

BY PROXY

By Sarah Tuttle

THEY could not speak a word to each other, for she was English and he was German, and neither knew the language of the other. They had an friends in common, and one could call Ned Brook a friend of Mrs. Chesire's, and she could call Mrs. Chesire a friend of Ned Brook's. Mrs. Chesire was the aunt and guardian, and of course with Dora. He had introduced himself to Theo Edelstein by a piece of friendly good nature. He was sorry for the poor young lawyer whose tongue was tied, the disadvantage of the silence being increased by the state of his health, which the Englishman would have described as "fishy" in the extreme.

Brook found Edelstein an eager, impressionable, impulsive young fellow, bound for the Cape, from which he was to go up country and start as a farmer. The idea of that scarecrow manuvering with a wagon and a span of oxen, exploiting Kaffir labor, building a log house, and setting down to sow and reap, to rear heads of cattle and flocks of sheep, when in six months or less all he would require of mother earth would be summed up in a grave!

But as for strenuousness, the word hardly expressed the energy and determination which dwelt in the long bag of bones. Brook could not have believed that so much will-power could survive in so shattered and enfeebled a frame. But the good bond of union between the two young men and the girl was that they were to be fellow passengers for a time in the Fair Winds. Dora and her aunt with Ned Brook were going on a holiday trip to the Canary islands, and Edelstein was on his way to the Cape.

"If the unfortunate chap does not kick the bucket before he sees the shore again," said Brook lightly, in discussing the ailing passenger with the ladies during his last call at the hotel. "I shall be astonished."

Mrs. Chesire was roused into a protest. "Ah, I hope he won't die before we reach the Canaries. I think he ought not to be allowed to come into the saloon. I will speak to the captain the first thing. We will hold this miserable Mr. Edelstein at arm's length."

But her aunt's careful arrangement was exactly that which Dora did not choose to follow. She contrived to slip away from her relative and to seat herself with an air of perfect innocence between Brook and Edelstein. Once seated she said it was "very nice" where she was and declined to be dislodged.

"I don't mind," Dora told herself, "though Aunt Chesire and people in general count me forward and inconsiderate—and pretend that I have laid myself out to engross the attention of a couple of young men—a couple did I say? A man and a half—a man so sick as this poor German is only half a man; but at least he shall have somebody who will not shrink from him, who will look kindly at him, and be attentive in passing him the salt and the mustard. I wish I could do more. Ah! I know; I will get Mr. Brook to speak German across to me, so that a forlorn invalid, courageous enough to venture on exile, may not feel himself utterly lonely."

At the first luxurious, elaborate dinner Dora, sitting dumb beside her right hand neighbor, could at least beam upon him till his gaunt face and sunken bright blue eyes were lit up with half puzzled and eager admiration. She dined him with every toothsome dainty in their vicinity, making expressive signs of what she held most worthy of his patronage.

At the time she wondered which was good and which was bad for him. She took it for granted that it was consumption which had left him a walking skeleton. She had heard that one of the last accredited cures was feeding the sufferer up, as she did her best by this means to look after his encouraging smiles to get the scarecrow to begin to stut himself. She shook her head disapprovingly when he declined oysters. She made the waiter pause significantly at Edelstein's shoulder with a chocolate cream.

"Take care, Miss Dora," said Ned Brook warningly. "What are you, too, frightened for infection? She demurred scornfully, while both speakers were unfettered in their discourse because of the dead wall which Edelstein's practical ignorance of English had erected between him and them.

years before she is a married woman, and wait faithfully all the same.) He is under the delusion that you (being one of those wrong-headed, devoted angels, whom poets and men of his kidney find among women) like him well enough to follow him (he would have followed you to the world's end in other circumstances)—to the Cape, to trek up country after him, and when some Dutch pastor has made you his wife, to be contented to find your happiness in nursing him back to health—as if that were not a desperate job. There you are to work with him, a household drudge, a notable farmer's wife, without a civilized creature, save himself, to speak to far and near (and even to speak to him you must pick up German), without a decent shop to enter, without a log built church in which to say your prayers. Assuredly your friend is not 'blate,' as the Scotch say."

"Friend! I do not count madmen among my friends. He is beside himself," declared Dora, with uncompromising severity.

"Beside himself? Yes, with unrequited love—only he does not dream that it is unrequited, with the enthusiasm which we call 'gush,' and the weakness consequent on the poor sinner's illness. And I must warn you, Miss Dora, that if you were the infatuated being he thinks you, if you gave up for his sake every worldly prospect, every intellectual satisfaction, and every family tie, I believe by sheer dint of will he would fight off death, he would live on and cheat you for years of the delirium which widowhood might bring to you."

She said nothing for a moment, standing silent, with a face from which the rich color had fled, with knitted brows, and set lips. Then she spoke abruptly.

"I will go down with you, Mr. Brook, since you think he is entitled to my presence on the occasion, only let us get through with this—the horrid ordeal as speedily as possible."

She walked down the stairs and entered the saloon with her head held high and pride and scorn in every line of her figure and lineament of her face. She had said she had insulted her—more, he had cruelly wronged her in the mistake he had made. He had abused her womanly good will, distorting it in his foolish fancy, and employing it as a weapon against her. He was compelling her to endure a detestably painful, awkward, grotesque ten minutes.

He was standing near the door of the saloon as she entered. He bowed low with a foreigner's instinctive gesture of the hand to the heart, which indicates, profoundest homage.

She met his eager eyes devouring her, and tendering to her grateful thanks for her infinite condescension in complying with his daring summons, with a slight bend of her head, and a respectful glance. It wavered and fell before his ardent regard, while her heart suffered a sharp pang and sank like lead in her breast.

Two saloon chairs had been drawn forward for Dora and Ned Brook. Edelstein took up his position on the other side of Brook, standing there as at once the boldest and the humblest of petitioners.

Brook accepted the arrangement until he remarked how Dora, who had come in with a rigid air, was beginning to fidget uneasily, as if she would rise from her chair; for she was, saying to herself, as he soon guessed, "I am angry and I do well to be angry, but I would not for worlds at here and hurt him in that way. It would be mean to force him to realize his weakness. He cannot stand there and be agitated and argue the matter as a strong man would."

Ned Brook comprehended, got up, and pulled forward another chair, saying hastily to Edelstein.

"You had better sit down, you are not up to much, and this must be a trying explanation for you."

Dora hung her head and said nothing.

Years passed. Time and change did their best and their worst for the actors in the little drama on board the good ship Fair Winds.

Mrs. Chesire had died suddenly, leaving no will for her valueless property to deal with when the testatrix is in health. In this instance the negligence was disastrous, for there was a nefarious relative than Dora, who, though he had been a reprobate, refused admission to Mrs. Chesire's house, did not on that account forfeit his legal birthright.

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"You had better sit down, you are not up to much, and this must be a trying explanation for you."

The suitor sat down on the other side of Brook, who was seated between him and Dora, and for a moment sank back with a forced sigh of relief for welcome rest. The next instant he was bending forward with intense earnestness and speaking some eloquent words in his mother tongue, with glowing eyes fixed upon Dora, who turned away impatiently.

"He says," interpreted Brook with a carefully repressed grin, "that his proper place, which is ready to assume, is on his knees at your feet."

"O, don't let him! For mercy's sake prevent him!" cried Dora in real trepidation, catching hold of her countryman's arm.

Edelstein had cast a glance of mystified annoyance at Ned Brook when Dora's action appealing for Brook's intervention met his eyes.

value of the love she had rejected, which it would have been impossible for her to accept. No worldly advantage would weigh a thistle down in the scale against such love as she had inspired once—but once in her life. Like the blossom of the aloe it could only be counted upon to appear at rare intervals, to a few individuals. How strange and sad that when the precious gift was offered to her it was in connection with a situation which precluded any chance of its being taken—even if she had been worthy of such a gift! But it was not of herself she thought, beyond the fact that she was haunted with an aching regret for not having been kinder, more forbearing.

What did it matter? What could her gratitude or ingratitude signify to a disembodied spirit, which had long ago entered into eternity, and been employed, she trusted, in heavenly praise and heavenly work for a longer period than that in which she had taken up her life task in earnest.

Dora was disturbed in the look she had cast backwards by her landlady's voice speaking to somebody on the door mat.

"Yes, sir; Miss Chesire is at home. Will you please to walk in?"

The second voice spoke with a foreign accent. To whom could it belong? It was a big man who was shown in, and seeing that he was there in propria persona Dora laid down the card without looking at it, and waited for the stranger to tell his errand.

He loomed almost gigantic in his long ulster and the broad felt hat he held in his brown hands. He seemed to fill the little room to the blotting out of Dora—herself a tall woman.

"O, (he pronounced it "ach") Miss Chesire." He halted her by her name, adding with lingering emphasis "at last!"

She had only listened to that voice for any length of time on one former occasion, but its tones thrilled her with a sense of some sound she had heard and been impressed by, in the past. In the same way the face, hugely changed, broadened, bearded, of a hale weather beaten tan, and the cordwood blue eyes with the glint of steel in their keenness and strenuousness struck her as strangely, distracting familiarity.

"Do you not know me?" he was asking her, with tender reproach, which no amount of respectful restraint could altogether check, vibrating through his guttural accents. "I would have known you among a thousand. Why, of course, I am Theo Edelstein."

ing this morning. "You were desperately ill ten years ago. It is an age since you must have—"
"Died?" He finished the broken sentence, catching and holding the hands that would have pushed the vision of him beyond touch. "Nothing of the kind. I reached my destination. The fresh air and the sunshine suited me. I recovered from my ailment, which I know some of you thought was a galloping consumption. I remembered you always as I said I would, I have learned English. I should have written but I feared to put my fortunes to the test of paper. Had they not failed when they were urged by another man's tongue? I would plead my own cause, and if you were still free—if you had died I should have known it—you might yield, you might still be mine. I would do all that I had promised to do. You had wished that I might be a mighty stockholder and farmer. I have oxen by thousands and sheep by tens of thousands. I have many a field of nodding grain and barns to receive it. My house is built and furnished and standing waiting for its mistress; your garden is laid out like the English gardens English women delight in. Our next neighbor is an Oxford man who took honors at his college as I did at mine, but his health also gave way and he, too, was fain to turn to primitive nature as the great healer she is, and to lead the life of an old patriarch, throwing his books and papers overboard. But we are not without books. I have laid the foundation of a library—I shall do as he does every time he goes to the nearest town. He brings back for himself and for his young wife—a bishop's daughter—books and magazines, as well as new music, and pretty dresses as I shall bring for my wife when I have won her. Our neighbors on the other side are a dear old German couple who nursed me when I first arrived, and have been like a father and mother to me. I have told them that if I take you back you will be another daughter to them as I am another son. Will you come, my one and only love, and make my life and my home complete?"

"I—I cannot tell," she faltered. "You have taken me so by surprise. It is not a couple of hours ago since I thought of you as long dead. In one light you are an utter stranger to me. Recollect this is the first time we have spoken together. In another sense I seem to know you well, and to owe you a mountainload of gratitude for thinking of me so much oftener and better than I have deserved, and for forgiving me for the hardness of my dismissal in the dining saloon of the Fair Winds."

"There was nothing to forgive," he said, simply. "How could there be forgiveness between you and me? And the second light is the true light—you do know me—you will come to me, my gift from God!"

"The gift is mutual," she said, speaking softly. "If there is any meaning in the name common to us both—"



A Kiss Shot... By J. H. Rosny.

At the early age of 30 I settled down to a life of single blessedness on my paternal estate. I had been ill and the world in every phase and climate and congratulated myself on being through with storms, literal and figurative.

her large fortune, which she appeared anxious to exchange for French soil. After purchasing the estate adjoining mine she successively acquired other properties until she threatened to surround and engulf me. One day she said:

went on with alternate advantage until she had scored 200 to my 283. Then I made a run of sixteen with ease and stopped, balked by a difficult shot, within one point of victory. She also, after running up to 239, found herself confronted by an awkward configuration, but the shot was so much easier than some which she had made that I gave up the game for lost. She aimed carefully and steadily, played—and missed by a hair's breadth!