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STORIES OF THE SEA

By EDWARD JENKINS, M.P.

Author of "Little Hodge," "Lord Bantam," "Ginx's Baby," &c.

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

Sir Benjamin was delighted. They proceeded aft. Lord Pendlebury said a few polite words to Lady Peakman about the weather, slyly squinting meanwhile into the purser's cabin at its occupant, who was listening intently to all that took place; and then, after exchanging a few commonplace remarks with Araminta, the peer lifted his hat, and coolly walking back again, resumed his position opposite little Mrs. McGowkie, who became more lively and pretty than ever. Shrewd Sandy McGowkie had not been an apprentice at Lewis and Allonby's for nothing. He had watched the whole performance with a sardonic interest and a grim sense of humour, which produced curious results on his steady face.

Araminta pouted and pretended to sleep. Lady Peakman tossed her head and turned her back. Sir Benjamin's study of Mr. William Black's charming book assumed an intensity which the great novelist would have been pained to witness, especially if he had noticed that not a page was turned over for half-an-hour. After lunch, however, the peer, with commanding coolness, seized upon the knight stool, conning with the air of an amateur admirer the graceful figure and pretty dress of Miss Araminta, made himself immensely at home. The facile knight lent himself agreeably to this whim, his lady endeavoured, with indifferent success, to run a delicate line between hauteur and amiability. She was too fond of governing to endure with equanimity a neat and successful rebuff. But little Araminta prattled away in the best Windsor-school style, and by-and-by, when Lord Pendlebury gravely asked the permission of Lady Peakman to give her daughter a promenade, it was very solacing to the old lady to watch the lithe damsel leaning on the steady arm of the rich and brilliant young peer.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ding-Dong, &c. Once more that dinner bell with its "clang and clash and roar!' The bright cool weather had quickened the blood and sharpened the appetites of the saloon passengers, and with very few exceptions they showed up at the table. There was the captain, rosy and smiling, fresh from his shaving-glass, in his blue jacket and gilt buttons, every inch a sailor and a man. He was chatting with his friends the McGowkies. Sandy had been crossing to and fro for ten years, and Captain Windlass and he always "foregathered" with mutual good-will. Mr. Carpmael, a trifle sea-green perhaps about the cheeks, and his wife were at the table. Next to them there had seated herself a tall lady, who, though past the prime of life, still showed traces of a period when she must have figured as handsome. Her fine cap and black lace shawl, which dropped negligently off her shoulders, vindicated her regard for the conventional custom of dressing for dinner.

Lady Peakman coming in, as usual, late, with considerable fuss, exchanged glances with this lady, and saw in a moment that she had to do with a person probably as skilled as herself in the ways of society. Araminta's dress showed that her maid has been put to some trouble in preparing her for action. The knight in his black frock coat asserted the eminent dignity of the family. Behind his chair the new valet silently stationed himself.

"Oh, I thought," said Lady Peakman to the captain, as she raised her glasses and swept the table with her glance she had reached the point where Lord Pendlebury — who, she observed in a moment, still retained his grey tweed coat — was sitting, "I thought, captain, that you would have been able to arrange that Lord Pendlebury should join our party at the head of the table."

"I should have been very happy," said the captain, with the indifference of a matter-of-fact man who was master of his ship, "to find Lord Pendlebury a place somewhere up here, had he applied to me in time. But he selected his own seat."

"Oh, I know. He came on board late," said her ladyship. And turning her eyes inquiringly across the table, she added, with a curious mixture of graciousness and insolence, "Perhaps Mr. McGowkie could——"

"Na!' said Sandy McGowkie, drily, interrupting her. "We're no to move, my Lady Peakman, noo we're settled down in these seats. His lordship may just shift for himsel'."

"The impertinent puppy," said Lady Peakman to himself. "And after his lordship has been so condescending to him."

The lady opposite McGowkie could hardly repress a smile, which the knight caught and resented. Lady Peakman had not been so fortunate.

"Oh," she said, turning deliberately towards the stranger, "there he is a lady who, I believe, has no companion. Do you think, madam, that it might be possible to arrange that Lord Pendlebury—a friend of ours — who is at the foot of the table, might be allowed to join us by making an exchange of seats with you?"

"Lord Pendlebury, madam," said the lady, quietly raising a single eye-glass and looking at the peer, "is an old friend of ours—I mean, of mine —and I can scarcely conceive that he would consent to the arrangement you propose."

"The table must stand as it is arranged," said the captain, bluntly, and he was dashed in Lady Peakman's good graces for ever.

The knight smiled all the time, and bowed with affected approval upon McGowkie and his vis-a-vis, as they made their remarks. With the greatest ease he instantly entered into conversation with the strange lady about the young peer. Her accent gave him a hint, which he improved.

"He was a short time in Ireland, I think?" said he, deferentially.

The experienced dame gave a sly side-glance at Lady Peakman, on this incautious admission by her husband that the "friendship" with the young lord was not of sufficient intimacy to have enabled them to follow his notorious movements.

"I knew him very well in Dublin," said the lady, "when he was an aide-de-camp to the Lord-Lieutenant. He was so clever, everybody liked him at the Castle."

Sandy McGowkie's under jaw was a study. Mistress McGowkie looked frightened. This was a battle with great guns, and she knew who she thought had won. Mr. Carpmael, with lawyer-like alacritry, turned the conversation, out of which Lord Pendlebury was allowed to drop "like a hot potato."

Lady Peakman had used her scented handkerchief very vigorously, and then applied herself to the soup. As she laid down the spoon, her eye fell on the face of the knight's valet, who stood sedately behind his chair. He was looking straight at her. Their eyes therefore met. A curious change passed over his face swiftly, like a flash of lightning.

"Good Lord!" cried Lady Peakman, and she fainted away.

In an instant there was immense commotion. The valet darted round the table and supported his lady. Araminta screamed. Everybody jimped up. Little Mistress McGowkie was the only one who retained her presence of mind. She clapped a bottle of smelling salts to her ladyship's nose, and dashed a glass of water in her face. But it was not a fit which would yield to those remedies. Lady Peakman was carried by the valet and captain into her cabin, the knight following and wringing his hands. The doctor, who had, on taking a glance at her, instantly run for his lancet, now ordered the cabin to be cleared.

Later on it was reported in the ship that Lady Peakman had had a slight fit, brought on by eating too rapidly when in a state of excessive weakness. Two persons were ceaseless in their inquiries and in their offers of help, namely, Mrs. McGowkie and the lady who sat next to Mrs. Carpmael. This lady's maid, an older and more experienced person than either Maria or Miss Ringdove, was installed for a time in charge of the invalid. She gave as the name of her mistress, Mrs. Belldoran.

One person on board had not yet taken advantage of the finer weather to leave his quarters. The door of the captain's cabin, surrounded as we have seen by aristocratic and pretty loungers, remained closed, save when Nick Donovan, the steady-going Irish servant of its tenant, now and then entered to wait upon his master. Mr. Corcoran, for he must now be known by his correct name, was not merely kept in hiding by a pusillanimous sham, but his terror at the idea of another meeting—even under more dignified conditions—with his divorced lady was more than he could overcome. On her part, as we have seen, there appeared to be no such mauvaise honte. She had gone to dinner ready to face any emergency. When the excitement created by Lady Peakman's illness had subsided, and people, finding the patient did not mean immediately to die, resumed their places, Mrs. Belldoran made herself agreeable to the company about her. Lord Pendlebury joined her as she was leaving the saloon, and a few words passed between them.

"Well, you have not forgotten me?" she said.

"O no, Mrs. Cor—— I mean—whew! I forgot! A thousand excuses. Forgive me. What shall I say?"

"Mrs. Belldoran."

"Your family name. Of course I have not forgotten you. What a delightful place that Castle was!—But what changes!—How terrible all this is! Forgive me, I cannot help alluding to it."

"Oh!" said the lady, touching her eyes with her pocket-handkerchief. "What I have suffered! And now, what do you think? Come into my cabin a moment, where no one can hear us, and let me tell you. You swear you will never utter a word of this? Well. I met in London a very estimable and gentlemanly person—a Mr. Freemantle —cousin, you know, of the Freemantles of Castle Doynton. He is permanent financial secretary, or auditor-general, or something like that, in the Canadian Government. And, my dear Lord Pendlebury, do you know I agreed to marry him at the expiration of a year from the—the—you know. I cannot bear to mention the word. The year is just up, and I thought it would be better to go out and marry him quietly in Montreal, instead of setting every one's tongue a going here. Well now of all the most perverse and terrible accidents in the world—He is on board. Ay! and in the very next cabin. I heard his voice. I have seen him' —Mrs. Belldoran covered her eyes with her handkerchief as if to shut out the terrible vision—"seen him under the most absurd circumstances, which I won't describe to you." Then she began to cry.

"And do you know," she continued, sobbing, "the poor creature! my maid tells me they mistook him for a murderer, and put him in irons. I heard them struggling with him. O, dear, O dear! was there ever anything more dreadful and more awkward!"

"Pray be calm!" cried Lord Pendlebury, who was distressed at the feeling she showed. He bit his lips, for he knew not what else to say, The chance of a re-establishment was gone, for here was the lady en route to be married.

"You may at least be friends again," he said to himself, half thinking aloud.

"No," she said, beating her breast. "No, never! I sat in court. I heard the evidence. Up to that time, although I was dreadfully angry with him, for he is a most foolish and impracticable fellow, I never really in my heart believed the worst about him. But the evidence of that Homburg waiter! There was no getting over that you know."

"Mrs. Corcoran—there — please forgive me, but I can call you nothing else—that evidence was not true," said Lord Pendlebury, surprised at his own dogmatism. He had nothing but Corcoran's word for it.

"Who says so?" said the lady, vehemently.

"I have seen him in the next cabin. He told me the whole story. He assured me on his honour as a man and a Christian that there was not a word of truth in that evidence, though he admits he behaved stupidity and unadvisedly."

"Heaven help me!" cried Mrs. Belldoran, throwing herself down and weeping bitterly. If I could only believe it! I have never had a happy hour since this horrible thing happened. Pray leave me," she added, holding up her hand and motioning him away.

The young peer, greatly moved, walked out on the now darkened deck, and paced up and down a full hour before he could recover his self-command.

CHAPTER IX.

All night long Lady Peakman lay in her berth, The curtain was drawn, to shade from her eyes the light, which by the captain's permission had been left burning. Araminta and her maid had been removed to an empty cabin, and her ladyship's abigail occupied the other cabin alone. Towards night the wind, which as the gale moderated had gone round with the sun, freshened up a little, and the comparative serenity of the day was succeeded by a slight rolling motion, which was not however unpleasant. To and fro rocked Lady Peakman, to and fro through the draggling hours; listening to the irritating crack-crack of the woodwork as it started here and started there; to the heavy step of the watch tramping to and for to heave the log or haul tight a brace; to the jingling of the glasses in the rack over her head; to the melancholy sough and boom of the wind and ocean, that strangely-mingled sound which impresses such a feeling of intense mystery and powerlessness on a lonely soul at sea.

And just now Lady Peakman was intolerably alone—painfully isolated in her own sorrow. For a great and terrible sorrow had stricken her.

"Oh," she said to herself, "if I were only ashore! If I were not shut up in this floating den. It is too horrible!"

She was a woman of courage, of experience, of resource, but she was completely paralyzed. At times she burst into fits of weeping.

Had Maria been awake, she could have heard the sobs, and the low moans between them, which, strong as her mistress was, and desperately as she strove to stifle them, would have way. What was it that went and came with its gentle and its tempestuous changes through the soul of this woman—this woman so hard to herself, so haughty, so domineering, so relentless to others! Something that had happened that day had awakened old, old memories, long resolutely buried. The resurrectionist brings up dead bodies: but she recalled the buried past to life, to a vivid and an agonising reality. Her past! How much of it had she willingly entombed! How much of it would she ever willingly disinter? She thought of Mr. Peakman, who had met her at a table-d'hote at Baden; had taken her for what she passed as—a widow with a modest allowance; had been struck by her cleverness and adaptability; had selected her as he selected his agents and clerks, and for somewhat similar reasons, to be his wife; had satisfied himself that her reverend father, the vicar of a small Yorkshire parish, and his wife were dead, which cut him free of "embarrassing relationships;" and so having afterwards found her in every way a clever, economical, indefatigable, ambitious wife, had sought to know no more. He learned that she had suffered a great deal from and through her former husband, an English adventurer, who had been made, on some absurd ground, an Italian count. All she possessed was £200 a year, which the man had settled on her at her marriage, yet upon this she had been managing to live in continental hotels. She was called upon for no confession—she gave none. She made up her mind to marry this Canadian merchant, who was comfortably off, a man of agreeable address, and, as she could discern, with a keen business talent. She read him thoroughly. She knew what she could do with him. And she had done much. He leant on her, he looked up to her; he affected to be master, and he was her slave. Or, rather, no. They were thoroughly one. Either of them would have lain down to make a bridge for the other to step over. She had borne him two sons, but they were dead. This daughter was the one thing which kept alive their flagging, almost satiated ambition. She must be educated as only noblemen's children are educated, and by her marriage Lady Peakman had determined that she should end her days as the mother-in-law of a peer. They had visited England in the summer, expressly to take Araminta home, in order that she might first trot over the course of provincial society. Besides, there were not seldom stray aristocrats in Canada. Away from the surroundings of the bewildering society of London, not a few of these wandering first-class meteors had been caught by provincial maidens. The party were now travelling to spend their Christmas at their splendid mansion near Quebec. The truth was, Lady Peakman had heard of Lord Pendlebury's intention to visit Canada, to pass the winter with the Governor-General. She had taken the pains to discover that he sailed in the Kamschatkan, and on the twelfth of December, and had arranged her plans accordingly.

To Be Continued.

THIS SEASON'S WRAPS.

Capes or jackets, long circulars or ulsters, close or loose, half-fitted or entirely free—all fashionable, all beautiful, all made in colors and materials for old and young, short, tall, stout or slim, the great difficulty will be choosing from among their embarrassment of riches in tint, quality and design.

Coats and capes are growing longer. However smart, the short cape and jacket must now be considered passe. The new capes, with their rounded fronts, slope gradually off to some depth at the back, according to the wearer's height. A short woman will notice that a comparatively short cape is more becoming, while tall, graceful figures affect the style that sweeps down almost to the hem at the back of the skirt.

Coats are to be worn very long and are cut away in front after the fashion of the new cape. Most of the coats and capes are fashioned with an attached flounce of the goods, and many of the former have as many as three flounces.

Introduced for the first time this season is the very long circular wrap, variously shaped, but an approved form of which is in two pieces for the front and one, a shaped gore, for the back. The fronts lap slightly to about bust depth, and from there spread gracefully back toward the lower edge. The wrap may be finished simply with rows of machine stitching or may have a circular shaped ruffle all around.

Another long cape has a shaped flounce of very scant fullness, joined with a stitched strap. This is quite narrow at the neck, widening gradually toward the ground, and fully 14 inches all around the lower edge. The fronts flare but slightly, the cape practically covering the entire gown. A double collarette cape with a flaring gored collar is braided in the upper seciton and outlined with Persian lamb. The cape is of castor cloth.

An innovation, welcome to women of good figure, is the new redingote, a pleasing example of which is of bright blue cloth, with the high collar and deep reveres of otter fur. The redingote has a seamed, fitted back, with a deep flounce around the lower edge, this latter running narrower toward the front and passing up the closing edge without fullness. Very large cut-glass buttons are used in closing, and the sleeves are of the close-cut style.

Another redingote is fitted in the back and hangs perfectly straight in in front. There is no flounce, the edges being finished in narrow mink fur and folds of satin. A lace jabot depends from each side of the collar.

OFFICERS' SWORDS.

A writer in the London Daily Mail says—I think it only right to give you a few details of the severe tests to which swords are put before our officers ever see them. The tests are of far greater severity than the strongest arm in the British army could subject them to. Fancy a 400-pound blow on that dervish's head, delivered promptly. Why, it would have cut him in two, armour or no armour. A "Wilkinson sword" is given a 400-pound blow on both the front and back edges, and a 200-pound blow on both flat sides. Next it is given a very severe bending both ways, and driven point on through an eighth of an inch of sheet steel. Any blade that will not stand any one of the above tests is thrown away, and I can assure you they make no bones about it either.

ANXIETY REGARDING THE WEST INDIES.

Failur to Secure The Abolition of Bounties — Expedients Suggested By Mr. Chamberlain—Grants for the Establishment of Sugar Factories in Three of the Islands.

The seriousness of the situation in the British West Indies, due to the decline of the chief industry, the production of sugar, can scarcely be exaggerated. The cause of the decline is the impossibility of successful competition in the British market with the beet-root sugar of Europe, the growers of which, receiving a government bounty, can easily undersell the cane sugar of the West Indies. To find a remedy for this condition, the British government, some time ago, appointed a commission of inquiry, which, after thorough investigation, made three suggestions, the adoption of any one of which, it was believed, would tend to restore prosperity to the islands. One of these was a grant from the imperial treasury for the encouragement of other industries as substitutes for cane-growing, another the imposition of countervailing duties on the bounty-aided sugar of Europe, and the third diplomatic negotiations to induce European governments to abolish the bounty system. As to the first suggestion, though Jamaica could perhaps adopt other industries with profit, the change would necessarily be slow, while as to Barbadoes, Antigua and other islands, it is a question whether any other crop than cane would meet the exigencies of the case.

Again, no British government would ever consent to impose duties on foreign sugar equal to the bounties paid on them, thus taxing British consumers for the benefit of the West Indies, in the certainty that a similar demand would be made by the wheat growers of the United Kingdom against foreign competition. Lastly, attempt to secure the abolition of bounties has failed, the Brussels conference, called to consider the question, having come to nothing, owing to the refusal of Russia and France to accept the proposals. Other expedients suggested by Mr. Chamberlain, British Secretary for the Colonies, at the last session of Parliament, can hardly be regarded as other than makeshifts, intended only to give temporary relief to a situation the sole remedy for which is the revival of the cane sugar industry. These are grants from the imperial exchequer, in addition to the $660,000 previously voted for the relief of the colonies, for the establishment of model sugar factories in three of the islands, for improved communication between the West Indies and the British, Canadian, and United States markets, and the establishment of an agricultural and botanical department for the islands. The latter proposal only repeats in another form the suggestion of the West Indian Commission for the adoption of other industries, the objections to which have been stated; while it is difficult to discover the utility of better communication unless sugar can be exported at a profit, or how improved machinery could reduce the cost of production sufficiently to offset the bounties, which can be increased at any time.

ANNEXATION TO U. S., THOUGHT OF.

That the proposals are only makeshifts was recognized by the planters in their recent conference in Barbadoes, who, while expressing appreciation of the imperial grants proposed, saw in them only palliatives for the ruin which must, under existing conditions, inevitably overtake the islands. In the view of many of them the only solution of the problem confronting them lies in securing entrance to the United States sugar market on the same terms as Hawaii and Porto Rico, that is, by annexation to this country, and they are, therefore, in large numbers joining the secession movement started in Jamaica sometime ago.

Contrary to expectation, the general election in the Cape Colony, in August last, resulted in the defeat of the Progressive party led by Mr. Cecil Rhodes, by the Afrikander Bund, though by a majority of only three or four votes in Parliament. The majority has, however, proved large enough to defeat the Spriggs government controlled by Mr. Rhodes, on a motion of want of confidence, and to replace it by one headed by Mr. W. P. Schreiner, who, though often called a radical, really represents the moderate element in the Bund. It may be remarked that the fundamental doctrine of the Afrikander Bund, which was started soon after the Transvaal war, is that the first duty of a South African is to his own country, and that it should be ruled in accord with local interests, not merely in the interests of Great Britain. Naturally advocacy of this doctrine has given the Progressives, whose cry is loyalty to the British connection, opportunity to charge the Bund with desire for separation and other heresies, though its loyalty is unquestionable, the only wish of the majority being to see South Africa assume toward the Empire the position occupied by Canada.

UNION OF SOME KIND INEVITABLE.

Indeed, the British connection, which it was announced, would be the leading issue in the recent electoral canvass, was scarcely raised, the chief question, and that leading to the defeat of the Progressives, being the opening up of Rhodesia and the adjacent territories. As in Rhodesia, Mr. Rhodes bears undisputed sway, this meant the speedy annexation of that territory to Cape Colony, and with it the addition of its liabilities to the debt of the latter colony, now amounting to more than $140,000,000, while the white population by whom it is mainly to be borne, numbers only 450,000. It was the opposition in the colony to a proposal that would make Cape Colony, and later, the South African federation, liable for the debts of Rhodesia, not hostility to a South African union under Great Britain, that led to the defeat of the Rhodes party. It is, indeed, coming to be recognized, both in the British colonies and the independent Dutch States, that union of some sort is inevitable, though there is yet no general agreement as to its form and character, the Boers favoring a republican federal union, and many of the British a fusion and imperial federation. Judging from the Cape election, the obstacles to union are chiefly financial, the states and colonies having small debts being unwilling to lose their independence and have their financial burdens increased at the same time, while Cape Colony, though ready to share its own debt with the other states, is not ready to have that debt increased by the annexation of Rhodesia.

And you wouldn't begin a journey on Friday? Not I. I can't understand how you can have any faith in such a silly superstition. No superstition about it, Saturday's payday.

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