

# Maud Percy's Secret

BY MAY AGNES FLEMING

(CONTINUED.)

"Orlando Toosyeps, just stand by a minute, will you?" said the admiral, in the tone of a patient but persecuted saint. "Now, hold on—what have you revealed to me? what have you told me? There's two questions I'd feel obliged to anybody to answer."

"Why, my goodness!" said Mr. Toosyeps, in much surprise, "haven't I told you? Why, I thought I had. Well, then, Admiral Havenful, I've went and fell in love, and that's all about it."

"Maintopsail haul!" roared the admiral, immeasurably relieved; "who'd ever have thought it! Who is she, Orlando?" said the admiral, lowering his voice to a husky whisper.

"Your niece, Miss Pet Lawless," said Mr. Toosyeps, blushing deeply. This announcement took the admiral so much by surprise that he could only give vent to it by another appealing glance at the picture, and a stifled growl of "Splice the main-brace!"

"Admiral Havenful, it's my intention to splice the main-brace as much as possible. I'm very much obliged to you," said Mr. Toosyeps, gratefully. "But, at the same time, I'm afraid it won't do me the least good. I know very well she don't care anything about me, and will go and marry somebody else some day. By gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Toosyeps, with the energy of desperation, "I've a good mind to go and do something to myself, whenever I think of it. Why, it's enough to make a fellow go and heave himself away into an untimely grave—so it is."

"Don't Orlando, don't," said the admiral, in a tone of grave rebuke. "It's not proper to talk so. When you come to overhaul your conscience, by and by, you'll be sorry for such rash threats. Now, look here—I'm going to talk to you for your own good. Does Pet know you've gone and splashed your affections on to her?"

"Good gracious, no!" ejaculated Mr. Toosyeps, in much alarm. "I wouldn't tell her for anything—no, not for any amount of money you could give me for doing it, Admiral Havenful. Oh, my goodness! the idea! Why, she would laugh at me, Admiral Havenful."

"Avast there, messmate! avast!" growled the admiral administering a thump to his glazed hat. "Now, look here. When a young man goes and falls into love with a young woman, what does he do? or, what do they do?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeps, looking dejectedly at the carpet. "I never was in love before, you know, and it's just the queerest feeling ever was. I never experienced anything like it before. It's not like the colic, or the toothache, or a cramp, or anything; you feel—well, I don't know as I can describe it; but you kind of feel all over. And whenever I meet Miss Pet suddenly and she turns them two great black eyes of her's right on to me—my gracious! Admiral Havenful, the state it sets me into! Why, I actually feel as if I'd like to crawl out of the toes of my boots, or have the carpet open and swallow me up."

"Belay! belay!" said the admiral, impatiently; "you're steering in the wrong direction altogether, Orlando. Now, look here; I asked you, 'when a young man goes and falls in love with a young woman, what does he do?' and says you, 'I don't know, Admiral Havenful.' Well now, look here; I'll tell you. When a young man goes and falls in love with a young woman, what does he do? Why, Orlando Toosyeps, he goes and marries her? That's what he does!"

And hereupon the admiral administered another vigorous slap to his glazed hat, that very nearly stove in the crown of that ill-used head-piece; and leaning back in his chair, looked with excusable triumph and exultation at Mr. Toosyeps.

"They goes and gets married. That there's what they does," repeated the admiral, folding his arms and leaning serenely back, like a man who has settled the matter forever. "And now, Orlando Toosyeps, in the words of scripture"—here the admiral got up and took off his hat—"go thou and do likewise."

"Admiral Havenful, I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure," said the "lover," in a subdued tone; "but—but maybe she wouldn't have me. She might, just as likely as not, say 'No,' Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeps, mournfully; "it's my luck always, to have the most dreadful things happen to me! I declare it's enough to make a fellow mad enough to go and do something to himself—it actually is."

"Don't now, Orlando, don't now," said the admiral severely; it isn't proper, you know, and you really shouldn't. There's a proverb I'm trying to think of," said the admiral, knitting his brows in intense perplexity; "you know the Book of Proverbs, Orlando, don't you. Hold on, now, till I see. 'Fain—no—yes. 'Fain

neat—fain—heart never won a 'fair lady.' Again the old sailor reverentially removed his hat. "That's it, Orlando; 'fain heart never won fair lady.' No, look here; you go straight along and ask Firefly if she's willing to cruise under your flag through life, and if she lays her hand in yours, and says 'I'm there, messmate!' by St. Paul Jones! we'll have such a wedding as never was seen in old Maryland since Calvert came over. Hoorah!" yelled the admiral, waving his hat over his head in an unexpected outburst of delight that quite startled Mr. Toosyeps.

"Admiral Havenful, I'll do it! I will, by granny!" exclaimed Mr. Toosyeps, jumping up in the excitement of the moment. "I'll go right straight over to Heath Hill and ask her. Why, she actually might say 'Yes,' after all. Oh my gracious! if she does, won't it be nice? What will Aunt Priscilla say? Admiral Havenful, it was real kind of you to advise me so, and tell me what to do; and I'm ever so much obliged to you—I really am," said Mr. Toosyeps, bustling around, and putting on his hat, and turning to go.

"Keep her to the wind's eye!" roared the admiral, in a burst of enthusiasm, as he brought one tremendous sledge-hammer fist down with an awful thump on the table.

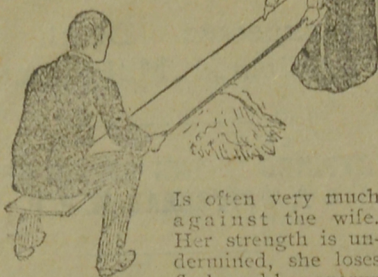
"Admiral Havenful, it is my intention to keep her to the wind's eye as much as possible," said Mr. Toosyeps, who comprehended the sentence about as much as he would a Chinese funeral oration. "Good-bye, now; I'll come right back when it's over, and tell you what she said."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

In all the ardor of his momentary excitement Mr. Toosyeps got astride of a serious-looking pony, a family relation of the admiral's favorite nag, Ringbone, and set out at a shuffling gallop for Heath Hill. Mr. Toosyeps did not look quite so pretty on horseback as some people might suppose; for he went jiggling up and down with every motion of his steed, and being remarkably long in the legs, his feet were never more than a few inches from the ground; so that, altogether, he was not the most dashing rider you would have selected to lead a charge of cavalry. But Mr. Toosyeps was not thinking of his looks just then, but of a far more important subject—trying to screw his courage to the sticking-point. The farther he went, the faster his new-found courage began oozing away. As the White Squall receded, so did his daring determination; and as the full extent of the mission he was on burst upon him, a cold perspiration slowly burst out on his face, despite the warmth of the day.

"Good gracious! it's going to be awful; I know it is!" exclaimed Mr. Toosyeps, wiping his face with the cuff of his coat. "And how I'm ever going to get through with it, I'm sure I don't know! If I only knew any young man that's in the habit of proposing, he could tell me how they do it, and then I wouldn't mind. But now—by granny! I've a good mind to turn, and go right back to Dismal Hollow. But, then, the Admiral—what will he say? Well, I don't care what he says. How would he like to go and pop the question himself, I wonder? By gracious! I will go back. It's no use thinking about it, for I'd sooner be chewed alive by rattlesnakes, and then kicked to death by grasshoppers, than go and tell Miss Pet the way I feel. I couldn't tell her the way I feel; it's the most peculiar sensation ever was. And them black eyes of hers! Land of hope and blessed promise! the way they do go right

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Large & new vest-pattern! How in the world so many men can manage to get married is more than I know; for I'd sooner march up to the muzzle of a pistol while old Nick held the trigger, than go and do it! Whoa, Charlie! Turn round. I'm going home to Dismal Hollow!"

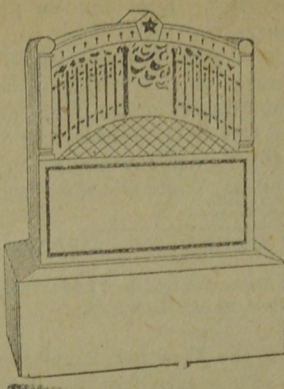
Whir, whir, whir! came something, with lightning-like rapidity, over the soft heath. Mr. Toosyeps turned round; and there came Miss Pet herself, flying along like the wind, on her fleet Arabian, her cheeks crimson, her splendid eyes blazing, her red lips smiling; her short, jetty curls flying in the wind she herself raised, her long, raven black plume just touching her scarlet cheeks; the red rings of flame flashing out in the sunlight from her dazzling eyes and hair. She was bewildering, dazzling, blinding! Mr. Toosyeps had his breath completely taken away, as his heart had long since been, and at that moment fell more deeply, deplorably, and helplessly in love than ever. Every idea was instantaneously put to flight by this little, dark, bright bird-of-paradise—this blinding little grenade, all fire, and jets, and sparkles.

"Halloa, Orlando! Your very humble servant!" shouted Pet, as she laughingly dashed up, touching her hat gallantly to the gentleman. "How does your imperial highness find yourself this glorious day?"

"A—pretty miserable, thank you, A—I mean I ain't very well, Miss Pet," said Mr. Toosyeps, stammering, and breaking down.

"Not very well, eh? Why, what's the matter? Not cholera morbus, or measles, or a galloping-decline, or anything—is it?" said Pet, in a tone of deepest anxiety. "The gods forbid anything should happen to you, Orlando, for the sake of all Judestown girls whose hearts you have broken! You do look sort of blue—a prey to 'green and yellow melancholy.' I shouldn't wonder! Make Miss Priscilla apply a mustard poultice when you get home—it doesn't matter where—and go to bed with your feet in a tub of hot water, and I'll bet you anything you'll be as well as ever, if not considerably better in the morning. I'm going to take in nursing some of these days, and ought to know!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



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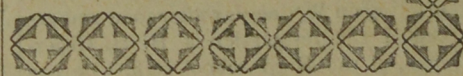
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