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STORIES OF THE SEA

By EDWARD JENKINS, M.P.

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

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

But all her pretty designs, all those bright mysterious hopes that seem with the death of nature to grow livelier in men's hearts under the blessed influences of the coming Christmas time were chilled and killed at the instant when Lady Peakman's eyes met those of Mr. Stillwater.

Under all his disguises she recognised who that man was. She had been simply startled by the first glance at him on deck. But she had persuaded herself that there must be some mistake. The horrible red hair and whiskers, the tinted eyebrows, the smooth-shaven face, these were all strange to her. The nose was pinched, there were crows' feet from the corners of the eyes. The brows had become knotted and ferocious. The lips were withered and drawn. But those eyes, there was no mistaking them, when they had opened fully on hers—when they came out as it were from their cunning hiding-places under the deep brows, and showed themselves in all their deadly brilliancy. He was alive, that she thought had been dead, and he brought with him from the dead all that she thought had been buried with him—the shame, the sin, the sorrows, the hideous incidents of their so-called "married life.'

She was in an agony.

Latterly religion had been something more than a mere fashion to her. As her dresses increased in girth and her face became a more difficult problem for her lady's maid, the conviction that there was another world began to weigh upon her. The discovery of the loss of physical grace is very often the first impulsion towards the grace that is heavenly. She found a pleasure in Gregorian music, in a sentimental, well-tailored, well-millinered, well upholstered, well-embossed service. And in the anguish of this night she strove to pray —Let pity wait without during those solemn mysteries.

At length she felt an irresistible impulse. Her brain was fevered. It seemed on fire. She told herself that the bold course was the best. She would go now, and see this man. She did not know where he was, nor had she determined what to do—but no matter. She must move. She could not lie there any longer.

Rising from the berth—staggering from weakness and the ship's motion —she threw around her a handsome flannel robe, that lay there ready for use. She turned to the door. But at the instant—it opened of itself slowly, softly, and a figure with the rapidity of a snake glided in, and, closing it, stood before her. It was he.

It was he, as she had seen him long years ago, only aged by time and crime, and shorn of his trim moustache and gay imperial. His black hair, parted in the middle, waved above his forehead. His whiskers were dark as before.

When he saw her up and dressed, a smile transiently stirred his features and disappeared, as a sickly gleam of sunlight fitfully darts along the black face of a cloud and leaves it all gloom again.

She did not utter a word. She stood there, struggling to be mistress of herself, to call back the power that once she had of half holding this man at bay. But she was not able to recover it. She staggered, and sank upon the end of the sofa, as far away from him as possible, and hid his face from her sight with both hands. There cowering, she spoke at him, but not to him.

"What do you want? Where have you come from?"

"Silence!" he said through his teeth.

"First," he whispered, "I lock the door.

"Second, if you speak above your breath again, neither of us leaves this cabin alive.

"Third, don't be a fool, don't faint, don't jib, don't try any of your damned tricks. Answer my questions. I know all about you. I spotted you yesterday morning. You are a clever woman. The cleverest woman I ever saw. I never admired, you as I do now."

She shuddered.

"If I had had your steadiness of purpose, your devilish ingenuity, and your self-control, by —— I don't know what I might not have been."

She kept her face covered, her shoulder turned; but now, in the desperate emergency, she was growing cooler, as he became more excited. Her old genius, a wicked one, was coming back. Could she outwit this villain?"

"You thought I was dead," he went on. "It suited my game to be dead for awhile. I was married again, like you, to a South American woman, and I had an account of my death put into Galignani. You saw it no doubt.—I'm in luck,' he said bitterly. "I came on board this ship a runaway and a pauper, not knowing that I should find the means of a handsome independence!"

"Well, what is it you want?" she said. "Money, of course."

"Not so loud, woman, do you hear?" He clicked the lock of a pistol.

"You fool,' she said, rising suddenly and facing him, with all the old fire in her eyes. "Shoot me now, if you dare! Don't I know, you wretched coward, that you love that cursed life of yours too well to risk it for good or evil?"

She had gained a great deal in moral force and dignity during the years that had separated her from him, and it told on his low dog's spirit with astonishing effect. His eye fell, and the pistol lay listless in his hand.

"Are you going to fire?" she said, pursuing her advantage. It was a desperate game. "Put up the pistol, or I shall call out," she added. He slipped it into his pocket, giving her at the same time a glance of terrible ferocity.

"There are quieter ways of doing it, madam," he said, with a cool sneer that made her shudder.

"Come," she said, sitting down, and looking away from him again. "Tell me what it is you want? What do you wish me to do?"

"Exactly," he said. "Let us come to business. Your so-called husband is a millionaire?"

"He is pretty well off."

"He can afford to pay handsomely, at all events, to save himself from a blasted name. That girl is his daughter, do you say?"

He said this with a malicious emphasis.

She turned and looked him straight in the face.

"She is his daughter." She spoke a little warmly.

"Hush! Let us arrange the matter quietly. I knew you were a woman of business, and I have considered what is the least I can manage to live upon and hold my tongue. Have you any money of your own?"

"Go on I shall answer no questions."

"All right. You will have to tell him then. I must have ten thousand pounds down, and fifteen hundred a year properly secured for the rest of my life."

"Is that all?" she said mockingly.

The man struggled hard against the to rush upon her and strangle her. ferocious impulse that was within him Then he said calmly, "I see I was a fool to come to you. I should have opened negotiations with him. I will go to him now. Excuse me for locking you in."

"Stay. I will undertake that you shall have your terms."

"Have you a jewel case?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me. No doubt it is well filled. It shall be security. If the money is paid within a week of our landing, you will get it back unopened."

She hesitated. "There are private letters in it."

"So much the better," quoth he. "You will want to get them back again Now, where is it?"

She pointed under her berth, where it was hidden away. He took it up.

"Now," he said, "I must be off. You will never see me again in this rig. I run a tremendous risk in taking it on. But I was anxious to make you sure of your man. There are five hundred pounds upon my head now. It is understood, we take no notice of each other. I shall do my best for the old governor, as he is going to be so good to me. When you have settled it with him, give me the tip how it is to be carried out. Good-night my dear!"

Lady Peakman did not hear him. Her face was buried in her hands. A severe reaction from the exciting effort she had made in this terrible interview had set in.

He slipped away like a guilty nightbird. Before stepping out from the narrow gangway between the cabins, he listened up and down the dark passage. At the instant eight bells struck, he heard the whistle of the boatswain calling out the watch. He glided along swiftly towards his cabin, which was as we have seen, amidships, just opposite the engines. He had not cleared the cabin passage, and still had to cross the lighted space by the main hatch, when he heard steps. A gang of sailors were getting out the hose to swill and swab the decks. Some of the stewards and galley-boys had also turned out, to begin the preparations for the day's life of the little floating town.

"I must make a run for it," he muttered to himself, as he darted across the lighted opening which lay between him and his berth. He rushed into the arms of a sailor who was coming along the passage way from the forecastle.

"Avast there, shipmate!" cried the man. "Where are you driving to?"

"Oh!" replied Mr. Stillwater, "I have been attending to old Peakman, and it's so precious cold, I was hurrying to get into my berth."

The sailor made way for him, and Mr. Stillwater, reaching his cabin, shut and secured the door. He was angry and flustered.

"To think that I should have met that cursed shipswab," he said. "And that I should have been such a fool as to tell him who I was."

CHAPTER X.

The morning of Tuesday broke dark and lowering. A chill came up out of the east with the sun and wind. The breeze was favourable, and the vessel dashed through the water, steadied by the sails which had been crowded on to aid the steam. Many passengers thronged the deck, not lounging about, but wrapped up in furs and woollens, taking vigorous exercise. The sea had changed its bright fresh hue of yesterday. It was now of a dull lead color. The wind and the light swell running in each other's teeth, the roughened waves lapped up in dingy hillocks, the peaks of which were broken by the breeze into crisp white combs of spray. Against the inky background of the sky the stormy-petrels darted about, and the white gulls, uttering joyous screams, wheeled round the stern of the steamer in powerful and graceful gyrations.

Lord Pendlebury, fresh from a good night's rest, the morning's douche from the hose, and a lazy breakfast in bed, having taken a few turns in the bracing air, knocked smartly at the door of the captain's cabin, and, upon a call from within, entered.

"Ha, Corcoran!" he said, speaking loud and cheerily, "are you never going to turn out? We shall have nothing but your body to land ashore, unless indeed you prefer a sea burial."

"The difficulty about that," replied Mr. Corcoran, "as the American said, is that your friends don't exactly know where to erect the gravestone. But," he added, sadly, "what matters it? What have I to live for? I should be content to let this voyage be my last."

"Oh, nonsense, man," cried the peer. "Life has compensation for everything with men who are busy and honest. You are getting dyspeptic in that berth. Turn out, and take some air. Do you know," he said, in a lower tone, "she's nothing like as bad as you are."

"Humph!" sighed Corcoran.

"She is not happy, either."

"Humph!" again said the Master in Chancery. "Serve her right! What is she doing on board here?"

"She is on her way to Canada, to get married," replied the young lord, with studied emphasis and deliberation.

"To get married!" shouted the Master, jumping up, at the imminent risk of sending his nightcapped head through the light poop-deck above it, while he threw his legs out over the side of his berth. "She going to get married?"

Lord Pendlebury, unable to contain himself, laughed immoderately. A faint echo came from the adjacent cabin.

"Ah! I see, you're joking!" cried Mr. Corcoran, beginning to draw in again.

"On my honor, it's true," replied the peer, recovering his gravity. "The happy substitute is to meet her at Portland, and they will be married before Christmas Day."

"Will they?" cried Mr. Corcoran, in a tone of thunder, as he slipped out of bed with extraordinary alacrity. "Give me my trousers!"

A silvery laugh again in the purser's cabin. Mr. Coccoran blushed and looked foolish.

"Stop!" said the young lord, highly delighted. "Remember, my dear Corcoran, whatever steps you propose to take, you have plenty of time. We are only five days out, and we shall be lucky indeed if we get in under seven more. Let me send you your servant, and then I shall be at your disposal."

In three-quarters of an hour the mysterious Mr. Fex appeared on deck, walking arm-in-arm with Lord Pendlebury.

The red-faced man of the dinner table was sitting in the smoking-room, exchanging vulgar confidences with some other people of his own sort. He had been relating a cock-and-bull story of the manner in which he had "taken down," the young peer, in a conversation at the foot of the table.

"There he is now!" he suddenly exclaimed, pointing with the stem of his pipe, "talking to that Mr. Fex who is in the captain's cabin. The first time the man has shown up since his arrest. What a lark that was! They say the man came aboard here under a false name, but I haven't been able to find out what his real one is. I believe old Peakman knows, but he is such a snob—you can never get anything out of him. He and that old duchess keep themselves as close as weasels."

"Is dere not some story about dis Lady Peakman?" said Mr. Weiss, a German tobacconist of Kingston. "Vas she not an actress before he married her?"

"O no!" replied the red-faced man. "Nothing so good as that. They said her husband was an Italian count, name of Stracchino."

"Stracchino!" cried the German, "A Prince of Milan, I suppose. Eh? Ha! Ha! It is a name that ought to smell —vot you call stink—at all events."

Mr. Weiss's joke was addressed to an audience to whom Gorgonzola and its magnificent flavor were alike unknown. But the red-faced man took the point, though he could not understand the joke.

"Well," he said, "if all they say is true, it did stink considerably in all the gambling-places in Europe. But Madame is clever. She never lets out anything, and it is so long ago, that inquiries are useless."

"Vell," said Mr. Weiss. "Vy vould you inquire? Is she not vell living now? and vy should you or I or any von else vant to trouble ze poor lady?"

Mr. Weiss, who was a man of some weight, sat puffing at his meerschaum, and his words, having a taste of honesty and good feeling in them, rather depressed the malicious energy of the red-faced man.

The topic was changed by Mr. Turton, the editor of a low Ottawa newspaper, returning from his first visit to the "old country," on what Americans call a "dead head" trip extracted from the owners of the Kamschatkan. He spoke in a horrible tone, which was neither Yankee, nor Irish, nor Scotch, but a successful compound of the most vulgar elements of all three.

"Well, sirr! Never mind the old lady. Though I'm of opinion that everybody's sins should be brought out square, and shown up, for the good of society in general, and of the folks themselves in particular." He puffed the smoke from under a scrubby moustache of a dirty clay color, and looked round on the assembled witenagemote of Canadian counter-jumpers. "But, lookee here! Has any one heard what they are doing to discover this murderer they say they have on board?"

No one had any news.

"Well, I've been doing a little detection on my own hook, down in the steerage—"

"And you have fonud de man!" said Mr. Weiss, with great gravity removing his pipe to utter the words.

"I didn't say so, sirr!" cried the other, annoyed. "But, if he is aboard—which I don't believe—he is among a troop of German gamblers I've spotted in the steerage."

The company laughed at Mr. Weiss, who went on puffing away, with perfectly steady features. Then deliberately removing his pipe, he said, "Den I do not give a cent for your discovery."

To Be Continued.

A MOORISH TEA PARTY.

The clink of the teacup is heard through the land these days, and the sale of brass kettles and silver tea balls goes merrily on. The samover, so popular for a couple of seasons, is hardly ever used now, and the round, fat teapot, with an apparently inexhaustible capacity for holding fragrant, flowery Pecan or orange pekoe, is again first favorite. Teacup parties are credited with devouring their friends as well as their macaroons and thin bread and butter, but one hears wisdom in great quantities around some tea tables. One woman, whose wide, innocent eyes have seen most countries, told about a Moorish tea party, between sips of Ceylon and lemon juice. She said that the Moors are the greatest of all tea drinkers, even greater than the Chinese or our Irish servant maids. To the Moor tea takes the place of all intoxicants, for the Moor is a Knight Templar of the most inexorable type. Moorish tea is made with as much pomp and ceremony as if a living sacrifice were offered up. Every one in the house squats on the floor; the head of the house near the teapot. Then the servant—who is always called either Absalom or Mohammed—brings in the boiling urn. The master rinses the teapot, puts in the tea, fills the pot with water, waits a few minutes and skims the frothy substance that rises to the surface, packs the precious teapot as full as possible, with freshly picked mint, and then, taking as much sugar as one would imagine would fill the teapot, pokes it into the mint-flavored concoction, lets it stand some minutes and then pours out a little of the weak, but highly-flavored tea and drinks it himself, to assure his guests that it is not poisoned. Then solemnly cups are filled for the visitors, and with the utmost pomp and many salaams handed round, to the men first, as in Morocco even foreign women do not count. Three cups is the usual allowance and one must swallow them somehow or run the risk of being considered both ill-bred and ungracious.

Tea gardens, where the precious plant is grown, are disappointing to the foreigner. The shurbs are low and scraggy, and neither the picking, sun drying nor packing process is picturesque.

THE QUEEN'S PAGODA AT OSBORNE

It is not generally known that at Osborne there is a garden cottage in the shape of a pagoda, where none may enter except Her Majesty. This cottage holds nothing but mementos of the late Prince Consort and relics of the Queen's youth, as well as the toys and games of all her children, many of which the Prince Consort made himself, for he was no mean carpenter. There are also here wonderful fishes caught by the Duke of Coburg in Canadian seas; birds and tigers, shot by the Prince of Wales while in India; a mummy case brought from Egypt and other precious curiosities that are dearly prized by the Queen, who visits this family museum every day while at Osborne and sits among the remains of her own and her children's youth.

ISLAND OF ELECTRICITY.

It is a well known fact that the cables which unite Europe with America are connected on the little island of Saint Pierre-Miquelon. The quantity of electricity circulating for this reason through the narrow strip of earth which composes the island, has resulted in overcharging the soil with electricity, and this superabundance of electrical fluid has given rise to a very strange experiment. By throwing an isolated wire three kilometres in length across the island, and then attaching it to a metal plate which is cast into the sea, it has been possible to intercept in its transit a message on its way from America to Europe, and vice versa, the overcharged electrical soil having turned the message out of its orignial path.

NUTRITION IN OYSTERS.

A quart of oysters contain, on the average, about the same quantity of nutritive substance as a quart of milk or a pound of very lean beef.

WORSE WEEDS THAN TOBACCO.

The Deadly Substitutes Which are Smoked in Rural England.

Tobacco is not the only weed that is smoked in Britain—not by a long way, says a writer in the English weekly. Answers. There is no need to go to the Far East to ferret out weird and poisonous smoking habits; they lie all around us.

In Somerset and the southwest counties a great many persons smoke a concoction called "sundew." It is not a new fad, but has been in use for three hundred years there. Sundew is a mixture of sun dried beet leaves, parsley and peppermint—a very little of the latter. It is not a very harmful mixture, though it conduces to considerable drowsiness, and is anything but good for the teeth. You may notice in the western counties a good many persons with browned or blackened teeth; it is the result of sundew smoking. The stuff is not pleasant to a stranger, for it is very hot and choky and takes a great deal of getting used to.

Sundew is often home made, and most of the country people are experts at making it. They set apart a week in July for the sundew harvest, and it is always dried and mixed by women. However, there are three regular sundew factories in Somerset, where bushels of the mixture are turned out. It can be bought for from two-pence to threepence per ounce, according to quality.

Going a little further north to Gloucestershire and Midwales, you will strike

A MUCH WORSE HABIT.

The people there — town and country alike — are much given to smoking "glissop." Glissop is a sort of dry mash of hemlock leaves — the young shoots that grow in spring — burdock and ground chick beans. This can also be bought at some shops, though most of it is home made. When bought it fetches fourpence an ounce. This stuff is smoked in short wooden pipes with very small bowls, and is really disastrous in its effects. Like sundew, it needs practice to get used to, but is much pleasanter to the palate than that compound. Its first effect on a smoker is loss of memory and this increases till the smoker, after six months of the habit, is quite unfitted for any profession that requires much thought. The eyesight soon becomes affected by constant and excessive indulgence in the habit, which takes hold of a man like morphomania and is almost incurable.

Even small children may be seen smoking glissop, though but for the shape of the pipe employed a stranger would not know that they were not smoking tobacco, unless he were very clone. The smell of smoke however, induces a tickling of the nostrils and a sort of giddiness, which is quite unmistakable.

Tobacco is far less injurious, even when indulged in to excess, than this poisonous compound. Although it is dearer than ordinary "shag" tobacco, the poorest people who are addicted to it always get it instead. They say they cannot taste or smell even the strongest tobacco any more than if it were mist.

Various good people of the districts, feeling distressed at the ill effects of the bad habit and

ALARMED AT ITS PREVALENCE,

have started regular crusades against it, holding meetings in the streets and trying to get habituals to sign a sort of pledge never to touch glissop again. It has a stronger hold than even drink, however.

But of all the poisonous compounds smoked in that country, "pennyleaf" takes the lead by a long head. It is another mixture — all these ghastly stuffs are mixtures—and is chiefly composed of marigold leaf, dock and a venomous plant called "Durham gloss," that grows in damp places in woods. This compound is smoked in short clays, and a confirmed smoker will get through a couple of ounces a day. Its cheapness recommends it, and no person who has smoked much of it cares for tobacco. It can be bought for a penny an ounce from those who make a special business of its manufacture and sale, or can, less easily, be made at home. Most of it is bought, however, and it is chiefly used by the countless factory-hands of the Black Country and Lancashire. Thousands of bushels of it are smoked every year. It weakens the jawbones first, and afterward the eyesight becomes affected. But, most of all, it operates on the heart just as cigarette smoking does.

HUGH QUARRIES.

Under the Petersberg hill, at Maestricht, in Belgium, are the most extensive subterranean stone quarries in the world, there being 116,000 passages, each 50 feet high and 12 feet wide, and the whole covering a space 6 miles wide by 12 miles long. They are supposed to have been first worked by the Romans. The galleries, running generally at right angles, and lined by many thousand massive pillars, left by the excavators to support the roof, cross and intersect each other so as to render it exceedingly difficult to find the way out; and it is dangerous to enter this singular labyrinth without a guide. The workings abound in marine fossil remains. One of the phenomena pointed out by the guides is the formation of a small natural reservoir in the roots of a fossil tree.

TO SEE SHOOTING STARS.

Sir Robert Ball, the eminent astronomer, told an audience the other night that any one who took the trouble to lie on his back on the ground and gaze at a clear night sky would, as his eyes become accustomed to the heavens, soon perceive numbers of shooting stars.

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