

Maud Percy's Secret

BY MAY AGNES FLEMING

(CONTINUED.)

"What now!" grunted the admiral, who foresaw something was coming; "heave to!"

"Admiral Havenful, would you be so good as not to say that? You mean well, I know, but you can't imagine the unpleasant sensations it causes—ugh!" said Mr. Toosyeggs, with a wry face and a shudder. "You never were sea-sick, were you, Admiral Havenful? If you were you don't require to be told the pang that hearing that inflicts upon me. Therefore, please don't say it again, for it gives me the most peculiar sensations that ever was."

The admiral grunted, and began smoking away like an ill-repaired chimney. Mr. Toosyeggs sat uneasily on the edge of his chair, and continued to make a light and rather unsatisfactory repast of the head of his cane.

Thus a mournful silence was continued for some fifteen or twenty minutes, and then the admiral took his pipe from his mouth, wiped it on the cuff of his sleeve, and without looking at Mr. Toosyeggs, drew a long placid breath, and held it out toward him with a laconic:

"Smoke?"

"Thankee, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, mournfully, "I never do."

"More fool you, then," said the admiral, gruffly, putting it in his own mouth again.

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, in a large tone of voice, "I'm aware that I ain't so wise as some of my friends could wish me; but, at the same time, let me assure you that I don't consider it a proof of wisdom to smoke at all. Smokers mean real well, I know, but it's unpleasant to others, besides setting the in'ards in a dingy state, blacking the teeth, adulterating the breath, and often producing spontaneous combustion. Which means, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, elevating his cane to make the explanation, "getting worked up to a high degree of steam, and going off quite unexpected and promiscuous, some day, with a bang, and leaving nothing behind to tell the melancholy tale but a pinch of ashes, and that—"

"O, bother!" cut in the admiral, impatiently. "Belay your jawing-tackle, young man, and let somebody else have sea-room. What port do you hail from last?"

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, in no way offended at this cavalier mode of treating his digression on the evils of smoking, "if you mean by that where I was all morning, I've just come from Dismal Hollow. Aunt Priscilla wasn't in—well, she wasn't in very good spirits—and so I got out of the back door and come away. I was going to old Barrens Cottage, only I saw Judge Lawless' horse before the door and so I came here."

"Always welcome, Orlando, boy—always welcome," said the admiral briskly. "But hold a minute! What the dickens brings that stiff bowsprit of a brother-in-law of mine so often to the cottage? Eh, Orlando?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs. "It's real singular, too; because he never used to go there at all, and now his horse is at the door every day."

"So's yours, for that matter. Hey, Orlando?"

Mr. Toosyeggs blushed to the very roots of his hair, and shifted his feet uneasily over the floor, as though it burnt them.

"Orlando," said the admiral—holding his pipe between his finger and thumb, and regarding significantly, these emotions—"Orlando, I see breakers ahead!"

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, in a tone of mingled uneasiness and anguish, "I dare say you do; but, my gracious! don't keep looking at a fellow so! I couldn't help it, you know; and I know it's all my own fault, to be miserable for life. I don't blame anybody at all, and I rather like being miserable for life than otherwise. I know you mean well; but I'd rather you wouldn't keep looking at me so. I'm very much obliged to you."

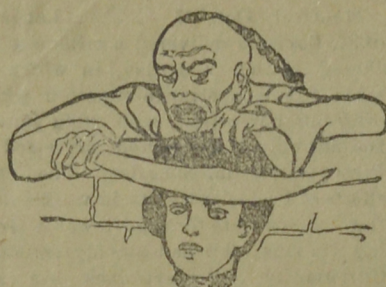
"Orlando," solemnly began the admiral, without removing his eyes from the other's face, "you're steering out of your course altogether. Come to anchor! Now, then, what's to pay?"

The unexpected energy with which the last question was asked had such an effect on the nerves of Mr. O. C. Toosyeggs that he gave a sudden jump, suggestive of sitting down on an upturned pin-cushion, and grasped his stick in wild alarm.

"Now, Orlando," repeated the admiral, with a wave of his pipe—"now, Orlando, the question is, what's to pay?"

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, in terror, "there ain't anything to pay; I don't owe a cent to the world, s'elp me Bob; I don't owe a single blamed brass farthing to a child unborn!"

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"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, hiccupping violently, "I'm ashamed of myself. I oughtn't to have said it; and I won't do so no more at any price. I know—I know I oughtn't mind being wretched, but somehow I do, and I can't help it. If you'll only forgive me, I'll tell you what's the matter and promise to try and do better for the time to come."

"Well, heave ahead!" said the somewhat mollified mariner.

"Admiral Havenful!" exclaimed Mr. Toosyeggs, springing to his feet with such startling energy that the old sailor jumped up, too, and brandished his pipe, expecting a violent personal assault and battery—"will you be good enough not to say that? Oh, my gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Toosyeggs, in a wildly-distracted tone, "if it ain't too darned bad! Ugh!"

And with a violent shudder and a sea-green visage, the unhappy young man sat down, with one hand on his mouth and the other on his dinner.

With a violent snort of unspeakable contempt, the admiral flung himself back in his chair, and turned up his Roman nose to the highest possible angle of scorn.

"Excuse me, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, at length, in a fainting voice, "I feel better, now. It was so—so sudden, and took me so unexpected, that—that it rather startled me; but I'm quite well now. I'm very much obliged to you. Ugh! The very mention of—you know what follows sea-sickness—turns my very skin to goose-flesh. We won't speak of it any more, if it's all the same to you, Admiral Havenful. I promised to tell you the cause of my misery—didn't I? Yes? Well, it's—its Miss Minnie."

"Little Snowflake! hea—I mean go ahead."

"I went—and fell in love with her, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toosyeggs, looking around, blushing.

"Stand from under!" growled the bewildered admiral.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Got It.

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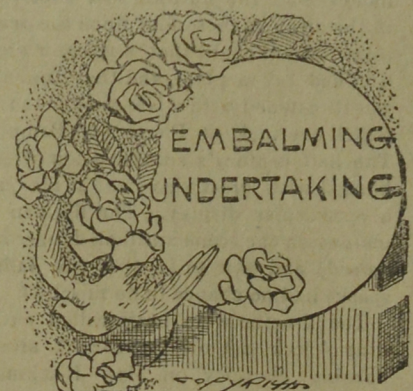
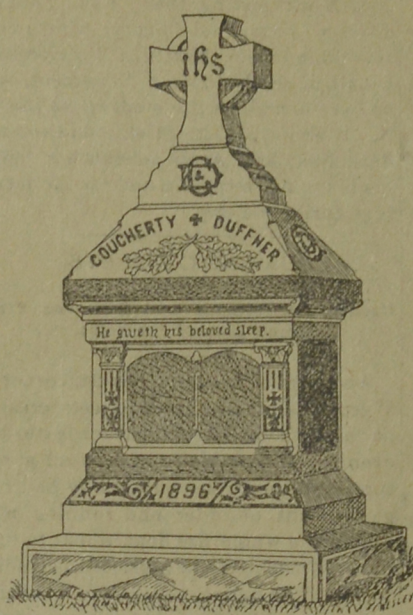
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