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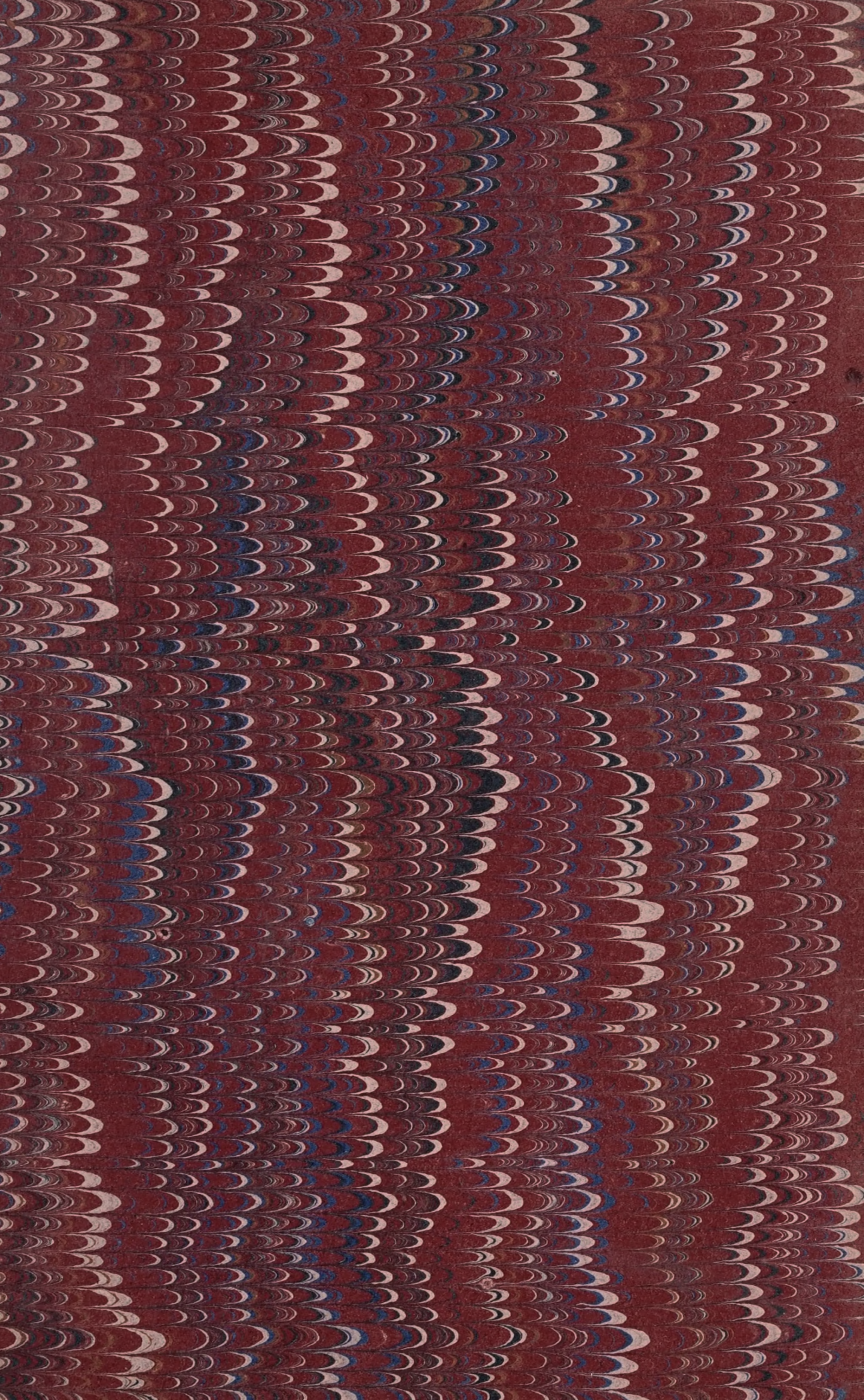
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APRIL 16, 1886

Subscription Price
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Entered at the Post-Office at New York, as Second-class Mail Matter

DOOM!

AN ATLANTIC EPISODE

BY

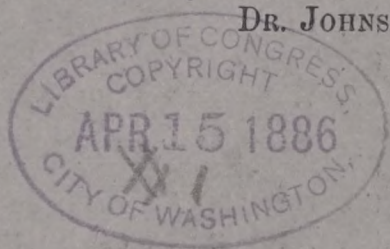
JUSTIN H. McCARTHY, M.P.

AUTHOR OF

"AN OUTLINE OF IRISH HISTORY" "ENGLAND UNDER GLADSTONE"
"OUR SENSATION NOVEL" ETC.

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TO ———

To you, such as it is, this story of doom
I offer, for it pleased you when we spun
Its web together while June's tropic sun
Gilded the walls of that familiar room;
Now, while the world beneath this Janus gloom
Lies hidden deeper than the barbarous Hun
Concealed the spoils of Rome, the task is done,
And new tales tempt us ere the roses bloom.
Forgive me where I fail in this, in all,
And I, forgiven, will hope for better things
And better days before the winter's pall
Of snow be lifted, and the swallow's wings
Bear back the welcome summer, and disenthral
The bud that blossoms and the bird that sings.

January, 1886.

D O O M!

CHAPTER I.

“MY NATIVE LAND, GOOD-NIGHT.”

THE Cunard S.S. *Atlantis* was getting up steam. In a few more minutes the signal would be given, and the miscellaneous crowd of kindred, friends, and visitors which thronged her decks, her saloons, and stairways would be unceremoniously sent on shore again, there to linger uncomfortably in their determination to see the last of the man-made sea-creature. Yet a few more minutes and the stately vessel would steer down the Mersey, widening to the open sea, and leave Liverpool on her lee.

An ocean steamer is not seen at her best in those busy moments which precede departure, under conditions of noise and hurry, her white decks trampled by the feet of swarms of strangers. Under that aspect she has vaguely the appearance of a beauty surprised in an unbecoming *deshabille*, or of a hero as he appears to the mildly speculative eye of his valet.

It is not until she has shaken off all these aliens, until she is well out of sight of solid earth, and has nothing around her, far as eye can reach, but the majestic ring of meeting sea and sky, that a great "liner" is really in her proper place, and can be seen to most advantage. In that vast vacancy of water and sheltering firmament the vessel becomes in herself a little world, a microcosm, a parody or picture in little of the great world which lies out there far away, somewhere beyond the sky-line.

With her steerage passengers, her saloon passengers, her costly cargo, her energetic crew, her officers, and her official head, she presents a well-nigh perfect reduction of any earth-borne system of human society. She is, in herself, as much of a world as Orbed Tellus or any of those planets that spangle the field of spheres. Like all other worlds, she should be investigated individually and alone.

Such, at least, were the opinions and reflections of Algernon Judge, captain Cunard S.S. *Atlantis*, on that day in early July, as he superintended the final preparations before slipping cable and steering out to sea. Judge was a man of meditative mind, who seldom found leisure for the meditative mood. Under happier conditions, he always told himself, he would have made an excellent philosopher. It would have gratified him greatly to expound philosophy for others in an Athenian garden or a Roman villa. But

the floating cosmos to which destiny had devoted him was wholly unsuitable as an Academe or a Tusculum. All the philosophy in him—and there was a good deal—he needed for himself, which was just as well, since he had no leisure to dole it out to others. He had not much time for forming many opinions, or for making many reflections on that bustling morning; his ideas had to take shape as best they might amid the hurry and worry which are the inevitable attendants upon an outward-bound, so long as she is still within the harbor-line. But Algernon Judge had learned from long experience to form his opinions and to make his reflections while he was, at the same time, busily engaged in doing something else. Indeed, if he had not done so, he would have had to abandon the meditative mood altogether, for the occasions were rare, indeed, in which he was able to fold his arms and say placidly to himself, “Go to; I will reflect upon life and destiny, and the sisters three.” To do him justice, he never complained, even to himself. A busy man, he always said, must take his thinking, like his sleep, when he can. It is well to be able to sleep whenever chance arises—to sleep standing, if need be, and if no more comfortable posture be practicable; and what applies to sleep applies to thought. Such, at least, was the deeply rooted theory of Captain Judge.

Just at the present Captain Judge was thinking chiefly of his imminent departure, but also not a little of his passengers. There was something very curious and very fascinating about each new world into which every successive voyage suddenly hurled him. To an imaginative mind such a situation must be full of attractive suggestions, and Captain Judge was happy in an imaginative mind. He liked the endless variety of society in a life of comparatively monotonous duties. True, no voyage is ever quite the same as another, but there is a similarity about them in their different seasons. When one crosses the Atlantic twelve times a year, one begins to find out the resemblances of voyages. To a sturdy sailor who does not care how high the waves are running or how loud the winds are roaring, a June voyage and a December journey present less difference than the tremulous landsman could think possible. The cruises, one with another, were much alike; but the people—they were always differing. Judge felt himself to be like the host of some inn on a posting-road in old days, whose ordinary was always full and always changing.

Every fortnight found him the ruler of the same kingdom, peopled by an entirely new set of subjects. For the seven or eight days of a voyage he sat at the head of his table with the same set of people, talked with them, listened to them, and just as he

got to know all their names and all their ways, and to be interested in their comedies and complications, why, presto, the *Atlantis* was passing Sandy Hook or drifting up the Mersey, and one comedy was over and another about to begin. The scenery was always the same, but the play was always shifting. The fellowship of one voyage was never identical with the fellowship of another voyage, or even resembling it. Sometimes a unit, or even a pair of units, from one cruise, by strange chance made their return journey in his ship, or came back by another and went out again with him; but then they became different by the very passing of time, or by the altered situation and shifted companionship in which they found themselves.

If you go to the top of the Tower of St. Mark, in Venice, the custodian will insist upon your taking a bird's-eye view of the city through different bits of colored glass, red and blue and yellow. Seeing the same human beings in different societies, argued Judge, is to see them through glasses of different hues. The only fault Judge found with the variety of dramatic entertainment afforded him by his lot was that it lacked change of motive. There was too much comedy, he argued. The sea and all that belongs to it are tragic enough; but thus far Judge's floating drama had missed out the tragic element, and Judge grumbled. A ship is the very place for

melodrama, he urged to himself; why is the *Atlantis* unprovided for in this respect?

This time his ship's passengers were all new to him, and they promised interest. Mentally he ran some of them over in his mind as he went about his work. There was a German, first of all, a professor from Bonn. He came early into the captain's mind, perhaps because he cared least about him. The man seemed a studious type of scholar—a sort of Teutonic Caxton, Judge classified him; for Judge was fond of novels, and preferred talking of Bulwer rather than of Buddha. For the rest, the professor seemed a quiet man enough, who would probably be sick most of the voyage, and keep his cabin and creep about the deck on quiet days, and trouble nobody. His countenance was almost extinguished by the floating, unkempt masses of his yellow-gray hair and beard; his eyes beamed blandly through the circles of a pair of most uncompromisingly goggle spectacles of a vapory bluish tint, which gave to him something of the appearance of the proverbial owl in an ivy-bush. He was entered on the passenger-list as Herr Professor Maximilian Spruch, of Bonn, with a little multitude of initials coming like camp followers upon the heels of the main body of his name.

Then there was Mr. John Harris, of London, the famous Jack Harris who laid down laws upon art to

the city and the world. Judge had heard of Jack Harris, of course. It was impossible ever to take up a society paper without hearing of Jack Harris, who had turned æstheticism into a creed, and who was now going out to convert the United States to his ideas.

Jack Harris had lately taken the Eighteenth Century under his special protection, and he favored that enlightened time—which he always seemed to regard as one unchanging period—in his costume as far as the limits of the tolerance of mankind and that most cruel of all critics, the small boy in the streets, would allow him. His cuffs were exaggerated, his waistcoat elongated, the lappets of his coat as wide and stiff as in the days when they flapped over a small sword; the bunch of seals which swung from his fob was the biggest in Christendom, and he dallied lightly with a *cloisonnée* snuffbox on which some modish heathen deities in powdered wigs disported themselves more joyously than decorously. Jack did not at all care for snuff, and disliked sneezing, but he felt it his duty as a devotee of the last century to affect an enthusiasm for “Mac-kabaw” which he did not feel. He would have worn a sword and a bag-wig if he might, but the restraints of the law forbade the one desire, and prudence counselled rejection of the other. As it was, Jack’s costume gave him something of the appearance of

Mr. Swiveller, chastened and sobered by a slight affinity to an old Chelsea pensioner.

Judge smiled slightly as he thought of Jack Harris, and promised himself some amusement on the voyage in drawing out the æsthete, who was now walking up and down the deck in the company of certain of his disciples, with his head thrown back, and surveying the docks with an air of critical disgust. "Doesn't think they're pretty enough," murmured Judge to himself; "would like to paint them sage green, and stick Japanese fans over them." Then the captain smiled as he remembered that Jack Harris was not the only lecturer on board. He had a rival—a fair rival—in the person of a lady lecturer with a religion of her own, who proposed to make many converts in America. The pair, Judge fancied, would afford him no little entertainment.

But Judge's mind soon drifted from these and from all others to the passengers who most attracted his fancy. There were four of them: a father, a mother, and two daughters, the Van Duytens. New York society knew the Van Duytens well; so, now, did London society.

Van Duyten the sire was one of America's rich men. He did not, indeed, rank with the financial giants, with the Anakim of Wall Street, with Vanderbilt and Jay Gould and the others; but he was

richer than most of the British peerage, and that contented his modest ambition. He was fond, in a placid way, of ruminating over the rent-rolls of England's nobility, and calculating how many of them he could afford to buy up at a swoop without seriously affecting his bank account. Mrs. Van Duyten was, on the whole, an amiable sort of person, with a marked tendency to overdress, overeat, oversleep, and, in fact, to overdo most of the ordinary duties that occupy existence. But it was not of the elder Van Duytens that Judge was thinking, as his eyes wandered to the group comfortably arranged on deck-chairs, with a quantity of chattering friends ranged around them.

The two Van Duyten girls did not greatly resemble either their father or mother, or each other. The poets who praised them—and they had found poets to praise them in two hemispheres and half a dozen European capitals—declared that they possessed the differing beauties of day and night, of spring and summer, of dawn and twilight, of sunlight and moonlight, with such other contrasting similes as suggested themselves to the young men their adorers, both in the Old World and the New.

In all the solemn prose of truth the two sisters did, indeed, widely differ. Evleen, the eldest—their birthdays lay but a single year asunder—was tall and fair and strong, and in the three qualities of tallness, fairness, and strength her sister Rhoda closely re-

sembled her. Indeed, neither of them was a typical American girl, of that kind which an ingenious writer has christened the dark-eyed daughters of dyspepsia. Both the Van Duyten girls—so Jack Harris declared, in the poetic language which endeared him to his school—would have appeared equally at home in the company of Diana's nymphs in the brake. Both, no doubt, if they had been properly trained, would have proved as skilful with bow or javelin by the reedy waters of Eurotas, or along the wind-swept edges of the Arcadian Mountains, as they had already proved themselves to be with their tennis-rackets at London garden-parties, and at tournaments in Manhattan Island.

The difference between the two consisted mainly in this—according to the prophet of culture—that something of the Oread or the Dryad still lingered in Rhoda's composition, while no memories of a woodland past seemed to tremble along the chords of Evleen's life. Her tranquil eyes, said Jack, poetically, were as deep as Thrasymene or the Volsinian Mere; but you never saw there the shadow of an older world, or caught the least expression of a desire for any other than the hour in which she lived and breathed. It was quite true that Evleen found life exceedingly delightful. All that the heart of a girl could desire she had in abundance. She was as healthy as the ideal savage is popularly assumed to

be; she was as wealthy as the typical Russian princess of romance; and she was as wise as a clever girl of eighteen can be—far wiser than there was any need for rich Van Duyten’s daughter to be. Of course she enjoyed life. She knew that it was pleasant, and her eyes—and not her eyes alone, but every movement of her body—betrayed the knowledge.

Rhoda, too, found life pleasant, but not so pleasant. Their enemies—for they were young and pretty, and clever and rich, and had enemies in proportion—decided that Evleen was too strong-minded, and Rhoda too sentimental. Their friends declared that Evleen was the more practical, Rhoda the more poetical of the two girls.

Jack Harris, with a fine instinct for literary effect, declared that they represented the opposing tendencies of the romantic and realistic movements. This was, in a measure, true, though Rhoda had never read a page of Theophile Gautier, or Evleen troubled her pretty head about the theories of Emil Zola. But while Evleen was frankly happy, frankly content with herself and with the world as she found it, Rhoda always seemed a trifle pensive, to put the thought prettily, or a trifle bored, to put it more bluntly.

She was not quite so content with existence as Evleen; yet if any one had asked her, or if she had ever asked herself, she would have probably declared

that she was as happy as her sister. Had she not, too, everything she wished for? She dearly loved travel, and she had wandered half over the world and seen more of it than was possible to explorers half a century earlier. Still, unknown to herself, she wanted something which she had not got—though what it was she did not know. Whatever it was, it must have been, indeed, difficult to obtain, if rich Van Duyten, of New York, could not obtain it to gratify the slightest wish of either of his daughters.

For the rest, they both dressed exquisitely, with that kind of quiet faultlessness which is often the privilege and property of American girls who might be least expected to possess it. The two Van Duyten girls—children of a lumber-merchant who had made his pile and converted it into a pyramid—were both inspired by a delicate artistic feeling, which was certainly no inheritance from father or from mother, and which, as it were, consecrated them with an instinctive appreciation of what Saint Augustine called “the fair and fit.”

It was, indeed, an instinct, for their education had been eccentric and incomplete, and they had not the slightest affectation in their clay. Their mother, whose early life was passed largely on a Missouri log-raft, and whose principal pictorial notions were derived from the sign of the “Independence” Inn at Council Bluffs, talked art loud and long to all who

would listen to her. Indeed, among the stupendous baggage of the Van Duytens, which helped to choke the hold of the *Atlantis*, there was a goodly box devoted to spurious Italian masters, which Van Duyten, in obedience to his wife's suggestions, had bought very dearly from the ingenious craftsmen of Rome and Florence, and would have to pay for again, and heavily, before he could pass it in triumph through the New York Custom-house.

In this, as indeed in most other possible particulars, the girls did not take after their mother. They were fond of pictures, with the quick, keenly perceptive fondness which they had for all beautiful things, but their vocabulary, which, to do them justice, was a wide one, was free from the jargon of dealers and the slang of studios.

Judge did not know all this or any of it, as he every now and then allowed his glance to rest admiringly upon the sisters. Jack Harris could have told him as much and more, for Jack had met them many times in London, at the Duke of Magdiel's and Sir Charles Amber's, chiefly. They went everywhere, and Jack went to many places, and he had amused the Van Duyten girls a good deal, and he had been pleased to express his approval of them in terms highly flattering to their personal beauty.

Nothing — Jack had assured his friends of the Smollett and Acropolis clubs—nothing in the con-

summate loveliness of a Syracusan coin, nothing in the delirious perfection of the terra-cottas of Tenægra, could be said fairly to surpass the flawless ideality of their faces and forms. The girls heard of his praises, and laughed and were amused. They knew quite well that they were more than pretty, and they were well content with the knowledge. They had not waited for the eloquence of Jack Harris to assure them that they were fair to look upon. They read that knowledge, as in a magic mirror, in the eyes of every young man they danced with at a ball, or brushed against in a crowded room, or passed in the street.

They might have read it, if they liked, now in the eyes of Algernon Judge. Jack Harris could have told the captain of the *Atlantis* something of the characters of the two girls; but it needed no assurances from Jack Harris to tell Captain Judge that two fairer women never trod the decks of his vessel.

But Captain Judge's reflections on beauty in general, and the beauty of the Van Duyten girls in particular, were harshly interrupted by the arrival of the moment when the *Atlantis* must depart. The warning bell rang; warning voices shouted; busy officials collected the crowds of strangers together, and artfully directed their course towards the common focus of the gangway; tender farewells that had taken long to utter were hurriedly blurted out at last; strong grasps

hastily pressed fair fingers ; men wrung each other's hands warmly ; women kissed and cried—all was bustle, flurry, and confusion. But at last the final farewell was spoken, the last hand-pressure given and received, the last tokens of love, of friendship, or of family affection exchanged ; the stream of strangers had been carefully conducted down the gangway as down a sluice, and was allowed to flood the dock with a high tide of noisy humanity, waving handkerchiefs, kissing hands or shouting final words of wisdom, or wishing yet another godspeed. The many adorers of the fair Van Duytens gathered themselves disconsolately together. Merged with them, as rain-drops merge together to form a shining pool, were the friends who had come down to see Jack Harris fairly off on his new crusade. Theocritus Marlowe, Boiardo Polwheedle, and Heliogabalus Murdle had made the journey to Liverpool for the special purpose of seeing the last of their venerated young leader and champion. The ardor of this purpose was in no wise lessened by the pleasing knowledge that Evleen and Rhoda Van Duyten were going down to the sea in the same ship as the illustrious author of “Women and Graves.”

There was a trace of tears in the eyes of Theocritus as he thought of that evening, some few years earlier, when he had encountered Jack in the *foyer* of the Parthenon Theatre, and had consented to ini-

tiate him into the glories and mysteries of Higher Culture. Now the pupil had become the master, and was going out, an æsthetic Alexander, to conquer a new world.

It was almost too much for Theocritus's feelings. A flood of recollections swept over his soul—their common labors in the sacred cause of æstheticism, their brief but brilliant period of companionship in Parliament, when for the first time an astonished nation was taught the real value and purpose of her senate, the blissful hours of Symposia. Theocritus wrung a hand each of Heliogabalus Murdle and Boiardo Polwheedle, and whispered, "This is bitter, but it is our task to keep the pure flame burning on our English shrine while our dear master carries in his bosom the sacred fire to rekindle the extinguished altars of the American republic."

Heliogabalus and Boiardo returned the melancholy pressure of Marlowe's fingers, and then all waved a last wild farewell to the illustrious poet, who, leaning languidly over the taffrail, wafted them a condescending but kindly salutation with his citron-colored pocket-handkerchief.

Every one on board appeared to be parting from some one. Even the female lecturer had her little knot of hard-visaged men and unkempt women, who gathered about her to catch her latest counsels and wish her well in her enterprise.

Only the German professor from Bonn appeared to be entirely friendless. He did not seem much to mind his lonely condition. He sat contentedly on a big deck-chair, puffing at a gigantic porcelain pipe, which might well have made the most ambitious of his collegians envious, and surveying the jostling, excited crowd blandly through his old-fashioned slate-colored spectacles.

And yet he seemed to miss some one too, for every now and then he sent quick glances through the veil of gray smoke at the people about him, as if he expected to find some familiar face among them. It must have been merely a fancy upon his part, or else he must have been bitterly disappointed, for no look of recognition came into his eyes as the last of the strangers was bundled off the *Atlantis* and on to land. Steam floated from the funnels of the *Atlantis*; a kind of tremor ran through all her bulk; another second and several feet of quivering water lay between her and the rapidly receding docks. The *Atlantis* was off, and all on board had said good-by to land till they met their mother earth again beyond Sandy Hook.

The professor leaned back, allowed his eyes to rest for a moment on a young man who made his appearance for the first time on deck, sent a gray cloud like a pillar of smoke up from the bowl of his big pipe, and apparently settled himself, if not to sleep, at least

to sleep's half-sister, reverie. Was he not a German professor, and are there not plenty of world problems still to solve, in spite of Schopenhauer and Hartmann?

Captain Judge, rejoicing in his heart to find himself fairly under way, regarded the decks, thinned, indeed, as to their population, but still well peopled and animated, with an air of satisfaction. His eye rested almost paternally on the various groups: upon the Van Duytens first, on whom the sun of Jack Harris's favor was at that moment beaming; upon the lady lecturer deriving grim spiritual nourishment from a little volume of tracts; upon the dreaming professor from pleasant, scholastic Bonn; and finally, with an air of freshened and almost surprised interest, upon the young man who had just made his appearance on deck.

Judge had not seen him before, but he guessed at once who he was. He was undoubtedly the young Englishman, Flavian Hope by name, who had insisted upon having a cabin absolutely to himself, and who had paid for the privilege the price of the unoccupied berths in his state-room. The *Atlantis* was not very full, and the lover of solitude was able to gratify his desire more easily than is often possible on an Atlantic liner.

Judge surveyed the new-comer critically, as he would have surveyed a new hand; decided that his

dark hair and eyes made him handsome; that his closely shaven mouth and chin were weak. Judge felt that he should not like his first mate to have exactly that mouth and chin. He almost smiled as he made this reflection, for if there was one thing which, after managing a vessel, Judge did pride himself especially upon, it was his quick-witted knack of reading the character of a man—or, for the matter of that, of a woman, though Judge knew less about them—in the lines of the face, the set of the mouth, and the glance of the eye. Judge felt quite convinced that he had accurately gauged the character of the young Englishman, who, after casting a hurried glance over the deck, had moved to the loneliest part of the ship's side, and, leaning on the bulwark, was gazing with wistful intensity at the busy town and the low shore which seemed to diminish with every second as the *Atlantis* slowly forged her way out to sea.

CHAPTER II.

“THERE IS A WORLD ELSEWHERE.”

THERE was one thing, however, which Captain Judge could not do, clever as he was, and that was to tell what Flavian was thinking of, as he sat there with his sad eyes fixed on the receding shores of England. If he could have known—what he was able to half guess later, when certain documents came for a short time into his hands—he would have been for at least five minutes, and for probably a longer time, the most surprised captain that had ever served the Cunard Company.

The thoughts of Flavian Hope had for some time past run almost entirely upon the two axioms which thus expressed themselves to his tortured mind: “My God, what a fool I was!” and “My God, what a rogue I am!” Yet Flavian did not seem to be of the stuff of which fools and rogues are made. He was a fellow of Cambridge, which is not much of an argument against his folly, and he was what is called a gentleman of independent means, which is no argument at all against his roguery.

Certainly he was not, in the ordinary sense of the

reproach, a fool. He had studied much, dreamed much, hoped much; he was better educated than nine out of every ten young Englishmen of his own age and station; he had been counted a clever fellow at college, one of the best men at the Union. No mere creature of books and words, either. Flavian was an athlete, and an oar. There is a staircase at his college, a solid stone affair as formidable to the inexperienced eye and mind as the Giant's Stair at Venice, which the men of Flavian's time, and the successors who remember their traditions, will tell you that Flavian cleared on one occasion by a standing jump that never was equalled before or since in the annals of his college.

As for his roguery, why Flavian never knew what debt meant at Cambridge; and if any college friend had heard it suggested that Flavian was not a perfect and honorable gentleman, the friend probably might have hit the doubter, had the doubter been a man, between the eyes on the spot for his insolent incredulity. And yet all Cambridge was wrong and Flavian was perfectly right. He was—at one and the same time—a fool and a rogue.

He knew it only too well, as he sat there with his eyes fixed on the dwindling coast-line. That forest of masts, which are the pride and glory of Liverpool, and in consequence the pride and glory of England, seemed to him to take the form of some fantastic

alphabet, and to trace against the widening sky the words "fool" and "rogue" and "coward."

How he hated himself as he read the hideous thoughts of his own melancholy mind translated into the lines of the flickering spars that were gradually fading away out of sight. And yet, much as he hated himself, much as he was conscious of his own crime, there was not a man on board, down to the meanest sailor that ever handled a rope, who would not have hated him a thousand times more could he but have known truly the thoughts that were tearing Flavian's mind in pieces as the *Atlantis* slowly cleared the bar of the Mersey.

What were those thoughts? Flavian's private papers made them common property to those who saw them later; we may forestall their knowledge. The eyes of Flavian were fixed on the fading shores of England. Any one who had gazed into Flavian's eyes would have seen their own image painted upon his retina; but what he really saw, with that inner eye which is at once keener and crueller than any human vision, was always the one scene, and that scene only a wide open space in a great town in Russia, the driving snow falling steadily, with a kind of white parody of pity, upon a dense and silent multitude. The eyes of all that multitude turned towards one object—the gaunt gallows that stood up horridly in face of them, with

its lean black bars grimly outlined against the wan morning sky.

On that gallows, presently, some culprits step forth to meet their death—three in all, two men and a woman. Any keen-sighted person near to that scaffold—and most of the correspondents of the foreign papers who clustered about its base were keen-sighted persons—could see that the woman was gifted with singular beauty. One man far away in the crowd, though he could not distinguish her features, knew them well enough, could see every line of her mouth and eyes and hair; saw them again and again long after that ghastly play had been played to the fall of the curtain; saw them to the end—not merely saw them, but knew what was in the woman’s heart and mind; knew what name, half whispered to herself, slightly altered the curve of those full, scornful lips, and slightly shadowed the pride of her brave, wide eyes.

The same name was in the hearts and on the lips of her companions; but that lonely, guilty wretch, alone in that vast assemblage, knew well enough that the same thoughts did not accompany it. He knew as well as if he were on that fatal gibbet that in the woman’s mind there were only thoughts of mercy and prayers for pity; that in the men’s minds there were but black imprecations of hate and prayers for pitiless, horrible revenge. And he knew,

too, that there were hundreds of persons in the broad dominions of the Tsar, ay, and in lands where the Tsar could claim no allegiance, whom the thoughts of those two men would reach and be remembered by when no human soul would echo the woman's prayer for pity and pardon.

Flavian did not need to close his eyes to see the whole horrible tragedy over again; it was painted for him in unfading colors upon the broad surface of God's sky. He saw with fearful clearness that throng, silent with an awful silence; that woman with the fatal gift of beauty, whom he had loved and who had loved him; those two men who had called him by the name of brother, and who were meeting death with such set, pale faces.

There is a moment of awful stillness. One of the men comes forward to the very edge of the deadly platform, and cries out in a voice that rings to the very edge of the crowd—that will ring in Flavian's ear till the day that he dies—the one terrible cry of accusation, "They have tortured us." The cry is answered by a low groan from that mass of spectators, and then cry and groan alike are silenced by the blare of music: the soldiers about the scaffold have struck up the National Hymn in obedience to the sign of their officer, and so in the noisy mockery of those strains the two men and the solitary woman are killed. The drop falls, the

bodies dangle; all is over. The White Tsar is avenged!

If any one had told Flavian at six-and-twenty that he would ever have found himself a Russian Nihilist, he would have smiled at his informant's folly. He had walked little more than a third of the pathway of his life, when he found himself alone in the world, his own master, and the master, besides, of a fortune which was not, indeed, large, but which was quite large enough to allow him to live as he pleased, with neither thought nor care for the morrow, and in the full enjoyment of all that he cared to enjoy. His chief pleasure—a pleasure little gratified at the time—was foreign travel; his chief ambition—so far as any ambition defined itself at all clearly to his mind—was to enter Parliament some day, and to make a figure there. It would be pleasant to hear the hallowed walls of St. Stephen's echoing with the plaudits that always greeted Flavian when he rose to speak in the Union. But there was plenty of time for that. It was the peremptory duty of a future statesman to gain experience of foreign States, and, of all foreign States, the one of which full and complete knowledge seemed most necessary to an Englishman was Russia.

To Russia, accordingly, Flavian went, and in Russia, unfortunately for himself, Flavian stayed—not very long, perhaps, but long enough to make a

tremendous fool of himself; a fool with that touch of the rogue and that horrible proportion of coward in its composition which now haunted his day-dreams and night-dreams.

He could hardly tell how it all happened. Some chance words overheard at a café, a conversation in which he joined, prompted by the vanity of showing that he knew something of Russian and boasted of advanced ideas; more meetings, more conversations which tended to improve his Russian and make his ideas a little more advanced; then the bright eyes and soft words of a woman, and then Flavian found himself one fine evening a recognized Nihilist, sworn to obedience of the dictates of that strange fellowship, and at the same time the possessor of a promise from the most beautiful woman he had ever seen or ever dreamed of. Even a placid Englishman might be well forgiven for falling in love with Nathalie Sarovsky. She was young, she was beautiful, she was rarely educated, she was given with all her soul to the service of the Nihilists—with all her soul, but, unfortunately for her and for Flavian, not with all her heart.

There was not a man of her section who was not in love with her, who would not have gladly given his life for her, who would not have done anything whatever that lay in his power, except to betray his cause, to bring one smile of pleasure to her pale

cheeks, or win the reward of one grateful glance from her dark eyes. But she cared for none of them, cared for nothing but her cause, until, for her sins, she encountered Flavian. She loved him, and he, in his way, loved her. She looked upon him as a young apostle of liberty from distant England. She listened to the turgid nonsense which had so often startled the Union, and which meant nothing in the mouth of a man like Flavian, as she had never listened to the words of the brotherhood. And so it came to pass that Flavian, hardly knowing what he was doing, woke one morning in St. Petersburg to find himself a Nihilist, and the lover of Nathalie Sarovsky.

How did it happen? How did it all happen? This was the question he kept asking himself with endless and aimless iteration, as his memory dwelt upon the swift succession of events which had lent such tragic gravity to his commonplace, unimportant life. He thought with a kind of giddy horror of those Russian days, of his deeper and deeper entanglement in the meshes of the conspiracy. It all seemed like a play at first—the pass-words, the secrecy, the disguises, the strange companionship, the mysterious dangers and duties. To help in printing seditious newspapers, to aid in the promulgation of revolutionary pamphlets, to attend strange meetings in the cellars and attics of eccentric parts of the city

—if to do all this was to be a Nihilist, then to be a Nihilist was to undergo some very odd and fascinating experiences. Flavian would have declared himself a Buddhist, or a Mohammedan, or anything else, if his doing so would have brought him an ace nearer to the hand, the lips, and the heart of Nathalie Sarovsky. He was a Nihilist because his Nihilism gave him all three.

Unfortunately for Flavian, his fellowship did not look upon their work as a more or less amusing game. They were in deadly earnest, and they believed Flavian to be in deadly earnest too. They did not dream of the existence of a mind to which the whole thing was an interesting vacation experience; they could not guess at the mimetic facility of Flavian's nature. They all adored Nathalie Sarovsky, but it did not enter within the compass of their thoughts that any one of them could possibly set his love for her above his love for the cause. Had they known Flavian better, there were men among them who would have blown his brains out without hesitation to keep the work from any mischief through him. There were men among them who bitterly regretted, long after, that they had not dealt thus sharply with him.

But the majority of them believed in Flavian. They were completely deceived by his spurious air of energy, by the purely fictitious passion for liberty

which he professed, by the fiery words with which he whipped the cool currents of his blood to what seemed very like true revolutionary boiling-point. It was not surprising that Flavian deceived his fellows, for he thoroughly deceived himself for a time. There were moments, and even long half-hours, in which he honestly believed that his soul was animated entirely by a loathing of tyranny, that his whole being burned with the wild desire to set the Russian peasant free from his oppressor. As he looked into Nathalie's eyes, as he listened to Nathalie's voice, when he came from a meeting with her, with her kisses warm upon his lips, he needed no self-assurances to convince himself that he was heart and soul a Nihilist.

But when the moment of action came, when the play he had been playing suddenly turned to serious and terrible reality, then the sham was shattered. A dangerous enterprise which had long been talked of was decided upon. Nathalie was one of the agents in the work, and Flavian was specially chosen for an important share in the scheme. He entered the plot blindly, like a man in a dream, still curiously and helplessly unconvinced of the reality of the whole business. It was only on the very morning of the proposed attempt that the full truth of the whole thing flashed upon him; he seemed like a man who walks in his sleep and wakes untimely to find himself at the edge of a precipice.

Flavian lost his head hopelessly. He did not carry out his part of the task, he did not warn his comrades of his sudden weakness; he simply did nothing. All his strength and manhood seemed to crumple up and leave him limp, inert, and nerveless, incapable of anything but dull inaction. The attempt was made, and failed, owing to his absence. It is not necessary to say what the attempt was, or which one of the many Nihilistic conspiracies was that destined to prove fatal to Flavian. Enough that the attempt failed, that Nathalie and two of her fellow-conspirators were arrested, tried as Nihilists are tried, were sentenced to death, and duly executed.

Flavian, shrinking like a murderer from all humanity, could not leave St. Petersburg until the tragedy was over—could not resist the horrible fascination of witnessing the tragedy for himself. He had worn since his college days a dark mustache and pointed beard, which gave him, so he fancied, something of the air of the stately Spaniards of Velasquez. He shaved close now and became practically unrecognizable. He took many precautions, disguised himself effectually, for he knew perfectly well that there was no forgiveness to be looked for from the revolutionary tribunal. He was doomed, he knew, to death as a coward and traitor, doomed by the terms of the oath he had so lightly taken. Had the Nihilists been willing to forgive his crime, they would not

forgive him for the death of Nathalie. There was not, he knew, a single man who had ever called Nathalie sister, who would not take a greater pleasure in driving a knife into Flavian's heart, or a revolver bullet into his brain, than in sending a whole brood of Tzars to destruction. But he lingered disguised about the city till the day of death, lingered to look upon the last agonies of the woman he had loved, and who had loved him, and who was his victim.

Then he fled, loathing himself, over the frontier, across Europe, and to England. There were moments when he thought of killing himself, but his brain reeled and his hand faltered at the thought. He called himself unworthy to live, but he was afraid to die; he vowed to kill himself, and shuddering, locked all his weapons out of reach; he prayed for death, and fled in abject soul-conquering terror from the avenging arms of his accomplices.

Life in England was impossible for him. The men whom he had betrayed might track him there easily enough. Through the familiar scenes of his youth there ran no Lethe to drug his mind and dull his memory. He resolved to go to America, to change his name. Both resolves were easy to execute. He had money, and could hide himself in whatever corner of the world he pleased. As for his name, that was an easy matter. One day while he was walking fearfully through London, fearfully as a ghost-haunt-

ed man might walk, making his lonely preparations for departure, the thought about changing his name came into his mind. As he thought, he looked up and saw the name "Hope" over a shop. The charm seemed to his shaken mind of happy augury. Might not there be hope, indeed, for him elsewhere. So the old name of which he had been so proud, and which generations of stately country gentlemen, his ancestors, had worn in pride before him, was shaken off forever. His Christian name happened to be that of a Roman emperor whom his father, a scholarly man, had admired. One Roman emperor suggested another, and he became Flavian Hope. As Flavian Hope he took his passage in the *Atlantis*. Somewhere in the great cities of the West he hoped to bury himself in safe and obscure exile. In the New World a new life might await him, where he might work out his redemption and live free from fear, and perhaps, in the fulness of time, forget. The crime of his youth need not blast his manhood and degrade his old age. This was what Flavian was thinking of as he sat on the deck of the *Atlantis*, and saw the scaffold rise from the shining waters, and the dead woman's face shut out the sunset.

CHAPTER III.

“WE WERE A GOODLY COMPANY.”

It is surprising how readily a couple of days serve to make people acquainted on board an American liner. The passengers of the *Atlantis* had not left England forty-eight hours behind them before they all became pretty cordially familiar.

There was something in the magical quality of the weather which especially served to encourage and cement this inter-oceanic Holy Alliance. Ever since the *Atlantis* had ploughed her way out of the mouth of the Mersey, a truly halcyon weather had attended upon her course. The great ocean lay all about her as tranquil as a lake—more tranquil, indeed, than many lakes, as old Van Duyten observed, contrasting its conduct favorably with that of Lake Michigan, when on several occasions it had the honor to carry Van Duyten and his fortunes. Nobody on board had been sick so far, not even Jack Harris. Jack had been a little nervous at first. His trips across the Channel had by no means taught him to regard himself as the one whom nature had destined for a sailor's life; and indeed he only was able to support

himself at all on those occasions by the reflection that, after all, even Cæsar, imperious Cæsar himself, was once sea-sick, and that Lord Nelson never began a cruise without suffering somewhat severely from that sea-born malady. But when he found hour succeed to hour, and leave the wide Atlantic as calm as those bland waters of the Regent's Park on which he had loved to disport himself in a skiff in the days before the name of Jack Harris had attained a more than European reputation, he plucked up heart of grace and walked the decks of the *Atlantis* with the tread of a Columbus and the mien of a buccaneer.

The rest of the passengers were equally fortunate. The Van Duyten girls were never ill, neither was old Van Duyten. He had crossed the Atlantic too many times to feel the slightest tremors of his inner man at its stormiest ravings. As for Mrs. Van Duyten, she could be ill, ludicrously, absurdly ill, if occasion served, but the more than meridian softness of that summer sea defied even her deep desire to suffer martyrdom. The stern prophetess was believed to have been ill already, very ill; if she had been she said nothing about it to anybody, and made her appearance on deck and at meals with the punctuality and method of a night watchman. The German professor did not seem to notice whether he was on sea or on land. As he trailed up and down the deck, with the lappets of his loose frock-coat blowing be-

hind him like the eccentric wings of some strange sea-bird, he seemed as indifferent as if he were taking his morning constitutional down the Poppelsdorf Alley in Bonn. His big pipe fumed incessantly, his spectacles beamed serenely, even caressingly, upon his co-mates and brothers in exile. He did not talk much, but he seemed to find a serenely meditative delight in forming one of a group of talkers and blinking good-natured attention. He speedily made friends with everybody on board, and was regarded by the Van Duyten girls, whose word was already a verdict on board the *Atlantis*, as an exceedingly agreeable, philosophical old gentleman.

And Flavian? What of him? He had sought no companionship, but companionship had sought him and found him. It is not easy to play the part of a hermit when one is a saloon passenger on a transatlantic liner. The claims of your fellow-man and of your fellow-woman upon your time and your attention are pressed with pertinacity at sea. You can hardly help becoming sociable, whether you will or no. Flavian's was never a solitary spirit. He was gregarious; he liked to be with people; he talked, and talked well, and he could not talk to himself. The sound of his own voice had a fascination for him; his fluent speech intoxicated him; no man, woman, or child had ever spent five minutes in Flavian's company without being attracted by

him. He knew this. It was not so much what he said as the way he said it. There was a soft charm about the quality of his voice which won the heart of its hearer more subtly than a caress. While he talked he convinced himself that he believed what he was saying, and the sweet, firm tones of his voice carried conviction irresistibly to the ears of his hearers. On the eve of his great treachery he had spoken at a meeting of the brotherhood with a passionate eloquence which drew the hearts of the men closer to him, and brought tears into the midnight of Nathalie's eyes.

In spite of his misery the mere animal part of Flavian thrilled with something almost akin to pleasure at being on shipboard. He was a good sailor, of course; his bodily machinery was too well fitted together for him to feel anything but a healthy gladness in the stormiest seas. The sight of those acres of serene sea, the feel of the pure, cool air upon his face, the salt smell, the salt taste of the air, all these were physical joys which soothed his feverous body and lulled a little the fever of his mind. An underlying sense of escape, of freedom, began to animate his languid pulses. Was he not sailing straight out to the west, to the land of promise? "Over all the mountains there lies peace," said a poet whom Flavian loved. Might not peace lie too for him somewhere beyond the waters, there in the unknown land

beyond those painted lines of sunset? When Flavian went on board he would have liked to think that he was the solitary occupant of the ship; yet land was scarcely lost to sight before his human instincts for society began to quicken. He had for so long shunned all fellowship that it gladdened him a little in his loneliness of mind to think that he was among a set of people of whom he need have no suspicion, and whom he would part with forever on the threshold of the new world and the new life. He found himself studying his fellow-passengers with interest, and he felt no resentment at the interruption of his solitary thoughts when, on the afternoon of their first day, the German professor interrupted one of his interminable tramps to wheel round upon him and begin to speak with him.

The professor was communicative, even confidential. He had lived most of his life in the university town, where he filled a classical chair—a peaceful, studious, sleepy kind of life, with its daily round of monotonous duties and monotonous pleasures, its lectures in the morning, its long walks by the river of evenings, its much reading and pipe-smoking and beer-drinking. Flavian listened with a kind of pity to the garrulous old man. If he had not been so wretched he would almost have felt amused. The Herr Professor was going to visit a brother who had settled out in Illinois, years and years before, and

was now a prosperous and wealthy farmer. "Think of it," said the professor, contemplatively, sending a thin, straight volley of smoke into the air to herald his observations—"think of it, how different two lives may be. Little Peter and I were inseparable in childhood; we promised each other we would never part. By-and-by chance comes and carries little Peter off to America, and I remain behind in the fatherland. It is twenty years since we met, and now he is a rich man, oh rich! so rich! and knows nothing but farming and grazing, and I am a poor professor, with more languages in my head than coins in my pocket." The remarks were addressed by the professor less, as it seemed, to his human auditor than to a solitary sea-gull that was swooping and circling about the vessel's wake. But he suddenly brought them back to Flavian by asking him abruptly, "Do you agree with your countryman, that life is a jest, Mr. Hope?"

Flavian started, less at the somewhat absurd question jarring his strained nerves than at the unfamiliar sound of his assumed name. The German waved his pipe apologetically. "I see your name," he explained, "painted on one of your trunks. You are Mr. Hope, are you not?" Flavian nodded. There was a kind of satisfaction he felt in being thus definitely addressed by his new name. He almost felt as if the old professor were chanting a requiem for

him over his buried past, and he felt vaguely grateful to him in consequence. A kind of friendship sprang up between them, and through the connecting link of the professor, who talked to everybody, Flavian soon found himself, almost against his will, on terms of intimacy with most of his travelling companions. Jack Harris was disposed to patronize him amiably until he found that Flavian knew much more about Greek plays than he did. The Lady Lecturer pressed a peppery little tract upon him, which Flavian gravely accepted and abandoned on a seat, where it was soon found by its indignant donor and confined with a vicious snap in the recesses of her reticule. The Van Duyten girls took to Flavian enthusiastically. His appearance had prepossessed them in his favor; his manners, his voice, his demeanor, tinged with that courteous sadness which is fascinating to women, confirmed their prepossession.

They were interested in the lonely young man with the strong, lithe form, the dark, handsome face, and the dark, handsome eyes, with the far, melancholy look in them, which, such was the mimetic quality of the man, he could not help intensifying when he saw the women watching him. So it came to pass that on the second day after the *Atlantis* sailed, Flavian, who had begun by intending to preserve an absolute isolation, found himself exceeding-

ly popular with all on board, and in constant intercourse with two young and lovely girls, both of whom seemed pleased, and one something more than pleased, to be with him and to talk to him.

One particularly fine morning, when more than half of the journey of the *Atlantis* was done, most of her passengers were assembled on deck, enjoying the beauty of the sea and sky and air.

There are few pleasanter sights on the face of the earth, or, to speak by the card, or by the chart of a master mariner, there are few pleasanter sights on the face of the water than the deck of a great Atlantic liner on a sunny day in summer out in mid-ocean. Captain Judge loved the sight dearly, and he had never loved it better than one hot afternoon when the *Atlantis* had made rather more than half of her voyage, and the chaotic agglomeration of individual units had settled down into a well-ordered, compact little cosmos of its own. All on board were good friends; all, in obedience to the laws which govern the larger societies of solid earth, had sought and found their affinities and formed little associations and alliances which had their own separate existence, and yet were absorbed in the general body and were in union with it. As a single strawberry is in itself, to the eye of the botanist, not an individual fruit but a congeries of fruits massed together in more or less imperfect pyramidal form, so the sum

total of the passenger list of the *Atlantis* was composed of an aggregation of little companies in which like joined hands with like, and kindred minds entered into alliance. On those occasions of common union, when the bell summoned all on board to the many banquets which break up the monotony of an ocean voyage, these little differences disappeared, all were blended in a common brotherhood. Even the lady with the mission was known on these occasions to unbend a little, to suffer the rigid lines of her visage to relax into the nearest approach to a human smile that she ever permitted herself, and she had been known on one occasion to express something approaching to a regret that her companions were so inevitably drifting to the haven of perdition.

Captain Judge's bright eyes beamed complacently over his mimic kingdom and his loyal subjects. The scene was exceptionally pleasant, and it gratified him almost as much as if he had brought it about by the skilful application of a quick mind to the laws of navigation and the study of steam propulsion. The morning was bright, luminous, warm, would be very hot by-and-by. Far away on every side the smooth blue waters ran away to meet the lips of the inverted bowl of the sky. Azure ocean and azure firmament faded into each other; it seemed as if the great waves had invaded the empire of the air and

suffused heaven's cup with their own color. High in heaven the sun rode, squandering his golden light recklessly upon the glancing flood and glowing on the white decks of the *Atlantis*. Every one was on deck, every one was happy in the enjoyment of the sunlight and the stillness, and the sight of those spreading fields of sea. The emigrants, huddled together in the fore-part of the ship, drank in the sweet influences of the morning as tired flowers drink dew, and seemed to grow visibly better for it as flowers do. There seemed to be a gentler tone in their babel of voices. Even the roughest of those pilgrims grew tenderer, even the noisiest more tranquil, in the face of those smiling heavens and that gentle deep. There were people of all nationalities on board; all tongues were talked, all racial types were recognizable; the soft accents of the County Kerry mingled with the sharp, almost English, intonations of the fair-haired Swede, and the mild-eyed Mongolian sunned himself peaceably by the side of the Teuton, the Briton, or the Gaul. The captains of to-day are kind to those whom fortune forces to travel steerage. Judge was kind among the kind, but on this morning he was not thinking of his steerage passengers, but of the groups that were scattered over the quarter-deck.

Some lay lazily on deck-chairs and read, or pretended to read, dozing deliciously over volumes which

fell every now and then from their relaxing fingers. Some had stretched gayly colored rugs upon the decks, and reclining comfortably, played cards together. Ever and anon they would lift their eyes from their painted mysteries to gaze dreamily out to sea, and forget for a moment their pasteboard monarchs and the fortunes of the game to let their fancy float with some long ripple, or fly on the curve of some sea-bird's wing. Others, of energetic mind and body, played, indifferent to heat, at shovel-board, or walked the deck with the regularity and solemnity of professional pedestrians. Along the shady side of the deck-cabin most of the womankind had ranged their chairs, and worked or chatted. Some children had been lifted into one of the ship's boats, and were making merry with their toys, and sending down little gusts of shrill, childish laughter. Other children clattered about the decks, exploring every part of the great ship, which was to them an illimitable kingdom, and getting into the way of every one with the good-humored cynicism of childhood.

Jack Harris sat under a huge umbrella by the side of Mrs. Van Duyten, talking art to her and listening with generous interest to her thoughts on art. The German professor walked up and down with old Van Duyten, discussing the social and economic problems of America, or rather listening placidly while Van Duyten harangued him, and through him

the world at large, on those vast subjects. Evleen and Rhoda sat together reading. They had declined all offers of companionship, all inducements to play games of any kind. With the easy frankness which was characteristic of them, they let their numerous adorers know that they wished to be left alone for a while, and dispersed their disconsolate little court to seek nepenthe in the pastimes of the deck or the seclusion of the smoking-cabin.

Captain Judge watched the two girls admiringly. The penalty of banishment did not, of course, extend to him—the captain is an unquestioned autocrat—but though he was for the moment free from duty, he did not quit the bridge from which he was watching the deck and its occupants.

He was waiting for something to happen which did shortly happen. The girls were ostensibly reading, but they seemed to talk to each other more than they read. They had been silent, however, for a little while, when Judge saw Evleen whisper something to Rhoda, whose face slightly colored. Captain Judge's smiling eyes followed the direction of Evleen's glance—Rhoda's attention was devoted to her book—and saw Hope making his appearance at the top of the cabin stairs.

Hope had a book in his hand, and was evidently making his way to that part of the deck where Rhoda and Evleen were sitting. Captain Judge, still

quietly smiling, quitted his station and made his way, too, towards the Van Duyten girls.

He reached them only a moment or two after Hope, and Hope was speaking to Rhoda. Captain Judge saluted the ladies, nodded to Hope, and proposed a promenade to Evleen. Evleen smiled, rose, and took his arm. The astute captain had chosen his time well. He knew, for he was a student of mankind and an oceanic philosopher, that Evleen would willingly leave her sister alone with Hope. He was beginning, too, to understand that she would as soon have his companionship as that of any other man on board the *Atlantis*.

Evleen and the captain moved away. Hope dropped into Evleen's vacated chair by the side of Rhoda, and looked up into the girl's face. The warm flush that had come into her cheeks when Evleen had whispered to her of Hope's approach had not yet left them; her eyes were very bright as they looked down at Hope, her parted lips smiled a little tremulously. The captain of the *Atlantis* was quite right in his impression that Rhoda was always pleased when Hope was with her. The faintest apology for a breeze—a very baby among zephyrs—stirred the soft brown curls about her forehead into a gentle motion. Hope, looking up at her, thought that he had never beheld a fairer face, doubly fair just then because it seemed to come between him and some

haunting memories, and banish them for a moment with its sunlight.

“Have you got the book?” Rhoda asked.

She bent forward as she spoke to look at the little volume in his hand, and her face came very close to his. Flavian was silent for a moment, silenced by the exquisite delight of looking at her, of having her so near to him. She looked up from the book into his eyes, and he was obliged to speak.

“Yes,” he said, holding the little volume out to her; “I thought I had brought it with me. It is an old friend of mine, and I should not like to travel without it.”

She took the book from his hands, and as her fingers touched his, the dead pleasure and the dead pain which he believed he had buried forever seemed to quicken again for one fiery moment. The book was a little Petrarch, one of those dainty Italian editions dear to the lover of diminutive volumes. Rhoda took it and opened it with a pleased smile, her eyes glancing over the pages with that look of intelligence which showed that the foreign language was familiar.

Hope, as he watched her, felt as if he were witnessing the opening of a grave. The little volume which lay in the white small hands of Rhoda had been given to him by Nathalie. She had given it to him on the night when he first told her he loved her; he remembered kissing it passionately, and swearing to

keep it forever. It was, indeed, the only relic of her which he had preserved, the only thing he owned which served directly to link him with that dead past, from which he was now so feverishly eager to cut himself off forever. He had brought the book away with him because he could not bring himself to destroy it, but he had not thought to look upon its pages so soon again.

Within the last few days his acquaintance with Rhoda Van Duyten had strangely grown into friendship; there were even sudden moments when he asked himself fearfully if the purple blossom of friendship was once again to ripen into love's fruit. They had talked of poets, and of Petrarch, youth's dear poet, and Rhoda had expressed a desire to read some of the sonnets of the lover of Laura. Flavian would have done much to gratify a wish of Rhoda's. Here was a wish that he, probably, alone, of all on board, could possibly gratify. He had told her that he believed he had his Petrarch with him; he had promised to look for it; now he had found it, and it lay in her hands, and her eyes rested on its pages of marvellous devotion and unconquerable passion.

Flavian, as he watched her, felt himself tremble with pain and pleasure and shame—pain for the old love and the old life, with its ghastly ending; pleasure in the new life which already seemed more of a possibility, and the new love that seemed as if it might

sanctify it ; shame, vague, ill-defined, but ever present, to find that he could, so soon, have allowed his darkened heart to be again illuminated for the presence of another guest. He had promised himself that his heart should be but a *Chapelle Ardente*, where lights burn dimly for the dead, and lo ! already the torches of passion were beginning to blaze, and the perfume of flowers to overpower the heavy odors of the consecrating incense.

He sat silent for a few seconds, with his arm resting on his knee, and his chin on his hand, gazing in a dazed way out to sea. Her face, stooping over the little volume, was very close to his, so close that, if he had merely turned his head round, his lips would have brushed her cheek.

He was not thinking of her ; he was thinking of the old love and the old life, whose memory had been slowly dulling, filming over during the voyage. A slight exclamation from the fair girl beside him roused him from a silence which seemed to have lasted for hours, and had only been a business of seconds. Flavian turned sharply, so sharply that his lips passed very near to Rhoda's cheek, and just grazed one of the curls of fair hair which the baby zephyr was playing with.

Flavian felt his face flame, but it paled again instantly when he saw what had caused the girl to break the brief silence. She was pointing to the

page she had opened, and Flavian's eyes following the direction of her finger, saw some words traced on the tiny page. The words were written in a woman's writing and were in Russian character. He knew the hand well enough, though he had never seen the writing there before. It was characteristic of the man to have taken this love gift from the woman he loved and never to have opened the little volume afterwards. He had kissed it passionately when she put it into his hands; he had vowed never to part with it, and he had not parted with it. But he had never read it, never turned its pages through, never seen the lines which her hand had traced over one of the sonnets.

"What a pretty hand," said Rhoda, looking up with clear blue eyes of wonder; "and what an odd character. It isn't German, is it? What does it mean?"

Flavian shook his head and reached out his hand for the book. He felt cold as death, and his eyes were blinded with tears. This was more than he could well bear, this message from the grave—from that dishonored grave by the Russian prison, where the hand that wrote was mouldering.

It was not half a year since she had given him the book. When she wrote those lines she was fair and loving and full of hope; now she had died a shameful death, and he, her lover, was flying from vengeance

and remorse, to bury himself in the living death of a new world. The lines swam before his eyes. They seemed to be written in blood. Good God! Was he going to faint?

“Well,” said Rhoda, inquiringly, “what do the funny words mean, anyhow? Something sentimental, I guess.”

She said this with a slight smile; but she was not scornful. She felt just then as if she, too, could have written something sentimental in any book she gave to Flavian.

Flavian controlled himself with a desperate effort and shook his head again.

“I do not know,” he said. “I bought the book second-hand”—his lips quivered slightly over the lie—“and I never noticed the writing before. The writing is in some foreign character, but I do not know the language.”

A dark shadow fell upon the page. Flavian and Rhoda both looked up. The German professor was beaming blandly down upon them; by his side stood old Van Duyten. They had paused in their walk to join the group formed by the young man and the young woman.

“You seem mighty wrapped up in that book of yours,” said Van Duyten, meditatively, “and so I allowed we’d just stop in and see what it was.”

Rhoda’s face brightened.

“Mr. Hope and I,” she said, “have just been dreadfully puzzled by some writing in a book. You can’t help us, papa; but you can, professor, for you know everything.”

The professor smiled a good-humored protest out of the mazes of his grizzled beard, while Rhoda took the little volume from Flavian’s unwilling fingers and handed it to him. The professor looked at the page and the passage, and Rhoda, looking up at him, saw such an expression come into his face that she knew he understood the passage and found it interesting. If Flavian had seen the look, he might have read in it a passion which was somewhat incongruous. But he was staring listlessly out to sea and noticed nothing.

“Well,” said Rhoda, eagerly, “what does it mean? It is quite exciting, coming across hieroglyphics of that kind. Perhaps we hold the clew of a romance in our hands.”

The professor’s face had entirely lost its transient expression of interest, and was as placidly unmoved as ever.

“It is not very exciting,” he said, “although perhaps a little romantic, as well as I can make it out. The language is Russian, and I know a little Russian—a very little. When I was a boy I went in for studying all languages, and I think I have not quite lost my cunning.”

“Well, well,” said Rhoda, impatiently, “what does it mean?”

“The lines,” said the professor, slowly, with a voice as studiously deliberative as if he were haranguing his class—“the lines are poetry.”

“Poetry?” interposed Rhoda, joyously; “oh, how delightful! Pray read them.”

“If I can,” answered the professor, with a little bow, which expressed courteous humility. “As well as I can make it out, they run thus:

“*We cannot, alas, bind to the bank one single ripple of time, whether it be bitter or sweet; but we can cast upon the fleeting wave the wrack of our happiness in memory of what we were.*”

The professor read out the words with a smooth, unfaltering monotony, but his hands trembled a little as they held the volume. After all, the professor was not a young man. Rhoda listened with softening eyes. Flavian shuddered to hear those words which his dead love had written there for him thus read out by the callous voice of a stranger. When Rhoda had handed the book to him, he had not read the lines, only recognized their presence. Now, as he heard them, he groaned inwardly.

“How very sweet and sad,” said Rhoda, meditatively. “I wonder who wrote those words. A woman, of course, and in love, I suppose, poor thing,” she added gently to herself.

Van Duyten shrugged his shoulders, and observing that he “didn’t set much store by verses nohow,” proposed to the professor to resume their promenade. The German assented, handed the little volume back to Rhoda, and moved away with her father. Rhoda and Flavian were alone again.

“There ought to be a story connected with those lines,” said Rhoda, turning to Flavian; and then seeing how white he was, she asked him hurriedly if he were unwell.

Flavian smiled faintly.

“I was ill before I left England,” he pleaded, apologetically. “I grow faint sometimes.”

“Will you go and lie down,” she asked, and as Flavian shook his head,

“Come for a walk,” commanded Rhoda, decisively.

She got up, Flavian imitating her mechanically. She took his arm, and they walked up and down for some time. Under the influence of her beauty, her quick bright talk, and the pleasant sense of companionship involved by the pressure of her arm on his, Flavian gradually shook off the disagreeable thoughts that had crowded in upon his mind since the discovery of the lines in the volume.

When they came back to where they had been sitting, to collect Rhoda’s possessions before going downstairs to dinner, the little Petrarch was not to be

found. In vain Rhoda turned over all her wraps, in vain she made Flavian search his pockets, a process which she knew was idle, as she felt convinced that she had laid it on her chair when she rose to walk. The little volume was missing. Mrs. Van Duyten, ignoring the geniality of the baby zephyr, suggested that it had blown out to sea. Mr. Van Duyten and the professor, when appealed to, knew nothing about it. Undoubtedly it was somehow or other mislaid. Flavian was puzzled, but not grievously pained. He only wished with all his heart that it had been lost before he learned of the secret it contained, and had received Nathalie's message.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE BEST OF THE KIND ARE BUT SHADOWS."

THERE was an entertainment to be given that day on board the *Atlantis*. Any one who has ever travelled in an Atlantic liner will recollect the eagerness with which any little pretext is always seized upon which gives occasion for a concert, or some hastily improvised theatricals, or an impromptu dance, or even a scientific lecture. The presence on board of an eminent actor, or author, or divine, inevitably results in that divine, or author, or actor being called upon to contribute in some degree to the greatest happiness of the greatest number by employing his talents for the amusement or the instruction of his fellow-passengers.

The passengers of the *Atlantis* had devoted some time and trouble to the organization of an entertainment to be held on deck; but they were not actuated solely by a desire for amusement.

Among the steerage passengers were a poor couple. The wife had been for some months ailing, and her husband was convinced that a voyage to America might be the means of restoring her to health; he

accordingly sold his little business, and took places for himself, wife, and child on the *Atlantis*. But instead of the sea air effecting his wife's cure, it produced a totally opposite effect, and four days after the vessel sailed the poor woman died.

Those who were charitably inclined had proposed that a subscription should be made for the bereaved husband, and eventually it was settled that a few songs, readings, recitations, etc., should be given by such of the passengers as were willing, and at the end of the entertainment a plate was to be passed round for contributions which were to be handed over to the object of charity.

The entertainment was fixed to take place at four o'clock, to the satisfaction of every one, with the exception of a few old ladies who grumbled at the loss of their afternoon tea, and of the inevitable sprinkling of discontented spirits, to be found in every large company, who make a point of steadily disagreeing with the general arrangements. At the appointed hour the deck, which had for some time been the scene of unwonted activity, suddenly assumed an aspect of order and tranquillity, slightly tempered by the occasional buzz of expectation from the feminine portion of the audience.

It was a pretty sight. On the upper deck a small space had been cleared for the performers. Round it, in ever-widening circles, women were grouped on

rugs and deck-chairs. A fair number of them were pretty, most of them were dressed in soft, cool, summer stuffs, and as a whole they were very pleasant to the eye. Behind them the men stood lounging against the deck-rails, or leaning over some chair whose occupant they found more entertaining than the programme prepared for them.

Judge and the first officer looked down from the little "spy-deck." The lower deck was crowded with steerage passengers, who scrambled up the steps and hustled one another good-humoredly in their efforts to command a view of the upper deck, their rough, eager faces and keen interest in the proceedings contrasting oddly with the chatter of the women and the half bored expression of the men in the gayly dressed crowd above them. A tiny, poorly clad child had pushed her way to the top stair, and was surveying the company from her perch, her face expressing conflicting emotions—glee at the approaching treat, and regret that "father" had not secured a place beside her. It was the dead woman's child, and many a pitying glance rested on the little face beaming with the happy forgetfulness of childhood.

Jack Harris was not the only public character on board the *Atlantis*, and he had been much pressed by his travelling companions to give them a taste of his quality. Whatever else Jack Harris had accomplished, he had made himself talked about, and his

presence on the steamer was matter for infinite curiosity to the other voyagers. Already he had made himself as conspicuous in the little world of ship-board as he had done in the larger world of London. All the women liked him, and, which was more remarkable, so did the men. Jack Harris was generally popular with women; he always paid them in his poems and in his life an exaggerated homage which amused but did not fail to flatter. He declared again and again in his writings and his utterances that the main purpose of woman's existence was to be beautiful in his eyes, and yet he often was conspicuously attentive to plain, not to say ill-favored women; and not merely to plain women, where lovelessness was softened by the golden tints of reflected wealth, and to whom he offered the honest homage which money always gets from art, but plain women who were poor, who were uninfluential, who were not even clever. Perhaps he learned subtler lessons in the art of pleasing pretty women from his attentions to their plainer sisters, perhaps he was simply good-natured, perhaps he wished for allies in all camps. Women as a rule liked him even when they laughed at his theories and his affectations. Men often disliked him cordially at first, only to find on acquaintance that he was pleasant, that he was witty, and that his æstheticism was but the modish mask for a Rabelaisian appetite for all things appetizing.

Jack Harris rose from the cane chair in which he had been languidly reclining, and advanced with measured steps and an air of studied indifference into the centre of the little circle.

Passing his hand slowly through his long hair he paused for a moment, until the little buzz of excitement which had greeted his appearance had died away. Then allowing his look to travel for a moment round the little amphitheatre of expectant faces fixed on him, he threw his head back, advanced one foot a little, and, folding his arms, began to speak in slow tones which combined something of a solemn majesty with the touch of a tenderer pathos.

"I am going," he began—"I am going to address to you a few words upon the art of living—upon the perfect life. I am appalled, as all serious students of mankind must be appalled, when I reflect upon the few, the very few, who understand what the perfect life is; and the still fewer, the chosen of the chosen, as it were, who have the courage to live that perfect life. Most of us"—and here again Jack Harris surveyed his audience with something of Olympian serenity in his glance—"most of us do not live at all; can hardly be said to exist even. What is there in these common lives of ours, in our daily routine of pitiful occupations, and still more pitiful pleasures, which makes existence not merely a thing to be cherished, but even to be accepted? The world has

grown old and gray before its time. The dust of crumbling creeds has powdered its hair with a harsher whiteness than that of old; and we all appear to have fallen into a kind of joyless trance or stupor, in which our numbed senses are lulled into a bare oblivion, not by sleepy essences of hemp or poppy, not by the subtle slumber which lies in the blood of the vine, but by the freezing, fatal torpor of winter and of snow-bound sleep."

Here Jack Harris paused for a moment, and his eyes wandered away over the heads of his audience, far out over the blue and tranquil waves, as if he sought, somewhere beyond the sky-line, some satisfactory answer to the problem of existence.

His audience in turn surveyed their preacher a little uneasily. Most of them did not understand what Jack Harris was saying, and had a kind of vague, unpleasant conviction that they were being patronized or snubbed. The Van Duyten girls were frankly and delightedly amused. Van Duyten himself was quietly watching Jack Harris with the same degree of speculative interest in his keen gray eyes that an entomologist might feel on being introduced to some new specimen of beetle. Judge, with an unmoved face, was keenly calculating whether he should laugh more with or at the apostle of higher culture. Flavian was hardly listening to him at all. From where he sat, a little way off from Rhoda, he could

look uninterruptedly upon her fair profile, as she leaned forward looking up with curious interest at the speaker, and could allow his mind to slip into the sweet, strange, delicious reveries which had so long been estranged from him.

Jack's pause did not last long. With something like a sigh he began again.

“Life is a juggle, a jest, a puppet-show; what you will. Some of us are players on the stage, some of us are spectators in the parterre or in the boxes, or with the high gods in the gallery; but it behooves each of us, whether as actor or as spectator of the shifting scene, to make the most of our little hour, of the applause which we give or take, of our brief, passionate enthusiasms. Each of our lives is like a sum of money: so much is given us to spend—so much and no more; and yet how few of us know how to spend it. Thrifty economists in all else, we squander our lives without a thought, and yet without even a spendthrift's gratification. The dull hours slip between our numbed fingers like snow about the hands of the drowsy wanderer in the drift; yet each of these hours is precious and priceless, full of unnumbered possibilities. Let us fill them to the very lips with pleasure, with experience, which in the end is the highest pleasure, till our life brims and runs over like a golden cup flooded with golden wine. This is the noblest purpose, this is the loftiest

profit, to garner the harvests of unlimited and exquisite experiences, to crush the yellow ore of enjoyment from the gray rock of common years, to be as gods, knowing good and evil. There is a sentence in that sweet-scented manuscript of Oriental knowledge which we call the Wisdom of Solomon, which may be taken as the text of my sermon, and which should be graven over the portals of the House of Life. It is that sentence which warns us to let no flower of the spring go by us. In a fleeting life, where all things are fading about us, we must be forever, Ixion-like, catching at shapes of immortal beauty, content to perish rather in the pursuit of so glorious a phantom than to linger in the dull monotony of sordid and commonplace habits, surroundings, and occupations. Whatever gives the quickened senses pleasure, vivid hues or subtle odors, or the voices of plaintive music, or the shifting passion and pathos of women's love, or the blood of the vintage, crimson or amber in the silver chalice, whatever joy or experience stirs the pulses and sets the lifted spirit free, cling to that with your whole heart, for in that way lies wisdom. For the rest, the rest, I may say with the dying Dane, is silence."

Jack's voice died away into stillness; he stood for a moment surveying with dreamy eyes and slightly parted lips the summer sea; then, while his audience were wondering what he was going to say next, he

bent his head slightly to the company and returned to his comfortable deck-chair by the side of Mrs. Van Duyten.

That lady complimented Jack warmly upon his eloquence. Jack thanked her with a smile.

"Golden words, my dear madam," he answered—"golden words. It is not given to every one to grasp their full gnomic significance."

Which was quite true, for the majority of the audience did not, to use the expressive words in which Van Duyten gave his opinion upon the address, "know what the devil the man was talking about."

The rest of the little entertainment was ordinary enough. One or two people sang songs or recited, and then came a little collection which was liberally supplied, and insured the poor widower a fairly large sum.

"Poor fellow," said Rhoda to Flavian, "the money won't gladden his heart much now, I am afraid. How terrible it must be to bear about the consciousness of having stifled a life, especially when that was a beloved life."

Flavian shuddered. He was glad that the girl's face was turned away from him, and that no one was looking at him but the German professor, for he knew well that he had turned deadly pale, and for some seconds that seemed like centuries he could not utter a word.

At last he spoke, and for once there was a genuine unsimulated sympathy in his voice as he said, in a low tone, "Terrible indeed. I can hardly imagine a more terrible memory."

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT IS THIS THREATENING TERROR?"

ABOVE, the moon was riding high in the heavens ; below, the great black welter of waves spread themselves out to immensity. Every now and then the wind, that baby zephyr of the morning, grown by this to something a thought more blustering than boyhood, sent its cool breath abroad, causing crisped curves of white foam to shiver themselves against the vessel's side. Steadily through the night the *Atlantis* made her way, cleaving the waters and shattering into quivering gold-dust the reflection of the cold, bright stars. All was very quiet on the great ship. People go to bed early as a rule on board a liner. Some of the women were still in the ship's saloon, reading, or working, or talking. Most of them had gone to their cabins.

The smoking-saloon alone was full of light and life and men ; red gleams from its crimson-curtained windows glimmered on to the deck, and snatches of human babble and human laughter oozed from the vaporous atmosphere of the room. Jack Harris was entertaining the company with a few of his fantastic

ideas and many of his maddest and merriest stories. Captain Judge, who was among the listeners, was amused to find that Jack was shrewder than he had at first fancied, or than his address would have allowed him to suppose. Mr. Van Duyten from his corner, the corner nearest the spittoon, was surveying Jack with a quiet wonder as to whether that sort of game would really pay out yonder—that sort of game being the observations which Jack Harris had made that afternoon, and out yonder always being, in Van Duyten's phraseology, the United States.

All the male passengers of the *Atlantis* were not included in the merry company that thronged the smoking-room; two of the men's cabins were at that moment tenanted by their temporary occupants.

One was the cabin of Flavian.

Flavian sat by himself on the edge of his sofa, fighting with shadows. The shadows were the memories of his own past—princes of the power of the air, all of them. Some of them were ugly devils to exorcise; but they were not the worst. Other phantoms more difficult to deal with thronged about him, the phantoms of his own hopes, the hopes that a few days had quickened and fostered till they had grown to the strength of giants. The fisherman in the Arabian story, who sees the monstrous form of the Jinn rise from the neck of a small jar and expand and darken sea and sky, was not more horrified than

Flavian when he found that a mere question which he had asked himself had suddenly converted itself into a dominant, irresistible thought.

He had asked himself some terrible questions only that morning. Could he ever love again? Was it possible that after all his ruined life might be restored—that he might be able to accord himself absolution, and seek at once forgiveness and forgetfulness in a new passion that should make the new life seem the only possible life? He knew now that he was in love, was what he called in love, with Rhoda Van Duyten; he knew, too, that she was drifting into love for him—that she would inevitably love him, if he chose to allow her to love him.

Here, in the quiet and silence of his cabin, he had tied his soul to the rack and was torturing himself with terrible interrogations. Had he the right to grasp at this summer's flower of love so unexpectedly blossoming on his path? Was it not part of the penance for his sin, a penance he was bound to pay, to turn his face away resolutely from all the joy that life with love in it can offer, and to be forever the widowed lover of Nathalie? A week ago he had believed that it was so; a week ago he had sworn to his sick soul that nothing could ever again awake in him the hopes and fears of love; that nothing was left him but to redeem his past by some obscure, useful life, lived out to the end alone. Now, the

glance of a girl's eyes and the sounds of a girl's voice had destroyed this belief, had taught him that he was as hungry as ever for happiness, as eager for love, as keenly sensitive of the beautiful possibilities of life, as he had been in the days of untainted youth. If this fair girl loved him, had he the right to take her love, to offer her a life so burned and blackened by fiery passions and strange experiences and by such a crime? Was he free to grasp at this wonderful chance of beginning a new life in the new world, with all the happiness and all the varied opportunities that would come with a beautiful and rich wife? These were the questions which he strove in vain to answer, as he sat there with his arms folded, staring into the dim vacancy of his little room, and peopling it alternately with fearful and with gracious phantoms.

Another cabin was occupied by its tenant that same night—the cabin of the German professor.

If any one on board the *Atlantis*, from Captain Judge downward, could have possessed the privilege of entering its seclusion unawares, that person would have been surprised in no slight degree at the sight he would have beheld. The man who sat there wore the professor's habit, but the head which surmounted all was not the mild, scholastic head with which those on board were so pleasantly familiar. The close-shaved man with the short-cropped hair who

sat there silently, looking at a little volume which he held in his hands, was not an old man, not even an elderly man. He had, perhaps, like the pilgrim of the Italian epic, passed through half the pathway of his life, taking life at a standard of the Psalmist—certainly he had not overpassed it. The face was strong, quiet, masterful. The square jaw told of fine and bold determination; the firm mouth avouched the capacity to carry the determination into effect. The hair, such as there was left of it after the shaving and cropping, was fair hair, fair even to redness—the red hair of the Northern races. The stern gray eyes were wet with tears—so wet that the man could scarcely see through their melancholy mist the open page of the little Italian book he held, and the Russian verses written on it in a woman’s hand.

His strong frame sometimes shook with silent sobbing; save for such tremors, he sat still and motionless, heedless of the passage of time, conscious of nothing but the open volume with the writing which he could barely see for the dim light in the cabin and the blurring of his own tears. Then he let the book fall on his bed, and dropping his head on his crossed arms over it, allowed all the agony that was rending him to escape in one convulsive, stifled cry of “Nathalie, Nathalie, Nathalie.”

Suddenly the quiet of the night was startled into noise. There came a grinding crash, horribly jarring

the silence, as if some wild convulsion were tearing the ship in pieces; the vessel seemed to reel and shiver through all her bulk, and then stood still, as if the fierce life that kept her tearing through the waters had suddenly gushed out of all her iron pulses in one grim spasm.

The second of fearful noise was succeeded by a second of still more fearful silence, during which every man, woman, and child on board the *Atlantis* drew breath in fear, and then noise again, the noise of angry voices, of frightened cries, of hurrying feet, and the shouting of hoarse commands.

Jack Harris was in the middle of one of his most brilliant sentences, when the terrific crash silenced him and startled the merry company of the smoking-room. Judge leaped to his feet and had flung out of the room and on to the bridge before the rest could realize that anything had happened. For a moment they all sat silent, staring with blanched faces at the vivid patch of light where the door yawned open, and at the vaporous films of pent-up smoke slowly swirling in grotesque curves and spirals out into the free air. The bravest among them felt their hearts stand still for a second, as they paused, motionless, in the fascinated silence of an unexpected fear. Then they all rushed into the night, to find the deck alive with hurrying sailors, and to meet the stream of excited men and bewildered women who

poured wildly up from below to learn the secret of the terror that had invaded them.

When that ominous thunder reverberated through the ship it woke two men from painful meditation. As the horrible noise rumbled into silence, Flavian staggered to his feet, and clung for a moment to the door in a paroxysm of unconquerable alarm. His overwrought nerves were strained to their utmost tension by his warring emotions, and the dread disturbance of silence and night for a moment unmanned him. He leaned gasping against the door, like one awaking from a horrid dream of threatened death, who can hardly believe that the peril is past, that the fear which seemed so real was only a juggle of the fancy.

Only for a moment, however, was Flavian unnerved, only for a moment was he unable to realize that what had occurred was some accident to the ship, and had no nearer personal connection with himself. Then a woman's name came to his lips, and a woman's image entered his mind. He rushed into the saloon and found it thronged with women and children. Some were hurrying on deck in spite of the entreaties of the stewardess, whom others were besieging with passionate inquiries as to what had happened, which the woman, cool and courageous, but as ignorant of the catastrophe as the frightened passengers, was wholly unable to answer.

Flavian's eager eyes hurriedly investigated every group in search of Rhoda. Then he recollected that the Van Duyten girls occupied the captain's cabin on deck, which had been yielded to them by Judge, and he threaded his way as rapidly as he could through the clustering women to the stairs, and so up on to the deck.

The occupant of the German professor's cabin raised his head when the crash came. For a moment he sat still, collecting himself. His strong nerves were well trained to implicit obedience on his will, and in a few seconds he had realized that an accident had happened, and had decided upon his own course of action. He caught up the mass of grizzled hair that lay near him and hurriedly put it on, hid his keen eyes behind spectacles, assured himself of the companionship of a pistol, and passed out into the saloon, the composed, impassive German professor with whom every one on board was familiar.

As he came into the saloon Flavian was leaving it to mount on deck. The professor saw him and immediately followed, heedless of the entreaties and inquiries shrieked at him by some of the women as he passed.

Flavian found the deck a confused mass of humanity. Women were rushing about, catching at all who passed them and asking incoherent questions. Some children had made their way on deck, and apparent-

ly found a fearless enjoyment in the novelty of the situation, which contrasted curiously with the alarm of their elders. Most of the male passengers had rallied together in a little cluster, eager to do something, but ignorant alike what to do and what had happened.

Jack Harris, producing a gigantic revolver, and striking a dramatic attitude, announced his fixed determination to shoot any man who attempted to get into the boats before the women were all in safety, a heroic determination which was interfered with by the steward, who, after cautiously removing the weapon from Jack's unwilling fingers, assured him that there was no present intention of lowering the boats.

Flavian stared anxiously about him. There was something odd and ghastly in the way in which the *Atlantis* lay so still on that still sea, with no long furrow of divided water rippling at her wake. The brightness of the moon made everything on deck visible, and yet perplexing by the brilliancy of its light and the corresponding blackness of its shadows.

She was not among those fearful, clamorous women; of that Flavian felt very sure. As he hurriedly forced his way across the deck he came upon a kneeling figure, a woman's, hidden away under the overhanging shadow of one of the boats. He paused for

an instant, wondering if that were Rhoda; then a quick glance told him who it was—it was the lady lecturess, the prophetess of the new creed. She was audibly praying in a low, firm voice for the souls of all sinners on board. She was quite quiet, quite dignified, as she knelt there in that obscure corner, well out of the way of every one, earnestly breathing her petition to the courts of Heaven for her erring companions, “and for me, too, a sinner.”

Flavian felt oddly touched by her courage. Her grim face seemed to grow gentle under the benign light of the moon and the influence of the tender thoughts that were softening the hard lines of her lips into prayer. But his errand was not with her, and once again Flavian sent his eyes wandering through the perplexing lights and shadows, and pierced a slow pathway through the jostling, hustling, bewildered groups.

As he reached the captain's cabin he saw a woman's form at the door, and his heart beat quicker, for it was Rhoda. She was leaning against the doorpost, very still, till he was close to her, almost touching her. Then she turned and saw him, and a glad look came into her eyes.

“What has happened?” she asked.

Her face turned up to his was very pale in the moonlight, but her scarlet lips were firm and her eyes were strangely bright. For the rest of his life that

pale, fixed face, that fair red mouth, and those eager, starry eyes were Flavian's dearest memories.

“What has happened?” she asked again. “Mamma and Evleen are on deck with papa, but I”—for a moment her voice faltered—“I waited here.”

She had withdrawn a little into the shadow of the doorway, and he had followed. There they two seemed to be alone in the midst of all the excitement. All sense of danger, all prudent thoughts, all recollections of regret were swallowed up for Flavian in a sudden wave of passion, unconquerable, merciless.

“I do not know,” he answered, stooping over her, his voice sounding hollow and ghost-like in his ears.

Then madness mastered him, and he reached out his hands to her.

“If there is danger,” he whispered, “let us die together.”

There was no mistaking the expression of her pallid face, of her wide eyes, as he spoke.

“Let us die together.”

She repeated the words after him with tender, passionate acquiescence, and then he caught her in his arms and kissed her on the mouth.

“My love, my love!” he said; and she, silent, clung to him, yielding to his embrace for one wild, enchanting moment. Then she pushed him gently back, but he caught hold of her hands and held them, look-

ing into her frank eyes and reading there his answered love.

It was barely ten minutes since the accident first occurred, and yet they seemed to have stood there for an eternity, gazing each into the other's eyes.

Then their dream was broken. Over the crowded deck a man's clear voice rose high, and before it the noise dropped to a murmur and died out plaintively into silence.

The voice was Captain Judge's, ringing out firmly, its every note encouraging his faltering, startled listeners. There was nothing to fear, he assured them, and the very way in which he uttered the words carried a conviction of their truth to the hearers. An accident had happened to the machinery; the ship's course would be delayed for a little, but there was no cause for alarm, not the slightest. The best thing every one could do was to go to bed at once and sleep unconcernedly, and leave the deck clear.

The saloon passengers, hearing his words, felt reassured. The emigrants—the people in the steerage, huddling together, all their babel of nationalities blended into the common humanity of dread—heard him and were reassured, and suffered themselves to be pacified by the officers and sailors who had with difficulty kept them back.

Cool, reliant, talking to that terrified mob as com-

posedly as if he were leading the conversation at dinner, Captain Judge looked every inch a hero, especially in the eyes of Evleen Van Duyten, who, leaning on her father's arm, had managed to get quite close to where he stood and spoke. The elder Van Duytens, man and woman, had faced death too often in their rough youth to be unnerved by any peril, and the girls inherited their courage.

Among Rhoda Van Duyten's dim memories of that wild night, one memory in especial haunted and perplexed her.

It was an odd, disagreeable memory, vague, impalpable, and confused, like the blurred reflection on water when the wind troubles its surface. It floated across her brain as formlessly as a marred dream-picture broken by untimely awakening. With all her concentration the memory was as fleeting and intangible as a shadow—this memory of a man with a revolver in his hand, standing somewhere in darkness. So many thoughts, hopes, fears, and emotions had crowded upon her mind in that fantastic night that she could not, for all her thinking, evolve anything clearer from this fitful mental image than that somewhere in the blackness a man's form hovered, holding a pistol in his hand, on which the moonlight glinted coldly. The image seemed to rise upon her out of the bewildering gloom just before Flavian's sudden caresses banished all other thoughts from

her mind. When she raised her head from her lover's embrace, and heard the sound of Captain Judge's reassuring voice, the mysterious apparition had vanished.

She spoke of this strange impression to Evleen, and her sister laughed and told her of Jack Harris and his melodramatic heroism and prompt disarmament.

Rhoda smiled at this story of the illustrious singer, who had behaved pluckily if not practically. And yet she did not think it was Jack Harris whom she had seen. No doubt the excitement and the darkness had confused two separate impressions, for Rhoda could almost have sworn that the figure she saw, standing so close to Flavian with a weapon in its grasp, was the figure of the German professor.

CHAPTER VI.

“LOVE IS ENOUGH.”

MORNING crept up between the sea and sky, first turning heaven a livid hue and then flushing its sallow spaces with crimson light. The sun peered up over the rim of the world on the tranquil waste of waters, and on the stately ship that lay there so peacefully, almost motionless, on the surface.

There was hardly a wave on the gray, sleepy sea; it undulated a little, with the ambient writhings of a torpid snake, and the flattened planes of water caught the largess of the sun and glittered with all the splendor of a tropic serpent.

It was an exquisite morning; one of those rare, calm, summer days at sea when all is so strangely fair and still that the traveller almost fancies that if he strained his ears a little he could hear the sound of distant church-bells ringing as he had often heard them ring over familiar meadows not more tranquil than those flowerless fields of sea on which his eyes rest.

There were few, however, on board the *Atlantis* who had much leisure for dreamy admiration of the

beauty of the morning. Captain Judge and those under him had been up all night combating the trouble which had thus taken them unawares, and were in no mood for speculative contemplations of nature.

With the first pallid presence of the dawn passengers began to make their appearance on the deck, and to eagerly solicit information as to the nature of the accident and the precise degree and imminence of the threatened danger.

Jack Harris and a few others had declined to take Captain Judge's hint and retire to their cabins. Like Sir Toby Belch, Jack argued that it was "too late to go to bed" by the time the first alarm over the accident had subsided, and he urged upon the revellers of the smoking-room the necessity of going and burning, if not some sack, at least some more tobacco.

Jack had quite got over the first melodramatic impulses into which his excitement had carried him, and he was now very anxious to make the most of a somewhat unusual experience. It is not given to every adventurous poet to run the risk of shipwreck on his first voyage, and he did not like to let the golden opportunity slip by without extracting from it all its possible sweetness. He pointed out the joy of seeing the sun rise over the sea, a joy which hitherto he had denied himself with the greatest composure; and he dwelt, too, on the additional brilliancy

which was sure to be infused into conversation conducted under such unwonted conditions and in the face of such mysterious perils.

These arguments were wholly thrown away upon Flavian. He had said good-night to Rhoda; his head was dizzy with the events of the night, and he longed for sleep, or at least for seclusion.

The German professor had disappeared. He had been seen on deck, but as soon as it was clear that the accident was not immediately serious he had vanished below-stairs again.

Van Duyten, who knew something of engineering and machinery, had quietly shown Captain Judge that he might be of use, and had been permitted to accompany him in his investigation of the disaster.

But there were others whom the counsels of Jack Harris influenced, and who were ready to make a night of it with him. These free spirits were allowed their way by Captain Judge, on the condition that they kept themselves strictly inside the limits of the smoking-cabin, and on no account emerged therefrom to interfere with him and the new responsibilities suddenly put upon him. This pledge being given, Jack and the more festive of his fellow-passengers retired to the room they had so abruptly quitted when the noise of the accident first shook them from their pleasant ease, and there they essayed to cheat the long hours with talk and laughter.

But man is mortal and sleepy. One after another the voices grew lower and died out; one after another the wassailers of the smoking-saloon allowed their senses to slip away from them into sleep. Jack, in a pause after an unusually felicitous utterance, looked round and found that his audience were all asleep. Surveying them scornfully, he was mentally comparing himself with Socrates at that wild banquet told of by Plato, when his own head nodded, and before he was aware of it he, too, was asleep, and dreamed bewildering dreams, in which the shipwrecks of transpontine theatres mingled themselves up with Athenian banquets in a marvellously incoherent medley.

He woke up stiff and cold, and rather cross, to find that it was broad day, that the last of his companions was staggering sleepily through the opened door, that the cool salt air was very grateful on the rank atmosphere of tobacco and spirits, and that he had missed seeing the sun rise over the sea after all.

What was the accident?

That was the point on which everybody on board, with the exception of Van Duyten, who knew all about it, was eager to gain information. All the ship's officers, from Captain Judge downward, were energetically interrogated by excited passengers, who woke up preternaturally early from such disturbed sleep as they had been able to get, and who were far

hungrier for details of the accident than for breakfast. The matter, luckily, was easy to explain, and was explained to the curious by Van Duyten, who took upon himself the task of acting as Judge's vicegerent in this particular.

Part of the ship's machinery had unexpectedly given way without the slightest warning, and had fallen on one of the powerful double engines which drove the vessel through the water. The engine on which the broken bulk of iron had fallen had been completely disabled. If the descending mass had fallen but a single inch nearer to one side it would have struck the other engine too, and in destroying it have left the *Atlantis* completely crippled, with only her sailing power to trust to, or the chance of a passing vessel to take her in tow.

Luckily, however, that single inch made all the difference. One engine was left intact, and with one engine the *Atlantis* could be successfully worked, though at a slower rate, until New York was reached. The engineers of the ship were busily engaged in directing the removal of the débris of the ruined engine; as soon as that was accomplished the vessel would once more make steam for Sandy Hook.

Such were the cheering tidings of Van Duyten.

There is hardly a stranger sight in the world than that of a great transatlantic steamship lying motionless in the middle of a smooth and silent sea. Trav-

ellers so inevitably associate those great floating worlds with ideas of ceaseless energy and tireless progress that it is quite a shock to their established notions to see one of them thus suddenly brought to a halt in mid-ocean.

Who ever thinks of a steamship as stationary, except when it is in the dock? Once it has left land behind, its sole purpose is to push its way along the path of the waves, never to cease in its strenuous, feverish activity until it reaches the sea-mark of its utmost steam in the haven of its destination.

Even to Captain Judge's cool and experienced mind there was something odd, even uncanny, in the way in which the *Atlantis* rested so quietly, like a tired sea-bird, on the face of the quiet waters. To the passengers it seemed almost terrible. Even when the nature of the accident was explained to them they still could scarcely resist shuddering as they gazed along the far horizon, beyond which New York lay hidden, and contrasted the swiftly cleaving motion of yesterday, bringing them stroke by stroke nearer to their harborage, with the apathy, the leaden, lifeless torpor which had come over the vessel to-day.

It was as if some spell of strangest witchcraft, setting at naught the strength of steam, had breathed a paralyzing breath upon the gallant vessel, and left it helplessly and hopelessly becalmed in the centre of an enchanted sea.

To most of the passengers their novel situation seemed either hateful, or at least disagreeably annoying.

Van Duyten grumbled because he had arranged to be back on a certain date; and though nothing whatever depended on his punctual return, he was irritated at transgressing, were it only by a single day, his long-established principles of punctuality.

Jack Harris plaintively complained that the people of New York would be cruelly disappointed in being, even for a few hours, frustrated in their desire to gaze upon the great poet who had written "Women and Graves," and who had taught an astonished nation the true purposes of life.

The German professor expressed great impatience at the unexpected delay in his meeting with the kinsfolk, to grasp whose hands he had quitted pleasant Bonn and the kindly Rhine, and trusted to the terrors of the deep.

Jack Harris noted with a kindly pity that he quoted Horace, "Illi robur et aes triplex." Jack smiled and whispered to Evleen that the learned man was dreadfully old-fashioned. "We shall have him quoting Shakespeare next," Jack said, with a little shudder of pathetic horror.

The prophetess was fretful at the unlooked-for hinderance to her work. A world was waiting for her, a new world of controversy and converts, and

she grumbled sourly at the interruption in her sacred mission.

Judge, for the moment oblivious of the fact that a longer passage meant more companionship with exquisite Evleen Van Duyten, fumed inwardly at being compelled to record an accident and a lengthened trip. The accident was no fault of his; no vigilance could have foreseen or prevented it. But it was an accident, nevertheless, and for a moment the seamanlike steadiness of Judge's mental balance was forced to swerve by the commotion of his angry thoughts.

All the ship's company chafed at the delay, and the emigrants imprecated it in almost every tongue that is talked beneath the canopy of heaven.

To Flavian, however, the delay only brought delight with it. On the day when the accident occurred they had counted to make New York on the next day. The interruption delayed the arrival for at least twenty-four hours, and to Flavian twenty-four hours more near to Rhoda's presence, treading the deck she trod, and breathing the sea wind that fanned her pale cheek to a faint glow, and played with the curls of her golden hair, was a very paradise of content.

As he leaned upon the bulwark and gazed over the glancing water, he wished that the vessel might be bewitched, like the ship of Vanderdecken in the

weird legend, and lie forever off Sandy Hook and Staten Island, and so compel endless companionship between himself and the girl who had kissed his lips last night.

He had not slept since that moment. Through the night he had lain in his cabin, dreaming with wide, wakeful eyes, and to his own amazement his dreams were all pleasing visions. The dark horror which up to that night had haunted him, from whose shadow he had been seeking in vain to fly, seemed not indeed to have vanished, but to have fallen far away from him. It hung still on his soul's horizon, dark and hateful, but it lay behind him like a drifted thunder-cloud, and ahead his heaven seemed bright with the kindling promise of a golden dawn. Surely, ah, surely, she loved him. He could feel no doubt of that, as his heated imagination recalled the cling of her arms about his neck, and the warm, impetuous pressure of her lips to his. He could not doubt that she loved him. All he doubted and dreaded was lest she should repent with the morning the avowal which night and danger had wrung from her. How would she greet him when their eyes met again under the clear light of day?

Every pulse of Flavian's body trembled with new fear when, after vexing his mind with fruitless questionings, he suddenly turned and saw that Rhoda Van Duyten was standing on the deck.

She had just crossed the threshold of her cabin, and stopped to speak for a moment to Captain Judge, who was passing. Flavian looked at her in a kind of mute wonder, asking himself if it were possible that so fair a thing could really be about to come into his marred life and make it whole and hopeful again. The anxious blood had not yet left his cheeks, the expression of his eyes and mouth were still obedient to his questioning thought, when Rhoda, leaving Captain Judge, advanced towards him.

Flavian heard his heart beating so loudly that for a moment the ludicrous notion flashed into his mind that every one on board must hear it, too, in the new silence of the pulseless vessel. He seemed to have listened to its sound for centuries by the time that Rhoda had reached him, and holding out her hand, with her frank eyes full on his, had wished him good-morning.

The tones of her voice, the touch of her hands were reassuring. The keenest onlooker would have discerned in them only the tones and touch of yesterday. But to Flavian, whose nature had in it a certain feminine strain which made him delicately conscious of the moods of women's minds, the sound of the voice and the pressure of the hand tacitly admitted a degree of intimacy of which there had been no thought four-and-twenty hours earlier.

They talked for a few moments of trivial things, trivially; of the accident and the stationary ship.

“It seems like a soulless thing,” Rhoda said.

Each was conscious of playing a kind of part. Each was conscious of the other’s reserve; each was eager to lay aside the mask. Flavian was the first to do so. He turned away from Rhoda’s fair, grave face, and looked steadily out to sea.

“Last night,” he said, speaking in a low voice—“last night, in a moment of what seemed to be serious danger, I allowed myself to reveal what I had meant to keep as a holy secret forever.”

He paused for a moment, with his eyes still fixed on the far sea-line, as if he were reading his words in the broken clouds that flecked the sky. He did not expect her to speak, but he gave her a chance of speaking, and the girl, courageous, took it.

“I, too,” she said, “last night, let a secret slip from me. We are both alike to blame.”

“If we are to blame at all,” he interrupted, passionately.

He swung round, and his look was now intent upon her face, which looked lovelier than ever to his hungry eyes, with the curious determined look on the mouth and in the eyes.

“Why are we to blame? I love you. How could I help loving you? It is the noblest thing about me, my love for you. If I have done wrong in letting

you know that I was a better man than I had dared to hope, forgive me and forget me."

His voice was charged with the passionate earnestness of truth, and his words sounded very sweetly in the ears of the listening girl.

"There is nothing to forgive," she answered; "and it is scarcely likely that I could or would forget you. Hush," she added, quickly, for Flavian, leaning forward, had caught her hand as she spoke; "hush. Let us speak no more of this now."

"But I must speak to you," Flavian pleaded. "My life, my soul are in your hands. Have pity on me. Let me tell you how much I love you."

The girl shook her head.

"Not here," she said, "and not now."

She paused for a moment, as if reflecting, while Flavian held his breath, and watched her with a tremulous joy that had something of terror in it.

Then she spoke again.

"Yes," she said, almost as if she were speaking to herself, "after last night we may, we must speak together."

She fixed her eyes full on him. "If you are here to-night at ten, when the ship is quiet, I will come to you for a few minutes. Till then, leave me to myself."

Flavian bent his head. He was still holding her hand, which she had allowed to lie passive in his.

Stooping a little he lifted it to his lips and kissed it very reverentially. Then he let it go, and it fell by her side, but there was a warmer color in her cheeks as she moved away.

Flavian, looking after her lithe young figure, asked himself if it were all a dream, from which he should wake suddenly to curse himself for having forgotten, even in sleep, his sin of penance.

He moved from where he was standing, and walked slowly up and down the deck, which was rapidly becoming crowded with awakened and excited passengers, men, women, and children. As he paced up and down, two sailors brushed past him in the execution of some order. One of the sailors spoke to his companion, and his words suddenly sent the blood from Flavian's face. They were simple, unimportant words, referring to whatever task the two men were engaged upon. But they had a peculiar significance to Flavian, for they were spoken in Russian.

There was nothing surprising in the presence of Russian sailors on board a Cunarder. Seamen of all nationalities take service under the flag of the Cunard Company. But the sound of their voices recalled Flavian from the dream-kingdom he had entered to that valley of shadows from which he had believed himself to have emerged. He shuddered at the ugly associations which the sound of Russian speech had

conjured up. He turned to get away from the sailors, and ran against the German professor.

“Curious fellows those sailors,” Flavian said; “I can’t make out what country they come from.”

“They are Russians, I think,” said the professor, quietly; and then the two men separated, and each went his own way.

CHAPTER VII.

"FREE."

NIGHT, deeply dark and still, reigned in heaven. There was no moon, and in the blue blackness of the sky few stars hung out their beacon-fires. But the light that was lacking to the firmament seemed to live instead upon the surface of the water. In the wash and swirl of the ship's wake the writhing waves blazed with phosphorescent flame. Night, like a new Prometheus, had stolen the celestial fire from heaven, only to scatter it in long, lambent masses upon the sable field of sea. Save where the screw churned the water into this flashing foam, the sea was waveless as the sky was windless.

It was late, and the deck of the *Atlantis* was well-nigh deserted. Such of the women-folk as had not yet gone to bed were still in the saloon, working, or writing, or eagerly reading the last pages of the latest volume that they had borrowed from the ship's library. For in spite of her accident the *Atlantis* was making way again now, counted to reach her destination on the next morning, and the students of the fiction provided by the ship's officers for the en-

livenment of the voyage were anxious to know the last of the fortunes of hero or heroine before the arrival. Probably the fair readers knew from experience that the book which we begin under one set of conditions, and are compelled to lay aside unfinished, is very seldom resumed and concluded under other conditions.

The smoking-room, as usual, was occupied by the more jovial of the passengers. Jack Harris, who hated going to bed early as much as he hated a picture by Greuze or a statue by Canova, and who loved cigarettes as he loved Whistler's etchings and Swinburne's verses, was enthroned there, of course, and in view of his approaching arrival in the New World which was to worship him scintillated with especial brilliancy.

Judge was absent. Since the accident he had been, to use his own words, "wildly busy," and the ship's passengers had seen little of him. Van Duyten sat in his accustomed corner, tranquilly taciturn, surveying Jack Harris with the expression of humorous speculation which always illumined the gaze of the millionaire when it rested on the poet of "Women and Graves."

The rest of the company smoked and drank and laughed and chatted, and listened good-humoredly to Jack's eloquence, and shouted boisterous approval of his good stories.

Outside, on the darkened deck, Flavian paced restlessly up and down. The tumultuous thoughts that agitated his mind spurred his spirit with a kind of fierce joy. He had so patiently argued himself into acceptance of his despairing mood, he had so resolutely taught his fighting soul that it must henceforward be dead to all delight, that his new-born sense of freedom and hope and happiness troubled his senses like an intoxicating draught.

His febrile nature had a feminine delicacy in the appreciation of all pleasures, which made the experience of a pleasure very exquisite to him. That very delight in experience, in experiment upon the most sensitive chords of being, had lent to his sorrow and his shame something like a sense of ecstasy. His anguish had been bitter enough, but he had drunk its bitterness to the lees as eagerly as men, fighting with fever, drain some medicine which has an acid savor in it. He hated his crime, and yet he hugged it to his heart; he wore his repentance like a hair shirt, with a kind of defiant delight in his own austerity. He racked out his repentance as he had in all his life racked out every emotion that had ever seized upon him; he positively glutted his sick soul with sorrow. He found an almost hysterical rapture in assuring himself that the book of his youth was shut and sealed forever; that the rest of his life was to be but a remorseful penance for the past.

His was one of those imaginative natures with whom to resolve strongly affords all the satisfaction of a fulfilled resolve, and therefore ingeniously excuses the fulfilment. He was sated with regret, although he knew it not, before he had set foot upon the ship which was to convey him to his new career of patience and of penance. The sight of Rhoda Van Duyten had been a touchstone to his nature, revealing to him that he was already weary of remorse and craving for a new pleasure or even a new pain. He had shuddered at monotony ever, and he had found that a monotony of grief might be as physically exhausting as a monotony of joy.

The delight of Rhoda Van Duyten's beauty refreshed him; his passion for her grew with the passion for him which his quick eyes saw growing up in her bosom, and he persuaded himself, with the convincing logic of supreme egotism, that a young man need not be entirely overcast by the shadow even of a great sin. Repentance was imperative and inevitable, he told himself; but he did repent, and deserved forgiveness. He had tacitly accorded himself that forgiveness, and now all the purpose and all the passion of which he was capable were devoted to the one thought of Rhoda Van Duyten.

So Flavian walked up and down in the still blackness of the night, watching the vivid glitter of the phosphorescent light burning like pale green flame

on the dancing ripple. His own past life he likened to that lurid gleam shifting fitfully upon a sea of shadow; his future, he was resolved, should shine with the silver patience of a star. As he lifted his eyes from the sea to seek in heaven the planet of his destinies, he became aware of a white figure standing motionless a little way from him.

It was Rhoda. He knew it at once, and the glad blood flushed his cheeks. It was a good omen, that when his thoughts were busy with a fair future his glance should rest on the form of his beloved. Yet, as he hurried towards her where she stood, framed in the doorway of her cabin, with a dim light shining in the space behind her, he could scarcely refrain from shuddering. She reminded him as she stood there of some picture he had once seen, of a girl at the gate of a tomb, with the light behind her of the sad lamp which burns for the dead.

The next moment their eyes met and all chill thoughts vanished away from him.

He took her hand and kissed it without speaking; then they walked together in silence towards the stern of the vessel, and leaned over the bulwark. The phosphorescent brilliancy had greatly increased, and the living flames zigzagged upon the water with mad activity. For a few moments they remained silent, watching the quivering flames; then Flavian broke the silence.

“May I have my answer?” he asked.

“Are you not answered?” Rhoda replied, softly, with her gaze still fixed steadfastly on the sea.

Flavian turned sharply round. In the darkness he could just discern the exquisite outline of her face.

“I scarcely dared to believe it,” he said, in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper. “What am I that I should win your love, that I should pretend to be worthy of your love?”

He reached out his hand to touch hers as it rested lightly on the bulwark, and caught it in a passionate pressure. The girl trembled a little, but she did not withdraw her hand, and Flavian spoke again.

“If I am so blest,” he said, “as to have gained your love, I can defy the world. Am I, indeed, so blest? You gave me your friendship, and to me, lonely, miserable, and an exile, your friendship came like the promise of pardon to a dying man. I might never have dared to hope for more than your friendship; I had sworn to keep my love forever secret from you. Last night’s danger overthrew my purpose, and in a moment of unconquerable impulse, which revealed my passion, I seemed to learn that you, too, had kinder thoughts of me than friend extends to friend. The promise of pardon then seemed more like a pledge of Paradise to the doubting soul. Will you tell me that I make no error,

that I walk in no dream, that as I live and breathe this night, and love you, I am loved again?"

His voice trembled with the intensity of his passion. He was desperately in earnest, for he was pleading for all that made life dear to him. The girl who was listening to him could have no idea of the many times in which he had seemed as earnest, as impassioned before — could not guess that even then, when life and love were opening up for him a new horizon and a new hope, he was at the same time, half unconsciously, enjoying the dramatic value of the situation, and lending to his words a faint emphasis which was not quite reality. He was keenly aware of the attractive side of the situation, of the darkness of the night, of the cool air, of the swift ship and the dividing waters, of the rare beauty of the girl beside him, of the picturesqueness of their lonely vigil with none but the stars as witnesses of their troth.

She was only thinking that the man she loved was beside her, telling her that he loved her. The strange conditions under which that love had revealed itself may have heightened its charm to her mind, but if it did it was quite unconsciously. All she knew was that she loved Flavian, and that Flavian was asking her to tell him so. Why should she not? It was the truth, and truth was everything to her.

So she answered him, quite firmly and simply, with

her eyes fixed on the distant darkness, "I love you, Flavian."

It was the first time she had ever called him by his name. He caught her in his arms and kissed her as he had kissed her on the night when their common peril revealed their common love.

"Rhoda," he murmured, "my love, my love."

She yielded to his embrace passively—a sweet, girlish sense of shame at his sudden kisses blending deliciously with a strange feeling of pride in being so beloved. To him it seemed as if her arms had loosened him from the burden of his life, that he found on her lips the lost youth and the lost ambition which he had believed were gone from him forever. But the memory of that dark past floated over his mind even then, as he held her in his arms, and prompted him to speak.

"Sweet love," he whispered, "sweet love, will you be true to me, come what may?"

She looked up at him in surprise.

"I love you," she said; "how could I help being true to you?"

To her white soul, to love once meant to love always. She knew that the way of the world was not her way; she could not understand it. The heart once given is given forever, she felt.

"Do you mean because of my father?" she asked.

Flavian shook his head. To do him justice, the

thought of Van Duyten had not come into his mind. His was not a calculating mind. If Rhoda had been the only support of some parent, old and poor, who could not well exist without her, it would not have occurred to Flavian, even for a moment, to think of any duty the girl might owe to another so long as she cared for him. The fact that Rhoda's father was a rich man was a matter of equal indifference. Flavian was only thinking of himself.

"My father," said Rhoda, "will not object. I know that his only wish would be to make me happy, and when he knows that I am happy"—she drew involuntarily a little nearer to her lover as she spoke—"he will be kindness itself."

Flavian looked lovingly into her eager, pleading face.

"My dear," he said, "I was not thinking of your father. He is a rich man, I know, but I am not a poor man. No, there was nothing of that in my mind. My thoughts were very different."

"What were they?" she asked, anxiously; and then again, as Flavian hesitated, she repeated her question with a pretty imperiousness. Women are wonderfully rapid in the way in which they accept a situation. While poor man is blundering along, uncertain what he should say or do next, bewildered by his good-fortune, woman at once steps lightly on the throne that has been offered her, and

wields her sceptre with an air of long-established authority.

Flavian was no blunderer. He had almost a woman's quickness in appreciating a position; but Rhoda was quicker than he. They were avowed lovers now, and she seemed to recognize the fact more frankly and fully than he did. "What are they?" she asked again, imperatively.

"Suppose," said Flavian, slowly, "that there was something in my past life, a great shadow, a great sorrow, a great fault, would it make any difference to you?"

There was an unexpected kind of honor in Flavian's composition. He had come to the conclusion that it would be unfair to take the girl without letting her know at least something of the past, and having resolved to do so, he went on with his resolution, even at the risk of perilling his new-born happiness.

The girl trembled a little, and there was a startled tone in her voice as she questioned him again. "What shadow? what sorrow?" she asked.

"Listen," said Flavian. "I cannot tell you what the shadow is which darkens my past. I can only say that it was an error, not a crime. I was young, I was impulsive, and I was made for a time the tool of designing men."

As Flavian spoke, he was really for the moment

convinced that he was speaking the truth, and that he had indeed been the victim of unscrupulous plotters, who had traded upon his inexperience; that he had been the deceived, and not the deceiver.

"I was tempted," he went on, "at an age when every young man who adores freedom looks upon himself as a chosen apostle in the cause of liberty. I thought the opportunity had come for me to serve that cause, and I yielded to the temptation. I cannot tell you what the cause was within whose fatal meshes I was for a time involved. I remained its captive until its course led to crime, and then I shook myself free. That is all."

As Flavian finished he felt as if a load had been lifted from his mind. It really seemed to him that he had made full confession of his fault, and it almost appeared to him, while he spoke, as if he had acted rather nobly than otherwise in the part he had played and the manner in which he had withdrawn from the ranks of the Nihilists.

Rhoda's eyes were wet with tears, and her voice shook a little as she clung to him and whispered,

"Dear Flavian, I knew that there could be nothing in your past life of which you had any cause to be ashamed. But I have nothing to do with your past. Your present and your future are mine, and I want to know nothing of what happened yesterday, or the day before yesterday. It is enough for

me to know that you love me and that I love you. Nothing that has happened in the past, nothing that can happen in the future, can alter that. I am yours, my dear, forever."

She was weeping fast as she ended, and Flavian felt the ready tears spring into his own eyes. "Love, love, I thank you," he whispered, and kissed her again on the forehead and on the lips. They stood for a few minutes quite silently; then Rhoda lifted up her head and looked at him with fond, bright eyes.

"I must go now," she said. "To-morrow our new life begins together in my country, your country now. Do not speak to my father until I tell you. It will be best so."

She held out her hand and he covered it with kisses.

"Good-night," she said. "To-morrow!"

"To-morrow, and forever," he answered; and he walked by her side in silence till they came to her cabin door. As they were about to part, he drew her once more towards him, and their lips met again. Then she opened her door and passed in, and he walked slowly along the deck towards the head of the stairs leading below.

Obeying a natural impulse, she came out of her doorway again to catch a last glimpse of her lover. She saw his form darkly in the distance, moving to-

wards the ship's stern. As she turned to go back again another form moved hurriedly past her. She hardly noticed it; the night was so dark and the figure passed so rapidly that she did not distinguish its outlines. It was probably a sailor or some be-lated passenger, who had been taking his final nocturnal stroll on the decks of the *Atlantis*. If any passenger, it was probably the German professor, who had an owl-like affection for midnight promenades; indeed she fancied it must have been he. But the question did not long trouble her. She went to bed, and lay awake long hours thinking of her happiness, and fell asleep at last and dreamed of Flavian.

As for Flavian, he paced up and down the deck for long enough, meditating upon his good-fortune. When at last he turned to go down-stairs, he gave one final look over the vessel's wake, and murmured to himself joyously, "Free, free, free!"

CHAPTER VIII.

“THAT ENDS THIS STRANGE, EVENTFUL HISTORY.”

THERE are not many fairer sights in the world than the entrance to New York harbor. As the vessel slowly steams between those smiling shores where the wooded hills enfold as many sunny spots of greenery as did the pleasure-place of Kubla Khan, the traveller who makes his approach for the first time may well be excused for any amount of enthusiastic admiration.

Even the most hardened and habitual of ocean voyagers would find it difficult not to experience a delight in the sight of that fair landscape, even if its every hill and creek are as familiar to him as Broadway or Bond Street, even if he could repeat the roll-call of the owners of every handsome villa on the hill-sides as volubly and as accurately as the Greek Rhapsodists of old time prided themselves on repeating the Homeric catalogue of ships.

Those who are so far favored by fortune as to enter New York harbor on a fine morning of summer, may have wandered in many climes and over many continents; but let them ransack their memories as

they please they can scarcely recall a spot where Nature has been more bounteously prodigal of her gifts.

Jack Harris, sitting on a camp-stool by Mrs. Van Duyten's side, and sharing with that amiable lady the protection of her pagoda-like parasol, was giving vent to some very pretty utterances in this regard, which made Mrs. Van Duyten's portly and patriotic bosom swell with pleasure.

“I have seen,” murmured Jack, dreamily—“I have seen the flashing foam of the blue *Ægean* break in melodious ripples on the golden sand of that sea-garden of the Attic town, Phaleron; I have seen the mosques and minarets of Stamboul mirrored in the treacherous waters of the Golden Horn; I have floated over the Tyrrhene sea beneath the orange-trees of Naples; I have seen the fierce waves breaking on those fangs of rock which sternly guard, in the port of Jaffa, the passage to the Holy Land.”

He was going to enumerate a still further list of the various ports and harbors which he had been fortunate enough to behold, but observing that a slight yawn creased the folds about Mrs. Van Duyten's ample mouth, he checked himself manfully. Even the temptation to expound felicitously the fruits of his wanderings was not worthy to be gratified at the price of boring Mrs. Van Duyten, so Jack brought his eloquence promptly to its conclusion.

“All these I have seen,” he murmured, solemnly, “but never have I looked upon a fairer sight than that which unrolls itself before me.”

Mrs. Van Duyten rewarded his glowing periods with a motherly smile.

“I guess you’re about right there, every time, Mr. Harris,” she said, approvingly. “But just you wait a bit, young man, till we’ve got you on shore for a while, and see if we don’t fix you up some sights that will go clean ahead of this. Yes, sir.”

And Mrs. Van Duyten brought her hand sharply down on to her knee in emphatic endorsement of her statement, and smiled caressingly upon the pleasant landscape that lay before her. Jack beamed sympathetically, and was about to express further sentiments calculated to arouse emotion in the transatlantic breast, when the group was increased by the arrival of Mr. Van Duyten and the two girls, with Judge in their company.

Evleen was talking with her usual animation to Judge, in whose honest breast there was no small regret at the prospect of being deprived in so short a time of her sweet society. He was the most philosophical of sea-captains; he thought that he had long ago attuned his mind to the formation of pleasant friendships which grew with exotic rapidity on board ship, and then vanished forever out of his life, as evanescent as the odor of the violet—“the perfume

and suppliance of a moment, no more, indeed," he quoted to himself grimly under his breath. He had long since assured himself that, as his life was so inevitably a sure succession of meetings and partings, he must take such meetings and partings as lightly as a healthy man takes waking and sleeping. Yet here he was, for all his sea-stoicism, with an odd sense of something akin to wretchedness hanging over him like an ugly shadow.

"If you knew how ill all's here about my heart," he said to himself, sadly, and then went on bitterly, "'tis such a kind of gaingiving as might, perhaps, trouble a woman."

Judge's weakness was for Shakespeare. He had little time for reading, and he had made up his mind years earlier that Shakespeare was the best of all reading, so he read little else, and knew him well-nigh by heart, and talked to himself in citations from the beloved author. He quoted him now with a kind of sour satisfaction in mocking his miserable mood as he looked into Evleen's bright, beautiful face, and thought what a fool he was. But no shadow of his thoughts stirred the composure of his face as he talked to the girl indifferently of the places they passed, and of New York and its people and pleasures.

The decks had completely lost their look of lazy, happy tranquillity, and on this morning had assumed

an aspect of bustling activity. The lounging, picturesque passengers of the last week seemed to have been transformed as by magic into hurrying, everyday travellers. The ship's company might well be likened to the inhabitants of that Arabian city which suddenly fell asleep in the midst of its daily occupations, and as suddenly awoke again to gather up the threads of life where it had dropped them.

There were doubtless many on board the *Atlantis* who had been thankful for the week of ocean calm, bringing its sea-dreams, and clearing away from heart and brain the smoke of busy, rushing life in London, and who would have been glad to prolong yet a few days their dream of restfulness.

There were a few sad faces on deck, but on the whole the ship's human freight seemed to have shaken off the spell which had bound it, and was viewing with cheerful expectancy the great world of America as it loomed before the vessel.

The deck was thronging with people who were superintending the final adjustment of their "goods and chattels." There was the usual handful of people who insist on deferring the packing of their trunks until the shortness of time compels a wildly incomplete operation. Much to the fore, and quite as trying in her way, was the lady who insists upon her friends and relatives completing their preparations to the fullest, and standing, rugs in hand, ready

to step on shore some two hours before the vessel sights land.

Rhoda, leaning on her father's arm, was looking pale, and she glanced anxiously about the deck in search of one who was not present. Jack Harris talked to her and she answered absently, for she was thinking of Flavian, and wondering why he was not there to greet her. She felt very proud and happy, but she was eager to meet him again, and his absence was not like a lover's impatience. Judge, too, with appreciation quickened, perhaps, by his own mood, noted Flavian's absence and commented on it.

"Where is Mr. Hope?" he asked, and then wished he hadn't, for he saw the faint flush on Rhoda's cheek, and quite misunderstood it.

"They have not been able to agree," he said to himself. "He will not appear till she has gone on shore. Poor fellow! this has been an unlucky cruise for some of us," and Judge stifled a most unseaman-like sigh.

He wished he had not spoken; but it was too late, for Jack Harris and Mrs. Van Duyten took the interrogation up and pursued it.

"I wonder he is not here," said Jack, "to breathe the beauty of the morning and hail the land of freedom. Every one else is on deck," Jack continued, glancing over the thronged scene, "even our grave representative of Teutonic culture," and he waved

his hand towards the poop, where the German professor was perched, puffing his huge pipe complacently. The professor saw the gesture, and apparently took it at once as a salutation or summons, for he climbed down from his post and came towards the group, whom he saluted comprehensively.

Jack repeated to the new-comer his surprise at Flavian's tardiness, and the professor shared in it. It really was curious, for the *Atlantis* was now almost along-side the quay, and a steam-tug from the shore was making its snorting and puffing way towards the vessel. Probably he had overslept himself, the professor suggested, and he hinted that it would be only civil to wake him up and let him know that the ship had reached her destination.

"He must be a sound sleeper," said Judge, laughing, "if he can command his slumbers through all the row that is now going on."

He admitted, however, that it might be well to wake him, and talked of sending the steward, but Jack Harris volunteered to go himself, and promptly disappeared down-stairs.

He had not been gone more than a few seconds when he appeared on the deck again, staggering like a drunken man, his face white with terror and his out-stretched hands trembling painfully.

He rushed wildly up to the group he had just quitted, and cried hoarsely, as he reeled on to a

seat, “Dead, dead! My God, he’s dead! Murdered!”

For a moment those who heard him gazed at each other with pale faces, and from all parts of the deck people hurried to where they were standing. Then a woman’s voice broke the silence with a terrible cry of pain, and Rhoda darted from those about her and rushed swiftly down below.

Instantly Judge was after her; but even his practised feet were no match for her maddened speed, and he only came up with her at the open door of Flavian’s cabin. There she stood for one moment, looking in, and then with a low groan dropped in a helpless heap at the foot of the bed.

Judge, just behind her, saw her fall, and stooped to lift her. Behind him an excited throng filled the saloon and choked the entrance to the cabin. Those in front saw what had happened, and shuddered with horror.

On the bed lay Flavian, dead.

The body was on its back, in an attitude of still, untroubled repose, the arms stretched tranquilly down outside the coverlet. The handle of a dagger stuck out from his breast, just above the heart, and a blackened stream of blood ran down from the clean stab in the night-shirt and stiffened the linen to the chill flesh beneath. The eyes were staring open and upward in the fixed regard of dissolution; on the

cheeks and chin the dark hairs of the beard, as yet unshaved, had grown since death, and contrasted horribly in their blue shadow with the livid pallor of the face.

Judge, who was nearest to the body, could see that a bit of paper was between the hilt of the knife and the bosom of the night-dress. Whoever had struck the blow had driven the weapon through the paper and the body at once; whoever had struck the blow had struck it well and had killed his victim instantly, with that single stroke sped straight and unerringly to the heart.

Judge lifted up the senseless girl and handed her to Van Duyten, who bore her away. Then, with the assistance of some of his officers, he cleared the crowd away and left a watch at the cabin door, that the room might be left unaltered until the police authorities inspected the scene of the crime. For a crime it undoubtedly was; of that Judge felt convinced. No suicidal fingers had driven that dagger so steadily into the dead man's heart. It was a murder; where was the murderer?

When Judge came on deck he found Jack Harris the centre of a crowd of passengers, listening while Jack described what he had seen to an enterprising reporter who had come on board to interview him.

Judge at once sent a messenger on shore to communicate with the police, and in a short time a con-

siderable number came on board and proceeded to investigate the crime and interrogate the passengers. All that could be done at once was to examine the scene of the murder, to note the condition of the body, and to ascertain where the various passengers had come from and where they were going to. All the saloon passengers gave satisfactory accounts of themselves, and after giving their addresses to the police were permitted to land, on the understanding that they would be ready to appear and give evidence when called on. The interrogation of the steerage passengers took longer, but had no results. Then came the turn of the crew. While the examination was being carried on, the ship's doctor, under the directions of the police, had removed the dagger. The bit of paper was found to contain some few words written in a foreign character. On being examined by an interpreter they were found to be in Russian, and when translated, read, “By order of the Third Section. Remember Nathalie.”

This paper led to the immediate arrest of the only Russians on board the *Atlantis*, two Russian sailors, but a conclusive *alibi* was proved for them by their officers and fellow-seamen, and they were dismissed.

* * * * *

The murder on the *Atlantis* occupied New York attention for quite a number of days. The interest culminated when it became known that the German

professor had disappeared, that the family to whom he had alleged that he was going were apparently purely fictitious, that the address he gave in New York was entirely imaginary, and that the best efforts of the police to trace him were wholly unsuccessful.

“The earth has bubbles as the water has, and he is of them,” Judge muttered to himself bitterly when he heard of this. He knew of the terrible brain-fever through which Rhoda was being slowly nursed back to life by Evleen, and he knew the cause.

The large circle of the Van Duytens' acquaintance only knew that Miss Van Duyten had suffered terribly from seeing, by mistake, the dead body of a fellow-traveller on board the *Atlantis* with whom she had had some slight intimacy, and that the shock to her nerves had much prostrated her.

The whole episode was at first a little annoying to Jack Harris, as it took off considerably from the personal *éclat* of his own arrival; but he soon found that his special knowledge of all the actors in the grim tragedy gave him additional interest in New York eyes so long as the news was novel.

The novelty of the news soon wore off. A great trotting match first shook its popularity. A dramatic divorce case, enlivened with a little shooting, distracted public attention further. The arrival of a beautiful English actress and a popular London preacher banished it entirely from memory.

It was only remembered by Judge, by the Van Duytens, who went abroad after Rhoda's comparative recovery, and by Jack Harris, who occasionally made good use of the theme in his lecture on artistic emotion.

THE END.

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
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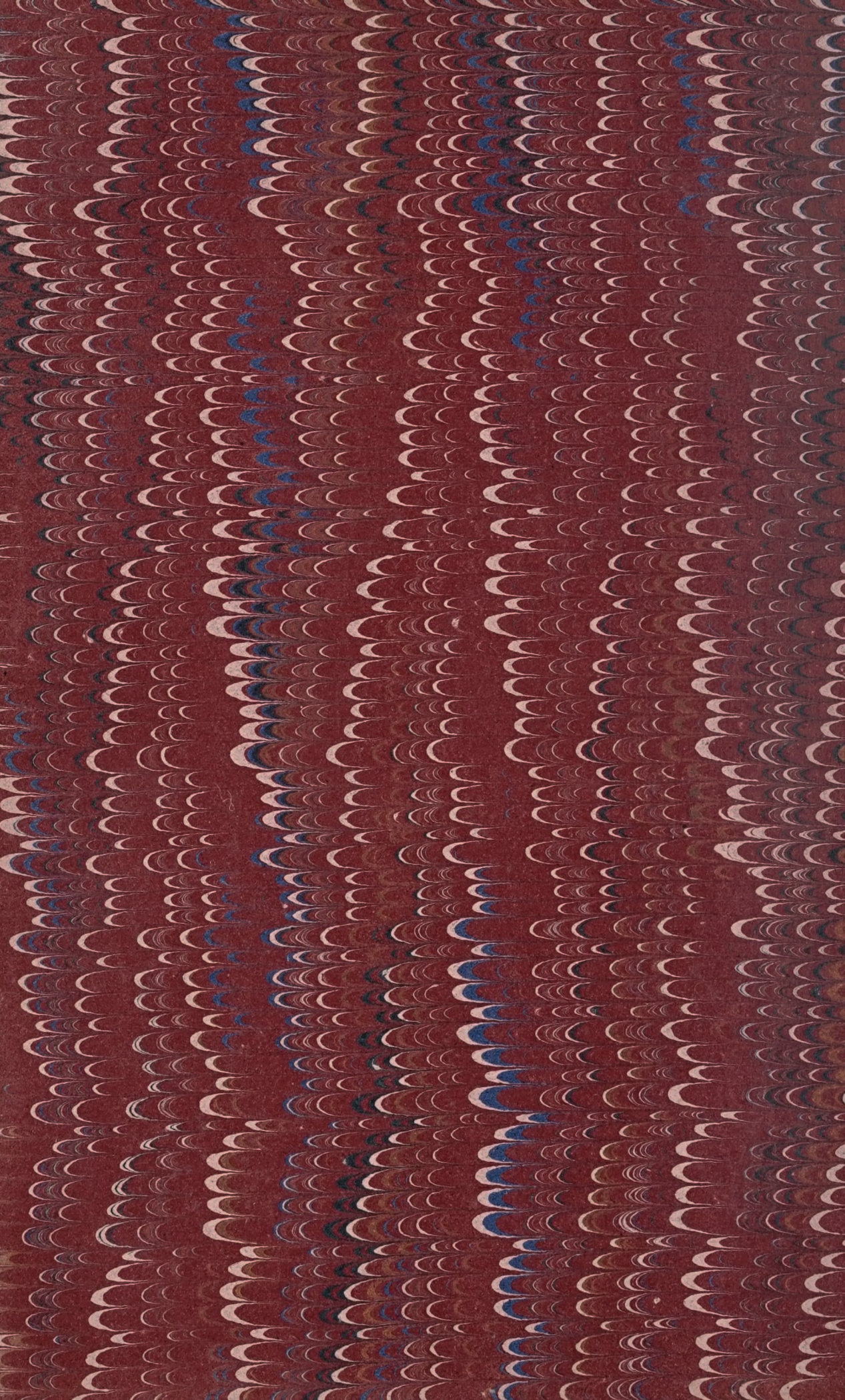
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