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THE BELLE OF THE RAJESTAN

BY JULIAN RALPH

(Continued from January Number.)

"You are so full of life and spirits," the missionary said to her one day. "Why do you come away from all the amusements on deck to weary yourself with me?"

"I don't know," Miss Bucknam replied. "I think it's because you need some one—no, I won't deceive you. I do it for my own selfish reasons. I may be sick myself some day, and, maybe, what I do for you will come back to me when I need it."

"You're like an angel to me," the sick woman murmured.

The compliment fell like a blow. Miss Bucknam shrank back as if to ward it off. "Don't talk crazy," she said.

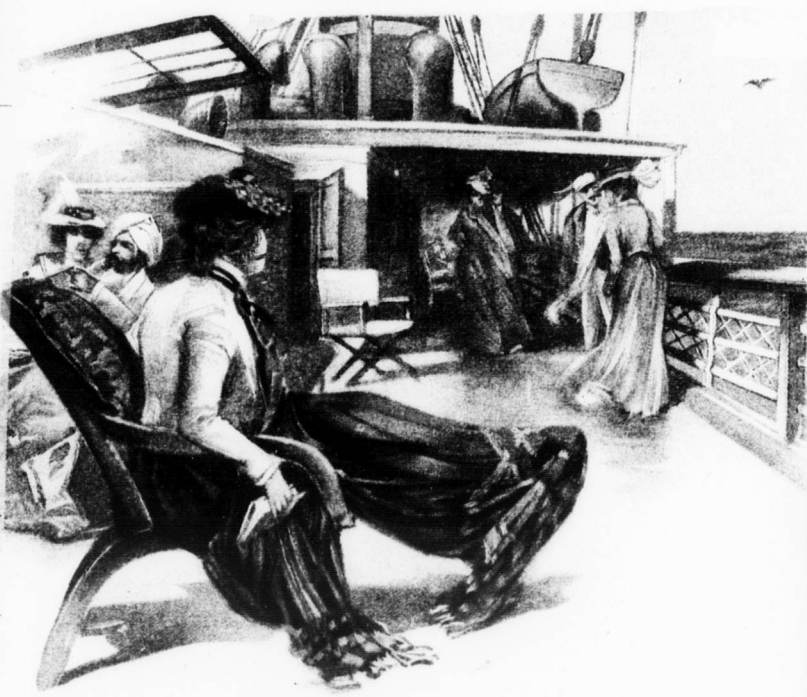
In this sick-chamber the beautiful girl grew to be confidential, to breathe out her heart, to regard the patient as a confessor, as one so much closer to death than to life that confidences were not stayed by caution, as they would have been with another to hear them.

"You are being blessed," said the missionary, in her feeble, yet infinitely tender voice. "Think of your good fortune! You have been taken in as a friend by the nicest people. You have gained that which would have seemed impossible a month ago. You have got the one thing needed; for the lack of such a standing—and the hopelessness of

Lascars in the crew; and this strength was needed, for little Doo-oo wriggled, leaped, squirmed and flung himself about in her arms as long as he was awake. He knew nearly everybody on board, liked everyone and everything immensely, and called every person and object by the same name—"Doo-oo"—which name, in turn, everyone called him.

He dubbed the stern and grizzled Captain "Doo-oo," and stopped him to receive a salaam and to make himself amusing but, just as the great man would be about to exhibit his glorious gold watch, the baby would catch sight of the chiefest and nastiest of the Lascars and show his preference for him by crying out "Doo-oo" and straining away from the Captain to be carried to this greater favorite. The Captain had little else worthy of Doo-oo's regard but the gold lace in his cap and sleeves, but the mate of the Lascars was a very wonderful personage indeed, who carried a silver whistle which he was in the habit of blowing very shrilly to make the other disreputable black bundles in dirty cotton run about the deck.

Miss Bucknam was the only woman who walked on the deck before breakfast, and, as little Doo-oo was one of the many gentlemen who took the air at the same time, these two soon became known to one another.



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ever gaining it—keeps too many others as they are." Here a wasted hand crept out from under the bed-clothing and felt its way to Miss Bucknam's, grasping it, smoothing it, and fondling it. "Promise me, dear, you'll do as I say; won't you?"

Miss Bucknam dropped on her knees by the side of the bunk so that she could lean over the kindly missionary and assure her of her gratitude by further whispered confidences.

And now the picturesque routine of life aboard a P. & O. steamer was in full swing. The constant succession of sports and pastimes, the pleasant footing of the passengers in their near approach to democracy, the made-to-order weather, the oil-smooth seas—all that renders the trip to or from India during more than half the year the pleasantest known to those who travel was being enjoyed on this ship. Miss Bucknam was greatly enjoying it.

Little Doo-oo, an infant passenger, was destined to affect her life more than she or any one else would have believed possible. Little Doo-oo was not merely a baby. He was a paragon. He was one of the few babies in the whole world who was as good as his mother thought him. He was a big, chubby lump of infant manhood, with flaxen hair and sky-blue eyes, a sensitive, humorous mouth that worked a dimple in and out of each of his pudgy cheeks.

During the greater part of each day he inhabited the arms of a strapping black nurse. She possessed the strength of any two, perhaps of any three, of the grimy

other. Miss Bucknam was slow in getting acquainted, because she did not know how to talk to a baby or what to do with one. She made a few attempts to interest the child, but felt so awkward and ignorant that she would have withdrawn from the experience except for little Doo-oo, who took a prodigious liking to her. He screamed her name, "Doo-oo," at her from amidships when he saw her in the stern. He seemed never to miss seeing her—almost behind and through the deck-houses when they got between him and this object of his most violent and masterful flirtation.

"Salaam to the mem-sahib," said the kindly and gentle-spoken ayah, as she ran to Miss Bucknam with a pit-pat of her bare feet and a jingle of her ankle-loads of silver bands and bangles; "salaam to her, salaam; so—that very good. Now, Missy, take him in your arms; he like you very much."

"I'm afraid I'd spill him," Miss Bucknam said. "I haven't ever handled a baby, you might say, since I was one myself. I never had one in my arms."

"Doo-oo! Doo-oo!" the little gentleman chirped, as he strained with both arms toward her in his impatience to have this inconsequential dialogue end.

And then a miracle came to pass; for Miss Bucknam took him in her arms and, with the action, found that she knew as well how to handle a baby as if she had been the mother of six. After all, it was nothing but the woman in her—this wonderful miracle.

"You little loafer," she said, as she cud-

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