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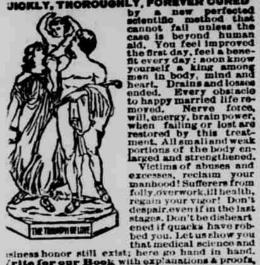
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was already as ir, and as soon as Ross appeared from below, they met. "I am sorry for you. Bob: but it's the best

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

He could not yet recollect all that had

thing you can do to gang hame by train. I dinna thing I thole to hae you on board after what has ta'en place. Had you done it at ony other time, I wouldna hae thought muckle about it; but when you were at the wheel and at such a place-oh, confoond it, I canna think about it wi' ony patience."

Ross bowed his head and could not speak. Presently the captain went on-

"Hows'ever, you can mak' your mind easy sae far that I'll na speak a word about it, and the lads will hand their tongues for your sake. At the same time I am done wi'

"It's very good of you, captain," said Ross, speaking low and huskily; "but al-though you may the it from other folk, you cannot hide it from me. That's the worst of it. I don't know yet exactly what I have done or how I did it; but I dare say I shall learn it all soon enough. Thank you, and

He went on shore, the captain looking after him with something wistful in the expression of his ruddy face. Suddenly be turned and shouled-

"Campbell-here. You gang up to the station wi' Bob Ross and see him safe into the train. I'm doubtin' he's na juist himsel' yet."

Campbell obeyed willingly; he was the only one, except Annie, who had the slightest doubt as to the cause of Ross's disgrace. The captain turned to his duties with an excess of energy, as if anxious to forget in the busile this painful incident.

When Cargiil rose and learned that his rival was safely off, he was in high glee. He had no doubt that now with a clear course before him and with her father on his side, he would speedily overcome Annie's objections. In his cunning schemes, however, he did not take into account his own clumsiness. Annie did.

CHAPTER XI. ONE PRIEND AT LAST.

It was a busy day for the master and crew of the Mermaid. The cargo consisted chiefly of salt, saltpetre, and a large quantity of oil, intended for one of the experiments in oiling the angry waves for which Peterhead was become famous. The captain was desirous of having all cleared out before the noon of the following day, and his men found him more impatient than they had ever known him before.

Cargill would have persuaded Annie to accompany him on an excursion inland to view some of the beauties of Buchan, which he had been told were numerous. She declined, pleasantly enough, as it seemed, but so firmly that he aid not persist. He counted upon his victory during the return passage. Meanwhile he sauntered into the town by himself, to gratify the eyes of the folk with a view of his manly person and the latest style in tailoring.

Annie felt as if the atmosphere were somehow purer during his absence. Without exhibiting any deliberate design to avoid him-and certainly without discourtesyshe contrived to escape being left alone with him during the next two days, when the business of unloading having been completed, that of reloading was in progress. On this second day after the departure of Ross there was amazement on board the

Mermaid at sight of old Dick Baxter hirpling along the quay, as calmly consequential and as much at home as if he had been at "Dod, there are surely few bees i' the

byke when the drones come out," exclaimed the captain cheerily. "Whar in the world Hundreds of cases have been cured by do ye come frae, Baxter?" "Just frae hame, captain, and I'm wantin' you to tak' me back again."

> "And are you out on business, or are you just taking a daunder to see the kintry?" "Oo, baith, baith, captain; a man's never ower auld to learn, and I hae been learning a heap as I cam' alang. But I would never hae started if it hadna been that naething

would satisfee Bell Cargill except that I

should gang ance errand to look after her "What's ta'en the auld wife?" said the captain, laughing; "does she think he canna take care o' himsel'?-he's auld enough." "I couldna say, but Bell has notions, and

she will hae them carried out." "Aweel, gang you below and Annie will see that you hae something to cat."

"And whar's Jeems the-noo?" "Up the town, some gate."

At that Dick Baxter hirpled down to the cabin with unusual alacrity. To Annie his only salutation was, as he presented a let-

"Bob Ross sends you that, missy." Her face flushed with pleasure; but she out the note in her pocket in order to attend to the wants of the unexpected guest. "Na, na," he said hurriedly; "read your bit letterie, and while you're doing that I want to look into Jeems's cabin. I hae got

fair play, and I want to try and make sure You think that?" she cried joyfully. "I has nas doubt about it, and the doctor

an idea in my head that puir Bob didna get

that saw him in Edinbro' has nae doubt about it for, tak' his word for it that he asted nacthing a' day exceptin' what Jeems ded him. But we want to mak' sure afore peaking. Whar's his cabin?"

See pointed to a door. Old Dick passed into the place, closing the door after him. Apple, like many others, had great faith in Dick Baxter's wisdom, for as he studied the newspapers so carefully he could always tell about everything that was going on, and no one had ever been bold enough to question his judgment on any question of right and wrong.

She opened her letter with fingers which were not quite so steady as usual, and read her first love-letter. It was a strange one. "I write this to let you know I am better, Annie, and to tell you that there has been some mistake about me somewhere.

Some mistake about me somewhere.

On the way to the station, Campbell told me about everything that happened, and although I could not take it all in clearly at the time I have been able to do so since. You all think that I was drinking. You will believe me—I had nothing except what Carrill gave me, and that I took because after what you had said to me I was kind of pirving him, and did not like to show Hifeeling. There was something wrong about that whisky. Dick Baxter had been reading something in the paper that made him suspect it the minute. I told him about the acciden...

world again, and, best of all, I will be able to meet you without feeling that there is any shame upon me.

"It has been a hard time for me, Annie, and I do not think I could have come through it but for you—God bless you. I am hoping that there is only a wee while to wait till I may see you again; and I am feared that something may come between us yet. But nothing can change me."

She put the letter in her pocket. There was a new light on her face, making it look gentler and happier that it had ever done before. Ay, she did believe him-she had believed all along that he had been betrayed in some way, although she could not guess how. But Dick Baxter was a clever it; but how could they prove her man and he would find it out.

When Dick reappeared from Cargill's cabin there was a peculiar smirk on his wizened face, and nodding to Annie complacently he muttered-

"Just as I thought, just as I thought." "What is as you thought?" she inquired

"Give me a minute or twa," he answered, seating himself before the joint of corned beef which had been placed for him. He took a dram first and then ate heartily. His refl ctions were much aided by this proceeding, and when he had finished he produced a large well-worn pocket-book from the midst of a curious collection of needles, hanks of thread, fishing books and odd buttons, and selected a scrap of paper which had been cut from some newspaper.

"I dinna want to gie you ony false hopes, missy, but if I be na far wrang, Bob Ross

will soon be put right."

"You have found out how it was done?" "I jaloused it as soon as Bob let me ken what had happened. You see what comes o' reading the papers. I would hae been like the lave o' you, maybe, if I hadna read

He handed her the scrap of paper. It was the report of a common enough police case; a man enticed into a house, drugged, robbed, and turned out into the street in a state of apparent drunken stupefaction.

"This is what he has done!" she cried ex-

"Bide a minute, missy. You hae a heap to answer for; if it hadna been for you, the gowk would never hae thought o' sic a daftlike thing. Hows'ever, we want to clear Bob. You say naething about this, no even to your father, and I'll satisfee him that he was mista'en. Whan do you stari?" "To-morrow morning."

"Weel, as soon 's I hae told Jeems what his mother wants, Pil gang hame again by train the-day. But I would like you to tell me ane or twa things first."

The "ane or twa things" included the whole of her conversation with Cargill about Ross, and the information she had gathered from the men separately that not one had observed the slightest sign of anything being wrong with the pilot until they found him lying by the wheel.

"It's just wonderfu' how you thought about seeking out a' that," said Dick admiringly; "but you were aye a clever lass, missy. I canna understand how the captain should be sae ready to think ill o' Bob." "Cargill made him believe that he had been drinking before."

"Aweel, that'll a' be set right afore lang. You and me mann keep a calm sough for a wee while. Just you keep on as you hae been doing-keep frien's wi' him and may-

be we'll get mair out o' him." When Cargill returned he was annoved exceedingly to find his bugbear, Dick Baxter, waiting for him, and almost started into a rage when he heard the well-known salutation, "Weel, Jeems, how's a' wi' you

He would have turned away at once from this pest, but he was detained by the next | fell doon stupefied at the wheel."

"Your mother sent to you ance errand. She wouldna believe in the post or the telegraph; the matter was sae particular that naething would serve her but I maun come wi' her message."

"What is it she wants now?" was the surly and impatient query.

"She doesna want you to break your trip; but she commands you to gang straight to her the minute you land. She bade me say that you would hurt yoursel' mair than you can fancy, if you didna do her bidding."

'Very well." "You'll come the minute you land?" "Of course, since she is so particular about

"I'll tell her to expect you, for I'm gaun back by train the-day." That evening in the gloaming, work over

and all quiet in the harbor, Captain Duncan was sitting on deck smoking. Annie was walking up and down, occasionally halting beside him. During one of these halts, he said abruptly-

"Annie, I want you to be kind to Jeems Cargill." This was the first time he had referred to

the subject of the proposed union since that evening in the cottage. What for in especial, father?"

He puffed slowly, and looked over the bulwark into the clear blue water which was plashing gently against the sides of the Mermaid. He was perplexed; what especial reason was there for asking her to be kind to Cargill? He himself had no especial regard for the man, and but for his fortune would have little to say to him.

"It's this way, Annie; you see he's a man that has a great notion o' you; he's weel-todo in the world; there's naebody has ony particular ill to say against him; and he asked me to put in a word for him wi' you. I said I would, and I'm doing it. You might do a hantle waur than agree to be Mistress

She laid her hand on his shoulder; she could feel the awkwardness with which he spoke. At another time she would have relieved him by laughing at the whole affair. At present she had too many anxious thoughts weighing upon her for laughter to find vent

"I told you my mind about this, father, when you mentioned it before. I am of the same mind yet, and I will never change." She felt a glow of pleasure in thus echoing her lover's words.

"A weel, aweel, I'm na gaun to force your will. I was meaning you for another man a' the while; but I hae done what I promised and nae mair need be said. You would hae loupit blitherly enough at -but that's a' by and nae mair need be said."

He got up and leaned over the bulwark now puffing vigorously. A vague suspicion of his meaning flashed across her mind, making the heart leap

quick with surprise and joy. "Who are you speaking about now, father" she asked, her voice low and not quite so steady as usual.

"Never heed, never heed. It's a' by neo the big fool!"

Then there was silence. She was tremb ing and afraid to speak lest she should find that she misinterpreted berfather's thoughts. But it must be him he referred to; and this was the meaning of all his curious little jokes and grins which had often puzzled her when he was speaking about her marriage.

"I'm sair put about wi' Bob Ross," he said by-and-by, half angrily, half regretful-"What a hypocrite he maun hae been! -I would as soon has thought o' doing air a

thing mysel' as nim. find it na that, he was the man for you and modd tue."

"A And will be, father," she cried gleeful-

'Na, that canna be noo-it's a' by. Pd sooner see you maerrit to Jeems Cargill."

"Oh, father, you will find that you are mistaken abou p or Bob."

In the mids of her great gladiess there came that crues toomfor-everything had been lost by Kat one blander. She knew what Cargill had done; Des Baxter knew

As soon as the Mermeld arrived at Leith, Cargill took his by A and the was disappointed; all by a local ston had

failed to move her. She had been civil to him-most civil-but she would not permit him to get out his propo al. When he was saying good-bye he made one more effort to

win her favor. "I suppose I may come to Anchor Cottage to-morrow?"

Then her whole manner suddenly changed, she became cold, almost stern. "You may come, of course, Mr. Cargill;

but you will not speak to me until Mr. Ross

is put right with my father." He was staggered, confused, muttered that he did not see what business it was of his; and with clumsy haste made his way

on shore. Thinking over those parting words of Annie's he was a little disturbed and in very Ill-hamor when he arrived at his mother's "beastly hut," as he called it. Entering the room he did not observe the ab ence of any salutation, querulous or oth rwise, from his

mother; but when he tooked he was conscious of a change in her appearance which startled even him. She sat bolt upright in her chair, the white mutch as carefully "piped" as ever, surrounding a face like that of a corpse. Her right hand rested on a little table at her side, the left grasped the arm of the chair,

supporting her in the erect position of one who is just about to rise to her feet. He did note the singular calinness of her voice, and was more startled by its tenderness than by her appearance.

"I'm glad you hae come, Jeems, for I has muckle to say to you afore I get up." "What is it, mother?"

His own voice was somehow subdued and less self-assertive than usual. "You ken, Jeems that I has mony times

had rizzon to complee o' your way o' doing; and mair than once in my passion I was actually meaning to take every bawbee awa' frae ye and gie it to some o' the hospitals?" "Oh, yes; but that was only when you were angry," he answered uneasily.

"Ay, but my anger lasted lang enough for me to make out the will." "What!" "Ye needna be feared. There was a frien"

o' yours wha after lang speakin' gar't me put that paper in the fire." "Who was that?" he asked, breathing freely again.

"It was name ither than Bob Ross. Had ye na rizzon to be grateful tae him?" The selfish nature of the man rendered him indifferent as soon as he knew himself

to be safe. "Of course, and I'll thank him when we meet.

The woman's eyes set in that gaunt, sallow face seemed to glitter as if a flame were reflected in them; and there was a weird solemnity in her voice. "Ye'll hae to dae a heap mair than that

. . . Ye'll hae to put him right wi' his folk. Ye'll has to tell how it cam' about that he There was none of Bell's customary pas-

the sentence calmly, and there was a tremulous sadness somewhere which rendered her words the more impressive. "What do I know about it," he said sulkily after the first surprise, "except that I

sion in tone or manner. She pronounced

gave him a dram, and-"And you ken what was in the dram, Jeems. You ken that there was nearly the hale o' this stuff that was in this bottle

She lifted the right hand from the table, and showed him a small phial,

"Where did you get that?" he exclaimed, starting up, and then suddenly checking himself, whilst inwardly cursing his own studidity in having laid down the phial in his berth on board the Mermaid and forgotten it, instead of throwing it overboard at once. He was only for a moment puzzled as to how it came into his mother's possession, for he presently remembered the visit to Peterhead of the creature he now began to took upon as his evil genius, Dick Baxter.

Reit Carrill went on. You bought this on pretence that you wanted a strong sleeping drink, and you gied it to Bob Ross Did you na dae

"What is the use of asking such a foolish question?" he growled restlessly.

The old woman looked at him a long time. and that strange sadness which was lying omewhere in the background became more evident in the lines of the worn face and the darkening of the eyes. Without anger, scarcely with any change of tone, she spoke,

"Laye kenned ye were a fule, Jeems, but I never thought you were a villian. Own the truth to me, or you'll hae to own it in a court o' justice. Ye hae wranged the man that was your best frien'- when I get up I'll mak' amonds tae him. But that's na the question. You mann mak' amends tae him enon, or never a farthing o' my siller ye shall hae. Speak-you did it.'

Cargill saw how much in earnest his mother was, and after a struggle with his vanity, which was overcome by his greed, he answered, with a clumsy attempt to be jocular "Well, I did put a few drops into his dram, but it was only a joke, and meant no harm. I had no notion that he was going

"Hech, sirs, and that's a your repentance. Ye ken fine that you were gaun to wreck

him. . . . Put your name to this paper.' Cargill looked at the paper, which she held under her hand, and read the writing on it. It was a plain, brief statement that he had purposely given Ross a sleeping draught. He made an attempt to snatch it away from her, but whilst she covered it with one hand she placed the other on his

"Hearken Jeems. If that paper is na put into the hands o' Dick Baxter this night wi' your name to it you will be ruined."

He hastily scrawled his name, thinking that he could easily tear the paper afterwards; but at that moment his evil genius hirpled is at the door, and snatched the paper almost from under his hand.

"The paper doesna matter, mistress," says Dick Baxter, "though I've got it. I was standing on the starhead and heard every word he said tae ye. Cargill's impulse was to seize the man

and take the prize from him by force; but the attention of both was attracted to the mother Her eyes had become suddenly dim, and

she muttered, in a voice growing rapidly more and more faint-"Tell Bob Ross I'll mak' amends tas him

when I get up. I'm weary ence"."

"That's impos ible."