

**The Cruise**  
**By**  
**Letitia Elizabeth Landon**  
**(L. E. L.)**

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**Peter J. Bolton**

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"THE small things of life are the terrible," says a popular writer of our day, and the saying is true. Let us all look back on the most important events of our life, and in what slight accidents have they originated! The following story seems to be but a succession of unlucky chances, and yet each was a link in the dark chain of human destiny.

Its scene lies in one of the gayest sea towns of Devonshire; one of those bathing places which, for about three months in every year, is astonished at its own gaiety, and when the season is over is obliged to be content with its own society, and its own natural loveliness. Gaiety in a place of this kind, is a different sort of gaiety to that in London. It is more familiar—more a thing of fits and snatches—belongs to the open air—and has a touch of wildness from the green-wood tree. No one more enjoyed the brief dissipation of her native town than Edith Trevanion. The heiress and beauty of the neighbourhood, the darling of her father (mother she had none), the delight of her circle, human life seemed to have made an exception in her favour. The troubles that vex the most prosperous existed not for her. Poverty she only knew by the pleasure of relieving it. Sickness and death had left her house at too early a period for her remembrance, for her mother died when she was a child in arms. Within the last few months a still deeper happiness had girdled her around. She was engaged to a young man, of family and fortune equal to her own; and, moreover, Arthur Raleigh was a very handsome young man. However, wherever there is any love in the case, there is never any want of a few miseries as well. Arthur was of a jealous temper, and this is a sore temptation to a petted beauty. Edith knew her power, and did not dislike using it. Truly and entirely attached herself—loving, too, with all the gay confidence of unbroken spirits and first affection—she could not enter into, and therefore could not allow for all the tender anxieties of her lover; she excused a little feminine teasing to herself, as a wholesome sort of moral discipline. It was an absolute duty to cure him of such a fault as jealousy. What would he be when once she was fairly married to him?

In the meantime, the War-office combined with fate against the unfortunate lover — a regiment was suddenly quartered in the town. This was really too much. Poor Arthur was haunted by red coats. They lounged through the streets, they rode through shady lanes, they danced in the assembly rooms, they lunched here and they dined there; and when at last night arrived, it was “dreams and not sleep that came into his head.” His visions were all of “the scarlet colour.” No young lady’s head in all the place could run more upon “the officers” than his own. Both the Majors were married—that was something to be thankful for; but the Colonel was single, and younger, and better looking than the generality of Colonels; and the junior officers were an unusually fine set of men—at least so they seemed to Arthur Raleigh. During the first month of their stay, he took them all in their turns. One day it was the fascinating Captain—the next it was the handsome Lieutenant; till it even reached the interesting Ensign.

At last, these flying fears settled into a good earnest fit, which had Captain Delaford for its object. The whole regiment was considered charming enough; but Captain Delaford was the most charming of all. We Londoners know nothing of hearts carried by beat of drum. “The officers” conveys no meaning to our ear. We have an idea that the guards are very gentlemanlike, but the military go for nothing in the great system of London dissipation. A young lady, even in Knightsbridge, would stare to be asked “If the barracks did not make the neighbourhood very gay?” It would be something like the fair damsel at St Helena asking “if England was not exceedingly dull after the fleet sailed?” But in a country town a regiment is a very grand affair indeed! Parties are made for and by the officers; they light up a ball, and the young ladies feel that it is an opportunity for attachments happy and unhappy; and, as Mr Bennet in ‘Pride and Prejudice’ justly observed, “next to being engaged, it is something to be crossed in love.” Edith Trevanion liked the increased gaiety, she liked too the admiration and the attention. But her heart was irrevocably gone, and the very thought of change never came into her head.

But the more she was conscious of her own attachment, the less could she bear to have it made a perpetual subject of doubt. It was one very hot morning—for the summer had been unusually warm and long—that they were standing on a terrace which ran on the shady side of the house. They were walking up and down a little to Arthur's discontent, for he had been asking her to ride, which Edith refused on account of the extreme heat. She was herself in such gay spirits. Her father had just surprised her, and such surprises are very agreeable, by a set of turquoises, and she was convinced herself, and wanted to convince everybody else, that blue was the loveliest colour in the world. "It is the colour of the sky, of violets,"—"and," interrupted Arthur, "as Captain Delaford would say, of your eyes. I am sure that is just one of his pretty speeches." "Not quite," replied Edith; "you have a scowl where he has a smile—and you ought to put on an irresistible air while speaking." "An irresistible air!" exclaimed Arthur. "So you think him irresistible?" "At least our whole town does, and you would not have me opposed to general opinion. You know what an enemy you are to singularity in our sex." Arthur made no answer, but amused himself with picking off the heads of divers unoffending flowers. Edith began a curious examination of a bunch of Provence roses, which she held in her hand. Her own sweet mouth, with the smile dimpling round it, was like one of the buds, when the soft red first breaks through the green envelope. "But, at least," said Arthur, "you will not dance with Captain Delaford. I make a point of your not doing it." Now Raleigh was very wrong to make a point of any such trifle. It set the whole spirit of feminine insubordination up in arms. Besides, this very jealousy was an angry subject with Edith. She felt herself unworthily judged—and, moreover, her taste called in question. The very idea that she could think of such a man for one moment—she who quite piqued herself on having such an ideal standard of perfection!—it was such a bad compliment. Captain Delaford all smiles, sighs, and *douceurs* to every lady he came near; he who cut out all his conversation by a pattern—well, it was too provoking! Had Arthur chosen to be jealous of the Colonel, who was pale and silent—therefore set down as having had an unhappy passion, and "so interesting;"—or even the young ensign, who was such a sweet poet, and had written some exquisite verses in her album, about moonlight, and blighted affection—either of these would have been some credit. But Captain Delaford—the singing, flirting, universal Captain Delaford—it was really too bad!

"Not dance with him!" exclaimed she, with the prettiest air of surprise in the world. "Why, I would sooner dance with him than any one else—he is the best waltzer in the room." "And I am the worst" interrupted Arthur angrily, conscious of his own unjustifiable deficiency in that important accomplishment.

"But that you take what to you doth belong  
It were a fault to snatch words off my tongue,"

maliciously quoted the lady. "Well, at all events," said Raleigh, looking as angry as a gentleman well could do, "you shall not be troubled with me; I will not dance with you!" "Truly, that will be a loss!" cried Edith; "why I shall never get over the disappointment! Well, well, I must see how charming I can make myself. Perhaps Captain Delaford may ask me a second time." "And there he comes, Madam!" exclaimed Arthur, who saw the very gentleman in question galloping up the avenue. No pleasant sight, for he looked remarkably well on horseback, and the lover saw, or fancied that he saw, Edith watching admiringly. Had he looked a little closer he would have seen that her eyes were filled with tears, and that she had only turned aside to conceal them. But Arthur was too angry to observe. "I will not interrupt your *tête à tête*, Madam. I now understand why it was too hot to ride with me this morning;" and without waiting for an answer, he sprang from the terrace, and was soon lost to sight among the coppices below. Edith remained to do the honours to her visitor with what grace she might. But anger gave her spirit, and she contented herself with turning in mind the dignified resentment she would display when they met at dinner.

Never had Edith looked more beautiful than when she paused on the threshold of the old gothic library, where the guests were assembled for dinner, to still a little fluttering at the heart before she entered the room where she expected to meet Arthur. She entered, a little flush on her cheek, and a little sparkle in her clear blue eyes. Her father came towards her, and drew her arm in his. He was almost as proud as fond of his lovely child. She gave one quick glance round the library. Arthur was not there. Captain Delaford came forward with a smile and a compliment. She scarcely answered him; and it was a positive relief when an old baronet, who had been sent into the world to be a bore, and who from his cradle had fulfilled his destiny, came forward, and handed her to the dinner table. There were one or two late arrivals;—they little knew how quickly the heart of the fair mistress of the house beat at their entrance. The longest dinner that Edith had ever known was at length over;—but a yet longer evening was to come. She went with a large party from their house to the ball, and she danced the first dance with Captain Delaford. Ah, the restraints of society! Her pulses beat feverishly; her eyes were filled with tears; she was anxious—restless; and yet she had to appear gay, polite, and occupied with the scene before her. How often during the course of that evening did she go through a course of manœuvres to obtain a place near the door,—and then, ashamed of her motive, leave it hastily, only to return again! Still Arthur never came.

The party returned to the hall; and it was as much as Edith could do to appear the attentive and well-bred mistress of the house. Generally speaking, the little supper at home, after the dance, had been so gay; to-night it was positively dull—all said they were tired. The visitors took up their candles, and as the door closed upon the last, Edith threw herself into her father's arms and burst into tears. Half in sobs, and half in words, her story was told, and Mr Trevanion was at first very angry with Arthur Raleigh's want of temper. But Edith could not bear to have him blamed, and she now made all sorts of excuses for the jealousy which in the morning seemed to her so unpardonable. It was a lovely night when, feverish and restless, she flung open the windows of her dressing-room. The moon was shining in a cloudless sky, and the sea in the distance was tremulous with light. But there was a weight on Edith's spirits which she could not shake off. The clouds were beginning to redden in the east before she went to bed, and the last

words on her lips were, "Where is Arthur?" Where, indeed, was he? When he left Edith he rushed in a paroxysm of rage to the sea-side, and there, bare-headed, he amused himself with walking up and down, cursing woman's fickleness and all good waltzers in his heart. Suddenly a little boat shot round one of the small capes which so gracefully indent the coast, a youth sprang out, and approaching Arthur, unperceived, passed his arm through the wanderer's and addressed him in the well-known

"Why bare-headed are you come,  
Or why come you at all?"

It was an old college friend; and Arthur, between anger and confidence, was soon moved to tell his story. "I will tell you what you shall do; come with me into my boat, my yacht waits me in the offing; we will have a pleasant sail, a gay supper, and to-morrow, you, having so shown with what spirit you can act, shall to-morrow go and beg your fair tyrant's pardon—or, what is far better, let her beg your's." Arthur was just in that sort of mood, when we are ready to let anyone decide for us rather than ourselves. He went with his friend, had a gay supper, and did what he could to drown a few of Edith's frowns in Champagne. He woke the next morning with a head-ache, and the agreeable intelligence that they were driven out to sea. It was a week before they could land; and when they did, of course Arthur's first thought was to hasten to Edith. For this purpose he was put in at the very creek which he had left the day before. "You look so handsome in my foraging cap," said his gay companion, "that you must carry everything before you."

Arthur's step was as heavy as his spirits. He could not disguise from himself that his strange absence must have inflicted a degree of most cruel anxiety, and he dreaded to see Edith again. The sound of the bell tolling for a funeral did not add to his cheerfulness. He had to pass by the little churchyard, and saw a group of people in the one corner. Surely they were gathered round the old vault of the Trevanions. He entered—the rattle of the earth on the coffin struck upon his ear—the vault was open, and the clergyman was reading the last sacred words that part the dead from the living. He asked one question, and the wretched young man heard the name of Edith Trevanion. His sudden disappearance, and his hat having been found on the sea-shore, led to the belief that he had destroyed himself. This report had been hastily communicated to Edith, and she had broken a blood-vessel. Death followed instantly. In the small churchyard, whose old yews are seen at a great distance out at sea, is an old-fashioned monument—it is the vault of the Trevanion family. The last inscription is—

"Edith Trevanion, aged 19."

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