

The DESTROYER

By BURTON E. STEVENSON

CHAPTER XIV—(Continued).

"We will say good by, then, for the present," added the admiral, with a touch of irony. "We shall, perhaps, be forced again to call upon you."

A second time Hausmann bowed. When Miss Vard entered her stateroom, that day, to brush her hair before going to lunch, her nostrils were assaulted by a most unpleasant odor, and, when a cursory inspection of the room failed to disclose its cause, she summoned the steward and asked him to investigate. An hour later, a white capped official approached Mr. Vard, who was looking vainly through the collection of books in the library for something he cared to read, and informed him, with many apologies, that it would be necessary for him to change his stateroom. Just what was wrong with No. 514 it was impossible to say; but it could not be denied that there was a bad odor there, whose source had not been discovered, and the only alternative seemed to be to shut it up until the end of the voyage and then to overhaul it thoroughly.

"Very well," said Vard. "I have no objection to changing. But I cannot understand how a cubicle with floor, ceiling and walls of steel, could so suddenly become insanitary."

"It is a mystery to us also, sir, and one which we shall look into very thoroughly. We regret it extremely."

"Not at all," said Vard, somewhat astonished that so much should be made of the matter. "Have the steward change our baggage to the new quarters, and then come and show me where they are, and let us forget all about it."

"It is most kind of you to take it so good naturedly," protested the officer. "The embarrassing thing to us is that, as there is no vacant stateroom in the second cabin, we shall have to transfer you to the first."

Vard looked at him. "And you expect me to pay the difference?" he asked.

"Oh, no; not at all," the other hastily assured him. "We had not thought of such a thing! But we feared you might have some objection to first class, and that the change would inconvenience you still more."

Vard smiled grimly. "As a matter of fact, I have an objection to first class," he said, "but it is largely that of wasting money for which I have a better use. The people one sees there also do not appeal to me. I fear most of them are idle fools. But perhaps the library is better selected."

"Oh, it is much larger than this!" the officer agreed. "I may take it, then, that you consent?"

"Certainly. We can't stay in a stateroom that smells as ours does."

"Then," said the other, "if you will inform your daughter, I will myself conduct you to your new quarters."

So Miss Vard was summoned, her steward was loaded with baggage, and after a glance around No. 514 to assure herself that nothing had been overlooked, Miss Vard found herself following her father and the white capped German along a narrow passage, past a steel door that was unlocked for them, and up the companion way to a very handsome suite opening on the upper promenade. It consisted of two bedrooms and a sitting room, and Kasia, as she glanced about it, could not repress an exclamation of surprise.

"Are we to stay here?" she asked.

"Yes, madame," and the official smiled. "It is the only thing we have to offer. I am glad that it pleases you. It will help you to forget the inconvenience of changing," and, having waited until the steward had deposited his burden, he motioned him out before him, bowed and withdrew.

Kasia made a quick tour of the room, admiring its elegant furnishings, glanced into the bedrooms, and then came back to her father.

"I don't understand it!" she said. "Why should they give us all this?"

Her father regarded her in some surprise.

"Why, my dear," he said, "you have heard the explanation. I do not for a moment imagine that the steamship company would have been so generous if there had been any way to avoid it!"

"No, I suppose not!" Kasia agreed, and set herself to arrange their belongings—it was almost like fitting up a flat! "This suitcase is very heavy, father," she added, after a moment. "Will you put it in your room?"

"Of course," and Vard lifted it, started for the bedroom, and then turned and placed it on the little table which stood between the windows. "I will have a look at it, first," he said, loosened the straps, took a key from a flapped compartment of his pocketbook and put it in the lock. "One would scarcely believe, Kasia," he added, with a smile, "that this little bag contains the destiny of the world!"

"No," she said, and came and stood beside him, one arm about him, her head against his shoulder.

He turned the key and raised the lid. Then he put aside some articles of clothing and lifted from beneath them an oblong box, open at the ends. One saw, on looking closer, that the sides of the box were of glass, partially covered on both sides with tin foil; and peering in at the open end, one perceived a vague maze of wires and pinions.

Vard gazed at it for some moments without speaking.

"There it is, Kasia," he said at last, "the wonder worker, which, properly tuned and connected with its batteries, generates a force which puts an end to armies and to fleets. With it in the world, there can be no more war—and if there is no more war, there is the end of kings and tyrants. It is a great thought, is it not, my daughter?"

"A great thought!" she echoed, but her voice was shaking, and she shivered a little and drew closer to him. "And yet, father, think what an awful force it would be if it fell into unscrupulous hands! It is that which makes me tremble sometimes!"

"You do not fear me, Kasia?" he asked reproachfully.

"No, father; of course not!"

He replaced the mechanism, covered it carefully with clothing, closed the lid, locked it, and returned the key to his pocket. Then he carried the bag to his bedroom and slipped it under the bed. At last he came back to his daughter.

"I will not deny, Kasia," he said, "that I have been tempted, more than once. Not by the prospect of wealth or power—those cannot tempt me; but by the thought that, after subduing the world, I might remould it nearer to the heart's desire." And yet how vain to fancy that I or any man possesses the wisdom to do that! No; that cannot be. Each nation must shape its own destiny, as friends and brothers. It is for me to strike the swords from their hands!"

But still Kasia trembled and a shadow lay across her face.

"What is it you fear?" her father asked, looking at her.

"It seems too great a destiny!" she answered, with quivering lips. "There is so great a risk! Suppose some one should steal that instrument!"

"That would do no harm. I can make another—100 others! That is my purpose. The whole world must know of it—must possess it. Every nation must know that, the instant it marches to war, it risks annihilation. I see no danger there."

"But suppose," Kasia persisted, "that the man who stole it should kill you—what then? Oh, I have thought of it, father, so much, so closely, all through the night! We must run no risk like that!"

Vard took a rapid turn up and down the room. He was deeply perturbed. At last he paused beside her.

"You are right, Kasia," he said. "I do not believe there is any danger—yet we must run no risk like that! Well, it is easy to avoid it! Wait!"

He disappeared into his bedroom, and Kasia heard him pulling out the bag and opening it. Then the lock snapped again, the bag was pushed back under the bed, and her father rejoined her.

He held in his hand a little case of polished steel. Within it were three filament like wires wound peculiarly around a series of tiny pins.

"Here it is," he said, "the very heart of the mechanism. Without this it is useless. Without this, it is merely a transformer. It can do no one any harm—can betray no secret."

Kasia took the little box and looked at it.

"Is this difficult to make, father?" she asked.

"It took me eight years to make that one; but I can make another in two days, or perhaps three."

"You are sure of that?"

"Oh, yes," and he smiled. "It is very intricate, yet very simple when one has the clue. Every convolution of those filaments is photographed on my brain. I can close my eyes and see them winding in and out."

The girl hesitated, the little box still in her hand.

"Then it would be safe to destroy this?" she asked, at last.

"Safe? Yes! That is my meaning! Let us destroy it!"

Still a moment she paused, then she closed her hand.

"Yes," she agreed; "let us destroy it."

Her father nodded his head indifferently. With him the moment of tension had passed.

"Drop it into the sea," he said. "That will end it. Now, I think, I shall go and examine the books in the library."

He went out and closed the door; but Kasia stood for a long time without moving, staring at the little box of polished metal. After all, if he should not reproduce it; if there should be some convolution he had missed, some accidental conjunction he was not aware of! If to destroy it now would be to destroy it forever! Better that, of course, than run the other risk! But was there no other way? Perhaps, perhaps...

CHAPTER XV.

A WORD OF WARNING.

Wherefore it happened that Dan Webster, searching promenade and saloon and library, that afternoon, mounting to the boat deck, descending to the lower deck, peeping into every nook and corner where passengers of the second class were permitted to penetrate, looked in vain for Kasia Vard. Nor was her father anywhere to be seen. At last, perceiving the curious glances shot in his direction, and having stumbled for the third time over the same outstretched pair of feet, he mounted gloomily to the boat deck and sat down to think it out.

The weather continued fine and the sea smooth, so that it was absurd to suppose that either of them was ill; and that they should keep to their stateroom on such an afternoon for any other reason or even for that one, was more absurd still. Perhaps, if they were working...

The thought brought him sudden relief. That explained it! They had some work they were doing together. Perhaps Kasia acted as her father's secretary, and even now was writing to his dictation. She had said that he was engaged in some gigantic project, the nature of which Dan understood but dimly—a plan for the disarmament of the world or something like that. As he remembered them here in the cold light of day, her words of the night before seemed more than a little fantastic; but perhaps he had not understood, or perhaps she had spoken figuratively.

"The nations of the world in the hollow of his hand"—that, of course, was figurative. And, equally of course, Vard's plan would come to nothing. But it would be interesting to know more of it.

He must have a talk with Vard before the voyage ended. A story like that would make good copy, and a little newspaper propaganda would help the thing along. Meanwhile, there was nothing to do but wait until Miss Vard should choose to reappear. He cast his mind back over the story she had told him—ye gods! what a feature that would make, told just as she had told it, simply and earnestly and without embellishment. Perhaps he could persuade her to write it for the Record. He could picture the shining face of Craftsman, the Sunday editor, as he read it!

Some one, crossing the deck unperceived by him, sat down beside him. He turned quickly; but it was only Chevril.

"Ah, M. Webster," said the Frenchman, smiling, "you were among the day dreams; and they were not of me. That is apparent from the look with which you regard me!"

Dan flushed a little, and then he laughed. There was no resisting

Chevril's genial humor.

"No," he admitted; "they were of some one quite different."

"Nevertheless, until that 'some one' appears, I trust that I am welcome!"

"Indeed you are. I'm glad you came!"

Dan spoke warmly, and his companion, with a little satisfied nod, settled back into the seat. They had seen very little of each other since the moment of meeting. Dan had gone to bed the previous night before his room mate appeared, and had not even heard him come in. This morning, when he arose, Chevril was sleeping calmly, and Dan had gathered his clothes together as noiselessly as he could and stolen away to the bathroom. They had passed each other once or twice on the promenade, and had nodded but had not spoken—and then Dan remembered suddenly the flare of light from the nearby bench the night before, as he and Kasia rose to go below. Chevril smiled again as he met his glance.

"You are thinking of last night?" he said. "Yes! It is concerning that I wish first to speak to you. When I sat down yonder I was not conscious that this bench was occupied. You and the young lady were speaking in very low tones, and the bench itself was in shadow. It was only when she raised her voice that I realized I was hearing what was not intended for me. I was just about to go, when she stopped abruptly, and a moment later you went down together. It was then that you noticed me. I struck the match in order that you might see that it was I, and so have no uneasiness."

Dan stared at his companion in astonishment.

"Uneasiness!" he repeated. "But why should I have any uneasiness?"

"Not on your own account, of course, but on the young lady's account."

"But I don't see why, even for her, I should be uneasy," said Dan perplexedly.

"My dear sir," and Chevril dropped his voice and spoke very earnestly, "there are always spies on these big boats—this is a most productive field for them—German spies, French spies, English spies, listening to each word, watching each gesture. Suppose one of them had chanced to hear what I did..."

Dan stared a moment longer, then he burst into laugh.

"Oh, come, M. Chevril," he protested. "You don't really believe that?"

"Believe what?"

"About the spies."

Chevril's face grew a little grim.

"I am not one to offer advice where it is not desired," he said; "but I assure you, M. Webster, that what I have told you is true, and furthermore had any one of three or four persons who are on this boat heard what I heard, that girl and her father would have been under espionage for the remainder of their lives."

It was easy to see that Chevril spoke in deadly earnest, and, in spite of himself, Dan was impressed and sobered.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "perhaps you are right; but to an American the very idea of such a system is laughable—it savors to much of cheap melodrama. But why should the story Miss Vard told me interest any one?"

"My dear sir," answered Chevril, drily, "when a girl goes about boasting that her father is more powerful than the czar or kaiser! Suppose she had stopped there, any hearer would have concluded that he was an anarchist, and therefore to be watched. But she went further: she asserted that he can blow up forts and destroy armies! That he can wreck battleships. Why, M. Webster, it is only four days since La Liberté, the greatest of French battleships, was destroyed in the harbor of Toulon by an agency not yet determined!"

Dan had turned a little pale.

"But you don't imagine," he stammered; "surely you don't..."

Chevril flipped away his cigarette negligently.

"That La Liberté was destroyed by this man? Absurd! But, nevertheless, it is a bad time to make such boasts."

"I can see that," agreed Dan. "I will speak to Miss Vard."

"I would do so, by all means. She seems a most interesting girl, and I should regret to see her involved in an unpleasant situation. Or her father," Chevril added. "A most interesting enthusiast!"

"You have talked with him?"

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.)

Two scientists in Europe have decided that the human brain is radioactive and emits a faint glow under certain conditions.

SERVES NATIONAL DEFENCE COUNCIL



Robert S. Brookins.

Robert S. Brookins, a St. Louis merchant, is one of the four civilian members of the war industries board. Mr. Brookins has gained pre-eminence in educational affairs as well as in business, having been active in developing Washington University as well as occupying positions on the board of trustees of the Carnegie Institution and the Carnegie peace foundation.

That Silver Deluge.

From the Detroit Free Press. Silver bullion having now reached the point it was holding in 1922, the year of the repeal of the Sherman purchasing act, there may be an opportunity to test the truth of a belief that was prevalent in some quarters in those days. A good many people seriously thought that there were veritable mountains of silver ore out west and that unless something was done at once by the government the world would be flooded with the white metal and silver would be a drug on the market. The average price of silver in 1922 was 87 cents an ounce, a price lower than the prices now quoted in New York. If there were inexhaustible ore bodies waiting for shipment then they will be in evidence now, since the improvement in mineral saving processes will fully offset the rise in other costs of production and leave as much margin of profit now as in the '90s. But it is safe to say that silver will not replace tin as material for domestic utensils. The largest American producer of silver in any year prior to the repeal of the Sherman act was only 68,500,000 ounces, this record being reached in 1922, when the fears of a silver flood were rampant, and for the last three years the output of the United States has been more than 72,000,000 ounces annually. The silver deluge was only a campaign argument.

The Quiet Life.

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
In his own ground;

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with
Whose flocks supply him with attire;
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter, fire.

Blest, who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health, day, peace, and quietude,
Quiet by day.

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
Together mix'd; sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please
With meditation.

Thus let me live unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

—A. Pope.

Union Pacific Dividends.

Wall Street Journal. Union Pacific Railroad company has declared the regular quarterly dividend of 2 per cent and an extra dividend of one-half per cent on the common and retained semi-annual dividend of 2 per cent on the preferred, all payable October 1 to stock of record September 1.

The present high rate of earnings holds. The payment of 2 per cent extra in January, presumably based on the earnings of 1918 and bringing the returns to stockholders up to 10 per cent for that period, adds strength to this conclusion.

From 1907 to 1913, inclusive, 10 per cent was the regular rate of Union Pacific. The rate was reduced to 8 per cent July 1, 1914, but on July 20 stockholders received as a special dividend \$12 in Baltimore & Ohio preferred and \$2.50 in Baltimore & Ohio common as well as \$3 in cash per share out of surplus. Stockholders of Union Pacific who have retained shares of Baltimore & Ohio distributed at that time have received in the dividends therefrom a continued equivalent of 10 per cent on the Union Pacific holdings, bringing the return to 9 per cent. Their present income from Union Pacific in on a 10 per cent basis irrespective of any Baltimore & Ohio holdings.

Union Pacific's return to 10 per cent in January of this year followed a year of record operating revenues. Earnings for the year ended December 31, 1918, were \$17.64 a share for the common stock, as compared with \$12.42 in 1915.

For the first six months of this year gross earnings were \$33,730,183, as compared with \$30,636,976 in the corresponding period in 1918, while net after taxes was \$15,349,443 against \$12,674,336.

Promising.

Little Marlon's father was the only practicing physician in the town. One morning the little girl, who evidently had an eye to business, came running to her mother and, in tones that had a ring of earnestness, told her that she must call upon their new neighbor at once.

"And why, dear, must I call on her?" questioned her mother, amused at the child's positiveness.

"Well, in the first place," explained the little miss, "they've got four of the scrawniest kids you ever saw, and then the mother herself doesn't look very strong."

Extent of Africa.

From the Christian Herald. Nearly one-fourth of the earth's land surface is comprised within the continent of Africa, and it is far around the coast of Africa as it is around the world. Every eighth of a person of the world's population lives in the dark continent. The blacks double their number every 40 years, and the whites every 50 years. There are 83 languages and dialects spoken among the blacks of Africa, but only a few of them written. One area in Africa, occupied by missionaries is three times the size of New England, a second would make four states like New York, and another is 13 times the size of Ohio. Throughout Africa there is one missionary for every 123,000 souls.

Rebuffed.

From the New York Times. Mrs. Marton (to small daughter saying prayers)—"A little louder, dear. I can't hear."

Daughter—"Yes, but I'm not speaking to you."

PAIN? NOT A BIT!
LIFT YOUR CORNS
OR CALLUSES OFF
No humbug! Apply few drops then just lift them away with fingers.

This new drug is an ether compound discovered by a Cincinnati chemist. It is called freezezone, and can now be obtained in tiny bottles as here shown at very little cost from any drug store. Just ask for freezezone. Apply a drop or two directly upon a tender corn or callus and instantly the soreness disappears. Shortly you will find the corn or callus so loose that you can lift it off, root and all, with the fingers. Not a twinge of pain, soreness or irritation; not even the slightest smarting, either when applying freezezone or afterwards. This drug doesn't eat up the corn or callus, but shrivels them so they loosen and come right out. It is no humbug! It works like a charm. For a few cents you can get rid of every hard corn, soft corn or corn between the toes, as well as painful calluses on bottom of your feet. It never disappoints and never burns, bites or inflames. If your druggist hasn't any freezezone yet, tell him to get a little bottle for you from his wholesale house.—adv.



ORCHID ICE CREAM COMMON

It Does Not Bear That Aristocratic Title but Goes by the Very Plebeian Name of Vanilla.

Very few of us would ever think of ordering orchid ice cream without a little tremor of the pocket book, for everyone knows that the orchid is the most expensive of flowers. But there are thousands of persons who eat orchid ice cream daily. Although they probably have not been aware of the distinction, it is none the less a fact. Of course the ice cream is not ordered by the aristocratic name of orchid. On the contrary, it bears the very plebeian name of vanilla.

There are said to be no less than 15,000 varieties of orchid scattered over the earth. All of them have the peculiar artificial beauty and the haunting odor that seems inseparable from this flower, which looks almost as though it were a product of an unhealthy condition in nature. Of all these 15,000 varieties, only one has any practical value, and that is the one from which vanilla comes. The plant grows abundantly in South and Central America, and has been transplanted to other tropical countries, where it is now flourishing.

Waited Eighteen Years for It.

Talk about the returning traveler, and how he feels his heart beat when he returns to his native shore from a long, long sojourn in a foreign land! Here's Frederick Rockwood, New Englander by birth and a resident of Bogota, Colombia, for 18 years as consul, newspaper correspondent and general agent.

He landed in this country a few days ago, perfectly tickled to death, as the girls say, to get back to the U. S. A. But did he fall down and kiss the shores or offer burnt sacrifices?

He did not.

He had been longing for a good-sized dish of corned beef hash ever since he went to Colombia 18 years ago. He had been saving up a corned beef hash appetite all these years. So when he landed the first thing he did was to go to a restaurant and order five portions of his favorite food.—Earl Goodwin in Washington Star.

You can't tell how well-heeled a man is by the size of his shoes.

Where there's a will there's always an heir.

If
you never
tasted
Grape-Nuts
FOOD
you have
missed
one of the
good things
in life