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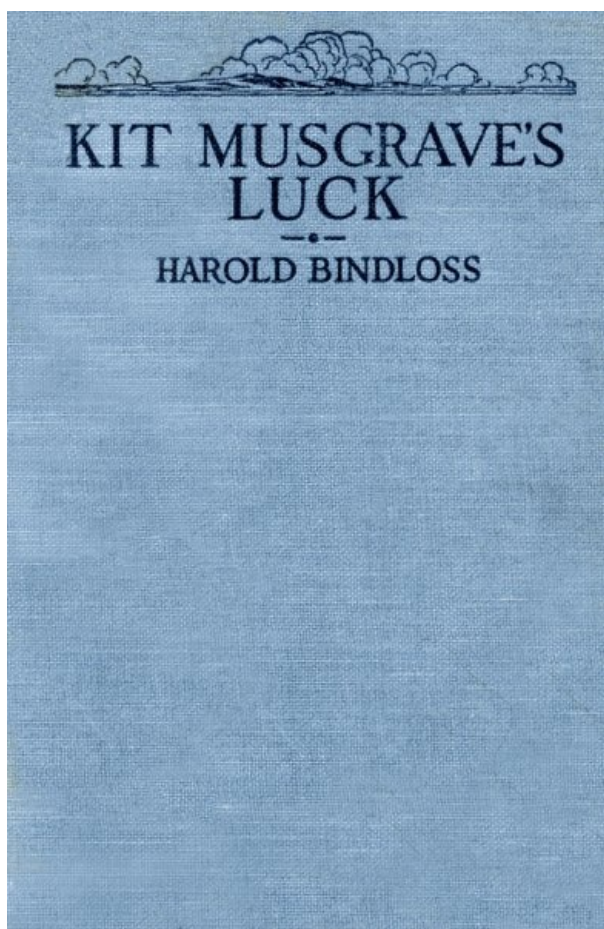
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KIT MUSGRAVE'S LUCK

BY
HAROLD BINDLOSS

AUTHOR OF PARTNERS OF THE OUT TRAIL, THE LURE OF THE
NORTH, THE WILDERNESS MINE, ETC.



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KIT MUSGRAVE'S LUCK

PART I THE WIDE HORIZON

CHAPTER I KIT'S PLUNGE

[Pg 3]

The morning was hot, and Kit Musgrave, leaning on the African liner's rail, watched the volcanic rocks of Grand Canary grow out of the silver haze. He was conscious of some disappointment, because on the voyage to Las Palmas he had pictured a romantic white city shining against green palms. Its inhabitants were grave Spaniards, who secluded their wives and daughters in old Moorish houses with shady patios where fountains splashed. Now he saw he had got the picture wrong.

Las Palmas was white, but not at all romantic. A sandy isthmus, swept by rolling clouds of dust, connected the town and the frankly ugly port. The houses round the harbor looked like small brown blocks. Behind them rose the Isleta cinder hill; in front, coal-wharfs and limekilns, hidden now and then by dust, occupied the beach. Moreover, the Spaniards on board the boats about the ship were excited, gesticulating ruffians. Bombay peddlers, short, dark-skinned Portuguese, and Canario dealers in wine, tobacco, and singing birds, pushed up the gangway. All disputed noisily in their eagerness to show their goods to the passengers.

Yet Kit was not altogether disappointed. Somehow the industrial ugliness of the port and the crowd's businesslike activity were soothing. Kit had not known much romantic beauty, but he knew the Lancashire mining villages and the mean streets behind the Liverpool docks. Besides, he was persuaded that commerce, particularly British commerce, had a civilizing, uplifting power.

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Seeing he would buy nothing, the peddlers left him alone, and he mused about the adventure on which he had embarked. Things had happened rapidly since he went one morning to Don Arturo's office in Liverpool and joined the crowd in the great man's waiting-room. Don Arturo was not Spanish, but at Grand Canary he was generally given the Castilian title and the Spaniards declared the island would soon be his. He was an English merchant of the new Imperialist school and he gave Kit exactly one and a half minutes. Perhaps he approved the embarrassed lad, for half an hour afterwards Kit had engaged to start for the Canaries and take a *sobrecargo's* post on board a Spanish steamer. The secretary admitted the pay was small, but argued that since Don Arturo controlled all the business worth controlling in the Canaries and West Africa, the chances for promotion were remarkably good. In short, Kit could sail in two days and was a fool if he did not go.

Kit agreed and signed the contract. He knew some Castilian, which he had studied at evening classes conducted by the Liverpool Y.M.C.A. Since he thought the association's motto, *Mens sana in corpore sano*, good, he had also trained his muscles at the Y.M.C.A. gymnasium. For a city clerk he was healthy and strong.

The two days before he sailed were marked by new and disturbing thrills. Kit was conservative, and sprang from cautious, puritanical stock. His grandfather was a Cumberland sheep farmer, his father kept a shop and had taught Kit the virtues of parsimonious industry. His mother was kind but dull, and had tried not to indulge her son. Although Kit was honest and something of a prig, he had the small clerk's respect for successful business. He was raw and his philosophy was Smiles'. In order to make progress one must help oneself.

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Yet he had not altogether escaped the touch of romance, and when he agreed to sail his first duty was to explain things to Betty. She kept the books at a merchant's office, and sometimes they went to a tea-shop and sometimes to a cheap concert. Betty did not go to theaters, but now and

then took Kit to church. She was high-church and wore a little silver cross. Betty was thin, pale and quiet, and Kit's mother approved her, although nothing had been said about their marrying. Kit saw that in the meantime marriage was not for him. To marry on pay like his was not fair to the girl. Yet he imagined he loved Betty; anyhow, he liked her much.

When she left the office in the evening they went to a tea-shop. Kit found a quiet corner and helped Betty to cakes. He was embarrassed and his careless talk was forced. Betty studied him and did not say much. Her quietness had some charm, and she was marked by a touch of beauty that might have developed had she enjoyed fresh air, good food, and cheerful society. Women had not then won much reward for their labor, and Betty was generally tired. At length Kit, with awkward haste, told her his plans. Betty drained her cup and gave him a level glance. Kit thought her paler than before, but the electric light was puzzling.

"You are going to the Canaries and perhaps to West Africa! Are you going for good?" she said.

"Why, no!" said Kit. "I expect I'll stop for a year or two. Anyhow, if I make much progress, I'll come back then. You see, I'm forced to go. There's no chance for me in Liverpool; you get old while you wait for the men in front to move up the ladder. If I stop until I'm forty, I might get up a few rounds."

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"Is it necessary to get up?" Betty asked.

Kit looked at her with surprise. Sometimes Betty's philosophy was puzzling, and he wondered whether she got it at church. Kit had not heard another clergyman preach like the vicar and thought him privately rather a fool. But Betty seldom argued and they did not jar.

"Of course!" he said. "So long as you can get up honestly, you have got to get up. You can't stop in the pushing crowd at the bottom."

Betty was quiet for a few moments. She looked tired and Kit imagined she knew all he knew about the pressure of the crowd. Then she said, "If only we didn't push! Perhaps there's room enough, and we might make things better."

"Oh, well," said Kit, rather comforted by her calm, but vaguely disappointed because she could philosophise. "Anyhow, although it's hard, I must seize my chance. I shall miss you. You have been much to me; now I've got to go, I begin to see how much. Perhaps it's strange I didn't see before. You don't argue, you belong to my lot, but somehow one feels you're finer than other girls one meets—"

He stopped and Betty gave him a curious smile. "Do you know many girls, Kit?"

"I don't," he admitted. "I haven't bothered about girls; I haven't had time. They expect you to tell them they're pretty, to send them things, to josh and make them laugh, and now and then to quarrel about nothing. Rather a bore when you'd sooner be quiet; but you're not like that. We have been pals, and now I wish you were going out with me."

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"There's not much use in wishing."

"That is so," Kit agreed and hesitated for a moment or two while his face got red. "You couldn't go now, but I'm coming back. Suppose I get on and my pay is good? Will you marry me when I go out again?"

Betty gave him a long, level glance. For all that, he thought her hand shook when she moved her cup and his heart beat.

"No," she said quietly. "Anyhow, I won't promise. Perhaps, if you do come back, we'll talk about it, but you mustn't feel you're bound to ask."

Kit got a jolt. That Betty liked him was obvious, and the girls he knew were keen for a lover. Betty, of course, was not like them, but she was human. In a sense, however, her refusal was justified. Perhaps he was a dull fellow; a girl by whom he was once attracted declared he was as gloomy as a funeral. Then, with his rather shabby clothes and small pay, he was certainly not worth bothering about. For all that, Betty's refusal strengthened his resolve.

She was firm, but he got a hint of strain. The thrill of his adventure had gone and he was sorry for Betty. He knew how she lived; the dreary shabby street she left in the morning for her nine hours' work, the pinching to make her pay go round. All was dull and monotonous for her, but he was going to a land of wine and sun. He could not move her, and she left him, puzzled and unhappy, in the street.

The evening before he sailed they went to a concert, and Betty let him come with her to the door of her lodgings. She opened the door and then looked up the street. Nobody was about and when Kit advanced impulsively, she put her arms round his neck and kissed him. Then she firmly pushed him back.

"Good-bye!" she said, and the door shut.

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Kit thought about it while he leaned against the rails on board the African boat. Perhaps it was strange, but he had not kissed Betty before. To hold her in his arms had rather moved him to a curious tenderness than to passion. When he thought about Betty he felt gentle; but he braced himself and forced a smile, for the new governor of an African jail came up with Bones and Blades.

Considine was an old soldier, with a red face and twinkling eyes, who had been long in India, but did not state his rank. Bones and Blades were raw lads from Lancashire going out to a West African factory for the yearly pay of eighty pounds. Their notion of life at the factory was romantically inaccurate.

"The boat stops six hours," Considine remarked. "Long enough to see the town, and they tell me wine is cheap. I'll go ashore with you, Musgrave. Where's my money, Bones?"

"I'll keep t' brass until you come back," Bones rejoined.

Considine was fat and his hair was going white, but he turned with unexpected swiftness and seizing the lad, took his cap.

"No time to get my boots, but your deck-shoes won't go on! Hand out my pocket-book."

Bones gave up the book and went to the gangway with Kit.

"I expect that's your boat. We were pretty good pals on this voyage and I hope we'll meet again. What do you say, Blades?"

"I'd like it," agreed the other and then his friendly grin vanished and his freckled face got grave. "All the same, Africa's a queer country and you can't have adventures without some risk. Well, good luck, Musgrave! I'd better say good-bye!"

Kit gave him his hand and afterwards learned that Blades' dream of romantic adventures was not realized. His job was to count bottles of trade gin, and he and Bones died of fever before they earned their first year's pay. [Pg 9]

In the meantime, Considine jumped into the boat. He wore neat white clothes, thin, red slippers, and Bones' cap, which was much too small.

"I ought to have stopped on board," he said with a twinkle. "All the same, when I get to Africa I'll have long enough to play up to my job. At Las Palmas I'm not important. When you want a frolic, go where you're not known."

Kit did not want a frolic. He was thoughtful and rather daunted. All his old landmarks were gone; he was in a new country where people did not use the rules he had known at Liverpool. Besides, he was thinking about Betty. For all that, when the Spanish boatman rowed him across the harbor to a lava mole he roused himself. The *patron* declared that although the fare was fixed in pesetas English passengers paid with shillings. It was, however, not for nothing Kit sprang from sternly frugal stock. He stated in his best Castilian that the peseta was worth ninepence and he would pay with Spanish money or would not pay at all. The *patron's* violent arguments did not move him, but when he heard a laugh he looked up.

Two ladies occupied the pavement at the top of the steps. One was little, dressed in white, with fine lace on her fashionable clothes, and looked dignified. The other was young and wore a dress of corn-yellow. Her eyes were brown and luminous, her hair was nearly black, and her rather olive skin had something of a peach's bloom. Her type of beauty was new to Kit, but when he saw she remarked his glance he turned to the gesticulating boatman.

Mrs. Austin was an important lady at Las Palmas, where her husband, and her father, Don Pancho Brown, carried on a merchant business. People said Jacinta Austin ruled both. Olivia, her sister, had not long returned from an English school. [Pg 10]

Señor Don Erminio Martinez, captain of a small Spanish mail steamer, engaged the ladies in talk, because Olivia was beautiful and he waited for his boat. Don Erminio was big, brown-skinned and athletic. He wore shabby English clothes and a small English cap, and looked something like a bullfighter. On the whole, he was a trustful, genial ruffian, although the Barcelona anarchists were his political models. He used a little uncouth French and English.

Mrs. Austin noted her sister's glance at the boat. The tall young man was obviously English, and had come to take a post; he was raw and did not wear the tourist's stamp. Mrs. Austin knew men and there was something honest and thoughtful about him that she approved. All the same, she did not want Olivia to approve.

"Book Castilian; I think the accent's Lancashire," the girl remarked. "I wonder where he's going; African shipping office: bananas, or coal?"

"It's not important," Mrs. Austin rejoined.

"Oh, well, unless he's a hermit, we are bound to meet him, and he's fresh blood anyway. One gets very bored by the banana and coaling men. Still I think he's their type."

"The type's plain, but I doubt if he's for the coaling wharf; the young man looks honest," said Mrs. Austin, and turning to the captain, added: "I expect he will join the *correillo*."

Correillo is not classical Castilian, but the captain knew she meant a small mail steamer and spread out his hands.

"Aha! Another animal. He come to me. All animales the Yngleses of Don Arturo. *Verdad*. People without shame and education——" [Pg 11]

"I am English, my friend," Mrs. Austin rejoined.

"One forgets; the thing looks impossible," said Don Erminio, with a bow. "You have a charm and sympathy. But the others! With teeth and neck like the camel, and the air commanding. They come on board my steamer. 'I am Ynglesa. All the ship for me.' But another animal of a *sobrecargo*! Señora, I am your servant. I go and tear my hair."

He went off, and Olivia laughed. "It's strange, but people don't like us, and at the beginning I expect the young man will have some trouble on board *Campeador*. All the same, Don Erminio's really a good sort. Well, it looks as if the dispute about the fare had stopped. He's beaten the *patron*."

She stepped back, for Kit came up the steps behind a boatman who carried his tin box. Considine followed, and at the end of the mole the boatman called a *tartana*. Kit got into the little trap, and Considine, pushing the driver from his seat, seized the reins. The horse kicked, the *tartana* rocked, and they started for Las Palmas in a cloud of dust.

"At home, we're a sober lot," Mrs. Austin remarked. "In the South, we're joyfully irresponsible. How do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it," said Olivia. "There's no use in bothering about things like that. Besides, the young man looks remarkably sober."

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CHAPTER II

OTHER RULES

After a collision with a steam tram, the *tartana* reached Las Palmas and Considine got down at a wine shop. He refused to pay for the damage to the trap, and wishing Kit good luck, vanished among the barrels in the dark shop. The *tartanero* drove Kit to the steamship office, and sitting on the doorstep declared he would not go away until his just claim was met. Kit, somewhat embarrassed, was shown into the manager's room and received by a little, fastidiously neat Spanish gentleman. The driver's mournful voice pierced the lava walls, and when Kit narrated the grounds for his complaint, Don Ramon shrugged.

"It is not important; when the tourists are about, such disputes are numerous," he said in careful English, and gave a clerk some orders.

The *tartanero*'s clamour stopped and Don Ramon resumed: "We will send a note to the purser, and if your countryman does not miss his ship, the thing is finished. Many do miss their ships and there is trouble for us. I have much admiration for the English, but they make disturbances."

"We are not all like that," Kit objected.

"You are not like that in England; I was at the Company's office," Don Ramon agreed. "All was in stern order, but in this country you have other rules. Well, it is not important. To-night you join your steamer; I will tell you your duties."

He did so with kind politeness, and Kit liked the man then and afterwards. By and by Don Ramon sent him to a Spanish hotel, and for a time he wrote letters to his mother and Betty behind a bougainvillea that climbed from the flagged *patio* to a balcony. The creeper's splendid purple shone against the yellow wall and on the opposite balcony old bronze rails twinkled. The shade was cool, and all was quiet but for the rumble of the Atlantic surf. While Kit wrote his frank, boyish letters, he thought about Betty with shy tenderness. In a sense she had refused him, but his normal mood was calm and he had not known passion yet. He wrote to Betty very much as he wrote to his mother.

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By and by he put up his writing case and went off to get some stamps at a baker's shop. In Spanish countries one cannot, as a rule, buy stamps at a post office. Then he looked at his watch, and seeing it was two o'clock, walked across the town. Don Ramon had stated that he need not go on board before midnight. The streets were strangely quiet and for the most part nobody was about; Kit understood the citizens went to sleep in the afternoon. He saw nothing romantic. Las Palmas rather looked business-like and modern than picturesque. The houses had straight, square fronts and the roofs were flat. Only the white belt of surf and background of broken volcanic mountains relieved the utilitarian ugliness.

The wine shops had no call for Kit, but he noted the splashed floors, pungent smells, and swarms of flies. A girl on a balcony near the cathedral dropped a red oleander and another smiled, but Kit did not turn his head. He sprang from sober, puritanical stock, and his code was austere; one earned one's pay and studied in order to earn more; one shunned indulgence and trained one's body. Kit had trained his at the gymnasium and a cheap swimming club. In summer he sailed races on board cheap little boats. Although his horizon was not wide, his health and nerve were good.

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He followed the *carretera* that runs south from the town. In Spain, a road is often a bridle-track a

mule can hardly climb, but the government *carretera* is wide and level. In the distance was Telde, where oranges grow, and Kit set off in the dust and scorching heat. The Trade-breeze blew behind him; on his left hand the Atlantic broke in shining foam against black lava reefs; on his right, across the thin belt of cultivation, dark rocks, melted by volcanic fire, rose like a giant wall.

A few palms and fields of feathery sugar cane bordered the road. Then Kit saw vines, tied to sticks and growing in hot dust, and by and by a thread of water in a deep *barranco*. Washerwomen knelt by the channel, beating wet clothes with stones, and Kit understood afterwards why his shirts wore out. Some of the women were young, but when he stopped for a moment at the bridge they did not look up. To beat the clothes was their job, and maize flour and goat's milk cheese are dear. Farther on, Kit saw others, carrying big earthen jars on their heads. They looked like Moorish women, for their feet and arms were very brown, and long black shawls half hid their faces. In the fields, barefooted men laboured among the tomatoes and vines. It was obvious the *peons* did not sleep in the afternoon; but for the most part their white clothes were good and they looked happy.

Soon after he passed a lava village, Kit got tired. This was strange, but the sun was hot; and there was a wall about which lizards ran. Behind, grew fleshy green bananas, with big flowers like bleeding-hearts; and he sat down in the shade. He had meant to walk to Telde; going four miles an hour, one could get back before nine o'clock, but it was cool among the bananas and he had begun to feel the drowsy calm of the islands where nothing is important and the sun always shines.

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He mused about Betty. She was thin and often looked tired. If he could bring her out, to feel the sun and balmy wind and see the blaze of colour! He pictured her bending over her account books in a dark office and going home through the dreary streets. She knew no joy and brightness; his horizon was getting wider, but hers was not. Then he remembered Betty's silver cross. Betty went to church; perhaps she found her romance there and saw things beyond his view. She had refused to marry him and perhaps her kiss was meant for good-bye. He did not know, but when he got promotion he was going back to try again. In the meantime, for Betty's sake, he meant to keep his simple rules; to go straight, do what he said, cheat nobody, and by diligence force his way to fortune.

He heard shouts and mocking laughter, and looked up. The governor of the African jail was running along the road, his face red, and wet by sweat; Bones' small cap occupied ridiculously the back of his head. His white jacket had lost some buttons and blew open; his thin, red slippers were trodden down at the heels. He laboured on with stern resolution, looking straight in front. Behind came a swarm of ragged children, pelting him with soil and stones.

"Shilling, *penique*, *puerco* Ynglisman!" they cried.

For a moment or two Kit gazed at Considine with angry impatience. He did not know if the fellow was very drunk, but it was obvious he was not sober, and his breathless panting jarred on the drowsy calm. Don Ramon had said the English made disturbances. Yet the fellow was Kit's countryman; and he got up. Driving off the children, he stopped Considine.

"Where are you going?"

"Must catch my ship. Purser said five o'clock."

Kit looked at his watch. It was four o'clock, and Las Palmas was some distance off. The port was three miles farther, but one could get a *tartana* at the town.

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"You're heading the wrong way," he said. "Can you run?"

"Turn me round and see me go," Considine replied. "Beat you, anyway. Loser pays for drinks."

Kit turned him round and they started, but when a piece of lava a boy threw struck his head, it cost Kit something to use control. Now and then Considine's red slippers came off and they were forced to stop. Considine declared that if he stooped he could not get straight again, and Kit resignedly put the slippers on his feet. He felt himself ridiculous and wanted to leave the wastrel, but somehow could not. If Considine lost his ship and got into trouble at Las Palmas, he might lose his post. Kit saw his business was to help him out.

He got very hot. The Trade-breeze blew the dust in his face, and the dust turned to mud on his wet skin; he saw dark patches on his white jacket. Considine's slippers came off oftener, and Kit remarked that not much of his stockings was left, but they made progress, and at length the town was close in front. Kit wondered whether the citizens had finished their afternoon sleep, and did not know if it was a relief or not to find the first street empty and quiet. He did not want people to see him, but he must find a *tartana*, and none was about. Considine, going five miles an hour, was a yard or two in front. When he saw a wine shop he stopped.

"Here we are!" he gasped. "The loser pays."

Kit pushed him across the pavement; Considine turned and knocked off his hat. While Kit picked up his hat the other reeled towards the wine shop and people came out. Kit seized him and drove him on. The market was not far off and he had seen *tartanas* in the square. He was breathless, tired and dusty, and had trodden on his soft grey hat. People were beginning to run after them, but he meant to put Considine on board a *tartana* and send him to the port.

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The market was nearly deserted, for in the Canaries one buys food before the sun is high, but a few stalls were occupied and three or four small traps waited for hire. Kit waved to a driver and seized Considine. Then he tried to get his breath, and wiping his hot face, smeared his skin with muddy grit.

"Loser pays," said Considine. "What's good stopping in the sun? Let's get some wine!"

He tried to make off, but Kit shook him angrily and glanced about. A crowd had begun to gather and all the traps were coming. At the end of a neighbouring street, the girl he had noted at the mole talked to a man in English clothes. She was very handsome and looked cool and dignified. Kit was young and got hotter when he saw her eyes were fixed on his dishevelled companion. He felt humiliated and could have borne it better had she looked amused, but she did not. She watched him and Considine with grave curiosity, as if she studied people of another type than hers. Kit got very angry.

Four traps arrived, the drivers gesticulating and cracking whips, and Kit dragged Considine to the nearest. Considine struggled and tried to push him back.

"Not going yet," he shouted. "Beat you easy. Where's my wine? Don't you pay your debts?"

His jacket tore and he almost got away, but Kit got a better hold.

"You're going now! Get in!"

"Won't go with that fellow. Don't like his horse," Considine declared.

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The crowd had got thicker and people jeered and laughed.

"*Todos animales. Gente sin verguenza!*" one remarked.

Kit frowned. He knew the Castilian taunt about people who have no shame, but he held on to Considine. The drivers did not help; they disputed noisily who should get the passenger. Then the man Kit had noted with the girl came up.

"Put him on board. I'll lift his legs," he said.

They did so with some effort, for Considine was heavy and kicked.

"To the mole; African steamer's boat," said Kit; Considine occupied the driver's seat.

"Show you how to drive!" he said, and shoving back the *tartanero*, used the whip.

The horse plunged, the wheels jarred the pavement, there was a crash as a stall overturned, and the *tartana* rolled across the square and vanished. Kit heard Considine's hoarse shout and all was quiet. He looked about. The girl who wore the yellow dress was gone, but the man stood close by and gave him a quiet smile. He had a thin, brown face and Kit saw a touch of white in his hair. A mark on his cheek looked like an old deep cut.

"You didn't go with your friend," he remarked.

"I did not; I've had enough," said Kit and added anxiously: "D'you think he'll get the African boat?"

The other looked at his watch. "If he runs over nothing before he makes the port, it's possible. A West-coast trader, I expect?"

"No," said Kit. "He's the governor of a jail. An old soldier, I understand."

His companion smiled. "The British Colonial office uses some curious tools, but if he sweated for you in India, their plan's perhaps as good as handing out a job to a political boss."

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"Then, you're not English?"

"I'm an American. I don't know if it's important, but since you'd had enough of the fellow, why did you bother?"

"For one thing, I wanted to get rid of him," Kit said naïvely. "Then, of course, since he is English, I felt I had to see him out."

The other nodded. "A pretty good rule, but if you stick to it at Las Palmas, I reckon you'll be occupied! Which way do you go?"

"To the *Fonda Malagueña*," said Kit.

His companion indicated a shady street and left him at the top, and when Kit loafed in the *patio* after his six o'clock dinner, he pondered. Las Palmas was not at all the romantic city he had thought, and the men he had met going south on board the steamer were a new type. They were business men, holding posts at African factories, but they were not the business men he knew at Liverpool. He could not picture them punctual, careful about small things, or remarkably sober. They had a touch of rashness he distrusted but rather liked. Yet he understood some occupied important posts. In fact, it looked as if the Liverpool small clerk's rules did not apply everywhere; in the south men used others. Although Kit was puzzled his horizon was widening.

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CHAPTER III

A MOUNTAIN EXCURSION

Two weeks after Kit joined his ship, she returned to Las Palmas, and on the whole he was satisfied with his occupation. *Campeador* was fast and built on a steam yacht's model, except that her bow was straight. Although she rolled horribly across the combers the Trade-breeze piles up, she shipped no heavy water. Then Kit thought it strange, but she was kept as clear as a British mail-liner.

He had begun to like her crew; the grave bare-legged fishermen who rowed the cargo launches, and the careless officers. All were Spanish but Don Pedro Macallister, the chief engineer, for although the *roll* stated that his birthplace was Portobello, it was not in Spain. The rules require that Spanish mail-boats be manned by Spanish subjects, but government officials are generally poor and English merchant houses sometimes generous.

For two weeks *Campeador* steamed round the islands, stopping at surf-hammered beaches to pick up cattle, camels, sheep and mules. Now the livestock was landed and Kit, waiting for a boat to carry him ashore, mused about his first encounter with the captain. *Campeador* was steaming out from Las Palmas, rolling violently as she breasted the long, foam-crested seas, and Kit staggered in the dark across the lumbered deck where the crew were throwing cargo into the hold. She had, as usual, started late, for in Spain nobody bothers about punctuality.

He reached the captain's room under the bridge. Don Erminio had pulled off his uniform and now wore a ragged white shirt and shabby English clothes. His cap, ridiculously shrunk by spray, was like a schoolboy's. Kit inquired politely what he was to do about some goods not recorded in the ship's manifest, and the blood came to the captain's olive skin.

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"Another animal! All *sobrecargos* are animals; people without honour or education!" he shouted. "I am a Spanish gentleman, not a smuggler!"

Kit was half daunted by the other's theatrical fury, but his job was to keep proper cargo lists, and what he undertook he did. It was not for nothing his ancestors were hard sheep-farmers in the bleak North.

"Nevertheless, I want to know about the chemical manure for Palma," he said.

Don Erminio seized the tin dispatch-box and threw it on the floor.

"Look for the documents! Do I count bags of manure? I am not a clerk. When the company doubts my honour I am an anarchist!" He kicked the tumbled papers. "If you find five pesetas short, I throw the manure in the sea. People without education! I go and tear my hair!"

He went, and when the door banged Kit sat down and laughed. He had borne some strain, but the thing was humorous. To begin with, Don Erminio's hair was very short. Then, although his grounds for anger were not plain, Kit thought it possible the cargo belonged to a relation of the captain's. Picking up the papers, he returned to his office, and when *Campeador* reached port the bags of manure were entered on the manifest. Don Erminio, however, bore him no grudge. In the morning he met Kit with a friendly smile and gave him a list of the passengers, for whom landing dues must be paid.

"Sometimes one disputes about the sum. It is human, but not important," he remarked. "You will write three lists for the robbers who collect the dues."

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Kit said the list obviously did not give the names of all on board, and Don Erminio grinned.

"It is a custom of the country. If one pays all one ought, there is no use in having official friends. I put down the names of people the collectors know."

When the steamer was ready to leave Palma, Kit and Don Erminio went to the agent's office and were shown a pile of bags of silver. There was a bank at Las Palmas, but for the most part the merchants did not use its cheques, and Kit's duty was to carry the money to their creditors. The agent gave him a list.

"You will count the bags before you sign? It is the English habit!" he said.

Kit saw Don Erminio studied him and imagined the agent's voice was scornful. For a moment or two he thought hard, and then took up a pen.

"I expect all the money is here?"

"I have counted," said the agent and Kit signed the document.

He knew he had broken a sound business rule and perhaps had run some risk, but he had begun to see the rules were different in Spain. When he went out he heard the agent say, "*Muy caballero!*"

"This one is not altogether an animal," the captain agreed.

Kit afterwards counted the silver and found the list accurate. On the morning he waited for his

boat at Las Palmas, he mused about it, and admitted that perhaps his philosophy did not cover all the complexities of human nature. By and by Macallister joined him, and he asked: "Who is the American with a scar on his cheek I met before we sailed?"

"I'm thinking ye mean Jefferson. A fine man! He was Austin's partner and they transact some business together noo."

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"Then who is Austin?"

"He was *sobrecargo* and held your post, but he didna bother about the freight. Pented pictures, until he and Jefferson salved the *Cumbria* and I married him to Jacinta Brown."

"You married him to the lady," Kit remarked.

"Weel, I reckon I had something to do with it. For a' that, Don Pancho Brown is cautious, and although he's anither daughter, I doubt if I could do as much again. Ony way, if ye trust old Peter, ye'll no go far wrang."

Kit was frankly puzzled about his new friend. Macallister's hair was going white, but his eyes twinkled humorously, and Kit often found it hard to determine whether he joked or not. All the same, people did trust Macallister. In the meantime, Kit wanted to know about Austin and Jefferson. Macallister told him.

Jefferson was mate of an American sailing ship, and inheriting a small legacy, undertook to float a wreck on the African coast. His money soon ran out, his men fell sick, and when he fronted disaster Jacinta Brown sent Austin to help. Austin was poor and not ambitious, but he had some talent that Jacinta roused him to use. Macallister said Jacinta could make any man do what she wanted and the girl Jefferson married was her friend. Money was raised, Austin went to Africa, and he and Jefferson salved the stranded ship. Their adventures made a moving tale and when they returned Pancho Brown gave Austin a share in his merchant business. Macallister repeated that he was really accountable for Jacinta's marrying Austin, and when he stopped, studied Kit.

"I dinna ken what I can do for you," he said in a thoughtful voice. "Ye're no like Austin. He was a lad o' parts. Aweel, ye're young and a' the lassies are no' fastidious."

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"Anyhow, I'm not an adventurer," Kit rejoined and hesitated. "Besides, if I'm ever rich enough to marry, there's a girl at home——"

"Yin?" remarked Macallister. "Man, when I was young I had the pick o' twelve! Then I'm thinking it was no' for nothing she let ye away. Maybe ye have some talents, but ye're no' amusing."

He turned, for Juan the mate, who wore spectacles, and the captain came on deck. Don Erminio carried an old pinfire gun, hung round his shoulders by a strap; he wore a big cartridge belt and black leggings, and looked like a brigand.

"*Vamos!*" he said. "Me, I am *cazador*. I go shoot the rabbit. If the *patron* is not about, perhaps I shoot the goat."

A boat came to the ladder and Kit, rather doubtfully, got on board. He knew something about his companions and imagined the excursion might be marked by adventures. For one thing, the goats that roamed among the hills were not altogether wild but belonged to somebody. When the party landed he thought his doubts were justified. Two horses, a big white donkey, and a mule were waiting, and a violent dispute began, for the muleteer declared he went with the animals and must be paid before they started. He called his saint to witness that he knew the captain.

"*Buen!*" Don Erminio remarked at length and turned to Kit. "He is more animal than the mulo, but it is not important. *Vamos!* Now we start."

They set off in a dust cloud, but presently left the road and laboured across a waste of hot sand. When the sand stopped they went by winding paths to the hills, and when they pushed up a dry watercourse Kit's troubles began. The track was rough, and dangerous in places where the sharp lava blocks were piled in heaps, but Don Erminio rode his lean horse like a *gaucho*. The fat mate rode like a sack, but his big, cautious donkey knew the hills, and Macallister had the carriage and balance of a cavalry soldier. He declared he had learned to ride in the Greys, and Kit thought it possible, although Macallister's statements were sometimes not accurate. He carried a sharp stick, with which at awkward spots he pricked Kit's mule.

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A Spanish mule is as surefooted as a cat, but riding is not a pastime for small shipping clerks, and Kit had not mounted before. The pack-saddle was very wide and galled his legs, the jolts shook him hard, and when they reached the top of the watercourse his muscles ached intolerably. The muleteer ran beside him, sometimes holding on by the stirrup and sometimes by the animal's tail. At the top the path went obliquely up a precipitous cinder bank and Macallister used his pointed stick. The mule kicked and Kit, falling backwards, rolled for some distance down the pitch. When he got up he was shaken, bruised and very sore, but he saw Macallister's twinkle and heard Don Erminio's hoarse laugh. His mouth went hard. He had engaged to ride to a hill village and he was going to ride there.

The muleteer helped him up and they presently reached a row of square lava houses standing among palms and sugar cane. There was a small, dark wine shop, at which Don Erminio stopped.

"*Buen' caballero!*" he remarked to Kit. "Now we take a drink and then I shoot the goat."

There was no glass in the wine shop windows and the Trade-breeze blew through the room. After the glare outside, to sit in the shade and rest one's aching muscles was soothing, and Kit drank two cups of red wine. The captain drank *caña*, a raw rum, and presently picking up a guitar began to sing. His voice was good and Kit liked the music, although he did not know it was classic opera. He sang on, without embarrassment, when Macallister began, "Gae bring to me a pint o' wine," and the clashing melodies brought a group of *peons* to the door.

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"Ave Maria!" one exclaimed. "But they are strange, the men of the sea!"

By and by Kit noted the empty bottles and got up. He had had enough and resolved he would not help Don Erminio to shoot another's goat. Moreover, he imagined his companions had had too much. Starting for the port, he left the village but soon afterwards sat down by a euphorbia bush. Although his head was clear, his legs were a trifle unsteady; the red wine was stronger than he had thought, but perhaps his coming out from the cool, dark shop into the scorching sun accounted for something. He frowned, and resolving he would not again indulge like that, began to look about.

Overhead, a tremendous rampart of broken mountains cut the sky. In places, the rocks, torn by volcanic heat, were black as ink; in places they were red, and some belts shone in the searching light like polished steel. In the hollow of a *barranco* where water ran were tall palms and luminous green cane, dotted by red oleanders and geraniums. The sky was all blue and the Atlantic glimmered like a big turquoise.

Kit felt the landscape's charm, for he had not known much of Nature's beauty. At Liverpool, when one went out with a bicycle on Saturdays, one followed the tram-lines across a flat country stained by smoke and the dust of traffic. He had once stopped for a week with his father's relations in the North and remembered the quiet, green valley where the river ran, but the moors about it were hidden by rain-clouds, and mist rolled down the long wet slopes. Now sea and mountains were touched with splendid colour by the Southern sun.

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He mused about his companions. He thought Macallister a good sort, and liked the Mate and Don Erminio. Their irresponsible carelessness had charm, but Kit did not altogether approve; his friends and relations were frugal, industrious folk. He had a vague notion that their utilitarian virtues were sometimes shabby; for example, in Kit's circle, one was sober because soberness paid. But at the same time, to waste his youth and talents in indulgence was folly.

Yet he was not altogether moved by selfish caution; Kit's unconscious asceticism was his by inheritance. The blood of yeomen flockmasters, who by stern self-denial had held their sheep-walks on the bleak hills, was in his veins. They were hard folk, who fronted bitter gales, took no thought for their bodies, and lived that they might work.

But, since he was not a hermit, it was plain he must go with his new friends as far as his code allowed, but when he had done so he would stop. He thought, for example, he had stopped in time when he left the wine shop after Macallister ordered another bottle. Then, looking at his watch, he got up and started for Las Palmas.

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CHAPTER IV KIT'S OBSTINACY

When he had gone some distance Kit climbed down a ravine that promised a short line to the harbour, and stopped as he crossed a field of maize at the bottom. A girl, standing by a horse, was occupied by a strap, and Kit knew her before she looked up. She wore a short linen riding-skirt, a thin yellow jacket, and a big yellow hat that shone against the tall green corn. Her olive skin had a warm tinge; her brown hair looked burnished. She was Mrs. Austin's sister, and Kit admitted he had not in England met a girl like this. He thought her vivid; it was the proper word.

"Have you some bother about the harness?" he asked.

Olivia looked up and noted that he was tall and straight. His colour was fresh, for Kit was not much sunburned yet, and his eyes were frank. In a way, he was rather an attractive fellow, but not altogether her sort. For one thing, he was Don Arturo's man and his white clothes were cheap. All the same, when the winter tourists were gone, young men were not numerous.

"A strap has broken," she replied. "Perhaps one could get a piece of string through the hole. Have you some?"

"I have a leather bootlace," said Kit. "If you'll wait a minute——"

He was going off, but she stopped him. "You had better see how much we need, because if you cut too much, you may have some trouble to reach Las Palmas."

"That is so; you're rather clever," said Kit, who looked at the broken strap. "Well, I'll find a block where I can take off my boot."

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Olivia smiled. Lava blocks were all about, but she liked his fastidiousness. In a minute or two he came back with a piece of the lace and began to mend the strap.

"Let me help," said Olivia. "That loop is not very neat; I don't think you are much of a workman."

"In England, I was a shipping clerk," Kit rejoined.

Olivia noted his frankness. As a rule, the young men from the coal wharf and banana stores talked guardedly about their English occupations. Some had come for a warmer climate and some for fresh experience, but none admitted he had come for better pay. She helped Kit to pull the loop straight and he remarked that it did not look very firm.

"It will hold," she said. "In Grand Canary harness is mainly string. You are on board the *correillo*, are you not? I think I saw you land from the African boat."

Kit said he had joined the ship two weeks since, and Olivia wondered whether he was dull. He ought to have seen that her remembering his arrival was flattering, but he obviously did not.

"Well," she resumed, "what do you think about the *correillo*'s officers?"

"I don't know yet. You see, one doesn't meet men like these at Liverpool. For one thing, *Campeador* generally sails an hour or two late. That's significant."

"In Spanish countries, punctuality is not a virtue and nobody is a slave to rules. We do what we like, when we like, and let people wait."

"Sometimes it must make things awkward," Kit remarked. "However, if you're satisfied about the harness, can I help you up?"

Olivia gave him a quick glance; it looked as if he were willing to let her go. He was dull, but his dullness was intriguing. In fact, since Olivia knew her charm, it was something of a challenge. She said she would walk across the maize field and signed Kit to lead the horse.

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"I expect you'll make for the *carretera*," he said "Isn't it the easiest way to your side of the town?"

"If you know where I live, you know who I am."

"I do know. You are Mrs. Austin's sister. Macallister told me."

Olivia frowned. She was not jealous, but sometimes she felt as if Jacinta's popularity swamped hers.

"What did Don Pedro tell you about my sister?"

"He said she ruled the English colony and at Las Palmas what she said went."

"Oh, well! Perhaps he did not exaggerate very much. Macallister does exaggerate, you know. But was this all?"

Kit was embarrassed. Macallister had said much more.

"He told me something about Mr. Austin and the wreck on the African coast."

Olivia pondered. She knew Macallister and noted Kit's embarrassment.

He occupied the post Austin had occupied. On the whole, Olivia was amused, but while she thought about it they passed the end of a path that turned off through the corn.

Kit was quiet. He felt the vivid light and colour made a proper background for his companion's exotic beauty, and not long since it was unthinkable that a girl like this should engage him in friendly talk. Yet, although one got a hint of pride and cultivation, she was frank and he thought her kind. The dreariness he had known at Liverpool was gone; walking in the splendid sunshine by Olivia's horse, he felt another man. For all that, Olivia thought they had talked long enough and when they came out from the maize she stopped. Then she saw with some annoyance she had passed the proper path.

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They had reached the edge of the narrow tableland, and in front a bank of volcanic cinders ran down steeply and vanished, as if there was a cliff not far below. The smooth surface was broken here and there by the marks of horses' feet, and one saw in the distance a bridle path wind among the rocks. A little cement channel, carrying water from the hills, crossed the steepest pitch, and indicated how the horses had reached an easier gradient. Yet to ride along the channel looked horribly risky, and Kit thought the bank of cinders had recently slipped down and carried away the path.

"Give me the bridle," said Olivia.

"You're not going to get up?"

Olivia smiled. She had pluck and rode like a Spaniard. Moreover, in the Canaries, the hill roads are generally bad. Then perhaps she was willing Kit should see her cross the awkward spot.

"My sister is waiting for me. Can you hold the stirrup?"

"I won't try! You mustn't ride along the channel."

The blood came to Olivia's skin. Jacinta ruled all the men she knew and Olivia thought something of her sister's power was hers. Then she was proud and young, and the fellow had told her she *must not*.

"Do you mean you won't help me up?" she said. "After all, I can get up without you."

Kit went forward a few yards and then turned and fronted her. He blocked the way and his mouth was firm. Olivia looked at him haughtily and her eyes sparkled. His object was plain; he meant to stop and force her to go another way.

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"Move back, please!" she said sharply.

"Not yet," said Kit and indicated the watercourse. "You see, for a few yards there's nothing but the channel. You couldn't walk across the cinders and lead the horse. The pitch is very steep."

"One could ride along the channel."

"I think not. The top's rounded and the cement's smooth. The horse would slip."

"Do you know much about horses?" Olivia asked.

Kit coloured, because he imagined he understood her taunt. "I know nothing; until this morning I hadn't mounted a horse. All the same, the risk is obvious."

Olivia looked at her wrist-watch. "My sister has some engagements for the afternoon and needs me. I ought to be at home. This is the shortest line to the town, but since you won't let me use it, perhaps you have another plan."

"I have," said Kit. "I'll ride the horse across."

With an effort he got into the saddle. The saddle was a man's, but he had not long since finished his first riding lesson, and all his muscles ached. Olivia marked his awkwardness and hesitated, although she let him go. The thing was not so risky as he thought and the horse was steady. Still she admitted that the fellow's nerve was good.

Kit's heart beat and his look was strained. He expected to fall and might roll over the cliff. Then he noted that the horse tried the treacherous cinders with its feet as it climbed obliquely to the watercourse. He thought the animal was used to the hill-tracks, and if it knew how to get across, he would let it. One could not go up hill because of the rocks, and on the other side the slope was precipitous. Not far off, the bank of cinders stopped and one saw nothing but a vulture poised against the sky. He left the bridle slack and the horse went on. After a few minutes the animal stepped off the watercourse and headed cautiously down the slope.

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To brace himself back hurt horribly, but Kit did so. They had nearly passed the top of the cliff and in front a slump of cactus grew beside a winding path. If he could hold out until they reached the clump, he could get down. In the meantime, his stiff, galled knees had no grip and the animal's cautious movements jarred his aching back. He sat like a sack until the horse stepped on a rolling stone, and then his feet came out of the awkward Spanish stirrups. He struck the ground, and rolled into the cactus. A cloud of dust marked his plunge.

When the dust blew away Kit was rather surprised to find he had stuck to the bridle and the horse had not run off. Then he was conscious of a strange pricking over much of his body, as if he had been stung by nettles. He looked at his clothes and saw they were pierced by small spines like needles. He pulled out a number, but they stuck to his hands and it was plain both ends were sharp. Then he looked at the cactus and understood why it was called prickly pear. The needles grew in tufts on the round fruit and thick, fleshy leaves. He got up and shook his clothes, but could not shake off the tormenting spines. While he was occupied Olivia joined him.

"Since you have got across, I expect you see you're not very logical," she remarked.

"It looks like that," said Kit. "Nevertheless, I was logical as far as I knew."

Olivia studied him quietly and Kit got embarrassed. His clothes and skin were smeared by dust and he felt like a pincushion. The prickling was intolerable and he wanted to rub his leg. Olivia's charm was strong, but he wished she would go. In fact, he imagined she knew this, because her eyes twinkled.

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"Your logic's not very sound," she resumed. "For example, I began to ride when I was eight years old, and you admitted you began this morning. Why did you imagine you could ride along the channel when I could not? However, you have kept me for some time and I mustn't stop."

Kit did not know what he ought to do, but he gave her the bridle and held the stirrup.

"Not that way! Keep your hand firm and your arm stiff," she said, and putting her foot on his hand, sprang to the saddle. Then she turned and smiled. "You have pluck, but you had better get back on board and change your clothes."

She started the horse, and leaning back in a strangely graceful pose, let the animal go. The pitch was steep, and the soil was loose, but they plunged down the hill. Kit knew nothing about a horse's paces; he rather thought it skated. When Olivia had gone he tried to pull out the spines, but finding that for the most part they stuck to his hands he gave it up. Then he lighted a cigarette and reflected moodily.

To begin with, it looked as if Miss Brown knew all about prickly pear, and her amused sympathy annoyed him. Then his battling her was obviously not justified, and as he watched her speed down the slopes below he frowned. He had refused to let a girl who rode like that undertake a feat he had tried; and then had fallen into the prickly pear. The thing was ridiculous. In the meantime, his skin was tingling; he must get off his clothes, and he started for Las Palmas.

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CHAPTER V

MRS AUSTIN'S VERANDA

Don Erminio and Kit were fishing in the bay behind the Isleta, the hill of volcanic cinders that shelters the Port of Light. Off-shore, the Trade-breeze was fresh, but in the bay the rocks broke the sea. The captain had moored his *barquillo* to a reef and stood in a pool, with the warm, green water washing about his knees. His legs and arms were bare, as were Kit's, but they wore rawhide sandals, because where the sea-urchin grows one protects one's feet. Don Erminio carried a dripping bag, in which something moved, and a pole with a sharp hook like a salmon gaff. Kit carried a short fishing rod and was rather wet. Stepping out on a dry ledge, he looked about.

A quarter of a mile off, the long, white-topped combers rolled across the bay and then broke on the north shore of the island in a belt of foam. Mist had begun to creep down the mountain wall, and in the distance Galdar hill rose against the sunset. Farther off, across a belt of shining sea, Tenerife's snowy peak glimmered upon a background of dull green and red. Some distance from land, a small ketch-rigged vessel steered for the Isleta. It was nearly six o'clock and would soon be dark.

"*Vamos!*" said Don Erminio. "One does not get rich while one looks about, and the salt fish I sent home from San Sebastian is almost gone."

Kit remarked that the captain had sent a large box and asked if Señora Martinez liked salt fish.

"She does not, but it is not important," said Don Erminio. "Children are always hungry and meat costs much. When one is a sportsman, fish costs nothing, and there is more money for me."

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He stepped on some wet weed, and staggering across the ledge, declared the man who made his sandals had no shame, but Don Erminio was seldom angry long, and Kit admitted he was a sportsman. They were looking for the big, yellow-striped eel, which in the Canaries is a delicacy, and when the captain got his breath he plunged into the shallow water and began to whistle.

"*Salta, morena!*" he called in a thin, high-pitched note.

The *morena* feeds on pulps, the squid and octopus, which blow out air with a whistling noise when the pools get dry. The Spaniards eat the small pulps, but some are large and *morena*-fishers state they eat men. After a time Don Erminio jumped into a chasm where the surge swung to and fro, and presently stopped in front of a dark cave. Long weed tossed about with the wash, and the light that touched the rock was broken by puzzling reflections, in which the captain's legs shone lividly white. Kit, standing behind him, rather wished he would leave the cave alone. Somehow the dark hole looked forbidding, but Don Erminio declared he had seen a *morena* go in and Kit resigned himself to wait.

By and by he remarked, under water, a dark object stretched across a rock. It was spotted and looked rather like a thick stalk of weed. He thought it wavered, but the movement of the water might account for this, and Don Erminio began to pull about the weed. When Kit looked down again, the object was curved and thicker than he had thought. It obviously moved and its outer end was getting near the captain's leg. Then Kit saw another, and for a moment stood stiff and quiet while something throbbed in his ears. He knew the objects were the arms of an octopus.

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He roused himself, and pushing the captain back, lifted his rod and struck. Don Erminio saw and shouted, but turned to the cavern and his pole jarred on Kit's. The weed tossed, the water got disturbed and thick, and Kit saw indistinctly three or four waving arms. It looked as if the thing was coming out, and he struck in savage panic at the spot he thought it occupied. Then Don Erminio leaped on to a dry ledge and pulled Kit up. When they looked back an indistinct, spotted horror writhed about the mouth of the cave. For a few moments Kit fought against a sense of nausea and the throbbing in his ears got worse.

"*Buen mozo!*" said the captain, beating his shoulder. "One has enough; the big pulpo is the devil. *Vamos!* In English, we get out."

While they pulled their boat to the rocks a man some distance off crossed the reef, and waved a white jacket. It looked as if he signalled and Kit saw the ketch he had noted was nearer land, but thought her too far off for the crew to see. The man, however, saw the boat, for he began to scramble across the rocks, shouting to Don Erminio.

"The ketch is Señor Jefferson's and they do not want her to make the port, where she must pay some dues," the captain said to Kit. "She is to go on to Africa, but the fellow says his boat is damaged and he cannot carry the message. Me, I think the wind is too strong for him. However, Señor Jefferson is very much a gentleman and the thing is possible."

Kit looked at the sea and doubted. The wind was fresh and outside the shelter of the rocks the combers were white and big, but Don Erminio could handle a small sailing boat. Kit signed agreement and the captain turned to the fisherman.

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"Go home, mackerel-eater, and say two sailors have taken on your job."

They got on board, and while the captain rowed Kit reefed the latine sail. The boat plunged and spray began to blow about. When the sail was hoisted Kit got on the windward gunwale and the captain took the helm. The *barquillo* was small and did not carry much ballast, and the reefed sail pressed her, but in order to reach the ketch she must be driven to windward boldly. The others saw her coming for they hove their vessel to some distance off. Kit knew they durst not run far into the rocky bay.

The long yard began to bend and foam leaped about the gunwale. The *barquillo* was fast, and the latine sail took her well to windward, but a small boat going to windward is generally wet. When she lurched obliquely across the rollers the spray blew in clouds from her weather bow, and now and then their tops broke on board. Kit durst not get down to throw out the water; his weight was needed for a counterbalance on her lifted side, and he presently imagined she could not stand much more. Don Erminio's clothes and face were wet, but he met the big, curling seas with cool confidence, and somehow the boat went across.

When Kit could look ahead he saw the ketch was not far off. Her mainsail was lowered and, with jib and mizzen set, she swung her forefoot out of the foam and sank until her rail was hidden. It was plain the boat could not reach her on one tack, and by and by Don Erminio waved his cap.

"Let them do something. Now they must come to us," he said.

The ketch's helm went up, she swung round before the wind, and when she luffed the boat was close under her lee. Don Erminio and the *patron* shouted, a letter was thrown across, the ketch hoisted her mainsail, and Kit slacked the latine sheet. Going back, the wind was fair and they sped, with bows out of the water, across the long seas, while a wedge of foam stood up above the depressed stern. When they landed behind a reef it was nearly dark and Don Erminio studied Kit with a grin.

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"Señor Jefferson is very much a gentleman and the letter is important," he said. "If you go by the *triana* and do not stop near the lights, nobody will see you. I must take the fish to my señora before she buys some meat."

Kit did not want to go. For one thing, his thin, wet clothes stuck to his body, he wore rawhide sandals, and could not find one sock. Yet he would rather like to meet Jefferson, who no doubt expected the letter. He started for the town and after a time stopped at a house in a quiet street. Somebody opened an iron gate in a narrow arch and Kit crossed the *patio*. He saw the stars shine over the court and shadowy bougainvilleas trail from the balconies. A fountain splashed in the gloom, and he smelt flowers. Then Jefferson came from a lighted room and took him in. He gave Kit a quick glance and noted his wet clothes, but did not look surprised. To look surprised was not Jefferson's habit.

"You have saved me some port dues and an awkward delay," he said when he had read the letter. "Will you take a drink?"

Kit refused politely and Jefferson resumed: "My wife can't receive you; she's at Palma, and there's something about which I ought to put Austin wise. Will you come along? I expect you know Mrs. Austin?"

"Perhaps I can claim to know Miss Brown?" Kit replied and then indicated his clothes.

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"You're near my height and I can fix you; I didn't mean to let you go off like that," said Jefferson smiling.

Kit wanted to go and when he had put on a white suit of Jefferson's they started. Mrs. Austin's house was modern and occupied a natural terrace on the hill behind the town. A veranda ran along the front, and Kit saw a group of people in basket chairs. When Jefferson presented him Mrs. Austin's smile was kind and Olivia gave him her hand. Presently Kit sat down in a corner and looked about.

The veranda was wide and Mrs. Austin used it for a drawing-room. English and Spaniards owned her influence, she meddled benevolently with other's affairs, and presided over something like a salon of the old French school. At one end of the veranda a lamp stood on a bronze pillar, and bright beams shone out from the rooms behind, but Kit's corner was in the gloom and he was satisfied, since he rather doubted the fit of Jefferson's clothes. In front, one saw the clustered lights of the town and the white belt of surf that ran back to the shadowy Isleta. The sea sparkled in the moon's track, and then melted into the blue dark behind which was the African coast.

Kit studied his hosts. Mrs. Austin was slender and small. Her skin was olive and he noted some white in her hair. She was very graceful, but her glance was rather thoughtful than commanding.

Austin loafed in his easy-chair. He was handsome, but looked languid—his hands were white and finely-shaped, his glance was careless. Kit could hardly picture him the hero of Macallister's romantic tale. In fact, Austin and Jacinta rather disappointed Kit.

On the whole, it was easier to picture Jefferson doing something big. He was thin, and although he was quiet, looked resolute and, so to speak, rough-hewn. Kit thought his was the Abraham Lincoln type. The others, however, were not really important when Olivia was about. She wore black and amber; a Spanish dress of diaphanous material and lace. Her olive skin was faintly touched, like a peach, by red. Kit thought her strangely beautiful and got a hint of pride and conscious power. By and by she crossed the floor and joined him.

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"Have you gone for another ride?" she asked.

"Not yet," he said. "We have been at sea and one ride is enough for some time."

"Do you mean, you were shaken by your fall? If so, I'm sorry."

"I don't mean the fall. Going up the *barranco* to the hills shook me worse. I think you know it was my first adventure on horseback. Anyhow, you saw its inglorious close."

"But I rather thought you enjoyed adventures," Olivia replied with a twinkle. "Shortly before you arrived I was at a shop in the *triana*, and you crossed the front of the window."

Kit coloured, for he had seen his reflection in Jefferson's dressing glass; he imagined Olivia knew his shoes pinched and the clothes he wore were not his. Her quiet amusement jarred, but he reflected that clothes were not really important.

"My last adventure was on board a boat not long since," he said. "However, I do know a little about a boat."

"Mr. Musgrave certainly does know," Jefferson remarked. "He went off to meet *Cayman* in a fresh breeze that scared the fellow I sent."

"Now you ought to be satisfied!" said Olivia.

"I'm not satisfied. I didn't expect Mr. Jefferson to back my statement."

"Then you didn't want to persuade me you can manage a boat?"

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"Not at all," said Kit. "I wanted to state that when you stick to things you know, you're not ridiculous. When I met you at the maize field I was ridiculous, because it was pretty obvious I couldn't manage a horse. In fact, I feel I ought to apologise."

"I wonder. You declared you were logical as far as you knew, and when I thought about it I agreed. You imagined the channel wasn't safe and saw I was obstinate. In consequence, you resolved to ride the horse across. On the whole, I think you were nice!"

"Are you disputing?" Mrs. Austin asked.

"Oh, no," said Olivia. "I am trying to persuade Mr. Musgrave he was rather noble. Not long since he rode my horse across a spot he didn't think safe for me."

"Then I reckon his nerve is pretty good!" Jefferson remarked.

Austin laughed, Mrs. Austin said nothing, but looked interested, and the blood came to Kit's skin. He almost thought Olivia shabby. Anyhow, he had had enough. If he stopped, he might look like a fool again, and he declared he must write out some cargo lists. Mrs. Austin told him he might come back, and after a glance at Olivia he turned to Jefferson.

"Thank you for the clothes," he said in rather a loud voice. "I'll send them home to-morrow."

He went off and Mrs. Austin said: "I don't altogether see——"

"It isn't very obvious," Olivia replied. "However, I imagine Mr. Musgrave has some grounds for thinking I ought to understand." She smiled and resumed: "Well, one gets rather tired of the banana men, and although Mr. Musgrave has some drawbacks I think he's good stuff. What do you think, Jake?"

"I reckon you *know*," said Jefferson, who looked at Mrs. Austin. "You see, I brought the young fellow."

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"Oh, well," said Olivia, "we will admit that is something, but perhaps it's not important. Mr. Musgrave has engaged to return your clothes. If you had trusted anybody else on board his ship, I expect you would not have got them back. The *correillers* keep all they get."

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CHAPTER VI

THE INJURED PASSENGER

The red sunset shone behind Lanzarote's broken hills, and the Trade-wind had, for an hour or two, dropped to a light breeze. *Campeador's* boat, under jib and spritsail, was beating up the coast. Don Erminio held the tiller; Kit sat on the gunwale and smoked and looked about. Between sea and mountains ran an empty plain, crossed by lava ridges and covered by sand that had blown, for sixty miles, from the Sahara. In the distance, the little whitewashed port of Arrecife glimmered against the dark sea. The landscape was clean-cut and arid. Kit thought it looked like pictures of Palestine.

Rabbits and vividly-coloured fish occupied the bottom of the boat, for Don Erminio was a keen sportsman and made his sport pay. As a rule, his other ventures were not profitable, and he had taken Kit along the coast to look at a new tomato farm, in which he had bought shares. They found a rude wall, enclosing a belt of sand in which Kit imagined nothing could be forced to grow, and the captain stormed about the knavery of the people who had persuaded him to speculate, until he saw a goat. Now, however, he was resigned and philosophical.

"Business is not for sailors, who are honest people," he remarked in English. "You have seen the *finca de tomate. Buen' ejemplo!*"

Kit had seen, and sympathised with the captain.

"Did you invest much money?" he asked.

"Fifty-dollar. Money of my señora, and when I arrive at my house she make *escandolo*. When they start the *finca* there is a feast, mucho talk and drinky. Me I say, '*Viva la industria*. Take my fifty-dollar.' *Hombre*, when I calculate the vermouth fifty-dollar buy!" [Pg 45]

Kit said it was hard luck and tried not to smile, for the captain's speculations were something of a joke at Las Palmas.

"Other time I buy the mule cart," Don Erminio resumed. "I say, if the merchant want his cargo, he must use my cart. The plan is good, I buy more cart and get rich quick. *Vaya!* The cart is on the mole, two good mule in front. Comes the *locomotura*, pushing the concrete block. *Mal rayo!* The driver not look, and the mule is in the sea. I am no more *commerciante*; I am anarchist!"

Kit thought he understood the accident, for the mole at Las Palmas is narrow and the concrete blocks, carried on rails to its end, are large. The captain paused and coughed.

"Don Pedro savvy much; he buy whisky," he went on. "Now I have seen the *finca* mi t'roat is like the lime pit."

Kit's throat did not bother him. He had inherited an ascetic vein and, in a country where wine is cheap, he was abstemious. For all that, he was hungry and he looked ahead to see if the little port got nearer. He hoped the breeze would not freshen much before they arrived. Then he heard blocks rattle and looked astern. A schooner had gone about behind them and was overtaking the boat. Her forefoot swung out of the smooth swell, and a thin streak of foam marked her waterline; her high sails were black against the sunset. As she came up she swerved, a jib was hauled aback to stop her, and her after-canvas flapped.

"*La Malagueña*," said Don Erminio. "Now we get a drink!" [Pg 46]

When the schooner forged past somebody threw a rope, Kit pulled down the boat's mast, and in a few minutes he and Don Erminio got on board. She was a beautifully-modelled vessel, belonging to the fruit-carrying fleet, but Kit understood an English merchant had recently chartered her. When he jumped down from the bulwarks, Wolf, the merchant, crossed the deck.

"If you'll come below and smoke, we'll tow your boat," he said and addressed Don Erminio in good Castilian. "Hallo, my friend! How do things go?"

"They do not go well," said the other. "I have seen the tomato farm."

Wolf laughed and took them to the small stern cabin, where he got out two or three bottles, some figs, and cigars. Kit took a *copita* of sweet, white muscatel and studied his host. Wolf was dark-skinned and wore white clothes, Canary rawhide slippers and a Spanish sash, but his English was good. Although he was fat, his movements and glance were quick.

"We'll put you on board your steamer when we anchor off the town," he said presently.

"Then, you're not going in?" said Kit.

"I think not. Arrecife is an awkward port to make in the dark. If the wind holds light, we'll anchor and wait for daybreak."

"The wind she freshen," said Don Erminio. "I know the reefs like a fish. I pilot you."

A steward had lighted the swivelled lamp and Kit occupied a locker behind the small swing table. Don Erminio and Wolf were opposite and Kit thought the captain's offer embarrassed the merchant. He, however, smiled and said they would wait. They could not land cargo until the morning, the casino was dull, and to win three or four pesetas was not exciting. Then he turned to Kit. [Pg 47]

"Since you sail for Las Palmas soon, I'll give you a passenger. I expect you know we are trying to start a trade with the tribes on the Sahara coast. One of my men got hurt, and if he goes with

you, the doctor will look after him to-morrow. I'd like you to send on a note I'll give you as soon as you arrive and keep the man on board until a boat comes. Then perhaps you needn't register him in your passenger lists. He's not a Spanish subject and we don't want the *commandancia* officers to make inquiries about the accident."

"The officers are animals. Me, I know them!" Don Erminio remarked.

"Sometimes they bother one," Wolf agreed. "However, I'll pay the *sobrecargo* for a first-class berth."

Don Erminio spread out his hands indignantly. "No, señor! A friend of yours is a friend of mine. There is no use in being captain if one's friends must pay."

"Oh, well," Wolf said, smiling. "I expect the *sobrecargo* is accountable for the passengers."

He put down an envelope and some money. Kit counted the coins and pushed back three or four.

"You have given me too much."

Wolf looked at Don Erminio, and Kit thought he slightly lifted his brows. Don Erminio shrugged, and Wolf leaned forward to pick up the money. Kit did not know if he got it, for the schooner lurched and the floor slanted. One heard the water rush along her side and a noise on deck. Loose canvas banged, ropes and blocks rattled, and it was plain the breeze had not kept light. As a rule, the boisterous north-easter freshens after dark.

Don Erminio jumped for the ladder and a few moments afterwards Kit got on deck. All was dark and showers of spray blew about, but he saw the schooner was now lying-to, and the crew had partly lowered the big mainsail. The indistinct figures hanging on to the long boom were trying down a reef. Presently they rehoisted the sail and when the schooner started, foam boiled about her lee bulwarks and all forward was lost in a cloud of spray. Kit looked aft and saw *Campeador's* boat, lifted half her length out of water, at the end of the towrope.

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They made two tacks and then hove the schooner to with the lights of the little town abeam. The crew pulled up *Campeador's* boat, and Kit, balancing on the schooner's rail, waited for a minute before he jumped. Long, white-topped combers ran in the dark, the schooner rolled, lifting her wet side out of the foam. Sometimes the boat bumped her planks and sometimes swung away on the backwash. At length Kit jumped, and held her off while Don Erminio, rather unsteadily, came down a rope. Then two men appeared at the gangway, carrying another. The boat swung towards the vessel, Kit, bracing himself to bear a load, reached up, and next moment the man fell upon him.

A rope splashed, he stepped the little mast and hoisted the jib. Don Erminio seized the tiller, the schooner vanished, and the boat headed for Arrecife. The passenger lay in her bottom and did not move. By and by *Campeador's* lights tossed in the dark ahead, for there was no moon and the gloom was thickened by spray and blowing sand. The steamer rolled savagely and Kit knew if they missed her, it would be awkward to make the shallow, surf-swept port. One could not trust the captain's pilotage; Wolf had been generous with his liquor.

Riding on a comber's crest, they sped past *Campeador's* stern and Kit saw her side, pierced by lights, lengthen out. He jumped for the mast and dropped sail while Don Erminio shoved down the helm. The boat ran on towards the illuminated square of the gangway under the saloon-deck, and a rope came down. Then Kit, pulling out the mast, held her off with the hook and the steamer rolled her bilge out of the water. Gangway and ladder went up, her side looked like a high, slanted wall; and then she rolled back and buried the ladder in swirling foam.

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Indistinct figures cut against the light and scrambled down the ladder. Kit let the boat swing in, and somebody seized the passenger and dragged him out of the boat. Next moment Kit was on the platform at the bottom of the ladder with the water about his knees, helping the others, who pulled their load through the gangway. The officers' mess-room was opposite, and carrying in the man they put him on the locker cushions. He looked young, but his eyes were shut, he breathed heavily, and a dirty bandage covered the lower part of his face. When they entered Macallister got up.

"Wha's this? Where did ye get him?"

"His name's Scot and we brought him from Wolf's schooner. He's hurt."

"Maybe; the bandage indicates it," said Macallister, who studied the man. "For a' that, I alloo he's drunk."

Kit was surprised and rather indignant, but Macallister grinned.

"I'm telling ye, and I ought to ken."

"*Verdad!*" said the captain. "Don Pedro savvy much. Me, I savvy something too. *Es cierto*. The animal is drunk."

The ship was crowded by emigrants for Cuba and when they had put a pillow under Scot's head, Kit went for his dispatch box and got to work. At midnight he returned to the mess-room and found Scot sitting up with his back against the bulkhead. His eyes were dull and his pose was slack, but he awkwardly sucked up some liquor through a maize stalk. Macallister sat opposite, looking sympathetic.

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"Is that stuff good for him?" Kit asked.

"D'ye ken what the stuff is?" Macallister rejoined.

Kit admitted that he did not and remembered that the other sometimes doctored the captain from the ship's medicine-chest. When Don Erminio had friends on board his throat was generally bad.

"Anyhow," Kit added, "I only see one glass."

"He can hear ye, although he canna talk," Macallister resumed.

"Where were you when you got hurt?" Kit asked.

Scot moved his hand over his shoulder and Kit thought he meant to indicate the African coast.

"How did you get hurt?"

The other felt in his pocket and taking out a piece of lead dropped it on the table. Kit saw it was a bullet and the end was flattened.

"Hit a bone," Macallister remarked.

"But how did they get the bullet out? Wolf has not a doctor on board."

Macallister smiled scornfully. "When ye have gone to sea langer ye'll ken a sailor's talents. For a that, ye'll no trust the captain if the boat carries an engineer. But I'm modest and will not boast."

Campeador, steaming before the big rollers, plunged violently. One heard the measured beat of engines and roar of broken seas. The mess-table slanted and Kit picked up the bullet, which rolled about and struck the ledge. He wanted to ask Scot something, but Macallister waved his hand.

"Dinna bother the puir fellow. Away and count your tickets!"

Kit went and got a bath, and was afterwards occupied until *Campeador* steamed into the Port of Light, when he sent off Wolf's note. Some time afterwards a boat with a Portuguese runner from a big hotel came alongside and they put Scot on board. In the evening Kit went to ask for him, but the clerk declared Scot had not arrived, and he doubted if their runner had gone to meet the *correillo*. Muleteers and camel-drivers from Arrecife did not stop at fashionable hotels. Kit was forced to be satisfied, but he thought the thing was strange.

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CHAPTER VII

THE BULLET

All the basket chairs on Mrs. Austin's veranda were occupied and two or three young men leaned against the posts. Mrs. Austin used no formality. People came and went when they liked. Jacinta had a smile for all; to some she talked in a low voice and with some she joked. She knew things her guests hid from everybody else, and held a clue to numerous intrigues. The others revolved about her; Jacinta, so to speak, occupied the middle of the stage.

Austin, as usual, was satisfied to leave his wife alone. The evening reception was her business, and if she needed his help he would know. In the meantime, he talked to Jefferson and Kit. Kit was half conscious that he owed his hostess much. His clothes were better and the colours did not clash. He had dropped one or two mannerisms Mrs. Austin quietly discouraged, and had begun to take for models her husband and Jefferson. Jefferson was thin and hard and often quiet, although his smile was friendly. Austin was urbane and looked languid, but Kit now imagined he was not. In fact, both had a calm and balance Kit admired. They had risked and done much, but they did not talk down to him; to feel they weighed his remarks was flattering.

Notwithstanding this, he was rather annoyed by the young man who talked to Olivia. The fellow had returned from England and was telling her about cricket and tennis matches and London restaurants. Olivia looked interested, and Kit was jealous. His cricket was elementary and he knew nothing about tennis, but he thought Olivia ought to see Nasmyth was a fool. For one thing, he wore Spanish alpaca clothes, a black Spanish hat and a red sash, and looked like a brigand from the opera. Kit instinctively hated a theatrical pose, and wished Olivia had seen the fellow crumple up after a few minutes' dispute with Macallister about some coal.

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He was not in love with Olivia; this was, of course, ridiculous. She did not move him, as Betty had moved him, to a shy tenderness that was mainly protective. When he was with Olivia he was romantic and ambitious; she inspired him with vague resolves to make his mark and use his talents. Her charm was strong, but Kit knew his drawbacks.

By and by Jefferson asked: "Did you see Wolf's schooner when you were on the Lanzarote coast?"

"Why, yes," said Kit. "We went on board one evening and brought back a hurt man."

He stopped for a moment. Wolf had asked him not to enter Scot on the list of passengers, but then he had not asked him not to talk about it. Besides, the thing was puzzling, and Kit was curious. He narrated their getting Scot on board and sending him off with the hotel runner at Las Palmas. When he stopped he thought Austin looked thoughtful.

"Do you know Wolf?" Austin asked.

"I do not," said Kit. "I hadn't met him before. He was polite, but, of course, he knew my post."

"You mean, he reckoned you were not worth cultivating?" Jefferson remarked. "Sometimes a mail-boat's *sobrecargo* is a useful friend."

"I don't expect Wolf has much use for me. He's trading in North-west Africa, is he not? What does he get?"

"The Sahara's not all desert. There are oases, and *wadys* where water runs. The Berber tribes have goods to trade and some of the stuff that comes out of the hinterland is valuable. In fact, the caravan roads may presently go west to the Atlantic and not north to Algiers." [Pg 54]

"What sort of fellows are the tribesmen?"

"Physically, they're magnificent; I reckon it's the proper word. Six feet tall, muscular and hard as rawhide. We don't know much about their morals, but they're fearless, proud, and distrust strangers. Anyhow, they're a pretty tough crowd to get up against."

"Have you got up against them?" Kit asked.

Jefferson smiled. "We have had disputes. I reckon you know Austin and I send the *Cayman* across now and then. Sometimes she brings back sheep and barley and sometimes other goods. The trouble is the Spanish crew are not keen about anchoring on the Sahara coast; they know the *Moros*. But the fellows are not Moors, but Berbers of a sort. The true Berber is rather short and light; these folk are big and dark."

"Whose is the country?"

"The Berbers'?" Austin replied with some dryness. "Nominally, the Rio de Oro belt belongs to Spain. France claims the hinterland, the coast south of Rio de Oro and some territory north. However, did you look up the fellow Scot?"

"I tried. He was not at the hotel, and when I went to the house where Wolf's note was sent, the old Spaniard I saw knew nothing about him."

"Where is the house?" Austin asked.

Kit told him and he looked at Jefferson, who knitted his brows.

"Oh, well," said Austin. "Do you know how Scot got hurt?"

Kit took out the bullet. "He couldn't talk, but when we asked about his injury he put this on the table. The boat was rolling and I thought the thing would jump off." [Pg 55]

Jefferson examined the bullet and gave it to Austin, who said nothing for a few moments and then lighted a cigarette.

"Strange and perhaps significant!" Austin remarked.

"Why is it strange? We know the man was shot," said Kit.

"The Berbers use long, smooth-bore, muzzle-loading guns; beautiful guns, with inlaid stocks, probably made long since in Persia and India. I don't know how they get them, but these people are not savages. They have a pretty good trading system and caravan roads. This bullet was fired from a modern rifle; a Mauser, I think. Do you want it?"

Kit said he did not and Austin glanced at Mrs. Austin, who presently beckoned Jefferson. He went off, and Kit pondered. On the surface, the others had been frank, but he doubted if they had told him all they knew. Then it was perhaps strange Mrs. Austin had signed to Jefferson.

"Looks as if the bullet interested you," Kit ventured.

"That is so," Austin admitted with a smile. "We imagined we knew the range of the Berbers' smooth guns. Since they make very good shooting, we found this useful; but a modern rifle is another thing. In fact, I begin to see——"

Kit was intrigued by the hint of romantic adventure, but Austin stopped and got up, for Olivia advanced. Sitting down by Kit, she opened her fan.

"Since you come to see us, I expect you're not bored," she said.

"Not at all," said Kit. "I feel I owe Mrs. Austin much for leave to come. All's so new to me."

"The people? Well, I suppose we're rather a mixed lot."

"I didn't altogether mean the people, although they are new. At Liverpool, my friends were of a type; the industrious clerk's type. We had our rules; you must be sober and punctual, you must look important, and your aim was to get on. At Las Palmas, you're not a type but individuals," [Pg 56]

doing what you like. Still I think the new surroundings count for more. After the shabby streets, the rows of little mean houses, to come to this——"

He indicated the dark volcanic mountains whose broken tops cut the serene sky, the Atlantic sparkling in the moon's track, and the twinkling lights along the belt of surf. When he stopped he heard the sea and the *Cazadores'* band playing in the *alameda*. The smell of heliotrope came from the dusty garden.

"All is really beautiful, anyhow at night, when you can't see the port," Olivia agreed. "It looks as if you felt its charm, but I think you resist. Some people don't trust beauty!"

"In a sense, to come South was like coming out of a dark room when the sun is bright. I'm, so to speak, dazzled and can't see which way to go."

"You're not emancipated yet," Olivia rejoined. "In Spain, we don't bother where we go, so long as the road is easy and the sun does shine. However, we won't philosophise. You did look bored not long since."

Kit had not imagined Olivia had noted his annoyance when she talked to the young man in the theatrical clothes, but he was beginning to know her.

"Don't you think I was justified?" he asked.

She laughed. "The charm of the South's insidious. When you arrived you were a Puritan; something of Jefferson's stamp. Well, he doesn't flatter one, but one trusts him."

"I think him and Austin fine," Kit declared. "They're quiet and Austin's humorous, but you feel what they say goes. Then you know their politeness is sincere. But since Jefferson's American, why does he live at Las Palmas?"

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"I'll tell you his story. He was mate of an American sailing ship, some time since when sailing ships were numerous. She was wrecked and when she was sinking the crew got at some liquor and tried to kill their officers. I believe they did kill one or two, and then Jefferson got control."

"You can picture his getting control," Kit remarked. "But this doesn't account for——"

"The survivors' story was tragic and Jefferson lost his post. He came to Las Palmas and went to the coaling wharf. In the meantime, he had met on board a steamer the girl he married."

"Ah!" said Kit. "Calm nights in the tropics, with the moon on the sea! The girl was romantic and liked adventure?"

"Not at all! Muriel Gascoyne was conventional; the daughter of a remarkably disagreeable clergyman, who came out to stop the marriage, but arrived too late. Macallister had something to do with that. He delayed the *correillo* when Gascoyne was crossing from Teneriffe. Then Jefferson got a small legacy and bought the wreck of the *Cumbria*. Austin went to help him and when they floated the ship, married my sister. The doctors said Mrs. Jefferson could not stand a northern climate and Jefferson stopped at Las Palmas; he and Austin had earned rather a large sum by their salvage undertaking. I think that's all, but the story's romantic. Doesn't it fire your ambition?"

"To begin with, I don't expect a legacy," Kit remarked. "Then I'm not like Austin."

Olivia smiled and shut her fan. "No, you are something like Jefferson. He married a clergyman's daughter! Well, I imagine Jacinta wants me."

She went off and Kit's heart beat. Olivia thrilled him, but he was not a fool. For one thing, he knew she knew he was not her sort; then wrecks that poor adventurers could float were not numerous. All the same, when he talked to Olivia he was carried away, and wondered whether he could not by some bold exploit mend his fortune. He frowned and lighted a fresh cigarette.

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Soon afterwards Wolf came up the steps. With his dark skin, soft black sombrero and black silk belt, he looked like a Spaniard; his urbanity was rather Spanish than English. When he stopped by Mrs. Austin, Kit somehow imagined she was not pleased, but she laughed and they talked for a few minutes. Then Wolf joined another group and afterwards pulled a chair opposite Kit's.

"I must thank you for landing Scot. Looks as if you used some tact. Your getting him quietly was an advantage."

"A hotel runner brought his boat, but when I went to look him up the clerk knew nothing about him," Kit replied.

Wolf smiled. "A dollar carries some weight with a hotel tout, and I didn't want to put the Port captain's men on the track. Since Scot landed in the hotel boat, they'd take it for granted he was a sick English tourist, and unless we're engaged in business, the Spanish officials don't bother us."

Kit rather doubted if Wolf was English, as his remark implied, and reflected that he had not much grounds for trusting him. For one thing, when he paid Scot's passage he put down a larger sum than was required, and Kit, thinking about it afterwards, imagined the fellow expected him to keep the money. Then Macallister declared Scot was drunk, and Kit had noted that he was strangely dull. To some extent, however, Wolf's frankness banished his doubts.

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"Is Scot getting better?" he asked.

"He's not making much progress. In fact, since the town is hot just now, we have sent him away."

Kit noted that he did not state where Scot had gone, but perhaps this was not important, and he wanted to be just.

"Are you satisfied with your post on board the *correillo*?" Wolf resumed.

"In a way," said Kit "I like my job, but the pay is small."

Wolf looked thoughtful. "Perhaps you ought to stop until you know the country and the Spanish merchants, but I might help you by and by. We'll talk about it again."

He crossed the floor and by and by Kit got up. Mrs. Austin gave him her hand and Olivia went with him to the steps.

"Is Mr. Wolf a friend of yours?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Kit. "I think he's friendly."

Olivia knitted her brows. "Jacinta receives him, but sometimes I wonder— Anyhow, I imagine she approves you and you might find her a useful friend. People come to her when they can't see their way."

She let him go, and Kit returned to his ship, wondering whether her remarks indicated that he ought to consult Mrs. Austin before he made friends with Wolf.

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CHAPTER VIII

A SWIMMING MATCH

A light breeze touched the long swell that splashed about the coaling mole, for the range that runs down the middle of Teneriffe cut off the Trade-wind. The sun was near the mountain tops and cool shadow touched Santa Cruz. The houses on the hillside had faded to grey, but the lower town shone dazzlingly white, and the sea was like wrinkled silver. At the end of another mole, across the flatly-curving bay, a beach of black sand and a green house with balconies marked the citizens' bathing place. The *correillo* rode at anchor near the mole's seaward end, and an African mail boat rolled upon the sparkling swell between her and the coaling station.

Kit, standing in the shade of a truck, pulled off his clothes and glanced at the water. The strong light pierced the smooth undulations and he saw the stones three or four fathoms down. A young clerk from a merchant house, half undressed, sat upon a lava block, and three or four others were stripping in the shadow of a neighbouring truck. One bantered Macallister, who wore a towel and talked at large.

"I was a swimmer before ye were born," the engineer rejoined. "Weel, I alloo ye're soople and a bonny pink, but ye're saft. When I get in the water, I'll let ye see!"

"You're not really going in?" remarked another, and a lad seized Macallister's arm.

"Put on your clothes, Mac. We'll let you off your bet."

"Ye're generous, but it's possible ye canna pay. Though I'd feel shame to rob ye, I never made a bet I didna try to win," Macallister replied and, stretching his arms above his head, balanced on his toes. "Thirty years sin' ye would not have seen me go, but the cares o' the world have worn me, no' to talk about keeping steam wi' short-weight coal."

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Kit turned to his companion. "Perhaps it's curious, but I haven't seen Macallister in the water. Since he started the match, I suppose he can swim?"

"You can't argue like that about Don Pedro," said the other. "Anyhow, I think Nelson doubts; he tried to stop him."

Kit glanced with some curiosity at the young man who had meddled. Crossing the plaza on the evening before, he stopped in front of a hotel and heard somebody singing. Perhaps it was because the song was English and, heard among the tall, white Spanish houses, had an extra charm, but Kit was moved by the music and thought the voice very fine. Entering the hotel, he found Macallister in the group about the piano, and when the engineer admitted that Nelson's song was good, but declared he, himself, could beat any Englishman, singing, riding, or swimming, the match was arranged.

"Nelson's at the coaling sheds, I think?" Kit remarked.

"That is so," agreed the other. "Don Arturo heard him sing in a church choir at home and gave him the coaling job."

"Because he can sing?"

The other laughed. "Doesn't look very logical, but Don Arturo's reasoning isn't always obvious. You don't know why he likes you and this has some advantages."

Kit threw off his shirt, and when he walked to the edge of the mole in his thin swimming suit, the other gave him an approving glance. His head was well poised on his sunburned neck, his figure was tall, finely-lined, and muscular. He looked hard and athletic but he was tired, for it was not long since he had laboured with Don Erminio across the high rocks of Gomera to look for suppositious wild goats. [Pg 62]

"The sun's hot and I wish they'd send us off, but I don't see the launch to take our clothes across," he said.

"That's Nelson's job and Nelson forgets. They tell you in the sheds he sometimes forgets how many bags of coal go to a ton, which leads to complications, since they don't fix the weight by scale and beam. But Don Juan is coming. Get ready to start."

A man carrying a watch jumped on a truck, shouted a warning, and began to count. White figures leaped from the wall, and for a moment Kit turned his head. He saw Macallister advance to the edge of the mole and the *Campeador's* mate seize him from behind. There was a struggle and the mate and Macallister fell, but next moment Kit heard his number and threw himself forward in a long flat plunge. He came up on top of a roller, and shaking the water from his eyes, saw the African boat and *Campeador* cut the dazzling sky. Then a long green slope rose in front.

He swung out his left arm and dropped his hand in front of his head. His head went under with the impetus he got, and when he came up he saw Santa Cruz glimmer pearly-grey. The shadow had crept across the town and was moving out to sea. Kit did not see the others; when one uses the overhand stroke one does not see much, and for the most part he was down in the hollow of the trough. He made the best possible speed he could, but after a time found the effort hard. Kit was not a mountaineer, and climbing across broken lava for eight or nine hours is strenuous work. Besides, the water was colder than he had thought, and when he swung up on a long undulation he stopped and looked about. [Pg 63]

The sun had gone and the sea was dark. Between him and the beach a small white object broke the surface and vanished; farther back, he saw a dot like a swimmer's head. He was too far out: the bathing house looked a long way off, he could not see the launch. Then he sank into the hollow and the view was lost.

Kit changed his stroke and swam on his chest. He must economise his strength, because he doubted if he could reach the sandy beach, and to land on the reefs would be awkward. In fact, it began to look as if he was not altogether swimming for sport. Perhaps he ought to steer for the *correillo*, but she was some distance off. By and by he heard a faint shout and paddled easily until a man overtook him.

"Hallo, Nelson!" he said. "Are you trying to get past?"

"Not at all," gasped the other. "I've had enough. Saw you were going away and made a spurt."

Kit, swimming slowly, could talk without much effort, and asked: "Where's Macallister?"

"On the mole; wish I was! Where are you heading?"

"I thought about the *correillo*."

Nelson blew the water from his sinking lips. "Too far. I'm going to the African boat."

"We have got no clothes."

"It's not important. Let's get out of the water."

"Clothes are important," Kit rejoined. "I expect she has a crowd of tourists on board and don't see myself walking about the saloon-deck in a bathing suit."

"Get on and stop talking," Nelson spluttered.

"Now I'm going easy, I can talk all right."

"*Don't!*" growled Nelson. "You'll have to help me before long."

Kit got level with him. "Brace up, go slow, and keep stroke with me."

They went on; sometimes seeing for a few moments the slanted hull and white deck-houses of the African boat, sometimes nothing but sky and heaving water. Still the ship was getting near, and by and by her whistle shrieked.

"Wants the water-barge," said Nelson. "She can't start yet."

Kit was relieved to know this. The steamer had finished coaling, and if she started before they reached her, it would be awkward. After a few minutes he lifted his head and looked about. The liner, rolling on the long swell, was now close in front. He saw her wet plates shine as she lifted them from the sea and the groups of passengers about her rail. Some had glasses and he thought they were watching him and his companion. The vessel was obviously taking home the last of the [Pg 64]

winter tourists, and Kit frowned when he noted women's dresses. It did not look as if he could get on board quietly. All the same, he must get on board, because he could go no farther.

He encouraged Nelson, and passing her high bow, they swam along her side. The ladder was aft and all the passengers on the saloon-deck came to the rail. Kit seized the ladder and when he had pulled Nelson on to the platform hesitated. No shore boats were about and he could not swim to the beach.

"Embarrassing, but let's get up," gasped Nelson.

Kit set his mouth and went up. A steward who wore neat uniform met him at the top.

"Have you got a ticket, sir?"

"I have not," said Kit; "do I look like a passenger?"

"Ship's cleared, sir. All visitors sent off. We're only waiting for the water-boat."

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Kit made an effort for control. To get savage would not help and the fellow had no doubt been ordered to let nobody come on board. For all that a number of amused passengers were watching the dispute. The thing was ridiculous, and he was cold. He thought he knew one of the passengers and tried to signal, but the fellow went behind a boat. Although an iron ladder a few yards off led to the well-deck, the steward resolutely blocked the way. Then a very smart mate crossed the deck.

"Why have you come on board? What do you want?" he asked.

"Clothes, to begin with," said Kit. "Anyhow, we have got on board and we're going to stop until we get a boat."

The whistle shrieked and drowned the other's reply. He turned, Nelson pushed Kit, and they ran for the ladder. Plunging down, they reached an alleyway and Nelson laughed.

"I don't expect the fellow will come after us; a liner's mate has got to be dignified. If you want help when things are awkward, try the engineer."

They went up the alleyway and met a short, thin man, wearing a stained blue jacket and greasy trousers. He stopped and studied them, without surprise.

"Weel?" he said. "Are ye going to a fancy ball?"

"We want to borrow some clothes; dungarees, overalls, anything you've got," said Kit. "We had to give up a swimming match and couldn't reach my ship, astern of you."

"The little Spanish mailboat? Ye're with Macallister?"

"Of course. He got up the match, although I think he didn't start."

"It's verra possible," said the other dryly. "Mack canna swim. But if ye are friends o' his, I must get ye clothes."

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Kit thanked him, and then, looking at the man thoughtfully, added that he doubted if the things would fit.

"I wasna meaning to lend ye my clothes," the engineer replied. "If ye're no fastidious, the second's aboot your size. Since he's occupied below, I dinna think he'll mind."

He took them into the mess-room, gave them some white clothes, and went off, remarking: "Ye'll be ready to go ashore with the water-boat. When they've filled my tanks we start."

"He won't start for some time," said Nelson. "You see, until we were on the mole, I forgot to tell Felix they wanted water. Jardine sent the coal, but the water's my job."

"You seem to forget rather easily," Kit remarked.

"Oh, well," said Nelson, "Don Arturo gave me the post because I can sing." He paused and added apologetically: "I really can sing, you know."

Kit laughed. He thought he liked Nelson. "Where do you think the others went?"

"There's a sandy spot near the *barranco* and I expect they crawled out. Of course, the distance was too long, but Macallister insisted we should go right across."

"Yet the engineer declared he can't swim."

"He can't swim; I have gone in with him at the bathing beach. All the same, I don't think this would bother Mack. If your mate had not meddled, he'd have started."

"But the thing's ridiculous!" Kit exclaimed. "If you can't swim and jump into deep water, you drown."

"Unless somebody pulls you out. Anyhow, Mack is like that, and I forget things; Don Arturo's men are a fantastic lot. A number of us have talents that might be useful somewhere else, and, so far as I can see, a number have none, but we keep the business going and beat Spaniards, French and Germans at jobs they've studied. I don't know if it's good luck or unconscious ability."

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However, we'll go on deck and look for the water-boat."

They went up the ladder and saw a tug steaming for the ship with a barge in tow. A few minutes afterwards the passenger Kit thought he knew crossed the deck.

"Mr. Scot?" said Kit, looking at him hard.

"I am Scot," said the other. "Met you on board the *correillo*. Come to the smoking-room and let's get a drink."

The smoking-room was unoccupied and they sat down in a corner. Kit thought Scot had not wanted to meet him, and was curious. The fellow talked awkwardly and the side of his face was marked by a red scar.

"You picked up my bullet," he said.

"I did," Kit admitted. "Meant to give it you back, but I forgot. Do you want the thing?"

"I'd like to know what you did with it."

"Austin got the bullet. I gave it him one evening when we were talking about Africa."

"You gave it Austin!" Scot exclaimed. "After all, perhaps, it doesn't matter. I have had enough and am not going back."

"How did you get hurt?"

"For one thing, I'd put on a cloth jacket—the evenings are pretty cold—and dark serge doesn't melt into a background of stones and sand. I imagined the tribe knew me."

"Perhaps a stranger fired the shot."

"There are no strangers about the Wady Azar. I carried an automatic pistol, but I reckoned the other fellows knew it wouldn't pay to shoot. In fact, I don't yet see why I was shot."

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"The bullet was not from a smooth-bore, but a rifle," said Kit.

Scot gave him a keen glance and smiled. "Oh, well, I've had enough of Africa. Suppose we talk about something else."

Nelson and Scot talked about London until the tug's whistle blew and they ran to the gangway. The ladder was hauled up, but Kit and Nelson went down a rope to the water-boat, and as she sheered off the engineer came to the steamer's rail.

"Ye'll mind about the clothes when we come back," he shouted.

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CHAPTER IX

KIT GIVES HIS CONFIDENCE

Campeador, bound for Teneriffe, rolled with a languid swing across the shining swell. Her slanted masts and yellow funnel flashed; her boats and deck were dazzling white, and Kit, coming out of his dark office, looked about him with half-shut eyes. When he joined the *correillo* he had not expected to find the Spanish crew kept her clean, but she was as smart as an English mail-boat, and Kit admitted that some of his British prejudices were not altogether justified. Now, however, she was not steaming at her proper speed. The throb of engines harmonised in a measured rhythm with the roar at the bows, but the beat was slow. Kit turned and saw Macallister watching him with a grin.

"Ye look glum," said the engineer.

"It's possible. We are late again, and I don't see how I'm to finish my business at Santa Cruz before we start for Orotava. Have your muleteer firemen got too much rum? Or did you forget to chalk the clock?"

Macallister smiled. "Ye're hipped. I'm thinking Olivia wasna kind; but ye have not much notion o' amusing a bonny lass. They're no' all satisfied to be looked at. Man, when I was young— But ye needna tell me ye didna go til Mrs. Austin's. I saw ye, stealing off, with your new silk belt and your shoes fresh chalked."

"Miss Brown has nothing to do with the boat's arriving late."

"I mind a trip when her sister had much to do with our arriving verra late indeed. Gascoyne, Mrs. Jefferson's father, was on board, going to stop the wedding, and Jacinta gave me a bit hint, but that's anither tale. The trouble is, when ye're short o' fuel ye cannot keep steam. I allood I kened a' the tricks o' the coaling trade, but a lad with the looks and voice o' a cherub let me down two hundred-weight a ton. Weel, I might have kened, after the innocent set on Juan to hold me so I

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couldna win the swimming match."

"You're near the limit, Mack," Kit remarked and went off.

He was disturbed, but *Campeador's* slowness did not account for all. Before she sailed a letter arrived from his mother, who stated in a postscript that Betty did not look well. The girl felt the cold of an unusually bleak spring and worked too hard. Mrs. Musgrave understood the doctor thought she ought to go South, but Betty, of course, could not.

Kit walked up and down the deck and pondered. Betty had refused him and he had resigned himself to let her go. In fact, he had begun to think he had not really loved her much. Now, however, to know she was ill, hurt. He wanted to help, but it was impossible.

Then he remembered that Mrs. Austin and Mrs. Jefferson were on board. Perhaps he ought to see if they were comfortable; besides, to talk to them might banish his moodiness. He found them sitting to lee of the deck-house, and leaned against the rail opposite. Beneath him, in the moving shadow of the ship, the water was a wonderful blue; farther back, the long undulations, touched here and there by white, melted into the shining plain of the Atlantic. In the distance, Teneriffe's high range was streaked by silver mist, from which projected a glittering cone.

Mrs. Austin held a book and rings sparkled on her hand. Mrs. Austin was fond of rings. Kit knew she was the daughter of a merchant who began his business career by selling sailors cheap tobacco, but he thought her like an old French marquise; a marquise with a salon where plots were made.

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Mrs. Jefferson was not like that. She was not fashionable and one felt her gentle calm. Somehow Kit knew the calm was inherited; one could not altogether get it by cultivation. She had quiet eyes, her sympathetic voice moved him. Now and then he was rather afraid of Mrs. Austin; he loved Mrs. Jefferson. He owned it strange he should enjoy the society of ladies like these.

In the meantime, Mrs. Austin studied Kit. Although he was very raw when he arrived, he was, so to speak, toning down. She had taught him something. Mrs. Austin had educated a number of raw young men, but since it looked as if Olivia were interested in his progress, she wondered whether she was rash to meddle with Kit. For one thing, he was rather handsome; he carried himself well, and his figure was good. He was honest, and his frank look had some charm. Then he had begun to choose his clothes properly; Mrs. Austin admitted she had given him some hints. Now, however, he was obviously disturbed and she had grounds for curiosity. She knew she could persuade him to give her his confidence and she did so with a cleverness Kit did not note. By and by he gave her impulsively his mother's letter.

"I'm bothered about the thing," he said.

Mrs. Austin passed on the letter to Mrs. Jefferson. On the whole, she was conscious of some satisfaction, because she thought Mrs. Musgrave's use of the postscript significant.

"One doesn't like to hear one's relations are ill," she remarked in a sympathetic voice.

For a moment or two Kit hesitated. Mrs. Austin was Olivia's sister and he had not meant to talk about Betty. Sometimes he did talk when he ought to be quiet.

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"Betty is not a relation, but I'm bothered about her being ill," he said and indicated the snowy peak, silver mist and shining Atlantic. "I feel shabby, as if the thing's not just. You see, I've got so much and Betty, who needs all I've got more, is shivering in the cold. You don't know Liverpool when the east winds blow in spring."

"I know other English, and some American, towns in winter," said Mrs. Jefferson. "When my husband found I could not stand the cold, he brought me back to the Canaries. I think I can sympathise with Betty."

"Not altogether," Kit rejoined. "When you are tired, you can rest; Betty can't. You have not to go to an office at nine o'clock, knowing that if you're ill for a week or two you may lose your job. You are not forced to stop until nine o'clock in the evening, without extra pay, when trade is good."

"Are office girls paid nothing extra for extra work?"

"All I know are not," said Kit. "Perhaps five pounds at Christmas, if the house is remarkably prosperous; but I don't think Betty minded this. You feel the dreariness most; the poor food you eat in the middle of a crowd; the fight for the tram-cars when it rains, and the long walk through muddy streets when you can't get on board. I expect a girl hates to sit all day in wet clothes. Besides, it isn't good. Then Betty's office is dark, and she writes entries in a book until her eyes ache. The thing's, so to speak, hopeless. You feel you've got to go on like that for ever——"

He paused and his look was very gentle when he resumed: "Betty bore it cheerfully. She has pluck, but I knew she was tired, and now she's ill!"

"Was she going to marry you?" Mrs. Austin asked.

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"No," said Kit, blushing like a girl. "When I got my post I wanted her to promise she would marry me when I came back, but she refused."

"This was just before you sailed?" Mrs. Austin remarked thoughtfully.

"Of course. Until Don Arturo sent for me, I knew it might be long before I could support a wife. Betty knew, but she went about with me. Sometimes we went to small concerts and sometimes, on Saturday afternoons, across the river. On the Cheshire side you can get away from the streets. There's a wood one can reach from a station, and primroses and hyacinths grow in the dead leaves. Betty was happy among the flowers; she loves things like that. She used to watch the thin birch sprays swing across the white trunks. I didn't know they were birches until she told me, but I sometimes thought her eyes were like the hyacinths. However, I've talked a lot and I'm boring you."

"We are not bored," said Mrs. Jefferson, and Mrs. Austin mused.

Kit's voice was very gentle; it looked as if he had not known passion, and Mrs. Austin thought Betty had qualities. One could picture a girl whose life was dreary using all her charm to get a lover; but Betty obviously had not. She had refused Kit, although nothing he had said indicated that she was calculating and ambitious. Well, one sometimes met a girl whose thought was not for herself.

"After all, a *sobrecargo's* pay on board the *correillo* is not large," she said.

"That is so," Kit agreed. "But one has so much besides; the sea, the sunshine, friends I could not have got at Liverpool. One feels confident; there are better jobs, and perhaps one is not forced to be poor always. Anyhow, Betty didn't bother about the pay; she can go without things, but when I tried to persuade her she was firm. Well, I think it's done with, she won't marry me. All the same, if I could bring her out to rest and get strong in the sun——"

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He stopped, with some embarrassment, and resumed: "I have bored you and must get the captain to sign the manifests."

He went off and Mrs. Austin looked at Mrs. Jefferson.

"Well?" she said.

"I like him," said Mrs. Jefferson. "I think I'd like the girl. One feels he drew her better than he knew."

"Yet he's not her lover."

"He doesn't know he is her lover, but it's important that when he thinks about her being ill he's strongly moved. To know she might get well here but he can't help, hurts. I'm sorry she can't come."

"I don't know that it's impossible," Mrs. Austin replied.

Mrs. Jefferson gave her a thoughtful glance. Jacinta was generous and often helped people, but Mrs. Jefferson imagined she had an object now.

"You don't know her and I expect she's independent."

"For all that, I don't imagine she would refuse a good post, and a post where the work is light might be got. We'll talk about it again."

When *Campeador* arrived at Santa Cruz, Mrs. Austin and Mrs. Jefferson drove across the island to Orotava and Kit went round with the ship. Orotava is open to the Atlantic and landing is sometimes awkward, but onions were cheap and the company had engaged to load a barque for Cuba. Kit sent off a quantity on board the cargo launches and then went to the agent's office to pay for the goods. In Spanish countries, business is not transacted with much speed and when he started for the harbour it was dark. He wore deck-shoes and thin white clothes, and his pockets bulged with documents. At the *marina* he met Mrs. Austin, Olivia, and Jefferson.

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"We came down after dinner to see the surf; it's rather grand to-night," Olivia remarked. "I suppose you are going on board?"

Kit said he was going. He carried the ship's papers, and she could not sail until he arrived. Then he asked Jefferson: "Have you seen my boat?"

"They ran her up when the sea began to break. I reckon you'll have some trouble to get off."

This was obvious. At Orotava the surf is not quiet long, and while Kit was engaged at the agent's the rollers had got high and steep. For a moment or two he looked up the famous horseshoe valley. Mist floated about the shoulders of the giant Peak, but the mist was still, and lights high up on the shadowy slopes did not twinkle. The illumination about the big hotel on the cliff was steady. One got no hint of wind; the night was calm and hot. For all that, the Atlantic was disturbed, and the crash of breakers rolled about the little town. The air throbbled with the measured roar.

Kit looked seawards. Two short moles enclosed a break in the lava rocks, but their ends were lost in phosphorescent foam, and a white turmoil marked the gap between. Now and then most part of a wall vanished and a yeasty flood ran far up the beach. Kit saw a group of indistinct figures standing about a boat and left the party.

"Can one get a boat off?" Mrs. Austin asked Jefferson.

"It's risky. Musgrave means to try. The danger spot is where the rollers break on the shallows at

the harbour mouth. Beyond that, they're smooth."

After a few minutes Kit returned and Jefferson said, "Well?"

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Kit laughed. "They're not keen about going, but the promise of a bottle of *caña* carries some weight and old Miguel is a useful man at the steering oar. Anyhow, I've got to try. Keeping up steam costs something, and a barque at Palma waits for the onions."

"D'you reckon a *sobrecargo's* pay covers the risk?" Jefferson asked.

They stood near a lighted wine shop and Kit gave him a puzzled look. "Perhaps we ought to get paid for an extra awkward job, but in a sense, the pay has nothing to do with it. When you sign on, you engage to do what's required. But you ought to see——"

Jefferson saw and his eyes twinkled. Kit was embarrassed, because he had remembered the others and thought he was talking like a prig. All the same, the young fellow was staunch.

"Miguel will come to the steps for me," Kit resumed, and they went with him along the wall. A quarter of a mile off, the *correillo's* lights tossed in the dark.

The boat was a thirty-foot cargo launch, rowed double banked by sturdy fishermen, but swinging about on the white turmoil, she looked small. Sometime when a thundering roller broke across the mole she vanished. To get on board was awkward, but when she stopped opposite some steps Kit ran forward and stood, stiffly posed, at the top.

"*Ahora, señor!*" somebody shouted.

Kit jumped. The others saw his white figure plunge and vanish. A crash, half drowned by the roar of the sea, indicated that he had got on board, and the boat went out on the backwash that rolled down the harbour like an angry flood. There was no moon, but one could see her dark hull against the phosphorescent foam. The men were pulling hard; their bodies swung and fiery splashes marked the big oars' path. At the mouth of the harbour she lurched up, almost perpendicular, over a white sea, plunged, and melted into the dark.

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"They have got out," said Olivia. "It was very well done!"

"Then we'll go back to the hotel," Mrs. Austin remarked, rather coolly. "You are wearing your dinner dress and the spray is thick!"

"I'm not going yet," Olivia declared.

Mrs. Austin knew her sister and waited, although she was annoyed. One could not blame Kit for doing what he ought, but the thing was unlucky. After a minute or two, Jefferson jumped on a lava block and Olivia cried out. Just outside the harbour a long dark object rolled about in the foam. The object was like a boat, but it was obviously not the proper side up.

"She may clear the head of the mole," said Jefferson, and he and Olivia plunged into the spray.

Mrs. Austin hesitated and was too late. A sea washed across the wall, the others had vanished, and she durst not go alone. Men began to run about and she saw the boat was coming back extraordinarily fast. She was upside down, but two or three white objects clung to her, and swimmers' heads dotted the frothing surge that carried her along. Jefferson and Olivia ran back and Mrs. Austin went with them to the beach. The boat struck the lava and was pulled up. A group of dripping men pushed through the crowd and Jefferson stopped the *patron*.

"Have you all got back?" he asked.

"All but Señor Musgrave," said the other, "We held on to the boat; he went on."

"He went on!" Olivia broke in. "Do you mean swimming? Where did he go?"

"To the ship, señorita. He shouted he must get on board."

The man went off and Jefferson remarked: "I reckon Musgrave will make it. The surf-belt's narrow and there's nothing to bother him after he gets through. If he'd come back, he might have washed past the harbour and hit the rocks. I'll wait at the agent's office and see if the *correillo* starts."

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"I'll stop with you," said Olivia firmly.

They waited for half an hour and then *Campeador's* whistle pierced the roar of the surf. Her lights began to move and Jefferson said, "She's steaming off. Musgrave has made it!"

Olivia thrilled, but said nothing. Mrs. Austin said they had better go back to the hotel and pondered while they climbed the steep path to the cliff. Kit had tried to get on board because he thought he must; he had not, consciously, wanted to persuade Olivia he had pluck. All the same, he had done a bold thing, with an object that justified his rashness, and Olivia had seen the risk he ran. Mrs. Austin however was rather sorry she had suggested their going to the mole.

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CHAPTER X

MRS. AUSTIN MAKES SOME PLANS

Mrs. Austin's veranda was not as crowded as usual. For one thing, a steamer that touched at Las Palmas regularly had arrived from the Argentine and her captain was giving a ball, to which Mrs. Austin had resolved she would not go. Captain Farquhar's friends were numerous but rather mixed; his feasts were not marked by the strict observance of conventional rules, and at Las Palmas Jacinta Austin was something of a great lady. When Kit came up the steps she gave him a gracious smile.

"I'm flattered because you have not, like the others, deserted me," she said.

"You are kind to hint you would note if I came or not," Kit replied. "However, I must own I don't dance."

"Then, if you did dance, you would have gone to Captain Farquhar's ball?"

Kit smiled. "I think not. To begin with, I'd sooner come here, and I went on board *Carsegarry* when she called on her outward run. Captain Farquhar's kind, but I had enough. In another sense, so had Macallister and Don Erminio."

"You would be nicer if you knew where to stop," Mrs. Austin remarked.

"If you'll let me stop now for half an hour, I'll be satisfied," said Kit.

"Satisfied?" said Mrs. Austin. "Oh, well, I know you're frank. Frankness has advantages, but perhaps it's not always necessary."

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She noted that his glance wandered to Olivia, and she began to talk about something else. He was not going to join Olivia, but while she talked she studied Kit. He was an honest, sober young fellow, and had recently begun to make allowances for others, and had learned to laugh. In the meantime, however, she thought his laugh was forced.

"If you are not amused, you needn't make an effort to be polite," she said. "When you arrived I knew you were moody."

"Then I'm duller than I thought," Kit rejoined. "You oughtn't to have known. On your veranda one's bothers vanish."

"Why were you bothered?"

"I got another letter and Betty's worse," said Kit. "My mother states she has been warned she must give up her post. Her work's too hard; she must get the sun and fresh air. I feel I ought to help, but it's impossible. Thinking about this, I've begun to see my job on board the *correillo* leads nowhere. Perhaps they'll let me stop when my engagement's up, but there's no promotion."

Mrs. Austin knew the Spanish manager was satisfied and meant him to stop.

"All the same, you like your job?" she said.

"For the most part, but one gets some jars. Recently we have been buying onions. A ship is going to Cuba, the freight is low, and Havana merchants give a good price for onions, but the *peons* who grow them in the mountains know nothing about this. They have got a big crop that nobody wants to buy and the price has fallen to a very small sum. The poor folks are a remarkably frugal, industrious lot."

"I don't know a country with finer peasants," Mrs. Austin agreed. "Still, if they're willing to sell you the onions, why should you not buy?"

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"We are buying too cheap."

Mrs. Austin turned to Jefferson. "Mr. Musgrave puzzles me. He grumbles because he's buying onions too cheap."

"Let him state his case," said Jefferson.

"I'll try. Our plan's like this," said Kit. "At daybreak *Campeador* steams up to a beach from which cargo can be shipped. Don Erminio and I get horses and go off to the hills, where nobody knows about the steamer. Don Erminio stops at a village wine shop and plays the guitar while I talk to the *peons*. They're an unsophisticated lot with the manners of fine gentlemen, and live on maize, bananas, and goat's milk cheese. Yet, for all their poverty, I must eat membrillo jelly and drink a cup of wine before we get to business. They have stacks of onions, and at Havana onions are short, but the *peons* don't know and my job's to buy their crop very cheap. The worst is, the fellows are grateful and try to make us a feast. If they got half the sum their goods are worth, they'd be rich. It's rather like robbing a trustful child."

"I am a merchant's daughter and doubt if I ought to sympathise," said Mrs. Austin. "To buy at the lowest price the seller will take is a sound business plan. Were you not a business man at Liverpool?"

"At Liverpool nobody I knew made a profit of a hundred per cent," Kit rejoined. "The thing's not honest; besides, one feels it's not sound."

Jefferson laughed. "On the whole, I reckon Musgrave's justified. You can fool people once or twice; you can't fool them all the time. When they find you out, they charge you double or sell to another."

Kit looked at Olivia. She was talking to two or three young men and the position of their chairs would make it awkward for him to join the group. Moreover, he imagined Mrs. Austin had not meant him to do so. By and by he looked at his watch.

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"I must go. It's later than I thought, and I've got to stop at the *Carsegarry*."

"You said you were not going to the ball."

"I'm not going to dance. We sail at ten o'clock and I must get Macallister and Don Erminio on board."

"Then I allow you have undertaken something of a job," Jefferson remarked.

"That is so," Kit agreed. "The last time I went for them I got rather damaged and they tore my clothes. Don Erminio's excitable and Macallister is big. All the same, somebody must go. Don Ramon at the office is patient, but I've known him firm. After all, he's accountable, and we carry the Spanish mail."

He went off and Mrs. Austin laughed. "Kit's naïve, but I like him. He's a good sort."

Olivia sent off the young men and stopped for a moment by her sister's chair.

"Kit Musgrave is a very good sort, but his luck is to get a knock-about part."

"One's luck turns," said Jefferson. "If Musgrave gets another part, I reckon he'll play up."

Olivia went into the house and Mrs. Austin said to Jefferson: "If Harry has finished his writing, bring him to me."

When Jefferson went for Austin she knitted her brows. Kit was obviously attracted by Olivia and Mrs. Austin did not approve, although in other ways she meant to be his friend. She had married a poor man, and rousing him to use his talent, had helped him to get rich; but she doubted if Kit had much talent. Moreover, she had qualities Olivia had not, and Kit was not like Harry.

Mrs. Austin did not know about Olivia. She thought her sister saw Kit's drawbacks, but the tourists only stopped for a few months in the winter, and for the most part, the coaling and banana men were dull. In fact, Mrs. Austin resolved to run no risk.

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When Jefferson returned with Austin she said, "You work too long, Harry. You began this morning as soon as you got up."

"I'm forced to work," Austin replied. "Since Jake and I started the African business I'm pretty closely occupied. For one thing, he won't write the English letters, and my Spanish clerks can't."

"Viñoles speaks good English."

"That is so," Austin said with a smile. "You speak good Castilian, but to write a foreign language is another thing. In fact, I remember a note of yours that embarrassed a sober Spanish gentleman. Anyhow, Viñoles' method of addressing an English merchant house is, *Señor Don Bought of Thomas Dash*."

"What about engaging an English clerk?"

Austin shook his head. "The experiment's risky. When the pay's not large, you must get them young and don't know your luck until they arrive. Some come out for adventure—I imagine these are worst—and some come to loaf. If Musgrave wanted another job, I might engage him."

"I think not," said Mrs. Austin firmly. "Why not try an English business girl? She wouldn't lose her pay at the casino and borrow from you. She wouldn't make disturbances at cock-fights."

"It might work," Austin replied. "In fact, I begin to see where I'm being gently led. I expect you know a candidate, but she mustn't be pretty. Modern business has nothing to do with romance."

"The girl I thought about is a friend of Musgrave's."

"Ah!" said Austin, with a twinkle, "the plot thickens!"

"Now you're ridiculous!" Mrs. Austin rejoined. "Anyhow, my plan has some advantages."

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She indicated the advantages and enlarged upon Betty's business talents, about which Kit had not said much. When Mrs. Austin felt her cause was good she was not fastidious. Moreover, she knew her husband and Jefferson, and felt she was on firm ground when she drew a moving picture of Betty's struggle against failing health and poverty. It counted for much that Muriel Jefferson could not stand the winter in the North. When she stopped Jefferson glanced at Austin.

"Perhaps we might risk it. Muriel would look after the girl."

Austin agreed and Mrs. Austin let them go. Her plans had worked, but she was not altogether

selfish. She liked to help people and thought Betty needed help. In the meantime, however, Kit must not know; she would write to Mrs. Musgrave, for when Kit gave her the letter she had noted where his mother lived. Mrs. Austin's habit was to note things like that. So far, the scheme went well, but she had not gone far enough. After all, Betty had refused Kit and the *correillo* stopped at Las Palmas for three or four days every two weeks. Betty would be occupied by her business duties, but Olivia had none. Mrs. Austin admitted that her supposition about the girl's grounds for refusing Kit might not be accurate, and imagined a longer voyage for Kit was indicated. By and by Wolf entered the veranda and she saw a plan. Yet she hesitated. She had no logical grounds for doubting Wolf, but she did doubt him.

"Mr. Scot, whom you sent home after his injury, has not come back," she said presently.

Wolf said he did not think Scot would come back, and waited.

"Are you not embarrassed without him?"

"To some extent," Wolf replied. "I can't, however, go to England, and to engage a young man you haven't seen is risky. Then I don't know a coaling clerk I'd care to hire." [Pg 85]

"But you do want help?"

Wolf agreed and Mrs. Austin looked thoughtful.

"Perhaps it's lucky, because I'd like to get Mr. Musgrave a good post. I expect you know I'm a meddler and managing people's affairs is my habit."

"I know you are kind and a number of people owe you much," Wolf replied.

Mrs. Austin gave him a gracious smile. "Well, I really think Mr. Musgrave is the man you want. He's honest and resolute, and although I don't know if he's very clever, he's not a fool."

Wolf thought his luck was good. He did want a resolute young man, but did not want him clever, and had for some time thought about Kit. Then he had an object for satisfying Mrs. Austin, who did not disown her debts.

"Well," he said, "I imagine I could give Musgrave a post he'd be willing to take. In fact, when my schooner comes back from Africa I'll probably send for him——"

He stopped and Mrs. Austin waited with quiet amusement. She knew Wolf did nothing for nothing.

"Señor Ramirez arrived from Madrid a few days since," he resumed. "I understand Don Arturo comes from Liverpool by the next boat. I would like to meet them."

"But this ought not to be difficult."

"In a way, not at all difficult. One can go to a public function and, if one is lucky, talk for a few minutes to the honoured guest, who forgets one immediately afterwards. There is not much use in this; but to meet an important man at a friend's house is another thing." [Pg 86]

Mrs. Austin pondered. Ramirez was a Spanish officer of high rank and came to the Canaries now and then on the government's business. Don Arturo had invested much money in the islands and West Africa. Austin knew both gentlemen and Wolf wanted to meet them at her house. It looked as if he knew Ramirez was going to dine with Austin. On the whole, Mrs. Austin did not want to indulge him, and imagined Austin would not approve. Yet Wolf had promised to give Kit a post.

"Why do you want to meet Señor Ramirez?" she asked.

"I rather think it's obvious. The Spaniards are jealous about the Rio de Oro belt, and I am a foreigner. There are rules about trading with the Berbers that stand in my way. A quiet talk to Ramirez might help me much, and I imagine he would be interested."

Jacinta saw something must be risked, and after all Ramirez knew men. He would not take Wolf's honesty for granted because he was her friend.

"Very well," she said. "Señor Ramirez will dine with us one evening, and I will tell you when the time is fixed. I don't know about Don Arturo yet."

"You are very kind," said Wolf. "I had meant to send for Musgrave, but now I feel I must use an extra effort to give him a good post."

He went off and soon afterwards Mrs. Austin told Austin, who frowned.

"I don't know if I altogether approved the fellow's coming to the veranda, but this didn't imply much; his coming to dinner does."

"He promised he'd give Kit a post," Mrs. Austin replied.

Austin looked at her rather hard.

"You might have helped Musgrave at a cheaper cost. However, one doesn't cheat Ramirez easily and so long as you are satisfied——" [Pg 87]

"Do you imagine Wolf will try to cheat him?"

"It's possible," said Austin dryly.

Mrs. Austin laughed. "Anyhow, Ramirez is just and won't make you accountable. Besides, if he is cheated, Wolf is cleverer than I think."

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CHAPTER XI THE PLANS WORK

Dinner was over, the night was hot, and Mrs. Austin had taken her party to the veranda. Wolf had gone; he declared he could not put off another engagement, but Mrs. Austin wondered. The fellow was clever and knew when to stop. A man like that did not go farther than was necessary and risk losing ground he had won. All the same, Mrs. Austin was satisfied. She had paid her debt, and although she had hesitated about asking Wolf, she now felt her doing so was justified. He had interested her famous guests; the dinner party had gone well.

Señor Ramirez occupied a chair by a table that carried some fine glass *copitas* from which one drinks the scented liquors used in Spain. His family was old and distinguished, and his post important. He was thin, dark-skinned and marked by an urbane dignity. As a rule, he looked languid, but sometimes his glance was keen.

Don Arturo sat opposite. He was strongly built and getting fat. Although his hair and eyes were very black, he was essentially British. He had known poverty, but now controlled large commercial undertakings and steamship lines. Don Arturo was loved and hated. Some found him strangely generous, and some thought him hard and careless about the tools he used and broke. He made bold plans, and had opened wide belts in Africa to British trade.

Mrs. Jefferson, Austin, and two or three others occupied the background. They were, so to speak, the chorus, and in the meantime not important. Austin knew when to let his wife play the leading part.

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"When I was honoured by your opening your house to me I knew my entertainment would be good, but I must own it was better than I thought," Ramirez presently remarked.

"Ah," said Mrs. Austin, "I hesitated. You have public duties; I doubted if you could come."

"Duties are always numerous and pleasures strangely few. Besides, at Las Palmas, you command. But if one is allowed to talk about your other guest——"

"Señor Wolf wanted to meet you. I hope you were not bored."

Ramirez smiled. "Some people want to meet me and some do not, but I was not bored at all. Your friend is an interesting man; he told me much about which I must think. You have known him long?"

"Not long," said Mrs. Austin. She wanted to hint that she did not altogether make herself accountable for her guest, and resumed: "Still, at Las Palmas, we are foreigners, and since he is English——"

"Then you imagine Señor Wolf is English?"

"I have imagined so," said Mrs. Austin with some surprise. "However, his skin is rather dark."

"Darker than mine, for example?" Ramirez rejoined with a twinkle. "Well, the colour of one's skin is not important. In Spain there are descendants of the Visi-Goths whose colors is white and pink. One must rather study mental characteristics."

"Then you think Wolf's mentality is foreign?" said Don Arturo.

"It is not English. One notes a touch of subtlety, an understanding of one's thoughts, a keen intelligence——"

Don Arturo laughed and Mrs. Austin waved her fan.

"But, señor, I am patriotic. Are we very dull?"

"My lady, your grounds for patriotic pride are good. Your people have qualities. Let me state an example. In these islands our *peons* are frugal, sober, and industrious; a fine race. Our merchants are intellectual and cultivated. In mathematics, philosophy, and argument I think no brains are better than ours. It is possible we got much from the Moors——"

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"My coaling and banana clerks are not philosophical, and I doubt if many are cultivated," Don Arturo remarked.

Ramirez spread out his hands. "You use my argument! I admit you have qualities. These raw English lads do things we cannot. They load in a night bananas we cannot load in two days, they

get the best fruit, they use our fishermen and labourers to coal your ships. The profit and all that is good in Grand Canary goes to you. At the hill villages where the *peons* went to bed at dark, your mule carts arrive with cheap candles and oil. The shops are full of English clothes and tools. When the *peon* finds he needs your goods he grows things to sell. Sometimes we are jealous, but we trust you."

"It looks as if you trusted Wolf, although you imagine he is not English," Don Arturo said dryly.

"He is the señora's guest," said Ramirez, bowing to Mrs. Austin.

"Ah," said Mrs. Austin, "this does not carry much weight! I am not a clever politician, and perhaps my judgment is not very sound."

"All the same, I did trust Señor Wolf. He wanted some concessions; a little slackening of our rules about trading on the African coast."

"Your rules are rather numerous," Don Arturo remarked.

"It is so, my friend. Our possessions in Africa are small and the Moors of Rio de Oro are fierce and troublesome, but I think that belt of Atlantic coast will some time be worth much. Valuable goods cross the Sahara from the West Soudan, and when we have made harbours, caravans that now go to Morocco and Algiers will arrive. Well, perhaps we are cautious. We have greedy neighbours, and when one has not got much, one keeps what one has."

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Don Arturo looked thoughtful. "West Africa's my field, and I don't know the North, but now France has got all the hinterland, I sometimes think the dispute about the Atlantic coast may be reopened. I imagine the Spanish Government is not a friend of Islam."

"When we are not anarchists we are staunch Catholics," Ramirez agreed. "Well, in North Africa the sun and the tribesmen's blood are hot. A strange, wild country, where the agreements diplomatists make do not go. But this is not important. I think the señora's talented friend interested you."

"I promised to charter him a steamer," said Don Arturo dryly.

"A Spanish steamer?"

"She is now an English cargo-boat of two thousand tons. I do not know if Wolf will hoist the Spanish flag. Perhaps this might be allowed."

Ramirez's eyes twinkled. "It is possible. We are poor and cannot pay our officers much. But two thousand tons? To carry a few sheep!"

"I understand Wolf will send her to Mojador and Saffi for maize and beans."

"Oh, well," said Ramirez, "we will talk about something else." He turned to Mrs. Austin. "My lady, you have seen our politeness is not as deep as people think, but you will make allowances. When one meets a famous English merchant, and a man of talent who knows the Rio de Oro, like Señor Wolf——"

"Although he is not English," Mrs. Austin remarked, but Ramirez smiled and turned to the others, who played up.

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After a time the guests went off and Mrs. Austin said to her husband. "Somehow I feel I've meddled with a bigger thing than I knew. In fact, I rather wish I had not."

"Your object's good," said Austin. "You have got Kit a job. I suppose this was all you wanted?"

Mrs. Austin smiled. "I didn't want to help Wolf, and if I have helped, it's because one gets nothing unless one pays. However, we'll let it go."

When Kit returned to Las Palmas he found a note from Wolf, and in the evening went to a house in an old quarter of the town. The street was narrow, quiet and dark, but the moon touched one side with misty light. Kit heard the throbbing rumble of the surf, and coming from the noisy steam tram and the lights of the main street, he got a hint of mystery in the quietness and gloom. The houses had flat tops and looked like forts. Their straight fronts were pierced by a few narrow slits and a low arch. The slits were high up and barred. Kit thought that part of the city looked as if it had not been built by Europeans; it rather belonged to Egypt or Algiers. There was something romantic but sinister about it.

He knocked at a door and an old man took him across a *patio* where a ray of moonlight fell. The man showed him into a room furnished like an office, and Kit waited and looked about. There was no window, but an arch opened on to a passage with dark wooden pillars supporting a balcony. A few maps occupied the wall, and Kit began to study one of the Rio de Oro belt. Maps drew him; they called one to countries one had not seen, and this map pictured a wild land white men did not know much about. For all that, Kit thought it good. Green rings marked the oases, blue threads the wadys where water sometimes runs, and the red lines were the tracks by which loaded camels came from the Soudan. The marks, however, were not numerous, and Kit mused about the blank spaces.

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Then he turned with a start and saw Wolf. He had not heard the fellow come in, and noted that he wore slippers of soft red leather. His shirt and trousers were white, but he wore a red silk

sash and a Fez cap.

"My map interests you?" he said. "Well, I doubt if the Spanish government owns one as good. I expect to have noted that for the most part it is not printed?"

Kit had noted that the caravan roads and wadys were drawn by a pen.

"I was studying the unmarked spaces," he replied.

Wolf smiled and indicated a chair. "The explorer's instinct; there's something about the unknown that pulls. All the same, more is known about the country than some people think, and in one sense, it is not a desert. Then the people are not savages, although their rules are the rules the Arabs brought a thousand years since. They spring from famous stocks; Carthaginian, Roman; Saracen adventurers who pushed across the Atlas range and vanished. The country's intriguing, but to know it one must be resolute."

"I suppose the tribes are Mohammedans?" Kit remarked.

Wolf gave him some scented wine and a cigarette with a curious taste, and while he smoked Kit heard the measured beat of the surf. Somebody on a neighbouring roof played a guitar and the music was strange and melancholy.

"Some of the tribes are fanatics," Wolf replied. "Islam was born in the desert and its driving force comes from the wilds. When the prophets were made caliphs they lost their real power. The Turk has got slack and meddles with forbidden things, but the faith lives and has spread far recently. Its missionaries, however, do not come from Constantinople. Lean John Baptists appear in the desert and found fierce, reforming sects. One has grounds for imagining their job is something like this."

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"Ah," said Kit. "Do they expect a new Mohammed?"

"I think they expect a new prophet," Wolf said quietly. "Not a political caliph, but a man from the wilds who will re-enforce the ancient Arab laws. They have waited for him long and have sometimes been cheated. Their habit is to wait. It is possible they will be cheated again."

Kit was young, and romance and mystery appealed. "Well," he said, "I'd like to see something of North-west Africa."

"Then the chance is yours. I am sending a steamer to the Morocco coast and want a man I can trust to meet the Jew merchants and put on board the maize and beans I've bought. Then she'll steam south to pick up goods at Rio de Oro, and my agent must go inland with an interpreter to meet the tribesmen. If you like, you can go."

Kit's eyes sparkled. "I'll take the post," he said, and then stopped and frowned. "I forgot," he resumed. "My engagement with the *correos* runs for some time."

"This is not much of an obstacle. I am chartering the steamer from the company and expect Don Ramon will let you off."

"If Don Ramon is willing, there is no obstacle," Kit declared, and when Wolf told him about his pay and duties his resolve was keener. He would use a power and responsibility he had not yet known and be richer than he had thought.

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"Very well," said Wolf. "When you come back from Palma you had better see Don Ramon. In the meantime, I'll get things in trim."

Kit went down the street with a light step. The old Spanish house, the map, and Wolf's talk had fired his imagination. Adventure called. In a week or two he was going to see the desert and try his powers.

PART II

RESPONSIBILITY

CHAPTER I

OLIVIA'S EXPERIMENT

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When the *correillo* returned from Palma and Kit went to the company's office he was bothered by doubts. Don Ramon, the Spanish manager, had been kind, and Kit felt shabby. He had engaged to serve the company for twelve months and doubted if his asking the other to release him was justified. For all that he wanted to go to Africa.

He was shown into the private office, and Don Ramon, after indicating a chair, occupied himself for a few minutes with the papers on his desk. Kit's embarrassment was obvious, and the manager was amused.

"I have studied your notes about business at the ports *Compeador* touched on her new round," he said presently. "Some of your suggestions are useful. I expect you wanted to talk to me about this?"

"Not altogether," Kit replied.

"Then, perhaps, you meant to talk about painting the passengers' rooms?"

"No," said Kit. "The rooms need painting, but I really meant to ask you to let me off my engagement. I have heard about another post."

Don Ramon studied him quietly for a few moments. Kit's glance was direct, but the blood had come to his skin. The Spaniard was very subtle and knew something about young Englishmen; he rather approved Kit.

"A better post?" he said.

"It is better, but I'm not altogether influenced by this," Kit replied awkwardly. "I haven't much scope on board *Campeador*. One likes to feel one is responsible and doing something worth while."

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"Ah," said Don Ramon, "a number of your countrymen arrive at this office with the resolve to do as little as possible. However, I imagined you were satisfied on board."

"In a way I am satisfied. The captain and engineer are my friends, I like the company's agents, and your clerks make things easy. In fact, if you think I ought to stop, I will stop."

"You imply that you are willing to give up the better post unless we agree to your leaving us?"

"Of course!" said Kit. "I won't urge you to agree."

Don Ramon smiled. "After all, your joining Mr. Wolf has some advantages, particularly since the steamer he has chartered is ours, and I don't know that it is necessary for you to break your engagement with us. If it is not broken, you could go back to *Campeador* after the other boat's return, and, in the meantime, will get your pay. I expect Mr. Wolf did not state how long he wanted you."

"He did not," said Kit and pondered.

Perhaps it was strange, but he had not stipulated that he must be employed for a fixed time. He ought to have stipulated. Then he was surprised because Don Ramon knew his object for wanting to go. Don Ramon was clever and his remarks hardly indicated much confidence in Wolf.

"You are generous," Kit resumed. "However, I doubt if I can honestly work for you and Wolf. You see, the office now and then buys corn at the Moorish ports."

"I think I see," Don Ramon replied with a twinkle. "You imply that so long as you take Wolf's pay you are his man, and we must not expect you to study his business for our benefit? Well, we do not expect this, and you will find Wolf's business is, for the most part, transacted at a neighbourhood we leave alone. All the same, the chartered steamer is valuable, and although we have asked for some guarantees, we would like a company's servant on board. Don Erminio and Macallister will join the ship."

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Kit's hesitation vanished. His luck was strangely good, and he thanked Don Ramon, who presently sent him off. While his double engagement lasted he would be rich, and when he returned to the *correillo* he wrote to his mother, asking her to make some plan for helping Betty. For example, Betty might take a holiday and, if Mrs. Musgrave used proper tact, need not know Kit had borne the cost. He wanted Betty to get a holiday that would brace her up. Yet it was obvious he was not in love.

His reflections were disturbed. A fowl, cackling in wild alarm, came down the ventilator shaft that pierced the ceiling of his small room. It struck the rack above the folding washstand, and Kit's hairbrush and a box of brass buttons fell. The buttons rolled about the floor and under his berth. Then the fowl swept his desk with fluttering wings and the inkpot overturned. Kit frowned and put his letter in the envelope. His friends on board liked a rude joke, and a fowl had come down the shaft before. Kit had thought he had spoiled the joke by painting the inside of the bowl-head on deck, but the paint did not long keep wet. He tried to catch the fowl, with the object of putting it in Macallister's bed, and finding he could not, opened the door, and drove it out. Soon afterward Macallister came in and indicated the stained desk.

"She's no' rolling, but it looks as if ye couldna' keep your inkpot right-side-up," he said. "Weel, I've kenned Garcia's sherry account for stranger things than yon."

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"I've known it account for your losing your boots," Kit rejoined.

Macallister grinned. "The night was balmy. I was tired and my feet were sair. Ye'll mind I scalded them, saving the ship when the boiler tubes burst——"

"I was not on board," said Kit. "Anyhow, Don Erminio states Felix, your stoker, stopped the tubes."

But you certainly lost your boots."

"How was I to ken the Spaniards would rob me while I slumbered? And I have my doubts. Mills o' the *Estremadura* was tacking along the mole, and they're no' a' gentlemen aboard yon boat. But we'll let it go. Ye dinna ken what auld Peter has done for ye?"

"My notion is, you have done enough," Kit remarked. "It's some time since the mate and you sold my clothes when I was ashore, but you haven't paid me yet."

"If my luck is good, ye will be paid, and ye have not heard my news. The company is chartering the old *Mossamedes* and ye're to gang to Africa on board. I got ye the job."

"Go on," said Kit dryly. "I expect it's a romantic tale."

Macallister lighted his pipe and put his coaly boots on the locker cushions.

"It was like this. Don Ramon called me to the office. 'We have chartered *Mossamedes* for a run to the Morocco coast,' says he. 'Captain Erminio is no' much o' a navigator and the mate's eyes are no' very good, but if ye're in the engine-room, I'll ken all's weel. Then we need a *sobrecargo*. Whom would ye like?'

"'Maybe Mr. Musgrave would suit,' says I. 'He's slow and dour, but for a crabbit Englishman, he has some parts. Besides, when he gangs ashore the lassies will not bother him. He's no' the sort to charm a fastidious e'e. If ye send Mr. Musgrave, ye'll not go far wrang.'" [Pg 103]

"Did you argue in Scots or Castilian?" Kit inquired.

"In Edinburgh Scots; better English than ye use. What for would I use Castilian?"

"I see one important obstacle," said Kit. "When a man who has long been chief-engineer on board a Spanish ship is forced to paint the pressure gauge and chalk the clock, in order to let his firemen know what steam must be raised——"

"There's no' a shabby hotel tout who canna speak six languages," Macallister rejoined. "Don Arturo and I use English. Since I dinna convairse with foreigners, what for would I learn their language? If they want to talk to me, they must use mine."

He went off and Kit laughed. He owned that his conventional notion of the grim, parsimonious Scot was strangely inaccurate. The Scots he knew in the Canaries were marked by freakish humour and rash generosity. They were kind with the kindness of a benevolent Puck. In fact, all the *correillers* were to some extent like that, a reckless, irresponsible lot, but Kit had known men with virtues shabbier than the sailors' faults.

A week afterwards, he got up one evening from his revolving chair in the *Mossamedes'* saloon. She was going to sea at daybreak, and Don Erminio had brought his friends on board. All the chairs were occupied, and cigarette smoke drifted about the green trailers of a sweet-potato that grew across the beams. The empty bottles were numerous, and at the end of the table Don Erminio made a speech. Kit heard something about animals and anarchists, and noted that the wine dripped from the glass in the captain's hand. At the other end of the table Macallister sang. [Pg 104]

Kit had had enough. He thought he had done all politeness required, and the noisy revels jarred. It was a relief to go on deck and breathe the cool night breeze. *Mossamedes* was a larger boat than the *correillo*. Riding near the harbour mouth, her masts and funnel swung languidly, and her lights threw trembling reflections on the black water. A long deckhouse ran aft from the captain's room and pilot house at the bridge, and a row of stanchions carried its top level with the rail. Luminous smoke rolled from the funnel; one heard the clank of shovels and hiss of steam. In the background were glimmering surf, lights that twinkled in clusters against dark rocks, and then a gap where the Atlantic rolled back to Africa.

When he ordered his boat Kit's heart beat. His last duty before the vessel sailed was to get some documents from the *commandancia*, and then he was going to Mrs. Austin's. Mrs. Austin was not at home, but Olivia received him on the veranda.

"Harry and Jacinta will not be very long," she said.

"I'm sorry," said Kit. "I can't stop, but I wanted to say good-bye, and thank your sister."

"Then you waited for some time. Didn't you know Jacinta was going to the Metropole?"

"Not altogether," Kit replied with some awkwardness. "I think I knew she might go, but the captain was giving a party and I couldn't get off."

Olivia smiled. She knew her charm, and Kit was rather obvious.

"When his guests started I was at the mole and I expect the port-guards will get some amusement when they come back," she said. "But why do you want to thank Jacinta?" [Pg 105]

"I imagine she had something to do with my getting the new post."

Olivia gave him a keen glance and was quiet for a few moments. Then she said, "It's possible! You feel you ought to thank her?"

"Of course," said Kit and pondered. It looked as if Olivia were angry, and this was puzzling.

"The post is good," he resumed. "I could get no farther on board the *correillo* and my work was not important. On the bigger boat I'll have some responsibility. Wolf is not going with her and gives me control. You see——"

"I think I do see," Olivia interrupted with a touch of scornful impatience. "You imagine you are going to force people to own your talents? This, of course, is enough for you, and you see nothing else. You imagine Jacinta knew your ambition and wanted to help?"

"I'm satisfied she did want to help, and she has helped. Mrs. Austin's kind."

Olivia laughed. Kit was very dull, but Jacinta's firm rule was sometimes galling. Olivia saw her object and wanted to baffle her. Besides, she doubted Wolf and knew Austin did not like him.

"Kit," she said, "suppose I asked you to do something for me?"

"Try!" he said, rather tensely, and waited.

"Then don't go to Africa. Stop at Las Palmas."

Kit's heart beat. Olivia had come nearer him; if he moved his hand he would touch her. Her voice had a strange, soft note, and she fixed her eyes on his. For a moment he hesitated and then braced himself to resist. It was not for nothing he sprang from Puritan stock.

"But this is not for you, and I am forced to go. *Mossamedes* sails in the morning, and Wolf cannot get another man. Besides, the company ordered me on board, and I have the ship's papers. I can't break my engagement when the boat is ready to start." [Pg 106]

Olivia gave him a glance that fired his blood, and then turned her head. At the beginning she had meant to baffle Jacinta, but she had another object now. Kit's stubbornness was a challenge, and if she could not move him, she must own her charm was weak. Vanity accounted for something, but not for all. His resistance moved her to passion.

"Is it a drawback that the thing I ask is rather for your sake than mine?" she said, looking up. "Would you sooner I didn't care if you ran a risk or not?"

Kit used stern control. Olivia was very alluring, and he noted the tremble in her voice. He was strongly tempted, but although he thrilled he was not a fool. She did not belong to his circle; he was poor and her sister, with careless kindness, had tried to help him. By and by perhaps, if he got a good post—— He pulled himself up. If he meant to be honest and justify Mrs. Austin's kindness, he must stick to his job. Besides, if there was a way at all, this was the way that led to Olivia.

"I think you know I'd like you to care," he said and paused. To talk like this was dangerous. "But why do you want me to stop?" he resumed with an effort for calm.

"Are you very dull, Kit?" Olivia asked quietly.

Kit coloured and got up. After all, he was human and knew he could not hold out long. He thrilled and his hands shook as he turned his soft hat. Mrs. Austin trusted him, and since he could not see another plan, he must run away.

"If my luck is good and I get promotion, I won't refuse another time. Now, because your sister got me the post, I must stick to it and go on board." [Pg 107]

Olivia gave him a cool, level glance. "Oh, well! I know your obstinacy; you baffled me before." Then her look got softer and she added: "But be cautious Kit! I don't like Wolf."

She let him go and when he went down the steps he frowned. He had tried to take the proper line, but he was young and wondered whether his scruples were extravagant.

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CHAPTER II

THE FIRST VOYAGE

To some extent, Kit's first voyage on board *Mossamedes* was disappointing, and he felt as if he had been cheated. Nothing romantic marked the run; the boat was large, her roll was slow and regular, and while her big engines pushed her north against the Trade-breeze, one could without much balancing walk the deck. On board *Campeador* one could not. Her sharp plunges sent one staggering about, and one must dodge the spray that swept her like a hailstorm when the white surges burst against her fore-castle. The spray and violent motion had some drawbacks, but Kit got a sense of man's struggle with the sea.

On the whole, he thought the Morocco coast dreary. The towns were like the Spanish towns, dazzlingly white on the water-front, but meaner and dirtier. In fact, to walk about the narrow streets in the dark was rash, and Kit was satisfied by his first experiment. The hot, foul-smelling cafes by the harbour had no charm for him, and he lost himself in a network of alleys between

straight walls. The alleys were very dark; sometimes an indistinct figure stole past, and sometimes he saw a yellow gleam in a high and narrow window. This was all, and it was a relief to get back to the beach and feel the fresh Trade-breeze.

As a rule, they moored *Mossamedes* some distance from the beach, and she rode uneasily, rolling on the long swell while her cable jarred against the stem. Boats came off with her cargo of beans, barley and maize, and Kit, watching the dust-clouds roll along the parched coast, wondered where the produce grew. When he asked Yusuf, Wolf's agent, the Jew vaguely indicated the hinterland. He was, he said, a merchant, and the merchants stopped in the towns. The Moors of the back country were strange people, and one left them alone. Notwithstanding this, Yusuf was obviously a good business man, for the quantity of grain he sent on board was large and when *Mossamedes* weighed anchor, Kit thought Wolf would find her first voyage profitable.

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Getting off was not easy. She had swung, and her cable, sweeping the bottom, had fouled the anchor. They hove all on board in a horrible tangle, and for hours the barefooted crew were occupied in dragging the ponderous links about. In the meantime *Mossamedes* steamed slowly south, with a yellow smear on her port hand that stood for the coast. The shallows run far to sea, and the charts are not remarkably good. Yusuf had sent her to load sheep at the mouth of a wady, but stated that she might wait some days before the animals arrived.

Miguel, the old quartermaster, steered her in. He had long sailed on board a fishing schooner and knew the shoals, for where the African coast-shelf drops to the deep Atlantic, fish are numerous. Fish, lightly salted and dried in the sun, make the Spanish *bacalao*, and the *peons*, whose main food it is, are sometimes touched by leprosy. Miguel never wore boots and stockings, although when he went home on feast days he carried raw-hide sandals. Kit rather doubted if he put the sandals on. His clothes were strangely patched, and he could not read, but his manners were the manners of a Spanish grandee. He was something of a mystic and believed in miracles. He told Kit the Moors were cruel and treacherous, but his saint was king of angels, and he was not afraid. The mate was a Catalan Freethinker, and believed in nothing he could not touch and see. Since he wore spectacles, his vision was limited.

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When they reached the spot agreed upon, Miguel went to the bridge, and they rigged the deep-sea lead and stopped the ship. Miguel, posed like a Greek statue, stood on top of the pilot-house; his thin clothes wind-pressed against his body, and his white hair blown about his red cap. There were no shore marks, and Don Erminio's reckoning was not always accurate. Across a belt of blue sea one saw a brown and yellow streak. Its outline was vague and broken; only the colour was distinct.

"The *Punta!*" said Miguel. "The *barranco* is a league south. A bad place, captain, and the people are without shame."

Kit knew *barranco* in Castilian and *wady* in Arabic mean a stony hollow where water sometimes flows. He looked for an anchorage, but saw none. In places, the belt of blue was broken by patches of pale green, and farther on, by glistening white lines. These marked ridges on the coast-shelf and shallow spots where the long rollers broke. The wind was fresh but blew obliquely off the coast.

"How much water?" Don Erminio asked, and when Miguel answered, signed to a man on the forecastle.

"*Veremos*. We will see," he said.

The lead plunged, the line ran aft, and stopping swung upright at the poop. Two men began to haul and one shouted the depth.

"Half a *brazo* too much. It is very good," the captain remarked.

Then the screw began to throb and *Mossamedes*, going half-speed, forged ahead. Sometimes she crossed green belts and sometimes went round patches where the water was yellow and the swell curled as if the Atlantic waves ran up an inclined bottom. Kit thought Miguel did not hesitate; his lined face was imperturbable, and he directed the helmsman with a firm movement of his hand. Yet it was obvious they crept round banks where a ship like *Mossamedes* would not float. When Miguel nodded and the captain rang his telegraph, all felt some relief.

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"*Fondo!*" the captain shouted and the anchor leaped from the forecastle.

The splash was drowned by the roar of running cable that presently stopped with a jar. She brought up, swung to the wind, and there was a strange quietness on board.

"We are arrived," said Don Erminio. "If Miguel's saint does not guard him until the sheep come, I do not think we will get to sea again. In the meantime, we will catch fish and make *bacalao* for my señora."

In the morning they launched a boat and rowed to the coast. The point was low and stony, and farther along the hammered beach a shallow hollow ran down to the sand. In the background one saw a sandy waste dotted by thick-stalked euphorbia. One could land by jumping overboard into the surf while the others held off the boat, and Don Erminio shot a partridge and got some bait. Then they went back to the steamer, and for three days Kit and the captain fished.

Shoals surrounded the basin where *Mossamedes* rode two miles from land. From her deck it

looked as if she were at sea, for the banks that sheltered her were only marked by lines of foam. Although she rolled, the motion was not violent, and Kit got a sense of space and freedom. He liked the lonely anchorage better than a noisy port. In the morning they hoisted the boat's lugsail, and following the edge of the sands, stopped where fish were numerous. A disturbed swell crossed the shoals, and spray blew about. Sometimes when the boat sank in the trough they could not see the ship, but the fresh breeze tempered the heat and drove along a thin haze that softened the light. Kit caught strange, deep-bodied fish with square heads, and was content.

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One day, however, the breeze backed North and the boat could not leave the ship. It blew hard, and big, hollow-fronted seas rolled along the coast. In the distance, their ragged crests cut the sky, and the horizon was indented like the edge of a saw. In the foreground they crashed upon the shoals, and all about *Mossamedes* one saw spouting foam. Brown dust-clouds tossed behind the yellow streak that marked the coast, and the sky was darkened as if by smoke. Macallister was ready to start his engines, but the lead-line that crossed the steamer's rail ran straight down. Although she plunged, her anchor held.

Kit, sitting behind the deckhouse, smoked and mused. He saw that since he arrived at Las Palmas he had taken greedily all his new life offered; sports he could not enjoy before, the society of cultivated people, fresh excitements and emotional thrills. Now, however, a reaction had begun; he must pause and try to see where he was going.

To begin with, he thought he had not neglected his duties. It looked as if Don Ramon at the office approved him, and if they got the sheep on board, Wolf ought to be satisfied. *Mossamedes* carried a paying cargo, and Kit had kept the cost of shipment low. He was making good, and now he had been given some responsibility, found he could, without much effort, carry his load. In a sense, however, this was not important; he really meant to think about Olivia. Olivia had carried him away and after a half-hearted struggle he had let himself go. She had beauty, pluck, and a cultivation higher than his. Sometimes she was gracious, and when they jarred he thought she found the jars amusing. She laughed at him afterwards and he did not mind. He would sooner she laughed than let him alone. He could not think about her without a disturbing thrill.

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Yet the thing was ridiculous! Olivia was rich and extravagant, but he was poor; and not like Austin, who had married her sister. But suppose he somehow made his mark? If Don Arturo, for example, gave him a good post? Kit lighted a fresh cigarette and frowned, for he began to see his doubts would not be banished then. After all, he was not Olivia's sort. He understood half-consciously that for him her charm was mainly physical, and he had tried to resist. He had an inherited distrust for all that appealed to his senses. With Olivia he would get excitement, shocks and thrills. He would live at high tension, and she would take him far; but his vein was sober, and perhaps he would not want to go. Yet he was flesh and blood, and her beauty called.

The others left him alone, and when a cloud of spray, sweeping over the deck-house, drove him aft, he looked for another quiet spot. The sea was getting worse, and spindrift blew across the turmoil like a fog. *Mossamedes* rolled until her scuppers dipped, and when she swung to the savage gusts the jar of her cable pierced the rumble of the sea. The water in her bilges splashed, and a ragged plume of smoke, blown flat from her funnel, indicated that Macallister kept keen watch. For all that, the anchor held, and Kit, sheltering behind the after wheel-house, thought about Betty.

Betty was his sort. She understood him, although he did not always understand her. She did not ask much and would not urge one far; Betty's plan was to brighten the spot she occupied. Kit had doubted its wisdom, but he began to see it had some advantages. Yet if Betty did not urge, now he thought about it, he had felt her gently lead and had known her way was better than his. He did not see all she saw, but sometimes he was dull. Betty was calm and kind and did not think about herself. She had, however, refused him, and he had let her go. All the same, he was glad he could help her, and if his mother had used some tact---

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The swinging stern lifted, and the iron deck throbbed. The foam was torn in a frothy patch; Kit saw the screw spin, and the throbbing stopped. Macallister had turned his engines to satisfy himself they were ready to start. On the surface he was careless and irresponsible, but when the strain came one could trust old Mack.

On the whole, the break in his disturbing thoughts was a relief to Kit. His philosophy was rude, and he did not understand that he was moved by two antagonistic forces. One was altogether of the flesh; the other was not. He did, however, see that his business on board *Mossamedes* was with her cargo, and he began to speculate about the sheep. If the animals did not arrive soon, they ought not to stop. The anchorage was dangerous, and *Mossamedes* was the company's boat. He got up and went off to talk to Don Erminio.

In the night the wind veered to the north-east and got lighter, and soon after daybreak a streak of smoke blew along the beach. Juan, the mate, hove out a thirty-foot cargo launch, and Kit went down the rope with Miguel, the interpreter, and some sailors. A flock of sheep occupied the wady and five or six men, mounted on tall camels, moved the animals to the beach. The shepherds were big men, but their bodies and for the most part their dark faces, were covered by blue and white cloth. Kit's job, however, was to count the flock and see all were got on board. He let the interpreter talk and helped Miguel.

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They dropped an anchor and the boat rode in the shallow surf a few yards from the beach. When a large roller ran in they hauled her off and waited; and then, letting her drift back, jumped over

and picked up as many sheep as possible before another roller broke. The work was exhausting and sometimes men and sheep washed about in the surf. When they pulled off, the boat held much water and now and then the sea-tops splashed on board. Alongside *Mossamedes*, the sheep were thrown into a tub, swung out by a derrick when for a few moments she stopped rolling. The tub went up and came down empty, but after the most part of the flock was on board one plunged out through the gangway and the others followed. Don Erminio stormed, and Miguel with stolid patience steered the heavy launch in chase of the animals.

She went back and brought off a number of loads, but when the last was on board Kit's muscles were sore, and his burned skin smarted with salt. He had, however, got all the flock, and when he went below to bathe in fresh water the screw began to throb. Miguel climbed to the top of the pilot-house and *Mossamedes* steamed out slowly between the shoals.

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CHAPTER III KIT'S SURPRISE

Soon after his arrival at Las Palmas, Kit started for Jefferson's office. He had passed an hour with Wolf, who declared himself altogether satisfied about the voyage and gave Kit some compliments. Kit's mood was cheerful; his employer's frank praise was encouraging, and he felt he was making good. Besides, Wolf would not want him again until next day and, if he were lucky, he might find Olivia at home. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and as a rule Mrs. Austin's visitors did not arrive before the evening. On the voyage he had begun to see his haunting Mrs. Austin's veranda was rash, but as he got nearer Las Palmas his good resolutions melted.

Nevertheless he must first see Jefferson. When they steamed along the Morocco coast they met the *Cayman*. She hove to and signalled, the steamer's engines stopped, and a message was shouted through a megaphone. Since Kit was keen to get to Mrs. Austin's to carry the message was rather a bore, but he admitted that Jefferson ought to know what his captain wanted.

In Spanish towns a merchant's office generally occupies the ground floor of his house, and Kit liked Jefferson's. The narrow street was very hot, and the reflections from the white walls hurt his eyes. To enter the tunnel, guarded by a fine iron gate, and cross the shady *patio* was a relief. In the middle, a little fountain splashed, the walls were lemon-yellow and a splendid purple bougainvillea trailed about the pillars that carried a balcony. The dark spaces behind the posts looked like cloisters. In front big heliotrope bushes occupied green tubs.

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As he crossed the *patio* Kit met Jefferson going to the gate.

"Hallo!" said Jefferson. "Got back all right? Sorry I can't stop. I've fixed it to meet a customer at the Metropole."

Kit told him about their meeting the *Cayman* and pulled out a folded paper. "I made a note——"

"Thanks! I must order the truck the captain wants," said Jefferson, who did not take the paper. "The port doctor allowed you had loaded up the boat and brought a good flock of sheep. What did you trade for them?"

"We landed no goods; I imagined the sheep would be paid for afterwards. Looks as if Wolf had an agreement with somebody in the interior."

"It's not usual. Nobody trusts us like that," Jefferson remarked in a thoughtful voice. "You carried an interpreter. Did you talk to the Berbers?"

"Not at all," said Kit. "You see——"

He stopped. Jefferson was his friend, but after all he was to some extent his employer's antagonist. The other noted his pause.

"Oh, well, I reckon Wolf knows his job, but I'd watch out for those fellows. They're a pretty hard crowd. Anyhow, I must get along. Do you mind giving my English clerk the note?"

He smiled as if something amused him, and went off, and Kit crossed the flags. At the arch that opened on Jefferson's office, he stopped abruptly and wondered whether his imagination had cheated him.

A few yards off Betty sat in front of a writing-table. Her head was bent; Kit saw her face in profile against the coloured wall and noted the clean, flowing line. After a moment or two she looked up and Kit's heart beat. His advance was impetuous, and when she gave him her hand he pulled himself up with an effort. When he last saw Betty in the shabby street at Liverpool, he had kissed her. It was strange and disturbing, but he had come near to kissing her again. Betty, however, was very calm and her hand was cool and steady.

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"Why Kit! You looked startled!" she said.

"I'm very much surprised," he admitted. "You see, I thought you were at Liverpool."

"At Liverpool? Then you didn't think I'd gone for a holiday to the South Coast?"

Kit was embarrassed. It looked as if his mother had not used much tact, but Betty's smile was gentle.

"Sometimes you're rather nice, Kit, but all the same you ought to see I couldn't go."

"We won't talk about it," Kit replied. "When I came in you didn't look at all—surprised."

Betty gave him a calm glance, but he thought she had noted his hesitation. Surprised was not altogether what he had meant.

"I was not," she said. "I knew you were on board a ship that had just arrived. Then I heard you talking to Mr. Jefferson."

He pulled up a chair and studied her while she neatly folded some documents. Betty was thin, but if she had been ill, she was obviously getting better. A faint colour had come to her skin, and her eyes were bright. At Liverpool she had worn very plain, dark clothes, because they were economical; now her dress was white and she had pretty grey shoes. In fact, Betty was prettier than he had thought. Perhaps her escape from monotonous labour and the dark Liverpool office accounted for much, but she was not the tired girl he had known. [Pg 119]

Kit looked about the room. There was not much furniture, and all was made of Canary pine that polishes a soft brown. The wall was yellow, and blue curtains hung across the arch; Kit knew they were needed to keep out the morning sun. A rug was on the floor, and it was like the curtains, the dull blue one saw in Morocco. Betty had fastened a spray of heliotrope in her white dress.

"Do you like my room?" she asked.

"It's just right. The strange thing is, I hadn't noticed this before; I don't think—Jefferson bothered about his office. Anyhow the room was his."

"Now it's mine. Mrs. Jefferson gave me the rug. I think it came from Africa. She said you were a friend of hers. Isn't she nice?"

"She is a very good sort," Kit agreed. "I'm glad you have got an office like this; the dark stuffy hole at Liverpool wasn't fit for you. I haven't asked if you're getting better, because I can see. Somehow you are another girl."

Betty said nothing, but rather thought Kit another man. He looked stronger and his skin was brown. Then something about his voice and carriage indicated quiet confidence. At Liverpool when Kit was resolute he was, so to speak, aggressive, as if he wanted others to remark his firmness. Now his glance was calm, his nervous jerkiness had gone. All the same, she thought he had not got fresh qualities but developed those he had. Betty knew Kit.

"But where do you live?" he resumed. "In a Spanish town it's awkward——"

"I live with Mrs. Jefferson. Before I came we agreed on this. She's very nice and takes me about; sometimes for a drive to the mountains and sometimes in the sailing boat. When I remember my other post, I feel as if I'd got out of prison." [Pg 120]

Kit was satisfied. To know Betty was happy was much; she deserved the best. Then she gave him a thoughtful glance.

"It's strange you didn't know I was coming. Mr. Jefferson wrote to me a month since."

"Jefferson wrote?"

"Of course. He stated he wanted somebody to answer his English letters and undertake general office work, and he understood from you I might take the post."

"I certainly did not tell Jefferson anything like this," said Kit. "I gave Mrs. Austin my mother's letter, in which she said you were ill and must leave the office. But Mrs. Jefferson was with Mrs. Austin, and perhaps they talked about it afterwards."

"Then, giving me the post was *Mrs. Austin's* plan?" Betty remarked and Kit thought her voice was rather hard.

"I expect it was," he agreed. "Mrs. Austin does things like that. I imagine she persuaded Wolf to send me on board *Mossamedes*."

Betty studied him. She did not think he saw the light he had given her. Sometimes Kit was dull.

"Don't you like Mrs. Austin?" he asked.

"I like Mrs. Jefferson better," Betty replied. She stopped and noting that Kit was puzzled, resumed: "She is kind. So is Mr. Jefferson. When he comes into his office he throws away his cigar. He asks me—Won't I write a note for him and count up the bills. He doesn't think because I'm paid it doesn't matter how he talks. But why did you give Mrs. Austin your mother's letter?"

"Now I think about it, I don't altogether know. She's sympathetic and I was bothered because you were ill. I imagine she saw I was bothered." [Pg 121]

"Were you bothered very much?"

"Of course," said Kit. "You were breaking down, and must stop at Liverpool in the rain and cold; I had the sea and sun. Sometimes I was savage because I couldn't help."

"Then you didn't think Mrs. Austin might persuade her husband to give me a post at Las Palmas?"

"I did not. I gave her the letter, that's all. Mrs. Austin likes helping people, and Austin and Jefferson wanted an English clerk. I expect this accounts for their engaging you."

Betty doubted. For one thing, she had met Olivia and two or three young men from the coaling wharfs, who had tried to amuse her by humorous gossip about the English people at Las Palmas. Then Mrs. Austin had sent Kit on board Wolf's steamer, which made longer voyages than the *correillo*, and had persuaded Jefferson to engage her for his clerk. Betty thought Mrs. Austin's object was plain, but wondered much what Kit had said to her. Since she could not find out, she began to talk about Liverpool, and Kit presently narrated his adventures on the African coast.

Nobody disturbed them and the shady room was cool. The smell of heliotrope floated in; one heard the fountain splash and the languid rumble of the surf. Betty leaned back in her revolving chair and Kit lighted a cigarette.

Jefferson was occupied for some time at the Metropole, but when he crossed the *patio* he slackened speed in front of the arch. He was a sober merchant, but it was not very long since he was a romantic sailor, and the picture that met his glance had some charm. His pretty clerk rested her cheek in her hollowed hand; her pose was unconsciously graceful, and she studied Kit with thoughtful eyes. Kit talked and his face wore a strangely satisfied smile; Jefferson imagined he did not know his cigarette had gone out. His thin figure was athletic, he looked keen and virile. Jefferson approved them both. They had not his wife's and Austin's cultivation, but they were honest, red-blooded people. In fact, they were good stuff.

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For all that he was puzzled; he had not thought Musgrave a philanderer. Besides his office was not a drawing-room and he advanced rather noisily. Kit pulled out his watch and got up with a start, but Betty did not plunge into her proper occupation. Betty was generally marked by an attractive calm; then she knew her employer.

"I expect you gave Miss Jordan the note about the stores for *Cayman*?" Jefferson said to Kit.

Kit took out the paper. "Sorry, but I did not. I must get on board. Perhaps I ought to have gone before."

"You can go now. Come back for supper, if you like," Jefferson replied with a twinkle and put down some documents. "If you can give me a few minutes, Miss Jordan——"

When Betty got to work at her typewriter he went to Mrs. Jefferson's drawing-room.

"I have asked young Musgrave to supper and reckon he'll come," he said.

"Don't you know if he is coming?" Mrs. Jefferson rejoined.

"He didn't state his plans. I imagine he was rattled when I fired him out. It had probably dawned on him he'd been loafing about my office most part of the afternoon."

"You knew he was a friend of Miss Jordan's," Mrs. Jefferson remarked.

"I knew Jacinta Austin was pretty smart, but it begins to look as if she was smarter than I thought."

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Mrs. Jefferson smiled. "Oh, well, you have got a good clerk and Kit has got a post he likes."

"But what about Olivia?"

"I don't think you need be disturbed about Olivia," said Mrs. Jefferson, dryly. "Anyhow, you mustn't meddle. Your touch is not light."

"That is so," Jefferson agreed. "Jacinta's touch is surely light; she can pull three or four wires at once, without your knowing how she's occupied. For all that, I've a notion she'll some time snarl the wires in a nasty tangle. Can't you give her a hint she's got to leave my clerk and Kit alone?"

"I doubt. The thing is puzzling. You see, Betty refused Kit," Mrs. Jefferson remarked in a thoughtful voice. "However, I think two of the leading actors in the comedy know what they want. The others do not."

"It rather looks as if three didn't know."

"I think my calculation's accurate. However, I see no useful part for us. Ours is to look on and smile when the play's amusing."

"If Jacinta hurts Miss Jordan, I won't smile," Jefferson rejoined. "I'm fond of the girl, because in a way she's like you."

"Sometimes you're very nice," said Mrs. Jefferson, and went off to talk to the Spanish cook in the kitchen that had, when Jefferson got the house, adjoined the stable.

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CHAPTER IV

WOLF GIVES A FEAST

Kit returned for *comida*, which in Spanish countries is the second proper meal. At Jefferson's it was served about five o'clock, and when Kit arrived Mrs. Jefferson indicated a chair opposite Betty's at the table in a big cool room.

"Now we can begin," she said and Jefferson clapped his hands for the major-domo. In old Spanish houses there are no bells, and one uses customs the Moors brought long since from the East.

"If I'm late, I'm sorry," Kit replied. "I had to call at the *Commandancia* and they kept me longer than I thought."

"I expect the *ayutante* was getting his *comida*," Jefferson remarked. "Anyhow, you didn't hold up our meal. Miss Jordan hadn't finished some letters I wanted sent off by the Castle boat."

"That's some relief," Kit said to Mrs. Jefferson. "Although I hurried, I was afraid——"

"To wait for one's dinner is not much relief," Jefferson rejoined. "Then, since you know the Spanish rules, my notion is you ought to have got on a hustle earlier."

Mrs. Jefferson gave him a quiet glance and he began to move some plates. Betty did not look up, but Kit thought she was not at all embarrassed.

"I forgot about the *ayutante's comida*. In fact——" he said, and stopped. It was strange, but he had forgotten he had meant to go to Mrs. Austin's.

"Give me the hot plates," said Mrs. Jefferson, and when Jefferson did so one slipped and rattled. [Pg 125]

"Perhaps it's lucky my touch is not light," he remarked. "If it had been lighter, I'd have broken some crockery."

Kit imagined there was a joke, but since the joke was not obvious he studied Betty. She now wore a thin black dress, made in the Spanish fashion with black lace at the short sleeves and neck. Her skin was very white and smooth and Kit thought she looked as if she had always worn a dinner dress.

The room was spacious. Mrs. Jefferson's china and silver were good. A bowl of splendid roses occupied the middle of the table, and although they had no smell, the little *tierra* roses, half hidden by the others, were seductively sweet. Decanters of red and yellow wine shone among coloured fruit, and in front of Betty a cluster of white Muscatel grapes glimmered against dark vine leaves.

One got a hint of taste and cultivation, and Kit remembered that for a time after his arrival he had felt raw and awkward at houses like his host's. At Liverpool Betty had worn rather shabby clothes, and often when he met her going home from the office her boots were wet and muddy. Now she looked as if she belonged to Mrs. Jefferson's circle. Kit did not know if this was strange or not; he began to think he had not really known Betty.

All the same, he was conscious of keen satisfaction. Betty had fronted poverty and smiled, but her smile was no longer forced. She had escaped, like Cinderella, from dreary servitude, and Kit was very glad, although he doubted if his analogy were good. Cinderella was splendidly conspicuous when she went to the ball, but Betty was not. Her charm was her gracious quietness; she did not stand out from her background, she harmonised with it. Kit thought her like the Muscatels that glimmered with pearly tints among the leaves. [Pg 126]

"I guess you are thinking about Wolf's cargo," Jefferson remarked.

"Not at all," said Kit. "I was thinking about Liverpool. And Muscatel grapes."

He imagined Betty's glance rested on him for a moment and was gone, but Jefferson looked amused.

"Don't you get things mixed? When we towed out on board the old *Orinoco* in the sooty fog, Liverpool wasn't much like a vineyard. However, I allow the Muscatel's a pretty good fruit. Doesn't catch your eye like the red grapes, but when you put the *colorado* in the press the wine has a bite and some is mighty sour. The white wine's sweet and fragrant. All the same, you don't get the proper bouquet until the grapes are in the press. What d'you think about my philosophy, Miss Jordan?"

"Sometimes the press hurts," Betty remarked quietly.

"It hurts all the time," said Jefferson and his thin face got grave. "You know this when you have felt the screws. Well, I guess it's done with, but when I hear them sing their Latin psalm *In exitu*, I understand. Some of us have been in Egypt——"

"Now you are mixing things! You were not in Egypt," Mrs. Jefferson rejoined, and Kit thought she meant to banish her husband's sombre mood.

"Anyhow, Egypt's in Africa and considerably cooler than the swamp where the *Cumbria* lay. Then

I reckon Harry Austin and I made some bricks without much straw."

"Jacinta helped. She has helped a number of people."

"Mrs. Austin has helped me," Kit agreed and looked at Betty. It was strange, but he imagined she did not own her debt to Mrs. Austin. [Pg 127]

Soon afterwards it got dark and they went to the flat roof. There was no moon, but the stars were bright and the sky was clear. The soft land-breeze had begun to blow and stirred the mist that rolled down the dark rocks behind the town. Lights twinkled along the sweep of bay and two that swung across a lower group marked *Mossamedes* rolling at the harbour mouth. Footsteps and broken talk echoed along the narrow street; one heard guitars and somebody began to sing the *Africana*.

Kit was strangely content. Betty was getting strong again, and he thought her happy; he, himself, had a post he liked, and all went well. His ambitions were not important; he was not moved, as he was moved at Mrs. Austin's, to efforts that would force people to own his talents. In fact, he recovered something of the tranquillity that had marked the afternoons when Betty and he gathered primroses in the woods.

Jefferson talked about the strain and suffering on board the sailing ships. He pictured a battered wooden vessel, stripped to her topsails and staysails and kept afloat by the windmill pump, beating round Cape Horn while her exhausted crew got mutinous, and food got short. The story harmonised with the languid rumble of the surf, for Jefferson's voice was quiet, as if he talked about things that were done with. Man had come out of bondage and steam was his deliverer.

Kit did not want to talk; he was satisfied to be near Betty and Mrs. Jefferson. It was plain that they were friends, and he thought them alike. Neither urged her rules on one, but one felt the rules were good. One could do nothing shabby when one had been with them.

In the morning, Kit went to Wolf's office with some documents. Perhaps it was the contrast between his employer and his recent hosts, but somehow Wolf jarred. Kit began to feel vague doubts about the fellow. Nevertheless, he admitted that Wolf's approval was flattering, and they planned a dinner to be given on board *Mossamedes*. [Pg 128]

The dinner was not like the captain's feast. It was served with much ceremony, and the guests were important people, for the most part Spanish merchants and government officers. All the chairs at the long tables in the saloon were occupied, and Don Erminio, sitting at the end of one, did not look comfortable. The captain liked old English clothes, but now wore his tight, blue *correo* uniform. Moreover, since Don Ramon, the company's manager, was not far off, and his neighbors were *Commandancia* officials, he could not talk about animals and anarchists.

Kit's chair was next to Jefferson's and opposite Austin's, and he was satisfied to look on. He was rather interested by the captain of a French gunboat that had recently anchored behind the mole. Captain Revillon did not talk, but he looked about thoughtfully, and Kit imagined he knew Castilian.

The giver of the loyal toast was a high official, who said the Spanish crown stood for justice and steady progress. One lost much by rash experiments, and to modify cautiously old traditions was a better plan. A country's prosperity was built upon the efforts of all its citizens, and men must know the reward of their labour was theirs. Just laws were needed and the loyal *Canarios* knew the Spanish laws were good. But this was not all. Effort must be made for cultivation and commerce. Although the islanders were industrious, much of the soil was barren and sometimes food was short. Spain owned a belt of Africa with fertile oases where corn was grown and flocks were fed. The country was richer than people thought; it must be developed and extended until it made up for the territories Spain had lost. This was why he wished the new venture, launched under the Spanish flag, good luck. [Pg 129]

There was a shout and a rattle of glasses, but Kit thought the little French captain pondered.

"Since France claims the back country, I expect Revillon wonders how they're going to extend the Rio de Oro," Jefferson remarked.

Don Ramon, urbane and smiling, got up. The islanders must live by trade, he said. They were a virile race of sailors and small farmers, but since modern ships and machines cost much, they could not refuse foreign help. With English help they had made much progress and might go farther. They had built up Cuba and now Cuba was gone they must build up their African colony. The *Mossamedes*, flying the Spanish flag, was opening a new, rich field. Don Ramon was proud he had some part in sending her out.

"He has struck the same note," Austin observed. "In a way it's the note one would strike, but somehow I imagine Wolf has used the tuning fork. When you make a speech to order, you rather like a hint about the line you ought to take. However, the fellow is going to talk."

Kit afterwards thought Wolf's speech clever. To begin with, he indicated the richness of the Rio de Oro belt and its hinterland. His venture was small, but when he had opened the way, Spanish effort would make the African oases another Cuba. He paused and turned to the high official, who smiled as if he agreed. Then Wolf hinted at a community of interest and talked as if his gains would be his guests'. Kit felt that a stranger might imagine the merchants were shareholders and the others had given the undertaking official patronage.

"Looks as if we were all in it," Jefferson commented. "On the whole, I'm satisfied our house is not. I'd rather like to know what Revillon thinks." [Pg 130]

"Revillon's thoughts are not very obvious. Since he has stopped at Las Palmas before, I expect he knows our friends are patriotic sentimentalists," Austin replied.

Soon afterwards Kit went on deck. Wolf did not want him and the saloon was hot. Leaning against the rails, he looked across the harbour, and his glance rested on the French gunboat. She was a small, two-masted vessel, of a type that was getting out of date but was used by French and British for police duty on the African coast. Sometimes she touched at Las Palmas for coal, and Kit understood she cruised from Morocco to Senegal. She was not fast, and he thought her rather deep for use in shallow water. When he was on board the *correillo* he had seen her hauled up on the beach after grounding. Hearing a step he turned and saw Wolf.

"I came up for a few minutes to get away from Revillon; the fellow's rather curious about your voyage," said Wolf. "Besides, I want to talk to you. Let's go into the captain's room."

The captain's room was on the boat-deck below the bridge. One reached it by a ladder, and nobody was about. Wolf turned on the electric light and gave Kit a cigarette.

"I haven't told you much about your cargo for this run, but I had some grounds for not doing so."

"The cargo's ready to put on board," said Kit.

"Not all," Wolf replied meaningly. "Yusuf, my agent in Morocco, will supply or tell you where to get the rest. You will carry out his orders, unless, of course, you resolve to turn down the job."

"Then, we are to carry goods the Spaniards would not allow us to land?"

Wolf smiled. "Now you, perhaps, see why I gave the feast. My guests, so to speak, have given my venture the government's sanction. In Spain it pays to have official friends, and a tactful present carries weight. The officers are not as fastidious as yours——" [Pg 131]

He stopped and Kit wondered whether he had said *yours* unconsciously. Kit had thought Wolf claimed to be English, but there was a hint of a sneer in his voice.

"What are we to carry?" he asked.

"Cartridges! If you don't like the job, I think I can get another man."

Kit imagined all traffic with native Africans in breach-loading guns and ammunition was forbidden. Moreover, it was obvious the Spanish government would not approve Wolf's supplying the Berber tribes with cartridges. This, however, was the government's business, and Kit was young. Romantic smuggling had some charm; but he hesitated.

"Why do the Berbers want the cartridges?" he asked.

Wolf shrugged. "I don't know their plans. They're a turbulent, independent lot, and sometimes quarrel with their neighbours who are supposed to belong to France. I expect they have a dispute with another tribe in the back country about an oasis, or perhaps the control of a caravan road. Anyhow, I'm sending a small quantity of ammunition, because I want to keep a good customer. Well, I won't persuade you. Are you going?"

"I'll risk it," said Kit, rather doubtfully. "Does the captain know?"

"Of course," said Wolf, smiling. "Don Erminio's not scrupulous and sees a chance of earning something besides his pay. All the same, he understands that while he is navigator you are my representative. But I mustn't leave the others long." [Pg 132]

He went off and Kit smoked a fresh cigarette. The adventure had some charm, but he was not altogether satisfied. He had, however, agreed to go, and presently he banished his doubts.

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CHAPTER V WOLF'S OFFER

Jefferson sat in the shade of the bougainvillea and pondered some letters. Austin lounged in a basket-chair opposite and read the *Diario*. They had combined their business as far as possible, but Pancho Brown would not agree to a formal amalgamation. All was quiet. One heard the fountain splash and Betty's typewriter rattle. Sometimes a voice came from the room where Jefferson's Spanish clerks were occupied, but this was all.

Presently Austin put down the newspaper.

"The tomato crop was light and the vines are doing badly. It's ominous that the Palma import houses are cutting down their orders."

"Martinez allowed he wanted to get out of the deal in chemical fertilisers. Trade is looking sick," Jefferson agreed.

"When I joined Pancho Brown I used to study the accounts and congratulate myself when I saw our credits going up," Austin remarked with a smile. "To feel I could write a cheque for a good sum was something very new. Now I'm bothered because we have money at the bank. I don't see how it's going to be usefully employed."

"You want to keep money moving. Well, I met Wolf a day or two since, and he hinted he knew about a deal. I wasn't keen, but he said he might come around and see us. I rather expect him."

"You don't trust the fellow?"

"Sure thing! Reckon it's instinctive. I like straightforward folks. Wolf's a mystery man."

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Austin looked up and laughed. "He's coming."

Wolf crossed the flags, and when he stopped by the bougainvillea his face was red. He was fat and his thin, black alpaca jacket looked very tight.

"Sun's fierce. Will you take a drink?" said Jefferson, and clapping his hands for a servant, ordered *Cerveza*.

As a rule, in hot countries, cautious white men do not drink much beer, but Wolf drained his glass of pale yellow liquor with obvious satisfaction.

"The Glasgow stuff is good," he said. "In fact, for British lager, it's very nearly right."

"Where d'you reckon to get it exactly right? Chicago or Munich?" Jefferson inquired.

Wolf laughed. "It's good at both cities. At Munich there's a *garten*. But I'm not going to bore you by talking about lager."

Betty's typewriter stopped. The light in the *patio* was strong and to sit in her dark office and study the group outside was like watching a play on an illuminated stage. The curtains at the arch narrowed her view, and the figures of the actors, sharply distinct, occupied the opening. Betty's sense of the dramatic was keen, and she had remarked that Wolf sat down where a beam shone over his shoulder. Then when Jefferson talked about Chicago and Munich she thought he tried to study Wolf's face, but could not. Wolf had hesitated for a moment before he admitted that he knew the cities. Betty rested her face in her hand and resolved to watch. For one thing, Wolf was Kit's employer.

"Trade is slack," Wolf resumed. "The Spanish merchants see they can't ship much produce and are cutting their orders. I don't know if you feel the slump, but my African speculation promises well. The trouble is, I can't finance it properly, and if you would like to come in——"

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"Pancho Brown is old-fashioned and not keen about new undertakings," Austin replied cautiously. "Do you expect to get larger lots of sheep?"

"It's possible, but I thought about buying camels. I reckon I can get them for a low price, paid in trade goods, and I expect you know what they are worth just now."

Austin pondered. The single-humped camel is used in the Canaries, particularly in the dry Eastern islands, and the animals cost much. All the same, Austin knew his partner doubted.

"Where do your customers get the camels?" Jefferson asked.

"I frankly don't know. The Berbers are not the people to give you their confidence. It's possible they steal the camels. Anyhow, they state they can get them."

"Well, if you are short of money, we might perhaps supply the goods you want and take the camels at a price agreed."

"I can get credit for the trade-goods and sell the camels to Spanish buyers as soon as they arrive. In fact, I see no particular advantage in your plan."

"Then, what is your proposition?"

"Something like this: I want you to join me in the speculation and take your share of the profit and the risk. There is some risk. The business is going to be bigger than I thought, and my capital is not large. I want partners who will help me seize all the chances that come along and will back me if I get up against an obstacle."

Austin lighted a cigarette and Betty imagined he weighed the plan, but Jefferson did not. Wolf drank some beer and when he put down his glass Betty thought the glance he gave the others was keen. He looked cunning, and she thought if she were Austin she would let his offer go. After a few moments Jefferson looked up.

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"Harry and I will talk about it and send you a note. Will you take another drink?"

Wolf drained his glass and went off. When he had gone Jefferson turned to Austin and smiled.

"I reckon nothing's doing!"

"Then why did you promise to talk about it?"

"I am talking about it," Jefferson rejoined. "I didn't want Wolf to imagine I'd resolved to turn down his proposition."

"After all, I don't think he meant to cheat us."

"Not in a sense. He knows you're not a fool and Don Pancho's very keen."

"Then what does he want?" Austin asked.

"I don't know; I'm curious. Anyhow, he doesn't want me, although if you and Don Pancho joined, he reckoned I'd come in. I'm not a British merchant; I'm an American."

"But what has this to do with it?"

"I allow I don't altogether see. Anyhow, Wolf's a German." Austin looked puzzled and Jefferson smiled. "You don't get me yet? The fellow has cultivated out his accent and claims he's English. That's important, because he got his English in the United States and doesn't claim he's American. When I talked about Chicago and Munich I made an experiment."

"He admitted he knew the cities."

"That is so. He saw I was on his track and he mustn't bluff. If I'd met Wolf in the United States, I mightn't have been prejudiced, but I met him at Grand Canary, starting a trade with Spanish Africa. I reckon the Spaniards are sore about Morocco. At the grab-game, France and Britain scooped the pool; Germany and Spain got stung. Anyhow, I've no use for taking a part in world politics, and when Musgrave has gone a voyage or two in *Mossamedes* I'll try to get him off the ship."

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"I wonder whether you know Jacinta sent him on board?"

Jefferson smiled. "Does Jacinta trust Wolf? Talk to her about the deal, and if she approves I'll come in."

"Very well," said Austin, and they started for the town.

When Jefferson returned to his office a clerk brought in a note. "From Don Enrique, sir."

Jefferson opened the envelope and laughed, for the note ran: "Nothing doing in camels. Jacinta does not approve."

"Sometimes a woman's judgment is sound, Miss Jordan," he remarked. "Mrs. Austin doesn't know all I know, but she gets where I get, and I think she got there first."

"It is strange," Betty said quietly.

"One doesn't know when you're amused and when you're not," Jefferson rejoined. "However, I want you to send Wolf a note."

"*Dear Mr. Wolf?*" Betty suggested.

"I reckon *dear sir* will meet the bill," said Jefferson dryly. "Then let's see, 'In reference to our conversation this morning, after careful consideration, we regret we cannot see our way to entertain your proposition.' Pretty good office English?"

"There are three *tions*," Betty observed.

"Proposition's all right," said Jefferson thoughtfully. "Fix the others as you like. You know the sort of thing."

He went up the outside stair and found Mrs. Jefferson on the balcony.

"If Musgrave's not a philanderer, he's mighty dull," he said. "I'd like you to have seen Miss Jordan just now. A model clerk, very cool and business-like, manner exactly right. All the same, before I got started she saw where I was going and I guess she smiled."

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"It's very possible," Mrs. Jefferson agreed. "Well, perhaps it's lucky I'm not jealous!"

"You're not jealous, but if I've got an eye for fine and pretty things, you're accountable. Once on a time I reckoned a big sailing ship, close-hauled on the wind with all she'd carry set, was beautiful; I hadn't seen you talking to our guests across the fruit and flowers. Now I'm thankful for all beauty; things men made like sailing ships, and pretty girls. Betty in white by the bougainvillea, Olivia on the veranda in her black and gold. This old world is charming since you opened my eyes."

"For a business man, you're sometimes extravagant," Mrs. Jefferson replied. "All the same, you are a dear."

Jefferson turned and looked over the balcony. A young man who wore spotless white flannel and a red silk belt crossed the flags. He stopped abruptly when Jefferson shouted: "Hello!"

"We thought if you were going to haul up *Cayman* for scraping, you'd like to know our tug is off the slip," the other remarked.

"Thanks!" said Jefferson dryly. "You needn't bother Miss Jordan about it. *Cayman's* gone to

Palma."

The young man recrossed the flags and Jefferson laughed. "His last brain wave was to see if *Cayman* would take coal across for ballast and he could keep us some hefty lumps. Yesterday two banana men blew in with a fool proposition about my sending fruit to Africa, and before they were through, Walters from the cold store arrived. Looks as if I'd got to put up barbed wire."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Jefferson, "I don't suppose a sailing ship is their standard of beauty. Besides, the big sailing ships are gone." [Pg 139]

Betty, studying some figures in the office, heard Jefferson stop the coaling clerk and smiled. Young men from the coal wharfs and fruit stores arrived rather often when they thought her employer was not about, and if she was not occupied she sometimes let them talk. For the most part they were a careless, good-humoured lot and she liked their cheerfulness, but this was all. When she refused Kit at Liverpool she was resolved he must get his chance; now it looked as if she had got hers she was not moved.

She contrasted him with the others. They frankly amused her, and sometimes Kit was dull. Yet she sensed in his soberness something fine that did not mark the rest. They joked and did not bother; Kit bothered much. Betty liked his tight-mouthed, thoughtful look. His habit was to weigh things, but when he was satisfied he went stubbornly ahead. Betty wondered whether he was satisfied about Olivia. Then, with something of an effort, she resumed her calculations.

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CHAPTER VI

BETTY CARRIES A MESSAGE

The morning was hot and Betty had pulled the curtains across the arch. She typed an English letter and thought about Kit. Although she knew he had gone to Mrs. Austin's, it was some days since she had seen him and his steamer would soon sail. Betty had expected him to say good-bye to her and was hurt because he had not. Presently she heard Jefferson's step in the *patio*. He stopped and somebody crossed the flags.

"Come inside, the sun is pretty fierce," he said, and Olivia went through the arch.

"I think you know Miss Jordan," Jefferson resumed.

Betty stopped her typewriter. She was in the shadow and studied Olivia, who stood where the strong light shone into the room. Betty thought her clothes were made in London or Paris; they were in the latest exaggerated fashion, but she admitted that Miss Brown's beauty justified her wearing clothes like that. Betty, herself, wore plain white, and a cheap, Spanish sewing woman had helped her to make the dress.

"It looks as if you had got up before Harry, although you kept him for some time last night," Olivia said to Jefferson, and took out a small packet. "He had not begun his breakfast when the mail arrived with some samples you want for Morocco. Harry thought Mr. Musgrave might leave them for your agent at Saffi, but our man was not about and I was going to the shops."

Jefferson pulled out his watch. "Thanks, I'll send the thing on board. I'm going up town. Will you come along?" [Pg 141]

"I'll stop in your cool office for a few minutes," Olivia replied, and Jefferson turned to Betty.

"Felix will be around soon. Send him off with the packet. I expect Musgrave will be at the *Commandancia*. You have about half an hour."

He went off and Olivia lighted a cigarette. She threw the match on the floor, and although people smoke in Spanish offices Betty was annoyed. She wondered whether Miss Brown's carelessness was studied, but after a few moments Olivia gave her a thoughtful look.

"I understand Kit Musgrave is an old friend of yours."

"He is my friend," said Betty.

"Then I expect you know he's satisfied with his post. All the same, he ought to give it up."

Betty said nothing. She thought she saw why Miss Brown had brought the packet, but did not see where she led. Besides, she was conscious of a subtle antagonism. The girl was not the type whose friendship was good for Kit. In the meantime, Olivia occupied herself with her cigarette. She had meant to make an experiment and satisfy her curiosity, for Kit had not come to the veranda much since his return and she had missed him when he was away.

"He ought to go back to the *correillo*," she resumed. "However, I expect you know he's obstinate."

"Sometimes he's firm," said Betty, quietly, although quietness was hard.

She did know Kit was obstinate, but to allow Miss Brown to talk about it was another thing. Besides, she was bothered about the other's object for stating Kit ought to go back.

"Oh, well, it's really not important," Olivia replied as if she were bored. "I thought perhaps you might persuade Kit to rejoin the *Campeador*." She paused and smiled carelessly. "I can't, I admit I tried." [Pg 142]

"Why do you want Mr. Musgrave to leave his ship? I understand your sister got him the post."

Olivia was embarrassed, although her embarrassment was not obvious. She had begun by wanting to baffle Mrs. Austin, whose object for sending Kit on board *Mossamedes* was plain. This, however, was some time since, and now she did not know what she did want. She would not acknowledge Kit her lover, but she liked to know he was about. All the same, her efforts to separate him from Wolf were to some extent unselfish.

"I don't want Kit to leave the *Mossamedes*; I think it better for him to do so," she rejoined. "It's possible my sister did get him the post. Jacinta does things like that, but sometimes her plans do not work as she hoped."

"Then, when Mrs. Austin sent Kit to Africa she had a plan?"

Olivia looked up sharply and threw her cigarette on the floor. She had not found out much and did not mean to argue with Jefferson's clerk.

"We don't get forward, and I can't stop," she said. "I'll tell you all I know. I think my sister doubts Wolf; Jefferson frankly distrusts him. He was talking to Harry on the veranda and I was in the room behind. It was plain they were puzzled about Wolf. Jefferson said the fellow was playing a crooked game, and Kit ought to quit. Anyhow, he ought to know his boss's African scheme was a cover for something else, and he was going to use the French captain. Wolf meant to give Revillon a part in the plot."

Olivia got up. "That's all, but I rather agree with Jefferson."

"If you think Mr. Musgrave ought to be warned, why didn't you warn him?" [Pg 143]

"For one thing, I imagined you were his friend," Olivia rejoined with a careless smile. "To write a note is sometimes awkward, the steamer sails very soon, and it's obvious I can't go on board and ask for the *sobrecargo*. Well, you are Jefferson's clerk and have the packet of samples. You can go—if you like!"

The curtain swung back, and for a minute or two Betty pondered. Her curiosity was excited, and she wondered much how far Olivia's interest in Kit went; that it went some distance was plain. Betty felt a keen antagonism for the fashionable and rather scornful girl. Yet to some extent the other's object was good; Betty thought Kit ought to be warned about his employer. All the same, Miss Brown's statement that Betty could warn him was hardly accurate. Spanish conventions were strict and Betty knew the gossip that marked the English circle. If she went on board the steamer, people would talk and Mrs. Jefferson would be annoyed. But Felix, Jefferson's boatman, did not arrive, and Betty looked at her watch. Something must be risked and perhaps she might meet Kit outside the *Commandancia* office. Picking up the packet, she got her hat.

A *tartana* waited for passengers at the end of the street, and she got down at the Catalina mole. *Mossamedes'* windlass rattled, and her cable was coming in, but a boat with the African house-flag painted on the bow lay against the wall, and Betty knew Kit had not gone on board. For all that, she did not see him, and the steamer's anchor would soon be up. If he did not come in a minute or two, she would have no time for talk. Then he ran out of the office, pushing some papers into his pocket, and stopped.

"Hallo!" he said. "You are kind to see me off."

"I didn't come to see you off. At least, that wasn't all," Betty replied. [Pg 144]

"Oh, well," Kit said, laughing, "you're generally frank. I'd rather have liked to think you did want to see me off. Anyhow, I'm glad you have arrived."

Betty gave him the packet and he noted the address.

"All right, I'll land it at Saffi. I wish you had come sooner. They've broken the anchor out."

She went across the mole with him and stopped at the top of the steps. He looked keen, alert and handsome. His white clothes were well made, his thin figure was athletic, and Betty liked his smile. She felt rewarded; Kit was glad she had come. The trouble was, she could not send him off like that.

"There's another thing," she said. "Jefferson thinks you ought not to stop on board *Mossamedes*. He declares Wolf is not to be trusted."

"Ah!" said Kit, rather sharply. "But how do you know?"

Betty braced herself. She must be honest, although it was plain honesty might cost her something.

"Miss Brown came to the office half an hour since and brought the packet. She heard Jefferson talk to Austin about Wolf, and thought you ought to be warned."

"She came to the office!" Kit exclaimed, and Betty saw his satisfaction. "Well, she's very kind. But she sent a message?"

"Wolf is plotting something in Africa. His business isn't what it looks. Captain Revillon has some part in it."

Kit laughed. "Miss Brown meant well, you mean well, but you don't understand. Wolf is cheating the French captain. He'd an object for asking him to the feast. In fact, I see his plan."

"I don't think Miss Brown was cheated," Betty urged.

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Mossamedes' whistle shrieked, foam splashed about her stern and she began to forge ahead. Kit shouted to the men in the boat and Betty gave him her hand.

"Don't bother about the thing," he said. "Perhaps Wolf is rather tricky, but I know him and I won't get hurt. Anyhow, Miss Brown was kind to let me know, and you're a good sort to carry the message."

"Still, you'll use some caution, Kit," said Betty, but he waved his hand and ran down the steps.

Mossamedes circled slowly and forged by the end of the mole, her white deck-houses shining in the sun. Kit's boat vanished round her stern, smoke rolled from her funnel, and with a white wave breaking at her bows she steamed out of the harbour. For a time Betty watched the ship and her thoughts were moody.

She had refused Kit at Liverpool because both were poor. Tired, as she was, of badly-rewarded labour, she might have been satisfied to occupy her self with frugal housekeeping, had she not seen that for Kit to marry meant bondage for him. A married clerk with Kit's pay durst run no risks, he must stick to his job, indulge his employers and wait for them to offer him better wages. She might have promised to marry Kit and let him go to try his luck; but she knew girls whose lovers had gone away. One had come back another man, and Betty imagined he saw the girl he dutifully married was not the girl he had thought. The others had not come back at all.

It was not that Betty doubted Kit. He was staunch and did all he engaged to do, but he was young. Betty imagined his was a boy's romance and she did not want him to return for her because he thought he ought. Besides, he had some talent and might make his mark abroad. If he did so, she was not going to embarrass him. In fact, she, so to speak, resolved that Kit must have his chance.

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Now he was obviously attracted by Miss Brown, and Betty knew Olivia was not the girl for him. Moreover, she was persuaded Olivia saw his drawbacks. Kit was poor, his infatuation was ridiculous, and to find it out would hurt, but Kit would find out. Betty frowned because she could not help.

By and by she noted that *Mossamedes'* masts and funnel were getting indistinct. The ship's hull had melted to a dark streak, seen for a moment when she plunged across a roller's crest, and Betty got up. She had stopped longer than she ought and must hurry back to the office. As she went along the mole she remembered that she had been willing to risk something in order to warn Kit, and he had laughed. Sometimes one's fine resolutions were rewarded like that. Perhaps the thing was amusing, but her smile was dreary.

At the office she found Jefferson reading a newspaper.

"I see you haven't begun the English letters," he remarked. "Did Olivia stop long?"

Betty said the boatman had not arrived, and she had taken the packet to the mole.

"Well, I wanted the thing to go across. I reckon you gave it to Musgrave?"

"I did so," said Betty and noted Jefferson's twinkle. All the same, she thought his taking out his watch was unconscious.

"Perhaps you had better go ahead with the letters," he said.

Betty started her typewriter, but her thoughts were not fixed on what she wrote. She pondered about Wolf and was vaguely disturbed. Kit had laughed at Olivia's warning, but sometimes Kit was confident and rash. After all, it was possible Miss Brown was justified. Then Betty glanced at a letter she took from the machine and tore the sheet across. Jefferson was not fastidious, but he liked his customers to know what he meant. She could think about Wolf and Kit again, and in the meantime must concentrate on her proper duty. Olivia Brown could indulge her romantic imagination when she liked, but Betty was a merchant's clerk.

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CHAPTER VII

SHIPPING CAMELS

Mossamedes dropped anchor as near as was safe to the flat-roofed Moorish town. The roadstead was open and the harbour was only deep enough for boats, but so long as the wind did not back to the North one could ship cargo, and the agent sent off a quantity of maize and beans. In the Canaries corn is scarce, and the *peons* roast and grind such grain as they can get for their coarse *gofio* meal. Kit was rather disturbed about the cartridges, although Wolf's Jewish agent had so far refused to state when they would go on board. Kit was the steamship company's servant, the ship was British, and he thought he ought to have warned the manager how she might be used. The trouble was, he was Wolf's servant, too. Besides, it was possible Don Ramon was informed.

When the grain was on board Kit went one evening to the agent's house. Yusuf was old and yellow-skinned. His beard was thin and his long hair greasy with scented oil, but he had a touch of dignity. Kit went through a little dark shop to his office and sat on a low, flat-topped couch. An iron chest stood against the opposite wall, and an open lamp hung by chains from the roof. A door with a horseshoe arch and a leather curtain led to the house; the door to the shop was strong and iron-bound. One very narrow window pierced the wall. The Jews have long traded in Morocco, but they know the risk, and Kit generally found it a relief to finish his business and get back to the harbour. Yusuf transacted Wolf's business in the evening, and when Kit arrived the copper lamp was lighted.

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Yusuf gave him a little cup of black coffee and a cigarette with a strange, bitter taste. Then he talked about the grain, and presently took a long roll of paper and some documents from the chest.

"This voyage we will give you camels," he said in good Castilian. "You will get them where you got the sheep. Since you will not come back, I will give you the bills of lading for the captain to sign."

"The rule is to sign the bills of lading when the goods are shipped," Kit remarked.

"In this country English rules do not go. A trader must run some risks and you will need proper documents for the Spanish officers."

Kit agreed. Wolf had told him he must trust Yusuf, but he did not, although he was willing to carry out his orders. There was something secretive about the old fellow; one felt strange plans were made in his small dark shop. In fact, Kit would have trusted nobody in the town. The people were a strange, silent lot; the Moors stamped by an inscrutable reserve. The Jews and half-breed Christians looked furtive and afraid. To hear the negroes' noisy talk was a relief, but all was quiet after dark.

"I understand you have some other cargo for us," he remarked.

"That is so. When you go back to your boat you will find the boxes are on board."

Kit thought it strange. His boat lay alongside the little mole, where people could see goods carried down, and since Yusuf had got the cartridges Kit wondered why he had not smuggled them off overland. To use a steamer like *Mossamedes* to carry a few boxes along the coast was a strange plan; but then the business was all strange.

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"Where must we land the goods?" he asked.

"I will show you," said Yusuf, and when he unrolled the long paper Kit saw with some surprise it was a good chart of the African coast.

"You will anchor here and signal," he said, marking a spot. "When you see smoke among the sandhills send off your boat. Afterwards you will steam back to the anchorage you know and wait for the camels."

"But we may wait for some time," Kit objected, noting the distance between the spots.

"I think not. A messenger will be sent and a good camel travels fast," Yusuf replied, and Kit, picking up the chart, started for the harbour.

The night was not dark and when he jumped on board his boat he noted a row of small boxes stowed in the bottom.

"But this stuff is heavy!" said old Miguel, striking a cardboard match.

Kit told him to put out the match, but was relieved to see the boxes were not numerous. Then they had, so to speak, been put on board openly, and Kit felt that after all he need not bother Don Ramon about the thing.

"We will go. Push off," he said.

The men pulled down the harbour. A smooth swell rolled in and two or three anchor lights tossed and swung. By and by engines throbbed in the dark, and Kit saw moving beams of red and green. The French gunboat had arrived the day before, and her launch was coming off from the mole. For a minute or two Kit was disturbed, but the launch steamed by and vanished in the dark. Kit steered for *Mossamedes'* lights and when he got on board went to the captain's room. Don Erminio, wearing his old English clothes, fronted Macallister in greasy dungarees, and between them some bottles and glasses balanced the swing-table. Kit put down the bills of lading and remarked that he had agreed the captain would sign the documents.

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"But of course," said Don Erminio, "when I sign for Señor Wolf, I will sign all you ask. When I sign for me, it is another thing. Then, if I am not cautious, somebody gets my dollars."

"Where are we going?" Macallister asked.

Kit spread out the chart and indicated the spot Yusuf had marked on the curve of a bay. It looked as if landing would not be hard, but although the chart did not give the political frontiers, he imagined the bay was outside the Spanish belt.

"I expect the coast is French. It's awkward; particularly since we carry cartridges."

"Senegal's French," said Macallister. "The rest is nobody's; the strongest tribe uses the ground it wants. Man, they're amusing fellows at the foreign offices. Do they think they can parcel out Africa wi' a gold fountain pen?"

"Sometimes the French foreign office uses the foreign legion."

"Must I teach ye geography? The legion leeves in Algeria, and that's t'ither side the country o' Kaid Maclean."

"It is not important," Don Erminio remarked. "All politicians are animals, and if the Moors shoot somebody with the cartridges, it is not my affair. I will catch fish for *baccalao* and then my señora will not want much money."

Kit put away the chart and went on deck. He rather envied Don Erminio's philosophical carelessness. The captain did not bother; if he could catch fish and shoot rabbits, he was satisfied. Kit was not like that. His job was to keep things going smoothly, but things did not go smoothly when one left them alone. He was accountable to Wolf and the owners of the ship, and began to see his duties might clash. Walking up and down the boat-deck, he frowned when he heard the clink of glasses and Don Erminio's laugh. Then Macallister began to sing, and Kit went off impatiently to his room. [Pg 152]

At daybreak they hove anchor and steamed South along the coast, until one morning a dark line on the port bow indicated land. Then they turned a quarter circle, the line got faint, as if it ran back to the East, and after they took soundings *Mossamedes* steamed into a wide, shallow bay. Some time after she brought up a plume of smoke blew across the sandhills, a boat was swung out and Kit and the interpreter went ashore. Nothing romantic marked the landing of the cartridges. A few big, dark-skinned men came down the beach, took the boxes from the sailors and vanished in the sand. The boat pulled off and Kit began to think smuggling in Africa was strangely flat.

Then *Mossamedes*, stopping now and then to use the lead, steamed North dead-slow. They saw no ships, although at times a trail of smoke stained the blue horizon. Liners bound for Cape Town kept deep water, and the captains of the Guinea boats hauled off until they made Cape Verde. The stream of traffic flowed along, but did not touch the forbidding coast.

At length Don Erminio headed cautiously for the beach and *Mossamedes* dropped anchor in the pool among the sands. For two or three days the captain and Kit went fishing and then, when the smoke signal wavered about the mouth of the wady, Kit went ashore with Miguel in the big cargo launch. In a sense, perhaps, the job was not his, but he felt his responsibility. The camels were his employer's, and he must see them got on board.

The morning was hot, the sea luminous green, streaked by dazzling lines of foam. Sandhills and stony hummocks floated like a mirage in quivering, reflected light. Farther off, dust storms tossed in spirals and dissolved. Now and then the wind got light for a few minutes and Kit felt he could not breathe, but there was no break in the steady beat of the white surge on the beach. [Pg 153]

When the rollers began to curl Miguel threw out an anchor, and the boat drove in stern-foremost until the rope brought her up. This was possible because the headland broke the sea, but Kit thought the launch would soon be swamped if the wind backed farther North. The interpreter jumped overboard, and by and by men in fluttering blue and white clothes drove the camels from the wady. When the animals reached the beach all the crew but Miguel went overboard, and the hardest work Kit had known began. The camels knelt while the head-ropes were fixed, but some stretched their long necks and tried to seize his arm with their yellow teeth. They grunted and made savage noises, and when they were driven to the water obstinately stopped.

The single-humped camel can swim, but will not, unless it is forced, and to break the big animal's firm resolve is not easy. Moreover, the launch leaped and plunged and must be hauled off when a large roller came in like a glittering wall. Spray blew about; sometimes the men were knee-deep, and sometimes buried to the shoulders, in angry foam. Now and then Kit was knocked down and washed up the beach among the legs of a floundering camel. In the background, the group of Moors sat on the beach and watched; their dark skins and harshly-coloured clothes distinct in the strong light.

When Miguel was satisfied he could take no more, they hauled off the boat and tied the camels by the short head-ropes along her gunwale. Then the anchor was got up and they began to row, but although they pulled the long oars double-banked, did not make much progress. It looked as if the camels, supported by their halters, were satisfied to be towed. The animals floated awkwardly and their bodies were a heavy drag. [Pg 154]

To drive the boat ahead was exhausting labour in the burning sun, and by and by Kit relieved a man whose efforts got slack. His clothes had dried stiff, his hair was full of sand, and the salt had crystallised on his burned skin. At length they stopped abreast of the steamer's gangway and somebody threw a rope. *Mossamedes* rolled, lifting a long belt of rusty side out of the foam. Sometimes she was high above the boat, and sometimes she sank until the water splashed about the open iron doors. A man, seizing a boathook, stood ready to fend-off the launch; the others got canvas bands under the camels. Then a long derrick swung out and a band was hooked to a wire rope.

"*Ahora! Llevadlo!*" shouted Miguel and a winch began to rattle.

The rope tightened with a jerk, a camel rose from the water, and for a few moments swung wildly to and fro. The animal looked ridiculous, with its outstretched neck and paddling legs. Then *Mossamedes* steadied and one heard running wire; the camel sank and vanished and the rope came down again. When all were on board, Miguel started for the beach with a fresh crew, and Kit went to see the animals fastened up and fed. The mate was accountable for their stowing, but camels were worth much at Grand Canary, and Kit imagined his employer's interest was his. Sometimes when he thought about his efforts afterwards, he smiled.

He was occupied until the launch returned and he went ashore again. The tide had risen and the surf was worse, but they got another load. The launch came back half-swamped with the men exhausted and a broken oar, and on her next voyage the crew kept her off the beach until the tide fell. While she rolled and plunged at anchor Kit lay in her bottom and watched the angry combers crash upon the beach. [Pg 155]

They brought off the last few animals in the dark and Kit washed away the sand and salt. Three or four dark bruises marked his skin, his hands were blistered and he limped because a camel had stepped upon his foot. All the same, when he put on soft clean clothes he was satisfied. *Mossamedes* would go to sea at daybreak and it was something to know the job was done. [Pg 156]

CHAPTER VIII AN IDLE AFTERNOON

The veranda was shady, and Kit sat on the top step in the cool breeze that blew between the posts. Olivia occupied a basket-chair farther back; her pose was languidly graceful and sometimes she smiled. It was not for nothing she had put on clothes she liked the best of all she had, but she thought she knew why Kit for the most part looked at the town and not at her. Sometimes his puritanical conscience bothered him. Mrs. Austin's rule was to receive all her friends who liked to come after six o'clock, but Kit had arrived two hours sooner, because Olivia had hinted that he might. She knew Jacinta would not be about, and now thought Kit imagined he ought to go.

The landscape he contemplated had some charm. The sun was behind the mountains, and the dark rocks were a good background for the white town and the cathedral towers. The white was not dead; the shadow had touched it with elusive grey and blue, and the rows of houses glimmered, somehow like pearls. In front the sea was a wonderful ultramarine.

In the meantime, Olivia studied Kit's figure and his face in profile. She thought his profile good, there was something ascetic about its cleanness of line. He was thin, but his white clothes rather emphasised the firm modelling of his neck and shoulders and the curve to his waist. All the same, Olivia thought his quietness tiresome.

"The view from the veranda *is* rather fine," she said.

Kit looked up with an apologetic smile. "You imply I'm dull? Perhaps I am dull. You see, I was pretty strenuously occupied not long since." [Pg 157]

"Catching fish for the captain's señora?"

"We did catch some fish, but we shipped some camels through the surf, and ran into bad weather coming home. To keep the animals alive was an awkward job. The sea came on board, the fodder washed about, and the scuppers were choked. The ship got a list, and two or three feet of water splashed in the angle between her deck and side. Camels can't stand getting wet, you know."

"I don't know," Olivia rejoined. "Besides, I don't see how the bad weather accounts for your absorption in the view."

"Oh, well! After a job like ours you want a rest, and there's something about Grand Canary that makes you satisfied to loaf. The Island of the Golden Apples, the old explorers talked about! Then I think the nicest spot in Grand Canary is Mrs. Austin's veranda. Anyhow, if I had talked, you might have got bored. You are bored sometimes."

Olivia laughed. "You are modest, but if you know when I am bored you are cleverer than I

thought. However, when you first arrived you would have been hurt."

"One gets philosophical and no doubt I was very raw. I hadn't known you and Mrs. Austin."

"To know Jacinta is something of an education," Olivia agreed. "But you talked about the old explorers. Have you ever seen the island of San Borondon?"

"I have not," said Kit. "I'm a practical fellow and don't see things like that. All the same, our quartermaster declares he has seen San Borondon, and it's possible. Old Miguel's a mystic and the finest sailor we have on board. The sort of fellow they'd have made a saint in Columbus's days ——" [Pg 158]

He mused for a few moments and resumed: "Well, the story's curious. If you leave out a few desert rocks, there are six Canary Islands; the first explorers saw seven. The seventh was San Borondon, where it is always calm. When the galleons came back to conquer it, the island was gone, but now and then somebody sees the mountains against the sunset, in the same spot as you steam West to Hierro. A mirage, no doubt, but one can understand the sailors' weaving legends about San Borondon."

"I expect the monks wove the legends," Olivia remarked. "Their business was to point a moral, and the Grail story's old. It looks as if they could not find a knight-adventurer like Galahad. Yet you imagine your quartermaster——"

"Old Miguel is something like Galahad," Kit said quietly, although a touch of colour came to his skin. "Believes in his saints and keeps his rules. As trustful as a child, polite as a Spanish hidalgo, and brave as a lion! One does meet some fine gentlemen. Jefferson's another."

Olivia said nothing, but on the whole she agreed. Although Jefferson had some drawbacks and Kit's were numerous, their puritanical sincerity had charm. As a rule she had not found the type polite, but Kit was getting sophisticated. His touch of colour indicated this.

"I expect you are going back on board *Mossamedes*?" she said by and by.

"For another run. After that I don't know," Kit replied.

He did not know and was rather disturbed. When he was going to Mrs. Austin's he met Don Ramon, who stopped him.

"Has Wolf talked about his future plans?" the manager asked. [Pg 159]

Kit said Wolf had not, and Don Ramon resumed:

"You see, the charter does not run long, and *Mossamedes* is an expensive boat for the Morocco trade."

Kit had thought this and was bothered about something else. He wondered whether Don Ramon knew about the cartridges. In a way, perhaps, the thing was not important, since the quantity was small, but Kit thought Don Ramon ought to know. Yet so long as he took Wolf's pay he was Wolf's man.

"Before you sailed on your last voyage I sent you a message," Olivia resumed.

"I got the message. You were very kind."

"But this was all. You thought I exaggerated?"

"No," said Kit. "You stated Wolf meant to use Captain Revillon. Well, I thought I saw his object."

"You mean, Wolf meant to cheat him?"

"In a way perhaps——" Kit agreed and stopped.

Olivia laughed. "You are very staunch. In fact, you have a number of qualities one does not at first expect. All the same, I don't think you ought to go to Africa often."

She was sincere, because she instinctively distrusted Wolf, but she wanted to keep Kit about Las Palmas; to some extent because Jacinta had planned to send him away. She did not know if she wanted him to stop for good. His firmness intrigued her, she liked his honesty and his physical attraction was strong. Sometimes she hesitated and sometimes resisted. Olivia was calculating rather than romantic, and frankly did not see herself marrying a steamship *sobrecargo*.

"I must go for another voyage," Kit replied. "I have engaged to go, and for another thing, Mrs. Austin got me the post. I want her to think I'm making good. It's obvious I owe her much." [Pg 160]

Olivia knew he owed her sister less than he thought. Sometimes Kit was very dull, but he had given her an opportunity to experiment.

"Jacinta likes helping people and as a rule it doesn't cost her much. For example, when you told her about Miss Jordan, Harry and Jefferson wanted an English clerk. I think Miss Jordan's satisfied, but I doubt if she's as grateful as you."

"She's altogether satisfied——" Kit declared and stopped. Betty's gratitude to Mrs. Austin was not very marked.

"Oh, well!" Olivia resumed, "Jefferson's a good sort and I think he's lucky. Miss Jordan is a good

clerk and an attractive girl. People like her, and Jefferson's *patio* is getting a fashionable spot in the afternoon. You can study the latest styles in men's light clothes."

"Do you mean the coaling and banana men pretend they have some business and hang about?"

"I don't know if they pretend, but they do hang about. Jefferson declares if he wanted coal he could get an extra bag to the ton, and Ritchie told him an ingenious plan by which he could cut down *Cayman's* fresh water bill."

"Ritchie's the theatrical fellow with the *sombrero* and brigand's sash?"

"He is theatrical," Olivia agreed and smiled. "Since he has neglected me, his theatricalness is plainer. No doubt Miss Jordan finds him amusing, but when *Cayman* is in port he goes to the office. Looking for orders, I believe."

"All the coal *Cayman* burns goes on the galley fire," Kit remarked with a frown. "A ton a voyage would see her out."

Olivia noted his frown. She admitted that her methods were crude, but cleverness, so to speak, would be wasted on Kit. In some respects, he was like a child. [Pg 161]

"After all, I don't see why Miss Jordan should not marry a coaling clerk," she said. "One or two are rather nice."

Kit set his mouth. He had not thought about Betty's marrying and owned that it ought not disturb him, but it did so. His look was sternly thoughtful, and Olivia touched his arm. She had made her experiment and although she did not know if she wanted Kit for herself or not, she resolved he was not for Betty.

"You have no grounds for meddling, and Miss Jordan is not a fool; I think she's fastidious," she said. "When you come back we must try to get you a post at Las Palmas. If you get a proper start, you might go far, and perhaps the post can be got."

Kit's heart beat. Olivia wanted him to go far, and this implied much. He forgot Betty, and then looking up, saw Mrs. Austin and her husband on the steps.

"Hallo!" said Austin. "I imagined you were occupied on board. As a rule, you stick to your job tighter than I stuck to mine. Anyhow, since you have come ashore, you'll dine with us?"

Kit was somewhat embarrassed. He had seen Mrs. Austin give Olivia a keen glance; moreover she had left her husband to ask him to stop. Signing to Olivia, she went into the house.

"Why did you put on that dress?" she asked.

"It's light and cool," Olivia replied and added with a smile: "Sometimes you're romantic and let your imagination go."

"I'd like to think I was romantic, but I doubt. Anyhow, Kit is flesh and blood. Why can't you leave him alone?"

"My dear! You really ought to keep the conventions. The proper line is to argue I oughtn't to let the young man bother me. However, it's obvious you don't mean to be nice." [Pg 162]

Mrs. Austin frowned and went off. She had controlled her husband and others, but Olivia baffled her. If the girl resisted from obstinacy, there was perhaps no need for disturbance; the trouble was, Mrs. Austin did not know. Besides, Kit was trustful. She had meant to be his friend and was angry because her plans had not worked.

Kit did not enjoy his dinner. Mrs. Austin was polite, but he felt she was annoyed, and when he tried to talk to Olivia she firmly started another subject. Olivia looked amused and her amusement jarred. Kit was young and if he were being punished, thought Olivia ought to sympathise. Soon after dinner he declared he must go on board and Olivia got up.

"Where are you going?" Mrs. Austin asked.

"I'm going to the gate with Kit," Olivia replied carelessly, and Mrs. Austin knew her smile meant she could not meddle when the others were about.

Olivia went down the path with Kit and stopped at the gate. It was getting dark and some tamarisk grew between them and the house.

"You don't look very cheerful," she remarked.

"I'm not cheerful," Kit admitted. "I'm afraid I have annoyed Mrs. Austin."

"Jacinta has her moods," Olivia agreed. "However, if she wasn't very nice to you, she wasn't nice at all to me. Besides, you really ought not to have stopped when she was not at home. Jacinta is conventional, although she pretends she is not. We all are conventional, you know."

Kit looked hard at her and was hurt. Olivia, herself, had fixed the time for him to come, and had kept him when he would have gone. For all that he said nothing and she resumed in a gentle voice: "Well, you are going back with the steamer and I will not see you before you sail. You'll use caution, Kit?" [Pg 163]

He thrilled, but said quietly: "I don't think much caution's indicated. We have gone twice and nothing has bothered us."

"Oh well," said Olivia: "you are obstinate and I suppose you must go. Perhaps I'm superstitious, but sometimes the third venture is unlucky." She touched his arm. "I don't want you to run a risk!"

Kit tried to seize her hand but she was gone. He saw her figure melt into the gloom among the tamarisk, and then, looking round, noted Wolf coming up the path.

"Hallo, Musgrave!" said Wolf. "Have you gone to the *Commandancia* for your papers?"

"I went in the afternoon and got the documents," Kit replied, and started for the road.

Wolf went to the veranda and talked to Mrs. Austin until some others arrived; then he crossed the floor. A chair by Olivia was unoccupied, and noting Wolf's advance, she gave a young man an inviting smile. The young man did not remark this and Wolf got the chair.

"Malin deserves to pay for his dullness," he said.

"Then you saw me signal?" Olivia rejoined. "All the same, you came!"

"One sometimes gets a humorous satisfaction from baffling people. Besides, I wanted to persuade you I'm not revengeful. It's obvious you don't like me."

"Oh well," said Olivia, "I don't claim my prejudices are always logical. Sometimes one likes people, and sometimes one does not."

"We'll let it go and I'll try to be resigned. However, I don't think you ought to prejudice my *sobrecargo*."

Olivia's eyes sparkled. It looked as if Wolf had seen her touch Kit; he was very keen.

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"Do you know I have prejudiced Mr. Musgrave?" she asked.

"He has not hinted this; the young fellow is staunch, for all that, I don't imagine you approve his sailing on board my ship. Do you approve?"

Olivia said nothing, and Wolf resumed: "If it will give you much satisfaction, I'll discharge him after the next voyage."

For a few moments Olivia thought hard. She wanted Kit to leave *Mossamedes*, but she did not know yet if she wanted him to stop about Las Palmas altogether. Then she felt that Wolf was not the man to whom she would like to owe a debt. The fellow was cunning.

"Oh no!" she said smiling, "it's really not important, and I wouldn't like to feel accountable if he didn't get another post."

"Very well. If he wants to go, I'll use no arguments. If he wants to stop, you won't try to persuade him he ought not?"

"I agree," said Olivia, and getting up, waited until Wolf went off.

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CHAPTER IX

THE THIRD VOYAGE

Mossamedes was hauling out from the mole, and Kit, on his way to his room, stopped to look about. The deck was strewn with cargo, for a small steamer that had tied up alongside had just moved astern. Winches rattled and a gang of men lowered some heavy wooden cases into the hold. Another gang got in the slack of a big rope made fast on the wall. There was much shouting; the pilot in front of the wheel-house roared orders, Don Erminio ran up and down the bridge and the mate was vociferous on the forecastle.

Macallister looked out with ironical amusement from the door of the engine-room. As a rule the Scot is not theatrical, and when others were noisy Macallister's dour calm was marked.

"They're pretty clothes," he said, indicating Kit's white uniform. "For a' that, if I had your figure, I'd wear something thick. I alloo Miss Brown thought ye like a tablecloth on a pump. But why are ye no' helping the ithers at the comic opera?"

"I have another job," Kit rejoined, putting a bundle of documents in his pocket. "It doesn't look as if you bothered about yours!"

The engines had begun to throb, and the telegraph rang violently. Macallister signed to somebody below and grinned.

"Yon's Don Erminio taking the floor. He means naething and I dinna mind him. When the action kin' o' drags he shouts and gives the telegraph handle a bit pull. When ye think about it, temperament's a curious thing. Maybe ye have seen a big boat haul out on the Clyde? Noo an' then an officer lifts his hand, ye hear a whistle, and a winch starts. All's calm and quiate. She's away, ten thousand tons o' her, before ye ken what's gaun on!"

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"You're a grim, efficient lot," Kit remarked. "Just now it looks as if the pilot meant to hit the coaling tug. I don't know if you can stop him; that's your business and his. I'll get to mine before she starts to roll."

He went to his room, pulled up his folding stool, and threw the documents on his desk, for he was rather puzzled about some cases of agricultural machinery and tools. Perhaps these were the boxes transhipped from the other boat, but, so far as Kit knew, agricultural machinery was not much used in Morocco. In fact, he thought the Moors' methods were the methods of Abraham. In the meantime, the shouts got louder, and Kit imagined Juan on the forecastle, disputed with the pilot on the bridge.

"*Pero, Señor!*" the mate's expostulating cry pierced the turmoil, and then Kit's inkpot jumped from the desk.

He saw a dark smear on his new clothes, *Mossamedes* trembled, and he felt a heavy shock. His stool tilted, and he went over backwards and struck his head against the locker.

Getting up rather shakily, he remarked that the ship had listed, for the floor of his room was sharply inclined. When she lurched upright with a jerk he seized the doorpost and then, since it was obvious she was not capsizing, put the cork in the inkpot and began to pick up his papers. He had something of the sobriety that marks the puritan temperament, and it was characteristic that he occupied himself with his proper job. The papers for which he was accountable must not get stained by ink. When he had put all straight he went on deck.

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Not far off, the coaling tug circled back for the wharf. Her bulwarks were broken, some plates were bent, and she had let go the string of barges she towed. On board *Mossamedes* Don Erminio leaned against the bridge-screens and his face was very white. The pilot stated loudly the course the tug's *patron* ought to have steered, and the mate and a number of sailors ran about the deck. Kit did not think they were usefully employed.

Going to the forecastle, he found Macallister leaning over the rails. A plate was bulged and the stem was bent, but it looked as if all the damage were above the water. Lines of foam ran by and melted ahead, for *Mossamedes* was steaming stern-foremost out of port.

"She's no' much the worse; I dinna ken aboot the tug," Macallister remarked, and took Kit to a spot beneath the bridge. "Tell the captain to brace up and get away to sea," he resumed. "If he's no' quick, the *Commandancia* launch will come off and stop us to make reports. They'll forget a' aboot it before we're back."

Kit translated and Don Erminio, pulling himself together, advanced upon the pilot. A savage dispute began, but presently the captain stopped and spread out his hands.

"The animal is not satisfied. He will not go."

"Aweel, I'll come up and pit him off," Macallister remarked and climbed the ladder.

The pilot hesitated. His duty was to take the ship outside the mole, but the engineer's look was resolute, and he retreated to the ladder at the opposite end of the bridge. When Macallister reached the top the pilot had reached the bottom, and a few moments afterwards, went down a rope to his boat.

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"Noo, if ye'll put the helm across, I'll give her a bit shove ahead and we'll get away," Macallister said to the captain and rejoined Kit.

"Nane o' it was my job and maybe on board a British ship I'd no' ha' done as much," he observed and vanished below.

Mossamedes circled, the engines throbbed harder, the mole dropped back, and Kit began to laugh. He agreed that Macallister would not have done as much on board a British ship. For all that, his rude but cool efficiency was rather fine.

Half an hour afterwards Kit took some documents to the captain's room. Don Erminio was stretched on a locker, and a bottle of vermouth and some Palma cigars balanced the swing-table. When he saw the documents he frowned.

"Another day. Just now I am ill," he said. "When one has an assassin for a pilot, to command a ship is not amusing. I bear much, but some time I take Enrique Maria Contallan y Clavijo by the neck and throw him in the sea. In the meantime, I have saved the ship and we will take a drink."

Kit refused politely and did not smile. He liked Don Erminio and the captain was not a fool. Kit had known him calm and steady when things were awkward, and sometimes his pluck was rash. All the same, he was unstable; one could not foresee the line he would take. The Spanish character frankly puzzled Kit. It was marked by sharp contrasts, and one could use no rules. Macallister and Jefferson were not like that. Their qualities, so to speak, were constant. When the strain was heavy one knew they would be cool.

Mossamedes steered for the eastern islands, and in the morning the parched rocks of Lanzarote melted in the glitter on the horizon. Then she headed for Africa and at sunset Don Erminio stopped the ship and used the lead. He got soundings on the coast-shelf, and Kit, passing the chart-room, imagined the mate and captain argued about the ship's position, but when *Mossamedes* went on again the compass indicated that Don Erminio had hauled out to avoid shoals. When the moon rose one saw nothing but sparkling water, the swell was long and measured, and the leadman, making another cast, got no bottom. It looked as if they had left the hummocks on the coast-shelf astern, and *Mossamedes* went full-speed.

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About midnight Kit lounged and smoked on a locker in the engine-room. He was not sleepy, and since *Mossamedes* sailed, had thought much about Olivia. On the whole, his thoughts were disturbing. When he was with Olivia he forgot his poverty; all he saw was her charm. She was beautiful, she was clever and now and then he got a hint of tenderness that gave him a strange thrill. The thrill moved and braced him; while it lasted all looked possible. Somehow he would mend his fortune and make his mark. Austin, who had held Kit's post, had done so and married Olivia's sister.

Afterwards, when Olivia was not about, Kit knew himself to be a fool. To begin with, he had not Austin's talents and must be satisfied to keep his proper level. Then supposing he did get rich? After all, he was not Olivia's sort. Kit was staunch and stopped there; he would not admit that sometimes he vaguely doubted if Olivia were the girl for him. Instincts he had inherited from sober and frugal ancestors were strong. Yet for the most part he resisted unconsciously. When one is young and carried away by an attractive girl one is not logical.

Lighting a fresh cigarette, he looked about. *Mossamedes* rolled and light and shadow played about the machinery. In front, the bright cranks flashed and faded in a shallow pit, the crossheads slammed between their guides and the connecting-rods, shining like silver, swung out of the gloom. Above, the big cylinders throbbed and shook with the impulse that drove the ship ahead. Men like shadows moved about with oilcans and tallow-swabs, but now and then a moving beam touched a face beaded by sweat. Macallister occupied the top of a tool box and smoked a black pipe.

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Kit liked the engine-room. The steady beat of the machine was soothing. One got a sense of order, measured effort and strength that matched the strain. Force was not wasted but sternly controlled. In the engine-room Macallister was another man, quiet, keen, concentrated, and Kit understood the Scots' satisfaction when all ran well. They sprang from a stock that counted rule and effort to be worth more than beauty.

There was a crash, and Kit jumped from the locker. *Mossamedes* stopped and the shock threw him against a column. He seized the iron and held on, conscious that he trembled. The jar was terrifying because it was not expected. A sea broke about the vessel, she shook and water rolled across the deck. A greaser shouted and Kit saw Macallister on the grated platform above. He had not seen him go, but his hand was on the throttle-wheel. He did not look disturbed, and signed a man to the control of the reversing-gear. If the link were pulled across, the engines would go astern. The telegraph, however, was silent and Macallister did not turn the wheel.

The ship lifted, lurched forward, as if a sea had borne her up, and went on. Macallister waited for a few moments and then went up to the door with Kit. The door on the starboard side looked out towards Africa, but nothing broke the furrowed plain of glittering sea.

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"I'm thinking she bumped a bit hummock," Macallister remarked. "She got a jolt, but the old boat was built by men who dinna scamp their job. Where ye see yon house's name, ye ken the work is good."

"All the same, you have started the bilge pump," said Kit, for a sharp throbbing pierced the beat of machinery.

"Pepe will let her rin a few minutes. Although I dinna expect she'll draw much water, ye keep the rules," Macallister replied and turned to Miguel, who came along the alleyway. "What do you think about it, friend? The third voyage has not begun well."

Macallister's Castilian was uncouth, but Miguel understood. "It is not good, Don Pedro! A bad coast and a treacherous people, but one is not disturbed. Some of the saints were fishermen, and mine is king of all. But I go to try the after well."

He went off, but Kit had noted that the line he carried was neatly coiled and the sounding-rod was wet. He thought it typical that the old quartermaster had tried the forward well a few moments after the ship struck. Moreover his talk about his saint somehow was not extravagant. One felt that Miguel knew and trusted his great patron.

"A most queer fellow," Macallister remarked. "A believer in wax images and pented boards."

"Pented boards?" said Kit.

"Just that," Macallister rejoined. "Ye'll no ken the Scottish classics. When the great reformer was a galley slave they gave him the image to worship. 'A pented brod, mair fit for swimming than praying til,' says he and threw't overboard. Weel, for Miguel, the images are not pented things, and I've met weel-grounded Scots I wouldna trust like him. He kens his job and his word goes. I alloo it's much."

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Kit went on deck. The sea sparkled in the moon and long regular combers rolled up from the north. One could not see land and nothing indicated shoals ahead. *Mossamedes* dipped her bows to the knight-heads and showers of spray leaped about the rail. Then her stern went down and the rising forecastle cut the sky. For a time Kit forgot Olivia and mused about the engineer and Miguel.

Macallister's mood was sometimes freakish and his humour rude, but behind this was a stern, honest efficiency. The quartermaster was a mystic, but when the big white combers chased the cargo launch one could trust him with the steering oar. After all to know one's job was much.

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CHAPTER X SMOKE ON THE HORIZON

An angry swell rolled along the coast, dust blew across the flat-roofed town, and *Mossamedes*, with two anchors out, rode uneasily. She had unloaded some cargo and Kit, going ashore in the evening, speculated about the rest. He did not think he was superstitious, but the voyage had not begun well, and he wanted to get it over. There was something strange about the business in which he was engaged, and he resolved he would talk to Wolf when he returned.

Moreover, he did not like the dirty Moorish town. When it got dark the narrow streets were forbidding, but Yusuf declared he could not transact the ship's business until he closed his shop. In the Canaries and Morocco, rich merchants keep a shop. One could buy a shipload of their goods or a few pesetas' worth.

Yusuf's little room was very hot. The dust had blown in, and the floor was gritty. Flies hovered about the copper lamp which burned an aromatic oil. The agent gave Kit coffee and a cigarette. The tobacco was bitter but soothing and Kit imagined it was mixed with an Eastern drug. At Yusuf's he generally felt dull; perhaps it was the smell of the lamp, leather and spices. They began to talk, and presently Kit remarked: "If you send your boats to-morrow, we will hoist out the last of the cargo. Have you got much stuff for us?"

"I have got nothing," said Yusuf, smiling. "Your cargo is on board."

"All the goods we carry are consigned to the Greek merchant here and you."

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"That is so, but I will endorse the bill of lading, and file a statement for the Customs officers that the cases of machinery will be landed at another port."

"Ah!" said Kit who began to see a light. "Then we are to carry the cases along the coast? I was puzzled about this lot of cargo; but we got it from a Spanish ship at Las Palmas. The cases were put on board in daylight when two of the port captain's men were on deck."

"The plan was good," Yusuf remarked. "When one does things openly nobody is curious."

"All the same, the Moorish officers know machinery is not used in the Sahara."

"It is not the officers' business. They are friends of mine, and in this country a present carries some weight."

Kit knew Wolf and his agent were clever, but began to think they were cleverer than he liked. He felt he was being used, and, so to speak, kept in the dark. He did not know the others' plans, in which he was involved, but if the plans did not work, he thought he ran some risk. Yusuf was subtle, and Kit's instinctive antagonism hardened. For all that, he was Wolf's servant and must carry out his agent's orders.

"I will endorse the bill of lading," the other resumed. "You will land the boxes at the spot you got the camels, and the owner will take his goods. Perhaps he will keep the document for a talisman. Some of these people have a strange respect for all that is written on paper."

"Very well," said Kit, who got up.

Yusuf went with him to the door, and Kit starting along the street, heard the heavy bolts shoot back. To know the business was over was something of a relief. Although Yusuf was inscrutable at his house one got a sense of fear and secrecy. In Morocco a Jew trader was perhaps forced to use caution, but Kit thought he would sooner deal with the wild Berbers who ruled the open desert. Yet he owned he had no firm grounds for doubting Wolf's agent. When he got on board *Mossamedes* he went to the chart-room and found Don Erminio playing cards with the mate. The captain had won two pesetas and was jubilant.

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"Juan is clever and cautious. I am not clever, but I am bold," he said.

Kit noted the bottle on the table. When Don Erminio drank a few glasses of *caña* he philosophised. Kit narrated his interview with Yusuf, and the captain looked thoughtful.

"It is plain the boxes hold guns," he said. "The Moors do not carry guns to shoot the rabbit, and if we land the boxes somebody will get killed. However, it is not important. The Moors are numerous and all are bad."

"I was not thinking about the Moors," Kit rejoined. "The business is strange. The guns were on board a Spanish ship and if the Moors use them to steal camels, the camels will no doubt be stolen on soil that is claimed by France. There may be trouble afterwards. Our employer knows this."

Don Erminio picked up the cards. Spanish cards are not marked like English cards, but Kit thought the one the captain indicated stood for the ace of clubs.

"*Bastones!*" Don Erminio remarked and shuffled the pack. "I put it at the bottom. You see it is there? Now take three away and you will find it at the top. A trick, but clever. Señor Wolf plays a game like this."

Kit carried out his instructions and laughed. "Wolf is, no doubt, clever, but this is *not* the card."

Don Erminio frowned and swept the pack on to the floor. The swing-table tilted, but Juan stretched out his hand and seized the bottle.

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"Señor!" he expostulated. "The *caña* cost two pesetas!"

"I have forgotten something. All the same, you see the moral," Don Erminio resumed. "Merchants are cheats and use cunning tricks. One thinks one knows their plan, but one does not. One puts one's money on the wrong card and it is gone. Sailors are honest and do not get rich. Well, we will carry out our orders. That is enough for me. I have drunk some *caña* and in the morning my throat is bad."

Two days afterwards *Mossamedes* hove her anchors and steamed south. As a rule, the Trade-breeze blows steadily, but now and then its strength varies. Sometimes a little rain falls and the day is nearly calm; sometimes the wind backs north and blows hard. *Mossamedes'* holds were almost empty and her rolling was wild. When she plunged across the long swell, half her screw came out of the water and one heard the top blades thrash. Don Erminio followed the coast, steering as near land as he durst. He wanted to avoid the traffic, and *Mossamedes*, going light, did not draw much water. She was built to cross the sands at African river mouths.

One morning Kit went to the bridge. The sun was not high and the air was fresh. The wind had dropped, and the faint haze that generally softens the light and glitter when the Trade-breeze blows had vanished. The sky was a harsh, vivid blue, and the tops of the long rollers cut the horizon with sharp distinctness. They did not break, but rose and subsided, leaving here and there soft streaks of foam. For all that, the swell ran high, *Mossamedes* lurched about, and Kit thought wind was coming. He was bothered about it. If the wind were fresh, they could not land their dangerous cargo. The mate leaned against a stanchion and searched the sky-line with his glasses. After a time he gave the glasses to Kit.

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"Look!" he said.

Kit saw a faint brown smear drawn across the sky. It was rather like a thin cloud, but he thought it smoke. When the wind is light, a steamer's smoke spreads far and floats for some time. The strange thing was, the steamer was there, inside the proper track. He glanced at *Mossamedes'* funnel but the last coal they had got was good and diaphanous vapour rolled astern. Kit put down the glasses and went to the captain's room. Don Erminio came out, studied the smoke, and frowned. He wore pyjamas and a shooting jacket, torn at the back.

"The animals cannot see us, but a steamer ought not to be so near the coast," he said. "Then we will soon reach the spot where we land the guns."

"Perhaps the captain takes a drink," Juan remarked.

"It is possible. When I drink much *caña*, my calculations are not good," Don Erminio agreed. "All the same, to run a risk is foolish. We will stop and use the lead."

After he got a sounding he changed his course three or four points east and steered obliquely for the land. In the meantime the smoke vanished and Kit went down and told Macallister to keep his fires clean. To see smoke where smoke ought not to be was disturbing, and if the others had seen *Mossamedes*, they would speculate about her captain's object for navigating shallow water.

When Kit went on deck again the swell had begun to break and ran ominously high. The wind was not yet strong, but it strengthened and the sky in the north was black. At noon, a sailor in the rigging thought he saw smoke again. Don Erminio went up with his glasses, but saw nothing and gave the glasses to Kit.

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"The Norther begins," he said.

In the distance, a brown fog obscured the horizon and Kit knew it was a dust-storm blowing off the coast. Spray leaped about *Mossamedes'* forecastle, her plunges were violent and to hold on to the rigging while the mast swung was hard. They went down and soon afterwards the look-out hailed. Kit was on deck and joined Don Erminio on the bridge. When *Mossamedes* lifted, two masts and the top of a funnel cut the horizon. Kit thought it ominous that he saw no smoke.

The sea had got up and long, white-topped combers rolled after the ship. When her stern swung

out of the water the engines ran away and their savage throbbing shook the deck. With her rudder lifted, she did not steer, and while the helmsman sweated at the wheel she yawed about until her quarters sank and the screw got hold. One could not drive her fast, but much of her side was above water and the savage wind helped. For a time the other vessel's smoke vanished in the thickening spray. Then they saw her again, sharp and distinct. The ominous thing was, they did not, as they might have expected, see her on the quarter but abeam. It was plain that when *Mossamedes* changed her course, or soon afterwards, the stranger had changed hers.

"The French gunboat!" Don Erminio said and clenched his fist. "Somebody has sold us."

Going to the compass, he got the other's bearing, and Kit marked his coolness. When the strain was steady the captain did not tear his hair. He took Kit and the mate to the chart-room, and a few moments afterwards Macallister came up. The rules of the British liners were not used on board *Mossamedes*, and Don Erminio spread a chart on the table. Then he lighted a cigarette and indicated the steamer's course along, but converging on, the coast. [Pg 179]

"The wady is not far ahead," he remarked and put a pin in the spot. "To cross the shoals might be dangerous and I doubt if our anchor would hold. However, if we do not cross, the animal will soon be nearer."

It was obvious when the captain sketched a triangle, of which the gunboat occupied the apex and *Mossamedes'* course was the base. In order to clear the shoals she must shorten the base and, steaming out, lessen the distance between them; if she turned and steamed the other way the gunboat would come down obliquely and cut her line. The long chase is the stern chase, but *Mossamedes* could not make off like this because she was jambed against the coast. Two things were plain: the Frenchman commanded the faster vessel and had well chosen her position.

"The Jew has sold us, but just now it is not important," Don Erminio resumed. "We cannot long run away from the French animal, but I have a plan. We will throw the guns overboard and wait for him."

He looked at Kit, who hesitated for a few moments. The captain's plan had marked advantages and some drawbacks. For one thing, the guns were valuable and if they were sacrificed Wolf must front a heavy loss. Moreover, if they were not delivered, the tribes with whom he traded would refuse to trust him again. This counted for much, but Kit was not altogether thinking about Wolf. His rule was to do what he undertook, and to do so now might baffle the man who had cheated him.

"I think not," he said. "Our business is to deliver our cargo. If Yusuf has plotted with the Frenchman, we must spoil the plot, and I don't know a better plan than to carry out his orders. He sent us south to land the guns and we will land them. It will soon be dark, and if we get across the shoals there is some shelter behind the sands. Revillon durst not cross." [Pg 180]

"*Buen' muchacho!*" said the captain and looked at Macallister. "It will be dark at six o'clock. Can we keep in front?"

Macallister knitted his brows. "I'll no' say it's easy. When the screw's jumping oot o' water ye cannot get much grip to shove her along. For a' that, yon stump-tail gunboat will jump worse, and the old engine's good. If she does not shake off her screw, I'll keep ye ahead."

Kit began to translate, but the captain smiled. "Me, I know the English. Don Pedro good ol' sport. *Bueno; muy bueno!* I jump much *en caballo*; now I jump the sandbank. If the other thinks he catch us, we drown the animal."

Kit thought it possible. *Mossamedes* was built with heavy bottom frames to bump across African river bars, and was going light. He imagined the gunboat's draught was some feet more than hers. All the same, the thing was risky. If *Mossamedes* touched the sand she might not come off.

"It is good! I go for Miguel Sænz," Juan, the mate, agreed.

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CHAPTER XI

MIGUEL TAKES CONTROL

A black cloud rolled from *Mossamedes'* funnel and blew across her bows. The beat of engines quickened and when the stern swung up their furious racing shook the ship. Kit pictured Macallister, sternly calm, at the throttle wheel. Much depended on his skill, for if he were slow when the spinning screw came down and the runaway machinery resumed its load, something must break. Kit, however, did not go to the engine-room. He stood at the door of the pilot-house, inside which Miguel Sænz gripped the slanted gratings with his bare feet. His face was wet by sweat and his brown hand was clenched on the steam-steering wheel.

Although the muscular effort was not great, steering was hard. *Mossamedes* rode high above water and the gale pressed upon her side; the combers lifted her, and screw and rudder could

not get proper hold. Sometimes she came up to windward and rolled until the white seas swept her rail; sometimes she yawed to lee. Kit saw the bows circle and pictured the compass spinning in its bowl.

So far, Miguel steered by compass. Don Erminio had changed his course and headed obliquely for the shoals. It was not the course the gunboat's captain would expect him to steer. Revillon, no doubt, imagined the line along which *Mossamedes* travelled inclined at a small angle out to sea, in order to clear the hammered sands, and he could steam down from his commanding position and cut her off. The line, however, really slanted the other way. Dark clouds obscured the sky, the light was bad, and the driving spray made accurate observation hard. Kit thought Don Erminio's plan was good, but longed for dark.

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Sometimes he saw the gunboat's masts, and sometimes, when a comber lifted *Mossamedes*, he saw her hull. She was getting indistinct and dusk was not far off. Kit imagined she flew some signals, but one need not bother about the flags. Revillon could not launch a boat, and there was not much use in shooting from a rolling platform at a mark that for the most part could not be seen. Besides, Kit thought Revillon would not use his guns. Commanding the faster vessel, his plan was to pin *Mossamedes* to the coast and when the gale blew out come on board and search her. Then, if the cargo was not jettisoned, she might perhaps be seized. Kit did not know much about international rules, but if he threw the guns overboard, Revillon would after all win the game. Guns lying at the bottom of the sea could not be landed in Africa.

Kit felt his youth and responsibility. Standing for his employer, he had urged the captain to hold on to the cargo. Yusuf's treachery had made him savage; he felt he had been cheated like a child, but this was not all. Kit did not mean to let the cunning brute rob his master. He was Wolf's man and his business was to guard his interests. Moreover, he was moved unconsciously by inherited stubbornness. He had engaged to land the guns and was going to do so.

In the meantime he thought his luck strange. Not long since he was a humble shipping clerk, occupied by tame, conventional duties; now he was a smuggler, breaking rules ambassadors and men like that had drawn. All the same, in a way, the adventure was not romantic. There was no shooting, and for the most part one could not see the pursuing ship. Before long, Kit hoped, one could not see her at all. The risk was rather from the sea than the gunboat. For all that, Kit knew two men bore a heavy strain; Macallister on his reeling platform, guarding his engines from sudden shock; and Miguel at the wheel. When Kit looked into the pilot-house the quartermaster's pose was rigid, his mouth was hard, and his eyes were fixed on the revolving compass. Steam pulled across the rudder, but one must use nerve and sound judgment to hold *Mossamedes* straight.

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By and by another man climbed the ladder and went into the pilot-house. Miguel came out and joined the captain. He looked slack, as if he felt the reaction now the strain was gone, and held on by the rails while he looked about. Kit saw his cotton clothes were stained by sweat; the wind blew the thin material against his skin. He wore a tight red knitted cap, and the spray beat upon his face. The captain talked, and gesticulated when the turmoil of the sea drowned his voice.

The light was going fast and the gunboat had melted into the gloom, but her smoke rolled in a thick black trail across the water. It looked as if she were steaming hard and Revillon did not try to hide his advance. Kit wondered whether he imagined he had pinned *Mossamedes* against the shoals and meant to shorten the distance in order not to lose her in the dark. *Mossamedes* made no smoke; Macallister kept his fires thin and clean and it was important that the gunboat's smoke was now on her quarter. This indicated that Revillon did not know she had swung off a few points and steered for the land.

Kit waited until the ship went up on a comber's back, and then looked ahead. The sea was angrier. Some distance in front were broad white belts where the rollers broke in savage turmoil. Between the belts Kit thought he saw a gap, in which the seas were regular. In the distance a brown haze indicated a dust storm raging about the point. One might find some shelter behind the point, but not much.

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High-water was near, and although on the open Atlantic coast the rise of tide is not marked, the moon was new and one might perhaps expect an extra fathom's depth. Then, if *Mossamedes* could get across to the pool, when the ebb began to run the sands would lie like a breakwater between her and the sea. Kit rather doubted if she could get across. One could see no marks, the captain durst not stop for proper soundings and the hand-lead, used from a platform that constantly changed its level, was not much guide.

All the same, it looked as if old Miguel meant to try. For a few moments he stood with his eyes fixed ahead and his lean, upright figure at an angle with the slanted bridge; then he turned and went into the wheel-house. His slackness was gone, his movements were somehow resolute. The other man came out of the house, and Kit saw Macallister at the top of the ladder. Holding on by rails, the engineer looked about.

"If Miguel's saint is watching now we'll no' be independent and refuse his help." he said. "For a that, there's a line in the *Vaya* that betther meets our bill——"

He misquoted from the sailing permit of the Spanish *correo*, but Kit knew the line and, with the raging shoals ahead, owned its force. When one fronted the fury of the sea, words like that meant much.

"The mill's good and running weel, but if Miguel's no' sure and steady, there's no much use in my keeping steam," Macallister resumed. "The bit spark o' human intelligence ootweighs a' the power that's bottled in my furnaces. I dinna see what's to guide him, but maybe the old fella thinks like a *baccalao*."

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"*Baccalao* is salt fish," said Kit.

"It was swimming before it was sautit," Macallister rejoined. "Then ye dinna get fish in deep water; they seek their meat in the channels and the tides that run across the sands. Weel, Miguel has his job. I'll away to mine."

He went down the ladder, but Kit clung to the rails. He had not a job; his part was played when he urged Don Erminio to steer for the land, and now as he watched the white seas curl and break he knew his rashness. The steamer's course was a zig-zag; with the savage wind on her quarter, her bows swerved about. All Miguel could do was to let one divergence balance the other. In front was an ominous white crescent, running back into the dark, but broken by a gap in the middle. A man, strapped outside the bridge, hove the lead, but this was an obvious formality, because if he got shallow water *Mossamedes* could not steam out. If Miguel tried to bring her round, she would drive, broadside on, against the hammered sands.

There was no smoke astern. Revillon, no doubt, had seen the surf and hauled off, but *Mossamedes* went inshore fast. The horns of the crescent enclosed her and Kit no longer saw a gap. The sea was all a white turmoil and furious combers rolled up astern. One felt them run forward, as if they travelled up an inclined plane, and the ship rode dizzily on their spouting crests. Then for a time Kit saw nothing. Foam enveloped *Mossamedes*, her deck vanished, and he was beaten and blinded. He could hold on, but this was all; the spray came over the wheel-house like a cataract. Kit knew *Mossamedes* was swinging round because the wind now blew across the house.

The plunges got less violent and the spray was thinner. One saw the iron bulwarks, and the winches in the forward well, about which an angry flood washed. At the end of the bridge, Don Erminio's figure, looking strangely slanted, cut the sky. *Mossamedes* had run through the gap and was in deeper water behind the sands. Yet the water was not all deep. Another shoal occupied part of the basin and Kit tried to recapture its bearings as he had noted them when he went fishing in the boat. He found he could not. When the light was strong and the swell slow, one could judge distance and know the depth by the changing colour and the measured line of foam. Now there was nothing but foam that tossed in the dark.

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Mossamedes forged ahead, and Kit wondered whether Don Erminio knew where he went. On the whole, he thought the captain did not know; sometimes one must blindly trust one's luck. She came round again, lurched by the turmoil on a sand, and steamed head to wind. Then Miguel came to the door of the wheel-house.

"We are arrived, señor!"

Don Erminio signed to the leadman, who swung the plummet round his head and let go.

"Good! We have water enough," said the captain, and rang the telegraph.

The reversed engines shook the ship and the anchor plunged. She stopped, and but for the roar of the breakers all was quiet. Somehow Miguel had brought her across the sands. When she dragged out her cable the guns were hoisted up and put near the gangway, where, if needful, one could heave the boxes overboard. Miguel cleared the cargo launch ready for launching and they stripped the covers from a lifeboat.

Since they had brought their dangerous cargo to the spot agreed, Kit was resolved it must be landed. To carry out Yusuf's orders was perhaps the best plan to defeat his treachery, and Kit thought his doing so had a touch of humour. He felt he would like to see Yusuf again, but he need not bother much about Revillon. The Frenchman had chased *Mossamedes* and lost her; if he returned at daybreak, he would not venture across the sands. Anyhow, they could get rid of the evidence against them soon after they saw the gunboat's smoke. All the same, Kit meant to land the guns.

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When all was ready he went to the engineers' mess-room and smoked. He was highly strung and could not sleep, but to wait for daybreak was hard. The gunboat might arrive and he doubted if the cargo launch could cross the surf. One must run some risk, but he was not going to drown his men. He heard the wind, although its roar was dulled by other noises. Then *Mossamedes* rolled, the water in her bilges splashed about, chains clanged on deck, and one heard hammers and shovels in the stokehold. Strange echoes rolled about the empty iron hull.

Now and then Don Erminio came down and talked about shooting rabbits; sometimes Macallister pulled back the curtain, lighted his pipe, and philosophised, but did not stop long. Barefooted firemen and sailors flitted along the alleyway; it looked as if nobody could rest. At length, when Kit's mouth was parched from smoking, he got up, shivered, and turned off the light. A pale glimmer pierced the glass, and putting on a thick jacket, he went on deck.

Day was breaking and it was cold. The wind was dropping, but the swell ran high, and the sand blew from the point like a brown fog. Under the fog were white lines of surf. By and by Don Erminio climbed the rigging and Kit joined him where the steel shrouds got narrow. The mast swung, carrying them with it in a reeling sweep, until they could have dropped into the sea. In

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the meantime the light had got stronger and presently Don Erminio gave the glasses to Kit. So far as one could see, nothing broke the horizon.

"It is good," said Don Erminio. "The animal is gone. We will get to work."

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CHAPTER XII

THE RETREAT TO THE BOAT

At the bottom of the wady it was very hot, and Kit lay on the sand behind a rock. His smarting skin was crusted by salt, his clothes had dried stiff, and his muscles were sore. He had landed the guns, and it had not been easy to run the launch through the surf and hold her off the roaring beach while the boxes were brought ashore. The boat was half swamped, and the sailors laboured up to their waists in water.

After the cargo was landed, a few dark-skinned men arrived, and when they loaded the boxes on their camels a dispute began. Kit understood the Berbers declared the rifles were not the pattern they expected to get, and Wolf had not sent the number agreed. The leader, a very big, truculent fellow, had opened a box, and argued angrily with the interpreter. Simon was a Syrian, and since he owned that the Morocco he knew was the Mediterranean coast, Kit imagined he did not altogether understand the other's dialect. The Berber's dissatisfaction was obvious, and Kit agreed to go up the wady and meet the chief.

When he had gone two or three miles, the Berbers, stating that they would bring the chief, left two of their party and vanished with the loaded camels among the stones. Kit rather thought the two who stopped were meant for guards. They carried long guns and refused to talk to the interpreter. After waiting for some time, Kit began to get disturbed. Since he had left some men on board the launch, his party was not large and carried no weapons but their long Spanish knives. Moreover the yellow haze round the sun and the pillars of sand that span about the wady indicated a dust storm not far off. If the wind freshened much, the launch could not ride in the surf. Kit resolved he would not stop long, and lighting a cigarette began to ponder.

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They had not seen the gunboat. It looked as if Revillon imagined *Mossamedes* had got away in the dark and was searching the coast for her. He would, no doubt, come back, but since the incriminating cargo was landed this was not important. Perhaps Revillon had come back. The sea was hidden by the hot, stony banks, and Kit was tired and languid; to climb to the parched table land was too much effort. He began to think about the rifles. So far, the tribesmen had brought the sheep and camels they had agreed to deliver; now it looked as if they thought they had been cheated. This was strange, but Kit remembered that none of his friends trusted Wolf. He must see the chief and if possible satisfy the fellow. All the same, he would not wait much longer. Don Erminio would get disturbed, and the wind was rising. If nobody arrived when his cigarette was smoked, he would start.

"They are sulky fellows," he said, indicating the Berbers.

"The Moors are very bad people," Miguel agreed. "When a *bacalao* schooner is wrecked on the coast one does not see the crew again. It is possible all are not drowned, but they vanish."

Kit looked at the Berbers and thought their quietness sinister. Their dark faces were inscrutable, and they did not move. One could hardly distinguish them from the stones.

"This time they bring no sheep or camels," Miguel resumed meaningly.

"It is strange," said Kit. "We have brought them rifles, but perhaps they have already paid for the lot."

"Some day they will get the rifles without payment," remarked Juan, the mate. "So long as they expect another lot, they are honest, but when they get all they want they will cut your throat. They will not cut mine; I have had enough. Señor Wolf is clever, but the game is dangerous. If he cheats, you will pay."

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Kit looked at Simon, who knitted his brows. "I do not altogether understand, but they are angry. Something is not as they had thought."

The haze about the sun was thicker. Puffs of fiery wind blew down the wady, a whirling pillar of dust broke and fell near the group, and the distant rumble of the surf got loud. It was very hot and the men were languid, but a sailor pulled a knife with an ornamented handle from his sleeve and began to sharpen it on his belt. Kit's cigarette had burned to a stump, and he looked at his watch. Juan got up.

"*Vamos!* We start now," he said. "Señor Wolf knows much; he stops at Las Palmas and if his customers carry us off, it is our affair."

One of the Berbers began to talk in an angry voice but they set off, and to start was some relief to

Kit. Standing for his employer, he felt himself accountable for his party, and he had waited long enough. In fact, he wondered whether he had not waited too long, since the rising surf might force the launch to return to the ship. Now he was going, he wanted to go fast, but for a time did not. He was tired, the heat was enervating, and the path was rough. Big stones lay about the dry river bed, and the gaps were filled by soft sand, in which one's feet sank. Besides, it was prudent to use control. The others were obviously disturbed, and he must make an effort for calm.

For all that, when the sand began to blow down the wady his speed got faster. The dust stuck to his hot skin and gathered on his eyelashes. He could not see properly and his breath was laboured, but when a sailor in front began to run he kept up. He frankly did not want to be left behind. Perhaps it was imagination, but he began to feel as if somebody followed him.

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Turning his head, he looked about. He saw big stones and clumps of tamarisk, but this was all. The dust might hide the Berbers' camels, and a camel travels faster than a tired man. The strange thing was, although he had gone up the wady to meet the Berbers, he now wanted to reach the launch before they arrived. Kit admitted he was not logical, but to know the launch might have gone bothered him.

At length the wady got wider, and peering through the dust-cloud, he saw the sea. The launch had not gone and the lifeboat was coming from the steamer. Kit thought this strange, since the launch would carry all, but perhaps Don Erminio had sent to find out why they had not returned. The surf was high and a man on board the launch stood up and waved his arms, as if he signalled the party to be quick. Then the dust got very thick and boats and surf vanished. Juan shouted, but Kit did not hear what he said. They were all running as fast as possible, slipping and stumbling across the stones.

They reached the open beach and the dust rolled by. For a few moments the view was clearer and Kit saw the man on the launch was not waving to him; he signalled to the lifeboat. Looking back, Kit understood. Camels were coming down the wady. Then the dust rolled up again and he saw nothing.

Breathing hard, he laboured across the beach. The sailors had paid out cable and the launch, with her bows to the breakers, tossed about in the surf. In a few moments he would reach her, but somebody behind seized him. He staggered and tried to turn; and then a sailor swerved and jumped. Kit saw the Spanish knife shine and next moment he was free. He plunged into the water and the launch's stern struck the sand close by. A broken sea rolled in and men jumped overboard. They carried oars and knives, for the *baccalao* fishers' quarrel with the Moors is old. Kit seized the launch's tiller, a thick bar of African oak.

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Men with darker skins than the Spaniards were in the water, but so far as Kit could see, they did not shoot. It looked as if they meant to capture the party. Kit, however, could not see much. Dust and sand rolled across the beach and the spray was thick. The launch was half swamped and he thought the Berbers would hold her until the surf beat in her bilge. Long oars and stretchers swung, Miguel used an iron anchor-stock, and the mate, crouched like a cat on the stern, thrust with his knife. Perhaps the struggle had gone on for a minute when the white lifeboat rode in on a comber's top. She swung to her anchor and Don Erminio jumped overboard. To come ashore was not the captain's business, but Don Erminio was a sportsman.

For the next few moments the struggle was savage, but Kit did not know much about it. He was knocked down and washed against the lifeboat. His head hurt, he could not get on his feet, and the surf rolled him up and down the beach. Then, when he was going out with the backwash, somebody dragged him on board, and while he lay in the water under the thwarts he was dully conscious that the boat was off the beach. He knew this because she lurched violently, but did not strike the sand. Spray blew about and the tops of the seas splashed across the gunwale. She made slow progress and Kit thought all the oars were not manned.

Crawling aft under the rowers' feet, he seized a thwart and pulled himself up. Don Erminio lay on the sternsheets and groaned. His face was very white and his leg was not its proper shape. The launch laboured across the combers some distance off. Kit pushed a man from the tiller and told him to row. His head ached, but he could steer.

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They were long pulling off to *Mossamedes*, and then were forced to wait for some minutes. She rolled, lifting her bilge-keels out of the water, and one must watch for a chance to hook on the tackles. At length a broken sea, smaller than the others, lifted the boat and Kit seized the swinging hook. The bowman was quick and got the other hook, a winch rattled, and the big boat went up. She struck the steamer's plates, but did not stop, and in a few moments the swivelling davits dropped her on the skids. Macallister and a steward lifted out the captain, and Kit went aft to see the launch hove up. Then he went to his room and for a time knew nothing more.

He was roused by Macallister's bathing his face, and gave him a dull look.

"I'm thinking ye'll no be very bonny for a week or two," the engineer remarked. "For a' that, ye're luckier than the captain."

"Is Don Erminio hurt?" Kit asked.

"His legs and some ribs are broken; maybe he was washed aneath the launch. But yon's no a'. When the boats came off Juan and Miguel were not on board."

Kit lifted himself awkwardly and leaned against the back of his bunk. His head ached horribly and

his brain was dull, but he felt the throb of engines and heard water flow along the plates. *Mossamedes* was steaming hard and he must get up. He got his leg across the ledge, and then Macallister pushed him firmly back.

"Ye'll bide! Felix and I have work enough wi' the captain and two or three mair."

"But you must stop her. I'm going back for Miguel."

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"Ye cannot go back. I dinna ken how we won out."

"Ah!" said Kit, who felt the steamer's regular rise and fall. "She has crossed the shoals?"

"It looks like that. When I stopped to use the big lead, we got good water."

"But who took her out? Miguel's not on board."

"Sometimes ye must trust your luck," Macallister replied. "Before the lifeboat went away Don Erminio hove the cable short, and when ye brought him off, unconscious, I broke the anchor out. There's no' a sound plank in the launch, the lifeboat's sternpost's smashed, and the sea was getting up. If Juan and Miguel are living, the Moors have carried them off. Weel, since the second mate is damaged, I reckoned my job was to get back to Grand Canary. I sent Salvador to the wheel, started the mill, and let her gang."

"You went across blind?" Kit exclaimed with dull surprise.

"Just that! She hit the bottom, but came off and we got no extra water in the wells."

The thing looked impossible; Kit had thought nobody but Miguel could steer *Mossamedes* across the shoals. For all that, her even movements indicated that she had reached open sea, and Kit tried to brace himself.

"But if the captain and second mate are knocked out, we haven't a navigator, and Grand Canary's small."

"Ye have a good engineer and a crew o' *baccalao* fishermen," Macallister rejoined. "I alloo Grand Canary's small, but it's high, and ye can see the Peak o' Teneriffe over a hundred miles. Weel, I ken where we started and put over the patent log. When ye steer for an archipelago ye needna bother about a few degrees."

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Kit nodded. Six high volcanic islands rise from deep water, and *Mossamedes'* crew had manned the fishing schooners. On a short voyage one could navigate by dead-reckoning.

"I'll away and look at the captain," Macallister resumed. "If ye'll no promise to lie quiate until I let ye up, I'll lock ye in."

Kit promised, because he doubted if he could get out of his bunk, and when Macallister had gone he turned awkwardly and looked at the glass on the wall. A purple mark crossed his swollen forehead, and his jaw was cut. Somebody had knocked him down with a gun, or perhaps he had got under the plunging boat. All his body felt battered. For a few minutes he leaned against the side of his bunk, and then slipped back and went to sleep.

PART III

KIT FINDS HIS LEVEL

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CHAPTER I

ILLUMINATION

Mossamedes steamed into Las Palmas harbour one evening, and as soon as she was moored Kit landed Don Erminio and filed the necessary documents at the *Commandancia* offices. He, however, said nothing about the struggle on the beach, and accounted for the captain's injuries by stating that he was washed under the boat. The sailors' hurts were not serious, and Kit had not allowed the port doctor to see the men. His visit was an embarrassment, but on the whole Kit and Macallister thought they had not excited his curiosity.

While he lay in his bunk Kit had pondered and made his plans. He meant to return and look for the mate and Miguel, but if the Spanish officers knew, he was persuaded they would not let him go. They would, no doubt, make exhaustive inquiries and reports, and then send a properly organised search party. Speed, however, was important, and anything undertaken by the Spanish Government was not done soon.

Although it cost him some effort, he went from the *Commandancia* to the mate's house and told

his story to a startled woman with a powdered face. When Señora Diaz was calm she asked Kit what he was going to do about it, and he said: "In the morning I sail for Africa. I do not think Juan is hurt; the Moors wanted prisoners to hold until they get satisfaction. You must not be afraid. Somehow we will find him."

Señora Diaz was comforted. Kit was young, but he looked very resolute and capable. Something in his quiet voice gave her confidence.

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"*Vaya con Dios!*" she said and let him go.

Kit felt the señora had not used conventionally the polite good-bye; anyhow he had not given her an empty promise. He was going to find her husband, and Wolf was going to help. If it were necessary, Kit meant to force him, for he had noted that *Cayman* was in the harbour ready for sea. Wolf must charter her in the next hour or two, and she must sail before the Commandante knew about the fight on the beach. Responsibility had developed Kit and brought into action qualities he had not altogether known were his. He could front a crisis and saw he must front one now. *Cayman* was in port, and with the fresh Trade-breeze abeam, would soon reach the wady. A few resolute men might find and make some bargain with the Moors, but if a gunboat landed a strong party the tribe would vanish in the desert.

After the lonely anchorage and desolate surf-beaten coast, the noise and traffic in the streets were strange. Bright lights burned in the shops, people crowded the pavements, enjoying the cool of the evening, and Kit heard the band in the *alameda*. He felt he had nothing to do with the careless loungers, and their cheerful voices jarred. His load was heavy and he was highly strung.

To reach the quiet street where Wolf lived was some relief, but Kit went slowly, trying to think. He had taken Yusuf's selling them to Revillon for granted, but he doubted if this were all. Kit was satisfied Wolf had not carried out his engagements with the Moors, and since the fellow had cheated his customers he would not hesitate to betray his servants. He had used them unscrupulously, and now two might be forced to pay for his dishonesty, he must send them help.

For a few minutes Kit mused about something else. Mrs. Austin had got him the post, and it looked as if she knew Wolf was a cheat. Anyhow, Olivia knew, and she was not as clever as her sister. After he had seen Wolf, he was going to see Mrs. Austin. If there was any difficulty about Wolf's chartering *Cayman*, she must persuade her husband. Austin was Jefferson's partner and owned some shares in the boat.

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Kit stopped at the arch that led to Wolf's *patio*. All was dark inside and the iron gate was fast. He rang a bell and a man crossed the flags and pulled back the heavy bolt. His face was near the bars, and Kit noted with some surprise that it was not Wolf's servant.

"What does your honor want?" he asked.

Kit said he wanted Wolf and would go to the office, but the other did not open the gate.

"Señor Wolf is not here."

"Not here! Then, where is he?" said Kit, with an effort for calm.

The other spread out his hands. "*Quien sabe?* Many are curious, but nobody knows. The señor went some days since. I am the landlord's servant and take care of the house."

"Ah!" said Kit sharply. "Did he leave a letter for his *sobrecargo?*"

"He left nothing, señor. The boxes in the office were empty. There was a heap of ashes, as if somebody had burned papers, but this was all."

Kit thanked the man and went off. He knew enough. Wolf was gone and one saw what his going meant. Numerous steamers touched at Las Palmas and the fellow had, no doubt, quietly got on board. Since he could buy his ticket from the purser, there was no use in inquiring at the steamship offices. Well, Kit must see Mrs. Austin.

The shortest way to the house was across the *alameda*. The band was playing, lamps burned among the dusty trees, and as Kit approached a group of people he stopped. Olivia talked to a Spanish lady, the lady's husband, two or three young Spanish girls, and some coaling clerks stood about, but when Olivia saw Kit she left the others. Going with him to a bench at a quiet spot not far off, she sat down. Kit leaned against a tree and a beam from a lamp touched his face. Olivia noted the dark bruise and the hardness of his mouth. He looked very tired and his eyes were dull.

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"Why, Kit! What is the matter?" she said.

"I expect you know Wolf is gone?"

"Yes, I do know. But what does it mean?"

"For one thing, it means Wolf's a thief and I'm a trustful fool. In the meantime, perhaps, that's enough—"

"I wouldn't bother about it," said Olivia soothingly. "You look ill and you have hurt your head."

"I must bother," Kit rejoined. "I was Wolf's servant and have lost two of his men. Since I stood for their employer, in a sense the men were mine. The Moors have got them. Wolf cheated the fellows, they followed us to the boats, and there was a fight. I got on board, but all the men who'd

gone with me did not. I was their leader; I ought to have gone off last."

Olivia was moved by his distress and put her hand gently on his arm.

"Oh, Kit, I'm sorry! But you're not accountable. If it had been possible to save the men you would have brought them off."

Her sympathy thrilled him. He was highly strung, and although he tried for control he was carried away.

"The voyage was disastrous; all went wrong from the start," he said. "You warned me and talked about bad luck, but I went. Perhaps I'm obstinate, but I think you knew why I did go."

Olivia turned her head and thought. She had known why he went, but it was plain the reserve he had used was gone. His control was broken and he would be frank. She liked him, but now he forced her to choose her line, she admitted this was all. [Pg 203]

"I think you were rather ridiculous," she said, quietly looking up.

He tried to pull himself together, but could not. He had got a nasty knock.

"It looks like that!" he said in a hoarse voice. "All the same, you knew my ambition and didn't hint I was ridiculous!"

The blood came to Olivia's skin and her eyes sparkled.

To some extent she felt Kit's retort was justified, but she was modern and had pluck.

"I thought you lonely and we were pals," she said. "Did you expect me to warn you I didn't want a lover?"

"If you had warned me it would not have cost you much. Perhaps I am dull, but sometimes I do understand. I thought I might, like Austin, mend my fortune; he held my post and married your sister. You knew, and I expect you were amused. The thing was a joke! Well, sometimes I saw I was a fool, but I wasn't logical long. When you're about one isn't logical. I *meant* to mend my fortune."

"Are you logical now?"

Kit laughed harshly. "Oh, yes; my rashness is plain enough! You had long since resolved to refuse me all I hadn't the pluck to ask. Well, my luck is certainly not good. I have been refused before and in the meantime——"

She stopped him by a proud gesture. "You are breaking rules, Kit, and mustn't talk like this again. When you are cool you will know you ought not. What have your love affairs to do with me?"

He gave her a steady look and his face got rather white. The dark bruise was plainer and the blood left his lips. [Pg 204]

"My rules are the rules of the humble folk to whom I belong. All the same, I might have tried to use yours had I been my proper self. Well, perhaps I deserve some punishment. I'm poor and have no talent to help me along; I let Wolf use and cheat me like a schoolboy. Then, when I met you a few minutes since, I forgot about the men I'd lost. However, I'm going back to look for them and if I find them and some time get a proper job, we'll talk about my rashness again. I'll go to Don Pancho and state I mean to ask you to marry me. You'll no doubt refuse, but my proposal will be regular, and to refuse an offer I've some right to make won't humiliate you."

Olivia thought fatigue and strain accounted for much. He had got a bad knock, and she had hurt him worse. She was half sorry and half angry, but her anger was keenest against Mrs. Austin, who had sent him on board the ship.

"You are ridiculous, Kit," she said gently. "But if you are in trouble about Wolf and the men in Morocco, go to Jacinta. I think she ought to help. That's all. You mustn't keep me. The others are curious."

She rejoined the party at the band and Kit went on to Mrs. Austin's. He agreed with Olivia, but did not stop where she stopped. Mrs. Austin *was going* to help. When he reached the veranda she was talking to Mrs. Jefferson, and nobody else was about. Kit remembered this was an evening on which she did not receive guests. She glanced at him with some surprise, noting his bruised face and disturbed look, and then indicated a chair.

"I don't know that you'll urge me to stop when you have heard my tale," he said. "However, is Mr. Austin or Mr. Jefferson at home?" [Pg 205]

"Harry is at Teneriffe, and Jefferson has gone to Madeira."

"Then my luck is bad again," said Kit. "All the same, I've come to ask for something and meant to state that I expected your support. I meant to see you anyhow."

Mrs. Austin was surprised, but said nothing. Kit had not talked to her like this before. He was cool and very stern. Somehow he looked older and she wondered about the bruise.

"Very well," he resumed. "I met Miss Brown at the *alameda* and understand you know Wolf is

gone. I did not know until I arrived, but begin to see light. It's possible his going did not surprise you. You knew he was a rogue!"

"You are taking much for granted," Mrs. Austin remarked quietly.

"Not at all," said Kit. "Your sister knew and warned me. People declare you're the cleverest woman at Las Palmas."

Mrs. Austin pondered. If Olivia had warned Kit, it was possible the girl herself did not know as much as her elder sister had thought. About Betty, for example.

"Well?" she said.

"I'll tell you my story," Kit replied, and narrated his adventures after landing the guns.

"I begin to see," Mrs. Austin remarked. Then, for her line of argument was sometimes not very obvious, she resumed: "You met Olivia not long since by the band?"

"That is so," Kit replied with some dryness. "All the same, you have no grounds to be disturbed; Miss Brown knows my drawbacks. In fact, when you persuaded Wolf to give me the post your meddling wasn't necessary. But you did get me the post, although you doubted Wolf. This is important!"

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At Las Palmas Mrs. Austin was a great lady, and Kit had gratefully owned his debt to her. Now he took another line; a line that nobody she knew durst use. For all that she was sorry for Kit. He looked ill and worn; she saw that losing the men weighed hard on him.

"Suppose I admit I sent you to Wolf?" she said. "You feel you are entitled to blame me because your adventure was not fortunate?"

"Not at all; my object's not to blame you," said Kit. "When I took the post I thought you kind. To find out that all you wanted was to get me away from Las Palmas hurt. However, we won't bother about this——"

He paused. Mrs. Austin's calm was beginning to embarrass him. In fact, there was something very dignified about her quietness, although she admitted that her plotting had cost him much. Kit, however, braced himself.

"I meant to see you before I saw Mr. Austin," he resumed. "I'm going back for the men and must get a boat at once. If the Commandante knew I was going he wouldn't let me sail, and he will know soon. *Cayman's* ready for sea and you must lend me her."

Mrs. Austin smiled. "I don't think your argument is altogether sound. *Cayman* belongs to my husband and Jefferson and they are away."

"All that's Mr. Austin's is yours, and Mrs. Jefferson is here."

"I imagine I can promise for my husband," Mrs. Jefferson remarked.

"Very well," said Mrs. Austin. "You may have the boat. I will give you a letter for the captain."

She went off, and Mrs. Jefferson turned to Kit. "Have you seen Betty?"

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Kit started. He had forgotten Betty; he was again a fool. She would understand his troubles and would sympathise. He was persuaded she would agree he ought to go.

"I'd like to see her, but I cannot," he said. "We must sail at daybreak, and I have much to do. All I can think about is getting back to Africa. But, if you will tell her why I didn't go to the office——"

Mrs. Jefferson smiled. Betty had qualities, but Mrs. Jefferson doubted if she would approve Kit's sending another to tell his tale. She said nothing, and Mrs. Austin presently returned and gave Kit an envelope.

"This is an order for the captain. Your adventure's rash, and I really ought not to agree," she said. "For all that, I wish you luck!"

Kit thanked her and when he went down the steps Mrs. Austin looked at Mrs. Jefferson.

"If he wrecks *Cayman* or the crew get hurt I shall have some trouble with Harry. Sometimes he is firmer than people think."

Mrs. Jefferson smiled. "On the whole I imagine Jake will approve. Perhaps Kit was rude, but in a way he was rather fine. He won't wreck the boat, and I expect he will get the men. Kit is good stuff. However, I suppose you're satisfied you were entitled to meddle?"

"About Olivia? Yes, so far as that goes, my plan was good. My father was a steamship steward and began business at Las Palmas by selling tobacco on board the ships. All the same, Kit Musgrave is not Olivia's sort. If she doesn't know this now, he and she would soon find it out. Well, I'm going to be firm."

"I doubt if firmness is indicated," Mrs. Jefferson rejoined with a twinkle. "Sometimes the best plan is to leave things alone."

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CHAPTER II

"CAYMAN'S" START

Soon after he left Mrs. Austin's, Kit rowed off to *Mossamedes*, got some clothes and talked to the interpreter, who hesitated for a time before he agreed to go with him. Then he picked out three men from the crew, but ordered them to stop on board until he was ready. It was obvious that his adventure must not be talked about before he left the port.

Afterwards he was rowed to *Cayman* and gave Mrs. Austin's letter to the captain. *Cayman* was a fast and strong ketch-rigged vessel of about sixty tons. Four hands could sail her and relieve the watch, but she carried six. When goods are not all landed at the ports, trading on the Morocco coast has some drawbacks, and Jefferson ran no risks. The captain was an old *baccalao* fisherman and when he read the order he asked: "Where do you want to go?"

Kit told him, and he looked thoughtful. "I know the spot. The sands are dangerous and the Moors are bad."

"For all that you must anchor the ketch behind the banks and wait until I come back from the desert," said Kit, and stated why he meant to undertake the journey.

"Ah," said the captain, "that is another thing! My men will not grumble; they know the Moors. Well, we are not allowed to carry guns, but I can throw a knife, and Maccario can kill a jumping goat with his sling. Then Andres, the wrestler, knows a trick. The Moor he seizes will drop with a broken back."

"Your men will stop on board. They are Señor Jefferson's servants, and the job is mine. When I land three or four from the steamer will go with me."

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"We will talk about this again. But you had anchored behind the sands and had lost Miguel. How did you get to sea?"

"I don't know," said Kit. "I was in my bunk and Don Erminio was in his, but we did get to sea. I understand Don Pedro took control."

The captain laughed. "*El maquinista? Ave Maria!* Señor, for a good sailor who is not a fisherman the thing was impossible! But I know Don Pedro. I have seen him dance, strange dances of the North, at the wineshop by the mole. Some say he is mad. All the same, the steamer is not wrecked. *Ma!*"

Kit stopped him. It looked as if Macallister's friends were numerous, but there was much to be done and he rowed the captain to the port office and left him to file his papers. One could not, without complying with some formalities, sail before daybreak, and Kit thought to send to the ayutante's house was risky.

Engaging a *tartana*, he went to see Don Erminio. The captain's small house smelt of salt fish, garlic, and burned olive oil, and Señora Martinez received Kit in the court. She was fat and her brown skin was thickly powdered.

"You will not excite my husband," she said. "When he is ill he is sometimes difficult, and he has had a dispute with the doctor."

She took Kit up the outside stairs and along a balcony to a small, hot room. Don Erminio occupied the old-fashioned bed, and when Kit came in looked up with a savage frown, but the frown vanished.

"I thought it was the animal of a doctor coming back," he remarked. "Me, I am a sailor, and he will not let me drink! The *anisado* was on the table, he put the bottle in his pocket, and I could not get up. Then he looked in the cupboard. The animal is cunning, but another time I put the bottle under the bed. However, the Moors have got Juan and Miguel. We must do something!"

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Kit stated his plans and the captain signed approval. He was tightly bandaged and could hardly move his head.

"It is very good. But you will take Don Pedro?"

"I think not. In fact, he does not know I am going."

The captain urged, but Kit was firm. Caution and tact were indicated, and although Macallister was generally cool, his coolness often masked a freakish rashness.

"Very well," Don Erminio agreed at length. "Sometimes Don Pedro is humorous, but the Moors are not people with whom one jokes. I will lend you my gun."

He signed to Señora Martinez, who brought the old pinfire gun and gave it to Kit.

"The gun is good. If you are careful she will not go off before you want, but you must not shake her," he resumed, and frowned when he saw the mark on the box of cartridges. "What is this?" he asked his wife. "Bring the number B. Señor Musgrave does not shoot the rabbit."

Señora Martinez got another box and Don Erminio nodded. "It is good! If Pepe has used the

proper measure, she will kill a Moor at twenty yards. But you must not shake her. The hammer-spring is loose."

Kit thanked him and soon afterwards went off. He had taken the gun in order to indulge the captain, since it was obvious that when he met the Moors he could not use force. For all that, he had not a pistol and to some extent the old gun might give him moral support.

When he was rowed across the harbour he heard a guitar badly played, and jumping down from *Cayman's* bulwarks saw Macallister sitting under the anchor light. The engineer held the guitar awkwardly, and the sailors sat round and laughed.

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"Hallo!" Kit said, frowning. "Why have you come on board?"

"Ye're a dour, crabbit Englishman and no' as clever as ye think," Macallister rejoined. "Ye had not been gone ten minutes when I kenned what ye were after and reckoned I had got to see ye oot. Ye didna ken I talk Aver-r-rack?"

"I doubt it now," said Kit and Macallister beckoned the interpreter, who had come on board with him.

"Ye shall judge, Adjia Simonidas."

"Is this Arabic? It sounds like Greek," said Kit.

"Simon's from Aleppo," Macallister rejoined. "When ye trade in the Levant, ye use Arabic, Turkish, Italian and Greek, and whiles ye mix the lot. There's no' a sailor's café between Suez and Smyrna I dinna ken. But ye're a doubting creature. Weel, Simon——"

He began to talk and the interpreter leaned against the mast and laughed.

"He is truly droll," Simon remarked in French. "But I think he is safe with the Moors. Good Moslems believe that Allah guards such as him."

Kit lighted a cigarette. He had undertaken an awkward job and was sternly serious. Mack was, of course, a good sort, but when he was not engaged in the engine-room his talents were for something like comic opera. Kit would frankly sooner he had stopped on board *Mossamedes*. For all that, he had known Mack's reckless humour useful when sober thought was not, and he must be resigned. Mack was on board and would not go back.

When Kit had smoked his cigarette he got two of the men to wash *Cayman's* boat and rowed across the harbour to a coaling wharf. The clerks had gone, but Kit knew how the hose key worked and brought back the boat loaded with fresh water as deep as she would float. Then he looked at his watch and going to the *patron's* small cabin tried to sleep.

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The rattle of chain woke him and he went on deck. Day was breaking and a cold wind blew off the land. Mist rolled about the mountains and in the background Las Palmas glimmered against dark volcanic rocks. Its outline was blurred and the white houses were indistinct; the town looked ghostly and unsubstantial. In the harbour, steamers with gently-swaying masts floated on the smooth swell. Nobody moved about their decks and all was very quiet but for the surf that beat against the mole.

Some of the crew began to hoist the mainsail. They moved slackly, as if they were half-asleep, their bare feet made no noise, and Kit liked to hear the thud of the canvas they threw off the boom. Then blocks began to rattle, and when the gaff was up the sail flapped in the wind. They left the peak hanging and went forward to hoist the jib. The noise of running wire and chain halyard was cheerful, and Kit tried to rouse himself.

There is something that moves the imagination about a large steamer leaving port. One gets a sense of organised effort, of force in man's control and the triumph of his inventions. Kit had vaguely felt that the *correillo's* sailing with the mails on board was, so to speak, a social function of some importance to all. To mark a mail-boat's departure by a gun or detonating rocket was proper. But *Cayman's* start was flat and dreary. She must steal out of harbour lest she be stopped; and Kit, shivering in the cold wind, was daunted.

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He had left his ship without leave and Macallister had frankly run away. They had broken useful rules and would, no doubt, lose their posts, but this did not much bother Kit. He had undertaken a job that, so far as he could see, he could not carry out. In fact, the thing was ridiculous. The Moors were fierce and cunning desert thieves, and he was going to force them to agree with him. He knew no arguments they would admit, and his only protection was Don Erminio's old pinfire gun.

Kit felt his youth, but his inheritance counted for much. His code was the Puritans', and its rude simplicity had advantages. One must do this because it was proper; the other was not. There was no use in arguing when one knew what was right. Kit saw his duty and, if it cost him something, he must pay. All the same, he shrank. To do what he ought might cost much.

Cayman rode to a buoy and when the jib was sheeted they brought the mooring aft and let her swing. The *patron* went to the long tiller and wore her round, and the slack mainsail lurched across. Then all went to the peak halyard and Kit's spirits rose. The rattle of blocks was cheerful; he liked to see the straining figures rise and fall. The men's laboured breath and rhythmic movements gave him a bracing sense of effort.

Cayman stole between a big cargo boat and a passenger liner, and by contrast with their lofty hulls looked absurdly small. When she began to list the water was nearly level with her covering board. The list got sharper, she forged past the end of the mole and her bowsprit splashed in the high, green swell. The *patron* studied the mist that rolled about the mountains and turned to Kit.

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"The wind blows up there and we will get it when we get the sun. Well, we must drive her off the coast before the Commandante knows why we have gone. I think we will not steer the usual course."

They ran up the staysail and set the mizzen. *Cayman* leaped forward and the spray blew from her plunging bows. Her white wake trailed across the tops of the seas astern, and the water that bubbled through the scuppers crept up her lee deck. For all that, the captain was not satisfied and he looked to windward, knitting his brows.

"One can see far with the telescope from the Isleta signal station," he remarked. "The mist is clearing. We will risk the topsail."

The big sail was hoisted and *Cayman's* list got very sharp. One could not see how far the water crept up her inclined deck, because a sparkling cascade splashed across her weather bow and swelled the flood. They had hauled her on the wind and her channels dragged in the foam. One heard the wire shrouds hum and the masts groan, and now and then a sea rolled aft and broke against the boat on deck. For all that, the captain held on, and when the sun rose Grand Canary had melted into the silver mist.

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CHAPTER III THE WADY

The sun was nearly overhead, and Kit sat in the hot dust that lay about the wady. A low bank rose behind him and shaded his head. His eyes hurt, he was tired, and his burned skin was sore, for the dust stung as if it were mixed with alkali. In the open one could hardly front the sun, but the nights were keen, and at daybreak he had got up shivering from his hard bed behind a stone.

Macallister, Simon, and three sailors from *Mossamedes* occupied the narrow belt of shade. Their poses were cramped and awkward, for all tried to get some shelter from the sun. They had lunched frugally on *gofio*, goat's-milk cheese, and a little sour wine. *Gofio* is roasted grain, ground and mixed with water. The gritty paste stuck to Kit's parched mouth, for he tried to control his thirst. The skin in which they had brought water from the ketch did not hold much.

The map in Wolf's office indicated an oasis not very far from the coast, and Kit imagined that where water was he would find the Berbers. Since the wady ran nearly straight inland, he resolved to use it for a guide, and for three days the party had laboured across the dust and stones. As a rule, the hollow was not deep or sharply marked. For the most part, easy slopes led to a bare tableland where the soil, swept and consolidated by the wind, looked like rock. In places, however, the hollow pierced rolling ground and sank to a stony ravine.

The country was strangely desolate, but was not the level, sandy desert Kit had thought. In fact, there was not much sand, and in spots it looked as if the soil was sometimes cultivated. The bank behind Kit's camp was sharply cut as if by an angry torrent, but since he had left the beach he had not seen water. There was not a rabbit or a partridge, although in the dry Canaries rabbits haunt the stony ravines and red-legged partridges run in the prickly pear. Nothing but a pair of buzzards, floating very high up, had crossed the sky.

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Half closing his eyelids, Kit looked about. Strange reflections quivered across the stones and distant objects were magnified. In the foreground, the light was dazzling, and the hollow melted into a luminous belt of brown and yellow. A euphorbia bush with stiff, thick stalks, however, was harshly green and looked like a house, although it was but four or five feet high. The euphorbia puzzled Kit; in a country where one found no water, its stalks were tender with milky sap. He glanced at his companions. Their cotton clothes had gone yellow, their skin was brown, and he thought one could not distinguish them a short distance off. An hour since he imagined somebody had looked out from behind a stone. Although he wanted to meet the Berbers, he did not want to think they cautiously followed his track.

He mused about the barrenness of the country. At Lanzarote, sixty miles from the African coast, it sometimes did not rain for six or eight months, and then, when the concrete cisterns were nearly dry, it rained in floods. Perhaps it was like that in Morocco; sheep and camels could not live if it did not rain at all. Kit began to think about the good bishop who used all his fortune to send the people of Lanzarote water.

A sailor shouted, and Kit jumped up. A cloud of dust rolled down the wady, and in the dust, about sixty yards off, men on camels rode for the camp. Kit watched their advance with dull surprise. A few moments since he had seen nobody and a camel is a large object to hide. It looked as if the Berbers had sprung from the sand. Then he heard the humming flight of a stone and a camel

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swerved. A sailor laughed hoarsely and stooped to get another stone for his sling, but Kit stopped the man. He had come to meet the Berbers and they carried long guns. Had they meant to hurt him, they could have hidden behind the stones and shot the party.

For all that, when they pulled up a few yards off, his heart beat and coolness was hard. They were big, muscular fellows and the nearest looked scornfully fierce; Kit could not see the others' faces because they wore loose hoods. One or two of the Spaniards had drawn their knives, but nobody moved. The little party stood against the bank and looked at the Berbers. Then Kit braced himself and signed to the interpreter.

For a few moments Simon and one of the others talked, but the Berber's remarks were short. His pose was easy, but very still, and the long gun he balanced somehow emphasised his height. He was like a bronze and blue statue, and Kit thought his quietness forbidding. The camel moved its long neck and grunted.

"He says we must go with him," Simon remarked. "His chief is waiting. That is all."

Kit looked at Macallister, who calmly cleaned his pipe. "Aweel," he said, "ye wanted to find the Moors and ye ought to be satisfied. Yon fellow's no' for arguing. We'll just gang."

The Berber touched his camel and lifted his hand. His gesture was commanding, and when the others moved forward Kit told the Spaniards to put up their knives. The Berbers did not threaten; they pushed their camels against the bank, and the men must move or be trampled.

"*Arrai!*" said the leader, his camel grunted, and Kit's men set off, one behind the other between two rows of the clumsy animals. [Pg 218]

The camels went fast, their necks moving backwards and forwards like engine piston-rods. At the bottom of the wady the heat was intolerable, and thick dust rolled up. Moreover, the ground was rough, but Kit pushed on as fast as possible. He did not think the Berbers would argue about the pace; it looked as if they thought his business was to keep up. He heard Macallister breathe hard and sometimes Simon coughed. The sailors went silently in their open rawhide shoes, the Berbers said nothing, and one could not hear the camels' feet. In fact, all was strangely quiet, and somehow flat.

Kit had started with high resolves, but owned he had not played a romantic part. Things had not gone as he had vaguely planned; the situation, so to speak, was not in his control. His party was driven along rather like a flock of sheep. Although he had meant to negotiate with the chief, it looked as if he was the fellow's prisoner.

The wady pierced a stony hill, and in the defile the heat got worse. Kit's skin was scorched; the dust got into his nose and throat. Sometimes he could hardly see; his eyes hurt and his head ached. Nevertheless, it was obvious that he must keep up and he laboured on.

By and by the Berbers turned and climbed the side of the defile. To climb was hard, for parched soil and loose stones rolled down the slope. The camels, however, went up, and Kit saw he must keep in front of the animals behind him. The track was narrow, and it did not look as if the Berbers would stop. He could not see Macallister. Gasping men and lurching camels moved in a yellow fog.

At the top they crossed a dazzling tableland where the soil was firm, and to feel the wind was some relief. When they went down again, a few miles farther on, Kit saw prickly pear, thorny aloes, and in one spot short, white stubble, but there were no tents. The hollow was wide and ran on straight in front, until stones and dust melted into the quivering reflections. Nothing indicated that a camp was near. [Pg 219]

The sun sank, and the camels threw grotesque shadows across the parched soil. Kit began to lose the sense of feverish heat, and although he was worn out, walking was easier. When the sky was luminous red and green the wind got cool and the camels' pace was fast. Somehow he kept up, and at length the Berbers stopped.

Dark tents dotted the wady and sheep occupied a belt of dry stubble. In places an aloe lifted a tall shaft, tamarisk and prickly pear grew on the banks, but Kit saw no palms. A few ruined stone huts, hardly distinguishable from the background, occupied a bend of the hollow, and a broken heap that might have been a watch tower on the ridge cut the sky. Kit understood the Berbers were nomads, but it looked as if somebody had long since built a village.

No excitement marked the party's arrival. The leader shouted "*Foocha!*" and the camels knelt; the men got down and pushed Kit and the sailors forward. Indistinct figures appeared at the tent doors, and he smelt acrid smoke. In front of the middle tent the leader stopped and a man came out.

It was getting dark, but Kit remarked that the man was not as big as the camel drivers and his skin was lighter. His mouth and jaw were covered and his blue clothes were clean. For a moment or two he studied the group and his calm glance rather annoyed Kit. All the Berbers he had met were marked by an imperturbable calm. Then the fellow said something to a camel driver, who signed the party to go with him and took them to a hut. The front was broken and the roof had fallen, but the building gave some shelter from the keen wind. By and by another man brought them a bowl of stuff like porridge, some dried meat Kit thought was goat's flesh, and dates. [Pg 220]

"What did the sheik say to the camel driver?" he asked Simon.

"He will talk to us in the morning; this was all. If he had meant to hurt us, he would not have sent the food. When you go, call him *Wazeer*. It is not his title, but he will like it."

Kit doubted if the Berber would be moved by flattery, but he said: "The food is good. This porridge stuff is better than the Canary *gofio*. What do they call it?"

"*Cous-cous*," said Simon. "From Morocco to Nigeria, all food that looks like this is *cous-cous*. It may be made with sour milk, palm oil, or water, and roasted grain, and some is very bad. In Africa they do not use many names."

"I'm thinking to talk much would hurt them," Macallister remarked. "A very reserved people, and yon sheik's the dourest o' the lot. For a' that, when I try him wi' Avar-r-rack——"

Kit turned impatiently to the interpreter. "We have got to negotiate with the man. Since we can't buy his friendship, I don't see my line."

"To be poor is not always a drawback," Simon replied. "Perhaps it is better he does not think us rich. In Africa, one gives a present and we have some wine left. It is not good, but when one has none——"

"But a Mohammedan is not allowed to drink wine."

Simon smiled. "I will use some caution. If the headman breaks the rules, his people must not know. Those who got no wine would be horrified. In this country one uses caution always. Frankness is dangerous."

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"Do you know much about the country?"

"I know something," Simon replied. "A Levantine and a Jew may go where an Englishman cannot and a Spaniard would be killed. In Egypt I was an hotel servant, in Algiers a pedlar. I have sold wine to the Legion at the outposts, and in Senegal I was major-domo for a French commandant. A small, fat man, with a theatrical dignity, but the black soldiers loved him. When they drilled well, he gave them sugar. He did not send an orderly; the commandant went along the line with the sugar in his cap. Some French are like that. Your officers are just, but one doubts if the Africans love you much. Well, in Algiers one has adventures, but in Morocco, south of Casablanca, one is lucky if one keeps one's life. If you are not bored——"

Kit said he was not bored. To listen was some relief from his gloomy thoughts, and Simon told a romantic tale. The fellow was obviously a bold and unscrupulous vagabond, but Kit did not know when his narrative stopped. He was very tired and presently his head dropped forward and his shoulders slipped down the broken wall.

When he awoke the stars were shining and it was very cold. Two sailors lay beside him and all was quiet. Kit put his head on another stone and went to sleep again.

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CHAPTER IV

KIT NEGOTIATES

In the morning before the sun was high, a Berber took Kit and his party to the headman's tent and signed them to sit in the sand. Their clothes were smeared by dust to which the dew had stuck, and Kit's boots were broken. His fatigue had not worn off much, he felt horribly dirty and dull, but he knew he must brace up. The headman and two or three others occupied the open front of the tent. In the background a row of camels, making strange noises, knelt beside a broken wall, and behind the uncouth animals stones and clumps of tamarisk melted into the widening bottom of the wady. The wind had dropped, it was not yet hot, and thin smoke with a pungent smell floated about the camp.

Kit studied the headman with some curiosity, since he did not know if the fellow was his host or captor, but got no hint from his inscrutable face. He understood the people were Berbers, but at Las Palmas he had borrowed a book that stated the Berbers were short and light-skinned. The tribesmen Kit had met were big and dark, but the chief was lighter in build and colours than the rest. He was obviously not a savage; somehow Kit thought him well-bred.

"Why have you come to my camp?" he asked.

Simon translated and afterwards carried on the talk. As a rule, it dragged, and Kit imagined the interpreter was sometimes puzzled and used the *lingua franca* of the Moorish ports.

"Tell him I have come for the men his people carried off from the boats," said Kit.

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"You thought to take them from us?"

"No," said Kit. "We knew this was impossible."

"Yet you brought a gun!"

Kit had missed the gun, but when the headman signed one of the others brought Don Erminio's old double-barrel. The Berber studied it and Kit thought him amused.

"Then you mean to buy the men?" he resumed.

Kit said he did not; he had no money, but if the men were not released, it was possible the Spanish government would send soldiers to look for them. The headman let this go and asked what his and Macallister's occupation was. Simon replied, and the other was quiet for a few moments. Then he said: "I have a better gun than yours, but sometimes it does not shoot. If this man knows machines, let him mend it."

He clapped his hands and a Berber brought Macallister a big automatic pistol.

"I doubt my luck's no' very good," Macallister remarked. "A watch I ken. When ye can grip her in a vice and have tools to pick out the works, she need not puzzle ye lang, but a pistol ye must hold on your knee is anither job. I'm thinking there might be trouble if I spoil her. For a' that, if ye have a peseta, I'll try t'."

Kit, with some hesitation gave him the coin. He had known Macallister spoil a useful watch, and return another bearing the marks of the vice-jaws. Experimenting with watches had a strange charm for him, but sometimes he made a good job, and if he mended the pistol it might help. Macallister got to work with the coin and his big pocket knife, and the headman turned to Kit.

"I seized the men because your master cheated me. If I let them go, I will not get the goods he owes." [Pg 224]

"You will not get the goods," Kit agreed. "My master is gone."

The headman and one of the others talked, and Simon said to Kit: "They think it is so. They have found out that Yusuf is gone. I expected something like this."

"Not long since I would have sold the men; I might have sold you all," the Berber resumed. "Now, however, this is perhaps not safe. We are not afraid of the soldiers, but we have enemies, and sometimes our neighbours take the white men's bribes."

"He is frank, but it is like that," Simon remarked. "In Africa, the white man's power is not his native soldiers. One tribe hates the next and foreign money rules the desert." He paused and shrugged. "It is possible the fellow would have sold us. *Baccalao* fishermen have vanished. At the wineshops the Spaniards tell stories— But he wants to know why you bother about the sailors. They are not your servants."

Kit hesitated. He did not know the Berber's code and if he claimed his object was unselfish the fellow might think he had another. Yet he was not going to make up a plausible tale. Kit's anger was quick and hot. The brute had pondered selling white men like camels.

"Tell him I saw somebody must look for them. When his people tried to carry me off, I think one put me on board the boat. That's all," he said.

"Then, they have no rich friends who would pay you if you brought them back?" the chief asked.

"You have seen them!" Kit rejoined and indicated his companions. "They are men like these. Rich men don't labour in a steamer's boats."

The Berber gave him a thoughtful glance. Kit was angry and his naive honesty was obvious. The Berber was subtle, but it did not look as if he doubted. Kit thought he weighed something; and then he looked up with a start. [Pg 225]

He had heard a sharp report, and a thin streak of smoke curled about the automatic pistol. Sheep ran across the stubble, a camel got up, and Kit saw a small hole in the tent.

"Noo I ken what's wrang with his gun," Macallister remarked.

Holding the pistol in front he advanced towards the Berbers. None moved and the headman's look was imperturbable. Kit wondered whether the magazine held another cartridge and hoped nobody would move. He knew Macallister. The engineer stopped opposite the headman, and for a moment their glances met. Then he held out the pistol, with the butt to the other.

"For a camel thief, ye're a trustful person," he said dryly.

Kit had not seen a Berber laugh, but when Simon translated it looked as if the headman smiled. He signalled and across the wady a man with a modern rifle got up from behind a stone and another crawled out of the sand. Kit thought they were picked shots and had marked the range. All the same, he doubted if the headman knew there was a cartridge in the magazine. Macallister, stopping by the other, opened the pistol.

"Noo," he said, "ye see—"

His *lingua franca* was uncouth, but when he took some pieces from the pistol with his pocket knife it looked as if the headman saw. He was obviously interested, something of his reserve vanished, and presently he signed one of the others back and Macallister sat down on the piece of carpet by his side. The engineer gave Kit a smile he understood. It was as if he had said, "Ye [Pg 226]

dinna ken old Peter yet!"

Kit mused. He had borne some strain and was languid, and the headman was occupied. It was strange, but Macallister, by luck or talent, generally took the middle of the stage. Kit was not like that, but now chance had given him a leading part, the part must be played, and he weighed the arguments he had used. He had stated that he was poor and Wolf had vanished. If the chief were satisfied about this, there was obviously no use in his holding the party for ransom or to force payment of Wolf's debt. Then he had hinted that the Spanish government might send soldiers to search the country, and the Berber admitted that he had enemies who intrigued with the white men. Kit did not know another argument; perhaps he had said enough, and he waited.

By and by the headman talked to the interpreter, who said: "He wants to know why you landed the guns when you had not brought all."

"We thought we had brought all," Kit replied. "We didn't know until the French gunboat came that Yusuf had cheated us. But he hasn't heard about the gunboat yet. You must try to make him understand."

He narrated their escape from the gunboat. The story was long, for the Berbers were not sailors and translation was difficult. Sometimes Simon hesitated, but the headman did not look impatient. His face was inscrutable and one got no hint about his thoughts. The sun got hot and the wind began to blow the dust about the wady.

At length Kit stopped and for a few moments the headman pondered.

"You might have thrown the guns into the sea, but you did not," he remarked.

"The guns were yours," said Kit. "When we knew the Jew had sold us, we resolved to deliver them. You see, we had got the camels."

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The headman gave him a searching look. "If I let you have the men we took, you will be satisfied?"

"Yes," said Kit. "That is all we want."

"Very well," said the other. "Your master robbed me, but he is gone and my debt will not be paid. I will let your men go; to keep them might be dangerous." He paused, and although he did not smile, Kit imagined he was amused. "All the camels with which I paid for the guns were not mine," he went on. "Some belonged to people who are friends of the French. I will send for your men. They are not here and you must wait for two or three days."

He sent off a man to the camels and then touched Macallister.

"If you will stop with me, you shall take care of my guns and you may get rich," he said, and turned to Kit. "If you can bring me the goods I want, I will trade with you." Then he indicated the interpreter. "If this fellow comes back, we will shoot him."

He got up, signed that the audience was over, and went into his tent. Simon's eyes twinkled.

"Perhaps he thinks I know too much, and I know something. All the same, I will not come back. In Morocco one runs risks and I have not got paid. At Cairo the tourists are curious about the East and some are generous. They know Simon at the big hotel. I will return."

Kit went off to the shade of the ruined hut. Perhaps it was strange, but he trusted the haughty Berber and he had not altogether trusted Simon. On the whole, he thought the fellow's plan was good. If the tourists at Cairo were like some at Las Palmas, Simon would be a useful guide about the town at night. Kit, himself, would sooner be a robber like the dark-skinned chief. Then Macallister sat down opposite and began to clean his pipe.

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"If I kent where to steal a handy bit steamboat, yon headman and me would make a bonnie pair o' pirates, but I've no' much use for camels," he remarked. "Weel. I alloo ye took a very proper line wi' him."

"I didn't see the line I ought to take. I was frank."

Macallister's eyes twinkled. "Just that! I'm no saying ye were plausible, but the headman's no' a fool; he saw ye were a simple weel-meaning body. Onyway, it's done with. We'll get off when Miguel comes."

Three days afterwards Miguel and Juan arrived, riding in a frame hung across a camel. The quartermaster got down awkwardly and stretched his arms and legs.

"But I am sore! It is like beating to windward in a plunging boat," he said and went up to Kit. "We were anxious, señor, the Moors are bad. But I did not bother very much. I knew you would come back for us, and my saint would guard you."

The blood came to Kit's skin. He said nothing, but gave Miguel his hand.

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CHAPTER V

THE RETURN TO THE BEACH

It was getting cooler, and long shadows marked the curves of the wady. On the other side, oblique sunbeams touched the bank. The wind had dropped, and as the dew began to fall the hot soil smelt like a brick-kiln. In the distance the surf throbbed, and Kit thought its measured beat soothing. He had had enough of the parched wilderness.

He was languid, for he had borne some strain, and when Miguel and the mate arrived a reaction had begun. The Berbers gave the party a little food and water before they broke camp and vanished in the desert, and Kit started for the coast. Travelling as fast as possible, he had used his short supplies with stern economy, and now, when he thought the shore was three or four miles off, he was hungry and tired.

To some extent, dejection accounted for his fatigue. He had got the men for whom he went, but the thrill he felt at first was gone. Wolf had run away, his wages were not paid, and since he had left his ship without leave, he expected Don Ramon would dismiss him when he got back. Moreover, he had perhaps involved the company in trouble with Captain Revillon and the Spanish officers. In fact, it looked as if he were ruined and disgraced.

He was not going to think about Olivia. She had refused him, but he had really known she would refuse. It was done with; he would be sent back to Liverpool and would not see her again. There was one comfort; Betty would stop. She was getting well and making progress; Jefferson trusted her, and her pay was good. At Liverpool he would not see Betty, but, like Olivia, she did not want him. In fact, nobody had much use for him. He had been easily cheated and had muddled all he undertook. Still, he had got Betty a good post and this was much.

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After a time he imagined he ought to see the bay from the top of the bank, and telling Macallister where he was going, he went up the slope. The climb was laborious, and at the top he stopped for breath and shaded his eyes from the level rays. The sun was near the Atlantic and in its track the water was red; the broken ground about him shone like copper. Outside the crimson reflections, the sea was wrinkled and marked by thin white lines where the long rollers broke. The strong light hurt his dazzled eyes, and with a vague sense of disturbance he turned his head. When he looked again he could see the end of the point and the anchorage, but *Cayman* was gone.

Kit felt slack and sat down in the sand. He could not see all the bay, but a vessel could only anchor at one spot and *Cayman* was not there. Kit had got a very bad jolt. The food and water would hardly last for another day, the coast was an arid desert, and he did not think he could reach the camp the Berbers had left. He did not know if he hoped *Cayman* had been blown ashore, but if she were wrecked, the crew might have saved some stores. A mile or two farther on one ought to see the beach from the top of ground that now broke his view, and he was anxious to get there, but went down slowly. He must be cool and not alarm the others yet.

At the bottom he joined Macallister, who had waited and gave him a keen glance.

"Weel?" said the engineer.

"*Cayman's* not riding in the pool," Kit replied.

Macallister was quiet for a moment or two. Then he said. "We have half a gallon o' smelling water, and there are eight o' us! As a rule, I ha' no' much use for water, but I mind when we broke the condensing plant on a coolie pilgrim boat. Ye could not fill your tanks at every coaling station then. I got some water from the hot well; tasting o' copper and grease. We fed the boilers from the sea and drove her, with funnel flaming and tubes caked wi' salt. Iron burns, ye ken, unless it's clean, and I thought the softening furnaces would blow down. She was crowded fore an' aft wi' sweating, gasping coolies, and we let her gang. When we made port I swallowed maist a gallon o' lemonade, claret and ice. Man, I hear the ice tinkling against the pail!"

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"To talk about it makes one thirsty and we mustn't be thirsty yet," Kit remarked, frowning. "Say nothing to the others. We'll push on for the ridge."

To push on was some relief from suspense. The rest of the party had not stopped and there was nobody but Macallister to note Kit's keen impatience. He wanted to reach the high ground that commanded the beach, because it was possible *Cayman* had broken her cable and driven ashore. Kit felt he must know, and the shadows got longer fast. Perhaps it would be dark before he got to the ridge. His burned skin was wet by sweat, and his breath was short, but he stubbornly laboured on.

At length he climbed a sloping bank, and from a high spot searched the bay. The sun had gone, and the red on the sky and water was fading, but behind the point *Cayman's* mast cut the glow. Kit's heart beat. The ketch was not at her anchorage, but she was not on the beach. He shaded his eyes and looked again.

The mast was slightly inclined; in the glimmering reflections he could hardly distinguish the boat's hull. The tide was ebbing and he thought her keel touched bottom, but there was some water under her bilge. Although the risk of hunger and thirst was gone, Kit was disturbed. When he studied the water-line on the beach, it looked as if *Cayman* would presently fall over on her

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side. On a flat, open coast, the tides do not rise much, but there was a difference of some feet in the level, and at low ebb the boat would be nearly dry.

Kit wondered whether she was damaged, because one of two things had happened. When it blew fresh *Cayman* had broken her cable and driven ashore; or the captain had slipped the anchor and tried to get to sea. That he had not done so was plain, but since she had not broken up, Kit imagined she lay in a hollow, sheltered to some extent by higher sands outside. To get to sea she must wait for the big tides at the new moon, and then perhaps one must land all heavy gear and ballast and put the stuff on board again when she reached the anchorage. The job would be awkward and long.

Pulling himself together, Kit went down to the wady and told the others the ketch had grounded. The tired men saw all this implied and while the light faded made the best speed they could. When they reached the beach it was dark, but the captain had kept good watch and soon after they arrived a boat came shorewards on a smooth-topped roller. Running into the water, they pushed her off and Kit presently climbed on board the ketch. *Cayman's* deck was sharply slanted; sometimes she lifted her lower side and one felt her bilge work in the sand. Some distance out to sea the rollers crashed upon the shoals, but the waves that broke about the ketch were small. Kit dined on salt fish, potatoes and sour red wine. In the morning he would talk to the captain; now he was very tired and must sleep.

He got up soon after daybreak and joined the captain on a plank hung over the side. A man with a mallet caulked an open seam and indicated three or four butt joints that were freshly tarred. When Kit had looked about, the captain sat down on the plank and made a cigarette. [Pg 233]

"It blew, señor, but it blew!" he said. "When the anchor dragged we hoisted jib and mizzen, but she would not beat out. Then while we hoisted the reefed mainsail she struck. A comber threw her up the sand; we lowered all sail and let her drive, until we knew by the smoother water she had crossed the shoal. Then two anchors brought her up."

Kit nodded. "What are you going to do about it?"

"When we have caulked some seams she will not leak much, and if it does not blow again, she will lie here until the tides get high. In the meantime, we will heave out the ballast and land it on the beach. Then perhaps at the new moon we can kedge her across to the pool."

"The job will be long," said Kit. "My men must rest to-day. In the morning we will get to work."

They began at sunrise next day, but the work was hard. *Cayman* had been built for speed and when sail was set would not stand up without a large quantity of ballast. The ballast was iron kentledge, moulded to fit her frames, and when the floors were up the men, crouching in the dark, pulled the heavy blocks out of the bilge-water. Except for an hour or two at low tide *Cayman* did not lie quiet; when the water lifted her she rolled. The blocks were sent up in a sling and lowered into the boat, which did not carry much and must be rowed for half a mile across angry waves. Near the beach an anchor was dropped, and when she swung head to sea her crew jumped over and carried the iron through the surf. Sometimes they were forced to wait, and sometimes to haul off the boat. [Pg 234]

All hands were needed, and after a day or two Kit's muscles ached and his bruised hands bled. When his limbs were cramped by crawling among the timbers in the hold, he went off in the boat, and clasping a fifty-six-pound lump of iron laboured up the hammered beach. Sometimes a roller, frothing round his waist, urged him on, and sometimes he stopped and braced himself against the backwash. The bottom was not firm; gravel and sand rolled up and down and buried his sinking feet. Moreover, he knew the iron he laboriously carried up must all be carried back.

When the ballast was out the captain hesitated. On the Moorish coast sheltered ports are not numerous, and for the most part *Cayman* landed and shipped cargo from anchorages behind the sands and reefs. In consequence, her main anchor and cable were very large and heavy, but the captain thought the vessel must be further lightened in order to float across the shoals. Now the iron was landed, she rolled violently, and one hot afternoon, Kit, holding on by a runner, leaned against the bulwarks. Macallister and Miguel occupied the hatch coaming, the captain the grating by the tiller.

"If we do not land the anchor, she may strike when we kedge her across the sand," he said. "If she gets across and it blows hard we will need the big anchor and all the chain to hold her. We must run one of two risks."

"If she strikes on the high sand she will stop for good," Miguel remarked. "In two or three tides the surf would break her up."

"I think that is so," the captain agreed. "In the pool she might ride to the small anchor and the kedge. It depends on the wind. I do not know if we will get much wind or not." [Pg 235]

Miguel shrugged and used the Castilian rejoinder, "*Quien sabe?*" which implies that nobody knows.

The captain lighted a cigarette. He was obviously irresolute, and Kit sympathised. One could not weigh the risks and the choice was hard.

"When you cannot see your way you trust your luck and drive ahead," Macallister remarked in

uncouth Castilian. "If you do not get to the spot you want, you get somewhere and the hardest road is often shortest. Land your anchor and let us start."

"*Bueno!*" said the captain, who got up and went to the windlass.

At high tide, when *Cayman* floated, they carried out the kedge, and hove the main anchor and put it in the boat. Kit went with the landing party and doubted if they could have got out the anchor had not Miguel been on board. They had no mechanical help; while the boat plunged in the foaming surf the ponderous lump of iron must be lifted by muscular effort and when one struggles against an angry backwash one cannot lift much. Kit was exhausted, his hands bled, and Miguel's arm was torn, but they got the anchor over and returning to the ketch were fronted by another obstacle.

In broken water the boat would not carry all the chain; they must take it by fifteen-fathom lengths, and the connecting shackles had rusted fast. Kit thought nobody but Macallister could have knocked out the pins, but at length the cable was divided and they resumed their labour in the surf.

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CHAPTER VI BETTY DEMANDS HELP

On the evening of Austin's return to Las Palmas he and Jefferson smoked and talked on the veranda steps. Mrs. Austin and Mrs. Jefferson were occupied with some sewing at a table near the lamp, but Olivia was not about. She had gone to a concert at the Metropole with a young English tourist whom Mrs. Austin approved. For all that, Mrs. Austin did not know how far Olivia approved and she was bothered about Kit. He had been longer than she had expected, and to some extent perhaps she was accountable for him. Mrs. Austin generally meant well and as a rule her plans to help people worked, but Kit was headstrong and had not left much to her.

She wondered what Austin thought about her sending off the *Cayman*. Harry did not say much and he had been occupied since his return. Jefferson had, no doubt, talked to Muriel, but Muriel was sometimes reserved. Now Jefferson and Harry were together, Mrs. Austin thought she might, if she were cautious, get a useful hint.

"I would rather like to get up an excursion to the mountains for Mrs. Gardner's party. She was Muriel's friend in England, and we have not done much to amuse her," she said. "However, I expect you could not join us?"

"You mustn't count on Jake and me," Austin replied. "We have let things go long enough."

"Yet the business kept going. In fact, I imagine it went pretty well."

"That is so," Austin agreed with a smile. "We know where you got your talents, and things do go well when Don Pancho resumes control. All the same, he's had enough and I am needed."

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Mrs. Austin was baffled. She had not learned much from Harry, and she tried Jefferson.

"You have not a useful father-in-law. Did you find a bad tangle when you got back?"

"I have known a worse tangle when I was about," Jefferson replied. "Anyhow, I've a pretty good Spanish clerk and Miss Jordan's a wonder." He paused and gave Mrs. Austin a thoughtful glance. "She's a girl to reckon on, but she was glad to slacken up and let me get to work. Struck me she was quiet. Something's bothering her, I guess."

Mrs. Austin let it go. If they would not talk about *Cayman*, she would not talk about Betty, but she listened. After all, she had given them a lead.

Jefferson lighted a cigarette and turned to Austin. "You met Don Ramon. Were his remarks illuminating?"

"Don Ramon is sometimes discreet; I didn't get much from him. The *Commandancia* people are his friends and so far I reckon they have not made trouble about the men Musgrave left in Africa. However, he stated that Don Arturo would shortly arrive from Liverpool to see if he could settle the coaling dispute, and I imagine Don Ramon would sooner leave the thing to his chief."

"Do you think Revillon lodged a formal complaint?"

"On the whole, I think not. Revillon's a cautious fellow and didn't get on board *Mossamedes*. In fact, he hasn't very much to go upon, and it's possible the French foreign office don't want a dispute about the Moorish Atlantic coast. But I don't know, and the situation's interesting. My notion is, it will be handled pretty cautiously when Musgrave comes back. Don Arturo's not a fool, and when a light touch is indicated you can trust Don Ramon."

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Jefferson smiled. "In a sense Musgrave's not important. His part's to put across an awkward job

the Spanish officers would sooner leave alone, and when the log-rolling begins he drops out. If it pays, the others may use his exploit, but we must try to see he does not get hurt. Anyhow, I hope he has not piled up the boat. We'll want her soon."

"That is so," Austin agreed. "I've been closely engaged and haven't yet bothered about the ketch. But are you going?"

Mrs. Jefferson said they had promised to meet some people at the Catalina, and Austin went with them for a short distance. The night was dark, but soon after they left the gate they met a girl going towards the house with a quick, resolute step. It was not Olivia, and when she vanished in the gloom Jefferson smiled.

"Miss Jordan, I think!" he said, and his voice was rather dry.

A few minutes afterwards, Mrs. Austin, looking up with some surprise, saw Betty on the steps.

"If Mr. Jefferson is wanted you have missed him," Mrs. Austin said.

"I did not want Mr. Jefferson. I met him and the others in the road and knew you were alone."

"Then you wished to see me?" said Mrs. Austin, in a careless voice, although she would sooner Austin had turned back. She indicated a chair and resumed: "Very well! Tell me what it is about."

Betty sat down. Her clothes were plain but very neat. She looked business-like and resolute. Mrs. Austin thought her calm cost her something, but her mouth was very firm.

"Kit has not come back," she said after a moment or two. "I waited until a fishing schooner returned from the African coast. The *Lucia* arrived this afternoon, but her crew had not seen the *Cayman*. The next boat is not expected for some time, and I saw I must come to you."

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Mrs. Austin noted that Betty had informed herself about the sailing of the fishing fleet. She would sooner have sent the girl off, but since she saw no way of doing so politely, resolved to give her a lead.

"I wonder why you came to me."

"Don't you *know*?" said Betty, who gave her a searching look. "For one thing, when you persuaded Mr. Jefferson to engage me, you had an object. You often have an object when people think you kind!"

"Then you imagine I am accountable for your getting the post?"

"Of course!" said Betty, with a touch of impatience. "Kit told me about his giving you his mother's letter. I rather forced him to tell me; Kit is trustful and he trusted you. Well, I expect you knew that when he left Liverpool he wanted me to marry him. It's plain you thought I might take him from your sister."

"Perhaps I did so," Mrs. Austin admitted. "Kit's an attractive fellow, and when I was young I fought for my lover; in fact, I fought pretty hard. Was it strange that I imagined you might take my line? We are all human; but perhaps you were proud and felt that Kit must fight for you?"

Betty agreed that Mrs. Austin's humanity was obvious. In a way she was a great lady, an acknowledged leader of fashionable people, but she, so to speak, put off her dignity. Betty was a clerk, but the other talked to her as if it were important that both were flesh and blood.

"You don't altogether understand," Betty rejoined. "At the beginning I did not want to keep Kit away from your sister."

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"At the beginning! You imply you would have liked to keep him away afterwards?"

"Something like that," said Betty quietly. "I saw Miss Brown was not the girl for Kit."

Mrs. Austin used some control, for Betty's frankness was embarrassing.

"Yet you refused Kit Musgrave at Liverpool!"

"That is so," said Betty and the blood came to her skin. "I'm a clerk and not beautiful like Miss Brown. I have no advantages and knew nothing but my business until Mrs. Jefferson began to teach me. Kit's pay was small; I thought it might be long before he got more and our poverty would keep him down. A young man who marries on very small pay is badly handicapped. Kit has some talent; I thought if he was free and lucky, he might go far. Well, I saw I mustn't stop him, and I let him go."

Mrs. Austin was moved. Betty, like Kit, was naively sincere, and her unselfishness was plain. It looked as if she loved Kit, but her love was marked by something motherly and protective. In spite of this, however, she was now sternly resolute.

"Since you do not approve Olivia, you ought to have been satisfied when I helped Kit to get a post on board a ship that was not often at Las Palmas like the *correillo*," Mrs. Austin remarked.

"I was not satisfied. All your thought was for your sister. You did not trust Wolf, but you saw Kit trusted you, and you let him run a risk. So long as he was not at Las Palmas, the risk did not matter. Wolf was the cheat you thought. When he'd done with Kit he sold him and the others to the French captain."

Mrs. Austin was surprised that Betty knew so much. Moreover, she was beginning to get angry, because the girl's accusation was just.

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"What do you know about Wolf's selling them? You did not see Kit before he went off," she rejoined.

"I did not," said Betty and coloured. "He saw Miss Brown and did not bother about me, but Mrs. Jefferson told me why he wanted the boat, and I went to Don Erminio's."

She was quiet for a few moments and Mrs. Austin saw her shot had reached its mark. Her mood changed and she was sorry for the girl; Betty had pluck and was very frank.

"But you did not know where to stop," Betty resumed and her eyes sparkled. "When Kit wanted to go back you lent him the *Cayman*. You knew he was rash, but this did not count. You thought the Moors might carry him off and you would get rid of him for good. Kit took the boat and thanked you. Perhaps it's strange, but he had not found you out!"

Mrs. Austin's face got red and to keep her self-control cost her something. She was, however, calm.

"Perhaps I can't persuade you I am not as selfish as you think, but you are not altogether just," she said. "At the beginning I did send Kit to Wolf, although I doubted the fellow. But I did not know the risk he ran. Afterwards, when Kit wanted the *Cayman*, he had found me out."

She stopped for a moment, and smiled when she resumed: "In fact, Kit was very angry, and his statements were like yours; he declared I had planned to get rid of him. If it is much comfort, he will not trust me again. Well, I did not want him at Las Palmas, but I did want to help. I liked Kit, I liked his honesty; the young fellow is good stuff. We will let this go. I did not willingly let him take the *Cayman*. He was resolved to get the boat, and Kit is obstinate. He talked about my plotting against him, because he meant to force me to agree, and when I saw his losing his men weighed on him I did agree. That was all. I had no object then but to see him out."

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Betty was persuaded. It looked as if she had exaggerated Mrs. Austin's unscrupulousness, but this was not important. She had come to fight for Kit and the battle was not won.

"Anyhow, you are accountable," she urged. "You let Kit go and he has not come back. Perhaps he's wrecked and hiding on the coast; perhaps the Moors have carried him off. We must find out, you must send another boat——"

She stopped, for Austin came up the steps and leaned against a post. Looking about with a smile, he noted that Mrs. Austin's colour was rather high. Betty was white and highly strung. She was obviously embarrassed by his arrival, but looked resolute.

"You want us to send another boat to Africa, Miss Jordan?" he remarked. "Well, on the whole, I think we must try to indulge you. If you will wait a few minutes, I will go back with you and see Jefferson about it."

He went into the house and Mrs. Austin went after him. When he sat down at a writing table, she stood opposite.

"Were you long in the garden?" she asked.

"Not long, but perhaps long enough," he replied. "I wanted to go round by the back, but to pass through the kitchen might have excited the servants' curiosity. To feel I must steal into my house was rather ridiculous."

Mrs. Austin gave him a searching look. "Then you know the situation! It's awkward, and I'll own my trust in my cleverness has received a nasty knock. You see what I have done? I liked Kit, and he thinks I cheated him. I like Betty and she hates me!"

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"Perhaps Miss Jordan has some grounds for annoyance, but I wouldn't exaggerate."

"I did want to keep Kit from Olivia," Mrs. Austin resumed. "Now he's gone back, she'll think him a hero; his going *was* rather fine. To leave things alone would have been very much better."

"Meddling is sometimes risky," Austin agreed. "On the other hand, Olivia is really not romantic, and I imagine she is weighing young Lockwood's advantages."

"After all, Olivia's not very important, and perhaps Betty's argument was justified. I am accountable for Kit's sailing on board *Cayman*, and it's possible the Moors have carried him off. I'm not as hard as people think. He must not get hurt."

Austin smiled soothingly. "Exactly! Somebody must go to look for him and I'll try to engage a fishing schooner. The *Lucia's* fast. Well, I'll talk to Jefferson."

Mrs. Austin put her hand on his arm. "You're a very good sort, Harry. I've done some foolish things, but you haven't yet let me down."

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CHAPTER VII

THE "LUCIA" ARRIVES

Jefferson, sitting under a lamp in his office, smoked a cigarette and studied Austin with quiet amusement. He knew his partner rather well and thought him embarrassed; in fact, he thought Harry had some grounds for embarrassment. Jacinta Austin was clever and Jefferson admitted he owed her much; for one thing, he might not have married Muriel had not Jacinta helped. Unfortunately, however, meddling was her habit, and sometimes her clever plans made trouble. Jefferson thought she was sorry she had not left Kit Musgrave alone.

"I guess we had better send the *Lucia* across," he said, when Austin stopped. "*Cayman* cost a pretty good sum, and since she has not returned it's possible she has driven ashore. I'd expect the Moors to get busy about a stranded vessel, and on the South coast they're not friends of ours."

"Your argument's plausible, Jake," Austin remarked. "For all that, I imagine you really don't want to let me down."

Jefferson smiled. "Sometimes your imagination's pretty fierce. We're merchants, and when you're up against a possible loss, to spend a small sum in order to get your money back is a useful plan. There's another thing. The *patron* of the *Lucia* knows all about catching *bacalao*, but he stops there. You wouldn't leave him to handle an awkward job, and the Moors are a treacherous lot. Then Revillon may blow in. You see where I lead?"

"It's obvious. One of us ought to go, and the job is mine."

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"I think not. You know the sea, but you're a steamboat man. I'm a sailor."

Austin had from the beginning seen that Jefferson knew the part Jacinta had played and knew he himself was accountable for his wife and meant to pay her debts. Jake, however, would not admit this and had taken another line. He was a very good sort, in fact, he was the best. Anyhow, he was a sailor, and somebody must stop at Las Palmas.

"Very well," said Austin. "Don Erminio's house is shut, and I understand his friends don't know where he's gone. Don Ramon has, no doubt, sent him off. Sometimes the captain talks and I expect the *Commandancia* folks are getting busy. Don Ramon doesn't want any complications before his chief arrives. Well, suppose you bring Musgrave back?"

"I reckon you can leave it to Don Arturo," Jefferson replied. "If Musgrave has got the men, the Spaniards will be glad he's put across an awkward job. Political jealousies are pretty keen, and they have no use for sending Spanish soldiers outside Spanish soil. However, if Kit has put it across, Don Arturo will soon fix up things with the Commandante. I'd back Don Arturo and his manager to bluff Revillon."

Austin agreed, and to agree was some relief. *Cayman* was his and Jefferson's boat, and he had thought Kit's using her might involve them in some trouble with the government officers. Nevertheless, he must support Jacinta, and Jake would support him.

A few moments afterwards the door opened and Betty came in. Jefferson got up as if he meant to fetch a chair, but Betty did not advance. She stood by the door, looking very slender, straight and white. Her face was quiet and her mouth was firm, but her hands moved nervously. Jefferson stood by his desk and waited. His manner was the manner he would have used had a great lady come in, and Austin thought that after all Betty owed Jacinta much.

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"Are you going to send off a schooner in the morning?" she asked.

"It's possible. We were talking about it," Jefferson replied.

"You *must* send a boat," said Betty firmly.

Jefferson said nothing, but looked at Austin, who knew he must be quiet.

"I don't know if I'm much use and perhaps I'm not," Betty resumed. "However, if a boat does not sail, I'm going back to Liverpool." She paused and added with a hint of strain: "I don't want to go."

"Thank you," said Jefferson. "Well, I allow we want you to stop. There's another thing. I understand my partner kind of promised a boat would go. Sometimes he's rash, but I feel I've got to see him out."

For a moment Betty turned her head, but when she looked up again she was calm and businesslike.

"I am sorry I disturbed you," she said. "If you think I took a line your clerk ought not to take, I will give up my post. However, you are occupied with Mr. Austin, and we can talk about this again——"

She hesitated and the blood came to her skin. "I ought to have known you would not refuse; I really did know, but speed's important," she added, and went off.

"I reckon I ought not to have kept her in suspense," Jefferson remarked. "Miss Jordan's modest, but she has grit, and grit like hers is fine. Muriel is fond of her, and I think she is happy with us. At Liverpool her luck was pretty bad, but if she couldn't bluff me, she was going back. Well, if Kit Musgrave——"

He stopped and Austin, understanding his embarrassment, smiled. Olivia was his relation, but he agreed that if Kit, for her sake, let Betty go, he was a fool. Austin thought he saw what Betty's staunchness cost. The girl was proud, but when she imagined Kit was in danger she conquered her pride. She knew Jefferson knew something about Kit's infatuation, and that her demand for help indicated that she loved him; but she did not count this important. Austin thought that after all Betty's sense of values was just.

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For a few minutes he and Jefferson resumed their talk, and then started for the port. They found the *Lucia's* captain on board, and before long all was ready for her departure in the morning.

In the meantime, Kit and *Cayman's* crew were strenuously occupied. After they had landed the ballast, cable and all heavy stores, they took careful soundings in the boat and marked the best line to the pool by bearings from the shore. Then, when the moon was new and high water at about twelve o'clock one hot morning they launched the boat. For about two hours there would be water enough to float *Cayman* across the highest sands, but if she did not reach the pool before the tide ebbed much she would strike and stop for good. Since the ballast was landed, sail could not be used and she must, if possible, be towed by the boat. Kit, however, doubted. There was some wind and towing would be hard. He thought they would soon be forced to kedge; to carry out a small anchor and heave the vessel forward by the rope. Perhaps the worst was the sun was nearly overhead.

The windlass clanked until the cable ran nearly straight up and down, and Kit jumped into the boat. It was not his business, but flesh and blood could not long bear the strain and all must work by turns. For a minute or two they waited, and he looked about. The light on the sea was dazzling, and one saw nothing but glittering lines of foam that marked the turmoil on the sands. To tow *Cayman* across the belt of broken water looked impossible, but they must try, since kedging is slow and time was short. Moreover, the shoals beyond the pool to some extent broke the sea.

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The *patron* signalled, they got out the oars, and the boat went ahead. She did not go far. The tightening rope jerked her back, under *Cayman's* bowsprit, and, when they pulled ahead again, fouled the oars. Then the boat sheered off at an angle and they struggled savagely to get her in line. *Cayman* floated high above water, exposing her side to the wind, and the steep swell rolled her about. Her progress was not even; she advanced by awkward leaps, running up on the boat and a few moments afterwards dragging her back. When her bows swung up Kit saw her copper sparkle with reflections of green and gold, but one did not see it long. The bows went down, the boat ran back, and the plunging bowsprit was over his head. He heard the others' laboured breath and set his mouth and rowed.

Cayman was moving, but her progress was horribly slow. The men's bodies were tense with effort and the muscles on their arms swelled in knots. Their legs were braced like iron, and the sweat glistened on their brown skin. Kit could not see properly, and was conscious of a salt taste in his mouth. In the desert his lips had cracked and he thought they bled. Perhaps he had torn them when he clenched his teeth. The others rowed stubbornly, but he knew they could not keep it up.

They did not keep it up. The tightening rope fouled the steering oar, the boat was drawn back, and when she struck *Cayman's* bow a man fell off his thwart.

His oar went in the water and when it was recovered the *patron* signalled them to come on board. Miguel and two or three more jumped down and Kit leaned slackly against the bulwarks. There was no shade, the hold and cabin were unthinkably hot, but he saw the short, thin shadow the mainmast threw across the deck had moved. This meant the sun had passed its highest point and the tide was ebbing. He could not judge the progress they had made. Astern, all was dazzling white and yellow. Foam and sand melted in a blaze of colour. The *patron* stood on the steering gratings and his brows were knit. He said nothing, but Kit thought he knew they could not tow her across.

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After a time the *patron* signalled, a small anchor plunged, the boat came alongside, and Kit helped a fresh crew to put the kedge anchor on board. To carry it ahead was easier than towing, but when they got back they must break out the other anchor and then heave *Cayman* up to the kedge. To heave by hand was fastest, and for a few minutes the row of men, singing hoarsely, strained and swung. Then the singing stopped, their bodies got upright and went no farther back. The veins stood out on their brown foreheads, but the rope would not come in. They hung on, tense and rigid, unwilling to own that they were beaten.

Perhaps the wind had freshed, for *Cayman's* plunges were sharper. Without her ballast, she rolled and jumped ridiculously like a cork, and now and then her heavy masts lengthened the swing, until it looked as if she were rolling over. There was not much sea, but on the sands its movement was horizontal; it rolled across the bottom, and for the ketch to advance she must overcome its backward impulse.

The men took the rope to the windlass and laboriously hove the levers up and down. Sometimes the drum would not turn; and then the sharp clink of the pawls indicated that the rope came in. When she was over the kedge all were exhausted, but the anchor must be dropped to hold the

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ground they had won while the boat took the kedge another cable's length ahead.

When the mast was for a moment upright Kit looked at the shadow and saw it had moved across another plank. He doubted if they could get across the sand, although the men were doing all men could do. The strange thing was, they held out in the scorching heat. But if they did get across, their labour would not be finished, and Kit owned he shrank from reloading the ballast. When they landed the iron, the sea carried the boat ashore; when they brought it off she must be driven against the rollers. Moreover, the work must be done with speed, because the anchorage was unsafe. *Cayman* had driven ashore and, if it blew hard, might drive ashore again. She could not, without her ballast, beat for open sea.

Somebody shouted and Kit saw an object on the horizon. It was like a sail, but he was dull and his satisfaction was not keen. The other boat would not arrive for some time, and if they did not reach the pool before her, the ebbing tide would strand them on the bank. Although help was perhaps coming, it might come too late. They must concentrate on getting across, and trying to brace himself, he jumped into the boat.

The wind freshened and progress was slower, but the heat did not get less. Kit's head swam, his arms were cramped, and the backward swing with the oar badly hurt his side. To heave at the windlass levers was worse, and he did not bother about the sail. Time was going and he thought he felt *Cayman's* keel touch bottom. Perhaps the sand was uneven and she had crossed a hummock. He laboured mechanically, seeing nothing but the lever he pulled up and down. All the same, he knew the kedge warp came in, because the pawls clinked; if they stopped, the men were beaten, and *Cayman* would soon strike. Kit did not know the depth of water the *patron* got, but the sea was smoother, and this indicated that the tide had sunk behind the shoals. In fact, Kit thought he saw shining sand in the foam. All must brace up for a last effort.

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The rope came in faster, as if the resistance slackened, and when the kedge was carried out the men left the windlass and walked aft along the deck with the rope. Somebody said there was good water under the keel, the long pole the captain used for sounding hardly touched bottom, and then did not touch.

"*Basta!*" he shouted; they made the rope fast, and Kit sat down on deck.

A two-masted vessel came up the channel. The sweep of her slanted green hull, outlined by curling foam, and her high, shining canvas were beautiful, but Kit hardly glanced at her. He was exhausted, and leaning against the bulwarks, he shut his eyes.

Soon afterwards, Jefferson jumped on board and stopped by Kit. Kit's skin was burned, and crusted by salt and sand where the spray had dried. His lips were cracked, and his torn hands bled. Getting an anchor out of a plunging boat is awkward work.

"Hallo!" said Jefferson. "You look as if you had got up against it hard."

Kit opened his eyes and smiled. "I think we have had enough."

Jefferson nodded. "We'll put you on board *Lucia*; they have rigged an awning under the mainboom. We've got some ice and Pepe knows how to mix a long, cool drink." He turned to the *patron*. "If there is much sea next high water, you cannot ride to the kedge. I see you have landed the best anchor."

The *patron* said he had done so and Jefferson ordered his boat to the bow.

"Let your men rest; the *Lucia's* are fresh. But what about Miguel and Juan, the mate?"

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"They are in the forecastle, getting up another warp."

Jefferson gave Kit a smile. "You brought them back! We'll talk about it again. I must get the anchor while there's water across the sand, and will put you on board *Lucia* before I start."

Kit went on board and got into a hammock under the awning. He thought Jefferson's getting to work typical; Jefferson's habit was to work and talk afterwards. Now he had arrived Kit was not going to bother. His job was finished, and things went smoothly when Jefferson took control. Pepe brought him a cool drink, and soon after he drained the glass he went to sleep.

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CHAPTER VIII

"CAYMAN'S" RETURN

Don Arturo and his party occupied a corner of the glass-roofed *patio* at the Metropole. For the most part, the tourists had gone when Las Palmas got hot, and the big hotel was nearly empty, but the cook and manager had given the party's ten o'clock breakfast careful thought. The company's cold stores were searched and the finest fruit in the island was ordered. Don Arturo's hospitality was famous at Las Palmas, London and Liverpool, and people talk about the feasts he

gave. Pioneers of colonial industry, imperialist politicians, and leaders of commerce met at the table.

His guests at the Metropole were a high civil officer, Don Ramon, Austin and the *Commandante de Marina*. The coffee, and cigars carefully sealed in glass, were brought from the Caribbean coast in the company's steamers, and grown for the presidents of South American republics; the wine was made for the rulers of central Europe. As a rule Don Arturo's hospitality was extravagant. Perhaps he found it paid, for he himself was a plain business man and had known poverty. Yet, although a merchant, he was something of a prince; when famous shipbuilders and financiers crowded his waiting-room, he would stop to weigh a ship's cook's complaint. His humblest servant might appeal direct to him. He gave all audience, and his knowledge and justice were rather like Haroun a Raschid's.

Now he looked thoughtful and gave Austin a quiet glance. "To some extent, Wolf was your antagonist, but I don't see why you took a part in my purser's African adventure."

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"At the beginning I don't know that I did take a part," Austin said with a smile. "Mr. Musgrave demanded my boat, and since I was not at home, my wife indulged him. When I sent off the other vessel, my object was mainly to get my money back."

"You imagine Musgrave's resolve to go was, so to speak, spontaneous?"

"I don't think he was *prompted*. Losing his men—in a sense, they were your men—weighed on him. All the same, if he brings them back, I imagine his going was lucky."

"It is lucky," the civil officer agreed. "The men are Spaniards and we cannot leave them in the hands of the Moors, but to rescue them might be difficult. Expeditions to Africa are not popular just now, and to send a gunboat would embarrass the government."

The Commandante nodded. "One must reckon on the opposition newspapers, and the Catalan radicals are very keen. Fresh trouble about Morocco would start an outcry. If one could send a small party to negotiate, it would be easier, but this might be dangerous; the Moors are disturbed and threatening. To land an armed force would mean fighting and the force must be strong. Besides, the Moors are cunning. It is possible they have retired across our border."

"I understand the French captain has not lodged a formal complaint," Don Arturo remarked.

"Captain Revillon is discreet," said the civil officer. "Had he seized your ship with the guns on board, it would have been another thing."

"Well, I suppose you are satisfied that I was cheated? You take it for granted that when my ship was chartered I did not know she would be used for smuggling?"

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"We know you and we know your manager," the officer replied with a polite bow. "We doubted the man who chartered the ship, but until she came back and he vanished we did not see his plan."

"On the surface, his plan was obvious," Don Arturo remarked rather dryly. "For a time he carried on a risky business and then, when he saw the risks were greater than he thought, resolved to get a quantity of goods without proper payment. When he had got the goods and knew he must soon be found out, he intrigued with the French and tried to get some money from them. The ship was not his, and I imagine the last lot of guns were worthless. It looks plausible."

"Yet you think this was not all?" the Commandante suggested.

"I am a merchant, not a politician," Don Arturo rejoined. "I have got back my ship and am satisfied."

"You have some grounds for satisfaction. The ship carried guns for rebels and Señor Musgrave was your servant as well as Wolf's. I think this was a mistake, but Don Ramon has used much discretion, and we do not doubt your honesty."

"In the meantime, my purser and the Spanish sailors have not returned. What are you going to do about it?"

The Commandante lighted a cigar. "You must use patience. I think you see the situation is awkward, and Wolf is not a common cheat. Your manager knows much about our politics."

"I imagine Wolf's object was not altogether to earn money by smuggling and robbing the Moors," Don Ramon agreed meaningly.

The officer shrugged. "It is possible. One cannot be altogether frank, but there is some jealousy about the African coast, and a country we know feels she is shut out. Well, we will imagine a ship flying the Spanish flag is seized by a foreign gunboat, and French subjects are killed by the guns she landed. Perhaps Spanish subjects are killed; it is not important which. Then the ship is really British. Picture for yourself the complications! When a dispute begins, who knows where it will end?"

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"In Spain, we are old-fashioned, and our justice is not British justice," said the Commandante, whose face got very stern. "One is given some discretion. If I could find Señor Wolf—"

"For a few days we must wait," the civil officer resumed. "Perhaps the English *sobrecargo* and

our sailors will return. If they do not, we must think—— But we will talk about something else."

They talked for some time and then a messenger arrived and gave Don Ramon a note.

"It is from the office," he remarked. "The signals on the Isleta are going. A schooner and a ketch come from the East."

"Ah," said Austin with a smile, "I reckoned on something like this. I think the situation has arranged itself."

"You mean, the ketch is yours?" said Don Arturo.

"I expect she is the *Cayman* and the other is the *Lucia*. It looks as if Musgrave had got the men. Shall we cross the harbour and see the boats arrive?"

The others agreed, for all were keen to get the news, and soon afterwards they landed on the long mole, which, built of ponderous concrete blocks, runs for some distance out to sea. The morning was bright, the Trade-breeze fresh, and outside the shelter of the Isleta head big foam-tipped combers rolled south. Shining spray blew about the mole, and one felt the surges beat the massive blocks. The echoes of the measured shocks rolled among the coal wharfs across the harbour.

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Some distance off two sails broke the dazzling sweep of blue. They slanted, plunged and almost vanished, but they got larger, and at times when they crossed a comber's top Austin saw a dark line of hull. He knew *Cayman*; no other boat about the islands carried a mizzen like hers. Moreover, he thought he knew Kit Musgrave, and since Kit was coming back, was persuaded he had brought the men. He admitted that Jacinta had used Kit rather shabbily, and he meant, if possible, to make some amends.

"What are you going to do about Musgrave?" he asked Don Arturo.

"If he is willing, he can stop with us. Are you interested in the young fellow?"

"Musgrave is rather a friend of ours and has some useful qualities," Austin replied. "For example, he undertook a very awkward job because he felt he ought. Then it's important that he has carried out the job. One trusts a man like that and my business is growing——"

Austin knew when to stop. Since he had indicated that he knew Kit's value and was willing to engage him, he had perhaps gone far enough. Don Arturo smiled.

"If Musgrave has straightened out the tangle that bothers our Spanish friends, he deserves a reward. However, I must think about it and study the fellow. Sometimes to push on a young man fast is not an advantage."

Austin agreed, and when they reached the end of the mole noted that Betty occupied the last large block. The spray tossed about her, and her dress streamed in the wind. She did not see Austin; her eyes were fixed upon the boats. Austin was not surprised that she was there. When vessels approached the port, the look-out on the Isleta signalled to the town, and clerks at the shipping office knew the flags. Advancing carefully, he touched Betty's arm.

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"The smaller boat is *Cayman*. I expect Kit's on board."

She turned and Austin saw her look was strained. "You don't know yet! Unless the men are with him, Kit is not on board."

"I know Jefferson," said Austin, smiling. "He went to look for Kit, and the larger boat's the *Lucia*. You see what this implies? I'm using your argument."

In the meantime, a crowd had begun to gather. Men from the fishing vessels and women with black clothes and black shawls pushed towards the end of the mole. Some talked and gesticulated; some were quiet, and their dark faces were inscrutable like the Moors. All kept back a little from Don Arturo's party, and the Commandante studied them with languid interest.

"If their friends do not arrive, I think we shall have a *demonstration*," he remarked to the civil officer. "We know Don Ramon is discreet, and I gave the *Diario* a useful hint, but it looks as if the people knew the story we meant to keep dark."

"At Las Palmas nothing is long kept dark," Don Ramon replied. "I have used some caution, but one cannot stop Don Erminio talking. It is frankly impossible!"

The officer shrugged. He was a *Peninsular* from Madrid. "In a few minutes, perhaps, your islanders will curse the government and throw stones at us. But a demonstration is not important, and at Barcelona they use bombs and knives——"

He stopped, for the vessels were not far from the mole. *Lucia* led. Her high white canvas was sharply inclined and her hull listed until the foam leaped about her rail. One saw her keen bows swing and cleave the frothy seas. She was beautiful and strangely swift, for there are no finer schooners than the Canary coasting fleet. Three or four small figures began to run about her deck, the big gaff-topsail tilted, fluttered and came down; a jib was lowered and the ketch behind her forged ahead. Austin smiled and left the others, for he was now altogether satisfied Jefferson was on board. Jake was a chivalrous fellow.

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"All has gone well," he said to Betty.

"But you cannot see the people yet. It's too far."

"We saw *Lucia's* topsail hauled down," Austin rejoined.

Betty's eyes sparkled. "You mean, they want to let Kit make the harbour first? Well, that's like Mr. Jefferson!"

"Jefferson's a good sort," Austin agreed. "Anyhow, I rather think Kit deserves his triumph."

Cayman did not shorten sail. Her topmast bent to leeward, her outer jib was wet, and when she plunged, her straining bowsprit sank into the sea ahead. Her deck was sharply slanted; one saw her copper glimmer green, and now and then a fathom of the metal swung out of the foam. A tattered red and yellow flag, hard like a board, blew from her mizzen gaff; she leaped across the white seas as if her *patron* felt he carried important news.

The news was important. On the mole, people who did not know Kit and Jefferson waited with keen suspense. They could not yet see the faces of the crew and tried to count the figures, but the men moved about. Some got the anchor ready and some threw down coils of rope. Then, listing to a gust that buried her lee rail, *Cayman* drove past the end of the mole and the crowd began to shout.

"*Ambos! Los veo!* They have brought them both!"

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Betty thrilled. Her heart beat and her eyes were wet. She was moved by keen emotion, and for a moment she had seen Kit. Then *Cayman* went about and he was hidden by the swinging canvas. She came up to the wind again. Jibs and topsail ran down, she stopped, and the anchor splashed. People shouted and pushed towards the landing steps.

Cayman's boat was lowered. Betty saw Kit, Macallister and some others jump on board. The boat pulled for the steps and the crowd surged along the edge of the mole. When the boat stopped, hats were thrown up, and Betty knew in Spain one throws one's hat to the *maestro* after a great exploit in the bull-ring. Hoarse shouts pierced the rumble of the sea.

"*Viva el Yngles! Buen' muchacho! Viva el Señor Jefferson.*"

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CHAPTER IX

KIT'S REWARD

On the morning after their arrival, Kit and Macallister went to the Metropole. Macallister wore a neat blue uniform, a cap with the company's badge, and spotless white deck-shoes. His talk was careless and now and then his eyes twinkled. Kit's look was moody, and he wore plain duck clothes. He did not know if he was the company's servant and rather thought he was not; Don Arturo had sent for him, and he was probably going to be dismissed.

When they went up the drive to the big square hotel Macallister looked about.

"Don Arturo's a great man, but he has no' much eye for beauty," he remarked. "When his architect built the Metropole his model was a block. Maybe the cube style's economical. We get the maist room inside wi' the least span o' wall, but if I was a Spaniard, I'd make a bomb and blow up the ugly thing."

He stopped and putting his head on one side studied the hotel. "Bulk has value, if it's properly relieved. The old Greeks kenned; they used the square but they broke the line wi' pillars and cornices. Maybe, if ye worked in two, three mouldings and ran a *loggia* along the front——"

"I didn't know you were an architect," Kit said impatiently.

"Ye dinna ken a' old Peter's talents," Macallister rejoined with a grin. "Architecture's useful and man has done fine work in stone, but for a pattern o' lightness, strength and beauty ye'll need to take a modern steel steamship. She must bear strains and stresses ye dinna bother about on land. A town hall, for example, is no designed for plunging through a steep head sea. Man! wi' a rule and a scribe, I'd design ye a better building than yon hotel."

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Kit frowned and pulled out his watch. "Don Arturo is waiting for us."

"Just that! He stated eleeven o'clock. There was no inquiry about my convenience. Maybe the head o' a big steamship line likes to command, and deck officers touch their hats and run, but when ye send for an engineer ye use some manners."

Kit said nothing and started for the hotel. He was not an engineer, and at the Liverpool shipping office had been drilled to prompt obedience. The clerk, however, told him to wait and sent a page with Macallister to a room above.

"You are some minutes late," said Don Arturo, indicating a chair.

Macallister noted that the open window commanded the front of the hotel. In fact, when he stopped to criticise its architecture he imagined his stopping might be remarked.

"Three minutes, sir," he admitted, pulling out a black-metal watch. "On board a Spanish ship breakfast's no' very punctual."

Don Arturo knew something about Macallister; moreover he knew his type. Sometimes one may bully a merchant captain, but not a Scots engineer.

"You left your ship without leave," he said. "Are you willing to state your grounds for breaking the company's and the British Board of Trade's rules?"

"To begin with, the ship was Spanish for the time," Macallister rejoined. "Had there been work for me on board I might have stopped, but the captain was sick and the office had no use for the boat. Then I reckoned Mr. Musgrave might need me in Africa. In a sense, his business was the company's."

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Don Arturo pondered. It looked as if Musgrave had staunch friends, but this was not important. He saw the engineer was not at all embarrassed.

"Mr. Musgrave has pairs," Macallister resumed. "For a' that, he's young and had undertaken a verra awkward job. I thought he needed a man o' sound judgment, in fact, a man like me."

"So you stole away and went with him? If this is an example, I don't know that your judgment is very good, but I'm curious about your adventures."

Macallister instinctively felt for his pipe. Don Arturo glanced at the pipe and pushed across a cigar box. The cigars were packed in glass, but Don Arturo was a great merchant and sometimes indulged his humour. It was plain the other rather thought himself his guest than a servant who deserved a reprimand.

"Thank you," said Macallister coolly. "Weel, if ye'll no' be bored——"

He narrated his journey up the wady and the encounter with the Moors, but gave Kit the leading part. Macallister had some talent for story-telling and used no reserve. When he talked about their interview with the chief Don Arturo stopped him.

"Your carelessness with the pistol might have cost your party much," he said.

Macallister smiled. "It might have cost the headman mair!"

"That's obvious," said Don Arturo, with a touch of impatience. "But suppose the bullet had struck him? You don't imagine his people would have let you go?"

"It's no' altogether obvious, until ye understand. When she exploded I put my finger on the magazine. There was another cartridge. Had the headman moved when I went up til him—— He didna move; he was wooden. I'm thinking he kenned the magazine wasna empty."

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"But you gave him the pistol?"

"Just that!" said Macallister. "Maybe the experiment was rash, but I was justified. Yon Moor was proud and his nerve was good."

Don Arturo thought the engineer's was better and, allowing for the strain, his judgment was strangely quick and accurate. He did not doubt the tale; he knew much about his servants, and when some boiler tubes had burst——

"For all that, I don't see how you persuaded him to release the men," he said.

"Mr. Musgrave persuaded him. His argument was good, though it wasna altogether his argument, but himself. The lad's honesty was plain. The Moor couldna doubt him, although he might ha' doubted you or me."

"Sometimes frankness pays," Don Arturo remarked with a twinkle. "What argument did Musgrave use?"

"His master had gone, naebody would ransom us and the ithers, and we had naething worth the stealing. It carried weight, but no' a' the weight. The Moor was a robber, but in the desert he was a kin' of prince, and a prince cannot be shabby. Mr. Musgrave, wi' two, three ragged sailors and a very old gun, had come seeking him. The thing was a joke, but I reckon the Moor saw the joke was fine. He was a proud man and he let the sailors go."

Don Arturo mused. He was not romantic, but, like the Moor, he was sometimes generous. He pictured the little drama in the sands; the English lad's naïve honesty, and the dark Moor's reserve. The tale was moving, and he was forced to approve the part his servants had played. But other business waited.

"Well," he said, "you have talked about Musgrave, but I don't know that you have yet justified your leaving your ship."

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"I dinna ken I tried," Macallister rejoined. "When I'm wanting it, I can get anither post, but I doubt if ye could get an engineer like me."

"It's possible I could not," Don Arturo admitted with some dryness. "Well, if you can satisfy Don

Ramon, you may go back on board, and now you might send up Mr. Musgrave."

Macallister went off, smiling, but when Kit entered he was highly strung, since he expected to be told he must give up his post. He looked worn, for fatigue and strain had left their mark. Don Arturo looked very business-like, and his watch was on the table.

"Mr. Macallister has given me some particulars about your exploits and I have not much to ask," he said. "To begin with, when the French gunboat chased you, why did you resolve to land the guns?"

"I don't altogether know, sir," Kit replied. "It was plain Wolf's agent had sold us and it looked as if he had cheated the Moors. They had paid for goods they would not get, and although Yusuf made the bargain, in a sense, they dealt with me."

"You felt your business was to deliver the goods?"

"Something like that, sir," Kit said awkwardly. "Then, since Wolf had engaged to land the guns, I thought we could best baffle him by carrying out his engagement."

Don Arturo saw the ironical justice that marked Kit's counterplot, but he said dryly, "I expect you knew you risked my ship?"

"I knew this afterwards; when the gunboat steamed up I couldn't weigh the risk. I didn't know how much Captain Revillon knew, and if he could seize the ship had we thrown the guns overboard. It was obvious he could not seize her if we crossed the shoals. The water was not deep enough for him." [Pg 266]

"We'll let it go. Why did you return for the men?"

"I thought the job was mine, sir. I was the company's servant, and the captain was injured. If I'd told my story at the office and the *Commandancia*— But you can see the obstacles!"

Don Arturo nodded. "I imagine I do see. You thought you could handle the thing better than Don Ramon and the Spanish officers? Rather a bold claim, was it not?"

"They'd have been embarrassed by difficulties that did not bother me," Kit replied with some hesitation. "I thought speed and quietness important; the plan was to steal off and get to work."

He had stood in front of the table, but Don Arturo now indicated a chair.

"On the whole, I think your plan was good. All the same, if you stop with us, you must run no more risks like that. Your business is to carry out the company's orders."

Kit's heart beat, for his relief was keen. "Then I may go back, sir?"

"You will not go back on board the *correillo*, but Don Ramon is sending *Mossamedes* to Cuba and has a post for you. At sea, your duties will be a purser's; at the Cuban ports you will be the company's agent. All the cargo is not sold and you will negotiate with the merchants. The post carries better pay, but Don Ramon will give you particulars. I believe Mr. Macallister will join the ship, and the *correillo's* captain takes command."

Kit had not thought Don Arturo meant to promote him, and the blood came to his skin.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I'll try—"

Don Arturo smiled and looked at his watch.

"If you carry out your new duties with the resolution and honesty that marked your dealings with the Moors, I expect we shall be satisfied. In the meantime, they want you at the office." [Pg 267]

Kit started for the office. He was promoted, and although his promotion was perhaps not marked, he thought the head of the line had studied him and meant to help his progress. Moreover, his supposition was accurate.

Soon after Kit had gone a page brought up Austin, and Don Arturo remarked: "I have just given Musgrave rather a better post."

"Then I expect he will make good. If he had joined me, I'd have given him the best post I'd got."

"Musgrave's friends believe in him," Don Arturo replied. "But we must remember that caution is sometimes useful and the lad is young. I would sooner his promotion was gradual. But we have something else to talk about."

In the meantime, Kit went to the office and afterwards to a bench in the *alameda*. His post was better than he had thought, and he felt he had, so to speak, made a start. If he satisfied the company, he might go ahead fast, and this was important because it was bound up with something else. Since he saw Olivia he had pondered, and now he reviewed his efforts and ambitions. It was getting plain that when he fell in love with Olivia and tried to force himself above his proper level he was rash. She had refused him and, from her point of view, she was justified, but in a sense, his proposal was not regular, and he had declared if his fortunes mended, he would renew it in proper form. He owed Olivia this; the strange thing was he was rather conscious of his duty than keen.

To begin with, he must see Mrs. Austin, since he now meant to keep the rules. She was at home

and when she received him he said: "You know we got the men, and I must thank you for lending me *Cayman* and sending the schooner. If she had not arrived, I doubt if we could have brought *Cayman* home."

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"Oh, well!" said Mrs. Austin, "to find you have forgiven me is some relief, but after all I don't deserve your thanks. You see, Miss Jordan sent the other boat!"

"Betty sent the *Lucia*?" Kit exclaimed.

"She bullied me and declared I had not used you well. While we talked about it my husband arrived and rather agreed with Betty's argument. Nevertheless, I imagine she doubted us, because soon afterwards she bullied Jefferson. She stated that if he did not go to your rescue, she would give up her post."

Kit coloured, and Mrs. Austin was amused by his embarrassment.

"Perhaps I did not use you well," she resumed.

"From the beginning you were very kind," Kit broke out. "When I last saw you, I talked like a hot-tempered fool. I didn't see all I owed you, I meant to force you to lend me the boat. The strange thing is, I hadn't thought about Betty; but it was really she who helped. Betty is like that——"

He was quiet for a moment or two, but Mrs. Austin waited and he went on: "Well, I have done what I undertook, and Don Arturo has given me a better post. Perhaps the post is not very good, but I am going to ask Olivia if, when I have made some progress, she will marry me."

"Do you expect me to approve? Or do you feel I ought to know your plans?" Mrs. Austin asked.

"I think I want to be honest," Kit replied, rather dryly.

Mrs. Austin smiled. "Your honesty is obvious. Well, I don't know that I would approve, but if you can persuade Olivia, I'll try to be resigned."

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"You don't expect I can persuade her?"

"Perhaps I don't. Do you?"

"I do not," said Kit. "For all that, I'm going to use some effort."

"You are an obstinate fellow," Mrs. Austin rejoined. "However, you will understand my not wishing you good luck. In fact, I rather think you don't know your luck!"

Kit went off. He was puzzled. Sometimes Mrs. Austin's remarks did puzzle him, but he began to see a light. But the light was dim. Full illumination had not yet come.

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CHAPTER X OLIVIA'S REFUSAL

After the five o'clock *comida* Kit went to Jefferson's office. There was no use in returning to Mrs. Austin's, because it was an evening she received her friends, and Olivia would be surrounded by the guests. Besides, he wanted to see Betty. He had not seen her yet, for when he went to the office she was occupied with Jefferson, and he did not know she had watched his arrival from the mole.

The room behind the arch was shady. A little cool breeze shook the curtain and one smelt heliotrope. Kit noted the smooth polished floor, the even rows of black boxes, and the neatly-sorted documents on the big writing table. Tidiness is not the rule in Spain, but all was neat where Betty was about. Betty herself wore a plain white dress, and Kit thought she looked cool and businesslike. Turning her revolving chair, she gave him her hand with a friendly smile.

"I was very glad to know you had got back," she said.

"If you had not sent Jefferson we might not have got back yet."

"I expect you have seen Mrs. Austin, but you mustn't exaggerate," Betty said calmly. "When you forced her to lend you *Cayman*, she knew she was doing what she ought."

"I imagined I forced her; now I doubt. She is kind and it looks as if I'm not as clever as I thought. Anyhow, I didn't force her to send the other boat; if force was needed, you did that. When the *Lucia* arrived we were worn out, but all the ballast must be brought off through the surf. It had been calm unusually long, we knew the wind would soon come, and if it blew fresh before we got the big anchor on board, *Cayman* would be wrecked. I hardly durst think about the job."

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"You had a bad time, Kit?"

"Perhaps I got as good a time as I deserved. When I arrived from Liverpool I was very raw, but

didn't know my rawness. People indulged me, and I went ahead, satisfied I could pull off all I undertook. I didn't know I was used and cheated; no doubt Wolf and Yusuf laughed! They'd got a dull, self-confident simpleton to play their crooked game. Well, in a way, perhaps, it was lucky I lost the men. I began to see my level."

Betty mused. She rather liked Kit's humiliation. Perhaps it was extravagant, for his rash return to Africa was very fine. Although his venture looked hopeless, he had gone. The strange thing was, when at length he saw Wolf had cheated him, he did not see another had done so. Betty wanted to warn him, but knew she must not.

"You were sincere and nothing you did was shabby," she said. "Perhaps your luck was bad, but this is not important. You didn't think about yourself; you were not daunted——"

"I was daunted," Kit declared. "When I landed from *Cayman* and started for the desert with three or four sailors, I wanted to run back to the boats. You see, the thing was ridiculous. All my fine romantic plans had led to this. However, we'll let it go. You're staunch and you helped me out. Now, when I'm hipped and moody you let me talk. I doubt if you know what a very good sort you are."

Betty gave him a level glance. She was moved and calm was rather hard, but calm was plainly indicated.

"Come in again when I'm not engaged, because I must send you off," she said. "Jefferson goes to Orotava with Mrs. Jefferson in the morning and some accounts must be made up before he starts." She paused and added: "I think Mrs. Austin and Miss Brown mean to join Mrs. Jefferson."

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Kit went off. It was strange, but Betty's news was something of a relief. After all, if he did not see Olivia in the morning, he need not, for some time, resign himself to her refusal. She would, no doubt, refuse him, and he wondered whether his shrinking from the jolt accounted for his moodiness. Perhaps the moodiness was not logical, but he was moody. It would have been much better had Betty not refused him at Liverpool. Betty was his sort and had she loved him he would not have been carried away by Olivia. Of course, Betty was justified; she knew his drawbacks, but from Olivia's point of view, he had others. But in spite of this, after his rash talk in the *alameda*, he must ask her to marry him. Mrs. Austin knew he was going to do so, and she had smiled.

In the morning he was forced to go to the office, and when Don Ramon sent him off he saw the *correillo* start for Teneriffe. A clerk told him Mrs. Austin and Miss Brown were on board, but a few days afterwards Kit thought his luck was good. *Mossamedes'* cargo arrived slowly and Don Ramon resolved to send a schooner to Orotava for a load. Kit got leave to go, and one evening landed on the lava mole.

The evening was calm and light mist floated about the shoulders of the Peak. The long swell broke in sheets of foam, but its beat was slow and languid echoes rolled about the valley. One smelt oleanders and orange flowers. When Kit went up the path to the hotel his look was thoughtful. He wondered whether Mrs. Austin had an object for leaving Las Palmas; but he was going to see Olivia. To know he was refused was better than suspense. Anyhow, he must ask her in proper form, and she must decide. If she would not frankly acknowledge him her lover, she must let him go.

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His luck held good, for he found her on a bench behind a tall geranium hedge. Olivia wore a black evening dress with yellow bands, and in the background the red geraniums shone. Kit knew she liked colour, but somehow he was jarred. Olivia was strangely beautiful; one could not see her a poor man's wife.

She looked up and a touch of red came to her skin. Kit thought her surprised and perhaps a little startled, but this was all. He himself was very sober and looked rather grim.

"Kit!" she said. "When did you arrive?"

"I landed not long since from a schooner. The company sent me to buy onions."

Olivia laughed. "You are dreadfully unromantic, but perhaps you thought you had better state your object! Have you bought the onions?"

"Not yet. I wanted to see you first. Sometimes I am romantic. It might be better if I were not."

"Well, perhaps romance cheats one now and then," Olivia rejoined, smiling. "But we won't philosophise. If you had arrived two or three minutes since, you would have seen Jacinta."

"I saw Mrs. Austin the afternoon before you sailed," said Kit. "I told her I was going to ask if you would marry me."

Olivia turned, rather quickly, and gave him a level glance. "Oh, well! I knew your pluck. But what did Jacinta remark?"

"She laughed," Kit replied with some dryness. "Nevertheless, she declared if you were willing ——"

"Jacinta is not often rash. I expect you doubted my willingness, but after your extravagant talk in the *alameda*, you felt you ought to ask."

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Kit coloured, but his mouth was rather hard and his look was steady. "I did feel something like

that. In the *alameda* you were amused and your amusement hurt. I was carried away, but I wanted you. Well, I said if I brought back the men and got another post— I did bring back the men and have got a better post."

Olivia stopped him, but her look was gentler. "Your venture was very fine, Kit. I was proud of you, and if anything could have moved me— But I'm not your sort."

"You are the most beautiful girl I have known," Kit declared.

"Yet you're a Puritan and ought to know beauty isn't all; I think you really do know. Well, I won't marry you, Kit. We would risk too much. People think me romantic, but I'm not. In fact, I'm cold and very practical. It looks as if we had changed parts and you were the sentimentalist."

"I loved you," Kit said quietly.

"I know," Olivia admitted. "It counted for much. Perhaps I liked you to love me; I own I'm selfish. But your poverty wasn't altogether the drawback. You're sober and quiet; I'm theatrical. I like the middle of the stage; I want colour, movement, and the leading part. It's plain that we would jar."

Kit frowned. He saw Olivia was firm, and saw, rather vaguely, that her firmness was wise. In a sense, she was theatrical. Red geraniums, oleanders and scented orange flowers were her proper background. Olivia belonged to the South. Perhaps it was strange, but he pictured Betty in her neat, cool office. Betty wore white clothes, sometimes with a touch of the soft virgin blue. She stood for the reserve and staunchness of the bracing North. But he had asked Olivia to marry him.

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"If you were persuaded we would jar—" he said and stopped.

Olivia smiled, but her smile was kind. "You are trying to be nice, but you want to know why I let you go on? Well, you were a new type. You were fresh and sincere, and sometimes very obstinate. The others indulged me; you did not. You had qualities I liked; perhaps because they were not mine. Then romance called and sometimes I began to think I might take the plunge, but I hesitated. I valued all I must give up and I have not your pluck—"

She paused and gave Kit a quiet glance. "Well, I'm sorry, but you ought to be grateful I was not rash. Although you're a very good sort, you are not my sort. I could not use your rules, and you would not use mine. You must let me go and marry somebody brave and honest—"

She got up and Kit heard steps on the path.

"Some of the people from the hotel," she said. "Will you come and see Jacinta?"

"I think not," Kit replied and forced a smile. "My business is to buy onions and I must get to work."

Olivia gave him her hand. "Perhaps I was shabby. In all you do, I wish you good luck!"

She went to meet the others, and Kit went down the path. He was hurt, but he had braced himself beforehand, and the hurt was less than he had thought. Moreover, he knew Olivia's arguments were good. He loaded the schooner and soon after he returned to Las Palmas Jefferson came to look for him on board *Mossamedes*.

"If you're not altogether satisfied with the post Don Arturo gave you, another could be got," he said. "A Spanish company is going to run two or three small, fast boats to the islands and wants an agent. I've been asked to find out if you would undertake the duties?"

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"I'm not a Spaniard," Kit replied. "Why do they offer me the job?"

"I rather think it is a reward. In Spain, government approval pays, and perhaps the new company got a hint. It's possible the Las Palmas officials feel they owe you something, but can't openly acknowledge your services. However, I'd better state the duties and pay."

When Kit knew the pay he lighted a cigarette and pondered. Then he said, "The offer's good, but I can't take the post. For one thing, I've engaged to go to Cuba for Don Arturo."

"The office would release you."

"I think that is so," Kit agreed. "All the same, I undertook the job; and there's another thing. I'm young and begin to see I'm rawer than I thought. In fact, I've begun to know my proper level and where I really belong. Not long since I got a nasty knock and for a time I'm going slow. Perhaps I may go higher, but when my chance comes I mean to be fit for the better job."

Jefferson nodded. "On the whole, I reckon your plan is good, and we'll let the agency offer go." He paused and resumed: "You were across at Teneriffe. Did you make Orotava?"

"I did," said Kit, with a smile. "I saw Miss Brown and asked her to marry me. She would not, but now I can think about it calmly, I see she took a very proper line."

Jefferson said nothing, and soon afterwards went to his boat. For all that, he approved Kit's philosophy. Musgrave could take a knock and was good stuff. Jefferson thought the head of the line knew his value, and Kit would presently find his sticking to the post he took would pay.

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CHAPTER XI

DAYBREAK

Mossamedes sailed from Cuba for Buenos Ayres, and on the ocean voyage Kit enjoyed more leisure than he had known for long. When the sea was calm and the ship steamed steadily across the shining swell, he lounged under the awnings and gave himself to thought. Perhaps it was strange, but he began to see that at Las Palmas he had hardly thought at all. Events, so to speak, had followed each other fast; he had let himself go and was carried along.

Now he could ponder quietly, he sometimes frowned. He had not done much that he had meant to do and had no grounds for satisfaction, but when he thought about Olivia he was calm. Olivia did not belong to his circle, and he now admitted that he could not enter hers. Even if he became rich, the thing was impossible. She liked, and in fact demanded, excitement, power, and a leading part; he liked to go soberly and do something useful. When she refused him she took the proper line, and he owed her and Mrs. Austin much. They had given him a wider view and helped him to conquer his aggressive priggishness. Then perhaps he had captured something of their cultivation; anyhow they had taught him to tolerate people who jarred.

For the most part, however, his thoughts dwelt on Betty; Betty in the primrose wood and in the shady office with the blue curtains. Betty was sober and quiet; when one was with her, one's mean ambitions vanished. Yet she was hopeful and never daunted. She looked ahead with steady eyes and held fast to all she knew was good. Like Olivia, she had refused him, but while he was resigned to Olivia's refusal, he knew he was a fool to let Betty go. Sometimes he wondered—; and then got up impatiently and went off to study his manifests. There was no use in brooding, and he durst not look forward yet. In the meantime, his job was to see all was ready for unloading cargo when *Mossamedes* reached port.

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At Buenos Ayres, he and Don Erminio stopped one hot afternoon in front of an Italian café in a quiet square. Small tables occupied the pavement in the shade, and Don Erminio ordering wine and ice and aerated waters, mixed them in a bowl.

"It is not like *tinto granadilla* and snow from the Peak when one has eaten much salt fish," he said. "However, to a seaman, all wine is good, and if Don Pedro were with us we would dance. But let us be happy, and if I go to sleep you will carry me on board."

Kit was satisfied Macallister had not joined them. He was strenuously occupied scaling the boilers, and when Kit left *Mossamedes* strange bi-lingual threats and exclamations echoed about her stokehold. By and by Don Erminio began to glance about.

"*Vaya!*" he said. "Look at him! Now perhaps we can amuse ourselves. I will talk to the animal."

He got up, and carrying the bowl of wine, crossed the pavement. A man in white clothes occupied a chair at another table, and when he looked up Kit saw it was Captain Revillon. Kit had noted a small French cruiser at anchor in the roads.

"*Ola, señor!* All sailors are friends," said Don Erminio. "Besides, this bowl is large and my companion is sober and very dull. The wine is not Spanish, but it will go, and when I drink your wormwood, in the morning my throat is bad."

Revillon bowed and let him fill his glass, and Don Erminio resumed in uncouth French: "We took you, my friend, that time on the Morocco coast!"

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"It looks like that," Revillon replied, with a touch of dryness. "Still I do not see why you risked crossing the shoals. You had, no doubt, thrown the guns overboard."

Don Erminio indicated Kit, who had joined him. "He is a boy, but very obstinate. The English are obstinate and the Scots are worse. Me, I know. Well, his bargain was to land the guns, and they were landed."

"Then, I think you did take me," Revillon remarked with a quick, surprised glance. "Had I known ___"

Kit was intrigued. He had sometimes wondered why Revillon had not looked for *Mossamedes* in the morning. The coast was dangerous and the gale was fresh, but he had thought this did not account for all.

"The animal who loaded the ship sold us," said Don Erminio. "If you paid him, you did not get much for your money."

Revillon drained his glass and smiled. "Your betrayer did not demand a large reward; perhaps he expected to be paid in another way. However, now it is done with, I may tell you something. To begin with I did not trust Señor Wolf, although I knew the guns were on board and must not be landed. To force you to throw them overboard would satisfy me."

"Was it not your duty to stop and search our ship?" Kit asked.

"In a sense, it was so. In fact, I think the man who sold you expected me to seize her," Revillon agreed with some dryness. "Well, I followed you and steered a course that would pin you against

the shoals. I had studied the chart and pilot book, and nothing indicated that a vessel could get across." He paused and shrugged. "Well, what would you have? I imagined the guns were overboard and you had run aground. My duty was not to wreck my ship. I hauled off the coast."

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"They have given you a larger vessel!" Don Erminio remarked meaningly. "I wish you luck. All sailors are honest, but not many are discreet. The politicians are animals, and I would drown the lot. Well, it is not important now, and the wine is gone."

Kit began to understand. Revillon had not been cheated; he was not very keen about seizing *Mossamedes*. It looked as if Wolf had engaged in dark political intrigue, and meant to use the French officer in his plot. Revillon, however, had seen his object. But the thing was done with, and Kit went off to the office of a merchant who was loading *Mossamedes* with grain.

When her cargo was on board she sailed for Teneriffe, and anchored at Santa Cruz to land a few barge-loads. Kit, going to the agent's in the evening, met Jefferson in the plaza.

"Mrs. Jefferson and Miss Jordan are at the Golden Pine," he said. "They went to Laguna for a holiday and I came over to bring them back. Will you walk up to the hotel with me?"

Kit wanted to go, but said he could not: *Mossamedes* would start for Las Palmas when they had landed another load of maize. Santa Cruz, sheltered by the volcanic range that cuts off the Trade-breeze, was very hot, and he asked why Mrs. Jefferson had left Laguna, which occupies a cool tableland behind the town.

"We meant to go back on board *Campeador* this morning," Jefferson replied. "The company, however, have altered the sailing bill, and Don Maccario doesn't expect the boat to arrive for some days."

"If Mrs. Jefferson can get ready soon, we'll take you across," said Kit. "We ought to make Las Palmas about daybreak and can give you good rooms on deck."

Jefferson agreed and an hour afterwards his party arrived. Kit's boat was waiting at the mole, and when they got on board, *Mossamedes* went to sea. For some time Kit was occupied with his dispatch box, but as soon as he had sorted his manifests he went on deck. [Pg 281]

There was no moon, the sea was phosphorescent, and the wind was light. *Mossamedes* rolled languidly and the foam that ran back from her bows sparkled green and gold. Mrs. Jefferson, Jefferson and Don Erminio occupied canvas chairs on the upper deck, but at first Kit could not find Betty. Then he saw a white dress in the gloom by a boat and heard Macallister's voice. Kit turned back and Betty laughed. He thought her laugh had a note of protest and wondered what Macallister had said.

"You must really stop!" Betty exclaimed.

Macallister's reply was not distinct, but Kit heard part: "Weel, it's for your ain good. Maybe ye might get better, but ye might get waur——"

"I'm going," said Betty firmly, and light steps indicated that she left the boat.

Kit, meeting her across the deck, thought her embarrassed and when they joined the others she did not talk much. He, however, was satisfied to sit on the deck and smoke, knowing Betty was about. After a time Macallister returned and leaned against the rails. He chuckled and Kit noted that Betty did not look up.

"We're a humorous lot, though a' o' us dinna see the joke," he said. "Noo I'm getting old I look on and laugh. When ye meddle ye get no thanks. For a' that, philosophy is sometimes hard. Ye meet folks who dinna ken their luck."

"It's possible, but I don't see where your remarks lead," Mrs. Jefferson rejoined and turned to the captain. "Do you see?"

"I am a sailor," said Don Erminio. "Sailors are not philosophers. They are honest people and some are fools. If they were not fools, they would not go to sea. But perhaps it is better to be a fool than an animal like the men who own the ships." [Pg 282]

Mrs. Jefferson laughed, and they talked about something else until she got up and glanced at Betty, who went with her to her room by the bridge. When the others went off Kit stopped and smoked. Betty had kept close to Mrs. Jefferson; it looked as if she did not mean to be left alone with him.

At daybreak he went on deck. There was not much wind, and *Mossamedes* went steadily through the dim blue water. Her masts swung, but one felt no motion; the engines throbbed with an even rhythm. To starboard, dark rocks pierced a bank of mist; ahead a thicker bank indicated the Isleta hill and Kit looked at his watch. It was six o'clock. In half an hour *Mossamedes* would steam into the harbour, and his chance of talking to Betty would be gone.

Kit wanted to talk to Betty, but was daunted. On the ocean voyage, he had seen a light. Perhaps it was strange, but he knew now the light had begun to burn one April day in the primrose wood; and then, for a time, he had lost it, because Olivia had dazzled him. Betty knew. He thought she knew all his follies, but she was kind.

Coming down from the bridge, he saw her by the rail. Her look was thoughtful; her brows were

knit and putting her hand on a stanchion, she fixed her eyes ahead.

The mist was thinner and the sky above it began to gleam like an opal. Soon the haze would roll back and the sun leap up. Kit advanced quietly, but Betty turned as if she knew his step. Somehow Kit knew she had been thinking about him. A touch of colour came to his skin and his heart beat, but he was calm. When one talked to Betty, one was not moved by strange, disturbing thrills; she did not dazzle one. Her light was clear and steady, and Kit knew it had after all been his guide.

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"Betty," he said, "why did you refuse me at Liverpool?"

She gave him a quick glance, and for a moment turned her head. When she looked up her colour was rather high.

"We were very young, Kit."

"You mean, I was very young and rashly confident. You don't think about yourself. It was for my sake you let me go."

"Aren't you taking something for granted?"

"I think not," said Kit. "I'm dull, but sometimes I do understand, and I now see all I lost. You wanted me to have my chance; you thought to be tied to you might keep me back? Yet I believe you loved me. Let's be frank!"

"Suppose I did love you?" said Betty, with a blush, although her voice was quiet.

"To begin with, you know how I used my freedom; you know my ridiculous ambitions."

"You mean you were ridiculous when you fell in love with Olivia Brown?"

"Yes," said Kit. "Anyhow, it was ridiculous for me to imagine I could marry her."

Betty gave him a keen glance, for she was human. She liked Kit's staunchness, but nevertheless sometimes it jarred.

"Nevertheless you did not feel you were ridiculous, when you thought you could marry me!"

"I was a fool. My wanting you was all the sense I had. The strange thing was, from the beginning you were my guide, and I tried to use your rules. When I lost the men in Africa, I went back to look for them because I felt you would have me go. I was accountable, the job was mine, but I would not have known this had I not known you. It was like that before and afterwards——"

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Betty was moved, but she thought Kit was not altogether just to himself. His honesty was instinctive, and he paid his debts.

"But that's not all," he resumed. "At Liverpool you sometimes puzzled me. You saw and followed a light I did not. Once when I talked about climbing above the crowd, you said perhaps one need not climb. One ought to stop at one's proper level, and try to make things better. Well, when the Spaniards offered me a good post, I remembered. I'd had enough of shabby ambitions and knew my level. In fact, so to speak, the light was breaking."

He was quiet for a few moments and looked about, knitting his brows. The surf was louder, the sky was red, and the mists glimmered, as if a glow shone through. Betty waited and said nothing. She had waited long, but Kit had returned to her.

"I was a fool," he broke out. "But you know all, dear, and are very kind. Somehow I think you will take me back."

Betty gave him a gentle smile. "It looks as if I had never quite let you go."

Kit took her in his arms and when he looked up a warm beam touched them and moved across the deck. The mists were rolling back, day had broken and all ahead was bright.

THE END.

Transcriber's Note: The following typographical errors present in the original edition have been corrected.

In Part I, Chapter I, a quotation mark was added after "I might get up a few rounds."

In Part I, Chapter IV, a period was added after "he started for Las Palmas".

In Part I, Chapter V, "the sale fish I sent home" was changed to "the salt fish I sent home".

In Part I, Chapter X, a missing quotation mark was added after "I knew you were moody.", "to note thinks like that" was changed to "to note things like that", and a

period was changed to a comma after "He promised he'd give Kit a post".

In Part I, Chapter XI, "the caravan roads and wodys were drawn by a pen" was changed to "the caravan roads and wadys were drawn by a pen".

In Part II, Chapter I, a missing quotation mark was added after "if you think I ought to stop, I will stop.", a missing period was added after "'Maybe Mr. Musgrave would suit,' says I", "Since I dinno convairse" was changed to "Since I dinna convairse", and a period was changed to a comma after "Then she said".

In Part II, Chapter II, "foul-smelling cafes by the horbour" was changed to "foul-smelling cafes by the harbour", "sailed on beard a fishing schooner" was changed to "sailed on board a fishing schooner", a comma was added after "sports he could not enjoy before", a period was added after "a cultivation higher than his", "they halued her off and waited" was changed to "they hauled her off and waited", and "brought off a number of loans" was changed to "brought off a number of loads".

In Part II, Chapter III, "'I'm very much surprised,' he admitte.d" was changed to "'I'm very much surprised,' he admitted.", "Its not usual. Nobody trusts us like that" was changed to "It's not usual. Nobody trusts us like that", "his imaginatino had cheated him" was changed to "his imagination had cheated him", and a quotation mark was added after "he'd been loafing about my office most part of the afternoon."

In Part II, Chapter IV, "althought he doubted if his analogy were good" was changed to "although he doubted if his analogy were good", "a dispute with another tribe in the back country about an oases" was changed to "a dispute with another tribe in the back country about an oasis", and "When he was on board the *coreillo*" was changed to "When he was on board the *correillo*".

In Part II, Chapter VI, "I think it better or him to do so" was changed to "I think it better for him to do so", and a quotation mark was added before "That's all, but I rather agree with Jefferson."

In Part II, Chapter VIII, "The view from the veranda" was changed to "The view from the venranda".

In Part II, Chapter X, "Don Erminio spread a chart on the tabble" was changed to "Don Erminio spread a chart on the table".

In Part II, Chapter XI, "It was swimming befoe" was changed to "It was swimming before".

In Part II, Chapter XII, "She struck the steamers plates" was changed to "She struck the steamer's plates", and "the lifeboat's sterpost's smashed" was changed to "the lifeboat's sternpost's smashed".

In Part III, Chapter IV, "smoke curled about the automatic pistal" was changed to "smoke curled about the automatic pistol", "I knew you would came back for us" was changed to "I knew you would come back for us", and periods were changed to commas after "Very well", after "he said" and before "and turned to Kit", and after "I knew you would came back for us".

In Part III, Chapter V, a period was changed to a comma after "he had used his short supplies with stern economy", and a quotation mark was removed before "We'll push on for the ridge".

In Part III, Chapter VI, a quotation mark was added before "You're a very good sort, Harry."

In Part III, Chapter VII, "grit like her's is fine" was changed to "grit like hers is fine", and a period was changed to a comma after "over the kedje all were exhausted".

In Part III, Chapter VIII, a period was added after "Austin was not surprised that she was there", and a quotation mark was added after "I rather think Kit deserves his triumph."

In Part III, Chapter IX, "Somethink like that, sir" was changed to "Something like that, sir".

In Part III, Chapter X, period were removed after "brought back the men and got another post——" and "if anything could have moved me——", "The others iindulged me" was changed to "The others indulged me", and a period was changed to a comma after "Then he said" and before "The offer's good".

In Part III, Chapter XI, "Ola, seuor!" was changed to "Ola, señor!", and "a' o' us dinna see he joke" was changed to "a' o' us dinna see the joke".

In addition, the heading for KIT MUSGRAVE'S LUCK which originally followed the heading for PART I: THE WIDE HORIZON has been moved to precede it.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KIT MUSGRAVE'S LUCK ***

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