

When Stormy Winds Do Blow.

IN TWO INSTALMENTS.

'No, I suppose not'—regrettably—'but there will be coral reefs and—'

'Well, I guess I'd rather see the pirates if I had my choice,' he interrupted, with a laugh; 'coral is very nice and pretty round a young lady's neck, but it doesn't look quite so pleasant when it sticks through the side of a ship, and the water pours in. So you'll come to Australia, eh? and won't find it dull being the only female abroad?'

'Dull! in tones of ecstasy. 'Why, it's the one wish of my life—a sea voyage, and to Australia of all places in the world.'

And in proof of her assertion, the rich scarlet surged into her cheeks, her eyes sparkled with pleasure, and, catching her skirts in both hands, she pirouetted round the room.

Captain Wintour gazed at her in mingled relief, pleasure and amazement.

'Well, she is a queer one,' he muttered. 'It is not many girls who would be so wild with delight at being torn away from balls, and theatres, and lovers.'

Then a sudden thought flashed into his mind, and a shrewd look came into his eyes.

'I wonder now if she has guessed what was in my mind. Girls are little cattle. If the fellow is as far gone as they say, it ought to work out all right. Now to see the Chetwynds and secure their co-operation.'

What he had to say to them caused much wonder, and not a little excitement—it was so novel, so romantic.

'Well, I declare!' cried her ladyship in real admiration. 'Fancy a sailor inventing such a scheme, and little Vere jumping into the net like that! Of course, that will clinch the business.'

'Well, we've no time to lose; we sail a week today, and I must go down to the ship to get things taut and ready,' replied the captain briskly. 'In the meantime, you just interview this Gorman fellow, and see if he will join in the plot. Say I'm shipping my ward off to Australia, and no other passenger on board. Now's his chance. He can come along and woo and win her on the voyage, or stay at home and give her up to a pluckier fellow. I won't drive her into marriage with him; but, if he comes, he shall have every chance of courting her and getting the answer reversed. I'm off now; a line or messenger will find me at any time on board the Albatross, and, if you hope for success, don't let the girl have a hint of what's going on.'

CHAPTER IV.

'Oh! isn't it glorious? Do you know, this ship looks so big and strong that it seems impossible to be afraid of a wreck or a storm? I love the sea!'

'Well, I'm proud of you,' replied Vere's uncle laughingly. 'For you are a born sailor. Very few men, let alone girls, can find their sea legs from the moment they are on board, as you've done. I thought last night that you were going to be a sorry handful, you looked so white and scared-like.'

'It was coming on the ship at midnight,' she confessed, with a half-laugh, 'and everything was such a scramble just at the end to get ready. I meant to be on board much earlier; only, half my things didn't come home in time. Then the water looked so dark, and there was such yelling and running about, I confess my heart did mis-give me.'

'You'll find it dull, I guess, once the first novelty wears off,' hazarded the captain, shooting a covert glance at her pretty face, from which, for the moment, the smiles had flown, leaving a dreamy, rather pathetic expression instead. 'Be missing your lover, no doubt, and not have a word to throw to a dog—'

'Just wait and see,' she replied gaily; and then his duties called him away for awhile, and she was left alone.

'She can't deceive me,' thought the sage old aunt. 'There were tears in her eyes when I came up behind her, and she gave a sigh deep enough to be heard the other end of the ship. She sees her mistake—she regrets having said "No." Just keep it up for a bit longer, and she'll jump into his arms.'

Meanwhile Vere was standing on the deck, lost in a reverie.

Idly she watched the sailors perform their various tasks, and shuddered when she saw them sent up aloft.

One figure reminded her strangely of Claude Tempest—it was so well knit, so active, so splendidly proportioned.

He seemed to be leaving his heart behind him in England, for he loitered about starting into space, and once she saw him bury his head in his arms, and was sure she heard a faint groan break from him.

'Poor fellow!' she thought sorrowfully. 'How sad he is! Parted, perhaps, from all he loves best, and not knowing if he will ever see them again. I should like to speak to him. There cannot be any harm in addressing a common sailor, and perhaps I could comfort him.'

'Now, then, what's your name?—Tanner?—can't have you loafing there!' cried out a stern, pitiless voice from the bows. 'Run up the mizzen and shorten sail. There's a brisk breeze springing up, and it's going to be a bit rough. Hallo! what's the matter? Left your heart behind. Well, well, nothing will cure it sooner than hard work. We've all been through it in our time, and a sore heart never kills.'

The young sailor addressed as Tanner turned to obey the order, and, as he passed by Vere, she started forward to speak words of comfort to him, but they died on her lips, and no sound came forth.

She stood, without moving, until he came safely down, when she forced herself forward and addressed him in a faltering tone.

At first her words appeared to have no effect—or worse, for, so far from adding to his cheerfulness, he only seemed more dejected; but, in the end, he suddenly turned to her with a radiant smile, and plunged deep into conversation with her.

Then he fetched her a deck chair, and a hassock for her feet, and was just settling her comfortably in a secluded corner of the deck, when her uncle came along, and chuckled at the sight of his pretty niece, with a novel in her hands, looking the picture of happy indolence, and the handsome young seaman dancing attendance upon her.

'Upon my word, you know what's what!' he ejaculated, as he paused by her side. 'I knew you were a born sailor. So you've set your authority against mine already. Have you, miss? Suborned one of my crew to take your orders. Hallo, Tanner! calling the young sailor back just as he was hurrying off of sight. 'You see this young lady?—well, she's my niece, and this is her first voyage. I meant to put her under Gregson's charge, but as you've started you may as well go on, for she must have some one to look after her. You are a better ladies' man than sailor, my fine fellow, so consider yourself Miss Chetwynd's attendant.' Then, in a stage aside, he added: 'The little puss had not a bad taste of her own after all; she has chosen the best-looking man that ever sailed under me, for her servant—lucky thing for him, too. Jackson is a brute to inexperienced hands, and this fellow is only working his passage out. I think. Hallo! here comes Gorman. Now for a scene!'

Indeed, it was none other than the millionaire who crossed the deck at that moment, spick and span, dressed in a yachting suit of pronounced type, and looking rather well in it, too.

'Good-afternoon, Miss Chetwynd,' he said, pausing just in front of her. 'You are a good sailor, I see—quite enjoying yourself.'

'Mr. Gorman!' she faltered, pale with surprise, 'this is so—so unexpected—I did not know—'

'No, of course you didn't; my little joke,' he said laughingly, taking her sudden pallor for joyful agitation at the sight of him, when she had deemed him far away. 'You see, it's like this: Captain Wintour was determined to take you away from us all, and I felt I could not part from you; so, as the season was on its last legs, and London as flat as ditch-water, I just thought I'd like a long voyage, and made arrangements to come along.'

'Propinquity, you see, and all that. You didn't know me very well in town—just meeting in theatres and crowded drawing-rooms. How could you know me properly? So we fixed it up this way. Here we are boxed up together for a long voyage, with your uncle and his crew to act as chaperone, and Mr. Gorman laughed heartily at his own joke.

Vere felt herself turn white to the lips. It was no joke to her.

She had run away from England to avoid this man, and he had actually arranged to travel in the same ship with her, and all her relatives—even her Uncle Wintour, whose pet she had always been—had conspired against her.

She felt herself caught in a golden net. How could she escape him now?

It had been difficult enough even in London, when she only saw him for a short time each day at social functions, where etiquette required that he should bestow his attentions on others as well as herself.

He watched her varying color and expression with keen enjoyment.

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Never had she looked prettier than she did now in her dainty white serge yachting suit and sailor hat, with the glorious frame of the wide blue sea to show up the fair picture she presented.

'You seem to have chosen a very jolly corner,' observed the millionaire complacently, 'and really, with your permission, I'll join you. Hi! you fellow, bring another chair and don't forget a piece of awning to keep off the sun. Confound the man, he's gone up that rope ladder: they don't keep chairs there! and, a little disconcerted, he watched the sailor's active form climb higher and higher until he reached the highest point, where he perched himself, and looked calmly down.'

'Foreigner I suppose; doesn't understand English,' murmured Mr. Gorman contemptuously. 'My man is ill, so I'll stroll about until I can get someone to attend to me.'

But he soon tired of that, it was so monotonous, and came and leaned disconsolately near Vere's chair.

'You see, sailors are not exactly here to take passengers' orders,' explained Vere demurely; 'this is not a passenger-ship. My uncle had to get special permission for me to travel by it, and I'm afraid he has committed a sad breach of discipline in bringing you. These men shipped as sailors only—not as valets or flunkies. You'll find them very independent, and—and at such times, as your own servant is unavailable, I advise you to wait on yourself.'

'Confound their impertinence!' fumed Mr. Gorman angrily. 'I'm sure I saw that young fellow wait upon you. I suppose you speak his lingo.'

A faint smile curved the girl's roguish pretty lips.

'Well, yes, I do, she confessed; 'but he won't take your orders. He has been told off to wait on me, but I'm afraid he is a little particular, and I shall keep him busy that he will have time for little else than fulfilling my orders.'

'Doesn't seem overwhelmed with work at present,' dryly, 'perched up there like a bird in a tree.'

'Oh! that's part of the work,' she explained calmly. 'He sits there awaiting orders from me. When I want anything I just wave my handkerchief, and he comes down. I find him most civil and intelligent. Uncle has given me into his charge for the whole of the voyage.'

Mr. Gorman made no verbal reply, but his eyes expressed vague amazement.

Just then another sailor appeared up the hatchway, and, eagerly approaching him with a coin in his hand, the millionaire had no difficulty this time in getting what he desired, much to Vere's vexation.

She buried herself in her novel, and hardly seemed conscious of her companion's presence, until, annoyed at her apparent indifference, he retired to the saloon and remained there in a fit of the sulks, telling himself she would soon relent and fetch him out again.

As dinner time approached, however, and still she came not, he relented himself sufficiently to put his head out, and take a careful survey of her surroundings.

There she was, still in the same spot; while, seated by her side was the young sailor, told off as her attendant, and their heads were bent confidentially together as they chatted in a friendly undertone.

'Confound that fellow! What does he mean by such familiarity towards my future wife?' growled the millionaire, coming into full view, and glaring angrily at the seaman, who, on his approach, rose from his chair, and went aloft again.

Mr. Gorman put on a very severe expression, as he said—

'My dear Miss Chetwynd, I do not approve of that young man at all; he does not seem sufficiently respectful, does not keep his distance properly. Might I ask how it was that you were seated side by side in such deep conversation together, and why he bolted so suddenly on my approach?'

'Oh! it was your chair, you know,' she replied, with an air of candor and half apology. 'He would not dream of keeping you standing, seeing that you paid Gregson to put it there.'

'But how came he in it?' the millionaire demanded.

'I waved my handkerchief and he came down, for I wanted to know so many things. This is my first voyage, and we were passing ships with different flags, and curious floating barrels—buoys he called them—and in the distance I seemed to see coast lines and things. I did not like to keep him standing all day!—demurely—so I told him he could sit down until you returned. That's all, Mr. Gorman. I assure you.'

'Ah, hum!' said the millionaire, 'you meant it kindly, of course, but it was hardly judicious—and I could have told you everything myself—'

'Yes; but you were not here,' she replied. 'But of course, now you are here, you can gratify my curiosity. Just as you came up, he was telling me what our latitude and longitude are. Please go on, it's so interesting.'

Mr. Gorman grew red in the face.

'I—er—I will find out,' he replied pompously; 'not being a professional sailor, of course I cannot tell you offhand.'

'Ah! but that isn't the same thing,' she replied disappointedly. 'Well, never mind that; tell me how many knots an hour we are going.'

The millionaire muttered something under his breath, before saying aloud—

'That again, my dear Miss Chetwynd, is a question I find myself unable to answer.'

'Dear me, there's the dinner-bell!' cried Vere springing to her feet, and hailing the sound with great relief. 'I had no idea it was so late.'

The next morning the same state of affairs set in.

Vere was simply full of technical questions one following on another so swiftly, that Mr. Gorman became both exasperated and fatigued with trying to frame replies to them.

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He was chagrined also at his ignorance being exposed, as it frequently was, when he not only could not reply to a question, but in addition did not even understand what it meant.

'Her uncle knows her better than I do,' he thought, as he made an excuse and went away for a quiet smoke. 'It was really necessary to tell off a real sailor to attend to her. Dear me, I have quite a headache—never felt more tired in my life!'

As the days passed on, Tanner, the sailor, was rarely absent from Vere's side.

On one pretext or another she always found a good excuse for requiring his services, and Mr. Gorman raged helplessly in the background.

Sometimes he would stand near enough to hear all they talked about, but it was or seemed to be, so very 'nautical,' that he wearied of it and them, and went away again disconsolately.

After awhile he felt a vague jealousy spring up towards Tanner.

He had objected to him from the first, but the passive dislike turned into an active hatred as day after day, the young fellow was ever at Vere's side, smiling, explaining, attending to her every want; so the millionaire sought Captain Wintour, and pointed out that he would prefer some older, sturdier man for the post.

Captain Wintour smiled exultingly.

'Well, he is a handsome young fellow,' he said, and Vere has a weakness for good looks; but, bless your heart, she isn't likely to flirt with—'

'Flirt! ejaculated the millionaire, flushing crimson with indignation. 'My wife flirt with a common sailor? You must be mad to think of such a thing!'

'Well, she isn't your wife yet, so that doesn't count,' replied the captain dryly; but she is my niece, and, as such, respects me too much to lower herself in any way. No; I can't spare another man, and if you can't make headway against a mere seaman—well, it's a poor look-out before you.'

Nevertheless, he kept his eyes a little wider open after that, and took occasion to administer a private caution to his niece the first time they were alone together.

'Look here, my girl,' he said sagely; 'the skipper's niece has nothing in common with the crew. Tanner is your servant and as such, you can do what you like with him, but there's a fixed line between you and him that must never be passed. No flirting, no love-making; we've shipped Gorman aboard as mate of that department, haven't we?' with a chuckle.

'You have, uncle; but I didn't sign articles,' she replied, with a shake of her pretty head. 'I said "No," and I meant it, and—and—' hanging her head a little—'it wasn't quite fair to trap me like that, was it?'

'All's fair in love and war, my lass,' he jovial captain returned.

'Oh, is it?' briskly. 'Well, then, I'll just confess that my great desire for knowledge on all things nautical, which renders Mr. Tanner's presence at my side so imperative, arises from my fixed determination not to drift into an engagement with Mr. Gorman. You gave Tanner to me, and told him to take my orders. Well, my first order, and all succeeding ones, have been not to leave me alone with that man. I don't want him, and I won't have him, so there.'

'Easy there, my lass. Captain's orders rank first, and if you mutiny, why—why, I'll put Tanner on some other duty, and—and—'

'And I'll never move out of the cabin; I'll fall ill until we put into port, when I will run away, and never trust you again you tyrant!' she retorted half playfully, yet with an undercurrent of earnest which her uncle quickly saw.

'And she'd do it, too,' he said to himself in a tone of conviction. 'Her ladyship was quite right she's as obstinate as a mule. I can plainly see Gorman won't have it all his own way; but I think there's something in it about Tanner, after all. She seems to have struck all of a heap, and changed color, or, perhaps, it was only a scheme of hers to tease Gorman. She knows she can twist his round her finger, and glories in tramping him underfoot.'

In the Red Sea they were nearly all overcome with the great heat, but Tanner kept to his post pluckily, and worked like a coolie at fanning her.

'I understand the young lady,' he explained when Gorman ordered him off, and called up another man to take his place, 'and as it's my duty to attend to her, I'll do it.'

Mr. Gorman, jealous and suspicious, fiercely repeated his orders, and the two

men stood facing each other, defiance in one face, sullen hate in the other.

Captain Wintour was attracted there by the sound of the altercation, and thundered out orders to the young sailor to go below.

'I'll have no more of this,' he said to himself angrily. 'The little mix is not to be trusted, that young fellow is head over head-o-er-heels in love with her, Gorman is green with jealousy, and it will be ship's talk next.'

'You'd better go without further ado,' sneered the millionaire triumphantly, addressing the young seaman; 'you've had your orders both from me and your captain.'

Tanner's expression was mutinous, and he made no sign of obeying.

Vere suddenly went to his side, and whispered tremulously—

'Do go—oh! do go now, for my sake. My uncle is so strict, he will put you in irons if you disobey.'

'I'll go because you ask me,' replied Tanner in a low voice, 'but it is hard to leave you with him.'

Then he turned away, and went below. Captain Wintour drew a long breath.

'It's a good thing for him he went that instant,' he exclaimed, frowningly; 'in another minute he would have found himself in irons. The fact is, my girl, you've turned his head, and the kind of thing I can do for him is to keep him away from you for the future. I'm sure Mr. Gorman knows enough of a sailor's life by now to answer all your questions; if not, I'll help him. We are out of the Red Sea and are making for Ceylon. Now—in a low aside to her—do be sensible. Gorman's quite bluff, and you'll never have another chance like this. Come, you've tried his patience and his love quite enough—you'll lose him altogether unless you tack!'

Vere's eyes flashed.

Why would no one understand—least of all Mr. Gorman himself—that his attentions were not desired, that she was in earnest in declining them, and that to all eternity she would give him no other answer?

He was now prosecuting his suit more from dogged obstinacy than anything else. He sometimes loved Vere to distraction, and at others felt as if he hated her; but he swore to himself that he would never give up until she promised to be his wife.

He could not go back and confess to everyone that his suit had failed; that he, a millionaire, had been rejected by a chit of a schoolgirl hardly out of the schoolroom; so he sank into the vacant chair at her side, and plunged desperately into conversation.

Vere replied politely but briefly; her manner was cold as ice, and he quite understood that she resented his interference about the young sailor who had been sent below.

'It's no good giving herself airs and graces, because I will soon knock them out of her once we are married,' he thought. 'I was sick of seeing the fellow dance attendance upon her. Oh! well, she'll soon tire of this attitude towards me, and be glad enough of my society after her sulks are over.'

But, much to his chagrin, Vere's manner remained quite the same, studiously polite, but nothing more encouraging, day after day, until he could have boxed her ears with anger.

She never mentioned Tanner's name now and Captain Wintour kept him busy in another part of the ship.

Her curiosity seemed satisfied, too on all topics, for she never spoke except to reply to questions put to her, and then it was generally in monosyllables.

'You seem to have lost all interest in Australia,' remarked her uncle, one day, suddenly recalling her excitement on first hearing she was to go there.

'Yes,' she replied listlessly.

'Have you any friends in those parts?' he asked.

'No, not now.'

'Then you had once, and they've left?' he queried.

'No, not exactly. I—I had a friend who meant to go there, and—'

'Changed his mind, maybe?' said the bluff old fellow.

'Not exactly, but he hasn't landed yet,' vaguely.

'Hum! Rather a poor reason,' mused the captain later on. 'More likely she's seen someone more to her mind since she parted from the first. Well, it evidently isn't Gorman, and—and if she's fretting over the other, I'll—I'll, yes, I'll have him cat-o-nine-tailed, I will indeed. My niece to demean herself by flirting with one of her uncle's crew! There's nothing for it but to force her to marry Gorman. I didn't mean to be harsh, but it'll have to come to it sooner or later, I can plainly see; so here goes.'

Determined to strike while the iron was hot, he sought out Vere, and plunged right into the subject next his heart.

The girl had been dreading this.

She had seen clearly enough that her uncle was bent on her marrying the millionaire.

She knew also that she would mortally offend him if she refused to let him carry out his pet scheme.

It was this consideration which she felt most acutely.

She loved the bluff old mariner with all her heart, and it would pain her unspeakably were she to forfeit his regard.

And yet it appeared that she must do so, for marry Mr. Sias Gorman she would not.

On that point she was most unalterably determined.

Her uncle was equally determined on his. He gave her to understand this without any unnecessary beating about the bush.

(CONTINUED ON FIFTEENTH PAGE.)

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