

CHAPTER XII.

UNEXPECTED PASSENGERS.

The request of Mr. Malarius could only be received with gratitude by the committee. It was therefore passed enthusiastically, and the worthy teacher, whose reputation as a botanist was greater than he himself suspected, was appointed assistant naturalist of the expedition.

As for the condition upon which Tudor Brown bestowed his donation of twenty-five thousand kroners, both Dr. Schwaryencrona and Mr. Bredejord were strongly inclined to refuse to grant it. But if called upon to give some motive for their repugnance, they had to confess that they would not know what to say. What sufficient reason could they give the committee if they asked them to refuse such a large subscription? They really had no valid one. Tudor Brown had called upon Dr. Schwaryencrona, and brought him a certified account of the death of Patrick O'Donoghane; and now Patrick O'Donoghane appeared to be living. But they could not prove that Tudor Brown had willfully deceived them in this matter, and the committee would require some sufficient cause before rejecting so large a sum. Tudor Brown could easily declare that he had been truthful. His present attitude seemed to prove it. Perhaps he intended to go himself, only to find out how Patrick O'Donoghane, whom he believed to have been drowned in the Straits of Madeira, could now be living on the shores of Siberia. But even supposing that Tudor Brown had other

projects, it would be to their interest to find them out, and keep him in their hands. For, one of two facts was certain: either Tudor Brown had no interest in the search which had occupied Erik's friends for so long a time, and in that case it would be useless to treat him as an enemy; or he had some slight personal interest in the matter, and then it would be better to watch his plans, and overthrow them.

The doctor and Mr. Bredejord therefore concluded that they would not oppose his becoming a passenger. Then they gradually were filled with a desire to study this singular man, and find out why he wished to take passage on the "Alaska." But how could they do this without sailing with him. It would not be such an absurd thing to do after all. The course which the "Alaska" was to take was a very attractive one, at least the first part of it. To be brief, Dr. Schwaryencrona, who was a great traveler, asked to be taken as a passenger, to accompany the expedition as far as the China seas, by paying such a price as the committee might judge proper.

This example immediately acted with irresistible force upon Mr. Bredejord, who had dreamed for a long time about an excursion to the land of the Sun. He also solicited a cabin under the same conditions.

Every one in Stockholm now believed that Mr. Hochstedt would do the same, partly out of scientific curiosity, and partly from terror at the thought of passing so many months without the society of his friends. But all Stockholm was deceived. The professor was strongly tempted to

go, and he reviewed all the arguments for and against it, and found it almost impossible to arrive at any decision, but fate ordained that he should stay at home.

The time of their departure was irrevocably fixed for the 10th of February. On the 9th Erik went to meet Mr. Malarius, and was agreeably surprised to see Dame Hersebom, and Vanda, who had come to bid him farewell. They were modestly intending to go to a hotel in the town, but the doctor insisted that they should come and stay with him, to the great displeasure of Kajsa, who did not think that they were sufficiently distinguished.

Vanda was now a tall girl, whose beauty fulfilled its early promise. She had passed successfully a very difficult examination at Bergen which entitled her to take a professor's chair, in a superior school. But she preferred to remain at Noroe with her mother, and she was going to fill Mr. Malarius' place during his absence: always serious and gentle, she found in teaching a strange and inexplicable charm, but it had not changed the simplicity of her home life. This beautiful girl, in her quaint Norwegian costume, was able to give tranquilly her opinion on the deepest scientific subjects, or seat herself at the piano, and play with consummate skill a sonata of Beethoven. But her greatest charm was the absence of all pretension, and her perfectly natural manners. She no more thought of being vain of her talents, or of making any display of them, than she did of blushing on account of her rural costume. She bloomed like some wild flower, that, growing beside the fiord, had been

transplanted by her old master, and cultivated and cherished in his little garden behind the school.

In the evening all Erik's adopted family were assembled in the parlor of Dr. Schwaryencrona; Mr. Bredejord and the doctor were about to play a last game of whist with Mr. Hochstedt. They discovered that Mr. Malarius was also an authority in this noble game, which would enable them to while away many leisure hours on board the "Alaska." Unfortunately the worthy instructor also told them, at the same time, that he was always a victim of sea-sickness, and nearly always confined to his bed as soon as he set foot upon a vessel. Only his affection for Erik had induced him to join the expedition, added to the ambition, long fondly cherished, of being able to add some more varieties to his catalogue of botanical families.

After which they had a little music: Kajsa, with a disdainful air, played a fashionable waltz; Vanda sung an old Scandinavian melody with a sweetness that surprised them all. The tea was served, and a large bowl of punch, which they drunk to the success of the expedition, followed. Erik noticed that Kajsa avoided touching his glass.

"Will you not wish me a happy voyage?" he said to her, in a low tone.

"What is the use of wishing for what we do not expect to see granted?" she answered.

The next morning, at day-break, every one went on board, except Tudor Brown.

Since the receipt of his letter containing the check they had not heard a word from him.

The time of departure had been fixed for ten o'clock. At the first stroke, the commander, Mr. Marsilas, had the anchor hoisted, and rang the bell to warn all visitors to leave the ship.

"Adieu, Erik!" cried Vanda, throwing her arms around his neck.

"Adieu, my son!" said Katrina, pressing the young lieutenant to her heart.

"And you, Kajsa, have you nothing to say to me?" he asked, as he walked toward her as if to embrace her also.

"I hope that you will not get your nose frozen, and that you will discover that you are a prince in disguise!" said she, laughing impertinently.

"If that should happen, then at least I might hope to win a little of your affection?" he said, trying to smile, to hide his feelings, for her sarcasm had cut him to the heart.

"Do you doubt it?" answered Kajsa, as she turned toward her uncle, to show that her adieu to him was finished.

The time of departure had indeed come. The warning bell rang imperiously.

The crowd of visitors descended the stairs to the boats which were waiting for them.

In the midst of this confusion every one noticed the arrival of a tardy passenger, who mounted to the deck with his valise in his hand.

The tardy one was Tudor Brown. He presented himself to the captain, and claimed his cabin, to which he was immediately shown.

A moment later, after two or three prolonged whistles, the engine began to work, and a sea of foam whitening the waters behind her, the "Alaska" glided majestically over the green waters of the Baltic, and soon left Stockholm behind her, followed by the acclamations of the crowd who were waving their hats and handkerchiefs.

Erik, on the bridge, directed the maneuvers of the vessel, while Mr. Bredejord and the doctor waved a last farewell to Vanda from the deck.

Mr. Malarius, already frightfully seasick, had retired to his bed. They were all so occupied with saying farewell that not one of them had

noticed the arrival of Tudor Brown.

Therefore the doctor could not repress a start of surprise when as he turned around, he saw him ascending from the depths of the vessel, and marching straight toward him, with his hands in his pockets, clothed as he had been at their first interview, and with his hat always seemingly glued to his head.

"Fine weather!" said Tudor Brown, by way of salutation and introduction.

The doctor was stupefied by his effrontery. He waited for some moments to see if this strange man would make any excuse, or give any explanation of his conduct.

Seeing that he did not intend to say anything, he opened the subject himself.

"Well, sir, it appears that Patrick O'Donoghane is not dead, as we supposed!" he said, with his customary vivacity.

"That is precisely what I want to find out, and it is on that account I have undertaken this voyage."

After saying this, Tudor Brown turned away, and began to walk up and down the deck, whistling his favorite air, appearing to think that his explanation was perfectly satisfactory.

Erik and Mr. Bredejord listened to this conversation with a natural curiosity. They had never seen Tudor Brown before, and they studied him attentively, even more so than Dr. Schwaryencrona. It seemed to them that the man, although he affected indifference, cast a furtive glance at them from time to time, to see what impression he made upon them. Perceiving this, they also immediately feigned to take no notice of him, and did not address a word to him. But as soon as they descended to the saloon, upon which their cabins opened, they took counsel together.

"What could have been Tudor Brown's motive in trying to make them believe that Patrick O'Donoghane was dead? And what was his purpose in taking this voyage upon the 'Alaska'? It was impossible for them to say. But it was difficult not to believe that it had some connection with the shipwreck of the 'Cynthia,' and the infant tied to the buoy. The only interest which Patrick O'Donoghane had for Erik and his friends, was the fact of his supposed knowledge of the affair, and this was their only reason for seeking for him. Now they had before them a man who was uninvited, and who had come to them, and declared that Patrick O'Donoghane was dead. And this man had forced his society upon the members of the expedition, as soon as his assertion in the most unexpected manner had been proved to be false. They were therefore obliged to conclude that he had some personal interest in the matter, and the fact of his seeking out Doctor Schwaryencrona indicated the connection between his interests, and the inquiries instituted by the doctor."

All these facts therefore seemed to indicate that Tudor Brown was in this problem a factor quite as important as Patrick O'Donoghhan himself. Who could tell whether he was not already in possession of the secret which they were trying to elucidate? If this was the case, was it a happy thing for them that they had him on board, or should they rather be disturbed by his presence?

Mr. Bredejord inclined to the latter opinion, and did not consider his appearance among them as at all reassuring. The doctor, on the other side, argued that Tudor Brown might have acted in good faith, and also that he might be honest at heart, notwithstanding his unattractive exterior.

"If he knows anything," said he, "we can hope that the familiarity which a long voyage necessarily produces may induce him to speak out; in that case it would be a stroke of good luck to have had him with us. At least we shall see what he can have to do with O'Donoghhan, if we ever find the Irishman."

As for Erik, he did not even dare to express the sentiments which the sight of this man awakened in him. It was more than repulsion, it was positive hatred, and an instinctive desire to rush upon him and throw him into the sea. He was convinced that this man had had some share in the misfortune of his life, but he would have blushed to abandon himself to such a conviction, or even to speak of it. He contented himself with

saying that he would never have allowed Tudor Brown to come on board if he had had any voice in the matter.

How should they treat him?

On this point also they were divided. The doctor declared that it would be politic to treat Tudor Brown with at least outward courtesy, in the hope of inducing him to speak out. Mr. Bredejord, as well as Erik, felt a great repugnance to act out such a comedy, and it was by no means certain that Dr. Schwaryencrona himself would be able to conform to his own programme. They determined to leave the matter to be decided by circumstances, and the behavior of Tudor Brown himself.

They did not have to wait long. Precisely at midday the bell rang for dinner. Mr. Bredejord and the doctor, went to the table of the commander. There they found Tudor Brown already seated, with his hat on his head, and he did not manifest the least inclination to enter into any relations with his neighbors. The man proved to be so rude and coarse that he disarmed indignation. He seemed to be ignorant of the simplest rules of politeness. He helped himself first, chose the best portions, and ate and drank like an ogre. Two or three times the commander, and Dr. Schwaryencrona addressed a few words to him. He did not even deign to speak, but answered them by gestures.

That did not prevent him however, when he had finished his repast, and armed himself with an enormous tooth-pick, from throwing himself back in

his seat, and saying to Mr. Marsilas:

"What day shall we reach Gibraltar?"

"About the nineteenth or twentieth I think," answered the captain.

Tudor Brown drew a book from his pocket, and examined his calendar.

"That will bring us to Malta on the twenty-second, to Alexandria on the twenty-fifth, and to Aden at the end of the month," said he, as if speaking to himself.

Then he got up, and going on deck again, began to pace up and down.

"A pleasant traveling companion truly," Mr. Marsilas could not help saying.

Mr. Bredejord was about to answer, when a frightful noise at the head of the staircase prevented him. They heard cries, and barking, and a confusion of voices. Everybody arose and ran on deck.

The tumult had been caused by Kaas, Mr. Hersebom's Greenland dog. It seemed that he did not approve of Mr. Tudor Brown, for after evincing his displeasure by low growls every time he passed and repassed him, he finished by seizing him by the legs. Tudor Brown had drawn his revolver from his pocket, and was about to use it when Otto appeared on the scene

and prevented him from doing so, and then sent Kaas away to his kennel. A stormy discussion then took place. Tudor Brown, white with rage and terror, insisted that the dog's brains should be blown out. Mr. Hersebom, who had come to the rescue, protested warmly against such a project.

The commander arriving at this moment, settled the matter by desiring Tudor Brown to put away his revolver, and decreeing that henceforth Kaas must be kept chained.

This ridiculous incident was the only one that varied the monotony of their first days of voyaging. Every one became accustomed to the silence and strange manners of Tudor Brown. At the captain's table they at length took no more notice of him than if he had not been in existence. Everybody pursued their own avocations.

Mr. Malarius, after passing two days in bed, was able to crawl upon deck, he commenced to eat, and was soon able to take his place at the innumerable whist parties of the doctor and Mr. Bredejord.

Erik, very much occupied with his business as lieutenant, spent every spare moment in reading.

On the eleventh they passed the island of Oland, on the thirteenth they reached Shayer Rock, passed through the sound, signaled Heligoland on the fourteenth, and on the sixteenth they doubled Cape Hogue.

On the following night Erik was sleeping in his cabin when he was awakened by a sudden silence, and perceived that he no longer felt the vibrations of the engine. He was not however alarmed, for he knew that Mr. Kjellguist was in charge of the vessel; but out of curiosity he arose and went on deck to see what had happened.

He was told by the chief engineer that the engine had broken down, and that they would be compelled to extinguish the fires. They could proceed, however, under sail, with a light breeze from the south-west.

A careful inspection threw no light on the cause of the damage, and the engineer asked permission to repair to the nearest port to repair the injury.

Commander Marsilas, after a personal examination, was of the same opinion. They found that they were thirty miles from Brest, and the order was given to steer for the great French port.