

The Last Voyage of The Donna Isebel

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Nothing Except the Remembrance of the Women Afforded Me Strength and Courage to Remain.

open deck, that cabin revealed a temperature so awful in intensity as to make us recoil before it, our hands to our faces. A hundred years of winter—the black eternal winter of the south pole—smote us with icy breath, seeming fairly to sear the flesh with its frozen touch. Dade dropped under it, and we dragged him aside, sobbing like a baby. It was several minutes before we could even draw near enough to hack away more of the ice and, with the ax, drive the door farther back into its grooves.

It was intensely dark within, every window and porthole shrouded, only the narrow door-opening permitting the slight glimmer of the moon to touch the edge of the black interior. I wrapped my muffler to the very eyes, and stepped across the threshold, feeling as if the icy air grasped me with actual fingers, yet resolute to learn all, and confident no other there would ever venture it. I touched an overturned bench with my knee; my fingers explored the back of a heavy chair having a carved top, and then came into contact with a bare back, heavily ridged along the edge. Seemingly this stood crossways of the cabin; and I felt cautiously along it, a deeper cowardice gripping me with every hesitating step forward in the dark. Suddenly I touched hair and the gelid coldness of frozen flesh, and as instantly leaped backward, mad with nameless terror. The overturned bench tripped me, and I fell, grasping at the door casements, and thus dragged myself out of that hell-hole by my arms.

CHAPTER XXIV.

In Which I Explore the Cabin.

De Nova assisted me to my feet, the other men crowding about, their faces filled with wonderment. "For God's sake, w'at is it, monsieur?"

"There are dead men in there," I explained, already ashamed of my display of terror. "I—I touched one in the dark."

They drew back from the open door, gazing with new horror into the blackness of the interior; but my own courage was rapidly returning, as I realized that I must lead and control.

"Well, lads, it startled me, all right, but we cannot afford to give up this ship to dead men. De Nova, take Kelly with you, and try to discover something on board with which to make a flare. There ought to be plenty of dry stuff in the galley. Not a word to the women about what I found aft."

The rest of us hacked away, while they were gone, at the ice concealing the front window shutters, and partly uncovered one. But we could get no purchase upon it from the outside and no one volunteered to venture within. I kept them all busy, however, the hard work and sense of command combining to restore my own nerves to a normal condition. The mate despairing of doing better, finally brought back a table-leg of pitch pine which we contrived to ignite after several unsuccessful experiments, the yellowish-red flames circling the heavy end like so many coiling serpents, and sending forth a weird reflection through spirals of black smoke. It was a poor glim enough, yet it would serve; and I bore it inside, holding the torch well before me, the men clustering about the door.

The mottled flare cast mingled light and shadow over the horrors thus dimly revealed, rendering the ghastly sight one to chill the blood of any man. The cabin was a long one, extending aft clear to the stern, the immense butt of the mainmast almost separating it into two apartments. About this was arranged a great arm-rack completely filled with a variety of weapons, many of them flashing back the glittering rays of the torch. At one time that had been a rare sea-parlor, but now it was a wreck, the walls and ceiling dingy with smoke, the gut defaced and battered. Overturned furniture was everywhere; piles of clothing, and a perfect rickrack of articles strewed the deck floor; a violin lay almost at my feet, all but one string snapped; and some sort of an odd music-box rested against the bench over which I had fallen. A great square box-stove stood just before the mast-but, a huge pile of ashes all about. An immense lantern, as strange a looking contrivance as ever I saw, swung solemnly from a deck-beam, and just beyond, suspended by wires, was a gorgeously colored picture of the "Madonna and Child."

I beheld all these details at a glance, although at the time I scarcely realized any of them, my entire horrified attention being riveted upon the scene of death revealed. The table, which I had previously touched, extending crossways of the cabin, was uncovered but contained plates, cups, a large bottle half-filled, and some scraps of frozen food. The bodies of two men, one with a cloak over his shoulders, occupied the bench within three feet of me. The one nearest had fallen sideways, and hung there, his arm

hooked across the back of the bench, his long, black hair dangling over his face; the other sat with head bowed on the table, his features hidden by his arms, but the gold rings in his ears plainly showing. Directly opposite these two, sitting bolt upright in a chair, eyes wide open, staring straight at me, was a third. My God! It was De Nova! The same eyes, the same dark curly hair, the same little black mustache, the same smile curling the thin lips. I could have sworn it was the mate, endeavoring to frighten and mock me. I even wheeled about angrily, flashing the light of my torch over that cluster of faces in the doorway. No! by heavens, the creole stood behind, and this, this counterpart, was a dead man—dead for a hundred years. No words can ever retell the struggle I made to control myself, the smoking torch shaking in my hand and casting its miserable flicker over that charnel house, every limb trembling like aspen, my eyes staring into the shadows. My very violence of fear angered me; what had I to be afraid of? How could these poor frozen bodies injure me? Nerved to the endeavor I stepped forward around the end of the table, throwing the faint glare of the torch into the after space concealed by the huge mast-but. A tall, thin man sat on the deck, braced against the wall, his long, gray beard almost concealing his face; on a wide divan, nearly opposite, lay a woman, her dark hair loosened, a large diamond glittering on the hand which hung rigid over the edge of the couch. Just below her fingers, as if dropped there in final weakness, lay a baby's well-worn shoe.

I scarcely comprehend how I ever conquered the sickly horror that smote me as I gazed about upon this scene of death, rendered even more terrible by the silence and the flickering, smoking torch that furnished the only light. Nothing except the sense of command, the remembrance of those women waiting outside in the cook's galley, ever afforded me strength and courage to remain. The task must be done; by some one it must be accomplished, and that some one, of necessity, was myself. With clenched teeth, my face as white as those of the frozen dead about me, I advanced from door to door down one side of that cabin, and up the other. Out from the staterooms that had remained closed there came the same awful breath of the frigid south, rendering even the icy air of the main cabin ten times colder, and causing me to breathe with difficulty as I peered hastily within. These staterooms were all of fair size, the two situated farthest aft being unusually large and comfortably fitted, although in great disorder. In one only did I discover a body, that of a child of three or four years, flaxen-haired and bonny even in death. Upon the deck at the foot of the mast I discovered the vessel's log-book lying wide open, a quill pen beside it, exactly as it had been dropped. I did not take time to decipher the Spanish, inscribed in a scrawling hand, but my glance caught the date of that last entry—"September 11, 1753."

The date rang in my head crazily, as I stood there staring at them, totally unable to grasp or apprehend the truth. One hundred and twenty-six years!—Merciful God! And all that time those men had been there at that table; all through those days and nights, those months and years, that frozen image of De Nova had been smiling, his cold fingers clutching the glass; all through those decades that woman had been lying on the couch, that flaxen-haired baby in the bunk! There, exactly as we found them, during a century of inky blackness, tossed about by the sea, cradled in the pitiless ice, smitten by the awful breath of eternal Winter, those bodies had remained rigid, motionless, even as the souls left them, for 126 years! It was unthinkable, inconceivable, miraculous, beyond all my power of apprehension. Blessed Mary! what changes the world had witnessed since these died! What wonders of discovery; what growth in faith; what widening of human knowledge; what generations of men and women had been born, lived, loved, and died since the deadly ice locked these into this floating tomb!

Not until after I had explored the last empty room and returned to the group at the door did I regain my senses and feel myself again a living, responsible being upon whose strength of will depended the future of all on board. A glance into those horrified faces told me instantly that they were ready for a mad retreat to the boat; that the slightest exhibition of weakness on my part would set them into a panic. I stiffened into resistance, all memory of the past blotted out utterly by the demands of the present.

"Men, we've come into a hard job here, but it is one which must be attended to," I said, gravely. "However, we'll wait until after breakfast before tackling the worst of it. Day is beginning now, and we will get out some light it gives us. Dade, get out some

provisions from the boat, start a fire in the galley, and prepare a hot meal. Sanchez, go along and help; you will probably have to cut away some ice before the fire will draw. Not a word to the women about what you have seen aft, my lads."

The two started forward willingly enough, and I immediately turned to the others, marking their uneasy glances, and fully assured that I must keep them also busily employed, or else lose control altogether.

"We have too much to accomplish here to waste any time while those fellows are getting a meal ready," I continued, quickly. "McKnight, you tackle these front shutters. Kelly, climb up on the poop and dig the ice off the skylight and out of the funnel. We've got to have daylight and a fire. Now, De Nova, I want you and Johnson to help me. Come on, men; what are you two afraid of? These are all dead."

I fairly drove them to it, but it did them both good, although the manner in which they advanced down the cabin, their faces blanched under the torch glare, their bodies shaking as with ague, made me nervous and irritable. I put them at the after-ports, Johnson with the cleaver, and De Nova with his sheath-knife, and between the three of us we finally succeeded in wrenching both stern-ports free of their icy fetters. As we burst them open, through the wide apertures we looked forth into the gray dreariness of the dawn. Satisfied with what had thus been accomplished, we retraced our steps back through the cabin, observing that Kelly had made some progress above, the faint daylight already beginning to tinge that grim interior.

That breakfast was the first warm meal any of us had enjoyed for five days, and we ate it together, sitting about on the galley deck. The men were unusually silent, even the voluble Kelly holding his tongue. No doubt their thoughts were with their perilous situation and the grewsome task confronting them; yet they partook heartily of the food, and I endeavored by every means in my power to arouse their courage and cheerfulness. To that end I dwell on the possibility of the wealth that might be concealed between decks, promising an early search. But I spoke most to Lady Darlington, admiring greatly the easy manner in which she bore herself amid such rude surroundings and adapted herself to the necessities of our situation. All semblance of pride and exclusiveness had vanished, and she was a simple-hearted woman, bearing her trials with silent fortitude. Only once did she even refer to our discoveries aft, and then only to appear perfectly satisfied when I explained that the cabin was in such disorder it would have to be cleaned before fit for occupancy. Rough as the experience of the previous night had been, her dress soiled, her hair ruffled, never had she appeared more attractive than when, sitting in the midst of us on that galley deck with the gray daylight streaming in through the broken roof, the ruddy flames of the fire flickered across her face. I saw the men glance toward her in respectful admiration as they filed out one by one, and thus left us for a moment alone. No matter what words I whispered in the brief time before I joined them, but as I glanced back where she remained standing, there was a smile upon her lips and a mist of tears in her eyes. As for myself, I was prepared for the work of the day.

I need not dwell upon the unpleasant details. The most disagreeable portion fell to me, although Johnson took hold like a man after the first few moments of reluctance. The others devoted themselves diligently to scraping off the ice, gathering up and casting overboard the accumulation of litter about the main cabin and the various staterooms, and assisting us only as we passed the heavy, rigid bodies through the stern-ports. We performed this unpleasant task of burial hastily, but with all gentleness; there was little to do except to wrap the stiffened figures as best we might, weight them, though they were themselves like stone, and consign them to the gray sea. Not heartlessly, but with unspoken prayers upon our lips, we watched them sink silently into the depths they had resisted so long. Never shall I forget the face of the child, the last to be buried, nor the sickening feeling with which I sank back upon a bench, staring about the vacated cabin when the awful task was finally accomplished; yet the realization that it was over with, the

(To be Continued)

Some more bargains for you--

A saving of 20, 30 and even 50 per cent on good dependable merchandise is a clear cut money making proposition for you and is fast cleaning up our Summer merchandise. Some of the lines advertised Monday are closed, but we have decided to put out on the tables the following goods, not heretofore on special sale:

All our 25, 35 and 40c men's fine fancy hose in stripes, checks, polka dots and fancy weaves, for cash at **19c**

All single pairs in our 35, 40 and 50c line of men's fine lisle suspenders, with genuine leather ends. Medium, light and dark patterns. Choice for cash **23c**

Here's another shirt bargain. All left-overs in a big line of plain and fancy patterns in Cheviot, Madras and Mercerized Sateen shirts, with soft collars attached. No old stock—new this spring. Cash **54c**

A limited line of fine salmon colored lisle underwear—two piece—full fashioned. Satin trimmed, pearl buttons. A regular 75c value. While they last, for cash only **39c**

We still have left a few of sizes 15, 16 and 17 in the sample night gowns, full size, bell shape. Better come quick if you want some of them at **54c cash**

We have sold more than half of the big line of men's 4-in-hand wash ties at 12c. A good many good patterns left, especially in white.

We have added to the line of boy's stockings all the remnants of our Black-Cat 25, 35 and 40c line (sizes only 5½ to 8) and put them all in at the low price of 16c.

Now we cannot tell you in this space of all the other items where one dollar does the duty of two. Better come in at once and see them. Bring the ad with you and compare them with the goods. If they don't agree—don't buy, but for the sake of your pocketbook don't let this sale go by without investigating

No sale goods charged

No cash register tickets given

C. E. Wescott's Sons

"Where Quality Counts."

THE HOME OF SATISFACTION!

He Likes Oklahoma.

Dr. George H. Gilmore of Murray was in the city this morning attending to business matters. Dr. Gilmore and wife recently returned from an extended trip to Tuttle and Minco, Okla., as noted in the Journal, and the doctor is greatly taken with that country. He states that the country around Minco and east of that point is as fine as any he ever seen and that there is abundance of crops of all kinds there this year. The only drawback which exists in that country is the danger in titles, as so much of the land is held by full blood Indians who are forbidden by the United States government to transfer their lands. Many of the people of the north who have gone down there with the intention of purchasing land have been unfortunate enough to have gotten hold of some of this land to which no title is attached and in consequence they have lost much money. Should the restrictions be removed by the government, Dr. Gilmore believes that this country would rapidly settle up, and those getting in would make splendid sums off their investment. During the time he was there the weather was good and everything worked lovely to make him fall in love with the baby state.

Attention.

Next excursion to Scott Bluff, August 3. For particulars as to irrigated land, write this office at once; 25 improved farms near Alliance at \$15 to \$22 per acre; 10 improved farms in Dawson county, near Lexington. No finer opportunities are presented.

WINDHAM INVESTMENT CO.

Mrs. E. Drew of Omaha, who has been visiting with Mrs. J. C. Cummins and family, returned to her home this morning.

Mr. Heisel Holding His Own.

The condition of C. Heisel is reported this morning as not materially changed. He is holding his own remarkably well and the disease, which is gangrene of the foot, is not making very rapid progress. It is the earnest hope of the gentleman's many friends in the city that his improvement continues and that the turn for the better, which seems to have set in, will continue until he will once more be able to be down town and make his customary visits. That he should hold his own so well with the disease is remarkable, and revives hope in his friends for an ultimate recovery.

Miss Black's Condition Unchanged.

From the hospital at Omaha where Miss Hannah Black is being treated, word comes of no change in her condition from what it has been the past few days. She is in quite serious condition and very little encouragement is held out by the attending physicians. Owing to her weakened condition any change for the better will necessarily be slow. This is sorrowful news for the many friends which this young lady has here and they all unite in the hope that she will shortly change for the better and make a speedy recovery.

Mrs. Jacob S. Wendell, Mrs. Gertrude Morgan and her mother, Mrs. Swift, were all visitors at the home of William R. Murray at Mynard, where they had an enjoyable day. One especially fine feature of the day was a delicious dinner served only as Mrs. Murray can serve. It was well worth traveling a long distance to get and the guests returned to the city greatly pleased to have received so hospitable and pleasant a reception.

James K. Pollock returned to Omaha this morning after spending several days in this city with his folks.

To Improve Property.

Robert Troop has recently acquired the Graves property on the corner of Ninth and Rock streets, and will at once proceed to put the same in the best possible condition, thoroughly remodeling and improving the house and making it a modern and up-to-date residence property. The house is to be raised, the yard graded up, a foundation put under it, bath room installed and steam heat put into it. This will make it one of the best and most comfortable houses in the city and one which should be in good demand.

Notice of Sale.

Notice is hereby given that the Board of School District No. 2, in Cass county, Nebraska, will sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, at 2:30 o'clock p. m., of the 21st day of August, A. D. 1909, at the south door of the Court House, in Plattsmouth, Nebraska. Sale to remain open one (1) hour, the school building with foundation, known as the Goos School House, and located on the farm of Mrs. Anna Goos, about one mile southeast of Plattsmouth, Nebraska. Dated this 24th day of July, A. D. 1909.

HANS KEMP,
Director.

Mrs. R. W. Clement and family, who have been visiting for a number of months past at Portland and other points in the northwest, have returned home. They had a delightful trip and greatly enjoyed themselves visiting the various points of interest in that country, including the Seattle exposition.

Harry Kruger, wife and boy are spending today in Omaha, coming in from their home in the country and being passengers for that city on the morning train.