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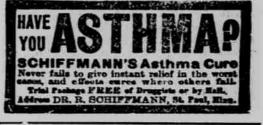
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BY CHARLES GIBBON.

grey old houses, with their red and brown roofs, looking out on the harbor, would also have appeared dull and dirty but for their picturesquely irregular gabies and heights. Then the busy figures of the fishwives in their bright-colored petticoats and "shortgowns" (long jackets); the lounging groups of the fishermen, and, above all, the bustle in the harbor and on its walls which projected out into the Forth, gave life to the scene in harmony with the strong breeze

"Will she win in, think you?" asks one. Saw enough Bon was is steering." confidently answers a little weather-wizened-

"It was a daftlike thing for Bob to think he could be out in time to help them."

"It was worth trying," said Baxter drily. Suddenly the prow of the boat is turned towards the opening in the walls and comes straight and swiftly along, crosses the bar, down goes the sail, and boat and men are safe in haven.

There was no cheer although brave work had been done; but an eager inspection of

"They hae gotten them a' but Jock Tamson," said Baxter in a matter-of-fact tone, the circumstance being of too ordinary a nature to call for much feeling; "pair sowl,

"My man, my man," cried a woman, rushing down the steps to the boat, "whar's he?" There was no answer and the woman understood. She bowed her head, covered her face with her hands and was silent. Then a couple of burly women, with broad shoulders and muscular hands, took each an arm

ly, and the voice was tender although the notes were harsh—"ye'll he better there."
And they led the widow home.

helping one of the three men who had been saved to land. The others followed, and were first assisted to a much-needed dram and then to their houses. The crew proceeded to the inn, accompanied by a number of friends eager to obtain more details of the rescue than had been given in the hurried answers to the crowd in the haven.

Ross did not accompany them. He gave his stalwart frame a shake, like a huge Newfoundland dog after coming out of the water, and that contented him. He was a man of about thirty, a handsome fellow, tall and sinewy, dressed in a pilot jacket, and boots over his trousers.

weather, the features good, and the clear grey eyes which looked straight at any man bespoke an honest, open, and fearless nature. He had begun life in his father's fishing smack; but whilst always ready to do his duty in the boat, he had continued to attend school more than the other lads of the village, and to make more of what he learned there. The dominie took an interest in him and helped him to learn navigation as far as it was in that worthy man's power to do it. But his real knowledge was gained by practical experience in his father's smack. So, by the time he was twentytwo he was said to know the road from Newhaven to John o' Groat's-ay, or from Newhaven to Yarmouth-better than any pilot in Leith. He obtained his license and became a recognized pilot. He soon earned a high reputation as a trusty, steady, and skilful man. But he still retained his interest in the smack, and when occasion permitted went out to the fishing with as much glee as of old.

After he had seen the rescued men safe in their homes, he turned on the way to his own. Dick Bexter met him. He was a favorite of Dick's, and that was an honor; for Dick was a person of importance in the village. An accident thirty years ago had disabled him from following his craft as a fisherman; but he eked out a living by doing odd jobs at the harbor and by the tips he obtained from sightseers for information about the place and people. This he gave with the air of a proprietor showing his place to his guests. Amongst fisherfolk he obtained the reputation of being a wise man. He was a pawky one, giving advice in a slow, learned way that impressed the simple although clever people. He pronounced as authoritatively on the position of current politics as on religious affairs and the weather. In short he was an authority in the land notwithstanding the chaff which

In his scaly old blue jersey and corduroy trousers, and with his thin brown wizened face, he was always at his post and knew everybody's affairs.

"I was on the look-oot for you, Bob. Hoo did you manage? It was weel done on yway." "We were just in time-poor Thomson had gone and the other three were just dropping off the keel. But you see we got them,

"Ay, but it was weel done, and there'll be a paragraph in the Scotsman about you the-morn.

laughing. "Is that a' you think o't? Man, I'd gie onything to hae them speak about me in

print! But be that as 't may, wha do you think is here?" "A lout oo'f folk."

you would like to ken that Jeems" (pronounced with the s short) "is here." "To see his mother, I suppose, and get

some more of her sider." "Jist that, an' speaking that fine English

I could hardly understan' him. But I thought you would like to ken, for he's come to see some ane forbye his mither." That was what Dick Baxter had been

Bob Ross's face-a comical attempt to hide the fact that the news disturbed him. "But what can that matter to me, Dick? I

"Nae doot, and it's jist as you tak' it. But if I was in your place, I'd be there afore

"Where, man, where?" "As though you didna ken!" exclaimed Dick slyly. "Hows'ever, you'll ken fine when I tell you that I saw her vestreen and she was speerin' for you, and there was a braw laugh on her face when I said you was to be here the-day."

dence annoyance; "but I wish you wouldna" meddle.

"I didna' ken afore that it was ony harm to do a frien' a guid turn," answered Dick Baxter in his most dignified way.

"No harm-I hope." "I didna say onything by ordinar," said Dick a little sulkily, and yet with a desire to reassure Ross, seeing him so much put out. But the "by ordinar" must have had an extensive range indeed in his mind since he had been praising his young friend without stint to Annie Murray, the only child of Captain Duncan Murray, who was sole owner of Anchor Cottage and the Mermaid steamer. "And she didna take it that ill," added Dick pawkily.

"Then it's all right,"

And Ross laughed again as he went his way, and that way was to Anchor Cottage, He had been sent for by Captain Duncan on a matter of business. But the business was not in Bob Ross's mind as he walked rapidly along with head bowed against the wind, the spray dashing over the parapet, and the sun slowly beginning to make its way through the mist.

"I wonder can it be true! Was she thinking o' me? Maybe, maybe, for she's no resetting like other lassies I ken " havers is this? The

-- septain is friendly and proud o' his steamer, and proud o' his siller

—he would never hear o't when there's a chiel like Cargill hanging about waiting for

At this thought he stopped, teeth closed and feet went down harder and faster on the ground. Again-

"But why should he not think of his own early days and count my chances as guid as his were?"

Here a faint smile of hope crossed his face; but the smile faded into a troubled "I'm thinking he would do it, too, if Car-

gill werena here with his fineries and his siller that he had no hand in making. Puir auld Bell Cargill-it was a pity you spent your life in hoarding up your bawbees for a loon that's more than half-ashamed to call you his mother before his fine friends -ugh! Lord forgie me for thae hard thoughts. If Annie likes him let him hae

The healthy nature of the man rose against this envious spirit which had for a moment taken possession of him. Helifted his head and looked Fate steadily in the face. She should take him for his own sake

or he would "e'en let the bonnie lass gang." It was a relief to the man to feel this better mood upon him before he reached the cottage, for he knew that ugly thoughts make ugly faces. It was a relief, too, that the sun had scattered the mist and brightened everything.

> CHATPER II. ANCHOR COTTAGE

The cottage stood on the high ground overlooking the Firth. It was a square comfortable-looking building of one story, built of brown stone and slated. The only piece of ornamentation about the building was a porch. It stood in a piece of ground which was also square and planted with things useful-vegetables, fruit-trees, and berrybushes. There were a few plots of flowers and some rose-bushes, but these things being merely beautiful were kept well within bounds. Nevertheless the place had a cosy appearance and was attractive on that ac-

count. The captain had been brought up to regard utility as the first consideration in life; and the only bit of fancy he had permitted himself when the grounds were laid out, was to place an old anchor in the center of the patch of grass, called the green. This anchor had one of its points stuck firmly in the ground as if it were holding the whole

place steady. "That auld anchor, sir," the captain would say to any visitor, "saved the Mermaid once when she was being blown out of the roads by one of the clartiest storms I have ever been in. The Mermaid of that time was a bit cutter you maun ken. And when I sold the cutter and got the steamer I brought that anchor here and I'm proud o' it-rael proud-and so I named the house after it."

As soon as Ross passed through the gate he halted, hesitating whether to go straight to the door or cross the green towards the lass he saw amongst the berry-bushes busy gathering fruit. His heart's impulse had its way, and he went towards her.

As the gate closed behind him with a clang a frank sun-browned face looked up from amongst the bushes and recognized him with a pleasant smile. He thought that smile as bright as the sunshine itself.

"Glad to see you' Mr. Ross." she said in a rich cheery voice. "Father has been expecting you, but there is somebody with him just now." How cordially Bob Ross thanked that

'somebody," and how earnestly he prayed that the "somebody" might stay long. "I could not come so early as I was meaning to do, and I'm no exactly sorry.'

"How is that?" "You are here."

She looked as if she enjoyed, or at any rate did not dislike, this very direct compliment. She said banteringly-"T'll hae to take care of you, Mr. Ross."

"That's just what I would like you to do,"

he rejoined sincerely. "Keek into the berry-bush and say what you see there," she replied, laughingly quoting an old play-rhyme of childhood. "I'm doubting you would not let me tell

you what I see.' "Oh, but I would, for I'm no the gowk!" "I'm sure of that, for what I see is the

bonniest lass in all the world!" "Eh, Mr. Ross!" she cried, laughing again, "I'm thinking I had better go and tell my father you are here."

That was a check, otherwise he might have found an opportunity to turn this banter to serious account. She was conscious of that and wished to avoid the possible turn the conversation might take-and he was aware of it.

But he tried to detain her by the assurance that he was in no hurry and would rather wait until the captain was quite free. With a smiling shake of the head, she took up her basket of fruit and went towards the house. A tall, winsome figure, in neat simple dress; and as she crossed the green her rich fair hair glistened in the sunlight

The wistful lover, following, felt that there was no use in following, for such a prize could never be his-not because there was any inseparable gulf between their positions; but because she in herself appeared to be so much above him or any ordinary mortal. Alas, poor lover!

like gold.

But Annie was a bright specimen of woman nature-kind and generous, bonnie and brave. The man who won her would be fortunate indeed, for he would possess that greatest of all blessings, a faithful helpmate in all that concerns daily life-tender in his sorrow, blithe in his gladness, and patient

of his errors. All this and more Ross thought, and it rendered the possibility of her becoming the prize of James Cargill the more bitter. He tried to make allowance for his own feelings in regard to Annie and the influence

when all allowance was made ue could not believe that Cargill was likely to make her

or any woman happy.

The captain's daughter was as famous as the captain himself; for although she could play the "planny," and was reported to be able to speak French "as well as the French themselves" (such a smattering of the language as any school-girl might possess would suffice for this report), she was her father's clerk and purser, besides being his housekeeper. She accompanied him on all his voyages, and in the wildest storm was

When the Mermaid was in straits she would stand by her father's side-her sailor hat and the pea jacket over her ordinary dress giving her tall figure a somewhat manly appearance-ready to obey him in anything he might command.

manhood. When at home in the cottage no stranger would have suspected that the quiet-looking lass with the merry smile was accustomed to such stern experiences

The Mermaid was a small -- steamer which Duncan Murra

Ther nad purchased a bargain.

naving sold his cutter, he employed the steamer to considerable advantage in carrying goods along the coast, or to whereever he might obtain a cargo. By this means he had made a good deal of money-a big fortune his friends considered it-some of which was prudently invested in house property.

He might have retired and lived comfortably on his income. But he would not do that; he only became more particular about his cargoes and about his rates of freight. Likewise, he would now employ a pilot more frequently than had been his custom, in order to give himself more ease on board.

Often he had been heard to declare with an emphatic oath that he would never part with the Mermaid or his daughter "as lang as they could hand thegither."

In spite of this well-known declaration there were men who would have been glad to make him forego his yow so far as the lady was concerned; only, she *cemed to be as much disposed to observe it as her father. At any rate, no one had yet obtained her favor; and there seemed no likelihood of that favor being easily won.

To herself there was the simple fact that her life was a happy one and there was no need of change. Even if one should appear possessed of that strange power which draws a maiden away from father, mother, and kindred to trust her whole life to him. she believed that she could resist it, until her father said-"Go, and take my blessing with you."

"Here is Mr. Ross, father," said Annie, as she entered the room, and added with some surprise-"Mr. Cargill has gone?"

"Ay; did you not see him?-he wanted to see you. . . . How are you, Bob? I'm wanttin' you to come wi' us as far as Peterhead. Can you manage it?" The captain was a burly little man with a

very ruddy face-shrewd, sharp, and yet not ill-natured. "When?" was the prompt query. "Next week, on Tuesday maybe, but on

Wednesday sure.' Ross looked at Annie-his eyes turned to her involuntarily, asking the question, was she going too? But she looked down at the table examining some forms which her father had thrust towards her whilst he was

"I'm not sure. But what should you need me for?-you know the roads better than

The captain's quick pale eyes looked up at him sharply, and he said good-natured-

"I'm perfectly aware o' that, Bob, but next to mysel' I think you ken them best." "Thank you captain."

"And as I am to have a friend wi' me, I dinna want to hae mair fash mysel' nor is just necessary. That's the reason why I want you wi' us, though what you are sac particular about kenning for, I canna make out. What's wrang wi' ye?"

That was a question not easily answered, for the man himself did not know precisely. He felt that there was a great deal wrong with him; but as he found it difficult to discover an explanation for it in his own mind, it was impossible to translate it in words to the understanding of another. So, he answered vaguely-

"Nothing, captain, except that I would like a bit rest."

"Rest!-you that fetched aff they three billies frae the smack this morning, and was able to walk out here as if naething had happened-you to talk about rest when you are gaun aboard the Mermaid!-hoots man, that's na your reason."

"What is that about the smack, father?" broke in Annie, with eyes brightening, as she remembered the explanation Ross had given for being late. "A daft thing-that fool-fellow gaed out

in the teeth o'a gale because he saw a smack cap-eczed---" "Did you save them?" she asked of Ross;

but the father replied-"Oo, ay, he brought hame three o' thembut he might hae made the loss o' his ain crew as weel as that o' the smack. It was cleverly done as I am told, all the same; but you should mind that life in the hand is worth twa in the wrack. But that's na the question; are you to come wi' me or no? Cargill is coming."

Annie by a flush of the cheeks and a movement of the hand-instantly checked as if she would take that of Ross, appeared to think that the saving of the men was very much the question.

The father did not observe the movement, and Ross was entirely occupied with the announcement that Cargill was going to Peterhead on board the Mermaid. "I'll go wi' you, captain," he said quietly;

and any one hearing him speak would have thought that he was merely closing an ordinary bargain. But through his mind was passing the panorama of Cargill, all the way along the coast courting Annie.

"That's a plain word, and I think you ought to hae spoken it sooner, for it's au easy job to you, and you'll be among frien's. Take a dram on the head o't."

CHAPTER III.

AT THE GATE.

He had been in a dream during the last ten minutes of his stay in the captain's room. He was in a dream now that he got out into the fresh air. Cargill going with them-Cargill had been at the cottage just before him-why, then it was all settled and there was no hope for him.

What fiend, then, had prompted him to say he would be pilot of the Mermaid on this voyage? Why should he be with them when it would be only to intensify his sense of loss into hate, and-maybe, crime?

He should have said, No, no, no!-and he had said "yes" for the very reason which should have compelled him to say no. It was not yet too late, He could find

some excuse; he could feign illness-he could drown himself. Anything rather than go on board that vessel and see them together, knowing the man to be so unworthy. He did believe that if he had thought Cargill an honest man he could have said goodbye in sad resignation to the inevitable; he could have steered them safely into port with no chagrin, but only sorrow in his



CHAPTER I. A FRESH BREEZE. A grey day that would have been dull anywhere but by the sea. A strong breeze blowing and the grey and blue waters leaping into white combs and points. A landsman would have called it a gale, but to fisherfolk it was only "a wee thing fresh." The

and the leaping waters. Out on the farthest point of the grey walls a group of men and women, with the spray flashing over them and the keen wind biting their cheeks, stood watching a smack which was tacking to make the port.

faced old man, by name Dick Baxter. Bob Ross had seen a smack capsize and with five trusty e urades had put off to the

the boat to see who was in it.

of the mourner. "Come awa hame, Jeanie," said one, quiet-

Bob Ross was the first out of the boat,

His face was tanned by exposure to the

he had sometimes to endure from the young-

and that's all."

"Well, it'll do nae harm," answered Ross,

"Jist that, jist that; but I was thinking

waiting to tell, and he enjoyed the look on

suppose he is free to go wherever he is welcome like other folk."

"Thank you, Dick." said Ross with evi- ings in regard to Anine and the man, But

as cool as the oldest seaman on board.

And throughout this rough life she preserved the gentlest characteristics of wo-