

CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.

She had been entrusted by her parents to his care, he told her, and, therefore, it was his bounden duty to see that she did nothing to injure her own prospects.

To become the wife of Mr. Silas Gorman, millionaire, and potential Member of Parliament and even peer, was something that could not be improved upon.

That, consequently must come about. She was to marry Mr. Gorman at Sydney have a week's honeymoon on land, and return to England in the Albatross.

'Stands to reason the man can't waste half his life following you about, and being laughed at for his pains,' he said indignantly. 'So I have given my word that you'll say "Yes," and it's fixed up for Sydney all right.'

Vere gazed at him in vague alarm. She knew very little how far a legal guardian could carry his authority, but surely, she told herself, he could not marry her to anyone against her will.

Mr. Gorman then appeared on the scene and taking her hand in his, remarked, with a satisfied smile—

'Yes, dear Vere, your uncle and I have made all arrangements together, and the marriage is to take place at Sydney during our stay here. Girls take so long to make up their minds, and the affair has already been protracted to a ridiculous length.'

'But I refuse to do anything of the kind,' she protested in some alarm. 'Uncle—Mr. Gorman, indeed you are mistaken, for nothing—'

'Come, come,'—slipping a lovely half-hoop diamond ring on her left hand 'it is all settled. We will leave you to think it over, and reconcile yourself to the idea.'

Then, bending his head he kissed her with unmistakable triumph before she realized his intention, and not paying any attention to her intense indignation, hurried away after her uncle to chuckle over their device.

'Nothing like carrying them by storm,' he said. 'Faint heart never won a fair lady,' you know, and she's the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life.'

As Fate would have it, Tanner happened to be an eye witness of this scene, and his face grew stern. At white and haughty.

'To be false, after all!' he muttered bitterly. 'Has she only been playing with me, and now thrown off the mask? If I thought so my life would be worthless.'

Vere! Vere! little Vere, be true to me! I have given up all for you—home, fortune and friends. You promised to wait until I could come back to claim you for my wife—don't say you've thrown me over before we even sight land; or it is so, perhaps I'd better know at once, and neither Tanner, the sailor, nor Claude Tempest, the gentleman, will ever be heard of more!

CHAPTER V.

A crash. A sudden lurch, a wild clamor of voices, confusion worse confounded.

Vere started up in her berth to hear that dreaded call—

'All hands on deck! She's struck a reef. Man the boats!'

It was midnight as the girl hastily threw on a few garments, and tried to keep calm and composed in the face of one of the greatest perils one can ever be called upon to pass through—shipwreck in mid-ocean, far from the sight of land or sign of human help, at that dread hour of a misty night.

The heavy feet tramping and rushing overhead, mingled with the shouts of the crew, almost drowned the loud, clear voice of the captain, who, standing at his post, gave his commands as calmly as if he did not know that the next minute might see him and all aboard his ship launched into eternity.

Someone knocked urgently at her cabin door, and before she could open it, Tanner rushed in, and said in a low, vehement tone—

'Vere, my darling, don't be alarmed. We hope to get clear away without loss of life but there is no time to waste. The Albatross has struck on a coral reef. They are getting the boats ready. Don't delay a second, but come with me now.'

She was dressed by this time, and although her lips slightly trembled, she forced a smile to her face as she went towards him.

'I am no coward, Claude,' she said simply; 'and I knew you would come.'

'Yes; though I may save you for him, and lose you myself, you shall live, or I shall die with you,' he replied bitterly. 'It was worse than death to me to see you in his arms yesterday—to see him kiss you, Vere.'

'Stop!' she cried, with a scarlet tide on her cheek, as, standing on deck together, she faced him unflinchingly. 'Since you saw that, now, at the moment when death stares us in the face, no false pride shall seal my lips. I love you and you only, Claude; that kiss was stolen, not given, and I threw his ring after him. If you had watched, you would have seen it roll right to my uncle's feet, who picked it up and put it in his pocket.'

'Then nothing shall ever part us again,' cried the sailor joyfully; 'even death has no terrors left for me. But, see! the boats are ready; they are filling them fast. The niggers are such cowards they would kill anyone who barred their way.'

'For God's sake, men, save the girl!' cried the captain's voice, in anguish accents. 'I must stay by my ship. Gorman where you? Get in the same boat if you love her. Vere, my little pet, where are you?'

The mist was so dense that it was impossible to see further than a few feet before one's face.

The captain held a pistol in his hand. It necessary, he meant to use it; but he could not see what was taking place, who had left the ship, and who remained; he only knew that he must be the last to go, yet Vere must be saved.

'Gorman,' he cried again, where are you, I say?'

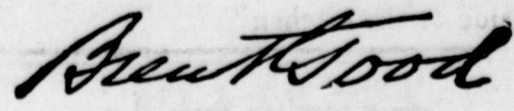
'Your niece is here with me,' replied Tanner, in a clear voice, which was aud-

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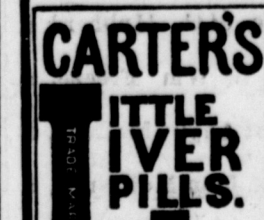
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ible even amidst the turmoil; 'we live or die together.'

'God bless you, my lad, you'll be true to your trust. Get in the boat with the Englishmen if you can. Gregson, Smith are you here?'

'Aye, aye, sir,' replied a voice in clear, hearty tone, 'and there's precious few besides. We are left with the jolly boat only sir; those cursed niggers have bolted with the others, cut them adrift, and gone off anyhow.'

'There's no time to lose, she may break in two any minute.'

'Mr. Jackson is below, sir, fetching food and drink—the others have gone off without any—may as well go down now, as drift about in an open boat without provisions, if they did but know it.'

Then, after minutes which seemed like hours, one after another descended into that little cockleshell of boat until it contained four men and Vere.

Then, last of all, the captain himself slid down the rope, and seizing the oars they pulled away for dear life—only just in time, too; for, with a crack like thunder, the old Albatross split in two and went under with a gurgling sound like a dying groan.

When day dawned it found them on the open sea, turning weired, anxious faces all around to ascertain their position.

There was not a sign of the other boats. What had become of them could only be conjectured.

'She struck on a reef that is not in the chart,' said the captain; 'it must be the same one that the Victor went down on three months ago. We are ten days from shore, even in calm weather, relying only on the oars.'

'And we're only food for a week,' said the mate quietly. 'If anything hinders us—storms or fog—may Heaven help us!'

Then they portioned out the food in half rations, for it must last the ten days, in case they were not picked up beforehand. Tanner helped in dividing it into portions, and as he handed Vere hers the captain saw him quietly add part of his own share to it.

Seeing he was observed, he put his finger on his lip to enjoin silence, and the captain felt constrained to obey; but, a little later, he asked—

'Now, my lad, what was that for? I hon our you for it, but it mustn't happen again. You don't know, as I do, the awful hunger that will come to us all after a day, or two of semi-starvation—men become like brute animals.'

'Hush! She is so weak and frail, and I am strong; it will take a lot to kill me. Look at her. Unless we keep her strength up she will die before our eyes, and she is more than life to me.'

'It's a hopeless outlook,' protested the captain. 'You a sailor—'

'The time has come for you to know our secret,' replied Tanner quietly. 'I am her equal in birth and position, being the nephew and adopted son of Sir Humphrey Tempest. Vere and I fell in love with each other at first sight, and plighted our troth for real or woe on the night of Lady Howard's ball, before we left London.'

'My uncle had disinherited me for refusing to agree to a match of his making. I told her all, and she promised to wait until I could make a home for her. I arranged to emigrate to Australia, and try the gold-fids, of course working my passage out, writing to her on landing, and at regular intervals afterwards, to report progress.'

'As Fate would have it, I chanced to get on board your ship by pure accident, and, more wonderful still, Vere came too, and recognized me the very first time I passed by her. To say that we were overjoyed is putting it mildly, especially after you told me off as her attendant. I contrived to prosecute my own courtship and keep Gorman off at the same time. Still, the contrast in our financial positions made me wretched and despondent many and many a time—'

'A sail! a sail!' cried out a joyful voice from the stern, and the next minute others echoed the good news, for there far away in the distance, a ship was coming towards them.

On and on it came until those who were in it caught sight of the boat; nearer and nearer it drew, and at last the castaways

were taken on board.

There a surprise awaited them, for, during the night, two other boat loads from the Albatross had been picked up, amongst the rescued being Mr. Gorman.

He looked a little shy just at first, as if conscious that his conduct would hardly be termed heroic; but, after awhile, he tried to reassess himself, and explained that he had been literally carried off the ship by the first rush, and was quite sure someone told him that Miss Chetwynd was the first to be lowered to the boat.

His valet told a different version, however with slightly veiled contempt.

His master, was an arrant coward he said, and, at the first alarm, had offered a large reward to anyone who would help to save his life.

He himself, with half a dozen others, had saved him, with themselves, and from first to last he had never once even vaguely asked what had become of Miss Chetwynd.

Vere listened to the account with a half scornful look; then, shuddering, she crept into Claude's arms.

'Are you not ashamed of yourself, uncle,' she inquired severely, 'when you reflect that you tried to force your niece to marry a coward, just because he was rich?'

'My lass, when I think of it, I could kick myself cheerfully,' the captain replied. 'To get in the first boat, and leave a woman on a sinking ship—any woman, not to say the one he wished to make his wife! You've the laugh of me for life over that; but, as you are strong be merciful!'

The ship that picked them up was home-bound, and Vere always said afterwards that that return voyage was the most delightful period of her whole life.

Her uncle was now enthusiastically fond of Claude Tempest, cheerfully consented to the engagement, and declared that, until the young fellow got something to do they could both come and keep house for him.

'It won't be a mansion, you know, but just a sailor's cottage by the sea. I'll use all my influence—and I have more than you think—to get Claude made secretary to some political swell, or slip him into a good government appointment. Little did I think, when I shipped him as a new hand aboard the poor old Albatross, that my niece would find her fate in a common sailor 'When the Stormy Winds did Blow.'

But a strange and pleasant surprise awaited them on their return home.

Sir Humphrey Tempest had quickly recovered his temper, and bitterly regretted having banished from his side the nephew who was as dear to him as a son.

Having read in the papers an account of the wreck, and having identified the lost Claude with Tanner the sailor, he was among the joyful crowd of relatives and friends who awaited the arrival of the vessel which had picked up the survivors, and the grip in which the old baronet seized his nephew's hand spoke volumes and wiped out all the bitter past.

'Say not a word, but come straight home, and bring the bride-to-be with you. What! this girl! Why, Claude, my boy, if you had only shown me her photograph, our little quarrel would never have taken place. Give me a kiss. Vere, my child; shake hands, Captain Wintour. The carriage is waiting outside. We old fogies will entertain each other, and leave the young people to their own devices. I only stipulate for one thing; they live with me at the court, and you take your cottage as near to us as possible—eh? No objection? Carried unanimously. And it was.

TOLD BY THE OLD CIRCUS MAN.

A Tribute to the Ready Resourcefulness of the Man Who Ran the Show.

'I do really believe,' said the old circus man, 'that for ingenuity in advertising the old man never had his equal. Look at the way he used to work the greatest of all giants. We never struck a town that he didn't find a chance for him to do something wonderful that set everybody talking.'

If there was a town clock there he'd have the giant, when he came along that way, stop and turn the hands back and forth two or three times. If there was nothing else to do in a town he'd get somebody to take the giant out gunning, and then have the giant turn up with a shotgun over his shoulder with barrels as long and as big around as telegraph poles. He never failed to find something for him to do that would attract attention; and some of the very simplest of these things were the most effective. A thing of this sort that the giant did was his helping people over a stream. I always thought myself that this was one of the best things.

'There'd be, say, running along on the outskirts of some town where we were going to show, a big brook, or a little branch, maybe fifteen or twenty feet wide, with a bridge over it on the road approaching the town, stream broadening out here a little, where it was shallow, and a ford close to the bridge where people used to drive across in summer, to give their horses a drink. The bridge here, you know, was generally just the very simplest sort of construction, a couple of timbers laid across and braced, with their ends on stone laid up for piers on either side of the streams, and these timbers planked and furnished with a railing along the sides. If there was nothing else that the old man could see to do in a town when he looked it over, and there was a stream and a bridge like this, then, in the morning before people were up he would just simply have the elephant hooked onto one end of it and haul the bridge out of place, in the

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line of the road, enough so that it would drop down off the supporting stone work on the other end, we used to put short skids under that end for the ends to rest and slide on, so, that they wouldn't jolt down when we pulled 'em off and smash the bridge up.

'When people began to get around in the morning and found the bridge down the old man would give out that it went down under the weight of the elephant in crossing over; and when this got out around, why the whole town would turn out to see the bridge that had been broken down by the elephant. And in the natural course of things there'd be more or less people coming along this road, too from one way or the other, wanting to cross over; and finding the bridge down they wouldn't know what to do, and they'd stand there and wait; and then, when these people that wanted to get across began to add up a little, then was when the old man would rise up.

'Send up the giant,' he'd say to somebody he had with him, and this man would go back and bring up the giant; we'd kept him till then down the other end of the line, out of sight as much as possible, in the woods.

'This stream, there at the bridge would be, maybe, twenty feet wide. The great giant would come striding up the road to the stream and first step one foot across it and halt and stand there with a foot on either bank. And then he proceeded to just lift the people over the stream—that is women and children. The bridge wasn't down so bad but that men and boys could scramble up from the dropped end to the road. But the women and children couldn't do this, and they were the ones we wanted to please, anyway.

'And the giant could please them easily. As a matter of fact he was a gentle hearted man and he had a pleasant kindly face that captivated the children; and he'd begin on them. He'd looked down at some little girl that had been standing on one of the banks waiting to go across and looking up at him as she would at a steppie on a church.

'Well, little girl,' he'd say bending down to her at the same time, 'you want to go across?'

'And he'd put his great hands around her hands so big that just lapped over each other, and lift her up as gently as could be and up and over with a great sweep through the air and set her down on the other bank almost before she knew it.

'Well, now you know, by gracious! it was the most astonishing thing the people had ever seen—this man standing there across this twenty foot stream—and not having to stretch his legs a bit to do it, either—helping people over, and it just simply carried them away. Before he'd finished with the little bunch of people on either side that really wanted to go over, he'd be besieged by people, women and children in the crowd, that wanted to be lifted over for fun. And he'd lift them all right, he could do it easily. He'd pick up a little child on one bank and swing her over and set her down on the other bank and then pick up a young woman and swing her gently over to the bank that he had brought the child from. And when he had set the young woman down he'd pick up somebody there and swing her over to where he'd brought the child from. When he set down one he'd pick up another and that's the way he kept 'em going back and forth through the air, working up the darndest, strangest, most curious excitement the town had ever known.

'But of course you couldn't keep this up always; and the way in which the old man used to change the subject, so to speak, showed his genius too. While the great giant was gently tossing 'em over like that and everybody would be just simply glued to the spot looking at him, the old man would have some men at work planting in the road about fifteen or twenty feet away from the end of the bridge that was down a stout post. Then they'd make one block of tackle fast unto the dropped end of the

bridge and make the other block fast to that post in the road and then hook the elephant onto the fall. When everything was ready and they called to the elephant to start him, the giant would look to see what was up.

'When the giant looked of course everybody looked, and they saw the elephant sitting on the fall, and the end of the bridge rising slowly into place, we'd left those skids under it you know, and now they helped to guide it, and they had the bridge back where it belonged in mighty short order. And then the giant would step back to the far bank of the stream and walk across the bridge with everybody on that side following him; and that show was over.

'Now, you know, everybody in that that town would have heard of our circus, but not everybody would have been impressed by it as they were sure to be by such a thing as this. There wasn't a living soul that saw the giant at the brook that morning but what wanted to see him in the show; and when we got a chance at 'em like that the canvas wouldn't hold the people that wanted to come in. He was a great man, the giant; but I don't know but what in his way the old man was greater.

The Queen Scored.

'My queen!'

It was young Mr. Kilduff who spoke, and he addressed Miss Mullins, at the same time placing his arm round her waist and attempting to deposit a kiss upon her lips.

This was all proper enough, for the two were engaged, and had been betrothed for a year; but the girl evaded the salute, disengaged herself from his embrace, and stood apart.

'I am not your queen!' she replied, with stately, if not regal, dignity.

'Why, what's up, Carrie?' asked the young man, in surprise.

'You have no right to speak to me like that,' she protested.

'I am very sorry, dearest. But I don't understand.'

'You call me your queen. You have often called me that, but I am not. I have read that when Queen Victoria appears in the Drawing Room it is no uncommon thing to see her display tens of thousands of pounds' worth of jewellery. How much do I display? Not even an engagement ring!'

And she held out her ringless fingers for Mr. Kilduff's inspection.

He caught hold of the extended hand, and this time he got his kiss, for he replied:—

'I can't give you as many jewels as Queen Victoria wears, but my queen shall have a diamond ring to-morrow.'

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