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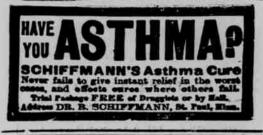


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A MAIDEN FAIR, and trowning prow.

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

"Ah, you are weather-wise, Miss Murray, and I ought not to have dared to say a word on the subject. I ought to have asked you to tell me how it was to be. But we may be happy in the most unpleasant weather when we are with those we like best in the

"What is the day to be, father?" she said, turning her head away impervious to this very broad compliment.

"You'll na be fashed wi' heavy seas, ony way," answered the captain, busy minding his own business and unconscious of what was going on. Cargill did feel that slight movement of her head and inattention to his words; for like all small natures he was content so long as attention was paid to him, but spiteful always, and wrathful sometimes, when he was treated with the slightest neglect.

"However, she will come round," was his thought, and the opportunity to bring her round was his now. The father was in his favor, and that bugbear, Bob Ross, was not on board. He congratulated himself most cordially on that circumstance. He did not care by what lucky accident it had been brought about. There was the fact, and that was enough for him. It was something more than that the absence of Ross left him free to woo Annie; there had been certain wild thoughts in his head which made him spec. Hy glad that the man was

Then he had a porticular piece of gratification. Annie went down to the deck and he accompanied her. They walked up and down, and she listened to his empty chatter about the grand sights and grand people of London and Paris. He tried to make her understand what delights lay before the woman who should be taken to these places by a man who loved her and "knew his way about."

She said little in reply, but she listened, and he felt assured that he was making rapid progress in her good graces. She halted occasionally and looked out to sea or towards the shore scanning the waters with eager eyes; he did not observe their expression, and did not guess what she was looking for. And at such times she would say "yes" or "no" "that's fine," in a low voice

which filled him with the joy of triumph. But in the midst of his triumph, the Mermaid suddenly slackened speed, and then the engine stopped altogether. Annie stood still, looking across the water at a smack which was sailing towards them.

"Is there anything the matter?" inquired Cargill in surprise.

"Oh, no, nothing the matter; only there's Mr. Ross coming." Cargill looked as if the shadow of the

blackest cloud which followed them had fallen on his face. Then there came a shout from the distance

of "Mermaid ahoy!" And presently the boat glided up beside the steamer. A little figure climbed up her side and Bob Ross stood on the deck. A wave of his hand to his comrades below to signify "all right," the little boat dropped astern, and the paddles of the Mermald moved again. Then he turned to shake hands with Annie, but did not stay to speak more than a few words of greeting to her. He hastened to the cap-

There was such a change in the manner of the girl! And yet it was a change of so quiet a nature that it was only perceptible to the eyes of jealousy. Dull of wit as Caralousy made him keen of vision. From the impassive listener to his rhodomontade, courteous because he was her father's guest, she became buoyant in mood and bright in face, answering him briskly on every subject he mooted, giving him with singular cordiality more than all the information he desired as to the management of the vessel and the various points of the coast which they passed. For as it was a clear day they were enabled to hug the coast line, and even the houses could be distinguished with the naked eye, so far.

"But suppose now if the man at the wheel happened for a little while to neglect his duty and you were passing a rocky shore, what would be the consequence?" he inquired, as one anxious for information.

"Well, if the wind blew landward we should come to grief," she replied, smiling, "But you need not be afraid of that with my father and Mr. Ross on board."

"Oh, I am not afraid," he said pompously; "but I wanted information in the management of a boat, as I think of buying a yacht, and your father is to arrange the matter for me if I should decide upon it. But

that will depend upon somebody else." And he looked at her, meaning that she should understand who the somebody was. She did not choose to understand, but answered as if she were interested in the pro-

"It would be a fine enjoyment for you to go sailing about wherever you liked; but I hope you would not think of managing the boat yourself at first."

"Certainly not; but the somebody is quite able to do it-only of course she would not the pledge she had given. be required to do it. She would, however, control our skipper, whoever he might be, and see that he played no larks with us. As, for instance, keeping us in port for his own purposes when we wanted to go out by pretending that the wind was dead against us; or there was a storm coming-and so on. She would know all about it and set him right."

Still she would not understand. "It is not usual for any one to interfere with the skipper," she said, without the slightest alteration of tone or manner; "and no man that ken'd his trade would allow it." "But supposing you were to see a man

making a dangerous mistake-he might know his trade but be drunk perhaps-you would not stand by and permit it to continue at the risk of the lives of all on

"Ay, but the man that got drunk when at his work would not ken his trade," she answered, in a tone of contempt for such an individual as had been problematically sug-

The answer and the manner in which it was given apparently afforded Cargill much satisfaction, for he did not at that moment further attempt to impress upon her that the yacht he spoke of was to be bought for her if his suit prospered.

She was too happy to be annoyed by his attentions; and he was not mistaken as to the immediate source of her good-nature. He saw her speaking frequently to Ross, and although he could not hear them, he could easily guess the purport of their conversation, and he was several times successful in interrupting them. He noted with what glee she waited upon him at meals, on which occasions they were generally alone together in the cabin, for, of course, when Ross was below, Captain Duncan was on deck.

Ohce, standing by the open sky-light he heard this part of their conversation. "You mind, Annie, that when this trip is over I'm to speak to your father."

"Oh, yes, I mind; and I can give you good news. From something he said to me, I think he'll maybe na be much against it." Carrill walked away with teeth bard set the darkening outlines of the coast. He

CHAPTER VIII. ROCKS AHEAD.

But from that moment Cargill's bearing towards Ross altered strangely. He became quite friendly-not patronising-in talking to him, and he praised him in the cabin. So cleverly did he manage this that Ross said to himself, "Well, he is not so spiteful as I thought he was;" and Annie's eyes bright ened whilst she said to herself, "Well, there is some good in him after all. I never thought he could say a kind word about Bob." For although she spoke of Mr. Ross,

that person was in her thoughts plain Bob. In fact they were all getting on in such a pleasant way that Captain Duncan began to think that Cargill had succeeded in winning the lass; and he said to his daughter when they were alone together-

"So, you're to tak' a man after a"" "I'm na wantin' a man," she said very decisively, knowing to whom her father referred.

"Ay, ay," was the jocular observation, "ye say that, but I never ken'd a lass that didna want a man unless she had one already." Annie turned away her head, making no

reply. But she was thinking much. What was she to do if her father insisted on this marriage with Cargill? He had said that he would not insist; but she knew how obstinate he was once he had got an idea fixed in his head. Kind he was, and fond of her as a father could be of a daughter; but in his anxiety to see her "a grand leddy," as he called it, the conviction might be borne in upon him that he was proving his affec-tion most by forcing her to do what he judged best for her future.

Had Annie seen the curious grin on her father's ruddy face as he made his little joke, perhaps she would not have been so uneasy. She had not seen it, but remembered what she had told him-that she would take no man without his good-will and would not take one against her own. She would hold to that.

She went towards Ross, who was at the wheel. He smiled as she approached, but there was no answering smile on her face. She passed him without a word and stood with her back towards him gazing at the long track the little steamer had made.

Ross, grasping his wheel firmly, glanced round in surprise; but it was only for an instant, for he had to turn his face quickly to the course before him. He could speak, however, although he could not look, for the coast of huge rocks is one of the most dangerous known to mariners. The Mermaid was a very slow vessel, although a sure one, and to save time, the weather being fine, they were hugging the shore, and constant watchfulness was requisite on the part of the pilot.

"Is there anything wrong?" he asked anxiously. She answered, also without changing her

"I am feared there is something wrong." "Can you tell me what it is-can I help you in it?"

She stood silent for a while, the wind, whistling around them and the engines panting as the Mermaid toiled her way along. At length, Annie-

"Do you mind that day we were at the gate?"

"I shall never forget it." "Do you mind that when I was saying there was only one time when I wished I might leave father, I did not tell you what that time was?"

"I mind every word you said, for every rd was like

"I am going to tell you now." Her voice faltered a little as she spoke, and he listened with his heart thumping against his side. Then came the low sweet voice like a whisper of the wind-

"It was when I thought of you." His grasp tightened on the handle of the wheel as if to keep himself from forgetting all sense of duty and turning round to take her in his arms.

"I ken'd that, Annie, and that was what made your words sae dear to me. Nothing can ever take the joy of that minute from me-I hae felt it in my heart ever since, and it has comforted me whenever I thought of the possibility that you might be given away

to-somebody else." There was again a long silence. They were full of the glory of their love and could not speak. Annie was the first to find voice. "I doubt my father is against us. He is taken up with that man, and his grand ways and his fortune and his promises, and I doubt he will never hearken to a word from you. That is what is wrong, and I'm sair

troubled." "But you will never give yourself to him?" "Never. That is what I came to tell you -I shall never take him; but I shall never take you either without father's will. And I want to tell you more; that if I am na to be yours, I shall never be anybody else's." "I am content. I can bide my time, and

it will come. Do not you fear.' She scarcely heard the comforting words, for she had turned quickly and hurried away, half-ashamed of the confession and

Ross feit as if he could have steered the Mermaid against the wildest storm that ever blew. He was no mere man now, he was a giant with all a giant's strength. She had told him that her thoughts had been like his own long ago. She had pledged herself to him and the future was safe. Now he knew what he had to do. He had to satisfy her father and he would do it. There might be a little delay, but the time must come when Duncan Murray would own that he was worthy of his daughter. As for Cargill,-poor chap !- if he had any right feeling in him at all he would suffer badly by the loss. Even if it were only his vanity which was hurt, he would suffer, So, for

But oh! the happiness that thrilled through the man as he stood at his post, guiding the little Mermaid safely to her

him there was nothing but kindly pity.

Cargill, however, had no intention of being a loser in this game they were playing. He, too, could bide his time, and he felt assured that his time was nearer than that of

It had been his purpose to make his proposal to Annie before they reached Peterhead; but he had soon seen that the time was not fitting, and he did not mean to ask her to marry him until he was pretty sure that her answer would be yes. And that time would be soon.

It was getting dark when the heavily laden little steamer reached the rugged coast of Buchan, and the pilot, knowing the dangers of the Dun Buy Rock and the Bullers, was keeping well off, but not so well off as one less acquainted with the coast would have done. So far, this had been the most rapid passage the slow Mermaid had achieved. and Ross had good reasons for desiring to make it a remarkable one in its career.

When they were about opposite Slains Castle, the lights were up, and there was no one on deck except Ross and the look-out. The captain was below, resting in perfect confidence of his pilot's skill, and Annie was engaged with some papers in the cabin. Cargill came on deck, lit a cigar, and took

SPOKE & IEW WORDS to the diam on out, then he walked slowly aft to Ross, who, confident of his course in such a caim see, and feeling some sorrow for the man whom disappointment he expected to be so great, and who had become so friendly with him

lately, had no objection to exchange a word with him. "Cold work this. Ross, and confoundedly dull, isn't it?" he said good-naturedly, "Neither cold nor dull, Mr. Cargill," was

the cheery answer.
"Ah, you like the work, I suppose, and that makes all the difference." Cargill seated himself on a coil of rope as

"Of course I like it or I wouldn't be at it." "I suppose you find it troub'esome enough at times?

"That is to be expected-all work is troublesome at times.' "You seem to be taking things easy, though, with all the perils of the deep be-

fore you." "Whiles," answered Ross, laughing. "Wish I could do that," and a cloud of smoke went up from the cigar.

"You have never known what it was to work for your living, and that's a pity for any man."

Ah . . . Do you smoke?" "Very seldom, and never at work," "That's a pity for you; because I have some splended cigars here-cost a shilling

"Then I should not like to smoke one." "You would if you knew what they were. Well, you won't refuse to have a drink with me? If you do, I shall think you are keep-

ing up old scores against me." He poured out a drain from his flask ashe spoke and held it up to Ross. The latter hesitated, but remembering the trouble he was to cause this man, he said-

"It is against all rules to drink when on duty; but seeing what there has been between us is likely to be, I won't refuse to drink your health,"

He drank and Cargill slowly put the metal cup on the bottom of his flask again.

"Capital stuff that, I can tell you. Got it my-elf from a friend in Campbelton." "Ay, it's strong," said Ross, gasping. "I wish there had been some water with it,"

"Would you like some now? I'll send it "Thank you, I'll be obliged to you," "All right," and Cargill moved off as if to fulfil his promise. He threw hise gar over-

board and disappeared down the cabin stair. But the water did not come. Ross felt his throat parefied and something fiery fly up to his head, making his eyes start as if they were to come out. What could this be? Surely one glass of whisky could never have such an . If at upon him. It must have been very sir g whisky indeed. What a fool he had been to touch it! They were approaching the Dun Buy Rock and the Bullers, where he should have all his senses about him. But no! his senses were becoming confused, his eyes dim, and everything danced before them-a devil's dance of flashes of fire and black huge rocks. What was the matter? Could be not pull himself together? He had only to hold the wheel as it was and all was right. Steady, now. He set his teeth; he would master

this demon that had got possession of him. He tried to call out, but his tongue was paralyzed. His senses were becoming more and more confused, his eyes more and more dazzled. Then a sort of frenzy seemed to come upon him. He would defy these demons. He would hold on and carry the

vessel safely by the rocks. He fell, still holding to the wheel, thus altering the course of the Mermaid so that her nose turned suddenly straight to the Dun Buy Rock.

There was a moment of bewilderment on the part of the look-out. Then he shouted in terror-"Save us! what's wrang?-we'll be on the

rocks in five minutes!" The captain heard the cry and harried on deck, followed by his daughter and Cargill. In an instant the captain's eyes took in the terrible position. He rushed to the

wheel and saw Ross lying prostrate. *Drunk! and earse him?" he almost screamed as he grasped the wheel, and with a vigorous effort wrenched it round so that he turned the Mormaid Into safe water ...

All hands were on deck now, Annie standing apart, pale and bewildered,

"Take that drunken villain out o' my sight," he roared, as he stood panting and guiding the vessel.

CHAPTER IX. ALL FORLORN.

The huge rocks called the Bullers o' Buchan rise high and jagged above the sea, which dashes and churns white against them, falling back a mouning as if with disappointment that it cannot overthrow them. But it has made inroads at their feet, forming curious archways, leading to great cayerns, once the haunt of smugglers. Still the rocks stand firm, proud guardians of the coast, and a terror to mariners and fishermen when the winds blow high.

The little Mermaid looked like a speck on the water in contrast with these giants of nature. As it steamed slowly and safely by them there were some on deck whose hearts beat quick at thought of the peril they were so narowly escaping. All were grateful to the captain, who had come so timely with such skill and strength to their rescue; only one pitied the man who had led them into the danger.

As for Duncan Murray, his breast was full of wrath. The reputation for care and skill which he had earned with a lifetime to be jeopardised at last, and only saved by a miracle! Jeopardised by the man he had trusted as he trusted himself! There was

no penalty heavy enough for such a villain! Except the engine-man and Ross, who had been placed on the floor of the cabin, all remained on deck. But no word was spoken until they had passed the grim Bullers. They were like people petrified, pale and dumb, watching the scowling figure at the wheel. When they knew that they were safe there was one great breath like a sobof relief, and a silent prayer of wondering thanks. Then the power of motion was restored to them by the loud voice of the cap-

tain giving some brief commands. Annie had been by her father's side all the time, so white and calm that she was more like a statue than a living woman. She watched every movement of the vessel, how obediently it answered the helm under the master's hand, until at length it took them out into safe water. But her mind was busy seeking the reason for this strange occurrence. Her father in his rage had said that Ross was drunk, but she could not believe it. Her mind leapt to the thought that he had fallen in some fit; and at her father's first words she moved swiftly away, down

There on the floor lay the man she loved, the man to whom she had pledged herself, and who had so nearly destroyed them alla senseless, ugly piece of humanity. She approached him, bent over him with tender

to the cabin.

She drew back quickly and her face flushed. His breath told her that her father had spoken truly. And yet she was dimly cona short turn up and down as if surveying scious that mingled with the fumes of whisky there was something else, which she