

died him to her bosom, and buried her lovely face in his fat little neck; "you fraud! Why! you're nothing to hold, after all. And I thought you was a sort of game a person had to learn. You bold flirt, you; that's what you are—you little masher."

The words were not any which little Doo-oo had ever heard before, but the tone struck his sensitive ear as correct; and so he squirmed himself upright in his new friend's arms, cried out "Doo-oo," and pointed toward the bow of the ship to indicate his desire for movement.

Part of the influence which the baby directed upon his beautiful new friend was exerted through his mother, a young widow with hair and eyes like jet, and skin as dark as an Indian's—an intense little woman, who was as quick and vigorous in action as she was sparing with words. Noting her baby's admiration for Miss Bucknam, and seeing that she more and more frequently took him from his nurse, the little widow bent herself to be agreeable to her. It happened to follow that, from treating her with formal politeness, she came to prefer her company to that of any other woman on the ship.

On one day, Doo-oo's mother, Mrs. Knight by name, had been sitting in silence beside Miss Bucknam for an hour. Suddenly she turned and said, "My dear, would you mind coming down to my cabin with me? I want to say something that can't very well be said up here."

When they were both together and the cabin door was closed, Mrs. Knight startled the younger woman by remarking that she had taken an extreme fancy to her, and that she wondered whether it was not possible for them to live together.

"I have few relatives in England, and with those I have never got along very well. I have no friends there for whom I care much. I manage the two plantations in Ceylon which my husband left, and I spend eight months of every year there with my managers and servants. I live well in Ceylon and there is a tolerably large colony of very nice English people close to where I live. If I was more lively and talkative, I could entertain a great deal. That is a thing you could do very well while I looked on, for—though I like to have dinners and dances—I don't know how to carry them off. You say your father has met with reverses in his business in Hong-Kong and is too broken up to mend his fortunes. You are going to study painting in London—"

"Or be a nurse, perhaps," Miss Bucknam interposed.

"Or drudge along—for that's the truth, my dear; one means starving, and the other drudging. Well, why not cast your lot with me? Go back with me in the cold weather, accept a nice allowance, and share whatever I've got as well. Will you? Kiss me, and let that be 'yes.'"

Miss Bucknam's thoughts ran madly to and fro across her brain. She saw the widow's cheek held down and towards her for a kiss, and in the flurry of her thoughts she reached up, mechanically, and kissed her.

"No, no! I did not mean to kiss you," she cried out. "I take that back Mrs. Knight. It's too sudden, this awfully kind idea of yours. Let me think it over till—till Gibraltar."

"Quite right," said Mrs. Knight. "You are a girl of sense. I could not expect you to have been thinking of it—oh, a long time—as I have. I do things suddenly. I'm sudden, myself. Till Gib, then. And now let's go on deck and not speak another word all day."

At Port Said, a few of the winter dawdlers in Egypt came aboard. Among them were some common-place, elderly passengers, and two very interesting young persons. They were a young man and a young lady, who were alike in the possession of misplaced wealth. The young man had his in the shape of money. The girl's took the form of superabundant affection. Both were wasting their treasure and killing themselves at the game. He had been flinging his money away with both hands at Cairo, where he had met the young miss and made a violent, but wholly insincere, assault upon her heart. He wore stays, blacked his eyelashes and the edges of his eyelids, began each day with champagne at breakfast, and talked about his money as if he had enough to breathe and bathe in, if he chose to.

The young lady was the companion of her invalid mother, who spent most of the time in bed, while the daughter drifted where she would. She could not have been a day beyond eighteen, and gave the impression of being country-bred and from home for the first time. She came on board at the side of her mother, but her eyes were riveted upon Harold Baddington—the fresco of a man in his frame of solid gold. He was still very attentive to her, and when the ship moved away from Port Said, and her mother had gone to her cabin, they sat together in the

stern of the *Rajestan*, behind the smoking room and out of sight of everyone; of everyone except the firm of Arthur & Co., for those young partners now hung about the stern and watched and whispered.

They afterward considered themselves well rewarded for their pains.

In the afternoon Harold Baddington was hurrying along the deck to get a rug and a book for the girl he had fascinated, when he saw Miss Bucknam standing by the ship's rail amidships. She glanced at him in a way that she had not done, I think, even once before during the voyage; in a peculiar way; a way you could not even mention in a court of law under the rules governing evidence; and yet, it was a way which might easily produce the most important episode in human life. The difference between it and the ordinary glance of a woman was as great as that—and yet it was so slight a difference as to be all but indescribable. Indeed, she might have been barely conscious of her own act until she saw its effect upon him, for he stopped, in spite of his hurry and lounged up to the rail beside her. In five minutes he had told her something of his great wealth, and she was encouraging his mood with close attention and a certain familiar and free line of comment and by-play of words, of which she proved herself an easy mistress.

Two hours later, the little semi-motherless maiden who had sent him for her book and rug was posted thirty yards further along the deck beside the same rail, looking now into the sea and now at the merry couple, with a face so troubled that it could scarcely be believed to be the same that she had carried, radiant and glorious, only a short time before.

Were the ship cinematographed all the way to Gibraltar, that same scene would be repeated uninterruptedly to the end. There would be variations, but only of a minor sort. Often Harold Baddington and Miss Bucknam sat in their chairs close together and only the backs of their heads visible, at the far end of the little frequented hurricane deck. Then the languishing country maid sat at the near end with her book closed on her lap, stealing glances in their direction. Often, also, the picturesque pair stood in the stern or at the rail, played at quilts together, or sat side by side where the people were thickest on the main deck. He was forever talking in a low tone; she was as constantly laughing, a trifle loudly. And always, like the Death's head at a Roman feast, or a grim cartoon by Doré at the end of a chapter, the country miss lurked near—misery personified, daily growing more haggard—a spectacle to waken pity in a Baryé bronze.

Miss Bucknam still pursued her share of the sports competitions, took her part in the concerts and dances, and in every way kept up her position as one of the charter members, so to speak, of the lively, club-like company. Something different, however, might have been noticed in her manner toward the invalid missionary. She invited less good counseling, and spoke of herself a faint little bit more unworthily. Her visits, too, were fewer and shorter.

"You've only to follow your best impulses," the invalid said one day, when she was at her favorite pastime of planning the other young woman's future: "pursue your acquaintances on deck, take up music or painting in London, for which you are inclined, and keep in touch with these new friends. Then if anything goes amiss or you need help, come to me, won't you, dear, at the address I have given you, our missionary headquarters? I will see to it that you get the money to come to me wherever I may be."

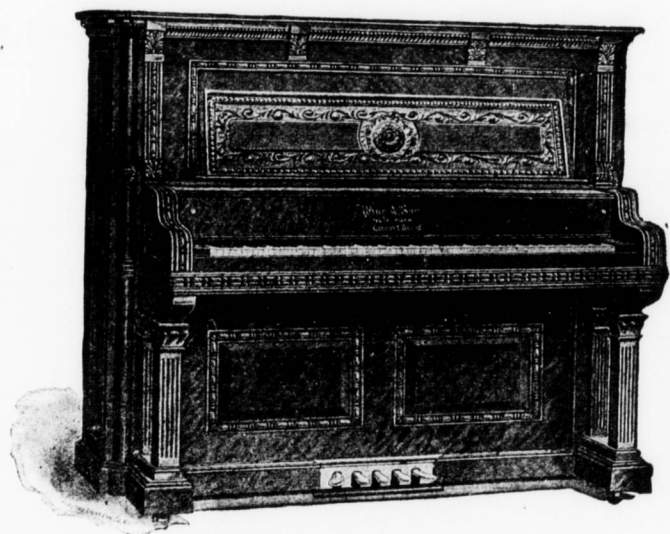
"Ah," said Miss Bucknam, with something too suggestive of a softened snarl, "you don't understand. Those women on deck are like Freemasons. Some day they will ask me for their password—my pedigree, I mean—or they'll get suspicious, and then it'll all have been for nothing. I tell you, it's no use. After we leave this ship it will be best that you don't think any more about me."

She even made an effort to change her relation toward Mrs. Knight. One day, after a long tête-à-tête with Baddington, she looked all over the deck for that lady. When she found her, she told her that she really did not think it was right for her to accept her offer of a home. She was going on with a flood of argument, for the delivery of which she had evidently prepared herself, but Mrs. Knight stopped her.

"We weren't to speak of that till we got to 'Gib,'" she said, "I will not believe you could disappoint me, even then, but until we get to 'Gib,' think it over earnestly and don't let us talk."

And now the ship was nearing Gibraltar. The rock rose ahead in a shape that is never shown in pictures, and a fleet of black warships nestled beside it.

(To be continued)



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