replied, with an indifferent shrug of his shoulders. With a gesture of impatience he added curtly: "It's no use crying. That won't do any good. What you need most is to get out of those wet clothes. You're soaked to the skin."

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"I have no others to put on," ruefully she replied, making an effort to sit up and squeezing the water out of her skirt. She thought with dismay of all her precious belongings forever lost at the bottom of the sea. Fortunately, her pearls were saved. The necklace was still round her throat.

"Look!" she said, holding the necklace up so he could see it. "At least we have these. They are worth \$40,000."

He laughed derisively.

"They're worth nothing where there's no one to buy them," he growled. Then, impatiently, he said: "Don't waste your time bothering about that. What you want to do is to take those clothes off right away. Then you'll dry them and put them on again. You can't remain any longer in wet clothes."

He spoke authoritatively, with the commanding air of one who intends to be obeyed. She was in no mood to argue the matter. Besides, he was right. She was already chilled and ran the danger of getting pneumonia unless she dried her clothes quickly; but how could she change them—with no fire to dry her things and with this man coming in and out? He saw her embarrassment and intuitively guessed the reason. He was still in the shadow, but she fancied she noticed a covert smile hovering about his mouth, and she immediately took a dislike to him, in spite of the service he had rendered her. His manner was overbearing—almost insolent. Again, there was something about him that reminded her of a man she had known or seen, but still she could not remember. Turning to her, he said gruffly:

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"I'm fairly well soaked myself. While you're changing I'll go and take a run along the sands and dry my clothes in the sun. Before I go I'll light a fire for you to dry your clothes on."

He produced from his pocket a small box wrapped in oilskin. Opening it, he held up three lucifer matches, and, grimly, he said:

"These are worth more to us than your pearls. See—there are only three left, and they're as dry as when I left the ship. I'm going to light a fire just outside there, at the foot of the cliff. Once lighted, the fire must never be allowed to go out. It must burn night and day. It will keep us warm and cook our food. I'll start the fire; you'll keep it going with what small pieces of wood you can gather. Do you understand?"

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Grace was taken aback. For a moment she was speechless with indignation. This man, this common sailor, was actually giving her a command, telling her to do menial work, and admonishing her to do it properly, as if she were a domestic servant. Her first impulse was to rebel and order him angrily from her presence. On second thoughts, she said nothing. After all, he was right. She ought to be willing to do her share. They were no longer on the ship where she had only to touch a button and a dozen maids and stewards ran to obey her slightest whim. Although reared in luxury, and petted and indulged since her birth, she was not a fool. She was quick to realize that conditions had changed and that their respective social positions—hers and this sailor's—were now completely reversed. She was dependent on him, not he on her. If she were to be saved, it would be thanks to his resourcefulness, his courage. Her money would be of no use here. He alone could protect and save her, so why, quarrel with him. Docilely, therefore, she replied:

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"Yes—I understand."

Armitage left her alone in the cave, and, proceeding along the silvery sands, set hastily to work to gather together the scattered driftwood. The beach was strewn for miles with the flotsam and jetsam of countless tides, an accumulation that apparently had been undisturbed for centuries. Much of it was moldy with age and, well protected from the rains by overhanging rocks, was dry as tinder.

"This stuff'll make a bully blaze," he muttered cheerfully to himself.

He toiled with a will, glad of the brisk exercise to take the kinks out of his numbed limbs. The sun was now high above the horizon, and its warm rays felt grateful after the chill of the stormy night. Directly he had started the fire, he'd leave the girl to change her clothes and go himself where he could take a rub-down and lay out his own things to dry. Then he'd take a run along the coast and climb the cliff to see what sort of a place this was they had landed on. He felt a sense of relief that he was no longer subjected to the discipline and restraint of the ship.

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He chuckled to himself as his mind dwelt on the disaster that had emancipated him. His taskmasters were no longer there to torment him—all were drowned or gone away in the boats. Once more he was a free man. At last he could raise his head. To the others the wreck had been an overwhelming calamity! to him it meant salvation. No matter what the future had in store, no matter what privations he must suffer on this island—even if he must soon perish—anything was better than the torture he had endured in that hellish stoke-hole.

In a way, he felt sorry for the girl. Evidently she was not used to roughing it. It would be harder for her than for him. She seemed inclined to be haughty, he thought. He had noticed the proud toss of her head when he spoke about her attending to the fire. He smiled grimly. She didn't like that. Well, that was the fault of her bringing up. How could a girl, raised as she'd been, be expected to do anything useful? Such girls were only the butterflies of life—of no particular use except to look pretty. It wouldn't do her any harm to learn a thing or two. Apart from that, she seemed all right. In fact, he was not sorry she'd been saved to share his solitude. His hour had not come to die, that was sure; otherwise he'd have been drowned with the rest. As long as he had to be cast away on this barren islet it was as well that he had a companion. Of course, she wouldn't be much use if it came to real hardships—procuring food, fighting off attacks of animals or reptiles, or building a boat to get away—but she was a beauty, a prize-winner, no mistake about that. Again his eyes gleamed as his mind dwelt upon what had been revealed to him in the cave—a torn dress, a white, soft neck, a soaked dress showing limbs like sculptured marble, a curved mouth, tempting enough to inflame a saint. Fast and furiously he worked, strange thoughts crowding upon each other in his brain.

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Soon he had gathered a big pile of driftwood, and had it all ready for lighting. He rubbed his hands with satisfaction. They'd soon have a blaze that could be seen fifty miles out at sea. Taking from his pocket once more the little box, he unwrapped the oilskin and took out one of the three precious matches. Then, with infinite precautions, stooping and covering the tiny flicker with one

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hand to protect it from the wind, he applied the light. Only one match was necessary. Owing to the extreme dryness of the wood, the pile caught instantly. A thick column of smoke rose to the sky, followed by a sharp crackling and long tongue of flame. More wood and more he kept piling on until he had before him a roaring furnace. Pleased with the quick result, he shouted to Grace, who was still inside the cave.

"See here. You'll soon dry yourself by this fire!"

Grace appeared at the mouth of the cave. Busy tending to the fire, his back turned toward the cliff, he did not see her suddenly recoil as she perceived him, nor the expression of consternation and terror that came into her pale, wan face. As he stood there full in the strong light of the roaring fire, she saw the face of her rescuer distinctly for the first time. She saw vividly a picture she had seen once before on the ill-fated ship—the handsome profile of a man bending low over a glowing furnace, with the shoulders and muscles of a Hercules, and the head and grace of a Greek god. Transfixed, her bosom heaving, she stood rooted to the ground. Now she remembered! Now she knew him! He was the fireman Armitage—the terrible man of the *Atlanta's* stoke-hole. She was alone on the island—with that terrible man!

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## CHAPTER X.

The rest of that morning, Grace, to her intense relief, saw little of the man into whose abhorrent company she had been so strangely and unceremoniously thrown. Once the fire was well started Armitage had disappeared, leaving her in privacy to attend to her immediate needs. For this much consideration she felt grateful to him. But, after she had dried her clothes and had time to realize her terrible situation, she was overwhelmed by the hopeless horror of it. Her faculties well-nigh paralyzed, her nerves shattered almost to the point of total collapse, she sank down on a rock under the frowning cliffs, and, looking helplessly out over the vast and now peaceful sea, started to take mental stock of the extraordinary predicament in which she suddenly found herself.

Things had happened so quickly that she had no time for reflection. Bad as the situation had been before, it was ten times worse now. To think that she should be perched on a lonely island hundreds of miles from civilization, without any means of communicating with the outside world, alone with that man—and such a man!

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Her heart sank as she remembered all the dreadful things she had heard about him on the ship. It was surely calamity enough to be shipwrecked and cast away on a stupid little island without food, shelter, or clothes, but how much more serious was the situation when the only other human being to be saved beside herself was the worst character on board. The first revelation of his identity was such a shock to her nervous system that she nearly swooned, her brain reeled, she thought she would go insane with terror.

She tried to calm herself. At the worst, she argued philosophically, he could only kill her and throw her body into the sea. Not that she could look forward to such a fate with equanimity. She gulped down a hysterical sob as she pictured her splendid form and tender young flesh providing a toothsome meal for some rapacious shark, and she wondered if the world—particularly her own set—would care when they read in the sensational Sunday papers all the horrible details of her dreadful end. Yet why, after all, should this man—this ogre—kill her? Her pearls didn't tempt him. Hadn't he scoffed at them just now? Then her face blanched and she dug her manicured nails deep into her skin as she thought of a worse fate than death that could overtake her. She had read and heard of such things—hadn't Professor Hanson, during their talks on shipboard, conceived this very situation?

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She wondered how she could protect herself and what attitude she should adopt toward this man. An open rupture would never do; she must not even show distrust of him. Only she must be constantly on her guard. All these thoughts were rushing through her brain when it suddenly occurred to her that she was hungry. What was more natural? The last thing she had eaten was the plate of ice cream brought to her during the dance by Count von Hatzfeld. Since then nothing but sea water had passed her lips.

A feeling of faintness came over her, and soon her dread of Armitage gave her less anxiety than her speculations regarding the problem of procuring food. She was desperately hungry. Perhaps if she walked along the shore she could pick up some shell-fish—oysters, or perhaps some crabs. She thought pensively of the delicious crab meat *à la Newburg*, served in chafing-dish, which was one of the culinary delights of Sherry's delightful little after-the-theater suppers, and, closing her eyes, she gave a sigh of despair. Then, catching a glimpse of her water-stained, tattered gown, she could not help laughing in spite of her misery. The idea of her traipsing along the sands in a décolleté ball-dress struck her as ludicrously incongruous. She must find something else to wear, but what?

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She wondered where Armitage had gone and why he stayed so long away. Perhaps he would never come back. Then, surely, she would perish miserably alone. It needed a man's strength and resourcefulness to ensure an existence in such a wild, deserted spot. What could she, a frail woman, do alone to get food and devise some way of escape? Unconsciously, she already missed

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her companion. Without realizing it, she admitted his superiority in the new conditions the shipwreck had brought about.

Suddenly she heard a shout, and, turning quickly, she saw him coming along the beach carrying something in his hands. She advanced toward him, preserving a cold, indifferent exterior, but glad secretly that he had returned. After all, he was a human being, some one she could talk to. Had she alone been saved, to live alone on this island, she would have gone mad. As she watched him approach she wondered why she had not recognized him at first. It was the same tall, splendidly proportioned figure, the same dark, wavy hair, closely cropped, the same regular features, and bold, defiant toss of the head. Yes, she saw the reason why. His face was clean and white now, whereas on shipboard she had never seen it any other way than grimy and covered with coal-dust. The involuntary bath had effected a wonderful transformation. He was decidedly handsome. As he came along at a quick, swinging gait she wondered why such a fine fellow should have sunk so low as to be obliged to become a common stoker.

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"I have your breakfast here!" he called out cheerily, as he came in earshot. "I guess you're ready for it."

She reddened, and stammered a confused reply.

"Here's some fresh water," he said, as he came up to her. Holding out a huge scallop-shell filled with water, he went on: "You can drink it safely. I've found a spring in the hills away yonder. It's clear as crystal."

Grace drank greedily, murmuring her thanks.

"It's delicious!" she gasped between gulps.

He gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"I picked up the shell along the beach," he said. "It doesn't make a bad drinking-cup. We'll find it useful. Mind you don't lose it."

Again that tone of command which had irritated her before. She looked up angrily, but he was paying no attention to her. Putting his hand in his pocket he brought out some mango fruit and offered it to her.

"Here's something you can break your fast with. There's plenty of it growing hereabouts. There are limes and cocoanuts, too, for the picking. When I get my tackle fixed, I shall be able to catch some fish."

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He threw himself down on the sloping beach as though weary after the long exploring tour, and, picking up a splinter of wood, he started to draw lines on the sand.

Grace, busy eating, her white teeth biting hungrily into the luscious fruit, watched him without speaking. His abrupt manner intimidated her. She was afraid of him, and the realization of her own utter helplessness only served to make her more nervous. Finally, summoning up courage, she asked:

"What did you see—could you make out where we are?"

He looked up and nodded. Then, with his bit of wood, he began to draw in the soft sand a diagram of their position. Carelessly he said:

"We're on an island about ten miles long by about three miles wide. It seems to be of volcanic origin and uninhabited. The land is low and swampy in parts, with a lot of thick brushwood, but there's a big hill on which we can build a signal fire."

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"What are our chances of being sighted and taken off?" she interrupted eagerly.

"Decidedly slim, I should say," was his laconic rejoinder.

Grace stopped eating, and a look of dismay overspread her face. He continued:

"You see we're far out of the regular steamship track. Not being down on the chart, navigators probably never heard of this island. Our only hope is in the whalers. These waters are full of whales, and whaling-vessels come here after them from all parts of the world. Some no doubt land here to replenish their supply of fresh water. Or a passing whaler may sight our fire."

"How long will we have to wait?" she demanded anxiously.

He shrugged his shoulders as if the length of their enforced sojourn on the island were a matter of no concern to him. Indifferently he replied:

"One can't tell. Three months—six months—a year!"

"A year!" gasped Grace. "How could I live here a year, or even six months—I should go mad."

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He smiled grimly.

"Oh, we get accustomed to most anything when we have to. I wasn't overfond of the job I had on the ship, but I had to knuckle down to it all the same. We don't always get things the way we want them, do we?"

She ignored the rebuke, too much perturbed at the gloomy prospect he held out. Nor did she notice that this was the first allusion he had made to his work in the stoke-hold.

"Even a month would seem like a century," she went on almost hysterically. "Is there no possible way of reaching the mainland?"

He shook his head.

"The nearest land is a good eight hundred miles away. We have no boat—no compass——"

"Oh, what can we do? What can we do?" she wailed, pacing to and fro, swinging her hands.

"Make the best of it, I should say," he replied coolly. There was the suggestion of a smile hovering around his mouth, and his eyes were full on her as he added: "I'm in no particular hurry to get away myself."

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She saw the covert smile and the boldness of his glance, and it aroused her resentment. Forgetting her caution she turned angrily on him.

"Of course, *you* don't care. Why should you? You find there's plenty here to eat and nothing to do. That kind of life suits you better, no doubt, than having to earn a living by hard work. You've no friends who are mourning for you, no father or mother grieving over your supposed death. So long as you can enjoy creature comforts without paying for them, you are satisfied to stay here forever. But with me it's different. My life has not been like yours. You ought to realize that. What may seem like comfort and all that is necessary to you, is torture and starvation to me. You ought to be able to see that! You ought! You ought!"

She stopped, her face red from excitement, her bosom heaving, her voice choking with sobs.

Taken aback at the vehemence of her hysterical outburst, he simply looked at her, admiring her flashing, dark eyes, fascinated by her beauty. He did not care what she said, although she had spoken as a woman might to her lackey. Her words were stinging, her tone contemptuous. She had given him plainly to understand that she was fashioned of entirely different clay. When forced to it by circumstances she might, when thirsty, share his cup. She might, when hungry, accept part of his food, but aside from the satisfying of these elemental human desires, he and she had naught in common. He must understand that plainly.

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"She's dead right," he said to himself. Socially they were separated by the widest gulf imaginable. Even with him to attend to her wants she would be as much alone on this island as if he were not there. A common stoker was hardly fit to breathe the same air as a girl who was heiress to millions, accustomed to all the refinements of wealth.

He looked at her for a moment in silence. His face flushed and his lips moved as if he were about to make some angry retort. With a visible effort he mastered himself, and, turning on his heel, he walked slowly away.

Grace's first impulse was to recall him. Only her pride prevented her running after him. Already she regretted her hasty words. She would have given almost anything to unsay them. She had not intended to be discourteous to this man. Whatever his character might be, however low he might be in the social scale, he had rendered her a service she could never repay. He had saved her life. Yet, thoughtlessly, needlessly, she had hurt his feelings. What utter folly it was to boast of her social position in her present predicament. She thought with bitterness how little her culture and education could help her now. Their situation was precarious enough without making matters worse by senseless bickerings.

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Wearily she sank down on a rock, angry with herself, apprehensive of the consequences of her speech. She had had reason to fear him before; by her own foolishness the rupture was now definite. This new misunderstanding would certainly add to her discomfort and perhaps lessen her chances of escaping from this worst of horrors—a living death!

Looking out to sea, she strained her eyes in every direction in the hope of catching a glimpse of some vessel which to her would mean safety and home. The thick black smoke from the fire Armitage had started was still rising in a straight column to the sky. If there happened along a craft of any description their signal could not fail to be seen. But her tired eyes swept the horizon in vain. There was not a speck on the vast expanse of shimmering blue to give her the slightest encouragement. Her heart sank within her. All signs of the recent hurricane had disappeared. Once more Nature was in holiday garb. The ocean reflected the turquoise-blue of the cloudless heavens; the air, gently stirred by a balmy breeze, was fragrant with the odor of spices. There was no trace of the wreck or of the missing life-boats. The ocean had completely engulfed the steamship. What the fate of the other passengers, officers, and crew had been could only be matter of conjecture.

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"God grant that they got safely away," she murmured fervently to herself. "Perhaps they will be picked up by some ship and then they may come in search of me—unless they come to the conclusion that I'm dead. I might just as well be dead as here."

She was still ravenously hungry. The little fruit she had eaten had not satisfied her and she did not know where to go to look for more. She wondered if she had made him so angry that he would entirely desert her and leave her to starve. With a shudder she thought of other terrors in store for her. What about the coming night?

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The afternoon was rapidly advancing; before very long the sun would set and what then? How could she face the coming darkness alone with that man whom she had angered and with all the unknown terrors the island contained? Almost panic-stricken from sheer nervousness and anxiety, utterly discouraged and miserable, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

Suddenly she heard a footstep, and, looking up, she saw Armitage approaching. He was making only slow progress, being weighted down with some heavy object.

"Here's a prize!" he shouted, as he came nearer.

Staggering up to near where she stood he set down a huge iron pot.

"I spied it lying among the drift along the shore," he went on. "It's a bit rusty, but that'll scrape off. It's worth its weight in gold to us. We've something to cook in now."

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He spoke cheerily, with the utmost frankness. If he still nourished any resentment his manner did not betray it. In her present state of depression Grace would have welcomed the apparition of Satan himself. She made no attempt to conceal her joy at his return. Clapping her hands with childish enthusiasm, she cried:

"Oh, isn't it perfectly lovely!"

At home she had never been inside a kitchen. It is indeed doubtful if she knew what a culinary utensil looked like. Perhaps it had never occurred to her that the kettle and many other things as humble are all indispensable parts in our civilization. But now she understood. Necessity is a quick teacher and Grace was learning. The pot was an ordinary tripod affair, battered and rusty. Judging from its appearance, it had fallen overboard from some ship and had floated ashore. Otherwise it was sound and serviceable. She could see that its value to them was well-nigh inestimable.

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"That's splendid—that's bully!" she repeated excitedly.

He enjoyed her enthusiasm. It was the first time he had seen her smile, and it looked good to him. He chuckled to himself as he said:

"But that isn't all. A pot with nothing to put in it isn't much use. I've brought you something good to eat."

Plunging his hand into the pot he brought out half a dozen live crabs and threw them at her feet.

"Aren't they beauties?" he exclaimed. "I'll bet they'll taste dandy, too. Look out! Mind they don't nip your fingers with their claws. They're pretty lively. They bite like the mischief."

Grace's mouth was already watering:

"What shall I do with them?" she asked helplessly.

"Cook 'em, of course," he replied, with a grin. "You get them ready while I go and fetch some water."

She listened in consternation, not liking to tell him she did not know how to cook. His women, of course, could work and do everything to help themselves. They could sew and make their own dresses. She felt ashamed of her own uselessness and was about to make confession when he hurried away. As he ran he turned and called out:

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"You'd better take a shell and see if you can scrape off some of that rust inside the pot."

He disappeared, leaving her looking in dismay, first at the iron pot and then at the crabs, already striving to regain their liberty. She had not the slightest idea what to do. Her only knowledge of crabs was when their tender, white, flakelike meat was served in chafing-dish with delicious sherry sauce. How to accomplish the operation of transforming those crawling, dangerous-looking things into a toothsome dish she had not the slightest notion. Even if she did know, how could she touch the nasty things when they were raising their nippers so menacingly and already trying to scud away in the direction of their native habitat, the sea. The most she could do was to run after each wriggling deserter and with her foot turn him over on his back. As to the other order she had received—that was easy. She could scrape the pot with a shell. That was easy enough. Yet if she were busy on the pot the crabs would profit by it to slip away, and then they would have no supper at all. It was certainly a problem worthy of the Sphinx.

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She was still trying to solve it when Armitage reappeared. In one hand he carried a gigantic cocoanut filled to the brim with sparkling, fresh water; with the other he was dragging along the sand a huge plant of unfamiliar aspect.

"Are you all ready?" he called out.

"No—I'm afraid not," she stammered confusedly.

Quick to guess the reason, he merely smiled.

"All right," he said pleasantly. "I'll fix it."

Carefully putting down the precious liquid, he seized hold of the iron pot, and, with a few strokes of his sheath-knife, soon had it in condition and on the fire. Over such fierce heat, the water did

not take long to boil, and a few minutes later the obstreperous crustaceans were on the way to discharge their natural debt to two starving humans.

"What a feast we'll have!" exclaimed Grace, as she eagerly watched his preparations. "If only we had some bread to go with them."

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"Here's something just as good," he replied quickly. Stooping down toward the plant he had just brought in he plucked some of the fruit—long, yellow pods with red speckles—and held them out to her.

"What is it?" she asked, in surprise. "I never saw fruit like that before."

"They are plantains—the potatoes of the tropics," he answered.

"They look like bananas," said Grace, starting to peel and eat one.

"Same family," he explained. As if surprised at her ignorance, he went on: "It is a wonderful fruit. It's meat, potatoes, and bread all in one. Its fiber one can use as thread, and its enormous leaves make warm clothing. When the fruit is powdered and baked you would hardly know it from rice. Speke, Stanley, and the other African explorers frequently mention plantains as the staple food of the natives. We're fortunate to find it here, and there seems to be an abundance."

Grace looked at him curiously. She was not aware that seamen were so well versed.

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"What do you know about African explorers?" she demanded.

Her question seemed to amuse him, for he showed his teeth in a smile.

"Oh, I've read their books," he replied. "We sailormen pick up a good deal of information knocking about the world as we do."

She would have liked to question him further, curious to learn something of his history, but there was an air of reserve about him that gave her little encouragement. On reflection she thought it unwise to appear interested. He might misconstrue her motive. She had not forgotten the bad reputation he had borne on the steamer, and while there had been nothing in his behavior so far to give her cause for alarm, she must not forget that she was entirely alone on this island with a man of the lower classes, a man unaccustomed, probably, to self-control. She must discourage all familiarity, and never for a moment permit him to forget the broad social gulf which separated them. With these anxieties running through her mind she relapsed into silence. He seemed to notice the sudden change in her manner, for he looked up from the fire and said:

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"I'll soon have it ready. Suppose you get two big, flat shells for plates. We'll have to use our fingers for forks."

As she went to carry out his suggestion, she said apologetically:

"You think of everything. I wish I could be of more assistance."

"Nonsense!" he answered. "Why was I saved from the wreck if not to look after you?"

She did not like this speech, savoring as it did of clumsy gallantry, so she made no rejoinder. By the time she had found the kind of shells suitable for plates, the crabs were cooked to a turn, and they immediately sat down in semi-reclining position to enjoy them.

It was a veritable feast of Lucullus served picnic-fashion in mid-ocean. To Grace it seemed that in all her life she had never tasted anything so delicious. The crabs were tender and sweet-flavored, and the plantains provided her with a new taste which improved on acquaintance. In spite of their thus sharing a common meal there was a certain restraint. Each seemed to be uncertain of and mistrust the other. They ate quickly and in silence, each preoccupied, Grace becoming more and more nervous as the shadows about her deepened, Armitage, silent, in admiring contemplation of his companion's shapely hands, her full bust and white neck, her beautiful eyes which, when they looked full into his, caused every nerve in his body to thrill.

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By the time they had eaten the last scrap, the evening was well advanced. The sun had dipped below the watery horizon long ago, and it was getting dark very rapidly. Grace's growing nervousness became more and more apparent. He noticed it and suddenly broke the silence.

"Where will you sleep to-night?" he asked. "You're worn out after all you've gone through."

"Yes—I am very tired," she replied.

He rose, and, after throwing more wood on to the fire, he turned to her.

"I'll have to fix you up a bed in the cave the best way I can. I can get fern-leaves and long, cypress-haired moss in the woods. That'll make capital stuffing, and with a few plantain-leaves you'll have a mattress fit for a queen. It'll do for to-night. To-morrow we'll make you more comfortable."

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Before she could murmur her gratitude he had hurried away in the direction of the woods.

Left alone, her nervousness increased. She wondered what he would do for a bed, if he would insist on sharing the shelter of the cave with her, or if he would prefer to sleep outside under the stars. She felt singularly apprehensive. A panicky feeling seized her. How could she spend all the

lonely hours of the night in the terrifying darkness—alone with that man? She felt nervous and uneasy, as if some new peril threatened her. Certainly, she would not be able to close an eye. A night of mental torture was before her.

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## CHAPTER XI.

Soon Armitage returned, his arms filled with a great load of fern-leaves and grass.

Grace followed him into the gloomy cave, the interior of which was now quite dark. Laying his burden down, he prepared to arrange her couch.

"How would you like to lie?" he asked.

"I think I would prefer to lie in the open," she replied, with a little, nervous shudder.

He shook his head.

"No—you'd better sleep in there," he said. "It may rain. Besides, we don't know what may be roaming round here during the night. In there you'll be protected on all three sides, and, as to the entrance, I'll throw a few big branches across. Nothing can get past without you knowing it."

"And where will you be?" she inquired timidly.

"Oh, I'll throw myself down by the fire. I'm accustomed to roughing it."

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The bed was swiftly made, soft and springy. All it lacked were pillow and covering.

"Take my advice and don't sleep in your clothes," he said. "You can't sleep properly unless you do, and you'll need all your strength. There's no one to disturb you. You can use your dress for a pillow and your mantle for a sheet. Don't be nervous. I'll be on hand if you want me. Good night."

"Good night!" she echoed faintly.

He went out and she was alone. It was now quite dark outside. The night was clear, and the heavens were studded with their countless stars. The only light which entered the cave enabling her to grope her way about was a ghostly flicker from the distant fire.

She tried the bed. It was fairly comfortable. Utterly exhausted, she thought she ought to sleep until daylight. She surely would if only she could calm her nerves and allay this persistent premonition of impending peril. After all, she thought, it was foolish to be afraid. So far he had been thoughtful and respectful, and given her no cause for alarm, and as to wild animals, they couldn't get at her if the entrance were closed. Should she disrobe entirely or remain fully dressed to be ready for any emergency? Certainly she would be more comfortable undressed. Besides, it was the only way in which she could get a pillow and covering.

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At that moment a heavy thud just outside made her heart leap to her mouth.

"Who's there?" she cried out.

"It's only me," answered Armitage. "I'm fixing the door of your hotel. I guess nothing can get in now. Good night."

"Good night!" she replied faintly.

She listened to his footsteps as they died away in the distance, and slowly began to disrobe.

She was soon undressed and was about to get into bed and cover herself up when a thought occurred to her. There was something still to be done. Dropping on her knees, her bare feet on the cold sand, she buried her face in her hands and for the first time in her life offered up a fervent prayer to the unknown, Almighty Power that directs all things. Grace had never been a devout girl. She had no decided metaphysical views of any kind. She was merely indifferent. Given up solely to a life of pleasure, religion to her had been only a word. Her parents had a pew at St. Thomas', on Fifth Avenue, and when she had a new hat or a new gown to show off, she attended the services in the same spirit that she would go to the horse show or any other fashionable function. Never until now had she felt the need of that moral support and encouragement which never fails to bring comfort to the faithful in their hour of trouble. She prayed earnestly to be saved from her present desperate situation, for protection during the coming night, and she prayed also for her late ship companions who at that moment might be suffering in the open boats. This done, her mind felt easier, and, covering herself as well as she could, she closed her eyes and courted sleep.

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Happily the night was warm, otherwise her scant covering, consisting solely of a thin mantle, would not have sufficed. Everything outside was perfectly still. The lazy splash of the surf and the gentle murmur of the breeze were the only sounds that reached her ears. Not hearing Armitage moving about she concluded that he had rolled himself up near the fire and gone to sleep.

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She closed her eyes, and, lulled into drowsiness by the distant music of the sea, she gradually sank into the delicious semi-conscious state that just precedes slumber. Through her tired brain passed confused mental pictures of the extraordinary happenings of the last forty-eight hours—



the dance on the deck, the sudden storm, the shock as the great liner struck the sunken reef, the rush for the life-boats, her fall into the water and the long swim until she came to herself on this island and recognized the refractory stoker, Armitage, as her rescuer. She wondered if he was really as black as he had been painted. If he was, she had seen nothing of his bad qualities. He was only a stoker—a superior one to be sure, from his conversation and knowledge of things—and so far he had behaved like a gentleman.

She wondered what she would do if suddenly he forced his way in now and attacked her. Would she scream, or faint, or do any of the hysterical things a woman is supposed to do in such circumstances? Her mind dwelt upon his personal appearance. She recalled how handsome, and graceful, and strong he looked as he came along the beach at a swinging gait, bringing to her that greatly needed breakfast, which she had devoured with such appetite. From him, her thoughts traveled homeward. She saw her poor mother and father grieving for her, and her supposed loss the sensation of the hour in their immediate circle of friends. Then her thoughts grew mixed and confused. Her breathing grew more regular, her bosom rose and fell with rhythmic motion, her brain ceased thinking. She was asleep.

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The long hours of the night passed slowly. Her slumber had been as peaceful and profound as that of a child when, about three o'clock, she suddenly awoke with a start. At first she believed she was still in her luxurious stateroom on board the *Atlanta*, but the rough couch, the prickly points of which punctured her thin garment, and the splash of the surf outside rudely reminded her of her misfortune.

She wondered what had interrupted her sleep. It was still pitch-dark and everything was quiet, yet she was wide-awake with every sense and nerve alert and tense. Like most persons who awake suddenly in the middle of the night without being able to explain the cause, she was at once seized with nervous dread. Something was wrong.

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Hastily, fearfully she glanced around, but her eyes were unable to penetrate the opaque darkness that surrounded her. The faint light that came from the cave entrance only served to make the shadows deeper. She strained her ears, but heard no sound. Yet she could not shake off the terrifying suggestion that *some one* or *something* had entered the cave while she was asleep and now stood in the shadows watching her, perhaps waiting for an opportunity to attack her.

The more she thought of the possibility of such a thing, the more alarmed she became, and her nervousness increased each minute until she was bathed in perspiration from head to foot. She tried to reason with herself, to shake off the impression, and with an exclamation of impatience at her own childishness she turned over and again closed her eyes. But as she moved *It* moved also. Her alert ear caught the sound of a slow and cautious movement, as if *some one* or *something* were creeping on all fours toward her. Petrified with fright, her heart in her mouth, she called out:

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"Who's there?"

There was no answer, but the sound ceased.

Something was there, that was certain. At any moment it might spring upon her. She shook with terror, her teeth chattered. She dare not make a movement. Her ears were strained for sounds of further moves. Almost rigid with fright, each passing moment seemed a century. If only she could flee from there and reach the open. She was sorry now that Armitage had left her alone. What would she not give to be able to call him now to her aid!

Suddenly the bed moved as though *something* had accidentally stumbled against it. She distinctly heard a rustling sound as if *something* had grazed the branches of which her couch was built. The *Thing*, whatever it was, man or beast, was close to her. The suspense was more than she could bear. Almost swooning from terror she sprang up, and, leaning over the side, peered into the darkness. What she beheld made the blood freeze in her veins.

A long, slimy-looking, sinuous thing, almost as thick as a man's arm and nearly six feet in length, was gliding slowly and aimlessly about in the shadow. In the faint glimmer of light that struggled in from the entrance to the cave was plainly discernible a pair of glistening eyes set in a squat, flat head, and a cruel mouth with fanglike teeth in which a forked tongue darted rapidly back and forth. It was a huge hooded cobra, the deadliest of all the venomous serpents inhabiting tropical Asia.

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Panic-stricken, Grace opened her mouth to scream, but no sound issued forth. She tried to flee, but some irresistible power held her rooted to the spot. Every faculty, every muscle in her was paralyzed by unspeakable horror.

With eyes dilated with terror, with every nerve tense to the snapping-point, she watched with fearful fascination that hideous, slimy head as with slow, rhythmic motion it swayed from side to side, the forked tongue darting from the horrid mouth as lightning rends the skies. Staring straight into the cruel, beady eyes, her fixed gaze seemed riveted there against her will, as if the reptile had cast over her a hypnotic spell. She felt herself gradually growing numb, cold sweat burst from every pore, her flesh crept, and there was a tingling sensation at the roots of her hair.

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Each instant she expected that the cobra would dart forward and strike her. The suspense was

fearful. The seconds seemed like centuries. She wondered when the fatal moment would come that would mean her death. Certainly, all was over with her now. The storm, the shipwreck—that was nothing. This new peril, a thousand times more deadly than those she had emerged from safely, was momentarily coming nearer, and she was powerless to avert it. She must be resigned to perish miserably and cruelly the most shocking of deaths. Escape was out of the question. Coiled up in threatening attitude at the foot of the bed the reptile was between her and safety. If she attempted to run she would never reach the open.

That the cobra was conscious of her presence and was preparing to attack there could be no doubt. It showed its irritation in the manner usual to its species, by dilating its neck until it formed the shape of a broad hood. Evidently the reptile made its home in one of the dark recesses of the cave. Asleep, it had awakened during the night, and its keen sense of smell attracted by the unusual odor of a warm human body, it had crawled to where she lay and now was ready to claim its prey. The slightest move on her part and it would dart forward. A lightninglike thrust forward of that loathsome head, then the powerful, scaly coils would close around her, there would be the ghastly sound of bones being crunched, and all would be over. Armitage would come in only to find her mangled and partially devoured body, perhaps himself to meet with a similar fate.

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Again she opened her mouth to scream and warn him. Her tongue clove, speechless, to her dry palate. A feeling of nausea came over her, her temples were throbbing, her heart seemed to have stopped beating. She wondered if she had gone mad.

She was noting the curious, spectacle-like markings on the back of the reptile's hood when suddenly the cobra started to hiss loudly as slowly it began to move nearer to its trembling victim. Coil after coil of its glistening, sinuous body followed the hideous head as the creature dragged itself along. As it glided its sinister way over the sand the cruel, beady eyes for a brief instant were averted from the girl. Instantly the hypnotic spell which had held her transfixed was broken. Uttering a piercing scream, she sprang from the bed and took refuge on the far side of the cave. The cobra, enraged at her attempt to escape, hissed more loudly, and, accelerating its movements, moved rapidly in her direction.

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Flattened up against the wall of the cave Grace's lips parted in a last, despairing prayer. She could retreat no farther. Solid rock barred the way, and escape to the open was cut off. She had not improved her position. By seeking to evade her doom, the agony was only drawn out the longer. The cobra was now only a dozen feet away. Coiling upon itself within striking distance it suddenly drew back its head, then, with lightning speed, shot it forward.

Quick as the movement was, Grace was quicker. Her instinct of self-preservation enabled her to foretell the instant the creature would spring, and the energy of despair gave her strength. Giving another shout for help, she nimbly jumped aside just in time to avoid the blow. Hissing furiously with baffled rage the serpent resumed the attack. Dawn was slowly breaking, and in the dim light she could see the creature's cruel eyes scintillating as they turned to look for her.

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Breathless, panting from the unusual exertion, in a state of complete nervous collapse, Grace was in no condition to continue the unequal combat. She realized that her strength was fast ebbing. It was only a question of seconds now when she must succumb. As those horrid, beady eyes met hers, again she was seized with that strange sense of limpness, utter inability to move a muscle. Again she was under the hypnotic spell. She realized that death in its most fearful form was there before her, claiming her. She felt sick and faint. Staggering as she clutched the cold, rocky wall of her living prison, she gave another despairing scream like a wail of human agony.

Scarcely conscious, she saw through her half-closed eyes the cobra gliding nearer, she could almost feel the reptile's fetid breath upon her cheek. With hopeless horror she saw it approach closer and closer, then stop and again coil itself ready for the final spring. She shuddered, and, closing her eyes, waited for the end. There was a strange buzzing in her ears. Suddenly everything grew dark. The cobra began hissing more furiously. There was a loud crash and she knew no more.

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When again she opened her eyes, she was lying on the bed and Armitage was kneeling by her side, bathing her face with water. Surprised to find herself still alive, she looked at him, the look of terror still in her face. Fearfully she whispered:

"Where is it? Did you see it?"

"It's all right," he said cheerily, trying to quiet her. "It won't trouble you any more."

"Was it only a nightmare?" she murmured.

"Nightmare—no," he answered. "It was real enough. Look!"

He pointed to a few paces away where lay the cobra, dead, its head crushed in by an enormous stone.

"I heard you scream," he explained. "I was asleep. It woke me. At first I thought I was dreaming. Then came another scream. I ran here and saw you against the wall yonder and the serpent preparing to spring. I picked up a stone and killed him. I was just in time, a second later and it would have been too late."

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"Thank God!" she said.

## CHAPTER XII.

It was some time before Grace had recovered sufficiently from the nervous shock of her terrifying encounter with the cobra to be able to get about, and during this period of enforced idleness she was compelled to depend altogether on Armitage. He supplied her with the necessaries and, as well as he was able, administered to her comfort.

Grateful to him for his attentions, it was not long before her feeling of obligation changed into real regard for the man. The dread in which she at first held him had completely disappeared, as was only natural after the services he had rendered her. Twice she owed him her life. That alone was a debt she could never repay. Moreover, he was thoughtful and courteous, and, so far, at least, had shown no disposition to take advantage of her helpless situation. How much worse her position would be if he were not there at all!

But she was too much worried and preoccupied with her own troubles to give her strange companion much thought. She watched him at work, and she ate listlessly the food he brought her, but that was about all the interest she took in anything. [Pg 200]

Her one burning desire was to get away. During all her waking hours her thoughts turned only in one direction: how to escape as speedily as possible from this wretched island. As the days went by and no vessel appeared, she began to wonder if they would ever be rescued, or if she was doomed to remain on that remote islet for the rest of her days unable to communicate with her father and mother and friends, who, in ignorance of her fate, had long since given her up as dead. Perhaps in years to come some ship touching at the island in search of water would find, strewn along the beach, her bleached bones and his—picked clean by the vultures. She wept bitterly as she thought of it; her face was bathed in tears of compassion over her misfortune. She was ashamed to let Armitage see that she had been crying, but all day she brooded over her sorrow, and at night she dreamed that he was building a boat stout enough to convey them to the mainland. [Pg 201]

Fearful that she would lose all notion of time, she started to count the days, keeping a rough kind of calender by scratching notches at regular intervals on a shell. She notched off the days one by one, her spirits sinking in proportion as their number increased. In her despair she appealed to her companion to reassure her. But Armitage shook his head dubiously. He had little comfort to offer.

"We must be patient," he said grimly. "We're here scarcely a week. Think of those shipwrecked sailors who have been marooned on desert islands for months, even years, often with almost nothing to eat. When finally they were rescued they were not recognizable as men. Their clothes hung upon them in shreds, their hair was matted and over-grown, they had forgotten how to talk, they tore the meat given them with their fingers like famished wolves. We have not so much to complain of. We have plenty of water, enough to eat. It's no use fretting. We must wait patiently. Perhaps we won't have to wait long. Any day our signal-fire may be sighted by a vessel."

They now kept two fires going, one close at hand for their own use, and another much bigger on top of the hill for signaling purposes. The hill-top commanded a superb view of every part of the island, and, viewed from the ocean, it must have been a conspicuous mark for miles. They christened it Mount Hope, for on it Grace centered all her fervent prayers for rescue. It became her Mecca, and each day she made the long and exhausting climb up its precipitous slope in the expectation of seeing steamer smoke or a sail on the distant horizon. But disappointment always awaited her. There was nothing in every direction but dreary, monotonous wastes of heaving water, the boisterous waves dancing in the sunlight as if to mock her misery. [Pg 202]

The care of keeping this signal-fire going devolved on Armitage, and it was the day's most important task. The fire was kept banked with damped moss and peat in the daytime, so it would throw off a smoke thick enough to be visible miles away at sea. At night it was made to blaze furiously with the same object in view.

The cave had been deserted long ago. The day following her horrible experience with the serpent, Grace protested hysterically that nothing could induce her to enter the gloomy place again. Sleeping in it, she declared, was utterly out of the question. The cobra was dead, but there was no telling what other reptile as venomous and deadly might again crawl out of the cave's countless holes and recesses. Armitage admitted the possibility, and at once offered to build a cabin for her in the open. It would be far more healthy and comfortable. [Pg 203]

She gladly consented, and he went to work with a will. He had no tools, and his construction materials were necessarily of the most primitive character. Happily, the weather continued fine, and, while her new home was in the building, Grace managed as best she could under a temporary shelter.

Selecting a site that was high and dry, Armitage first dug a square hole in the ground three feet deep by about fourteen feet in length and breadth. Each side of the excavation he lined with stone walls made of huge boulders piled one on top of another, and decreasing in weight and size

until they reached a height all round of nearly nine feet. The interstices he filled with clay to keep out the wind and rain, and additional strength was secured for the walls by banking up earth on all four exterior sides. It was a herculean task, for each of the big, heavy stones had to be dragged a considerable distance, and the only implement he had to dig with was a crude spade which he made out of a piece of planed wood found among the drift along the shore and sharpened and hardened in fire. Light entered through a door and window, and then came the roof. This he made with heavy limbs of trees equally matched, which rested on top of the stone walls, these in turn being crossed with smaller branches, and the whole covered with a thick thatch of tussac-grass and moss held in place by heavy stones. The floor inside was strewn with tussac-grass to keep the feet dry from the damp earth. There was also a fireplace for logs, with a flue and chimney to carry off the smoke, and before it was ready for occupancy he started a fire, thus driving out the damp and making it dry and inhabitable.

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He toiled unceasingly and tirelessly, whistling cheerfully as he worked. As Grace watched him, the thought was impressed upon her more strongly than ever that this man was far happier here amid primeval conditions, thrown upon his own resources, than he had been in a so-called civilized state. Evidently he had no keen desire to be rescued. The thought filled her again with dismay. Not that it would really make any material difference. If succor were coming, they would be rescued whether her mysterious companion wished it or not. But that any human being could be reconciled to spending the remainder of his days on a barren islet in a remote part of the ocean, without clothes, tools, books, or even the bare necessities of life, was intolerable. A man who could entertain such an idea for a moment could have instincts little superior to a savage.

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Often she had watched her strange, moody companion as he worked and wondered what his history was. He was no ordinary seaman—that was evident from his speech and manner. He had certainly known better days. He never spoke of himself, and when tactfully she broached the subject, he abruptly changed the conversation. One day she said to him:

"You weren't always a stoker, were you—you weren't born to that kind of life?"

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He stopped in his work, and for a moment looked at her in silence, as if seeking time to frame his answer. Then laconically he said:

"My past life is dead. I live only in the present. Just what I seem I am."

Still unconvinced, she returned to the attack.

"Why did you desert from the steamer in New York?"

He clenched his fist as thus brutally she revived the memory of his past suffering, and in a low tone, which came almost like a hiss from between his set teeth, he said:

"Because I could not stand it any longer—I just couldn't. I was desperate."

"Why did you take to such dreadful work?" she persisted. "Was there nothing else more congenial, less brutalizing that you could do?"

He shook his head.

"No—nothing. There was nothing else." Bitterly he added: "The poor must slave so that the rich may enjoy."

Puzzled, she asked:

"What do you mean?"

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"It's no use going into particulars," he replied, almost contemptuously. "You wouldn't understand."

Turning on his heel, he resumed his work on the cabin.

Grace did understand. She understood that there was something in the past life of this man which he did not wish to divulge. She felt that he had suffered, and she was sorry for him. Again she tried to draw him out, but skilfully he parried her questions, and appeared to resent them. Noticing this, she desisted. His past, as far as she was concerned, at any rate, was and must remain a sealed book.

But Grace did not remain silent for all that. She was too much of a woman to permit of that. Seeing that she could get nothing from him, she talked about herself. She chattered about her home in New York, about her friends, about the things which interested her and the things which bored her. He listened as he worked, apparently interested, and when she said that she despised the empty and frivolous amusements of her set and was ambitious to do something more worthy in life, he nodded approvingly. When she had told him everything, once more she attempted to question him in turn, but he relapsed into an obstinate silence.

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After a week's continuous toil the cabin was completed. As a finishing touch, he made some furniture for it—a crude table and two three-legged stools. When he had put the bed in place the hut was ready for occupancy. When at last everything was ready, he called out to Grace to come and inspect her new home.

"You'll be comfortable in here," he said cheerily. "At least there are no snakes. I can promise you that."

He waited for her to say something, expecting that she would be pleased.

"It's very nice," she said hesitatingly. "Only——"

"Only what?" he demanded in a tone of disappointment.

"It's too bad to have taken so much pains for so short a time," she said.

He laughed carelessly.

"So short a time?" he echoed. Almost mockingly he asked: "Do you expect to leave here so soon?" [Pg 209]

"As soon as I can—you may depend upon that!" she replied determinedly, almost ready to cry.

His indifference angered her. She thought it brutal when he knew how unhappy and miserable she was and how anxious to get back to her family. At that moment she hated him.

"Ah, that's just it!" he exclaimed, with a gesture of impatience. "As soon as you can! But you can't! We're prisoners here—in prison just as securely as though we were behind iron bars. We can't get away."

"But we'll get away some time, won't we?" she gasped.

He shook his head.

"The chances are slim," he replied grimly.

"Then what good is our signal-fire?" she persisted.

"Not much good," he admitted frankly.

Her heart sank. Her face paled, and her lips trembled as she asked:

"Don't you think it'll be seen sooner or later? Ships must pass by here some time."

He shrugged his shoulders.

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"Even if they do, they may not see the fire. If a ship passes near this island it would be a great distance away. It would never occur to them to look here for signals. Besides, very few vessels do pass. A ship may not sight our signal for a year, maybe five years, perhaps never. You remember Alexander Selkirk—Robinson Crusoe. He was twenty-eight years on Tobago island—in complete solitude."

Grace gave a low moan of distress.

"At least," he went on, after some hesitation, "we have each other."

This remark angered her. She thought it impertinent. The boldness of his veiled insinuation was more than she could bear. He actually contemplated the possibility of a permanent stay.

"I couldn't stand it," she cried hoarsely, her eyes filled with scalding tears. "I would rather kill myself."

He shrugged his shoulders, and that made her all the more angry.

"You don't care," she went on. "You're willing to sacrifice me because you prefer this kind of existence to the wretched life you've had."

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This speech aroused him to action. All his life he had suffered from injustice. This girl, he thought, was like all the others. For a moment, he lost his sang-froid.

"You're unjust!" he replied hotly. "I'm doing all I can. Who built the signal-fire on Mount Hope? I did. Who keeps it going night and day? I do. It's no fun climbing up that steep hill collecting fresh fuel, but I do it. Even in my sleep sometimes I wake up in fright, thinking I may have neglected to throw on enough fuel, fearful that the fire will go out—my last match gone. I work myself into a cold sweat thinking of it. I can't sleep. At last I am unable to stand it any longer. I get up and rush to the hill-top, all for nothing. The signal-fire is still burning brightly. All that time you are sleeping peacefully. Does that look as if I didn't care?"

"Forgive me," she murmured between her tears. "I'm peevish and unreasonable. Forgive me. I'm so unhappy!"

He smiled sympathetically.

"Don't get discouraged," he said kindly. "As long as we're here, it's best to get along as well as we can. It's no use fretting. If help is coming it will come. You'll not mend matters by worrying." [Pg 212]

She felt he was right. What use were her tears and her irritation? He was doing all he could. They were in the hands of an inscrutable Providence. As long as the signal-fire was kept burning there was hope.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

Slowly the weeks slipped by. The castaways were still in their island prison with relief as far away, apparently, as ever.

Grace had taken possession of her cabin and made herself as comfortable as it was possible under the circumstances. The luxuries to which she had always been accustomed were lamentably lacking. There was no dainty bathroom for her ablutions, no maid to answer her call, no extensive wardrobe to select from, no telephone through which she could chat with friends. But at least she had shelter and a bed to sleep upon, and for these blessings she was sensible enough to be devoutly thankful. Armitage had built close by, for his own use, a similar, but less elaborate, hut, and he took a certain pride in keeping it in order.

One day Grace found some flowers on the table in her cabin. Only one person could have put them there, and when she realized that fact, it came rather as a shock to find her strange companion paying her attentions of this nature. [Pg 214]

"Thank you for the flowers," she said, with some embarrassment.

"I thought they'd brighten the place up a bit," he replied awkwardly:

He smiled, and she noticed for the first time that he had fine white teeth. But nothing more was said, and he went unconcernedly about his work.

For the remainder of that morning she avoided him. She left her cabin and fled to Mount Hope, straining her eyes once more in a fruitless effort to see appear on the horizon the ship which would come to her rescue.

Monotonous and lonely as was their existence on this remote islet, there was plenty of work to be done, and the hours sometimes sped by so quickly that both Grace and Armitage were astonished. The shadows of night would fall when they had thought it only a little past noon; Each did a share of the day's work, glad of the occupation that helped to divert the mind. [Pg 215]

The signal-fire on Mount Hope demanded most of Armitage's attention; When not engaged in gathering fuel, he went on long foraging expeditions. The problem of procuring food was no light one, and, like other shipwrecked sailors, who have had to exercise their wits, he was quick to devise ways to keep their larder supplied. He caught fish with a hook made out of a sharp-pointed stick hardened in flame; he killed sea-gulls with stones hurled from a sling; he overturned turtles while they lay basking in the sun, and he saw to it that they had an abundant supply of fresh drinking-water.

Grace also was not idle. She mended and patched their clothes with needles made of fish-bone and thread made of the fiber of plantain fruit; and under Armitage's clumsy tuition she quickly learned how to cook. He showed her how to clean and broil the fish he caught, and taught her how to obtain salt by boiling sea water until the water evaporated. In a cleverly improvised oven which he built for her, she learned how to bake delicious cakes of flour made from dried and pulverised plantain fruit. She prepared their meals, which they ate together at regular hours, and for dessert she set before him plantains, quinces, limes, and cocoanuts which she herself had gathered in the wood. [Pg 216]

This constant and intimate association could have only one result. Every day it brought the proud beauty and her taciturn companion closer than would have been possible under any other conditions. At times, in her interest in the work of the moment, Grace would entirely forget their difference in class. She would unbend and laugh and chat with him as though she had known him for years. Then, an instant later, suddenly conscious of their respective positions and what she thought she owed to her own dignity, she would relapse into an abrupt silence and draw away once more, cold and reserved. But this purely artificial demeanor could not be kept up. A few hours later, obeying her natural impulse, she was herself again, chatting with him freely, asking his opinion, trying to please him, full of respect for his superior judgment.

Armitage listened to her ceaseless prattle, amused at her vivacity, replying gravely to her questions, explaining all she wished to know. During long, idle afternoons they would sit together on the beach and he would tell her stories of the sea, about lands he had visited, strange people he had seen, while Grace, curled up at his feet, like a child, listened with breathless attention. [Pg 217]

Thus gradually, almost unconsciously, their mutual interest in each other grew. They became necessary to each other. Sharing common perils, they naturally sought each other's companionship, and to Grace as much as to Armitage the unconventional association and comradeship was as delightful as it was novel. Grace was pleased because he treated her not as other men had done, as a toy, only to be flattered with foolish compliments, but as a woman, a helpmate, whose opinion was worth having.

Greatly to her surprise, Grace soon found herself taking pleasure in this bucolic, semi-savage sort of a life. It was so utterly unlike anything which she had ever known that, at times, she thought it must be all unreal and that, sooner or later, she would wake up from what was only a fantastic dream. But it was real enough. She had only to glance around her to realize the grim truth. There was Armitage a short distance away along the beach trying with a crudely made net to catch fish for their noonday meal, yonder on top of Mount Hope a column of black smoke was ascending to the blue sky—a mute and urgent summons to the outer world for help—and if any further testimony were needed she had only to look down at her own tattered rags, scarcely recognizable now as a gown to bring back with vividness all that had happened since the moment the typhoon [Pg 218]

broke.

Yet, as the time went on, with rescue no nearer than before, Grace seemed each day more resigned to her precarious situation. She did not fret so much. Her nervousness disappeared and her spirit became more buoyant. There were moments when she even felt happy. Armitage was quick to notice it, and by the way he smiled as he greeted her, by the almost boyish enthusiasm he went about his work, it was evident that he welcomed the change.

Grace was surprised herself. At first it alarmed her to note her growing indifference. She could not understand the reason. Sensibly she argued that she could not be always fretting. If she did, nervous collapse would be the consequence. It never occurred to her that this new life in the exhilarating sea air explained the secret, that her body was growing more healthy and normal under the new hygienic conditions, and that as her body changed, her mental outlook changed also. The discomforts which she had to put up with were, of course, many, and her anxiety regarding the outcome of the adventure as poignant as ever, yet in other respects it was an almost ideal existence.

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The weather was perfect. She lived, so to speak, in a bower of flowers, in idyllic peace, with nothing to disturb the general serenity. She had all the food to eat that her appetite craved for, there was plenty of crystal spring water to drink. At night she slept peacefully, lulled by the rhythmical music of the waves as they washed lazily against the shore, and when she awoke the birds were singing their joyous notes of welcome to another glorious day. It was the voluptuous life of the tropics with all its dreamy languor, its sensuous charm.

Constant living in the open had indeed effected a wonderful improvement in her personal appearance. Had she possessed a mirror she would scarcely have recognized in that health-flushed face, tanned by wind and sun, the pale and languid girl whose condition had alarmed her friends in New York. With her large dark eyes, clear and limpid, her lips, red and tempting as cherries, her glorious hair caught up in careless knot, her bosom fuller, her lines more rounded, her walk with an elasticity it had never known before—she was in the full bloom of youth and beauty. Grace herself realized the change, and vaguely she guessed that this explained the new mental attitude she had assumed toward her unfortunate position. Not only in body, but in her mind she felt more vigorous. Her despondency had given place to a pronounced optimism. She took keen interest in everything taking place around her. She was no longer peevish and irritable. She laughed and chatted with the spontaneous gaiety of youth, and if it were not for a constantly gnawing anxiety to know what the future had in store, to communicate with her parents, she would have been content to go on living like this for months.

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Not only were the surroundings ideal and conducive to real happiness, but it was a new and pleasurable sensation to her to find that she could be of some use in the world. She took pride in doing her share of the work, and her respect for herself grew in proportion as she felt that her services were appreciated by Armitage. Gradually she learned to scrutinize his face to see if he approved what she had done, and if she saw him smile she beamed with satisfaction.

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Long ago she had come to the conclusion that her companion was no ordinary man. Not only was he above his apparent station in life, but he possessed qualities that she had never yet detected in any of the men she had met. Not only was he handsome and built like an Apollo, but she recognized his superior mentality. He was born for leadership—that was evident by the manner in which he had managed things on this island. He had suffered in life, for some cause which he kept secret, and had been forced to take to brutalizing work. But it had not degraded him. He was kind and gentle, unselfish and brave.

While he succeeded in concealing his own past life, Armitage was less successful in concealing his interest in his companion. Grace's feminine tuition told her that he admired her, and, although she knew that socially he was far beneath her, she was still woman enough to be gratified. Besides, she did not seek to disguise from herself the fact that she was strangely attracted toward this man. He had about him a magnetism which she could not explain. Perhaps more than anything else it was the very mystery with which he surrounded himself that interested and attracted her. She found herself speculating strangely. Suppose he had been a man of her own class, would she marry him? Was he the type of man she could love? She remembered Professor Hanson's queer hypothesis that afternoon on the steamer. Suppose this man were to make love to her and insisted on the ties suggested by the professor. What could she do to protect herself? What could she do? She was utterly helpless. There would be nothing to do but throw herself on his generosity.

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It annoyed her when she realized how much her companion entered into her thoughts. She tried not to feel lonely when he was away. She tried not to feel pleased when he returned. But she knew that she was lying to herself, and at moments it terrified her when slowly it dawned upon her that her strange, mysterious companion had entered into her most intimate life. Was it love? She laughed at the absurdity of the idea, and to show her indifference, so Armitage might plainly understand the difference in their positions, she forced herself to seem cold and reserved. He noticed the sudden change in her manner, and, unable to account for it, thought he must have displeased her.

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One day he had gone up to Mount Hope to attend, as usual, to the signal-fire. She was alone. The day's work was done, and, somewhat fatigued, she was resting, seated on the verdant, sloping beach overlooking the sea. At her feet stretched the golden sands, gently laved by the rippling, transparent waves. The air was full of sweet scents, and the temperature so warm that even the

thinnest clothing was almost unendurable. Drowsy from the heat, she lay under the grateful shade of spreading trees, and, looking out over the glistening ocean, watched the water as it sparkled in the sunlight. Her eyes half-closed, her entire being thrilled by a novel sensation of languor, she abandoned herself to the voluptuousness of the place and moment. Had she been alone, with no one to see her and no danger of a sudden surprise, she would have loved to divest herself of all her clothing and, nymphlike, roll nude in the golden sands like the woman she once saw in a picture called "The Birth of the Wave." Her form was physically as beautiful. She wondered if Armitage thought her beautiful—if he ever thought of her at all as men think of women—and gradually her mind wandered in strange channels.

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As she lay there basking in the ardent sunshine, she felt the pleasurable, exhilarating sensation of enjoying perfect animal health. A strange feeling of languor came over her. This, she knew, was happiness and the joy of life, and yet she felt that there was still something lacking to make that happiness complete. As her eye dwelt on the loveliness of the surrounding scene, perhaps for the first time she understood the enthusiasm of those nature lovers who are content only when in the country. What, indeed, were the artificial, tawdry delights of the man-made cities compared with the delights of life in the God-made fields? She thought of overheated ballrooms, inane afternoon teas, tiresome bridge-parties. What were they compared to lying there, listening to the birds singing in the trees, her cheek gently wafted by the soft sea breeze, the pure air filling her lungs and shading the damask on her cheek. If her dear old dad saw her he would hardly know her.

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She knew what her life lacked—love. A man whom she could admire and respect, a man who would rule her with his iron will and crush her if need be in his strong arms. Would she ever meet such a man? Had she already met him? Once more her mind conjured up the picture of the ideal man—the man of her day-dream on the steamer. If he should come along now, would she have the strength of will to resist the pressure of his ardent lips. Her eyes closed, she fancied she saw him coming, his head thrown back, straight as an arrow, handsome as an Apollo. As he passed he stopped, fascinated by her beauty. He came nearer, and with a cry of joy clasped her closely in furious embrace. Weakly she tried to avoid the warm kisses he rained on her too willing mouth. As she turned she chanced to see his face, and, starting back, she gave a cry. It was a face she knew. Frightened, she opened her eyes and sat up. Armitage was standing before her.

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"Were you asleep?" he asked, with a smile. "I hope I didn't disturb you."

"Where have you been?" she asked, embarrassed.

"Up on Mount Hope tending the fire," he replied, his eyes taking in every detail of her splendid beauty. Her hair was disarranged and her bodice open at the neck because of the heat. He thought she looked the prettier, and he was only human.

"Nothing in sight, I suppose," she asked.

"No, nothing," he answered.

She rose and, going to the cabin, hastened to prepare their supper.

While she bustled about he sat quietly and watched her. He hoped she would not read on his face the happiness that was in his heart.

Yes, she had guessed aright. He was happier on this desert island than ever before. It was true that he had no wish to be rescued. For him rescue meant going back to purgatory, while this was Elysium. Never in all his life had he known such happiness as this. Only one thing was lacking to make his happiness complete. It was to call this woman—wife. He did not know how it had come to him, but he loved her with a fierceness that frightened him. He did not like to even admit it to himself or even to think of it. But he knew that he must have this woman or his life must end. To live without her was impossible. It was inconceivable. He had tasted of Heaven these last few weeks, and if he lost that he must lose everything. Of course it was an impossible dream. She was rich. When she left here she would forget him. If one day she met him in New York she would even disdain to look at him.

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He clenched his fists and ground his teeth. Why should he lose this happiness that had come to him? He wanted this woman. No one should rob him of her. Even if it cost him his life and hers, he was determined to have her for his own. Why should he be denied her? Their rescue from this island was improbable, if not impossible. Ships never passed near there. It was too far from the beaten track, too full of hidden dangers. Navigators knew that and gave the island a wide berth. He had lied to her to reassure her, but he knew rescue was out of the question. They would spend the rest of their days there. The days would lengthen into months, the months into years. Their youth would go. Old age would come. Then it would be too late, and they would both be sorry. Why should they not mate now? He remembered the mutineers of H. M. S. *Bounty*—a true story of the sea which had always fascinated him. The men revolted and killed their officers and landed on an island inhabited by savages. They killed the men and married the women, and to this day their descendants were sturdy fishermen.

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Long after Grace had retired to rest, Armitage sat under the trees alone amid the silent beauty of the tropical night. The stars in their countless millions shone bright and resplendent in the clear atmosphere. The firmament was a glorious blaze of light. The planets flashed like suns, and changed color as he gazed at them. The small stars twinkled more humbly in a milky way that stretched across the heavens, while now and again a brilliant meteor, outlaw of the heavenly

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host, shot across space and as quickly disappeared. It was a spectacle for the gods, but Armitage heeded it not. Lost in meditation of things more earthly, he was wondering if he could win this woman for himself, how he could delay the dreaded moment which would take her out of his life.

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The next day when he suggested that they explore their lonely domain together, Grace readily consented to accompany him. Laughing merrily and chattering like a magpie, she walked briskly along at his side. The day was ideal. The weather was dry and clear, with an invigorating breeze from the sea, and, as they strode along in the dazzling sunshine, Grace felt buoyant with health and exuberant spirits.

They followed the coast-line, making their way in and out among the rocks. From the interstices of the tall cliffs as they approached flew out hundreds of wild sea-gulls uttering shrill cries of alarm. Armitage picked up a stone, but Grace stayed his arm.

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"It's bad luck to kill one," she said. "Let them live. Besides, they're our neighbors. They're the only other inhabitants besides ourselves."

The tide was out, so their way along the smooth sands was easy. The beach was covered with shells of remarkable luster and beauty, and Grace insisted on stopping to gather some. Presently they came to a creek, with stepping-stones covered with slippery moss. The problem was how to get across.

"Come along," said Armitage, leading the way.

"I'm afraid I'll fall into the water," exclaimed Grace, looking ruefully at the water.

"No, you won't. Take my arm," said Armitage.

They went across together, her arm closely locked in his.

Suddenly she slipped. If she had not been holding tight to his arm, she would have fallen into the creek. As it was, she was badly frightened, and clung more nervously to him. He felt her warm body pressed close against his, and a thrill went through him. There was still some distance to go before the opposite bank was reached. Putting his arm round her waist, Armitage reassured her.

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"You won't fall. Just keep close to me and step as I step," he said.

He felt her warm breath on his cheek. His head seemed to swim round. It needed all his self-control to keep his equilibrium and get across. Finally they reached the other bank in safety.

Leaving the beach, they clambered up the rocks, to the higher land, where they found an abundance of coarse grass with ravines and hollows choked up with a luxuriant growth of tropical vegetation. They entered a dense wood, almost impenetrable with tangled foliage, thick undergrowth, and hidden roots of trees. Carefully, he made a path for her, and once, when they came to a running stream with no way to ford it, he had to lift her up in his strong arms and take her across like a baby. Soon they came to a clearing, sweet with the odor of wild orchids and jasmine. Through the thick foliage of the spreading trees they had glimpses of the shimmering surface of the turquoise-blue sea. They sat down in the grass, glad to rest after their exertions, and when they got hungry they ate the provisions Grace had thoughtfully provided. It was a delightful picnic, and Grace laughed with glee.

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Armitage had plucked a plantain and was eating the fruit when suddenly he stopped and looked fixedly at her.

"Why do you look at me like that?" she asked roguishly.

"Because you are nice to look at," he answered gravely. "I look at the sea because it is beautiful. I look at you. You are beautiful."

She laughed and reddened. The compliment was clumsy, but it pleased her because she knew he meant it. To her it sounded better than any of the compliments paid her in New York's drawing-rooms. To change the conversation she said:

"I wonder if we shall ever get away from here?"

He said nothing, but his eyes sought hers. After a pause, he said boldly:

"I don't know. To be quite honest, I'm in no hurry. I'm very happy here."

Grace made no reply. This time she did not even seem angry.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Another fortnight passed and still no sign from the great wide world beyond the seas. The days came and went with monotonous regularity. According to the notches on Grace's shell calendar, which she had made carefully with each rising and setting of the sun, they were now well on

toward the end of September. Three long months had gone by since that terrible night when the hurricane drove the ill-fated *Atlanta* on the reef.

Would a ship never come? This question Grace had asked herself almost hourly until gradually the belief came firmly rooted in her mind that they would never be rescued, that she was doomed to spend the rest of her life in this unknown, out of the way island, her grief-stricken parents believing that she had been drowned when the *Atlanta* went down. If any of the survivors reached land, as she supposed some of them did, the news would have been instantly cabled to America, and her name would be listed among the missing. No doubt her father had long given her up for dead. It would never occur for him to come in search of her. Nor was there much chance of a passing vessel ever seeing the smoke from the signal-fire. As Armitage had said, they were probably hundreds of miles out of the shipping track. In all probability no human being had ever set foot on that islet before.

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Yet she never quite lost courage. Each day she made her weary pilgrimage to the summit of Mount Hope and eagerly scanned the horizon. Only disappointment awaited her. There was never anything in sight to bring joy to her heart.

They kept the big signal-fire going just the same. Night and day it burned, sending its flaming message of distress over the vast waste of heaving waters. It was never permitted to die down. Fresh fuel was piled on until the flames leaped high in the air or the thick black smoke went curling up in a long, straight column to the sky. Either the smoke or the blaze must be seen miles away at sea. Any moment some ship might turn out of her course and come to investigate.

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Otherwise they seldom discussed the chances of rescue. By mutual consent it seemed to be a tabooed topic. Armitage never failed in his self-appointed task; he kept the fire going with a plentiful supply of driftwood, but that was all. He never voluntarily mentioned the signal-fire or the prospects of getting away, and intuitively she knew that it was a subject that was distasteful to him. If he took the pains to keep up the fire, he did it for her sake. She understood that, and she was mutely grateful to him for it. In return, she was considerate for his feelings. She avoided speaking of her desire for a ship to arrive. Occupied with their daily tasks, they never broached the subject. When he went up the hill to attend to the fire he was always alone, and she tactfully selected a time when he was occupied about the encampment to make her daily climb to Mount Hope.

What if help did not come? Could they—he and she—go on forever living together like this? She was an intelligent girl. She knew that the present relations between herself and Armitage were artificial, and based wholly upon the conventions of organized society. But they were unnatural relations, contrary to the laws of nature. In her heart she knew that she cared more for this strange, silent man than she dared to admit. Yes, he was the man of her day-dreams, the man she had waited for, the man she could love. She did not ask what he had been. She only knew him as he was. She loved him for what he was. He was poor, he was not what the world calls of gentle birth, yet he had qualities that in her eyes raised him above all men more favored by fortune. He was one of nature's noblemen. Some great secret sorrow had wrecked his life, but it had not taken from him his sweetness of character, his beauty of face and mind, his manly courage, his courtesy to a lonely, helpless woman. She loved the rich tones of his voice, the sad, wistful gaze in his fine eyes when they looked silently into hers. She knew of what he was thinking. She knew the dread that was on his heart—the dread of a misfortune a hundred times worse than any that had yet embittered his life. The dread that one day, sooner or later, the ship would come to carry away from him forever the woman who had once more made life seem worth living.

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One morning Grace was sitting sewing, deftly plying the fish-bone needle which Armitage had made for her. She was making a desperate effort to patch up, for the hundredth time, her old battered ball-dress, which now, reduced to shreds, scarcely covered her decently. Armitage, no better off as regards attire, was stretched out on the sands near her, watching her work. It was a domestic scene. Any stranger chancing to pass that way would have taken them for a young married couple, the man evidently a fisherman, the woman, his wife, doing the household mending. A short distance away was their cabin, and on the fire close by the iron saucepan in which a savory mess was cooking for their noonday meal. Nothing was lacking to make the picture of connubial felicity complete.

Some such thought occurred to Armitage, for suddenly he blurted out:

"Do you believe in marriage?"

She looked up in surprise.

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"Do I believe in marriage?" she smiled. "What a singular question. Of course I do."

"What do you understand by marriage?" he persisted.

Grace thought for a moment and then readily replied:

"Marriage is a contract entered into by a man and woman by which they become husband and wife."

Nodding assent, he went on:

"That is to say, a contract entered into between themselves?"

"Not exactly," replied Grace hesitatingly. "Rather I should say an act before a magistrate or a religious ceremony by which the legal relationship is sanctioned by the law and church."

"Then, without such act or ceremony, you would not consider a marriage binding or right?"

"No," answered Grace emphatically.

He remained silent a moment, and then he said:

"But suppose a man and a woman loved each other and wished to enter into the married state, and yet were so placed that it was impossible for their union to have the sanction of either the law or church, what then?"

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Grace laid down her work and, shaking her head, looked gravely at her interlocutor:

"It is difficult to answer such a question offhand," she said. "I think it would depend altogether on the circumstances and chiefly on the personal views of those directly concerned. Some people scoff at marriage. Among them are many of my own sex. They regard marriage merely as a time-honored, worn out convention which really means nothing. They get married, of course, not because they believe in it as an institution, but as a matter of form, because their mothers did it before them, because it is the thing to do. But not unreasonably, they argue, that nowadays when it is so easy to obtain a divorce on the most trivial pretext, there is not much left about marriage that is sacred and binding."

He listened attentively. When she ceased speaking, he asked quietly:

"And what is your view? Do you indorse these opinions?"

"No, I do not," she replied, meeting his steady gaze frankly. "I believe in marriage. I think it is the noblest gift that civilization has bequeathed to the human race. It marks the great divide between man and the brute. More than that, it protects the woman who is, naturally, the weaker, and, above all, it protects the offspring."

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"You are right," he rejoined quickly, "yet isn't it curious that man seems happiest under monogamy, which is directly contrary to nature. Man is naturally polygamous."

"Ah, but that is only brute love. It rests on nothing tangible. Like a tiny flame, it is extinguished by the first adverse breath of wind. Man thinks he is polygamous. But that is only the beast in him—the beast with which his better and higher nature is ever at war. The superior man learns to control his appetites, the baser man indulges them, and therefore is nearer to the tailed ancestry from which he originally sprang. That is not love as I understand it."

He leaned quickly forward.

"How do you understand love?" he asked, in low, eager tones.

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Grace smiled, and, poutingly, she protested:

"Why do you question me in this way?"

Slightly raising himself on one hand, he drew nearer to her and looked steadily up into her face until the boldness of his gaze embarrassed her. Her cheeks reddened, and she lowered her eyes.

"What do you know about love?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Every woman knows or thinks she knows," she replied, with affected carelessness.

He was silent for a moment, and then he went on:

"Suppose a woman—say a friend of yours—loved a man, with all the strength of her heart and soul. Suppose special conditions made her legal union with that man impossible. Would you forgive her if her great love tempted her to give herself to that man, or would you insist that she should suffer and make him suffer—alone?"

She listened with averted face. Well she knew the purport of these questions. But her face remained impassive, and her voice was calm as she replied gently:

"No woman may sit in judgment over another woman. No woman can tell positively what she might do under all circumstances. The temptation might be such that even a saint would succumb. That reminds me. Do you know the story of the Abbess of Jouarre?"

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"No," replied Armitage; "what is it? Tell it me."

He settled down more comfortably in the sand to listen. Grace smiled, and took up her sewing again.

"It's a story that made a deep impression on me," she said. "It was during the bloodiest days of the French Revolution. On the Place de la Concorde a hundred lives were being sacrificed on the guillotine daily to appease the savage fury of the populace. Among the aristocrats sentenced to death and who awaited in the Temple prison their turn to be summoned to the scaffold was a chevalier, scion of one of the proudest families of France and an Abbess, a woman of gentle birth, both of whom had been denounced to the Revolutionary tribunal. They had known and loved each other as children, and they met in prison for the first time since the Abbess had taken her vows. Closely associated within the dungeon's grim walls they soon discovered that time had not killed

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their youthful infatuation. In the shadow of death the Abbess was willing to admit that she had loved the chevalier all these years, that she had prayed for him and carried his image in her heart. He clasped her in his arms and, pleading his unconquerable passion, he urged her to forget her vows and give herself to him. Kindly, but firmly, she withdrew from his embrace and gravely recalled him to a sense of duty. She declared that being now the affianced bride of Heaven, it was forbidden for her to even think of earthly ties or joys. But the chevalier refused to listen to reason or to calm his ardor. He insisted that such love as theirs was sacred, and that her vows to the Church did not bind her, now that she was about to die. In another few hours they would both be dead. Her duty, during the short time she had yet to live, was to yield to the promptings of her heart rather than to heed the dictates of her conscience. Their union, he said, would be a marriage before God, and after their earthly death they would be united forever in Heaven. The Abbess listened. Her great love gradually gained the mastery over her moral scruples. Her opposition weakened. The chevalier took her again in his arms."

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Grace ceased speaking. Armitage, his face betraying more and more interest, waited for her to continue.

"That is not all," he said interrogatively.

Grace shook her head.

"No, now comes the tragedy of it." Continuing, she went on: "The next day the prison doors were thrown open, and brutal jailers read out the lists of names of those prisoners who that morning must ride in the fatal death-cart. Among the first summoned was the chevalier. Tenderly he bade the Abbess farewell. Death he hailed with joy, for it marked the beginning of their coming felicity in another and better world. He disappeared, and the Abbess awaited her turn. Other names were called, but hers was not among them. The jailer stopped reading and turned to depart. The Abbess tremulously asked when her hour, too, would come. The jailer answered: 'You go free—by order of the Tribunal.'"

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Again Grace was silent. Armitage seemed lost in thought. Presently he said:

"And the Abbess—what became of her?"

"She had to bear her cross for her great sin. Her punishment was worse than death. Not only had she broken her vows and offended Heaven, but she was separated forever from the man to whom she had given her love. Cursed by the Church, shunned by everybody, she wandered miserably from village to village, leading by the hand a little child."

Armitage was silent for a few minutes, and then he said:

"You were reminded of this story by some remark you had previously made: What was it?"

"I said in answer to your hypothesis as to what a woman would or would not do for a man she loved, that even a saint might succumb, given certain circumstances. The Abbess was a saint. Yet she sinned."

"I don't think I would call that a sin," objected Armitage. "The real sinner was the judge who pardoned her."

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"Why not the chevalier who tempted her?" rejoined Grace.

He made no answer, but remained looking steadfastly at her. Then rising abruptly to his feet, he began to pace nervously up and down the sands. His face was pale, his eyes flashed, the muscles around his mouth twitched. He gave every sign of being under an intense emotional strain. There was something to be said, and he dare not say it. It was a novelty for him to find himself lacking in courage. At any other time he would have faced a tiger about to spring; he would have looked without flinching into the muzzle of a leveled rifle. But at that instant he quailed like a craven—he dared not tell this girl that he loved her and wanted her for his wife.

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## CHAPTER XV.

He disappeared and Grace did not see him again for the remainder of that day. All afternoon she waited, expecting each moment to see him reappear. Not wishing to be away in case he suddenly returned and wanted some supper, she omitted her customary visit to Mount Hope.

At first she did not mind his long absence. Busily preoccupied with her sewing and half a dozen other tasks about the camp, the time passed so quickly that she hardly noticed it. But when darkness commenced to fall and still he did not come, she began to feel uneasy. He had not told her that he expected to be gone so long. Something must have happened. Perhaps he had met with an accident and at that very moment was lying hurt, in need of assistance. She turned hot and cold by turns at this thought. Suppose he were killed! A sudden choking sensation in her throat, a quickened beating of her heart, told her that it would be a greater misfortune than any that had yet befallen her. If she had never fully realized it before, Grace knew now that this man had come to be part of her own life.

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Night fell, with its profound silence and its mysterious sounds. Nature slept. The chirping of

crickets, the croaking of frogs, the mournful sighing of the wind in the trees, the sullen splash of the waves on the sandy beach, were the only audible sounds. It was the first time that Grace had been left so long alone since they set foot on the island. In the daytime, with the sun shining, the birds singing and everything plainly visible for miles around, she did not care. But the darkness, the solemn silence, the strange inexplicable noises she heard every now and again in the wood—all this frightened her. Everything around her assumed strange, unfamiliar shapes. At one time she thought she saw some object with gleaming eyes approaching the cabin. Her flesh began to creep. Terrified, she quickly retreated inside the cabin and, barricading the door with table and chairs, crouched down by the window, straining her ears to hear some sound of Armitage.

Suppose something had happened to him! Then she would be quite alone, entirely defenceless. The mere thought of such an eventuality caused the blood to freeze in her veins. How could she be alone on that desert island? She would go stark, staring mad. Ah, now she knew what his companionship had meant to her. If only he would come back, she would hardly be able to resist the temptation to throw her arms round his neck. He was more necessary to her every day. No one can live without human companionship. She must have some one to talk to. Besides, every hour it dawned upon her more strongly that she loved this strange, solitary man. Even at this moment of terror it was love as much as fear that racked her heart with anxiety and anguish.

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Morning was just breaking in the east when all at once he reappeared.

"Where have you been?" she asked tremulously.

She averted her eyes so he should not see that she had been weeping.

"I don't know," he answered curtly.

He seemed worn and tired. His boots were muddy, his clothes had fresh rents and stains. He looked as if he had been tramping through the woods all night.

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"Will you eat something?" she asked.

"Don't bother," he replied. "I'll get something."

"It's no trouble," she said. Going quickly to their simple larder, she put before him some cold fish and plantain cakes.

He ate ravenously, in stubborn silence. When she spoke to him, he replied in low monosyllables. His eyes seemed to avoid her searching, inquiring gaze. Once she happened to turn quietly and she caught him staring at her in a strange way. His manner somewhat intimidated her. She wondered if she could possibly have done or said something to displease him.

It grew lighter every minute, but the day promised to be gloomy. The sun was invisible behind a bank of mist, and the entire sky was overcast. It looked like rain. There was a damp chill in the air. The weather seemed in harmony with Armitage's unaccountable behavior. Grace felt chilled herself. She had a presentiment that something was about to happen. Whether it would affect her or him she did not know, but instinct told her that danger of some kind threatened.

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Something troubled her companion, that was certain. What its nature was, she could not guess. She had never seen him so moody or acting so strangely. But, unwilling to put herself in the delicate position of asking for confidence he withheld, she desisted from any further questioning, and, leaving him alone, went to her cabin. She was exhausted from her long vigil and it was not many minutes after she threw herself down on the bed before she was fast asleep.

When she awoke he was gone. He had disappeared mysteriously, just as he had the first time, without leaving a word behind or a single indication to tell where he was going, or how long he would be away. Yet he had not entirely forgotten her. He had brought a fresh supply of spring water, and before the door of her cabin she found some freshly caught fish and a new supply of plantains.

Refreshed after her sleep, Grace went cheerfully about her usual morning tasks. She tidied her cabin, took her sea bath, and prepared the noonday meal. So busy was she that Armitage's new absence remained unnoticed. In fact, she dismissed him from her mind. If she thought of him at all it was to wonder vaguely what ailed him, and speculate idly how long his mood would last. By the time the sun was directly overhead, her work was done. Armitage not having returned, she ate her meal alone.

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It was no use waiting around any longer, so she started, after dinner, for Mount Hope. For two days she had not paid her regular visit to the signal-fire. She felt a sense of guilt, as if she had neglected the one thing which alone could save her.

It was a difficult, laborious climb up the hill, and she was compelled to rest several times on the way to the summit. She looked up as she went, trying to catch a glimpse of the smoke that was announcing to the whole universe that two human beings were in need of immediate relief. She could not see the smoke, owing to the projecting rocks which hid the summit from view. At the next turn she would come in sight of it. Up and up she went, out of breath.

Every now and then she halted and looked back. At this height, fully 500 feet above the sea, she commanded a superb view of the entire island. A few barren rocks connected by grassy and thickly wooded plateaus, it made but a speck on the surface of the wide ocean. Below, under the shelter of the tall cliffs, she saw their two cabins nestling under the trees. Thinking she might

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catch a glimpse of Armitage, she strained her eyes in every direction. But he was nowhere to be seen. There was not a sign of life anywhere. Not a human voice, not the bark of a dog. Even the birds were dumb. Perfect stillness reigned, as in the habitation of the dead.

Never so well as now had she realized their complete isolation. Her heart sank. Even if a vessel passed, how could she hope that an islet as small as this would be noticed? A sailing-master would not think for a minute that it harbored survivors of a shipwreck. Their only chance of attracting attention was the signal-fire.

"Thank God," she murmured, "that we had the means to light a fire. It has never been allowed to go out. Night and day it sends out its wireless message for aid!"

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She resumed her climb and presently reached the summit. Only another turn in the road and she would come in sight of the huge bonfire, blazing and crackling as it sent its message of distress far out to sea. Impatient to see it, she hastened her steps, almost running, in her anxiety to get there. Round the bend she went until, breathless, she emerged on the broad plateau.

Suddenly she stopped and turned pale. Could she have mistaken the road? No, this was the place. But where was the signal-fire? The spot where it had burned night and day all these weeks was plainly visible. The grass and ground all around was charred and blackened by the flames, but of the fire itself nothing remained. Some giant strength had wreaked its fury upon it, scattered the glowing embers right and left, drowned it out with water. The signal-fire was extinguished!

Pale and trembling, Grace stood rooted to the ground, trying to understand. Who had done this? Why had he done it? Of course, only one person could have done it. Was this the explanation of Armitage's long absence the previous night? Why had he scattered and drowned out their signal-fire?

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Her face flushed with anger. Her apprehension gave place to indignation. By what right had he presumed to take this step? If he were willing to sacrifice himself, what right had he to sacrifice her?

Turning on her steps, she hastened down the hill and soon reached their encampment. He was there to greet her, standing with folded arms, silent, as if he knew where she had been and was awaiting the first outburst of her reproaches and anger.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

"The fire is out!" she cried, as she came within speaking distance.

"I know," he answered stolidly. His face was expressionless, not a muscle moved. An observer might have mistaken him for a figure cast in bronze.

"How did it go out?" demanded Grace, trying to control herself.

Still he made no answer.

"How did it go out?" she repeated. "Did you put it out?"

Armitage nodded. Then, with a defiant toss of his head, he said:

"Yes—I put it out."

Grace stared at him in utter astonishment, scarcely able to believe her ears. She was so overwrought with indignation that everything seemed to swim before her eyes. She felt weak and faint. Fearing that she would fall, she leaned against a tree for support.

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"You put it out! You put it out!" she gasped. "Why—tell me why."

He shrugged his shoulders, and for a moment made no answer. Then, with eyes averted from hers, he said in a low tone:

"What's the use of letting it burn any longer? Nobody will see it if it burns till doomsday. It might burn on forever, till there was no more wood left on the island to feed it with, and still you'd be here eating your heart out waiting for help that would never come. It was labor thrown away."

Unable to control herself any longer, Grace burst out passionately, almost hysterically.

"So that is it? Because it was hard work, you sacrifice me! Because you prefer this idle, savage existence to the hard life you used to lead, you do not wish to get away. I must spend here my youth, the rest of my days because this sort of life pleases you. And you don't hesitate to destroy my only chance of relief because it suits you. How dare you! I thought you were a man. I was mistaken. A true man would not take advantage of a helpless woman's misfortune to further his own selfish interests. You are free to stay in this lonely spot if you choose, but I will not. I refuse to sacrifice myself. I will go away in spite of you. I don't know how, but I will find some way, and when I get back among my friends I shall tell them how a man treated a poor defenceless girl."

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He made a step toward her, as if about to say something, when she retreated and exclaimed:

"Don't come near me!" she cried, almost hysterically. "I hate you. I won't let you address me again until that fire is lighted."

She sank down on the stump of a tree and, burying her face in her hands, gave way, womanlike, to a torrent of tears. When the hysterical spell had passed, he was still standing humbly before her, looking down at her, with a sad, set expression on his face.

"Won't you listen to me?" he said.

"I won't listen to anything until you have lighted the fire once more," was her stubborn reply.

Overhead the sun suddenly broke through the heavy gray clouds. The mists slowly lifted. Once more land and water were bathed in a flood of cheering sunshine. Grace's moods were mercurial. All that morning she had been particularly depressed because of the weather. As Nature put on a fairer garb, her spirits rose. She now felt sorry she had spoken so harshly to him. At least, she might have given him a chance to explain.

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"Won't you listen?" he asked again.

He spoke pleadingly, without anger, the rich tones of his voice trembling with suppressed emotion. Standing bareheaded, the sun falling full on his tanned face and neck, he looked strikingly handsome.

"Why did you extinguish the fire?" she demanded again in a low and more conciliatory tone.

Leaning over toward her, he said:

"Can't you guess the real reason?"

"Because of the trouble—you said as much."

He shook his head and there was a note of reproach in his voice as he replied:

"You don't think that is the reason. You ought to know that I should consider no task too irksome if it would add to your happiness."

He spoke so earnestly that Grace looked up at him in surprise. What did he mean? His eyes met hers without flinching. He was silent. She saw he wanted to say something and hesitated. She knew not why, but there was something disturbing in this man's silent, persistent gaze.

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"What is the real reason?" she murmured, at last.

"Can't you guess?" he demanded hoarsely.

"No," she replied, outwardly calm, but with misgivings within.

"Because I love you!" he cried passionately.

He sprang eagerly forward, as if about to take her in his arms. Grace, startled, fell back.

"You love me?" she repeated mechanically.

"Yes, I love you—I love you!" he repeated wildly. "Haven't you seen it, haven't you felt it all along?"

The color fled from her cheeks. Her lips trembled. The crucial moment which she had dreaded had arrived at last.

"If you love me," she said, with a forced smile, "you have a curious way of showing it. You know that all my hopes centered on that signal-fire, and yet wilfully, deliberately, you destroyed it. If you love me, why did you do that?"

"Because," he said in a hoarse whisper, "I was afraid that some ship might see the blaze and come and take you away. I love you so much that I'd stop at nothing. You are the first woman I've ever loved. You don't know what that means to me. When a man of my age loves for the first time, the force of his passion frightens him. These last two days and nights I have purposely avoided you. I have tried to control and master myself. I have tried to forget you, to banish you from my thoughts. All last night I tramped through the woods, trying to persuade myself that it was an impossible dream, that such happiness could never befall such a poor devil as I. But I could not—I could not. In each tree I saw your dear face, in every sigh of the wind I heard the plaintive sounds of your sweet voice. Then, suddenly, I caught sight of the blaze on that hill. Instantly I felt it was my enemy. I knew that if a ship came I would lose you. I realized that it would mean the end of my happiness. Maddened by the thought, I was seized by a sudden fury. I ran all the way up to the top of the hill and trampled it out. Can't you understand that I don't want to lose you, that I don't want you to go?"

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Grace listened, her face flushed. When he ceased speaking, she said gently:

"Any woman would feel pleased and honored at what you say. You have been very kind to me. I shall never forget what I owe you. I am deeply grateful. I shall always remember you." Hesitatingly she added: "It may be that you are right—that a ship will never come—what then? What do you want me to do?"

"To—to be my wife!" he replied quickly and eagerly.

Grace gasped. She was not without a sense of humor and the incongruity of the situation was at once apparent to her. Really he went too far. He was making her a serious proposal of marriage. This sailor, fireman, stoker, or whatever he might be, was actually asking the heiress to millions, one of the prizes of New York's matrimonial market—to be his wife! It was too absurd. Only the grave, pleading expression in Armitage's face deterred her from laughing outright. If any of her set in New York heard of it, they would chaff her without mercy.

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"How handsome he is!" she murmured to herself as she looked at him. "What a pity we are not social equals!"

She was sorry for him, of course, but it would be kinder if she put him at once in his place and made him understand the hopelessness of his position.

"Do you hear?" he said hoarsely, his voice quivering from suppressed emotion. "I want you—I want you to be my wife!"

Grace drew herself up with the air of offended dignity of a queen hurt in her pride. Her gown was in tatters, her lovely hair hung loose over her snow-white shoulders. With her cheeks slightly flushed and her large dark eyes dilated and more lustrous from excitement, never had she appeared to him more beautiful or desirable. Like a trembling felon at the dock waiting to hear the judge pronounce his fate, Armitage waited for her answer.

"Your wife?" she replied not unkindly. "Do you know what I am, do you realize what position I hold in society? Don't you know that my father is one of America's kings of finance, that his fortune is twenty millions, and that our winter and summer homes are among the show-places of Fifth Avenue and Newport? Don't you know that I spend \$10,000 a year on my dress, that I have a dozen servants to run at my call, that my carriages, my horses, gowns and jewels furnish endless material for the society reporters of the yellow journals? Men have proposed to me—men of means, men of my own class. I refused them all because they hadn't money enough." With a scornful toss of her head, she added: "I despise a husband who looks to his wife for support."

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Armitage had listened patiently until now, but her last words aroused him. Suddenly interrupting her, he broke in:

"You refused them not because they weren't rich enough, but because you didn't love them. You can't deceive me. I haven't watched and studied you all these weeks for nothing. You aren't as shallow and heartless as you pretend. You are too intelligent to find pleasure in Society's inane pastimes. You admitted to me yourself that something seemed lacking in your life. Shall I tell you what it is?"

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He advanced closer and, looking fixedly at her, went on:

"I can read the secret in your beautiful eyes—the windows of your soul. Shall I tell you what your heart desires? You are love-hungry. Your whole being cries out for love. Not the infamous traffic in flesh and honor which receives the blessing of fashionable churches, but the pure, true, unselfish, ideal love that thrills a man and woman under God's free sky. What good are your father's millions here? What do I care about your houses, your gowns and your jewels? Here, stripped of everything but your own sweet lovable nature, you are only a woman—a woman I love and want to call mine own."

His voice held her spellbound. The tone of authority in his words weakened her will-power. His ardent eyes, looking tenderly into hers, fascinated her. She felt that the odds were fearfully against her. It required all her moral strength to resist his pleading, yet there was nothing here to which she could cling. At home, in New York, she could take refuge behind a hundred excuses. The polite conventions of society would lend her support. But here alone on this lonely island with this man whom she knew in her heart she loved, this man who insisted on frank explanations, straightforward answers, the odds were fearfully against her. She felt herself weakening.

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"Please don't," she murmured confusedly. "It's utterly impossible. Don't you see how impossible it is—even if I did care for you? In a short time a ship will come. We shall be taken off. We shall go back to New York. Each of us will resume the old life, and this adventure will be only a memory."

Armitage laughed cynically, and he made a gesture of impatience. His manner suddenly changed. He assumed the old tone of superiority which she had noticed when they first landed on the island.

"Don't deceive yourself," he said abruptly. "Some day things must be understood as they are, and it might just as well be now."

He stopped and looked at her strangely.

"What do you mean?" demanded Grace uneasily.

"I mean," he went on slowly, "that no ship will come. We shall never go back. The rest of our days must be spent here together."

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He spoke with such authority, such conviction, that Grace felt that he had good grounds for what he said. Her face paled and a feeling of faintness came over her.

"How do you know?" she demanded, with tears in her eyes.



"I've known it all along," he replied.

"But didn't you say that whaling-vessels made these waters their fishing-grounds?" she persisted.

"I lied," he answered frankly. "I was sorry for you, so I invented that fiction."

"Then, the signal-fire was useless!" she cried, almost hysterical.

He nodded.

"Yes—utterly useless. I kept it up only to please you. There isn't one chance in a thousand of it ever being seen. You had to be told the truth some time."

Grace stood listening to him, completely overwhelmed, as if in a trance. In these few brief moments he had destroyed every hope which she had nourished for weeks. All her watching and waiting and praying had been in vain. She was doomed to spend the rest of her days on this lonely island—with him! Her head seemed in a whirl. She felt dizzy and faint. Then she tried to collect her thoughts to reason it out, to picture the future. Suppose it was true, suppose they had to stay there together forever. How would it affect her? What would their life be as the years went on? They would gradually change their habits. The culture and careful training of her youth would soon be forgotten. Removed from the refining influence of civilization, she and Armitage would slowly degenerate, they would revert to the semi-savage condition of their prehistoric forbears. In time, the last remnant of their clothes would go, they would be obliged to make clothes of animals skins or of plantain leaves. They would cease cooking their food, finding greater relish in devouring it raw. Their hair would grow long and matted, their hands would look like claws. They might even lose the power of speech and if, in years to come, a ship chanced to touch at the island, they would find two gibbering human-like creatures who had forgotten who they were and where they came from.

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She gave a low moan of despair. Armitage approached her. She looked up at him appealingly:

"Is there no hope at all?"

He shook his head.

"No—none."

She covered her face with her hands. He could see that she was weeping.

"Don't cry," he said gently. "It's no use fretting. We can't fight fate." Tenderly he added: "Do you understand now why I said I loved you? Do you think I would have dared if I thought we should ever get away? I told you because I knew we must spend our lives in lonely solitude, and I knew we could not go on living as we have been. I want you for my wife. You cannot object. The obstacles you mentioned no longer exist."

Grace started to her feet. There was a note of defiance and alarm in her voice as she replied:

"If I must stay here and die here, I will. God's will be done. But I will live as I think is right, as I would live anywhere else. Being here alone with you makes no difference."

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He folded his arms and looked at her boldly.

"It does make a difference," he said slowly and firmly. "We are here—a man and a woman—alone on a desert island amid the eternal silence of the mighty ocean. There are only two of us. We are all the world to each other. Our future days must be spent together in the closest intimacy. We cannot go on living as though we were strangers. It isn't natural. You ought to be able to see that. The objections you mentioned would keep us apart under ordinary conditions, but here the conditions are altogether different. You are no longer the courted heiress, the society favorite. You are a woman and I am a man. The artificial conventions to which you cling have no place on this island. Here we are living amid primitive conditions. Nature gave woman to man—she was intended to be his mate, his companion. I assert my rights as the male."

He spoke harshly, in a tone of command, as if he allowed her to have a say in the matter, but intended to have his way in the end, after all.

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Grace found herself listening passively. She wondered why she did not burst out with indignation when he thus disposed of her as if she were his goods, his chattel. Yet, secretly, it pleased her to have him assume this tone of ownership. The men in society who had fawned upon her were tame, weak, despicable creatures, ready to lick her hand for a smile. This was a real man. He gave her orders. He told her what he wished her to do, and he said she must do it. As she listened to his rich, musical voice she thought to herself that, after all, he was right. Sooner or later it must come to that. The years would pass. They would get old together. Would it not be more natural, would not their lives be happier if they mated and had children to be the joy of their reclining years?

Armitage boldly took her hand. She did not resist. She had not the strength. This man had strangely paralyzed all her will-power.

He drew her fiercely to his breast and whispered ardently:

"I love you, Grace! I love you!"

His warm breath was upon her cheek. She felt his strong body pressed close against hers. A

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sudden feeling of vertigo came over her.

"I love you—I love you!" he repeated wildly, crushing her slender form in his powerful arms.

She made no attempt to resist, but remained passive in his caress, as if a prisoner who knew there was no hope of escape. Yet there was no indication of anger on her face. Why shouldn't she love this man? If their lives were to be spent together, she must be his helpmate, his companion. Besides, she knew she was lying to herself. She did love him—with all her soul. This was the man she had been waiting for, the man who would have the courage to overcome her resistance, to take her fiercely in his arms and cry "I love you—I want you!"

She closed her eyes, her head fell back. He leaned forward until his lips almost touched hers. Why did he hesitate? Why didn't he take the prize which was already his? He felt her warm body vibrating with the passion his ardor had awakened.

"I love you—I love you!" he cried. "Grace, tell me—will you be mine?"

Her eyes were closed. Her head, with its wealth of luxuriant hair all loose, fell back on his shoulder. Her face was upturned, her lips half parted. Trembling with emotion, he leaned forward. His mouth slowly approached hers for the kiss which was to seal their union, when suddenly he heard a shout.

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"Ahoy there! Ahoy there!"

The sound of a human voice in that deserted spot was so utterly unexpected, so entirely unlooked for, that for a moment Armitage and Grace started back in alarm. Armitage thus rudely aroused out of his day-dreams, hurried forward to investigate.

"Ahoy there! Ahoy there!" came the shout again.

There was no mistake this time. Some one was calling, in English.

Presently they saw half a dozen sailors clambering over the rocks and running toward them. They were Americans.

Grace sank to her knees.

"Thank God!" she murmured. "Rescued at last!"

A boatswain and five sailors came up, looking with interest at Armitage and Grace.

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"Who are you?" cried out the boatswain, as they approached.

Armitage went forward.

"We were wrecked on the Blue Star Steamship *Atlanta*, which went down in a hurricane on those reefs about six weeks ago."

"Passengers?" asked the boatswain.

Armitage hesitated. Then, pointing to Grace, he said:

"This lady was a cabin passenger."

"And you?" demanded the man.

"Stoker," replied Armitage grimly.

The other sailors looked at each other and laughed.

"We landed to get water," explained the boatswain, "and chanced to stumble across human footprints. Knowing the island was deserted, we decided to follow up the tracks. And here we are. I guess you're glad to see us."

Armitage was silent.

"Thank God!" murmured Grace. "Where is your ship? What is it?"

"The *Saucy Polly*, of Boston, Mass., and as fine a whaler as you ever saw. We're anchored on the other side of the island. I guess that's why you didn't see us."

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"An American ship—God be praised," murmured Grace, clasping her hands. "Will you take us home?"

"That we will, Miss. We couldn't leave you here."

Overcome with emotion, Grace suddenly burst into tears.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Fifth Avenue presented its customary animated and brilliant picture of refined cosmopolitan life. The sidewalks were crowded to the curb with stylishly dressed promenaders, the roadway

blocked with smart automobiles and handsome equipages. The all New York of fashion and wealth was taking its afternoon sunning.

For the foreigner making a study of our national manners, the Avenue's five-o'clock parade any fine afternoon during the season presents a scene as typically American as he may expect to find. Here in this one narrow, splendid thoroughfare, stretching in a noble line, as the crow flies, from Twenty-third Street away up to the Nineties, is concentrated the fabulous, incalculable wealth of the United States. Here, side by side, dwell the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, the Vanderbilts, the Astors, the Goulds, the Harrimans, the Morgans, the Whitneys, and other giants of finance, whose fortunes aggregate thousands of millions of dollars! Lined on either side of the street with the marble palaces of its multi-millionaires, its roadway jammed with carriages and automobiles kept in order by picturesque mounted police, its sidewalks thronged with pretty, stylish girls, and men and women famous in art, music, politics, science and literature—New York's most exclusive thoroughfare is perhaps the one place where the American plutocracy is on exhibition in all its aggressive opulence. The show street of New York, it is not laid with rails for electric cars like other thoroughfares of the metropolis. Wagons and trucks not having special business there are forbidden to traverse it. The poor man understands that it is the exclusive domain of the very rich, that he has no place there, and that if he appears on its sacred pavements he is apt to be looked upon as an audacious intruder.

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Armitage rested from his work and looked around him, dazed by the bustle and noise. The gay, busy city was such a contrast with the quiet, peaceful life he had led for the past few months that the sudden change was startling. It had all the attraction of novelty. The afternoon parade was at its height, and he was interested watching the promenaders. Never had he seen so many pretty girls. There were styles of beauty to suit every taste—blondes and brunettes. Tall, graceful, aristocratic girls; short, plump, vivacious girls. Some had the grace of stately lilies, others the charm and fragrance of the full-blown rose. Each rivaled the other in chic of costume, all were merry and full of the exuberance of youth. They passed in twos and threes and as Armitage watched them, he wondered where his girl was—the one girl in the world! He knew that she was in New York, and he also knew where her home was on Fifth Avenue. Perhaps if he stayed there long enough, he would see her go by.

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He had not heard from Grace since they landed in Boston. He reviewed in his mind all that had occurred since the wreck of the *Atlanta*, that ever-memorable night when, swimming for his life in the raging seas, he had felt her limp body lying heavily on his left arm. Then came their long sojourn together on Hope Island, a blissful dream rudely interrupted by the untimely arrival of the *Saucy Polly*. Then their return to America. Even on the voyage home they were no longer the same to each other. In her new clothes, borrowed from the stewardess, she looked quite different. He thought he detected more reserve in her manner toward him. Then, when they arrived in Boston, her father was waiting for her, and they left at once for New York—on a special train. He couldn't follow. He had no money and refused to accept any from Mr. Harmon. He felt amply rewarded for all he had done when Grace smiled kindly at him as she shook hands and said good-by.

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When they had gone he tried to find work. For some days he was unsuccessful. Times were hard. Instead of employing new men, old hands were everywhere being discharged by the hundreds. At first he thought of taking to his old occupation, the sea, but he thought better of it. He had had enough of seafaring to last him some time. Then, desperate, he tried to get anything. Men with nerve were needed in the iron construction work of a lofty sky-scraper. He didn't know much about the business, but he did not mind the danger, and he was soon high in the air, astride a swinging iron beam, riveting bolts at a dizzy height and with such frail support that the people in the street below turned pale for fear he would fall. What did he care if a girder fell and he was dashed to pieces below? He laughed at danger, and performed feats that made his fellow workmen gasp. This earned him good pay, and soon he had saved enough to come to New York.

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Why had he come to New York? Why had he given up good wages to come here without the certainty of finding work? Only one thing had attracted him here—the same reason that attracts the moth to the flame. He knew it was hopeless, but he could not resist the temptation of coming to the same city where she was, breathing the same air she breathed and secretly, at night, coming up to Fifth Avenue and standing for hours, watching her windows until he was ordered to move on by a suspicious policeman. Luckily he had found employment—the same kind of work that he had done successfully in Boston. A sky-scraper was being erected on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, and he was sent to rivet the iron beams. That was how he came to be there that sunny afternoon.

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Curiously, he eyed the fashionably dressed promenaders as they passed by, chatting and laughing in polite conversation. There was no hostility in his attitude as he watched them. That feeling had died away. These men and women with their fine clothes and polished manners appeared to him to-day in a different light. There was a time when he would have cursed them as they haughtily brushed past him, but now the old animosity had died away. The class hatred which he had nourished so long in his heart had undergone a change. These were her people, perhaps they were her friends. Wistfully, he looked after them, wishing he could summon up courage to boldly approach some one and ask how Grace was. Eagerly he scanned the brilliant throng, hoping each instant to catch sight of her in the crowd, but he watched in vain. The beloved figure he would have recognized a mile away did not appear.

Disappointed, he turned once more to his task. It was already half-past four. In thirty minutes

more the whistle would blow. The men would quit work and he would trudge over to the cheaper East Side, where he lived. He had picked up his sledge-hammer and was about to resume work when he happened to look up the Avenue. There she was at last, close at hand, coming toward him. Involuntarily, he stepped back, and the heavy hammer fell from his nerveless grasp.

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Grace went by, dainty and *chic*, the cynosure of every eye on the Avenue. Men turned after her as she passed. Women stopped and pointed. But, unconscious of, or indifferent to, the admiration she excited, Miss Harmon continued on her way home.

Armitage gazed after her, as if petrified. His first impulse was to cry out, to run after her, to attract her attention. He stumbled forward and then stopped. What right had he to accost her? She might resent it as an unwarrantable impertinence. It would humiliate and embarrass her to be addressed amid that fashionable throng by a common workman. It was enough that he had seen her—from a distance. That was all the happiness he could reasonably expect. By the time he had reasoned with himself, Grace was out of sight.

That evening when Armitage reached his lodgings he found awaiting him a letter bearing the Boston postmark. Opening it, he saw it contained another letter addressed to him and forwarded in care of the Boston office of the owners of the *Saucy Polly*. Tearing open the envelope, he read as follows:

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"— FIFTH AVENUE.

"DEAR MR. ARMITAGE: If you happen to be in New York, I should be glad if you could find it convenient to call at the above address.

"Yours faithfully,  
"JOHN HARMON."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

The town house of John Harmon was conspicuous for its size and beauty even on an avenue famous for its magnificent residences. With a frontage of a hundred feet facing Central Park, it was constructed entirely of French gray stone, Renaissance style, with turrets, gables, oriel windows, elaborately carved stone loggias and balconies, tiled roofs and all the other architectural ornamentation of that picturesque period. Set back some distance from the road, it was surrounded by tastefully laid-out grounds, with a handsome portico decorated by elaborate stone carvings, and a driveway bordered with flower-beds, entrance to which was made through ornamental gates of massive bronze.

Beautiful from the exterior as was this railroad king's home, within it was furnished with the lavish grandeur of a royal palace. All Europe had been ransacked to fill it with beautiful and costly art treasures. At the back of the large entrance-hall, with its magnificent frescoed ceilings, its satin hangings, marble pillars and stained-glass windows, was a monumental staircase of pure Italian marble and graceful design which led to the reception-room and other apartments above. The stairway was artistically decorated with marble statuary, trophies of arms and priceless tapestries. On the second floor were the famous art-galleries hung with paintings by the ancient and modern masters.

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It was only on extraordinary occasions that visitors were afforded an opportunity to see all the art treasures which the house contained. For the greater part of the year the pictures were not on view. To-day, however, was one of the rare exceptions. Mr. Harmon had thrown open his entire house in honor of the special event which he was celebrating.

Outside the house, on Fifth Avenue, a crowd of people stood watching the long string of carriages, automobiles and taxi-cabs in line before the gate. The day, although fine, was cold and windy and an awning had been stretched from the portico to the curb to protect the guests from the weather. The crowd of curious sightseers grew larger as each moment other cabs and automobiles dashed up. A mounted policeman prevented the spectators from pressing too close and kept the way open for regular traffic, while Mr. Harmon's servants in powdered hair and knee-breeches received each newcomer.

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"Gee! Get on to 'em guys wid der white wigs!" cried out a cheeky boy.

"What's all the fuss about?" inquired a bystander.

"Blessed if I know," replied the man curtly.

A well-dressed woman stopped and watched the scene with interest.

"Whose house is that?" she inquired of a policeman.

"John Harmon's, m'm," replied the officer of the law.

"The railroad man?" she asked, with growing interest.

"Yes," answered her informant. "Mr. Harmon's daughter was wrecked on the *Atlanta*, you know. She was reported drowned. Then they found her on a desert island. She's home to-day and

they're giving a reception to all their friends in honor of her return."

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In the splendid reception-room facing the Avenue rich with its gold and crimson furnishings, delicately frescoed ceilings, satin brocade hangings, priceless rugs, onyx tables and heavy red carpet, Grace was the center of an excited throng of women. Each fresh arrival literally fought her way through the crowd to get a glimpse of the heroine of the hour. There were murmurs of surprise and admiration on all sides as they caught sight of her.

They expected to see Grace a physical wreck after all the suffering she had gone through during her enforced imprisonment on the desert island. Some had gone so far as to whisper that the young heiress would never recover from the effects of the nervous shock. Such a terrible experience, they said, was more than sufficient to kill a strong woman. What effect, therefore, must it have had on the delicate Miss Harmon, whose health already gave cause for alarm before she went on that fatal voyage?

When the invited guests entered the reception-room and saw Grace beaming and smiling in the center of a circle of enthusiastic friends they could scarcely believe their eyes. To their utter astonishment she was precisely the opposite of what they had imagined. Instead of the frail, languid girl to whom they had said good-by when the *Atlanta* sailed from New York some six months before, she was the picture of good health, in as perfect physical condition as she had ever been in her life. Her face was tanned from long exposure to the sun, but the deeper color only heightened the rich effects of her beauty. It became her dark hair and her splendid eyes. She was a little stouter, but her fuller figure only set off to better advantage a new gown of clinging silver cloth, trimmed with rare lace. She looked radiant. Whispered murmurs of admiration were heard in all parts of the room. The women raved about her figure, her coloring and her hair, and the men fell over each other in their eagerness to attract her attention.

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The reception-rooms were already crowded and new arrivals were coming in constantly. Somebody said that Prince Sergius of Eurasia was present, and there was a general craning of necks to get a glimpse of royalty. A woman whispered confidentially to a friend that his royal highness had been a constant caller since Miss Harmon's return and that there were good grounds for believing that they were engaged. In a few minutes the friend had spread the information all over the room that the engagement was official and would immediately be made public.

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Supremely unconscious of the gossip of which she was the envied object, Grace stood in a corner of the room surrounded by Mrs. Wesley Stuart, Professor Hanson, Mrs. Phelps, and the Hon. Percy Fitzhugh. All fellow survivors of the wreck of the *Atlanta*, they made an interesting little group by themselves as they stood comparing notes and describing their adventures, while Mr. and Mrs. Harmon, scarcely able yet to believe the good news that their darling child had returned from the dead, went from one to another telling the wonderful story of her life on a desert island.

For the hundredth time Grace told and retold the story of the wreck—how she fell into the water from the overturned life-boat, and after swimming some distance, was fast becoming exhausted when suddenly one of the crew seized her and dragged her ashore. She told of her horrible adventure with the cobra and narrated in detail all the other incidents of her sojourn on the desert island up to the time that she was rescued by the *Saucy Polly*.

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Mrs. Stuart explained how she and Professor Hanson, together with Mr. Fitzhugh got away in one of the life-boats. Mrs. Phelps and Count von Hatzfeldt were also saved, but poor Captain Summers was drowned, a martyr to duty. He refused to leave the bridge and went down with his ship, keeping the whistle blowing as the vessel sank out of sight beneath the waves. After rowing all night they were picked up the following day by a P. and O. steamer bound from Calcutta to Southampton. They naturally supposed Grace was among the drowned, and, on arriving in England, gave her name among the others to the correspondents, who cabled the sensational news to New York.

Mrs. Stuart threw her arms around Grace's neck and kissed her effusively.

"Oh, my poor, dear girl," she cried. "If you only knew what mental agonies I've suffered! I thought that I should never see you again. I blamed myself for having suggested the voyage. I held myself responsible. I did not dare look your poor father in the face. Your mental suffering must have been terrible, to say nothing of the dangers you were subjected to. How terrified you must have been to be all alone with that dreadful stoker! You should thank heaven he did you no violence. A man of that character is capable of anything—especially when alone with a defenceless woman."

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Grace smiled faintly. A thoughtful expression came into her face. She made no answer, and Mrs. Stuart repeated her question:

"Weren't you afraid of him?"

Aroused from her reverie, Grace answered:

"No, not at all, we got along capitally. You know, dear," she went on, "the devil is never as black as he is painted. When people don't get along together, it is very often because they don't understand each other."

Mrs. Stuart looked at her former *protégée* with blank astonishment.

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"So this stoker fellow—you think you understand him? Did you actually take the trouble to understand him?"

She looked closely at Grace, a searching look that made the latter's cheeks redden.

"Perhaps," went on Mrs. Stuart, with a knowing smile, "you both came to a perfect understanding—some foolish romance which you'd blush now to acknowledge."

"Don't be silly, Cora," answered Grace quickly. "You know he saved my life twice. The least I could do was to be civil to him."

"Where is he now?" demanded Mrs. Stuart.

"I haven't the slightest idea," replied Grace. "He returned to America, of course, on the *Saucy Polly*, and when the ship arrived at Boston my father was there to meet me. When I had said what he had done for me, father was anxious to repay him, but he refused to take anything and mysteriously disappeared. I have not seen him since, but we are trying to trace him. Father has written to the owner of the *Saucy Polly*, whom, we think, knows his whereabouts."

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"Perfectly delicious!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart sarcastically. "Your father can offer him a position as coachman, footman or butler. No doubt he's dead in love with you! The romance wouldn't be complete unless you eloped with him!"

Grace was silent. Her friend's cynicism grated on her. She turned her head away afraid that the expression on her face might betray her. How often she thought words uttered in jest hit upon the truth! She did not tell Mrs. Stuart that she was just as anxious to have news of Armitage as was her father. Strangely enough, her return home, which she thought would fill her with joy, had failed to give her all the happiness she expected. Once more she was enjoying the social prestige, all the luxuries that her father's position and money secured for her, yet there were moments when she missed those days on Hope Island when her greatest ambition was to prepare a satisfactory meal for her companion's return.

She wondered if she would ever see him again. She knew why he had disappeared. He understood that there could never be anything between them. They belonged to different worlds. She had returned to hers; he to his. She would not have expected anything else of him. She would have been disappointed in him if he had done anything else. He was not the kind of man to come round, hat in hand, and ask payment for his services. No matter how poor he might be, he was too proud for that, and secretly in her heart she rejoiced to think that the man she cared for was of that stamp.

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Of course, their little love-affair was a thing of the past. When she thought of it she felt inclined to laugh, it was so preposterously out of keeping with her social position. Probably she would never see him again. She would try not to, because, secretly, she was afraid of herself. She was afraid that if she saw him again and heard his voice, if ever again he spoke to her as he had on that island, she would be tempted to throw herself into his arms, no matter what her position or how it might wreck her future. She remembered the story Professor Hanson had told her of a girl of good family marrying an Indian. She recalled the stories she had seen in the papers of rich girls running away with their coachmen. She could understand those things now. There was something in these men, some strange magnetic power, that made girls love them for themselves, regardless of the disastrous consequences.

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Mr. Harmon was listening with rapture to the flattering comments on all sides, on his daughter's improved appearance, when suddenly the English butler approached him and said quietly:

"May I speak to you a minute, Sir?"

"Yes, Hawkins, what is it?" answered Mr. Harmon impatiently.

"There's some one down-stairs to see you, Sir."

"Some one to see me?" echoed Mr. Harmon. "Go and tell him to come up—like all the rest."

The butler did not budge. He had been in service boy and man for over forty years, and he thought he knew what kind of people were privileged to enter his master's home as guests.

"Didn't you hear me?" repeated Mr. Harmon. "Go and tell him to come up."

"Excuse me, Sir—it is not a visitor, Sir. It's a person who tried to come in the front way, shovin' and elbowin' 'is way in along with the guests as if 'ee was a regular caller, sir. The policeman collared 'im, thinkin' 'ee was up to no good. You can never tell, sir. Sometimes they're arter the coats and umbrellas, sir. But the feller said you 'ad written him, sir, to come 'ere. So the policeman let 'im go. But we wouldn't let him come in the front way, Sir. We hustled 'im in through the tradesmen's entrance, and 'ee's down-stairs now. James is lookin' arter the silver, Sir, so there ain't no danger, there, Sir."

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"What's that?" exclaimed Mr. Harmon. "A person of that description says that I wrote him to come here. He must be an impostor. Throw him out—have him arrested."

The butler gave a grin of self-satisfaction. Rubbing his hands, he said:

"That's wot I thought, Sir. Leave 'im to me, Sir. We'll take care of 'im, Sir."

He was about to retire when Mr. Harmon suddenly had an idea.

"Can it possibly be——" he muttered to himself. "It must be he." Turning to the butler he went on: "Here, Hawkins, don't say a word to any one—particularly not to my daughter. Take the man to my library. I'll be down at once."

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Astonished, and also hurt, that his employer should have acquaintances whose appearance necessitated their being ushered in through the tradesman's entrance, the butler withdrew.

After greeting a few more arrivals and responding to a toast to his daughter in a glass of champagne, at the buffet-table besieged by a hungry and noisy crowd, Mr. Harmon slipped away unobserved and made his way to the library.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

As Mr. Harmon entered the room, he saw a man, tall, square-shouldered, roughly dressed, standing with his back to the door. The stranger was so busy in admiring contemplation of a fine full-length oil-painting of the railroad magnate's daughter which adorned the mantelpiece that he did not hear any one enter. Mr. Harmon coughed, and the man turned quickly. It was Armitage.

The light in the room was not good, and for a moment Mr. Harmon could not distinguish his caller's features. At first he was in doubt as to his identity.

"You wished to see me, Sir," he began. "You are Mr.—Mr.—?"

"Jack Armitage is my name," the other replied carelessly. Quickly he added: "I did not seek this interview, Mr. Harmon. You wrote asking me to call."

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Mr. Harmon advanced cordially and extended his hand.

"To be sure—to be sure. Sit down, Mr. Armitage. You happen to have called on a very busy day. We're having some friends to see us."

Despite his efforts to appear cordial, there was a certain embarrassment in the magnate's manner which his visitor was not slow to observe.

"So I noticed," he replied dryly. "The policeman outside didn't size me up as being a friend of yours, so he promptly ran me in. I insisted that you had asked me to call and he let me go. Then your cockney butler took me for a suspicious character, and after letting me enter, under protest, through the tradesmen's entrance, he set the footman to watch me while he went to find you upstairs."

Mr. Harmon laughed.

"Servants judge only by appearances," he said. "If you'd driven up in a carriage and pair, they'd have received you with every mark of honor. I'm sorry if they hurt your feelings."

Armitage shrugged his shoulders and gave a little bitter laugh.

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"What do I care for such jackals? I'm accustomed to that kind of thing. Well, I won't keep you, Mr. Harmon. You asked me to call. What can I do for you?"

The railroad man was taken aback. Yet he liked the man's independent spirit. Hastily he said:

"You mean what can I do for you. I sent for you because we could not allow you to go away like that. Do you suppose that I, John Harmon, would permit the man who saved my daughter to go unrewarded?"

Armitage shook his head.

"I want nothing," he said curtly.

"You want nothing?" echoed Mr. Harmon in surprise, looking his caller up and down from head to foot. "Are your circumstances such that you are in need of nothing?"

Armitage laughed bitterly.

"I need so much that I need nothing. It sounds like a paradox, but it's the truth."

Mr. Harmon looked at him in surprise.

"You weren't always so low down in the world?"

Armitage made no reply.

"You're an educated man. That I can tell from your speech. Some misfortune—some folly has brought you where you are."

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Armitage gave an impatient gesture and, moving toward the door, said:

"I didn't come here to discuss my affairs, Mr. Harmon. You sent for me. I thought you needed me."

Good afternoon."

Mr. Harmon intercepted him.

"Wait a minute, young man. Don't be so hasty. I meant no offence. Don't you see that I am interested in you? I want to help you."

"I ask help of no one," replied Armitage doggedly.

"Twice you saved my daughter's life. She and I can never forget what we owe you. She wants to thank you herself again. She could not understand your disappearance and silence. Why did you not come?"

Armitage was silent a moment, and then he said:

"What was the use? I don't belong here. I didn't wish to embarrass you. Can't you see that? I saw Miss Harmon the other day. She was walking on Fifth Avenue. She didn't see me. Why should she? I was working on a job close by. She happened to pass just as I was about to quit work. I looked at her, but she didn't see me. Even if she did, she wouldn't want to recognize me in these togs. I know that. I don't blame her."

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"You don't know my daughter," exclaimed Mr. Harmon enthusiastically. "She is the last girl in the world to act like that. If she had seen you, she would have been the first to extend her hand. I'm a self-made man myself," he added proudly. "There's nothing snobbish about me, and I hope there isn't about my daughter. You'll come up-stairs with me now and be introduced to everybody as the man who saved her."

Armitage shook his head.

"No—it isn't you—it's the world. It's not ourselves—it's because we're afraid of what the world, our neighbors, will think. No, I wouldn't embarrass your daughter. Besides, I've no wish to be put on exhibition."

Mr. Harmon, puzzled, scratched his head.

"Well, what can we do to show our gratitude? Let me give you a little present."

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He took out his check-book, and, sitting down, wrote an order to bearer for \$10,000.

"Here, Mr. Armitage. This is far cheaper than I value my daughter. But it will make life easy for you. You can start some business—be practically independent for life. Here, my boy, take it with a father's gratitude."

He passed the check over to Armitage, who looked at it a moment. A smile passed over his face and slowly, deliberately, he tore it into tiny pieces.

"What are you doing?" cried Mr. Harmon.

"I can't take your money for taking care of her, Mr. Harmon. I should forever despise myself if I did. It would be bad luck to me."

"Well, what can I do for you? I can't let you go like that!"

Armitage remained silent. Then, turning suddenly, he said:

"There's only one thing I could accept from you, Mr. Harmon."

"What is that?" demanded the railroad magnate eagerly.

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"Something that even you, rich as you are, cannot give me. You wouldn't give it me if you could. Good day, Mr. Harmon."

Armitage went out and, as he passed the astonished financier, he gave a last lingering look at the oil portrait which filled the space over the mantel.

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## CHAPTER XX.

In a cheap, grimy-looking hash-house on Third Avenue Armitage sat alone at a table, partaking with apparent relish of the rough yet not unwholesome fare which his slender purse could afford to pay for. The hour being late, he had exclusively to himself the services of the one greasy and cadaverous waiter, while the proprietor of the restaurant, if the "joint" might be dignified by so respectable a name, sat behind his rostrum near the window, sulkily reckoning up the day's receipts.

Through the open door came all the distressing sounds and smells that make this particular thoroughfare the noisiest and most objectionable of the city's main arteries. Overhead the elevated trains crashed with deafening noise, push-cart vendors shouted their wares, Italian organ-grinders played discordant tunes, smudged-faced, tattered children romped in the unclean gutters, slovenly housewives quarreled with cranky janitors, a drunkard staggered in bestial condition from a corner saloon, roughly moved on by a uniformed bully with swinging club;

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sinister figures of men and women, human derelicts, crouched in doorways, pavements and sidewalks were filthy with torn paper and decaying fruit, tattered washing hanging from broken-down fire-escapes—everything that is degraded and sordid was centered here right in the heart of the richest and most modern city in the world.

But Armitage was too busily preoccupied to be disturbed by his squalid surroundings. His appetite was keen, thanks to a day's hard work, and, while he devoured with amazing celerity the contents of his heaped-up plate, he stopped every now and then to read with closer attention the newspaper which was propped up before him. It was a torn copy of that morning's *Tribune*, and the part which interested him was an account on the society page of the big reception which had taken place at the residence of Mr. John Harmon on the previous day. It being a social event of some importance, two columns were devoted to it, the writer explaining the special occasion which it was intended to celebrate, and retelling in vivid detail the story of the *Atlanta's* ill-fated voyage. Armitage smiled as he read the account, sensationally exaggerated, of the beautiful young heiress' hairbreadth escapes from angry ocean and venomous serpent and all the other terrors of a desert island in company with a common sailor, who, when the rescue-party safely reached America, strangely disappeared despite the grateful railroad man's tireless efforts to discover his whereabouts and reward him. Then the article went on to tell of Miss Harmon's improved appearance, the delight of her friends, and to describe the wonderful gowns worn by the fashionable women who had thronged to welcome her home.

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He was reading the article in a careless, amused kind of way when suddenly he came to a paragraph which made him sit up with a start. It read as follows:

"But perhaps the chief interest of the afternoon, apart from the charming young heroine, centred in a distinguished guest, Prince Sergius of Eurasia. His Royal Highness has been a frequent caller at the Harmon residence ever since Miss Harmon's return, and, as usual, gossip has been busy trying to find some plausible explanation of this growing intimacy between the heir presumptive to a European throne, and the family of an American railroad king. It is whispered that Miss Harmon, whose marriage has been the topic of the last two seasons, is not indifferent to the Prince, and that if the consent of the King can be obtained, the engagement of the young couple will be shortly announced."

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A lump rose in Armitage's throat. Calling for a cup of coffee, he lit his pipe and took up the paper again. After all, he thought philosophically, why should he care? The girl was lost to him, that was certain. He would never see her again. She was a bit of sunshine that had suddenly burst into his dark, unhappy life; and suddenly gone again, leaving the outlook blacker than ever. He knew it was hopeless. He loved her, would always love her. Time would make no difference. She would marry her prince and have long forgotten her adventure on the island, and still he, knocking alone about the world, would cherish her memory in his heart.

He did not blame her. It was different in her case. On the island, alone with him, she might in time have learned to care for him. They might have been happy together, far happier than she would ever be in her Eurasian palace. But when the spell was once broken, when she returned to New York and was once more absorbed in her fashionable life, it was only natural that she should speedily forget him.

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He threw the newspaper down and, having settled his bill, was about to rise and leave, when suddenly his eye was arrested by an advertisement he saw in the paper which he had just put aside. Picking it up again, he read as follows:

ARMITAGE: If John Armitage, second son of Sir William Armitage, of Alnwick Towers, Bucks, England, will communicate at once with the undersigned he will learn something to his advantage. Coxe and Willoughby, attorneys, 27 Broad Street, N. Y. City.

His heart beating furiously, he read the advertisement over and over. John Armitage, second son of Sir William Armitage of Alnwick Towers, Bucks, England—what a familiar sound that had! Many long weary years had gone by since he had seen those names in print. What could have happened! Why should they want to communicate with him—the scapegrace of the family? He turned pale. Could his father be dead—the father who had cursed him and forbade him ever to appear before him again? Even if he were dead they would not send for him. His elder brother would succeed to the title and estates.

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Letting the paper drop out of his hands, he rose and, leaving the place, walked along Third Avenue as if in a dream. Coxe and Willoughby, 27 Broad Street! Well, there was no harm in calling on them to see what they wanted. Their offices would be closed now, but he would go first thing in the morning. The dull roar of the city's tremendous traffic, the clanging of car-gongs, the hoarse cries of news vendors greeted him as he stemmed the tide of pushing humanity, men and women toilers—the day's work ended—all hurrying to trains and ferries. A wagon driven at reckless speed round a corner nearly knocked him down as he crossed a street. A fellow workman loafing at the entrance to a saloon jocularly invited him to enter and take a drink. But he paid no heed. He strode along, walking as on air, his thoughts far away.

The advertisement he had just read had taken him back fifteen years. He saw himself in England, just graduated from College, receiving the congratulations of his friends. He remembered his father's pride in his success and his kindly admonition to continue as he had begun, so that one

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day he might add even more distinction to the honorable name he bore. How had he followed that sage advice? No sooner released from the restraint of the University than he plunged into every form of dissipation, sowing his wild oats recklessly, blindly, utterly indifferent to the deadly crop they might one day yield. The corrupt, gay city beckoned to him, and he could not resist its pleasure-call. He scattered gold right and left on race-tracks, at cards, on women. A small inheritance turned over at his majority went speedily the way of all the rest, and then he went to the money-lenders to pay for further extravagances, incurring obligations he could not meet. Sir William, sorely disappointed, came to the rescue again and again, and, extracting a promise of reformation, made him enter Woolwich to try for a commission in the Army. Plucked at every examination, he was quickly discouraged, returned to his fast companions and gradually drifted into the aimless, loose way of living of the idle man-about-town. Debts accumulated, the creditors dunned and dogged his footsteps until life became unbearable. His father, incensed beyond hope of pardon, turned a deaf ear to further appeals, and finally cut off his allowance altogether, hoping to teach him a lesson. Soon his clothes got shabby, he was forced into cheap lodgings, his fair-weather friends forgot to bow to him.

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That was the beginning of the end. He drifted lower and lower until he was forced to go to work or starve. He knew no trade. He was obliged to accept what he could get. He turned his hand to anything, often making barely enough to secure himself a night's lodging. Finally, when things seemed at their darkest, he heard there was a demand for stokers on the Blue Star Line. What he had suffered down there in that hell's furnace no man knew! The poor devils who had to do the work never survived to tell of their devilish toil. If these millionaires who liked to travel in fast ships knew the physical agony the vessel's speed cost a human being, they would refuse to patronize them. Thank God those days were over! No matter what happened, he would never go back to the stoke-hold.

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That night as he lay on his cot in his Bowery lodging-house he tossed uneasily, unable to sleep, wondering what Coxe & Willoughby, Attorneys, of 27 Broad Street, wanted with him.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

Broad Street, just before the stock-market begins its daily orgy of frenzied finance, is perhaps the most orderly and imposing of any of the splendid thoroughfares in New York's commercial center. Strange to say, it also fits its name, having almost three times the width of any other street in the down-town district. From the Wall Street end where the Sub-Treasury faces the old-fashioned premises of J. Pierpont Morgan & Co.'s banking-house, Broad Street sweeps round in a noble curve, lined on either side with stately office-buildings, rivaling each other in beauty of architectural design. The imposing building opposite ornamented with bas reliefs and noble marble columns is the Stock Exchange, where the unsophisticated lamb is ruthlessly sheared by bull and bear, and farther on, without other roof than the blue vault of heaven, are the noisy curb brokers, so called because, having no building of their own in which to transact their business, they are permitted by time-honored custom to trade in a roped-off enclosure in the middle of the street.

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It was absolutely terra incognita to Armitage, and he gazed open-eyed around him like any country yokel seeing the sights of the city for the first time. Suddenly he saw a crowd of men engaged in what seemed to be a desperate struggle in the middle of the road. They were grappling with each other, brandishing their arms and fists, yelling like Indians. It looked like a riot of serious proportions, and he wondered why the policeman who stood close by calmly looking on viewed it with such unconcern.

"What's the matter?" he queried of a passer-by.

"Matter—where?" asked the stranger, looking in all directions.

"Don't you see those men fighting?" said Armitage.

The stranger grinned.

"Say, you're from Jersey, ain't you? That's no fight. They're curb brokers trying to unload on each other their mining stocks."

Armitage felt foolish. To hide his confusion he asked:

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"Can you direct me to the offices of Coxe and Willoughby, the attorneys? I'm a stranger here."

The man pointed a little farther up the street.

"See that tall building on the left? That's it."

Thanking his informant Armitage hurried on, and, going up the stone steps of No. 27, passed through a revolving door kept whirling by an endless procession of brokers, clerks and messenger-boys who hurried in and out. Following a long corridor, he came to a large open space completely lined with elevators. Some were expresses which made no stop below the 25th floor; the rest were locals stopping at each story, on request.

"Coxe and Willoughby?" he said interrogatively to the uniformed starter.

"Twenty-seventh floor. Take the express," was the quick reply.

Armitage entered the waiting car. Other persons followed him in, and it was comfortably filled when the starter cried sharply:

"Right!"

Instantly the attendant closed the gates and touched a lever. Armitage felt his stomach leap into his throat. They were flying upward at a speed of fifty miles an hour, and before he had time to gasp, the car had reached the first stop, nearly 300 feet up in the air. Two stories more and he had reached the floor he wanted. [Pg 317]

"Along the corridor to your left, first door to the right," shouted the elevator man.

Armitage followed the handsome corridor with its marble walls, inlaid floors and hard-wood finishing until he came to a glass door on which was inscribed in bold black letters:

## **COXE AND WILLOUGHBY**

### **Counsellors at law**

He opened the door, and found himself in an outer office in which behind a rail were two foppish-looking clerks seated at desks. Neither of them made an attempt to move when Armitage entered, but continued their animated discussion of a game of baseball they had witnessed the previous day. Armitage hit the rail lightly with his hand to attract their attention, and finally one of the clerks condescended to get up and come and ask what the caller wanted. [Pg 318]

"I wish to see a member of the firm," said Armitage.

The clerk looked him over from head to toe. He had been trained to judge people by their clothes, and there was something unconventional about Armitage's attire that appealed to his sense of humor. He turned to his fellow clerk and gave him the wink, whereupon the other laughed.

"In relation to what?" he demanded, wondering what possible business this ordinary workingman could have with his employer.

Armitage was puzzled for a moment as to how he should announce himself. Then an idea occurred to him. Taking from his pocket the advertisement which he had clipped from the paper the night before, he handed it to the clerk, saying:

"Say that a gentleman has called in answer to this advertisement."

"A 'gentleman,' did you say?" demanded the clerk insolently.

He looked first at the advertisement and then at Armitage. A look of blank astonishment which came over his face was succeeded by one of utter incredulity. Leaving the rail, he went over to his fellow clerk and whispered something to him, and they both snickered. [Pg 319]

Armitage tried to be patient, but he was fast losing his temper. He did not like the clerk's supercilious manner. In another minute he would vault over that rail, and some one's head would get punched. Finally he said impatiently:

"Are you going to take that in to a member of the firm or must I do it myself?"

The clerk looked up, and he was about to make some impertinent retort when he suddenly thought better of it. There was a look in Armitage's eye that he did not like. Crossing the office, he disappeared through a glass door. A moment later he reappeared and, unfastening the rail gate, said in more respectful tones:

"Mr. Willoughby will see you at once, sir."

He ushered him into a spacious, well-lighted and handsomely furnished room. An elderly man of legal appearance was writing at a table littered with documents. He rose as Armitage entered, and courteously waved him to a chair. In his hand he held the advertisement, and while he twisted it nervously in his fingers he scrutinized his caller closely through his glasses. [Pg 320]

"You wish to see me, Sir. What can I do for you?" he began.

"No," replied Armitage quickly. "You wished to see me. I came in answer to that advertisement."

The lawyer came nearer, and his scrutiny became keener.

"Oh, yes—I see. May I ask in what way this advertisement interests you?"

"Only that I'm John Armitage—that's all."

Mr. Willoughby started, and, taking out his handkerchief nervously, wiped his face. As much as any lawyer allows himself to show emotion, he betrayed surprise. He came still closer and, peering into his visitor's face, said:

"You? *You* are John Armitage?"

He looked at his visitor's dress, noticed his clumsy thick-soled boots, soiled jacket and trousers,

and he shook his head incredulously.

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"The world's full of impostors," he muttered to himself, "but we lawyers are too much for them." Aloud he repeated: "*You* are John Armitage?"

"Yes—I am John Armitage, formerly of Alnwick Tower, Bucks, England."

Hurrying back to his desk, the old lawyer opened a drawer and took from it a faded photograph. Holding it so that Armitage could not see it, he stood comparing the portrait with the living man before him.

"Same face!" he murmured. "Older—more serious expression, but same shaped head—same features." Aloud he added: "If, as you say, you are John Armitage, you have, of course, some way of identifying yourself. You see we have to be very careful."

Armitage laughed.

"I don't happen to have a passport," he said. "When I left England some fifteen years ago I didn't think I'd require one. But I've a mark on my left arm, a rough tattooing of the Armitage crest, which I did in my foolish boyhood days. And I have some letters which my mother wrote me after I left home. Those I've treasured. I let everything else go, but her letters I kept." Placing his hand over his heart, he added: "They're here."

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As Mr. Willoughby grew more and more interested he became more and more nervous.

"Let me see them," he said impatiently.

Armitage opened his vest and drawing forth a small package of yellow-stained letters tied with a bit of ribbon, he handed them over.

"I guess we have no secrets from you," he said. "You may read them."

Mr. Willoughby untied the package, opened a letter and glanced hurriedly at the handwriting and signature. Then he handed them back.

"That's enough," he cried. "That's enough." Starting forward, he extended his hand.

"My dear Sir John—allow me to congratulate you!"

Armitage felt himself grow pale. He rose from his chair.

"You mean that my father——" he exclaimed.

The lawyer looked grave.

"Your father, Sir William, is dead——"

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"But my elder brother, Charles?" stammered Armitage. "He succeeded to the title and estates—not I."

"Your brother Charles," replied the lawyer solemnly, "was killed in an automobile accident five years ago."

Armitage sank into a chair and burying his face in his hands burst into tears. That his father had died without forgiving him was bad enough, but that Charlie, his old pal, should have died years ago without his knowing it, was terrible!

"Poor Charlie! Poor Charlie!" he murmured.

"When your brother was dying," went on the lawyer, "he summoned your heart-broken father to his bedside and made him promise to forgive you, to make every effort to discover your whereabouts, and to make a will in your favor. They advertised for you in the London and colonial papers. We advertised for you in the American papers. We received no answer. And now your father has passed away. You are the sole heir. As the estates are entailed, you would have succeeded to the estates as a matter of course, but your father died forgiving you fully and leaving you sufficient income to keep up the title. Sir John, I again congratulate you on succeeding to an old and honored title and an income of little less than \$100,000 a year."

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Armitage listened like a man who is dazed. It had all come so suddenly that he thought he must be dreaming.

"When did my father die—of what?" he asked in a low tone.

"Of heart failure—three weeks ago," was the rejoinder. "We've been trying to find you ever since. They followed you as far as the London docks, and then all trace of you was lost. Where have you been all these years?"

The lawyer noted his new client's sun-tanned face, and he looked askance at his workman's dress.

"Knocking about the world—trying to forget things," replied Armitage.

Mr. Willoughby shook his head as he said:

"Young men will do foolish things! Well, you've had your lesson. Perhaps you'll be a better man for the hard time you've had. The past is dead and forgotten. A bright future is before you. What

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do you propose to do now?"

Armitage seemed lost in thought.

"I don't know. I haven't had time to think."

"Have you any ties here? Are you married?"

Armitage smiled.

"No, who would have me—a pauper?"

Mr. Willoughby carefully adjusted his spectacles and said decisively:

"Well, then, you had better start for England at once and take possession of your property under the will and entail. There will be a number of legal formalities to go through. I will advise our London office that you are coming. This is Tuesday. Could you sail on the *Florida* next Saturday?"

"I can," replied Armitage quickly.

The lawyer went to his desk and sat down to write. A moment later he returned with a piece of paper in his hand. Holding it out, he said:

"Of course you can't go dressed as you are. Here's a check for \$1,000. It will pay your passage and your immediate needs. When you arrive in England, you can, of course, draw on our London office for all you want. You had better hurry now to book your passage and buy some clothes, and this evening if you have nothing else to do I shall be delighted if you'll dine with me at the Union League Club."

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He touched a bell, and the supercilious clerk entered. By the sneer on his face, he evidently expected that he had been summoned to eject the rough-looking visitor. To his astonishment, he saw his employer shaking hands with him.

Mr. Willoughby accompanied Armitage into the outer office.

"Good-by, Sir John," he said cordially. "I'm delighted to have made your acquaintance. Don't forget to-night. Union League Club, at 7 o'clock."

The two clerks nearly swooned from amazement and consternation. As Armitage went down in the elevator he pinched himself to find out if he was awake.

When he emerged into Broad Street he was surprised to find how different everything looked to him. The world had suddenly taken on another aspect. The sunshine seemed brighter. Every man and woman he met seemed more amiable and friendly. The whole world seemed gayer, more joyous. He felt within him a strange novel sensation of exhilaration. His moodiness, his pessimism had disappeared. He felt imbued with new life and energy, as if he could go forth and conquer a world. From less than nothing to a title and \$100,000 a year is a jump big enough to daze any man.

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Suddenly he thought of Grace. If only he had received this news a few weeks before! Things might have been very different. Well, what was the use of torturing himself any longer? She was lost to him now—no matter how changed his circumstances and position.

He stood still, at the edge of the curb, irresolute, not knowing what to do next. Putting his hand in his pocket to feel if the check was still there, he drew it out to look at it. It was drawn on the Chemical Bank and payable to bearer. A thousand dollars! He had never seen so much money in his life. It was a question if they wouldn't arrest him as a suspicious character when he presented it for payment. However, there was no time to be lost. He must get the check cashed at once, buy an outfit and secure his steamship passage.

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After some difficulty he found the Chemical Bank, opposite the Post-Office. It was a splendid building with a lofty dome of stained glass, reminding him of a church. Making his way to the paying-teller's window, he handed in the check. The teller, a gaunt, keen-eyed man with spectacles, looked first at the check and then at Armitage. The latter's appearance did not seem to fit the amount of money the check called for, and a suspicious look came over his face. Eyeing the bearer severely, he demanded sternly:

"Where did you get this?"

"From the man who drew it, of course," replied Armitage coolly. "Let me have it in fifties and hundreds!"

Instead of complying with the request, the teller quickly touched an electric bell. It was evidently a signal, for instantly a special policeman attached to the Bank came up and took up a position near Armitage. He made no attempt to interfere, but just remained on hand in case he was wanted. Meantime the teller was already in telephonic communication with Coxe and Willoughby.

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"Is this Coxe and Willoughby?" asked the teller.

"This is Mr. Willoughby," came the answer.

"Have you drawn to-day a check for \$1,000 payable to bearer?"

"I have."

"What does the bearer look like?"

"Tall, dark man, smooth face, dressed like a workingman. It's all right. Pay it at once. Good day."

That was enough. The teller returned to his little window. Dismissing the uniformed attendant, he turned to Armitage and in a tone as if he had never for a moment doubted the genuineness of the check, asked suavely:

"Fifties and hundreds, I think you said, Sir."

Rapidly counting out the bills, he passed them through the little opening and turned to attend to the next man on the line.

Armitage slowly folded up bills, a grim smile of satisfaction. He had enjoyed the situation hugely.

"Now for my steamship passage!" he muttered to himself.

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Turning to the right as he re-entered Broadway, he walked about a mile in the direction of the Battery until he came to Bowling Green, where the steamship companies have their offices. Conspicuous on the left-hand side were the palatial offices of the Blue Star Line. As he went up the imposing stone steps leading to the passenger booking-rooms, he thought bitterly under what different conditions he had last visited these offices. Then it was to sign articles as stoker on the *Atlanta*.

He entered the room devoted exclusively to first cabin business, and a clerk, quick to notice his shabby appearance, spoke up impatiently:

"Can't you read? This is first cabin. Steerage and second cabin on the other side of the hall."

Armitage gave the clerk a look that made the latter wish he had left the caller alone.

"Who asked you for any information?" he demanded, pretending wrath he did not feel.

"This is only first class," repeated the clerk peevishly, but not without feeling some respect to his interlocutor's massive shoulders.

"I don't care whether it's first class or tenth class," growled Armitage. "Let me see the plan of the *Florida*."

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The clerk gasped as he laid the plan before him.

"The lowest in this ship is \$150 a berth—two in a room," he said, in a tone as if he expected this would quickly settle the matter.

"Two in a room—not for mine," said Armitage jovially. "I want something comfortable. How's this?" he added, pointing to a berth.

"Single berth room—\$400," said the clerk blandly.

"I'll take it," replied the new passenger. Peeling off four 100-dollar bills from the bank-roll, he threw them before the astonished clerk.

"What name, sir?" he asked, more respectfully.

"Sir John Armitage."

The clerk's hand shook so with surprise and nervousness that he dropped the book-plan on the floor.

Leaving the steamship offices, Armitage proceeded along Broadway, chuckling. How sweet was the power of money! Now he would be able to wield this power, to enslave men as they had enslaved him. Yet in the midst of this new-found joy, he knew there was something still lacking. He was haunted by a pair of dark eyes, lips that had trembled with passion he alone had awakened. What good was his money, his new-found power, if it would not give him the woman he wanted. Engaged to that spendthrift princeling, she was entirely lost to him. She had sold herself, and he tried to persuade himself that he despised her for it.

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Yet how could he go away without saying good-by? It was different when everything looked hopeless, when his social standing was immeasurably beneath hers. He would never have subjected himself to a snub, and he had avoided her for that reason. He knew it would pain her to snub him, yet she would be compelled to do so. It would only have meant more suffering for him. But now it was different. He was more than her equal socially. In fact, he was her social superior. He could not go away without saying good-by. There could never be anything between them. She was going to marry the other fellow and satisfy her ambition to be a member of a royal house. Yet for all that they were still good friends.

He wondered how he could see her. The best way probably was to write her a letter, telling her he was sailing immediately and asking for an interview. He would say nothing about his accession to the title, but just that his condition had changed for the better. This revealed nothing, and yet would account for his better clothes and possession of funds.

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A firm of ready-made clothiers speedily fitted him with a neat business suit and furnished all the other things he required. When the transformation was complete with a clean shave and hair cut, he did not recognize himself in the mirror.

That night he took rooms at the Waldorf, and after enjoying a good dinner with Mr. Willoughby at the Union League Club, he returned to the hotel, sitting down in the reading-room, he wrote Grace a letter.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

NEW YORK CITY, Tuesday.

DEAR MISS HARMON: You will perhaps consider this letter an impertinence, and yet you may not—under the circumstances. When the other day I called at your house, at your father's request, Mr. Harmon asked me to go up-stairs to see you. It was impossible for me at that time to accept his kind invitation. You will understand why. Since then, however, a change for the better has taken place in my affairs. The outlook is no longer so hopeless. I am leaving America. I sail on Saturday.

I cannot go without saying good-by. I have read in the newspapers about your coming marriage to the Prince of Eurasia. I sincerely hope that this realization of your life's ambition will bring the happiness you expect.

No matter what the future may have in store for me, the recollection of those all too few weeks we spent alone in close association on Hope Island will never grow dim in my memory. I can never forget you or the dream of supreme happiness that I once thought within my grasp. The signal fire is now dead and cold on Mount Hope's lofty summit, but another flame as bright and fierce, which you yourself kindled, will continue to blaze in my heart while life endures. I know that you are forever lost to me, I know that another will call you wife, yet night and day I am haunted by the memory of that mad afternoon on the sun-kissed sands when, almost crazed with passion, I seized you in my arms to take you for my own. Then, all at once, came the rude awakening!

But all that is past and gone. I steel my heart to try and forget what I had won and lost again. I will leave you in peace to enjoy your new happiness. You will never see or hear from me after I leave New York. Yet I would like to see you just once more, to grasp your hand and wish you well. We were always friends, and for one brief moment we were almost lovers. May I call on Thursday afternoon?

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Yours sincerely,  
JOHN ARMITAGE.

Ensnconced in the big bay window of the library, comfortably propped up with cushions, Grace sat gazing pensively over the tree tops of Central Park. In her hand was Armitage's letter, which she had read and reread a dozen times until she knew every word by heart. Close by, impatiently tossed against a chair, was a magnificent floral basket which Prince Sergius had sent that morning. Attached to the basket by a white ribbon was an envelope—unopened. The perfume from the flowers scented the entire room, but Grace seemed to be unconscious of their presence. She kept looking out of the window as if expecting each instant to see some one appear on the Avenue. Every now and then she consulted her watch.

"Ten minutes past three!" she murmured. "I wrote that I should expect him at three. Perhaps he never got my letter."

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A look of worry came over her face, and she was straining her eyes in an effort to distinguish far-away figures on the avenues when the door opened and her French maid entered. Grace looked up.

"What is it, Louise?" she asked.

"Ze telephone, Mademoiselle. His Royal Highness want to know if you are at home."

"Did you say I was home?"

"*Mais non*, Mademoiselle. I said I would see if Mademoiselle was in."

Grace left her place by the window and paced nervously up and down the room.

"Tell His Royal Highness that I'm out," she said. With a gesture of impatience she added: "Say I've gone out to dinner and won't be back until late. *Vous comprenez?*"

The girl curtsied.

"*Mais oui*, Mademoiselle."

She was leaving the room when Grace called her back.

"Take these flowers away, too. Their strong perfume makes me nervous."

"*Très bien*, Mademoiselle."

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Elevating her eyebrows as if to convey that she quite understood the situation, the maid took up

the floral-basket and disappeared.

Grace resumed her vigil at the window, watching eagerly every one who came in sight along the avenue, wondering if each newcomer was the one man who was in her thoughts.

She was annoyed with herself for having betrayed herself before the servant. Yet surely they could all see that she detested the Prince, and that she was only marrying him for his lofty position. It had been the ambition of her life, her father approved it, her friends envied her, the papers were full of the splendors of the wonderful Eurasian palace of which she would one day be mistress. How could she resist? Yet how they must all despise her for selling herself!

Once more she took up Armitage's letter and read it through. She wondered why he was leaving America and what the change for the better of which he spoke could be. No doubt he had been successful in securing more congenial employment. She was sincerely glad to hear it. She would remember him always.

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She wondered why life was so contrary, so cruel. The one man she could have loved truly, sincerely, was too poor for her to marry, too far beneath her in the social scale. Suppose she braved everything for his sake, what then? It would break her father's heart. All her friends would laugh at her. The world would ostracise her. No—it was an impossible dream. She owed something to her position. Her own happiness must be sacrificed to please others. Angry, defiant yet powerless to resist the laws of the society she moved in, she rebelled at the injustice and cruelty of it.

Suddenly the bell at the front door rang. She heard voices, followed by steps on the stairs. A footman appeared on the library threshold.

"Mr. Armitage has called to see Miss Harmon."

Grace advanced, nervous.

"Ask Mr. Armitage to come up."

The servant withdrew, and Grace crossed hastily to the mirror to see if everything about herself was as she wanted him to see it. A moment later she heard some one enter the room behind her. It was Armitage. She turned and greeted him with a smile, extending her hand, which for a moment he held firmly in his.

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She hardly knew him, so altered was he in appearance. He wore a neat business suit, with derby hat and gloves. His hair trimmed and carefully brushed, was more wavy and glossy than usual, and a close shave threw into still greater relief the academic outline of his features. The change was so remarkable that at first she hardly recognized him. But when she heard the familiar rich tones of his deep, manly voice, no further doubt was possible.

"I've come to say good-by," he said, with a smile.

"What a change!" she exclaimed, with an effort to appear light-hearted and at ease.

He made no answer for a moment, embarrassed as to what to say. Then he replied:

"Yes—I do look a little different, don't I? It's wonderful what clothes will do. No wonder they are the world's only standard!"

"Come and sit here and tell me about it."

She led the way to the low recess at the bay-window, and, sinking down on the cushions, she motioned him to take a seat opposite.

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"Tell me," she repeated, "what good fairy has worked this transformation?"

He smiled as he replied:

"Things have changed a little for the better."

"You mean that you have found more lucrative and congenial employment?"

He hesitated, not willing to lie to her. Yet, after all, it was the truth. His new position was decidedly more lucrative.

"Yes," he replied, after a pause. "More lucrative—more congenial."

Grace was puzzled. His answers were vague. He was hiding something from her. Perhaps he thought her questions impertinent. After all, what right had she to question him?

"I'm pleased—for your sake," she answered, rather haughtily.

Armitage was quick to notice the difference in her tone, and intuitively he divined the reason.

"For my sake?" he echoed. "Why should you care?"

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"I shall always be glad to hear that you are prospering and—happy," she answered.

He looked into her eyes without speaking. There was a melancholy, wistful expression in his face. He seemed to want to say something and did not dare. Embarrassed by the continuity of his fixed gaze, she averted her head and looked out of the window over into the park, where the nurses



and children were playing on the green lawns. There was a silence that was almost painful. At last he broke it.

"You will be happy," he said. "One day you will be a Princess!"

Grace sighed. With a forced laugh she said:

"Happiness! What is happiness? We are always pursuing it, we think we've found it, only to find it empty and unreal, after all."

"You're happy, aren't you?" he persisted.

For a moment she made no answer. Then she said:

"Yes—I suppose I am."

"When do you expect to get married?" he asked.

"I don't know—nothing is settled—perhaps never——"

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She laughed nervously. There was something in the tone of her voice that sounded like a stifled sob.

Armitage watched her closely. This was not the way a happy woman acts or talks. Could it be that she did not care for the Prince, that she was forcing herself in this ambitious marriage in spite of her own better, truer self? Certainly the man was unworthy of her. The escapades and scandals in which he had been mixed up were the talk of Europe. She must be aware of his real character, or was she completely blinded by the brilliancy of his position? His heart throbbed furiously as he thought that he had perhaps guessed the truth.

He wondered if it would make any difference if he told her everything, of the miraculous change in his fortune, that he was no longer a penniless outcast of society, but the bearer of one of the proudest titles in England. That's why he hesitated. It might make a difference, and that he didn't want. If after being told of the change in his position she consented to marry him, he would always suspect that it was for his title. No, if he was to win her he was determined that she should love him for himself. The thought that there was still a possibility of making her his wife had never presented itself until now. On the desert island, remote from the conventions of civilized life, bound only by nature's laws, he had claimed her as his chattel, his primordial right. He was the lord and master whose will she must obey without question. But now, restored to the protection of civilization, she was free to exercise her own will, and it had never occurred to him that, of all the men who had courted her, she might have chosen him from preference. Such a possibility was beyond his most fantastic dreams. Yet, after all, why not?

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Breaking the long and awkward silence, he said:

"Have you quite recovered from your experience on Hope Island?"

"Yes—I'm all right now," she replied quickly.

"You're more comfortable, at any rate," he smiled, glancing around at the oriental rugs, books and costly *objets d'art* with which the luxuriously furnished room was littered. "I suppose you're glad to be home."

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She shook her head, and a wistful smile came into her face as she answered:

"Sometimes I wish I were back there. Now that I've returned, it's the same social treadmill again—the same exhausting round of teas, receptions, dinners, and all the rest, hearing women talk nothing but dress and scandal and bridge until you begin to think there is nothing else in the world worth discussing. It's nauseating. When I think of those ideal days on the little island—the life of perfect peace under the cool trees by the silver sea—doing cheerfully each day's allotted task, helping you as best I could—when I think of how happy I was leading that lonely peaceful existence, I'm almost sorry we were rescued."

A glad smile broke over his face. His eyes flashed and his mouth trembled slightly as he eagerly bent forward.

"Really?" he said. "You were happier then?"

She flushed and then turned pale. He hardly heard the low answer that came from her lips:

"I don't know."

His steady gaze embarrassed her. She was afraid that he might read the secret which lay deep in her heart. Rising abruptly from her seat by the window, she crossed the room, stopping near a side table to arrange some American beauty roses in a vase. Armitage rose and followed her.

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"Tell me," he persisted eagerly. "Were you happier then than you are now?"

"Suppose we change the subject," she said hastily, without turning round. "Let us talk about you and your plans. So you're going to England?"

He nodded gravely.

"I sail on Saturday. I came to say good-by."

Grace nervously plucked one of the roses and crushed its soft, perfumed petals against her face. Her head still averted, she said: "But you'll come back?"

"No—never," he replied firmly.

She made no reply, and, as he could not see her face, he did not know that tears were in her eyes and that her lips were trembling. She could not speak without betraying her feelings. An awkward silence followed.

Armitage stood watching her. This girl loved him—he was convinced of that now. Only her pride was keeping them apart. A struggle for the mastery was going on within her, between her artificial self and her true self. One word from him and she would know that she had no reason to be ashamed of the man to whom she had given her love; that, on the contrary, she might be proud to be his wife. But that one word he was determined not to speak. He owed that much to his manhood, to his self-respect. This would be the crucial test. If she loved him, it must be for himself alone, not for his title. If he won her, he would proudly carry off the prize of two New York seasons—he, penniless, unknown, to all appearances an ordinary workman!

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He moved forward so he could see her face.

"We've been good friends," he went on. "I can never forget you. You made a new man of me. You came into my life at a time when everything seemed at an end. Your sweet, gentle influence filled me with renewed hope, renewed energy, a determination to begin life anew. Suddenly, I discovered that you were indispensable to my happiness. In my folly I dreamed that you might become my wife. Perhaps if things had turned out otherwise, if the *Saucy Polly* had not come— Well, what's the use of talking of that now? I was insane. I lifted my eyes to the stars. I deserved to be punished for my temerity."

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Grace did not stir. Fascinated, she stood listening to his words. There was sadness in his voice, and the music of its rich tones still exercised on her its old-time magnetism. What potent attraction was there about this man that rendered her powerless to resist his pleading? Was she afraid to confess to herself that she loved him and that she was ready to do anything, break off with the Prince, incur the ridicule of her friends, offend her father—for his sake?

Armitage continued:

"But that is all over now. We part good friends. You go your way—I will go mine. You will find happiness with the Prince—"

Grace turned quickly. Her eyes red and flashing, her bosom heaving with pent-up emotion, she cried:

"The Prince! The Prince! I detest the Prince! I wouldn't marry him if there wasn't another man left in the world."

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Armitage drew back, surprised.

"Aren't you engaged to him?" he demanded.

"No—no! That is only newspaper talk. He has been annoying me with his attentions, and of course all my people were flattered. But there's nothing more serious."

"Thank God!" he muttered under his breath.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"I'm glad—for your sake," was his evasive answer.

He approached closer and held out his hand.

"Good-by," he said in a low tone.

Again she averted her head, and as she did so she stumbled against the table. Afraid she was going to fall, he caught her by the hand. Their hands remained clasped. She made no attempt to withdraw. He grew bolder and went still nearer. A strange sensation of sudden weakness came over her. She felt as if her will-power was about to succumb before a superior mental force. She loved this man. He was the first and only man she had ever cared for, and she was losing him. Her eyes filled with tears. What had she done that the happiness which other women know should not be granted also to her?

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"Good-by!" he said again.

She made no answer. Bending forward to catch a glimpse of her face, he saw traces of tears.

"What?" he exclaimed. "You are crying!"

"Am I?" she said quickly, making a desperate effort to hide her face. "How foolish!"

"Why are you crying?" he demanded.

"I'm nervous, I think. I have not yet quite recovered from the wreck."

He looked at her, trying to read her innermost thoughts. She met his gaze unflinchingly.

"Is that the reason, or is there another?" Drawing her gently to him, he said:

"You are unhappy—I know you are— You are allowing your pride to stand in the way of your happiness. I have no right to blame you. You are free to do as you think is right. Only I am sorry for you—sorrier for you than I am for myself. Good-by. May God bless and protect you. Just one kind word, one smile before I go. We may never see each other again."

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His voice trembled and grew husky. Manlike, he was ashamed of showing emotion; he was anxious to get away before he lost control of himself. He left her standing there, took his hat and gloves and went toward the door. She stood motionless watching him going, powerless to utter the word that would stay him. The color left her face. She grew ashen pale. Her entire being trembled with suppressed emotion.

At the door he turned round for the last time.

"Good-by—God bless you!" he said.

"Wait—just a moment—just a moment!" she cried desperately.

The spell seemed broken. She made a movement forward, her hand outstretched. There was a wild look of mute appeal in her eyes.

"You are going alone," she demanded, her breath coming and going in quick spasmodic gasps.

"Yes—alone."

"No—no—you're not!" she cried, advancing toward him.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Because I'm going with you!"

The next instant she was in his arms, her face buried in his shoulder.

"Going with me?" he exclaimed hoarsely. He thought he must be dreaming. Does such happiness as this come to a man so suddenly?

"Yes," she whispered; "as your wife—to the end of the world if necessary."

"But have you considered everything—your father—your friends—the uncertain future?"

"I've weighed everything. I knew that I loved you all along. I struggled with my pride, and I've mastered it. My father will forgive me when he knows that I am happy. As to what society thinks, I don't care."

"But are you willing to marry a poor man—are you willing to sacrifice all the luxuries you now enjoy for what may be a precarious existence with me?"

She looked up at him, her face radiant.

"I'd give up everything for you. Wealth does not bring happiness. I've found that out. I did not know what happiness was until I spent those blissful days with you on Hope Island. I'll welcome poverty if I am to share it with you. We can live in a cottage, on nothing a year, and I'll still be the happiest woman on earth."

He clasped her in his strong arms and fiercely kissed her unresisting lips. Here was a woman that any man might rejoice to call wife, and he had won her by love alone.

"It isn't as bad as all that, dearest," he said, with a smile.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, puzzled.

"There is no immediate danger of your having to live any differently."

Grace opened her eyes in amazement.

"What do you mean?" she repeated. "My father may be so incensed that he won't give me anything."

Armitage smiled.

"We wouldn't take it if he did. We wouldn't need to. I have plenty of my own."

Grace was more and more mystified.



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**"NO—YOU'RE NOT! I'M GOING WITH YOU."**

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"Are you jesting?" she exclaimed.

"Not in the least. Didn't I tell you there had been a change for the better in my fortunes?"

"Yes, but——"

Taking fondly once more in his arms the girl he had won, he whispered:

"That's why I—that's why we—are going to England, dearest. My father, Sir William Armitage, died three weeks ago. I am heir to the title and estates."

"I always thought you were more than you seemed," she murmured. Looking up at him mischievously, she added: "So you deceived me— I marry a title, after all?"

He looked down proudly at her as he replied with his frank smile:

"But I wooed you as a poor man. You are mine—by right of conquest!"

**THE END.**

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**3WHAT THE CRITICS SAY OF  
THE END OF THE GAME  
BY ARTHUR HORNBLow**

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"'The End of the Game' belongs to the school of good old-fashioned fiction which delighted the scant leisure hours of our grandmothers. It is a good healthy tale of normal human happenings, a sort of protest against the decadent type of novel which seems to be widening its empire among us. The characters are good human creatures and not the flat paper dolls found in the pages of so much current fiction."

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