



THE STORY *of* SARAH

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The Story of Sarah

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BY

M. LOUISE FORSSLUND

(M. LOUISE FOSTER)



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"To you who have believed in me."

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CHAPTER I

VONSTRADAM—THE LITTLE HOLLAND

THE stretch of roadway between the brook that bounds Shoreville on the east and the brook that bounds Shoreville on the west is not so long, nor has it so many turns, that it should take you from one manner of thought to another, from one mode of living to another, through a village distinctly American to a hamlet that seems to have been smuggled from some port in Holland. Nor, when following this road, will you become aware of any change until after you have passed the little west brook, where it coaxes its way in babbling curiosity from the quiet under low-bending, overhanging boughs to the noise of the wide, unshaded thoroughfare, and then, frightened by its own boldness, purls off to the protection of the woods again, but gets caught in a maze of bushy meadows and dodges hither and thither in the very capriciousness of timidity.

Here, at the brook, if you are a child that knows the way, you will be apt to pause, and, seeking the two middle boards of the unpretentious bridge, spread your small legs apart, and declare with the manner of one who encompasses the universe:

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“Here I stand in *two* places at once—Shoreville and Vonstradam!”

Then, if you (the child upon the bridge) are an American boy, you will point your scornful, stubby little finger up the brave little hill that marks the entrance to Vonstradam, and which would never be called a hill anywhere else save in the equally flat country of Holland, and you will sneer, as well as a little boy can sneer:

“*That’s Dutchtown!*” And tauntingly call:

“Dutchy! Dutchy! *Dutchy!!*” after the square little boys stolidly trudging home from school up the hill. “Hy, Dutchy! Don’t forget to ask your mother for a piece of bread-an’-lard-an’-mer-*lass*-es when you get home!”

It makes no difference if you are secretly afraid that the after-school void in your own stomach may never be completely filled: no difference in worldly circumstances will ever make up in your mind for the difference in birth—will make you jeer less contemptuously at the members of a community whose favorite butter is lard, and sugar, molasses.

But your little Dutch schoolfellows are as exclusive in their way as you are in yours, and at the top of the hill, they will dance a sober little dance of derision and delight, inform you Shoreville lads that you “can’t lick them”; then face about again, and with their dinner pails (Dutch boys always carry dinner pails) swinging from their hard young fists, disappear under the row of willows that lines the walk.

On, under the willows they will go, past the general store and post-office, then, glancing neither to right nor left, cross the main street and enter a narrow lane. Here, there is a thicket of willows that bends first one

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way and then another until suddenly it breaks off to leave you (if you have followed the Dutch boys) on the borders of a transplanted Holland.

Across the road, which is path and road in one, as well as the children's playground, wide fields of grass slope down to wooded meadows—the meadows of the brook—and out of the distance a half-dozen roofs of Shoreville are peeping, seeming like the housetops of another, far-off country.

There is an air of modest independence, of sedate freshness, of scrupulous cleanliness, of thrift, of just-soneness here that is lacking in Shoreville. The lane is so winding that you can see a long way down the row of houses on your side of the road and as far as the row that usurps the fields of the other side; and every house, —nay, every building, even to the cow shed—looks as if it had been painted but yesterday in its own decided color—a Dutch blue with red trimmings and a red roof; yellow, the shade of Wilhelmina's palace, with a crimson crown; white, with blue blinds and a red roof; possibly pink and still the red top; or red from peak to foundation. Even the fact that the houses are scrubbed on the outside once a week as faithfully as on the inside once a day, can not fully account for the glistening freshness of their coats. No. Paint is the one luxury of the Vonstradam Dutchman; so highly does he hold it in regard that the local expression for thrift and prosperity has come to be, "keeping things painted up"; and so openly does he declare this his strong weakness, that the Shoreville storekeepers regularly advertise in the Vonstradam column of the *Shoreville Herald*, "Bargains in Paint."

Extending way down the lane, continued from door-

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yard to door-yard, there is a thick, wide, close-cropped hedge, which is broken twice regularly in front of each place—once by a small wooden picket gate and once by a large wooden picket gate, painted to match the house beyond, and with never a picket or the smallest part of a picket or even a nail missing. The garden paths on the other side are swept as often as a leaf or twig falls upon them; the gardens hoed as often as a regard for their welfare permits; and the wood-piles, of which you catch occasional glimpses, have geometrical proportions, which in some mysterious manner they always maintain.

Of trees there are many, but all are chosen after careful consideration of their fruit-bearing possibilities; and all are stunted, gnarled, wide-spreading, as if pressed down into the sandy soil by the weight of our winter storms. Grape arbors, yielding both shade and fruit, besides the product known as home-made wine, are seen in every yard, no matter how small the yard, and many yards have two or three wide arbors. Flag poles seem to grow in extravagant, if patriotic, profusion out of the corners of the gardens, but a closer inspection of these over the hedges will show that they are the discarded masts of boats.

By this time you have come to the new line of hedges and houses on the other side of the street and a break in the line on your side, where one building opens with direct hospitality on the sidewalk. This is the church—white, low and square, similar in shape to one of the old Dutch dames, with its open, lace-work steeple looking like a quaint and ancient headdress. In this steeple there rests a bell which never rests on Sundays; and three times on the Sabbath day, you may see a

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straggling line of black-bonneted old women and rough-bearded old men enter the one wide door under the steeple of this little Holland church. Only old men and old women, because the young ones faithlessly worship in Shoreville, where the congregation does less chanting and the preacher is not one of the congregation.

If you go on down the lane from the church, peering over the green hedges and the picket gates at straight-cut, shrub-bordered paths; at innumerable flower boxes; at radiant flower beds or the ghosts of radiant flower beds; at window gardens blooming most brightly in the dead of winter—you will find that garden hedges, like all other things, have an end.

By this time you will have passed and been courteously greeted by girls at work in the yards, women cleaning shutters and clapboards, and many sturdy young children at play in the road; and now it may occur to you to question those stolid youngsters that are piloting their sloops through the dangerous channel of a mud puddle. They will tell you (if you prove yourself a man of patience and enough of a lawyer to have a taste for cross examination) that:

“Nobody in Vonstradam farms; nobody works in stores; nobody preaches or lies; everybody goes oystering in the oyster season, and—out of it, everybody clams.”

This hardly gained piece of information may account for that bit of true Holland scenery which now lies before you—the low, flat fields and meadows overlooking the wide waters of the Bay and sweeping down to the side of a canal-like creek; the low group of rude, red buildings at the edge of the beach, with trees reaching over the tops of their pointed roofs, mounds of bleached white

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shells rising high against their sides; and, to complete this Dutch picture, the windmill that calmly surveys the whole scene. Take that clearly marked, but crooked path across the lot and you will find that the reed-bordered canal is your old friend, the brook, making up for the aimless wanderings of its earlier ways by a wondrous activity toward the end of its course. For, if it is at the close of the afternoon, you will find both banks of the canal lined and double-lined with catboat after catboat and sloop after sloop, so close together that you could not get up or down the stream in a sharpie; and here the way of the canal is so crooked and bent that the very land has the appearance of being covered with a growth of bare masts and naked rigging.

The canal is very deep and is always kept free and clear, not depending, as the Shoreville harbors do, upon the grudging, uncertain will of the Government, but protected and watched by the water-wise Dutchmen themselves, who have built breakwaters out in the Bay, after the manner of the dykes that stand between Holland and the sea—breakwaters that will resist wind and weather, destroying waves, and shifting sands, as long as there is a Dutchman left in Vonstradam.

This passion for the sea is in every one of them, from the highest to the lowest—from the little child that sails boats in his mother's washtub to the old man who dies because life is not life when one is too old to go oyster-ing—and it is as natural to them as their frugality, their uprightness, their sobriety. At home, they wrest their country from the waters; and here, they struggle on the water for their homes. At home, necessity forces them to toil; here, first necessity, then ambition; and always a love for toil.

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They are proud, these Dutch, and sufficient unto themselves. They send their children to the Shoreville school (until they are old enough to cull oysters) because a separate school in Vonstradam would mean a longer time at learning English and a higher school tax. But the older people hold aloof: when the men wish to drink something stronger than the product of their own vines, they go to Shoreville, but they are not a thirsty race; when the women need calico for dresses, sun-bonnets, handkerchiefs, or patchwork, they do not go to Shoreville. They send the young girls.

These girls are faithful to their own lads, and their own lads are faithful to them—as a rule; and woe to the mistaken young creature that transgresses! “Live and marry and die in Vonstradam,” is the unwritten law of the community. It is strange, then, that, clinging so closely together, holding so sternly aloof from men of other nations, as the majority of them do, any of them should become Americanized; yet many are subject to this transformation.

You notice it in the younger people—never in the older. They forget to use the mother tongue—would forget it completely if the New Testament in Dutch were not the favorite book in every house the whole length of the lane; they pretend ignorance of the shape of a wooden shoe (after they have passed the spanking age); they dress on Sundays—alas for the Shoreville maids!—in super-Shoreville style, and saunter down to the larger town for religious instruction and—instruction that may not be religious. You notice it in gradual changes of sentiment: they fall in love—not once, but twice, three times! before they marry. It is a disgraceful American custom: love and marriage used to be synony-

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mous terms in Vonstradam. And, worse than this, they refuse to believe that woman was made for the scrubbing-brush and to rock the cradle, and for naught beside; and man for the oyster tongs—to work, to slave, to save and drudge, and nothing more.

Occasionally there is even greater rebellion than this among them:—a swain departs from the authorized manner of wooing; scorns his parents' advice; passes the trim Dutch maidens by with his eyes blinded by love for a maid of another nation—in short, follows his wilful young heart to Shoreville. And of a verity he follows it; and, once following, is not likely to return; for he would not think of bringing an American wife to raise the dust of dissension in that quiet, orderly little Holland hamlet.

He is a fool: let him suffer as a fool—so say his wise and solemn judges.

“*Fahder's*” *Family*

CHAPTER II

“FAHDER’S” FAMILY

THERE is, next door to the little white church with green shutters, a little white house with red shutters which differs in no marked way from its neighbors, having the same indispensable garden with its flower beds and flower boxes, its flagpole and its wide grape arbor; yet to one that knows the place, it does differ in a very great measure. Look again, this time a little more closely, and you will see—wonder of wonders!—that the neat paint is peeling off the boards in places, that the flag pole is decaying where it stands, that the snow-ball shrubs on either side of the blue front door with the pink panels are as high as the peaked roof of the little porch, that the grape vines are thick, heavy, and much twisted and gnarled. Now, having observed all these marks of old age, you will readily believe that this is the parent house, the mother grape arbor, the first flag pole, the original of all these trim gardens; for you are standing before the home of “Fahder,” as old Bernardt Benstra is lovingly called throughout, and even beyond, the hamlet of Benstra—or Vonstradam.

Old Mr. Benstra was the first to place a wooden-shod foot in Shoreville; and that was long, long years ago, when he was young and his wrinkled little wife was young—and oh, so pretty!—and when none of their ten children had been born to them. Now, the youngest of

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those children, "Baby Bernardt," stood over six feet in his stockings and voted for the first time at the last presidential election. Now, the old man's back had stiffened over the oyster tongs so that he could no longer do combat with the sea. An American would have taken to the chimney corner, but that is not the way with the Dutch; literally, they either do or die, and old Bernardt Benstra felt far too young to die.

Instead, he made a demand that West Shoreville have a Post Office, and when that request was about to be granted, applied for the position of mail-carrier between the new Post Office and the Shoreville railroad station; thus, in true Dutch style, benefiting himself while doing good to his neighbors. So it came about that, instead of bending over the oyster tongs, and handling the tiller, he straightened his broad shoulders, slung a mail bag over them by means of a stout stick and twice tramped three miles a day—to and from Shoreville.

On that route, he saw the whole world and met men of all minds; he grew broader in his views, although no less rigid in his morals; he learned to tolerate the follies of the world and to pity the frailties. He had time to think and time to observe and to compare: in a very short while he came to the conclusion that as all men are not so fortunate as to be born Dutchmen, they should not be judged as Dutchmen.

You might have seen him any day at certain hours marching along the road, smiling, courteous ever—a gentleman despite the patched patches on the broad knees of his trousers. He would talk to you on any subject, and, moreover, listen while you talked on any: the modesty with which he stated his own views was pleasing; the deference with which he heard yours was

“*Fahder's*” *Family*

charming. But if you talked to him, you had to walk with him; he would no more loiter by the way than he would steal a stamp or read a postal; he would not have failed to meet his train for the little Wilhelmina herself, and, at the other end of the route, there waited another and an older queen.

Straight from the station to the Post Office he would go, and from the Post Office to the little white house with red shutters; enter at the kitchen door, and tell all that he had seen and heard to the wrinkled old lady, who smiled and nodded and kept her strong opinions safe in her strong bosom. She had long ago learned many things that Fahder was learning but now; for, before age caught up to her, she, too, had gone out in the world—even as far as Shoreville, where little children had looked upon her as little children look upon storks in her own country, and where she is still tenderly remembered by many gentle mothers as the “Little Lady-nurse.”

On American soil, this worthy Dutch couple had raised nine worthy Dutch sons, all of whom, at the prescribed age, had married good useful wives of Dutch origin and, later on, had given the old people a wondrously large number of grandchildren. But, alas that so honorable a tale cannot be told of the tenth son, Ben Benstra! For what did this lad do but join that ever-increasing number of witless ones who woo in Shoreville!

Had he been a fool from his birth, his unhappy mother could have endured this folly; but even in the cradle he had been sober and wise and big and brave—to all appearances, a thorough Dutchman. He did not fail to show at the proper age that proper mania for the water and even for soap and water; he was quietly, mar-

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vellously obedient and sweet tempered from the time he uttered his first laugh (nobody ever heard his first cry, except his mother); he proved his strength and courage by beating, single-fisted, a rooster with cannibalistic designs on a chicken bone that Ben was gnawing, when Ben was no bigger than that big rooster himself.

So, you see, Ben bid fair to grow up into a proper Dutchman; but, as old Mrs. Benstra told her husband, "You can't tell nothing about children until they are men."

Little did either of the old people know, or would they have believed, at how early an age Ben's disloyalty to his own began—just after he had doffed his mother's cut-down dresses to don his father's cut-over breeches and was sent for the first time to Shoreville school. There he learned, before ever he had time to learn the alphabet, that pulling two particular braids of bright gold hair tied with blue ribbons would produce a squeal—not a prosaic, resentful Dutch squeal, but an American squeal—humorous, soft, laughing, delicious! Now Ben had a musical ear and innate good taste; therefore, he kept on pulling that American hair tied with blue ribbons and neglected to touch those inharmonious Dutch locks interbraided with pink string. And this was the first of the disloyalty: traitorous actions that have undermined nations have had beginnings as small.

Years afterward, when the meeting place was in a Shoreville church, instead of the Shoreville school, Ben had not gained wisdom in the managing of maidens and neither had he lost his admiration for a certain head of hair, although that hair had changed and deepened in color, being no longer a decided gold, but somewhat brown and somewhat red—in fact, no mere Dutch-

“*Fahder's*” *Family*

man could be expected to name its tint. Now Ben glanced askance at it, laughed to show he had no real affection for it, and slyly teased those girls that had once twined pink string through their larded braid. But that marvellous American hair, aided by a pair of eyes that might have drawn a man anywhere, drew Ben to Shoreville; and the soul shining fearlessly through the eyes, held Ben's heart in Shoreville.

Presently it became known in the Little Holland that Ben had no wish to choose a round-faced, strong-stemmed flower from this neat and tidy garden of girls—nothing but a useless Shoreville rose, pretty leaves, thorny branches, would suit him. How they found it out Ben could not tell, for he had certainly tried his best to hide it; but known it was, and a consequent contempt due to, and received by, Ben Benstra—not that he cared; the stolid Dutchman never cares for anything once he is sure that he is right. So he was able to turn a distant Dutch ear to the offensive Dutch taunts, and, being too honest to deny the accusations, too prudent to affirm them, joked modestly, laughed bashfully, and continued to go to church in Shoreville.

Then came a shock that roused the little community, turning all of its sympathies back to Ben; for the American rose (it was said) had scorned to be plucked by the hard and honest Dutch hand and had chosen, instead, an American hand—a hand quite as hard and not so honest, neither pure nor sweet nor clean—foolish little rose! Now it was that the lad refused to hear the taunts; now it was that he came from behind his screen of laughter and jokes, speaking openly, bravely, and nobly:

Every rose has the right to choose upon whose breast it shall be worn. This was the un-Dutchlike sentiment

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that Ben, the youngest son of Fahder, expressed to the consternation of every unmarried man in Vonstradam. Then Ben settled quietly down to his old ways—teased the same as ever, laughed almost the same, and, bound by a custom of both villages as well as by his own sense of honor, no longer looked on the rose or went within the spell of its fragrance. But even when the rose had been transplanted to other soil, Ben kept away from Shoreville—the garden of many memories and one lost rose.

At this time, old Bernardt Benstra showed some patience with Ben, but the little wife showed none; in her mind the folly of wooing in Shoreville might be forgiven, but the disgrace of not winning could not be endured.

Why did Ben, in courting this Shoreville maiden, depart from the straightforward customs of Vonstradam? How, unless he told her so, was she to know he wished to marry her? What was the reason that he had not taken her for those three Sunday afternoon walks that the lovers of Vonstradam take, with the breadth of the walk between them the first Sunday, and unbroken silence; hand in hand the next Sunday, and unbroken silence; arm in arm the third and last Sunday, and with the silence unbroken save for the words,

“Will you be my bride?” from his lips; and “Yes” from hers. If this foolish American girl had said, “No,” then Ben could have consoled himself with the thought that he had done his best.

The poor, backward lad had covered the wound in his honest, tender heart for two long months so successfully that none but the sympathetic father and the knowing mother could be sure that it was there, when something happened that gave sincerity to his smile, life to his laughter.

“*Fahder's*” *Family*

That something had happened, wise Mrs. Benstra knew one winter's night by the change of time in Ben's footsteps when he passed her door on his way to bed—knew it the next morning by the merry sound of his whistle as he worked about the kitchen, making the fire before she was up and ready to begin her long day's work. For it was Saturday—the busy baking day of Vonstradam, when every true Dutch housewife wears herself out in preparation for a long, true Sabbath day of rest; when the little Dutch boys watch for the butcher's wagon, listen for his jolly sounding bell, and smell visions of hot “boucher's meat” for that night's supper and cold “boucher's meat” for the next day's dinner. “Boucher's meat,” always beef and usually a certain cheap cut, is so called to distinguish it from the less luxurious and more customary meat—the family pig.

It was not yet daylight and the shadows lay thick in the Benstra kitchen, except where the beams of a small lamp spread themselves over the table and ventured only a little way beyond. But had you been there, even in the dim light, you must have noticed the deep blue of the rough, boarded walls; the row of red geraniums that grew out of a row of bright tin cans on the ledges of the small, square windows; the thick, fat, well-worn Bible beside them; the slim blue rafters that stretched across the room, hung with bunches of dried corn, the husks spread wide from each ear, and strings of dried apples and shrunken red peppers. Ben had to bob his head every time he passed under these rustling evidences of thrift.

But there is the little mistress of the kitchen opening her bedroom door, and as she is courtesy itself, you must no longer stare at her workroom. For a moment she

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stood on the threshold, peering through her heavily rimmed glasses at Ben, who was carefully combing his hair before a round little mirror in which he could not have seen more than one half of his face at any time, and in which, now, in the poor light, he could not have seen where his forehead ended and his hair began. The Little Lady, with her head placed on one side like a bird's, thought of the change of time in Ben's footsteps, thought of the merrily whistled tune, which even now was lingering on his lips.

"Hello, Little Mudher!" said he, and, seizing his slouch hat, placed it hurriedly over his newly-combed locks. She waited only to get a good look at his wholesome, shining face, and then she soundly rated him in very bad Dutch for looking so happy when their neighbor's son, Coss Quake, was "laid up with the rheumatiz." Ben showed proper penitence by saying that he was sorry, but spoiled the good effect of his words by laughing slyly to himself; whereupon the old lady sent him out for a pail of water and began to vigorously stir the pancake batter in the fat, brown stone pitcher.

It was for this same Coss Quake that Ben was going as a substitute to the Life Saving Station at Cedar Cove. Mrs. Benstra knew that the Station at Cedar Cove was only four miles from the one at Bleak Hill, where Sarah Jarvis, the rose that had pricked so deeply into Ben's heart and the traditions of Vonstradam, was living with her father; but the old lady could not conceive why that simple fact should have taken the strained, pained look out of Ben's face. Vonstradam itself was only five miles from Bleak Hill, and, five miles by water, in her mind, was not half so far as four miles through the heavy beach sand.

“*Fahder's*” *Family*

By the time Ben returned from the well, Mr. Benstra, the elder, had entered the kitchen and was occupied before the family toilet table, which in this family, was the kitchen sink. He, too, having been prompted by a whispered word from his wife, took note of the change in Ben's frank countenance, and, while she smiled and listened, Fahder talked seriously to the lad about the week he was about to spend away from his good Dutch home in the company of worldly Americans. Ben heard it all with unruffled good humor, while he obeyed his mother's outspoken command to make his own coffee. She, like every other good housewife in Vonstradam, had coffee at nine o'clock in the morning, coffee for dinner, coffee at four o'clock in the afternoon, and coffee for supper, reserving the luxury of a good, strong cup of tea for breakfast; and if Ben wanted to begin the day with coffee, he had to make it himself. So he did; and each morning the shining tin coffee pot took its place on the back of the stove with the polished copper tea pot, and there they both sat all day long, seeming as much a part of the stove as the stove a part of the kitchen.

When the coffee had boiled up just once, no more; the tea drawn; and the first griddleful of “boekweit” cakes were baking, the two men drew their chairs up to the uncovered, white-scrubbed table; both lifted their hats, and Mrs. Benstra, pancake turner in hand, one watchful eye on the griddle, bowed her head over the stove while Fahder asked a blessing. Then back went Fahder's fur cap over his bushy gray locks, and Ben's old brown slouch hat over his rumpled brown head; for a head covering of some sort is just as necessary to a Vonstradam Dutchman's peace of mind in the daytime as a nightcap to the quiet slumbers of a Dutch woman

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at night. Moreover, Ben had worn that same hat in almost all his waking hours from the time when his head was so small that the hat covered the upper half of his ears; while Fahder's fur cap had been seen in company with his head and his gold-hoop earrings every winter's day since Mrs. Benstra fashioned it out of the skins of two large squirrels that Fahder had shot in the meadow woods.

"Bennie," said Mr. Benstra in Dutch as he poured his tea from his cup into his saucer, "if you go to Bleak Hill, you ask that Captain Lem Jarvis when he's going to pay me that one dollar and seventy cents he owes me."

The lad, elbows on table, saucerful of coffee before his lips, choked over his reply; for he was enough of an American not to regard seriously the thought of dunning a not impossible father-in-law.

"He's owed it for ten years," said he in English. "It's outlawed and you can't get it."

Then Mr. Benstra looked grave, and inwardly reproached himself for ever having trusted that Captain Jarvis. Here the little wife, who did not know what "outlawed" meant, said in her own tongue,

"I guess Bennie won't have time to tell *Her* father what he owes his." (No member of the Benstra family ever called Sarah Jarvis anything but "Her" and "She.") "Ain't that so, Bennie?" The old lady said this with her usual gentle smile, but it made Ben give a little laugh of embarrassment and bend further over his plate. For a while there was silence, except for the clink of steel knives and forks; and then Mrs. Benstra, having cooked a pile of cakes a foot high, filled her tea cup and joined the two at the table.

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“Now, don’t you forget to say your prayers at church time to-morrow,” she warned her son; and he, thinking of the church he had attended before the hopeless days came, where he had been conscious of but two worshippers—she who worshipped God and he who worshipped God in her—answered emphatically.

“You bet I won’t forget!”

“Maybe Captain Woodhull will let you off in the afternoon,” suggested Fahder. “It’s the Reverend Dan’s Sunday at Bleak Hill.”

“There! You go then!” exclaimed the lad’s mother delightedly, for she and the Reverend Daniel Leggett were fast friends; and, as Ben would surely go to see “Her” anyway, it would be well to make the journey also a religious pilgrimage.

“Yes—yes,” assented Ben happily.

“I wish Coss Quake hadn’t gone and got the rheumatiz,” said Mr. Benstra. “I don’t much like you going to the Beach. It’s a lazy life them life-savers lead—doing nothing but walk up and down the sand. You might a good deal better stick to the oyster beds; but I suppose to oblige an old neighbor, you got to go.”

His little wife demanded if he “wasn’t ashamed to talk like that when Bennie had to go. But,” she added, “that Coss Quake deserves to be sick anyway for working in company with a lot of rough Americans instead of oystering like an honest Dutchman.” After that she told Ben to be careful not to catch cold patrolling the Beach of nights, and the lad rose from the table, put on his overcoat, patted his mother’s soft cheek, and with many a happy “Good-by,” went out of the door.

“She’ll get him yet,” said Mrs. Benstra, but without severity; and the old gentleman gave a slow nod that

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meant, "No girl can resist our Ben," and each at the same moment leaned over to blow out the light, for now the dawn was creeping through the flowers that screened the windows.

Then Fahder set his chair against the wall, took his long pipe from the shelf behind the stove, and sat down at the window for his morning smoke.

Mr. Benstra's accustomed seat at home was a visible proof that the spirit of trade—any but the oyster trade—will never live in Vonstradam. It was a red plush barber's chair—the only thing saved from the wreck of the only "tonorial parlor" that Vonstradam had ever known—and it had been washed into Fahder's kitchen by a curious wave of circumstance. He alone, of all the Dutchmen, out of pure kindness of heart, had turned his cheek to the enemy and entrusted himself to the arms of that chair when it was supposed to be serving its legitimate use. He thought his reward very great—overwhelming in fact—when, one morning after the wreck of the "tonorial parlor" had been reported, he found the barber's chair high and dry on his front stoop.

At first he used the embarrassing gift out of instinctive courtesy to the man that gave it, but in time he grew so fond of that gorgeous chair that he would have thought his home life incomplete without it. This morning, he leaned back against the worn head rest, smoking contentedly, with one patched knee crossed over the other, one gray flannel shirt sleeve resting on the red plush arm. He could see the village street over the tops of the geraniums, and every one that passed by. Now and then a child would trudge along, going on some errand before school time; but most of the passers-

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by were big baymen, swinging along with trousers tucked in the tops of high, thick boots; soft, dark hats pushed back from rugged faces (only the very young and foolish Dutchmen have adopted the fashionable yachting caps of the Shoreville baymen); immense dinner pails in their hands. Presently, the old man, watching this straggling procession which he himself once led, spoke:

“There’s those two Shoreville boys coming down the street. Peter Vespoor said they struck a new scallop bed yesterday. There; they stopped to talk to Belchie—she’s waiting at the gate for the butcher.”

The Little Lady went to the window to look over Fahder’s shoulder; and at that moment the two men passed on, leaving Belchie, whose baptismal name was Isabel, and who was a granddaughter of the Benstras, staring after them with open mouth. This attitude of the girl’s provoked her grandmother into saying that she knew “Belchie would go and get married pretty soon,” and, wondering what would become of Vonstradam when not only the lads but also the lasses proved unfaithful to their own, went back to her work.

A few moments later there was a heavy step on the porch, and then the door was thrown open (no one in Little Holland has time to waste at knocking) and one of the American lads entered. Both were surprised to see him, but greeted him heartily, the old man taking out his pipe to motion with it toward a chair, while the little wife dusted off the seat of that chair with her apron.

“Oh, I haven’t got time to set down,” said the visitor, pulling a newspaper out of his pocket. “I bought this air *Shoreville Herald* up street last night; and

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Mom, she said as mebbe you might want to see yer name in the paper. I jest seen Bell and she 'lowed as 'twas a lie."

"Ya—ya," assented Mrs. Benstra, who had no faith in American newspapers.

"Vhadt vas it?" asked her husband with greater tolerance and caution, as he watched Paul Ketcham laboriously searching for a certain paragraph under the Vonstradam news.

The *Shoreville Herald* was a budget of village gossip issued every Friday; its editor, a man that would have done well to study Dutch prudence and American common sense; his belief in everything that was told him bespoke a trusting spirit, but resulted in one of the most remarkable sheets ever printed in the County. Whatever he heard went pell mell into the paper, and a week later an apology usually went limping after. Fortunately for him, the people of Long Island will stand a good deal before they will fight, and at last accounts he was still without a scar.

Paul mumbled something about Dinkie Van Popering having a new organ—the organ was as old as truth itself, but then there was an organ, and that was as near the truth as any one expected the *Shoreville Herald* to get—and then he held the paper out to Fahder.

"There! Jest look ahere!" he said, pointing to a certain paragraph.

"Vhadt you dink? Me can no read de Eenglish."

"You read him, please," said the old lady with a smile; whereupon Paul, in loud, important tones, began to stumble through the following piece of news:—

"It is rumored that old Mr. Bernardt Benstra, who has been such a familiar figure on the road for years,

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has decided, because of his advanced age and an occasional touch of rheumatism in his shoulders, to give up his mail route.” Here Paul looked up from the paper to see the little wife standing directly before him in an attitude of strained attention, not unmixed with defiance; the old man leaning forward in his chair, almost dazed with wonder and incredulity. The reader continued, his voice now low and thrilling with suppressed excitement:

“ We shall miss ‘*Fahder*,’ as he passes the office every day, and his primitive mode of carrying the mail is far more rural and pleasing to the eye than the sight of our own mail carrier in the form of Silas Corwin’s lean horses. But old institutions must get out of the way when progress is marching on; and when the latter gentleman assumes the responsibility of taking the mail to and from Vonstradam next week, we can only say, ‘It is well.’ ”

The reading ended, there was a full moment of silence, broken only by the loud ticking of the clock. Poor Paul lost every sensation save that of discomfort, for even his slow eyes could see “*Tragedy*” written on both the old faces. Then the little woman spoke, using the only English ejaculation that she knew and firing it out like a rapid succession of shots:

“ Oh my—oh my—oh my—oh my ! ”

This verbal expression of dismay and surprise so relieved Paul that he seated himself on the edge of the table, being a lad with good American manners, and tried to understand the quick, broken speech of the old couple, for they had both begun to talk excitedly. They stopped as quickly as they had begun, however, and the Little Lady turned to her guest with a tremulous smile

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of apology; while the old man, throwing off his look of distress, declared,

“Dhot man vhadt makes dhot babper petter little bit nodt lie so much.”

Mrs. Benstra gave a smiling “Ya—ya,” which meant that now the first surprise was over, she bore the mistaken editor no grudge.

“But look ahere,” said the lad. “Don’t you go and be too sure as it’s a lie. I was up street las’ night an’ I see that air Si Corwin an’ I ast him if ’twas so, an’ he said he didn’t know nothink about it, an’ went an’ sneaked off. An’ you look ahere, Fahder, you want to look out fer that air stage driver—he’s a skin fer fair. He cheated my father onct out of a job of cartin’ oysters, an’ he’s alayin’ fer your job, too.”

“Oh my—oh my—oh my—oh my!” exclaimed the old lady, looking from one to the other.

“Si Corween,” began Mr. Benstra, “efery day I see him mit de station andt all de dime he say to me, he say, ‘Fahder, dondt it vas doo padt for you do vork so hardt?’ Den somedime he say, ‘You vas an oldt man, Fahder, andt de years dey be abetting along mit you; it vas doo padt for you do valk so far efery day.’ But I always dell him I dondt vas dhot oldt do rest yet—ya—ya!” The old man was letting his pipe grow cold, and Paul afterward declared that his hand trembled upon the stem.

“That’s Si’s way—underhanded,” declared the lad, getting off the table and approaching the door. “You jest go and ast to both them air Post Offices. He’s been adoin’ some dirty work, I bet you!”

“I dhought he vas a goodt poy,” muttered the old man, who would judge none without a hearing. “Dhot

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babber man, maybe he *haf* to lie apout *someding*.” But there was a great deal of doubt and trouble on Fahder’s face.

“Well, I got to go along or Hen an’ me won’t ketch no scallops to-day.”

“Dank you, Paul, and dank your mamma for sending you,” called Mr. Benstra after the lad, and his wife smiled bravely and echoed the words.

“You jest look out fer that air Si Corwin,” admonished the American, and slammed the door.

For a moment after they were left alone, the old man sat perfectly still, while his troubled little wife, watching him with sympathetic eyes and trembling lips, said not a word. Then the clock, striking the hour, broke the silence. At the sound, the mail carrier started up and his wife pointed her stiff forefinger at the solemn face of the timepiece, which seemed to mark the time only for the two painted boats sailing on the glass door beneath. Mrs. Benstra was too moved to speak, for the impossible had happened—her husband was five minutes behind his usual time of starting. However, her inaction did not last a moment; she helped him into his thick coat, tied a knitted muffler around his neck, thrust his mittens into his hand, and gently pushed him out of the door. Brave Little Lady! She was again smiling as she declared that it would be “all right;” but the smile died away when he had turned his back and was hurrying under the grape arbor toward the gate. Suddenly she remembered that he had not taken his cane, hurried to get it from its accustomed corner, and hurried out of doors—bare headed, save for the black silk cap she always wore, no outer covering on her square, plump shoulders. At the gate she caught up to Fahder

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and placed the stick in his hand; the distressed old gentleman took time to bow his thanks, and then, without a word, hastened up the street. For a while she stood looking after him, not a doubt in her mind but that he would make up the lost five minutes. Then, as she turned toward the house, she was roused from her thoughts by a call from the street. She looked back to see that a man driving by on a wagon load of oyster barrels had addressed her.

"Hullo," he said, staring curiously. "Fahder agoin' to give up the mail business, eh?" She did not know the man, but was sure from his manners as well as his face that he had no Dutch blood in him.

"Oh my, no!" she answered, with the sweetest of smiles and the most courteous of bows.

"Wall, Si Corwin said as he was."

The wrinkled face clouded over as Mrs. Benstra exclaimed:

"Oh my—oh my—oh my—oh my!"

This ejaculation made the man that drove the slowly moving horses laugh, and his amusement made the old lady remember that she had no small shawl over her head and no large shawl over her shoulders. Turning abruptly, she started on a run toward the house—short black calico dress skirt flying up, showing beneath it, a quilted plaid petticoat, a bit of red flannel, and even a partial view of a pair of hand-knit purple stockings. He who carted oysters for a living stared back and laughed loudly; for he was only an ill-bred young man from Shoreville.

The Moneylender's Ears

CHAPTER III

THE MONEYLENDER'S EARS

At this time there lived in Shoreville one Hiram Hedges, a little man who was called Old Hime, Hime Hedges, or The Moneylender, and a man whose name spelled Destiny for far more people than would have cared to admit the fact.

He was a very ugly-looking little man; no beard, sweet or otherwise, was ever covered by so tough and hard and twisted and misshapen a shell as the outer bark of the Moneylender. And his reputation was as bad as his looks; he was called a Note Shower; for the sake of money, he was popularly supposed to have committed every crime that a mortal can commit, and then borrowed some craft of old Satan. He was a bad enemy, there is no denying that; and whenever he befriended anybody, which he sometimes did, for "the devil is not so black as painted," he did it so stealthily, so shamefacedly, that even the person befriended rarely knew of the deed.

He was a steady individual, anyway, conducting his business by preference over the hedge that half hid his front garden from the street, or along the street itself, sinking at the side of some troubled debtor who looked as if he could buy and sell the shabbily dressed little Moneylender. However, there was a room in Mr. Hedges's unpretentious house that served as an office—a

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not uncheerful room, with blazing pink walls and an ever glowing stove—where he would sit for hours at a time, curled up in a great armchair before an enormous, old-fashioned, black walnut desk, whose every pigeon-hole was crammed full of papers. The door between this room and the kitchen was usually open, and often when he sat thus he made greater use of his ears than of his pen, for his wife was a great gossip, and her kitchen a rendezvous for gossips.

She was a kindly woman in some ways, this wife of his, and he loved her almost as dearly as he loved to quarrel with her; and although she was large, ungainly, unkempt, and untidy, she shared one virtue with him—the truly admirable virtue of standing up for one's friends through thick and thin. People that were not their friends had reason to say equally hard things of both the Moneylender and his wife; and certainly the guest of the evening, who was earning her way by helping to wash up the dishes after the frugal tea, was justified in her desire to throw Mrs. Hedges in the “wash biler an' bile her up an' down along with all the other dirty old duds in the room.”

Mrs. Abraham Thurber was justly proud of her own neat appearance, for she had come over from Bleak Hill dressed as nicely as her common sense would permit her to dress for a five-mile sail in Abe's old clam-boat.

“Wall, wall,” Mrs. Hedges was saying, “yer don't mean ter tell me that this here is the fust time yer come off this winter, Ann-Abe.”

(Two Thurber brothers had married Anns, so to prevent confusion each wife had tacked her husband's name to her own, that being permitted in Shoreville.)

“That's the gospel truth,” answered Mrs. Abraham

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Thurber. "An' I'm scart ter death now fer fear somethink'll happen ter them air younguns on the Beach; but Sadie'll sorter keep an eye on 'em when Abe tells her as I'm gone. I wa'n't agwine ter distarb her myself when I see as her an' Ben Benstra was asparkin'."

"Lorgens-ter-massy! Why, he hain't nawthink but a Dutchman!"

(In the other room, the Moneylender, growling at the tendency of his right ear toward deafness, moved to a seat nearer the door and went on intently reading his evening paper.)

"Yes—yes," Mrs. Thurber assented in gossipy glee. "Nawthink but a Dutchman, an' Sade some stuck up, too! Wall, Abe he come in this forenoon all abilin' when I was on my han's an' knees ascrubbin' the kitchen floor an' he says, says he:

"'Ef yer agwine ter Shoreville with me git ready darn quick,' says he.

"Abe was kinder put out, Abe was; his las' three months' pay is run over 'leven days now—the Gov'ment's so plagued scart fer fear the men'll up an' throw up the job. I tell yer what! It don't improve yer temper none ter live over ter the Beach. An' fust one youngun an' then 'nother sick, off an' on, the hull livin' winter; an' the Doctor achargin' a fortune ter take a little five-mile sail; but we was lucky ter git him anyhow. Wall, as I was asayin', I jes' dropped everythink an' run over ter Sade Jarvis's, athinkin' as I'd ask her ter sorter look after the younguns ef things was so I couldn't git hum ter-night. But, law sakes! I stepped on the stoop and thar in the winder sot Sadie aleanin' back alookin' like a dyin' calf more'n anythink else, an' thar, right alongside her, was that air Dutch Ben

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Benstra; an' he had a cup of coffee in his han's an' he was aholdin' it in front of her mouth. An' she begun ter laugh—(Lord, how long sence I seen her laugh, poor youngun !)—an' he put his han' on her head an' made her drink that air coffee jes' like she was a baby. An' her—! She jes' drunk an' giggled like she'd choke ter death or bust or somethink; an' Ben, he jes' stood an' looked at her as if he thought he might enjij awatchin' her set an' swill coffee till Doomsday. Wall, I thought of them days when Abe Thurber come asparkin' me, an' I jes' turned roun' an' went back on tip-toe an' tol' Abe that I guess the younguns could look after themselves till he got back, when he could go and tell Sadie."

Here, from sheer force of necessity, Ann-Abe paused for breath, and Mrs. Hedges, who had been watching for this intermission, hastened out upon the stoop with her dish-pan and flung the dirty water on the ground. Then she hurried back, slammed the door, threw the pan in the sink, flounced down in a chair before the stove, tossed off her loose slippers and put her feet in the open oven.

"Now, mebbe yer don't believe it," she said, shivering audibly, "but it's turned off real cold, an' I shouldn't be surprised if the bay froze over ter-night."

"Law sakes alive!" ejaculated Mrs. Thurber, running to open the door and sniff at the air. When she turned back, her face was clouded with anxiety. "It is cold," she admitted as she seated herself in the one rocking-chair that the room boasted. "Now, who'd athunk it this mornin' when I started out? What on earth'll we all do ef the Bay is frizzed over ter-morrer an' I can't git back?"

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“An’ it’s the Reveren’ Dan’s Sunday at Bleak Hill, too, hain’t it?” remarked Mrs. Hedges.

Suddenly Ann-Abe began to chuckle, hiding the fact that she had but one tooth in her upper jaw with one hard-working, half-closed hand, and wagging her inquisitive nose from side to side.

“That’d serve that air pesky Devine Strong right,” she explained, in response to Mrs. Hedges’ glance of inquiry. “Gosh all hemlock! Won’t it beat all ef he couldn’t git over ter the Station ter-morrow!”

“Lorgens-ter-massy!” ejaculated Mrs. Hedges, letting the bare spot in her stocking touch the stove in her excitement. “Yer don’t mean ter tell me that that air ol’ widower’s amakin’ up ter Sadie agin?”

“Makin’ up *agin!*” repeated the other contemptuously. “Why, he hain’t never stopped amakin’ up. Lor’ bless me, I could kill the man for apesterin’ her as he done all winter long; an’ her ahatin’ him worse’n pizen. Why, she fairly wintered in the lookout; wonder she didn’t ketch her death acol’, fer ’tain’t nothink but a barn—as cold as Greenlan’! An’ she’d set thar’ an’ watch fer Devine’s sail, an’ when she see it acomin’, she’d run like Satan an’ hide. Many a time I’ve stowed her away an’ then swore up an’ down as I didn’t know where she was; an’—mebbe yer don’t believe it, but as many times as he’s been thar’, he hadn’t seen her but onct—*onct*, mind yer! An’ then, bein’ as I was with her, he didn’t git no satisfaction. I tell yer what! Ef she didn’t hol’ on me tight an’ shake like she’d drop ter pieces!”

“An’ what’d they say ter each other?” demanded Mrs. Hedges, grudging Ann-Abe the rest she had been obliged to take.

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(“ Yes—yes. What’d they say to each other?” the Moneylender asked inaudibly of his newspaper.)

Ann-Abe rocked back and forth a moment longer and then answered:

“ Why, they didn’t do nawthink but jes’ sass each other back an’ forth. He ast her as how she liked alivin’ on the Beach, an’ she said as she didn’t like nawthink better, an’ ’spected ter live thar’ all the rest of her life. Oh, she was jes’ as pert an’ sassy as she could be, an’ she tol’ him plump out that ef he come thar ter see *her* he better wait till he was ast. Yes, sir; that’s what she tol’ him, an’ his eyes aglowin’ red as a couple of live coals. But he laughed an’ said, as imp’tent as could be, that he ’spected an invite pretty soon. That air Sadie was as cool as a cucumber; but I could feel her atremblin’ like she’d drop ter pieces. An’ she tol’ him that ef he ’spected an invite from *her*, she guessed he’d git tired of awaitin’. But I had my suspicions all along that she had a sort o’ leanin’ toward him; an’ she did!” Here Mrs. Thurber paused to give greater effect to her climax: “ An’ she’s agwine ter marry him ter-morrow.”

There was a sound like a smothered ejaculation from the other room; and Mrs. Hedges exclaimed:

“ Wall, I’ll be flabbergasted! Gals do beat all fer ashiftin’ ’round like weather cocks. Thought yer said as yer left her an’ Ben Benstra asparkin’?”

“ Wall, I did, I tell yer; an’ I never see Sadie look so pretty an’ soft like, neither; though she was alaughin’ fit ter bust her biler. That’s what got the best o’ me—ter think I left her amakin’ a fool of that poor Dutch boy—an’ Devine hain’t been nigh her in a week an’ I was with her then an’ hern all they said—an’, ef yer please,

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when we was acomin' across, we met Devine, an' Cap'n Lem's boat was alongside o' hisn. An' them air men both hollered—Sadie's father an' Devine—both on 'em, they hollered:

“‘You're acomin' back fer the weddin', hain't yer, Ann-Abe?’

“Wall, yer could have knocked me overboard with a feather; but I got my breath an' I made Abe tack an' we come on 'em agin an' I hollered to that air Devine Strong:

“‘Be Sadie Jarvis agwine ter take up with an ol' pirate like you?’ says I. An' says Devine, says he:

“‘That's what!’ Imp'tent hain't no name fer it. He was agrinnin' like a full moon an' that air father o' hern looked tickled out'n his skin; but I was ahoppin', I was, fer I knowed Sadie didn't want him no more'n I did, so I yawped out:

“‘You're a liar fer fair, Devine Strong.’ An' agin he laughed like an idjit, but Cap'n Lem looked as ef he'd atook my head off ef it hadn't been fer the water between. An' so I jes' put two and two tergether an' made up my mind that ter-morrer bein' Reveren' Dan's Sunday, they'd jes' git him an' Devine over thar' tergether an' marry her off han'.”

(Some absurdity in the newspaper made the Moneylender give one of his rare chuckles, then bend down and read more intently.)

“Them two pirates hain't agittin' no favors out'n the Reveren' Dan,” declared the Moneylender's wife, coming to the defence of another friend of hers.

“Law sakes, the Reveren' Dan hain't nawthink but a pirate himself.”

“Do you s'pose that Sadie likes that air Ben Ben-

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stra?" asked Mrs. Hedges, going back to the more interesting subject.

"Do I spose she *likes* him," exclaimed Mrs. Thurber. "Why she knocked that air long-legged Peter Jones clean over 'cause he kissed her onct."

Mrs. Hedges laughed gleefully.

"Yes, sir," went on Ann-Abe, "she was acoming up from the landin' one day acarryin' her father's gun, an' Long-Legged Pete, who'd had proof time an' agin that Sadie Jarvis is about as standoffish as a porkipine, didn't have no more wit than ter up an' kiss her. An' she up with the gun as quick as a wink an' knocked him clean over; then went on up the Cedar Road as ef he wa'n't nawthink but a fly. Pete's anussin' that lame shoulder o' hisn yit."

Mrs. Thurber's hand went on duty over her mouth again, but it came down presently as she said:

"Devine laughed like he'd fraction his throat when I tol' him. An' wa'n't I some mad cause I tol' him then! So I says——"

"Of course," interrupted Mrs. Hedges, meditating over the tip of her warm toe, "when a girl what knocks one feller down fer akissin' her takes ter aspoon-in' with another, there's somethink in it."

The man in the other room had read his newspaper through, and now came shambling out into the kitchen—one shoulder much higher than the other, both badly bent, his eyes seeking the floor; curses were what weighed down his shoulders, people said, and the possibility of finding a lost penny kept his eyes on the ground. Did these people know?

"I'm agoin' up street, Belle," he said in his low, surly tones, without looking at his wife. "Ef Devine

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Strong comes aroun', you kin tell him that I been awaitin' fer him two hours, an' he kin set down an' wait fer me till I git good an' ready ter come."

"Be Devine Strong acomin' here to-night?" demanded the wife authoritatively, looking at Mr. Hedges over her shoulder, knowing full well that she was not to deliver one word of the discourteous message.

"I jes' tol' you so, didn't I?" growled the Moneylender, turning back into the office. Mrs. Hedges jumped up and followed him, closing the door without apology upon her guest, who immediately sped to the keyhole for revenge.

"Yer can't fool me, Hime Hedges," began Mrs. Hedges, placing herself, arms akimbo, between the Moneylender and the door; "that air Devine's acomin' here ter borrow money, like enough ter turn aroun' an' lend it ter Cap'n Lem Jarvis. Or else he's afraid yer'll take the sloop. Yer know yer own it an' him too—body an' soul."

The Moneylender, sulky and silent, scowled at the floor.

"Ann-Abe—" began his wife.

"Ann-Abe's an old glab-throat," he interrupted angrily.

"She hain't no sech thing! Why, I hain't never hern her say a word about nobody!"

"You must be deafe, then, fer she's been atalkin' like a house afire all the evenin'."

Mrs. Hedges dismissed the subject and appealed to him somewhat piteously:

"Hain't you got no feelin', Hime? Don't you 'member Sadie Jarvis, an' how good she was ter our Jinnie the winter Jinnie died?"

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At this he glanced up, his eyes showing surprising fire and brute-like pain; for she had touched upon that one wound which the making of money and the passing of years had failed to heal for the Moneylender.

“I hain’t aforgittin’ nothink,” he replied, huskily. “An’ ef Sadie Jarvis is sot on amarryin’ Devine Strong, I hain’t agoin’ ter hurt Devine Strong for no money.”

“Lorgens-ter-massy!” cried the woman. “Hain’t you got wit enough ter see, Hime, that Sadie jes’ *hates* that th’re ol’ widower, an’ that air heartless father o’ hern is jes’ amakin’ her marry him ter git her off’n his hands? Why, her an’ Ben Benstra——”

“Oh, shet up!” he growled, contemptuously shoving her aside and going to the door. “You women folks jest let your minds run away with yer. I happen to *know* what I’m atalkin’ about, an’ ef that air Ann-Abe seen a Dutch boy asparkin’ Sadie Jarvis, I seen something that passed between Sadie Jarvis and somebody else.”

With a gesture that forbade another word, he turned the knob and went out of doors.

“That’s always the way,” thought Mrs. Hedges; “as sure as I pull one way, Hime goes lickety split the other. Oh, gosh, I wish I’d hed sense enough ter kept still.”

“I’d jes’ like ter see anybody manage Hime,” she confided to her neglected guest, when she had resumed her occupation of toasting her feet in the stove oven. “He’s the most sot in his way of anybody I ever see—niasy ter death! There hain’t no doin’ nawthink with him but jes’ akeepin’ still, an’ I never was the kind ter keep still. I have to speak my mind right out.”

Mrs. Thurber nodded in sympathy and silently

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thanked the Lord that "Abe was Abe and not Hime Hedges" at the same moment when Mrs. Hedges consoled herself with the thought that her husband was a "King to Abe Thurber, anyway."

"Nobody never could work 'roun' Hime," continued the wife of the Moneylender, "but my little Jinnie. Ef you hed seen her coax the eyes right out'n his head! An' Sadie was as like her as two peas. Why, Hime, he would set by the hour alistenin' ter them two children aprattlin' about what they was agwine ter do when they got growed up. Thar wa'n't nawthink he wouldn't adone fer them. I 'spect ef Jinnie was alivin' now she'd ahad a pinnaner an' everythink. He even let 'em hev a Christmas tree onct—went out with them each aholdin' his hand an' cut it in the Rectory woods—an' he's dretful sot agin sech tomfoolery as a general thing. An' Sadie—she went an' put a box of t'ilet soap on it fer Hime, an' I tol' Hime what them two girls was up ter, an' he went an' went right up street an' bought a bottle of Sweet-by-and-by cologne an' put it on the tree fer Sade."

Mrs. Hedges paused to sniff at the recollection, and Mrs. Thurber, who had heard the story of the soap before, put her hand over her mouth and "done her best," as she told Sadie afterward, "ter keep from bustin'."

"Hime's got that box of soap yit," asserted the wife of the Moneylender triumphantly.

"Yes, yes; I thought likely he might," rejoined Mrs. Thurber from behind her hand. "'Bout how long 'go was that?"

"Eight years; it was the same winter Jinnie died an' Reveren' Dan's wife died, an' both them two gals was

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jes' turned thirteen an' as pretty as picters. Thar'll never be another Christmas like that."

The lonely mother took up a piece of her wrapper and furtively wiped her eyes. Mrs. Thurber blinked hard. In the silence that followed they were both startled by a loud knock at the office door.

"Thar's Devine now," exclaimed Mrs. Hedges, slipping on her slovenly shoes. Then she added, with a broad grin:

"We'll have time to git a whack at him before Hime gits back."

"That's what we will!" joyfully assented Mrs. Thurber.

Sarah Jarvis

CHAPTER IV

SARAH JARVIS

SARAH JARVIS'S mother, a truant member of the good old Mapes family of Wading Hollow, died when Sarah was three days old. It took the father a full hour to persuade himself that she was indeed dead—that God had *dared* to take his wife away from him; then, without a word, he had taken up the sleeping baby, gone with it into another room, and locked the door. An hour passed, and it was as still in that room as in the room where the wife and mother lay; some one, anxious about the baby, knocked, but received no answer. Another hour passed, and some one knocked again and called, but still received the same answer—silence. Then there were awed whispers about the door, then louder calls, then frightened demands and threats; but still the answer was a silence as deep as that in the room where the wife and mother lay. At the end of the sixth hour the Rector's wife came.

A sweet and lovely woman was the Rector's wife, and a very wise and sympathetic one. She called softly through the closed door, and presently there was the sound of feet dragging slowly across the room, of the key turning in the lock, and then the door was opened just far enough to admit Mrs. Leggett, and closed again.

What she said or how she managed none ever knew save she and Captain Jarvis; but the Rector's wife came

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out of the room with the baby in her arms, and in her arms she carried the child to her own home. For thirteen years Sarah stayed at the Rectory (not eating the bread of charity, for her father would not allow that), and then the Rector's wife died and the Rector's own daughter was sent to the convent where her mother had been educated, and Captain Jarvis took Sarah home—to such a home for a girl who had been brought up in refined surroundings by one of the sweetest, most understanding women that ever breathed !

He carried her across the Bay and gave her a little two-room cottage on Raccoon Beach, within stone's throw of the Life Saving Station of Bleak Hill. He was Keeper of the Station; his work was there; he liked the place, and he did not see why she should not like it.

It was in the dead of winter—of a cold and bitter winter—and at best Raccoon Beach is bleak and dreary in winter time—scarcely more than a long, long chain of dunes that heave up like the petrified billows of a tumultuous sea of sand between the waters of the Great South Bay and the illimitable expanse of the ocean. All along the beach, at distances of perhaps four miles, there are Life-Saving stations, the first to the west standing in the shadow of Raccoon Beach Light; but the fact that there are some human habitations on the beach seems to make it even more dreary and lonely.

There was no woman at Bleak Hill that winter—not even Mrs. Thurber; and so Sadie's lot fell among seven rude, rough, and, to her, half-savage, men, including her father.

Captain Lem Jarvis did not understand his daughter, and his daughter did not understand him; they had

Sarah Jarvis

seen but little of each other before this, and when they had met the Rector's wife had usually been present as interpreter. When Sadie lived at the Rectory he had been very proud of her beauty, her grace, and her cleverness; after she came to Raccoon Beach she suddenly shot into the awkward age, developed a fierce temper, and often used her cleverness to his discomfiture. Seen but occasionally, she had loved his picturesqueness, his blue coat and his brass buttons, his proud bearing, his rudely handsome face and figure. She thought his calling a noble one; she was grateful that he had not let her eat the bread of charity; and when he had refused to let her be adopted by a certain lady, because neither he nor chick nor child of his should be beholden to "big-bugs," her heart had gone out to him in spite of the fact that life with that lady would have been far preferable to life on the Beach. She had not been at Bleak Hill two days before she had heard him swear at her, had seen him drunk, and discovered that he did not do his duty nor possess her strong sense of right and honor. She had so much innate refinement and he so much ingrained coarseness that almost every action and every word of his jarred upon her, and, without meaning to or without the knowledge that he did so, he hurt her; but often, with deliberate intent, he teased and tormented his daughter for no reason in the world save that he took the greatest delight in seeing the child possessed by the demon of her temper; and then he would call her a scratch-cat and a Tartar—she who, even when chided, had never been chided harshly. She fought and prayed, and prayed and fought again that she might not hate him, her own father; she struggled all alone against ill-health, which was something new to

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her, against irritability, which was also new to her, against sullenness and mental misery. And all the while she never complained to any one. When the Reverend Dan came over once a month, he found her very quiet and reticent, but even more willing to sit upon his knee and put her arms around his neck than she had been in the old, sweet days at the Rectory.

Somehow that winter passed; spring came, with the yellow creeper like perpetual sunlight on the dunes, white violets in the marshes and blue ones in the woods. The coarse brown grass grew green with life again; birds built their nests in the sturdy holly and stunted cedars. Then, the first of June and the going of all the crew save one Billy Downs, who loved her like a daughter and taught her many things beside the fact that a very kindly heart may beat beneath a rough exterior—taught her how to row and sail; how to shoot, although she steadily refused to kill; taught her concerning the wind and weather, the signals and the service—taught her all that he knew, and, in return, she taught him how to read and write. Her father was away the greater part of the time, and the summer passed quickly. September found her, triumphant after a struggle with her father, living in Shoreville in two rooms in the house where her mother had died, and going to school.

Winters passed at school and summers on the Beach until Sadie was eighteen; then another winter at school as pupil teacher, and Sadie was nineteen—a little marvel of loveliness, of grace and dignity and refinement, bearing that “undefinable charm, the lady-look,” self-respecting, self-supporting; when, to the amazement and mystification of all who knew her, she began to “keep company,” as the village phrase goes, with Devine

Sarah Jarvis

Strong, a boon companion of her father's, and a man as fit to mate with her as a swine with a princess.

Against all remonstrances of the Rector's, of Mrs. Brumley, Sadie's motherly "big-bug" friend, of all who loved her, except Captain Jarvis, the affair went on intermittently for more than a year. Then Devine coolly announced that Sadie and he were to be married. The girl denied it to his face, and immediately went over to Bleak Hill to nurse her father through an attack of pneumonia—the first sickness that he had ever had.

As long as she was able to keep him in bed and to hide the fact that she had refused point blank to marry Devine Strong, Captain Lem was the most docile patient that ever came under the care of a woman; but as soon as he found out that he was not going to die, the saint turned back into a devil. He dinged Devine Strong's name in her ears all day; he flew into fits of rage every time she spoke of returning to Shoreville; he got out of bed and committed such acts of imprudence as would have killed any ordinary man. Sadie conceived that it was her duty to stay at Bleak Hill and watch over him; and for this and other reasons she gave up her school and stayed, but with the distinct understanding that the next time Captain Jarvis said "Devine Strong" she would get on board a boat and sail for Shoreville.

The winter had been exceptionally bleak and bitter—on a par with that first one that Sadie had spent at Bleak Hill—but in the midst of the winter there came one single day that was like a lull in the midst of a battle, sunshine in the thick of a storm—one of those rare, warm winter days that is like a token left by the fair autumn, or a message sent by the distant spring.

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It was the day on which Ben Benstra started for Bleak Hill.

The surf lay low, softly complaining; the sun came up cloudlessly and threw a broad path of shimmering gold across the waters, to be lost in the slow confusion of the breakers. The bay grew into a fair-weather blue beneath the fair-weather sky. There was just enough wind to fill the sails of Ben's sloop and to fan his hope and to cure the fever of his impatience, and to enable him to make the five miles that lay between the home of his childhood and the home of his heart before he had thought out half that he wanted to say to Sarah.

He anchored off the landing, rowed himself in, and marched boldly up the rude wagon trail through the stunted cedar wood to the little settlement of Bleak Hill.

The little settlement of Bleak Hill, with its red-shingled Station and its two small gray cottages, sits in a broad clearing from which dunes rise high on three sides and the cedar wood slopes slowly down to the shore of the bay on the fourth. Across the clearing, just opposite the cedar wood, is another road—a natural one—cut straight through the dunes to the surf shore.

There is a legend that accounts for this clearing in the heart of the dunes and for that natural road to the surf shore—a legend of a furious night when the surf raged high, when sea horses, riding fast and furious, came snorting over the bluff, galloping into and through the sands, on into the heart of the beach—a story of a wild attack upon the dunes, a stampede and a retreat. Billy Downs had told that story to the child Sadie years ago, one night when the surf was pounding and booming, the wind galloping fast and furious; and she, with scarcely less good faith, had told it to Ben.

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He thought of it now as he cut across the sands to the smaller of the two cottages, and laughed happily; but he was not laughing when he stood at Sadie's door, wondering what would be the manner of her greeting. Then he remembered that she had sent for him, laughed once again, and knocked loudly. With the tail of his eye he could see the window curtain stir suspiciously; then the door was thrown open and Sadie herself stood on the threshold—Sadie so small and so slender! Sadie holding out both her hands, her lips parting, her face flushing, her glorious eyes sparkling with unmistakable pleasure.

“Why, Ben!” she exclaimed in that dear, soft, exquisitely sweet voice.

Ben took those little hands in his big brown ones and held them close—thrilling, thrilling in every fibre of his being—a lump in his throat, a moisture in his eye, and not a single word on his tongue. She gently withdrew her hands, and with a blush and a shy little laugh asked him if he had any objections to coming in.

“Not much!” answered Ben, recovering himself, “when I been waiting two months for the chance!”

The Story of Sarah

CHAPTER V

BEN AND SADIE

A LITTLE kitchen-parlor, as Sadie called it, with ceiled walls draped in gray old fish-nets and covered with unframed pictures; soft yellow curtains at the small, square windows; a hand-woven blue and white quilt doing service as a portière; a shot-gun standing in one corner; papers and books and magazines piled high on the table in front of the gun; a richly colored rag carpet; a cooking stove, just like the one in Ben's cabin; a table set for breakfast, daintily and with a white cloth.

In that artistic, full little room Ben felt suddenly big and clumsy. He took off his slouch hat—oh, that his mother had seen him!—and crammed it in his pocket, wishing that he could likewise dispose of his feet.

“I was just going to sit down to breakfast,” said Sadie, beginning to rearrange the table. “I know you had yours in the middle of the night and must be ready for another one. Sit down, do! I shall be so glad not to have to eat alone.”

She was treating him as if they had met but yesterday, and this somehow set Ben at his ease.

“I should think you'd go crazy living over here all alone,” said he. “Say, you sure you ain't growing kinder looney?” he added, looking around the room with a humorous, teasing smile. “First time I ever saw nets set for catching pictures. And say, on extra cold

Ben and Sadie

nights don't you have to take that bed quilt down and put it on your bed? And I s'pose that gun's lots of company for you, eh, Sadie?"

Sadie laughed softly, forgetting how angry she grew over similar remarks when made by her father.

"Ben, I believe I shouldn't have had a lonesome minute all winter long if you had been here to tease me. Why on earth haven't you come before? Sit down over there and tell me what you have been doing all this time."

Ben thought it unnecessary to answer; he sat down at the little table, and, ignoring the bacon and eggs that she had placed before him, proceeded to devour the face of his hostess.

"You're a sight for sore eyes," said he at last.

"Milk and sugar in your coffee?" said she demurely.

"Poison will do just as well. I'd never know the difference this morning. Sadie, this is a day to be remembered!"

She looked surprised at his earnestness as she rejoined literally:

"Isn't it lovely! I went down to the surf to see the sun rise, and somehow the spirit of the day seemed to get into me. I thought as I came into the house that it was wicked and ungrateful to be unhappy in such weather!"

"Then you ain't happy?" said Ben, quickly.

"Oh, yes, I am!" she exclaimed with a smile, adding softly, "now that you are here." Ben's intense pleasure tied his tongue, and she, as if hurrying away from the subject of happiness or unhappiness, began to ply him with questions concerning Shoreville matters, after first asking if his father and mother were well.

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It required all of Ben's clumsy tact to disguise his ignorance of current village news; he longed to tell Sadie that he had not cared to go anywhere or thought of any one but her for the last two months. He was on safer ground when they talked about their school days and a hundred little personal matters. On the whole it was extraordinary how much they did find to talk about, when in his mind was uppermost the question: Why did she send for me? And she was fearful that this bit of sunshine was only transient—that soon she would be in the midst of the storm again.

It was when she had asked him to pour her a second cup of coffee, and, tipping back his chair, he had reached over to the stove for the pot, filled their two cups, then gotten up and carried Sadie's around to her, that Mrs. Thurber looked in the window.

"You ain't big enough to drink it alone," insisted the boyishly happy Ben, holding the cup to Sadie's lips. "Do you remember that tea party we had once up to the Rectory, when you had broke your poor little arm and couldn't hold your own cup, and I held it for you, and little Zeph said she wished *she* had broke *her* arm?"

"Zeph was always such a flirt—even as a baby," replied Sadie with a gurgle of laughter. "I hope the Reverend Dan will bring her over to-morrow. There, Ben, I can't drink another drop."

Ben put the cup down; then, with his hand on the back of Sadie's chair, stood looking fixedly down at her bright head, thinking only that he was near her and that he loved every strand and every thread of that gold-brown hair.

"Do you remember when you used to wear it in two

Ben and Sadie

pigtails tied with blue ribbons?" he asked, reverently touching one of the little curls.

"And you used to pull it and I used to squeal?" She got up from her chair and, with an unconscious, confiding movement, laid her hand on his faded old sleeve.

"Oh, Ben, I'm so glad you happened to come today!"

("Happened to come!" repeated Ben's thoughts in dismay.)

"There is no one else I would rather see! Oh, if you knew, Ben—if you knew!"

Ben was decidedly puzzled. He placed his own hand over hers and asked tenderly:

"Why didn't you send for me before? I should have been tickled to death——."

"Send for you!" repeated Sadie, drawing her hand away and flushing hotly. "Do you suppose that if you did not care enough to come, that I——?"

"Coss Quake is a liar for fair," burst out Ben, turning his head away in black, bitter disappointment.

"Oh!" said Sadie in a flash of comprehension. "Oh!" And then she gently laid her hand on Ben's arm again.

"I'm glad he is a liar."

"Did he lie?" began Ben in a choked voice, "when he said that it was all a mistake, that—that you never were engaged to Devine Strong at all? Your father told me you was two months ago."

"No, no!" A wild, hunted look came into the girl's eyes, and Ben's hand again closed over hers in the natural, although blind, desire to protect her. "He—father was mistaken. I never was engaged to Devine

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Strong." She breathed hard, keeping silence for a while; then she went on hurriedly, without looking at Ben :

"I have never told anybody, but somehow I feel that I can—that I must tell you. If I did not know—*know* that it would be a miserable marriage, I—I might. But, oh, Ben! he—he is horrible. I can say it now, away from him; but when I am with him—oh, Ben, you will think I am the weakest, poorest thing!"

"No-no!" said the lad huskily. "You are all atremble, Sadie. Lean against me. I am only your brother, my dear; only your brother."

"God bless you, Ben! I never spoke to anybody like this before—never before."

"I'm proud that you can speak out to me—nobody minds me!"

"Oh, I cannot help it; I must tell you. I have kept it to myself so long. You know what he is, Ben. Suppose that I should marry him and I should have children and they should grow up—the girls particularly, and they should be like me—like I was before he came into my life. I know a girl who has prayed since her childhood that she might keep from hating her own father. Suppose my children should have to go through that—suppose they should curse me for giving them such a father. Ben, what do you think of me?"

"I think that if I wasn't such a fool I might help you." Tears stood in Ben's eyes, but not for himself. He had forgotten himself and the hopelessness of his own love.

"And the worst of it is, Ben, that I cannot say these things to his face—I am afraid to meet him. I promised the Reverend Dan that I would never let any other

Ben and Sadie

minister marry me, and even Devine could not make me break my word to him; but I am afraid that if ever we two stood together before the Rector, and Devine said: “‘We come to be married,’ that I should agree and go through the service then and there. Don’t ask me what his influence over me is; I don’t know. Sometimes I think I ought to be put in a lunatic asylum until it wears off. Whatever it is, I’ve fought and struggled against it—oh, Lord, how I’ve struggled! And I used to boast of my strength of will!”

“I hoped,” she went on after a pause, “that it would wear off if I did not see him every day, and that is one reason why I have been staying over here. But I saw him a week ago, and then—then——”

There was a long silence. Ben held her hand against his breast, stroking it from time to time with his own; and some of the tears that had been in his eyes were sparkling on her hair.

“Sadie, this place has turned your head—there’s no doubt about it. You come over home with me. I’ll take you this morning. You go to Mrs. Brumley and tell her——”

“Ben, it is no use. You don’t understand. I’ve got to fight it out alone.” She drew her hand away and leaned against the window, gazing out upon the dreary, barren beach. Ben looked at her helplessly—longingly.

“I am very tired,” she said, speaking tremulously at last. “I did not sleep well last night. I have forgotten how to sleep.”

“Then you lie down now and try to go to sleep. I will go away.”

“I was so glad when I heard you were going to sub-

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stitute. You'll come over from Cedar Cove in the morning, *won't* you, Ben?" she asked wistfully, holding out her hand.

"Yes-yes. Now you lie down and don't worry. I wish to the Lord— Sadie, *won't* you let me take you back home?"

"Oh, I shall be all right now you are here. Perhaps I will go back when your time is up. Thank you so much for coming! You have put new strength in me. But listen. Isn't that some one on the stoop?" The frightened, hunted look again came into her eyes; then it vanished and she smiled as she recognized the step and said:

"Come in, Peter."

A long, lank, boyish individual, known as Long-legged Pete, and marked 3 in white embroidery on his left sleeve, entered, and the moment he spied Ben, exclaimed:

"Hello, Ben Benstra, what yer adoin' here asparkin' another feller's gal?"

"Oh, g'long, Pete!" retorted Ben, taking care not to look at Sadie. "You don't mean to tell me that she's been and took up with you!" With that and a very successful laugh, Ben stepped out on the stoop and closed the door.

"Well, Pete," said Sadie, "did my father go to Shoreville? I have not seen him this morning."

"Sade Jarvis," the lad began, going close to the girl, his simple face clouded over and working with almost childish misery—"Sade Jarvis, what do yer mean by atreatin' an ol' fren' like this? Oh, yer needn't look as if yer didn't know what I was atalkin' about! Why couldn't yer atold a feller yer was agoin' ter be married ter-morrer?"

Ben and Sadie

She looked at him without a word, her eyes wide with amazement and terror. Pete put his blue sleeve across his eyes and began to blubber. Her alarm vanished and she smiled in tolerant pity. Peter's love and jealousy had been one of the many troubles and torments of the winter.

"I haven't the least idea of getting married to-morrow. What makes you so foolish, Pete?" she asked wearily.

"Wall!" ejaculated Pete, suddenly rallying. "Ef that hain't jes' like them air two cheeky divils—afixin' it up ter suit themselves, 'thout so much as askin' yer leave or license. I went down ter the landin' with Cap'n Lem—wanted ter stretch my legs a little; got tired a settin' up in that air lookout—an' I carried the 'lasses jug. An' he says to me, he says, says he:

"'Hunt up yer Sunday-go-ter-meetin' necktie, fer thar's agoin' ter be a weddin' ter-morrer.'"

"'What yer mean?' says I, my jaw a fallin' two inches.

"'Jes' what I say,' says he alaughin'. 'Yer go an' tell Sade that I don't b'lieve I kin git Devine ter come back with me ter-night, but he'll be on hand along with the Rev'ren' Dan ter-morrer.'"

The girl was leaning heavily upon the back of a chair, her eyes lowered, her face betraying nothing to Peter.

"I am so tired," she said in scarcely audible tones. "Won't you please go away, Peter?"

"Yer knowed it all the time," snarled the unhappy youth, hurling open the door. "An' addin' ter yer sins by agittin' Ben Benstra on the string at the las' minute!"

The door slammed hard.

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"Pete, Pete!" called Sadie, running to open the door. "Oh, Peter!"

He turned sullenly about, one foot on the porch, one on the gleaming sands.

"What kind of weather are we going to have to-morrow—a—a storm?"

"Oh, yer needn't fret!" sneered the injured Peter. "It'll be jes' sech another day as this here blamed day."

Cross Purposes

CHAPTER VI

CROSS PURPOSES

IN Shoreville, where the habit of tagging and labelling people is a settled one, they had called Devine Strong the "Pirate King," until he arose in his might and gave a certain lad that had flaunted the title in his face a sound thrashing. However, the name still continued to suit the man. He was tall and lithe and slender, with a wild, free, savage air; a swinging, graceful, youthful carriage; genuine daring, although not un-mixed with bluster and bravado.

His most noticeable feature was his eyes, which were wonderfully, terribly beautiful, and which, whenever he was moved by any strong emotion, whether love, hatred, rage, or dogged resolution, had a way of sparkling and glowing as red as the heart of a ruby. But those eyes could soften, and the whole man could soften and grow tender—irresistibly tender. He also had a way with his voice that set at naught his bad grammar.

Perhaps his power was hypnotic—ask Zeph Leggett, the convent-bred daughter of the Reverend Dan. She had an encounter with Devine that evening before he visited the Moneylender's.

Devine took the chair indicated by Mrs. Hedges, just under the glare of the hanging lamp, and found himself facing the open door of the kitchen, and Ann-Abe

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Thurber on the other side of the threshold, energetically rocking.

"How air yer, Cap'n Devine?" she asked, as delighted at catching him in the Moneylender's as he was wrathful at being caught there by her—Sadie's near neighbor. Hurrying to take her stand in the doorway, in telegraphic line with Mrs. Hedges, who stood beside the office stove, Ann-Abe went on:

"Me an' Mis' Hedges was jest atalkin' 'bout you."

"Wall, they say," rejoined Devine, his natural assurance rising to the occasion, "that yer aprosperin' when folks begin ter talk about yer. I seen you two through the winder; I come up the back way, through the woods from the Rectory."

("The Rectory!" flew across the invisible wires from the doorway to the stove.)

"Umm—How air they up ter the Rev'ren' Dan's?" asked Ann-Abe Thurber in subdued tones.

"I didn't know as him an' you was callin' acquaintances," remarked the other woman, ironically.

"I went on business," said Devine. Then turning to Mrs. Thurber:

"How'd yer leave my leetle gal?"

"Gosh all hemlock, ef he hain't got gall!" wrathfully burst out the wife of the Moneylender.

"Your leetle gal!" snorted the other woman. "Ef yer mean Sade Jarvis, I guess she's more somebody else's leetle gal than she is *yourn*."

Devine laughed with the assurance of one who laughs last.

"I was jes' up ter the Rev'ren' Dan's to see about the weddin'. Sadie sent me thar—leastwise, she sent word by Cap'n Lem this mornin'."

Cross Purposes

“Jes’ what I ’spected,” declared Mrs. Thurber, “from what you said this mornin’ out in the bay. Wall, I want ter tell yer one thing, yer Pirate King you; ef everybody’s atellin’ the truth, *somebody’s* alyin’ like the divil. Fer when I seen Sade, only this forenoon, jes’ ’fore me an’ Abe come over, she was a-en’tainin’ Bennie Benstra ter breakfas’, an’ I never seen a han’somer nor a lovin’er couple in my life. Why, he had his han’ on her head, he did——”

Ann-Abe got no farther. Devine Strong was towering over her, looking as if he could scarcely keep from striking her down, his face black and terrible, the red glow in his eyes.

“Ben Benstra! That overgrown Dutch boy! I told her never ter speak ter him agin.”

Ann-Abe’s hand went over her mouth, and her nose began to wag merrily; Mrs. Hedges laughed outright.

“Too bad you hain’t got more cheek,” remarked the latter.

“Yes-yes; it *is* most too bad,” Mrs. Thurber agreed. “Do yer ’spose Sade’s agwine ter cut all her ol’ fr’en’s fer you, Devine Strong? Why her and him was good fr’en’s long ’fore you laid yer wife up in the graveyard.”

The man’s brows were contracted fiercely, his finger nails pressing into the palms of his hands.

“I tell yer one thing,” went on the fearless woman, “an’ that’s ef thar’s a weddin’ over ter Bleak Hill ter-morrer, it may be Sadie’s, but it won’t be yourn.”

“Thar, thar, Cap’n Devine,” put in the hostess soothingly, “don’t git so riled up. You’ve had your fun an’ yer must ’spect Sadie ter have hern; she’s jes’

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ahavin' her las' fling 'fore she settles down along with yer. Yer can't tell much 'bout a gal nohow from her actions," sagely added the wife of the Moneylender; "an' as fer the quiet kin' like Sadie, yer never kin tell which way they're agwine ter jump. 'Still water runs deep,' I tell yer."

Devine did not answer; he was thinking far more of the words than of the woman; but the very atmosphere seemed to bristle. His tormentor by the stove crossed over to nudge elbows with the one in the doorway, and they two stood together gloating over the picture of black jealousy that he made.

"How'd yer manage with the Rev'ren' Dan?" asked Mrs. Hedges at last.

Devine flashed an ugly look at her, and said hoarsely:

"How long 'fore Mr. Hedges'll be back, do yer s'pose?"

"Oh, I guess that's the gate I hear aclickin' now. Set right down an' make yerself comf'table."

She hustled Mrs. Thurber and herself in the kitchen and, shutting the door, knelt down to peep through the keyhole, her broad shoulders shaking with malicious merriment.

"I guess we made him squirm some," said she. "Hain't he a pirate fer fair! Look at him—look at him! Thar's Hime fin'lly, acomin' in the door. Guess I'll set down by the stove an' git my feet warm."

"How air yer, Mr. Hedges?" asked Devine cordially, yet with just that flavor of deference which the Moneylender loved; for Devine had determined—and the encounter with the women had but served to strengthen his determination—that there was one person with whom

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he should not fail on this, his wedding eve, and that person was the Moneylender.

“How air you?” rejoined the non-committal Hedges, curling down in the big armchair before his desk. “Been awaiting long? I hung ’roun’ here awaitin’ fer you till I got tired ter death alistenin’ ter the gab of the women folks.”

He jerked a dirty thumb in the direction of the kitchen, and Devine immediately concluded that the “gab” had been about him and Sadie; but he took comfort in the thought that as Mrs. Hedges seemed to be down on him, Mr. Hedges must of necessity favor his cause.

“I’m sorry I kept yer awaitin’,” began Devine. “I got so used ter awaitin’ myself that I don’t know how ter act now that I hain’t got ter wait much longer.”

The Moneylender stole a glance of inquiry at the speaker.

“Yer know,” explained Devine. “I been awaitin’ fer the las’ two months fer Sadie ter git ready ter be married.”

“Sadie?” repeated Hedges as if he wondered who this particular Sadie might be.

“Your little friend, Sadie Jarvis, Mr. Hedges.”

The Moneylender was pleased at the stress laid on the pronoun, and perhaps this is the reason why he grunted:

“Humph! What’s she awaitin’ fer?”

“Why, I hain’t got no idee,” answered Devine with his usual air of candor. “She promised me onct two months ago, an’ then went an’ got kinder scart. I suppose that’s the woman of it. So I tol’ her I didn’t want ter hurry her, but I’d be right on deck whenever she wanted ter send fer me—ef it was twenty years from

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now. Yer know I been awaitin' on her fer over a year now."

The Moneylender, looking down at his desk, his fist drumming lightly upon the wood, gave a grunt which might have meant anything.

"Wall," went on Devine, "she's sent all right. I met Cap'n Lem out in the bay this mornin'—he was a comin' over ter Shoreville ter see me—an'——"

The Moneylender glanced up suddenly, his eyes looking full into Devine's.

"Does he know you've transferred the mortgage ter me?" said Mr. Hedges.

"Why, of course! Yes-yes. 'Most time the interest was due, hain't it?"

(The Pirate King was a magnificent liar.)

"How many notes of hisn yer got? His notes hain't worth a darn."

"Hain't got none now," answered Devine, willing at that moment to tear up every paper in his possession rather than to lose ground with the Moneylender.

"Sadie made him pay 'em all up."

"That gal's got spirit—that gal has," said the Moneylender, as proud as if she had been his own daughter. Devine smiled—by lying he had scored one. The Moneylender meditated for a moment; then asked with returning suspicion:

"Sure this hain't a deal between him an' you, heh?"

"Lord, no!" answered Devine with a laugh. "They don't buy an' sell gals now a days. An' ef they did, Sadie hain't the kind ter be bought an' sold."

The Moneylender gave a nod of confirmation.

"Yer say she sent fer yer?"

"Yes-yes." Devine was sick at heart to think that

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Lem Jarvis might have lied about this matter for certain purposes of his own; but he answered none the less sturdily: "She tol' her father ter tell me that she was ready an' awaitin', an' fer me ter fetch the Rev'ren' Dan over ter-morrer, myself."

"Hev yer seen the Rev'ren' Dan?"

"Yes-yes; that's what made me so long agittin' here. I was in sech a sweat ter git ter the Rectory that I went an' got lost in that gol durn ol' graveyard. I tol' the Rev'ren' Dan that he built the Rectory in a divil of a place."

The Moneylender chuckled.

"Wall, the Rev'ren' Dan wa'n't over an' above anxious ter tie the knot, was he?"

"Wall, not over and above," admitted Devine; then added with a happy thought: "He thinks he's got more say than anybody else about Sadie. An' Sadie, she don't quite like it, sometimes. Now, with you it's different. She says you're one of the few folks what kin like her 'thout atryin' ter boss her."

The Moneylender was pleased in his quiet way, for he had always been jealous of the Rector's relationship to Sadie; but Devine went a little too far when he added:

"Yer better get over with us ter-morrer, Mr. Hedges."

"Wall, mebbe I will," replied the Moneylender dryly, "seeing that you're agwine on my sloop, an' then agin, mebbe I won't."

It was then that the lover and the "Pirate King" rose to the surface and the liar and diplomat went under.

"Wall," cried Devine with an oath, "ef yer take the sloop, an' I hain't sayin' but what yer might, I kin

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borrower or steal a sloop or cat-boat or any gol durn ol' tub. I guess your boat hain't the only boat in the bay, an' ef it is, why, thar' hain't no law aginst swimmin'."

"Mebbe yer kin skate," suggested the Moneylender with sly humor, but he was secretly pleased at the spirit shown by Sadie's lover. Devine could not trust himself to speak. He breathed hard, and—all aggressiveness and alertness now—closely watched the face of the Moneylender.

"Folks say as I'm a mighty mean man," quietly began Mr. Hedges after a moment's silence, "an' I hain't asayin' but what I be—that's neither here nor thar'. An' as a general thing I don't bother my head 'bout gals; but this here one an' mine was great cronies onct—when Jinnie was alivin'—an' I wouldn't connive with nobody ter hurt her—no, sir, not fer all the money in Shoreville. Folks did say that the reason Cap'n Lem was so sot on the match was 'cause you held the mortgage on his house here in Shoreville; so I worked my cards ter git that air mortgage transferred ter me."

"The divil yer did!" exclaimed Devine, but he winked at the pink walls above the Moneylender's desk.

"Yes-yes," chuckled the Moneylender; then glancing up sharply, but too late to catch the wink: "Sure yer tol' him, heh? Can't understand why I hain't made out ter tell him myself. But I guess it don't make no diff'rence. As you say, Sadie hain't the kind of a gal ter be bought an' sold. Howsomever, it might be safer ef I was ter go 'long with yer ter-morrer an' tell Sade that I'd make her a present of the mortgage whether she took yer or not—how's that?" Again his eye met Devine's; but Devine answered without flinching:

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"Gosh, that'd suit me well 'nough!"

"Humph! Guess I hain't gwine ter make *you* a present of a house an' home," snarled Hime Hedges; and Devine smiled without speaking. The Moneylender mused silently for a while.

"Been awaitin' on her a year, yer say," he began at last, "an' everybody raised the deuce an' yit she stuck ter yer. Seen much of her the las' two months?"

"No-no. That air Ann-Abe seen ter that. She hates me like pizen fer some reason or 'nother, an' she's managed ter keep Sadie out o' sight most every time I been ter the Station. Fact is, I hain't seen her but onct—that was jes' a week ago; an' then that ol' hag stuck closer'n a brother. Sadie couldn't be soft with her alistenin' an' awatchin'; so she was jes' sweet an' sassy an' joked everythink right off. She hain't the kind ter wear her heart on her sleeve, Sadie hain't."

"I seen her awearin' it thar onct," muttered the older man. "That's why I don't b'lieve all I'm told."

"Now, what does he mean?" wondered Devine. But he thought that he could not err in paying tribute to the Moneylender's love of power, so he began:

"Of course I know, Mr. Hedges, that I've let my heart run away with my head; an' atalkin' of amarryin' a wife 'thout a little help from you is all blamed nonsense. As you say, you 'bout own the boat, an' yer kin close on me any time. My seed oysters was all killed this year, every one of them, an' Ma's been sick off an' on most all winter. But the place is mine when she dies, an' ef you'll give me jes' a leetle lee-way fer Sadie's sake, Mr. Hedges——"

For Sadie's sake! The Moneylender's hand lay

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quiet upon the desk; his head was bowed down even further than was its wont. Of what was this hard man thinking? Thinking of two little girls whose childish laughter had rung out in this very room, whose childish voices had fearlessly and lovingly wheedled and coaxed him; thinking of two smooth, soft little faces that had dared and cared to press against his harsh, rough cheek. He put his hand over his eyes.

“Sadie often speaks of little Jennie,” murmured Devine, speaking softly, as to a woman.

The Moneylender kept his hand over his eyes and again the room was silent. His thoughts turned from the little girl Sadie to the woman she had grown to be; and he remembered what she would have wished him to forget—a never-to-be-forgotten look that he had once seen in her eyes when for one long moment they had rested on Devine’s.

Devine was getting anxious over the long silence, when the Moneylender slipped out of his chair, drew his bent little figure to its full height, and began to speak in tones that shook piteously.

“Ef my leetle Jinnie was alivin’ I wouldn’t consider no man on the face of the ’arth good ’nough fer her; but ef she wanted ter marry the divil himself an’ was real sot on him, I wouldn’t stand in her way; for ter go an’ set yer face agin a love match is ter bring sorrer an’ disgrace down on the heads of everybody consarned. *But—!*” Here the Moneylender paused to give greater emphasis to his words:

“Ef she did marry the divil an’ he wa’n’t good ter her, I’d make it so gol durn hot fer him that he’d be glad ter go back home ter git cooled off. So, Devine Strong, yer kin marry Sadie fer all of me; but ef yer

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hain't good ter her, I'll give yer cause ter remember that she's the same as a darter ter ol' Hime Hedges."

The little man slipped back in his chair, shrunken and shrivelled again. Devine held out his hand and the Moneylender took it, but muttered feebly:

"Oh, g'long!"

Devine hesitated, looking down at the pigeon-holes.

"Oh, g'long!" repeated the Moneylender. "Marry her fust and we'll talk business afterwards."

Devine opened the door and a breath of frosty air floated in.

"Why, it's growin' colder by the minute," said he. "Yer don't think it's possible that the bay could freeze over ter-night, do yer?"

The Moneylender did not answer. His head was lying buried in his hands upon the desk. He was thinking of two little girls—one safe in the graveyard, the other struggling with life and its passions. Had he but known!

Devine went out into the night, softly closing the door.

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CHAPTER VII

AN OLD MAN

FOR once the *Shoreville Herald* had known whereof it spoke—the old mail carrier's days as a mail carrier were numbered. The news passed from mouth to mouth, from one end of the Dutch lane to the other, and from time to time all through the day one neighbor or another would enter Fahder's gate, pass under the grape arbor to the kitchen door, and say by way of greeting:

“So Fahder's lost the mail, heh?”

And even after nightfall the visitors kept coming. Clatter, clatter went the tongues until long after the old folks' usual bedtime. But at last they were left alone, and very thankful to be alone, although there was one for whose presence both old hearts were yearning—one to whom the inward voice of each was crying:

“Little Bernardt, if you were only here!”

The kitchen had grown very quiet; only the tick-tick of the clock, senselessly but faithfully marking time for the two boats becalmed on the glass surface of its door, broke the silence; the light was turned low, for there was no work going on save the old wife's knitting, and she could see to knit in the dark. Her little low rocker, as well as Fahder's plush chair, was drawn close to the stove, wherein the fire burned drowsily.

“Fahder,” said Mrs. Benstra at last, leaning forward to place her hand on his, “it is time for you to go to bed.”

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He answered only with a sigh—a deep, weary sigh that made her press his hand in both her own and let her startled knitting tumble out of her lap upon the floor. She picked it up and went for a shawl to fold over his knees; then sat down again and began again to knit in silence.

(Oh, my careful Little Lady, when did you ever drop three stitches in one row before?)

Presently she lifted her head and listened to the sound of heavy, hurried steps coming down the board walk; and the old man lifted his head and, thinking that one of the “children” was coming back, pleaded childishly, “Please don’t let him in.”

But a knock at the door at that moment proclaiming that the visitor was a stranger within the gates of Vonstradam, Mrs. Benstra made hospitable haste to open the door.

“Why, Refferendt Daan!” she exclaimed, in relief, surprise, and pleasure, as she held out her hand and drew into the room the large, bulky, unclerical figure of the Reverend Daniel Leggett. “How do you do? Andt how ish de leetle *Jozephine*, my papbe?”

For seventeen years, ever since the day after the old nurse had left the Rector’s wife to take care of herself and her new-born “papbe,” Mrs. Benstra’s words of greeting to the Rector had always been these—and these alone:

“How do you do? Andt how ish de leetle *Jozephine*, my papbe?”

“How are you—how are you?” rejoined the minister heartily, keeping the Little Lady’s fingers in his right hand and offering his left to her husband. “Zeph’s all right. She sent her love to you.”

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(You are forgiven the lie, Reverend Dan—even rewarded for it by that smile of delight on the old nurse's face.)

But Fahder did not smile, standing in silence, his hand resting heavily on the top of his chair—the light gone out of his kindly eye.

“Heard you lost the mail,” said the Rector, looking at him sharply, “and thought I'd run up to see you.” Then he gripped the old man's hand again. Had it been a question of fighting any one for Fahder's sake the Rector would have known what to do; but to stand still and offer appropriate words of comfort was never an easy task for the Reverend Dan.

“I vas an oldt maan,” solemnly declared Fahder, as if the worst discovery of his life had been made. “I vas an oldt maan.”

“Hey—what!” exclaimed the minister loudly. “Why, man, you're good for twenty years yet; you'll outlive us all—just see if you don't.” And he slapped the mail-carrier on the back, just where was that fatal twinge of rheumatism. Fahder went on as if he had neither felt nor heard:

“De bapper said so; andt dhot dhere padt Si Corveen saidt so; andt so dhot vas vhy I dondt vas got de mail no more. An oldt maan—an oldt maan, Refferendt Daan.” And Fahder gave a slow, sad shake of his head.

“Oh my-oh my-oh my-oh my!” exclaimed the little wife in great distress. And the minister said nothing for a full minute; then he burst out:

“That Si Corwin is a low, contemptible scoundrel, and I'll hold him up before the congregation next Sunday.”

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The mail carrier looked steadily at the Rector from under his bushy gray brows; then with that same slow, sad shake of his head:

“It dondt vas Si Corveen’s fault dhot ve vas hettin’ oldt—me andt my Leetle Lady.” He looked at her with a tender, melancholy smile, at which she drew close and laid her hand upon his shirt sleeve. He put his arm over her shoulder, and holding her so, went on:

“Ya, me andt my Leetle Lady vas hettin’ oldt, andt it’s dime ve rest—de childtren say so.”

“Leetle Bernardt dondt vas say so,” she corrected gently.

“Where *is* Ben?” demanded the Rector, looking about the tidy kitchen as if he would thrash Ben if he found him—just to relieve his own feelings.

“To Cedtar Cofe—mit de Live Safing Station—he vent dis morning—he dondt know dhot I vas an oldt maan.”

The Rector swallowed hard, blinked, then said somewhat huskily:

“It will all come right in the Lord’s own good time. And”—regaining his accustomed energy—“we’ll have it back at that Si Corwin yet. Say, Fahder”—he lowered his voice again—“will you miss this money much?”

“I’m doo oldt to make no more money andt so I die pretty quick,” solemnly declared the father of all the Vonstradam Dutchmen; and now in shocked, pained tones his little wife exclaimed:

“Oh my-oh my-oh my-oh my!”

“But,” began the Rector with a touch of impatience, “why need you feel so badly about this? Ain’t

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you fixed for a rainy day? And what's the matter with your sons?"

"Andt Bennie?" put in the mother of them all.

"Yes-yes; of course—and Ben? I know it was a mean thing for that fellow to steal your mail business from you in that sly, underhand way, but he'll suffer for it, and who knows but what you'll get it back again? And if you miss the exercise in the meantime, why come to the Rectory twice a day; I'll be glad to see you."

Oh, Reverend Dan, Reverend Dan, this is want of tact!—as the eyes of the little wife are telling you. But the old man began to speak as if he had not heard, keeping to that same monosyllabic tone which he had used the whole evening:

"De childtren—dey say dhot dey knowet vhat Si Corveen vas apout, aldough dey did no dink so soon already; andt dey neffer toldt me pecause dey dhought beople say all de time, 'Oldt Fahder, he vork so hardt.' Andt den if I het coldt andt die, den beople vouldt say, 'Dey vork de oldt maan to death.' Oh, no! as long as I vork I *can* no die; but if I dondt vork, den I die sure." With a gesture as of renunciation, he declared:

"Dey are no my childtren—dey are no Dutch."

"But Bennie dondt vas say dhot," the Little Lady excitedly exclaimed.

The Rector cleared his throat with a loud noise, and then with the frog still there, said:

"Well, well, I wish I was one-half as young in my heart as you and the Little Lady are. And don't give up—all in the Lord's own good time, you know—all in the Lord's own good time."

"Von veek more," said the mail carrier. "Next Sadurtay, andt den I *rest*."

A n O l d M a n

“Leetle Bernardt vill be home Sadurtay,” suggested Mrs. Benstra brightly; but her husband only muttered: “An oldt—oldt maan.”

The Rector could endure this no longer. He pressed the old lady's trembling hand, took the old man by the shoulder and loudly told him to “brace up,” then went to the door, inwardly swearing that he would find something for Fahder to do, and that the very next day he would preach a sermon on the blessedness of work and the ingratitude of one's children.

So he left the old couple—the little wife bidding him “Good night” with her unfailing courtesy, thanking him for coming, and sending her “luff to *Jozephine*, my pappe”; the old mail carrier bending his whole figure in an exquisite bow. The door closed on the Rector, and just then the clock—faithfully, relentlessly, marking time for those two boats—began to strike the hour.

At the sound, the mail carrier started, drew himself up erect as a soldier, and, raising his hand to the fur cap that so rarely left its place upon his thick gray locks, bared his head before the great Commander, Time.

On, on—swiftly, swiftly, the seconds went ticking, the moments racing, while the two for whom the clock had counted off so many busy, happy hours, stood close together and listened to the tick-tick and watched the idle, painted boats in silence.

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CHAPTER VIII

AT BRUMLEY HALL

THE Rector stepped into the smart trap that was waiting outside Fahder's gate and said to the groom as they started off:

"Now, then, James, to Brumley Hall. I can chase up that Welsh rarebit with a clear conscience. Sorry I had to keep you waiting in the cold, though, after bringing you so far out of your way."

"Oh, that's all right, Rev'ren' Dan," replied the groom with affectionate familiarity. "If *you* kin stand these errands of charity, *I* kin."

"What about Mamie?—hey—what?" and the Rector laughed, for Mamie was the girl that James had been wooing for years, and he was due at her house this evening.

The groom did not reply, and the Rector sank into a thoughtful and somewhat moody silence.

They were driving back the way they had come—up the Dutch lane, out of the Little Holland, over the bridge, into the village of Shoreville, under the winter-stripped branches of the trees by the roadside, through their skeleton shadows, along the cold, hard, moonlit street, into the lighted business portion of Shoreville. Now and then some wayfarer hurrying homeward would

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shout "Hello!" to the Rector as he drove by, and add some remark on the weather; and the Rector would rouse up to wave his hand or to shout in reply.

Out of the lighted business portion of Shoreville, past the Moneylender's house, and past the Rector's little stone church of St. Catherine's, with its gold cross glistening in the moonlight.

"Ain't that a poem!" exclaimed the Rector, with paternal pride, turning to look back at the church.

"Yes, sir; too bad the ivy's covering up the stone. Can't tell what it's made of."

"James, you have no poetic soul."

"Don't believe I have, sir. There's the lodge."

The lodge stood at the entrance of the Brumley estate, and the horse turned into the ever-open gateway of his own accord and down a long willow-lined avenue, between acres of lawn and meadow-land which were divided here, there, and everywhere by the capricious will of a meandering brook.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" murmured the minister. "Turned into molten silver by the moonlight; see how it smiles and sparkles and dimples! Ever read Tennyson's 'Brook,' James?"

"No, sir," said James respectfully.

Trot, trot, went the horse's hoofs over the white shell road; clatter, clatter, over the rustic bridge; a slackening of pace where the avenue makes the turn that brings the house into sight.

"Reverend Dan!" called a timid, faltering voice after the carriage, as the figure of a slim young woman, completely enveloped in a shawl, darted from out of a clump of shrubbery that grew at the roadside.

But the Reverend Dan did not hear. He had caught

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sight of young Charles Brumley coming down the avenue, and was shouting:

“Hello! Lovely night for a stroll. Wish I was young—ha, ha!”

Trot, trot, went the horse’s hoofs, drowning Charlie’s answer. The trap passed the young man, and he ran forward and caught the woman just as she was slinking back into the shrubbery, apparently as bent on avoiding him as she had been anxious to attract the Rector’s attention.

The trap drove under the *porte-cochère* of the house—a rambling, gray Colonial mansion, standing at the edge of a small forest of pines; and as the Rector jumped out he said to James:

“Say, just leave the horse up and I’ll drive myself home. You’ve kept Mamie waiting long enough.”

Then with the groom’s “Thank you, sir” tickling his ears he went up the steps. A butler of traditional dignity opened the door before he had time to ring, and ushering the Rector into the handsome, hospitable hall, helped him off with his shabby, unbrushed overcoat.

“Your mother well?” asked the Reverend Dan, and receiving a solemn answer in the affirmative: “The Justice is in the library, I suppose? You needn’t announce me. That’s all right.”

He crossed the hall, and carefully parting a pair of heavy portières, peeked slyly into the library. As he looked, his eyes twinkled and his shoulders began to heave.

Justice Daniel Brumley sat at the centre table under the chandelier reading a newspaper aloud to his wife, who stood before him—half smiling, half pouting, yet wholly graceful, with her famously beautiful hands clasped loosely behind her back.

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“ ‘Eggs—Long Island,’ ” read the Justice, “ ‘twenty cents.’ How much do you pay, Dolly? ”

“ I shan’t tell you,” answered Mrs. Dolly saucily.

“ Twenty-five at least,” he declared, and she did not dispute the statement, because she knew that she paid thirty. “ These Long Islanders are the biggest skins I know.” He went on:

“ ‘Butter—best creamery—eighteen cents a pound.’ You pay this rascal up here thirty-two cents—you *know* you do, Dolly ! ” He put down the paper, and, shoving up his spectacles, looked at her with mock severity out of his deep-set gray eyes.

“ Now see here, Daniel Brumley,” she exclaimed, thoroughly aroused, to her husband’s delight, “ I’m tired to death of those quotations. I can’t get to Washington Market, and if you’re bound to stay in the country you must expect to suffer for it. Besides, those are wholesale prices, and you know it.” As she spoke she gave force to her words with graceful gestures of her perfectly formed hand ; and now her husband caught hold of that pretty hand and tried to draw her to him, saying penitently:

“ Ah, now, Dolly ! ”

But Dolly, with a pretty pretence at impatience, snatched the hand away and turned to the rollicking portières:

“ Reverend Daniel Leggett, what do you mean by sneaking into my house like a thief ? I’ll *give* you those portières if you want them.”

At that the Rector came out from the folds of the curtains, laughing heartily.

“ Oh, I know you think it’s a big joke to see me get mad over Daniel’s eternal reading,” said Mrs. Brumley ;

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“but I have to hear it every night; and it’s no wonder that the very name of butter and eggs makes me hopping. Daniel doesn’t realize that constant repetition will spoil the best joke in the world—do you, Daniel?” And, smiling, to show that she herself was not very serious, Mrs. Dolly sat down on the arm of her husband’s chair and began to run her fingers through his hair.

“Children, mere children, both of them,” thought the Rector, beaming first at the bright and tender but plain-faced lady, and then at her husband—immense in size and almost venerable in appearance, by reason of his spectacles, his heavy, prematurely gray hair and beard.

“Why don’t you sit down?” demanded Mrs. Dolly. “What do you mean by standing there and staring at me like that?”

“But how can I look at anything else as long as you are around?” retorted the minister; and the lady shook her finger at him, declaring:

“I don’t allow anybody but Daniel to make me pretty speeches.”

“Daniel? Of course, *I’m* Daniel,” rejoined the Reverend Daniel Leggett, drawing a chair close to theirs, and sitting down with a sigh of satisfaction. He was thinking of matters less pleasant than this rich, warm room, less light than this banter, but he thought that he would not speak of them just yet.

“Well, Justice Dan,” said he, using the term to tease his hostess, “how’s business coming on? Commit any sinners to jail to-day?”

“Don’t talk to me about business,” rejoined the Justice, leaning back in his *I’m-started-for-a-long-talk* at-

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titude. "If I had known what a confounded nuisance this Justice business would be, I would never have run for the office. I only took it for your sake, anyway, Reverend Dan, and—well, perhaps out of self-defence too." The Rector laughed loudly and Mrs. Dolly laughed softly, while Justice Brumley looked as solemn as a justice can look.

"You know," went on Mr. Brumley, "Dolly found fault with me because we never had any game and the woods were full night and day of the most dare-devil poachers you ever heard or read of. We stock the trout streams every year regularly, and we have never had enough trout for a breakfast—have we, Dolly? And your successive housekeepers were always kicking about tramps hanging around the Rectory as though it were a free-lunch stand or a clothing store where they were paid to take things away. They said they had to turn into thieves out of self-protection—the housekeepers, not the tramps—and hide their own dinners for fear they'd starve to death. And do you remember that last old lady you had who always kept one complete suit of yours under lock and key, for fear that some day you'd let some tramp take the shirt right off your back?"

"Yes," said the Rector with a roar of laughter, "and I never knew it until the day I fell in the creek and came home dripping mud and water with every step and said :

" ' Ann, I'll have to go to bed while you dry 'em.' "

"Gracious me! I'd like to have *you* for a husband!" broke in Dolly, patting her own well-groomed husband's head with approval.

"And so," went on Justice Brumley, "we decided

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that I'd better run for office just to see if we couldn't clear out the nuisance ; and—Lord bless me, if I didn't get it ! It's a worse nuisance than all the other nuisances put together ; isn't it, Dolly ?”

“Are you troubled with tramps at the Rectory nowadays ?” asked Dolly demurely.

“Never had so many in all the years I've been in Shoreville. I was afraid to tell Zeph, but I haven't anything to wear but this sweater. Poor girl ! She leaned over the banisters as I was coming out and cried—almost tearfully, upon my word :

“ ‘Dad, you *aren't* going to Brumley's in that old sweater ?’

“ ‘Can't help it, Zeph,’ I answered. ‘I wonder what that butler will say ?’”

The Rector laughed as though it were the best joke he had ever heard, and the Justice winked slyly, but the dainty Dolly puckered her brows for a moment ; then she said :

“Well, I'd rather have poachers than tramps, because they don't expect us to clothe them, but we've got 'most too many. The woods are full of scalawags ; and the worst of it is, they make every effort to get arrested. Then when they're brought up before Daniel, he frowns, and fines them ten dollars ; and after the trial is over, he calls them aside—oh, they hang around and wait for that !—and he gives it all back to them with a dollar for not telling. Oh, he's an ideal Justice !”

“Hey-what !” exclaimed the Rector, hugely enjoying Justice Brumley's somewhat sheepish look. “You don't seem anxious to tell about those four tramps you had up this morning ?”

“What's that, Daniel Brumley ? Something you're

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afraid to tell your wife?" asked the lady, twitching his ear.

"Isn't that just like a woman?" demanded the Justice. "It was all her fault, and now she says I'm afraid to tell her."

"Gracious me! I'd like to know what you're talking about," exclaimed Dolly.

"You see it was this way," said Mr. Brumley, addressing the Rector. "Si Corwin came down last night to tell me he had four tramps in the lock-up, and I asked Dolly what we should do with the poor devils; and she advised me to let them go in the morning with a quarter apiece for their breakfast. So I, like a fool, told Si Corwin to do that: charge ten cents a head to the Town, and fifteen to me. And what did those fellows do the minute they were out, but club together and get a box of beer instead of a good square meal; and now they're all back in the lock-up boiling drunk; and I've got to send Si Corwin down to Riverhead with them on Monday."

Dolly, indignant that even a tramp should prove so ungrateful, and more indignant at the amusement of the Rector, slipped away from her husband, and with her easy, graceful step, started to leave the room.

"Hy, where are you going?" called Mr. Brumley. "Don't you love me, Dolly?"

"No, I don't," she answered shortly, pausing with one hand on the portières. "Why don't you two men play chess if you want to?"

"All right for you," retorted her husband. "If you go off like that I won't give the next tramp a cent." Dolly hesitated at this familiar, but always effectual, threat.

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“Don’t go yet, Mrs. Dolly,” pleaded the Rector, with more seriousness than he had shown before. “I want to talk to you about something.”

“Yes,” she said, turning to him with a flash, “and I want to talk to you, too! Where did you go with that horse to-night?”

“You can’t fool her,” exclaimed the Justice. “She can tell to the minute how long it takes James to go over to the Rectory and back again.”

“Dolly won’t scold about the use I made of the horse to-night,” said the minister; and then in tender, pitiful language, he told about his visit to the old mail carrier’s. Dolly did not scold, but thoughtfully wiped her eyes instead; for Dolly had known the Benstras for twenty years, having, through force of circumstances, been tenderly mothered by the Little Lady when she herself became a mother, and brought her only child, Charles, into the world.

“So Fahder’s days of tramping along the road with his stick over his shoulder and the mail bag on his back are numbered,” concluded the Rector, with a sigh. “We’ll have to put him on the superannuated list.”

“Gracious me!” protested Dolly, the fire leaping to her eyes and drying up the tears, “I guess we won’t! Daniel will settle with that constable—won’t you, Daniel? Send him to Riverhead jail.”

The Rector burst into laughter; but Mr. Brumley smiled tenderly, and with a silent motion of the lips asked his eternal question:

“Do you love me, Dolly?”

“I’ll love you well enough if you get Fahder’s mail back for him,” she answered.

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“And send your most energetic constable to jail,” added the Rector.

“Oh, you keep still,” said Dolly. “And if you can’t think of a way of getting the mail back, think of something else that Fahder might do.”

“But what?” asked her husband, a little quizzically; for he had in mind a plan of his own.

“Well, he’s as proud as Lucifer,” said Dolly, as if thinking aloud. “And he can’t do but two things—sail a boat and walk. Now, he gave up sailing and oystering long ago, so he must walk.”

Then for a little while she kept her thoughts to herself, standing between the two men, her hands on the edge of the table, her eyes upon the papers scattered over its surface.

“I have it!” she cried at last, clapping her hands and facing about: “He shall come over here every day to teach Charlie Dutch. ‘Professor Benstra,’ that’s honorable, I’m sure, and he will have to walk one mile further than if he went to the Station.”

She looked at the Rector as if for approval, but found that gentleman’s eyes full of merry tears.

“‘Professor Benstra!’” he shouted, and throwing back his head, laughed until Mrs. Brumley angrily declared that he would have a stroke of apoplexy.

“Why not?” demanded the lady, when she could make the Reverend Dan listen. “Maybe the boy will be Minister to the Netherlands some day. Daniel would be now if I had wished. Wouldn’t you, Daniel?”

Daniel solemnly agreed; whereupon Dolly herself commenced to laugh.

“Of course,” said she, “Charlie would have to be careful not to pick up any bad Dutch; but he might

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pick up some points on good breeding that wouldn't hurt him. If ever there was a gentleman, Fahder's one."

"That's true," admitted her husband, "but when you get Charlie to take lessons in Dutch from Fahder, I'll stop reading the paper to you."

"That's a bargain," replied Dolly promptly. "But I tell you one thing, Daniel Brumley, if Charlie won't take lessons, *I* will." And, followed by the laughter of the two men, she glided out of the room, the train of her pretty gown swishing softly over the carpet.

"Say," said the Rector after she had gone, "can't you use your influence with Corwin?"

"I guess so," answered the Justice with a solemn wink. "But I thought I'd hear what Dolly had to say."

"You did, did you?" exclaimed Dolly's voice as her head and one uplifted finger appeared in the parting of the portières. "And did you suppose that Dolly didn't know that?"

Before either of the men could answer, head and hand and Dolly were gone.

"You can't fool her," declared the Rector, and then, with a sudden change of manner, he sighed heavily. Mr. Brumley was getting out the chess board.

"This will be our forty-first game," he remarked, "and you're one ahead."

"Hey—what?" said the minister abstractedly. "Oh, yes-yes." And opened with the Evans gambit.

The Justice became completely absorbed in the game, but the minister's thoughts were concentrated on a game that would require even more skill than the playing of chess: the immediate result was that the Rector lost his queen and was checkmated in ten moves.

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“Hurrah, caught up to you, Reverend Dan!” exclaimed Mr. Brumley, looking up in the expectancy of seeing his foe chagrined at the defeat; but the Rector only said:

“Hey—what? Oh, yes-yes.”

“What’s the matter with you, Reverend Dan?” asked the host a little disappointedly. “You don’t seem to be in trim to-night. Have a drink to brace you up.”

But the first drink failed to brace up the Rector, and when he was gloomily sipping the second, Mr. Brumley repeated with some concern:

“What’s the matter, old man?”

“Matter!” suddenly burst out the minister, setting down his glass. “I’d rather give myself a good licking than tell Dolly: Sadie’s going to marry Devine Strong to-morrow.”

The Justice set down his glass.

“Great Scott! Dolly will give you the devil for not telling her before. I’m going to call her now.”

He hastened heavily out in the hall and crossed to the foot of the broad stairway, calling at every step:

“Dolly! Hy, Dolly! We want you.”

“I suppose you do,” said Mrs. Dolly, appearing on the first landing and looked coquettishly over the banisters. “But I’m busy now.”

(What, you exclaim, a matron of more than forty flirting with her own great, gray husband? Ah, but if you had known Mrs. Dolly!—Mrs. Dolly with whom the years had served but to change importunate youth into sweet imperiousness, unconscious buoyancy into unconscious ease and grace—looking scarcely more than half her years, as though she had but yesterday

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come to her complete womanhood. Dear Mrs. Dolly, who loved everybody, and who would never own that she loved anybody; for that, she said, is one of the secrets of fascination.)

“Oh, come on!” pleaded her husband; “we need you.” And she came at once, descending the stairs in her light, soft way, seeming scarcely to touch one step before she was on the next.

“What’s the matter, dear?” she asked tenderly, quickly.

“Oh, nothing,” said he with attempted carelessness. “Only some one you swore by is going to disappoint you.”

“I’m sorry for that some one,” replied the lady promptly; and as they entered the library, she appealed to the Rector:

“What’s the matter with you two men? Can’t you get along without me for ten minutes? Who’s going to disappoint me, Reverend Dan? I’m tired to death of riddles.”

“Well, this is a riddle,” declared the minister. “And you can solve it if anybody can.” He leaned forward in his chair, and shaking his fist as if a foe stood before him in flesh and blood, shouted excitedly: “What on earth is it that makes Sadie Jarvis like Devine Strong?”

“The dear devil in her,” promptly answered Dolly. “You needn’t get so excited, Reverend Dan. I rather like him myself. But what——?”

“The scoundrel! The blackguard! The villain!” burst forth the Rector.

“Reverend Dan! What is the matter?”

“Hang him!” roared the minister; “first Sadie and then Zeph and now you, too, Dolly.”

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“Gracious me!” said Dolly, laughing in spite of herself. “I wish Devine Strong was in the bottom of the Bay. Has Zeph been flirting with him? And Sadie—Sadie—don’t tell me that Sadie——”

“Sadie’s going to marry him to-morrow. Hey—what! You don’t believe it! I came near jumping out of the window and ramming the words down his throat. It was just before James drove up, and I sat smoking my after-dinner pipe and listening to Zeph’s violin, when there came a ring at the bell, and I went to the window.

“‘Hello!’ I cried. ‘Who is it?’ and Devine Strong’s voice answered:

“‘Hello, yourself. This is a devil of a place to live in!’

“I knew in a minute that he had lost the road, and I roared; but I didn’t offer to go down and let him in—not much, with Zeph in the house! Thought very likely he’d come to see if he couldn’t raise high jinks with her. But he told me that Sadie had sent him—Sadie, mind you! I told him that he lied. We had it hot and heavy; that is, we would have if he hadn’t just laughed in his dare-devil way and said at the last, confound his impudence!—

“‘All right, Reverend Dan. I’ll be ready to take you across at half-past one to-morrow.’”

“He couldn’t have lied,” interposed Mr. Brumley.

“What good would it do him?” demanded Mrs. Brumley.

“Well, I slammed down the window and went back to my pipe, forgetting Zeph for the time. Then after a while I called to her for something, and she did not answer. Then I went out in the hall and called.

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“ ‘Yes, Daddy, dear,’ said Zeph’s voice, sweetly, from down-stairs out on the porch, flirting—flirting, in all probability, with that black-hearted scoundrel !”

Mrs. Brumley laughed. She could not help it ; and the Rector’s face grew blacker than ever.

“ Perhaps she was trying to reform him,” remarked the lady. Then added, seriously : “ After all, is he a black-hearted scoundrel ? I’d rather see Sadie dead than married to him ; but when we come to the point of it, what do we know against him ?”

“ Well,” rejoined the Justice, “ he’s always been straight enough in his dealings with me. As long as he’s sailed the yacht we’ve never had any trouble with him. He’s the best captain in the Bay ; and he always minded his own business and never meddled with ours. Charlie goes out with him sometimes now ; and he likes him. He says, to save your life you can’t help liking him.”

“ Well, *I* can help liking him,” declared the minister. “ And I don’t trust him, either.”

Mrs. Dolly had sunk down on a chair, and was saying mournfully, sorrowfully :

“ Poor Sadie—poor, poor Sadie !”

“ Never mind, Dolly,” murmured the Justice, reaching out his hand to hers ; “ if the girl’s bound to throw herself away, we’ll have to let her.”

Dolly sat up straight.

“ Daniel Brumley ! This is a put-up job between Sadie’s father and Devine, and I know it. Reverend Dan, you just say to Sadie : ‘ My dear, your Aunt Dolly wants you to get married in her house ; so bring your Devine and come along.’ Then I’ll settle with that

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‘Pirate King,’ as they call him. I’m not afraid of him or any other man.”

“Ah, Dolly,” teasingly exclaimed her husband, “aren’t you afraid of me?”

“Reverend Dan,” demanded the lady, “will you do as I tell you? And whatever you do, don’t come away and leave her alone in that God-forsaken place again.”

“I’ll do all that I can, Mrs. Dolly; but I’ve tried to fight Sadie before.”

“Gracious me! it isn’t Sadie, I tell you! I’ve a good mind to go over myself,” exclaimed Mrs. Dolly. Then, after a moment, she asked quietly:

“What was that story about her mother, Reverend Dan? Didn’t she belong to the old Mapes family?”

“Why, of course. I never thought of it before. This is history repeating itself. It was just before I came here, so I don’t remember just how it was; but they say that Sadie Mapes met Jarvis while up here on a visit—she was only seventeen, an orphan, living on the charity of a tyrannical old aunt, and Jarvis wooed her head right off and married her before she had time to find it. But he kept straight as long as she lived—I will say that—and to her dying day she worshipped the ground he walked on.”

“The little fool!” said Dolly, but her voice was full of tears. “And what of her people? Did they desert her entirely?”

“I don’t believe there were any near relatives, except this aunt, and she came up to the funeral—don’t you remember?—and offered to take the baby. But Jarvis rose up in righteous wrath and gave her the devil. I heard him; and from that day to this the Mapes have

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never made a sign that they know of Sadie's existence."

"She wouldn't have anything to do with them if they did," declared Dolly, proud of Sadie's pride.

"Zeph says—" began the minister after a long silence.

"By the way," broke in Dolly, "who'd you leave with Zeph?"

The Reverend Dan started guiltily, and Dolly got up and went over to his chair.

"Who'd you leave with your little daughter?" she repeated, bending over him. "Gracious me! you didn't leave her alone! You *better* talk about taking care of girls! Now, you go right home this very minute! Why didn't you bring her with you?" Mrs. Dolly had grasped the Rector by the arm and was trying to pull him out of his chair. "Do you hear me? Go right back to that motherless girl alone in the middle of the cemetery. You're a nice father, you are! Captain Jarvis is a king to you."

Mr. Brumley laughed outright, but, taking pity on his guest, asked slyly:

"Are you sure that she's alone? Where's that son of mine?"

"Of course," exclaimed Mrs. Dolly, with relief, "where else would Charlie be? You'd better shut Zeph up in the convent for another year, Reverend Dan. What? Going without your Welsh rarebit?" And the lady laughed mischievously.

"Yes, I'm going. Zeph alone is safe enough, but if there's a man with her—! Well, good night, Brumley, you got that game easy. Yes, thanks, I will have another drink; it warms the inner man." Then, lift-

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ing his glass with the old twinkle in his eye, the Reverend Dan exclaimed :

“Here’s to Mrs. Dolly—Patron of Tramps, Creator of Professors, and *Breaker* of Matches !”

Dolly laughed one moment, grew serious the next, and said fervently :

“Lord help us to break this match !”

“Amen,” responded the Rector, not with irreverence.

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CHAPTER IX

A FLIRTATION

THE moonlight was sifting in streaks and patches through the branches of the tall pine trees that stretched like a torn old canopy top from above the very chancel windows of St. Catherine's Church, to the roof of the red-shingled old Rectory, when Charles Brumley came from out of the churchyard into the hush of the wood, and began to follow the windings of the blind road.

"Humph!" said he to himself as he caught ghostly glimpses of the graveyard to the left; "healthy place for a young girl to live!"

He was in love with the young girl in question—poor Charlie! You remember when it began to grow a little dangerous for you to break your bones, and you took to breaking your heart instead?—that time when you first found yourself swaying up in the branches of the tree-top of love, fearfully frightened lest you fall off and break your heart? You remember how Dr. Cupid, ever alert for business, perched himself on a bough near you, and shook the tree just as hard as he could? Then, when you did fall, for fall you had to, sooner or later, do you remember how he leaned over you, put his thrilling little head against your breast, slyly pressed his warm, plump thumb upon the mercury of your pulse, and gravely declared that this was the worst case he had ever attended—naughty little quack!

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Ah, you do remember?—and, remembering, can sympathize with Charlie Brumley, who had done with breaking his legs and arms five or six years ago, but who had reached the settled age of eighteen without having once broken his heart, and then had broken it six times in one week over little Zeph Leggett.

This had been an eventful week for Charlie. Looking back over it, he decided that he had lived more in this past week than in all the other weeks of his eighteen years. And yet, inconsistent though it seems, he was fully persuaded that he had loved Zeph his whole life long.

“Yes,” said the lad to himself as a light in the upper window of the Rectory came in view; “it is she who has stood between other women and me.” Then he reflected that this was a pretty thought, which he would express to Zeph if he could ever get up the courage. Courage! Why, had he not that very day fought, beaten, and laid up in bed his tutor Martin for calling Zeph a—flirt! But there is courage and courage, and the particular kind necessary to enable this valiant defender of Zeph’s good name to knock on Zeph’s door was not forthcoming for several moments after Charlie had reached the Rectory, and stood looking up at Zeph’s light—an Aladdin’s lamp that might work wonders for him.

At length he made a rush for the porch, whirled around the handle of the old-fashioned bell, and then jumped back under the lighted window again, breathing hard. Presently the shade flew up; and then the window sash was raised cautiously and timidly, just far enough to admit of Zeph’s voice calling through the opening:

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“Who is it?”

“It’s only me—Charlie,” he assured her: “Won’t you please come down and let me in?”

She opened the window farther and leaned out, her head with its fluffy hair encircled by the light.

“I don’t think that Dad would like it,” said the coy young lady. “I’m all alone.”

“Oh, *please*, Zeph. I’ve got something to tell you. I’ll make it all right with—Dad.”

“Very well, then,” she rejoined—and he thought that he could detect a blush in her very tones because of the stress he had laid on the word “Dad”—“but you must bear the blame. Wait a minute.”

It was a very long minute for Charlie, walking up and down the porch, wondering how men usually went about a proposal, and upbraiding himself for not having read works on the subject. But when Zeph, dainty and sweet, exquisitely slender and girlish and willowy, had opened the door, and was standing with her little hand held out to him, Charlie let all thoughts of ever proposing to this Keeper of the Gates of Paradise slip hopelessly out of his mind.

“How do you do?” said Zeph, with enviable composure and a gentle pressure of the hand. Then she came out on the stoop, peering about in the moonlight.

“Charlie, there are two loaves of bread somewhere around here. I wish you would see if you can’t find them. We forgot to bring them in before dark; and Daddy’s baker just sits in the wagon and lets them fly.”

“Good heavens, Zeph! The Reverend Dan’ll starve you to death yet!” exclaimed Charlie, scrambling about the porch in search of the bread.

“There! There they are, Charlie!—sticking out of

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that flower box. I don't see why on earth those flower boxes weren't put away."

"The Reverend Dan's a great man," said Charlie, tucking the loaves under his arm with a boyishly happy laugh, and following Zeph into the unfurnished hall and up the bare stairs.

"Have you seen him to-night?" asked Zeph. "Did you leave him at your house? Ah! passed him at the bridge? He hadn't been gone more than five minutes when a woman came to see him. I was afraid of her: she seemed half crazy, and I wouldn't have let her in for anything in the world."

"I should hope not!" exclaimed Charlie, pressing close to Zeph.

"I wouldn't care if she came *now*," murmured the girl, and the words and the tone of her voice made Charlie forget everything else for several silent, thrilling moments, until they had entered the Reverend Dan's conglomerate, what-not apartment, and were seated in the library division of the room, their backs wisely turned on the kitchen and dining room division. A dusty, costly old rug was under their feet, a painting by one of the old masters above their heads; and within reach of their hands were a lot of muddy boots sticking out of a wood box.

The Rector knew what Comfort was.

"Yes," said Zeph, keeping to the subject uppermost in her mind, "I think that woman was crazy. Of course, I couldn't see her face, but her voice was so excited! And when I told her that Dad had gone to Brumley Hall, she cried,

"Way over there! Oh, God, God, will I ever find him?"

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“Why, that must have been the woman I met at the bridge,” said Charlie, getting excited. “She sprang out of the bushes just as your father drove around the corner, and I thought that she called to him, but the horse’s hoofs made so much noise and the Reverend Dan shouted so loudly that he didn’t hear her. Then I guess she saw me, for she started to run back again. ‘That’s mighty funny,’ I thought. ‘Can’t be one of Mamma Dolly’s poor folks, because they all know me.’ So I made a dive for her, and caught hold of the end of her shawl and asked her what she wanted. But she hid her face in her arm and wouldn’t say a word—not one, even when I offered to go back to the house with her and take her to Mamma Dolly or the Reverend Dan, or whoever it was that she wanted. Well, I couldn’t bear to torment the poor thing, so I left her, finally, leaning over the bridge, hiding her face in her shawl.”

“And you haven’t the slightest idea of who she was, then?” asked Zeph eagerly.

“How the deuce—?” he began, but brought himself up quickly and made a fresh start:

“No, I couldn’t even get a glimpse of her face; but she was thin and wore a dark dress, and, somehow, seemed genteel and respectable.”

Zeph was pensive for a while.

“Poor thing!” said she at last. “She must have been in some fearful trouble, and I was so afraid of her.” Then Zeph’s tone and manner changed. She leaned forward, resting her arms upon one arm of her chair, and giving Charlie full benefit of her heavily fringed violet eyes.

“Say, Charlie, what made you check yourself just now, when you began ‘How the —?’ you know.”

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“I’m awfully ashamed,” answered the lad in honest penitence; “but such words as ‘deuce’ and much worse ones, I’m afraid, *will* slip out. I guess I’m a pretty bad companion for such a girl as you, Zeph.”

For one moment the girl’s lips quivered and her eyelids drooped, but the next she was looking and speaking so seriously, so earnestly, that Charlie felt that he had misjudged her in thinking that she had laughed.

“I really do think,” she said “that you need polishing. It is wrong for you to waste your life as you do when there is so much that is noble in you. Aunt Dolly says that you spend half your time out gunning with the Shoreville roughs or sailing with the baymen.”

“Of course,” admitted the lad, sighing to think that he had not always had so sweet a mentor, “loafing around the woods with those fellows and going out on the bay with Devine Strong——”

At the sound of the name, Zeph started and hung her head, and Charlie thought that he associated with a man whose very name made this pure little girl blush; but the little girl was blushing at the thought of a certain flirtation scene of more than an hour ago in which that man and herself had been the only actors.

“All that does not fit me to talk to you, Zeph,” went on the ignorant Charles; “but you mustn’t think that I don’t do anything except bum around. I study real hard with Martin, and I shall be ready to enter Columbia next fall—unless, unless there should be some special reason for my going into business by that time.”

“What! You’re not going to get married?” exclaimed Zeph, in pretended surprise; but meeting his ardent gaze her blush rose high, and her lids fluttered down over her shy eyes. Charlie’s hand stole over to

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hers, and the lad ventured to whisper her name, but Zeph recovered herself with a laugh.

“Oh, that tutor of yours!” said she. “You’ll be prepared for college by the time you’re a grandfather if you don’t make a change.”

“He is a fool, isn’t he?” asked the lad, brightly, with a pressure of his hand on hers.

“Oh, I don’t know,” answered Zeph, with a sly look out of the corner of her eye; whereupon Charlie said something worse than “deuce” under his breath and dropped her hand.

“He’s a perfect coward! We had a knock-down fight to-day, and I hope he won’t be able to get out of bed until—until you’re back in the convent.”

Zeph, bent double with laughter, managed to gasp:

“Oh, was it a duel, Charlie? Now tell me; who were you quarrelling about?”

But Charlie only scowled and began to walk up and down and all around that madly arranged apartment with boyish recklessness, knocking down or getting tangled up in almost everything that he encountered.

“Love is blind,” thought Zeph, “love is blind. He’ll break his neck.”

“For heaven’s sake, come here and sit down,” said she at last, “or you will completely disarrange Dad’s elegant apartment, and he will never let me have company again.”

Charlie came back to his chair, and, looking into her piquant face, her sparkling, laughing eyes, he said, in slow, solemn tones:

“Martin said that you were a *flirt!*”

“He did!” exclaimed the girl’s voice indignantly, but her eyes fell before Charlie’s.

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“Yes, he did; and when I stood up for you and said that I ought to know, he said— What do you think he said, Zeph?”

Zeph, with a childish shake of her head, and an air of complete innocence, declared that she “hadn’t the least idea in the world.”

“He said—” Charlie stammered over the insulting words—“that—that the evening you were at our house and spent a half-hour alone with him in the library reading poetry—he said that you—you *kissed* him, Zeph.” The poor boy’s voice had sunk into a whisper, and he no longer dared to look at her.

“And so you thrashed him, Charlie! Oh, you darling!”

The lad looked up, his eyes alight with unspeakable hope, but only to find Zeph laughing as if she would never stop. Then he grasped her cruelly by the arm, exclaiming:

“Zeph, you did kiss him!” At this awful accusation Zeph stopped laughing to solemnly declare:

“Indeed, I did not, Charlie; he only kissed me”—and then she laughed again. He let go her arm and began to pace the room again, his attempt at dignity and composure making him look ridiculously like his father.

“I suppose I had better go home and apologize to the fascinating tutor,” he remarked with cutting sarcasm.

“He isn’t fascinating.”

“Then why the deuce did you kiss him? You never kissed me.”

Zeph twisted and untwisted her handkerchief; then with her eyes still intent on the task, said softly:

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“Is that *my* fault, Charlie?”

Her lover was at her side in a moment, bending tenderly over her as he asked :

“Would you kiss me now, if I asked you to, dear?”

She flashed him a glance, half contemptuous, half amused.

“No, I would not ! No girl ever kisses a man who stops to *ask* her.”

The lad, mystified and distressed, still bent over her ; and she with a swift change of mood threw him a look which said :

“I dare you to !” But this inexperienced lad frowned and again put the length of the room between them ; and taking his stand in front of the cooking stove with its unwashed pots and kettles, looked over to the girl as though she were a criminal and he her judge—an unmerciful Justice Brumley.

“I always looked upon Josephine Leggett as the sweetest and most modest girl I knew,” he began, unconsciously addressing the prisoner as if she was also the jury.

“You never knew me,” she interrupted, too angry to care for court etiquette, “except when we were little children and you said that you wouldn’t be *seen* playing with a girl. You know you never gave me a thought until I came home for the holidays. But *I* am not disappointed in *you*, for I never suspected you of being a gentleman.”

“I am this much of a gentleman,” replied this gentleman’s son : “I have always had a high ideal of women and you were the ideal of them all. You say that I never thought of you : I have always thought of you, Zeph. Didn’t we play together sometimes ? And didn’t

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I love you when you were in long clothes and I in short dresses ?”

“ You have a big imagination,” declared Zeph scornfully, but she was relieved that Charlie’s speech had not ended so heroically as it had begun.

“ I have never looked at another girl, never dreamed of another girl, never touched another girl.”

“ You never touched *me*, please remember,” said she, with an unsuccessful attempt at dignity ; for who can be dignified with the tears so near the surface ?

“ ‘ Is that *my* fault ? ’ ” mimicked the lad with boyish brutality. “ I will tell you why I never touched you : because I was waiting for the time when you might give me the right to touch you. I was always afraid to, and now it seems that any one may touch you—that even that confounded Martin may kiss you. I wish that I had blacked the other eye ! ”

An hysterical giggle escaped Zeph.

“ Oh, damn the girl ! ” muttered the lad.

“ How dare you talk to me like this ! ” cried Zeph, half sobbing, but Charlie was neither shamed nor pitiful.

“ Well, that’s what you must expect,” said he hardly, and crossing over to her chair, he seated himself on the arm and bent over her slight, shrinking figure.

“ Show me how you kissed that damn coward ! ” he demanded, so fiercely that she crouched farther back in the chair.

“ How the devil did you kiss Martin ? ”

She sprang up, and going to the desk, bent over the violin that lay upon the papers, her fragile form drooping, her small head bowed low ; and then suddenly the brute realized what a brute he had been. A dreadful moment of silence passed for him—and then another.

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Charlie went close to her, hovered over her, lifted his arms uncertainly, lowered them, sighed, and said no word.

“Will you go?” she whispered in simple childish misery.

“Do you want me to go, Zeph?” he rejoined as gently as if she were indeed a child. She did not answer, but ran her fingers over the strings of the violin: there was a plaintive cry from the violin, a little sob from Zeph, and Charlie’s arms were about her, turning her gently until her face was pressed against his breast.

“Will you ever forgive me, darling?” he murmured.

“Oh, Charlie, how could you!” she murmured back, lifting her reproachful, tear-wet eyes to his. He put his hand under her soft cheek and kissed the fine, faintly perfumed hair that waved above her temple.

“Now, tell me, Zeph,” said he, even in this blissful position not without some jealous pangs of doubt: “you didn’t kiss Martin, did you?”

“Why, no, dear, I was only teasing: I never kissed a man in my life.”

“Oh, what a brute I am!” groaned Charlie, and Zeph, unable to restrain a gurgle of laughter, slipped away from him back to the violin. Taking up the instrument, she put it under her round chin, drew the bow across the strings, and sighed:

“Dad insists upon sending me back to the convent Monday.”

The lad echoed her sigh, but brightened up as he rejoined:

“I don’t suppose you see a man there from one year’s end to the other.”

A Flirtation

Zeph, playing softly, said with a sweet, reminiscent smile :

“There’s one awfully handsome priest, who’s no end of fun.”

“Zeph, you don’t mean that !” exclaimed the shocked young man.

“Yes : why not ?” she asked, opening wide her violet eyes.

“I wish you would stop playing !” he cried. “Who taught you, anyway ?”

“Oh, the sweetest professor you ever saw ! He has heavenly eyes and hair like Paderewski’s. Here, put your hand over mine. There, that’s the way he teaches me the difficult parts.” Charlie’s hand and hers floated along with the music. “Dad says that I may have extra lessons this year.” Charlie, sick at heart, took his hand from hers and turned away. For a little while she played on, then, laying down the violin, touched him on the arm.

“He isn’t half as nice as you, Charlie,” she cooed.

“Zeph, what makes you tease me so ?” pleaded the lad, with his hand again on hers.

“Tease you ?” she asked, then with lowered eyes pondered for a moment over the question. “I don’t know, dear, unless, ‘to tease is to love.’”

Heaven and earth got mixed together in Charlie’s mind.

“Darling,” he whispered, “won’t you go on teasing me forever ?”

Zeph snatched her hand away, and clapping her palms together, cried delightedly :

“Why, Charlie ! You are improving !”

“Under your tuition, I suppose,” growled Charlie.

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Zeph pouted prettily.

"You don't seem to know enough to know when you *are* teased," said she, beginning to pet her violin.

"You are the most provoking girl! How am I to know what you mean?"

"Good gracious! Do you think I want you to know what I mean?" and laughing saucily, she began to play.

"I feel like smashing things," he remarked pleasantly, from between his closed teeth.

"What would you like to smash first?" she asked, watching him brightly.

"You and your old violin!"

She lowered the bow to her side and her laughter rang out, peal after peal, through the room. Charlie looked around for his hat.

"Don't go yet," she said teasingly; "I want to show you Dad's new coal chute: it runs down the back stairs: he's awfully proud of it. But I wish he hadn't turned the bathtub into a coal bin."

"Josephine Leggett! You're the most tormenting girl on the face of the earth."

"*Josephine!*" repeated Zeph with a grimace. "Dad never calls me that unless he's *awful* mad. Are you awful mad, Charlie, dear?"

Then, without giving him time to answer, she lifted her bow and began to play sacred music that the Rector loved—solemn, sweet music that made Charlie think of church and wonder if angels played violins. On, on, went the music, the girl standing straight and slim, her round chin upon the brown wood, her slender white arm moving with the bow, her lovely face serene and glad, her eyes, deepened and darkened, gazing

A Flirtation

beyond Charlie—perhaps beyond the very gates of Paradise.

“This is in her soul—her great, pure soul,” thought the lover, and before he knew what he was doing found himself on his knees at her feet kissing the hem of her gown. The music stopped with a discordant wail, and Zeph, startled, shamed, struck with a sense of her own unworthiness, cried out:

“Don’t kneel to *me!*” But when he had risen and was standing like a culprit before her, she had recovered herself so far as to ask:

“Don’t you think I play soulfully?”

“Yes!” he answered sadly. “I thought when I knelt down that it was your soul.”

“Well, it wasn’t,” she retorted. “I am making a collection of souls.” (She got that from the Professor.)

“I think I will go home now,” said the heartbroken lad.

“Very well, if you want to,” she rejoined hardly.

He hesitated for a moment; then she held out her hand and he took it in his, looking at her in anxious question.

“Good night,” said she, kindly ignoring all that had gone before. “I am going to a wedding to-morrow if Dad will let me. Don’t you wish it was yours?”

A wistful look was the only answer that Charlie dared to make.

“I think you might be polite enough to say ‘yes,’” pouted Zeph, leading him by the hand to the door. “The girl is going to marry a man she doesn’t want—not the least bit in the world, as far as I can make out. But I’ll bet on his getting her because—well, because!”

“I’d like to know how!” exclaimed Charlie.

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“Daddy doesn’t understand it either, but I think I do. It’s Sadie and your friend, Devine Strong,” added Zeph hastily. “You’d better take a few lessons of him.”

The next moment Charlie found himself and his horrified protest out in the dark hall with Zeph on the other side of the closed door.

“Yes, you’d better take a few lessons of Devine Strong,” she called out, laughing again and again, as she heard him stumbling down the stairway. Then she flew to the window and raised the sash in time to call to him as he stepped off the porch :

“Charlie !” He held his head high and started down the road.

“Charlie, dear !” And then he had to stop lest he miss a single note in the sweet music of her voice, but he did not turn around. Then she called again in supplicating accents ; yes, with tears in that dear voice of hers :

“Charlie, darling !”

She waited just long enough to see him wheel about in the moonlight, then, laughing gleefully, Zeph closed the window with a bang.

The Woman at the Bridge

CHAPTER X

THE WOMAN AT THE BRIDGE

OF all the roads that run through the Brumley estate, there is not one that does not fetch up at the stables—for the convenience of horse thieves, Mrs. Dolly always declared; for the confusion of his beloved tramps, Reverend Dan always asserted. Now it happened that the tramps' champion was made to suffer from the circumstance of the roads to-night; for no sooner did the cold, keen air strike the horse, than the animal bolted down a road that did not lead to the willow avenue, but into the depths of the pine wood, across a half-mile sweep of bleak meadow land, over a dangerous, rickety old bridge and back into the woods again. The Rector could only trust in Providence, give the horse her head, and inwardly swear that Mamie should marry the groom before he ever allowed himself to be carried off by night again.

At last, a stubby cornfield shot into view; then, the high garden fence flew past, the gardener's cottage, the hot-house and then—the Fates be praised!—the stables. Even here the horse did not consent to be controlled, but raced on to the front of the house, and finally brought up with a snort directly under Mrs. Dolly's lighted window. The Rector saw the shade fly up and Mrs. Dolly standing in the light, with her arms uplifted in the act of raising the window sash.

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“Get dap!” he urged in a loud whisper, but the wicked horse neighed negatively and refused to stir. Then the minister, bound that Mrs. Dolly should not get ahead of him, stood up in the carriage and greeted her with a shout of :

“I told you so!” But all that the lady said was :

“Gracious me! Reverend Dan, why *don't* you go home to Zeph?”

“Ain't that just like a woman!” exclaimed the Rector in injured tones as he tucked the robes about him; but he laughed in spite of himself when the laugh of the Justice floated down to him. Then he gave that horse a cut of the whip which sent her trotting nobly up to the bend of the road, just the hither side of the bridge, where, without warning, the beast shied and nearly threw the Rector out of the trap.

“Hey—what?” exclaimed the minister, with an exasperated jerk at the mare's head. “Hey—what?” in still greater surprise as he saw what had frightened the horse—a woman standing directly in the middle of the road with one hand imperatively uplifted.

“W—w—what the—? Hey—*what?*” roared the outraged Rector.

The woman, all enveloped in her shawl, ran to the side of the carriage and cried accusingly :

“Are you going to marry him to-morrow?”

The shawl, falling from the woman's face, revealed it twitching in every muscle—its great, dark eyes aflame with fury and anguish.

“'Liza!” exclaimed the minister in astonishment.

“What in thunder do you mean by this?”

“You shall not marry him! I will not let you!” she screamed, and her voice was so wild, so excited

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that the horse reared up in affright. She sprang to her head, saying :

“I'll hold her,” then flashed upon the Rector again :

“Do you hear me? You *shan't* marry Devine to that girl!”

“I'd like to know what you've got to say about that,” rejoined the minister with some heat. “What do you mean by stopping me like this in the middle of the night?”

“I went to your house and you wasn't home. I called you when you went by before and you didn't hear me, and I've waited and waited and waited. My God! You shall not marry him! He is mine, and my boy's father!”

“Hey—what?” gasped the minister, jumping out of the trap. In that single moment a hundred separate incidents concerning this woman and Devine Strong became one immense fact in his mind.

“I'm a decent woman, ain't I? Ain't I?” she insisted, stretching out her hand and appealing to him piteously.

Something prompted the Rector to take that thin, trembling hand in his own and to hold it closely while he looked down into 'Liza's face. Long afterward was he to remember her as she stood thus with that piteous question on her lips and in her eyes, while all around lay the still and peaceful country bathed in soft moonlight. They could hear the purling of the brook beneath the bridge.

'Liza, with a half sob as she felt and saw his compassion, began again, speaking so hurriedly that the words tripped over each other :

“I was just a silly, pretty girl, and I didn't know.

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(How could I know? Nobody ever told me.) He came up the river for apples—it was along in apple time—and he stayed at the farm for a whole week. He asked me to marry him, and never said anything about having a wife already, and I thought it would be fun just to run off. You know his way of making you see things. So I went off with him on the sloop and—and if I sinned it was because I didn't know sinning from loving. We didn't go back. I couldn't look Mother in the face. He promised to marry me in York, but he put it off, and when he left me there he promised to come back and marry me. And when he came back he said he'd bring me down here and marry me."

She paused, gasping for breath. Without a word the minister picked up the shawl that she had unconsciously dropped and wrapped it around her. She caught his hand and kissed it passionately.

"No-no!" protested the minister, in a husky voice.

"Well, finally he did bring me here," she said, hastening on with her story, "and he took me to the little house where we had talked so often of living together; and he took me to the window—it was dark—and pointed to the light across the street and said as 'twas his *wife's*. (Don't go yet, Reverend Dan. You've got to hear me out.) And he went on—for I couldn't speak a word—and said that I was a widow woman with a husband just dead, and told his name—John Ross—with a big, long story about them being friends in York. And—then I tried to kill him! I almost choked him to death. I wish to the Lord I had! (It was just five months after I left home.) But he laughed—you know his way—and he up and took me in his arms and kissed

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me—the wretch, the wretch!—and he made me believe he couldn't help doing what he'd done because he loved me so! And God knows I loved him, and he hadn't left me anybody else in the wide world except him and—and the baby that was coming. And the night the boy was born, she died. Devine's poor wife died, and he told me he would give my boy his name as soon as 'twas decent.

“That was seven years ago, Reverend Dan, seven years ago! and the boy growing bigger every day. Then to-night he came to me—for the first time in a week Devine came, and he told me he was going to marry that Jarvis girl and be a *decent* man!” 'Liza laughed aloud, and, with a growl of rage, the Rector strode over to the carriage. But she caught him by the arm and held him back with the strength of a mad woman.

“Think of my little boy,” she sobbed. “I couldn't help the lie I told when you baptized him. Think of him and help me, Reverend Dan!”

“Yes-yes,” said the minister, dragging her toward the carriage. “Come and hunt up that blackguard with me.”

“Don't—don't hurt him,” she stammered, drawing back.

“Are you coming?” demanded the Rector. “No? Then get out of the road!”

“You didn't promise!” screamed 'Liza, almost from under the horse's hoofs.

“I'll see him hung before he marries any one but you. Get out of the road!”

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CHAPTER XI

REVEREND DAN

GREAT stories of the Rector's drive through the streets of Shoreville at midnight went around the village. Men, returning home from the saloons with their heads not a little muddled, told of having met the Reverend Dan as drunk as the next fellow, racing one of Justice Brumley's horses through the streets like a madman; and women went forth the next day to repeat the story with unconscious enlargements. The Moneylender's wife told of how "Hime," creeping along the sidewalk in accordance with what was known as his habit of "prowling 'round nights," had met and hailed the minister, and the minister had only galloped on as if the devil was after him.

Other stories were told also, but these were of what happened after the Rector had finally brought up the horse in front of Devine Strong's gate, jumped out of the trap with the whip in his hand and gone up the boxwood walk to the little, old-fashioned front door.

The house was in total darkness when the Rector pounded with the butt of the whip on the panels of the door, and for a moment no answer came from within; then the impatient midnight visitor took his fists and pounded upon the panels as if they were the precious head of Devine Strong. He was still pounding when one of the little windows on either side of the door was

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pushed up, and a candle, a night cap, and an old woman's puckered face, with eyes half shut and blinking, one bent forefinger in front of the pursed-up lips, appeared.

"Shet up!" whispered the lips. "Yew'll wake up Devine."

"That's what I want to do!" roared the minister, rattling the latch of the door. "Tell him to come out here right off!"

"Lorgens-souls!" exclaimed Mrs. Strong. "Ef 'tain't the Reverend Dan!" And her shrill, cracked voice rang through the house:

"Devine! Devine! Devine!"

The full, deep voice of her son answered as he himself, dressed only in shirt and trousers, came leaping down the stairs.

"What in the divil's this row about?" the Rector heard him ask. "Hain't nawthink the matter with Sadie, be there?"

At that, the wrathful, stuttering minister thrust his head in the window, and the old lady, remembering how scant was her attire, promptly blew out the light and scuttled down the hall, out of sight.

"What yew been up tew?" she whispered to Devine as she passed. "He's got a horsewhip."

Devine crossed to the window and demanded of the Rector with an oath:

"What's the matter, anyway?"

"You black scoundrel, come out here and I'll lick you!"

The "Pirate King" unlocked the door, hurled it open, and with the roar of a wild beast sprang at the burly figure of the Rector, but the Rector had his whip

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raised and met Devine with a stinging lash across the face. Devine was blinded for the moment, and staggered back; then the whip fell again, but before it could fall the third time Devine had seized it and flung it far out among the evergreens. The minister made a spring at him; Devine dodged aside, seizing the Rector by the throat; and together for a moment they two swayed back and forth upon the narrow porch. Then the minister succeeded in getting a firm hold on Devine's hands, unloosed them from his throat, pushed Devine slowly but steadily toward the side of the house, then held him against the boards with his hands held high above his head.

"See here," said the Rector, speaking more calmly than before. "I want to talk to you and we can finish the fight afterward."

Devine made a desperate effort to free himself, but failing in that, sullenly assented.

"Yes-yes; I'd like tew know what the devil yer mean anyway, gol durn yer!"

"Well, go on in the house then," said the minister, releasing him, but watching for treachery.

"Now, you're talkin'," broke in old Mrs. Strong's voice from the window. "I'll light the kitchen lamp. Yew hain't agwine tew muss up my front room with no fights, ef yew do set up tew be a parson," she added to herself on the way to the kitchen.

When the two men entered the tidy, prim little room, they found the light, but not the woman; whereupon the Rector felt relieved.

"Now, then," said Devine, squarely and fiercely facing the minister, "what in thunder do yer mean?"

"Devine Strong," thundered the minister bringing

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his fist down upon the table that separated them, "you are never going to marry Sadie Jarvis if I can help it."

Devine's face turned from angry red to a gray white, snarling, ferocious, brutal, hunted, yet fiercely and wildly determined.

"An' how be yer agoin' ter help it?" he sneered. "There's other ministers, hain't there?"

"You're not going to marry Sadie," repeated the Rector, still gazing steadily at him, wondering what charm a gentle woman could find in this ugly fiend. "And what is more, you are going to marry 'Liza Ross."

A light broke over Devine's face at the name of the woman and he swore with a vengeance, but suddenly stopped and commenced to laugh as loudly as he had sworn.

"'Liza Ross!" he repeated, still laughing. "That woman! Why the divil should I marry her?"

"Because she is already your wife," sternly answered the minister, "and you are that boy's father."

"Now, say, Rev'ren' Dan," said Devine conciliatingly, "hain't that air 'Liza been astuffin' yer?"

"You needn't try any of your lies on me," rejoined the Rector. "And you'll leave Sadie Jarvis alone and marry 'Liza or I'll make it some hot for you!"

"Yer will, heh?" said Devine with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders, turning his back and going over to the stove, where he began to toy with the iron lifter. Presently he turned about, the lifter in hand, and again faced the scowling Rector.

"That air woman over there," he began, pointing with the lifter in the direction of the house opposite, "seems ter think she's got a mortgage on me jes' because she went and named her boy Devine. He might jes' as

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well abeen named Tom, Dick, or Harry, as far as that goes," he added with a coarse laugh; whereupon the minister crossed the space between them.

"See here! 'Liza isn't a common woman, and if she is, you made her so, you black-hearted scoundrel, you! And you will marry her or I will horsewhip you through the street."

"Yer will, will yer!" muttered Devine from between closed teeth, his hands shutting more tightly over the lifter.

"Yes, I will. And I will give you such a roasting from the chancel that you will be lucky if they let you out of Shoreville with only a coat of tar and feathers."

"The divil yer say! Wall, lemme tell yer what I will do." Then Devine, with unmistakable meaning, in language clear and chaste, told what he would do if balked in his honorable desire to marry Sarah; and then, not content with using Sadie's name and 'Liza's indiscriminately, brought in Zeph Leggett's!

The Rector, growling like a brute-mother defending her young, sprang at Devine; Devine hurled the lifter and barely missed the minister's head. Then the man and the coward—there are cowards and cowards—fell upon each other and began to grapple together. The Rector had gained middle age and rotundity, but had not completely lost that youthful skill at wrestling which had distinguished him, sometimes to his sorrow, at the theological seminary: Devine had no knowledge of the art of wrestling and his natural strength had been sorely impaired by dissipation. Yet each held his own, and they struggled on with a fine disregard for the limits of the field and the welfare of Mrs. Strong's furniture, until the table went over, and the lamp went

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out, and the Rector felt himself being attacked by a foe from behind, and, through the din of the battle, heard the old woman's voice exclaim :

“Lorgens-souls ! What good'll it dew yew tew kill each other ?”

She was clinging to the minister's coat tails, but at that moment seemed of no more account than a cat : the Rector, in spite of her weight, was hurling her son to the floor.

“Leave my boy alone !” she cried.

The Rector placed one foot on his chest.

“Say that name again if you dare !”

“Gol durn yer !” gasped Devine.

The wild cat was still tugging at the Rector's coat tails, and now of a sudden managed to make him lose his balance. Devine sprang up, with fist again doubled for the attack ; but the lively little mother changed her position, placing herself between the two men. Then Devine proved the quality of his cowardice by saying with cruel pleasure in his deliberately slow tones :

“Tell Zeph that I'm acomin' ter git my kiss back.”

“Hey—what ?” roared the minister, as, forgetful of the woman between, he tried to spring at Devine. But the mother met him with a blow of her hard old fist ; then turned quickly to throw herself upon Devine in an untender embrace.

“Yew go home !” she commanded, screwing her head in the minister's direction. “This is nice business fer a parson.”

“Yew go home,” she repeated, seeing that he made no movement to obey. “I'll take care of this young man.”

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The young man, with an ugly curse, tried to thrust her aside, but she stood her ground with a God-given strength. The Rector, his eyes blazing in the semi-darkness, flung these words over her head at Devine :

“You dirty coward ! You miserable liar ! You coward, you scoundrel, you liar ! Y-y-y—you !”

He strode to the outside door, opened it, letting a flood of moonlight into the disordered kitchen ; and, standing there with his hand on the latch, he said :

“I’m not through with you yet.”

“And I hain’t through with you neither,” growled Devine, but the Rector did not hear. He went out, slamming the door behind him, and followed the path around the side of the house, walking mechanically, scarcely seeing where he went. That reformed horse waited where he had left her untied at the gate ; and the Rector stepped, like a tired old man, into the trap.

“The coward ! The liar !” he muttered as he took up the reins ; then after a moment, with his head bent over the lines :

“Even *your* name, my baby girl !”

The Reverend Daniel Leggett had completely forgotten his reason for coming to Devine Strong’s !

Concerning a Kiss

CHAPTER XII

CONCERNING A KISS

THE Rector drove to the stable, and, without waiting to unharness the horse, marched grimly up to the Rectory. There was Zeph, wrapped, shivering, in a blanket, waiting for him on the porch.

“Oh, Dad,” she cried, reproachful but tender, “how could you leave me alone so long?”

He pushed her aside as he could not have pushed the meanest dog in the parish, and, striding into the hall, commanded harshly.

“Come in the house, and lock the door.”

The child stood still, struck dumb for the moment, then crept slowly after the Rector. He turned half way up the stairs, and called :

“Josephine! Come, hurry up there!”

“*Josephine!*” That baptismal name used only on dreadful, solemn occasions! Tears welled up in Zeph’s eyes, and then suddenly she laughed a little gurgling laugh.

“The tutor’s been telling tales,” said she to herself, springing lightly up the stairs. She flew after her father into the common room, and flew to press her tender, loving little hands against his breast, pretending not to see how he scowled and drew away.

“Oh, Daddy,” she began, looking up with wide,

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reproachful, dewy eyes. "How could you leave your little Zeph alone so long? She was so frightened."

He pushed her away, and exclaimed with tragic reproach :

"Thou, too, Josephine !"

"It's something worse than the tutor," Zeph thought swiftly, and turned with drooping head until her face was in the shadow :

"What makes you so unkind to me?" she began, with a brave disregard for the painful little catches in her voice. "I've been almost frightened to death for the last three hours worrying about you. I've had you thrown over the bridge and drowned in the creek ; and I've thought of you lying d—dead on the hard road. I went down stairs once before to look for you ; and I was just going down to the street, because I thought I should go mad if I didn't do something. And now that you've finally come back, after having a good time playing that horrid, senseless chess and not giving a thought to the poor girl left all alone, you—you call me Jo—*Josephine!*"

She blurted out the last word as though it were the name of some vile monster, instead of her own admirable self ; and, sinking into a chair, covered her face with her hands—carefully, so as to leave a peep hole between the fingers. The Rector began to pace the floor uneasily, now and then casting stealthy, shamefaced glances at the miserable little figure in the chair.

"I've had an awful night, Zeph," he said at last, apologetically. "And you mustn't mind if I'm as ugly as sin."

"What have you been doing, dear?" she asked with generous sympathy.

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“I’ve been licking Devine Strong!” he shouted, so savagely that she shrank back in the chair. “And I’m going to do it again: I’ll thrash him through Main Street as sure as my name’s Daniel Leggett.”

Zeph started to her feet, and with flashing eyes, cried out:

“What has he done?”

Then suddenly recollecting herself, she blushed red, and leaned heavily against the back of the chair.

“‘What has he done!’” her father repeated, taking her so roughly by the shoulders that she winced, and looked at him as if she could not believe that this was her father.

“Zeph,” he demanded, puzzled by her air of injured innocence, yet keeping cruel hold on her, “have you ever kissed a man?”

She laughed shrilly, and looking him straight in the eyes, answered:

“Yes, Dad; oh, lots and lots of times!”

“Hey—what? Who was the last man you kissed? Be careful, young lady.”

She hesitated, and in spite of the painful grasp on her shoulders smiled a little.

“Why, let me see,” she began slowly, then looked up with a saucy laugh:

“Why, it was you, of course, Dad. Who else would it be?”

“Young lady, I’m not fooling. You kissed a man to-night who was not your Dad: now didn’t you?”

“Y-yes,” she admitted; and suddenly he released her—so suddenly that only the chair behind the girl saved her from falling to the floor.

“The villain!” roared the Rector, striding across

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the room, "I'll thrash him within an inch of his life."

"I wouldn't do that," said Zeph very gently.

"Hey—what?" raged the Rector, stopping short and glaring at his daughter. "If you stand up for that dirty, black, contemptible, lying scoundrel, I'll take the horsewhip to you, you shameless girl!"

Now for the first time Zeph was really frightened, and realized that matters might soon get beyond her control; she started forward, crying:

"Oh, Dad, how can you talk about my Charlie like that?"

Then turning her back and hiding her face in one uplifted arm, she sobbed aloud. Her father was at her side in an instant, taking her in his arms, begging her not to cry; asking *her to forgive him*. Zeph leaned against his breast and sobbed on, unable to stop for the moment; and when she did look up, her lashes were heavy with tears, her eyes full of wonder and reproach.

"So it was Charlie?" said the father, smiling fondly at the small, wet face; and smiling again as the ever-ready blush swept from its forehead to its throat.

"Yes," she faltered. "He is such a nice boy, I couldn't help it."

"I wouldn't do it again, dear," he rejoined with a light-hearted laugh.

"Wouldn't you?" she asked innocently. "Well, I won't if you don't wish me to." But for the life of her, Zeph could not have kept back a tiny smile, which brought the Rector's suspicions to the fore again, and made him resume the old, harsh tone as he exclaimed:

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“Do you know what that miserable coward said?”

“If he is all that you call him,” Zeph rejoined with a swift, bewildering assumption of womanly pride and dignity, “I would rather not know what he said.”

And Zeph never spoke a truer word in her life.

Her repentant father took her in his arms and kissed her good-night at least twenty times, while he told her that they must both get up at daylight next morning so he could have an early start. And that very wise little Zeph went off to bed without a single question.

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CHAPTER XIII

BEN'S SADIE

A MOON almost at its full, a gentle surf, a hard, white, curving beach, and Sadie only four miles away—a life saver couldn't have such a hard time of it after all, thought Ben, as he started out on the eight o'clock run east from Cedar Cove on Saturday evening. If this weather kept up for the next week he could probably get off to see Sadie every day, and—who could tell?—perhaps Sadie would come to herself by the end of the week and let him take her back to Shoreville.

“Sadie——”

And so, with scarcely a thought outside of Sadie in his mind, Ben tramped along for two miles, to meet the runner from Bleak Hill; but that gentleman chanced to be Long-legged Pete, and he told Ben even before they exchanged checks that Sadie was going to be married to-morrow.

“Who said so?” demanded Ben, stunned, yet incredulous.

“Cap'n Lem,” asserted Pete. “An' Sadie didn't take pains ter deny it. He come back from Shoreville jes' as I left, an' he was so b'ilin' drunk that it's a wonder he didn't go an' git drowned on the way 'crost. An' he brought the durndest lot o' stuff fer the weddin' supper, an' he says, says he: ‘Twa'n't everybody what could marry off a darter an' lift a mortgage at the same

Ben's Sadie

time.' (He didn't mean ter give *that* away, Cap'n Lem didn't.) An' he says, says he, he'd saved the house whar Sadie's mother died fer her, anyway."

Ben, his hands clenched at his sides, had turned and was looking over the sea. He stood still so long that Pete, moved to unselfish pity, laid a hand on Ben's shoulder, and Ben could hear the big fellow snuffling.

"Where's Sadie?" asked Ben at last.

"Dunno. She worked like ol' scratch atakin' kere of Ann-Abe's younguns all day, an' she wouldn't hev a word ter say ter nobody. An' ter-night, after she'd been an' put the younguns ter bed, she went down ter the landin' ter see ef Cap'n Lem hed brought Devine along, an' Cap'n Lem hed come in alone, as drunk as a fiddler, as I said before, an' they hed a reg'lar set-to, him an' her. An' Sade, she got so gol-durn mad that she went atearin' away like a wil' Injun—nobody knows whar. Sade's got a temper, she has; but I hain't afindin' fault with her fer that! An' Devine'll tame it down, don't yer fret!"

Ben set his teeth.

"Why don't yer sail in an' cut him out?" demanded Pete. "Yer got till ter-morrer two o'clock—that's the time the Rev'ren' Dan gin'rally comes—an' I don't think much of a feller what can't ketch a gal in that time. (I hain't acountin' myself.) Jes' sail in an' give him a good lickin'. You're big enough, hain't yer, Ben?"

"All fighting ain't licking," said poor Ben with an attempt at his old laugh. "But you tell Sadie that I'll be over the minute I can get off in the morning. Well, so long." Then, not trusting himself to speak another word, Ben faced about and started on the homeward

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run, puzzled, pondering, blind and stumbling, yet upmost in his heart, pity for the incomprehensible woman that he loved.

A sound like a human cry floated down from the bluff, but Ben heard it only as in a dream, until, repeated several times, it caused him to start and look up. But seeing no one, he concluded that it must have been the mournful cry of the screech-owl, and went on again, his head again bowed down in painful thought. But once more the sound came, so much like a human voice that Ben crossed to the foot of the bluff and looked up searchingly. No one in sight, yet a shower of sand fell upon him. He shook himself like a dog coming out of water; then looked up again, to find Sadie standing at the top of the bluff, swaying back and forth, laughing hysterically, her long hair loosened and flying about her head and figure.

"Is that you?" he asked, stupidly rubbing his eyes.

"Yes, yes. Who else would it be? Catch me, Ben!" And, still laughing, she slid down the bank. Ben caught her up in his arms and held her close, distressed beyond measure that she should be wandering thus, wild and alone.

"Sadie," he murmured brokenly, "ain't there *nobody* to take care of you?"

Sadie trembled and crept closer to him without answering.

"I'll take care of you, dear," he whispered at length. "Don't fret."

She clung to him as if she were a little child and he her big, strong brother; and slow as Ben had been in some matters, here he was quick to understand. He hovered over her as tenderly as a woman, patting her

Ben's Sadie

ruffled hair, her cool, soft cheek; drawing her shawl snugly around her, and at last pressing his cheek against hers in silence. When she began to cry—almost without tears, but with great sobs that shook her whole body—Ben murmured terms of endearment, softly, soothingly, and let her have her cry out there on his shoulder.

“Dear Ben,” she whispered, when she could find her voice, and then stroked his face caressingly.

This was more than Ben could stand, and he gently put her down, turning away in the effort to keep his self-control. She caught his hand in a frightened way and asked imploringly:

“You do love me—don't you, Ben?”—the same painful, sweet question.

“Yes-yes,” he answered huskily, drawing her two hands to his breast.

“I'm so glad,” she sighed. “I came to tell you that it's going to happen—my father—he does not understand, you know, and he arranged it—and I want you to pray for me to-night, because—because Sadie is fearfully weak, my dear.”

“Sadie is strong!” Ben contradicted sturdily. “I ain't afraid of to-morrow.”

“Aren't you? Really, Ben? Then perhaps I will be strong if you believe in me. I knew you'd help me—that's why I came to you. Thank you! Thank you, my dear. Good night!” And she lifted her lips for a kiss.

Ben caught his breath sharply, then kissed, not the woman of his strong man's passion, but the little girl of the old school days; for never was there a knight more pure in heart than this, the Little Lady's son.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE NIGHT

WITHOUT a doubt that brief interview with Ben had helped Sarah; yet, nevertheless, alone in her cottage that night the girl fought such a battle with herself as Ben could not have dreamed of, or understood. She wanted to let herself go with the trend of circumstances—wanted to marry Devine, to give herself up to a sense of delicious defeat at the glad, mad end of a long, mad struggle.

“Why not?” urged one Sarah. “Your father said you were eating your heart out for him, and you are. Why not?”

“I don’t know why; but it is wrong,” wearily answered the other Sarah.

Over in the Station, Captain Lemuel was hilariously toasting the bride-elect, and here, in her little kitchen, sat the bride-elect, cold and in total darkness, for she had even drawn the curtains so as to shut out the moonlight, which had distressed her with the thought that it made her see herself more clearly, and that she could not bear.

She wanted to marry Devine; but what would Ben think of her—Ben and all the others who had loved and helped her from babyhood?

Sarah was sitting in the chair from which Ben had watched her so tenderly that morning, and with a thoughtful, grateful little motion she bent down and leaned her cheek against its back. Oh, the sense of

The Night

rest and comfort she had felt as she lay in his arms! And how strange it was that it had not seemed strange for her to kiss him! She could never kiss Devine like that—never feel that sense of safety in his arms. His very presence made her restless and uneasy.

“He would kill Ben if he knew,” she thought. “Nothing would ever make him understand. He does not know Ben’s Sadie at all, or want to know her. Ben’s Sadie is good, but Devine’s——!”

The girl huddled down into the chair, weeping wildly, until at length the fact that she was shaking, not only with sobs but also with a chill, was borne in upon her mind; and she rose, fumbled about for matches, lighted the lamp, and went mechanically to the stove—her thoughts exactly five miles away from her task. Taking off the lids, she placed them with elaborate care upon the table and stood looking down upon them with heavy, puzzled lines between her brows.

“I want some wood,” she concluded at last, and almost cried when she found the wood box empty.

Then she commenced to hunt for the poker and the shaker, but could find neither, though both were in their usual places by the stove.

“I wish Ben was here to help me,” she sighed, as she began to shake the grate with her bare hands. Then, absently opening the door of the oven, she burst into hysterical laughter, for the oven was full of driftwood which had been placed there to dry. She swept out the sticks with nervous haste, trying to count them as she did so.

“It’s all I’ve got,” she said; then added recklessly: “But I’ll have a roaring fire to-night, and to-morrow—to-morrow, maybe I won’t need one.”

Stick after stick she thrust into the stove, with no

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regard whatever for scientific arrangement, until she remembered that she had put in no paper, and seized that which was nearest—her precious magazines—and began to tear the pages frantically. Many ragged leaves were stuffed in among the sticks and scattered all over the room before Sarah realized what she was destroying.

“My best friends,” she said, looking penitently at the torn page in her hand. Then she added in exceeding bitterness:

“Well, never mind. I shall want nothing after to-night—nothing but Devine.”

She knelt down before the table, bowing her head upon her arms, and wept hot, silent tears of shame; but soon she raised her head with a motion of defiance.

“Why shouldn’t I love him?” she asked hardily; and yet the next moment was struggling to her feet with both hands thrust out as if to push Devine away.

“Love! Do you call that love? Oh, my God, what shall I do? What shall I do?”

In her agony she groped along the wall, never knowing that her fingers were caught in the fish net until suddenly it gave way and fell crashing to the floor—shells, pictures, curious little keepsakes and all. The girl looked at the wreck as if unable to believe the testimony of her own eyes; then she sat down on the floor and mourned over the broken things.

“Poor old fish net! I didn’t mean to do it—really I didn’t.”

Tenderly she lifted one object after another, musing over its history.

“Pete gave me this pink shell the day I knocked him down. I wish I hadn’t done it. I’m a bad girl. Why shouldn’t he kiss me?”

The Night

"Billy Downs found this stick. You can't break it no matter what way you bend it; but I—I——.

"Rose Thurber—dear little Rose! you couldn't love me enough to-day—gave me this big devil's pocket-book. God forbid that you should ever go through what I am going through now, my little Rose!

"And this winkle I picked up the day I decided to stay over here; and I was happy then compared to now, although I was so sorry for myself. Happy? Will I ever be happy again? Oh, Devine, come to me! Come to me!"

She had risen to her feet with her arms outstretched; but no sooner had that yearning, irrepressible cry for Devine escaped her than she shrank back with face averted and one forbidding hand thrust out.

"No, no; no, no!" she gasped, trembling with terror, for it seemed that Devine must have heard, and not only Devine, but the whole world also.

However, there came no sound in answer to that cry, save the incessant, melancholy mumble of the breakers and the faint rising of the wind outside the door.

"I should die of shame if Devine knew," she thought. "And Ben—how can I ever face him in the morning and tell him—tell him—oh, what will I tell him?"

She struck a match, with no thought of what she was doing, and threw it in the stove. Instantly the paper caught fire and up sprang the blaze almost to the ceiling, so that the whole room seemed to take fire. Fascinated by the sight, Sarah bent so near that her face was almost scorched, and locks of her flying hair burned with a sickening odor.

"This is like Devine's love for me," she whispered, "and mine—for him."

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While she watched, the flame died down and the papers burned out, leaving the sticks black and charred. Sadie laughed with mirthless significance, and built the fire all over again, this time so well that soon it was burning cheerily and steadily.

“Like Ben’s love for me. God bless him!” she murmured.

She looked up and caught sight of her face in the little mirror that hung on the wall, and, shocked at seeing herself so dishevelled, went and gazed at the reflection in grave disapproval.

“Devine would never call me beautiful now,” she thought, “unless he’s crazy. I believe he is a lunatic; he acts like one.”

With a tired, listless movement she pushed her hair from her temples, then lifted her hands to the nape of her neck and brought the whole tangled mass around on one shoulder. She was so accustomed to the beauty of her hair that she seldom gave it a thought, but to-night the gold lights that played over the brown ripples, the silky sheen and softness of the texture, appealed to her as they appealed to other people, and Sadie caressed her own hair in wondering admiration, as if it had belonged to some one else.

“Ben says it is so pretty,” she murmured. Then, in another mood: “But Devine says it’s the dear devil in me that gives it the reddish cast.” Smiling slightly, she continued to stroke the flowing mass.

“Devine has never seen it down,” she whispered; then, meeting her own eloquent eyes in the glass, the girl shrank back and huddled down upon the floor, hiding her face in her arms over the seat of Ben’s chair.

The Night

“No, no!” she cried; and again, “No!” sobbing as if she would suffocate, yet still crying “No, no!” as if she dared not stop for fear of never finding the word again, until at last she was forced to stop in sheer exhaustion.

She staggered up and made her way to the bedroom, groping like a blind woman; flung herself on the bed without undressing, and immediately fell into a heavy sleep, but a sleep made horrible with realistic dreams.

It was morning, and she walked along the surf shore looking for Ben; but she walked up and down for miles, until she was so tired she could scarcely drag one foot before the other, and still she could not find her friend. Then she met Devine, who told her that he had killed Ben because she had kissed him, and his dead body was up on the Station roof. Thereupon she struck at Devine in her dream, telling him over and over again that she had always hated him, always loved Ben. But Devine only laughed and caught her to him, holding her in spite of all her struggling, and crushed her slowly and cruelly until she died with her face against his breast. Then he carried her dead body up to the lookout, where he propped it against the window and left it alone, with wide eyes staring out on the still body of Ben. She could hear, as in a dream within a dream, the steps of Devine descending the stairs. Then all was still. She opened her stiff lips and found that she could speak, lifted her hands and found that she could raise the window and look out, bending over her dead love.

“Ben!” she whispered. He did not move or speak.

“Ben!” she implored; and words of love rushed from her lips—such words as she had never, never spoken to

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any man. But Ben lay still, gazing up at the sky, and did not answer.

“*Ben!*” Then in a torrent of words she told the still, quiet face of the fury of the battle that had raged within her for the past year, and begged him to awake and forgive her. And when she had finished, lo and behold! Ben was gone!

She dreamed again:

She stood over another dead body, and this was her father’s, bleeding slowly at the heart, while she held in her hand Ben’s jack-knife, dripping with blood. The Rector came, and without glancing at her or at the dripping knife began to read the burial service:

“‘I am the resurrection and the life——’”

“‘I did not do it!’” she cried, although none had accused her.

“‘I am the resurrection and the life,’” repeated the Rector’s low and solemn voice.

“‘I did not do it!’” she screamed, and tried to fling the knife away; but it clung fast to her fingers, dripping—dripping with blood.

A cold sweat stood out on the girl’s forehead and she was moaning in her sleep.

Then once more she dreamed—a dream of Devine—of the Devine who loved her with an overmastering and a contagious passion—of the Devine whose glance and voice and touch thrilled her to ecstasy, even in a dream.

Ashamed, yet thrilling with the dream touch, Sarah awoke to find herself benumbed with cold, the little cottage rocking on its foundation, the surf thundering on the sands, while the wind came galloping over the dunes with the sound of the falling hoofs of a thousand horses.

At Daybreak

CHAPTER XV

AT DAYBREAK

DAYBREAK, and a colorless, wind-whipped beach lying between the furious, wind-whipped waters of bay and ocean, while above, in the gray sky, frightened gray clouds were scurrying in every direction.

“Who’d athunk it?” said Billy Downs to himself as he made his way across the sands to Sadie’s cottage with an armful of wood. “Yis’d day was as pretty a day as iver I see up ter three ’clock las’ night. Now, who’d athunk it?”

Billy’s tone was aggrieved, for he felt that he should have been consulted about the matter.

“Wall, wall,” he thought, consolingly; “thar won’t be no weddin’ ter-day nohow—thank the Lord. Sade! Sadie, darlin’! come, open the door. Here’s yer ol’ Billy with a load of wood.”

Sarah hastened to throw open the door, exclaiming as she faced the old fellow:

“Oh, Billy, how good of you! You never forget your little girl, do you?”

“Humph!” said Billy. “Sleep wall? Don’t look much like it; yer eyes is big as sassers.” Then he went on without waiting for her to answer, while he piled the wood in the box behind the stove and kept his eyes carefully fixed on the task.

“Did yer ever see sech a suddent change in yer life?”

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The 'mom'ter dropped twenty-five degrees in as many minutes. Yer won't see the Rev'ren' Dan ter-day. He hain't sech a good sailor, over an' above. An' yer know my advice ter yer?—go 'long with Abe ter Shoreville. He says he's agoin' ter git Ann-Abe off this mornin' or bust."

Billy straightened himself and looked at the girl with more anxiety than the occasion seemed to demand.

"Why should I go?" she asked, vaguely alarmed at his manner. "The children would be all alone then."

"Hmm," said Billy, and again bent over the wood box. "I see Devine's sail jes' now over thar ter the le'ward, amakin' fer Bleak Hill—only sail in the hull bay. He's a fool ter take that air tub out in this gale. I says ter him las' time I see him: 'Devine,' says I, 'that air rotten ol' sail o' yourn is jes' awaitin' fer a chance ter split on yer,' I says, says I."

Billy looked up, to find Sadie sitting beside the table with her face buried in her hands. He shook his head with wondering pity, and crossed over to place an awkward, kindly hand on her bowed head.

"Abe'll be agoin' in 'bout ten minutes," said he. "Don't yer think yer'd better go 'long, darlin'?"

"I thought he wouldn't come till afternoon—if he came at all to-day," said Sadie in a half whisper; then with a sudden movement of resolution she rose to her feet.

"Sure Abe hasn't gone?" she asked hurriedly. "Give me that shawl quick. I'll go. You look after Rose. Good-bye, good-bye."

She raced out of the house and across the sands, leaving Billy with his mouth wide open, looking after her.

"She's a riddle, that's what she is," said he; "an' I give her up; that's what I do!"

At Daybreak

When Sadie entered the Cedar Road she saw the sturdy, thick-set figure of Abe Thurber a little distance ahead, and ran to catch up to him.

"I was afraid you'd started," she gasped.

"No—naw," rejoined Abe, without looking around. "Hed ter come back fer these here oilskins." And he walked faster, as if to escape the girl.

"I'm going with you," she said, quickening her pace also.

"Yer be, eh? Humph! Pretty weather fer women-folks!"

"Oh, hurry, hurry!" she cried, running lightly ahead. "Let's get off before—before it gets any worse." Whereupon Abe, who worked by contraries, slackened his pace.

"I hain't in no sweat 'bout gittin' off," he asserted. "I 'bout made up my mind I wouldn't go nohow, seein' the weather's so squallified."

"Oh, hurry, hurry!" she called back over her shoulder, as she ran on before him out of the cedars down to the edge of the water, where she paused with her hand up to her brow and eagerly searched the sullen waste for Devine's sail.

"There!" she cried, as Abe came leisurely along. "See that boat 'way off there?"

"Yes—yeah," grunted Abe.

"Is it Devine's?"

"No—naw!" answered Abe, stooping over his sharpie.

"How do you know it isn't?" she demanded. "Billy Downs says it is."

"That's jes' like Billy Downs. He don't know naw-think."

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“Look again, please, Captain Abe! Billy must have seen it from the lookout. Are you *sure* it isn't his?”

“I hain't sure of nawthink,” retorted Abe, giving his boat a resentful shove into the water. “An' that air Billy Downs is sure of *ev'rythink!*”

“Then it isn't his boat?” insisted Sarah, not daring to believe that which she longed to believe.

“Wall, I swan!” ejaculated Abe. “How many times yer want me ter tell yer? No—naw, Sadie, it 'tain't hisn.”

Sadie held out her arms, pleading,

“Take me along, Captain Abe.”

“I hain't agoin',” said he, facing about and holding the sharpie to the shore with one foot. “Thar's Cap'n Lem acomin'.”

Sadie glanced hastily over her shoulder, and saw her father hurrying down the Cedar Road.

“Oh!” she cried, trying to spring into the boat, but held back by Abe's resolute arm. “Let me go with you! Let me go!”

“Cap'n Lem,” began Abe in a significant undertone. Again Sadie glanced over her shoulder at the approaching figure, then whispered:

“Go! Go! Tell Reverend Dan that I want him badly, but never to marry me—never!”

“Yer hain't agoin' out in this here sou'easter, be yer, Abe?” broke in the Keeper's voice at that moment.

Abe lost no time in shoving off, and he fairly bristled with opposition as he shipped the oars.

“I promised Ann-Abe, I did,” said he; “an' it'll take more'n a sou'easter ter make me break my word ter Ann-Abe. S'long, Cap'n Lem.”

“Hurry back!” called Sadie. “And don't forget

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to tell the Reverend Dan." Captain Lemuel laughed, and with one of his very rare caresses, put his arm round the girl, saying tolerantly:

"'Fraid the minister won't git here?"

Sarah shrank back, with ominous lights flashing in her eyes.

"Is that Devine's boat?" she demanded, pointing out the disputed sail.

"Wall, I swan!" laughed the father. "Ef you hain't 'bout as silly as they make 'em! Can't nobody tell no boat two miles ter the le'ward an' the air chuck full o' snow."

"It is Devine's, and you know it," she said, looking him straight in the eye.

"Wall, have it your own way," rejoined Captain Lem, with another tolerant laugh, for he felt unusually good-natured this morning.

Sadie set her teeth with rage, and, battling against her old hatred of her father, ran quickly across the strand and up the Cedar Road.

"Thar's temper fer yer," remarked Captain Lem, looking sadly after her. "I declar', thar's times when I'm sorry fer Devine!"

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CHAPTER XVI

SUNDAY MORNING IN SHOREVILLE

JUSTICE BRUMLEY'S groom, James, stood in the little barn back of the Rectory, affectionately and sympathetically rubbing the horse's nose.

"Left you hitched up all night, did he? Pretty kind of a minister, he is. Well, well, he means all right, but he don't think hard enough; that's all's the matter with the Rev'ren' Dan. Never mind, Beauty, we're goin' back home, where there's an oat or two, an' he'll never have a chance to do it agin, 'cause Mamie (Back! back!)—me an' Mamie are goin' to housekeepin' in the old coachman's cottage, Beauty, old girl."

Then James, laughing bashfully now that the story was out, and Beauty whinnying softly, went out of the stable up the blind road. The man glanced up at the Rectory windows as they passed, half resentfully, half humorously; and, as if in answer to this look, the sash of one was raised and the Rector looked out, calling:

"Hy, wait a minute, will you?" then slammed down the window and disappeared. Presently he reappeared at the front door, buttoning up his overcoat, and giving the scowling groom a hearty good morning.

"Just stop at the sexton's, will you?" said the Rector, stepping hastily into the trap as he spoke.

Then, taking an old envelope and a stump of a pencil out of his pocket, he began to scribble with so much

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concentration that he did not notice when the horse stopped in front of the sexton's.

"There's Foth now," James reminded him as the ever-alert sexton came running around the corner of the house.

"Foth," shouted the Rector, without waiting for the man to come up to the carriage, "you tell Noah to open the Sunday School and take care of the old minister, and don't forget to wake up the organist in time. Here, give that to Noah."

"Goin' away, heh?" asked the inquisitive sexton, vainly trying to decipher the writing on the envelope that the Rector had handed him; but James and the Rector were already driving on.

"The Moneylender's next," said the minister, and James, beginning to feel that he had an interest in this mysterious business, touched the horse with the whip.

"He hain't home," announced Mrs. Hedges, who, in answer to the Rector's shout, had appeared at the front door in early morning toilet. "Anythink pertic'lar?"

"Know where he's gone?" demanded the minister, impatient of the curiosity in her face and voice.

"He went out 'bout daylight to see that air Devine Strong. What——?"

"Drive on!" interposed the Rector, and sank into a scowling brown study, out of which James presently aroused him by saying:

"There's Mr. Hedges now."

The Rector looked up and saw the Moneylender hastening down the road, beckoning wildly for the carriage to stop.

"I was looking for you," called out the minister.

"An' I was jes' agoin' ter see you," rejoined Hiram

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Hedges, stealing between the wheels as he added in a fierce whisper:

“Where in Jerusalem’s Devine Strong?”

“Hey—what! Ain’t he home?” shouted the Rector, so loudly that the Moneylender said “*Ssssh*,” and glanced hastily around the quiet street before he answered.

“I dunno. Poundin’ on their door fer a good hour didn’t fetch him out.”

“You—? What—?” began the minister, trying to account for the Moneylender’s interest. “Has he robbed you?”

Mr. Hedges beckoned for the Rector’s ear, and sidled even closer to the seat of the carriage.

“I seen yer go abilin’ down the street las’ night,” he whispered. “Wouldn’t ablieved nothink that air ’Liza tol’ me ef I hadn’t. I met her jes’ ’bout here, an’ she tol’ me the hull thing, an’ wanted me ter go an’ keep yer from hurtin’ *him*—that’s women-folks fer yer!”

“Come, go over to the beach with me if I can’t find him,” said the Rector abruptly, motioning the Moneylender from between the wheels. “I’ll be down to the breakwater in half an hour. See about a boat, will you?” And without waiting for an answer he ordered James to drive on to Strong’s.

The Moneylender stood in the middle of the road for a few minutes looking up at the heavy gray sky; then, with a dubious shake of his head, hurried onward.

A little later the minister was following the boxwood path that led to Mrs. Strong’s door. He thought to enter without the ceremony of knocking, but found the door locked, and had to resort to his fists. At the sound, Mrs. Strong appeared, peering out of the window,

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then hurriedly pushed up the sash and looked out at the Rector with every sign of antagonism in her stern old face.

“Where’s Devine?” demanded the Rector.

“How dast yew stan’ here an’ look his ol’ mother in the face, yew fightin’ parson yew?” she retorted.

“Has he gone out?” asked the Rector, trying to see around her head into the room.

“Gone out!” she repeated, with an indignant raising of her cracked voice. “Hev yew got the sass ter stan’ thar an’ ask me if he’s *gone out* when he’s got a mark acrost his face that’ll stay thar till his dyin’ day?”

“He deserved to be horsewhipped,” stoutly declared the minister.

“Ef it takes a parson tew dew it,” she added with telling sarcasm.

The Rector turned on his heel, but had not taken three steps before he turned back.

“You better think twice before lying to me,” he warned the woman in the window.

At that her old eyes grew brilliant with anger, and she snarled:

“I hain’t never tol’ a lie in all my born days; an’ that’s more than yew kin say, Dan’l Leggett.” And so closed both the argument and the window.

“She’s a Tartar,” said the Rector, smiling in spite of himself, as he hurried back to the carriage. “Now, if she was only on our side— Hawkins’s next, and drive like the devil, James.”

“Too bad it’s so far,” said the sympathetic groom. “Don’t you ’spose it would do for me to go up afterwards?”

“Mercy, no!” rejoined the minister, wearily. “It

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takes the old fellow four hours to get dressed; and he'd feel insulted if I didn't go myself. I don't like the looks of those clouds—snow-banks, James?"

"I'm afraid they are, sir. Baker, down east there, told me the bay was scum over last ev'nin', an' if the wind hadn't come up in the night it'd froze hard."

"I've a good mind to turn back," said the Rector, with seeming irrelevance. "No, no! Drive on; the church hasn't missed a service for twenty-five years."

Then he fell into thought, but was impatient and distracted, drumming constantly on the arm of the seat, telling himself first that Devine had such and such a start, and then that he was laid up in bed as a result of the fight the night before.

The horse had trotted up one of the northern side streets, crossed the railroad track, and was passing through the scattered German settlement, from which the Rector drew so many of his poorer parishioners. Now and then they met a group of shiny-faced, rosy-cheeked children starting off early for Sunday School, and now and then one less shy than the others would call after the carriage:

"Hello, Reverend Dan!"

And he would rouse himself to answer with that hearty good fellowship which made him the most popular child's man in Shoreville.

Presently they turned into a wagon trail cut through the scrub oaks and came upon a plain, gray, weather-beaten old house, with piles of pine needles tucked around its foundation to keep out the cold. In the yard there was a rosy, fat, stupid-looking girl drawing water at the well. She dropped the bucket with a splash at sight of the carriage, leaned heavily against the

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rickety curb, and stared, her eyes bulging, her mouth hanging open.

"Hello!" shouted the Rector. "Is your grandfather up?"

"Why, hello, Rev'ren' Dan," drawled the girl; then seemed unable to get out another word.

"Go tell the old gentleman I want to see him," the minister commanded, half rising from the seat in his impatience.

"I'll call him," she replied, moving slowly toward the house; "but I don't say as 'twill do no good, 'cause he 'pears to be fixin' to stay in bed all day."

The Rector jumped out of the trap and followed her into the kitchen, where she left him for a few moments stamping impatiently.

"Well, how is he?" demanded the Reverend Dan when the girl came back, her mouth still hanging open.

"Wall, he ain't over and above well."

"Oh, *oomn!*" And the minister turned on his heel. "You tell him," said he, pausing in the door and looking back, "that I've got to go away for the day, and if he don't preach, the church will be closed for the first time in *twenty-five years!*"

Then he went out, banging the door as a sort of relief to his nerves.

"Home," he said shortly to James, who was grinning at the picture of dumb astonishment framed in the kitchen window, and who drew himself up a little shamefacedly as he started the horse; but at that moment the picture in the window became animated, and there was a sharp rap upon the panes.

"Hold up a minute," said the Rector.

The girl slowly shoved the window open, and, with

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eyes fastened upon the scarcely composed countenance of the groom, said in her laborious tones:

"You needn't be scart but what he'll be there, Rev'-ren' Dan."

"Go 'long, James; what do you mean by making eyes at that girl?"

James put his hand over his mouth and did not venture a reply.

"This is a mighty uncertain day," he remarked, breaking a long silence, as they turned back into Main Street. "It'll snow before you know it. I wouldn't care 'bout crossin' the bay in this gale myself."

"It is a pretty stiff breeze," rejoined the Rector, with an anxious look up at the darkening sky. "But I bet Devine Strong's out in the middle of the bay by this time."

They drove up to the Rectory, where they found Zeph, becomingly clothed in furs as to her person, and feathers as to her head, waiting on the porch.

"Come, get on my lap," said her father. "Is the fire all right?"

"Yes," she answered, giving James a gracious smile; "it's out."

"Get a move on you, James. How long were we gone, Zeph?"

"Only an hour."

"Only an hour," blankly repeated the Rector, "and the Lord only knows whether that old woman was fooling me or not."

Zeph discreetly asked no questions, but after a time said with a sigh:

"I wish that you would bring Sadie back to live with us, Daddy."

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“And keep you home from the convent, eh?” rejoined her father, pinching her delicate ear. “Well, well; we’ll see about it.” Then he, too, sighed, and Zeph put her arm around his neck and stroked his hard cheek with her gloved hand.

Charlie came running out to meet them as they drove up to Brumley Hall, and lifted Zeph out of the trap.

“Where’s your father?” asked the Rector.

“He’s dressing. What’s the matter?”

“Hurry him up! Hurry him up!” said the minister, nearly falling over Zeph. “And Dolly, too.”

Charlie raced across the hall and up the stairs, where, meeting his mother on the first landing, he nearly knocked her down before he could stop.

“Gracious me!” said she, standing still in astonishment, and then, hearing the noise of the Rector’s entrance, hastened on down the stairs.

“What’s the matter?” she asked quickly, going to Zeph with outstretched hands.

“The m-m-m-matter!” stuttered the minister. “Why, that Devine Strong’s the biggest scoundrel on the face of the earth. Come in the library and I’ll tell you all about it. Run along, Zeph.”

But the young girl, with rising color, stood her ground.

“I’d like to know what that man’s done!” she exclaimed.

“Never mind what he’s done, but run along,” rejoined her father, so sternly that she dared not disobey.

At that moment Mr. Brumley, collarless, working his way into his coat, came puffing down the stairs.

“For the Lord’s sake, Leggett,” he called, “what’s the trouble?”

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“Yes,” urged Mrs. Dolly, gently shaking the Rector by the arm; “do tell us what’s happened.”

“Brumley, you’ve got to go to the beach with me and kidnap Sadie.”

“What!” ejaculated Mrs. Brumley, speeding across the hall.

“Where are you going?” called the minister in amazement.

“To order the carriage and your breakfast, of course. Come on into the dining-room. Come on,” she repeated, impatiently beckoning to the two gaping men. “You’ve got to eat, and you can talk at the same time. I bet you haven’t had a mouthful of breakfast, Reverend Dan.”

“I don’t know that I have,” he admitted.

“Well, you shan’t stir from here until you’ve had something to eat. You’d be a nice one to cross the bay in this weather.” And the minute they entered the dining-room Dolly ordered the breakfast. Then, while she herself supplied their wants, the Rector told the story of the night before, Dolly stopping him now and then to ask a pertinent question or to make some indignant ejaculation.

“Now, then,” she began, when the story and the breakfast were finished. “Come out in the hall and let me fix you up.”

Soon she had them both warmly clothed against the worst of wind and weather, the Rector seated in the closed carriage and Mr. Brumley waiting at the carriage door for his farewell kiss.

“Now see here,” said she, “don’t you ever dare to show your faces to me again unless you have that poor girl with you.” She lifted her warm, tender lips to her

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husband. "Do you hear me?" she added, urging him into the carriage.

Then she closed the carriage door, gave the order to the groom, and away they rolled, leaving Mrs. Dolly standing with one hand over her wet and tender eyes, the other bravely waving encouragement.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE SAIL

THE course of that brook which has its rise in the Brumley estate is as varied as the course of the little Dutch brook at the opposite end of Shoreville; and, like the Dutch brook, this little stream is arrested in its meadowland wanderings after it crosses the main country road and turns into a public harbor, with breakwaters of stone to guard its entrance. From the western breakwater, up along the bank of the creek, high mounds, thrown up at the time of the creek's widening, and now covered with a growth of long, rank grass, extend for some distance; and these were what stopped the progress of the closed carriage as it dragged through the sands of the heavy shore road that Sunday morning.

"Can't you go any further?" demanded the Rector, getting out of the carriage as he spoke, and taking in the whole dreary scene in one frowning glance—bleak, brown, wind-swept shore; high, raging waters, destitute of a single sail; the break water marked only by a foaming white line.

"Hear the surf," said the Justice—the surf booming five miles away. "This is worse than I thought, old man." And pulling their hats over their eyes, they trudged gloomily up the hill in the face of the gale. There at the top appeared the Moneylender, holding

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his hat on with both hands, while the skirts of his coat flapped about in the wind.

"Devine's boat gone?" gasped the breathless minister.

"Got anybody to sail us?" panted the Justice.

The Moneylender, prevented by the wind from hearing their questions, turned and spoke to some one below him; then he snarled as the two men came up:

"Whar yer been? Abe Thurber's been alayin' down thar this long time. Looks as ef he come out'n the Arctic regions, don't he? He come off this mornin', an' he says he sighted *my* sloop 'bout half way 'crost with her sail ripped 'crost five nettles, an' he went an' offered ter git Devine off; but Devine he tol' Abe ter go ter hell. An' Abe says *he* calc'lates that Devine's thar himself by this time."

"Hey—what!" said the Rector, bursting into involuntary laughter and racing down to where Abraham Thurber of Bleak Hill stood—sturdy, stubborn; immovable, watching them from the deck of his old brine-covered sloop.

"Hello, Abe! Never so glad to see you in my life."

Abe grunted.

"How are you? All ready to start?" asked Mr. Brumley.

Abe frowned and never stirred until the three men were on board and the Rector had thrown off one of the ropes that held the boat to the shore. Then he stooped down and tossed the rope back over the post.

"What's that for?" demanded the minister. "Waiting for some one?"

"Humph! Got 'nough lunytics aboard now," growled Captain Abe. "I hain't asayin'," he went on to admit,

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“but what I was more or less of a gol durn lunnytic myself ter go an’ come off fer my ol’ woman this mornin’, but that air niasy gal o’ Cap’n Lem’s was so bound an’ possessed that I should come an’ tell yer ter be sure an’ come over ter-day. I don’ see——”

“Did Sadie send for me!” broke in the Rector. “Put up your sail! Hurry, Abe, for heaven’s sake! Why didn’t you bring her off with you?”

“That air father o’ hern had somethink ter say ’bout that,” rejoined Abe, stepping deliberately on shore and starting up the side of the mound.

“Hey—what! Where are you going?” shouted the enraged minister, making a move to go after him.

“He’s gone up ter look fer Ann-Abe,” Mr. Hedges explained. “He’d no more dast ter go ’thout her ’n—’n nothink.”

Abe had no sooner reached the top of the mound than he turned about and started down again. Then Ann-Abe herself appeared, wrapped in a plaid shawl and laden with a market basket.

“Oh!” she cried after her husband’s retreating figure. “Don’t yer dast go ’thout me, Abe Thurber!”

Justice Brumley panted up the hill to relieve the woman of the basket, and Mrs. Thurber was so spent with her hard walk that she could not find breath to ask him what he was doing there. The Rector greeted her with outstretched hand, while even the Moneylender grinned a grin of welcome, for every one of the three recognized in Ann-Abe an important ally. The lady marked the unusually set and sullen look on Abe’s face; then, glancing sharply from one man to another, she finally let her eyes rest on Hiram Hedges, who happened to hold a mortgage on this very sloop.

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“Now what on arth does *this* mean?” she demanded.

“Sadie wants us all—every one of us,” hurriedly answered the Moneylender. “That durn ol’ Devine Strong’s atryin’ ter git her, an’ we got ter stop it.”

“Seems ter me yer changed yer tune mighty quick, Hime Hedges,” said Mrs. Thurber, so tartly that Abe took courage.

“’Tain’t fit ter put up a speck o’ sail, be it, Ann-Abe? Hain’t no cap’n ’long shore fool ’nough ter go out ter-day.”

“What’d *you* come fer?” retorted Ann-Abe; and with that, the Moneylender went up to the bow and began to raise the jib.

“I come ’cause I didn’t know no better,” answered Abe. “An’ I knowed you’d be ahoppin’ ef I didn’t. Besides,” he admitted reluctantly, “Cap’n Lem’s gal’d died on the spot ef I hadn’t come fer the Rev’re’n’ Dan. What on arth she wants of a minister——”

“Abe Thurber!” indignantly broke in Ann-Abe, to the joy of the other men, “chuck off that air rope! I never hern tell o’ sech heathen *contrariness!*”

“We’ll all be drowned,” insisted Abe.

“Drowned!” she repeated with a contemptuous snort. “I don’t care nawthink ’bout bein’ drowned as long as we git ter Sadie fust. Do you, Rev’re’n’ Dan?”

“God bless you!” said the overwrought Rector, so suddenly, so unexpectedly, and with so much fervency that Ann-Abe was struck dumb.

“I hain’t *scart*,” said Abe in sulky self-defence, as he started for the bow. “But *you*’ll be’ fore we git through.”

Even as he spoke the snow began to fall, and by the time he had reached the bow it was falling so thick and

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fast that the bow was hidden from the stern and the stern from the bow—land, water, sky, every familiar object, completely smothered in the curtain of snow.

“An’ a four-reef gale,” said Abe quietly to his mate Hedges, and that was the only comment he made.

He took the tiller in silence, and no one else spoke a word while the sloop laboriously made her way down the mouth of the harbor, until Mrs. Thurber’s good nerves gave out, and she screamed:

“He can’t see no more’n ef he was blin’folded. We’ll fetch up on them air stones as sure as guns!”

“Shet up!” growled Abe, savage in his anxiety; and at that moment there was a shock felt all through the boat, a violent trembling, and a sudden stop.

“The breakwater!” yelled Ann-Abe, seizing the Justice by the shoulders. Without a word Abe took up the pole, ran to the bow, and in a few minutes had the boat heading up the creek.

“It was that gol durn ol’ schooner of Bill Youngs’s,” grumbled the Moneylender. “He ought ter lay her further up.”

“Pooh! Twa’n’t the breakwater after all,” said Ann-Abe. “Yer don’t mean ter tell me that the boat’s sprung a leak, Abe?” she demanded, as he returned to the tiller.

“Much harm done?” asked the Justice, chafing at the delay.

“No—naw,” answered the Captain. “Nawthin’ but a leetle paint scraped off’n her nose, I guess.”

“Then what are you doing?” roared the minister.

“I’m aputtin’ back; hain’t no sense of arunnin’ in the face o’ Providence. Ef that hed been the break-water now——”

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"You're a—you're a—you're a—!" stuttered the Reverend Dan in helpless rage.

"By heavens! if I could handle the tiller!" began the Justice.

"I kin handle it all right, I guess," mildly put in the Moneylender. "Step ashore, Abe, if yer don't care 'bout gwine 'long."

The shore being an unknown quantity at that moment, Abe declined; but gave up the tiller to the Moneylender, folded his arms, and grimly waited the inevitable consequences of running in the face of Providence. And, truth to tell, he was not the only one that anxiously awaited the result of Mr. Hedges's venture. A sound very like a chuckle escaped the Moneylender—he had not forgotten his old sea-dog days if they had. On went the boat, dipping and plunging, plunging and dipping, bobbing painfully before the southeast gale, but at last reaching the open waters of the bay in safety.

"I hain't agwine back fer nobody, Abe Thurber," declared Ann-Abe, recovering herself.

"Nobody ast yer ter," retorted Abe. Then, sweeping down upon the Moneylender and the tiller: "How in thunder do yer 'spec' me ter sail a boat with a million people on deck? Ef the hull durn lot o' yer don't git out'n my way I'll swamp her."

Everybody except Mr. Hedges went down into the cabin. He brushed the snow from his eyelashes, seated himself on the edge of the cabin, took a flask out of his pocket and, after helping himself, offered the flask to Abe.

"G'on!" growled Abe, not yet able to forget his grievances; but the Moneylender still held out the flask,

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and Abe finally took it, reflecting, as he lifted it to his lips, that he had never known Old Hime to treat any one before. But, then, there were lots of things that he did not know about "Old Hime."

"I must say," remarked Abe, consoled by his draught from the flask, "that you done better'n I done; but, of course, twa'n't nawthin' but luck."

"Of course," said the Moneylender with a chuckle, considerately pushing the cabin drop down upon the others.

"I wouldn't be in that air cabin fer no money," said Abe. "Square Brumley 'bout fills it by himself."

For the time being the old sea-dog of a Moneylender agreed with Abe, and sat holding himself down on the cabin top, his coat collar turned up and his slouch hat pulled down until only the tip of his nose was visible.

The snow whirled about and fell upon them; the water dashed and froze wherever it dashed; the boom rattled and the wind roared and yelled like a living thing in the rigging. And, oh, it was bitter cold! And, oh, how that poor little boat shivered and shook in the violent hands of the tempest!

"I guess I'll go down," said the Moneylender, sheepishly, when he found that he could stand it no longer.

"Humph!" Abe commented briefly, pulling off his mittens and blowing on his half frozen hands.

Snug and tiny as the cabin was, and brightly as the fire burned in the little stove, Mrs. Thurber and the two men had huddled as close as they could get to the fire, and they were all wrapped in patchwork quilts borrowed from Abe's bunks.

"That's a good idee," said the Moneylender, taking

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off his frozen coat and diving behind the bunks for more quilts.

"I thought it 'bout time yer give up," said Mrs. Thurber, giving him the best seat by the stove.

"Pretty tough weather," remarked the Rector moodily. The Moneylender chattered his teeth by way of reply.

"Worst *I* ever see," declared Mrs. Thurber. "Wind straight ag'in' us. Hain't done nawthink but tack every sence we started out. Hear the ol' breakers amooiin'?"

Nobody answered, and presently Ann-Abe attacked the Moneylender in this fashion:

"Come, we been awonderin' why you always favored that air Pirate?"

"Yes, Hedges," put in the Rector. "Why in thunder——?"

The unfortunate Moneylender bent further over the fire.

"I thought her heart was sot on him," he muttered feebly.

"Her heart! Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Mr. Brumley. "What's that got to do with it?"

"She must have two hearts," declared Mrs. Thurber. "One what's sot an' one what hain't sot."

"Just let us have her at the Hall a month and Mrs. Brumley will knock all that nonsense out of her head," said Mrs. Dolly's fond husband.

"Do yer happen ter know, Ann-Abe," began the Moneylender, still intent on thawing himself out, "why her pop was so sot on the match? *He* didn't care nothink 'bout her heart!"

"Mortgage on the house ter Shoreville," answered

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Ann-Abe promptly. "Nobody never tol' me; but Devine, he hol's it, and Cap'n Lem'd drink up every-think he's got—even his own darter."

The Moneylender sprang up with a muttered curse, but only to be thrown down again by a lurch of the boat into Ann-Abe's lap.

"Wall, I guess we'll be pretty well acquainted by the time we git out'n this air place," she remarked dryly; but Mr. Hedges was up in an instant, making for the soap box that served as a step. He pushed open the slide and looked out blinkingly.

"Wall, Abe, how is it?"

Abe looked over the Moneylender's head and pointed with mysterious significance through the now lightly falling snow, whereupon the Moneylender let down the drop, and, calling to the others that Abe had sighted something, clambered out on deck, with the rest of the party at his heels.

"See that air boat," said Abe, "no more'n fifty yards ahead of us?"

"Hey—what!" cried the Rector.

"'Tain't Devine's, be it?" exclaimed Mrs. Thurber, grabbing hold of the little Moneylender in her excitement and calling over his shoulder:

"Hy, be that you, yer Pirate King, you?"

The snow turned into a fierce hail, which pelted unnoticed down upon their bare heads, and through it they could discern in the bow of the other sloop, the figure of a man at the mast, his arms moving up and down with lightning rapidity.

"That's him! That's him!" wrathfully screamed the woman. "What's he adoin', Abe?"

"I can't see," answered Thurber, standing up with

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the tiller between his legs. "His jib's been blown ter tatters. Thar's a piece of it now atrailin' down by her nose. He's gone an' rigged up a piece of the balloon jib—didn't take him no less'n two hours ter fix it neither—an' that's what he's ah'istin' now. Beats my time how he ever got sech a big sail an' put it down so small."

"He hain't no common man; he's a divil," said Ann-Abe, with awed conviction.

Then with one accord they grew quiet, each and all paralyzed by a sense of impotence as they watched Devine—heedless, if not ignorant, of their nearness, of the hail's fierce efforts to blind him, of the helpless rocking of his all but helpless boat—working swiftly, yet with unerring care. They saw him pass quickly along the deck, balancing himself with his hand on the top of the cabin; stoop to fasten the jib sheet and take the tiller; and then the hail turned back into snow, but they noticed it only because it came as a veil between them and Devine. Dipping, plunging, riding—as unreal as a phantom—they saw the boat sail away, and further and further away, into the thickness of the storm. Then at last, when they could see the misty shape no longer, they turned and looked at each other, and for the first time became conscious of their own boat's perilous tossing, of the freezing brine and snow.

"How near are we?" hopelessly asked the Rector, at last breaking the silence.

"'Bout one mile out," answered Abe.

"Hey—what! From Shoreville?" incredulously exclaimed the minister. "Why didn't you follow him to the windward?"

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“Yes,” said Mr. Brumley. “One foot to the windward is worth ten on the wind.”

“That’s all you know about it,” retorted the exasperated Abe. “Yer made me come out when it twa’n’t fit ter raise a rag, but I’ll be gol durned ef I’ll let yer drown Ann-Abe any sooner’n I kin help it.”

Ann-Abe promptly descended into the cabin, from whence her voice was heard somewhat huskily calling:

“Come, now, don’t r’ile up Abe no more. Come set in the glory hole with me. We’ll get thar jes’ as quick.”

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CHAPTER XVIII

WAITING

It was eleven o'clock at Bleak Hill. More than four hours had passed since Captain Abe set out from the landing; almost that length of time since Devine's sail—if it had been Devine's—had disappeared as if from the face of the waters; and for over three hours the storm had been so thick that the life savers had abandoned the lookout to patrol the beach. All the morning long Sarah had been in Ann-Abe's cottage doing her duty, and more than her duty, to the Thurber children. The children had had a glorious time, never guessing for a moment what was going on behind the quiet, white face of their beloved Sadie; never dreaming that the moments, passing so quickly for them, moved with intolerable slowness for her; never knowing the agony of suspense that she was enduring, the tight rein that she was forced to keep on herself lest she give way to some madness; box their ears for the din of their playing; screech as her every nerve was screeching, and run out into the storm, where she might face the elements and, in fighting against them, forget her mental warfare.

The clock struck eleven.

“Do yer 'spose Mom'll be home in time fer dinner?”

“Sadie, dear, what makes yer go an' look out ev'ry winder? Hain't one enough?”

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“Yer can’t git married ter-day, can yer? What’s folks git married fer, anyway? An’ what makes ’em call Devine Strong the ‘Pirate King’? He hain’t no pirate. I’d like him ef he was. Wouldn’t you, Sadie?”

Sadie took up her shawl and threw it over her head and shoulders, saying in scarcely audible tones:

“Children, I’m going over to the lookout. Be good while I’m gone.”

They clamored to go with her, but she silently motioned back the two boys, caught up Rose and hugged her violently, then went out, closing the door.

“She hugged me awsul tight,” gasped little Rose. ‘Mos’ tight as I lub her. An’ my face is wet up zare. Big ladies don’t c’y, do zey?”

“Oh!” broke in young Abe with an unearthly yell. “Pop’s been gone sense seven o’clock. ’Spose he’s drowned!”

For all that could be seen from the windows of the lookout Sadie might as well have stayed in the cottage; but she walked up and down the little box of a place, up and down, back and forth, from side to side and window to window, feeling in the motion and in the solitude some little sense of relief to her strained nerves. At any moment she expected to hear Devine’s voice in the room below, or that the storm would lift sufficiently for her to see his boat laboring toward the landing.

Up and down, back and forth, like an animal shut in an icy cage, until another hour had passed and Sarah felt that she was going mad.

Thick and fast fell the snow—softly, lightly; fierce was the tick-tack played by the hail upon the windows; and myriad-fold the wind-slanted bead curtain of sleet

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that came between the windows and the world outside. Soft and thick, light and soft, fell the snow, but never lightly enough for Sarah to see the bay as anything but an opaque wall.

At twelve o'clock Billy Downs came thumping up the stairs to lift the trap-door and gaze in astonishment at sight of the girl in the lookout.

"I thought yer was with the younguns," said he. "Yer'll ketch yer death acold! Come on downstair; thar's a good leetle gal!"

"I'm not cold; I'm hot. Oh, Billy, is it never going to light up?"

"Yer got a fever. Yer eyes is blazin' an' yer cheeks is like fire. Come on now; come on!"

"It's hailing again. I can make out the cedars. Here, Billy, take the glass and see if you can't find a sail."

Billy, knowing the uselessness of trying to persuade Sadie against her will, took the glass and looked long and carefully in the direction of the bay.

"Can't make out a thing," he muttered, "though I been athinkin' every minute that it'd let up. We hain't got the wu'st of this here storm yit, mark my words."

"It's lighting up, Billy. I tell you, it's lighting up! Let me have the glass!"

"Sadie, Sadie, ca'm down now," urged Billy, the compassionate. "I kin see—I kin see the landin' an' a—an' a——"

He paused, and there was a long moment of suspense. Sarah laid her hand on his arm, and, standing on tip-toe, strained her own eyes in the same direction.

"It's somebody," said Billy dubiously. "Here,

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wait a minute. Plaguedest weather iver I see!" Then he shouted out excitedly, triumphantly:

"What'd I tell yer? Only this mornin' I says, says I, 'His sail'll split,' didn't I? Wall, ef he hain't hed a divil of a time agittin' here I— Hy, *Sadie! Sadie!* Whar'd she go? Fer heaven's sake, whar'd she go so quick? *Sadie!*"

The life saver ran pell mell down the stairs, through rigging and sleeping rooms and down the other stairs; but Sadie had run on ahead with incredible swiftness, and was already out of doors, making straight for the road to the ocean—all fear, fever, and frenzy—only two clear thoughts in her mind: the one, to escape Devine; the other, to find Ben.

"Ben!" she cried, when she reached the surf shore and turned westward. "Ben! Ben! Ben!" And, still crying "Ben!" she hurried on in the only direction from which he could come, although drifts of snow were piled against the bluff to block her way and the white flakes were again falling to hide Ben from her sight were he ever so near.

The surf was roaring as if possessed with a sullen fury at being driven further and further up the sands; and the wind, laughing and shouting like an army of drunken demons, took her merrily up in its arms and carried her onward.

"Ben!" She could only whisper now; but still she called.

An enormous breaker came thundering up, and of all its tongues that licked the sand one licked her feet; whereupon she climbed the bluff and with no conception of her folly entered blindly among the snow-clouded dunes. She had for the moment forgotten her firm

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belief that Ben was on his way to her, and now her one purpose was to hide from Devine. On, on she went, groping up and down the dunes, through the drifted hollows, until at last her unnatural strength deserted her, and she paused, exhausted. It was at that moment, when she was brushing the snow from her eyes and trying to collect her scattered thoughts, that a voice came calling out of the thickness of the snow:

“Sadie! Sadie! Sadie!”—Devine’s voice, with all its commanding wealth of tenderness and passion. And there, on the top of the dune above her, loomed the dark figure of the “Pirate King.” Sadie’s heart leaped at the sight and the sound, bounding in Devine’s direction, trying to tug her with it, bidding her say:

“Dearest! Dearest! Here is Sadie.”

But all unconscious the man went on, calling, calling as he went; and the girl, with her hand crushing back that rebel heart, wheeled about and fled in the opposite direction.

“Oh, my God, my God, I want to be good!” Sarah was praying with all her might; for she felt that sooner or later he would stumble upon her, and sooner or later his will would be matched against hers out there in the snow. Even as she thought this the voice came again, but muffled and afar off, and she kept steadily on, now following the sound of the sea, determined to go to the surf shore, and, failing to find Ben, hasten back to the Station.

Up another dune she climbed, and down into its hollow; then started up another, but suddenly dropped down on her knees, for there was that dark shape again, floating down the side of the dune out of the whiteness of the snow. Fearfully, quickly, on hands and knees,

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she dragged herself out of its path, yet in as much terror of not being seen as in terror of being seen, for again her heart was playing the traitor. The dark shape came on and floated by, within touch, yet without seeing.

When it had passed, Sadie, without waiting to see what became of it, bounded up and on toward the bluff, but had not gone far when a new fear took hold of her—that the snow would lift and betray her whereabouts to Devine. The hand which a moment before had seemed so full of white petals was almost empty now. Slowly and yet more slowly the swirling flakes came down. She could see the waves, when at last she stood upon the bluff, reach up for them, swallow them, and reach for more; but she could also see for some little distance along the curve of the narrow surf shore, and there was a man, his face lowered against the gale, coming from the west. And the man was Ben. With a sob of relief, Sadie glanced hastily over her shoulder, to find Devine racing across the dunes to her, beckoning as he ran; and she laughed aloud hysterically.

“Ben!” she called, running down the side of the bluff.
“Ben! Ben!”

Ben started and lifted his head; then he ran like a deer to meet her, although he had not yet seen Devine.

“Don’t let him catch me!” called out Sadie, half between laughing and crying; and then Ben saw Devine appear at the top of the bluff.

“It’s all right, Sadie,” called the Dutch lad reassuringly; “Ben’s here!”

And then, even as Ben hastened to her, a strange, an incomprehensible thing made him pause, hesitating. Devine, who had come within call of Sadie, simply spoke the girl’s name. That was all. Yet Sadie

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paused in her flight toward Ben, her arms drooping, her small, proud head bending low ; and, slowly, she turned about until she faced Devine. Then Ben saw Devine take both her hands in his and heard him say :

“ My leetle gal ! ”

At that Ben’s slow Dutch blood boiled up, and, going close to the pair, he said distinctly :

“ Can I help you, Sadie ? ”

Sadie looked helplessly up at Devine, it seemed, as if deferring the question to him. Devine slipped his arm around the girl, and for one moment she fluttered like a little captive bird ; then, without having so much as glanced at Ben, allowed herself to be led in the direction of Bleak Hill.

Bewildered, helpless, and miserable, Ben stood for a few moments looking after the two. Then with a whispered “ Good-bye, sweetheart, ” he swallowed the largest lump he had ever felt in his throat and faced toward Cedar Cove ; while Devine and Sarah, forgetful of the lad’s very existence, went on together.

“ Hurry, darlin’ ! The boat’s awaitin’ fer us, ” said Devine after a while ; then added, in answer to the question in Sadie’s uplifted eyes :

“ The Rev’re’n’ Dan couldn’t come. He said ter bring yer over. ”

The eyes dropped, satisfied with the answer to their question ; but Sadie’s weary feet stumbled uncertainly, and, without a word, Devine took her up in his arms and carried her like a little child.

Loud, loud boomed the breakers :

“ How dare you ! How dare you ! ” But he did not hear.

The outrunner of a wave came up and swirled about

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his feet, but he did not heed. The one thought and purpose in his mind was to get back to the landing and sail off with this girl—his bride and his wife—out into the storm, where further pursuit was impossible.

“Put yer arms around my neck,” he murmured; but instead she made a movement of uneasiness, as if she would get down, whereupon he set her on her feet at once, and they went on, walking hand in hand again.

“Can’t yer go a little faster?” he urged presently.

“Oh, we’ll never get there!” she panted, and a smile came into Devine’s eyes. Then they darkened, and he cursed himself for having let the words of this little child keep him away so long.

“We hain’t got so far to go now, leetle one,” he said tenderly. “See, here is the big bluff, an’ now only the turn into the clearin’, my darlin’—my darlin’!”

The suppressed passion in his tones made Sadie raise her eyes, frightened, yet thrilling with pleasure, and it happened that as they entered the road between the bluffs they two were gazing full at each other. Then Devine, losing his head in the depths of the girl’s wonderful eyes, made a passionate effort to kiss her, but she drew back, instinctively putting off the moment of complete surrender. Oh, well, he could afford to wait; he would have kisses in plenty soon!

“Only a leetle way further now,” he murmured, jubilant over the sight of Sadie’s blushing. Then he looked up into the clearing as if to measure the material distance of that “leetle way”; but his feet stopped of their own accord, a horrible oath burst from his lips, and his hand tightened itself spasmodically over the girl’s, for not six feet away, bearing down upon them with doubled, furious fists, was the Reverend Daniel Leggett.

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At the fierce oath and the scarcely less fierce hand-clasp, Sadie looked up, and in one single moment of blinding revelation, of never-to-be-forgotten shame, she saw them all—the Rector, the Justice, the Moneylender, Mrs. Thurber, and, what even then seemed strange, her own father. Scarcely knowing what she did, Sadie wrenched her hand free of Devine's and he let it go, but only to swing her up in his arms, grapple her to him as if with bands of steel, and rush forward, seemingly straight for the ranks of the enemy.

She heard the sound of many voices, and, above all the others, the voice of the Rector:

“Drop that girl! Thief! Liar! Traitor! Blaaaack-guard!”

Then she felt that some tremendous force had stopped Devine's progress—felt him tremble with the shock even as she was trembling in his arms.

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CHAPTER XIX

THE FINAL TEST

IT was over at last—the scene that she must remember with bitter humiliation until her dying day—the scene in which she had been a silent, passive actor, jerked around by the other actors—the scene she had viewed as a trembling, confused, and horrified spectator.

What were these fearful things they had said about Devine, proving that she had done well to fight against him though she fought so blindly? He was a fiend, a villain, a scoundrel, and the rightful husband of another woman—that was what they meant. Oh, could she ever be thankful enough for her escape?

And yet he had denied every accusation. When they had wrenched her out of his cruel grasp he had begged her not to believe one single word; even then, he had called her his “darlin’” and his “leettle gal.”

Oh, shame, shame! She could scarcely bear to think of it. And she had been going with him on the boat!

Oh, that she had him here in this room alone with her! Oh, that she could tell him how all her wild fondness had been turned to loathing and disgust! How she hated, hated, hated him!

But now he was in the Station, surrounded by a guard of men, who probably thought that they had need to keep him from her; and she was alone in her cottage,

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sent out of his sight by the big, kindly, fatherly Justice, who had said—what was it he had said?

“Your Aunt Dolly sends her love to you. Go to your cottage now; I am coming to talk to you soon.”

What should she say to him?—how account for her actions?

She stumbled across the room, which, in fallen net and broken shells and torn and scattered papers, still bore the marks of last night's madness.

“He's spoiled my room. He wasn't worth even that, and yet I was going to let him spoil my whole life—forever.”

She sank down into a chair beside the window, rocking back and forth; but almost at once her attention was called by the sound of voices outside, and she drew aside the curtain.

Her father and Mr. Hedges, who had gone down to the landing, were coming back on a run, and John Henry Rhodes was with them.

“She's likely ter come on any minute,” Rhodes was shouting.

“Where is it?” Sadie called as she pushed open the window. “John Henry! Mr. Hedges, where is it?”

“Two miles east of Injun P'int,” the Moneylender answered as he ran. “She hain't on yit, but likely ter come on any minute. They've telephoned fer the hull crew.”

He passed out of hearing with the other men, but Sadie continued to lean out of the open window, completely forgetting herself in her pity for that vessel “likely ter come on any minute.” The roar of the wind made her tremble; the deep, ominous voice of the surf filled her with terror. She had seen more than one

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good ship driven upon that treacherous sandbar for the breakers to slowly pound to pieces.

Would those slow men never get off? If it were not for meeting Devine Strong she would go over and help them, as at any other time.

She would go, anyway. No; there were the Station doors opening, the men dragging out the apparatus cart, Long-legged Pete hopping along on one foot while he pulled a rubber boot on the other, her father pushing the cart from behind, and—no—yes, Devine Strong pushing with the Keeper. It was good to see the wretch's going; his presence seemed to pollute the atmosphere. Sadie closed the window, noticing, as she did so, that the three Shoreville men were closing the cart-room doors from the interior of the Station.

"Mr. Brumley will be over soon," she thought. "Oh, what shall I say to him, what shall I say?"

She lighted the fire, and in nervous haste began to straighten up the room for the Justice, but she was still in the midst of the task and her arms were full of papers when the expected knock came. Sadie put the papers down on the table, and, grasping its ledge with one hand, whispered:

"Oh, how can I meet him?"

Slowly and reluctantly she moved toward the door, a little puzzled as to whether she had locked it or not. She knew in a moment, however, for the latch was lifted with a click, the door pushed open, first cautiously, then hurriedly, and Devine Strong entered.

Sadie backed to the table, again grasping its ledge. Where was her new-born fearlessness, her scorn and hatred of this man? He turned and locked the door, putting the key in his pocket.

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“Devine!” she whispered, as she might have whispered had he come back to her from the dead.

“Did yer git tired awaitin’ fer me?” he asked; and if he had suffered any nervous fear of his reception, he hid it very well. “I hurried as fast as I could. Come, my darlin’. Thar hain’t nobody ter bother us now. Come, my leetle gal!”

She opened her lips, but no word escaped them; and although an angry fire was kindling in her eyes, she seemed unable to turn them from Devine. His own eyes grew wooing and glowing as he approached the girl, his arms outstretched in passionate supplication. Sarah trembled through her whole slender body; so that he, as well as she, knew that she was afraid to let him touch her. Nevertheless she raised her arm, and, with a gesture so stern as to make him pause, hesitating, she pointed to the door.

“Go!”

Her voice was so low, so tremulous, however, that he took courage, and, raising his hand, stroked her uplifted arm.

“You hain’t mad at me?” he murmured, his own voice up to the tricks that had so nearly undone her; but as he spoke, and as he touched the girl, an inscrutable look passed over her face, a weight seemed to fall from her shoulders. She relaxed her tight, painful hold upon herself; proudly she lifted that small, proud head, and, casting off Devine’s hand with a motion eloquent of loathing and disgust, she repeated:

“Go!”

He touched her again, compellingly, and cried out in simple anguish:

“Oh, Sadie, you hain’t mad at me!”

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“Go!”

One single small word, spoken for the third time, but spoken by a fearless, scornful, awful, passionless, immovable woman—so he thought; yet, failing to completely comprehend, muttered hoarsely:

“Oh, Sadie, you hain’t really mad at me!”

For answer Sadie started for the door, but only to remember that it was locked. Then all her fearlessness deserted her; with a cry of fright she bounded to the window, pushed it open, and tried to spring out, calling:

“Reverend Dan! Reverend Dan!”

She heard Devine’s wild laugh behind her, felt herself seized and dragged back into the room.

“Yer don’t need ter call,” said he, laughing cruelly as he closed the window with his free hand. “I locked ’em all in the lookout.”

“You lie!” said she, trembling violently, as she tried to struggle out of his embrace.

“What! Not one arm? Both arms, then. Here, with yer face so close. How’s that? Now ye’r mine—all mine!”

She struck him in the face with all the force of her clenched fist. He smiled and kissed her on the cheek, saying:

“A kiss for a blow, leetle gal.”

She shuddered at the touch of his lips, and drew her own painfully in under her teeth that they at least might be saved from pollution. She closed eyes to shut out the sight of his gloating face. He kissed and kissed and kissed, raving over the feast. Verily, verily, if in longing for this man’s caresses she had sinned, in actual deed she was reaping her reward. Presently,

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through all her shame, abhorrence, and humiliation, came the fear that she could not endure this much longer without fainting.

What should she do? The thought of the gun—Billy's gun standing in the corner—flashed over Sadie, and in the God-given strength of the moment she broke free. Before he knew what she was about—almost before he realized that he no longer held her—Devine was looking at the erect figure of the girl down the cold length of the barrel of a gun. Even then he laughed:

“Yer wouldn't shoot me?”

“No—not yet,” answered Sadie significantly, and paused as if hesitating for words. Devine braced himself for a tirade, such as other women had given him and such as she herself had longed to give him; then he thought that perhaps this original woman would give him only a few words of scorn and defiance; above all, insisting that she had never intended to go off on his boat.

When she spoke at last, she spoke slowly and distinctly:

“There is pen and ink and paper in the drawer of that little stand. Get them out. Get them out!”

He started to obey in silent astonishment, but turned about as he heard a slight movement from Sadie, only to find, however, that she was half kneeling in a chair, using the back as a support for the gun.

“You need not be afraid,” said she quietly. “If I shoot you it will not be behind your back. Now, write. You had better sit down—there is a chair.”

Devine wished to heaven that she would raise her voice.

“The date,” she began. “January 14, 18—. Now——”

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“‘I hereby declare in the presence of Sarah Mapes Jarvis——’”

Devine dashed it off, though scowling as he did so; but when he heard what came next he laid down the pen with an oath:

“‘That the boy known as Devine Ross—’ Go on, please. You need not swear. ‘That the boy known as Devine Ross is—my—son.’”

The man sprang up, and when Sadie had calmly said:

“I am not your wife that you should use such language in my presence,” sat down again.

“Have you got that?” she asked after a moment. “Go on, then:

“‘And the woman known as ‘Liza Ross——’”

Devine was writing like fury, above every other wish in his heart the wish that Sadie’s voice was not so low and even:

“‘Is—(comma)—in the sight of God—and—by all that is just—and right—and honorable—(comma)—my wife.’”

Devine turned around in his chair and looked up at the face above the muzzle of the gun.

“Sadie! When I love *you*—nobody but you!”

“Have you written the last two words?” she asked, wearily. “Then sign your full name—‘Devine Strong.’ I think I have done what I could,” she added, as if speaking to herself. “Have you signed it? Then put that book on top of the paper, and now——”

She stood up with the gun still at her shoulder:

“Go!”

He himself was too ignoble and base and self-centred to understand that Sadie had taken such pains for ‘Liza’s sake—in fact, he would not have believed it.

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“That’s a — — way ter get back at a feller,” he muttered, as he crossed to the door under cover of the weapon.

“The key is in your pocket.”

Devine wheeled about and faced the girl, looking straight into her hard, vigilant eyes as passionately as if she did not stand ready to kill him.

“Sadie, I know I’m as bad as they make ’em. I don’t deny nothink; but, darlin’, I knew that you could make me over. Yer kin make me over yit. I shall go ter the dogs, an’ yer know it; but if yer married me—if *you* married me—Sadie, *Sadie!* I love yer! I love yer!”

“Take the key out of your pocket,” said the low, weary voice of the girl. “How long do you think my patience will hold?”

But she was thinking:

“How much longer can I hold the dead weight of this gun?”

As through a mist she saw Devine take the key from his pocket, put it in the lock, then face about, without having turned the key.

“My God, must I kill the man!” she cried out sharply, and that meant:

“My God! shall I be able to hold the gun until he goes?” Devine turned upon her wrathfully, again in defiance of the pointed weapon.

“Ye’r a pretty gal, you are! Ter go an’ send fer me, an’ then ter throw me down in the mud an’ walk all over me. Shoot! Shoot! Why in hell don’t yer shoot? Because yer know I’d ruther die by Sadie’s hand ’n go on alivin’ without her!”

“Devine, I did not send for you,” said Sadie, whis-

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pering because unable to raise her voice above a whisper. "I did not do you that wrong, and you must believe me."

"But yer was agoin' on the boat with me!" he yelled, triumphantly.

Sadie started up and the weapon shook on her arm.

"Turn that key," she cried, "or I will kill you!"

Something seemed to burst inside of her head, blood to swim before her eyes; she heard Devine's laugh echo and reëcho through the room; she felt the gun shaking like the blade of the wind-blown dead grass out there upon the dunes. In vain she tried to find the trigger, in vain to hold the weapon. The gun slipped silently away. She tried to cry out, but could not utter a sound; she tried to push Devine's outstretched arms from her—to push the fluttering, fluttering darkness away; but the darkness closed in about her, even as the arms of Devine.

A Liar's Tongue

CHAPTER XX

A LIAR'S TONGUE

THE first thing that Devine did after he was fully assured that Sadie had lost consciousness was to hide the weapon; the next, to seize the paper, and, thrusting it in his breast pocket, go from window to window, lift a corner of each curtain, and peek out of doors. The dreary, desolate beach seemed to be given up to the wind and the snow. There was no movement around Mrs. Thurber's cottage; none around the Station—no sign that the men had found a way down from the lookout; but that this lucky state of affairs would last for any length of time Devine dared not presume. Lifting the girl from the chair in which he had carefully placed her, he walked over to the door, and there was brought to a standstill by a sound like the fall of a footstep on the porch. He placed his hand over Sadie's mouth, though it seemed unnecessary when she lay as still as one dead, and he held his own breath while he listened for a repetition of the sound.

“'Twa'n't nothink but the sand ablowin' against the door,” he told himself after a moment, and turned the key in the lock.

The sound—like that of a foot scraping over the floor of the porch—came again. Oh, well, it might be one of the Thurber children. It made no difference who or what it was. He was determined to get down to the

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landing and off in the boat with Sadie. How could she lie so still when his heart was throbbing so loudly against her own? He lifted the latch, the door swung ajar ever so slightly, and again the sound came from the porch. A spasm crossed Devine's face; he clasped Sadie with both arms close against his breast; then opened the door with a shove of his foot.

For the space of a moment there was silence, while Devine Strong and Ben Benstra stood looking each other in the face. Then said Devine:

“Take them arms down. What do yer want with me an' my wife?”

Ben's face, already a wrathful white, turned gray, and there came a look around his mouth and in his eyes that Ben's mouth and eyes had never known before. The lad took one hand from the side of the door, and, before Devine could take advantage of the movement by dodging past, the fingers of that hand had closed around his throat. Devine's arms tightened their hold on Sadie; he breathed hard, and his wonderful eyes continued to challenge Ben's.

“I can lick you,” said the large, stalwart young Dutchman, quietly, “and you know it. And if you don't want to put her down and fight like a man I can choke you to death. Take your choice.”

Ben was longing to look at Sadie; his heart was crying:

“Are you dead, my love—are you dead?” He did not look at her, however, but with his eyes still on Devine, whose own eyes had begun to bulge, and whose face was growing purple, he turned him slowly about and backed him against the jamb of the door.

A moment passed. Ben thought that his little mother

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would grieve if he committed murder. Who can say what Devine thought? Then a sound like a distorted mimicry of the old dare-devil laugh came from Devine's lips. Ben loosened his hold slightly and looked.

"Have you got enough?"

Devine gasped; then spoke with difficulty:

"Take—take her—an' my blessin' go with yer."

He laughed again, and suddenly and instantly let go of Sadie. Ben's free arm shot under the girl's body just in time to save her from falling between him and Devine, and at the same moment, jerking Devine about, Ben flung him off as he might have flung a dead dog. Devine laughed as he fell from the porch down into the snow.

"My time's acomin', Ben Benstra; yer jest wait an' see."

And it was; but Ben did not hear. He had passed both arms around Sadie and was pleading over her still, white face.

"Not dead—not dead, my love!"

"No-no!" said Devine, as he got up and staggered away, "not dead, — it! An' white as snow!"

"Got licked, didn't yer?" yelled a voice in wild delight; and Devine looked up, to see Ann-Abe Thurber dancing on the porch of the adjacent cottage, with her broom for a partner.

"Got licked, didn't yer?" echoed the two sturdy little Thurber boys from the doorway.

Devine looked down again, and with a low curse staggered on.

"He's drunk!" piped the children.

"No-no," said Ann-Abe, dryly, "but he'd like ter drown his sorrer. Devine Strong," she yelled after the

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man, "of all the hang-doggedest lookin' critters I ever see, ye'r the beat! Whar yer gwine now that that air Dutch boy's been an' settled yer hash?"

"Yes-yes, whar yer agoin'?" cried the children, but immediately fled from the doorway when they saw Devine turn and stride over to the porch.

"Agoin'!" said he with a look that would have cowed any woman but Ann-Abe. "I'm agoin' back ter the shore, whar thar's some *decent* folks."

"*Decent* folks!" said Ann-Abe, putting her hand over her mouth. "Wall, wall, I 'spose our sassiety hain't good 'nough fer the Pirate King, but I hope yer hain't gwine in the Moneylender's boat. Lorgens-ter-massey! he'll up an' die ef yer do. Ye'r a dirty thief, anyway," went on Ann-Abe, warming to her topic, "an' thar hain't no person on the hull of Long Island what hain't glad that yer got left on Sadie. Yes, siree! An' yer kin put that in yer pipe an' smoke it!"

"I hain't agittin' left," said Devine, with an angry, cowardly laugh. "That air Dutch kid kin marry her ef he wants ter. I didn't haf ter; an' yer kin tell him with my compliments that he's awelcome ter *my leavin's!*"

Ann-Abe, whose eyes had been growing wider and wider, and whose hands had been itching over the broomstick, suddenly lifted her arms and brought the broom with a whack down on Devine's head. The children, peeping out of the door, laughed shrilly, and Mrs. Thurber screamed:

"Git out o' my sight! The devil's a king ter yer!"

She shook her broom after Devine, while tears of rage ran down her cheeks; and, when the snow had enveloped his retreating figure, she said to herself:

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“Gosh, ef he hain't a liar fer fair! I'm gwine right over an' tell Sade.”

The women of Vonstradam would scorn to faint. Ben Benstra knew of but one girl that had ever been an exception to the rule, and she had long ago been brought to see the folly of putting on airs by a bucket of cold water, applied externally, in one dose, by a loving and judicious father.

When Mrs. Thurber bounced into the cottage, Ben, without looking up from where he knelt beside Sadie's chair with his throbbing head against her faintly beating heart, exclaimed with sudden fierceness:

“You shan't do it!”

“Lorgens-ter-massey!” ejaculated Ann-Abe, standing still in surprise for a moment, then hastening to Sadie. “What's aeatin' yer? One clean crazy an' t'other—” She passed her rough but kindly hand over Sadie's brow.

“Not far from dead,” dully asserted Ben, completing the sentence.

“I swan ef you hain't a fool! She's jes' keeled over. Git up! an' take her in thar an' put her on the bed. Why didn't yer onfasten her collar?”

Ben's face flushed. Venture to disturb Sadie's dress? Not he.

“Thar! Jes' let her flop right down. I'll fix her in a jiffy. Han' me that air bottle of ammonie an' g'long. This hain't no place fer men folks, nohow.”

Ben, laughing softly out of the relief in his heart, returned to the kitchen, where he began to walk up and down on tip-toe, pausing now and then to strain his ears for the sound of the dear one's voice to come in answer to Mrs. Thurber's softened, coaxing tones. At last,

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when he was about for the tenth time to give up all hope, Mrs. Thurber called out triumphantly:

“She’s come ’round.”

Ben staggered and clutched at the blue and white portières; then laughed at his own weakness and gave thanks for Sadie’s returning strength, all in one breath. He could hear the girl’s voice speaking slowly and painfully, although he could not understand what she said.

“Oh, land o’ love!” cried Mrs. Thurber, after a moment. “She says that air rapscallian went an’ shet the Rev’re’n’ Dan an’ them up in the lookout.”

“I’ll let ’em out,” called Ben reassuringly, as he ran to the door, and Mrs. Thurber shouted in return:

“She says, ‘God bless yer, Ben!’”

“‘God bless you, Ben,’” softly repeated the lad, as he ran across the sands to the Station, and if he had offered up his life for Sadie he would have thought that single phrase sufficient reward. The face he turned up to the lookout seemed like the sun shining through the snow to the man who saw it from the window.

“God bless you, Ben!” fervently exclaimed Justice Brumley.

“Hey—what!” cried the minister, looking up with a very red face from where he knelt on the trap-door trying to persuade the way of a broken-bladed jack-knife through the wood. “You don’t mean to say that somebody’s coming at last?”

“Tain’t nobody but that air pesky Devine Strong,” growled the Moneylender, perched on the one hard-bottomed, broken-backed chair, determined that he was not going to be fooled into expecting release.

“It’s Ben Benstra, I tell you,” said Mr. Brumley.

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"Hurrah!" shouted the Rector, springing up to slap Mr. Brumley upon the back. "Old man, if this had lasted another minute, we'd be fighting like wildcats."

"Speak for yourself," said the Justice, smilingly.

"I'd like ter know what yer been adoin' ef yer hain't been afittin'," declared the Moneylender, resentfully. "Ef I don't bury Devine Strong in my icehouse for the rest o' the winter I ought ter be strung up myself."

"Be sure you give him a broken-back chair for cold comfort," said the Rector, with a twinkle in his eye. "There's Ben now. Hello! hello! hello!"

"Hello!" returned Ben's voice, and they heard his firm, quick footsteps crossing rigging room and sleeping room, then coming up the lookout stairs. "Hello yourself!"

The footsteps stopped; silence a moment; then Ben's whole-souled laugh:

"How do you 'spect to get out as long as you stand on this door?"

The three men laughed shamefacedly as they crowded off the trap. The trap flew up, together with Ben's arm, and then his cheerily smiling face appeared.

"Ahoy there!" said the lad, for the life of him not able to resist a joke. "Fine weather for observation, ain't it?"

"An excellent place for the true test of Christian brotherhood," remarked the Justice, giving a sly thrust at the Reverend Dan.

"Hey—what! Hey—what!" exclaimed the minister, laughing good-naturedly.

A few moments later they were all in the messroom, and three pair of cold, stiff hands were spread out over the stove.

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“What did you do to Devine Strong to make him slink off like that?” asked Mr. Brumley. “We couldn’t see just what happened.”

“Oh, don’t talk about it,” said Ben, with a gesture of abhorrence. “I almost choked him to death.”

“Did yer see Ann-Abe try ter crack his skull with her broom?” asked the Moneylender, chuckling and chattering as he bent his pinched blue face over the stove. “We was jes’ agoin’ ter smash a winder an’ slide down the roof when we see you below. Gov’ment prop’ty, tew, them winders.”

“Hey—what! Hey—what!” exclaimed the Reverend Dan, gripping hold of Ben’s hand. “You’re good stuff, my boy!”

And Ben had not stopped blushing over being called “good stuff” before the Justice gravely held out his hand.

“If the Reverend Dan’s through,” said Mr. Brumley.

“An’ thar’s mine, tew,” put in the Moneylender. “An’ this is my advice ter yer. Sail in right away now an’ git her. Strike while the iron’s hot. Won’t nobody say nothink ’bout yer abein’ a Dutchman now.”

Ben laughed, and in laughing forgot his embarrassment.

“You ought to be proud of being a Dutchman,” said Mr. Brumley.

“That’s what I am!” rejoined Ben.

“Oh, come along, Brumley,” interposed the Rector. “We’ve wasted enough time. I’m going to hunt up that blackguard.”

He laid his hand on the latch of the office door as he spoke, but instantly withdrew it with an exclamation of surprise, for some one was lifting the latch from the

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other side, and, as the Rector drew back, the door was flung open, and Sarah Jarvis burst into the room with a gun carried across her arms.

"Oh, where is he?" she cried, running into the middle of the room and peering sharply around. "Are you going after him? Oh, bring him back to me—the vile, vile coward! No one else shall kill him. Oh, if you knew what he said—if you knew what he said!"

"My dear, my dear," said Mr. Brumley, soothingly. "Give me the gun. Never mind what he said. Who will believe him?"

Sadie looked at Mr. Brumley in a bewildered way, as if just aroused from a heavy sleep. Then Ben stepped forward, and, without a word, lifted the gun out of the girl's arms and laid it on the table. Sadie looked from the gun to Ben and from Ben to the gun in a wondering, childish way, then covered her face with her hands and began to cry softly. Ben winced, and the Reverend Dan started as if some one had lashed him across the face. Then, going quickly to her side, the Rector took the girl in his arms as he had often taken her in the old days at the Rectory.

"My baby, my darling, my little girl!" the others heard him murmur as he patted the head that lay on his shoulder. "If that scoundrel has said anything against you he shall pay for it to the utmost."

"If you knew what he said—if you knew what he said!" sobbed the girl.

The older men were too wise to ask the question that Ben now blurted out so furiously:

"What did he say?"

"I—I can't repeat it," gasped Sadie. "Ask Mrs. Thurber."

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The minister grated his teeth audibly; the Moneylender gave a low, animal-like growl; Mr. Brumley and Ben looked helplessly at the girl's bowed head. Then of a sudden Sadie broke away from the Rector, and, facing them all with head uplifted and splendid eyes flashing through her tears, she cried:

"If you have a particle of feeling for me, go find Devine Strong and tell him that if he doesn't take back that miserable slander I will kill him as sure as I'm above the ground. Yes," she insisted, raising her slender arm, "I swear to kill him!"

There was a little stir of uneasiness among the men. Ben caught the uplifted arm and brought it down to his breast, while the Rector said gravely:

"'Whosoever thinketh murder—' my dear."

"Murder!" repeated Sadie, wrenching her hand from Ben. "Is it murder to kill a mad dog?"

"Wall, I'll be durned!" mumbled the Moneylender, guilty of a sly feeling of admiration.

"Sadie, don't talk like that," urged Ben gently. "I'll guarantee that he'll take back every word."

Sadie looked quickly up into Ben's eyes, and a lovely change came over her face.

"Dear old Ben!" she murmured, laying her hand in his.

Mr. Brumley buttoned up his overcoat, saying:

"The first thing to do is to find him. Come on, Reverend Dan. He went east."

"Didn't go off on my boat, anyhow," said the Moneylender. "But I guess I might's wall go 'long."

"Then who's going to stay with Sadie?" demanded the Rector. "You, Ben?"

Ben hesitated, and Sadie exclaimed:

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"No, no! Ben must go back to the Cove."

"I'm afraid I got to," said Ben.

"We'll take you over to Mrs. Thurber's," suggested Mr. Brumley.

"Oh, no," rejoined Sadie, alarmed at the prospect of being under the fire of Ann-Abe's tongue again. "I'd rather stay alone."

"No-no, yer don't," declared the Moneylender. "I'll stay with yer. I hain't very good company, but I guess yer kin stand it."

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CHAPTER XXI

THE MONEYLENDER TAKES A CAT-NAP

THE Reverend Dan and Mr. Brumley had started out on their search; the Moneylender was in the mess-room drinking some of the coffee that Sadie had insisted on preparing for her defenders; and Sadie and Ben were standing in the open door of the cart room, bidding each other good-bye.

“Good-bye, Ben,” said Sadie, looking beyond his figure out into the whirling snow.

“Good-bye, Sadie,” said Ben, taking her hand and holding it fast.

“Good-bye,” repeated Sadie, and vainly struggled for some words of explanation and gratitude.

“I—I couldn’t help it,” she said at last; and Ben understood that she was thinking of the scene on the surf shore with him and Devine.

“Oh, what made you let me go with him?” said Sadie, with such inconsistency as might have bewildered a wiser man; but Ben answered promptly:

“It’d serve me right if you never spoke to me again.”

Sadie laughed a sad, tender little laugh, and, with a quick, unexpected movement, raised Ben’s hand to her lips.

“Oh, no-no!” cried Ben, snatching his big hand away and flushing at thought of his own unworthiness.

“Don’t you love me, Ben?” asked Sadie, with a look

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of pained inquiry; whereupon Ben held the hand up before his face and regarded it half humorously, half seriously, before he answered her by kissing the spot that she had kissed.

“You’ve spoiled it for work, Sadie,” said he with a happy laugh. “My right hand, too. I’ll starve to death now. Why couldn’t you have kissed something I could carry in a locket around my neck?”

Sadie laughed outright and it did Ben good to hear her.

“It’s time you went back to Cedar Cove,” said she, with a touch of sly mischief.

“I’d never go if I didn’t have to. Now you go back to the Moneylender, and mind,” he charged her impressively, “don’t let yourself be alone again for one moment.”

Sarah shrank back against the door, throwing a look over her shoulder into the deep shadows of the cart room.

“Bennie, I can’t talk about it,” she began hurriedly, “but I want to know how you happened to come just at the minute—at the minute when I needed you most.”

“Well, Sadie,” said Ben, looking puzzled and somewhat embarrassed. “do you b’lieve in what they call—let me see, what do they call it——?”

“Mental telegraphy?” suggested Sadie.

“Yes-yes, that’s it. Now, never mind. I knew you wanted me, and I suppose I knew it because I love you so, little—little sister.”

“God bless you, Ben,” whispered Sadie. Ben gulped hard; then he smiled his beautiful smile, and, stooping, kissed Sadie on the forehead.

The Moneylender, starting up from what he would

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have termed a "cat-nap" in his warm seat beside the messroom stove, was surprised to see the tender, brooding smile on Sadie's lips and in her eyes when she returned to him.

"Women-folks git over things quick," he reflected, a little disappointedly; but had no sooner reflected in this wise than Sadie's eyes filled with sudden tears, and he concluded that "'twa'n't no use fer an' ol' codger like him ter try ter make out women-folks nohow."

"You'll find the lounge in the office very comfortable," gently suggested the girl, noting how tired and worn the old man looked. The Moneylender coughed, fussed, and fidgeted in his chair, while his right hand fumbled and fidgeted in an inner pocket of his coat.

"Jinnie, Jinnie," he began at length, without looking up, and his voice a little husky. "Sadie, I mean—you remember Jinnie, don't yer?"

Sadie had not spoken ten words to the Moneylender since his daughter's death, and he had never given her any hint of his interest in herself. Unconsciously she had grown to look upon him as the crooked "Old Hime" of Shoreville, so now she was taken by surprise; yet, nevertheless, her ready sympathy went out to him, and she leaned over his chair as she answered:

"Indeed I do remember Jennie."

"My darter; yes-yes—" The hand that had been fussing in the coat pocket drew out a thick, folded paper and held it, shaking. "Her as was ter be the comfort o' my ol' age." The trembling, hard old hand suddenly thrust the paper into Sadie's, and the old man muttered pettishly:

"Thar! Git it out'n my sight. It's a present from Jinnie." Then he added, with a break in his voice:

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“Yer was both sech sweet leetle gals.”

A wave of remorse and shame swept over Sadie. So he had remembered all that time! With an impulse of great tenderness she laid her hand on the old father's head. He glanced up quickly, shyly, and she could see that there were tears in his eyes.

“I guess I'll go lie down now,” he muttered, rising stiffly from his chair. Without a word Sadie put her hand on his arm and led him into the office and over to the lounge, where he immediately lay down and turned his face to the wall. Going softly into the Keeper's room, she got a quilt, with which she covered the Moneylender, tucking it around him as no one had ever tucked a quilt around him since he slept in a trundle bed. She thought that he was already asleep, but as she bent over him he reached around for her hand, grasped it, and mumbled:

“Yer'll take it, won't yer, fer—fer Jinnie's sake?”

“Yes,” said Sadie softly, not knowing what she promised, but wishing only to comfort him, “for Jennie's sake.”

But when she examined the paper a little later and found that by it the mortgage on Lemuel Jarvis's place in Shoreville had been transferred to Sarah Mapes Jarvis, Sarah opened her lips in involuntary protest. The Moneylender was breathing hard, however, and with a strange mixture of emotions Sadie put the paper carefully in the desk, postponing the protest till the Moneylender should awaken.

Presently she forgot all about the paper and Jennie, and began to wish that she had been left with some one not so much in need of sleep. She wandered about from window to window of the Station; went again and again

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to the office and the cart-room doors to see if Devine were not lurking somewhere near; and finally became so nervous and overwrought that she felt that she could not remain in the gloomy Station with that feeble, helpless old man a moment longer.

“Devine has gone to my father with that dreadful lie, and maybe he will believe it,” she told herself. “I must see him first. I must! I must!”

The Moneylender was sleeping the daytime sleep of one who is in the habit of “prowling around nights,” and he was dreaming of a Christmas tree around which two little girls danced delightedly. Sadie pinned her shawl over her shoulders, tied a white scarf over her head, and again listened to the breathing of the Moneylender—poor, tired old man, humbugging the whole world with the belief that he had not one soft spot in his whole make-up! She took up the gun—how dare she go out, where at any moment she might meet Devine, without this protection? Then she stole out softly, so as not to awaken the Moneylender.

Fifteen minutes later the Reverend Dan and Mr. Brumley, driven back by the fury of the storm, entered the Station by the office door, and at the sound of their stamping feet the Moneylender sat up confusedly.

“I guess I must hev been asleep,” he muttered, scratching his head.

“Where’s Sadie?” asked the Rector.

The old man lay down again and said, half-way between waking and sleeping:

“She’s atrimmin’ the Christmas tree.”

Shoot!

CHAPTER XXII

SHOOT!

It had been predicted of Devine by those who knew him best and judged him most charitably that some day he would go violently insane; and deep down in the miserable man's heart there had always lurked a fear of this catastrophe, which this very day was to fall upon him. He had started eastward with the same intention in his mind that Sadie had suspected—of going to her father with the shameful lie that he had told Ann-Abe; but even before Sadie left the Moneylender to his cat-nap, the curse had fallen on Devine, and he was wandering over the dunes—wandering in mind and body—raging and raving—demented and delirious—a veritable madman.

Hard blew the wind; loud roared the sea; bitter, bitter was the cold; the soft, pure, white snow fell thick and fast.

“I'm shut in—Sadie! Sadie! How could yer do it? The walls be white, but they move—yes-yes, they move. I'll git out yit. What's these here blamed leetle bugs astingin' my face? Ben ran and I ran—'comma.' She laid so still in my arms. Sadie, wake up! wake up! Be this yer shroud that's wrapped aroun' my face? The Rev'ren' Dan's agoin' ter marry us. He don't like the job, but he kin go ter—'comma.'”

“Sadie! Sadie! whar be yer? I can't find yer. Slap that air Dutchman in the face. A kiss fer a blow,

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leettle gal. That's in the Bible. How soft yer cheek is, an' gosh! what long lashes! Sadie, don't draw yer lips in—I love you, nobody but you! But I'll sign the paper; bring it along. Shoot! Shoot! Why in hell don't yer shoot? Ef yer shoot, yer'll hang fer it, an' I'll wait the other side o' the gallers fer yer—'comma.' Why don't yer shoot?"

Oh, snow, fall not so thick and fast! Wind and sea, why do you roar at him? He is mad.

"I have killed her. I choked her ter death. Sadie, do yer feel them fingers aroun' yer pretty throat? The Dutchman's adiggin' her grave through twenty-five feet o' snow out on the hills. It's right alongside of Emmy Jané's. Emmy Jane allers was a good wife ter me. I'll marry yer, 'Liza, when she dies. They thought they'd git rid o' me when they sent me east with the crew. Long-legged Pete said he'd make a meal o' my liver—ha, ha! She knocked him down onct with the gun. Shoot! Shoot! Why in hell don't yer shoot!"

"Thar's a padlock on this here door. Now, Rev'-ren' Dan, what'll yer do? Jes' wait till I see Zeph ag'in! Zeph kin go hang. I want Sadie—Sadie!"

He called the name loudly; he yelled it; he shrieked it; he murmured and he whispered "Sadie!"

"Sadie, yer beautiful long hair's turned white. It's awrapped all aroun' me. It's down ter my feet, an' I'm astumblin' over it; but yer lips be cold—so cold they make me shiver. What made yer run out on the hills? Didn't yer know I was acomin'? The mortgage?—yes-yes; but all's 'fair in love an' war,' Ol' Hime says. I can't find yer, an' the Rev'-ren' Dan was jes' alandin'.

Shoot!

I'll never find yer—why, I'm lost—out here on the hills! I can't find the channel. They've pulled up the stakes. The water foams like a mad dog an' runs both ways, an' I hain't got no compass aboard. Sadie—Sadie! Stop kissin' that Dutchman. I'm lost—lost!"

Yes, lost, Devine Strong! Rave and roam, rave and roam; there is a certain brown dune that you must reach sooner or later.

"Thar be fifteen million white han's abeckonin' ter me. What do they want me ter come ter that big brown hill fer? 'I hereby declar'—I won't go! The surf's apoundin' an' aroarin'—' in the presence, "comma" '—I'll go down thar an' see ef the wreck's on."

Yes, go, Devine—go anywhere save in the direction of that big brown dune!

"I'm lost—lost! Sadie must hear me acallin', an' she won't come out 'cause the Dutchman's ahol'in' her. Why, good Lord! thar's that air big brown hill ag'in with a billion white fingers abeckonin'. What do yer want with me? Shoot! Shoot! Why in hell don't yer shoot?"

That is wise; turn around and run away. Stumble up and down other dunes; but, sooner or later, you will come again to that one large brown dune which stands out so clear and distinct from the midst of the snow.

"It's acomin' fer me! What is it? 'I hereby declar'—my wife—my son—"comma." 'It's acomin'! Come on! Come on! Yer can't ketch me!"

He closed his eyes and ran, shrieking and cursing all the while.

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Run, run! But sooner or later your eyes will open, and sooner or later you will *see*!

“My God! Nearer!” whispered the wretch. Then he stood still and addressed the terrible brown dune:

“Lemme go back ter Bleak Hill an’ I’ll go an’ tell Ann-Abe ter sweep my tongue out with her broomstick. It was a lie. Ef Ben Benstra had said it I’d shoot him. Shoot! Shoot! Why in hell don’t yer shoot? I’m awillin’ ter die fer it. I’ll burn in hell fer it; but lemme take it back! Lemme go back ter Bleak Hill!”

No! Did the dune say “No”?

“Curses on yer! I won’t come near yer! Lemme go back ter Sadie—she’s whiter’n all yer white fingers. She kept Devine Strong off a year—‘comma’—she never let him touch her han’ till the sail split an’ I thought I was agoin’ under. Kiss me—‘comma’—kiss me, Sadie! Raise yer voice, my darlin’; it skeers me so low—‘my wife.’ Yer won’t let me go back, yer big, brown hill, yer? Wall, I won’t come near yer! Yer kin beckon all yer want ter.”

Yes, beckon, beckon! and in time he will come, though now he is stumbling and reeling and raving and roaming again.

“Thar’s the same brown hill!” cried the miserable wretch. “It’s apullin’ an’ ayankin’ me—it’s Sadie’s heart, so I’ll go; I might jes’ ’s wall go. Here I am. Now, what do yer want? The paper? Why didn’t yer say so before? Here it is—‘comma.’” He tore open his coat, pulled forth the paper, and shook it at the brown dune.

“What! Hain’t that enough? I’m sorry. Yes-yes, it was a lie. ’Liza, here’s yer certif’cate. I’ll carry

Shoot!

the milk pail fer yer. Yer mother's acryin'. I'm here. Now, what do yer want?"

Silence! The breakers seemed to stop their mooring, the wind its loud breathing. The snow lifted sufficiently to show to Devine a figure on the side of the big brown dune—a figure with a monstrous long arm, surrounded by madly swirling drapery, and the cloud over Devine's brain lifted sufficiently for him to at last see himself as he was—his life as it had been.

"Oh, good God!" he cried in mortal agony. "Look at Devine Strong! The divil's a king ter him. Look at him—look at him! I never saw him before. Think of his life an' shoot—shoot! Why in hell don't yer shoot?"

The question asked for the last time. A report sounds through the air; a cloud of smoke bursts from that damning arm of madly swirling drapery; Devine calls out "Sadie!" with a shriek that echoes over the dunes. He darts up, spins about, then falls backward, his full length upon the snow—a great dark blot, a distorted white face with eyes staring wide in death, but holding an anguish even more bitter than that of death.

Roar not so loudly, O wind! He cannot hear you. Pity him if you will, O soft and gentle snow! But pity more the woman that looks so wildly from out the waving brown grass of the dune!

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CHAPTER XXIII

SLIGHTLY SUSPICIOUS

A GROUP of three gloomy, distressed men and one alert, uneasy woman was gathered in Sadie's cottage—the men, all covered with snow, thawing themselves out over the little stove; the woman bustling briskly about and making comment on comment.

“Couldn't fin' her, eh? Him neither? Been gone full two hours? Is yer ears froze, Mr. Hedges? Don't yer want ter take another nap? Yes-yes; I jes' abeen aclearin' up this air place. Never see sech a lookin' room in my life. Looks as if him an' her'd hed a free fight. The gun hain't here, neither. But she couldn't carry it very far; it weighs sights! Yes-yes. I het up her sheets with hot bricks, an' when she comes back I'm jes' gwine ter put her in that air bed an' set on her feet ter keep her thar, Rev'ren' Dan.”

“Hush!” said the minister, lifting his head. “What's that?”

There was a sound of heavy footsteps on the porch, whereupon the Rector hastily opened the door, and Billy Downs staggered in, carrying a girlish form wrapped in a great blue coat in his arms.

“Where'd you find her?” they all asked at once.

“Where's Devine Strong?” Billy demanded distractedly, and no one save Ann-Abe had the courage to answer:

Slightly Suspicious

"They been ahuntin' an' ahuntin' fer 'em both an' couldn't find 'em neither. Thought likely her an' him might arun afoul o' each other an'—an'—yer got the gun, Billy?"

"No-no," said Billy defiantly, drawing the blue-coated form closer to his breast. "She went an' lost her shawl an' dropped her gun an' hurt her arm jes' turr'ble. Didn't yer, Billy's leetle gal?"

The little girl sighed and stirred in Billy's arms.

"She's all tuckered out," said Billy, pityingly; then looking up at Mrs. Thurber, he exclaimed:

"Ann-Abe, can't yer do somethink fer the poor youngun?"

Ann-Abe's nose wagged resentfully as she answered:

"Wall, how yer 'spect a body ter do anythink when yer aholdin' on ter her like grim death? Here, set her down in this here chair. You men-folks'll have her dead yit."

Billy, with an unreasonable feeling of reluctance, placed Sadie in the chair, and Ann-Abe's rough but womanly hand began at once to minister to her. The girl was muttering as one mutters in sleep.

"What'd she say?" asked the Rector, straining his ears.

"She didn't say nawthink," asserted Billy, clapping his hand over Sadie's mouth.

"Yes-yes; she did," retorted Mrs. Thurber. "She said she couldn't help the gun gwine off."

"She's awanderin' in her head," protested Billy, almost tearfully.

There was a moment's silence, during which the snow was heard tapping like a ghostly hand on the window panes. The Rector's eyes met the grave, deep-set eyes of

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the Justice, then shifted over to the Moneylender's face; the Moneylender made a quick, hushing motion of the lips, then bent down his head. Sadie was beginning to mutter again, when Billy tried to silence her by saying:

"Thar, keep still now, darlin'. Yer all tuckered out."

"Humph!" snorted Mrs. Thurber, who was kneeling on the floor taking off Sadie's shoes. "I guess she's got a right ter say she's cold ef she wants ter."

Mr. Brumley caught Billy's eye and silently motioned him out on the porch.

"What does this mean?" asked the Justice, sternly. "Where did you find her?"

Billy Downs put his hands in his pockets, took them out again, shifted from one foot to the other, cleared his throat, and, addressing the flying snow, said at last:

"She was astandin' on the bank this way of the half-way hut jes' on the p'int o' akeelin' over, I guess; an' we was all acomin' with the cart along the surf from atryin' ter git off that air gol durned vessel what didn't git on atall. An' Cap'n Lem, he says, says he, 'Whar yer been?' an' she says, 'I dunno,' jes' kinder dumb, says she. An' says he, 'What yer been an' done with that air dirty clam digger of a Devine Strong? He give us the slip.' An' with that she started up as ef she could kill her pop—he'd been drinkin', Cap'n Lem hed—an' she says, 'Yer forgot I hed a gun!' says she."

Now Billy's unhappy eyes met those of the Justice.

"She hurt her arm somehow," went on the old fellow, brokenly, "an' she's sick. Take good kere o' her,

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Square Brumley." Billy was half-way across the sands to the Station before Squire Brumley spoke:

"Don't give up the search till you find him!"

"Dead or alive," added Billy, muttering in his beard.

At that moment Ann-Abe came bouncing out on the porch, declaring that Sadie's arm was hurt real bad, and she was going to get something to rub it with; and, therefore, when Mr. Brumley reëntered the kitchen with an anxious inquiry on his lips, he was the more surprised to see Sadie standing—not quite steadily, but still standing—her cheeks flushed, her eyes brilliant with fever, her hands clasping a chair for support.

"There's nothing to beat whiskey," the Rector was saying, with a poor attempt at joking. "Have another glass?"

Sadie shook her head, laughing a nervous, feeble little laugh which touched them more than if she had sobbed.

"You are better?" said Mr. Brumley. "What happened to your arm?"

"I don't know," she answered, in tones a little shrill and excited. "It doesn't hurt much now."

"What made you go out again?"

"I was lonesome," she said, her lip trembling.

"Gol durn this here fire!" exclaimed the Money-lender in unaccountable exasperation, since there was nothing the matter with the fire. Sadie turned to him and smiled in a way that was to haunt Mr. Hedges for months afterward.

"Did you enjoy your nap?" she asked, with no malice whatsoever.

"You haven't told us what you went out for," interposed the Rector, sternly.

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“Don’t be cross with me, Reverend Dan,” said Sadie with pleading sweetness. “I went out to tell Father something; I don’t remember what.”

The Moneylender looked squarely at her, and wondered in his heart of hearts. The Rector groaned:

“Hey—what! Why did you take the gun?”

Sadie straightened herself, the fire of hatred leaping to her eyes.

“Why do you suppose?” she asked, hardly and clearly. But the next moment she had drooped, and with a sigh that was echoed by every one of the men, she walked slowly and unsteadily toward her bedroom. Mr. Brumley took her by the arm, leading her gently, then lifting the portière for her.

“Oh, Dolly, Dolly,” he was praying internally. “Tell me what to do for this poor child.”

Sadie looked up in his face, pausing on the threshold of her room.

“The gun was so heavy; I hope I won’t ever have to take it again,” she said, plaintively. “Do you think I will?”

“No, my child,” answered Dolly’s husband, huskily.

“I am so glad. It scared me when it went off.” And Sadie passed into the bedroom.

The Justice silently dropped the portière and crossed over to the fire. He looked at the Rector, but the Rector would not look at him. He looked at the Moneylender, and the Moneylender gave him the tail of his eye and a half audible remark about his sloop. Then relief came to them all in the form of Ann-Abe, loaded up with bundles of a mysterious nature.

“Law-sakes! Has she been an’ gone ter bed, or has she been an’ clumb out’n the winder?”

Slightly Suspicious

"It's too bad there's no other woman here," muttered the Rector after Ann-Abe had disappeared behind the curtain.

"Ann-Abe'll fetch her 'roun' all right, don't yer fret," rejoined the Moneylender, as if he did not know that it was not Ann-Abe's ability as a nurse that was questioned, but her inability to hold her tongue.

Mr. Brumley peered out of one of the windows.

"I hope they've started out," said he. "There's no use of our going, for if ever a girl needed a body-guard, she does. Yet I would give a good deal to see Devine walk in that door."

The Rector made no answer, and the remark made by the Moneylender seemed irrelevant:

"I'm done with cat-naps."

The gloomy silence that followed was broken by Ann-Abe's bustling return to the kitchen.

"I rubbed her down an' put some St. Jacob's ile on her arm an' tucked her in as snug as a bug, an' she was as heavy as a log an' didn't say a word. An' now I got ter go an' cook supper fer them air younguns, an' ef yer come over one at a time—Mr. Hedges fust 'cause he eats the least—I'll see what I kin do fer you. An' come an' call me anyway ef she commences ter rave any."

The good-hearted woman went at last, and then began the gloomy watch of the three men in the little kitchen, while outside the storm rose higher and higher, beating more and more furiously.

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE SHIPWRECK

It was worse than fog. Not once after the return of the crew from Indian Point did the snow lift for a moment; but more thick and heavy it came down, yet seemed not to come down, but to whirl by and around and around you, never lighting anywhere, yet piling mountains of dry white powder at your feet, layer upon layer of chill white robes upon your garments. The "runners on the surf," sent out as by night from every station, met, and, unseeing, passed each other; went by the half-way huts within touch of them, and searched and searched without finding them; stumbled past their stations, or stumbled by great good fortune upon them.

Twilight fell early, and the solemn white night turned into gray; the gray into muffling, smothering darkness. All the while blew the wind blasts—beat the lashes of the wind, never pausing except to take breath, never resting save for a heavier blow. Down with terrible force came the worst fury of the storm upon the sea, which protested—raging, roaring, wrathful, kicking, foaming, rearing, plunging, yet ever forced and urged onward to the shore.

How many ships were threatened during that storm none will ever know, nor none be sure how many perished. The next day and the next, and still the next, the papers reported the wreck of one vessel after an-

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other. From the Stations upon the Long Island coast came news of three vessels threatened, but saved, and of three others that were threatened and lost. Of the latter perhaps the saddest was the wreck of the "Sarah M.," a three-masted schooner, on the way from Pernambuco to Boston with a cargo of rosewood.

The Captain was a man of about thirty-five years old, who originally hailed from Long Island, and who, strangely enough, had often roamed in light-hearted boyhood over the dunes of the very beach that was to witness the wreck of his vessel, and who had often plunged gayly into the very surf that was to pound the "Sarah M." to pieces, and greedily gobble up man after man of the crew, bellowing for more, more, more! This was only the second voyage of the "Sarah M.," and Captain Mapes had a half interest in the vessel. He had eight men under him, the first mate, Carl Brewer, being a personal friend; but all the crew, because of a certain charm and power that nature had given him, and particularly because of the unfailing tact and thoughtfulness with which he had managed them during this last fearfully hard and exhausting voyage, looked upon Captain John Mapes as their friend.

Saturday, it will be remembered, was a marvellously mild and warm winter's day; and every man went singing cheerily about his work, lifted up by the thought that home and the end of an almost insufferable voyage was near; but during Saturday night there was so sudden, so extraordinary a change in the weather, that by morning snow was falling thickly, while the cold was so intense that every wave that struck the vessel left a sheath of ice upon all that it touched; and the spray, mingled with snow, froze everywhere, turning the ropes

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into hard, immovable rods, festooning the rigging with beautiful, frosted, jagged ribbons.

The snow fell more or less thickly all day Sunday, so that they could not take the sun, and had to sail on dead reckoning. They knew, however, when they had passed Raccoon Beach Light and were skirting the shores of Long Island. Captain Mapes, who knew the dangers of the sand-bound curves and inlets of the Long Island shores, kept the schooner pointed as far as possible for the open sea, and frequently cast the lead. About noon the storm increased in fury, and from that time the wind, which was dead against them, never seemed to rest, nor the snow to lighten.

It was shortly after four o'clock when, without warning, there drove up to them, upon, and over them, a gust of such violence that it split the sails into shreds, heaved over the little vessel, sent creaking and groaning every piece of wood, rattling and whistling every bit of rope and rigging, while upon the deck there came tumbling over it, rushing, a maddened and merciless sea. The schooner righted with a brave and mighty effort, but from her crew three men were gone—gone without a moment's warning, lost to all help almost before they could cry out.

There was a list to port. Captain Mapes ordered the well sounded, and Brewer reported four feet of water in the hold. The men were sent to the pumps, and Captain Mapes himself took the wheel; but about five o'clock, when darkness was falling fast, an increase of two inches in the depth of water was reported. Then the Captain ordered rockets to be fired, and headed the schooner for the beach. He called all his men around him, and, with the composure that rarely failed him, told

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them to put on all the clothing that they could find, to eat all the food that they could swallow, and besides to stuff their pockets with food. Then, giving every one a strong dose of brandy, he told them that when the vessel struck to run for the rigging.

Rockets were again fired, but no signals were seen in answer, nor scarcely expected to be seen on account of the denseness of the snow. The "Sarah M." had gone perhaps half the distance to the shore when another great wave boarded her, and, striking the midship bulwarks, tore them from their fastenings for thirty feet or more. The weight of the water keeled the vessel over, and she certainly would have foundered had not Captain Mapes been prepared for the emergency. Without the loss of an instant he rushed along the deck to the mizzen-mast with an axe in his hands, and, keeping his balance in a marvellous manner, considering the lurching of the vessel, he weakened the mast and cut away the windward shrouds, so that with the next heavy sea the mast was brought down, crashing into and completing the ruin of the bulwarks, dragging spars, ropes, and sails in a tangled mass half over the side, half upon the deck of the vessel. They set to work to clear away the wreckage, the Captain shouting orders to those who helped him and to the man at the wheel. Lightened of the dangerous weight, the schooner ran rapidly before the wind to the beach. At five-thirty she struck the outer bar, was immediately lifted over that, and speeded on like one who knows the worst and will take it bravely and quickly.

Captain Mapes, steady, vigilant, fearless, though knowing well their danger, again stood at the wheel, directing the vessel to best advantage through that labyrinth of heaving valleys and tumbling mountains.

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She struck the inner bar, shuddering, shivering as her nose ran into the sand, and over her rushed those waves upon which she had been riding. The Captain left the wheel, or, rather, was torn from it, and would have been carried overboard had not chance and the force of the water sent a rope end into his hand. He grasped hold of this with one hand, while with the other he reached out for and caught a dark figure whirling past him. The night was now so black that he could not tell if the other members of the crew had gained the rigging, and could only guess whose was the helpless, sliding form he held by the arm. The great wave passed over, leaving Captain Mapes beaten and exhausted, his companion little better than a dead man. Receiving no answer in reply to his shouts in the fellow's ear, the Captain with a mighty effort half dragged, half carried the sailor, whom he now knew from his weight to be the youngest member of the crew—a mere lad playfully called Little Joe—across the slippery deck to the main-mast. He urged him to climb up into the shrouds, and, urging and pushing, in constant danger of the stupefied boy's falling down upon him, he followed step by step up the hard, ice-bound ratlines.

Waves reached up and passed over them during the necessarily slow progress; but by the sheer force, strength, and will of the Captain the two reached the cross-trees, and together, as Captain Mapes had planned, crept into the furled sail. From beyond and below, out of the fore-mast, there came a hoarse shout, heard even above the shrieks of the wind, and the Captain raised his voice in answer before he drew the canvas over himself and the boy. Within the tight and snug covering, Joe roused himself so far as to mutter what might have been either

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curses or prayers; but these grew lower and lower in tone until they died away. Captain Mapes called into the lad's ear, fearing that he might sink into a stupor as much from fright as from exposure.

"You're all right now," he said, as clearly and kindly as he could. "The starboard shrouds will hold; so there's no fear for the mast—Joe?"

Then, as the lad made no reply to this assurance or to the continued shouts of the Captain, he began to beat him with the end of a rope, and kept on beating until a grunt of protest showed that Joe had regained consciousness. The Captain's thoughts then turned to his other men, and he put his head out of the covering to call over to the foremast, asking how many hung in the shrouds and who they were. The mate's own voice answered faintly that the Portuguese had gone overboard; but that he, Brewer, with Irish Mike and Big John, was all right. Then Captain Mapes shouted out that he had Little Joe safe, and told what he had done to protect himself and the boy from the cold, advising them to climb further up in the rigging and make the same use of their topsail. Then, after they had all lifted their voices to the unseen and silent shore, the Captain went under cover again, his lungs ablaze with that refined fire of the cold. He took out his pipe and tobacco pouch, found his matchbox safe under his oilskins, and struck a light, holding it close to the boy's face. Joe's eyes stared vacantly at the little flame, blinked, and stared again.

"Light up, Joe!" ordered the Captain, with purposeful sternness. Joe dumbly obeyed, and for a while they smoked in silence, the boy numb and passive, the Captain pondering deeply.

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Against their shelter came rushing the wind, as if grudging them the bit of canvas, and the wind shook the mast until it trembled—nay, rocked; the frozen rigging until it rattled and whistled in response—helpless playthings. The vessel was so firmly embedded in the sand that she lifted only a little with each wave, and then sank down a little deeper; but to the men hanging over the water, every thud that she gave seemed trebled in force, and with every one they thought that either she would go over on her side or else the mast would snap in two. Colder and colder grew the night. Occasional waves rushed up to their shelter, leaving, always leaving, a coat of ice upon the canvas. The men themselves had been so thoroughly drenched that their garments were frozen stiff on the outside, while nearer the warmth of their bodies they were as wet as water could make them.

Captain Mapes smoked out his first pipe, and then, feeling less discomfort, again put his head out into the air. He looked to where the shore lay, but as yet the snow had not lifted sufficiently to show even a dim outline of the beach, or any light, if there were any on the shore. The blasting cold seemed to freeze even his eyeballs; it drew tight the skin upon his face, so that he was barely able to move a muscle; tears ran from his eyes and froze upon his cheeks; spray and snow hardened upon his eyelashes, his brow, and his beard, and he could scarcely breathe for the suffocating sense of heat that pained his lungs and seemed to choke up the air passages. It was very much colder.

He looked from the shore to the westward, where, whether far or near, Raccoon Beech Light must be burning, and still he could see nothing but blackness, flutter-

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ing, fluttering with snowflakes, relieved only by the ghostly white foam which, ever racing, never restless, leaped ahead of the vessel, broke upon her from behind, bounded up from all sides—as untiring as its master, the wind.

Captain Mapes knew that they could not be far from the shore, and it seemed impossible that they should be allowed to die off the very patrol of the life savers, not only without any effort being made to save them, but also without any sign that their distress was known. The three men in the foremast shouted to the Captain, but their voices were wails so low that he could scarcely distinguish the human sound in the inhuman howling of the wind and roaring of the sea. He wondered why they had not obeyed him by climbing up to the crosstrees, and thought with bitterness that their reason might be the belief that help was near. Finding that he could not understand what they said, or make his own voice heard, he went back under the canvas to get Joe to come out and help him; but the boy had again sunk into that helpless stupor, the persistency of which at so early an hour in the fight for life surprised and dismayed the Captain.

“Presently,” he thought, “I, too, will be overcome by it, and then——”

He hit the lad with a rope end, shook, and even kicked him, until it occurred to Captain Mapes that the child might not be properly clothed, and he began to feel of his garments—a rubber coat so badly worn that it could not possibly afford any protection from either the wet or the cold; a thin woollen suit; an outing flannel shirt; rubber boots full of water; no mittens, but a knitted muffler tied loosely about the throat. Little

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Joe either had his whole wardrobe on his back or else he had been too frightened to properly clothe himself. Captain Mapes, both sad and angry at the circumstance, also a little ashamed when he mentally compared his own manifold woollen garments, his own healthy, fleshy proportions with the miserable outfit and the more miserable physique of this child, worked his way out of his oilskin coat and then managed to wrap the coat around the boy. By this time Joe had awakened, although he was not sufficiently wide awake to appreciate the Captain's action.

"Come, Joe," said Captain Mapes, "don't give up yet. No one, no matter how near, could possibly see us in this storm; so the only chance is to make them hear us."

With that he made the boy put his head out of the opening, and the two shouted together. Again and again they shouted, the voices of the three in the foremast joining in—the five united voices raising such cries and calls for help as might have been heard through any storm at any reasonable distance; and yet there came not the slightest response from the shore just beyond the line of breakers.

"It's no use," moaned Joe, when the cold had driven them back under the canvas. "We've struck a heathen country."

The Captain had not the heart to answer. He realized that with each passing moment the cold grew more intense, and he himself was already suffering from the change in his garments—a change that the poor lad still failed to realize.

"It ain't no use," repeated the boy, dully, after some moments had passed; then wondered why the Captain made no answer.

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“We’ve struck a heathen country,” said Joe again, rousing himself to shout the words close to the ear of his companion, and still Captain Mapes did not reply.

“Oh, Lord! *You ain’t gone to sleep!*” cried Joe, and with energy born of terror seized a rope and began to beat his Captain even as his Captain had beaten him.

Captain Mapes started up, trying to understand why any one should hit him like that; and then he realized with shame and horror that he had allowed himself to fall asleep. His thoughts rushed back to the idea of self-preservation, and he began to feel in his pockets for the food with which he had stuffed them. Then, distasteful though the dry discuit and frozen meat were to them both at that moment, Captain Mapes ate a little of each himself and forced more upon the boy. Then, carefully, with many hopeful predictions for the morrow, he told Joe how they must live through the night: they must both smoke as long as the tobacco lasted, and from time to time they must eat of their small store of food until that was exhausted; if one fell asleep, then the other must at once beat him back to consciousness. Joe seemed to understand, and, with some of the Captain’s own courage, promised to obey.

So another hour of that night began, each keeping faithfully to the contract for a while, and both from time to time looking out to see if the snow had lifted, to call to their fellow-sufferers, or to appeal to that strangely silent shore. Each venture into the open air told them that the cold was steadily increasing; and once, when, after a hopeless half hour under the canvas, Captain Mapes again looked out, he was struck by the tremendous change in the temperature. Could it possibly grow any colder than this, he wondered.

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Then—he could not believe it—the snow had stopped falling; and, as he peered with eager eyes through the now lifting darkness, he caught the gleam of a light. He shut his eyes tightly, fearing that they were playing him tricks; and when he opened them again, this quietly brave man felt something very like a sob in his throat; for there, indeed, was a light, and more than one light; there were several, grouped together like those of a tiny settlement, and what settlement could there be on Raccoon Beach in winter save one around a Life-saving Station?

At this first sign of human life and human help nearby, so great a hope surged through Captain Mapes that all his strength returned with a rush, and he shouted as he had never shouted before, at the same moment when the three in the foremast raised their voices. Not the wind, not the breakers, not the creaking and the groaning of that doomed vessel could drown that call for help—that hopeful cry for succor. Even Joe stuck his head out of the canvas to join in with his half-sobbing tones.

There was no response from the shore.

With one accord they paused; then took up the strain again, all together, and as promptly as if a signal had been given.

The night was not so dark now, for somewhere behind the clouds the moon was shining. They could see the silhouette of the snowy, silent beach, and distinguish from it the tumbling whiteness of the breakers. How high the tide! How near the lights! They shout—they shout—first in hope, then in distress, then in desperation.

My God, still no answer!

The lights glittered, twinkled, and did not move from

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their positions—cruel, bright eyes, carelessly watching men that gazed at them in imploring prayer. Oh, it was hard, doubly hard, that they should perish within sight of those unheeding eyes! With voices hoarse with shouting, throats sore, lungs burning with the cold air that they had taken in, the men on the wreck grew quiet, and watched those evil, coquettish, wickedly laughing, unconcernedly winking lights in hapless fascination. Then a wave, rushing almost up to the canvas, drove the Captain and the boy back under cover.

Even then, disheartened though he was, Captain Mapes opened his stiff lips in an effort to cheer his companion; but his voice came only as a wordless, choking sound. Conscious that he must not give up; that it was his duty to make the other men go up in the furled sail of the foremast; that there was something else he had planned to do if he could but remember, he groped aimlessly around with his hands. He could find nothing; but he told himself that it did not matter, that there was nothing to find or to do—nothing mattered. He told himself this drowsily; he let his hands fall to his sides, his chin sink down upon his breast.

No more snow fell, and the night grew steadily colder and colder, and the cold crept further and further into their shelter. The moon was fighting with the clouds in the effort to see, to shine upon the sufferers. They none of them knew nor cared; they were sleeping—sleeping when sleep meant death.

Captain Mapes raised his head; he had slept—how long? He had slept like a coward, and let that boy beside him sleep.

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“Joe! Joe! Joe!” Each repetition of the name was emphasized by a blow. It was hard work and long work, but at last the lad awakened. The Captain filled and lighted his pipe for him, pressing it between Joe’s lips before he again looked out into the night.

He thought that he could only have dreamed of a place so inhumane as this village of immovable lights. But no; there they were, still laughing at him, and there was the silent, white beach with the restless line of foam moving up to its shore; there was the same high sea, the same merciless wind, the same dismal rattling of the rigging, and—the snowless night was even colder. He looked to the foremast and discovered to his great horror that one of the three men had disappeared. Looking hard through the clouded moonlight, he called to ask who it was that had fallen; and after a time Brewer’s voice came faintly in answer:

“Poor Mike; he fell in his sleep, and we can’t hold out much longer.”

“For God’s sake go up into the topsail!”

“Mapes, the mast is weakened, and we’re afraid to move.”

Then Captain Mapes raised a shout, mighty in its wrathful demand upon the shore, but one that was as silently received as all the other shouts had been. Just as, sick to his very heart, the Captain was about to go back under the canvas, a frenzied, blood-curdling shriek, loud and shrill above the voices of the storm, rose from the deck below. Glancing hastily over to the foremast, he saw that only Brewer hung there in the shrouds, his companion evidently having fallen in his sleep and awakened as he touched the deck in time to give that fearful yell before going into the silence of eternity.

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Brewer's turn must come soon, for he could not live on fighting death alone; and the Captain realized this, yet tried to shout a few words of encouragement before going back to that miserable child who was to be the last of all his good crew. It was strange that fate had paired them off in this way when he and Brewer might have saved each other. He could not rest for the thought of the man that hung alone in the shrouds, and from time to time he looked out to call to him; but Big John's wild death cry seemed to have deprived Brewer of all power of speech, and the Captain did not receive one sound in answer. Once Joe looked out at the mate's still figure and said that he must be dead.

On the shore glittered the lights of the hamlet; through the rents in the storm clouds shone the light of the moon—a light faintly reflected in distorted shapes upon the dark and troubled sea. Captain Mapes no longer had the heart to call to that deaf land, to beg mercy of its sightless eyes; and at last he stayed under the canvas, hoping nothing, as dull as Joe.

Of what use was the struggle, he asked himself, when none would or could help them? How much easier it would be to die without the agony of trying to live longer! He heard Joe sobbing, and marvelled at the boy's emotion, wondering why he should grieve at any past or present horror when relief in the shape of death was so near, yet wondering also why he himself no longer cared. He was growing warmer; after all, death would be very easy. Just a little more drowsiness, a few soft, warm dreams—that would be all. Then, afterward, there would be a distorted account in the papers, which might make a certain hard-eyed old lady cover her eyes

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for a moment, and then she would resolutely lock up the paper, and all the world would forget. After all, to die and to be forgotten is the sure end of every human being. Why should he care?

But when a man marches to his death to the slow, long beats of time, he meets one messenger and is overtaken by another—the one bearing recollections of the life gone by; the other, speculations on the life to come.

(“Cap’n Mapes.” The boy was speaking feebly; he seemed but a voice of long ago.)

So he was to die like this! He who had called all manner of men his friends! He who had started so well on the voyage of life, to end it all alone with this beggarly boy on the wreck of the “Sarah M.”! The Captain laughed. The boy shrieked his name, but he did not hear. Now, some woman was speaking to Captain Mapes; he did not remember who she was save that she was one who had always laughed at him.

“You people who are in sympathy with all men,” she was saying, in her hard, distinct voice, “are invariably out of sympathy with those nearest to you.”

Was it that which cut into his conscience and awakened him, or was it the lash of the rope in the hands of Joe? What folly was this? He to give up and leave that boy to fight alone! Never!

He roused himself to speak to the boy words of encouragement, though confused and unconnected; and then, with no very clear idea of why he did so, he looked out of the canvas over to the foremast. A hoarse cry of agony broke from the Captain’s lips, and he felt himself trembling. There, in the cruel, cold, clear moonlight, hung his mate and friend, with face black, distorted, and lifeless, with figure frozen stiff and fast to the rigging

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above the waist; and below, loosened so that the legs swung heavily back and forth with every heavy gust of wind. Unable to endure the sight for more than the flash of a moment, the Captain went back under the canvas, where the boy questioned him, and he answered that Brewer still hung on.

“That’s good,” mumbled Little Joe.

The Captain did not reply, and for a long, long while there was silence in the canvas, until Little Joe spoke again:

“Cap’n, you’ll come out all right; I know you will. But I’m goin’ to cave in pretty soon.”

“I won’t let you,” answered Captain Mapes, quickly; but the lad went on as if he had not heard:

“I got a mother, but I don’t believe she’ll care, ’cause there’s so many other brats. It don’t make no diff’rence to no one; but I jes’ wish you’d let her know, an’ tell her to tell Annie that—that I didn’t fergit nothin’.”

Again there was silence in the sail; then the man put his arm over the boy’s shoulder and asked:

“Your sweetheart?”

Joe did not answer.

Slowly but surely the cold stole into the canvas from every side. Captain Mapes looked out from time to time, though hating and dreading to look, lest those two vastly different sights—the village of immovable lights on the shore; the stiff figure in the shrouds of the foremast, at the mercy of every lurch of the vessel, every gust of the wind, its black, frightful face looking as if it realized and knew—lest the sight of these—the frozen form of the dead; the flaunting beacon of the living—make him hate his fellow-men and curse his God.

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The moon rose high in the heavens, but the wind never lost its strength, nor the sea its fury. Every voice in the timbers and every voice in the ropes still shrieked and groaned, and, groaning and shrieking, spoke of death.

In the Messroom

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE MESSROOM

AGAINST the windows of the Station beat the furies of the storm; upon the panes, sometimes heard, more often unheard, tapped the pleading fingers of the snow.

“Come out! Come out!” cried a hundred voices in wind and sea—a hundred voices, and some of these were human!

The messroom clock, furnished by the Government, and boldly bearing the letters “U. S. L. S. S.” (United States Life-saving Service) on its big round face, marked the time for the second night patrol, and yet all the men save one were gathered in the warmly lighted messroom. The tables had not been cleared, and the remains of a rude supper were still upon it. Long-legged Pete was also upon it, scraping his feet over the floor and crooning a love song—sentimental Pete! John Henry Rhodes (alas, it was the date of steady old Number One’s annual spree!) and Abraham Thurber had their chairs drawn close, their elbows spread upon the board, their unsteady hands holding tumblers to their lips—Number One’s Puritanical old face grinning as if he had suddenly been turned into an idiot, Abe’s surly countenance more surly than ever. In the far corner of the room two of the Germans were having a low, fierce debate over a game of cards; and, tilted back in a chair before the cooking stove, with his feet upon the hot

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iron surface, sat the Keeper of Bleak Hill, sending forth an odor of burning leather to mingle with the smell of cheap tobacco, recent cooking, and the reeking of many strong breaths.

William Downs was trying his best to cross the room without letting the floor get up on its legs and hit him—poor Billy was very tired, for he had run the surf and searched over the dunes all the afternoon, and he was not quite sure of his movements, although he was more certain of his duties.

“What in thunder yer want ter go out in sech a storm fer?” demanded Captain Jarvis in thick tones. Number Two looked puzzled, for the Captain’s manner was peremptory; nevertheless, he answered stoutly:

“I’m agoin’!”

Before he could reach the door, however, the long legs of Peter Jones shot out in front of him, and over went Billy, sprawling upon the floor, while the whole besotted crew roared with imbecile merriment.

“Guess yer better wait a spell,” remarked the youth of long legs, as Billy sat up and rubbed his head confusedly.

“Here, take another swig,” suggested Abraham Thurber, holding out a glass by way of consolation to the unhappy Billy. “Yer went an’ used yerself all up ter-day.”

Billy Downs scowled, swore, and made several attempts to get up on his feet, now and then sending appealing looks across the table to John Henry Rhodes, who on any other night would have taken entire command of the crew, but who could only grin at Billy now and mutter feebly:

“Thar, thar; don’t swar!” Unfortunately it was

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the full of the moon in January, and the January full moon always went to Number One's head.

Abe Thurber still held out the glass to Billy Downs, a sign of Abe's self-sacrificing spirit; and Billy could resist it no longer when he thought that it might give him strength to get up, so he took the glass and drained it at one swallow.

"Thar's a ship on an' I'm agoin'," he declared with greater boldness, as he again tried to detach himself from the floor.

"Wall, 'spose there be," rejoined the Keeper; "she'll stay thar, won't she?"

This humane remark was greeted with another roar of laughter; but John Henry Rhodes silenced this with a surprisingly stern "Shet up!" He cocked his ears and raised his trembling forefinger—noble John Henry Rhodes! The other members of the crew—used to obeying Number One—stared a little shamefacedly at each other, but the Keeper stared in astonishment at Number One.

"Thar, what'd I tell yer?" exclaimed Billy Downs, ready to cry because even now he could not come to a thorough understanding with his feet. The wind had borne into the messroom the unmistakable sound of a human cry of distress. It was awful; it was piercing; it seemed to echo through and through the room.

"That's the fourth time, ef it tain't the fifth," whispered John Henry Rhodes, with a sickly, grinning appeal to the Keeper. "Don't yer think we'd better go now, Cap'n Lem?"

"Cap'n Lem," the Keeper of Bleak Hill, a daring, fearless fellow out of his cups, and in them such a hero as you might expect to buy for nine hundred a year,

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reached down for the jug that set beside his chair, saying wearily:

“ Oh, hol’ on a minute.” Then Billy Downs grabbed hold of Peter’s feet, pulled himself up with their unwilling assistance, and blubbered:

“ Come on, Cap’n Lem!”

His “ Cap’n Lem ” was kind enough to look over the top of the jug and to say between his gulps:

“ What’s yer sweat?” And then the Keeper went into a fit of rage, swearing loudly against that German who had gone out on the western beat not long before those human cries began to disturb the peace and comfort of the messroom.

“ Ef thar’s a ship on, why in thunder didn’t Number Six come back an’ report it?” demanded the Captain; and then quieted down to his ease again, declaring that “ thar wa’n’t no wreck on, an’ that was all thar was about it.”

This drunken reasoning seemed to impress them all. Billy Downs looked doubtfully from the door to John Henry Rhodes, and from that helpless individual to the jug that Captain Jarvis was holding out as a peace offering.

“ Hol’ up, Billy Downs; hev another swaller,” the Keeper urged. “ Tell yer what, thar hain’t nothink what kin beat rum fer awarmin’ yer insides, be thar?”

This eloquent speech drew the reeling Billy to the Captain’s side, and the gray “ molasses jug ” to Billy’s lips.

“ P’ut’ nigh empty, hain’t it?” said Billy; then suddenly, before the liquor had flowed into his open mouth, he dropped the jug upon the floor, where it rolled and thumped about unnoticed. No one said a word of re-

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proach, although it was a careless waste of good drink; but every man started forward, even the Keeper bringing his feet down with a thud, while Billy himself spoke urgently and piteously:

“Guess we might’s well make a move now; don’t yer think so, Cap’n Lem?”

For Billy had been startled into dropping the jug by an appeal fearfully loud and long—wailing, despairing, desperate. The wind bore it swiftly, the snow parted to make way for it, the heavy air of the messroom took it up to the furthest corner, until the very ceiling seemed to ring with it. It lasted long, and slowly, slowly it died away.

And the men? It touched the hardest heart among them—a touch may be a very light thing, quickly forgotten—and it stirred their muddled brains. The Captain thought that his feet were uncomfortably warm, and shuffled them for a moment upon the floor. Peter Jones slid off the table, exclaiming in honest admiration:

“Gosh all hemlock! Ef they hain’t got strong lungs! Come on, fellers!”

The “fellers” tried to stagger to their feet; but Captain Jarvis scowled at the lad who sought to usurp him, and declared with an oath that—

“Ef they can holler like that, they’ll hol’ out some time yit. Let ’em holler, I say! Set down, Long-legged Pete.”

Long-legged Pete sat down. The last mournful notes of that prolonged cry died away. The wind took a fresh hold upon the sashes of the windows and rattled them as if in frenzied fury. The snow no longer tapped upon the panes. John Henry Rhodes had succumbed

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to a drunken stupor. Billy Downs looked at the victim of the full moon, and then at Captain Jarvis.

“D—don’t yer think we’d better go now, Cap’n—Cap’n?” he faltered, thickly; but Billy had taken so much liquor during the course of that eventful day that he himself could hardly understand the words.

Louder and louder blew the wind blasts, and louder and louder rose the rollicking of the crew. Colder and colder grew the night air; faster and faster flowed the warm drink. Outside in the wind and the cold the perilous moments dragged slowly and yet more slowly on; within, where all was warmth and light, whole hours passed so swiftly as to pass unnoticed.

Oh, Village of Immovable Lights, think you that never a one of your people shall suffer?

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE SUBSTITUTE

THERE was only one circumstance under which the Stations were excused from sending out "runners," and that was the unfortunate circumstance of a wreck, when, because the Stations were insufficiently manned, all the members of at least one crew were needed at the surf, and often one or two other crews had to be called to the scene of action. Of the several wrecks along Raccoon Beach during this fearful storm, one happened to be not far from Indian Point, the next Station to the east of Bleak Hill. The news came over the wires just as Number Six had swaggered off to the west, and when Number Three was tucking his brass check in his pocket preparatory to going to the east on the sundown patrol.

"Pete," the Keeper had said, with that thoughtfulness which had served to endear him to the crew, "stay in an' toast yer shins; yer ol' crony won't meet yer ter the half-way hut ter-night. Got a wreck on 'tween Injun P'int an' Lone Heights."

A little later the telephone wires, after their commendable custom of breaking down whenever the telephone is most needed, broke down not only to the east, but also to the west of Bleak Hill; so it happened that when Bleak Hill came to have a wreck of her own she was unable to send for help, and had to work alone all

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through the bitter night trying to get off the crew of the "Sarah M."

The two cottages, it must be remembered, were in the lee of the Station, somewhat sheltered by its bulk, and more or less deafened to all sounds from the sea. In one cottage Mrs. Thurber was cuddling little Rose in her arms, trying to soothe the child, who was terrified by the wildness of the night.

"I'm scart, Muvver; the house wocks so. Will it blow over, Muvver, dear?"

"Shame on yer, Rosy! 'Spose yer was arockin' in the roll an' heave of the breakers?"

"Who's awockin' in the bweakers?"

"No one that I knows on, an' pray God thar won't be!"

"I dess I'll say the west of my prayers now, Muvver. Dod bless Muvver an' Favver an' the boys an' Sadie dear, an' take care of the big ships an' make Rose a dood 'eettle dirl, for Christ's sake. Amen."

In the other cottage the Rector was bending over Sadie's bed, her hand clinging fast to his, her eyes looking at him in the desperate effort to tell something that her lips could not utter.

"What is it, my little girl?" he murmured, as he might have murmured over Zeph.

The eyes of the sick girl fell; her hand grew limp in his; she tossed her head from side to side over the pillow.

"Dying—dying—dying," she muttered. "And I am responsible."

The minister thought she was speaking of Devine.

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“Hush! Hush!” he whispered, laying his hand upon her mouth and looking over his shoulder through the doorway into the kitchen, where the Moneylender and Mr. Brumley were sitting. With sudden, fierce strength, Sadie sat bolt upright, seizing the Rector’s hand again and holding it fast—listening with every nerve in her body, but listening to a sound that he could not hear.

“Hark! Hark! Are you deaf?” she cried, so loudly that the men in the other room started to their feet. “Hear him calling!” She thrust the Rector’s hand from her.

“For God’s sake, *go out!*”

“Yes, yes, my dear,” said he, soothingly, and walked into the other room.

“Is she raving about Devine, do you think?” asked Mr. Brumley.

The Rector sat down by the table and put up his hand to shade his eyes from the light.

Ben thought it rather hard luck that he should have happened to come to the beach as substitute just in time for the worst storm that had struck the coast for years; and the Keeper of Cedar Cove thought it hard luck that he should number a raw substitute among his crew at such a time. It was with a pocket full of food to be eaten in case he felt faint, and a head full of instructions, which he was sure he would forget, that Ben started eastward from Cedar Cove on the eight o’clock patrol.

One of the instructions was to go on to the next Station, if no one met him at the half-way hut, and find out what was the matter. When he entered the hut,

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later than an old surfman would have been, and far more spent with the exertion of the stormy walk, he found Number Six, the sundown patrol sent out from Bleak Hill, lying upon the floor, either drunk or overcome by the cold.

Ben, charitably supposing that it was the cold, tried to bring the German to consciousness, and was rewarded by a furious kick and a volley of drunken curses. Then the fellow went off to sleep again, and Ben piled over him a heap of straw that he found in a corner.

“All right, old boy; I won’t report you,” thought Ben, holding the brass check that he had found on the floor up to the light of his lantern. “But as you ain’t my man, I suppose I’ve got to go on.”

So Ben went on, after closing the rude door upon the faithful life saver. The lad was happy to see that it had stopped snowing, and, according to another instruction, blew out the light of his lantern; for ever since a certain famous wreck of the early fifties was caused by the Captain’s mistaking a lantern light along shore for a light on a fishing smack, the surfmen of Raccoon Beach have not carried lanterns except in case of snow or fog. The moon, though partly hidden behind clouds, made it possible for Ben to see a long distance ahead, and to see that there was no one coming from the direction of Bleak Hill. Then the lad began to worry—not about chance wrecks or drunken crews, but about Sadie, which was very illogical, and the more he worried the faster went Ben Benstra, and the slower he thought he was going.

He walked on the bluff, because the surf shore was buried under many feet of swirling water; but even on the bluff, foam flew up to him and froze on his gar-

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ments. The wind was so strong that once or twice it took him up with fiendish laughter and threw him down into some hollow as if he had been a feather weight; whereupon Ben, as much surprised as bruised, picked himself up and went on, wondering whether he were really walking out in the open against a southeast gale or whether he were walking into the larger end of a funnel with all the forces of the air puffing and blowing with all their might into the other end of it. Now and then he would turn about, back to the wind, and rest for a moment, and then he would go on again, doggedly, resolutely.

The worry about Sadie began to grow into a persistent nightmare, until, at length, Ben would have taken his oath that she was calling to him to hurry, and after that neither Number One nor Billy Downs could have beaten Ben at hurrying. At last he did hear a voice—a voice from the eastward, from out of that mad, furious sea—a voice that uttered no more than a low, mournful wail.

“Sadie!” whispered Ben, involuntarily, and, pausing, listened for a repetition of the sound. It came again, a little louder, although greatly distorted by the wind. It was a cry of distress from the sea.

Ben’s heart leaped to his throat, tears came to his eyes and froze on the lids; for Ben was only the son of the “Little Lady,” and he had not made life saving his profession. He bounded forward, looking, always looking, toward the sea.

“Hurry, Ben, hurry!” called Sadie’s voice insistently; and Ben went even faster—as fast as if he knew that he alone was going to the rescue.

At last a bend in the beach brought him in view of a dark object lying amid the roll and heave of the breakers.

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He stopped short and took his Coston light from under his coat, reproaching himself bitterly for not having thought of it before. Then, turning back to the wind, averting his face, and shutting his eyes, he struck the light. It blazed up, a vivid, streaming, red fire, for a moment, and then went out, while Ben listened in vain for an answer. He hurried on, thinking that he had better not strike the second light until opposite the wreck. Presently, he could make out between the high waves that washed over her deck, the form of the vessel, and see that she was lying on her side, her mizzen-mast gone, her two remaining masts terribly, terribly near the water—no one left on her, as far as he could see, except one man in the rigging of the foremast. They had gotten all the others off, then; but—for heaven's sake, where was the Bleak Hill crew? Not on the bluff opposite the Station! In the roadway between the bluffs? What! Not there? Where, then?

He found out when he reached the Station, and, having passed through the cartroom, where the apparatus cart stood under a lighted lantern, patiently waiting for business, went on into the washroom, and there was met by a deafening sound of drunken shouts and song and laughter.

Ben's face grew stern and black; with one bound he crossed the little room, seized and lifted the latch, hurling open the messroom door. Pete had been lounging against the panels, and, as the door opened, fell his full length upon the floor. Ben leaped over his body into the midst of the shameful debauch. Where laughter, song, and shout had been, there came a fearful silence; then Number One—good, steady, Puritanical old Number One—realized it all and burst out crying; a

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general hubbub arose, the Keeper alone remaining quiet and looking at Ben as if he must stare at the lad forever.

Ben, knocking aside whomever stood in his way, looking neither to right nor left after the first comprehensive glance, strode into the office and rang the telephone. At the sound of the bell, Captain Jarvis unbent what had seemed to be his petrified figure, and rolled over to the open doorway.

"The wires be down somewhar's both ways, I guess," said he, thickly, holding to the jamb of the door for support. Ben ignored both the words and the man, and rang the bell again, whirling the handle around and around.

"Whatcher matter, Bennie?" pleaded the Keeper of Bleak Hill.

"Go 'tend to your duty!" roared Ben, pointing in the direction of the surf; then he crossed the room, opened the northern door and went out, as the Keeper muttered knowingly:

"Tha's all right—all right!"

"She's been calling for Ben for the last two hours. I wonder if it's a case of brain fever," the Rector was saying, when a loud stamping was heard on the porch outside. All the men started to their feet, the minister exclaiming:

"Hey—what!" and making for the door. It was thrust open before he had reached it, however, and Ben Benstra looked in and around the kitchen, calling:

"Sadie!"

From the other room a joyful cry came in answer:

"Ben! At last!"

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“What’s the matter?” demanded the Justice and the other two men together; but Ben, ignoring them all, looked straight at the bedroom doorway and called:

“I’m going back for our crew. Keep fires burning till they get here.”

Then Ben’s head disappeared; the door slammed hard, and within the kitchen there was a rush for coats and hats.

“She wasn’t raving after all,” said Mr. Brumley.

“Lord pity the ship that comes on to-night,” muttered the Rector; then looked up at a sound from the bedroom to find Sadie, wrapped in a blanket, standing in the doorway.

“I’m not able to go,” she said, speaking quickly, but calmly and rationally. “That key behind the door will open the woodhouse——”

And she went on to give smooth, clear directions.

The Bleak Hill Crew

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BLEAK HILL CREW

WHATEVER Captain Lemuel Jarvis of Bleak Hill did, he did thoroughly; when he took his leisure, he took it; and when he worked, he worked as if spurred on by a legion of demons. In a short time he had doused his head and every other head in the Station, had swallowed two bowls of strong, steaming coffee, and made every one of his men do the same; and, as Billy Downs remarked, before you could say "Jack Robinson" the crew were gathered around the apparatus cart, and Captain Jarvis himself was pushing back the bolts of the big doors.

"Stiddy thar, boys!" roared the Keeper, adding with a fine touch of sarcasm: "Be yer ready? Good men, I call yer."

Unfortunately, they could not recover from the effects of drink as quickly as their Captain. That worthy gentleman began to push against the doors and swore at finding them blockaded with snow.

"Yer 'spect ter stan' here all night?" demanded Abraham Thurber, explosively. "Ef yer agoin', g'on! Them 'tarnal Cove fellers'll be here 'fore yer know it. G'on!"

The Keeper and one or two others tried their best to go on, but the doors would not give way.

"Whar in thunder did yer go an' put them air spades,

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Abe Thurber?" whimpered Billy Downs, who, together with shaking, tremulous Number One, was looking to see if everything was in place upon the cart.

"I hain't seen no spades," retorted Abe, with a curse that reached the Keeper's ears.

"Quit yer fightin'," ordered Captain Lem, drawing back for a spring at the obstinate doors; "yer good-fer-nothink lot, come on!"

The heaped-up snow gave way suddenly; the doors swung out, and the Keeper of Bleak Hill rolled down the incline into a bank of snow. He was up in a moment, however, with his face so black and furious that no one dared to grin; and the crew started out, some fastened in the ropes and tugging like horses, some straining within the shafts, while the Keeper pushed the cart from behind, urging his men half frantically and working harder than any of them. But at best the cart is a heavy weight for men to drag, and now it seemed almost impossible to get it through the heavy, drifted snow. They were obliged to go around the drifts, thus taking a tortuous way to the beach; and some stumbled and fell, and some cried out with the cold; and had it not been for the terror of their position and the energy of their Keeper, it is doubtful if the crew would have reached the bluff that night. Billy Downs was, next to the Captain, the soberest man among them, and he kept muttering something about "spades."

"Thar hain't no spades on this air cart an' I know it," he finally roared. "Whatcher goin' ter do, I'd like ter know!"

"No spades!" repeated the Keeper, furiously. "Whar be they? Why didn't yer say so before?"

"Spades? What yer want spades fer?" rejoined

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Abraham Thurber. "I reckon yer'll find 'em whar yer left 'em down ter Injun P'int."

Oh, worthy crew of Bleak Hill, you have come at last! Stumbling, staggering along in the moonlight over the pure white track of the storm.

Suddenly the cart stopped, while a chorus of wondering curses went up from the crew. They had seen a flame of fire start up from the bluff above them, and in their muddled mental condition could attribute the circumstance only to the crew from Cedar Cove.

"G'on!" roared the Keeper, and they rushed on until a certain snow bank was passed and they came within sight of three men bending over the fire.

"Wall, I swan!" exclaimed Pete in a burst of relief. "Ef 'tain't the Rev'ren' Dan." Then, lifting his voice, he shouted, as the cart dragged up the bluff:

"Hullo, Rev'ren' Dan! How in thunder did yer come ter hev wit 'nough ter build a fire?"

"Hey—what!" yelled the Rector, turning around. "At last! Got here finally, have you? You miserable drunken loafers! You—y-y-y——"

"Thar, thar, don't swar!" admonished John Henry Rhodes, rising to his duties as Number One.

The cart halted on top of the bluff within reach of the spray from the thundering breakers, and directly opposite what was left of that vessel which had once been the shelter—the home of nine men.

"Jarvis, get your line out at once; she lies right over there," said Mr. Brumley, authoritatively.

The Keeper muttered an unintelligible reply as he bent over the cart.

"Whar's yer signals?" asked the Moneylender. "I'd light them fust."

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"Can't fin' 'em," replied Billy Downs in a half sob. "Them air drunken thieves went an' left ev'rythink down ter Injun P'int." At this, the Captain looked up with an oath, shaking his fist across the cart at Billy, then roaring to the Rector and his party:

"Git out'n my way, the hull durn lot o' yer. How in blazes kin I do anythink with all you fellers ahangin' 'round?"

The men, realizing their uselessness, went back to pile sticks on the fire; to look for some sign of life on that trembling, silent, wave-swept vessel; and to watch the crew at their clumsy efforts.

"They look more like demons than men," said Mr. Brumley. "They'll suffer for this."

"They're good 'nough when they're sober," rejoined the Moneylender, but keenly watching the wreck below. "That feller in the fo'mast moved then; I seed him kick. Tryin' ter keep from afreezin' ter death, he is."

"Oh, Lord, how long! how long!" exclaimed the minister. "You sure they're two men wrapped up in that sail, Hime?"

"Yes-yes."

"But where are all the others?" sternly demanded Mr. Brumley; and no one answered.

Then the first shot was fired, and the Rector jumped up and down excitedly, exclaiming:

"There she goes!"

"Humph! She ain't gone fer," remarked Hiram Hedges drily, as a roar of disappointment burst from the crew. "Line snapped. Kinked rope—gol durn 'em!"

"Whar's the man what put up that air rope?" the Keeper roared. "I'll skin him alive."

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"Reckon yer done it yerself, Cap'n Lem," carelessly replied Long-legged Pete, on whom the incidents of that night seemed to set with surprising ease. The Keeper was too busy looking for other lines to retort.

"Whar's them air shot lines?" he yelled, after a moment. "Hain't another line here, by thunder! Number One, Number Two, what yer fussin' roun' here fer? Go an' fetch the lines!"

Billy Downs and John Henry Rhodes locked arms and reeled off in the direction of the Station.

"Git some spades," Long-legged Pete called after them; "this air sand anchor hain't agoin' ter hold fer nobody."

"Oh, Lord, how long?" said the Rector.

"It's a shame to have to stand here like this," declared the Justice. "But what can we do?"

"Nothink," muttered the Moneylender, "but jes' pile on wood. I'm aspectin' ter see them air masts snap in two any minute. I'd make them air fellers go out in the boat, but it'd take till Doomsday ter git it down here, an' then thar hain't 'nough men ter man it in this here sea, an' ef there was they'd all be drowned."

"They ought to be drowned," declared the minister, furious at his own impotence and the inactivity of the crew.

"Yes-yes. But they be a *leetle* more useful alive 'n dead."

The breakers roared against the bluff; high dashed the spray; never did a more furious gale blow over Raccoon Beach. The moon and the stars looked serenely down upon the stormy sea—upon the snowy beach with its all but useless life-saving apparatus, its drunken and its despairing group of men—looked serenely down upon

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the wrecked vessel, upon the furled sail under which a man and a boy were sleeping the sleep that precedes death, and upon a frozen form clinging with hard, ice-like hands to the rigging of the foremast.

“He moved again.”

“Both legs.”

The Moneylender added a stick to the fire, bending down over his task. He had seen many terrible sights, and, it was said, been responsible for a few, yet when he looked up from the fire his face, which a moment before had been blazing red with the cold, was now as white as death. He did not speak, nor did the others.

Moments passed, dragging by as with leaden feet. The Rector took up a burning stick and waved it like a torch.

“Some one in the sail—maybe—” he said, and then his voice broke.

“Guess we’ll hev a taste of afreezin’ ter death ourselves,” gloomily remarked Long-legged Pete, “’fore them air fellers git back with the lines.”

“You an’ Abe go see what’s the matter with ’em,” commanded the Keeper; then immediately, pausing only to give an anxious look to the west, from which direction the Cedar Cove crew must come, he went up to the Station himself.

More wasted moments went by—a few moments wasted by the men on shore and perhaps eternity gained for the men under the furled sail. But at last the crew were all upon the bluff again, ready to send out another line.

The first shot went low, down upon the water-washed deck.

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“*Stiddy yer hand, Cap’n Lem!*”

The second shot did not touch the vessel.

“Whar’s Number One?” yelled the crew. “He kin do better’n that!”

The Keeper scowled and a look of grim determination came into his face. They understood then what he might have done had he been sober.

“*Hurrah! Bully fer you, Cap’n Lem!*”

The third shot had barely missed the furled sail; however, there had been no movement to show that the men wrapped in the sail were not dead men. The fever of their work seized upon the life savers—there was not one man among them now that would not have given years of his life for the hours that he had wasted this night in drunkenness and rioting.

“They work hard enough now,” growled the Justice. “But—but——”

“It is too late,” concluded the Rector.

Again and again the shots were fired, some striking low, some striking high; up went the signals one after another; loud sounded the shouts of the men on the shore; and still there was no sound in reply, no motion or movement upon that wrecked vessel save the stiff jerks of the legs of the man in the rigging of the foremast.

But Captain Jarvis and his crew persisted, and they were still working hard and doggedly when, from out of the west, over the snow banks, came bounding the crew from Cedar Cove—gallant men all, with a gallant Keeper at their head and a very tired young Dutchman in the rear.

“Hello!” shouted Captain Lemuel Jarvis of Bleak Hill. “Got here fin’lly, hev yer, Cap’n Henny Frank?”

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Wall, I'm glad ter see yer, fer we been aworkin' like thunder all night."

Captain Mapes slowly awakened out of dreams of battle where roars of cannon echoed loud and long to hear shots that were real—cries that were the signals of a battle for life—to see fires, lights, and the figures of human beings upon that inhuman shore.

"Joe!" he tried to say as he turned to the sleeping boy; but where was his voice?

He lifted his hands—yes, there was a little strength left in them—then beat and kicked the lad as hard as he was able until Joe at last awakened; but even then the boy seemed neither to understand nor to care that some one was at last trying to help them; and Captain Mapes had to go out alone and try to catch each line as it was sent out to the vessel. Some of these went low and some went far to one side of the mark, and when one did fall across the spring stay within reach of his very hand, he found himself too numb to be able to close his fingers over the line. In agony, more on account of the boy than for his own sake, he tried to reason himself out of his helplessness, but could not, and, while he was struggling within himself, sank into a doze; and from one doze into another he went, rousing sometimes when the cannon was shot, sometimes sleeping on, for the noise was very little beside the deep voices of wind and sea.

But when he saw them try to launch the lifeboat in those mighty breakers, saw them overturned, tossed about like so many playthings, and thrown back upon the shore, he shook off his semi-stupor, and when the line again came within his reach, he caught hold of it

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and kept hold until he had fastened the block upon the masthead. How he did the rest he could never afterward tell; he said that he had forgotten. He also forgot how he lifted his companion into the breeches buoy—mercifully forgot that which at the time he termed the cowardly anguish of soul he endured while waiting for the buoy to return to him—the fear that at the last moment the mast would break—the fear that he would not be able to move when the buoy did come back. He was not able to move—they could see that from the shore—and so the buoy was hauled back again, and some one went out over and through the breakers to put Captain Mapes in the buoy and to wait in the rigging until its return. That some one was Billy Downs, and he had to fight four men for the honor.

The first rays of the sun were stealing across that furious sea when they carried Captain Mapes's all but lifeless body up to the Station; and presently those same rays stole through the curtains of Sadie's bedroom window, and seeing, she thanked God that the frightful night was over, then turned on her side and, for the first time in many hours, slept.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

IN DOLLY'S SEWING-ROOM

MRS. DOLLY'S sewing-room, like Mrs. Dolly herself, was made for ordinary, every-day use—plain, unpretentious, but warm, bright, and sunny; and on this, the third morning after the storm, when the snow, contrary to its established custom of vanishing the moment it appears on the south shores of Long Island, still lay thick upon lawn, road, and meadow, weighing down the shrubs and bushes, the branches of pine and cedar—when the dark thread of the brook painfully wound its way between jagged, ice-bound shores, and the frozen surface of the bay looked dead and colorless in the distance, save now and then, when the white sail of an ice boat would come swiftly into sight, then as swiftly disappear—it was particularly pleasant to sit sunning one's self in the window-seat, looking out upon, but forming no part of, the wintry scene. So thought Sadie as she sat there, silent and restful, her sewing neglected and forgotten; but Mrs. Brumley, who sat in a low chair at Sadie's knees, rocking softly back and forth, neglecting her own work to watch Sadie's face as if it were some rare but puzzling picture, was thinking thoughts far from restful. She was wondering how she might best broach a somewhat difficult subject. At last, out of her impatience with herself, she spoke abruptly and

In Dolly's Sewing-room

upon another subject: "You're not much of a seamstress, are you, Sadie?"

The girl turned away from the window with a start, a guilty flush, and a rueful look at the gray skirt that lay across her knees.

"I'm sure I don't know what you'd look like," went on Mrs. Dolly, putting a finishing touch upon the waist of that same gray gown, "if you didn't manage to appear well dressed in any old dud you put on your back, and to keep your clothes like new as long as they hold together. I don't see how you do it. There!" She held up the waist and examined it critically, first with her head on one side, then on the other. "If you don't look like a bewitching little Quakeress in this I'm much mistaken."

"I don't see why you should make over my clothes for me," protested the girl, taking up an argument two days old, but one that still tormented her proud, sensitive nature.

"I don't, either," promptly rejoined Dolly, "unless it is because I love you. People who love you have a right to do anything, you know—even to scolding you; and I'm going to scold you now."

Sadie's eyes grew wide with fright; then her lids fell, and with trembling fingers she began to search for her needle.

"I've let you play sick for three days and haven't said a word to you," went on Dolly, pretending not to notice the girl's agitation; "and I ought to be ashamed of myself. You are fretting and worrying about Devine Strong; now, aren't you? Look up here! There, I knew it! Gracious me! will you please tell me why you let him worry the life out of you now? Is it all

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shame for what happened before and during the row over there? Or—or—are you accusing yourself of having been too harsh with him—afterward?”

“*Too harsh!*” repeated the girl, lifting her head in a flash of hatred and indignation. “I wonder how on earth I kept from killing him!”

“Ah!” exclaimed Dolly, tears of relief and gladness rushing to her eyes. “I knew it wasn’t that! I told Daniel I didn’t believe any such bosh.”

“You didn’t believe what?” asked Sadie in bewilderment.

“Oh, nothing,” and Dolly laughed comfortably. “After all, I guess I won’t scold you; you don’t deserve it. Instead I will make a confession.”

The confession waited while many more last stitches were put into the gray waist, and when at length Dolly did speak, she spoke in low tones, without looking at Sadie:

“I have been through the same war that you have, my dear; and I am by no means sure that it was as creditable to me as this affair was to you; for it was after I had married (I was very young and very ignorant when I married Daniel, you know), and I wouldn’t have known that there was anything wrong—anything that I should fight against—if I had not been a wife, and known that to give one single thought to any other man was disloyalty to the best man in the world—my husband.”

“*You!*” said the girl, able to grasp but the one fact.

“Yes, *I,*” answered Mrs. Brumley, as if resenting Sadie’s astonishment. “And you needn’t think any the less of me for it, either; since I succeeded in fighting it down as you did. (Yes, yes; you did!) It’s natural;

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it comes to every woman; only most women cannot tell it from love, and marry for it, and are miserable ever afterward. Sadie," Mrs. Brumley looked up abruptly and laid her arm across the girl's knee:

"I beg your pardon," said she, earnestly and humbly. "From my heart I ask your forgiveness, dear, for not having warned you that some time some man would have some such influence over you as Devine Strong had. These are the things that no girl ever hears of and never knows of until she finds herself in the thick of the fight. And every girl suffers from them sooner or later, I am sure; for the best and purest women I know have been through this war of passion, and you can watch it waging for yourself in women less pure and good. Yes, the best and the purest," repeated Dolly, again resting her eyes on Sadie's, "and you are one of those, dear."

Sadie, unable to speak, shook her head in sad negation, then with a gracious, unexpected movement, raised Mrs. Dolly's hand to her lips.

"I am glad you told me this, Aunt Dolly," she said when she had found her voice. "I thought I was the worst woman on the face of the earth. I—I was not warned: how could I know? I did not dream that he was anything to me—that any one could so influence me until—until——"

"Of course," hastily interrupted Mrs. Dolly. "How are girls to know of such things when there's no one to tell them? When no woman will own it, or confess it, of herself? When your own mother, if you have one, will shrink from telling you? And the first intimation you have is like a shot in an unprotected city? But after this, Sadie, you will be on your guard; you will notice the effect that every man you meet has upon you.

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One will influence you in one way; one in another; but none will ever take you by surprise again. And when love itself comes——”

“Oh, but I don’t want it to come!” cried Sadie; but Mrs. Dolly only smiled, shook her head in a knowing way, and went on:

“When love itself comes you’ll know it—don’t you fret; many mistakings of the imitation for the real will never make you mistake the real for the imitation.”

“I don’t want it,” insisted the girl, “real or imitation.” Then with a change of manner: “But, oh, Aunt Dolly, I thank you for telling me what you have. I thank you *so* much!”

Dolly held up her lips and Sadie leaned down to kiss them tenderly. In the silence that followed, a knock sounded on the door, and in response to Mrs. Brumley’s “Come,” a trim little maid, bubbling over with mirth and trying her best to cork herself up, entered.

“Fahder,” she announced in a half whisper; and then as her puzzled mistress said, “Your father?” the maid added in confusion:

“The old mail carrier—Mr. Benstra.”

“Oh, Mr. Benstra. Bring him right up here, Nellie. Now will you tell me,” demanded Dolly, turning to Sarah as the maid left the room, “why it is impossible to train these Shoreville girls into respectable servants? Why, what are you doing?”

Sadie had risen with her sewing in her arms, her face flushed in a way that made Dolly smile.

“I think I will go to my room, if you will excuse me, Aunt Dolly.”

“But I won’t excuse you. You don’t mean to say that you’re afraid of ‘Fahder’?”

In Dolly's Sewing-room

“N—no,” answered Sadie, and put down her sewing; and then Mr. Benstra appeared bowing low in the doorway, fur cap in hand, his keen eyes taking in the whole room with its two occupants in one glance.

“Goot morning!” heartily exclaimed the old gentleman. “Ah—ha!” as he comprehended the fact that the young lady with Mrs. Brumley was “Bennie’s girl,” “Goot morning!”

They both noticed that he held Sadie’s hand a trifle longer than he had held Mrs. Brumley’s; and that the look he gave the girl was searching, though kindly and courteous.

“How is the Little Lady?” asked Dolly after he and she were seated near the window, with Sadie in her old place just above them.

“Dank you,” answered the old gentleman, smiling and bowing; “my Leettle Lady’s vell, but she’s ahettin’ oldt.”

“Old! we’re all getting old. You people who have passed your three score and ten pose as martyrs, or victims. I tell you there is no age worse than a woman’s forty, and she rarely, if ever, gets over it. Now, I’m forty—just begun to be forty, and I spend all my time trying not to think of it. Mind, you don’t tell it, Fahder!” Mrs. Brumley used the term almost endearingly, and shook her dainty finger in the wrinkled, bearded, beaming old face. The girl in the window smiled tenderly at the picture they made—lady and gentleman; but oh, how vastly different!

“On my birthday,” Mrs. Dolly went on, “I made Mr. Brumley go to the city, so I could have a good time crying all day; but, gracious me, I couldn’t stay home all alone! So I followed on the next train and walked

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in upon him just as he was sitting down to lunch at the Lawyers' Club. Then we went to a horrible play, where I wept for all I was worth, and nobody dreamed that it was because I had passed out of my thirties. Oh, we had a glorious time!"

"I should say so!" slyly remarked Sadie; whereupon they all laughed, and Fahder felt as much at home as if he were sitting in his barber-chair with his fur cap on his head.

"Ya-ya!" laughed he, a hundred unexpected wrinkles appearing in his face, and his head nodding so that Sadie hoped it was fastened securely to his neck.

"Sewing?" he asked presently, turning to the girl that had created so much disturbance in West Shoreville.

"Not very much, I'm afraid," rejoined Sarah with a pretty, deprecating smile. "I hate it." Fahder's face grew serious.

"Can you cook?"

Mrs. Dolly bit her lips and Sadie bent far over her work, as she answered softly:

"Oh, yes; I like to cook."

"She's a fine housekeeper—as neat as wax," put in Mrs. Brumley, with eyes twinkling.

"Dhot's goot!" Fahder declared, and sighing with relief, got up to go, as if his business were finished.

"Gracious me!" exclaimed his hostess, "you're not going? Why, you just came. The idea of paying *me* a fashionable call. That's right; sit down again. I've got lots to talk to you about."

"My Leetle Lady," he explained in apology, "I no tell her I vas acoomin' here. Andt my eyes, dey veer petter dan hers; so she canna see so goot de bodadoes do beel."

In Dolly's Sewing-room

"Oh!" said Dolly, who had been obliged to listen intently in order to understand the old Dutchman. "You want to go home to peel the potatoes for her? Sadie, isn't that *lovely!*"

"Lovely!" repeated Sadie, looking as if she would like to hug the old man. Dolly wondered if, in the years to come, Ben would ever hasten home to peel potatoes for Sadie; and Sadie, with a little humorous smile, thought the same thing; and perhaps Fahder's thoughts were of a similar character, for he said:

"Ah, ha!" and laughed aloud.

"What about this mail business?" asked Mrs. Dolly, taking up a bit of lace work. "Are you going to give it up Saturday?" She put in a few stitches; then looked up at Fahder, to find him smiling over his own thoughts.

"It's—what you call him?—a long story," said he.

"I've heard a part of it," said she; "how all your loyal neighbors swore that they'd petition to have the Post Office taken away if you were made to give up the mail."

"Ya-ya; andt I saidt: 'No, neffer! Nodt for Fahder!'"

"And now?" asked Dolly, intent on her work.

"Si Corveen saidt he didn't vant him anyvay. Von of his horses, he diedt; andt so I hot him joost the same. Si Corveen, he pay me, but I hot de mail joost the same. I don'dt see, but I hot him." The old man was plainly puzzled. Suddenly Dolly lifted her head and laughed a merry laugh; whereupon Fahder looked more puzzled than ever.

"Well, I'm glad you've got it just the same," said the lady, rising and laying down her sewing. "Now,

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I'm going to get the Little Lady some flowers—she likes red roses best, I know!”

“Oh, my!” exclaimed Fahder, smiling as he pictured his wife's delight over roses in January.

Dolly in her quiet, graceful way slipped out of the room, leaving the old man and the young girl together. Sadie looked up at Ben's father with a smile that seemed to beseech forgiveness for all the harm she had unwittingly done to Ben. The old gentleman arose and, going close to the window-seat, laid his hand on Sadie's soft, rippling hair, pressed her face back, and looked deep down into her eyes. At first she flushed with resentment; then she was sorry for the momentary feeling, and met his keen though not unkindly gaze frankly and honestly. But he looked and looked and looked until she felt that her very soul lay bare beneath his eyes; and, suddenly growing confused, dropped her lashes and murmured the very question that she would have left unspoken:

“How—how is Ben?”

In answer, she felt Ben's father's lips upon her brow, his harsh mustache brushing against her flesh. She started up, thrusting out her hands to push him away; but when she saw the tears in his old eyes, she laid her hands in his outstretched palm.

“*My* Leettle Lady—she vas priddy, doo,” huskily whispered Fahder. Then Sadie said something that she felt she must say, else forever count herself a criminal:

“But *I* am nobody's Little Lady; and I'm not pretty in my *heart* at all.”

She had scarcely time to withdraw her hands and he had not time to answer before Mrs. Dolly entered, to find the two starting away from each other like a pair of

In Dolly's Sewing-room

surprised lovers, the young girl red and confused, the old gentleman beaming with satisfaction.

“So, so!” said Mrs. Dolly to herself. She started Mr. Benstra on his way to the Little Lady with a large box of roses in his arms; and she and Sadie together watched him going down the Willow Road, pausing from time to time to lift the lid of the box and peek within.

“Can you cook?” asked Mrs. Dolly, pinching Sadie’s ear. Sadie laughed, flushed, and said irrelevantly:

“I wonder what he would have said if he had known who condemned Si Corwin’s horse to death.”

“Or that the horse was already dead when Daniel condemned him. Say, Sadie, isn’t that the Reverend Dan driving home with Daniel? Well, it’s *time* he came to see us!”

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE RECTOR REPEATS THE GOSSIP OF SHOREVILLE

THE first thing that Justice Daniel Brumley did whenever he entered his door without Dolly was to call loudly:

“Dolly! Hy, Dolly! Where are you?” And the first thing Mrs. Dolly usually did when she heard him coming was to exclaim:

“There’s my husband!” and fly to meet him—even if she happened to be entertaining her most high and mighty acquaintance; and, no matter how high and mighty that acquaintance might be, he always took this natural, unnatural behavior as a big joke; for nobody but they two knew in those days that the reason Daniel never wanted Dolly out of his sight was because the time was coming when he must stare at her and the whole world through an impenetrable veil of blindness.

“Hy, Dolly! Where are you?” he called, peering around the hall over the top of his spectacles.

“Stop that noise!” saucily called her voice from over the banisters.

“Ah, there you are!” he exclaimed, in evident relief at having found her. “I’ve brought the Reverend Dan to lunch. May we come upstairs?”

“No; go right down,” she answered, smiling at the two men as they mounted the stairs. “Reverend Dan, what’d *you* come for?”

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“To see the adorable Mrs. Dolly, of course,” answered the minister, taking her outstretched hand; then he added in a low, more serious tone:

“Where’s Sadie?”

“I won’t let you bother her!” flashed Mrs. Dolly, as she led the way to the sewing-room.

“Who said I was going to bother her? Never bother Bother till Bother bothers you. Hello! Here she is now! Are you feeling better, Sadie?”

The Rector’s manner changed so quickly, his hand closed over Sadie’s so tenderly, that Mrs. Dolly, closely watching and listening, felt confirmed in her belief that something was the matter.

“I’m very well, now, thank you,” answered the girl, somewhat shyly; “but I’m so ashamed of myself, Reverend Dan, that I can scarcely look you in the face.”

“You see, she’s used to looking *me* in the face,” said Mr. Brumley with laborious levity.

“I must have been a fearful trouble to you the night of the wreck,” said the girl, still addressing the minister.

“If that ended the trouble—!” blurted out the Reverend Dan; then suddenly remembered that it is more comfortable to sit down than to stand under some conditions.

“How’s poor Captain Mapes?” hurriedly asked Mrs. Brumley. “Don’t tell me that he’s dead.”

“Hey—what! Dead!” roared the minister, seizing upon a topic for conversation. “That fellow’s got as many lives as a cat. I wish you could hear the stories they tell at the hotel about his appetite. Let me see: what did he have for his breakfast? Five pounds of

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sausage, three dozen eggs, four tomato cans, and a hammer."

Dolly made a motion as if to throw her scissors at the Rector's head.

"When did he come across?" asked Sadie. "Captain Mapes, I mean."

"Late yesterday afternoon. Billy Downs brought him over on an ice boat," answered the Rector. "As soon as he could stand on his feet, he declared that he would get away from that crew of heathen if it was the death of him!"

"They're not heathen," hotly exclaimed the daughter of the Station.

"No; they're only cannibals," said Mrs. Brumley. "They ate nearly all the flesh off your bones, young lady."

"There, there!" murmured the Justice, stroking Sadie's arm. "You've done with that life; you belong to us now."

"If they are heathen," persisted the girl, "I'm a heathen, too; and the worst one of the lot."

"You never spoke a truer word," declared the Rector solemnly. "But it's hard on me, when you were brought up at the Rectory."

Sadie melted into soft laughter.

"Come, tell me about Captain Mapes," said Dolly with some impatience. "Have you seen him? Who's taking care of the poor fellow?"

"There she goes again!" exclaimed the minister. "'Poor fellow'! He's able to take care of himself. I wish you'd seen him lounging back in his chair and speaking in an offhand way of himself as if hanging in the rigging thirteen or fourteen hours was as easy as

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falling off a log. And you ought to see the size of him, Mrs. Dolly! He's enough like Brumley to be his younger brother."

"Then he's lovely!" murmured Sadie; and the Justice winked solemnly and held out his hand.

"I'm wondering if he's any relation to Sadie," said the minister. "Mapes is a Long Island name."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the girl; and the Rector, wondering why he was such a blunderer, hastened to say:

"His firm must think a lot of him. They telegraphed from Boston to the Station to spare no expense in making him comfortable. Billy Downs told me so last night—I saw him in the store. You can't get that fellow himself to tell anything; but I did manage to get this much out of him: He got a letter of instruction from the firm this morning, and he's going to stay on to see if he can do anything with the cargo."

"It isn't ruined, then?" asked Sadie, who was following every word with painful eagerness.

"No; he thinks not. It's an iron ship, you know; and now the tide's gone down, it's so far up the sands you can walk out to it dry-shod."

"Well, he's a brave man—that's all I've got to say," declared Mrs. Brumley. "And, Daniel, the very minute he can move I want you to ask him to dinner."

"I've asked him," coolly interposed the minister. "I knew it would be all right. That fellow's just flooded with invitations. Shoreville's grown so hospitable that I can hardly recognize the place. Wish they'd treat my Lenten ministers like that. But the question that's bothering all the girls is this: Is he single?"

"Pooh!" ejaculated Sadie, taking up her sewing in disgust.

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"I'll find out," declared Dolly. "Poor fellow! It's small compensation to make a hero of him. It does seem too bad that he had to lose every one of his men—even that poor boy that he worked so hard to save."

A mist of tears suddenly hid Sadie's sewing from her; and she had to bite her lips to keep from crying out—bitterly, bitterly did she blame herself for all that had happened at the beach on the night of the wreck!

"I wish we could do something for him," said Dolly thoughtfully.

"Umm," replied the Rector abstractedly, leaning back in his chair, seeming to reflect upon the artistic blending of colors in Dolly's ceiling.

"It beats the Dutch," he said, after a short silence, "where that Devine Strong's gone."

Sadie started as if she had been struck; then, finding the Rector's eyes upon her, bent low over her sewing.

"Do *you* know where he is?" asked the minister abruptly.

"How should *I* know?" Sadie rejoined, without lifting her eyes. The three friends exchanged rapid, meaning glances, and the girl looked up in time to catch them in the act. A look of bewilderment crossed her face, and she gave a sigh that went to Dolly's motherly heart.

"Oh, of course, of course!" hastily mumbled the minister. "Only we thought as you saw him last, maybe he told you where he was going. Oh, no—Ben Benstra was the last one—no, he wasn't, either. It was Mrs. Thurber when she whacked him over the head with her broom. Oh, well, never mind; it's all right—all right."

"But where is he?" asked Sadie, speaking with perceptible effort.

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“Yes; where is he?” repeated Mrs. Brumley.

“That’s what I want to know!” rejoined the minister. “There’s no trace of him anywhere. He never came back to Bleak Hill; but maybe he knew that the Moneylender would take the sloop away. But nobody’s seen him at Indian Point, for there was a fellow from Indian Village in the blacksmith shop to-day and he said that over to their Station they say Devine Strong froze to death the night of the wreck.”

“No such luck!” snapped Sadie hardly and distinctly; and met the three pair of alarmed eyes that turned upon her without finching.

“Maybe he’s at Cedar Cove?” suggested Dolly, with a brave exterior.

“No; he ain’t been near there; for Ben Benstra has come home and he’s looking high and low for Devine Strong. And the funniest part of the whole business is this—that woman, ’Liza, has gone, leaving no more trace behind her than if she’d been wiped off the face of the earth.”

“Gracious me! What did she do with her poor little boy?”

“Well,” answered the minister, “I was in the Moneylender’s last night, and you know how Mrs. Hedges’ tongue runs on; and she told me all the news from A to Z. She said that on Sunday morning, when ’Liza went over to Jim Smith’s for the milk—they milk before daylight—she asked Mrs. Smith if she wouldn’t take care of her boy for the day; said she was going to make a little visit and that pretty soon she’d leave Shoreville for good and wouldn’t bother anybody any more. So, after Sunday School, the little shaver went to Jim’s with the key of the house in his pocket, and he’s there

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yet. Mrs. Smith says that 'Liza will come back, but Mrs. Hedges says that Shoreville has seen the last of her."

"But how could she leave her boy?" exclaimed Sadie.

"The gossip around town is something fearful—everybody's boiling over with the disappearance of Devine Strong and poor 'Liza and the scandal of the wreck and Sadie. Why, do you know they say, Sadie——"

The Rector came to a sudden stop. Sadie waited breathlessly for him to go on; then she caught Mrs. Brumley's eyes telegraphing to Mr. Brumley's, and with a little moan turned her face to the window.

"I'm going to preach a sermon on gossip next Sunday!" declared the Reverend Daniel Leggett, bringing his fist down upon Dolly's frail little sewing table.

"You'd better," rejoined the owner of the table. "How's Zeph? I thought you were going to send her back to the convent so fast."

The Rector ran his hand through his hair, and with a look that said, "Please do not call me a fool," replied:

"Well, you see, she begs so hard to stay with her daddy that I haven't the heart to send her back. Besides," demanded the minister, rallying, "when a girl says she's sick, who's going to be brute enough to make her go away to school?"

Mr. Brumley laughed outright.

"Sick? She seems to be well enough to go skating and sleighing with Charlie."

"Who wouldn't be sick?" asked Mrs. Dolly, shaking her head at her husband, "living next door to a cemetery? You don't know anything about it, Reverend Dan, because you're never home. I'm going to drive

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over with Sadie this afternoon and bring her back with us. You're a nice man to be the father of a delicate girl like that. Come, Sadie, get ready for lunch, sweetheart."

The girl looked up as if startled out of deep and painful thought; put down her neglected work and moved toward the door—an ungirlish heaviness, an unaccustomed self-consciousness and restraint in her manner. When she had gone, Dolly turned with pitiful eagerness to the minister.

"I don't believe a word of it!" she declared.

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CHAPTER XXX

CAPTAIN MAPES CALLS

THE next day the sleighing was still good—for our part of the country; and along the sunny, snowy main country road, sleighs of every kind and description were passing between two dark, dingy rows of gaping, betting, gossiping men who had been thrown out of their legitimate employment by the roughness of the weather and the closing of the bay. The wide, dark, open doorway of the blacksmith shop was filled with a group of these sorry holiday-makers, who had stopped betting on the passing horses to tell each other how *they* would have shut Devine Strong in the lock-up—how *they* would have saved the entire crew of the “Sarah M.,” and the vessel herself in the bargain, when the Captain and hero of the “Sarah M.” came out of the hotel, just across the way, stepped into the proprietor’s cutter, which waited at the door; and was driven past the blacksmith’s down Main Street—twenty necks or more craning after him.

Unconscious of the excitement that this, his first appearance by broad daylight in Shoreville, created, Captain Mapes went on through the village, past all the gossips, and past silent, restful St. Catherine’s, in its half-concealing, half-revealing winter garment—its gray stones covered with a tracery of white, every leaf of ivy

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a cup for the snow; each deep window ledge, a lap; every crack and crevice, a hold for beauty.

“What church is that?” asked Captain Mapes of the driver, a burly country boy.

“The Rev’re’n’ Dan’s. *My* minister? Wall, I guess! Wouldn’t have no other.”

The sleigh ran lightly over the road between the meadows, then turned into the gateway of the Brumley estate. Captain Mapes caught himself wondering at his errand; he had not thought of going to the house of the Justice when he ordered the sleigh, but at breakfast he had been handed two notes, both written in the same clear, youthful hand, both headed “Brumley Hall”—the one a gracious request from Mrs. Brumley that Captain Mapes dine with them informally that evening; the other an extraordinary request from one Sarah Mapes Jarvis.

Sarah Mapes Jarvis—whoever she was, and if she was the daughter of that wrecking, piratical Keeper of Bleak Hill, she was worthy of her parentage—had written in simple, straightforward language that it was necessary for her to see Captain Mapes; would he spare her the publicity of calling on him at the hotel by calling on her at Mrs. Brumley’s this morning?

“He won’t come,” the girl declared, looking from the sewing-room window down the length of the Willow Road. “He will think I’m bold—brazen—horrid!”

“What made you send for him?” asked Dolly with an amused laugh, sticking pins into Sadie, who, to please her, was trying on the gray gown for the “last time.”

“Don’t ask me,” murmured Sadie.

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“O—oh!” cried Zeph, clapping her hands joyfully. “Behold, the conquering hero comes! He’s handsome! He’s great! Oh, Sadie, tell me what you want to say; I’ll go down and see him, and he’ll never know the difference.”

“What ails this hook?” exclaimed Sadie, nervously trying to unfasten her gown. “And what did you do with my old dress? Where’s it gone, Aunt Dolly?”

Mrs. Dolly laughed and Zeph laughed, too; then Sadie understood that they had hidden her dress.

“But this is my *Sunday* dress!” she exclaimed, the country phrase coming to her lips in her dismay.

“Well, my little Quakeress,” said Dolly, deliberately tying a lace scarf around Sadie’s neck, “I don’t care if it is; and when Captain Mapes sees you he won’t stop to think what day of the week it is.”

“Oh!” cried Zeph. “Why didn’t *I* think to send for Captain Mapes!”

Sadie, flushing painfully, broke away from Dolly’s clasp.

“I did not want him to think that I—I was putting on airs,” she said quietly; “that was all.”

“Miss Dignity,” rejoined Dolly, mimicking Sadie’s stiff manner, “your airs would be the same in your old blue serge. They’re as natural as the breath of life to you.”

Sadie laughed a little nervously, submitted to being kissed by Mrs. Dolly, and then started down stairs.

“I want to see him *alone*,” she said at the last, and Zeph rejoined knowingly:

“Of *course* you do!”

Captain Mapes, waiting in the soft-toned, rich old

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library, scarcely knew what or whom to expect; he had come because he was a gentleman and some one signing a woman's name had distinctly requested him to come. If the Sarah Mapes Jarvis of the note was the Sadie Jarvis of whom he had heard so much loud, unbounded praise at the Station, he had better prepare himself for an uncomfortable quarter of an hour; for in that case she undoubtedly intended to plead with him in her father's behalf. Would she come in a maid's cap and apron, red and weeping? It was not possible that she was staying in this rich, refined house as a guest. He looked at the many shelves of books, thinking somewhat sadly of his own little library, water-soaked and ruined, over on Raccoon Beach; then, moved by an impulse, he took up a beautifully bound book and laid it with the caress of a lover against his cheek. He was standing thus, when a small, quietly and tastefully dressed young girl, with a pale, perfect, oval face, eyes and hair that were startling in their beauty, appeared in the doorway, and paused, after the manner of well-bred women, for the space of a moment on the threshold.

Clearly, this young lady was not the daughter of Captain Jarvis of Bleak Hill. He laid down the book and went forward, saying in that voice which pleased every man, woman, and child who heard it:

“Miss Jarvis?”

Sadie bowed, and, to her own astonishment, found herself holding out her hand. Then, immediately, as she met Captain Mapes's eyes and felt his hand closing over hers, she lost all her nervousness, all her dread of the interview.

“Captain Mapes,” she began softly and earnestly, “you must think it strange for me to have asked you to

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come here this morning when you were expected here to dinner to-night, but I had made up my mind that I must see you alone, and I could not sit down at the same table until I had—unless I knew that you had forgiven me.” Captain Mapes looked helplessly down at the sweet, intensely serious face of the speaker; then, turning away to hide his bewilderment, he said:

“Won’t you sit down? Here, by this glorious fire. I saw it the moment I came into the room—the first log fire I have seen since I left home, some months ago.” A hint of sadness came over his face, and, in response, a spasm of pain crossed hers. He saw and wondered. Going to the mantel, he laid his hand upon it and looked down into the blazing fire while he waited for her to speak. There was a short silence, which she broke by asking with an anxious look that swept over his face and figure:

“Are you all well now? Really? Thank the Lord for that!” He looked down at her sharply, but she was too much in earnest to notice.

“I want to tell you,” she went on, her eyes, faithfully expressive of her every emotion, lifted to his in a childish appeal for belief, “that it wasn’t my fault—I couldn’t help it.”

“I am sure you couldn’t,” he found himself saying, but he was more bewildered than ever.

“I should have been down to the surf,” the girl went on in her earnest way. “Perhaps you think there wasn’t any excuse for me, but I couldn’t—really, I couldn’t help it; I was sick that night.”

“I know that you were,” Captain Mapes’s sympathetic voice said for him; he himself was trying to collect his thoughts—to realize that this girl was indeed the

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daughter of the Station, and, moreover, that she seemed to regard herself as the Keeper.

"All night long I heard you calling. It was awful. And I tried so hard to tell them—the Rector, Mr. Brumley, and Mr. Hedges were all with me—but they thought that I was raving; and I don't wonder. I did my best to try to get up and go over to the Station, but I simply could not move." She leaned forward, her eyes wide with the horrible memory of that long night. "You don't blame me, do you? And you *do* believe that I was sick?"

"Miss Jarvis," he answered, touched to the heart, "I know you would have helped us if it had been in your power."

"Oh, yes, yes! But what did you think of my running off the very next morning and leaving you alone with all those men? I begged to be allowed to stay to take care of you, but I was so sick and weak myself, I had to let them do as they pleased with me. But they would not have hurried off like that if they had not been afraid of the bay's freezing over as soon as the wind went down; and it was very necessary for the men to get back to Shoreville."

"You forget that you left Mrs. Ann-Abe Thurber behind," said Captain Mapes, with a smile that even Sarah's gravity could not resist; "and, somehow or other, a doctor and a nurse got over there before I felt the need of them. To be sure, the doctor's trip was a flying one; but I am very grateful to whomever it was that sent him."

"It was Mr. Brumley," said Sadie, "the kindest man in the world." Then she asked, with a little hesitation:

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“How did my friends at the Station treat you?”

“Oh, fine,” he answered, with a heartiness that surprised himself. “I grew very fond of Billy Downs; and that one they call Long-legged Pete was very amusing. It was really pitiful to see Downs and—what do they call that old Puritan?—John Henry Rhodes trying to make me comfortable. They all seemed to have the same feeling about the wreck that you have; they said that if you had been well it wouldn’t have happened just as it did. You are greatly beloved by those big rough fellows.”

“Thank you,” she said simply; “more beloved than I deserve.”

The girl’s small figure drooped, and something like shame made her proud little head bend low. He did not understand; but to lift the head again, he began to talk upon other subjects, telling her how beautiful he thought the little stone church; how the village had impressed him, and how pleasant it was to visit such a place as Brumley Hall. Then they began to talk about other Long Island places, and, presently, he mentioned having been born in Wading Hollow.

“Why, that’s where my mother was born!” exclaimed Sadie; then flushed with anger at the indiscretion of her tongue.

“What was her name?” asked Captain Mapes; and then there appeared before his mind’s eye the clearly written signature, “Sarah *Mapes* Jarvis.”

“It does not matter,” said Sadie, with a little proud uplifting of her head. Captain Mapes smiled: he had forgotten who her father was in his determination to know about the mother.

“Sarah has been a family name with us for genera-

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tions—just as John has. You knew that the vessel was the ‘Sarah M.,’ didn’t you?”

Then of a sudden he remembered that her father was, in a measure, responsible for the death of the whole crew of the “Sarah M.”; and the girl saw his thought and covered her face with her hands. But for Captain Mapes the bitter moment passed, and he remembered that this girl was in no way responsible for her father’s misdeeds.

“Was your mother’s name Sarah, too?” he asked, speaking even more gently and courteously than before. “Then I remember, though I was only a half-grown boy, when she went away. She was my own cousin; and you must let me call you ‘Cousin,’ too; and forgive me for having taken your mother’s place in Aunt Sarah’s home—not in her heart; I could never do that—and forgive me for having accepted much that should have been yours.”

Sadie looked up at him wonderingly. By a few words he had succeeded in disarming her of her proud, life-long resentment against her mother’s family. She held out her hand, saying tremulously:

“You are very good to me.”

“I shall be very proud of you—my kinswoman,” rejoined Captain Mapes, and gravely lifted her hand to his lips.

“Gracious me!” whispered Mrs. Brumley, coming into the room at that moment to find out if Captain Mapes was under the impression that he had been invited to luncheon instead of to dinner.

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CHAPTER XXXI

BILLY DOWNS'S PATROL

BILLY DOWNS took his brass check from its accustomed nail on the rack beneath the clock in the mess-room, tucked it with unnecessary care in his breast pocket, and began to pull on his big, gray woollen mittens.

"Wall," he remarked to Abraham Thurber, whose turn to serve as cook had come and who was wreaking his vengeance on a batch of bread dough, "Cap'n Lem 'pears ter be aturnin' over a new leaf, don't he?"

"Who said he wa'n't?" retorted Abe, scowlingly whacking a giant loaf into shape. "*His* business, hain't it, Cap'n Billy?"

"Wall, I 'spose it is—more'n mine; but I kinder calc'lated on a settin' a spell in that air lookout; but, come ter think on it, I guess I ruther be aswingin' my legs along the surf. S'long Abe. Don't go an' git yer arms out'n j'int fer that air bread."

"They're my arms, hain't they?"

"He's the *contrariest* cuss I ever see," chuckled Billy to himself on his way to the back cartroom door. "Why, hullo! What yer doin' aputterin' 'roun' the cart this hour o' the day, Number One?"

Number One looked up, his face lined with care; then immediately looked down again and continued his "putterin'."

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“Jes’ come over here a minute,” he said. “Now, I want ter know ef thar’s the *le-east* mite of a thing alackin’ on this here apparatus cart.”

The old man drew back and, thoughtfully patting his heavy gray ear locks, waited for Billy to make his inspection. Billy looked at the cart from every point of view, handled everything on it, and answered at last in some perplexity:

“What’s the matter, John Henry? I don’t see nawthink wrong; do you?”

“I hain’t got nawthink ter say,” rejoined Number One in forlorn humility. “Any ol’ fool what makes his brags ’bout abein’ the stiddest man on the beach, an’ then lets a leetle thing like a full moon git the best of him, an’ goes an’ gits b’ilin’ drunk jes’ when a wreck’s acomin’ on—he hain’t got no right to no ’pinion atall.”

Number One paused, pushing back his ear locks nervously, and in the dim light of the cartroom Billy could see that there were tears in the old man’s eyes.

“Say, what yer givin’ us!” said Billy, with instinctive courtesy turning away from the sight of the tears. “Hain’t nobody here ter Bleak Hill ever been drunk that I heerd tell on. Anyhow,”—and Billy’s temper rose,—“agittin’ drunk hain’t nawthink ter not knowin’ when ter keep yer mouth shet; an’ yer want ter put that in yer pipe an’ smoke it, John Henry Rhodes!”

“Thar, thar; don’t swar!” muttered Number One feebly, as the door slammed behind Billy.

“John Henry’s got no end of book-larnin’,” Billy reflected, “but even Long-legged Pete’s got more *nat’ral* wit ’n him ’bout some things.”

“Hullo, thar!” called Pete’s voice at that moment from the open door of the woodhouse; “can’t yer say

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'Hullo' ter a feller jes' 'cause he's got ter chop wood fer a livin'?"

"Why, hullo, Long-legged Pete," rejoined Billy good naturedly, going to the door. "I thought yer was asnoozin' yit. Achoppin' wood, be yer? I tell yer what! Cap'n Lem jes' keeps things ahummin' now-days, don't he?"

"Yes-yes," growled Pete, swinging up the axe with his long arms; and then, as he brought it crashing down upon the block, he exclaimed:

"Say, he hain't asendin' out runners no sech fine day as this, be he?"

"Wall," rejoined Billy, turning to look at the haze that hung over the beach, "tain't over an' above thick, be it, Pete?"

"No-no! Folks be agittin' all-fired pertic'lar all of a sudden—durn if they hain't! How be Cap'n Lem's cold this mornin'?"

"Kinder graveyardy, I guess; I heerd him acoughin' like he'd bust. Ef Sade'd aheerd him she'd had a fit. Wall, wall, I guess I better be amovin'. S'long Pete; don't yer go an' bust yer b'iler achoppin' wood. Let them air good-fer-nawthink Dutchmen do somethink."

"I say, Billy Downs!" called Peter, as Billy was hastening away; "instid of awastin' yer time aswappin' lies with one of them air Injun P'int clam diggers, yer jes' run up ter look after my rabbit traps, won't yer? I hain't been nigh 'em sence the storm. Jes' two feet—my feet—east of the big hollies on the redge."

"Yes-yes," called back Number Two, running to make up for the time he had lost. However, that was not the reason why he cut across the dunes instead of going to the natural roadway. Billy had not set foot in

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that roadway since the morning after the storm; for directly in front of the road, high upon the sands, lay the pitiful wreck of the "Sarah M." Yet, torturing though the sight was, Billy could not help looking back at the wreck, which loomed up—a dark, shapeless blot—through the mist.

"I calc'late," he muttered with a slow shake of his head, "that Cap'n Lem's the least mite skeered fer fear that that air gol durned ol' wreck'll be a sort of a tomb-stun fer him an' the hull crew on us. Wall, one thing sartain, they can't do much ter him 'thout *our* testimony; an' we hain't none of us agoin' back on Cap'n Lem." Billy lighted his pipe and, puffing slowly and thoughtfully, began the run along shore.

"That's what comes," he continued, still speaking aloud, out of the habit acquired from being much alone, "of agoin' an' abreakin' my given word ter Sadie. She kinder counted on me akeepin' straight myself an' alookin' out fer John Henry Rhodes's full moon, too, when she went an' got sick herself. An' she wouldn't never agone an' done it neither, ef it hadn't been fer that air gol durn ol' cuss of a Devine Strong. So the hull thing's his fault; an' though I don't keer 'bout afittin' an' aquarrellin' as a general thing, when he gets good an' ready ter come ameddlin' 'roun' agin, I'll lick him as sure as my name's William Zebulon Downs."

Then William Zebulon Downs, drawing some comfort from that resolution, and having placed all the blame where it was sure to be accepted lightly, began to whistle as he marched through the mist; and, presently, a smile of tenderness wrinkled his brown, weather-beaten face into more pleasant lines; for the fond old fellow had travelled in his thoughts to Sadie—Sadie without Devine

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Strong to make her miserable—Sadie bestowing upon Ben Benstra his just reward.

“I’ll buy a black suit an’ a b’iled shirt fer the weddin’ ef it takes my las’ cent,” he declared aloud, nodding to the rickety old door of the half-way hut. The door creaked dismally, swung on its hinges, and showed him no one within; and when Billy looked along the surf shore to the east, he could not see his fellow life-saver coming through the mist.

“Got five minutes, anyway,” said he, looking at his immense silver watch. “Guess I’ll go an’ see ef Pete’s cotched anythink in them air traps o’ his’n. Ten ter one Cap’n Jake hain’t asendin’ out no runners ter-day, nohow.”

After one more look to the eastward, Billy turned and started across the dunes, floundering through the drifts of snow with undisturbed good nature, and thinking that a rabbit stew was just what he had been wanting this long time.

“Wall, I declar! Who chucked their paint pot in the snow? Paint! Why, gol darn it!” And Billy’s eyes squinted downward. “It looks as ef it might be a piece of the leetle gal’s shawl.”

He concluded to look into the matter, and knelt down in the snow; then with a snort of delight pulled off his mittens and began to dig all around the bright patch of color with his hard, big fingers. Sadie’s lost shawl! He would go over in the scooter to Shoreville himself that very afternoon and carry it to her. She was probably shivering and shaking in that little, new-fangled jacket of hers. Sadie’s shawl! Wouldn’t she be glad to get it again? He would put it in front of the mess-room stove and thaw it out. Sadie’s shawl—without a

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tear in it, and with all its bright, familiar colors unspoiled by the snow.

He got up on his feet, holding the shawl up before his eyes delightedly; then he folded it corner-wise with elaborate care and, winking at the big brown dune that was gazing stolidly at him from out of the mist, spread the shawl over his broad, burly shoulders, and took a few steps like a dancing bear; but his merry course was interrupted by a stumble, and down fell the bear on all fours. Then it laughed—a human, good-natured laugh, and began to seek for the cause of the accident.

The muzzle of a gun sticking out of the snow! Billy's lost gun! Did anybody ever have such luck as he and Sadie were having to-day? Falling to his knees, he began to tug and pull at the gun, which seemed to be held in the snow by some superior power, so strongly did it oppose all Billy's efforts to make it come forth.

“Gol darn yer!” said Billy, grabbing hold of the muzzle with both hands and tugging with all his might; “anybody'd think yer was some relation ter Abe Thurber!”

The gun, resenting the imposition, came bounding up, and over went Billy on his back with the firearm shaking like a reed in his uplifted hands. He laughed aloud, for the spirit of levity was on Billy to-day; and still laughing, he sat up. Then, over his merry face there came a change. His jaw fell, his eyes seem to start out of his head in horror, for there, within touch of his hand, lay Devine Strong, staring steadily up into the mist. The face was not black; it was not distorted; but Billy had looked right down into the eyes, and never, as long as he lived, was he to forget their expression of horror, of torture, of anguish immeasurable.

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“Good God!” whispered the living one in involuntary prayer over the dead.

He leaned forward, looking into those eyes, longing to go, yet fascinated into staying. He passed his hand over his own brow, which was wet with cold perspiration, and covered his own eyes.

“Good God!” he whispered again; then, with his eyes still covered, Billy rose to his feet. But he could not help looking again, and he looked and looked and looked, the gun grasped unconsciously in his hand, the gay plaid shawl folded over his shoulders. Slowly, slowly, he turned around, but once out of sight of that face, he broke into a run and tore across the dunes to the bluff as if the devil and all his legions were after him. On the bluff he ran against a man—the life-saver from Indian Point—who poked him in the ribs and with a shout of laughter asked him why he was dressed so gayly.

“Froze,” muttered Billy, “froze stiff!” Then he saw that the sun was breaking through the mist, and wondered how those dead eyes would look in the living sunlight. The man from Indian Point laughed again: Billy was a funny sight; and the woman’s raiment seemed to have turned him into a half-witted babbling old woman.

“Froze—froze stiff,” repeated Billy, and, shivering, drew the shawl closely around him.

“Say, yer shouldn’t oughter do it so early in the mornin’,” said the gentleman from Indian Point in tolerant, fatherly tones. “Ef yer have ter drink before breakfast, yer might’s well give up the sarvice.”

Billy took him by the lapel of his coat and said in a hoarse, earnest whisper:

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"Say, don't look into his eyes."

"Billy Downs!" roared the man, in natural exasperation. "Here, take my check an' give me yourn! We're fifteen minutes late now."

"Don't yer think yer'd better go up an' take a look?" asked Billy, jerking his finger in the direction of the large dune. "But don't look in his eyes." Billy breathed hard. "He's froze—stiff!" A light of comprehension shot over the other's face.

"Yer don't mean it! Devine Strong?" And away he ran. After some moments, he came back and found Billy standing on the bluff, leaning on the barrel of the gun and looking steadily and stupidly out to sea.

"Whar yer find them air things?" demanded the Indian Point man in a tone of authority. Billy looked up bewildered; he was thinking of the expression of those eyes.

"Somewhar nigh—nigh——"

"Hadn't yer better go an' put 'em back?"

"What fer? I'd like ter know," Billy retorted, roused into hot resentment. "Them's Sadie's, they be!"

"I thought likely they was," said the man, with a jubilant note in his voice—not because he had anything against Sadie, but because life is very, very dull on the beach, and this was exciting. "How near was they to the *murdered* man?"

Billy Downs started up, roaring with pain and rage, one hand clutching hold of the shawl, the other tightening over the gun.

"Murdered! He *hain't* murdered: he's *frizzed!*"

The life-weary gentleman from Indian Point smiled the sly smile of an old detective.

Then he said authoritatively, "Hand that air gun over

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here. Whar was yer eyes that yer didn't see his side tored open, Cap'n Billy?"

The sun disappeared; the whole world grew black to Billy. He did not know when the gun passed out of his hand, and showed no interest while the other opened it.

"Been fired off—one barrel!" Again there was that jubilant note in the man's tones. "Yer Sadie's done fer, Billy Downs—nawthink but a common murderer!"

But this was too much for Billy to endure; he struck out his hard fist blindly, yelling:

"Yer lie!"

"Thar, thar, Cap'n Billy," said the other man, picking up some snow to rub on his smarting face. "I can't help the law. Yer'll hev ter go an' put them air things back whar yer found 'em; an' leave 'em till the coroner comes."

"The—the coroner!" stammered Billy. "They're *Sadie's!*" It seemed as if the fact that they were hers should explain everything; but the other man insisted, and Billy finally started for the big brown dune, walking as cheerfully as if he were going to put his own head under the noose. Billy's manner, together with the painful impression of Billy's fist, awed his companion into silence; but when the thing was done and they two stood again on the bluff, about to part, the fellow regained his happy spirit so far as to say:

"I'm sorry fer the poor gal; but in this here free United States of America, Jestice is Jestice!"

Billy, growling like a mother beast, took the man by the collar and, holding him at arm's length, deliberately dropped him down the side of the bluff. Then, without looking to see the result of his action—in fact, forgetting all about it—poor Billy turned his face toward Bleak Hill.

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CHAPTER XXXII

THE LUNCHEON

MRS. BRUMLEY took her place at the head of the table with Captain Mapes and Sadie on either side of her; and began to count the vacant chairs in playful exasperation:

“One, two, three, four—I declare it’s disgraceful! Any one would think I was running a boarding house. Sadie, where’s Zeph?”

“I think,” answered Sadie, demurely looking down at her oysters, “that she’s helping the tutor with Charlie!”

“Fiddlesticks! What does she know about geometry? That Johnny Martin’s too young to be a tutor. Mr. Martin,” explained the hostess, addressing Captain Mapes, “is supposed to be preparing our boy for Columbia; if they keep on like this, Mr. Brumley says that Charlie will enter by the time he’s a grandfather.”

“Here they are now,” interposed Sadie, who sat facing the door.

“Gracious me, where have you children been?” demanded Dolly, scarcely waiting for them to enter. “Here’s Captain Mapes to lunch and everybody running off but Sadie and I. Captain Mapes, these are all my adopted children,” she added, with a twinkle in her eyes. “Now sit down right away.”

“You see,” said Zeph, making soft eyes at the

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stranger as she sat down between him and Charlie, "we didn't know that Captain Mapes was going to stay—did we, Charlie?"

"Why, Zeph," drawled the tutor from his place beside Sadie, "I thought your place was on *this* side of the table."

"It's different when there's company," retorted Zeph, smiling, saucy and unabashed; "isn't it, Charlie?"

"Zeph's got just as much right to one place as another," declared Charlie, taking her hand in his. Zeph flashed a look of triumph at the tutor, but he was speaking in a low tone to Sadie, evidently trying his best to make her laugh.

"Charlie, where's your father?" asked Mrs. Dolly; then, without waiting for an answer, turned to Captain Mapes.

"I'm ashamed of this, upon my word, Captain Mapes; you must think that I'm serving my family in courses."

"Mrs. Brumley," rejoined Captain Mapes, with grave courtesy, "this taste of home life is like nectar to me after—after——"

"So much salt water?" suggested the tutor.

"Yes—thank you; after so much salt water," said the other, speedily resolving to cast no gloom over the spirits of these young people. "But I do hope my host will come on with the dessert—is that the time for guardian angels to appear?"

"Guardian angels! Humph! Pretty good sized angel," said the tutor. "And when angels invite you to dinner, you can't expect them to come flopping around the table at lunch time!"

"Mr. Martin!" exclaimed Dolly in deep displeasure, and the tutor felt Sadie's eyes burning indignantly;

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but Captain Mapes threw back his head and laughed—his heartiest laugh for many a day.

“If *I* were an angel,” murmured Zeph in her most angelic manner, “I wouldn’t miss a chance like this.”

“But you *are* an angel, aren’t you?” rejoined Captain Mapes, gallantly rising to the occasion; then he looked up for Zeph’s pretty blushes, to meet Sadie’s amused, sympathetic, almost motherly look of interest. He smiled back at her; for somehow the understanding between him and this new-found cousin seemed perfect; and then he turned to his hostess.

“Are you sure there is such a person as Mr. Brumley?” he asked quizzically. “I’m half inclined to think he’s a myth—another Santa Claus.”

“You’ve hit the nail on the head,” declared the tutor without a change of countenance. Then he turned to Sadie and said in a whisper that could be heard all round the table:

“Say, the hero’s brilliant as well as handsome.”

Sadie drew angrily away, and Mrs. Brumley exclaimed:

“Johnny Martin, I shall ask you to leave the table if you don’t behave yourself.”

“Aunt Dolly, I wish you *would!*” cried Sadie, and Zeph giggled and said:

“Please do, Aunt Dolly!”

“I’ll beg you off, ‘*Johnny,*’” interposed Captain Mapes, and the laugh turned on the tutor.

“If you want to find your Santa Claus—your myth—your guardian angel,” said dauntless Mr. Martin, “go up to our magnificent courtroom and you’ll find him laying down the law to a lot of dirty tramps and poachers.”

“Oh, he’s just a darling!” cried Zeph, who had been

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too busy wondering how she would get Captain Mapes alone after lunch, to follow every word of the tutor's. "You'll do the very same thing when you get older, Captain Mapes."

Captain Mapes turned and faced her, which was just what Zeph wished; but she was somewhat surprised when he and every one else laughed.

"You put your foot in it this time, Zeph," cheerfully remarked the tutor, and Zeph poutingly appealed to Charlie for defence and explanation.

"Mr. Brumley," began Sadie, leaning forward with her hands folded on the table, "is the Justice of the village, Captain Mapes—a sort of an old-fashioned Squire, meting out justice like a father. They laugh about his tramps and poachers—there are four of his 'tramps' employed here on this place now, and they make good servants, too—don't they, Aunt Dolly? Why, if he chose,"—and here an audacious sparkle came into Sadie's eyes—"the Justice could turn even Mr. Martin into a self-respecting citizen."

There was a howl of pretended rage from the tutor, a shout of derisive laughter from Zeph and Charlie, while Mrs. Dolly exclaimed: "Gracious me!" and wondered why people should be talking such nonsensical stuff about Sadie when the girl was never more bright, more serenely happy, than at this moment.

"You make me more anxious than ever to see Mr. Brumley," said Captain Mapes, smiling at the tutor.

"Why?" Johnny Martin retorted. "To complain of the fit of his clothes?"

"Johnny Martin!" gasped Dolly, but every one else at the table looked puzzled.

"I knew that suit the minute I saw you," went on

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the tutor, serenely nibbling an olive. "You didn't think it worth while to alter the collar, eh?"

"Johnny Martin!" cried three feminine voices.

"That's all right, my son," said Captain Mapes, meeting the tutor's not unkindly eye; then he turned to Mrs. Brumley, and said in his more habitual, gravely courteous way:

"I think that this was the greatest kindness of all, and I could not have been more surprised had a wardrobe dropped from heaven than I was to see this suit lying on my bed when I entered the room at the hotel. And then, there were the flowers and the light and the warmth and the general air of comfort. It was almost like a home-coming, after—after—" His well modulated voice broke; and Mrs. Dolly, with a tender, sympathetic smile, murmured:

"Did you like it?"

"Like it!" he repeated, expressively.

"Then thank Mrs. Dolly," put in Dolly's son. "*She* did it."

"You?" And Captain Mapes stretched out his hand. "I might have known it was a woman's thoughtfulness."

"Now hear that, girls!" said Dolly; then added, with a warning pressure of her fingers: "But, mind, Captain Mapes, you must let Daniel think that *he* did it."

"That won't be hard," said the tutor. "He thinks he does everything that Mrs. Brumley does."

"He does *not!*" hotly exclaimed the natural young savage from Bleak Hill.

"Oh, ho!" crowed the tutor; "if you want to make Sadie mad, just say something against the Justice."

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Sadie's head went down, but came up again as Captain Mapes said:

"You are very loyal, my—Miss Jarvis." He had meant to say "my cousin," but her eyes forbade him.

"She thinks there's no one in the world like Daniel," said Mrs. Dolly, patting the girl's hand as it lay upon the table.

"Except my daddy," added Zeph, with a childish touch of jealousy.

"And *me*," mumbled the tutor.

"You can't guess who *I* think the world of," cooed Zeph, and everybody looked at her in amused surprise, except Charlie, who stared straight ahead of him and waited breathlessly; but Zeph was gazing full at Captain Mapes, with the imp of flirtation sparkling in her eyes.

"*I dare you to!*" called out the tutor; and immediately Zeph's eyes fell, and she shrank back in her chair flushing scarlet.

"Now, what do you mean by that, Johnny Martin?" demanded Mrs. Dolly. Zeph coughed ostentatiously and tried to catch the tutor's eye; but failed, and turned back to her faithful Sir Charles for protection.

"It's a part of a song," Mr. Martin was explaining cruelly. "Just the refrain of the song Zeph's eyes are always singing, '*I dare you to!*'"

Sadie's eyes and those of her kinsman met in silent laughter; but if Charlie could have killed with a look, the tutor would have died that instant.

"Who ever heard of eyes singing?" scornfully demanded the lad, his hand closing over Zeph's; but to his astonishment Zeph snatched her hand away and whispered:

"Fool!"

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"I wish you would learn to behave yourself, Johnny Martin," said Mrs. Brumley. "I don't want you to tease Zeph. She's sick. Just hear that cough now."

Zeph drew a long, self-pitying sigh and coughed a little louder.

"Take a little water, dear," suggested Dolly.

"Yes, do!" mocked the wicked tutor.

"She *has* got a cold!" declared Sadie, stanchly.

"A dreadful cold!" said Charlie, pressing his fingers lovingly over Zeph's on the glass that they two were holding to her lips; but Zeph pushed the glass away and began to cough again.

"You ought to attend to that cough, Miss Leggett," said Captain Mapes with grave sympathy; and Zeph thanked him with a look of her heavily fringed blue eyes; but she kept on coughing.

"Gracious me! she'll choke in a minute," exclaimed Mrs. Dolly.

A sound between a cough and a laugh escaped Sadie's lips, but every one except Captain Mapes was too much interested in Zeph to notice.

"Oh, dear!" said the little humbug, with the deepest sigh she could fetch; and, resting her head on her hands, she shut out her view of the distressed Charlie to get a better view of Captain Mapes.

"She'll die!" groaned innocent Charlie; and Johnny Martin grasped Sadie's hand and shook it with delight. Zeph coughed on.

"Pat her on the back," said Dolly, and both Captain Mapes and Charlie started to obey, but Mapes was the quicker one, and Charlie turned pale with jealousy as he saw the firm, well-shaped brown hand patting Zeph's shoulders.

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"Are you better now?" asked Captain Mapes, speaking in almost paternal tones and making the question an assertion.

"Y—yes, tha—ank you," stammered Zeph, looking up with a very flushed but still pretty face.

"Bless me! I had no idea your cough was so bad," said Mrs. Brumley. "It's a good thing you didn't go back to the convent."

"A mighty good thing!" added the tutor knowingly.

"The convent?" Captain Mapes turned to Zeph in surprise.

"Were *you* educated in a convent, Miss Leggett?"

"Yes; why not?" asked Zeph, with wide-open eyes.

"Didn't they do it well?" said the tutor, admiringly.

"Yes, I think they did," rejoined Captain Mapes; and Zeph said "Thank you" very prettily.

"If I'm not much mistaken," drawled Johnny Martin, when the laugh against Zeph had subsided, "here comes Captain Mapes's guardian angel fluttering down the hall."

"Not Daniel? Gracious me!" said Dolly, instantly getting up from the table.

"It's impossible," declared Zeph, looking around at the door. "He didn't call——"

"*'Hy, Dolly, where are you!'*" finished three youthful voices in a chorus of laughter.

Mr. Brumley appeared in the doorway and looked around the room in a way more suggestive of partial blindness than ever.

"Here I am, Daniel," said Dolly, laying her hand on his arm. "What's the matter?" She had read the word Trouble in large letters all over his face, but she did not

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wait for him to answer, save with a meaning glance at Sadie, before she went on:

“Here is Captain Mapes waiting to see you.”

Mr. Brumley held out his hand and said: “How do you do?” so perfunctorily that Captain Mapes felt a vague sense of disappointment in the man.

“We didn’t wait lunch for you, Daniel,” said Mrs. Dolly easily, “not even Sadie; and you can’t have her now, either, because she’s going upstairs to get off some letters for me, aren’t you, dear?”

“I will do it right away,” said Sadie, rising from the table. Captain Mapes intercepted her on the way to the door, and, as they shook hands, asked in a tone so low that no one else heard:

“When may I declare our relationship?”

“Don’t you think you’d better wait till you know me better?” she asked, without the slightest touch of coquetry.

“No,” said he decisively; but at that moment Mr. Brumley came up to them.

“Sadie?”

“Yes?” she asked, smiling, and laying her hand on the older man’s arm, because of the care and trouble that she saw in his face.

“I just wanted to look at you,” said Mr. Brumley, trying to smile as he gazed down into her eyes. “My dear,” he added, not too steadily, “you have the truest eyes in the world. Run along.” She flushed with pleasure, smiled, and bowed to Captain Mapes; then left the room.

“Daniel! Daniel!” said Mrs. Dolly when the door had closed; “what is it?” The Justice sank down in a chair and buried his face in his hands. Dolly went

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over to him and stroked his hair in her loving, womanly way, while she waited for him to speak. Captain Mapes felt that he should leave them, but a power greater than himself made him stay.

"Devine Strong," said Mr. Brumley at last, without lifting his head, "has been found."

There was a moment's silence.

"Alive?" asked Dolly's trembling voice.

"N—no."

The clock on the mantle ticked—ticked—ticked.

"Oh, my dear!" moaned Dolly, slipping her arm around her husband's neck and resting her head against his for a moment. Then she released him and begged him to tell all that there was to tell; and he told about the finding of the body and the gun and the shawl, all together.

"It seems a clear case against her," he muttered, breaking the painful silence that followed.

"But she never did it!" declared Dolly. "Do you believe that she did it, Daniel?"

"I will believe whatever she tells me," said poor Daniel. Dolly turned to the wretched, silent group of young people—Charlie and Zeph clinging to each other's hands; the tutor serious at last; the stranger grasping hard to the back of a chair.

"Will nobody stand up for her?" cried Mrs. Dolly.

"I will!" called out Zeph—Zeph, so small, so flirtatious, so frivolous! "And Charlie. We were brought up together."

"And I," said Captain Mapes, stepping forward; "her mother was a Mapes, and my own cousin."

"This is very noble of you all," said Mr. Martin,

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after a pause. "With Mr. Brumley, I will believe whatever she says."

"My heavens!" cried Mr. Brumley, the words fairly wrenched from him, "what *can* she say?"

No one answered.

Dolly, with a quick, motherly movement, drew Daniel's face against her breast, bending low over his gray head; and one by one the young people stole out of the room.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

THE BOY AND THE BOAT

WHEN Captain Mapes drove up to Brumley Hall he did not know Sarah Jarvis, he did not even know whom she might be; but he was resolved, if she were the daughter of his deadly enemy at Bleak Hill, to have as little to do with her as possible. When he left Brumley Hall, a few hours later, he not only knew that she was the daughter of the murderous wretch at Bleak Hill, but also that she herself was about to be arrested for murder; and yet, in the face of these facts, he had publicly declared that he and she were of one blood, and practically sworn to serve her as well as lay within his power. However, as he walked down the snow-covered road, between the winter-stripped willows, he did not think of his own changed position; but only of Sarah Jarvis, trying in vain to answer the question for her:

“Guilty or not guilty?”

He and the tutor had had a long talk in Mr. Martin's study after luncheon, during which he had learned all that the tutor knew about the character and history of Sarah Mapes Jarvis; and Mr. Martin, for all of his love of fun, was a keen, sympathetic, and intelligent observer. His summing up had been this:

“The girl, brought under certain influences, is capable of any action, good or bad, sublime or infernal—*except* an untruth.”

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Then what would she say when the question was put: "Guilty or not guilty?"

Guilty, for whatsoever reason—knowing that her hands were stained with the blood of a fellow-man; remembering every single moment, as she must, how he looked when she shot him, how he writhed in his death agony, how she left him lying out on the stormy beach with the blood oozing out from his wound over the snow—could she have spoken with such compassionate feeling, such bitter self-reproach of the wreck? Could she have met his eyes so unflinchingly? Could she have sat at the same table with those young people and laughed as lightly as any? Could she have kept her unstudied repose of manner—her restful restfulness, with that terrible thing on her mind? Good heavens, no! Unless she were a monster.

At this point in his reflections, Captain Mapes stepped upon the bridge, and there was roused out of his own thoughts by the sight of a common, shabby country boy poling a sharpie up the ice-choked brook with silent, dogged determination. Remembering his own boyhood, and that "the thoughts of a boy are long, long thoughts," Captain Mapes leaned upon the rail and watched to see what the lad would do when he reached the bridge.

"You can't get under," said the man, kindly; "too much ice."

The boy gave one sly, quick glance upward and silently went on poling; then he laid down the pole, seized the painter, and jumped upon the icy shore, dragging the sharpie with him.

"Let me help you," said Captain Mapes, going down the bank. The boy glanced up again; then, without

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a sound, moved to one side of the bow, while Captain Mapes took hold of the other.

“What?” said the Captain when the boy still kept tugging after the boat was far up on the shore. “Going across the road?”

“Yes-yes,” growled the youth, scowling blackly, as if at the impertinence of any man’s questioning him. Captain Mapes, with a smile of amusement, helped drag the sharpie across the road; and, holding the painter as the boat slipped down into the stream again, ventured upon another question:

“Now, where are you going?”

The same sly, furtive look, but no answer.

“Where does the brook come from?”

“Mill pond.”

“Going there?” asked the Captain, adopting the boy’s own short manner of speech.

“Yes-yes,” muttered the boy, trying to drag the rope out of the Captain’s hand.

“Aren’t you afraid of the boat’s being caught in the ice and smashed?”

“Let her smash!” And now genuine anger flashed in the boy’s gloomy eye; but Captain Mapes could see that the anger was not against him.

“Will you tell me why you are so determined to go to the pond?” insisted the Captain, laying his hand on the boy’s shoulder and speaking in his most kindly, winning manner. The boy jerked away and answered shortly:

“Ter hunt up my boat.”

“Your boat? Have you lost it? What kind of a boat was it?”

“Sharpie, rigged up fer a catboat—I earnt it myself.”

The Boy and the Boat

At last the boy's tongue was loosened; and he appealed wrathfully to Captain Mapes:

"Say, what would *you* do ef some durn ol' cuss come along an' stole *your* boat—*what yer earnt yerself with yer own money?*"

"I should make him give it up," answered the Captain promptly.

"Can't do nawthink with *him*; he's dead."

"Then he can't have any further use for your boat; and you'll find it without a doubt. How do you know it's at the mill pond?"

"Don't. But he went an' stole it onct before, an' went an' took some woman up ter the mill pond in it; and left it there *with the mast out*—gol durn him!" The boy's wrongs, and the stranger's unaffected sympathy with them, gave the lad an unwonted flow of language. "I been over ter the North Side acuttin' wood fer the las' week; an' when I got hum this mornin' I went right down ter the crick ter see about my boat. An' I left it kinder hid under the lee of the bushes where the crick takes a curve down there by them air woods (see?), an' nobody didn't know nawthink about it, *I* thought; an' now I've looked high an' low, an' I can't find it nowheres!"

"That's a shame! Have you asked anybody about it?"

"No-no; hain't agoin' ter, neither. Gran'pop'd break my neck ef he knowed it. I know that durn ol' Devine Strong stole it, an' I'll find it yit."

"Devine Strong!" repeated Captain Mapes, his thoughts rushing back to the painful subject of the murder, and his friendly interest in the boy lessening in consequence. "From all that I hear, that man lived

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only to make trouble. You go to Justice Brumley if you don't find your boat. Maybe somebody else took it."

The boy grunted an ambiguous grunt and began to pole away from the bank; but suddenly he paused, resting on the pole.

"Say," he called, with more young life in his voice than Captain Mapes would have thought possible; "be you the Cap'n what was froze?"

"I'm the Captain of the 'Sarah M.,'" answered Mapes with sad sternness. The boy's open mouth and eyes grew wider.

"Good-bye," said Captain Mapes. "Let me know if you find your boat, will you?"

"I thought yer was froze!" said the boy, looking the Captain over from head to foot in evident disappointment.

"No; only the tips of my ears," said Mapes, and, to avoid this unpleasant curiosity, hastened up the road, the boy scowling after him.

"Only the tips of his ears!" said the lad with a contemptuous snort. "An' they said he was *froze!*"

Ben and Captain Mapes

CHAPTER XXXIV

BEN AND CAPTAIN MAPES

CAPTAIN MAPES had not been in his prim, bare room at the hotel many moments when there was a knock on the door; and he opened it to admit a very large, very handsome, and very much embarrassed young bayman. "How do you do?" said Captain Mapes, cordially holding out his hand. "You are—you must be Ben Benstra."

"How'd you know?" asked Ben with his beautiful smile, and yet with the little laugh of embarrassment that so often accompanied it.

"From all that I heard about you at the Station. (Sit down; do!) I have been meaning to hunt you up. It seems that I owe you a great debt of gratitude, Mr. Benstra."

"No-no," cried Ben, a flush overspreading his face. "You didn't think I come for that, did you? No-no. I——" He paused, and again he was the shy Dutch boy, twirling his old brown hat between his knees. Then he looked up wistfully and said:

"Say—say, how is she?" Captain Mapes looked puzzled, and Ben went on hesitatingly:

"They told me you went up there—that you'd been there for hours. How—how did she take it?"

Then Captain Mapes remembered all of Billy Downs's talk about Sadie and Ben—Sadie and Ben; and his

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heart went out to the lad; but he did not understand why Ben should come to a stranger for news of the girl he loved.

“Why don’t you go there yourself, Mr. Benstra?” he asked.

“What? *Me?*” returned Ben in surprise. “Up to that big house? Why, she wouldn’t want to see *me!*” Then he leaned forward in his chair, asking with painful eagerness:

“Have they told her yet? What did she say? Poor little Sadie!”

“They hadn’t told her when I came away. Ben—I may call you Ben?—you know her better than I do; you have known her all your life—do you think she did it?”

“Did it!” cried Ben, getting up from his chair in violent indignation; but Captain Mapes reached out his hand and pushed Ben back; and then explained his relationship to the girl and told Ben how anxious he was to believe in her and help her all he could—speaking with such sincerity that Ben could not doubt his word.

“Is there any one else who could have done it?” asked Mapes.

“I don’t see,” answered poor Ben. “There’s nobody over to the beach but the life-savers, and none of them had the grudge that she had against Devine Strong. Wish I could make it appear that I did it.”

Captain Mapes sat up straight and looked at the Dutch boy. Ben was staring down at his battered brown hat, and there was no trace of self-consciousness in his manner.

“Would you do that?” asked Captain Mapes.

“What?” said Ben, looking up.

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“Suffer in her stead?”

“Of course. Sure! Why not?” answered Ben simply.

“You’re sure there’s nobody else who could have done it?” persisted Mapes. “Didn’t that man have any other enemies?”

“Yes-yes; more enemies than any other man on Long Island; but they wasn’t over to the beach when he was killed. I ’spose that woman, ’Liza, hated him about as much as anybody, but you can’t find hide nor hair of her. I saw her youngster swinging on old Mrs. Strong’s gate when I came along.”

“This woman ’Liza—who was she?” asked Mapes.

“A poor thing he ought to married and didn’t, and——”

“When did she disappear?”

“On Sunday; the day Devine was killed.”

The two men looked into each other’s eyes.

“Might not she have done it?”

“Couldn’t got to the beach in that storm to save her life. It was all Abe Thurber and Devine could do to get across.”

“Would it have been possible,” asked Captain Mapes, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, “for any one to have gotten over in a sharpie rigged up as a catboat?”

“No-no! She’d gone to the bottom in sight of an hour.”

There was a long silence, during which Ben looked out of the window down upon the village street, and Captain Mapes went over to a small table and began to write. At last, Ben got up and moved to the door.

“Well, so long,” he said, with a hopeless sigh. “I guess I bothered you enough.”

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“You haven’t bothered me at all, and I mean to help you yet,” said Captain Mapes, rising and taking Ben’s hand in a brotherly grasp. “I was writing to my cousin to tell her that I should come to see her to-night.”

“That’s what I was going to ask you,” said Ben with relief and gratitude. “Just make her feel that we all believe in her and she’ll explain it all away. And—and give her my love. And tell her if there’s anything in the world I can do—if—if she can’t explain and there’s any way of proving I did it—” Here Ben’s voice broke, and he hastily drew his hand across his eyes.

“You are very foolish not to go see her yourself,” said Captain Mapes, with mingled pity and irritation.

“’Twould only bother her,” said Ben; then added with a trace of anxiety: “They treat her well, don’t they?”

“Like a daughter,” answered Captain Mapes emphatically.

“Well, she don’t need *me*, then; but give her my love—all my love. I’ll be waiting here for you when you come back to-night.” Ben held out his hand again, attempted to say “Good-bye,” but succeeded only in making a sound that was half a sob, and then went out hurriedly.

His time for manly action, for unwearying search and toil, was yet to come.

Sadie Remembers

CHAPTER XXXV

IN WHICH SADIE REMEMBERS

THE library was dimly lighted; the fire on the hearth had been forgotten, and was slowly dying out; not the sound of a voice or a footstep reached the room; the whole house seemed as still as if death's hushing presence stood at the door. Captain Mapes caught himself walking about on tip-toe while he waited for Sarah Jarvis.

Would she come? Not for her own sake, he knew—not for his sympathy; but would the fact that when writing he had told her that he had imperative need of her assistance bring her to him now? He felt that he could not go away without having heard her self-defence, her explanation—felt that he could not leave Shoreville without first having done all that he could to help this unhappy child. But would she deign to defend herself? Would she give him the chance to help her?

“You wanted me?” said a hard, clear, even voice. He looked up at the doorway in surprise: there stood the woman of his thoughts in front of the velvet portières—her hands clasped behind her back, her head well lifted, her face white with the whiteness of anger—fearless, scornful, proud, defiant—her wonderful eyes ablaze with the passionate fire of her emotions. She was awe-inspiring. For a moment, Captain Mapes watched her

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without moving or speaking; then he went quickly forward and, with his heart torn with compassion, murmured:

“Little kinswoman!”

She started, threw him a swift look of question as if doubting his good faith; then said again in the same hard way:

“You wanted me?”

Drawing close to where she stood motionless, he replied:

“I have come as one of your own people—as a friend—a friend who hopes to help you.”

She drew a long breath, unclasped her hands and let them fall to her sides, but she did not speak nor did she look at him. He moved so that his arm came in contact with hers; and she did not move away. Presently he broke the silence by saying:

“I am sure that I can help you.”

“Nobody can help me,” she replied with hard hopelessness.

“How do you know that?” he asked quickly.

She trembled and drew away.

“Come, cousin,” he pleaded, “let us sit down while I tell you why I wrote you that note.”

“You said that you needed my assistance,” she rejoined with cold suspicion, making a movement as if to leave the room; but he took her hand in a close, warm clasp and led her to a chair beside the table. There was something in the touch of his hand that moved her more than any word could have moved; and as she sank into the chair she faltered:

“You are so good to me.”

Encouraged at that, he drew his chair close beside and

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facing hers; and began to talk slowly and gently, as to a little child:

“First you must feel that I am your friend and that I believe absolutely in your innocence.” She made no motion, sitting quietly with her face averted and her head bent down. He went on:

“You have been in my thoughts every moment since I left this house this afternoon; and the only reason why I did not come before was because I supposed the news would be kept from you as long as possible.”

Still no sign from the girl.

“Sadie,” he began again, “I am going to call you Sadie if you will let me, because you, too, are a Mapes, and not only my cousin, but also my little sister, now that this trouble has come upon you, Sadie.”

She did not answer, but it seemed to him that it was only because she was afraid of tears.

“Sadie, will you believe that I wish to help you just as I believe that you would have helped me the night of the wreck? And do you understand that I know you are as guiltless of this crime as you are blameless for what happened Sunday night?”

A wordless murmur seemed to answer in the affirmative.

“Then, knowing that I have full faith in you, will you not tell me how you happened to lose your gun and shawl?”

She shrank away from him, and he could see her hand tighten as it lay on the table.

“My dear child,” he said, after letting some moments pass, “I do not wish to hurt you; I would not pain you needlessly for anything in the world; but if I am to help you—and I believe that I can help you—

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you must tell me all that happened on Sunday. I mean," he added hastily at the sight of her cheeks flushing, "when you were alone on the dunes before they found you without your shawl and the gun."

She leaned forward and hid her face against her arm on the table. Again there was silence in the room. Then he asked:

"What made you go out in the storm?"

Only the same stillness answered him. He got up and walked over to the fireplace; then came back and leaning over her chair, laid his hand upon her head and said with infinite gentleness:

"What made you go out in the storm?"

"I—I can't tell you," she whispered.

"Dear cousin, I am pained to remind you that very soon you will have to tell the coroner's jury."

A dry sob escaped her and he saw a shudder run through her frame.

"Don't think that I said that to hurt you," he said entreatingly, still with his hand on her head. "Listen to me: would it not be far better for you to tell me all that you remember now, so that, if possible, I can save you from—from the other telling?"

"But why *you*?" asked the girl, lifting her head.

"Yes, I know," he rejoined as he sat down again. "I am only a stranger, after all, and you have friends innumerable; but I was vain enough——"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, for the first time rising out of herself. "But it is useless. No one can help me."

"Why not—when you are innocent?"

"It is useless," she repeated, with a hardening of her lips; and again he let the silence come between

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them. Then he said, in the same patient, persistent way:

“Try to remember, Sadie. The Rector was telling me this afternoon: You were left alone at the Station with Mr. Hedges; he went to sleep and you became so nervous that you couldn’t keep still, and went out of doors. Wasn’t that the reason? *One* of the reasons? Yes. Now, try to think. What was the other? Cousin, do not turn away from me. I am only asking you questions that you must answer later on. What was the other reason?”

“I don’t know,” she answered, a puzzled line coming between her brows.

“Why did you take the gun?”

Her hands doubled into tight-shut fists as if she were locking her reserve and her self-control fast within. He put his hand on her arm, gently beginning to stroke the gray sleeve.

“Do you remember, my child, why you took the gun?”

“Oh!” she sighed. “What *will* you think of me?”

His hand continued to move over her sleeve; but after that childish appeal he found himself unable to speak.

“I think,” he said at last, “that you are a good and true woman who will tell the truth and the truth only.”

Then she let her eyes meet his.

“I will tell the truth,” she said simply.

“There, that is better. Now, why did you take the gun?”

“I took the gun because I thought I might possibly meet—” The sentence was cut short by a tearless sob.

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"You took it so that in case you happened to meet him you would have something with which to defend yourself. You did not think of killing him when you went out? No; I know you did not."

He could hear her difficult breathing, could see the hunted look in her eyes, as she made an effort to get up from the chair in spite of his detaining hand.

"Oh, please, please!" she begged.

"Sadie," he pleaded in his turn, "sit down. And remember that I am your friend. Never mind why you went out with the gun. You wandered over the dunes in the blinding snow—did you meet any one?"

"N—no," she answered, but not convincingly.

"You didn't see any one until you stood upon the bluff and saw the crew below you? (Billy Downs told me about that.)" Sarah hesitated, and it seemed to him that she did not answer because she could not answer the question even in her own mind.

"Is your arm entirely well now?" he asked, with seeming irrelevance. She looked up, surprised, and nodded. "Yes." Then, while her eyes were on his, he asked suddenly:

"How did the gun happen to go off?"

She started up, her hands grasping the arms of the chair, her wide terrified eyes gazing at him as the eyes of a deer might gaze at a huntsman; then her lids fell and, slowly and wearily, she rose to her feet. This time he did not attempt to detain her; but she paused and with an involuntary motion of appeal, stretched out her hand toward him. His head was miserably bowed down; and that was why he did not see or take the hand; but she misunderstood, and over her face and figure there came an immediate change.

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“I told you,” she began with proud defiance, “that you should wait until you knew me better before you acknowledged—you—you acknowledged—” But here the tearless sob again choked her, and she broke down, covering her face with her hands. He was on his feet in an instant, bending over her, murmuring he knew not what, but words fitted to a child and turning her back into a child again:

“Oh!” she complained at last, uplifting her face to him. “Nobody will believe me—not even you.”

“But I do believe you—I do!” he said brokenly, for the “not even you” had almost unmanned him. They sat down together again, the sympathy now perfect between them.

“Now tell me from the beginning,” he urged when he thought she was able to endure questioning. “I will understand.”

“Will you?” she asked in sweet wonder, yet with simple faith. “Then I will try hard to remember.”

“That is like a good, brave girl.”

“It is like a dream—a horrible nightmare. And I can’t seem to be sure of anything.”

“I know; you were ill and half mad.”

“Half mad,” she repeated in a whisper; “half mad.” Then she sank into painful thought; but he roused her by saying:

“They will ask you why you went out upon the dunes. Tell me, Sadie.”

“I can’t be sure,” she replied wistfully. “But I think it was because I wanted to see my father. He—Devine, I mean—had said——”

“Had grossly slandered you,” put in the man without looking at her.

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“Yes; and I knew that he would go and tell father the same thing.”

“Well, then, you went out to meet your father and, naturally fearing that you might encounter that man, you took the gun. Perhaps you had had occasion to protect yourself with it before?”

“I had!” she answered with a sudden flash of anger. Captain Mapes made a sound like a growl; and spent some moments in wishing that he might have the pleasure of encountering Devine Strong in the flesh.

“Come, cousin,” said Mapes at length; “we will never accomplish anything at this rate. What direction did you take when you left the Station?”

“I went right down to the surf.”

“And after that?”

“I went east along the shore.”

“Then,” he went on, as if thinking aloud, “finding the wind too strong on the beach and the surf threatening, you climbed up to the dunes to get within the lee of the bluff.”

No answer.

“Sadie?”

“Oh, I *can't* seem to remember!”

“Don't you see that that must have been the reason, unless you saw some one coming along the beach? No? Then that was it; and once among the dunes, you were driven back by the wind and wandered aimlessly in the snow until you came to the place where you lost your shawl. Did you lose the shawl first or the gun? It is extraordinary that they should have been found together, when one remembers the high wind.”

“I don't remember which I lost first,” she said despairingly.

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“But you *must* remember.”

She sighed, and he let her rest for a while before beginning again.

“I know how it happened,” he said, closely watching her face. “The wind blew away your shawl, and as you ran after it you tripped and fell, dropping the gun, which, by the force of the fall, exploded. And,” he went on, slowly, keeping her eyes fast on his, “as you were rising you saw stretched out on the snow in front of you a dark object; and,” he continued steadily, despite the ominous blaze in her eyes, “without a thought of either the gun or the shawl, you ran away.”

“How dare you!” she cried, forgetful of everything else in her indignation.

“I knew it was not so—I merely wished to make you remember. You must believe me—I know you did not.”

Impressed by his sincerity, she sank back in her chair, and began to speak hurriedly:

“I remember now; I thought I heard somebody calling to me out of the snow.” Captain Mapes started, then recovered himself with an effort. “And it scared me so, out there all alone on the dunes, that I almost fell down and, in trying to catch myself, I did fall. The gun wrenched my arm and bounded ahead of me and went off with a noise that brought me to my senses; and I knew——”

“One moment,” interrupted Captain Mapes. “You said you heard a voice calling your name. Did you recognize that voice?”

“Oh, my God!” moaned the girl, and in her agony she might have added: “Why hast Thou forsaken me?”

“Was it his?” asked Captain Mapes, scarcely less moved than she.

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“Devine’s—yes, Devine’s! You see it is no use!” said Sarah, distractedly.

“Oh, no; we won’t give up yet,” said Captain Mapes, speaking far more confidently than he felt. “Have you any way of knowing just where you were then—when you dropped the gun?”

“It fell to the foot of a very large dune—as large as any on the beach, and there was a thick growth of grass all over it.”

“I am afraid it is your gun that they found, without a doubt. You said you heard a voice calling you. Did you *see* any one?”

The man’s heart sank when he saw her hesitate; at last she whispered:

“I didn’t see *him*.”

“What did you see?”

Another long silence; then the girl said haltingly:

“I thought at the time that it was just the snow; but as I got up after the fall and my eyes were turned toward that big dune, I saw—I saw what seemed to be a face looking out from the brown grass.”

“It might have been his face, and, if so——”

“His face?” She shook her head. “I’d know his face anywhere. I guess it was only a fancy; but I’ve thought of it many times since.”

“Did you lose your shawl when the gun fell?”

“N—no. I didn’t lose it then. I can remember holding it at my throat afterward; but I wasn’t very strong; and I guess the wind blew it from me. I do remember feeling too tired to go after it.”

“It’s extraordinary that it should have blown right back to that spot,” he said thoughtfully. “Is there anything peculiar about your shawl?”

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“Peculiar? I guess not. Father bought it for me to wear on the boat and over to the beach. He bought it at one of our stores.”

“Then there were a number of the same pattern?”

“No, they were different plaids—most of them, anyway. I never saw one like mine; but—” Suddenly she started as if some one had lashed her across the face.

“But what?”

“Devine Strong,” she said, speaking through close-shut teeth, “was laughing about it one day; and I never knew why till now. He said that ’Liza Ross had one just like it.”

She sank back, looking gloomily ahead of her; and after a moment he rose from his chair:

“You are very tired, dear cousin; but I want you to grant me just one more favor before I go.”

“Favor?” she repeated, trying to smile in answer to his smile. He took her two hands in his, gently drawing her to her feet.

“It is a very great deal, Sadie,” he said, again smiling. “A very great deal to ask of you.”

“You cannot ask too much of *me*,” she replied, remembering how kind he had been, despite the fact that she was her father’s daughter.

“It is this, then: Put all your trouble upon me for to-night. Go to bed and rest easily, if you cannot sleep. And to-morrow, before you come to face what you have got to face, I will come to you again—I hope, I believe, with good news. Will you trust me, Sadie?”

“I—I—” she began, influenced by his touch, his magnetism, his absolute sincerity, almost into believing that he had miraculous power. “I thank you; and yes—oh, yes, I trust you. You are so good to me,” she

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went on hurriedly, "so good! And yet we did not know each other this morning. If I could be as sure of people that have known me all my life I should not dread this quite so much."

Sarah was thinking of her name already being sullied and smeared and made black and filthy in the hands of the gloating old gossips of Shoreville; but he, suddenly remembering that he had failed to mention Ben Benstra, thought Sadie was thinking of the Dutch lad's silence in her hour of piercing trouble.

"Ben Benstra was in to see me this afternoon and to beg me to come to you. He sent you his love—all his love, poor boy! And he said that if there was anything in the world he could do for you, he would do it gladly; and he seemed possessed by the desire to stand in your place."

"Dear old Ben!" she murmured softly. "He has no need to tell me; I know." She went to one of the low bookcases and leaned against it, her face hidden from Mapes.

"You tell Ben," she said at last, in a muffled voice, "that he must never come near me again—that I do not want to see him ever again."

"Miss Jarvis!" exclaimed her kinsman in bitter disappointment.

"Will you tell him?" asked Sadie without turning around; and Mapes answered shortly:

"No!"

Then Sadie faced about with a sad, inscrutable smile.

"Yes, you will tell him—for his sake if not for mine. I do not love Ben." And again the gasping sound interrupted her speech, but she went on directly: "No, I do not love him; but I am far too fond of him—too

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proud of him—to let his name be dragged through the dirt with mine. You older people, I cannot help, it is different with you; but Ben—Ben—*will* you tell him?" In her earnestness she laid her hand on the Captain's arm.

"Yes," he answered, but with inward reservations, as his own hand closed over hers. Sadie divined his thoughts, however, and said:

"Don't tell him the reason why, but only that I wish never to see him again. It will hurt him now, but—" Without warning, she bowed her head on her hand and began to cry softly.

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CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GARDEN FENCE

AT one side of the Moneylender's house there was a garden; and between this garden and the neighboring yard there ran, or rather tottered, a rickety, unpainted old fence. Every picket of this fence had been relieved of a threatening weight of snow by the warm morning sun, and the snow on the garden path had turned into slush, when Mrs. Hiram Hedges bounced in her hurried fashion out of her kitchen door and hastened down the path, her unbuttoned shoes slipping with every step, her green plaid shawl dragging from her large, red hand.

"Mi's Hallet's been ahangin' over the fence sence daylight," she mumbled with as much distress as if she had kept an emperor waiting; yet Mrs. Hallet was only her neighbor—a big, ever-smiling woman with six curl papers resting across the top of her spacious forehead and a red cotton table cover thrown over her head.

"Been awaitin' long?" called out the Moneylender's wife, breathless with eagerness and haste as she came up to the fence.

"Wall," rejoined Mrs. Hallet with her usual ready, silent laugh, "I 'bout made up my mind as *you'd* been an' murdered somebody yerself—Hime, mebbe, until I seen him go out'n the gate."

"He wouldn't budge a minute sooner," declared Mrs. Hedges resentfully, flinging her shawl over her broad

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shoulders. "I been jes' adyin' ter git here an' hear the news. Hime wouldn't tell nawthink."

"George wouldn't neither," rejoined Mrs. George Hallet. "I tol' him that I'd like ter know, I says, what good him abein' on the jury was agoin' ter do me, I says, ef he wa'n't agoin' ter tell nawthink 'bout it. Thar hain't no countin' on men folks; now, ef they had women-folks on juries——"

"What'd yer make of the verdict?" interrupted the other; but at that moment a clanging sound came from the direction of the front yard and the aspirant for jury duty turned around, exclaiming:

"Lorgens-souls! Ef that hain't Char'y Esther acomin' in the gate. Wa'n't her brother-in-law on the jury?"

"Yop," answered Mrs. Hedges, adding in a whisper: "You'll hear some tall talkin' now; her tongue's awagin' a'ready."

Charity Esther Green could be depended upon to do what was expected of her; so now, as she bustled up the path, her prominent under jaw worked with the rapidity of a monkey's over a feast of peanuts.

"Did yew ever see sech slushy weather in yer born days!" she screamed, too much of a business woman to waste time over formalities. "I thought I never *should* git up street. Law sakes! Yew tew be ferever ahangin' over the fence! Say, Mi's Hedges," she added with malicious purpose, "what d'yew think of yer friend, Sa'y Jarvis, now?"

Mrs. Hedges drew up her shapeless figure and took her plump elbows from the fence, as she loyally declared:

"I don't think no less of her than I ever done."

"*You* hain't agoin' ter chuck a little thing like mur-

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der in her face, be yer?" laughed Mrs. Hallet, shaking like a form of gelatine.

"I don't see nawthink ter laugh at," retorted Mrs. Hedges; and in a noble spirit of forgiveness turned to Miss Green.

"Do you, Char'y Esther?"

"No-no!" Charity Esther snapped her black eyes at the grinning, joking, time-wasting Mrs. George Hallet. "This hain't no laughin' matter. An' I guess ef yew was Sa'y Jarvis, yew'd laugh on the other side of yer jaw, Mi's Hallet."

"Poor gal!" groaned the Moneylender's wife, heavily leaning on the fence.

"Anyhow," admitted the charitable Mrs. Hallet, "I suppose we ought ter be sorry fer her whether she done it or not."

But this breadth of view did not meet with Charity Esther's approval.

"Yew don't need ter waste no sympathy on *her*," she declared energetically. "Her head's gone up two inches, an' laws knows it was high 'nough before."

Brief though it was, this news was from a trustworthy quarter, and Mrs. Hedges thirstily gasped for more.

"How'd she take it?"

"Ca'm an' cool as a cucumber," answered Charity Esther. "Jim said so."

"An' George said," put in Mrs. Hallet, "he did manage ter say *that* much—that there was no upsottin' *her*. He says, says he, that she stood up thar before 'em all as ef she was the Queen of Africky agoin' ter chop their heads off; an' she didn't give no odds fer nobody."

"That's Sade Jarvis all over," joyfully declared the girl's friend. "She's got spunk, she has!"

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“Spunk!” ejaculated honest Charity Esther. “Gall I call it—downright gall! An’ them fool men thought ’twas fine! An’ save me”—in her righteous indignation the woman struck the fence with her mittened hand—“ef she didn’t hev everybody awaitin’ on her hand an’ foot. Jim says, says he, that Rev’re’n’ Dan an’ that big-bug Brumley, an’ Hime Hedges (yes-yes, your ol’ man, tew, Miss’ Hedges), an’ that air Cap’n Mapes, even—he says the hull lot of ’em was ahoverin’ ’round her after the inquest. She was like one leetle chicken with a lot o’ hens acluckin’ over her.”

“Only them hens was all roosters,” said Mrs. Hallet with a self-appreciative grin.

“Wall, I swan! Miss’ Hallet!” ejaculated Charity Esther at this moment, “be you agivin’ a party? Here be Hannah Charlotte an’ Licky Mott acomin’ in the yard. The idee of folks agaddin’ the streets Sad’day mornin’!”

“Yes-yes!” assented her two hard-working companions, in shocked tones. However, Mrs. Hallet turned around to smile her broadest grin at the two approaching guests.

“Come right along an’ jine the circle!” she called out with the generous hospitality of a woman who will entertain you in her back yard, summer or winter, and cheerfully offer you the freedom of her half of the garden fence. The owner of the other half reached her head far into her neighbor’s yard, after the manner of a cow that sees better pasture in the adjoining field.

“Was you agoin’ anywhar, Hannah Charlotte?” she asked, by way of greeting, addressing the elder of the newcomers—a woman that was continually holding up her skirts with one hand and adjusting her steel-rimmed

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spectacles with the other; and continually peering into other people's affairs without compromising herself or getting a stain on her own garments.

"Wall," said this gentle old lady, taking elbow room next to Charity Esther, "I sot out ter go down ter Lil's, but I met Licky, here, an' she was atellin' me all 'bout that air deceitful Sade Jarvis. An' we seen you an' Miss' Hallet ahangin' over the fence, *fer a change*; an' we thought we'd come in an' talk it over."

"Did they git her off ter Riverhead? That's what I'm adyin' ter know," said Mrs. Hallet. "Er did she have ter roost along with the tramps in the lock-up all night?"

"Thar hain't no call ter worry 'bout *her*, I guess," remarked young Mrs. Licky Mott in her exasperatingly slow, soft-spoken way. "I went over ter Si Corwin's las' night jes' ter see ef he was ter hum, er ef he'd gone down ter Riverhead. An' Miss' Corwin, she says, says she, that they got her off on the las' train, though they had ter put' nigh bust their b'ilers ter git ter the station in time."

"Pooh!" snapped Charity Esther in disgust at such roundabout information. "Yew fellers must hev been asleep! I was up thar myself. The platform was jes' packed an' jammed with folks what'd better been home amindin' their own business. I felt kinder sorry fer her myself with all them meddlin' busybodies asnoopin' an' apryin' at her."

"But you snooped an' pryed with the rest, I bet on that!" laughed Mrs. Hallet, nudging Licky Mott's elbow.

"Miss' Corwin says," drawled Mrs. Mott, "she says, says she, that Sadie Jarvis carried it off somethink won-

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derful. All them air men was with her. An' Square Brumley was jes' a-itchin' ter order a special train fer her—Miss' Corwin says so. An' that air fightin' ol' pirate of a 'Piscopal minister was uglier 'n a bear with a sore head ter everybody what looked cross-eyed at her. An' Hime Hedges——”

Mrs. Mott paused, having enough decency to feel embarrassed when she met Mrs. Hedges's eye ; but the eye did not burn with resentment.

“ Oh, Hime sets a heap by Sadie ! ” said the Money-lender's wife, as if she were proud of the fact. “ He hain't acarin', as far as *he's* consarned, whether she went an' killed that air pesky Devine er not. ”

“ She saved him a hangin', anyway, ” admitted Charity Esther, and then she took up the tangled thread of the story.

“ Wall, sir—mebbe yew won't b'lieve it—but she marched through the crowd with all them men asorter afencin' her in, an' Si Corwin aholdin' on tew her, as ef she was the bride of some big mogul agoin' on her weddin' tower, an' jes' the least mite upshot with the excitement of agoin' through the weddin'. An' that air Cap'n Mapes (folks say as they're cousins, but I don't b'lieve *that*) stuck closer 'n a brother to her. An' folks say—but I don't b'lieve nawthink I don't see fer myself—that he up an' kissed her wrists jes' where the handcuffs was agoin' . ”

“ Lorgens-ter-massey ! ” ejaculated Mrs. Hedges. “ Cousins, heh ? Her mother was a Mapes. Now, that 'counts fer him agoin' up ter Brumley's so much. ”

The group of women on Mrs. Hallet's side of the fence drew more closely together, and their hostess danced a semi-war-dance in the slush to get her feet warm.

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“Wall, I should think,” she remarked, with a grin in keeping with her savage-like movements, “that he must be hard up fer folks ter go 'round apickin' up murderers fer relations.”

Mrs. Hedges was so furious at this that she snorted with rage, and would certainly have turned her back on the fence had there not been so entertaining, if malicious, a set of gossips on the other side.

“Did he go along ter jail with her?” asked Hannah Charlotte, hurrying into the breach.

“N-nop,” answered Licky Mott, disappointedly.

“Gosh all hemlock!” screamed Mrs. Hedges. “They didn't let her go off ter jail alone, did they?”

“That's jes' like men folks ter go an' make out as they set a heap by yer, an' then—” began the irrepressible Mrs. Hallet.

“Don't let that bother yer,” interrupted Hannah Charlotte, who firmly believed in the lords of creation, having persuaded no less than three to marry her, then to die for her. “Square Brumley, himself, went along with her. Hain't that so, Char'y Esther?”

“Ho, ho!” chuckled Mrs. Hallet. “She wa'n't satisfied with nawthink less than the biggest big-bug in the county fer a jailer.”

“I don't b'lieve any one ever hern tell before,” asserted Charity Esther, “of a jestic a 'scortin' a prisoner tew jail. An' after he went an' signed the commitment, tew!”

“It must hev come tur'ble hard on him,” said Mrs. Hedges thoughtfully. “Where was Rev'ren' Dan all this time?”

“Oh, he'd agone, tew, but they say Zeph went off in a faintin' fit when she heard the news, an' she's had

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one spell on top of another ever sence, Miss' Corwin says," replied Mrs. Corwin's mouthpiece, Licky Mott.

"Oh, Lors!" ejaculated Mrs. Hedges, with a sigh that shook the fence; "I wish my Hime would make a mistake an' tell *some*think, once in a while."

Mrs. Hallet went with grinning insistence back to the more important subject.

"What beats my time," said she, "was where Miss' Brumley was all this time. Looks 'tarnal funny ter see a gal in trouble with nawthink but men folks ahangin' 'round her."

"Me, tew," softly assented Licky Mott; but Charity Esther kindly relieved their anxiety on that point.

"Miss' Brumley? Why, she was asetting' in the carriage acryin' an' acryin'; yew'd athought that *she* was the one agoin' tew jail."

"I never could see fer my part," declared Hannah Charlotte, with an exasperated hitch of her skirts, "what them air Brumleys see in Sade Jarvis. I guess now they found out that it don't pay ter take up with folks from Scragtown."

(Scragtown is not on any map; the dear old lady might as well have said, "From the scrub-oaks or the ash-heap.")

"I used ter put, nigh bust," laughed Mrs. Hallet, "when I see Sadie Jarvis sot up thar behind Brumley's high-steppers, as ef she'd been borned in a kerridge, with her head two inches higher'n Miss' Brumley's."

"She held her head higher'n most folks long 'fore she sot eyes on Miss' Brumley," angrily burst out the wife of the Moneylender. "Why, when she used ter come an' play with my Jinnie——"

"Wall, I *will* say," interrupted Charity Esther,

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“that she was never above speakin’ tew common folks, no matter who she was with.”

“Wall,” echoed Hannah Charlotte, without moving an inch from her pickets, “I guess ef I’m agoin’ ter git ter Lil’s ter-day, I better be amovin’.”

“An’ I guess ef I don’t want ter live on cinders fer the next week,” exclaimed Mrs. Hallet, making a dash for her kitchen door, “I better go an’ take my bread out’n the oven!”

As might have been expected, no sooner was her back turned than the four fence-holders began to talk about Mrs. Hallet.

“Yew bet yer life she won’t ask us in,” whispered Charity Esther.

“No-no,” buzzed Licky Mott; “folks say that yer can plant pertaters in her kitchen.”

“I wouldn’t care pertic’lar,” said Hannah Charlotte, feeling of her skirts to see if they were wet, and looking impressively up over her spectacles, “’bout eatin’ a slice off’n that air bread—*burnt, er not!*”

“Hannah Charlotte,” interposed the self-righteous Charity Esther, “stop atalkin’ ’bout yer neighbors, an’ look an’ see who’s acomin’ up Miss’ Hedges’s garden.”

Hannah readjusted her spectacles with nervous haste, while Mrs. Hedges turned hurriedly about and exclaimed:

“Lorgens-ter-massey, Lil! Where’d you come from?”

“I was jes’ agoin’ down ter yer house, Lil,” called out Hannah Charlotte, who was Lil’s beloved mother.

Lily jumped over the last pool of slush, then carefully selected two solid pickets upon which to rest her sharp

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elbows. She looked far too sour and embittered to join so amiable a circle of gossips.

“Wall,” she began, respectfully addressing her old mother, “I got tired of awaitin’ fer you; so I thought I’d dig along up street myself. I don’t wonder I couldn’t find nobody ter hum. Char’y Esther, ’pears ter me that you an’ Licky must hev shirked yer Sad’day bakin’.” Without making any pause in her speech, Lil nodded sourly to Mrs. Hallet, who reappeared at this moment: “I give Barnes his dinner-pail an’ seen him out’n the house; an’ then I made two cakes an’ three mince pies, an’ baked four loaves o’ bread, an’ washed the dishes an’ scrubbed the floor ’fore I come away.”

“An’ got ’nough breath left ter talk with!” exclaimed Mrs. Hallet in smiling admiration.

“Massey me!” ejaculated Hannah Charlotte, not to be outdone by her own daughter; “why, I——”

“Oh, I see in yer kitchen winder,” interrupted Lily. “An’ it was all spruced up. An’ when I see that yer wa’n’t ter hum, I took the key from under the mat an’ walked in. But yer went an’ fergot ter chalk up where yer was agoin’ on the cupboard this mornin’.”

“Wall, ef I didn’t!” exclaimed Hannah Charlotte, dropping her skirts in the slush in her consternation. “Yer see I was astewin’ so ’bout this here Devine Strong business— Hev yer hern the verdict, Lil?”

“I hain’t heard nothin’,” answered the daughter, with an injured air. “Might’s well live in the backwoods as ter live up my street.”

“Wall, ef yew didn’t talk so much yerself,” retorted Charity Esther, “mebbe yew’d hear more of what other folks hed tew say.”

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“What was it, Ma?” asked Lil appealingly, but Charity Esther was determined to resume her rightful position in the fence convention.

“What yew s’pose it was?” she demanded, her shrill voice rising three notes above Hannah Charlotte’s modest tones. “With a rippin’ gunshot in his side, an’ the gun what made it, an’ the shawl belongin’ tew the gal what fired it alayin’ right alongside o’ him? That settled Sa’y Jarvis’s hash; an’ she’s atakin’ time tew think on it down tew Riverhead.”

“Yop,” affirmed the grinning Mrs. Hallet; “she’s a jail bird fer fair.”

Of all those five women, Mrs. Hedges alone showed an atom of compassion.

“Good Lord!” she groaned. “Poor leetle gal! Her an’ Jinnie——”

“I wouldn’t waste no sympathy on her,” declared Lil. “What’d she expect?”

“Yes-yes; aleavin’ them things right by him. *That’s* where she showed want of wit.” Mrs. Hallet was thoroughly enjoying the situation; she bore other people’s troubles with commendable cheerfulness.

“How’d she ’count fer them abein’ there?” asked the latest arrival at the fence.

“Miss’ Corwin says——” began Licky Mott.

“George didn’t say——” commenced Mrs. Hallet.

“Hime, he——” started Mrs. Hedges eagerly.

Poor Lily would have gone mad in this babel of sound had not Charity Esther, with her sharp elbows and her sharper voice, come to the rescue.

“Let somebody come what knows somethink!” she shrieked at the top of her lungs. “My brother-in-law was on the jury, he was. An’ Jim’s a man what can’t

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squirm away from *me* 'thout atellin' somethink. An' he says, says he, that she tol' jes' the straightest story, 'thout a hitch in it. An' she stuck tew it tew; an' Jim says 'twas all he could do not to b'lieve her, he says—she's got sech an honest way with her—the hussy! Folks do say as Cap'n Mapes (he's another sly one!)—an' he jes' botched up a story fer her, an' pounded it intew her head, an' she went an' rattled it off like a Sunday-school lesson."

"She hain't atellin' no lies fer nobody!" cried Mrs. Hedges indignantly, but Charity Esther went on without seeming to hear:

"She said she didn't see hide nor hair of Devine arter she come tew her senses an' Ben Benstra 'd been and knocked the stuffin's out'n him. An'—jes' listen tew her cheek!—she said she seen some one on that air hill where they found Devine Strong. An' when they up an' ast her who it was, she said she didn't know, but 'twa'n't nobody what belonged there. An' she stuck tew it hot an' heavy. An' ef she hain't a liar fer fair, *I* give up! fer I'd like tew know how on arth anybody got over tew the beach in that air storm, *an'* how on arth anybody could alanded"—here Charity Esther paused to give effect to her most clinching argument—"*'thout Ann-Abe Thurber aknowin' it!*"

Every head nodded an emphatic yes-yes, except Mrs. Hedges', and that lone friend of Sadie's could only reassert feebly:

"Sadie's got spunk, Sade has!"

"Yew bet she's got spunk!" declared Charity Esther. "An' lorgens souls! what do yew think? *This* beats all. Arter she owned up that the gun was hers, an' she'd fired off one barrel accidently on purpose, they

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held up the shawl and says, says they, 'Be it yourn?' an' she must hev recognized it on the minute, but she made a big show of alookin' it all over, an' then she said *she didn't know!* Liar? Why, liar hain't no name fer it! She says, says she, that her shawl hed a leetle, cunnin' darn in one corner, an' that air very corner was tored out'n this here shawl."

There was a howl of derisive laughter from three of the four listeners; but Charity Esther demanded with impressive seriousness:

"Now, *who tore it out?*" Everybody gasped, but nobody attempted to answer.

"Wall," went on the lively narrator, "that's all she had tew say fer herself. An' then they went over the hull business. Billy Downs, he tol' how he found the body, an' Jim says he cried. Yes, sir, jes' bellered right out when they made him tell 'bout Sadie's things abein' along with Devine. An' when he had tew 'low that she said she couldn't help the gun agoin' off, an' a lot o' simple things like that, Jim said it was jes' reedic'lous tew see him. An', fin'ly, he shouted out all he knowed, like he was in a deaf an' dumb asylum, an' then he sot down an' bellered some more."

Again everybody gasped, and no full moon ever looked jollier than Mrs. Hallet's face.

"Wall," she remarked after a moment of happy silence, "I never 'spected ter see no woman wind Billy Downs 'round her thumb; but I never did like him fer a cent, nohow." Then her face changed, and she added, with an envious look at the well-informed Charity Esther:

"Now, why couldn't George atol' me all this? Yer want ter keep on the right side o' Jim, Char'y Esther."

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“It cut ’em all!” exclaimed Jim’s sister-in-law, having recovered her breath. “It cut ’em hard! Jim says thar wa’n’t a man in the hull lot what come up tew Cap’n Jarvis’s self—an’ him so racked with a cough that he couldn’t draw an easy breath. But he sailed in as if his darter wa’n’t no more tew him ’n a heathen cannibile. An’ he tol’ the honest truth ’thout any hagglin’. Him an’ every one on ’em had tew ’low that she hated an’ despised that air poor, dead Devine. An’ four on ’em—Rev’re’n’ Dan; your husband, Miss’ Hedges; that air ol’ half-blin’ owl of a Jestice; an’ Ben Benstra what used tew be so stuck on her (I guess he’s got over it, *neow!*)—they all had tew own up that they hern her say she’d kill Devine ef they didn’t.”

“O-oh!” cried the terribly shocked listeners.

“Gosh, but I wish I’d been there!” exclaimed Charity Esther. “I’d agone ’thout a meal o’ victuals fer a week tew aseem that trial!”

“Men folks git the best of it every time,” said Mrs. Hallet, with a momentary pang of jealousy.

“I wouldn’t abeen thar fer nawthink on the face o’ this round arth!” declared Mrs. Hedges, somewhat insanely, the others thought; then she looked from one eager, gloating face to another, and said falteringly: “Yer don’t think she done it, do yer?”

“Done it!” shrieked the others, incredulous of her simplicity.

“Done it!” repeated Charity Esther. “There hain’t a livin’, breathin’ soul in Shoreville—not even her thickest frien’s—but has tew ’low she done it. Now mind yew”—the woman added impressively, raising her hand—“I hain’t ablamin’ her one speck. The Lord knows I hain’t hard on her. Ef any man ever dast tew say

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sech a thing 'bout me as that air dirty divil tol' Ann-Abe 'bout her, I'd up an' kill him ef I did hev tew hang fer it."

"Well, how do yer know," asked Mrs. Hallet, showing her unclean teeth, "that he wa'n't atellin' the truth?"

With a fierce grunt of pain and rage Mrs. Hedges flounced away from the fence, and went bristling up the path, leaving her own reputation, as well as Sadie's, in four pair of tender hands.

In Prison

CHAPTER XXXVII

“BEHOLD, I AM IN PRISON AND CANNOT COME FORTH”

LONG before the court sat in Riverhead, the Moneylender's fence in Shoreville was broken down. The beginning of the fence's end came when Sadie was sick—dangerously sick—and Charity Esther declared, with a tremendous pound of the fist, that the “gal would cheat Providence yit.”

Which shows what great faith Charity Esther had in the power of Providence.

Hammer and nails were called into use after Mrs. Daniel Brumley went down to Riverhead to visit the wife of the sheriff. (“Did yer ever?”) And the fall of the fence was completed when, after a succession of lighter blows, Mrs. Hallet pounded her fiendish joy over Sadie's recovery on the resentful pickets. Then, as the days went by, the neighbors took time from the discussion of the murder case to remark that, finally and lastly, after keeping that old fence as an eyesore to the whole village for more years than any one could count, the Moneylender was building a new one.

Meantime Sadie, convalescent from her merciful sickness, had left the vague dreams of delirium in one rude, bare cell to take up the bitter reality of thought in another (for there was no hospital connected with the county jail). Mrs. Brumley's duties had called her

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home, and although Sadie had been allowed to see very little of her while at Riverhead, still the thought that Mrs. Dolly was near had been comforting, and now that she was gone, Sadie felt that she and all the other dear home folks, with home itself, were thousands and thousands of miles away.

Every one had been as kind to the girl as circumstances would permit—she told herself that harder treatment would have made her stronger; but there were many entire days that she spent alone—days when her faithful friends could not get to her even for those precious counted moments allowed to visitors; days when only their letters, written with the intervening eye of the sheriff in mind, could reach the prison cell. At first every one of her friends that could write had written (save Ben Benstra, and, instead of letters, he had sent each day by mail, without word or name, a sturdy, hopeful little flower from his mother's window garden), and people that Sadie had never known or even seen had also written; and at first every letter had been full of hopefulness and sympathy, but gradually the letters had come in smaller numbers, and slowly their tone had changed. Mrs. Dolly still insisted, on badly blotted paper, that 'Liza Ross would be found, but Sadie saw the tears between the lines; and Zeph still wrote long, long letters, going into the details of the search, and logically asking why, with so many people on her track, the woman should not be found? But Sadie would only smile sadly, and hold the letter to her lips.

She imagined that they were losing faith in her, and she tried not to lose faith in herself; but the struggle to retain hope was bitter, the battle for courage hard. There came many hours when she forgot to struggle,

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occasional long days when hope seemed to lie dead. At times sweet patience and resignation wrapped her round so close that she felt she would not murmur though the worst should come; but at others fierce rebellion seized hold of her, so that she was like a mad woman, trying to break the bars of door and window, to push away the cruel, confining walls and go forth—free!

“You must *think*,” Captain Mapes had told her. “Perhaps in your own mind you may find the solution of the problem.”

And every day she told herself this, but never a day did the solution come nearer.

The face that she had seen upon the dune—whose was it? This was the question driving her mad.

“Why don’t you say it was ’Liza Ross’s and be done with it?” Mrs. Dolly had demanded, and Sadie had answered that she could not.

One dark morning, not long before the day set for the trial, when a drizzle of rain was falling outside the window bars, Sadie lay on her cot, motionless, with her eyes closed; not sleeping, for she had gotten out of the blessed habit of sleep, and yet not wholly awake, but in that state half-way between waking and sleeping, where dreams are confused with thoughts, and recollections of the past are mingled with foreshadowings of the future.

“*Think*, you must *think!*” Captain Mapes had urged.

Wearily she tried to drive out from her mind all the vague prophecies of the future, and all the shadowy pictures of the past, save one—that painful picture around which all the painful prophecies centred. Over and over in her thoughts, shrinking from the recollection, she took the fatal walk upon the dunes; like a man

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going over and over one little piece of land, whose every inch he has covered times without number, in search of something that he lost there, and which he knows must still be there, but which he may never find, search he ever so diligently.

Again Sadie walked the surf shore, again felt the fury of the wind, the mad spray of the breakers, and was blinded by the thickness of the snow. Once more, at a certain point, she climbed the bluff, and once more she saw dune after dune rising slowly out of the folds of the storm, then sinking back again. She could see herself beaten and driven, blinded and confused, wandering aimlessly up and down the hills; more than this, she could feel the weight of the gun, the deadly fear that had enabled her to bear it, until—until——

The girl on the cot gave a long, shuddering sigh, and turned her face to the wall.

He had been wandering also, and very, very near her. What if she had known and seen? What if, when he called, he had appeared to her? Would not the end have been the same?

And so, repeated the girl's thoughts, he had struggled and wandered as well as she; perhaps the old, unconquerable attraction had drawn her to him then, was drawing her after him now.

“Mine—all mine!” he had once said, and again she heard the wild, triumphant assertion.

The girl on the cot trembled violently; she fancied that there was a spectre Devine with spectre arms held out to her.

Now she remembered with painful distinctness her secret fight against him and against herself, with burning shame the publicity with which the fight was won.

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Again she lived those breathless moments, when longing and loving, yet hating and fearing, she had watched Devine so near her, not seeing her for the snow; and again she stood between Ben and Devine out there on the surf shore, and chose Devine! Stood between good and evil, and deliberately chose evil.

Oh, how wicked and weak she had been! And how she must have wounded Ben—Ben, the magnanimous, too pure of mind to understand, too noble of heart to remember. Pushed out of her path by her own hand, and coming back as her protector. Well, she had done with hurting him now; she could think of him as going down the years, unsmirched by dishonor, noble and strong, attaining to her highest ideal of perfect manhood. That was better than that he should stay by her to the last, sharing her shame. She had chosen between him and Devine once, and, it seemed now, that it would be forever. But suddenly she cried out for Ben to forgive her. It did not matter that only the silent walls heard the plea. She knew that she had Ben's forgiveness; it was her own forgetfulness that she craved.

The shaking figure now lay face downward on the cot, and the wretched girl was weeping tears of misery and shame.

That man who had held this marvellous power over her was dead. Could it be? He whose voice, whose glance, whose lightest touch could once stir the depths of her nature, could never speak to her again, never look at her, never touch her. She was glad, she told herself fiercely. Whatever might happen, she would still be glad. And yet—*dead*? She repeated the word in low, incredulous tones.

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That strong and powerful man, *dead*? She thought of him, stripped of all power and might, lying lifeless and alone, the cold snow falling, falling on his face and figure, the winds fighting over him; but nothing felt by him, nothing known.

Had any human eye looked upon him as he lay there, she wondered? That face—that mad, elusive, snow-veiled face—had that looked down upon the dead, perchance, with guilty remorse? She dared not think too long of the face; it haunted and taunted and maddened her. Why had she not gone after it—followed it through the snow until she found whether it were indeed the countenance of a human being, or merely the creation of her own disordered fancy?

“*You must think!*” Captain Mapes had said, and in spite of her aversion Sadie tried to give the formless thing a form.

“Say it was ’Liza Ross’s, and be done with this nonsense!”

Mrs. Brumley herself seemed to be repeating the words in imperious command. Sadie, greatly tortured, tempted almost beyond her strength, started up as if to obey, but sank down again, touching the sweet, faded little rose upon her breast, murmuring:

“No, Ben, I won’t.”

She reflected sternly that, no matter whether her hand or some one’s else had slain him, it was no more than just that she should suffer for his death; her weakness alone had brought him to the beach, and she alone had sent him, a madman, out into the storm—so reasoned the unhappy girl. Moreover, though she had spared him when they faced each other in the kitchen, she had regretted it bitterly when Mrs. Thurber repeated his

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vile insinuation, and then and there she had determined that he should give his life for those words. It was, she could not doubt, the murder in her heart that led her to the big, brown dune; and only the mercy of God had kept him hidden from her, and saved her from the actual, deliberate crime.

“*Whosoever thinketh murder, committeth murder.*” It was the Rector’s voice speaking in the stillness of the messroom; and she wished that she could not remember so distinctly.

“*Whosoever thinketh murder, committeth murder.*”

Oh, no, that was unjust, horribly unjust, protested the girl, writhing upon her cot. But yes, it was true, and she was a murderess, and doubly a murderess.

“*The wages of sin is death.*”

She told herself again, in an effort at defiance, that she did not care; that be the wages ever so bitter, she was glad that he was dead; but she was not glad, because with his death her hatred had died. And, after all, why should she hate the dead?

She began to wonder what had been his last thoughts. There had been fear in his voice when he called out to her, so then he must have foreseen her action. But had he died unrepentant, evil-minded and passion-stained as he had lived? Had she all of his sins to expiate as well as all of her own?

“Oh, no,” she whispered in prayerful supplication, “he could not have died like that. He must have wandered long; he must have known that he was lost. Oh, surely he had time for some decent thoughts before—before—I dropped the gun.”

The rain fell softly outside the window bars. There

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was no one within to hear the low gasp of terror, no one to see the wild look of fear.

“Devine,” she whispered, “I could not help it. I did not mean to do it.”

For now she realized how he must have felt to know that *her* hand had lifted to strike him low in death—the hand of his passionately beloved “little girl”; the hand that had trembled whenever it touched his own. But did he know? She prayed that the call had been one of delirium, that he had not actually seen her, even as she had not seen him for the thickness of the snow. She prayed that he had not thought hardly of her at the last; and, above all, she prayed that God had purified his passion for her.

Had he recalled the slander that he had spoken against her? Had he repented the evil that he had done all womankind? Did he remember with compassion 'Liza and the child? Did he think with remorse of the dead wife and the dead babes? And, continued the girl's prayerful thoughts, did he see and recognize the face upon the dunes?

Oh, that she herself might know whose it was, that she might know! Was it that of a revengeful woman? of her whose hand had stricken him in death? Perhaps, she told herself bravely, perhaps, and prayed that before her own end came she might know, believing that any certainty, however terrible, could not be worse than this ever-present, tormenting doubt.

Her merciless thoughts rushed on, taking her to the time when the last of her earthly punishments should have been meted out to her, when all that was left of her earthly self should lie in a dishonored grave. Then, would that face come to stare triumphantly down upon

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her in death, even as it had taunted and haunted her in life? And would she struggle in vain to rise up to denounce it, recognizing it at last?

She could see the other faces that would crowd around the grave, some gazing down in stern censure, some in loving pity, but more in unfeeling curiosity—faces that in the ignorance of life she had hated, other faces which she had loved here, and would love throughout eternity. She pictured them all, pausing to remember for a while, then hurrying on to forget. And she would lie so still, so helpless!

Voices as well as faces began to haunt her now, and in vain she tried to shut both eyes and ears. Relentlessly, mercilessly, the foreshadowings threw themselves across her tortured mind, until great tears of self-pity gathered in the eyes, and fell thick and fast upon the face of the girl alone in the prison cell.

She began to think of her father, not in hatred, as heretofore, but with tenderness and pity, believing that he himself would die or else go mad with shame when her own shameful end came. He had been so proud of her—proud of her beauty, though in his ignorance he had tried to sell it; proud of her high spirit, though all her life long he had tried to break it. She remembered with a rush of gratitude how furious he had been when they brought the charge against her, and how, when the charge could not be adequately denied, he had bent over her, saying brokenly, in unconscious reproach:

“Sadie, I’d ruther it’d been me.”

A picture of the messroom rose before her, with all the crew gathered there discussing her whom, rude and rough though they were, they had all loved so tenderly,

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to whom they had all looked up as to one wiser and better than they. Wiser and better! And had not she thought the same? Oh, God, what vanity!

Her thoughts grew more confused; she felt herself again pressed close to Billy's fatherly breast, wrapped about with his great tenderness and sympathy.

Her mind began to move more slowly, creeping to subjects outside of her own immediate sorrow, until it went back to the night of the wreck—the night when Captain Mapes and his men had hung in the shrouds calling, calling, calling to her, and she had tried in vain to go to their assistance, tried in vain to make her three nurses understand. Again she writhed on her bed, again struggled, half rose and fell back again. She moaned aloud, and those supplicating voices cried on until the sweat of agony stood out upon her brow. Then at last there came another sound, Ben's voice—Ben's voice! And all was well.

The form of the girl on the cot relaxed; she began to breathe more softly; memories, crowding fast and bitter, yielded to dreams dawning slow and sweet. The merciful hand of sleep was staying the merciless hand of thought.

She looked so peaceful in her sleep, so pure, so far removed from any of this world's stain and turbulence, that the sheriff's wife, on entering the cell a little later, could hardly persuade herself to awaken the girl, but at last she did so by gently kissing Sadie's closed eyes.

"I'm not asleep," murmured Sadie, smiling dreamily, and taking Mrs. Brady's hand in hers; the girl was always lovable, even in prison.

"Do you feel able to see a visitor?" asked the woman.

In Prison

Then Sadie sat up, completely awake to the knowledge of where she was.

“Who—who?” she asked tremulously, for awful people with religious purposes sometimes came to see her.

“He’s a stranger to me; but he said to say, ‘Just Ben.’”

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CHAPTER XXXVIII

ONE OF "BRUMLEY'S TRAMPS"

WHEN it was known that Mr. Brumley—Daniel Brumley, the multi-millionaire, a member of the old New York family of Brumley—was to run for the office of Justice of Shoreville, everybody had laughed (except a very small set of rigidly upright politicians who had smiled behind their beards), and Mr. Brumley had laughed with the rest; and it was amid a chorus of laughter—on what the *Shoreville Herald* called an "overwhelming majority"—that Mr. Brumley had been elected. The laugh had not yet subsided, for the reason that Mr. Brumley would not allow it to; but the whole village was beginning to understand what the small set of politicians and Mrs. Dolly had known from the first, and what another large set of politicians and the deposed Justice, who had been "Boss" of Shoreville long enough to do almost irreparable harm, had feared from the first, that, by accepting the candidacy and winning the election, Mr. Brumley had dethroned the "Boss" forever, and dragged the politics of the village out of a quagmire of corruption and dishonesty.

Incidentally, he had made matters much harder for the deputy sheriffs, and much easier for town and county treasuries. In spite of all the jokes about "Brumley's tramps and poachers," courtroom business had been very slack; and Silas Corwin, in his daily

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conferences with the old “Boss” in the blacksmith’s doorway, would declare that “he’d a good might ter throw up his job ; there wa’n’t no money in it no more.”

However, one morning Si took courage when, after walking gloomily down the lane where he lived, he entered the main street to find a crowd of boys and “children of a larger growth” gathered in one loud, excited, swaying group ; and, on forcing his way through the crowd, to find a half-crazed, gray-headed old tramp brandishing a pistol right and left, and swearing that he would have “*His*” life, whoever *He* might be. It was a very old pistol, and the crowd had evidently taken for granted that it was harmless ; for they only laughed and played with the old fellow much as children play with the bear in “Bear in the Ring” ; but when Si Corwin appeared, they each and all remembered that, once the deputy sheriff was started, there was no telling whom he would arrest before he stopped ; so they drew respectfully back and let him arrest the aged stranger.

It was extraordinary how quietly the tramp gave himself and his pistol up to the brave, resolute deputy sheriff, and how quietly and tremulously he tried to account for the unseemly excitement he had created in the decorous streets of Shoreville. Said he, while Silas Corwin was dragging him forward in the direction of the lock-up and the crowd was following at their heels :

“I asked them a civil question. (They were three boys going to school, apparently. There ! There they are over there.) I says to them, civil like enough, says I : ‘Can you tell me if such a person as Devine Strong lives in these parts ?’”

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The deputy sheriff, who had not paid any attention to the tramp's speech until now, suddenly stopped and looked him in the face. There was a titter of suppressed mirth from the crowd.

“And,” went on the tramp unconsciously, “the youngest one—*that* boy over there, grinning—he pipes up (and he no higher than my waist):

“‘Do yer b’lieve in ghosts, yer durn ol’ fool, yer?’”

The crowd held its sides and roared with laughter, and more people came running out from the stores to gather at the edge of the crowd, peering over the tops of heads to get a view of the prisoner.

“Then, thinking they didn’t hear aright,” went on the old man, plucking Si Corwin’s sleeve, “I turned to another boy, a little older than the rest, that had come up, and I says to him, says I, civil enough again :

“‘Can you tell me where I may find Devine Strong?’

“And at that he cries out :

“‘Go to hell!’ Yes, sir, and he hadn’t put on long pants.”

The united voice of the crowd burst forth in one tremendous guffaw, at which the poor old stranger frowned distressedly and muttered to himself that in all his journeys he had never come across so ill-bred a set of people ; but Silas Corwin raised his voice in a command for silence, and the old man went on, even more tremulously, with his justification :

“Then that boy calls out (strange I can’t see him, he was here but a moment ago), he calls out to a group of men over the way :

“‘Say, here’s an ol’ cuss’ (I don’t like the word, sir, but he used it)—‘here’s an ol’ cuss what wants ter know

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where ter find Devine Strong.’ And then, amongst a lot of hooting and laughing, they all come across the road, and it seems a whole army of people gathers, all crying :

“‘Tell him ter go ter hell!’ Then I don’t know what happens, but I get frightened, an’ I take out my old pistol——”

“And threatens to shoot *me*,” good-naturedly put in a young man that was renowned for his laziness, and who would have been a tramp himself had not Providence provided him with wealthy and indulgent parents.

“It’s a pity ’bout you,” sneered another man, stepping forward. “Si Corwin, I advise yer to take this man out’n the street ef yer don’t want Square Brumley after yer.”

It was the Moneylender that spoke, and Si Corwin had reason to fear the Moneylender.

“Here comes the Square now!” cried another voice; and immediately the crowd dispersed, so that one might have wondered what became of all the people. When the Brumley carriage reached the spot, there were only the little Moneylender, the imposing deputy sheriff, and the shrinking, trembling old prisoner in the roadway.

“Who’s this?” asked the Justice, when they had stopped the carriage. Then, before they could answer, he leaned forward and addressed the poor old stranger.

“My good man,” said he, “have you had your breakfast?”

The tramp pressed forward in his turn, shading his eyes with his hand, looking eagerly up into Mr. Brumley’s face. “Sir,” he quavered entreatingly, “you are

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a gentleman, and not like the rabble that followed me hither. Will you tell me, kind sir, where I may find Devine Strong?"

The next morning, on the first train, before any of the village idlers were out of bed, Silas Corwin took the old man (remarkably genteel, with his beard trimmed and in an entire new outfit) to New York; then on from New York up into the country, until, toward nightfall, they came to a little village that straggled leisurely from out of a sleepy little valley up to the crest of a "heaven-kissing hill."

In the village proper—that is, at the only store which the place boasted—Silas parted with the old man; and the old man went wearily on up the hill alone until he came to a farmhouse that had the appearance of a person trying to look well fed and prosperous on an empty purse and an empty stomach. He hesitated at the gate, and then he went in, still hesitating, and looking around him at every step, as if to mark the changes that time had made in the place since he last saw it. He went around to the back door, meeting no one, lifted the latch, and entered; then sat down by the great old fireplace in the empty kitchen. Presently a woman, well past youth, and looking as if she, like the house, were struggling to keep up a good appearance, came in from out of doors, and, seeing the man sitting there by the fire, went quietly up to him and, leaning over his shoulder, lifted his face with her hands and kissed him, saying only:

"So you have come back, Father?"

"Yes," said the old man bitterly, "without Her, and without so much as having laid my finger on *him*."

“*Brumley's Tramp*”

Don't reproach me, Angeline. I have been a wanderer over the face of the earth ; I have stood the heat of summer and the piercing cold of winter ; rain and snow ; I have been in jail—in jail, Angeline, for God knows what. And at last I got on his track ; I saw a picture of him in a newspaper—just his picture and his name (I know his true one now) and the name of a place underneath it. I could not tell then why his picture should be in a paper, but it was (it was just a torn bit wrapped around a herring that I bought). So I started for the place (it was fifty miles away), and I walked day and night. Only yesterday I came to it ; and there I met two good men : one was a minister, though he did not look it ; and the other was a justice, though I must say he looked more than that ; and they told me that *he* was dead some time since—had been murdered, no one knows by whom. I would have done it gladly and suffered for it gladly ; but he had other enemies. Then—yes—I showed them the picture (I've carried it in my bosom all these years), and asked them (they were such kindly men) if they had ever seen any one in their parts who looked like it ; and they looked it over and over and called in a little crooked wizened man to look at it, and then they went in a corner together to look at it ; but when they came back they said ‘ No,’—that *he* never brought any one that looked like that picture to their parts. And I was glad (I could not but feel glad, Angeline). But they asked me who the picture was ; and they meant so well—they were all such kindly gentlemen—that I told them about our Elizabeth and that scoundrel, and how it had killed her mother, and sent her old father out to search for her—the beggar and the tramp they found me ; and

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how you were keeping the old home for her up on the hill, and how her chair was always set against her coming. She didn't come while I was gone, Angeline? Poor Angeline! Has it been hard to keep body and soul together and keep this fire burning for her? Take heart, she will yet come and we will wait here together for her. You have grown old, Angeline, and—what! my girl, crying? Think, think, dear, how blessed it was that I did not find her there and that she—your sister—your mother's daughter, had not been driven into killing him. I would have done it; I meant to do it all along, but no one would have known *me*. Killed by a tramp, they would have said, that is all. And if Elizabeth comes, I am to send a telegram to those men—to (here is the memorandum) Daniel Brumley, Shoreville, New York. They were kindly, oh, such kindly men! It is growing dark, Angeline; have you a light there? I think I will go to my old room—to Mother's room. It is good to be home, Angeline; but one does miss Elizabeth and Mother so. Good—good night. You are a good girl, Angeline. Good night.”

When he had closed the door, he took out of his breast the picture that he had carried through all his wanderings, and hung it where he could see it as he lay in bed.

It was the rarely life-like picture of a young girl, painted by an artist who had spent a summer in the farmhouse. The face was so young, so sweet, so winsome that it might have been called “Sweet Sixteen”; so pure and innocent that it might have been called “Innocence”; so near to unconscious childhood and yet so near to ripe, conscious womanhood that it might

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have been called “At the Parting of the Ways.” It was the picture of the old man’s daughter Elizabeth, and, please God, he was never to know that it was also the picture of the woman known in Shoreville as ‘Liza Ross.

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CHAPTER XXXIX

“JUST BEN”

HOWEVER friends, when parted, may misunderstand each other—may doubt each other's trust and affection, when they meet again and stand face to face, all this is forgotten, and without a word of explanation all misunderstandings are as if they had never been.

So it was with Ben and Sadie. She had believed that, though he might pity, he would never again love her ; he had believed that when she said she never wished to see him again, she had meant that his presence would never be a source of joy or comfort to her. So she had cherished his memory in her heart as something to be only a memory as long as she should live ; and he had worked alone and in silence during all her weeks of imprisonment, trying to set her free, yet giving no sign, save through his daily offering of flowers, and this, not because he thought that she would interpret it as a sign from him, but only because he knew that flowers of any kind must be grateful to one imprisoned.

But in Ben, the desire to see Sadie had grown stronger and stronger, until, one day, after several false starts, the desire took him of itself to the railroad station, put him on the east-bound train, and kept control over him until it had made itself known to the Sheriff at Riverhead. Then, before Ben got the better of the desire and concluded that he would not force his

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presence upon Sadie after all, he found himself standing in a large, bare room with white-washed brick walls, screened and barred windows, and a row of cell doors, one of which now opened to admit a woman dressed in black and then a pale, slender girl—the girl Ben loved !

The woman disappeared ; the Sheriff placed his portly body between Ben and the girl ; the girl stood with hands clasped in front of her and eyes bent down, while Ben looked at her not with his eyes only, but with all his being—jealously noting the lines that suffering had made in her face, the droop that sorrow had put in her figure. Then the Sheriff, who was a man of heart and humor, said suggestively :

“You can shake hands, you know.”

Sadie looked up ; and, as she met Ben’s eyes, a look of unutterable gladness came into her own. Her hand went out to meet Ben’s hand across the Sheriff’s vest ; and hand into hand fitted so perfectly that Sadie could not have told at that moment which was which, and Ben would have declared that both were hers.

“It seems a thousand years since I saw you,” said the lad in lovingly tremulous tones, “and I thought that I couldn’t bear to see you here ; but you’re so sweet and lovely yourself that I can’t see anything else for looking at you.”

“I think you’ve grown, Ben,” said Sadie, looking him over from head to foot ; “you look five years older. Oh, it is so good to see you again ! Do you know, I had just fallen asleep and was dreaming of you. See, I have your flower on my breast. How did I know *you* sent it ? Now, Ben !”

Ben was smiling in the old beautiful way—just as

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if they were not standing in front of Sadie's cell door with an officer of the law between them; and the bitterest thought in the lad's heart was the thought that Sadie's sweet voice had doubled in sweetness.

"Have you brought good news?" asked the sweet voice wistfully; and immediately Ben's smile vanished. "There, never mind! Don't let it worry you for a moment; I'm used to getting along without hope now; and, besides, you've brought yourself. Ben"—she began to speak hurriedly—"we've got only fifteen minutes together, and no one knows when I shall ever see you again. If you have anything to say to me, say it quickly; and never mind Mr. Brady; he is my very good friend, and I don't think any more of his ears than I do of those cell doors—they're all empty. I'm the only woman prisoner."

"You're unruly enough to make up for a dozen," declared the Sheriff, with a broad smile. "Here, where's that camp chair? Sit down, child!"

There was so much fatherly kindness in his manner that Ben forgot that he was Sadie's jailer and appealed to him impulsively:

"*She* couldn't kill a fly, could she?"

Sadie looked startled, but the Sheriff laid his hand protectingly on her head as he answered:

"You'll never find twelve men in Suffolk County to agree that she could—that is, not if you put her on the stand herself. There, go on with your talk; or she'll hoodwink me into forgetting to look at the time."

Sadie laughed the pitiful little laugh that she had learned in prison; and she wondered how, when she

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had so much to say to Ben, she should be able to say anything; and as he happened to be thinking the same thought, she spoke first.

“Have you found the boy that lost the boat?”

“No; you can hardly believe that any Shoreville boy could hide himself like that. Do you 'spose Cap'n Mapes's head was turned by the wreck?”

Sadie laughed that pitiful little laugh again, and leaned her head against the wall.

“Well, what of 'Liza? Have they found her old home yet?”

“Yes, her old home—poor soul! but not 'Liza.” And then Ben went on to tell Sadie the story of the old tramp who had come to the village only two days before, searching for Devine Strong.

“'Liza's father,” said Sadie, with a sigh of compassion. “There's trouble enough to go 'round, isn't there, Ben? I'm so glad they didn't let him know. And she was beautiful once—poor 'Liza!”

“Poor *Sadie!*” burst out Ben. Sadie smiled sadly yet gratefully, and some moments passed without either speaking. The Sheriff coughed, reminding them that they were wasting time; but still they kept silent—each wondering when, each picturing how, they two should meet again. The Sheriff opened his watch and shut it again with a click; then Ben roused up from his contemplation of Sadie sufficiently to wish that he might hang the Sheriff.

“Such a place to put her in!” thought the lad, glancing around the cold, hard, prison-like room, yearning to break down bars—to carry her through stone and iron out into the free world.

“Ben,” she asked at last, “have you seen my

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father? How is he? Is he really sick, do you think? And, oh! does he ever speak of me?"

"I guess he *is* sick, Sadie," answered Ben, carefully avoiding the last question. "He don't seem to have any gumption at all, 'cept sometimes when he steals out of the Station, when he thinks nobody's looking, and goes and runs every nook and corner of the beach for some signs of 'Liza Ross."

"Poor father!" whispered Sadie. "I guess he'd be well enough if I could let him lift his head again. Give him my love, Ben," she went on in clearer tones, "and tell him if ever I get out of prison, I'll try to be a better girl."

"I shan't tell him any such thing," declared Ben. "How could you be a better girl unless you was an angel, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, Ben, be still! Mr. Brady is laughing at you. Give father my love anyway; and tell Billy Downs and all the others that I think of them all so often; and that I should have lain down and died long ago if I had not known that they all believed in me."

Ben turned abruptly away and walked across the stone floor, again raging against her fate, longing to break her prison.

"If it only had been me!" he said at last. "I'm so big and strong, I could have stood it."

"Dear Ben!" murmured Sadie.

"I wish to the Lord that when I had my fingers round his throat, I had choked him to death! They wouldn't have hung me for *that*."

"But, Ben," said Sadie, with exquisite softness, "do you know I am very glad you didn't? Even—even if the worst comes, I shall be glad; because

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I could not bear to think of you as other than you are.”

Ben, forgetful of the intervening mountain of flesh and blood, started to go to her, thinking to take that fragile form in his arms, to rest that sweet, tired head on his shoulder ; but the Sheriff cried out good-naturedly :

“Hold on there !” and Sadie laughed the laughter that is so near to tears.

“Time’s up,” said the Sheriff, heartily wishing that he had allowed his wife to act as his deputy through this interview ; but Sadie said entreatingly :

“Oh, Mr. Brady, please put away that watch ! Now, Ben, I want to ask you something. Suppose ’Liza did get to the beach ; that you proved she got there, either in that little boat the boy might have lost, which I don’t believe at all, or in Devine’s own boat without his knowledge, as somebody suggested—what good is it going to do me ? How are you going to prove that she killed him, unless she comes forward and says that she did ? Ben, this ’Liza Ross theory is all nonsense. I did it—accidentally, oh, my God, yes ! accidentally—but still, I—I did it.”

“Sadie, dear, you must stop brooding,” urged Ben. “’Liza Ross did it ; and I will find her and prove it—I *know* I will. It seems more certain since I saw you, Sadie. And my little mother says that in the end Right comes to the top every time. Now, just think,” he went on earnestly, “we had hunted and hunted for her old home, thinking that she might have gone back there ; and we couldn’t find it—there was no chance of us finding it—when that poor old father of hers came

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right to Shoreville. And we will find her yet, when we least expect to."

Sadie stood up, the light of hope in her eyes for the first time in many days. She held out her hand to Ben; and Ben took it and, in spite of the Sheriff, pressed it against his lips.

"You will be good, Sadie, and hope for the best?" he said, with a new note of authority in his voice, which both pleased and surprised Sadie.

"Yes, Ben. Thank you for coming—in spite—thank you. There, you must go. Mr. Brady has put away his watch for the last time. I'm so glad you came. Good-bye, dear."

She was looking at him through a mist of tears now, and, lest he should see the mist turn into rain, she drew her hand away and groped for the cell door.

"Sadie, look here, dear! I forgot to tell you. Here's your locket. I've been carrying it around in my breast pocket for a month. I found it on the beach when I was hunting in the sand."

Still fighting against tears, she went on to the cell door, which the Sheriff was holding open for her.

"It can't be mine, dear," she said huskily. "I—I have mine on now."

Then, not trusting herself to speak another word, she went into the cell, and the door clanged behind her. But once within, she regained her self-control so far as to smile at Ben through the bars and wave her hand almost as she used to wave it in the old days; and not until he was out of sight and the clanging of another iron door had resounded through the place, did she give way to passionate weeping.

Another sorrow, none the less a sorrow because

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mixed with exquisite joy, had come to her. She knew that she loved Ben, and with this realization came the realization of the height, the breadth, and depth of his love for her.

How could she leave him now for a death most shameful?

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CHAPTER XL

A GLOOMY OUTLOOK

A STILL, dead, dreary twilight had fallen ; there was no sweet after-sunset glow in the west ; neither moon nor stars in the sky ; and there was not a breath of air stirring over the meadows. The brook seemed scarcely to move along its course, and only by leaning over the bridge and listening intently could you hear its lonely ripple and gurgle.

“ Will Daniel *never* come ? ” said Mrs. Dolly, impatiently addressing the dark water. The brook did not answer, but the sound of horses’ hoofs and carriage wheels in the distance did ; and presently this sound came so near that Dolly went out to the middle of the bridge to stop the carriage. There were only Mr. Brumley and James in the trap ; and James pulled up the horse sharply, while Mr. Brumley peered down to find the reason. Dolly put her hand in her husband’s.

“ Why, Dolly, is that you ? ”

“ I declare ! ” she exclaimed. “ I thought you would never come. Get out and walk to the house with me. ” He got out with quiet obedience, but as soon as James had passed out of hearing, began to scold in his gentle, serious way.

“ Dolly, you shouldn’t be out here all alone at this hour. ”

“ I don’t care, ” said she rebelliously, “ I got as ner-

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vous as a witch waiting for you. What kept you so long?"

"We drove like the devil," he answered, drawing her arm snugly within his as they walked under the willows. Dolly told herself that she knew what the evasion meant, and for the moment could not find the heart to speak. Then she went straight to the point by saying:

"Has she got any chance at all?"

"I'm afraid not, Dolly."

"But gracious me!" cried out poor Dolly. "Why don't you do something for her?"

Mr. Brumley stilled Dolly's nervous, restless hand by putting his own over it; and they walked on in silence, until at length he blurted out:

"Oh, damn the girl!"

"Daniel Brumley!" cried Dolly, drawing both hand and arm away, as she stopped short in indignant surprise.

"Well," he began in self-defence, "no one can do anything with her. She grows more like a lunatic every day. She's unmanageable. Dolly, you'll have to go down again and bring her to reason."

"Reason!" repeated Mrs. Dolly tragically. "I should like to see any one bring *that* girl to reason. But she can expect a good scolding when she sees me, I tell you!" And Dolly walked as if she were starting for Riverhead that moment.

"You won't have the heart to scold her," said the Justice. Dolly caught her breath sharply:

"Does she look *very* bad?"

"You wouldn't know her; but it's her manner more than her looks that frightens you. She always had

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repose ; but now it is stillness. She seems unreal, without life—as if she was so far off that you could not touch her. I can't make you understand ; but it is dreadful.”

“It is resignation—hopeless resignation ; and it's ridiculous,” said Dolly, stifling a sob. “She has no right to be resigned. I'd like to catch that 'Liza Ross !” And Dolly choked back another sob.

“There, there, Dolly !” said her husband, hurrying her toward the lights of the house.

“Didn't she have anything to say for herself ?” pleaded Mrs. Brumley from the folds of a handkerchief.

“Everything to say *against* herself. If she tried deliberately, she could not act worse, for her own sake.”

“She ought to be ashamed of herself !” declared Mrs. Dolly in clearer tones. “She's an ungrateful girl, when we are all doing our best to help her.”

“She says she's ungrateful,” rejoined Mr. Brumley, as he helped his wife up the steps of the veranda.

“Why don't she do differently then ?” retorted Dolly ; but under her breath, she said :

“Poor child ! Poor child !”

Then, as they were entering the hall, Dolly asked with wifely concern if Daniel had had his dinner, and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, she led the way into the library.

“Now then, Daniel,” began Dolly, after shutting the door, “sit down here beside me and tell me all about it. What foolish notion has the girl got into her head now ?”

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Daniel sank heavily down into the large armchair, and began with a weary sigh :

“She’s gone back on all the evidence she gave at the inquest ; says she never saw the face ; says she doesn’t know whether it was by accident or not that she discharged a barrel of the gun, and—listen to this!—she says it wouldn’t matter if it was proved beyond a doubt that ’Liza Ross committed the murder, she should still feel that she should be punished for his death—as an *accessory!* The Lord only knows what she means by that.”

“Why, she’s crazy !” declared Dolly. “Crazy ! I’m going down there to-morrow. I never heard anything so insane in my life.”

“You can’t do anything with her,” rejoined the Justice gloomily. “She’s beyond all influence. Captain Mapes argued it all out with her when she got the same notion in her head once before ; and she promised that she would never be so foolish again.”

“Yes,” said Dolly, nodding her head, “he told me that she promised to stick to the story of the face whatever happened. What ails her now, I’d like to know ?”

“The Moneylender—Hedges, of all people !—thought he would do her a good turn ; and what did he do, without consulting her or me or anybody else, but telegraph for Baxter—the most expensive lawyer—think of it, Dolly ! and the biggest scoundrel in New York.”

“Not Lawyer Baxter !” cried Dolly. “The big criminal lawyer ? Mr. Hedges, I’m going up to the village just to shake hands with you.”

“Just wait till I finish. We would have had Baxter ourselves, but I despise such contemptible means of

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attaining any end ; and I knew how it would be with Sadie. Well, at first, she said she didn't mind the great man, and she was willing to see anybody that Mr. Hedges wished her to see ; but when old Baxter began to instruct her on her behavior in court, she grew warm ; and by the time he got through telling her how to work upon the sympathies of the jury, she was boiling ! (I wish I might have seen her and Baxter together.) She ended by ordering him—one of the biggest lawyers in the country—out of her sight ; and he went back to the city swearing that he would have nothing whatever to do with the case.”

Pride and delight got the better of Dolly's distress.

“That girl's great—*great*, Daniel ! But what's to be done now ? I hope our lawyer didn't hear of it.”

“But he did, and he thought it was a great joke on Baxter ; but Hedges felt pretty sore about it, until he persuaded Sadie to let him send for another legal light—I can't think of his name now.”

“I take back all that I ever said against that man. Daniel, let's invite him to dinner—Mr. Hedges, I mean. And this other lawyer ; what about him ?”

Mr. Brumley made an exclamation of disgust.

“All the lawyers in New York couldn't save her now. Her pride has been touched—her sense of honor and all that. They will not dare to put her on the stand for all the infernal nonsense she'd talk ; it would make the evidence she gave at the inquest perjury, too, and that would tell against her. There's no defence—no defence. What jury is going to acquit her when she denounces herself, and, unless some tremendous influence is brought to bear upon her, will plead guilty ? And, even then, she will not bring in the plea of acci-

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dent. That was her strongest chance, and she knocks it in the head."

Mr. Brumley scowled blackly up at the chandelier, and again made use of that forcible little word, damn.

At that, Mrs. Dolly started up out of her own wretchedness to defend Sadie.

"You men have driven her wild," she declared. "You've mixed her up so she doesn't know what she's saying. If she swore on all the Bibles in the universe that she killed Devine Strong, I wouldn't believe it; and you wouldn't either, Daniel Brumley!"

"But what can you do?" asked her husband, in irritation born of despair. "Belief in her sounds very fine; but what good will it do her? Here it is Friday, and the trial comes off Monday. The end is as certain as death itself unless some new, and some very strong, evidence is found in the meantime."

Mrs. Dolly got up and walked around the library, seeing not her luxurious surroundings, but the narrow walls of a prison cell and a girl kneeling in prayer beside the little cot-bed. She paused before one of the low bookcases and, placing her arms upon it, rested her head upon her arms.

"Did you see Judge Corwin to-day? He's got daughters of his own; he shouldn't be hard on her," said Dolly at length, in scarcely audible tones.

"It has come to this," each was thinking; "we can only hope that the Judge will be as lenient as the law permits."

"That's why I stopped off at Indian Village—to see Corwin. I stayed to dinner there. He's a good fellow; but that makes no difference. It will be all the same in the long run. They will prove that she went

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out with the deliberate purpose of killing Devine Strong. You may as well make up your mind to what is next to the worst ; I hardly believe he would sentence her to death."

Dolly shivered as if with the cold ; then she turned around and stretched out her hands to her husband.

"Oh, something *must* be done !" she pleaded.

"But what ?" asked Daniel, taking the hands and drawing her back to her chair again. "I wish you would tell me what. I'd rather spend a year in Sing Sing myself than to stand up and testify against her. I shall always feel like a miserable wretch of a hangman. I told her so to-day ; for I felt that I must make some apology, however lame, for what I have already done and what I still must do. I wish you could have seen how sweet she was about it ; she seems as grateful as if we had accomplished all that we have tried to do and saved her. She spoke of every one as if she were leaving her last messages. She said that she hoped her father would be able to see her before she went away for good—that alone shows how she's changed, for she used to hate him. It was fearful, Dolly ; I could hardly stand it."

But Dolly, the sympathetic, made no show of sympathy.

"You're a great lot !" she exclaimed. "I never saw such a set of blundering idiots in my life. The idea of letting that girl lose her mind—for that is what she is doing—there in jail when that 'Liza Ross is running loose around the country. I'll turn detective myself—that's what I'll do !"

"Dolly," he protested in tender chiding, "we

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haven't left a stone unturned—you know how we've worked."

Mrs. Dolly knew very well, and she asked forgiveness by drawing her husband's head down until his lips touched hers.

"Do you love me Dolly?" asked Mr. Brumley softly.

"Has Ben been to see her yet?" returned Mrs. Dolly.

"Yes, only the other day," answered the Justice, patiently going back to the subject. "And the next day Fahder went down and took her something that the Little Lady had cooked."

"Gracious me! So Ben's won them over, too. I wonder how he got up the courage to go down himself. I never saw such a boy; he's worked harder than all the rest of you put together. Fahder told me that on all those stormy days, when not an oyster-boat went out, Ben went out and dredged for 'Liza's body. He spends half his nights on the beach searching around with a lantern, and goes to work oystering just the same the next day. And every Sunday he spends on the beach—all Vonstradam is horrified at that; but Fahder stands up for Ben through thick and thin. And yet, with all this, Ben wouldn't go to see her because he thought she *didn't want him!*"

"Ben's going to make a fine man," said the Justice, with seeming illogic. "I never knew him till this happened. He's very popular among both the Dutch and our people. He'll be a power in the town before he's thirty-five; that Dutch element is too important to be neglected much longer. Did I tell you that they wanted him to run for town clerk this election? And he coolly said he was too busy with other matters now!"

The Justice laughed; but Dolly said thoughtfully:

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“Sadie would have been proud. There was a time when I thought he wasn’t good enough for her—more shame to me! But I have seen so much of him during this trouble of hers that I feel as if he were my own boy.”

“Do you think she cares for him?” asked Daniel, after some moments of reflective silence.

“I don’t *think* it, I know it,” answered Dolly promptly. “Although,” she added, “Sadie doesn’t seem to know it herself; and I hope she never will realize it now, because—because—” Mrs. Dolly’s voice grew faint and husky, and died away before she completed the sentence.

“I thought, perhaps, Captain Mapes,” ventured Daniel, feeling that he was on ground where clumsy man must tread lightly.

“Captain Mapes! Gracious me!” ejaculated Dolly, with the scorn of superior knowledge. “Captain Mapes is a gentleman if ever there was one; and besides, the clan feeling with him is strong. He would do for any woman in a like position what he has done for Sadie, and I think that he would lay down his life for Sadie; but not—oh, Daniel, you are a goose! I wonder,” she went on irrelevantly, “what that horrid old aunt thinks of his actions.”

“The horrid old aunt has been to see Sadie,” said Daniel quietly.

“You don’t mean it! Go on—go on! What did Sadie say to her?”

“It was before Sadie got this outrageous notion in her head; and it seems this aunt is a religious crank, and she tried to create in Sadie a ‘change of heart’—tried to ‘convert the criminal.’ Sadie put the aunt

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out in a fury—after telling her what she thought of a religion without charity, and several other things.”

“Sadie! Sadie! Sadie!” wailed Mrs. Dolly. “With all your spirit and pride, why couldn’t you have shown some of it to that miserable wretch of a Devine Strong in the first place?”

She laid her head and arms down upon her husband’s knees and cried—silently, but desperately.

“Oh, Daniel!” she said, looking up wildly after a moment, “what shall we do for her? What shall we do?”

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CHAPTER XLI

ON THE OYSTER BED

FAHDER looked across the table to the bowed head of his youngest son, and, with his strong old face working with weakness, hesitated before he asked the blessing on the early morning's meal. The little wife wondered at the long pause, and, in her anxiety, could not help taking a peep toward the head of the table; but Ben did not look up.

"Heavenly Father," began the old man at last; and even his troubled boy heard and understood the unaccustomed quaver in the mellow, old voice; and Ben's heart swelled within him at the thought that deepest pity for him had broken Fahder's tones.

Mr. Benstra commenced again, one shaking, outspread hand before his eyes:

"Heavenly Father——"

At the second stop, Mrs. Benstra raised her head and looked from her old Bernardt to her "Little Bennie" in deep concern. Then, what she knew to have happened but once before (when she lay sick and Fahder thought that he would never again see her face opposite his own at the table) happened now: her husband got up, leaving the blessing unfinished, the meal untouched, and walked with slow, painful steps to his seat beside the window. He was getting very old.

Ben could not help it: he sobbed aloud as he, too,

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rose from the table; and only the little old lady was left to show the true, brave spirit of the family.

“Heavenly Father,” she prayed, in her very best Dutch, her voice clear, though tremulous, her little black-bonneted head bent reverently down to her clasped hands, “we don’t want anything to eat; but—help our Bennie and send comfort and patience to the American girl in prison.”

Then she left the table; and, being fine and sensitive by nature, pretended not to notice the broken-down old Fahder. She took Ben’s dinner pail from the corner of the table, and managed to make room in its stuffed interior for still another cooky, while Ben, puzzled and dazed by the un-Dutchlike emotion that both his parents had shown—greatly ashamed that any one should suffer for him, hovered over the Little Lady, and tried his best to smile when she turned the corner of her bright eye upon him.

“Drink your coffee, my boy,” she urged very gently.

“Yes, Bennie,” said Fahder, exerting himself to speak. “Don’t start to work without something to work on.”

Ben, though it threatened to choke him, swallowed the coffee, for he had been brought up to be reasonable and obedient.

“Don’t you fret,” said the old mother, promptly bringing him another cup. “It will be all right. It’s only Saturday to-day, and the Lord can do so much in two days—oh, my, yes! Ain’t it so, Fahder?”

This was beautiful and sweet of the mother even if she did not mean it; but she did mean it, and Ben was able to lift his head again, while Fahder went back to his true colors.

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“Your mother is right, Bennie,” he said in his own language, bowing with loving deference to his wife. “And when you get out in the bay and begin to work, you will know it, for work will make you feel better. When Monday comes it will be time enough for us to be foolish. Remember that everything ends right if you trust in” (Fahder raised his fur cap) “the Lord. You remember how worried we were about the mail, and then (I don’t understand it yet, but I know that Mr. Brumley had something to do with it) I didn’t lose it at all. I know that your trouble is a thousand times worse than that would have been ; it is, even to me. But as long as you know she is innocent, don’t you think that anything is better than that she should have married and lived with that Devine Strong ?”

Ben had thought this himself, but——

“Oh, my, yes !” exclaimed the mother. “Now, all the day long you must think that we will have some good news to tell you when you come home to-night.” Her smile was as tender as it was brave. “It will be all right, Bennie.”

She lifted her sturdy, plump arms, and drawing the lad’s face down to hers, pressed her wrinkled cheeks against his—so young, so smooth, and firm. He could not speak ; but he put his own arms around her and covered her face with kisses, just as he covered it when he was only a baby boy and she had not yet taught him the necessity of hiding his emotions. Her smile was brighter than ever when he released her ; her cheeks were flushed ; her eyes as starlike as when she and the older Bernardt were young sweethearts.

“It will be all right,” she said cheerily. “Trust in the Lord.”

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Fahder repeated her words. Ben put on his faded overcoat, took up his dinner pail, and went to the door, where he found sufficient of a voice with which to say good-bye. Then, followed by the unspoken, yearning prayers and blessings of the old people, he started for his work and the bay.

The early morning greeted him more gloomily than his fond parents had bidden him good-bye, and the little hope that they had inspired vanished with the first touch of mist on his face. It was another dreary day—half warm, half cold, with a lazy, lifeless wind from the east. Nobody could have luck on such a day, Ben told himself as he passed into the lane, and the old gate hinge creaked a melancholy assent. Anyhow, Ben reflected, his head bent down, his dinner pail swinging slowly in his hand—anyhow, he never did have luck on Saturdays; although this Saturday must of necessity be better than this Sunday, and infinitely better than Monday, for Monday was the day set for the trial.

Lower and lower went Ben's head; sadder and more melancholy grew his thoughts, as, seeing nothing but with his mind's eye, he went on down the tidy Dutch road. The few children that he met glanced at him shyly and edged out of his path, although they all loved Ben; and when he had passed, they explained his moody look by telling each other that he was coming down with the measles, that epidemic having swooped down upon the hamlet. Then they wondered if he knew that his little mate on the sloop had become a victim of the disease; but they did not venture to disturb Ben by asking.

Three or four old Dutchmen, too old to be going his

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way—to the general working-ground—met Ben and jerked out their characteristic, hiccough-like grunt by way of greeting; but the lad did not lift his head to reply.

“Bad for Ben,” they told each other; but added at once: “That comes of courting in Shoreville,” and sagely nodded their heads.

Unconscious of pity or blame, but also in no condition to care whether he were blamed or pitied, Ben walked on as in a dream until he found himself standing in the open doorway of one of the low, red oyster houses on the shore; and a dozen or more men looked up from their work of culling or packing oysters in the damp, dusky, dingy place, to say:

“Hullo, Cap’n Ben!” in laboriously cheerful tones. Then they all looked down again, lest Ben should think they were prying into his sorrow. However, one, the head of the packers and a brother of Ben’s as well, came forward, and, with seeming carelessness, putting his hand upon Ben’s shoulder, turned him about.

“I thought it was time for you, Ben,” said he. “Guess you better try that new bed of openers to-day, and we can start in with ’em on Monday.”

“Never get anywhere in this calm and fog,” said Ben. “Let me see; where’bouts is it?”

Garret Benstra pointed toward the West Bay through the lightly tossing mist.

“If you take a line with this shanty an’ Blom’s windmill, you’ll hit it. You can’t miss it, anyway, for there’s a forked cedar on one corner and the flat buoy I put down myself on the cat-y-corner corner. I guess it’ll clear up before you get there; but the bottom’s pretty thick, and even if the wind does come up, you’d better use the tongs.”

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“All right,” said Ben, and without another word started for the nearby canal.

Down the canal, one mist-darkened sail after another was stealing; and when Ben saw how many boats were ahead of him in that work-a-day fleet which sailed out of the harbor each morning, he threw off his cumbersome cargo of thought and sailed lightly for where his own sloop lay. The small, dark figure of a boy stood out from the mist on the bank of the canal, and Ben, naturally supposing that this was his little mate, called out an order; but the boy stood stock still and grinned a grin more fiendish than human.

“Why, Dirk!” commenced Captain Ben in some surprise; then paused in greater surprise at the sight of this un-Dutch-like hobgoblin in Dirk’s place.

“Where’s Dirk Van Vessen?” asked Ben as he stepped aboard.

“Measles,” growled the youth on the bank.

“Did he send you down here?” asked Ben.

“No-no,” said the boy, digging his hands in his pockets and his eyes in the ground.

“Can’t you say, ‘No, *sir*’?” asked Ben sternly, but with a quiver about the lips.

“Yes-yes,” answered the boy.

A laugh floated up the canal from Bastian Broerer’s boat. Ben looked around for help; but there was not a single boy in sight, save this sweet American youth.

“Can you cull oysters?” demanded Ben sharply.

“*Now*, yer talkin’!” said the lad, and, taking his hands from out of his pockets, jumped aboard; then, without another word, helped Ben get under way.

A little later, the sloop glided carefully through the mist, in and out of the windings of the canal, past one

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delayed boat after another, amid the creak of ropes, the clatter of wooden hoods, and the harsh sound of men's voices, until it had passed between the breakwaters, out upon the broad and silent surface of the bay.

The mist hung obstinately over the water, and the wind as obstinately refused to stir its wings all the morning, so that it was nearly noon when Ben found himself on the lot marked by the flat buoy and the forked cedar. He knew that to the east and to the west were fleets on fleets of oyster-boats; but he took a melancholy pleasure in thinking that they could not see him for the mist and that they were too far away to hail him. Yes; sociable, company loving Ben told himself that he was glad that he had an ugly, talk-forbidding urchin on board instead of his own wholesome little mate—told himself that he was glad Dirk Van Vessen had the measles! The child had to have them some time, anyway. Ben had the blues in its worst form; but if you want to keep the blues, you want to keep from work.

When, after having anchored and snatched a goodly bite from his dinner pail, Ben set to work with his hat pushed far back so that the soft breeze and mist swept cool upon his forehead; when he heard the whirr of the water as he plunged down the tongs and felt as distinctly as if they were his own fingers, the teeth raking up the oysters, he began to thrill and tingle with the pleasure of his well-beloved work.

“They're taking well to-day,” he found himself saying to the boy; but the boy scowled and made no answer. However, he was ready for the job of culling the moment Ben lifted up the weighted tongs and

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dropped a load of oysters on the deck. Down went the tongs again—whirr, whirr, the gray water.

“Glad to feel a pair of tongs once more,” said Ben, thinking aloud more than addressing his amiable mate. “I wasn’t brought up to use dredges, and, somehow or ’nother, can’t get used to ’em. Fahder says they’re what’s ruining the oyster business, and knocking us small dealers out o’ sight. Say, these openers are all right, ain’t they?”

The boy culled steadily and sullenly without looking up to answer, and Ben fell back into silence again as he worked his way along the deck; but much of his gloom had left him, and he even began to dream of a day when Sadie might sit on the top of the cabin watching him at work with the tongs, or hold the tiller while he flung out the dredges. He would work doubly fast then—for her and home, the home that would be hers and his together. By that time his brothers would take him into the partnership and make him head of the out-door workers; then he would go in for town politics, and he and Sadie would live in that pretty little house near the brook on the Main Road. She would like it there better than down the Dutch lane—But something caught in and choked up Ben’s tongs, and away flew all the airy castles in Spain before Ben’s momentary attack of irritability.

“Hello! What’s this?” he exclaimed impatiently. “I swan if this lot ain’t full of sticks! Get off there!”

The stick, or whatever it was, promptly obeyed; and Ben as promptly began to feel for it again.

“It clinks like iron. Guess I’ll haul it up and see what it is anyhow, like Abe Thurber with that cherry

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pie he threw overboard 'cause it was all pits and no meat, an' then—hello! I swan if it ain't a gun!"

For many long weeks, day after day, Ben had been looking for three things—a woman or her dead body, the boat that she might have sailed, and a gun that she might have possessed. Of the three he would know only the woman, if he should find her. He lifted the gun carefully to the deck and began to examine it, while the boy, impelled by that interest that every healthy male of the human species feels in a firearm, left his work and stole over to Ben's side.

"It's an ol' ram-rodder, hain't it?" said the youth, speaking at last out of the fulness of his heart.

"Ever see it before? Know it?" asked Ben sharply and with unconcealed excitement. "Can't get this cap box open. Rusty. Must have laid here some time. Ain't loaded either."

With that, Ben thrust the gun into the boy's hand and took up, not the tongs, but a pole, with which he began to feel over the surface of the bed, reaching the pole out as far as possible, then dragging it back under the sloop; then walking a step further along deck and repeating the process.

The boy was looking over every inch of the gun with grinning delight, much as he might have looked over every inch of a strange boat; but when he came to the cap box and found that it would not open, the grin turned into a black scowl.

"This here gun," said he, still working doggedly at the box, "is Devine Strong's, gol darn him!"

Then, disgusted with the obstinacy of the cap box, the boy flung the gun spitefully down into the cabin. Ben looked around, resting on the pole.

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“What did you say?”

“That air gun’s Devine Strong’s. What yer a-polin’ fer?”

“How do you know?” demanded Ben, ignoring the lad’s question.

“What yer polin’ fer?” repeated the boy. “Shell I pole tew?”

Ben took him by the back of his collar and repeated:

“How do you know Devine Strong’s gun?”

“I seen it before,” growled the lad, trying to squirm out of Ben’s hold.

“Where? I’ll throw you overboard as sure as I’m a Dutchman if you don’t tell me.”

“Lemme go an’ I’ll tell yer.”

“No, you don’t! How do you know his gun?”

“He left it in my boat onct, an’——”

“Your boat!” And Ben’s hold tightened over the boy’s collar. “You are the boy that lost the boat?”

“Lemme go!” roared the boy, striking out with arms and legs.

“Why didn’t you tell? I met you in Shoreville and asked you three times.” Ben held the squirming figure high over the water. “Answer me!”

“Gran’pop,” said the boy, shortly and without a whimper.

“Grandpop, what?”

“Said I wa’n’t ter git mixed up in no murder mess.”

Ben set the boy down on the deck.

“If you want to find your boat,” he said quietly, “take that other pole and follow me along deck. I might miss something.”

The boy took up the pole, and, without another word passing between them, the two traversed the deck from

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stern to bow, then started from bow to stern on the other side. The mist had not lifted at all, but the breeze was springing up, and the mumble of the sea came more distinctly from beachward. On Ben went, step by step, toward the place where he had picked up the gun; his eyes were flashing, his lips set with determination, his whole face and figure so charged with sternness and resolution that the boy glanced at him abashed and dared not follow too closely.

Ben reached the starting point and had found nothing in addition to the gun. He straightened his back and rested a moment, his face turned upward, his lips white and moving silently. Then he drew the sharpie up to the side of the sloop and stepped in, taking the pole with him.

"Come on," he called to the boy in a voice that seemed to belong to some rough, gruff old man. "Leave your pole. I want you to row."

The boy took the oars.

"Slow, now. Make for that buoy over there. Don't upset me, or you'll never find your boat."

The boy grinned in response to the laugh that came from Ben's dry lips. Ben stood in the bow of the boat, thrusting his pole in the water, first on one side, then on the other. In this manner they reached the flat buoy.

"Glad I got a lantern aboard," said Ben with the same unnatural laugh. "May be an all-night job. Row straight ahead till I tell you to stop."

The oars dipped in again and also the pole; the mournful mumble of the breakers grew louder, the mist lighter; and Ben thought that if the wind continued to increase, much as he disliked the thought of

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using the cruel iron in this search, he would go back to the sloop and sail around, dredging for Liza's body. Just then the pole struck against wood.

"Hold on a minute!" called Ben, and the boy rested on the oars, glancing covertly around at Ben.

"Give a pull!"

Down went the oars again, and the boat shot a few feet forward; then another pull and a few feet more.

"Hold up!"

Ben put the pole down again, and again it struck wood; then he turned around, dragging the pole along the side of the sharpie and, when he came to the boy, stepping over him without a word.

"Got it?" yelled the boy, plunging one oar down to make investigations of his own, and thereby almost upsetting both Ben and himself. "Sharpie with a centre-board."

Then a sound of fiendish delight, like an Indian whoop of victory, rang out over the quiet, misty water. The boy's oar had struck the hard surface of a boat turned bottom upward.

"Yes; we've got the boat," said Ben, resting his pole on the recovered boat itself, "but there is still——"

The pole slipped suddenly down upon a soft heap—so suddenly that Ben barely saved himself from falling overboard. The devil seemed to possess that boy, for again he gave his fiendishly gleeful war whoop.

"Hush!" said Ben sternly, as without attempting to get up from the position in which he had fallen, he prodded the pole downward.

"Hush!" he repeated in a low, broken voice. "She—she is caught by—one foot—under—under your boat."

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The pole slipped out of Ben's nerveless hand down into the water ; he rested his forehead against his arm ; the mumble of the breakers grew louder ; the sun blinked tearfully through the mist ; and a breeze came murmuring over the waters.

In the little bedroom where 'Liza was born and where 'Liza's mother had died, an old man was standing before a picture—the picture of a lovely, innocent, joyous-looking young girl.

“Elizabeth,” the old man whispered, drawing his hand over his eyes, “I can't wait much longer. You'll have to hurry, child !”

The Mother of Devine

CHAPTER XLII

THE MOTHER OF DEVINE

HE was a beautiful, pathetic-looking child with great, dark, mournful eyes, filled half with shrinking wonder, half with innocent trust and appeal, but he was enjoying the forbidden pleasure of swinging on his grandmother's gate with as much relish as any ugly, ordinary, healthy-minded young rascal.

"Hello, Devine," said Ben Benstra, pausing before the gate and stopping its progress by catching hold of one of the pickets. "Grandmother home?"

The boy did not answer, but peeped with shy curiosity at the gun under Ben's arm. Ben smiled engagingly.

"You're Devine Ross, ain't you, Cap'n?"

"No, sir," murmured the child. "My name's Devine Strong." Over the brown eyes came the sparkle of tears as he added: "Gramma says so; an' she says she's my gramma, too." The child looked over his shoulder into the yard as he said this, with a glance of fear, which speedily turned into a look of abject terror, as he caught sight of an old woman emerging from the shrubbery at the corner of the house, and heard her harsh, shrill voice calling him by name:

"*Devine!* Dee-vine! Git off'n my gate, yew brat, yew! How many times I got tew tell yew that I don't 'low *no* young un tew swing on my gate?"

Mrs. Strong came hobbling down the walk, while Ben

The Story of Sarah

pushed the gate open, entered the yard, lifted the frightened boy down, and placed his six feet of manhood between the child and the righteous wrath of his grandmother.

"An' agabbin' tew strangers, tew!" went on Mrs. Strong, with increasing asperity. "Them tew very things I tol' yew 'leven hundred times not tew dew!"

She tried to dodge around Ben to get at the boy, but Ben smilingly changed his position, and the child proved himself better at dodging than the old woman. Then her displeasure turned upon Ben.

"What right hev yew got tew come here an' interfere with my family affairs? I guess I'm able tew take care o' my own gran'son, hain't I? What yew adewin' anyway in my yard?"

"Let me in your house," said Ben earnestly, "and I'll tell you." The old lady planted a hand on either hip, and by her very attitude dared Ben to come a step nearer his desire.

"Ef I hain't very much mistaken," said she, "you're a Dutchman."

"Yes, ma'am," said Ben, acknowledging the accusation without shame; "I'm Ben Benstra."

"Wall, Ben Benstra, I 'spected yew sooner or later. P'ut' nigh everybody round about has been tew see me lately but yew."

With that Mrs. Strong seemed to drop all interest in her latest visitor, and calling through the denseness of his body, exclaimed:

"Devine! Come right straight in the house, young man!"

The little young man stole out from under Ben's wings, and yelling: "He's got a gun, a gun, a gun!"

The Mother of Devine

lifted his heels and scampered for the house, the old lady limping as fast as she could after him.

"Mrs. Strong—" began Ben, entering third in the race. On she went without turning her head.

"Mrs. Strong—" he began again as they turned the corner of the house.

"Shet up!" said she harshly, still without pausing or looking around. "I hain't astandin' with my rheumatiz out in this here dampness fer nobody. An' ef *yew* want tew talk to them half-dozen noses on Char'y Esther's winder-panes, *yew* kin."

Ben glanced at the window panes in question, wondering if the noses would scent the meaning of the gun. The old lady went past the back door out to her clothes-line, and began to take down some dish towels, while Ben waited helplessly on the back stoop. When Mrs. Strong saw fit to join him there, she put the towels and clothes pins down on the little home-made bench and called shrilly for Devine. The little fellow came reluctantly enough, and submitted to having his stockings pulled up over his thin little legs, his mittens pulled out of his pocket and yanked over his hands, and finally his woollen scarf tightened around his throat until his beautiful eyes bulged out. Ben, irritated though he himself was at the delay, smiled sympathy and encouragement all through the boy's ordeal.

"What yer got a gun fer?" piped up the child.

"Shet up! Mind yer own business!" exclaimed the grandmother, at last turning to the door. "Now, *yew* keep them air things on an' don't *yew* go out'n the yard. The neighbors hain't agwine tew say that I don't take good kere of *yew*! Come in, Bub."

The acrid invitation was given to Ben, but he was so

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tickled at being addressed as a little boy, that he smiled his broadest smile as he followed his hostess into her neat, but dark and gloomy kitchen.

"Set down," said she, dusting off an already immaculate chair with her apron.

"*You* sit down," said Ben with instinctive courtesy; but Mrs. Strong motioned him to the chair with all the authority of a grandmother, and herself retreated to a window, from which post she watched him with folded arms, compressed lips,—her whole manner eloquent of distrust and defiance. Ben laid the gun across his knees and said deferentially, apologetically:

"This is your son's gun, ain't it, Mrs. Strong?"

"Humph! 'Spect me tew know a gun a mile off? Thar! Set right down again. I—I don't want tew see it."

"When did 'Liza Ross get this gun?" asked Ben with gentle perseverance.

"What business be it of yourn?"

"Then you know," said Ben calmly. "Was it Saturday night or Sunday morning?"

"None of yer business! *Yew* hain't the proper one tew ask me questions."

"That's true enough," admitted Ben, "at least according to your lights. And I'm very sorry to have to do it, Mrs. Strong. But"—and here Ben warmed up—"we can make you suffer for not telling that 'Liza had gone off with this gun."

"Hain't nobody ever ast me no sech thing!" cried out Mrs. Strong shrilly. "Who sent yew here with that air gun anyway? Where'd yew git it? How'd yew know it was ourn? Who sent yew?"

Ben had a hot reply on the tip of his tongue, but re-

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spect and consideration for the old was a habit of his, and he adhered to this habit now when he said quietly:

"I guess 'Liza must have sent me."

"'Liza!" screamed the old woman. "'Liza! Speak out! What d'yew mean?"

"She has come back from the dead."

"Thar! I knowed she'd turn up some time. 'Liza done all her hidin' when she was alivin'. Wall, folks that don't behave themselves must 'spec' bad endin's," said Mrs. Strong, adding with a pitiful little quaver in her voice: "That's what I allers tol' Devine, but that's all the good it done him."

Ben lowered his eyes and gave the old mother some moments to regain her self-control before he spoke again.

"It was on the oyster beds," said the lad. "She was caught by one foot under her boat."

"I *knowed* she was somewhar in the bottom of that bay," said Mrs. Strong quietly; and then Ben forgot that she was old, a woman and bereaved, and remembered only how she had helped to keep Sadie shut up in Riverhead.

"Why the old boy didn't you say so!" he cried, half rising from his chair.

"'Cause it 'twa'n't none of my business," snapped Mrs. Strong. "An' I don't see fer my part what *yew* be ameddlin' in it fer." She started forward, pointing to the door with one crooked hand that she tried in vain to keep from being also a trembling one. "G' on! Folks what's got a right tew kin question me. I hain't got no call tew say 'Yes, sir,' an' 'No, sir,' tew a strip of a Dutch boy like yew!"

Ben resolutely kept his seat, but he hung his head;

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after all, he was only a "strip of a boy" beside this crippled old dame. Then he looked up frankly.

"I was hasty, Mrs. Strong," said the lad. "But time's flying, and we're 'most crazy to get this thing settled up. We've found 'Liza and the boat and the gun. Now, if we can prove that she started for the beach with the gun that will be one step further."

"But how yew agwine tew prove that she ever *got* tew the beach?" asked the old woman; and that was when she hurt Ben most.

"Never mind that," said he. "I want you to tell me when she came for the gun."

Mrs. Strong stared at Ben a moment, then she went slowly to the wood-box behind the stove, took out a stick, leisurely lifted the stove-lid, and in the same exasperatingly slow manner shoved a piece of wood in the fire.

"For the Lord's sake!" exclaimed Ben, his hands closing tightly over the gun in his effort to contain himself. "Haven't you any sense of justice at all? Think of that poor girl shut up in jail waiting to be tried for the murder of your son, when you know, and knew all along, that 'Liza Ross killed him."

"How yew agwine tew prove it, ever?" demanded Mrs. Strong. "They'd shet her up anyway. An', besides, it sarves her right. She hain't got no more'n her jest deserts; afoolin' my boy right an' left till he didn't know which end he was astandin' on!"

Ben had risen to his feet, and it seemed to more than his full height.

"You're a woman," said he, "and an old one; but if you was a man I'd knock you down this minute."

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He crossed the room, but paused with his hand on the latch of the door as Mrs. Strong demanded:

“Here! Whar yew gwine?”

“I’m going for somebody that will *make* you answer,” said Ben without raising his voice, but with so much manly sternness and dignity that the poor old mother caught herself in the act of envying Ben’s mother this son.

“Wait a minute,” said Mrs. Strong. “Thar be more tew yew ’n I thought. Who be yew agwine fer, ef I may ask?”

“For Justice Brumley and Reverend Dan.” Now Ben actually lifted the latch and let in a breath of the out-door air.

“Will yew shet the door, an’ come back here an’ listen tew common sense?” she cried. “Ef yew go an’ fotch that air fittin’ ol’ parson here, I won’t open my mouth—no, sirree! Not but what he’s a good man, I hain’t againsayin’ that, but I don’t kere ’bout aseein’ him. An’ I hain’t got no use fer that big-gun Square Brumley either. They be both on ’em meddlers. Be yew agwine tew set down, Cap’n—Cap’n Ben?”

Captain Ben was secretly elated at her change of attitude, but he thought that he had discovered how to manage the perverse old creature, so he frowned very sternly and said:

“If you will tell me all you know about the—the murder of your son, and be quick about it. First, did ’Liza come over here for the gun or——”

“I tol’ yew that ten times a’ready.”

“When did she come for it?”

“Sunday. When dew yew s’pose?”

“What time?”

The Story of Sarah

Mrs. Strong sat down at last under one of the small, high windows.

“Lemme see,” said she, bending her head in thought. “’Twas ’bout daybreak, I guess. Jes’ after Devine, he—he started fer the crick.”

It was something more than the struggle to remember that made the old mother keep her head down; and, when she could no longer hide the traces of that something, she raised the corner of her apron and furtively wiped her eyes; then moved her chair so that her guest could not see the working of her face. But that was unnecessary; the son of the Little Lady kept his eyes down, and pretended to be trying to open the stubborn cap box of the gun.

“Wall, ’Liza,” began Mrs. Strong, addressing her rag carpet, “she come arunnin’ over here jes’ as he got outer sight; an’ she ast me ef he was agwine tew the beach. Now, I never did take no stock in that air ’Liza Ross—Strong, I should say—fer ’peared tew me that she never dast tew look a body square in the face. Howsomever, I’d hern great an’ surprisin’ things in the talk that Devine an’ that ’tarnal ol’ parson had tewgether Sat’d day night, when he come aroutin’ us outer bed with a horsewhip—things I wa’n’t over an’ above anxious tew b’lieve. Jes’ the same, I up an’ flung ’em at Devine that very night. So when ’Liza came an’ tol’ her yarn, in the face o’ what that air fittin’ parson hed said, an’ what I hed wormed out’n Devine, I couldn’t in no ways doubt her. Yer kin look stiddy at a lie fer years an’ not see through it, but when the truth comes along an’ lights it up, yew hev tew see, yew can’t help it. An’ it hurt me turr’ble tew think that I’d been an’ let my son’s woman live right in sight o’ my front door all

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these years an' never knowed it, an' never done a thing tew make him marry her, fer she was a good 'nough woman in her way, 'Liza was, ef—ef——”

Mrs. Strong paused, gasping for breath. Ben no longer pretended an interest in the gun; he was looking at the bent form and shaking head of Devine's mother in wonder and admiration.

“So I laid her out,” went on the old woman after the breathing spell. “I didn't spare her one speck—no, sirree! I tol' her jes' what I thought of her, an' then I went an' got the gun an' rammed in the powder with my own han's, an' give it tew her.

“‘Thar!’ says I. ‘Yew don't need tew use it; but it takes more'n a woman's tongue tew scare my boy. Yew go an' fetch him back, an' yew tell him fer me that I'd rether see a son o' mine alayin' dead than amarryin' one woman when by rights he's the lawful husband of another.’”

“Bully for you!” exclaimed Ben with boyish impulsiveness.

Mrs. Strong turned her unsteady, little old head until she faced the lad.

“What else was I tew say tew that air neglected creeter?” she demanded. “‘Twa'n't no more'n fair fer her tew try an' keep him away from that air Jarvis gal. An' 'twa'n't no more'n he desarved fer her tew—up—an'—shoot him!’”

Sob after sob followed this emphatic assertion; and the woman could neither choke down the sobs nor smother them in the folds of her apron. Tears came into Ben's manly eyes; he leaned forward, murmuring: “Poor little mother!”

Instantly the apron was withdrawn, and two tear-

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sparkling eyes flashed with all the fire of youth from out of the wrinkled old face.

“Yew needn’t ‘*poor—leetle—mother*’ me! How dast yew? Yew sassy brat, yew! He’s better off dead ’n he’d be alive an’ married tew that air big-eyed Jarvis gal, what killed him herself fer all that anybody *alivin*’ knows.”

Ben sat up straight, white to the very lips.

“What did ’Liza say when she went off with the gun?” he demanded sternly. The fire died out of Mrs. Strong’s eyes; she sank wearily back in her chair as she answered:

“She says, says she, that she’d make sure he didn’t marry nobody ’less’n it was *her*. An’ I tol’ her tew hurry up an’ ketch him ’fore he sot sail. An’ she says, says she, that he wa’n’t agwine tew git away from her, not ef she hed tew foller him clear ’cross tew the beach. She said she could sail a boat as good as any man—that *he* taught her; an’ she laughed when she said it. An’ I says, says I:

“‘Dew yew promise me faithful not tew use that air gun ’less’n yew hev tew?’ an’ she laughs agin’, an’ says:

“‘Yew fergit that I love him,’ an’ off she goes arunnin’. I kept my eye on her, an’ she went straight down that air back lot”—Mrs. Strong pointed out of the window, and Ben got up to look through the glass—“an’ intew them air woods. (It’s a short cut tew the crick, as I ’spose yew know.) An’ I hadn’t my doubts but what she’d kotch Devine ’fore he started out. Howsomever”—and here Mrs. Strong threw Ben a fiery look of challenge—“I hain’t ablamin’ her one spec’ for astealin’ a boat, as she must hev, an’ astartin’ arter him.”

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“It’s a pity,” said Ben, “that you couldn’t have told all this before.”

“Nobody ever ast me,” asserted Mrs. Strong, as if that settled the question. “An’ I hed it all writ’ out, so ef I should die afore the trial.”

“Well, I’ve got to go now,” said Ben. “The lawyers are coming down on the 6.30, and they’ll probably be in to see you to-night.”

Mrs. Strong started up and laid her trembling, old hands on Ben’s arm.

“I hain’t agwine tew hev no dealin’s with *lawyers!*” she cried in nervous, ignorant alarm.

“They won’t hurt you,” said Ben reassuringly. “An’, say, Mrs. Strong, there’s no doubt ’bout this being the gun?”

He lifted the gun and held it across his arms, like a baby, for her inspection. She drew back at first, but after a moment came closer, and finally passed her hand down the barrel.

“My poor husban’s,” she whispered. “Oldest gun in this here place. Went through the War o’ the Rebellion, this here gun did. He ust tew lay it acrost his knees, an’ Devine, no higher ’n his knees, ust tew stan’ on the other side alistenin’ with open eyes an’ mouth tew stories my husband’d tell ’bout this here gun. He didn’t know then—he didn’t know—Devine was the cunninest baby—well, mebbe it *wa’n’t this* gun what killed him.”

“Would you identify it in court?” asked Ben, trying in vain to speak steadily and sternly.

“Lemme git this air cap box open, an’ I’ll tell yew fer sartain, though I hain’t got no doubts anyway. The fust letters of his name—D. S.—is on the inside o’ the lid.”

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Ben sighed impatiently; he was longing to get away, and yet did not know how to make the poor old woman hurry. Her tremulous, shaking old fingers were fussing with the cap box.

“The darn thing won’t open,” said Ben.

“Won’t, eh?” said she, as the lid flew up with a snap. “What’d that air Hessian do with all the caps? Yes, here’s the letters—I kin feel ’em with my fingers—D. S. Little did I think tew live tew see the day when I should be glad my husband was dead.”

She turned away, and sinking down in a chair, covered her face with her apron. Ben looked at the initials, and, never having seen so old-fashioned a gun before, examined the brass cap box with some curiosity. There were no caps in it, as Mrs. Strong had said, but there was a crumpled piece of paper, which Ben took out and smoothed, he could not have told why. His eyes lit up when the paper was spread before them, and a wordless ejaculation escaped his lips. At that the woman uncovered her face.

“Needn’t nobody feel sorry fer me,” she quavered with streaming eyes. “I don’t want nobody’s——”

Ben eagerly grasped her shoulder and thrust the paper in front of her face.

“You saw this in the box, didn’t you?” he cried with boyish excitement.

“Yes-yes, I seen it. What’s them air chicken scratches on it? Wait a minute. Lemme git my specs.”

She went to the shelf and felt around carefully until she produced a leather case, from which she took a pair of spectacles. Ben, himself, had held the paper all the while, and his hand was trembling. Now she put her

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own hard, misshapen hand over his, and held up the paper until it was level with her eyes. After a while she looked at Ben over the top of her glasses:

“I knew what I was adoin’ when I took that air youngun!”

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CHAPTER XLIII

THE SERMON

ZEPH and Charlie, a pair of acknowledged lovers, doing their best, with wise Mrs. Dolly's assistance, to get thoroughly tired of each other, had rowed down the brook through the Brumley estate to the wild little landing at the edge of the churchyard.

"I'll run ahead," said Zeph, when Charlie was stooping down to tie the boat. "I promised to meet Johnny Martin in the vestibule."

"The devil you did!" said Charlie, whom even Zeph had failed to teach good manners.

She laughed, and looking over her shoulder teasingly, ran up the narrow path between the bushes, which unkind action so disturbed Charlie that he tangled his feet up in the rope, and, being unable to go after her at once, thought that he had lost her to Johnny Martin forever. He had no sooner succeeded in freeing himself, however, than she came running back, her face dimpled with laughter, her slender body swaying like a young willow.

"Oh, Charlie!" she cried. "Come, come!" and seizing him by the hand, dragged him through the bushes out upon the smooth lawn of St. Catherine's.

"What *is* the matter, Zeph?" asked Charlie.

"Hush!" whispered Zeph, pointing her finger in the direction of the Sunday-school room. "*Eavesdropping!*"

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The Reverend Daniel Leggett eavesdropping!" And in the intensity of her enjoyment, she held fast to her sides and also fast to Charlie's fingers.

It was true, the Reverend Daniel Leggett was eavesdropping. He stood on the steps of the Sunday-school room, within touch of the gray old tower at the back of St. Catherine's, and well within earshot of a group of eight or ten women gathered together just around the corner of the tower, in that convenient angle devoted to before-service gossip. That he was listening intently could not for one moment be doubted, and that the women were talking with more vivacity than usual could not be doubted either.

"I wonder what they are saying," gasped Zeph when she could speak. "It must be about him. Look at his face, Charlie! Look at his face! 'Listeners,' you know. Just wait till I quote that to him."

"Listeners ought to hear evil of themselves," growled Charlie, who was both disappointed and shocked by the Reverend Dan's action. It was a relief to the lad when the last bell began to ring at this moment, and the Rector turned abruptly into the Sunday-school room; the group of gossips dispersed; and Zeph was willing to hasten across the lawn to the church. They were no sooner in their seats and on their knees, presumably offering up a silent prayer, when Zeph informed Charlie in a low, sweet whisper that—

"Captain Mapes, Johnny Martin, and Ben Benstra are here."

"How the devil do you know?" he rejoined in a whisper so imprudent that the village maid on his other side stuffed her handkerchief in her mouth.

Zeph, in her quick, careless way looked around again.

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“Aunt Dolly’s down there shaking her head at me,” she murmured in the lad’s ear. “What lots of people there are. Dad’s got a full house. And, Charlie, there comes the Moneylender!”

“Hush!”

Zeph sang two lines of the processional hymn, her eyes fixed on the vestry room door, by which the Reverend Daniel Leggett must enter.

“Doesn’t he look mad?” she asked of her hymnal when the Rector came striding into and across the chancel, his surplice flowing out behind, his eyes deliberately turning from face to face in the congregation. Presently, when Charlie was watching her kneeling figure, as if it were that of a saint, Zeph leaned toward him to whisper:

“I know he slept in that surplice, and he forgot to black his boots. It’s time I went home, dear.”

Then, when the minister had taken his place at the lectern and began to read the first lesson, Zeph stated in a horrified whisper that “he had on those old light trousers, and must have given the black ones away.”

Charlie bade her “hush!” again, and for a long while the minister’s daughter kept still; in fact, until the Reverend Daniel Leggett had raced at full speed through the prayers to that place where he always slowed up, like a rider preparing to dismount. Then said Zeph: “He feels better now,” and looked around to find out why her father’s face had suddenly beamed with a look of triumphant relief; and, failing in this, consoled herself by smiling impartially at Ben, the tutor, and Captain Mapes.

That look which had puzzled Zeph was still on the minister’s face when he announced the hymn that

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precedes the sermon, and read aloud the first two lines:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform—

But when the hymn was drawing to a close, and the Reverend Dan waited impatiently with his elbow on the large Bible for the "Amen," his face changed and grew so black and fierce that Charity Esther Green, in the act of whispering to her neighbor that "his hands was black and his shirt was red," was turned into a gaping statue by the conviction that he had divined her words. Afterward she declared that the Rector preached that morning to her alone, but at least twenty others disputed the honor of having been the inspiration and the object of that sermon.

Scarcely had the lingering "Amen" died away than the Reverend Daniel Leggett hurled this innocent text at his congregation:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another."

It was at once a challenge to come up and be thrashed and a declaration of victory; yet no one understood why it should be so. They all remembered that the Reverend Dan had preached on that text at least twice a year for the last twenty-five years, and they did not know what he could have left unsaid; yet it was very evident that there was something still left to be said.

"Love one another!" repeated the Rector, pounding the Bible as if it were his own pet sin, and looking as if he would like to set all his people on the lectern and pound them also. Then he began:

"Beloved, as I sat there at the prayer desk, the

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thought came to me, 'Why are all these people here this morning? How is it that, after seeing my congregation dwindle away like the flowers at the first blast of the winter's wind, it suddenly blossoms forth like weeds in a neglected field?'"

Now they thought they understood, and with a rapid exchange of guilty glances settled down for the worst. The Reverend Daniel Leggett had lost many of his followers, a large part of his congregation, through his stubborn defence of Sarah Jarvis; yet here was his church crowded with people on the morning before the first day of the trial.

"If I hadn't known better, I would have patted myself on the back and said, 'My people love me so they had to come back to me.' But, oh, no, I couldn't fool myself like that.

"Now, ask yourselves the question, Did you come here this morning because you love one another? Because you love your old friend and Rector? Or did you come to triumph over his pain? To see how he would bear up under sorrow? To hear his bitter prayer that the cup might pass away from him? To cry the cry that has come down the ages, '*Crucify him!*'?"

There was a stir of uneasiness in every pew, while every occupant of every pew wondered how so many people *could* have come out this morning.

"Now, I don't want to be personal," asserted the Rector. "I don't say that *you* came for that, or *you* came for that"—he pointed his stern forefinger just where he knew it would be felt the most—"but I do say that most of the people before me this morning came—perhaps you didn't realize it, but just the same, you came to offer me a drink of vinegar mingled with

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gall. But I tell you right here, if you came for that, go right home; get right up and leave, for you're going to get left. (Excuse the term.) The Lord, I want you to understand, ain't making any mistakes.

"I have been faithful to a friend—to a daughter—in adversity, and for that my own faithful—*faithful*, mind you!—friends have turned upon me. I have visited the poor in prison, and you have held up your white hands in horror, and pulled aside your dainty skirts as if I had the small-pox. Oh, contemptible, *contemptible!* 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.'"

The Reverend Daniel Leggett was standing away from the lectern out in the open chancel, where his every movement could be seen by all the white, strained faces of his congregation.

"I didn't mean to preach like this. You have brought it on your own heads." He paused with hand uplifted, and then declared with fearful solemnity: "'Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* congregation.' Beloved, I was going to tell you kindly, and hoped that you would offer up your prayers of thanksgiving with me; but a little while ago, as I stood in the door of the Sunday-school room, looking with a grateful heart out upon the beautiful earth that God has given us—those cedars out there are the finest in the place; the cedar is the most beautiful tree God ever made—and, as I was saying, I stood there, thinking of God's many mercies, in the shadow of yonder tower—See here!"

The Rector pointed at a woman—one of the women of the tower, Licky Mott, poor soul—who had risen in her seat:

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“If you are anxious to go home I will wait until you leave the building. No? Well, then, anybody else want to get away from this sermon? Ye who love one another, possess your souls in patience; I’m not going to say anything to distress *you*.”

“As I was saying, I looked up at yonder ivy-clad tower which is the poem of the church; and what do you think I heard rumbling around the corners of its gray stones? Poems? Kindly words? Loving Christian expressions? The decent talk of God-fearing people? *No!*”

The women of the tower were not the only ones that trembled, not the only ones that held their breaths in fearful suspense; the voice of the Rector seemed to be thundering alike over the just and the unjust.

“‘A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another!’” reiterated the merciless voice. “It was then that the words of the text came to me; they swept over me in a fiendish, sarcastic way, ‘That ye love one another!’” The Rector laughed, and they of the tower shuddered to hear him.

“That was a pretty time to think of brotherly love! For what do you think that beautiful tower had to listen to? It was a wonder to me that it didn’t go to pieces on the spot, and fall all over them and crush them—their vile tongues and their evil hearts—and stamp them out forever. Now, see here,” he exclaimed as there was a little stir among the congregation, “you needn’t turn and look at your neighbors; look into your own hearts, and see if ye love one another. Ask yourselves if *you* have never stood beneath the tower.

“Well, the tower didn’t fall; and those good, charitable people passed into church to offer up prayers and

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praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God. Oh, ye blasphemers! ye hypocrites!

“‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.’ ‘Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?’”

An audible gasp ran over the congregation.

“Oh, I’m not going to preach hell fire! I never did before, and am not going to begin now; but when I think of your insufferable impudence, right under the windows of the church, at the very door of the sanctuary, to take your sister, your suffering sister—and by the way, please remember, ‘Whom the Lord loveth, the Lord chasteneth.’ As I was saying, to take her and drag her through the mire, and throw mud upon her and rend her in a thousand pieces, like so many dogs snarling over her, or vultures picking her bones, it was for all the world like the cry of ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’”

“For the moment I wondered how God could permit such things to be. I wondered why he did not smite you as he smote those far less malicious liars, Ananias and Sapphira. Where have you been, ye people who so truly love one another? What are you thinking about? Don’t you realize that the merciless eyes of the world may be turned on *you* some day?”

“Is it my fault? Yes, I ask the question, Is it *my* fault? Maybe it is, maybe it is something in the way I have taught you. But if I thought it was, I should leave the pulpit to-morrow and go out into the wilderness and pray. Anyhow, as far as *this* is concerned, I can go to the Lord with clean hands. I can hold them

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out, saying: 'They never threw mud on anybody that was down, or cast one single stone; they were always held out to the lowest.' And, *moreover*, I can say this: 'They are not stained with the blood of the innocent!' Beloved, do you understand me, ye who love one another? Ye backbiters, slanderers, blasphemers, hypocrites! Ye serpents and vipers! Do you understand me? I repeat the word, I love it so—the *innocent!*''

The Reverend Daniel Leggett rested both arms on the lectern, and watched the stir that he had created in the congregation; he coughed and waited, unable to keep a softening line of humor out of his face as a murmur of amazement rose up from the pews. But in a moment he went on as sternly as before:

“And so ‘Mine enemies are brought to confusion!’ You, every one of you, miserable liars, are proved to be false prophets. Before God in heaven—God who is ever just and merciful, God who ‘moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform’—before the God to whom you must kneel in a humble prayer for forgiveness before you dare to leave this building, I declare the girl whom you have despitefully used, shamelessly slandered, the girl whom you have pointed at, crying, ‘Crucify her! Crucify her!’——”

The terrible voice, making them cringe in their seats and involuntarily stretch out their hands in a plea for mercy, lost control of itself; the stern, wrathful face of the minister lost all its wrath and sternness, while over his hard, glittering eye there rushed a dimness of tender tears. For the Reverend Dan all the glory of the telling had faded into insignificance before the glory of that which was to be told. Without an audible breath or movement, the congregation waited until, solemn and

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low, but reaching to the furthest corner of the church, the voice was heard again:

“God has at last shown the light of his countenance to that member of our congregation who has been in darkness so long; he has cast her bonds asunder; he has opened wide the prison doors. Beloved, Sarah Jarvis has been proved beyond a doubt to be innocent.”

A silence deeper than any that had gone before followed this declaration. Zeph was clinging like an overawed child to her lover's hand; Ben Benstra's head was bowed upon his folded arms; Mrs. Brumley was crying, but without a sound. The Rector's own stalwart figure had drooped, and he could no longer speak to his people or even look at them. Then, slowly, a murmur, half of dissent, half of applause, rose up from the pews, above it sounding one or two quick sobs, and then of a sudden there rang out a shrill peal of laughter.

The minister started as if he had been struck, and raised a face white with fury, an eye that blazed with wrath; but she who had laughed was only a nervous, overwrought young girl, who was now weeping hysterically. Every face in the congregation wore a look of terror, every face save one, which was the countenance of the unimpressionable Mrs. Hallet, grinning broadly up at the Reverend Dan, and this was the only face that the Reverend Dan saw.

“So you don't believe it!” he roared, looking straight at that one shameless woman, but addressing all of his trembling people. “Well, then, most charitable of unbelievers, I'll prove it to you. You don't want it proved, do you? You shrink away from God's own truth, but I'll show it to you just the same. Talk about the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah! Those wicked

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cities couldn't hold a candle to this pest-hole of slander. I tremble to think what God in his wrath may yet do to this pretty little village of ours. And talk about the cruelty of the sea—that's as tender as a mother's love beside you, for the sea has given up its dead to be a living testimony to the righteousness of the ever-just God.

“Yes, my dearly beloved, you have made a mistake which I hope will teach you that ‘Thou art inexorable, oh man, whosoever thou art that judgest’; a mistake that will teach you that charity pays; a mistake that will teach you, I hope, to so love one another that you will not jump up and down with unholy delight every time some one gets in trouble, because it gives you something to talk about! You have been pointing your finger of scorn at one woman—casting stones at her, oh ye people without sin!—stamping her further and further down into the mire, and all the time she was as innocent of the crime you imputed to her as a newborn babe; and the guilty woman lay at the bottom of yonder bay—sleeping after life's fitful fever—covered by the rushing waters, wrapped in the silence of death. But God can make even the dead speak.

“‘Whom the Lord loveth, the Lord chasteneth.’ That is why you were given the opportunity to rejoice over the downfall of the righteous; that is why that poor child has languished in jail, the victim of circumstances and of one of our most unjust and abominable laws. I need not tell you who the real criminal was; you know, and, in the name of God, I ask you not to revile the dead. Sometime when you are walking through our quiet cemetery—the God's acre that holds the earthly remains of so many of our loved ones—stop at her grave. It is at the side of her lawful husband's

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—we buried her just at the break of this beautiful day. Pause there a moment and offer up a little prayer for one whose sufferings had driven her mad, and lay one single flower—you need lay but one—upon the grave for the sake of those who called her ‘daughter’ and ‘sister,’ and the time when she was as young and innocent as the youngest child in this church this morning. Above all, even here, ‘Judge not that ye be not judged.’ She was mad, I tell you, when she took the gun and stole the boat and went through the fury of the storm to kill Devine out there on the dunes of yonder beach. You laughed a good deal about that shawl business, didn’t you? And only this morning under the shadow of that beautiful tower. Well, it was her shawl that was found by the body, and the other shawl was found only yesterday, caught in the bushes up on the ridge one mile to the west of where it was lost. Truth stranger than fiction?”

The Reverend Dan pounded the large Bible emphatically.

“Now there’s another strange thing I want to tell you, and one that proves beyond a doubt that it pays in the long run to love one another. On that memorable Sunday, Sarah Jarvis, at great risk to herself, forced Devine Strong to write in her presence what was practically a marriage certificate for ‘Liza Ross, and a paper making ‘Liza’s son legitimate. That paper, dated and signed, was afterward stolen from Sadie by Devine Strong. Where and when do you think it was next seen? It was found with ‘Liza’s body in the bottom of the bay only yesterday, a living testimony from the ever-just God.—If that woman down there on the right side of the aisle grins again I shall publish her name

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right here!—Of course the paper would have been destroyed by water if the gun carried by Liza Ross had not happened to be an old-fashioned firearm—what the boys call a ram-rodder—and if Liza had not been a woman of brains, brains enough to place the paper in the cap box. The cap box is in the stock of the gun, made of brass, and of necessity air and water-tight. And there 'Liza hid the paper, crumpled and stained with blood. Whether she did it for her own sake while she was still on the beach, and had some hopes of returning to Shoreville, or whether she did it for the boy's sake when she found out that her little boat could not live through the storm, we shall never know. But let us think the best of the poor woman, and believe that she hoped the paper would ultimately be found to exonerate any one else that might be suspected of her crime.

“Now one thing more and I am done. If you don't believe what I have told you, just visit Justice Brumley in a body, and you will find this and much more of a surprising nature to be true. (She lost a locket over on the beach, by the way.) The affidavits of the young man—one of our own boys, God bless him—who found 'Liza's body caught by one foot under the very boat that she sailed—just think of it!”

The Rector paused for a moment, then went on quickly:

“Well, well, it does not matter about the rest—all the affidavits were made before Justice Brumley last night. We worked like beavers way into Sunday morning. Or you can run down to Judge Corwin's; but if you possess your souls in patience, to-morrow's light will show you the truth of my words and the blackness of your own misjudgment.

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“Beloved, perhaps I have spoken hastily, perhaps I have let my emotions—my temper, I won’t soften the word—get the best of me. If so, I hope you will forgive me right now. And, now, I ask you to throw off all envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness; and, above all, to wrestle in prayer with your propensity to slander your brothers and sisters in Christ. ‘A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.’”

When the plate was passed the Moneylender slyly slipped in a ten-dollar bill. He said the sermon was worth it.

That week’s issue of the *Shoreville Herald* published all that several memories had retained of this memorable sermon parallel with the column of County Court News. In the report from Riverhead this statement was made:

“After the call of the calendar Monday, it was found that not a single case was ready for trial, and a recess was made necessary until 7.30 P.M. Then the sensation lovers who had waited all day to see the little bit of sensation that might be left in the remarkable murder case, were disappointed by Judge Corwin, who complied with the request of the defendant’s counsel, and tried the case behind closed doors. It was afterward announced that the case was dismissed without trial because of the unequivocal evidence produced that the crime had been committed by one ‘Liza Ross, deceased. A perusal of our issues for the last two months will prove that we always stood up for Miss Jarvis, who has the heartfelt sympathy, united with the warm congratulations, of the whole community.”

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CHAPTER XLIV

“WHEN THE DEVIL WAS SICK—” (?)

THE drill had passed off without a hitch—far more smoothly, Number Three had told Sadie, with a touch of pessimism, than if it had been arranged “fer that air pesky Inspector,” but now that it was all over and the men and the apparatus back in the Station, the drill-master, “Cap’n Lem,” sat huddled up in his arm-chair before the mess-room stove, silent, sulky, exhausted—shaking with cold, although out of doors the sun was beating warmly down upon the sands and the April morning was as soft and balmy as a rare day in June. At the far corner of the room the crew was gathered in a whispering, nudging, awkwardly sympathetic group, while Sadie bent over her father and strove to minister to him against his will.

“Another one of them gol durn plasters?” growled Captain Lem. “G’long! G’long! I tell yer! Can’t yer give yer ol’ pop a minute’s peace?”

“Thar! thar!” said John Henry Rhodes soothingly. “Don’t swar ’fore Sadie, Cap’n Lem.” But the sick man was coughing now and did not hear the kindly rebuke.

“The Cap’n’s ’bout used up, hain’t he?” said Peter Jones in a hoarse whisper.

“That’s what he is,” rejoined Billy Downs sympathetically.

“ *The Devil was Sick* ”

“ Ought ter hev hed wit ’nough not ter gone through that air drill,” grumbled Abe Thurber, so loudly that his words reached the ears of the Keeper.

“ Sade,” he gasped, “ send that air passel of whis-p’rin’ idjits out’n my sight.”

Sadie looked up at the “ idjits ” with a smile that asked pardon for sending them, yet still bade them go, and without a word every one turned and passed out by the washroom door—every one except Billy Downs, who closed the door after the others and resolutely stood his ground, only to be rewarded for his act of rebellion by a smile that warmed his heart.

“ I hain’t agoin’ ter stan’ another plaster,” the invalid was muttering.

“ All right, father,” the girl rejoined in soothing tones. “ You needn’t have anything you don’t want. Wasn’t that a beautiful drill, Billy Downs ? ”

“ Yes-yes,” answered Number Two huskily. “ Tell yer what : thar hain’t no gittin’ ’roun’ *our* Cap’n on drillin’.—Be yer clean tuckered out, Cap’n Lem ? ”

Captain Lem began a cursing denial, and Sadie shook her head at Billy, saying with truly admirable brightness :

“ Oh, no ! He’ll be all right in a little while. Fit for twenty years’ drilling yet, aren’t you, Daddy ? ”

He sighed in answer, and his head went further down upon his breast—that head, Sadie reflected with compassion, that had always been held so high.

“ Dad,” she murmured, “ don’t you want me to take off those heavy boots and put on these slippers for you ? ”

The sick man looked up with some of the old fire in his eyes :

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“Yer don’t get them air boots off’n me—till I’m dead.”

Then he looked down again and seemed to fall into gloomy meditation ; Billy and Sadie exchanged despairing glances. Then the girl leaned over her father and attempted to unbutton the collar of his flannel shirt, thinking that it was tight about his throat.

“No-no !” he muttered, pushing her away.

“Are you still cold ?” she asked quickly, rearranging the shawl that she had put over his shoulders.

“No-no. G’long !” But when she would have obeyed, his hand reached out and clutched a fold of her dress.

“Do you want anything ?—Your pipe ?”

“Pipes be durned,” he rejoined, drowsily nodding.

For a while the silence in the messroom was broken only by the sound of his breathing—a loud, painful, gasping sound. Every breath that he drew seemed to strike into the heart of his daughter, as she watched over him with such a mingling of emotions as can never be felt by daughters that have given and received love and the gifts of love alone. Her beautiful, expressive eyes were filled with the anguish of self-condemnation ; yet Billy Downs, who knew her whole life’s history, looked at her as she stood there as if she were a ministering angel.

“It’s his own fault,” said the life saver at last, vaguely aware that she was accusing herself.

“Hush !”

Presently Billy broke the silence again :

“I b’lieve he *will* die with his boots on.”

Captain Jarvis started up, nervously pulling on Sadie’s skirt.

“The Devil was Sick”

“Here! Whar be yer?”

“Right here, father.”

“I guess I was adreamin’,” he said, vainly trying to choke back a cough. “Thought somebody said somethin’ ’bout adyin’. Yer hain’t agoin’ ter git rid o’ me so easy as yer calc’late.”

“Nobody wants to get rid of you,” Sadie replied, meeting his suspicious look without flinching; but he continued to gaze at her in the same narrow, suspicious way as long as he could hold his eyes open.

“Father,” she ventured after a time, “won’t you go lie down in the office, just for a little nap?”

“Gol darn yer! Shet up!” he growled so fiercely that Billy Downs stepped forward to protect his little girl. “I knowed yer wanted ter kill me!”

Sadie bit her lips in the effort to keep back a hasty retort, and her father noted the action.

“Sade,” he said, pulling her a little nearer, “yer got the worst ol’ pop agoin’, hain’t yer?”

There was a touch of softness in his manner which brought tears to the eyes of the sensitive girl, so that she could not speak, and in a gush of tenderness put her hand on his shoulder.

“’Pears ter me,” he complained, “yer hain’t so sassy as yer ust ter be. Hev yer lost *all* yer Jarvis fire an’ spunk?”

“Father, if you don’t care to have me with you, I can go out of doors for a while.” There were tears in her voice as well as in her eyes now; but he could not understand.

“Thar yer go agin!” he exclaimed resentfully. “Always an’ forever atryin’ ter get away from me! Be I pizen?”

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Here Billy Downs came to the front, exclaiming wrathfully:

“Will you stop abusin’ that air gal what waits on yer hand an’ foot, day an’ night?”

Captain Jarvis was startled into a fit of coughing; and Sadie with one look of reproach at Billy, leaned tenderly over her father, murmuring as she would have murmured to a frightened child; but he pushed her aside and turned his chair about so he could see Number Two:

“What in thunder yer loafin’ ’round here fer? I’d like ter know,” sputtered the Keeper. “*You* ought ter be acoughin’ yer gol durn heart out, ’stid o’ me. Beats the divil, all you good-fer-nothink fellers got off scott free an’ I hed ter go an’ ketch this all-fired cold.”

Then followed the fearful, racking cough.

“There, there, Father! Never mind. Billy will go out.”

“Who said I wanted him ter go out?” gasped the Keeper. “I hain’t got nothink agin him, only I don’t see why he didn’t ketch his death a cold aworkin’ on that air ‘Sary M.’ instid o’ me.”

“Father, please be quiet: you’ll get to coughing again!”

“An’ a lot you’d care ef I did!” he retorted, clutching at his chest as if to hold back the cough, his eyes, brilliant and wild with fever, shining full on the face of his daughter. “Yer good-fer-nothin’ thing you! Nobody never hed sech an ongrateful darter,—alettin’ her father ketch his death a cold an’ never acomin’ near him!”

Sadie turned her face away without answering; and when Billy saw its pained expression, he dug his nails

“ *The Devil was Sick* ”

into his flesh. Captain Jarvis continued mercilessly :

“ Agallivantin’ ’round the country with them air big-bugs what hain’t nothink ’tall ter yer——!”

“ Father, hush ! Oh, my dear, my dear ! ” For he had excited himself into coughing again. “ I came as quickly as I could ; and I have tried so hard to do my duty for the last month. Surely, Daddy, you know that I couldn’t help ”—her voice sank into a whisper—“ staying in Riverhead——”

Captain Jarvis gripped her hand, muttering :

“ Durn the hull durn lot o’ ’em ter go an’ send a gal o’ mine ter jail ! ”

Her hand trembled in his and he gripped it all the harder ; she could not speak ; and Billy Downs stuck his finger in the corners of his eyes, then curiously examined the dew that it had collected.

“ Never mind,” said Sadie at last, speaking tremulously, “ it is all right now.”

But the sick man did not seem to hear. His fingers slowly loosened their hold upon hers ; his head sank further and further down upon his breast. Sadie looked at Billy with her lips pursed for silence, then waited until the great, gaunt figure of Captain Lem expressed nothing but pain and helplessness and exhaustion.

“ Billy,” she whispered, “ let’s coax him onto the lounge : he’s tired now.”

“ Gol durn yer, I haint ! ” muttered the sufferer, but his voice was scarcely audible and he did not open his eyes.

“ Come, Father ! ” said the girl gently, as she and Billy raised him to his feet.

“ Just for a little nap,” she coaxed ; and unresisting,

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he staggered between them into the office, where they placed him on the lounge.

Sadie drew a coverlet over him, wrapping it with mother-like care about his thin shoulders.

“Gol darn yer!” he said again, making a futile endeavor to throw it off; but seeming at once to forget that it was there.

“Drill went off all right, anyway,” he mumbled. “Hain’t no leetle cold agoin’ ter git the best o’ me!”

“No, Dad-dy,” rejoined Sadie, pressing her hand over her eyes.

Captain Lem did not answer, for drowsiness had overcome him.

In the silence that followed, the unmistakable footsteps of Long-legged Pete were heard shuffling across the messroom. Sadie looked up to the doorway with her finger on her lips; but Pete was too amazed at the sight of Captain Lem lying down in the daytime to heed the warning.

“Hullo!” he exclaimed with a long whistle. “Yer hain’t atellin’ me that yer got him there by *fair* means?”

“Sssh!” said Billy Downs, taking Pete by his narrow shoulders and pushing him across the threshold.

“All right,” Peter whispered shrilly. “Jes’ tell Sade as that air fool beau of hern’s come sparkin’ ’roun’ agin.”

Sadie heard and bent further over the couch to hide the flush that swept over her face. Billy saw, understood, and winked at Peter meaningly. Then Sadie moved slowly across the room.

“He’s sleeping soundly,” she murmured. “Will you watch him, Billy? And call me if he wakes up?”

“Yes-yes,” answered Billy with a smile too broad for

“*The Devil was Sick*”

the occasion. “Run along an’ git a breath of air : that’s a good little gal !”

“Say,” began Number Three, as Sadie joined him in the messroom, “yer hain’t agoin’ ter dish me for a little Dutchman, be yer ?”

“Where is Ben ?” asked Sadie.

“Out o’ doors thar,—akickin’ sand like a jackass an’ alaughin’ like a idjit.”

Her father would not have complained of Sadie’s loss of spirit if he had seen her eyes then, flashing at Pete.

“You’re an idiot yourself !” she exclaimed passionately.

“Wall, I hain’t asayin’ but what I be—when you’re around,” said Pete with generous admiration.

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CHAPTER XLV

CAP'N LEM, MATCHMAKER

FOR the sixth time during his hour's watch over Captain Lem, Billy Downs tiptoed from office into messroom, then up the enclosed stairway.

"Pete!" he called in a hoarse whisper as he ascended, and again, "Pete!" when he had reached the top of the stairs.

Peter's head appeared in the trap doorway of the lookout, as if he himself were lying on his stomach; and Peter's bulging eyes stared down through the space that separated him from Billy.

"Wall?" demanded Pete with some irritability.

"Be they any closer tergither now?"

"Yer kin come an' see fer yerself," answered Number Three gloomily. "I'm tired o' lookin' at 'em. Stuck on that air dirty ol' log like flies on stickin' plaster; an' Ben aedgin' 'long like an ol' fool, an' ahitchin' nigher an' nigher."

"Does it look as if he'd popped yit?" asked Billy, unconsciously raising his voice in his delight.

"Hain't got wit 'nough ter pop!" asserted Pete. "Ef I'd abeen on that air log with her all this time, I'd appopped an' hed it over with ten times by now."

"Yes-yes," assented Billy chuckling, "but *Ben* won't hev ter pop more'n onct." And without waiting to hear Peter's rude retort, Billy started down stairs,

Cap'n Lem, Matchmaker

again walking with a laborious attempt at quietness on the toes of his loud boots.

"Sade! Sade!" he heard Captain Jarvis crying out in the frightened tones of a sick child, as he entered the messroom.

"Yes-yes! Here I be, right here, Cap'n Lem," called Billy.

Captain Lem had raised himself up on his elbow, and was looking all around the office with wild, brilliant eyes.

"Whar's Sade? What yer been an' done with Sade? *Sade! Sadie!*"

"I'm agoin' ter give Ben his square chance ef it gits me my discharge," Billy silently determined. Then he said aloud, with his best attempt at tact: "Thar! Thar, Cap'n Lem! Don't yer go an' git all riled up now. She'll be 'long in a minute."

With a growl of rage and fright Captain Lem got up and staggered from one window to another, while Billy Downs, the hard-hearted, inwardly rejoiced to think that a certain log on the surf shore could not be seen from any one of them.

"Sade!" called the Keeper again, attempting to get to the messroom, but half fainting on the way, so that he was obliged to sink down in a chair.

Billy had to steel his heart, and remind himself that all's fair in love and war and matchmaking.

"Cap'n Abe!" gasped the Keeper. "Abe Thurber! Number One! Number *One!* Whar in thunder be the hull kit of yer?"

"They're atryin' ter fix up the Cedar Road, so as Sadie won't get her feet wet in them air ma'shy places," said that wretch of a Billy. "Does it hurt yer when yer cough like that, Cap'n Lem?"

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Captain Lem swore mighty oaths in a small voice, then called:

“Number Three! Long-legged Pete! Come down here an’ tell me what Billy Downs’s been an’ done with my Sadie!”

“Thar! Thar! Ca’m down,” urged Billy. “I hain’t done nawthink ter the child but tol’ her ter go out an’ git a breath o’ air. Can’t yer let her out’n yer sight a minute?”

“No-no! Not a durn minute. I want her ter do somethink fer me.”

“What yer want? Yer rock an’ rye? I’ll go an’ git it fer yer.”

Captain Jarvis felt about for something to throw at Billy’s head.

“G’long! Go find Sadie! G’on!”

Billy did not budge an inch; then the Keeper’s ugly, husky tones changed into a piteous whimper:

“I want my darter!” And for the first time since he had known Captain Lem, Billy saw tears in his eyes. The sick man put up his bony, shaking hand in an effort to hide the tears, and Billy quickly turned his head that he might not see.

“Thar! Thar!” said Billy with remorseful tenderness, hastening to the door. “I’ll hev her here before yer kin say Jack Robinson; she’s right down ter the surf shore asettin’ on a stick o’ timber along with Bennie Benstra.”

The invalid looked up, calling out with all the strength he could muster:

“Here! Come back here! Why in thunder didn’t yer say so before? Come back here, I tell yer! What yer starin’ at? Leave ’em alone, I say. Hain’t no

Cap'n Lem, Matchmaker

sense a shettin' a young gal up in the house all the time." Then very severely: "Wa'n't yer never young yerself, Billy Downs?"

Billy leaned against the door and stared hard at his Captain, who had begun to cough again.

"Kinder feverish this mornin', hain't yer, Cap'n Lem?" he asked at length, muttering in an aside to himself: "Too bad I riled him up like that; never thought of him agittin' light-headed."

"What yer atalkin' 'bout? Mumblin' ter yerself?" demanded Captain Lem suspiciously. "Ever sence I got this all-fired cold, you fellers took ter awhisperin' an' amumblin' like somebody was adyin'. Ef yer got anythin' ter say, say it out loud."

"No; he hain't light-headed," concluded Billy, and straightway made what he thought a bold stroke for Ben and Sadie: "I knowed ye'd see in time that him abein' a Dutchman wa'n't nawthink agin him; an' he'd take his eyes out'n his head fer Sadie. Them Dutchmans be good perviders."

Billy took the Keeper's grim silence for assent, and chuckling and shaking with delight, went on innocently.

"A settin' on that air stick o' timber an hour by the clock! Gosh all hemlock! He, he! An' ahitchin' up nigher all the time! Yer won't put the weddin' off long, will yer, Cap'n Lem?"

Captain Lem sat up straight, doubling his fists, and shaking them at Billy in impotent rage.

"Hev yer gone daft, you —!" Here followed a series of oaths. "Can't folks set on logs 'thout agittin' married? A good pervider!" More indignant oaths. "'Spose my Sadie needs any one ter pervide fer her?"

The Story of Sarah

An's agoin' ter take up with the first dumb Dutchman what comes along jes' cause he kin *make a livin'*! Go out an' tell her ter come in here ter her father, an' send that air Ben Benstra back whar he belongs!"

Billy Downs, although expecting his discharge every minute, stood still and managed to look almost as ugly in his resolution as Captain Jarvis looked in his rage.

"Ef I wa'n't sick an' tied han' an' foot," gasped the tormented Keeper, "I'd make it some hot fer you. I'd —I—"

He got half-way up in his chair, but was forced to sink back again, coughing with much distress.

"I guess that's Sadie acomin' now; sounds like her step," said Billy not unkindly. "Lemme give yer somethink so she won't be skeered ter death ter see yer so worked up."

"*Who* worked me up, I'd like ter know! Jes' wait till I tell my Sadie on yer! Sade, Sadie, be that you? Come here an' give an account of yerself!"

A radiant vision appeared in the doorway—a young girl with wild violets in her hands, roses of health and happiness in her cheeks, the sparkle of a new and unquenchable joy in her eyes—such an air of pure and ethereal loveliness about her, as if she were the spirit of the sweet spring day or the very incarnation of gladness, that a feeling of awe came over Captain Lem and Billy.

"They didn't tell me you were awake, dear," said the vision, in tones exquisitely sweet and tender, as it glided across the room to the author of its being. "Did you have a nice nap, Daddy? See, we found the first violets—blue and white. Aren't they lovely?"

"They can't hold a candle to *you*," muttered the idolatrous Billy.

Cap'n Lem, Matchmaker

Captain Lem caught the hand that held the violets, and, with a spasm of pain that was not physical crossing his face, looked up into the beautiful face of his daughter—happy, gloriously happy when he was passing away! Sadie understood and showed that she did by bending down and kissing him with unaffected tenderness. It was the first time since either could remember that she had kissed her father of her own free will.

“Hain’t she an angel!” said Billy to himself, but Captain Jarvis looked at the matter in a different light.

“*Hunh?*” he ejaculated suspiciously, taking her face between his hands. “Whose kiss was that yer flung away on yer ol’ Pop?”

Sadie flushed red with guilty confusion, and struggled to get away, although not resentfully. He let go her face, but only in order that he might make a grab for a letter that was thrust in the belt of her dress. She was too quick for him, however, and had the letter hidden in her bosom before his hand had touched it.

“Got a letter from yer toney relations, eh?” snarled the invalid.

“Ye-yes.”

Sadie looked heartily ashamed of herself, as should any young woman that has tried to deceive an indulgent parent.

“Ben Benstra bring it over?”

“Yes,” blazing red again and hurrying her words. “There were some papers for you. I forgot to bring them in. Shall I get them now?”

“No, sirree! Yer don’t git away from me so easy. Billy Downs kin git them.—G’on, Billy! What yer ahangin’ ’round fer, anyway?”

Billy looking bitterly puzzled, and casting sidelong

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glances at his "little girl," sauntered into the mess-room, where he sat down on the table and deliberately listened.

"Father, you didn't take your medicine at half-past ten. Let me get it for you."

"Go to thunder with yer medicine! What did Captain Mapes say?"

At that there was the old, stubborn tightening of the girl's lips, and she silently tried to wrench her hand from her father's grasp.

"What did that gol durn ol' ninety-fifth cousin o' yourn hev ter say fer himself? Hev yer lost yer ready tongue?"

She had not, as her next words proved.

"Oh, dear, you're crushing the violets that Ben picked for me. Please let me go!"

"G'on!" he growled, releasing her suddenly.

She tucked the violets over the letter in the bosom of her gown, where they fluttered with every one of her quick breaths; then she went to the little stand and began to prepare some medicine. Captain Lem frowned blackly at this performance, and craned his neck in the effort to get a better view of the face of the performer, but neither he nor Sadie spoke until she held the glass to his lips, and he pushed it roughly aside:

"When's Cap'n Mapes acomin' agin?"

"Again? Why, he hasn't been here since—for a very long time. Come, Father, you should have taken this an hour ago."

"Wall, whose fault was it I didn't?"

"I am afraid it was mine," answered Sadie with disarming gentleness. "But won't you forgive me and take it now?"

Cap'n Lem, Matchmaker

Before he had begun another protest, the medicine was down his throat, and Captain Lem was wondering how he had ever put up with so contrary a daughter.

"Thar! It's pizen, an' you know it. I'd abeen well long 'go ef I hadn't took no doctor's stuff."

"Very likely you would," she said cheerfully; and meeting with no opposition in this, he went back to the attack.

"Hand out that air letter! I want ter read it."

"You would be no happier if you did," rejoined Sadie with absolute conviction.

"Wouldn't, eh? How do you know? Come out from behind my chair whar I kin see yer. What yer hidin' fer?"

"I'm glad your cough's better, Daddy. You haven't coughed once since I came in the room."

He jerked his chair around and caught her in the act of waving her hand to some one outside the window. Now this was not strange, for Sadie would have waved her hand to any one of half a dozen people at Bleak Hill, but what was strange was this, she blushed hotly when discovered; hurriedly left the window, and sat down on the couch without saying a word.

"What the divil's the matter with yer!" burst out Captain Jarvis. "S'pose I got any objections ter yer shakin' yer hand ter Ben Benstra?"

"Oh, Father, haven't you?"

With a glad, eager little motion Sadie stretched out her hands, then clapped them gently together.

"No-no; but ashakin' yer hand out the winder, an' agoin' off an' asetting' on a log while yer father's adyin' fer the want of a little attention be a horse of another color."

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This indisputable fact she acknowledged with a droop of her head, but at once rallied to say:

“If I had thought you wouldn’t mind, we *both* would have stayed with you.”

“Sade Jarvis!” exclaimed the Keeper indignantly. “Yer needn’t think yer agoin’ ter fool *me* with yer monkey shines! Aleadin’ that poor Dutch boy on jes’ ter git me off’n the track! You an’ Mapes hev been alayin’ yer plans ter up an’ git married the minute I die fer the las’ month. Too bad the ol’ man holds out so long, hain’t it? Give me that air letter!”

Sadie recovered from her astonishment so far as to shake her head and clutch her dress to make sure that the letter was safe within. Captain Lem tried to swear, but ended by coughing with so much violence that she went to him and held his head against her breast, murmuring soothing words. When he at last stopped, he looked up with wet eyes full of pain.

“Don’t yer think, Sade,” he asked piteously, “that it’s most too bad fer yer ter go an’ marry yer father’s worst enemy the minute he’s in his grave an’ can’t say a word fer himself?”

“Father, dear, I would not marry any one that had ever said a word against you.” Then Sadie added cautiously: “*Who* is your worst enemy?”

“My worst enemy!” sputtered Captain Jarvis with a return of his ugly temper. “Yer hussy, yer! Per-tendin’ as yer don’t know! Who was it that come apokin’ his jibboom in my winders, an’ went an’ got wrecked right off’n this here Station, an’ killed off his hull crew, and put’ nigh killed me an’ mine? Did give me my death, an’ you’re glad of it. Hain’t never tol’ yer ’bout the time he come an’ laid me low fer what was

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his own doin's; an' said ef 'twa'n't fer you—a member of his own family, gol darn it! an' an angel born of the divil, that's what he called yer—said ef 'twa'n't fer my darter, he'd hev every one o' us awaiting trial in Riverhead. An' I tol' him he needn't stop fer that. He could go an' do his prettiest; I wa'n't afraid o' no land-lubber like him. An' then come that air first investigation, when him as has done it all behind my back wouldn't up an' testify like a man. But he couldn't git nobody else ter testify; *my* crew hain't agoin' ter be bribed by no half-witted Cap'n what don't know no more 'bout sailin' 'n—'n Rosy Thurber! An' the Justice wa'n't ter be bribed, nor nobody else; an' that air Dutch boy what yer amakin' a fool of—Cap'n Mapes he couldn't make no fool o' *him*; Ben, he—he—" The cough again got the better of Captain Lemuel.

Up to this moment it had been impossible to stop the excited invalid; and, in fact, Sadie had been too surprised to make the effort, for by mutual consent the subject of the wreck had been avoided by every one at the Station, and Sadie had supposed that it always would be avoided; but now that it was under discussion, her high and just spirit rose up in defence of Captain Mapes.

"I don't see," she began hotly, "how you dare to talk about my cousin in this way. Instead of being your worst enemy, he is your best friend, although, as you say, it has been for my sake."

"Thar! What'd I tell yer? Didn't I say as 'twas him yer was asetting' yer cap fer? Give me that letter!"

"That letter," said Sadie quietly, "is not from Captain Mapes."

"Yer, yer—!" Words failed the Keeper. "I seen

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the han'writin'!" he screamed. Sadie drew herself up and rejoined hardly:

"I said it was not from him, and it is not. I suppose I might as well tell you, it is from Mother's Aunt Sarah."

Words again failed the invalid, but this time from amazement.

"D'yer mean ter say," he gasped at length, "that that air lyin', thievin' ol' hag hed the cheek ter write ter *you*?"

"The poor woman is sick," said Sadie; "paralyzed."

"Serves her right! Glad of it! What'd she write ter you fer? Does she want yer ter marry her nephew, so yer'll be handy ter nurse her?"

"She says," replied Sadie in non-committal tones, "that if I will come down there and stay until she dies, she will leave me half her property."

Captain Jarvis swore, then he coughed, then he swore again, while Sadie stood still in stony silence.

"Wall, g'on! G'on!" he said at last. "Pack up yer duds, an' Ben Benstra will take yer acrost. G'on!"

A smile quivered about Sadie's mouth.

"An' then," went on the Keeper with forced calmness, "yer kin marry that durned Mapes, an' keep the money in the family." Suddenly the calmness vanished, and he started up, shaking his fist at Sadie.

"Yer shan't do it!" he gasped. "Not ef I hev ter live a hundred years ter pervent it!" Then with characteristic inconsistency: "I'll rise up out'n my grave 'fore I 'low you ter call yerself Sary Jarvis Mapes. It's bad 'nough ter hev the name in the middle."

The girl began to laugh hysterically. She would have shown more consideration for the invalid had she ended

Cap'n Lem, Matchmaker

the scene at once, but instead she laughed and went in hiding behind her father's chair, where she secretly fondled her violets. Captain Jarvis turned around and faced her.

"Alaughin'!" he began, in what he meant to be frightful tones, but his voice failed him, and he broke down pitifully. "Alaughin'!" he repeated in a half whisper—"alaughin' 'cause she's agoin' off an' leave her father ter die alone!"

The moment he grew weak she grew tender, and now she knelt down on the floor and leaned against him.

"No, Daddy, I shall never leave you now. I was laughing from simple nervousness, and because—well, it is funny! Captain Mapes and I are the best of friends and always will be, but as for anything else—Heavens, no!"

"Yer lyin' hussy!"

She was up in an instant, a monument of outraged dignity.

"Have I ever told you a lie?" she asked quietly.

Captain Lem breathed hard, first looking at Sadie with reluctant admiration, then glancing down because the sight was not altogether agreeable.

"Sade," he said at last, "yer mustn't mind yer ol' Pop. He don't mean half he says. An' my chest's apainin' me agin."

"I am sorry your chest pains you," she rejoined coldly. "I will bathe it for you."

"No-no!"

There was a long silence, then she leaned over him, saying very softly:

"Does it hurt so much now?"

"Sade! Sadie, you're like another gal, you're jes'

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like yer mother ust ter be. Why couldn't yer abeen like this all yer life? Then, mebbe, *I'd* abeen diff'rent."

So many bitter thoughts rushed across Sarah's mind at that moment that she dared not trust herself to speak.

"I'd like ter know," he said presently, "who's agoin' ter take care of you when I'm gone."

"Nonsense! It will be many years before you go."

"Now don't yer go an' sell yerself body an' soul ter that air niasy ol' woman," he went on as if he had not heard. "An' don't yer never be dependent on no big bugs; I'd ruther see yer ascrubbin' floors 'n alivin' on charity. An' don't yer go an' live in the middle of the graveyard with the Rev'ren' Dan's leetle gal; it hain't healthy. An' don't yer go an' wear yer life out ateachin' school when I kick the bucket. You'll hev the pension an'——"

"Father, please don't talk so, you—you hurt me."

"Abe Thurber says I can't hol' out much longer, an' Ann-Abe, she says as when her brother hed gallopin' consumption——"

"Hush, Daddy, I would like to kill them both!"

"Sadie, why don't yer stan' whar I kin see yer? Thar, I do b'lieve yer care somethink 'bout yer ol' Pop after all."

"Of course I do," Sadie rejoined, laying her hand on his shoulder.

"Then why the divil don't yer put him out of his misery, and do the right thing by Ben Benstra?"

The girl gasped, then a twinkle came into her eyes as she heard a stir and the sound of whispering in the messroom.

"The right thing?" she asked innocently.

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“Yes-yes. The right thing! Here he’s been awaitin’ on yer ever sence yer wore yer hair in pig-tails. Yer shook him fer Devine Strong, an’ I hain’t ab’lievin’ yit but what yer shook him fer Cap’n Mapes; an’ yer used the poor boy somethink shameful.”

Sadie stood with clasped hands and lowered eyes, overcome by guilt and shame.

“What’s yer objection ter him?” went on the terrible man in terrible tones. “’Cause he’s a Dutchman? The Dutchman’s ashovin’ us fellers right an’ left; they’ll own the hull Bay p’ut’ soon. He’ll make a good pervider—ask Billy Downs—an’ what more does a woman want?”

“I—I don’t know,” answered Sadie faintly. Then, warned by a sound from the messroom, she looked up and saw Ben—big, bashful, blushing with happiness—stoutly resisting Billy’s efforts to push him through the doorway. She signalled them both back, and bent over the invalid’s chair. Captain Lem looked up sullenly; Sadie smiled tremulously and tried to speak. Then she gave way to the impulse of the moment; she knelt down, throwing her arms over his knees, and began to cry.

“You darling!” she said between the sobs. “Oh, you foolish old darling!”

It might be all right to be called a foolish old darling, but he had not seen Sadie cry in years, except out of angry passion, and it distressed and enraged him to have her break down like this. His knees trembled, and he looked helplessly about for help. At that moment Ben and Billy, having heard the sobs in the messroom, and not knowing by what process of reasoning a woman comes to tears, rushed in to defend Sadie from her father. The father laid his protecting hand on Sadie’s

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head, and strove to fix Ben with his glittering eye, as he said very, very fiercely:

“Ben Benstra, ef yer ever make her cry agin, I’ll rise up out’n my grave an’ ha’nt yer!”

“Captain Jarvis,” rejoined Ben with surprising dignity, “if that’s all that’s going to trouble you, you will rest in peace.”

And Ben lifted the girl in his arms and drew her to him with a motion eloquent of womanly tenderness and the manly desire to protect and cherish.

A Family Party

CHAPTER XLVI

A FAMILY PARTY

Conclusion

ALL through the long winter and all through the trying days of early spring, the Little Lady had looked forward to the time when she might set her table under the south grape arbor just outside the kitchen door, and drink her coffee in the open sunlight with the gaudy tulips nodding in the garden, side by side with the sweetest smelling hyacinths in all Vonstradam, while the baby grape leaves held out their curly pink fingers to show her how they were unfolding day by day; and, by some sweet chance, it happened that the first day when this wish of the Little Lady's could be prudently gratified was her birthday and the occasion of a little party to Ben and his bride.

Never was there softer air, nor brighter sunshine, nor such a twitter-tweeting of the birds, who were having their own honeymoons and knew just how it was with Ben and Sadie. Never was there a daintier table, nor a whiter cloth with a bluer border, nor a more Dutch-like bunch of flowers for a centre piece; and never were there four people better satisfied with one another than the four holding up their pale glasses of anise wine made especially for the Little Lady's birthday.

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“Sadie, a toast,” said Ben, smiling at his wife across the table.

“Here’s to the Little Lady’s coming years,” rejoined Sadie. “May they be many in number, happy and busy.”

“Ya-ya,” said the Little Lady, “Busy, or dey no happy. Dank you, my tear.”

“Von moment,” interrupted Fahder. “Here vas do all my Leetle Lady’s pusy years gone py already: dey vill liff foreffer—mit you, Sadtie, andt dose childtren andt dose grandtchildtren.”

“Oh my-oh my-oh my-oh my!” remonstrated the Little Lady. “You dalk foolish.”

“Drink,” said Ben.

“Little Mudher,” went on the young husband after his glass was drained, “you must give Sadie the receipt for anise wine so we can have it on our birth-days.”

“Andt my grape vine,” rejoined the old lady. “Do you dink dhot grape wine off yours vill bear vell, Bennie?”

“You dont’t vas rememper, Mudher,” interrupted the old gentleman, stretching his hand across the table and laying it upon the Little Lady’s, “dhot furst pirdhtay in America?”

The old wife put her other hand over Fahder’s and looked steadfastly into his eyes, but she did not answer.

“I vas joost Ben’s age den,” went on Fahder, “andt dhot day you come nodt so oldt as Sadtie here, already; andt ve vas valkin’ from dhot station on de odder roadt eight miles up dere mit joost nine cents—ya-ya, dhots all. Andt, oh my, de sandty vay! Andt, oh my, de

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pack ache! But heart ache, dere vas none! I saidt:

“‘Vas you tired, my Leetle Lady?’ Andt you saidt—I see dhot smile evfen now, already—you saidt:

“‘Oh, my, no! Nodt mit you, Bernardt!’”

Twitter, twitter went the birds; the flowers were nodding in the garden. Fahder’s hands were clasped fast in the Little Lady’s, and the Little Lady’s head was down. Sadie’s eyes, sparkling with unshed tears, met Ben’s, and Sadie’s were saying:

“Ben, shall I ever be all this to you?”

“They lived in a hole in the ground at first,” said Ben hastily, fearing lest emotion overcome them all, Dutch though three-fourths of them were, “and they kept the calf under the same roof. Wasn’t that disgraceful?”

“He vas a nice, clean calve,” protested the Little Lady, looking up quickly and wondering why Ben laughed.

The lad dived into his pocket and drew out a newspaper.

“I bet you haven’t seen the *Shoreville Herald*,” said he, spreading the paper out before his face.

Fahder looked worried, and lines came between the Little Lady’s spectacles, for how could any one tell what the *Shoreville Herald* might say? Sadie rested her hands on the table and leaned eagerly forward.

“Ahem!” said Ben, clearing his throat importantly before he began to read aloud:

“Mr. Hiram Hedges emphatically denies the statement made in last week’s issue that he presented the handsome house on the Vonstradam side of the West Brook where Mr. and Mrs. Bernardt Benstra, jr., have

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taken up their abode, as a wedding gift to the bride. He says he only exchanged it for the property of the late Captain Jarvis in Shoreville. We had it on good authority, Hime, but we thought it was a mistake when we put it in."

Ben threw back his head and laughed aloud, but the Little Lady put up her two hands in horror.

"Oh my-oh my-oh my-oh my! Dhot babper maan! He see only de outsidet off beoples."

"Let's trink to de Moneylendter, as he vas on de insidet," said Fahder, filling the glasses with the birthday wine.

"And to Billy Downs, Keeper of Bleak Hill," added Sadie earnestly.

"To the Refferendt Daan and Jozephine, my papbe, and dhot nice Mrs. Tolly, andt all off Sadtie's friendts," said the loyal Little Lady.

"By the way," began Sadie after the toast was over, "Mrs. Dolly came to see me to-day, and what do you think she said about Ben?"

"Fire ahead, Sadie; it's nothing against *me*," said Ben.

Sadie smiled serenely and went on.

"She said she never saw such a change in any one in her life as there is in Ben since I married him. She says he walks differently, holds his head differently, and has lost all his bashfulness and—and"—here Sadie gave Ben a mischievous look—"and all his modesty."

"Dhot vas padt," commented Fahder with a sly wink at the old lady.

"Did you tell her who had done it?" demanded Ben.

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“Yes,” said Sadie, smiling. “And she said the same thing ailed her Daniel.”

“Vhot vas dhot?” asked the Little Lady with lively interest.

Sadie appealed to Ben with a quick look and a sudden blush; whereupon Ben got up and went behind her chair, taking her face between his hands.

“When you’re the husband of the loveliest woman in the world,” said Ben slowly, “and you know—you know she’s not exactly ashamed of it, why, you commence to think there’s something in you after all and you might just as well make the best of it.”

Ben smiled the old beautiful smile, then quickly stooped and kissed his wife. Old Mr. Benstra looked across the table into the happy, eloquent eyes of Ben’s mother.

“When you vas de husbandt off de luffliest voman in de worldt,” he repeated slowly; then, after a thoughtful moment, lifted his forefinger and pointed it at the old wife, as he exclaimed:

“Ah! ha! My Leetle Lady, dhot’s joost vhot you tone do me!”

“Oh my-oh my-oh my-oh my!” said the Little Lady, smiling and blushing with pleasure.



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