

CHAPTER XXXIII

The morning after the vessel left Dartmouth brought with it lovely weather, brisk and clear, with a fresh breeze that just topped the glittering swell with white. There was, however, a considerable roll on the ship, and those poor wretches, who for their sins are given to sea-sickness, were not yet happy. Presently Arthur observed the pretty black-eyed girl--poor thing, she did not look very pretty now--creep on to the deck and attempt to walk about, an effort which promptly resulted in a fall into the scuppers. He picked her up, and asked if she would not like to sit down, but she faintly declined, saying that she did not mind falling so long as she could walk a little--she did not feel so sick when she walked. Under these circumstances he could hardly do less than help her, which he did in the only way at all practicable with one so weak, namely, by walking her about on his arm.

In the midst of his interesting peregrinations he observed Mrs. Carr gazing out of her deck cabin window, looking, he thought, pale, but sweetly pretty, and rather cross. When that lady saw that she was observed, she pulled the curtain with a jerk and vanished. Shortly after this Arthur's companion vanished too, circumstances over which she had no control compelling her, and Arthur himself sat down rather relieved.

But he was destined that day to play knight-errant to ladies in distress. Presently Mrs. Carr's cabin-door opened, and that lady

herself emerged therefrom, holding on to the side-rail. He had just begun to observe how charmingly she was dressed, when some qualm seized her, and she returned to re-enter the cabin. But the door had swung-to with the roll of the vessel, and she could not open it. Impelled by an agony of doubt, she flew to the side, and, to his horror, sprang with a single bound on to the broad rail that surmounted the bulwark netting, and remained seated there, holding only to a little rope that hung down from the awning-chain. The ship, which was at the moment rolling pretty heavily, had just reached the full angle of her windward roll, and was preparing for a heavy swing to leeward. Arthur, seeing that Mrs. Carr would in a few seconds certainly be flung out to sea, rushed promptly forward and lifted her from the rail. It was none too soon, for next moment down the great ship went with a lurch into a trough of the sea, hurling him, with her in his arms, up against the bulwarks, and, to say truth, hurting him considerably. But, if he expected any thanks for this exploit, he was destined to be disappointed, for no sooner had he set his lovely burden down, than she made use of her freedom to stamp upon the deck.

"How could you be so foolish?" said he. "In another moment you would have been flung out to sea!"

"And pray, Mr. Heigham," she answered, in a cutting and sarcastic voice, "is that my business or your own? Surely it would have been time enough for you to take a liberty when I asked you to jump over after me."

Arthur drew himself up to his full height and looked dignified--he could look dignified when he liked.

"I do not quite understand you, Mrs. Carr," he said, with a little bow. "What I did, I did to save you from going overboard. Next time that such a little adventure comes in my way, I hope, for my own sake, that it may concern a lady possessed of less rudeness and more gratitude."

And then, glaring defiance at each other, they separated; she marching off with all the dignity of an offended queen to the "sweet seclusion that a cabin grants," whilst he withdrew moodily to a bench, comforted, however, not a little by the thought that he had given Mrs. Carr a Roland for her Oliver.

Mrs. Carr's bound on to the bulwarks had been the last effort of that prince of demons, sea-sickness, rending her ere he left. When the occasion for remaining there had thus passed away, she soon tired of her cabin and of listening to the inarticulate moans of her beloved Agatha, who was a most faithful subject of the fiend, one who would never desert his manner so long as he could roll the tiniest wave, and, sallying forth, took up her position in the little society of the ship.

But between Arthur and herself there was no attempt at reconciliation.

Each felt their wrongs to be as eternal as the rocks. At luncheon they looked unutterable things from different sides of the table; going in to dinner, she cut him with the sweetest grace, and on the following morning they naturally removed to situations as remote from each other as the cubic area of a mail steamer would allow.

"Pretty, very much so, but ill-mannered; not quite a lady, I should say," reflected Arthur to himself, with a superior smile.

"I detest him," said Mrs. Carr to herself, "at least, I think I do; but how neatly he put me down! There is no doubt about his being a gentleman, though insufferably conceited."

These uncharitable thoughts rankled in their respective minds about 12 A.M. What then was Arthur's disgust, on descending a little late to luncheon that day, to be informed by the resplendent chief-steward--who, for some undiscovered reason, always reminded him of Pharaoh's butler--that the captain had altered the places at table, and that this alteration involved his being placed next to none other than Mrs. Carr. Everybody was already seated, and it was too late to protest, at any rate for that meal; so he had to choose between submission and going without his luncheon. Being extremely hungry, he decided for the first alternative, and reluctantly brought himself to a halt next his avowed enemy.

But surprises, like sorrows, come in battalions, a fact that he very

distinctly realized when, having helped himself to some chicken, he heard a clear voice at his side address him by name.

"Mr. Heigham," said the voice, "I have not yet thanked you for your kindness to Miss Terry. I am commissioned to assure you that she is very grateful, since she is prevented by circumstances from doing so herself."

"I am much gratified," he replied, stiffly; "but really I did nothing to deserve thanks, and if I had," he added, with a touch of sarcasm, "I should not have expected any."

"Oh! what a cynic you must be," she answered with a rippling laugh, "as though women, helpless as they are, were not always thankful for the tiniest attention. Did not the pretty girl with the black eyes thank you for your attentions yesterday, for instance?"

"Did the lady with the brown eyes thank me for my attentions--my very necessary attentions--yesterday, for instance?" he answered, somewhat mollified, for the laugh and the voice would have thawed a human icicle, and, with all his faults, Arthur was not an icicle.

"No, she did not; she deferred doing so in order that she might do it better. It was very kind of you to help me, and I daresay that you saved my life, and I--I beg your pardon for being so cross, but being sea-sick always makes me cross, even to those who are kindest to me.

Do you forgive me? Please forgive me; I really am quite unhappy when I think of my behaviour." And Mrs. Carr shot a glance at him that would have cleared the North-West Passage for a man-of-war.

"Please don't apologize," he said, humbly. "I really have nothing to forgive. I am aware that I took a liberty, as you put it, but I thought that I was justified by the circumstances."

"It is not generous of you, Mr. Heigham, to throw my words into my teeth. I had forgotten all about them. But I will set your want of feeling against my want of gratitude, and we kiss and be friends."

"I can assure you, Mrs. Carr, that there is nothing in the world I should like better. When shall the ceremony come off?"

"Now you are laughing at me, and actually interpreting what I say literally, as though the English language were not full of figures of speech. By that phrase," and she blushed a little--that is, her cheek took a deeper shade of coral--"I meant that we would not cut each other after lunch."

"You bring me from the seventh heaven of expectation into a very prosaic world; but I accept your terms, whatever they are. I am conquered."

"For exactly half an hour. But let us talk sense. Are you going to

stop at Madeira?"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"I don't know; till I get tired of it, I suppose. Is it nice, Madeira?"

"Charming. I live there half the year."

"Ah, then I can well believe that it is charming."

"Mr. Heigham, you are paying compliments. I thought that you looked above that sort of thing."

"In the presence of misfortune and of beauty"--here he bowed--"all men are reduced to the same level. Talk to me from behind a curtain, or let me turn my back upon you, and you may expect to hear work-a-day prose--but face to face, I fear that you must put up with compliment."

"A neat way of saying that you have had enough of me. Your compliments are two-edged. Good-bye for the present." And she rose, leaving Arthur --well, rather amused.

After this they saw a good deal of each other--that is to say, they

conversed together for at least thirty minutes out of every sixty during an average day of fourteen hours, and in the course of these conversations she learned nearly everything about him, except his engagement to Angela, and she shrewdly guessed at that, or, rather, at some kindred circumstance in his career. Arthur, on the other hand, learned quite everything about her, for her life was open as the day, and would have borne repeating in the *_Times_* newspaper. But nevertheless he found it extremely interesting.

"You must be a busy woman," he said one morning, when he had been listening to one of her rattling accounts of her travels and gaieties, sprinkled over, as it was, with the shrewd remarks, and illumined by the keen insight into character that made her talk so charming.

"Busy, no; one of the idlest in the world, and a very worthless one to boot," she answered, with a little sigh.

"Then, why don't you change your life? it is in your own hands, if ever anybody's was."

"Do you think so? I doubt if anybody's life is in their own hands. We follow an appointed course; if we did not, it would be impossible to understand why so many sensible, clever people make such a complete mess of their existence. They can't do it from choice."

"At any rate, you have not made a mess of yours, and your appointed

course seems a very pleasant one."

"Yes; and the sea beneath us is very smooth, but it has been rough before, and will be rough again--there is no stability in the sea. As to making a mess of my life, who knows what I may not accomplish in that way? Prosperity cannot shine down fear of the future, it only throws it into darker relief. Myself I am afraid of the future--it is unknown, and to me what is unknown is not magnificent, but terrible. The present is enough for me. I do not like speculation, and I never loved the dark."

And, as they talked, Madeira, in all its summer glory, loomed up out of the ocean, for they had passed the "Desertas" and "Porto Santo" by night, and for a while they were lost in the contemplation of one of the most lovely and verdant scenes that the world can show. Before they had well examined it, however, the vessel had dropped her anchor, and was surrounded by boats full of custom-house officials, boats full of diving boys, of vegetables, of wicker chairs and tables, of parrots, fruit, and "other articles too numerous to mention," as they say in the auctioneer's catalogues, and they knew that it was time to go ashore.

"Well, it has been a pleasant voyage," said Mrs. Carr. "I am glad you are not going on."

"So am I."

"You will come and see me to-morrow, will you not? Look, there is my house," and she pointed to a large, white house opposite Leeuw Rock, that had a background of glossy foliage, and commanded a view of the sea. "If you come, I will show you my beetles. And, if you care to come next day, I will show you my mummies."

"And, if I come the next, what will you show me?"

"So often as you may come," she said, with a little tremor in her voice, "I shall find something to show you."

Then they shook hands and took their respective ways, she--together with the unfortunate Miss Terry, who looked like a resuscitated corpse --on to the steam-launch that was waiting for her, and he in the boat belonging to Miles' Hotel.